



# Module Ten

## Heart-Matters

## SHOWING OFF—RIYA'

**Showing off is one of the calamities of the heart [whose definition is] to perform an act of devotion for other than the Creator's sake.**

Riya is ostentation. It comes from the word ra'a (to be seen). It is described by the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) as minor shirk. The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said he did not fear his Umma falling into major shirk, but rather minor shirk of doing things for other than the sake of Allah.

By saying 'act of devotion' he excludes acts done for others that are not acts of devotion exclusively for Allah, such as dressing nicely. His definition also excludes actions that are not done for people, such as a person who performs Hajj with the intention of engaging in buying and selling.

## SHOWING OFF—RIYA'

Rather, it is for the purpose of seeking some worldly benefit or praise from His creation, or to protect oneself from the opposite, [that is, loss of wealth or dispraise].

Tama' is the root, and because of it a person loves praise and dislikes blame. Were it not for tama' one would not love praise and dislike blame from other people.

## SHOWING OFF—RIYA'

Ibn Hamdun says that there are six forms of riya'

1. With the body—making oneself appear sallow and thin, to make it seem to others that one is a Zahid who is staying awake in the night in prayer; having disheveled hair so others think he is too busy with dhikr to bother with such things, purposely developing a zabiba.
2. Body language—hanging head down, closing eyes, etc.
3. Garments—wearing wool or tattered garments, or dirty garments to give the appearance that one doesn't care about such trivialities

## SHOWING OFF—RIYA'

4. Statements—the riyā of preachers who adorn their words and put them in rhyming patterns and utter wisdom and alter their voice to make it appear that they are in a ḥāl, while their inward state is bereft of that.
5. Action—lengthy standing and sajdā, stillness in public not observed in private (not always)
6. Gathering a crowd of students around oneself, mixing with lots of shaykhs so that it is thought that he is a Shaykh.

## SHOWING OFF—RIYA'

The 'ulama mention that it is not riya to seek status from others by doing things that are not acts of devotion, such as rehearsing poetry, showing one's knowledge of medicine, math, grammar, etc. This is not haram unless it results in pride or harming others or other blameworthy qualities.

The worst riya' is nifaq—manifesting iman while concealing kufr. The second is riya' in ibadat, like the one who only prays when others see him, or only gives zakat when seen by others, or the one who lengthens and beautifies his prayer when others observe him but is sloppy when alone—if he prays them at all.

## SHOWING OFF—RIYA'

The cure for riyā' is comprised of an 'ilmi and 'amali aspect. The 'ilmi is:

**[It is cured] by knowing that if all of creation were to join forces to oppose you or support you, they would not be able to do so except by His permission. Indeed, He alone possesses rewards [for your actions] in both abodes, and He is All-Powerful, the Good, and Thankful**

**[It is also cured] by being always conscious of its harm, which results in detesting it and thus warding it off.**

## SHOWING OFF—RIYA'

**That is its theoretical treatment. And veiling one's actions from the eyes of others is its practical treatment, as is frequent recitation of Surat al-Ikhlās and the “master supplication for forgiveness.”**

Imam al-Ghazali states that removing riya from the heart requires addressing the three things that cause it:

1. Love of praise
2. Fear of creation
3. Covetousness

He says its remedy is the same as the remedy for love of status—to really know that all of this is an illusion and to deeply understand in oneself that this is HARMFUL to the soul. He says if a person knows there is poison in honey they won't eat it despite how appetizing it looks.



## SHOWING OFF—RIYA'

Some also consider that merely taking delight in people's awareness of one's actions is showing off, though the Star [Imam Malik] did not consider that harmful as long as the original intention was based on the foundation of sincerity.

This is another area where scholars differed. Some say that one who takes delight in people knowing about their good deeds is a show off—albeit retroactively.

Imam Malik did not consider this harmful provided the original intention was sincere. He was asked, 'What do you say about a man who comes to the masjid and thinks to himself that he hopes others see him?' He didn't see anything wrong with that as long as his original intention was sincere and the person wards off such thoughts—we are responsible for what we actively acquire and seek, not passing thoughts.

## RELYING ON OTHER THAN ALLAH

**Fear of and desire for other than my Lord contradicts absolute trust in Him. The origin of both of them—and I seek refuge in the Mighty from every disease—is lack of certainty.**

Imam Muhammad Mawlud discusses the lack of tawakkul in the context of one who is so fearful of someone or so reliant on them that they are lacking in tawakkul in Allah. He says that this is the result of a lack of certainty.

## RELYING ON OTHER THAN ALLAH

**What is prohibited from the two is that which prevents an obligation from being fulfilled.**

There are two forms:

1. A lack of tawakkul that causes one to neglect a wajib—such as a person who is so fearful and lacking in trust of Allah that they do not fulfil a right
2. A lack of tawakkul that causes one to do something haram.

## RELYING ON OTHER THAN ALLAH

At the root of this is a lack of certainty regarding who is really in control. This leads people to unhealthy levels of fear of others. Fear of creation is blameworthy when it prevents one from fulfilling what is wajib or causes them to do what is haram. It is also blameworthy when it causes one to fear what is not fearful conventionally, such as fearing a lamb.

As for fear of snakes, lions, oppressors, etc. that is permissible as it is linked with our natural survival instinct.

## RELYING ON OTHER THAN ALLAH

**The cure for both is to know that there is none who can bring benefit or harm other than Him alone.**

This is the theoretical cure—to really have *yaqin* in who is in charge. Practical cures would depend on the cause of the fear and acclimating oneself to them.

## DISPLEASURE WITH DIVINE DECREE

**Displeasure with the Divine decree occurs when one resists Allah, the Majestic and Exalted, in what He has decreed.**

**For instance, saying, “I did not warrant this happening to me!” or “What did I do to deserve this suffering?” [what sin did I do to deserve this?]**

This displeasure can be hidden in the heart, or it can be translated on the tongue by those who say ‘I did not deserve this’ or ‘why me?’

## DISPLEASURE WITH DIVINE DECREE

The obligation upon us is to have the exact opposite quality: rida. It is wajib to have rida with the qadar. Scholars are careful to point out that we are required to have rida with Qada and not the Maqdi.

**Qada**=the Divine Decree itself

**Maqdi**=the object of Divine decree

*Example:*

Qada=Allah decrees that Fulan gets sick.

Maqdi=Feeling sick (fever, soreness, etc.)

## DISPLEASURE WITH DIVINE DECREE

Imam al-Qarafi noted that the difference between qada and maqdi, and qadar and maqdur—being content with the divine decree and being **content** with the decree itself. Are we required to be happy with everything that happens to us, including the bad?

He said the difference can be likened to a doctor who tell a patient that their condition requires a bitter medicine or amputation of a limb that is ailing them. If the patient says to the doctor, no your treatment plan is a bad idea; give me something easier, this is displeasure with the doctor's decree. He may even transgress against the doctor or slander him, causing the doctor to dislike him as a patient.



## DISPLEASURE WITH DIVINE DECREE

On the other hand, if the patient say ‘this medicine is bitter’ or ‘the treatment was painful’ and the like, he is expressing displeasure with the maqdi, while not criticizing the doctor at all. And the doctor knows it’s going to hurt and isn’t angry if the patient describes the facts.

The Shariah has not obligated us to be pleased with things that go against their essential nature—such as pain.

## DISPLEASURE WITH DIVINE DECREE

Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili said, ‘There is a negative quality that invalidates good actions that many people are unaware of. It is displeasure with the divine decree. Allah said, ‘That is because they hated what Allah sent down, and so He invalidated their deeds.’