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Islam and Racial Superiority

(Verse 13)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ
أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

“O’ Humanity! Without doubt We have created you from a male and a female and have made you into various nations and tribes, so that you may come to know and understand one another. Definitely the most honoured among you in the sight of Allah is the one who is the most Allah-Consciousness. Surely Allah has full Knowledge and is All-Aware.”

The issue of equality between all human beings, opposition to any type of racial, ancestral and class discrimination, fairness between all the children of Adam in relation to human rights and that no person is better than another due to his skin colour, language, lineage or race – is one of the most important societal issues in the Qur’an which has been mentioned in various Ayat of this Heavenly Book.

The Qur’an has denounced any sort of superiority – whether it be of race, language or skin colour and even today, this subject is one of the most complicated issues within the society which even in the most important industrial centres of the world (such as America) is still a source of confusion and since the (the industrialized centres of the world) feel that this is an issue that can never be solved, they have brought this discussion to a close. The Qur’an explains this issue with simple logic and by explaining the origin and creation of man, clearly demonstrates that such an imaginary belief that one’s race or colour is what makes him superior to others is false.

We see that from the beginning of this Surah to the present verse under discussion, Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) has addressed the people five times with the phrase:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

“O’ you who have true faith...”

However in this verse, the sphere of those being addressed has been widened from “those who have true faith” to “humanity” in general – Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Thus, in this verse, we read:

“O’ Mankind! If you look through the files of creation of the entire humanity, you will definitely see that the origin of all of these people is one and all of them have come from one male and one female (Adam and Hawa, peace be upon them both) and all descendants return back to these two people and thus, there is no criteria that can be used to make one group of people better than another.

If We have brought you forth as different groups and nations then it is not because you should have pride or conceit over the nation or family that you have come from. Rather, it is through the different groups that you are to know one another and recognize each other (لِتَعَارَفُوا). The secret behind this branching out (of humanity) is simply for attaining knowledge and recognition of one another and merely being attached to one family, but this should never be the basis and criteria for claiming superiority over another.”

In order to condemn this fable of racial superiority and to negate this imaginary belief of preference of national supremacy and nationalism and to quiet any slogans of the ignorant people, the concept that all of us have been brought forth from one source has been mentioned in various chapters of the Qur’an as those mentioned below1:

إِتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ...

“Have taqwa (Allah-Consciousness) of your Lord (O’ People) who created all of you from a single soul...”²

Just as the Qur’an has referred to the issue of superiority of one tribe over another as being a myth, even the difference in languages or the colour of skin are also not grounds for pride or vanity over one another.

It is both of these things (language and skin colour) which have been referred to as the signs (ayat) of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) and a symbol of the power of the Creator so that we may recognize that we have come from one element and one source. It is through this chain of natural and inherent characteristics that there is a difference in the colour of the skin of various people and that they speak various languages, just as has been said:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالاخْتِلافُ اَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَاللّوَانِكُمْ اِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ
لآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

“And of His signs is the creation of the Heavens and the Earth and the difference in your languages and your skin colours. Certainly there are signs in this for the people of the worlds.”³

The Question of Race and Language in the World Today¹⁰²

Even though the world today has passed through many stages of industrialization, however they still have not been able to reach to even partial completion in the issues mentioned (in regards to the eradication of racism).

Every year in the advanced centres of the world, the experts sit down to discuss this issue, while the flames of disagreement burn and in which people are pulled (into these flames of hatred). Today, in some of the largest and “most advanced” parts of the world, students, who due to a series of natural and ontological events that have taken place which lead to their skin being black, are not permitted to go to the same schools as those whose skin happens to be white, even if they are of the same religion and country of origin.

Today, if by accident a white person was to walk through the door of a movie theatre that is specifically for black people only, they would be forced to pay a fine.

In the present day in these industrialized countries, the surgical and medical treatment wards of the hospital are different for black people and white people and the instruments and medicines that are used in the section reserved for whites would never be seen or used in the medical ward or surgical area for the blacks! In addition, those young doctors who come from overseas – who the Hospital Staff feel are still ‘doctors in training’ – do not have the right to treat white patients, however the doors to the black patients are wide open!

With the unjust distinctions and privileges which know no limit or boundary that exist within these nations, how is it possible for them to put out the call for freedom and refer to themselves as the pillars of liberty?!

In regards to the issue of the Declaration of Human Rights which was ratified after the French Revolution, or the Charter of Freedoms and Equality of Humanity which was penned after World War II and was signed by all of the major and influential world powers –we see that they still have not been able to bring this conflict to an end.

However on that day, in the sand filled country of Arabia and the gloomy and unenlightened world that existed at that time, a divine man and heavenly leader lifted up the call of true freedom and equality of all

human beings and said, “In the presence of Allah and in His Court of Justice, a Leader from the tribe of Quraish is equal to a black Ethiopian.”

In order to reject and eliminate all of the (previous) incorrect traditions, the Prophet of Islam (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) sent a comprehensive message to the societies that blood, nationality and one’s language are no reasons to show pride or conceit.

The noble Prophet of Islam (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) was a progeny of this same environment (of `Arabia) and was fully aware of both the ailments and the cures of the `Arab society. He knew the reasons for the decline of the people of Makkah and thus was able to place his finger on the societal ailments of the `Arab society and to completely cure their sicknesses. At this point, we present some of the words of the Prophet of Islam (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) in which there is a cure for specific ailments with society.

1. Having Pride of One’s Relations, Family or Tribe

Of the many illnesses that existed in the `Arab society which was also one of the biggest things for a person to boast about was being from a branch of one of the well-known tribes, such as that of the Quraish. In order to remove this fictitious element of greatness, the Prophet of Islam (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) stated the following:

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَزْهَبَ عَنْكُمْ نَخْوَةَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ وَتَفَاخُرَهَا بِآبَائِهَا إِلَّا أَنْكُمْ مِنْ
آدَمَ وَآدَمُ مِنْ طِينٍ. إِلَّا إِنْ خَيْرَ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ عَبْدٌ اتَّقَاهُ

*“O’ Mankind! Surely Allah has removed the pride and conceit that existed within you during the days of Ignorance in relation to your fore-fathers. Surely all of you are from (Prophet) Adam and Adam was (created) from mud. Surely the best servant of Allah is that servant who has consciousness of Him.”*⁴

In order for the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) to announce to the world that the true criteria in judging a person is his level of taqwa (consciousness of Allah) and keeping away from sins, in a part of his speech, he divided all of mankind into two categories and said that their only greatness is the taqwa or consciousness of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) that people have. By dividing them in this method and grouping them in this way, he removed all of the imaginary criteria that existed when he stated:

إِنَّمَا النَّاسُ رَجُلَانِ: مُؤْمِنٌ تَقِيٌّ كَرِيمٌ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَ فَاجِرٌ شَقِيٌّ هَيْنَ عَلَى اللَّهِ

“Certainly mankind is of two types: the true believer who has piety and nobility to Allah; and the sinner, who is lost and despicable in the sight of Allah.”

2. The “Virtue” of Being an `Arab

The Prophet of Allah (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) knew that the `Arab nation considered their nationality and their descent from this race to be a major source of honour and pride. The vanity and conceit that the `Arabs possessed resembled a contagious disease that was deeply rooted in their hearts. In order to cure this sickness and to remove this imaginary greatness that they claimed to possess, the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) once again turned towards the people and said to them:

أَلَا إِنَّ الْعَرَبِيَّةَ لَيْسَتْ بِأَبٍ وَوَالِدٍ وَ لَكِنَّهَا لِسَانٌ نَاطِقٌ فَمَنْ قَصَرَ عَمَلَهُ لَمْ يَبْلُغْهُ
حَسَبُهُ

“Now then, surely your being `Arab is not the basis for your personality nor a part of your essence, rather, it is the language which you speak. So then whosoever is negligent in his actions, then the pride that he has from his father (being an `Arab) will not help him in the least and will not make up for the defects in his (religious) actions).”⁵

Is it possible to find a more eloquent and expressive statement than this? Truly the Messenger of Allah (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) was the genuine caller to freedom. However he did not stop at this. Rather, in order to strengthen the equality of humanity and the society he said:

إِنَّ النَّاسَ مِنْ عَهْدِ آدَمَ إِلَى يَوْمِنَا هَذَا مَثَلُ أُسْنَانِ الْمَشْطِ لَا فَضْلَ لِلْعَرَبِيِّ عَلَى
الْعَجَمِيِّ وَلَا الْأَحْمَرَ عَلَى الْأَسْوَدِ إِلَّا بِالتَّقْوَى.

“Surely all of mankind – from the time of Adam until our time – are like the teeth of a comb (all equal to one another) and there is no greatness for an `Arab over a non-`Arab and no greatness for a red-skinned person over a black-skinned person, except due to one’s consciousness of Allah (taqwa).”⁶

Through these words, the Noble Messenger (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) removed all sorts of distinctions and merits that knew no ends or boundaries, among the nations of the world. All of these areas which the *Declaration of Human Rights* or the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* have not even mentioned were addressed and put to rest in the Islamic sources.

Not only did the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) accomplish this task through

conveying the verses of the Qur'an and his speech (ahadith), rather, he was also able to stir up tension in the hearts of the defeated people of those days. In many instances within his practical life, he was able to make null and void the nationalism and racism that was surrounding him.

In order for him to reach to his aim of equality between all human beings, he married the daughter of his uncle to the slave he owned named Zaid. In addition, he gave Bilal, who was both a non-Arab and a black-skinned African slave (at one point in his life), the important religious post of being the Muaddhin or the one who made the call to prayer. He also commanded Ziyad ibn Labid who was one of the richest and noblest men from amongst the Ansar to marry his daughter to a black slave named Jubair.

Keeping in mind the outcome of the marriage of this man's daughter to the man she married and how these two people had come from completely opposite lifestyles, we see that this is one of the amazing stories of Islam and in reality shows the true equality between people of all levels of society who have sincere faith.

It is appropriate at this point that we properly analyse, investigate and relate this event in brief, especially since this event has been mentioned in the most trustworthy books of the Shi'a.⁷

The Most Amazing Marriage in History

Not even a few days has passed since the migration of the Messenger of Allah (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) to the city of Madinah when a very enthusiastic man from the city of Yamamah came to the presence of the Prophet of Islam (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and accepted the teachings of the faith. This man had a pure heart and was a true believer with genuine sincerity.

As for his physical form, he was a short man who was not that handsome with a very dark, African complexion. In any case, he had needs, but did not have the means to supply for them, and he did not even possess suitable clothing on his body! The abject state of poverty of this man from Yamamah – whose name was Jubair – caught the attention of the blessed Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and it was his state which drew the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) closer to this poor man.

The Prophet of Allah (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) felt compassion for him due to his lack of proper clothing and since he was away from his home land, gave him two pieces of clothing to cover himself up properly and also ordered the Muslims to give him one Sa`8 of wheat every day. His accommodation was also looked after as the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) gave him permission to live inside the Masjid with the other indigent and helpless Muslims.

Time passed by and this man from Yamamah continued his life in this manner. The more the teachings of Islam spread and extended outward into other regions, the more people who were far from their own home and had no possessions made their way to Madinah. Other than the Masjid, there was no other

place of residence for these people and it was out of necessity that they were housed there. The Masjid was a place where Muslims gathered, a place of worship for the people of Madinah and the centre from where the true teachings of Islam were being spread.

It is clear that the state of these people was not something that could be tolerated and was not in agreement with the higher aims and goals of the Noble Messenger (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and his leadership and guidance (that they stay in a Masjid in the state that they were in). In any event, these men who had no family or possessions were taking up space for others and in addition, the Masjid in Madinah did not even have the capacity to house so many people.

At this time, the Revelation came to the Prophet and he was commanded to purify the Masjid of all forms of pollution and dirt and was told that all of the people who were given the chance to stay in the Masjid and sleep there were now to be removed from this sacred site at that very time (which was night-time).

Even more than all of this, the command came that all of the doors of the Masjid that opened up into the houses of those who lived around this place of worship were to be sealed, with the exception of the Prophet's (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) door and the door of the house of `Ali and Fatimah (peace be upon them both). They were exempt from this ruling and this in itself was one of the distinctions for these two noble personalities.

The Noble Messenger (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) then went on to introduce new conditions to the community in stages and thus from this day forward, no one had the right to live inside the Masjid. However in this present state, the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) did not forget these refugees and thus he ordered that a place be built for them which had a roof so that all could live in there together. The place that was built was known as *Suffah* and an uncountable number of companions of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) would later go on to be known as the *Ashab-e-Suffah* or those companions of the Prophet who lived under this sheltered housing.

After all of this transpired, the normal habit of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) was that he would pass on whatever food and clothing that was given to him to the people. Following the example of the Prophet, the Muslims too did not forget these people and whatever they had and were able to give was handed over to them. In this way, the Islamic society which at that time was quite small and did not have a large budget at their disposal, took care of those people who had no help or security.

As he usually did, one day the Prophet went to see the Ashab-e-Suffah. Amongst these companions, he noticed the man from Yamamah and said to the man, whose name was Jubair, "How good it would be for you to find a wife and get married and through this act, you would be able to get rid of the demonic temptations and also protect your own chastity, since your wife would help you in matters of this world and the next world."

With complete politeness Jubair replied to the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny), “Is it possible that someone would develop a liking for me? I do not have any personal merit, nor do I have any great lineage. I have no wealth nor do I possess beauty. Thus, what kind of woman would be willing to marry me?”

The Noble Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) replied, “O’ man! Through the religion of Islam, Allah brought those people who during the days of Ignorance felt that they were superior and excellent, to a level of humbleness and inferiority and those who during the days of Ignorance were abject and considered as insignificant (in the society) were given esteem and honour. By sending the religion of Islam, Allah the Most High has removed all sorts of pride, vanity, self-centeredness and the imaginary nobility that people felt for themselves during the days of Ignorance.

From today, one’s tribe or clan, descent or lineage and any other prejudice that stem from ignorance have no value or worth. Today all men – black and white, Quraish and non-Quraish, `Arab and non-`Arab are all equal. Everyone that exists – no matter what nationality they are and in whatever state, are all the children of Adam and Adam was created from dirt.

In the Last Days, only those people who are more conscious of Allah (have taqwa) than others, those who are the foremost in their servitude and obeying the orders of Allah will be the ones who will be blessed with the kindness, grace and mercy of Allah.”

The heavenly words of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) took such a place in the heart of the man from Yamamah that the spiritual rays of the Prophet’s words opened the doors of cognizance and true belief in him. By hearing these words, the true meaning of justice and the actual interpretation of fair dealings was made incarnate for him.

Upon hearing these words of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) which he listened to with great attentiveness, such that it could be said that every word of the divine words brought up an image of the reality and pure truth (of Islam) and in the presence of this strong logic, Jubair had no other choice but to remain quiet and it is possible that may have he felt remorseful and guilty for that short sentence which he said to the Prophet.

At this time, the Prophet told the man from Yamamah to get up and go to Ziyad ibn Labid who happened to be one of the most noble people of the tribe of Bani Bayadhha and tell him, “I have brought a message from the Messenger of Allah to you. The Prophet has told me that I am to convey to you that the Messenger of Allah commands you to marry your daughter whose name is Dhulayfa, to the man named Jubair – which is me.”

The man from Yamamah got up and made his way to convey the message of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) to Ziyad ibn Labid. When he reached the house, he saw Ziyad and a group of his family and close relatives in the house sitting together. He asked permission to enter which he was given and then proceeded to enter and greet the people present.

At this time, Ziyad and those present with him took notice of Jubair and wanted to know why this poor man from Yamamah wanted – who was always known to them as one of the companions of the Suffah and whom people such as these (rich, affluent `Arabs) would naturally look at as being a contemptible and low person who possessed the frame and physical features that he did.

Jubair said, “O’ Ziyad! I have brought a message to you from the Messenger of Allah! This message is in relation to myself – should I proclaim it in the open or in private (to you)?”

Ziyad, who could not even think that this man from Yamamah had any needs said, ”Why should you say it in private? Speak it out! I am honoured to hear the message of the Prophet of Allah!”

Jubair said, “The Prophet has commanded that you are to marry your daughter Dhulayfa to Jubair.”

Ziyad, who was not anticipating to hear such a message, with complete shock and surprise said, “Are you truthful that the Noble Prophet has sent you here for this reason?”

Jubair said, “Yes! I have never attributed a lie to the Messenger of Allah!” Ziyad said, “I (only) marry my daughters to those people who are equal and at their same status that we are at and that too from the people of the Ansar. Jubair! You may go back and let me go see the Prophet and convey my apologies to him.”

Jubair returned back in a state of confusion and said to himself that, “I swear by Allah! The Qur’an does not condone or sanction the actions of this man, nor was the intention of the apostleship of Muhammad (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) for this.”

Dhulayfa, the daughter of Ziyad was behind the curtain (in the room) and was witness to all that had transpired and heard the final words that her father said to this man from Yamama. These words of her father weighed heavily upon her and it could be said that the faith and belief that she had in the Prophet deep in her heart had been rebuked.

Therefore, she immediately sent a person to go to her father and from behind the curtains (in her room) she summoned her father and reproached him saying, “My dear father! What is this that I heard you saying? Why did you speak to this person that was sent by the Prophet as you did?”

Ziyad replied, “Did you not hear what that man said? With the state that he is in, he claimed that the Prophet had sent him to me and was commanding me to marry my daughter Dhulayfa – you – to himself.”

Dhulayfa said, “I heard what he said, however I swear by Allah that Jubair is not the type of person who would openly lie against the Prophet. In any case, he was sent by the Prophet and he definitely tells the truth. You must immediately send someone to catch up to Jubair before he reaches the Prophet and conveys your reply to him and ask him to return here.”

Up until this point, it was as if Ziyad was in a deep slumber which his daughter had to wake him up from and without any questions, he immediately sent a person to go after the man from Yamamah and requested him to return. Jubair returned to the house, though Ziyad did not pay attention to the change in the mental state and confusion that Jubair was in, with open arms, he welcomed him and said, “Jubair! Thank you for coming! I request you to stay here for a little while until I return.”

Ziyad left him in the house and went to the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and told him, “O’ Messenger of Allah! May my father and mother be sacrificed for you! Jubair brought your message to me and told me that you had commanded me to marry my daughter Dhulayfa to him, however I did not show my pleasure or happiness to him and thought that I should come and speak to you that which I feel is necessary.

Our custom is that we give our daughters in marriage to a person who, from the point of view of his nobility, honour and other aspects, is at the same status of us. Therefore, in the future, a person from the Ansar who possesses these traits will be the husband of my daughter.”

The Noble Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) replied, “Jubair is a Muslim man and a believer and in the teachings of Islam a Muslim man is the equal to a Muslim woman and any believing man is at the same status as a believing woman. Therefore, Jubair is the equal (in societal status) to your daughter and therefore, you must get them married as soon as possible and there is nothing that can excuse you from this order.”

Seeing as how Ziyad was not able to have his way (with the Prophet), he returned to his house and went directly to his daughter and told her what the Prophet said to him. His daughter replied, “Therefore, there is no choice but to comply with the order. If I go against the Prophet, then I will become a disbeliever.”

Ziyad came out of his house, took the hand of Jubair and took him to the elders and seniors of his tribe, and in their presence, married his daughter to him. The Mahr (dowry) which had been specified by the Messenger of Allah (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and was agreed upon was the traditional Mahr of 500 dirham. After this, the preparations for the wedding celebration were made and the gifts that were to be given to his daughter were purchased.

The message was then passed on to Jubair that his wife was now ready for him and at this point, he was asked if he had a house. Jubair replied, “No, by Allah! I do not have my own house.” The order was then given that a house should be given to the bride and her husband and all the necessities of the house – whatever they needed – were gathered together. Two new pieces of clothing were also given to Jubair and the bride was brought to her new home in a special manner.

Jubair entered into the bridal chamber, however contrary to his expectations, he was not happy at what he saw. He looked towards his wife and then glanced around the bedroom. Looking around, he saw the gold, ornaments, rug, curtains which had all been perfumed with musk and amber which really astonished him. Without saying a word or paying any attention to his wife, he took a place in the room

and until the rising of the sun, was busy in the recitation of the Qur'an and Salat. He heard the sound of the Adhan from the Masjid of the Prophet at the time of Fajr and thus made his way to the Masjid, while his wife made her Wudhu and performed her Salat at home.

In the morning, the ladies of the city all made their way to her house and being impatient as they were, wanted to hear about the night that she spent with her new husband. They proclaimed, "Dhulayfa! Did your husband come to you last night?" In a state of embarrassment, Dhulayfa said to them, "No. From the beginning of the night until morning, he was busy in the recitation of the Qur'an and in the performance of the Salat and at the breaking of dawn when he heard the Adhan, he went to the Masjid."

The same event that happened on the first night transpired on the second night as well and during these two days, there was no physical contact between the husband and wife; however the ladies and close family members of the bride did not mention any of this to the bride's father.

The third night ended in the same way as the first two nights and at this point, the women broke their seal of silence and told Dhulayfa's father of what had happened. Ziyad proceeded to the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and said to him: "O' Messenger of Allah! May my father and mother be sacrificed for you! You commanded me to marry my daughter to Jubair even though he was in no way compatible with us and was not equal to us and we still obeyed your commands and in whatever way possible, we sent the bride on her way and brought the bride to the home of our son-in-law."

The Prophet said, "Congratulations! But have you seen something bad from him?"

Ziyad said, "This man had absolutely nothing to his name, I gave all the necessities for his house to him and gave my daughter in submission to him, however I did not expect him to act in the way that he has!"

The Prophet replied, "What has he done?"

Ziyad said, "Nothing. On the night of the wedding, Jubair entered into the room and without even paying any attention to my daughter, with a sad face, he sat in a corner of the room until the morning busy in the recitation of the Qur'an and in the performance of Salat and at the time of Fajr, he left the house. The second night was just the same as the first, however his actions were kept hidden from me. The third night passed the same as the first two nights and it was at this time that the news was given to me and now, I am coming to you so that you can intervene in this matter. This present state of affairs cannot be tolerated! I think that this man does not possess any sexual desire and has no liking for women." Ziyad finished his talk and left.

The Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) called Jubair and asked him, "Do you not have any liking for women?" Jubair replied, "Of course I do – am I not a man? Incidentally, I have a strong inclination for women."

The Prophet replied, “However I have been given reports that run contrary to this. I have been informed that you have been given a magnificent house with all the things that you would need including a beautiful daughter who dresses up for you and just like the branch of a flower, she is perfumed and sweet smelling, however you entered the bedroom with a grim look on your face and did not even say one word to her! Has an unexpected event come upon you?”

Jubair replied, “O’ Messenger of Allah! For many years I was alone in the Suffah. All of a sudden after my marriage, my eyes were opened to a wide, spacious house with all types of items and necessities of life and a beautiful, sweet smelling wife has been given to me. In this state, that condition that I had passed many years through came to my mind. The thoughts of poverty and misery and nakedness, being alone without anyone, living amongst the poor, destitute – all of these things came back to me one after the other. I saw it far from being just that before I make use of all these blessings that I have been given, without first thanking Allah.

It is because of this in order to thank Him and get closer to Allah, I took a corner of the room to myself and from night until morning, was busy in the recitation of the Qur’an, Ruku and Sujud; and while in the state of Sujud I would thank Allah as much as possible until I heard the sound of the Adhan and at this time, I would leave the house. I would spend the whole day in fasting until the breaking of the fast and I continued this act for the past three days.

Through all of this, I have humbled and put myself to shame in the presence of Allah and have considered these acts of mine as being trivial. However today I will put these acts to an end and tonight, with the permission of Allah, I will make my wife pleased with me.”

After hearing the words of Jubair, the Noble Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) called Ziyad to come to him and what he had heard from Jubair was related to Ziyad. When Ziyad and his entire family heard this, they became extremely happy and these words (of Jubair from the Prophet) relieved all of the discomfort and distress that they felt.

That day passed on and the night of the fourth started, however in reality, this was the first night of their marriage. Jubair was faithful to the promise that he had made and the new groom and his bride started their happy, pleasant life together.

By acting in this manner, the Noble Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) was trying to make it known to the unruly people of his time and even of today, that not only have we been commanded to destroy the stone and mud idols, rather even all of the irrational idols of distinction and class supremacy must be removed.

Yes! This unequalled marriage was the centre of attention for all of the people of Madinah – in fact for all of the Muslims – which formulated and made strong the spiritual power and influence of the Prophet and also brought some of the programs and plans of the religion of Islam to the practical level.

The popularity and talk that came about from this marriage had not even stopped, when the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) dispatched a group of companions towards the battle front. Jubair who had been recently married was sent and it was during this battle that he was killed and was blessed to drink from the cup of martyrdom. His beautiful wife Dhulayfa, was thrown into mourning for the death of her husband. However, after this, Dhulayfa, like the other women did not stay a widow, rather, she received proposals from Muslims everywhere and more than any other woman, people wanted to marry her.

Why is Allah Consciousness (Taqwa) the Criteria for Excellence?

We must find out what the roots and conditions which relate to the soul and spirit are that make one person better than another. In other words, from the true factor that makes up a person which is his soul, we must take lessons and we must never look at wealth, property, nationality, colour or status in the world, possession of children or genealogy in relation to other tribes or groups of people or individuals as being the true visage of what makes up a person's character and status. These are all far and separated from the truth and thus none of these play any role in the character or the greatness of a person.

Yes! The noble ethical traits and lofty spiritual characteristics such as truthfulness, love, nobility and friendship or cognizance (of Allah) which truly bring about the unity of a person with his soul are the criteria which must be used to determine the greatness of an individual. It is these characteristics which if united together within someone truly make up his humanity and spiritual character.

However all of the outward, apparent characteristics of a person cannot lead to a good demeanour of one, if they are not accompanied with the characteristic of consciousness of Allah (Taqwa) and keeping away from sins, which in reality means that one observes and maintains the rights of both Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) and humanity.

This is said because each of these lofty humanistic traits can only be classified as a pride for the person when he does not trample upon the rights that he must observe in relation to Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) and the people around him. In other than this, not only can these traits not be classified as a pride for the person, rather, they would be categorized as him stepping over the boundaries and would actually be negative moral traits for him.

1. Surah al-Nisa (4), Verse 1; Surah al-An`am (6), Verse 98; Surah al-Zumar (39), Verse 6.

2. Surah al-Nisa (4), Verse 1.

3. Surah al-Rum (30), Verse 22.

4. Sirah bin Hisham, Volume 2, Page 412; al-Kafi, Volume 8, Page 246.

5. Al-Kafi, Volume 8, Page 246.

6. Ikhtisas, Volume 341.

7. al-Kafi, Volume 2, Page 9; Tadhkirah, Volume 2, Beginning of the discussion on Marriage (Nikah).

8. A weight of measurement equivalent to approximately 3 kilograms.

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