

Home > Greater Sins Volume 3 > Thirty-third Greater Sin: Pride or Arrogance > To honour a wealthy person for his wealth is a path to destruction

Thirty-third Greater Sin: Pride or Arrogance

The thirty-third greater sin is Pride; as mentioned in the tradition of Imam Riḍā (a.s.) narrated by Fazl ibn Shazn. Shaykh Ansari has also verified the authenticity of this tradition in Makasib. A similar tradition from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) is quoted by Amash to have said,

“Arrogance and tyranny is a greater sin.”

According to the Holy Qur'an, pride is a sin that will most certainly be severely punished.

The Almighty Allah says in Surah az-Zumar (Verse 60)

“Is there not in Hell an abode for the proud?” (Surah az-Zumar 39:60)

He also says:

“It shall be said: Enter the gates of hell to abide therein; so evil is the abode of the proud.” (Surah az-Zumar 39:72)

In Surah Ghafir (Verse 35) Almighty remarks,

“Thus does Allah set a seal over the heart of every proud, haughty one.” (Surah Ghafir 40: 35)

The one who considers himself to be the best wants others to know that he is the best. There are numerous Qur'anic verses against pride and haughtiness but we shall mention only the one that talks of the haughtiness of Shaitan; as the result of which he became the accursed one:

“He refused and he was proud, and he was one of the Unbelievers.” (Surah al-Baqarah 2:34)

Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali (a.s.) says in one of his sermons:

“You should take a lesson from what Allah did with Shaitan; namely He nullified his great acts and extensive efforts on account of the vanity of one moment, although Shaitan had worshipped Allah for six

thousand years – whether by the reckoning of this world or of the next world is not known. Who now can remain safe from Allah after Shaitan by committing a similar disobedience? None at all. Allah, the Glorified, cannot let a human being enter Paradise if he does the same thing for which Allah turned out from it an angel. His command for the inhabitants in the sky and of the earth is the same. There is no friendship between Allah and any individual out of His creation so as to give him licence for an undesirable thing which He has held unlawful for all the worlds.” (That is pride and arrogance).¹

After a few sentences ‘Ali (a.s.) says about Qabool:

“Do not be like him who feigned superiority over the son of his mother without any distinction given to him by Allah. It was only the feeling of enmity which created a feeling of greatness in him and the fire of anger that vanity kindled in his heart. Satan blew into him his own vanity, after which Allah made him responsible for the sins of all killers upto the Day of Judgement since he had initiated the crime of killing.”²

Thus Qabool was doomed to eternal perdition due to pride that caused him to murder his righteous brother.

‘Ali (a.s.) continues:

“Take instruction from how the (Shaitan) brought Allah’s wrath, calamities, chastisement and punishment on those who were vain among the past people. Take admonition from their lying on their cheeks and falling on their sides, and seek Allah’s protection from the dangers of vanity, as you seek His protection from calamities.”³

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

“Allah will not speak to Three kinds of people on the Day of Qiyaama; and they will not be looked upon kindly by Him; and there is a severe punishment for them: An aged adulterer, a tyrant ruler and a proud beggar.”⁴

From the above hadith we can conclude that the punishment for a youthful adulterer, a ruler who does not oppress and a proud person who is not a beggar will be less severe. An old man committing adultery is far more despicable because unlike a young man he is not fired by an intense sexual urge, and in spite of this he disobeys the Divine command and brings upon himself added punishment. The same applies to a ruler whom Almighty has bestowed a kingdom, wealth and power; and the ruler instead of being thankful and grateful to Allah (S.w.T.) for His bounties misuses them to oppress Allah (S.w.T.)’s creatures.

Not only is such a ruler accountable for his oppressive deeds but he incurs the intense wrath of Allah (S.w.T.) because of his ingratitude and denial of Allah (S.w.T.)’s blessings. A proud beggar is miserable creature; he incurs the intense displeasure of Allah (S.w.T.) because he is vain in spite of the fact that

he has nothing that can be the cause of his vanity.

A man enquired from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.):

“What is the lower level of disbelief?”

Imam (a.s.) said, “It is pride.”

Imam Baqir (a.s.) says:

“Stateliness and superiority, and the expression of a pride are like two exclusive garments of Allah (S.w.T.). (No one can share it with Him). Hence if anyone dares to acquire these qualities he will be thrown headlong into hell by Allah.”⁵

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) is also recorded to have remarked:

“Pride and superiority are like two exclusive garments of Allah. So one who acts proud has made war on Allah.”⁶

A proud person is mentioned as having made war on Allah (S.w.T.) because such a person loses all awareness of the reality that he is an insignificant creature whose very existence and all that he possesses is only because of Allah (S.w.T.)'s favour on him. He regards himself as someone very special, in full control of his life, which no other power can influence. His arrogance can reach a stage where he can even claim divinity in open defiance of the Almighty, as it happened with Fir'on. While a man can develop qualities like mercy, kindness etc. which are also divine qualities, and developing these qualities will in fact help a person to gain nearness to Allah (S.w.T.), but man, a creature of Allah (S.w.T.) has no right whatsoever to associate pride and superiority with himself. These are exclusive for Allah (S.w.T.). The Almighty says in the Qur'an:

“And to Him belongs greatness in the heavens and the earth, and He is the Mighty, the Wise.”
(Surah Jathiyah 45:37)

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“There is a special section for the arrogant people in the hell. It is called Saqr. Saqr complained to Allah (S.w.T.) for the intensity of its heat and sought permission to breathe. It breathed and scorched hell.”⁷

Imam (a.s.) also remarked,

“Certainly the haughty people will be raised as peanuts (on the Day of Qiyāma) and till the accounting of the people is complete they would be trampled upon.” (by others).⁸

Allamah Majlisi explains the above tradition: “This hadith proves that it is possible that some people may be raised in diminutive form, possessing some or all of the physical characteristics. (It is also possible)

that other additional characteristics may be added to their bodies and hence be the cause of additional pain. It can also be said that the arrogant sinner will be raised in such a disgraceful condition that it would be as if he is utterly small in size. Whatever may be the form, it is certain that they will be trampled under the feet of other people.

Pride and its Types

Arrogance is the practical expression of pride which develops in a person who thinks himself to be better than others. Arrogance can be categorized as:

- (1) Arrogance against Allah (S.w.T.)
- (2) Arrogance against the Holy Prophet (S) and the Imams (a.s.)
- (3) Arrogance towards people.

Arrogance towards the Almighty is expressed in different ways. There are arrogant people seized by the feeling of being all powerful. They attribute all their achievements and acquisitions to their own capabilities and are oblivious of the supremacy and might of the Almighty. The feeling of self importance is expressed by them in their actions and speech with words like “I have done this,” and “I will do that”.

On the basis of his strength and property he refuses to recognise the supremacy and might of Allah (S.w.T.), with the result that the darkness of disbelief shrouds his heart. The Holy Qur’an says:

“...there is naught in their breasts but (a desire) to become great which they shall never attain to...” (Surah Ghafir 40:56)

These are people who will not achieve greatness either in this world nor the Hereafter. The Almighty Allah says at another place,

“...so (as for) those who do not believe in the hereafter, their hearts are ignorant and they are proud.” (Surah an-Nahl 16:22)

As mentioned earlier, sometimes, the haughtiness assumes such high proportions that the man apart from crediting his own self for everything also dares to declare his Godhood and supremacy over other people. He claims that he has absolute control over a section of people and that they are subservient to him. Like the foolish Fir’on who alleged:

“Then he said: I am your lord, the most high.” (Surah An-Naziat 79:24)

He tries to prove his claim by saying:

“...is not the Kingdom of Egypt mine? And these rivers flow beneath me;..” (Surah Az-Zukhruf

43:51)

And,

“...I do not know of any god for you besides myself.” (Surah al-Qaḥaḥ 28:38)

In the same way Namrud also considered himself the controller of life and death:

“he said: I give life and cause death...” (Surah al-Baqarah 2:258)

Namrud ordered that two of his prisoners may be presented before him. And in order to prove that he had control over life and death, ordered one prisoner to be killed and released the other one!

Then there are individuals who do not deny the existence of Allah (S.w.T.) but they show their arrogance against Allah (S.w.T.) by not worshipping Allah (S.w.T.) and by disobeying Allah (S.w.T.)’s orders regarding obligatory and prohibited acts. Allah (S.w.T.) the Almighty says:

“The Messiah does by no means disdain that he should be a servant of Allah, nor do the angels who are near to Him, and whoever disdains His service and is proud, He will gather them all together to Himself.

Then as for those who believe and do good, He will pay them fully their rewards and give them more out of His grace, and as for those who disdain and are proud, He will chastise them with a painful chastisement.” (Surah an-Nisā’ 4: 172-173)

Wilful disobedience to Allah (S.w.T.)’s command is insolence and defiance against Allah (S.w.T.) and sins so committed are unforgivable. Such a person considers himself so superior that he feels there is no need to obey Allah (S.w.T.). This attitude amounts to disbelief in Allah (S.w.T.). The sins committed by a person who believes in the supremacy of the Almighty are not of the above category. These sins are committed due to evil desires and foolishness and not due to Kufr. Imam Zainul ʿAbidin (a.s.) says in Du’a of Abu Hamza Thumali:

“O my Allah! When I committed a sin I was not a disbeliever in You (at that time) and neither did I consider Your commands unimportant. And I did not take lightly Your threats of chastisement. Neither I had any objection against Your punishment. Actually the sin that I had committed was due to the instigation of my own self which defrauded me and my carnal desire overcame me.”⁹

The disbelief of Iblīs was proved in the same way when he refused to prostrate before Hazrat Adam (a.s.).

“He said: I am not such that I should make obeisance to a mortal who Thou has created of the essence of black mud fashioned in shape.” (Surah al-Hijr 15:33)

The Almighty Allah replied,

“...then get forth from this (state), for it does not befit you to behave proudly therein. Go forth, therefore, surely you are of the abject ones.” (Surah al-Arʿaf 7: 13)

The High and Almighty Allah has also said,

“...and he was proud, and he was one of the unbelievers.” (Surah al-Baqarah 2:34)

“Arrogance overcame Izzat (Satan), made him liable to be cursed.”¹⁰

To Give up Du’a due to Arrogance is Kufr

“And your Lord says, Call upon Me, I will answer you, surely those who are too proud for My service shall soon enter hell abased.” (Surah Ghafir 40:60)

In the above ayat Allah (S.w.T.) has assured that whoever seeks His help will receive immediate response. According to Tafsir Kashaf Du’a means to ask, that is to seek something. Thus the actual purpose of Du’a is to beg the Almighty with utmost humility and sincerity. This is true obedience and worship of one God. So whoever does not supplicate is arrogant. He considers himself self sufficient and independent of Allah (S.w.T.) and does not consider Allah (S.w.T.) deserving of obeisance; such a person has committed Kufr and will remain forever in Hell.

Imam Zainul Abedin (a.s.) says:

“(O Allah (S.w.T.)) you have named Du’a towards You to be Your worship and its omission to be arrogance which earns Hell.”¹¹

“The best of Your servants are those who are not arrogant, and who do not repeat sins insolently, and make repentance their habit and I avoid to be the one who becomes arrogant and does not call You.”¹²

Arrogance by Sacrilege

One of the types of arrogance with regard to the Almighty is to behave arrogantly towards whatever is associated with Allah (S.w.T.)’s name. For example the orders and prohibitions of Allah (S.w.T.), specially the sacred month of Ramadhan, the Holy Ka’ba, the Holy tombs; and even an ordinary mosque because Allah (S.w.T.) has said,

“And (all) the mosques are for Allah.” (Surah al-Jinn 72: 18)

So if one acts arrogantly with relation to any of the above it means that he is arrogant towards Allah (S.w.T.). For He (S.w.T.) says,

“O You who believe! Do not violate the signs appointed by Allah...” (Surah al-M’ida 5:2)

It means that one should not insult or disregard anything that is related to the Almighty.

Arrogance causes degradation in this world as well as the Hereafter

Arrogance with relation to the Almighty or otherwise brings degradation and insults in this life as also in the life after death. On the other hand humility and the expression of lowliness before Allah (S.w.T.) earns the respect of this world as well as success in the hereafter. The stations of such a person are raised. The Holy Prophet (S) says,

“One who humbles before Allah is raised by Him in status; and the one who is arrogant will be degraded by Allah.”¹³

Umar ibn Shaiba says in the Sharh of Sahīfa that, “I was at the sacred Mecca, between Safa and Marwah when I saw a stranger on a camel. His slaves were preventing the people from coming near him. After sometime I happened to be in Baghdad. There I saw a man in a dishevelled condition with his hair awry. I stared at him in surprise. He asked as to why I was staring at him. I said that I find a great resemblance between him and an arrogant person whom I had seen at Mecca between Safa and Marwah. At that time he behaved very arrogantly. The man said, “I am the same person! I had behaved arrogantly at a place where people exhibit humility, that’s why the Almighty has made me lowly in Baghdad where people achieve great honours. And thus these people behave arrogantly towards me.”

Arrogance toward the Holy Prophet (S) and Imams (a.s.)

To consider oneself as equal to or better than divine personalities is an act of arrogance. Also to refuse to obey their commands amounts to being arrogant towards them. This is like the behaviour of the supporters of Fir’oun who considered themselves superior to Hazrat Mūsa (a.s.) and Harūn (a.s.). They used to say:

“What! shall we believe in two mortals like ourselves...? (Surah Al-Mum’īn 23:47)

Similarly some of the disbelievers used to tell the Holy Prophet (S): “Why have not angels been sent down upon us, or (why) do we not see our Lord?” These people considered their status to be on par with that of the Holy Prophet (S) and wondered why the revelation had not descended on them.

The Holy Qur’an remarks:

“Now certainly they are too proud of themselves and have revolted in great revolt.”

(Surah al-Furqān 25:21)

The following words of Hazrat Nuh (a.s.) are recorded in the Holy Qur’an:

“But my call has only made them flee the more:

“And whenever I have called them that Thou mayest forgive them, they put their fingers in their ears, cover themselves with their garments, and persist and are puffed up with pride.” (Surah Nuh 71:6-7)

The Meccans were similarly puffed with pride whenever they were told to believe in Islam:

“And they say: why was not this Qur’an revealed to a man of importance in the two towns?” (Mecca and Taif) (Surah Az-Zukhruf 43:31)

It was unacceptable to the infidels that a mere orphan who had not much wealth either had been selected for the exalted position of Prophethood. They would have preferred the Qur’an to have been revealed upon some influential people like Walid bin Mughaira and Masud Thaqafi etc.

Arrogance towards the Prophet (S) and Imams (a.s.) is actually arrogance towards the Almighty Allah (S.w.T.). Disobeying the commands of the Prophet (S) and the Imams (a.s.), the representatives of Allah (S.w.T.) is an act of arrogance towards the Almighty Himself. Similarly the pious Mujtahids and the jurists are representatives of Imam az-Zaman (a.s.). One who considers oneself superior to them, or insults them and is insolent towards them by disobeying their rulings is guilty of arrogance towards the Imam (a.s.) himself, and the Prophet (S). Also, according to Imam Sadiq (a.s.) such arrogance is a kind of polytheism.

Arrogance with an ʿAlim is arrogance towards the Holy Prophet (S)

The Messenger of Allah said:

“Beware! Do not falsify the words of an ʿAlim. Do not reject his statements and do not bear enmity towards him. Be cordial with them, because friendship with the learned is a sign of good morals. And enmity with them is hypocrisy. Beware! Whoever insults an ʿAlim insults me and whoever insults me insults Allah; and whoever insults Allah; his abode is Hell. And (remember), whoever honours an ʿAlim, honours me and whoever honours me honours Allah and whoever honours Allah; his abode shall be Paradise.”¹⁴

The Arrogants are the inmates of Hell

We must remember that all the Qur’anic verses that mention eternal punishment for the proud people are concerned with two types of pride. The first is with respect to Allah (S.w.T.) and also the Prophet (S) and the Imams (a.s.). As we stated before, arrogance of these types is a result of disbelief in the creator of the Universe; and the one who dies without belief in Allah (S.w.T.) will abide forever in Hell.

Al-Shahīd Al-Awwal Faqih Al-Sarbidaran mentions in *Qawaid* the fact that pride and arrogance are Greater sins and numerous traditions testify to this. The Holy Prophet (S) says:

“One who has even an iota of pride will not enter Paradise.”¹⁵

Then he says that the pride referred to in the tradition is one that reaches the level of disbelief, it is the arrogance towards Allah (S.w.T.), and the Prophet (S) and Imams (a.s.). However if it applies to arrogance towards people the tradition is construed to mean that those who have even a bit of pride will not enter Paradise with the humble believers. They will have to undergo punishment in Hell and only then allowed to enter Paradise.

The interpretation is in accordance with the narration of Muhammad Ibn Muslim who quotes Imam Sadiq (a.s.) to have said:

“Even one who has pride equal to a mustard seed in his heart will not be able to enter Paradise.”

Muhammad Ibn Muslim says, “I said. Certainly we belong to Allah (S.w.T.) and to Him we shall return.” Imam (a.s.) asked him the reason for reciting the verse of return. He replied that it was in response to the Imam’s statement. “It is not what you have understood,”

Imam (a.s.) told him, “Know that I meant disbelief and refusal by it.”

(The arrogance which prevents one to enter Paradise is arrogance based on the rejection of truth and on the rejection of Allah (S.w.T.), the Prophet (S) and the Holy Imams (a.s.). But if a person is a believer and is arrogant; he will not have eternal punishment in Hell).

Behaving arrogantly with the people

The third type of arrogance is with respect to the fellow-beings. To consider oneself superior and better than others and to consider others lowly. To behave in a proud manner with them, and walk ahead of them. To try to find the best seat in a gathering. To expect others to salute and show humility. To hate one who offers good advice and to refuse the advice offered. To feel angry if someone points out one’s mistake. Not to behave with kindness and benevolence towards those whom one teaches. To act as if one has done a great favour and expect servitude in return. In brief, arrogance is the act of considering and believing oneself to be the most superior person. Just like we consider ourselves superior to the animals.

The proud people who are rich prefer not to stand besides the ordinary people during congregational prayers or mix with them in religious gatherings. In reality an arrogant person has made himself a partner with the Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) by trying to acquire the Divine attribute of Pride that belongs exclusively to Him. It is as if the slave takes away the king’s crown and puts it on his own head and seats himself on the throne. Such a slave is liable for the worst punishment. It is wise to avoid such

behaviour.

Allah (S.w.T.) is the Creator of all human beings, therefore it is not proper for one man to behave arrogantly with another and to consider himself superior and exclusive. The one who behaves proudly has actually become Allah (S.w.T.)'s rival, because Pride is a quality reserved for Allah (S.w.T.) alone.

Some of the traditions related to Pride and the proud people have already been mentioned above in the beginning of the discussion. Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

*"Pride is considering other people lowly and considering the truth as foolishness."*¹⁶

Allamah Majlisi explains that it denotes making fun of truth, rejecting it, considering it lowly, and not understanding its importance.

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

*"The worst kind of Pride is considering the creatures lowly and considering the truth foolishness."*¹⁷

Umar bin Yazid says, I asked Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.): "I eat well and wear a good perfume and ride the best horse. I am also accompanied by my slaves. Is it arrogance on my part? I want to know it so that I may abstain from such a behaviour."

Imam (a.s.) bowed his head and then said,

"Remember! The accursed and arrogant is the one who considers other people lowly and ignores the truth."

Umar said, "I understand what truth is but what is the meaning of 'ignoring the Truth'?"

Imam (a.s.) said: "One who considers other people inferior and shows his superiority over them is arrogant."¹⁸

We shall refer to some types of pride and arrogance with people because the Holy Qur'an has mentioned them in different ayats.

The Qur'anic view of arrogance with people

In Surah al-Baqarah we come across the following ayat:

"And when it is said to him, guard against (the punishment of) Allah; pride carries him off to sin; therefore hell is sufficient for him; and certainly it is an evil resting place." (Surah al-Baqarah 2:206)

According to Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud the greatest sin is when one is told to 'Fear Allah' and he replies,

“Mind your own business.”

When someone warns a person of Divine retribution and advises him to forgo some sins and instead of accepting his advice with humility he says, ‘It is none of your business. First reform yourself!’, or instead of giving up a sin the person repeats it with insolence; these are the types of people who are condemned to Hell according to the above ayat.

The arrogance and pride of such people are obstacles in their moral development and instead of accepting the truth they try to justify their actions.

In the same way during a debate a person is confronted with a fact which his pride hinders him from accepting. He sticks to his stand in obstinacy. This behaviour is a speciality of the hypocrites.

The Almighty Allah says:

“And those who disbelieve say do not listen to this Qur’an and make noise therein, perhaps you may overcome.” (Surah Fuṣṣilat 41:26)

And in Surah Luqmān the Qur’an says:

“And do not turn your face away from people in contempt, nor go about in the land exulting overmuch; surely Allah does not love any self-conceited boaster.” (Surah Luqmān 31: 18)

Similarly another verse says:

“O you who believe! Let not (one) people laugh at (another) people perchance they may be better than they, nor let women laugh at (other) women, perchance they may be better than they; and do not find fault with your own people nor call one another by nick names; evil is a bad name after faith, and whoever does not turn, these it is that are the unjust.” (Surah al-Hujurat 49: 11)

The unjust are those who have made themselves liable for Divine anger and chastisement.

Anyone who looks down upon the Muslims and considers himself superior to them is like Iblīs who refused to prostrate before Hazrat Adam (a.s.) because he considered himself superior. He said:

“I am better than he; Thou hast created me of fine, and him Thou didst create of dust.” (Surah Sād 38:76)

The Almighty replied:

“That I will most certainly fill hell with you and with those among them who follows you, all” (Surah Sād 38:85)

Show of wealth is also an act of pride

Flaunting ones riches and wealth before the less privileged people is an act of arrogance and pride. The Almighty says regarding this:

“Surely Qarḳn was of the people of Mḳsa, but he rebelled against them, and We had given him of the treasures, so much so that his hoards of wealth would certainly weigh down a company of men possessed of great strength. When his people said to him: Do not exult, surely Allah does not love the exultant...He said: I have been given this only on account of the knowledge I have...So he went forth to his people in his finery... Thus We made the earth to swallow up him and his abode; so he had no body of helpers to assist him against Allah, nor was he of those who can defend themselves.” (Surah al-Qaḳaḳ 28:76-81)

It is recorded in Bihḳr al-Anwḳr that the Holy Prophet (S) prohibited the people to walk and dress in a proud manner. He said,

“One who wears a nice dress and feels proud of it, will be taken to a lowest level of Hell and made a companion of Qarḳn. Because Qarḳn was the first proud. Due to this the Almighty had caused his house to be swallowed by the earth. So one who competes in the greatness of the Almighty has waged war against Him.”

The Prophet (S) also said,

“One who frowns upon a needy person, oppresses him or looks down upon him, will be raised (in Qiyḳma) in the form of an ant. And he will be assigned to Hell.”¹⁹

The Proud people are insane

It is also narrated in Bihḳr al-Anwḳr that one day the messenger of Allah (S) was passing by a group of people intent on watching something. When he (S) enquired about this they said that they were watching a mad man perform funny antics. The Prophet (S) said that the man is not mad, rather he was suffering from a nervous disorder.

Then the Holy Prophet (S) asked the people if they would like to know who is a mad man. His companions expressed their willingness. The Prophet (S) said:

“The insane is the one who walks in a proud manner and looks right and left in exultation; moving his shoulders and sides in a vain fashion; and at the same time he expects the Almighty to grant him Paradise. Whereas he is busy in disobeying Allah and people are not safe from his mischief and neither do they expect any goodness from him. This is the (real) mad man.”²⁰

To show oneself to be absolutely purified is an act of pride too

To consider oneself the purest and deserving of honour and respect and to make a show of one's sanctity is also a kind of haughtiness. The verse of Surah an-Najm prohibits such behaviour.

"... Therefore do not attribute purity to your souls; He knows him best who guards (against evil)."
(Surah an-Najm 53:32)

And in the same way the Almighty Allah has remarked in the following words:

"Have you not considered those who attribute purity to themselves? Nay, Allah purifies whom He pleases; and they shall not be wronged the husk of a date stone. See how they forge the lie against Allah, (like the Jew who claim to be the chosen people) and this is sufficient as a manifest sin." (Surah an-Nisā' 4:49-50)

A show of one's knowledge and the claim of having met such and such a scholar is also an act of pride. Or to say, "I have toiled a lot to master a particular subject." Or to flaunt one's piety. For example to say that "for years I prayed during the nights and fasted during the day." To say, "That person is wealthier than me but I have performed hajj and Ziarat many times." All these claims are a show of vainglory.

Even to hint at one's greatness is not allowed. Like to allege that, "So and so person had oppressed me and thus died an untimely death, or he is afflicted with a dreadful disease, or has become a destitute." Because such statements are an effort to show off one's extraordinary powers. Similarly to claim that one's prayers were instantly answered by the Almighty.

Signs of Pride

- 1) When we speak to a person having same social status as us, regarding a fact, which is difficult for him to accept and he does not express any pleasure it denotes that he is proud.
- 2) If in gatherings and social events he finds it difficult to sit in place which is below his dignity or he dislikes to walk behind, then this person is proud.
- 3) If he finds it difficult to salute a person lower than him in social status, he is proud.
- 4) If it is difficult for him to accept the invitation of poor people or to sit with beggars it is a sign of pride.
- 5) If he feels it is below his dignity to purchase household items and to carry them home, he is proud. But considering his social status and the prevailing circumstances if such an action would be the cause of criticism and backbiting among the people there is no blame on him.
- 6) If a person is averse to wearing clothes of inferior quality and desires to wear good clothes considering them to be a sign of greatness, he is proud. Except, as already mentioned, when inferior

dress may be a cause of disrespect to him.

7) If one does not like to sit together with a servant or the student, it is a sign of pride.

Remedy for Pride in Theory and Practice

The practical remedy for the disease of pride is that man should contemplate upon his original creation. He must keep it in mind that he is born from a despicable drop of semen, which is considered dirty by everyone. It is clearly mentioned in the Holy Qur'an:

“So let man consider of what he is created: He is created of water pouring forth:” (Surah Tariq 86: 5-6)

He should not forget that he was born weak and helpless and whatever strength he has developed is given by the Almighty. Besides his strength and power is limited. Allah (S.w.T.) has made him susceptible to hunger, thirst and sleep. He is needful of clothing, dwelling, and several other requirements without which he would perish. He is prone to diseases, calamities and disasters, over which he has no control.

Man carries inside his body dirty substances like urine and stool; and if the Almighty had not hidden them, their terrible stench would have made life difficult for him.

It is written in the book “Adadus sin” that when Ayaz became a close confidante of the king, his detractors began to try to pull him down from this position. And one day two of the ministers came to the sultan and said, “Ayaz has stolen a lot of ornaments and treasure and he has kept all of them in a room which he has locked. Every morning he visits that room and does not allow anyone else. Thereupon hearing this, the sultan fell into doubt and said when Ayaz comes to me tomorrow you people go there, open the door and bring here whatever he has stored in that room.

The next morning these people took tools and broke the lock of the door and stepped into the room of Ayaz. They, however, did not find anything except a cotton sheet and a pair of leather slippers. They thought that the treasure must be buried underground otherwise what was the need for him to visit this room everyday if it contained only a torn sheet and old slippers. They dug the floor of the room but did not find anything.

They informed the ruler and he asked Ayaz that except for a sheet and a pair of slippers there was nothing else in the room. So, why did he keep the room locked and pay a private visit everyday? Ayaz said, “Before I became your slave I had worn that particular garb. But after joining your service I got everything. Since man is prone to disobedience and pride, I frequently visit the room and see my old dress so that I may not fall into vanity. I should always remember that whatever I have is due to the favour of the king and it is all given to me as a loan. After that I begin my job of the day.

Indeed, there are countless weaknesses of man that do not allow him to reach his desires. Just as man desires to have knowledge about a lot of things, but it is not possible for him. He wants to remember something but he forgets it. He prefers to forget a particular sin but he could not do so. He tries to concentrate on something and to get rid of worries and doubts, but he does not succeed. And he is attracted towards those things in which there is destruction for him, and dislikes those things which are beneficial to him.

Apart from this he is in constant dread of losing something which is dear and precious to him, like wealth or children or his physical powers.

The Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) says:

“And they control not for themselves any harm or profit, and they control not death nor life, nor raising (the dead) to life.” (Surah al-Furqān 25: 3)

In brief, man is a mortal who has no control over his capabilities or susceptibilities. It is a fact that he is always in fear of death and there is none that can save him from death.

After death, What?

The challenges a man faces during his life do not come to an end with death. After death, he will have to face divine justice. He would be interrogated regarding all his major and minor acts. The details of this questioning are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an and traditions.

It is very likely that the people who occupy a high position from the worldly aspect will be degraded and lowly there, and the powerful people of this world will be utterly insignificant in the hereafter. Numerous beautiful faces will appear horrid in appearance. They will be so terrible that, dogs and pigs will be better than them.

No individual knows about the Hereafter and the kind of end there is in store for him; whether he shall be from the evil ones or the righteous, whether he would be honourable or degraded, whether his face will be black or shining bright. Whatever has been described about the circumstances of the people at that time are applicable equally to all, whatever their areas of activity or circumstances on earth. If a person ponders over these facts he will be convinced that it does not befit a human being to commit sins and be proud and arrogant. How can a man claim greatness and importance when he is surrounded by all kinds of uncertainties and susceptibilities? Can there be a bigger farce than the claim of ones own greatness?

We should keep in view those who are greater than us

Some elders have given detailed cures for pride. They say that Pride is a condition which is created when one keeps in sight those who are lower and ignores those who are higher than us. A person who has a slave is in a higher position than the slave. He is in command of the situation and the slave cannot

disobey him. The slave has to carry out the commands given to him. If such a person only thinks of his own superiority over the slave, he will become proud.

But if the person realizes that with respect to Allah (S.w.T.), his own position is like that of his slave; Allah (S.w.T.) is the creator and he is the created. Allah (S.w.T.) has full control over him; in fact absolute control, which he can never have over his slave. He has to be subservient to Allah (S.w.T.) and carry out His commands. With this idea firmly in mind a person is bound to become modest and humble towards the creatures of Allah (S.w.T.), very much like a person who in a fit of anger, not only speaks harshly to the person who has caused him consternation, but also with those who are not responsible for it.

No one is justified in being proud. Allah (S.w.T.) is Supreme. All Might and Power is with Allah (S.w.T.). Allah (S.w.T.) is not subservient or indebted to anyone, except for Allah (S.w.T.) it does not befit anyone to be proud for any reason whatsoever even if they are the carriers of Arsh like Isra'el and Israel.

It is also said that one who feels he is having the slightest worth before Allah (S.w.T.), is actually considering himself superior. The Almighty Allah says:

“And that do not exalt yourselves against Allah.” (Surah Ad-Dukhān 44: 19)

Humility of the Prophet (S)

Some special characteristics of the Holy Prophet (S): He never got angry with anyone for personal reasons. He sat on the ground and ate on the ground. It often happened that a maid would come to fetch him for help needed by anyone anywhere. Whenever he came home he helped his family members.²¹

The basic causes of Pride must be removed

The causes of pride can be the possession of knowledge, wealth, goodness, beauty, physical power, position, status and lineage.

Any discerning person will realize that being proud of beauty or physical strength is foolishness, because these can be easily lost with age, accident or disease. It is wisdom for a person to keep in mind his final fate, which is death and consider of what use his beauty, physical strength and elegance will eventually be to him.

Pride over ones lineage is equally senseless. If it is worldly, it has no significance for the hereafter and if it is truly spiritual, the ancestors could not have attained that superiority but for being humble towards Allah (S.w.T.) and His creatures. The progeny that wishes to associate itself with the superiority of these ancestors can only do so by being humble to Allah (S.w.T.) and His creatures as exemplified by their elders; there is no question of being proud of this lineage whatsoever.

A person of knowledge, whether worldly or religious, who is proud of his knowledge, is a person without merit. He has not realized the most important fact, that his knowledge should have taught the limitation of his knowledge, and how insignificant is what he does know as compared to what is left to be known. Isaac Newton a famous scientist who formulated several laws of physics and discovered the force of gravity said this of himself: "I am like a child collecting pebbles on the sand, while vast ocean of truth lies undiscovered before me."

A person with knowledge of religion and the hereafter, in fact will be extremely humble, because he will realize his own loneliness, he will know that the accountability of his actions has increased seventy fold as compared to the actions of a person without knowledge. He will have the added burden of the responsibility to spread his knowledge and benefit the ignorant. He will therefore be in awesome fear of Allah (S.w.T.). The Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) says:

"Those of His servants only who are possessed of knowledge fear Allah; surely Allah is Mighty, Forgiving." (Surah F^{at}'ir 35:28)

If instead a person with religious knowledge is proud of it, then he has failed to grasp the essence of the knowledge and the Almighty Allah says of him:

"Is as the likeness of the ass bearing books." (Sura al-Jumu'a 62: 5)

Balam Ba^{ar} who was a non-practising scholar is compared to a dog. If a scholar ponders and contemplates, indeed the argument of Allah (S.w.T.) has been exhausted on him and there is mighty responsibility on his shoulders. That is seventy sins of an ignorant person will be forgiven while a single sin of a scholar will be accounted from him. Thus there should be increase in humility and modesty if his knowledge increases. And not that he should be a prey for pride and vanity.

What applies to knowledge is also applicable to goodness

A deed performed with sincerity and humility is the essence of obedience and of great value and significance. If it is performed with pride, it is like a lifeless face, which is not worth anything. A good deed is beneficial only if the Almighty accepts it. No one knows whether his good deed has been accepted by Allah (S.w.T.) or it has been rejected due to lack of sincerity or piety. Therefore, like knowledge, a good deed must also be a cause for humility instead of pride and vanity. Regarding the qualities of the believers, the Almighty Allah says:

"And those who give what they give (in alms) while their hearts are full of fear that to their Lord they must return." (Surah Al-Mum'inⁱⁿ 23: 60)

Pride on ones wealth is foolishness

It is equally stupid to be proud of wealth and position. Like other worldly acquirements these are also transitory and can be easily lost overnight. Besides Allah (S.w.T.) may give wealth and position to a person in order to test him. It is possible that these worldly bounties given by Allah (S.w.T.) makes the person proud, oblivious of the needs of the poor and harsh and disrespectful towards others.

It is also possible that such a person in lure of wealth will not care for his religious obligations. He may earn wealth unlawfully and spend it unlawfully in wasteful and luxurious ways. All such people have failed the test to which they were subjected by Allah (S.w.T.). They have incurred the displeasure of Allah (S.w.T.) and will face severe chastisement. So wealth is actually a calamity for these people and certainly not a thing to be proud of. Worldly possessions are a bounty only for those who realize that these are a trust with them to be utilized in a manner to gain the pleasure of Allah (S.w.T.). The Almighty says:

“Do they think that by what We aid them with of wealth and children, We are hastening to them of good things? Nay, they do not perceive.” (Surah Al-Mum’īn 23: 55 – 56)

“And know that your property and your children are a temptation.” (Surah al-Anfāl 8: 28)

Post, title and status are all Temporal

There are many incidents of the past people illustrating the unreliability of all these worldly glamour. And an incident is recorded in the book Habibus Sayr. That when Umr[ؓ] bin Laith with 70,000 trained warriors came to confront Amir Ismail Sasanid with his 10,000 soldiers and when the war cries and the bugle etc. were raised the horse of Umr[ؓ] bolted and took him into the rows of the enemies. In this way Amir Ismail became victorious without fighting. He confined Umr[ؓ] in a tent. It is said that Umr[ؓ] perchance saw one of his past students. Umr[ؓ] called him and said that he was very hungry.

The student at once brought for him a piece of meat. Since there was no vessel he put the meat in the pail of the horse and lit a fire below it. Then he went away on some errand. By chance a dog passed by. When it put its head in the pail the steam of stew made its mouth hot. When he tried to quickly remove its head the handle of the vessel was caught in its neck and it ran away with all the things together. When Umr[ؓ] began to laugh at this scene a sentry asked him why he was amused? Umr[ؓ] said that once my commander had complained that your kitchenware could hardly be carried on 300 horses. And today I am seeing that a dog is easily carrying it away.

An identical incident is related about Marwan Himar the last of the Bani Umayyah rulers. In 132 A.H when he came face to face with Saffah at [ؓ]bez[ؓ]b, the battle lines were already drawn. He got down from his horse to ease himself and the horse bolted and went to his army. His men thought that Marwan was killed and his horse had returned. They became fearful and dispersed from there. Marwan was

finally killed and it was said: His power went out through his urine.”

Apart from this, it is famous about the Abbasid Caliph who used to beg in the Jame Masjid of Baghdad say: O people! Have mercy on the one who was ruling over you till yesterday and today he is begging from you.

Superiority of Humility

The importance and significance of humility as a human characteristic can be judged by the fact that the Almighty Allah has commanded His Messenger to practice humility:

“And make yourself gentle to the believers.” (Surah al-Hijr 15:88)

And He praised His servants who have imbibed this quality in the following words.

“And the servants of the Beneficent God are they who walk on the earth in humbleness...” (Surah al-Furqān 25: 63)

In the Shiite traditions the Imam has to be superior in every quality, including humility. Amir ul-Mu'minīn 'Ali (a.s.) says:

“If it has befitted Allah to allow some of His creatures to be proud he would have permitted it for His special servants, the saints and the prophets.” But the Being of the Almighty is pure from all bad qualities. He made pride detestable for them and liked humility for them. Thus they kept their chests near the ground, their foreheads smeared with dust they continued to bow down before the believers in humility and remained in a weak condition on the Earth.”

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

“The best person near me on the day of Qiyāma and the most proximate to me will be only one who has the best behaviour and is most humble.”²²

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“There are two angels in the heavens who are appointed on the people so that one who is humble may be exalted in status by them and one who is proud and arrogant may be degraded and humiliated by them”.²³

Amir ul-Mu'minīn 'Ali (a.s.) says,

“Pride is that from which Allah has protected His believing servants through Prayer, Zakat and fasts on the appointed days. So that their organs and body parts may have peace, the glance is cast down by a feeling of helplessness, humiliates the self, making the hearts humble it removes ego from them. Because the delicate parts of the body are smeared with dust during the as-Sajda. And the seven

special parts fall on the earth and express their lowliness. And in fasting the stomach touches the back in obedience to His command.”²⁴

Worship destroys Pride

The primary aim of worship is to create humility and destroy pride in us. Acts of worship are therefore to be performed in the prescribed manner to be acceptable to Allah (S.w.T.). Worship which is accompanied by Pride is never accepted by Allah (S.w.T.). Worship denotes obedience and submission to Allah (S.w.T.). It is not meant to show oneself to be great and superior.

The Meaning of Humility and its kinds

Humility is a condition of the mind wherein one fully realizes one's own insignificance and the fact that one is utterly lowly and worthless.

There are three areas of humility: Humility and lowliness towards the Almighty Allah, humility and lowliness towards the Prophet and the Imams (a.s.), and humility with people.

Humility with the Almighty Allah

Humility with the Almighty is the realization that our very existence and everything associated with it is from Allah (S.w.T.). All the unlimited bounties that Allah (S.w.T.) has bestowed on us are through His grace and kindness and not because we deserve them or have any right on them. This realization creates a feeling of humility and lowliness towards Allah (S.w.T.) which is to be expressed by continually seeking Allah (S.w.T.)'s pleasure through sincere obedience, worship and good actions. To be aware that we are not really able to worship Allah (S.w.T.) as He deserves to be worshipped and to be aware of our severe limitations in fulfilling our duties towards the Almighty because of our ignorance and lapses. Our humility is also expressed by an intense feeling of gratitude towards our creator, for the many favours He has bestowed upon us and to be continually thankful to the Almighty.

It is recommended that whenever we are reminded of the past bounties we should perform prostration of thankfulness. Divine favours should be regarded as honourable and sacred, as they are bestowed on us from our Lord and Creator. Traditions of our Ma'sūmīn (a.s.) emphasise the utmost respect we should have for the sustenance that we get from our Lord. When you sit you must sit with humility like a slave and eat like a slave. The Holy Prophet (S), when eating used to sit in a position of Tashahhud during prayer. The etiquette according to Ma'sūmīn (a.s.) to be observed while eating, is, that we do not eat at the table, instead we remove our shoes and sit with respect on the ground. We pay special respect to bread. All the members of the household, both men and women and servants should sit at the same dinner spread (dastarkhan). It is not advisable that anyone should be served separately. We start to eat with Bismillah and end with Alhamdulillah, and more important, to be aware and attentive towards the

One Who is the Provider.

The respect we accord to food is such, that even if some food does not suit somebody's health, one should not say that the 'food is harmful' or 'the food has made me sick'. He should rather say 'My health was not suitable for this food' or that 'I consumed it at an inappropriate time'.

Humility before the Almighty is to show respect and honour for all things connected with the Almighty. The names of Allah (S.w.T.) are not to be touched without Wuzu, nor any disrespect shown to them by being thrown or trampled upon, nor should one sit with the legs stretched towards them.

Mosques are sacred places of veneration. We should feel the utmost respect for them and express it in every way possible. As Allah (S.w.T.) Himself says:

"Indeed the mosques are for Allah..." (Surah al-Jinn 72:18)

Accordingly to spit in the mosques or to enter with foul odour, to speak loudly and to speak of worldly matters in a mosque are all against the norms of a respectful attitude.

Humility before the Prophet (S) and the Imam (a.s.)

The most eloquent expression of humility and helplessness before Allah (S.w.T.) is humility and a feeling of lowliness before the Holy Prophet (S) and the Imams (a.s.). They are the great signs of Allah (S.w.T.), Allah (S.w.T.)'s representatives and Caliphs on the earth. We should feel the utmost respect for them and express it in every way possible. Humility before them is humility and helplessness before Allah (S.w.T.). We must not touch their blessed names without ritual purity. We must not pray Salāt facing their graves. We must utter their names respectfully and recite blessings and salāms on them. Some scholars did not even utter the names of the fourteen Infallibles (Ma'sūmīn) (a.s.) without being with Wuzu.

It is narrated that when Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) spoke the name of Hazrat Muhammad (S), he used to bow so much that his face used to reach to the thighs. In the same way respect and honour to the scholars and Sadāt is humility to the Imams and the Prophet (a.s.).

Humility with the People

All the human beings are equal with respect to their creation. All are creatures of Allah (S.w.T.), and Allah (S.w.T.) is the One Who sustains and nurtures us all. All of us are under His protection, His vigilance and His jurisdiction. So it does not befit any human being both by logic and rules of Shariah to consider himself superior to any other, and to feel proud about it. Nor does he have a right to expect anybody to be humble and submissive to him.

The only superiority that one human being has over another is on the basis of piety. But some people

are superior because of their position and we have been commanded to show respect and humility towards them. The most outstanding example is that of parents. Honouring our parents and being humble before them is honouring Allah (S.w.T.) and being humble towards Him. Besides parents one has to give due respect to a believer. A believer has a special dignified position as he has a special link with the Almighty. Honouring a believer and being humble towards him is also equivalent to honour and humility for Allah (S.w.T.). Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) says,

“The honour of a believer in the view of Allah (S.w.T.) is greater than the honour of the Ka’ba.”

The respect and honour for all signs connected with the Almighty like mosque etc. have already been discussed. In the same way one should show respect and humility towards scholars, teachers, elders of the community and guests.

It is not correct to be humble before a disbeliever or a transgressor

It is not advisable to be respectful and humble towards non-believers. One should not deal with them at a level of equality or superiority. A disbeliever is not deserving of respect because he does not acknowledge Allah (S.w.T.), the Supreme Being and in effect has degraded himself to a despicable position of those who openly defy Allah (S.w.T.); like the disbeliever who proclaims his disbelief with impunity, and the sinner and transgressor who sins openly and brazenly, the oppressor, and the one who insults the signs of Allah (S.w.T.); these are the people whom we should treat with anger and harshness, for the sake of Allah (S.w.T.).

Thus we must be humble and lowly before the believer and high and arrogant before the disbeliever. If any believer accords respect to a disbeliever, it is, as if he has preferred disbelief to faith in the Almighty Allah (S.w.T.). That is he has acted in a contrary manner. Because honour is for Allah (S.w.T.), the prophet and the believers. (Surah Munafiq^{۹۱}n).

‘Ali (a.s.) says,

“The Messenger of Allah (S) has commanded us to behave with sinners in an acerbic way.”²⁵

It is also improper to be humble towards an arrogant person

Doubtlessly we must never be humble towards an arrogant person who considers everyone else degraded. Because first of all it is a kind of insult to behave humbly towards a conceited person and it is a despicable act according to reason and religious law, secondly, humility towards an arrogant person will increase his conceit. It is possible that if we are arrogant and break off relation with a conceited person, avoid business dealings with him he may reform himself and give up his arrogant behaviour. We would then have executed successfully the dictates of Nahy Anil Munkar. Our behaviour towards

arrogant people should be as directed by the Holy Prophet (S) in this hadith: *“Whenever you meet humble people from my Ummah you must meet them with humility and you must behave arrogantly with the arrogant people. Because your arrogance towards them will be a cause of their disrespect.*

It is entirely reasonable and understandable that one would not want to be humble towards an arrogant person, one would in fact be inclined to reciprocate with arrogance. Such reciprocal arrogance is permissible by our religious laws, as is evident from the hadith quoted.

There is a difference between not being humble and being Proud

In the present discussion we are commanded by our religious laws to be arrogant and harsh towards disbelievers, transgressors and conceited people and not to show any humility or respect to them.

A subtle point of great significance has to be emphasized here. It must be entirely clear to us that the anger and arrogance that we exhibit is entirely in obedience to the commands of our religion according to which we have to be enemies with those who are enemies of Allah (S.w.T.). In no way do these commands imply that we should really believe ourselves to be superior to the sinners. At no stage should a personal feeling of pride and superiority over the sinner ever enter our hearts. At every stage we have to be aware that both they and we are helpless at the mercy of Allah (S.w.T.). Salvation is for whomsoever Allah (S.w.T.) may choose to give Tawfīq. It is possible that Allah (S.w.T.) may give Tawfīq to the sinners to do Tawba; and they are redeemed. So it must be amply clear that the arrogance and anger we have to exhibit is only in obedience to what our religion expects of us and not because of any real feeling of pride and superiority.

To clarify that there is no difference between being angry and not being proud we present an example below. Whenever the king orders one of his servants: “Whenever my son misbehaves you must express displeasure and beat him.” Thus if the servant finds the son misbehaving it is his duty to beat him and express his displeasure. If he doesn’t he has not obeyed the king’s command. Though the servant does not have pride and does not consider himself greater than the Prince. Rather he knows that the son is having a higher status and is closer to the king. And if anger and pride comes together, we must know that it is not for the pleasure of Allah (S.w.T.). It is due to the selfish desires.

Pride and obedience are not compatible

Our aim should be to impress upon them the greatness and supremacy of Allah (S.w.T.), of which they are oblivious, and to make them realize that arrogance befits the Almighty only to Whom we are all subservient. Our arrogance, is then an act of worship and a means to get nearness to Allah (S.w.T.). But beware, if a slightest element of self importance and pride gets into our hearts, this very act is directed by Shaitan. Such is the significant difference between an act performed for Allah (S.w.T.) and the very same act performed for self.

13. Bihār al-Anwār
14. Layali al-Akhabār
15. Qawaid
16. al-Kāfi
17. al-Kāfi
18. al-Kāfi
19. Bihār al-Anwār vol. 16
20. Bihār al-Anwār vol. 73
21. Bihār al-Anwār Vol. 6 page no. 204
22. Bihār al-Anwār
23. al-Kāfi Vol. 2, Chapter of Pride
24. Nahjul Balagha, Khutba Qasiya, 92
25. Wasa'il ul-Shia, Kitab Amr bil Ma'ruf
26. Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 15

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