

إمام جعفر الصادق (ع) قال:

"مَا مِنْ رَجُلٍ تَكَبَّرَ وَ تَجَبَّرَ إِلَّا لِدَلَّةٍ وَجَدَهَا فِي نَفْسِهِ."

Imam Sadiq (AS) stated:

*"No man becomes haughty and arrogant unless he finds in himself a sense of inferiority."*

There are times that the flames of haughtiness rage and thrust the person into the realm of transgression and corruption. At this stage, if others are not affronted, it is called egotism. However, when the stronger attempts to pressure or influence the weaker to take a specific course of action against the better judgment of the latter, it is considered arrogance. These people exhibit certain behaviors that indicate the presence of this serious disorder in their character.

Arrogance is a transparent and useless scheme for disguising one's inadequacies, which further reveals the hidden deficits and abnormalities of his character. Moreover, it serves as a lightning rod to distract attention from his deep-seated lowliness, and helps to create a frame of mind that allows greater freedom of transgression by the arrogant person.

Among the many dangerous symptoms of arrogance, few are more harmful than intolerance and prejudice, and their effects are far more severe and destructive. The recent brutal crime of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia is a prime example and a grim reminder of this kind of human moral deficiency.

Oftentimes an arrogant person would not greet the people in lower socio-economic stratum, nor would he interact with them. However, if for some self-serving reason he appears at a social function, he would make a conspicuous arrival, always followed by a band of naive people, his entourage, and would find his way to the uppermost section of the place of assembly.

To confront this mental disorder, Islam recognizes that all human beings are equal. The only criterion for preference in Islam is piety, not gender, wealth, power, status, lineage, race, and not even knowledge. The Holy Qur'an in chapter 49 (Al-Hujurat) Ayah 32 states:

"إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ."

*"Surely the most exalted among you in the presence of Allah is the most virtuous among you. Verily Allah is All-knowing and All-aware."*

Although there is a delicate balance between piety and humbleness, it is conceivable that someone with spiritual significance may be duped into considering himself better than others. The Holy Qur'an in chapter 53 (An-Najm) Ayah 32 states:

"فَلَا تُزَكُّوْا أَنْفُسَكُمْ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَى."

*"Do not consider yourselves preeminent. Allah knows best who is the most righteous."*

Accordingly, no one, despite all his qualifications and achievements, can consider himself above others. Only Allah (SWT) and His chosen representatives peace be upon them can ever legitimately claim preeminence, since only Allah knows who is more pious.

A noteworthy point that should not be overlooked is that 'Iman' and 'humility' are inversely related. Whenever *Iman* is strengthened, the meekness and humility of the person emerges. This means that, by virtue of increasing *Iman*, the believer is more conscious of the universal order and the supreme authority of its Sustainer. Furthermore, he is aware of his own insignificance and feebleness. It is on this premise that Allah (SWT) institutes humility to His enlightened servants, as He affirms it in Verse 28, Surah 35 Al-Fatir of The Holy Qur'an:

"إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ."

*"Verily! the erudite among His servants fear Allah alone. Lo! Allah is Mighty, Forgiving."*

The Late Imam (RA), in his book on moral principles, *Jihadun-Nafs*, elucidates that one of the signs of a true believer is that he holds himself less deserving and undistinguished and considers everyone else better than himself. Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (AS) has stated:

"وَيَرَى النَّاسَ كُلَّهُمْ خَيْرًا مِنْهُ وَ أَنَّهُ شَرُّهُمْ فِي نَفْسِهِ."

*"He perceives all the people better than himself, and himself lesser in his own mind."*

Scholars of Islamic ethics consider arrogance and conceit the greatest impediment for achieving excellence and human perfection, which they call "حجاب اكبر" the grand veil (hijab akbar).

A glimpse into the history of religions provides us with better understanding of why the greatest opposition to Allah's prophets exclusively came from the over-privileged aristocrats and the arrogant religious hierarchy, those who would willfully alter the truth, even though a divine scripture, to conform with their own power and authority.

Of course, there are many other explanations for the acts of hostility and the campaign against the holy prophets and their true representatives. However, the most contemptible excuse for their opposition was that they could not be considered equal with their slaves and those from the lower socio-economic stratum. They could not concede to the fact that all mankind are servants of Allah (SWT) and created equal. The Holy Qur'an in Surah Shu'ara verse 111 states:

"قَالُوا أَنْوْمُنْ لَكَ وَاتَّبَعَكَ الْأَرْدَلُونَ."

*"They said: Shall we put faith in you, when the lowest (of the people) follow you."*

The archives of historical references overflow with evidence on the causes of past and present wars, regional and international conflicts, aggressions and exploitations of mankind. In most cases, the prime stimulus is arrogance or its infamous derivatives: bigotry, racism, intolerance, and ethnocentrism.

Man is an enigmatic being, seldom publicizing the things he has and often boasting about those things which he does not possess. For example, well-grounded scholars are prompt to acknowledge their limitations and lack of knowledge, but the less educated are more likely to express their opinions on every subject.

Similarly, those with distinguished personalities and high ethical standards seldom suffer from the moral disorder of arrogance. The Prophet (SAW) used to associate with the poor and downtrodden, and he would eat with slaves and indigents. It is reported that Imam Sadiq (AS) was waving a fan over his sleeping servant so he could rest comfortably. The Holy Prophet (SAW) made his residence in the house of Abu Ayyub Al-Ansaari, the poorest man in Medina.

عَنْ عَلِيِّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: "كَفَى بِالْمَرْءِ مَنَقْصَةً أَنْ يُعْظَمَ نَفْسَهُ."

*Imam Ali (AS) stated: "To consider himself superior is sufficient (evidence) for a person's (moral) deficiency."*

According to Islamic references, Satan was originally a Jinn and his consistent effort had placed him in the ranks of the Angels. When Almighty Allah decreed that the angels must prostrate before Adam (AS), Satan, who was lacking the innate purity of an angel, refused to prostrate. To justify his noncompliance, he claimed that fire transcends clay, and since his origin was fire, he was therefore superior to Adam (AS), who was created from clay. Imam Sadiq (AS) indicated: "If Satan contemplated on the spiritual and heavenly aspects of Adam (AS), he would not have fallen into (the disgrace of) disobedience."

The plight of Satan is a frightful warning that many spiritual deficits, which provide an impetus to arrogance and other vices, may remain concealed for a long period of time and become inflamed in an instant, engulfing man's lifetime achievements.

"لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ مَنْ كَانَ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ مِنْ كِبَرٍ."

The Holy Prophet (SAW) stated: "Whosoever possesses in his heart arrogance in the amount of a mustard seed would not enter Paradise."