

## HUMILITY AND COURTESY

One day, somebody became the guest of the Umayyad Khalifah *Hazrat Umar Bin Abdul Aziz (May Allah have mercy on him)*. While they were sitting together, the lamp began to die. *Hazrat Umar* rose and set the lamp right. The bemused guest said, “why did you take the trouble? You should have asked me to do it or called a servant.” *Hazrat Umar* replied: “I was Umar before and I'm the same Umar now. I have not changed a bit. Verily the most respectable man before God is one who is humble and self-effacing.”

*Hazrat Abu Bakr (RadhiAllahu Anhu)* used to do the daily chores for the poor and needy. For instance, he routinely helped minor girls by milking their goats. When he was elected as the successor of the Prophet those minor girls of Madinah thought that now that he has become Khalifah, he will no more milk their goats. But *Hazrat Abu Bakr (RadhiAllahu Anhu)* was such a humble and self-effacing man, that after finishing his work as head of government he continued to milk the goats of those girls. He also used to sweep the dwelling of an indigent old woman and did other chores for her.

It so happened that an expedition under the command of young Usamah Bin Zaid (*RadhiAllahu Anhu*) was proceeding towards the border of the Roman Empire. Khalifah Abu Bakr was among those who accompanied the fighters up to the outskirts of the city to say farewell. At this moment *Hazrat Usamah* was riding on his horse while *Hazrat Abu Bakr* was walking on his feet. The abashed *Hazrat Usamah* requested him either to ride his horse or allow him to come down. With utmost humility, *Hazrat Abu Bakr* replied, “neither I need ride your horse nor you need to come down. What's the harm if my feet gather some dust for a while in the way of Allah?”

History has recorded that one night a great personage knocked at the door of a widow with a sack of flour on his back. The person lighted the fire in her stove and remained there until the bread was baked for her and her hungry orphans. He was none other than the Commander of the Faithful and the Successor of the Prophet, *Hazrat Umar Bin al-Khattab (RadhiAllahu Anhu)*.

It happened during the reign of *Hazrat Umar*. Once an emissary of the Iranian emperor came to Madinah and inquired about the palace of the Khalifah. The folk informed him that they have no palace for their Khalifah. Then he expressed the wish to meet him. The folk guided him to *Hazrat Umar* who was

lying beneath a tree alone. The emissary was astonished to learn that this man had no palace, no court, no guard and no retinue. A man whose name frightened the tyrants of the day, was lying alone underneath a tree peacefully and fearlessly. He exclaimed spontaneously, “O Umar you are lying here fearlessly because you have established justice and equity under your rule.”

The place was the city of Madaen of Fars conquered by the Arabs and *Hazrat* Salman Farsi was appointed as its governor. The elites of the Quraish were assembled around him. They took pride in narrating their genealogies and flashing their wealth and status. After hearing all of them *Hazrat* Salman introduced himself in the end, “As far as I am concerned, my beginning was as a drop of dirty semen and I shall end up as a dead corpse. Then a Day of Reckoning will come when I shall be weighed on a balance. If my weight is heavy, I will be regarded as respectable and honorable. If it weighs light, I will be regarded as damnable and abased.”

### What is humility?

Humility is just the opposite of arrogance and exuberance. A humble person neither considers himself as superior nor regards others as inferior to himself. One should be humble in thought, humble in speech and humble in his social behaviour. It is a characteristic of a believer that he equally respects all persons, whether they are rich or poor, weak or powerful. *Allah (Ta'ala)* has enjoined his messenger (ﷺ) to be humble and deferent towards his followers:

﴿ وَأَخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾ [الشعراء: ٢١٥]

Translation of Meaning: "And lower thy wing [in humility] unto those believers who follow you" (Ash-Sho'raa: 215). In another place it is declared:

﴿ تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴾ [القصاص: ٨٣]

Translation of Meaning: "That Abode of the Hereafter We have made for those who do not pursue domineering in earth, nor yet corruption. And [the well-being of] the End is for men of piety." (Al-Qasas: 83).

A renowned savant *Hazrat* Tufail Bin Ayadh (*RadhiAllahu Anhu*), when queried about the meaning of humility, stated, “ Humility is that you submit yourself to right and follow it no matter whether that right is conveyed to you by a child or by an ignorant person.” *Hazrat* Abu Bakr (*RadhiAllahu Anhu*) warned, “None of

you should denigrate others because the humblest of the Muslim community is held to be great before God. There goes a proverb that humility is the crown of a man.”

**The Messenger of Allah as a Courteous Man:** *Allah (Ta'ala)* had deputed his messenger to perfect the best of moral principles. He was a paragon of virtues and high morality. He set himself as an exemplar to be emulated by all. Once *Hazrat Ayesha* was asked about how the Messenger of Allah conducted himself at home. She replied, “the Prophet took part in the daily chores of his household but as soon at the time of *salat* he left everything and went to his masjid.” [[Bukhari]. He behaved like an ordinary human being. He used to milk his goats; he mended his shoes himself; he stitched the patches of his cloth himself; at meal time he made his servants to sit with him on the table-spread; he went to bazaar to buy his necessities and carried the commodities himself; he saluted everybody whom he met; shook hands with him; and he never differentiated between big and small, rich and poor, black and fair, or slave and freeman. He treated his companions equally and participated in all their matters, big and small.

**On** the day of conquest of Mecca, he was a spectacle of humility. He downed his head so much in thanks giving to God, it so appeared that his forehead would touch the back of his camel. An example of his humanity and humility was that he did not take revenge from those Meccans who had tormented and oppressed him and his followers brutally. That day he pardoned all of them and declared saying:

«ادْهَبُوا فَأَنْتُمْ الطُّلُقَاءُ» (ابن هشام ، سيرة)

Translation: "Go, all of you are free" [Ibn Hisham, *Seerah*].

Humility and self-effacement is a grand attribute which brings a man nearer to his God. He obeys all his ordinances and commands. He can never defy God and His messenger. It also enables him to emulate the *uswah* of the Prophet and follow his teachings. He deals with ordinary people gently and humanely. He avoids arrogance and pride, pays other people's dues and treats them fairly.

### **The Virtue of Humility:**

**One** correlation of humility is with inner cleanliness and purity of heart and mind. It leads to fraternal love and fellow feeling. It eliminates hatred and

enmity. All this begets the pleasure of Allah. The Messenger of Allah has pronounced:

«مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ، وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلَّا عِزًّا، وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلَّا رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ»  
(مسلم)

Translation: "No charity has ever diminished one's property; if a bondman of Allah forgives another he increases his honour; and one who becomes humble before God, Allah raises his stature." [[Muslim]. Another tradition is:

«وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَوْحَى إِلَيَّ أَنْ تَوَاضَعُوا حَتَّى لَا يَفْخَرَ أَحَدٌ عَلَى أَحَدٍ، وَلَا يَبْغِيَ أَحَدٌ عَلَى أَحَدٍ» (مسلم)

Translation: "Verily Allah has revealed to me that you adopt humility so as nobody should take pride over others and nobody transgresses against others." [Muslim].

### Arrogance:

**Arrogance** is the very antithesis of humility. Arrogance does not behoove a human being who is himself a humble creature and dependant on God. The Messenger of Allah stated that: *Allah (Ta'ala)* has declared:

«الْكِبْرِيَاءُ رِدَائِي وَالْعِظَمَةُ إِزَارِي فَمَنْ نَازَعَنِي وَاحِدًا مِنْهُمَا قَذَفْتُهُ فِي النَّارِ» (مسلم ، أبو داود ، ترمذي)

Translation: "Grandeur [*kibriya*] is my covering and majesty [*adhmat*] is my under dress. If anybody contests with me in respect of any one of them I shall throw him into the Hell fire." [Muslim; Abu Daud; Tirmidhi].

Arrogance and exuberance breed a number of heinous evils. Its fruits are mutual hatred, enmity and ill-will. It bedevils interpersonal and social relations. *Allah (Ta'ala)* has especially warned us against arrogance and impudence. He says:

﴿وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ﴾ لقمان: ١٨

Translation of Meaning: "Turn not thy cheek in scorn towards other persons, nor walk with pertness in the land. Lo! Allah loveth not the lot of self-conceited proudly braggart." (Luqman: 18). In another *ayat* Allah has issued a stern warning against the arrogant people:

﴿سَاءَ صِرْفٌ عَنْ إِيَاقِ الَّذِينَ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ﴾ الأعراف: ١٤٦

Translation of Meaning: "I shall turn away from My revelations those who behave arrogantly in the earth wrongfully . . . ." (Al-A'raf: 146).

In another *ayat*, it is declared:

﴿كَذَٰلِكَ يَظْبَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ قَلْبٍ مُّتَكَبِّرٍ جَبَّارٍ﴾ غافر: ٣٥

Translation of Meaning : " Thus does Allah stamp the hearts of all arrogant and tyrant persons." (Ghafir: 35).

Again:

﴿إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْتَكْبِرِينَ﴾ النحل: ٢٣

Translation of Meaning: "Allah does not like the proudly persons." (An-Nahl: 23).

Hell is declared to be the abode of the arrogant:

﴿الْأَنسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ﴾ الزمر: ٦٠

Translation of Meaning : "Isn't the Hell the abode of the arrogant?" (Az-Zumar: 60).

To summaries, arrogance and conceitedness is an irrational and idiotic attitude. Because of it, no good can be expected from an arrogant person. He spoils interpersonal relations wherever he lives. Arrogance makes a person morally impure and his character stinking.

### **The Punishment for Arrogance:**

**An** arrogant person becomes hated in the world and infamy and abasement is his punishment in the after-world. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "No one will enter the paradise who harbours even a grain of arrogance in his heart." [Muslim; Abu Daud; Tirmidhi]. The Messenger of Allah has portrayed the treatment of the arrogant on the Day of Judgment in this way, "The arrogant will be raised on the Day of Rising like small ants in the shape of human beings who will be covered by humiliation from all sides, then they will be driven towards a prison in the Hell named Bolas where the fire of fires will envelop them from the above and they will be made to drink the poisonous wash of the dwellers of Hell." [Tirmidhi].

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