

3. Humility And Politeness

An important social principle bearing useful fruits and creating popularity is humility and politeness. Politeness not only distinguishes a man but in addition gains popularity for him and makes him beloved in the eyes of people. Arrogance and vanity is the quality which earns dis- affection and disregard from others and sows the seeds of enmity in hearts.

While praising the courteous people, the Holy Qur'an says:

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا

And the servants of (Allah) Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility and when the ignorant address them, they say, "Peace". (25:63)

The lives of the Holy Prophet (S) and his progeny (Ahlu 'l-Bayt) were also based on these principles. They mixed and assembled with the poor and the suppressed, shared their meals and treated them in a brotherly manner. The Holy Prophet (S) himself reprimanded the arrogant people and taught them the lesson of humility and politeness.

One day when the Holy Prophet (S) was sitting in the mosque and his companions were sitting around him, a poor Muslim wearing old clothes came in and, according to the Islamic custom (that when someone comes to a gathering, he should sit wherever there is a vacant place, without any thought that he should be given a special place according to his supposed status) looked around, found a vacant space, went there and took his seat. Perchance, on his side was a rich man. That rich man apparently did not like a poor man sitting at his side and gathered his robes and pulled himself a little apart from that poor fellow.

The Holy Prophet (S) who was observing this behaviour, asked him: "Were you afraid that some of his poverty would stick to you?" The man replied, "No, O Messenger of Allah!" The Prophet (S) continued, "Were you afraid that some of your riches would go over to him?" "No, O Messenger of Allah!" the rich

man replied again. The Prophet (S) asked, "Were you afraid that your clothes would become dirty by his touch?" When again the reply was, "No, O Messenger of Allah!" the Prophet (S) asked, "Then why did you gather yourself up and do injustice to him by pulling yourself away?" The man replied, "O Messenger of Allah! I confess that I committed a sin, and now to correct this mistake and remove this sin, I am ready to offer half of my wealth to this Muslim brother of mine."

Hearing this, the poor man said: "O Messenger of Allah! I am not ready to accept this offer." The Prophet (S) asked why. He replied: "I do not want to become proud and selfish, under the influence of wealth, and to behave one day with one of my Muslim brethren as this man has behaved with me."¹

Plato (Aflatun) says: The best way to gain friendship is through humility and politeness. The great thinkers of Islam further elaborate this point.

Arrogance is the enemy of friendship. Anyone having arrogance in mind and vanity in walk casts out his well-wishers and minimizes his friends. On the contrary, the benevolent and polite person attracts friends. The selfish cannot gain friends, because people do not tolerate arrogance.

Muhaddith-e Qummi says: "Selfishness and egotism of people have some outwardly signs: a proud and self-centred man always thinks that he is great while others are little and despised; he does not like to stand on equal level with others; he wants to walk ahead of others, to sit in a higher and distinguished place; he expects others to salute him; if somebody advises him, he becomes angry; and if he advises others he uses harsh language, and if his advice is not accepted he becomes furious; if he teaches he insults his pupils, and treats them as his servants."²

Now see, how can a man having such behavior possibly create friends, or what can people learn from such person. That is why the Qur'an has clearly condemned selfishness and conceit:

أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ

. . . Is there not in Hell an abode for the haughty? (39:60)

Similar views have also been expressed by the sixth Imam, Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) He stated that there is an abode of excessive torture in Hell reserved for the arrogant people.

The Holy Qur'an narrates the useful teachings of Luqman to his son in which, among other things, he says:

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ

And swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men, nor walk in insolence through the earth, for Allah

loves not any arrogant boaster. (31: 18)

The sixth Imam explains that pride is based on an inferiority complex. He says:

ما من أحدٍ يتنَبه إلا من ذلةٍ يجدها في نفسه

No one shows haughtiness and pride but because of some inferiority which he feels in himself.³

After thorough studies on this subject of arrogance, the authorities have endorsed the above ideas and further explained: the sense of superiority in one person or a nation amounts to segregation and hatred of another. Enmity, controversy and present disputes are all the products of this theory of hatred. This way of thinking is actually the result of the false prestige and feeling between himself and the others.

In light of the above facts, humility and politeness are two of the fundamental principles of sociology and as already stated, in Islamic teachings it has been emphasized for the people to avoid conceit and a superiority complex and win the favour of people and pleasure of Allah through politeness.

^{1.} al-Usul al-Kafi.

^{2.} Safinatu '1-Bihar, vo1.2, p.459.

^{3.} al-Usul al -Kafi , vol. 3

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