

Arrogance

Arrogance is a mental state causing self-admiration and haughtiness against others in words or deeds. It is censured and dispraised in many texts in the Quran and Sunna:

“Do not scornfully turn your face away from people. Do not walk around puffed-up with pride; Allah does not love arrogant and boastful people (31:18).”

“Do not walk proudly on the earth; your feet cannot tear apart the earth nor are you as tall as the mountains (17:37).”

“He does not love the proud ones (16:23).”

“Is not hell the dwelling of the arrogant ones? (39:60)”

The Prophet (S) said: “The most favorable of you and the nearest to me on the Day of Resurrection will be the most well-mannered and the most modest. The remotest of you to me on the Day of Resurrection will be the bigmouth and the proud¹.”

As he passed by some people, the Prophet (S) asked them about the reason of their gathering. They answered that they were gathering on an insane epileptic person. He (S) commented: “This is not insane. He is afflicted with a disease. May I tell you about the true insane?” “Yes, you may,” they answered. He said: “The true insane is he who walks swaggeringly, looks to his sides, moves his shoulders through his sides, and hopes for Paradise of Allah while he acts disobediently to Him. His evil cannot be trusted and good is not expected from him. That is the true insane and this one is afflicted with a disease².”

While a wealthy man with a clean garment was sitting with the Prophet (S), a poor man with dirty garment came and sat next to the wealthy who pulled his garment. The Prophet (S) said to the wealthy: “Have you been afraid that his poverty would inflict you?” “No, I have not,” answered the man. “Have you been afraid that he would soil your garment?” asked the Prophet. “No, I have not,” answered the man. “Why did you then do so?” asked the Prophet. “God’s Messenger,” said the man, “I have a

companion who shows me my evildoings as righteous and my righteous ones as evildoings. As penance, I offer the half of my fortune to this man.”

The poor man refused this offer and answered the wealthy who asked him about the reason, “Well, I refuse because I am afraid I will be inflicted with the same feeling of arrogance that you had.”

In one of his sermons, Amirul-Mu'minin (a) said: “You should take a lesson from what Allah did with Satan; namely He nullified his great acts and extensive efforts on account of the vanity of one moment, although Satan 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 Satan by committing a similar disobedience? None at all. Allah cannot let a human being enter Paradise if he does the same thing for which Allah turned out from it an angel and seek Allah’s protection from the dangers of vanity, as you seek His protection from calamities. Certainly, if Allah were to allow anyone to indulge in pride, He would have allowed it to his selected prophets and vicegerents. But Allah, the Sublime, disliked vanity for them and liked humbleness for them³.”

Imam as-Sadiq (a) said: In the heavens, there are two angels whose mission is to oversee the servants. They advance him who behaves modestly, and humiliate him who behaves proudly⁴.”

“Any behavior of arrogance or haughtiness is inevitably the result of the feeling of humility in the mentality of the arrogant or the haughty⁵.”

A quarrel broke out between Salman al-Farsi⁶ and a man who addressed to him: “Who are you and what are you?” Salman answered: “The first of you and me is a dirty sperm. The last of you and me is a stinking carrion. On the Day of Resurrection, the scales will be maintained. Those whose good deeds will weigh heavier on the scale will be the true noble men, but those whose good deeds will be lighter on the scale, will be the true inglorious⁷.”

Disadvantages of Arrogance

Arrogance surrounds with a ring of vanity and pride and inflicts with the fondness of selfishness and showiness to the degree that nothing will satisfy the arrogant except false flattery and fake praise. The arrogant, then, can no longer see his defects and shortcomings, care about self-discipline, or remedy his flaws. The result will be that he becomes the target of criticism and the subject of malice and revulsion. Furthermore, the arrogant is the remotest from the right and justice. The arrogant, too, excites people’s malice and loathing in such a way that nobody else can do.

Incentives of Arrogance

Self-esteem is one of the incentives of arrogance, which occurs only when one feels that he bears abundant knowledge, high position, big fortune, or the like stimulants of selfishness.

It may also be arisen from enmity, envy, or pride that may urge to challenge the ideal individuals for belittling their qualities of honor and daring them through various sorts of verbal and active practices.

Levels of Arrogance

Levels of arrogance vary according to the intensity of its signs.

The first level is that which is treated with modesty without allowing its signs and disadvantages to appear.

The second level is that when arrogance grows and allows its signs to appear through vain behaviors with people.

The third level is that in which arrogance prevails so aggravatingly causing megalomania and excessive fondness of high rank and showiness. Hence, you see the affected ones go on referring to their merits and disparaging others. This is in fact the worst level of arrogance.

Sorts of Arrogance

- Arrogance against God: This stands for the abstention from believing in Him and the vanity against obeying Him. This is definitely the worst kind of atheism and the most hideous sort of arrogance.
- Arrogance against the prophets: This stands for the vanity against believing and submitting to them. Though the two are very close to each other, this sort is, to some extent, less horrible than the first.
- Arrogance against people: This is achieved by showing contempt against people and regarding one's being too far above them in words and deeds. Arrogance against the scholars by regarding oneself too high for asking them or seeking their knowledge, is a subclass of arrogance against people.

Treatment of Arrogance

The arrogant should recognize his reality: his origin is a dirty sperm and his end is stinky carrion. Between these two, man is weak and feeble. Hunger and thirst exhaust him, ailment and sickness overcome him, poverty and harm afflict him, and death and wear will inevitably befall him. Man cannot provide benefits and cannot save himself from misfortunes:

“There is the life hereafter which we have prepared for those who do not want to impose their superiority over the others in the land nor commit evil therein. The happy end certainly belongs to the pious ones. (28:83)”

Hence, the best people are the most well-mannered, helpful, pious, and righteous.

Man should keep in mind the advantages of modesty as well as the disadvantages of arrogance. He should also remember the words of praise that were said about modesty and these of dispraise that were said about arrogance. It is said: “For people of reason, modesty with ignorance and stinginess is better than arrogance with mannerism and openhanded. Modesty, then, is such a great good feature covering two bad qualities, and arrogance is such a bad quality screening two good traits⁸.”

- ¹. Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 15 part 2 page 209 (quoted from Qurb ul-Isnad.) There is a similar narrative that is recorded in Sheikh as-Saduq's Ilal ush-Sharaayi.
- ². Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 15 part 3 page 125 (quoted from Sheikh as-Saduq's al-Khissal.)
- ³. Quoted from Nahj ul-Balagha.
- ⁴. Quoted from al-Wafi; 3:87 (quoted from al-Kafi).
- ⁵. Quoted from al-Wafi; 3: 150 (quoted from al-Kafi).
- ⁶. Salman al-Farsi (born in 7th century) is a great figure in Islam. He was a companion of the Prophet Muhammad (S) and a close friend of Imam Ali Amir ul-Mu'minin (a) who supported him during the tragedy of the usurpation of his right of leadership after the Prophet. During his caliphate, Imam Ali (a) gave him a governmental office.
- ⁷. Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 15 part 3 page 124 (quoted from Sheikh as-Saduq's al-Amali.)
- ⁸. Quoted from ar-Raghib; Muhadharat ul-Udabaa.

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