

## Fourth Hadith: Pride (Kibr)

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَيْسَى، عَنْ يُونُسَ، عَنْ أَبَانَ، عَنْ حَكِيمٍ  
قَالَ: سَأَلْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ عَنْ أَدْنَى الْإِلْحَادِ، فَقَالَ: إِنَّ الْكِبْرَ أَدْنَاهُ.

Muhammad ibn Ya'qub (al-Kulayni) from 'Ali ibn Ibrahim, from Muhammad ibn 'Isa, from Yunus, from Aban, from Hakim; who says: I asked Abu 'Abd Allah (Imam al-Sadiq) (A) as to the lowest degree of ilhad (apostasy). He answered, "Verily kibr (pride) is its lowest degree."<sup>1</sup>

### What Is Kibr?

*Kibr* is the name of a psychic state in which a person feels a sense of superiority and behaves high-handedly with others. Its signs are discernible in his actions and its symptoms are clearly noticed by others by which they know that he is proud. *Kibr* is something different from *'ujb*, and, as mentioned earlier, this vice is the offspring and fruit of the tree of *'ujb*. *'Ujb* consists of self-love and conceit, and the meaning of *kibr* is to consider oneself superior to others. When someone perceives a merit in himself and is overcome by a sense of pleasure, exultation, and vanity, that state is called *'ujb*.

And when he considers others to be lacking in the imagined merit within himself, he perceives himself to be superior. This perception of superiority and supremacy over others causes in him a state of vanity, which is pride. *Kibr*, in this sense, is an inner state, and when its effects are reflected in his behavior and his speech, it is called *takabbur*. In short, the self-indulgent person becomes self-seeking, and his self-seeking tendency grows into self-love, and when this self-love is filled to the brim it manifests itself as haughtiness and high-handed treatment of others.

Here, it is necessary to mention that the psychic traits, whether vices and infirmities or virtues and accomplishments, are extremely complicated and complex matters. It becomes extremely difficult to discern one from the other. On account of this, there is often a great difference of opinion even among great scholars in precisely defining them and it may be impossible to give a faultless definition of inner

states. Therefore, it is better for us to leave this matter to the inner conscience of individuals and not to entangle ourselves in the maze of finding precise definitions, and turn attention to our main purpose.

## Kinds and Degrees of Kibr

It should be noted that there are different degrees of *kibr*, similar to the stages and degrees that were mentioned during the discussion about *'ujb*. However, there were some stages that could be mentioned with regard to *'ujb*, but since they were not so important in that context we abstained from mentioning them. Yet it is important to mention those stages in the context of *kibr*. But at first let us note that the stages of *kibr*, similar to those of *'ujb*, are six in number:

1. *Kibr* on account of possessing true faith and belief.
2. As opposed to it is the pride in invalid faith and false belief .
3. Pride on account of good qualities and praiseworthy attributes.
4. Pride in moral vices and undesirable qualities.
5. Pride in one's righteous deeds and devotional exercises.
6. Pride in sinful and wicked deeds.

It is possible that each one of these stages may be caused by the equivalent degree of *'ujb* present in one's soul, or it may have some other reason, which we shall discuss afterwards. For the time being, of our main concern here are the external factors as sources of pride– like the pride in one's family, descent, wealth, status, position, and the like. Following that, God willing, we shall discuss the evils of this vice and their remedies, according to my ability. And I implore God's help and assistance in making it effective upon others as well as my own self.

There are certain other aspects and levels of *kibr* when considered in another perspective. They are: (1) *kibr* towards God; (2) *kibr* towards His prophets, messengers, and *awliya'* (3) *kibr* in regard to the Divine Commandments, which also amounts to *kibr* towards God; (4) *kibr* towards the creatures of God, which, too, according to the *urafa*, amounts to *kibr* towards God.

As to the *kibr* towards God, it is the most abominable, the most destructive, and the highest degree of pride, and is present in infidels, those who contest God's authority, and those who make claims to divinity. Sometimes its traces are seen among some men of faith as well (whose description is not appropriate here). This kind of *kibr* signifies the extreme of ignorance and the absence of knowledge about one's limits and the majesty of the Necessary Being.

As to the *kibr* towards the prophets and *awliya'* of God, it was an attitude, which was more prevalent during their own days, and the Quran reports about it in this verse:

﴿أَتُؤْمِنُ لِبَشَرَيْنِ مِثْلِنَا؟﴾

**Shall we put faith in two mortals like ourselves? (23:47)**

And someone from his people is reported to have said (about the Prophet [ S ]):

﴿لَوْلَا نَزَلَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ عَظِيمٍ﴾

**If only this Quran had been revealed to some great man of the two towns. [i.e. Makkah and al-Ta'if] (43:31)**

During the early days of Islam, the instances of such pride towards the *awliya*' of God were very frequent, examples of which are still manifested in the behavior of some professors of Islam.

As to the *kibr* towards the commands of God, it is seen among some sinners, such as those who abstain from performing Hajj as they do not consider the dress of ihram appropriate for themselves; abstain from *salat* because they consider the state of prostration as not in accordance with their position and status. Such kind of pride is sometimes seen among persons of faith, devotees, and scholars who abstain from *adhan* on account of it.

Similarly there are those who would not accept a word of truth if it comes from anybody belonging to the same status as themselves, or lower. Sometimes it happens that one hears something from his colleagues or friends, and vehemently rejects it and derides the speaker, but he readily agrees with it when it is uttered by someone superior to him in religious or worldly status. It is even possible that he would accept it with the same seriousness with which he had rejected it earlier.

This person is not a seeker of truth, but his pride has drawn a curtain over the truth, to which his obsequiousness has blinded and deafened him. It is the same kind of pride, which prevents a scholar from teaching a certain subject or a certain text because he considers it below his dignity, or dissuades him from giving lessons to persons devoid of any outwardly significant position. Or one may stand away from a small mosque attended by a small number of persons for the same reasons despite knowing that the pleasure of God lies in his doing so. Sometimes the traces of pride are so subtle that the person who is afflicted by this evil, unless he is careful and serious about correcting himself, cannot know that his actions testify to the presence of *kibr* in his character.

As to the *kibr* towards the creatures of God, *kibr* towards men of divine knowledge and scholars is the worst form of it, and its evil effects are graver and its harms more serious than of any other type of *kibr*. Of this category of *kibr* is the pride, which avoids the company of poor people and seeks out prominence in gatherings and meetings, and displays itself on the road and in one's carriage. Yet this evil is prevalent and inflicts all the classes of society; from the elite to the class of *ulama* and scholars of

*hadith*; from the rich to the poor and deprived classes; no one can elude it, except for those whom God Almighty saves.

Sometimes it is so difficult to discern between humbleness and humility aimed at popularizing oneself, and between pride and self-containedness, that one should seek refuge in God Almighty, that He may guide us on the right path. If one is eager to reform oneself and tries to reach one's goal, the Holy God guides him with His infinite mercy on the right path and eases one's journey on this path.

## The Causes of Kibr

There are various causes of *kibr*, but all of them derive from the delusion, which occurs when men imagine themselves to possess some kind of excellence. This illusion leads to *'ujb*, which, blending with self-love, conceals others' merits and virtues from their eyes. When that happens, the afflicted individual believes others to be inferior to himself and begins to cherish a feeling of self-esteem in his heart, as well as manifesting a similar demeanor.

For instance, one may find an individual among the *ulama* and *urafa* who considers himself to be a visionary and a man of mystic knowledge and insight, classing himself in the category of saintly persons with a high record of good deeds. Such persons make an absurdly ostentatious show of their superiority over others, dismissing the *hukama'* and philosophers as nuts, the *fuyaha'* and muhaddithun as superficial bums, and all ordinary people as subhuman creatures and beasts.

They scorn and look down on all the creatures of God; while claiming to follow the dictum of *فناء في الله* and *بقاء في الله* they beat the drum of their truth-seeking, whereas the Divine teachings require of them to contemplate the creatures of God with goodwill and optimism when the least knowledge of God demands that he should not scorn these manifestations of His Glory and Beauty.

He himself would affirm this while speaking about Divine teachings, pronouncing something, which contradicts his own inner state. Yet this happens because those teachings have not penetrated his heart. The poor fellow has not attained even the station of a true believer, yet he often speaks of *'irfan*. Although *'irfan* has not touched him, he claims to have realized the ultimate Truth.

Among philosophers, too, there are such persons who consider themselves to be in possession of the proofs and knowledge of certain truth. They class themselves among men of certain knowledge of God who possess confirmed belief in angels and scriptures; yet they look down on others in disdain. They dismiss all other sciences as fiction and all human beings as defective in faith and knowledge, viewing them with haughty contempt in their hearts as well as their arrogant demeanor, whereas the knowledge of the majesty of the Lord and the utter destitution of the ephemeral creature (that he is), necessitates an opposite behavior. The truly wise (*hukama'*) are those whose knowledge of the secrets of human origin and end makes them modest and humble—God Almighty had bestowed upon Luqman the gift of wisdom; yet the Quran reports of him as saying to his son:

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

**Turn not thy cheek in scorn toward people, nor walk with pertness on the earth. Verily, God loveth not any braggart boaster. (31: 18)**

Sometimes such people are found among those who claim to be mystic masters and guides of consummate inner purity, yet, they treat the common people with pride and look down on *fuqaha'*, *ulama* and their followers, and speak disparagingly of philosophers and *hukama'*. They consider everyone except themselves and their associates as doomed creatures. Since they themselves lack in knowledge and learning, they consider knowledge a thorn in the path of spiritual journey, and those who possess it are considered by them as devils who mislead the wayfarers in their inward journey, although their own claims to high spiritual station would tend to contradict such a viewpoint.

A spiritual guide of people must himself be free from all kinds of mortal and destructive sins and qualities; one who claims the capacity to guide the astray should have transcended the narrowness of mundane existence and its attachments, being absorbed in the beatific vision of His Glory. He should not be haughty and disdainful towards the creatures of God.

Also among the class of *fuqaha'*, scholars of *fiqh* and *hadith* and the students of these sciences sometimes such people are seen who view other people with scorn and treat them high-handedly, considering themselves to be worthy of every praise and appreciation. They think that everybody should obey their commands without any hesitation, and apply the following criterion to themselves:

﴿لَا يُسْأَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْأَلُونَ﴾

**He (i.e. God) will not be questioned as to that which He does, but they will be questioned. (21:23)**

Except for themselves and a handful of persons like themselves, they do not consider anybody to be fit to enter Paradise. Whenever something is spoken about other field of learning, they dismiss it with scorn. They unhesitatingly reject every other discipline except their own field- of which they possess very little knowledge-considering it not only unworthy of study but destructive. They denounce the scholars of other sciences due to their own ignorance. They present their own views as if their religiosity necessitates such a contempt, whereas knowledge and religion are free from such prejudices.

The *Shari'ah* forbids men from speaking about anything without having its proper knowledge, and considers it obligatory to respect every Muslim. This wretched fellow without possessing enough knowledge of religion or sciences is sinful of doing something, which is against the scripture of God and the teachings of His Prophet (S).

Yet he moulds his ideas into the form of religion; though the conduct and behavior of all the great

scholars of every generation was unlike this. Each one of the branches of religious sciences demands the scholars who are associated with it to be humble, and requires them to obliterate all signs of pride from their hearts. None of the sciences gives rise to pride and none of them is against humility. Later I will explain the causes behind this sharp contrast between their knowledge and behavior.

Also among the experts of other sciences, like medicine, mathematics, physics, engineering, industrial crafts, etc., the instances of pride and arrogance are seen. They underestimate all other sciences however important they may be, and scorn the scientists belonging to them. Each one of them believes that whatever he knows is the real knowledge. They scorn people in their hearts, as well as manifest it in their demeanor; whereas their knowledge does not require this.

Some others who do not belong to any of the branches of science, like the people devoted to prayers and other devotional rites, also tend to behave high-handedly with others. They disdain people and treat them with contempt, and do not consider even great scholars as worthy of redemption. Whenever there is a discussion about knowledge, they point out that knowledge without action is useless. They give great importance to the little knowledge that they themselves possess and view all others with *'ujb* and haughty contempt, forgetting that if their worship were true and sincere it would have reformed them.

The prayer forbids one from performing indecent deeds and sins and is considered as the culmination of a Muslim's attainment (*mi'raj al-mu'min*). But such a person, even after performing the *salat* for fifty years and meticulously performing all obligatory (*wajibat*) and recommended (*mustahabbat*) religious duties, is immersed in the vice of pride which is a kind of apostasy—from head to toe, and is afflicted with *'ujb*—which is uglier than any other indecency—and comes to resemble Satan and acquires his attributes.

The *salat* that does not forbid one from indecencies and indignities, the prayer which does not protect the heart, rather whose excessive performance vitiates the heart, is not worthy of being named as *salat*. The *salat* about which you were so particular, but on account of which you come to resemble Satan acquiring pride, his characteristic trait, is not *salat*; for the *salat* does not result in pride either.

All these are dangers of knowledge and deeds, but pride can also arise from other causes, all of which relate to a sense of one's worth and excellence which others are imagined to lack. For instance, someone who comes of a noble descent looks down on those who are not like him. Other reasons relate to personal beauty and charm, one's tribe, the number of one's supporters, followers, or pupils, which cause arrogance and pride with respect to others who do not possess these advantages. In all cases, therefore, pride is caused by an illusion of some kind of perfection in oneself, elation on its account and *'ujb*, while others are seen to lack such an imagined merit or advantage.

Even the bad characters and persons of vicious morals, also, sometimes look down on others with haughty contempt, because they consider whatever they possess as a kind of merit and asset. Though the person afflicted with the vice of pride tries to conceal it due to some reason or other and tries to show no sign of it, but since this evil tree of pride has run its roots in his heart, its effects nevertheless

manifest themselves. As soon as any change occurs in the natural condition of the possessor of this vice, as when he loses control over himself due to anger, he starts boasting of his superiority and enumerating his merits, whether they belong to the category of knowledge or deeds or whatever.

At other times, a proud person exhibits his pride, not paying any attention to its outward revelation. The intensity of his pride makes him lose control over himself. Then, his pride finds expression in his movements and pauses. In social gatherings he shows his self-importance by taking a lead over other people while entering and leaving. He neither allows the poor to join his company, nor does he himself attend their gatherings. He creates an artificial halo of sacredness around himself and every action of his, the gait, the manner of looking at other people, the manner of speaking to them, everything is indicative of his pride and haughtiness.

One of the researchers, from whom I have borrowed the fundamentals of this discourse and have translated them, says that the lowest degree of pride in a scholar is that he should turn his back on other people as if he wants to avoid them. The lowest degree of pride in a devotee (*'abid*) is manifested in his stern attitude towards people and his frown, as if he wants to avoid them, or as if he is angry with them. The poor fellow does not know that piety and continence (*wara'*) does not lie in the frowns on one's brow or forehead, not in a disdainful look and a wry face, not in avoiding the people, not in bending the head or turning the neck, but it lies inside one's heart. The Prophet (S) once, pointing at his chest, said, 'Piety lies here.'

On some occasions, the devotee boasts about himself in his speech; while expressing the purity of his soul, he makes a display of his devotional exercises, brags about himself by mentioning his pious deeds, and denounces others for their shortcomings, thus highlighting the superiority of his piety. Sometimes he does not say anything explicitly but makes some gesture, which implicitly exhibits his piety. A scholar afflicted with *kibr* may brag about his own intellectual achievements, saying, "What do you know! " Then he would mention the books read and written by him, the universities visited by him, the professors and authorities whom he has met, and his own scholarly endeavors. Therefore, at all times, it is necessary to seek refuge in God from the mischiefs of the self and its wiles.

## **Spiritual and Social Harms of Pride**

Whereas there are many vices inherent in pride itself, it generates many other vices as well. It prevents men from acquiring inward and outward merits and from enjoying the blessings of this world and the Hereafter. It causes hatred and rancor in human hearts, disgraces man in the eyes of his fellow human beings, and brings about humiliation for him. It forces other people to retaliate against him and despise him and insult him.

In *al-Kafi*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) is reported to have said, "There is no person who does not have a harness on his head, and an angel who attends to it. Whenever he is proud, the angel says, 'Be humble, lest God should disgrace you'. Thus, he is the greatest of human beings in his own eyes, whereas in

other people's eyes he is the smallest of creatures. When he is humble and modest, God removes the harness from his head and the angel says to him, 'Elevate yourself, as God Almighty is elevating you'. Thus, he is the smallest of persons in his own eyes, while the most elevated and exalted in the eyes of others.'<sup>2</sup>

My friend, others also possess a mind similar to yours. If you behave humbly, other people will be forced to respect you and you will rise in their estimation. But, if you show arrogance, there is no good for you in it; they may even disgrace you if they find an opportunity, and treat you with indifference. And if they cannot find an opportunity of insulting you, they will despise you in their hearts and you will not find any respect in their eyes. It is, therefore, better for you to conquer their hearts with modesty and humility. Everyone with whom you associate will somehow show the signs of his attitude towards you, and if their hearts turn against you it will be something, which is against your desire.

Therefore, even if, presumably, you are interested in obtaining greatness and respect, you will have to adopt a proper course for it, which is to cultivate cordial relations with others and to, adopt a humble demeanor towards them. The result of pride will be against your aim and purpose. It does not even fulfill your worldly aspirations, which are easier to be fulfilled, and instead of this what you receive is its opposite. Besides all these, this habit will bring you disgrace and shame in the next world. In the same way as you scorned people and considered yourself to be superior to the creatures of God, and expressed an inordinate sense of pride and arrogance here, in the other world this same arrogance and pride will bring you disgrace and humiliation, as mentioned in a tradition reported in *al-Kafi*:

بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ دَاوُدَ بْنِ فَرْقَدٍ، عَنْ أَخِيهِ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ يَقُولُ: إِنَّ الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ يُجْعَلُونَ فِي صُورِ الذَّرِّ فَيَتَوَطَّوهُمْ النَّاسُ حَتَّى يَفْرَغُوا مِنَ الْحِسَابِ.

From Dawud ibn Farqad, from his brother, who said: I heard Imam al-Sadiq (A) saying: Verily the proud [on the Judgment Day] will be created in the form of ants and people will trample them down under their feet until God is finished with the reckoning.<sup>3</sup>

In his last will, al Imam al-Sadiq (A) told his companions:

قَالَ: وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَالْعِظْمَةَ وَالْكَبْرَ فَإِنَّ الْكِبَرَ رِءَاءُ اللَّهِ عِزٌّ وَجَلٌّ، فَمَنْ نَازَعَ اللَّهَ رِءَاءَهُ قَصَمَهُ اللَّهُ وَأَذَلَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ.

Refrain from pride and self-glorification, since pride is God Almighty's mantle, and one who contests with God regarding His cloak, God will shatter him and disgrace him on the Day of Resurrection.<sup>4</sup>

What will be the plight of the person whom God Almighty disgraces? For the things will be different in the Hereafter. Disgrace in the Hereafter will be an affair different from the disgrace and humiliation in this world. In the same way as the comforts and torments of that world bear no similarity with those in this

world, and its comforts and bounties are beyond one's imaginative power, the torments and tortures in that world are also far above the reach of our imaginative faculty. Its honors are beyond the possibilities of what we can think, and its humiliations also cannot be compared with our ideas of humiliation and disgrace. And the ultimate abode of the proud person is eternal damnation and hell. The tradition states:

الْكِبْرُ مَطَايَا النَّارِ.

i.e. 'one who rides the mount of pride is taken by it into the hell-fire.' He will not get any glimpse of Paradise as long as the traces of this vice are present in his heart. The Prophet (S) has been reported to have said:

لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ مَنْ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالُ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ مِنْ كِبْرٍ.

Never can the person who possesses a speck of pride inside his heart enter Paradise.<sup>5</sup>

Imam al-Baqir (A) and Imam al-Sadiq (A) have also said something almost similar to this statement. In *al-Kafi* Imam al-Baqir (A) is reported to have said:

الْعِزُّ رِداءُ اللَّهِ وَالْكِبْرُ إِزَارُهُ. فَمَنْ تَنَاوَلَ شَيْئاً مِنْهُ أَكْبَهُ اللَّهُ فِي جَهَنَّمَ.

honor is God's robe and pride His mantle; one who wants to acquire it will be thrown into hell by God Almighty.<sup>6</sup>

And that too, what kind of hell! The hell, which is prepared for the proud, is different from the hell into which other sinners will go. Here, I shall again quote the same tradition the translation of which was given earlier:

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَعْقُوبَ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ ابْنِ أَبِي عُمَيْرٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ بُكَيْرٍ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَالَ: إِنَّ فِي جَهَنَّمَ لَوَادِيًا لِلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ يُقَالُ لَهُ سَقْرٌ. شَكَأَ (جَهَنَّمَ) إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ شِدَّةَ حَرِّهِ وَسَأَلَهُ أَنْ يَتَنَفَّسَ، فَأَذِنَ لَهُ، فَتَنَفَّسَ فَأَحْرَقَ جَهَنَّمَ.

This is a highly trustworthy tradition, and can even be compared to sahih. Ibn Bukayr reports from al-Imam al-Sadiq (A) that he said, "Verily there is a valley in hell for the proud called Saqar. Once it complained to the Almighty about the intensity of its heat, and requested Him to relieve it for some time so that it may take a breath. As soon as it breathed, its breath filled the entire hell with fire."<sup>7</sup>

I take refuge in God from a place, which in spite of its being a place of torment complains about its hotness, and the hell starts burning because of its breath. We cannot comprehend in this world the

extent of the intensity and strength of the fire of the Hereafter, as the difference between the intensity and weakness of torment is dependent upon several factors. One is the strength and weakness of perception, and the second is the dissimilarity of different kinds of material and their different capacities for tolerating heat. For example, gold and iron can be exposed to more heat than lead and tin, which can endure more heat than wood and coal, which are less sensitive than flesh and skin.

Another factor is the sensitivity of perception; for example the human brain, which despite being less tolerant to heat is more sensitive to it than the bones, for its power of perception is stronger. And the feebleness and intensity of the heat itself is another factor. It is more painful at a hundred degrees than at fifty. One more factor is the relative distance between the source of heat and the material exposed to it; for instance, when fire is very near to the hand it will inflict a different kind of burn than when it affects the hand from a distance.

All these five above-mentioned factors exist at their weakest degree in this world, and at their utmost strength and force in the Hereafter. All our perceptive faculties are imperfect and weak in this world and at the same time covered with several veils. Today our vision is incapable of perceiving angels and the hell; our ears cannot hear the queer sounds of *Barzakh* (the Purgatory) and the cries of its inhabitants, and the clamor of the Day of Resurrection and the people thereof. Our senses cannot even perceive the heat of that place. This is on account of their own infirmity.

The Quranic verses and the traditions of the Imams (A) are full of explicit and implicit references to this issue, and it is also in accordance with discursive reason. The human body of this world is incapable of enduring heat. The cold fire of this world is strong enough to turn it into ashes in moments. But God Almighty is capable of recreating it in a form on the Day of Resurrection so that it would not be consumed by the fire of the Hereafter, a fire of so great intensity that, according to the testimony of Gabriel (A), if a link of the seventy-cubit chain of fire prepared for the inhabitants of hell is thrown into this world it would melt all the mountains due to its excessive heat.

Therefore, the resistance of the human body will also be incomparably great in that world. Also the relationship between the body and soul is very fragile in this world. This world does not allow the soul to manifest its real faculties and powers. But that world is the world of the soul's manifestation and domination. There, the relationship of the soul with respect to the body is loaded with action and creativity—as has been established in its proper place—and this relationship is the most complete and thorough of all relationships.

This worldly fire is a faint and coldish glow and an ephemeral phenomenon combined with impurities of all kinds; whereas the fire of hell is a fire free from all impurities, and its substance is self-subsisting and self-perpetuating. It is a living substance, which burns its inhabitants with a will and consciousness, and uses all its strength to overwhelm them. You have heard about its properties from Gabriel (A), the truthful witness.

The Quran and the traditions of the Imams (A) are full of the descriptions of hell and the fire therein. However, its similitude cannot be found in this world. If all the fires of this world were to surround a human being from all sides, they will envelop only the outer surface of his body; but the hell-fire will encompass the human being from within and without and envelop the senses and the perceptive faculties. It is a fire, which consumes the heart, the soul, and all the human faculties, pervading them and uniting with them in a fashion, which is unexemplified in this world.

Hence it is obvious that the requirements of Divine chastisement are not at all to be found in this world. Neither the material is capable of enduring its heat, nor is the agent of heat a complete one, nor are the perceptive faculties at their complete acuteness. The fire the heat of whose breath fills the hell with flames, we and our perceptive senses fail to comprehend it, unless, God forbid, we, belonging to the clan of the proud, leave the world without purifying ourselves from this abominable vice, and see it face to face:

﴿فَلَيْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ﴾

*What an evil abode is that of the arrogant!*

## Other Causes Of Pride

Besides the above-mentioned factors that cause pride, there are some others also, such as narrow-mindedness, lack of capacity, petty-mindedness, baseness, and lack of fortitude. Being a person with a narrow mentality, as soon as he beholds any merit in himself he imagines himself to enjoy a kind of superiority. He thinks he has acquired a high station, whereas, if he justly evaluates it and judges his accomplishments and merits, he would see that what he imagined to be perfection and is so proud of is not at all an accomplishment or merit, and even if it were a merit how insignificant it was when compared to other persons' accomplishments.

Poor fellow, he has made his cheeks ruddy with a slap to give an impression of healthiness. The *'arif* who disdains others on account of his pride in his mystic knowledge, and considers others superciliously to be superficial and shallow, what knowledge does he possess about God, except for a handful of concepts and terms that are in reality veils of realities and hindrances in his religious path? What is this knowledge except for a number of glamorous and gaudy terms which do not have any relevance whatsoever to the knowledge of God? How far are they from the knowledge of God and the knowledge of His Names and Attributes.

Knowledge is a quality of the heart, and in the view of this writer all these are practical sciences, and consist not of mere acquaintance with certain abstract concepts or artful juggling of terms. With this short life and limited knowledge, I have seen certain people among these so-called mystics and other scholars who, I swear by *'irfan* and knowledge that these terms have not made any mark on their hearts;

may, they have rather left on them an opposite effect! My friend! the knowledge of God, in your own words, makes the heart a place where His Names, Attributes, and Essence are manifested, a stage for the appearance of the Real Monarch, who obliterates all signs and purges it of all stains and removes from it all limitations:

﴿إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوهَا وَجَعَلُوا أَعِزَّةَ أَهْلِهَا أَذِلَّةً﴾

***Indeed, kings, when they enter a township, ruin it and degrade its men of honor. (27:34)***

It converts your heart into a Unitarian and the one filled with the praise of the Lord. But why did it make your heart a place of your own glorification? Why has it added unnecessary colors to it, and accumulated trappings and accretions that deter you from obtaining nearness to God Almighty and from beholding the effulgent glory of His Names? Why, it has made your heart an abode of Satan and so you look down on the servants of God and His chosen, the signs and reflections of His Glory and Splendor! Woe unto you for your wretchedness, O 'arif, whose condition is worse than of anybody else, and all the doors of defense and pretext are sealed upon him! You are proud towards God and have assumed a Pharaonic arrogance towards His Names, Attributes, and all the manifestations of His Essence. O amateurish student of concepts who has gone astray of the realities! Deliberate over the matter for a while, and think as to what knowledge you possess of God.

What impact has the knowledge of God and His Attributes made on your self? Perhaps the study of music and musical rhythms may be more exact and precise than your knowledge. Astronomy, mechanics, other physical sciences, and mathematics can match your learning as to the precision of their terminology. Yet in the same way as they are not concerned with the knowledge of God, your knowledge also is a thick curtain consisting of the veils of words, terms, and concepts. They can neither make one ecstatic nor send anyone into a trance.

Rather, in the eyes of the *Shari'ah*, the physical sciences and mathematics are better than your knowledge, since they produce some result, whereas your knowledge not only gives no good results, but gives opposite ones. An engineer draws results from his calculations, and a goldsmith is benefited from his craftsmanship; but your knowledge, apart from not gaining any material benefits, has failed to fulfill any transcendental ends as well.

Rather, the veil before your eyes is so thick that when you try to picture the Unity of the Divine Being a world of utter darkness fills your imagination, and when His Names and Attributes are mentioned an infinite plurality is pictured by your mind. Therefore, these terms did not lead you to the path of Truth, but on the contrary they have become a source of pride and arrogance towards the righteous scholars.

A knowledge, which darkens the heart and increases it in its blindness is not knowledge. A learning, which ultimately makes its possessor an heir of the Devil, woe unto such learning! *Kibr* is the property of

Satan's nature. He was arrogant to your father, Adam, and was expelled from the Almighty's court. You who are arrogant towards all human beings and all the sons of Adam are also worthy of banishment. From this you can infer the plight of the scholars of other sciences also.

A *Hakim*, a man of wisdom, if he is a real sage, having comprehended the relationship between God Almighty and His creatures and himself, the sense of superiority remains no more in his heart. But the unfortunate seeker of terminology and terms has mistaken them for *hikmah* (wisdom) and '*ilm* (knowledge) and imagines himself to be an '*alim* and *Hakim*. He even associates himself with the Attributes of the Necessary Being and says that *hikmah* is one of the Attributes of God Almighty'

الْحِكْمَةُ هِيَ التَّشْبَهُ بِالِإِلَهِ.

Wisdom is what makes [man] similar to God.

At other times he groups himself with the prophets and messengers of God, and recites the Quranic phrase,

﴿وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ﴾

*He teaches them the Book and Wisdom.*

And sometimes reiterates the Prophet's *hadith*:

الْحِكْمَةُ ضَالَّةُ الْمُؤْمِنِ، وَمَنْ يُوتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا

Hikmah is the lost property of a mu'min; one who is endowed with hikmah has been given an immense measure of good.

While his heart is unaware of *hikmah* and several thousand stages away from all good and he is himself a stranger to *hikmah*. The great Muslim thinker and philosopher Muhaqqiq Damad (R) states that a *Hakim* is a person who can discard his body like a dress whenever he wants to. What does he say and what are we saying! What meaning did they understand from *hikmah* and how do we conceive it? And you with your pride in your knowledge of a handful of concepts and a few terms, who treat the creatures of God with haughty contempt—it becomes quite clear that you are a petty minded and shallow person.

Those who style themselves as *murshids* (leaders of mystic orders) and guides of God's creatures, offering spiritual assistance and pretending Sufi insight, their state is worse than that of the two former groups, and their conceit is greater than theirs. They appropriate the terminology of those two groups, and set out their goods for sale in the marketplace. They have distracted the attention of the creatures of

God from Him, attracting them towards themselves, having made those simple-hearted creatures to view the *ulama* and other people with suspicion. For the sake of some mean profit, they have coined some attractive terms to deceive credulous people, thinking that titles like ‘Majdhub ‘Ali Shah’ and ‘Mahbub ‘Ali Shah’ will produce love for God or create some kind of ecstasy or bliss.

O seeker of the world! You thief of concepts and ideas, this activity of yours does not call for pride and exultation. Poor fellow, he is befooled by his own petty-mindedness and narrowness of capacity, considering himself to be a person of high spiritual station. His own tricks have fooled him. His infatuation with himself, his love of the world, and his obsession with some stolen ideas and conceptual trappings and auxiliaries have coalesced to form strangely vicious and perverse admixture. Yet with all these flaws, the poor fellow imagines himself to be a murshid, a guide and liberator of mankind, and knower of the secrets of the *Shari’ah*! No, sometimes this impudence surpasses all limits and he imagines himself to be at the pinnacle of *wilayah* ! This situation arises due to the lack of capacity, the poverty of merits, the narrowness of the mind and the heart, and the suffocating contraction of the breast.

You too, O student of *fiqh*, *hadith* and other religious sciences, you also have no share of knowledge except for some terms which have gained currency in *usul* and *hadith*. If this learning, which is altogether related to practice and action, has not brought any improvement in you and has not rectified you, but instead of this given rise to moral and practical vices in you, your performance is inferior to that of the experts of other sciences and incomparable in its worthlessness with the baser activities of all other people.

All those concepts, verbiage, rivalries, and disputations—most of which have no relevance to the religion of God and cannot be considered to be belonging to any sciences either, nor could be regarded as the fruit of knowledge—that does not call for so much of pride and exultation. I make God my witness—and suffices He for testimony—if the result of your knowledge is that it cannot guide you on the right path, nor can it guard you against vices of morals and deeds, the meanest and basest of vocations is better than this learning, because it shows some immediate results and has fewer this-worldly and other-worldly harms.

You, poor fellow, who acquire nothing but a painful burden, hard to carry, your burden does not bring you anything but corrupt morals and perverse deeds. Therefore, your knowledge does not call for any pride and exultation either. Nevertheless, the horizon of your mind is so narrow that as soon as you prepared a hotchpotch of some terms you started thinking yourself to be a great scholar, fit to walk over the plumes of archangels under your feet, and other people as ignorant creatures. Your arrogant gait restricts the passage for the servants of God in alleys and your conceit encroaches on the roominess of social gatherings.

Yet the meanest among the arrogant is the person who is proud of outward matters like wealth, position, family and descent. This poor fellow is far from all human excellences and moral sense; his hands are

empty of all learning and knowledge; but since his clothes are made of sheep's wool, or since his father is somebody, he is arrogant with the people. What a petty mind and a dark and narrow heart it is that leaves all accomplishments and perfections to be content with the niceties of a robe and hat! For his beautiful cloak and cap, he has given up all other beauties of character and soul.

Poor fellow, he is satisfied to survive on the plane of beasts and is happy with bestial pleasures, having forgone the dignity of human station for what he considers to be some sort of status, choosing a meaningless and hollow existence, and a blank form devoid of reality and truth. He is so base and hollow that if he meets someone who is superior to him in respect of worldly advantages, he behaves with him like a slave with his master. Of course, one whose goal is nothing but the world is a slave of the worldly and the world...

In any case, narrowness of vision, pettiness of mind, and lack of capaciousness of personality, together, are a strong factor responsible for pride, which makes its victim to have *'ujb* and *kibr* and makes him highly sensitive to qualities which are neither a kind of perfection nor any merit of note. And the more one is infatuated with one's self and with the world, the more he is likely to be affected by these things.

## How to Cure Pride?

Now that you have known the viciousness of pride, it is now your duty to resolve to cure yourself of this disease and to make up your mind to purge your heart from its taints and remove its traces and its heavy dust from the mirror of your heart. If you are among the people of strong will power and an open heart, and the worldly desires have not driven their tentacles deep into it, and if the worldly allurements and ornaments have not blinded it by their light, and if you are still capable of judging and criticizing yourself with justice, the suggestions given in the previous chapter can be most useful for you in this regard.

But if you have not reached this level, it is better for you to meditate upon your state; it is possible that your heart may wake up. O man, who were initially nothing; who were hidden in the folds of nothingness for ages and epochs, more insignificant than nothingness itself and absent from the realms of existence, when God Almighty resolved to create you, you were the most deficient of the recipients, mean, and insignificant. You were incapable of receiving the Divine effusion (*fayd*). He created you from the matter (*hayula*) of the universe, which is absolute potentiality and pure weakness, and moulded you into an elemental bodily form, which was the lowest, and the meanest of the existents of the universe.

After that you were given the form of sperm, which you will loathe to touch it and will take great pains for cleansing your hands if by chance they are made dirty by it. Then you were kept in a very narrow and unclean place, the twin reproductive glands of the father. And after that through the urinary tract in a terribly ugly state you were brought into the mother's womb and you were given such a place to live in, that description will be disgusting to you. After being placed there, you were given the form of a fetus and a lump of clotted blood. There you were nourished with such a food that you will go mad if you are told about it, and will feel ashamed. But since everyone has to pass through this tribulation, it abates our

shame of it.

وَالْبَلِيَّةُ إِذَا عَمَّتْ طَابَتْ.

A distress, which is common, becomes tolerable.

During all these stages of evolution and change you were the lowest and meanest of creatures. You lacked in all external and internal perceptive faculties and devoid of every kind of merit. After that, with His great kindness and mercy, He made you capable of receiving the gift of life, the life that was manifested in you was so imperfect and fragile that it was, even inferior to that of a worm in its biological functions. In order to improve your deficient capacity, He gradually improved your functions with His mercy and compassion, until you became fit for entering this world and facing its climes. Through the meanest of corridors and in the worst possible condition you were made to enter this realm. Yet you were still weaker than and inferior to the young ones of all the animals.

After that, despite acquiring the maximum of your internal and external powers and abilities, you are still so weak and vulnerable that none of your own powers is under your full control. You can neither safeguard your health, nor can you guard your own life and energies, nor can you preserve your beauty and youth. If any calamity of an illness befalls you, you do not possess enough power to repel it. In short, you don't have any control over any aspect of your own being and existence.

If you face starvation for one day, you will not resist from eating any kind of rotten cadaver. If your thirst were to overwhelm you, you will be ready to drink from dirty and fetid water. Similarly, in all matters you are a helpless and abject slave who has no power over anything. If you compare yourself with the existence and perfection of the existence and other living beings, you will realize that you and your entire planet, or even the whole solar system, have no significance whatsoever in front of the whole physical world, which is the meanest and the smallest of all other worlds.

My dear, you have not seen anything except yourself, and whatever you have seen you did not compare it with the world around you. Compare whatever you possess, from your life to the worldly treasures in your possession, with your city, your city with your country, and your country with all the hundreds of the countries of the world, whose names you might not have even heard of, and all those countries with the whole solar system and its vast spheres which are not more than tiny fragments of the sun, and the whole solar system with the Milky Way, of which our sun along with its planets is one of millions of other stars and a part of the huge galaxy, and there are several million of such galaxies like the Milky Way.

All these are a part of the physical world, whose vastness is not known to anyone except its Creator and the discoveries of the discoverers have succeeded in revealing only a small fraction of it. Yet this physical world has no significance whatsoever as compared to the supra-physical world, whose realms lie beyond the powers of imagination of the human intellect. In the light of this, let us reexamine the

extent and scope of our lives and the share of our fortune in the realm of existence.

Thereafter, when God Almighty resolves to take you away from this world, He commands all your powers to deteriorate and your perceptive faculties to halt their activities. The mechanism of your life is broken down; your auditory and visual senses, and your energies are taken back from you and you become an inanimate inorganic substance. After the passage of a few hours, people will not be able to tolerate the stench emanating from your body and they will be averse to the view of your body and face. All your bodily members and organs will decompose and disintegrate after a few days. Such is the state of your body, and what will happen to your wealth and glory is also quite obvious.

But as for your life in *Barzakh* (the Purgatory), if you depart, God forbid, without reforming yourself, God alone knows what conditions and states will be prescribed for you therein. Perceptions of the inhabitants of this world are incapable of seeing, hearing, and smelling the affairs of that world. Whatever you hear of the darkness, the dreads, and the pressures of the grave, you compare them with this-worldly dreads and pressures, but you are mistaken. O God, help us, and rescue us from the calamity of what we ourselves have prepared with our own hands. The punishment of the grave, which is a model of the punishment in the Hereafter—and according to some traditions we will not be able to avail in the *Barzakh* any intercession of the intercessors—God alone knows what kind of punishment it will be! The state of affairs on the Day of Resurrection will be worse and more dreadful than all the past phases. It will be the day of the revelation of secrets, the manifestation of truths, and the day of the embodiment of morals and actions. It will be the day of reckoning and the day of disgrace. Such is the Day of Resurrection!

## The Punishment in The Hereafter

As to the conditions of the hell after the Day of Resurrection, they are also known to you. Would you like to know more about the hell? The punishment of hell will not be confined to the torments of fire alone; a dreadful door will be opened to your eyes, which if opened to this world its dread will destroy all of its inhabitants. A similar door will open to your flesh, another to your nose, each of which will be sufficient to kill the inhabitants of this world. One of the experts in the knowledge of the Hereafter says that in the same way as the heat of hell will reach the climax of its extremity, its coldness will also be at the highest point of coldness.

God Almighty is capable of bringing together these two extreme opposites. Such are the dreads of the Hereafter. In the light of all this, one whose beginning lies in infinite nothingness; one who from the point he steps into the world of existence, all whose stages of development are ugly and indecent; all whose states are shameful; whose conditions in the world, the Purgatory and the Hereafter, each one is more horrible and disgraceful than the other—what reason has he for pride?

What merit or glory makes him so boastful? Therefore, those whose ignorance is more and whose rational faculties are more defective, are more proud of themselves; and those whose knowledge is greater, whose souls are more capacious, and whose breasts are spacious—they are humbler and more

modest.

## **Humility and Modesty of the Prophet (S)**

The Prophet (S), whose knowledge was derived from the Divine Revelation, and whose soul was so great that it could preponderate over the spirits of millions upon millions of human beings, who rejected all the practices and customs of the pagan Arabs, who shattered under his feet all the false creeds, abrogated all the scriptures, and the circle of prophethood achieved its completion in his noble existence; who was the ruler of the world and the hereafter, and who was the master of all the worlds, with the permission of God Almighty; yet his humility towards the creatures of God was more than of any other human being.

He hated to see his Companions stand up in his respect. Whenever he entered a gathering, he used to sit in the lowest place He used to dine on the floor and used to sit on the floor and used to say, "I am a slave of God; I dine like a slave and sit in the manner proper for a slave." It has been reported from Imam al-Sadiq (A) that the Prophet (S) preferred to ride a donkey without a saddle, preferred to dine in a lowly place with the slaves, and offered alms to beggars with his two hands. That holy personage used to ride a donkey and used to sit on the mount with a slave or some other man.

It is written about him (S) that he used to share with the members of his household the duties of housework himself used to milk the sheep, stitch his own clothes and shoes, grind the flour and knead the dough, and carry his belongings himself. He liked the company of the poor and the destitutes and used to dine with them. Such, and better than what we have described, was the character and the modesty of this great personage, although besides holding his high spiritual station he held to perfection the authority of a temporal sovereign. Similar was the life and character of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A), who also followed the Prophet's way, and his character was identical to that of the Prophet (S).

## **To Cure Pride, One Should Act Against Its Dictates**

Therefore, my friend, if you are proud of your spiritual attainments, they (i.e. the Prophet and Imam 'Ali) were over and above all of us in this respect; and if you have pride in your office and authority, they possessed true sovereignty. Yet, in spite of it, their humility and modesty was more than of anybody else. This shows that humility is the product of knowledge and wisdom, and pride is the outcome of ignorance.

Therefore, free yourself from the ignominy of ignorance and the disgrace of petty-mindedness; acquire the attributes of the prophets and shed the qualities of Satan. Do not contend with your God regarding His mantle of Pride and Glory, as His wrath will subdue the contender and he will fall on his face into hell-fire. If you make up your mind for rectifying your self, the way to do so is also easy if you are somewhat persevering. You will not encounter any peril on this way if you move with manly resolve, freedom of thought, and high-mindedness. The only way of overpowering your carnal self and repelling

the insinuations of Satan is to act against their incitements.

No other way is better for crushing the desires of the self as adopting the traits and qualities of the modest and following their behavior and character. In whatever stage of pride you may be, and to whatever scientific or professional field you belong, you are advised to act against the inclinations and desires of the self. By discovering and meditating about this-worldly and other-worldly consequences of pride, it is hoped, your journey will become easier and you will reach the desired goal. If your self wishes that you should take the seat of chairmanship of the gathering or to take precedence over your colleagues and equals, you should act against its desire. If your self incites you to refrain from joining the company of the poor and indigent, admonish it severely and resolutely go and sit in their company, dine with them and travel with them.

It is possible that your inner self would try to prevent you by arguing that you are a person of a higher position and that it is essential to keep up your esteem and dignity for the sake of the propagation of the *Shari'ah*, that sitting with the poor will undermine your respect in society, that humor with the subordinates will be injurious to your authority, that occupying a lowly place in gatherings will affect your status and then you will not be able to perform your religious duties properly... and so on.

Be certain that all these are guiles of the Devil and wiles of the self. You have read and heard about the behavior and character of the Holy Prophet (S), whose worldly position was incomparably superior to you.

## A Reminiscence of a Teacher

Among the scholars of our own times, I have seen a person who enjoyed great eminence throughout the Shi'ah world and followed the footsteps of the Holy Prophet (S). The respected teacher and the revered *faqih* Hajj Shaykh 'Abd al-Karim Ha'iri Yazdi enjoyed the sole *marji'iyyah* (Shiite jurisprudential authority) of the Shiite world from 1340/1921 to 1355/1936. We have all seen his simplicity. He used to travel and dine with his servants. He used to sit on the floor and make all kind of strange jokes with the most junior of students.

During his last days, when he had taken ill, with slippers on, he used to walk in the alley after the sunset, without a cloak and turban and with a piece of cloth wrapped around his head. Regard and respect for him grew in the hearts of the people, and these acts of him did not affect his high station either.

There were other great scholars in Qum besides him, for whom these barriers that are created for you by the Devil did not exist. They used to buy their foodstuffs and goods by themselves, used to fetch water from the water tanks and attend to the duties of housework also. They meted out equal treatment to the senior and the junior and did not differentiate between the first rankers and others of a subordinate rank. Their humanity and modesty made people wonder and their respect was also not lowered; rather it was enhanced in the hearts of the people. Anyhow, the attributes of the Prophet (S) and Imams (A) do not

derogate people.

But one should be cautious of the guiles of the self while opposing it, as it may lure you into its snares and use other tactics for defeating your purpose. For example, you will observe some person occupy an inconspicuous place in a gathering, but in a fashion, which is meant to make others understand that his position is superior to all the others present and that it was but a gesture of humility and modesty on his part that he has occupied that place.

Or, for instance, if he had declined in favor of a person of uncertain superiority over himself, he will give priority over himself to someone who it is certain is of a lower rank, thus immediately making it clear that he had declined in favor of the first one because of his own humility. These, and hundreds other like this, are the wiles of self, which add *riya'* and hypocrisy to pride, and unless one does not resolve to combat them with a sincere determination one will not succeed in rectifying one's self.

All the vices of the soul are rectifiable, but a little diligence is needed in the beginning. After one has entered the process of self-correction, everything becomes easier for him. The main thing is to realize the need for the rectification of the self and to wake up from the spell of self-negligence,

## Yaqzah (Awakening) is the First Step

The first stage of humanness is *yaqzah*. It signifies the awakening from the slumber of obliviousness and the intoxication of physical nature, and the realization of the fact that man is a traveler and like any other traveler he also needs some provisions for this journey. His morality and character are his provisions for this journey.

The only means of undertaking this hazardous and perilous journey on this dark and narrow path, which is sharper than the sword's blade and thinner than a hair, is manly courage. The light of this path is one's faith and one's good qualities. If he is lazy and negligent and gives in to weakness, he will not be able to cross it with safety and will fall headlong into the hell of disgrace and into the gorge of perdition. And one who cannot pass safely over this path will, also, not be able to pass over the *Sirat* in the Hereafter.

My dear, be brave and tear apart the curtain of ignorance and folly and deliver yourself from this terrible abyss. 'Ali (A), the Lord of the Pious, the unique wayfarer of the paths of heavens and the real guide, used to cry out in the mosque so loudly that he could be heard in the neighborhood:

تَجَهَّزُوا - رَحِمَكُمُ اللَّهُ - فَقَدْ نُودِيَ فِيكُمْ بِالرَّحِيلِ

Equip yourselves and be ready, your departure has already been announced.

No preparations will be more beneficial to you than your good moral characteristics and merits, the

heart's piety, the righteous deeds, and the purity and spotlessness of your conscience. If, supposedly, you are a person of incomplete and apparent faith, you should cleanse yourself of these impurities so that Divine mercy will put you amongst the righteous and pious servants of God. Only the fire of repentance (*tawbah*) will clean these impurities, when the self is melted in the furnace of self-reproach with the fuel of remorse and return towards God. Today perform this smelting yourself, in this world; otherwise only God knows how many centuries of the Hereafter it will take for your soul to be refined in the furnace of Divine chastisement, and with a fire of which it has been said:

﴿نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمُوقَدَةُ الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ﴾

***It is the fire of Allah, kindled, which leapeth up over the hearts. (109-6-7)***

It is much easier to purify oneself in this world, as changes occur rapidly in this world; but in the next world, the process of change will be a prolonged process, and the effacement of one evil attribute of the soul will take several centuries.

Therefore, my dear, try to reform your self as long as you possess life, youth, energy, and freedom. Do not pay any attention to this-worldly fame and glory. Trample such phantoms under your feet. You are the son of Adam (A), so free your self from the trait of Satan. Perhaps the Devil gives more importance to see that this vice, which is characteristic of his own nature and for which he was driven out of the court of the Almighty God, is shared by everyone, the sage or the commoner, the scholar or the unlettered, and that they join his fold.

Then if you meet him in the next world, having carried this vice with you, he will rebuke you for having adopted this vice. he will say to you, 'O son of Adam! Didn't the prophets inform you that my haughtiness towards your father drove me out of the court of the Almighty? I was cursed due to my scorning of Adam and my self glorifying. Why did you allow yourself to be afflicted by this vice?'

At that time, you, wretched creature that you would be, besides confronting all kind of humiliations and tortures, besides all the regret and remorse, will also have to face the rebukes of the most wretched of beings and the basest of creatures. Satan was not guilty of pride towards God, but of pride towards the creature of God and had said to Him:

﴿خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ﴾

***Thou createdst me of fire., and him Thou didst create of clay. (7: 12)***

In this manner he glorified himself and looked down on Adam (A). You, also, who look down on the progeny of Adam and glorify yourself, have disobeyed God's Commands; for God has commanded His creatures to be modest and humble towards other human beings. You who treat people with haughty

contempt, why do you curse the Devil alone?

Why don't you include your vicious self also in this curse, as it also shares this vice with him? The proud man is a personification of all Satans; perhaps in the purgatory and on the Day of Resurrection, his appearance will be that of Satan. The criterion of man's form in the Hereafter are his spiritual qualities. It's possible that you will acquire the form of Satan as well as the size of an ant. The standards in the Hereafter will be different from those in this world.

## The Vicious Subtleties of the Self

Sometimes it happens that a person who lacks a certain merit is proud towards the possessor of that merit, such as when a poor person is proud towards a rich one or when an ignorant one is proud towards a learned person. It should be remembered that in the same way as *'ujb* is sometimes the source of pride, jealousy (*hasad*) may also be the source of pride. One may perceive himself as lacking in a certain merit, which is present in another; then he becomes jealous of him and this serves as the cause of pride towards the other person, whom he tries to insult in all possible ways.

In al-Kafi it has been reported from Imam al-Sadiq (A) that he said, "Pride is found in the most vicious of human beings, to whatever kind they may belong." Then he added: "Once the Prophet (S) was passing through one of the lanes of al-Madinah where a negress was gathering dung. She was told to move aside and allow the Prophet (S) to pass. She answered that the passage was wide enough. One of the persons who accompanied the Prophet (S) tried to threaten her, but the Prophet (S) prevented him from doing so, saying: Leave her alone, she is a proud woman."

Sometimes this vicious habit is seen among some scholars, who make an excuse that to act with humility with the wealthy is not a virtue. Their vicious self makes them believe that modesty with the rich weakens faith. The poor fellow cannot differentiate between the humility before wealth and humility towards the rich and others. It is true that sometimes the vice of love of the world and the ambition for worldly honor and glory makes men to adopt modest and humble behavior. This cannot be counted as modesty; it is flattery, and is reckoned as a moral vice.

The possessor of this trait does not show humbleness to the poor, except when his self-interest requires it or when he uses it as a bait. But it is also true that the virtue of humility of men invites man to act with modesty and humility towards the others, irrespective of whether they are rich or poor, whether of enviable conditions or not. That is, their modesty is sincere and pure. Their souls are clean and unstained by the love for popularity in society and honor, which have no charm for them. This kind of humility and modesty is good with the poor, and it is good with the rich as well.

Everyone should be treated with the respect that is due to him. But this pride and contempt of yours towards the rich and wealthy is not on account of the fact that you are not a sycophant, but it is because you are a jealous person, and you do not understand this. If the same rich man were unexpectedly to

show you respect, you will be humble and modest with him. In any case, the snares and the skilful guiles of the self are so subtle that one cannot do anything except taking refuge in God.

وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ أَوَّلًا وَآخِرًا

And Praise is God's, in the beginning and the end.

- [1.](#) Al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi (Tehran), Vol. III (Arabic text with Persian translation by Hajj Sayyid Jawad Mustafawi), pp. 421-422.
- [2.](#) Al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi, Vol. III, p. 426.
- [3.](#) Al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi, Vol. III, p. 424.
- [4.](#) Al-Hasan ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Shu'bah al Harrani, Tuhaf al-'uqul (Kitab furushi Islamiyyah, Tehran, 1402 H.), Arabic text with Persian translation by Ahmad Jannati 'Ata'i, p. 327.
- [5.](#) Usul al-Kafi, Vol. III, p. 423.
- [6.](#) Usul al-Kafi, Vol. III, p. 423.
- [7.](#) Usul al-Kafi, Vol. III, p. 424.

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