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Lecture 12: Knowledge, Like Property and Social Status, Brings About Arrogance

There is an important point that is necessary to tell you religious students and university students about. It is a danger that will ruin all your efforts if not understood. This danger is arrogance. This danger is found in every group of people, but it is more common amongst scholars. The knowledge that one has in any field can cause arrogance. Arrogance destroys people, just like it destroyed Iblīs. There is a tradition that says that the first sin on earth was Iblīs's arrogance. He fell due to his arrogance to a place where everyone curses him.

The definition of arrogance, its danger and why it is common amongst scholars will be made clear.

One is arrogant when he imagines himself to be of importance or imagines that he has special characteristics. He thinks that he does not have any needs. He considers himself important because he learned some jargon or he considers himself someone who does not have any needs because he has become rich. Someone is more likely to become arrogant if his social status increases after he has gained knowledge. When one becomes a president of a company he sees greatness in himself.

Compound Ignorance Makes One Forget That He's A Servant

The danger of arrogance is that one will leave worship and enter into a state of compound ignorance. Ignorance is when one does not see reality. He considers his imagination to be true, not reality. One reality, for example, is that every existence in every level is less than the existence of the Seal of the Prophets (S). Whoever considers his existence to be dependent, and his existence to be from someone else, is present and everlasting. But, whoever thinks that his existence is in his own hands must see that he will die even if he does not want to and he will continue to live even if he does not want to. One will not die until Allah allows him to die, even if he tries to kill himself.

Not only is his life in someone else's hands, but his death is in someone else's hands as well. Drinking poison and death is from Allah. If Allah wants one to die by drinking poison he will die, but if Allah does

not want this, even if he drinks poison he will not die.

He Tried To Kill Himself In Two Different Ways, But Survived

I read in an article that a man in New York took a loan for millions of dollars in order to build a skyscraper. The skyscraper was left half way done and he did not have the ability to complete it. Nobody else would give him a loan. Now, he has a huge debt on his shoulders that is increasing daily due to interest and his skyscraper remained half way done and nobody wanted to rent it. He decided to commit suicide by jumping off the top floor. He then thought, maybe I will not die by jumping so it is better to drink poison and then jump off the building. He thought that he would definitely die from one of the two reasons. He drank the poison and jumped, head-first, off the building. On his way down he crashed into a pole on the building and threw up the poison. So, he did not die in either way that he had thought he would. When Allah does not want something, there is nothing that one can do.

We must understand that life is not in our hands, not the start of life and not the continuance of life. Likewise, death is also not in our hands. We have been created, raised and remain living without choice. Everyone is dependent on Allah and Allah is the only independent existence. Man must have the ability to do whatever he wants to do. Is he able to bring about this ability in himself?

Do not say: "I am doing this." Do you have the ability to do what you want? Your existence is not in your hands for you to be able to say that qualities such as ability are in your hands. *لَا هَـٰوِلَ وَآلَـٰهَ إِلَّا بِـِِّلَـٰهِ*

A Scholar Is Also In Need Of Allah Regarding His Knowledge

One should not consider himself independent, no matter how much knowledge he has. Being dependent is part of man's nature. One must not forget that he is dependent as long as he is alive.

The place of knowledge is in one's memory. Allah decides how long knowledge remains in one's memory. Fifty years ago, there was a scholar who taught a book called *Muttawil*. One day when he woke up he forgot how to recite the first chapter of the Qurʾān. He was in a state of forgetfulness. When he entered the classroom it was as if he had never read the book before, and as if he had never attended school before. He even forgot how to say 'in the name of Allah.'

The memory stores knowledge like a computer and this memory is one of the proofs that one's *nafs* is immaterial. The memory holds all information learned, for example the alphabet that one learns in first grade. If one's memory is taken from him he will even forget the alphabet. So, a scholar is still in need of Allah, even in regards to his knowledge.

A Doctor Who Accidentally Killed His Own Son

A doctor is able to benefit from what he learned if his knowledge remains in his memory. But what would happen if Allah didn't want it to remain in his memory?

The son of a doctor, around 30 years ago, had a fever and the doctor thought that his son had malaria. The doctor treated him as if he had malaria when in reality he had typhoid fever. The medication of typhoid fever and malaria are different. The son died after a few days. There is nobody who would work harder in finding a cure for that child other than his father, but everything is from Allah.

There was a religious doctor who passed away. He told me: "Sometimes I give someone medication which I am certain will work. Later I see that it did not have a positive effect. Sometimes medication that I thought might work works perfectly." It is clear that the effect is also from Allah. A doctor, like a mujtahid, is in need of his knowledge and for that reason he should not become arrogant.

A Scholar Must Be Humble

A mujtahid, a doctor and an engineer must be humble. He should not consider himself to be different from the laity. Likewise a millionaire must not consider himself different from a poor person. The million dollars that one has did not make him a person without needs. Can one's money cure him from an incurable disease?

It should not be left unsaid that this is related to the person himself. The mujtahid should not consider himself high and others low. He should not have huge expectations of respect. But, it is other people's duty to respect him and hold him high. A scholar in any field must be respected, especially the religious scholars. Many traditions have been mentioned about this, for example, respecting a religious scholar is like respecting the Messenger of Allah (S) just like mistreating a religious scholar is like mistreating the Messenger of Allah (S).

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