

Diseases of the Soul: Pride – Kibr

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Article

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Undoubtedly, Allah knows what they conceal and what they reveal, and He doesn't love the proud (Qur'an, 16:23).

Muhammad ibn Ya'qub (al-Kulayni) reports from Hakim; who says: "I asked Abu `Abd Allah (al-Imam al-Sadiq) (a) as to the lowest degree of ilhad (apostasy). He answered, 'Verily kibr (pride) is its lowest degree.'"

[Al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. II, p. 309, hadith #1]

Kibr is 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 clearly noticed by others by which they know that he is proud. He considers others to be lacking in the merit that he thinks he has within himself and he perceives himself to be superior to others.

This perception of supremacy over others causes in him a state of vanity. Kibr, in this sense, is an inner state, and when its effects are reflected in his behaviour 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.

Kinds And Degrees Of Kibr

- There are different degrees of kibr (pride), similar to the stages and degrees of `ujb (self-admiration). The different kinds of kibr, are six in number:

1. Pride 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.

- 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 (gnostics), amounts to kibr towards God.

The Causes Kibr

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

Examples Of Kibr

- Among the scholars of religious philosophy, mysticism and other religious sciences are those who consider themselves to be visionary and men of specific knowledge and insight, imagining themselves in the category of godly and saintly persons with a high record of good deeds. Such persons make an absurd show of their superiority over others, dismissing others as nuts and superficial bums, and all ordinary people as subhuman creatures. They scorn and look down on all the creatures of God while claiming to possess love and fear of God and beating the drum of truth-seeking. Divine teachings require them to be humble with the creatures of God with goodwill and optimism and least knowledge of God demands that they should not scorn His servants.

- Among the spiritual masters and guides of flawless inner purity, there are those who treat the common people with pride and look down on scholars of religious sciences and speak disparagingly of them. 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.
- Among the experts of other sciences, such as medicine, mathematics, physics, engineering and other experimental sciences, there are individuals who consider their discipline to be superior to others. Each one of them believes that whatever he knows is the real knowledge. They behave with pride and arrogance and underestimate all other sciences no matter how much important they are, and scorn the scientists and experts belonging to other fields of knowledge whereas their field of knowledge neither teaches such attitude with others nor requires it.
- Some others who do not belong to any of the branches of science, such as the persons 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 respect. 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.
- Other examples of pride include those who come of a noble descent and look down on others not like them. Others relate to personal beauty and charm, wealth and material possessions, one's tribe, the number of one's supporters, followers, or pupils, which cause arrogance and pride with respect to others.
- Some examples of pride are seen in persons with 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. Such an individual thinks that 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.

The Spiritual And Social Harms Of Kibr

Pride itself is a devilish trait and it leads to many other vices as well. It prevents the person from acquiring inward and outward merits and from enjoying the blessings of this world and the Hereafter. It causes hatred and malice in human hearts, disgraces the proud person in the eyes of his fellow human beings and humiliates him. It forces others to retaliate him, and despise and insult him.

- The Prophet (s) said: **“Never can the person who possesses a speck of pride inside his heart enter Paradise.”** [Al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 3, p. 423]
- Imam al-Sadiq (a) said: **“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.”** [al-Kafi, vol. 3, p. 424]
- Imam al-Sadiq (a) 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.”** [al-Kafi, vol. 3, p. 424]

Practical Steps To Cure Kibr

- A person suffering the disease of pride, thinking himself to be superior to others because of any reason should at first step realize that all other human beings are creatures of God like you. You were also created from a drop of semen, born helpless, you don't know and cannot control whatever disaster may befall you at any moment, you will certainly die one day, your dead body will decay and then you will be lost from this world. Thus, the best way to live a life of honour and dignity is to always be realistic about yourself and behave humbly with others.

- If you are proud because of your knowledge, you should know that you were born ignorant and you were taught by your teachers who imparted knowledge to you and because of that you were able to acquire higher levels of knowledge that you possess now and imagine to be superior to others and look down on them. Besides, you were given eyes, ears, brain and other blessings by God to read, understand, memorize and analyse and then speak and write. If you were born with a genetic disease or without opportunities that could have prevented you from acquiring knowledge, then you would have been like millions of others who are illiterate. It is also possible that there are many intellectuals and scholars in your own field who have more knowledge than you and you do not know them. You may also suffer any moment from a disease that leads to loss of your memory, power of reasoning, vision, hearing and speech.
- If you are proud because of your wealth, beauty and other physical attributes, you should know that all these possessions are temporary in one way or the other. Your wealth may be lost if your business or investment suffers loss and you may go bankrupt. Changes in stability of your city or country can devalue your material possessions. If you are proud of your beauty, you know that it will ultimately go away with ageing, it may also be lost if you have an accident.
- If you are proud of your power or status in the society or your community, you should know that others with whom you behave arrogantly are your enemies. They will conspire against you and will remove you from power because of your proud and belittling behaviour towards them. Besides you should know that no one remains in seat of authority or power forever, it's always transient.
- Finally, if you are proud over your virtuous deeds and acts of worship, you have forgotten the basic fact that it was God Who enlightened your heart to worship Him, it was God who gave you opportunity and strength to worship Him and perform virtuous actions. It was His special favour upon you that He put you in a situation whereby you were able to perform good deeds. If He removes His special favours from you even for the blink of an eye, you will perish. Thus, remember that all your pride is fruitless and will lead you to Hell.

Conclusion

Imam al-Sadiq (a) said: **“Whoever frees himself of pride (it is as if), has in fact acquired dignity and honour.”** [Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 78, p. 229]

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