

The True Measure of Honor in Islam: Taqwa as the Sole Criterion

Introduction

In Islamic sources, the true measure of honor, nobility, and superiority among human beings is not lineage, wealth, social status, race, color, physical characteristics, tribal affiliation, nationality, or gender. It is **taqwa**—piety, God-consciousness, or being most careful of one's duty to Allah. The Quran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) and the Imams (peace be upon them) explicitly reject worldly distinctions as the basis for true merit in the sight of Allah. Islam teaches that all people share a common origin, that diversity exists for mutual recognition, and that the only legitimate criterion of distinction before God is taqwa. Beneficial knowledge is also recognized alongside taqwa as a criterion, though not as a legal privilege.

The Quranic Foundation: Common Origin, Diversity, and Taqwa

The decisive Quranic standard is found in Surah Al-Hujurat:

يا أيها الناس إنا خلقناكم من ذكر وأنثى وجعلناكم شعوبا وقبائل لتعارفوا إن أكرمكم عند الله أتقاكم إن الله عليم خبير

"O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware." (Quran 49:13)

This verse establishes several principles. First, all human beings share a common origin, having been created from a single male and female, which establishes the innate equality of humanity. Second, the creation of diverse nations and tribes is for mutual recognition (*li-ta'arafu*), understanding, and cooperation, not for hierarchies, pride, contempt, or discrimination. Third, the only legitimate basis for true honor in

the sight of Allah is *taqwa*. Allah, being All-Knowing and All-Aware, is fully cognizant of deeds and intentions.

The Quran also states:

إن أكرمكم عند الله أتقاكم

"Indeed, the most honored of you with Allah is the most God-conscious of you."
(Quran 49:13)

Taqwa is described as the best provision for the journey of the Hereafter:

و تزودوا فإن خير الزاد التقوى

"And take provision, for indeed the best provision is taqwa." (Quran 2:197)

It is also the best spiritual clothing:

و لباس التقوى ذلك خير

"And the clothing of taqwa—that is better." (Quran 7:26)

Alongside taqwa, beneficial knowledge is recognized as a criterion for distinction. The Quran asks: **"Say: Are those who know and those who do not know alike? Only the men of understanding are mindful."** (Quran 39:9). This implies a superiority based on understanding and knowledge, particularly in matters of faith and divine wisdom, which often goes hand-in-hand with taqwa. Such social distinction based on piety and knowledge is permissible, but not in terms of legal privilege.

Humanity's Common Origin and Fundamental Equality

Islamic teachings affirm that all human beings share a singular common origin. The human species originated from Adam and his mate, and all people are descendants of these two progenitors. This foundational principle underscores the unity of mankind and the shared humanity of all individuals, regardless of their diverse characteristics.

The Quran states that Allah " **O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer.**" (Quran 4:1). Many Quranic verses refer to humans as the "children of Adam," emphasizing their direct relationship with the first human and highlighting the continuity of humanity's history from this initial link.

عدة من أصحابنا عن أحمد بن محمد عن الحسن بن علي عن هشام بن سالم عن أبي عبد الله (عليه السلام) قال إن الله عز و جل خلق آدم من الطين فحرم أكل الطين على ذريته .

A number of our people have narrated from Ahmad ibn Muhammad from al-Hassan ibn Ali from Hisham ibn Salim who has said the following: "Abu 'Abd Allah (peace be upon him), has said that **Allah, most Majestic, most Glorious, created Adam from clay and has made it unlawful for his offspring to eat clay.**"

— Al-Kafi (Vol. 6) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Yaqub al-Kulayni, Book 5, Chapter 18, Hadith #4

The humble origin for all humanity serves to eliminate any grounds for pride based on lineage or social status.

رسول الله ﷺ (صلي الله عليه و آله): آفة الحسب الافتخار والعجب

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: '**The bane of [noble] lineage is pride of it.**'

— al-Kafi, v. 2, p. 329, no. 6

Islam champions the absolute equality and inherent dignity of all human beings, unequivocally rejecting discrimination or social hierarchy based on external factors. These include distinctions of skin color, physical attributes, wealth, lineage, nationality, or social status. All individuals are considered equal in the sight of Allah and in terms of their fundamental human rights.

The Purpose of Human Diversity

The diverse array of humanity—manifested in different races, tribes, languages, and complexions—is not intended to create divisions, foster superiority, or lead to conflict. Instead, Islamic teachings clarify that these differences serve a profound divine purpose: to facilitate mutual recognition, understanding, and cooperation among people.

Allah has made humanity into various nations and tribes "**so that you may come to know and understand one another**" (Surah Al-Hujurat, Quran 49:13). These variations are considered signs of Allah's existence and creative power, meant to enrich human experience and promote social harmony. They are not a basis for pride, contempt, or the usurpation of rights, but rather a means for mankind to learn from and appreciate each other's unique traditions and contributions.

The Quran presents the diversity of human languages and colors not just as a sociological phenomenon but as profound "signs of Allah" that reflect His boundless power, wisdom, and artistry in creation:

و من آياته خلق السماوات و الارض و اختلاف السنتكم و الوانكم ان فى ذلك لآيات للعالمين

"And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed in that are signs for those of knowledge." (Quran 30:22).

This indicates that recognizing the wisdom behind diversity is a trait of the knowledgeable, who see it as a path to knowing God, whereas the ignorant may use it for arrogance.

The statistical impossibility of identical humans as proof of divine power that in the entire world, one cannot find two humans who are identical in all aspects regarding face and voice tone. The complexity of this design is further explained that the human face, which is a small part, and the human voice tone, which is a simple subject, by the power of the Lord take on billions of different forms, and this is among the signs of His greatness.

These differences in physical forms, languages, and complexions are meant to be pondered upon by those who know and the wise, serving as sermons that deepen

their understanding and appreciation of the Creator's grandeur. They emphasize that these differences are to be equally respected and valued, rather than being used for divisive purposes.

Rejection of Racial and Ancestral Superiority

Islam explicitly and unequivocally rejects all forms of racial, ancestral, class, or national superiority. It condemns concepts such as racial superiority and national supremacy as artificial and void. The religion disallows anyone from claiming superiority over others based on characteristics like race, color, language, or wealth.

The pride and hauteur based on ancestry, prevalent in pre-Islamic societies, were explicitly dispelled by Islam. The universal concept of brotherhood in Islam is founded on the belief in One God (Tawhid) and fundamentally rejects all artificial marks of distinction.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) declared:

الناس كأسنان المشط سواء.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"People are equal like the teeth of a comb."**

— Man La Yahduru al-Faqih (Vol. 4) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali al-Saduq, Book 1, Chapter 175, Hadith #5798

إن الله لا ينظر إلى صوركم و لا إلى أموالكم و إنما ينظر إلى قلوبكم و أعمالكم

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **God does not consider the faces and properties, rather he considers your hearts and actions**

—Mohajjatol Beisae volume 6, page 312. Mustadrak AlWasail, vol 11, page 264. Aalamu AlDeen, page 201. AlAmali, page 535. Jami' Al-Akhbar, page 100. Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, vol 2, page 181. Makarim AlAkhlāq, page 469.

عن جعفر بن محمد، عن آبائه في وصية النبي (صل هلا عليه وآله) لعيل (عليه السالم) اقل: اي عيل آفة الحسب الفخار، ثم اقل: اي عيل إن هلا قد اذهب ابالسالم نخوة الجاهلية وتفارها آبابئها، آل إن الناس من آدم، وآدم من تراب، وأكرمهم عند هلا. أتقاهم

From Ja'far bin Muhammad, from his forefathers regarding the Prophet's (peace be upon him and his family) advice to Ali (peace be upon him): **O Ali, pride in lineage is a defect.** Then he said: **O Ali, indeed Allah has removed through Islam the arrogance of ignorance and its boasting of ancestors. Indeed, people are from Adam, and Adam is from dust, and the most noble among them before Allah is the most God-fearing.**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 16, Section 1, Chapter 75, Hadith 20929

الإمام علي (عليه السلام) - في ذم إبليس -: فافتخر على آدم بخلقه ، وتعصب عليه لأصله ، فعدو الله ٠ الإمام المتعصبين ، وسلف المستكبرين ، الذي وضع أساس العصبية ، ونازع الله ٠ رداء الجبرية ، وادرع لباس التعزز ، وخلع قناع التذلل

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) condemning Iblis [Satan], said, '**So he felt proud of his own creation over Adam's, and was racist against him because of his origin. The enemy of Allah, therefore, is the leader of all racist bigots, and the forefather of all those who consider themselves superior, who laid the very foundation of bigotry, and tried to wrest the cloak of might from Allah, and assumed the garb of exultation having shed the veil of self-abasement.**'

— Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 192

- عنه عن أبيه عن فضالة عن داود بن فرقد عن أبي عبد الله (عليه السلام) قال إن الملائكة كانوا يحسبون أن إبليس منهم وكان في علم الله أنه ليس منهم فاستخرج ما في نفسه بالحمية والغضب فقال خلقتني من نار وخلقته من طين.

It is narrated from him (narrator of the Hadith above) from his father from Fadalāh from Dawud ibn Farqad from Abu 'Abdillah (peace be upon him) who has said the following: **"The angels thought that Satan was one of them. In the knowledge of Allah he was not one of them. He (Satan) let out that which was in his soul with racist feelings and anger saying, 'You have created me from fire and You created him from clay.'"**

— Al-Kafi (Vol. 2) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Yaqub al-Kulayni, Book 1, Chapter 123, Hadith #6

These sayings powerfully condemn all forms of racial and ethnic prejudice. Islam explicitly banishes the pride and prejudice rooted in ancestral boasting or social distinctions, viewing them as relics of the 'Days of Ignorance' (pre-Islamic era). It teaches that any distinctions based on external factors are human constructs, and challenges all forms of societal divisions, whether based on race, wealth, or lineage. The only true basis for an individual's elevation is their conduct, piety, purity of character, and high morals.

Taqwa: The Sole Criterion for Honor

The core message of the verse is articulated in the statement: "**surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty); surely Allah is Knowing, Aware.**" (Quran 49:13). This unequivocally declares that nobility, honor, and superiority in Allah's presence are determined solely by taqwa (piety, God-consciousness, or being most careful of one's duty), not by lineage, wealth, social status, race, or tribal affiliation. Allah's knowledge and awareness encompass all deeds and intentions, ensuring that true piety is recognized.

In Islam, the criteria for nobility, honor, and superiority are fundamentally rooted in an individual's spiritual and moral character, particularly their taqwa (piety, God-consciousness), rather than external or inherited factors such as lineage, wealth, social status, race, or tribal affiliation. The Islamic worldview, as articulated in the Quran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) and the Imams, explicitly rejects these worldly distinctions as a basis for true merit in the sight of Allah. The example of Bilal ibn Rabah, a formerly enslaved African man chosen to give the call to prayer (*adhan*), powerfully symbolized that taqwa is the sole criterion for honor.

Prophetic and Imamic Teachings on Honor

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) emphasized this principle in his Farewell Pilgrimage:

حدثنا أبي - رحمه الله - قال: حدثنا محمد بن أبي القاسم ماجيلويه، عن محمد بن علي الكوفي، عن محمد بن سنان، عن حنان بن سدير، عن أبيه، عن أبي جعفر عليه السلام قال: صعد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله المنبر يوم فتح مكة ثم قال: أيها الناس إن الله تبارك وتعالى قد ذهب عنكم بنخوة الجاهلية وتفآخرها بآبائها، ألا إنكم من آدم وآدم من طين، وخير عباد - الله عنده أتقاهم، إن العربية ليست بأب والد ولكنها لسان ناطق فمن قصر به عمله لم يبلغه رضوان الله حسبه، ألا إن كل دم كان في الجاهلية أو إحنة فهو تحت قدمي هاتين إلى يوم القيامة.

We were told by my father, may Allah grant him mercy, that he said: We were told by Muhammed bin Abi'l-Qasem Majilawayh, from Muhammed bin Ali al-Kufi, from Muhammed bin Sinan, from Hannan bin Sudair, from his father, from Abu Ja'far, peace be upon him, that he said: **The Messenger of Allah, Allah's blessings be upon him and his Family, climbed the pulpit on the Day of the Conquest of Mecca, and then he said: O people, indeed, Allah, Blessed and Exalted is He, has certainly removed from you the vanity of the Jahiliya and its (act of expressing) pride with its fathers. Alas, you are, indeed, from Adam, and Adam is (made) from mud, and the best of the servants of Allah to Him is the one among them who is most godfearing. Indeed, the Arabic is not a begetting father, however, it is a speaking tongue. Hence, the one whose action reaches short, the satisfaction of Allah will not make him reach his dignity. Alas, every blood, indeed, that was during the Jahiliya, or hatred, it is under these two feet of mine until the Day of Resurrection.**

— Maani al-Akhbar by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali al-Saduq, Book 1, Chapter 191, Hadith #1

المسلمون إخوة، لا فضل لأحد على أحد إلا بالتقوى.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **Muslims are brothers, no one has fadl over another except through taqwa.**

— Mizan al-Hikmah by Muhammad al-Rayshahri, Volume 2, Page 1341

إن من خير رجالكم التقي، النقي، السمع الكفين، النقي الطرفين البر بوالديه ولا يلجئ عياله إلى غيره.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **From the best of your men is the one with taqwa, the pure, the one with generous hands, the pure on both ends, and the one who is dutiful to his parents and does not force his family to rely on anyone else.**

— al-Kafi by Shaykh al-Kulayni, Volume 2, Page 57

من سره أن يكون أكرم الناس فليثق الله.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **Whoever would like to be the person of greatest karamah, let him have taqwa of Allah.**

— Mishkat al-Anwaar fi Ghorar al-Akhbar by Ali bin al-Hasan al-Tabrisi, Volume 0, Page 52

أكرمهم عند الله أتقاهم

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"The most honored of them in the sight of Allah is the most God-fearing among them."**

— Bihar Al-Anwar volume: 22, page: 438

عن يعقوب بن شعيب اقل: سمعت أبا عبدهللا (عليه السالم) يقول: ما نقل هلا عبدا من ذل المعاصي إلى عز التقوى إل أغناه. من غير مال، وأعزه من غير عشيرة، وآنسه من غير بشر

From Yaqub bin Shuaib who said: I heard Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) saying: **Allah does not transfer a servant from the humiliation of sins to the honor of taqwa (God-consciousness) except that He enriches him without (having to give him) wealth, honors him without a clan, and provides him companionship without people.**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 20, Hadith 20385

و روى الحسن بن محبوب عن مالك بن عطية عن عائذ الأحمسي عن أبي حمزة الثمالي قال قال زين العابدين علي بن الحسين عليهما السلام : ألا إن أحبكم إلى الله عز و جل أحسنكم عملا و إن أعظمكم عند الله حظا أعظمكم فيما عند الله رغبة و إن أنجى الناس من عذاب الله أشدهم لله خشية و إن أقربكم من الله أوسعكم خلقا و إن أرضاكم عند الله أسبغكم على عياله و إن أكرمكم عند الله أتقاكم

Al-Hasan ibn Mahbub narrated from Malik ibn Atiyyah, from Aidh Al-Ahmasi, from Abu Hamzah Al-Thumali, who said that Zayn Al-Abidin Imam Ali ibn Al-Hussain (peace be upon him) said: **Behold, the most beloved of you to Allah (swt), the Mighty and Majestic, is the one with the best deeds.**

Indeed, the greatest among you in reward with Allah (swt) is the one with the greatest desire for what is with Allah (swt).

The safest of people from Allah's (swt) punishment is the one who fears Allah (swt) the most.

The closest of you to Allah (swt) is the one with the most expansive and noble character.

The most pleasing to Allah (swt) among you is the one who is most generous toward his family.

Indeed, the most honored of you in the sight of Allah (swt) is the most God-conscious among you.

— Man La Yahduruh al-Faqih (Vol. 4) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali al-Saduq, Book 1, Chapter 175, Hadith #5884

عن الوليد بن عباس اقل: سمعت أب عبدهللا (عليه السالم) يقول: الحسب الفعال، والشرف . المال، والكرم التقوى

From Al-Walid ibn Abbas who said: I heard Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) saying: **Merit is in action, nobility is in wealth, and honor is in taqwa (God-consciousness).**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 20, Hadith 20388

وعن محمد بن يحيى وعثمان بن عيسى جميعا، عن بعض أصحابه اقل: قلت ألبى عبد هللا (عليه السالم): من أكرم الخلق. عمل هللا؟ اقل: أكثرهم ذكرا هللا وأعملهم بطاعته

From Muhammad bin Yahya and Uthman bin Isa together, from some of their companions who said: I said to Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him): **Who is the most honorable of creation to Allah? He said: The one who remembers Allah the most and acts most in obedience to Him.**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 7, Section 3, Chapter 5, Hadith 8993

عن ابن رئاب، عن أبي عبد هللا (عليه السالم) اقل: إن ال نعد الرجل مؤمنا حتى يكون لجميع أمران متبعا مريدا، أال وإن من اتباع. أمران وارا دته الورع فتزينوا به يرحمكم هللا، وكيدوا أعداءان به ينعشكم هللا

From Ibn Ri'ab, from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) who said: **We do not consider a man to be a believer until he becomes a follower and supporter of all our matters. Indeed, among following our matters and supporting them is piety (* wara'), so adorn yourselves with it - may Allah have mercy on you - and resist our enemies through it - may Allah raise you up.** Translator: * The word Wara' can be translated as "scrupulous piety" or "religious consciousness" but its complete meaning is more nuanced. It refers to a state of heightened spiritual vigilance and extra cautiousness where a person abstains not only from what is clearly forbidden (haram) but also from doubtful (gray areas) or questionable matters out of caution to protect their faith. Wara' is placed between Taqwa (God-consciousness) and Ijtihad (striving/effort), highlighting its crucial role as a spiritual quality.

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 21, Hadith 20391

قال: أخبرني أبو بكر محمد بن عمر الجعابي قال: حدثنا أبي العباس أحمد بن محمد بن سعيد قال: حدثنا محمد بن هارون بن عبد الرحمن الحجازي قال: حدثنا أبي قال: حدثنا عيسى بن أبي الورد، عن أحمد بن عبد العزيز، عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام قال: قال أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام: لا يقل . مع التقوى عمل، وكيف يقل ما يتقبل

He said: Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Umar al-Ji'abi reported to me from Abul Abbas, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Saeed, who reported from Muhammad ibn Harun ibn Abdul Rehman al-Hijazi, who reported from his father, who reported from Isa ibnAbul Ward, from Ahmad ibn Abdul Aziz, who reported from Abu Abdillahthat: Amirul Mu'mineen, peace be upon him, said: **"A deed when performed with Taqwa (i.e. being mindful of one's duties towards Allah, and guarding oneself from sins for the fear of Allah) is not (of) less (importance). And how can that be less which has been accepted (by Allah)?"**

— Al-Amali by Shaykh Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Mufid, Book 4, Chapter 2, Hadith #2

This indicates a distinction: while society might perceive nobility through material wealth, true honor and nobility in the divine estimation are derived from taqwa.

Islam is considered the highest form of nobility, and piety is the most precious form of honor.

عن مفضل بن عمر اقل: كنت عند أبي عبدهللا (عليه السالم) فذكران العمال، فقلت أن: ما اضعف عميل، فقال: مه استغفر: (هللا، ثم اقل لي: إن قليل العمل مع التقوى خير من كثير بال تقوى، قلت: كيف يكون كثير بال تقوى؟ اقل) عليه السالم، نعم مثل الرجل يطعم طعامه ويرفق جيرانه ويوطئ رحله اذا ارتفع له الباب من الحرام دخل فيه فهذا العمل بال تقوى. ويكون الآخر ليس عنده اذا ارتفع له الباب من الحرام لم يدخل فيه

From Mufaddal ibn Umar who said: I was with Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) and we mentioned deeds. I asked, "What is the weakest deed?" He replied, **"Stop! seek forgiveness from Allah."** Then he said to me, **"A small deed accompanied by piety is better than a great deed without piety."** I asked, "How can there be a great deed without piety?" He replied, **"Yes, consider a man who feeds others, is kind to his neighbors, and is hospitable to guests; yet, if a door to something forbidden opens before him, he enters it—this is a deed without piety. In contrast, another man may lack such means, yet when a door to something forbidden opens before him, he does not enter it."**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 20, Hadith 20384

عن السكوني، عن أبي عبد هلالا (عليه السلام) (قل: اقل رسول هلالا) صل هلالا عليه وآله: (ثالث من لم يكن فيه لم يتم له. عمل: ورع يحجزه عن معاصي هلالا، وخلق يداري به الناس، وحلم يرد به جهل الجاهل

From Al-Sakuni, from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) who said: **The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) said: Three qualities, whoever doesn't possess them, their deeds will not be complete: Piety that prevents him from disobeying Allah, good character through which he is courteous with people, and forbearance with which he responds to the ignorance of the ignorant.**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 12, Section 1, Chapter 121, Hadith 16084

عن جعفر بن محمد عن آبيه - في وصية النبي (صل هلالا عليه وآله وسلم) (لعيل) (عليه السلام) - . اقل: اي عيل ثلاثة من لقي: هلالا عز وجل بهن فهو من أفضل الناس من أتى هلالا عز وجل بما افترض عليه فهو من أعبد الناس، ومن ورع عن محارم هلالا فهو من أورع الناس، ومن قنع بما رزقه هلالا فهو من أغنى الناس، ثم اقل: اي عيل ثالث من لم يكن فيه لم يتم عمله: ورع يحجزه عن معاصي هلالا، وخلق يداري به الناس، وحلم يرد به جهل. الجاهل - إلى أن اقل: - اي عيل السلام عراين ولباسه الحياء، وزينته العفاف، ومرؤته العمل الصالح، وعماده الورع

From Ja'far bin Muhammad from his forefathers - in the Prophet's (peace be upon him and his family) advice to Ali (peace be upon him) - he said: **O Ali, whoever meets Allah the Mighty and Obligation Of Wara' (Piety) Majestic with these three traits is among the best of people: One who comes to Allah with what He has made obligatory upon him is among the most worshipping of people, one who abstains from Allah's prohibitions is among the most pious of people, and one who is content with what Allah has provided him is among the wealthiest of people. Then he said: O Ali, three traits without which one's deeds remain incomplete: piety (wara') that prevents him from disobeying Allah, good character in dealing with people, and forbearance to counter the ignorance of the ignorant. Then he said: O Ali, Islam is bare and its clothing is modesty, its ornament is chastity, its virtue is righteous deeds, and its pillar is piety.**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 21, Hadith 20405

عن الحسين بن يزيد، عن جعفر بن محمد، عن آباءه، عن النبي (صل هلا عليه وآله) اقل: ثالث من لم تكن فيه فليس مني وال من هلا قيل: اي رسول هلا، وما هن؟ اقل: حلم يرد به جهل الجاهل، وحسن خلق يعيش به، وورع يحجزه عن معاصي هلا. عز وجل

From Al-Hussain bin Yazid, from Ja'far bin Muhammad, from his forefathers, from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) who said: **Three traits, whoever does not possess them is not from me nor from Allah.** It was asked: O Messenger of Allah, what are they? He said: **Forbearance by which one counters the ignorance of the ignorant, good character by which one lives, and piety which prevents one from disobeying Allah, the Mighty and Majestic.**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 20, Section 3, Chapter 31, Hadith 25829

عن السكوني، عن أبي عبد هلا، عن آباءه (عليهم السالم) اقل: اقل رسول هلا (صل هلا عليه وآله وسلم): ثالث من لم يكن فيه لم يتم له عمل: ورع يحجزه عن معاصي هلا، وخلق يداري به الناس، وحلم يرد به جهل الجاهل

From Al-Sakuni, from Abu Abdullah, from his forefathers (peace be upon them) who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) said: "**Three qualities, whoever does not possess them, his deeds will not be complete: piety that prevents him from disobeying Allah, good Recommendation Of Good Companionship, Neighborliness, And Fellowship character by which he deals with people, and forbearance by which he repels the ignorance of the ignorant.**"

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 12, Section 1, Chapter 2, Hadith 15513

اتق الله بعض التقى و إن قل ودع بينك وبينه سترا و إن رق

Imam Jaffar Sadiq (peace be upon him): Imam As-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said: **Be god-fearing and fear although it may be little, and maintain a curtain between yourself and Him, although it may be thin**

— 1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 268

Luqman the Wise advised his son:

و قال لقمان لابنه : يا بني إن الدنيا بحر عميق و قد هلك فيها عالم كثير فاجعل سفينتك فيها الإيمان بالله و اجعل شراعها التوكل على الله و اجعل زادك فيها تقوى الله عز و جل فإن نجوت فبرحمة الله و إن هلكت فبذنوبك.

Luqman said to his son: **O my son, the world is a deep ocean in which many people have drowned. Make your ship in it faith in Allah (swt), make its sail reliance upon Allah (swt), and make your provision in it piety toward Allah (swt), the Mighty and Glorious. If you are saved, it is by the mercy of Allah (swt), and if you perish, it is due to your sins.**

— Man La Yahduru al-Faqih (Vol. 2) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali al-Saduq, Book 3, Chapter 22, Hadith #4

الإمام الكاظم عليه السلام : إن لقمان قال لابنه : ... إن الدنيا بحر عميق ، قد غرق فيها عالم كثير ، فلتكن سفينتك فيها تقوى الله ، وحشوها الإيمان وشراعها التوكل ، وقيمها العقل ، ودليلها العلم ، وسكانها الصبر ،

Imam Musa Kazim (peace be upon him) said, '**Luqman said to his son:...the world is a deep ocean in which many worlds have already drowned, so make Godwariness your boat, faith its content, trust in Allah its sail, reason its custodian, knowledge its guide and patience its inhabitants.**'

— al-Kafi, v. 1, p. 16, no. 12

الإمام الهادي (عليه السلام) : من اتقى الله یتقى

Imam Ali-un-Naqi (peace be upon him) said, '**The one who is wary of Allah, Allah will make everyone wary of him.**'

— Bihar al-Anwar, v. 77, p. 366, no. 32

What Is Taqwa? Definition, Dimensions, and Stages

Taqwa derives from the Arabic root *wa-qa-ya*, meaning protection or support. It refers to protecting oneself from Allah's displeasure by adhering to His commands and avoiding His prohibitions.

عن الهيثم بن واقد اقل: سمعت الصادق جعفر بن محمد (عليه السالم) يقول: من أخرجه هلاعا عز وجل من ذل المعاصي إلى، عز التقوى أغناه هلاعا بال مال، وأعزه بال عشيرة، وآنسه بال أنيس ومن خاف هلاعا أخاف هلاعا منه كل شيء، ومن لم يخف هلاعا أخافه هلاعا من كل شيء، ومن رضي من هلاعا إبليس من الرزق رضي منه إبليس من العمل، ومن لم يستيح من طلب المعاش خفت مؤونته ونعم أهله، ومن زهد في الدنيا أثبت هلاعا. الحكمة في قلبه، وأنطق بها لسانه، وبصره عيوب الدنيا داءها ودواءها، وأخرجه من الدنيا سالما إلى دار السالم

From Al-Haytham ibn Waqid who said: I heard Al-Sadiq Jafar ibn Muhammad (peace be upon him) say: **Whoever Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, removes from the humiliation of sins to the honor of taqwa (God-consciousness), Allah enriches him without (having to give him) wealth, honors him without a tribe, and provides him companionship without companions. Whoever fears Allah, Allah makes everything fear him, and whoever does not fear Allah, Allah makes him fear everything. Whoever is content with little sustenance from Allah, Allah is content with little deeds from him. Whoever is not ashamed of seeking livelihood, his expenses become light and his family lives in comfort. Whoever renounces worldly life, Allah establishes wisdom in his heart, makes his tongue speak with it, shows him the faults of the world, its diseases and its cures, and takes him out of this world safely to the abode of peace.**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 20, Hadith 20387

الإمام الصادق (عليه السلام) - في قوله تعالى: «ولذكر الله أكبر»: ذكر الله تعالى عند ما أحل وحرّم

Imam Jaffar al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said, with regard to the verse of Allah: **"and the remembrance of Allah is greater", '[It means] Remembering Allah with regards to what He has made lawful and unlawful.'**

— Nur al-Thaqalayn, v. 4, p. 162, no. 61

الإمام الصادق (عليه السلام) : لك أن تنظر الحزم وتأخذ الحائطة لدينك

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said, **'It is upon you to be resolute and pre-cautious with your religion.'**

— Bihar al-Anwar, v. 2, p. 259, no. 9

الإمام الصادق (عليه السلام) - في قوله تعالى: «و من يؤت الحكمة فقد أوتى خيرا كثيرا»: طاعة الله   ومعرفة الإمام

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said regarding Allah's verse: "**and he who is given wisdom...**", said, '[It is] **obedience to Allah and knowing one's Imam.**'

— al-Kafi, v. 1, p. 185, no. 11

واعلم أنك لن تخلو من عين الله، فانظر كيف تكون. (تحف العقول ص455)

Imam Mohammad Taqi (peace be upon him): **Do know that you are not away from the sight of Allah, So see to it that in what condition you are living (sinfulness or piety)**

— Tuhaf al-Uqul P 455

Taqwa is guarding the self from opposing the commands and prohibitions of the Truth and following His pleasure; it is often used for the emphatic protection and complete guarding of the self from falling into prohibited matters by abandoning doubtful things. Taqwa is a comprehensive concept encompassing consciousness and fear of Allah, leading to protecting oneself from His displeasure by fulfilling obligations and avoiding prohibitions. It includes being constantly aware of Allah's presence, spiritual mindfulness, reverence and awe, inner control, righteousness, and purity of the soul. The fear of God associated with taqwa is interpreted not as fear of God's qualities, but as fear of His justice and punishment.

Its dimensions include:

- **Negative dimension:** avoiding sins and disobedience.
- **Positive dimension:** performing obligations and acquiring spiritual perfections.
- **Heart dimension:** a sense of responsibility and commitment arising from firm faith.

Ayatollah Mutahhari clarifies that taqwa "is a freedom rather than a restriction." By becoming a true servant of God, an individual becomes a "liberated force," breaking free from the need to please others and finding fulfillment in pleasing God. Taqwa is "the foundation of all moral values," promoting generosity, caring for people, forgiveness, managing anger, honesty, trustworthiness, self-control, and fairness. It is a means of purification from the impurity of the soul, a cure for the ailments of the heart, and a sight for the blindness of one's core.

Some scholars identify three stages of taqwa:

1. Guarding the self from eternal punishment by acquiring correct beliefs.
2. Avoiding every kind of sin, whether leaving an obligation or committing a prohibited act.
3. Self-restraint against what occupies the human heart and turns it away from the Truth—the taqwa of the elite.

Taqwa is a comprehensive trait with various levels, ranging from *Adalah* (justice) to *Ismah* (infallibility), encompassing all ranks of faith and all stages of perfection. The highest stages of piety, which involve removing all shades of polytheism and misdirection, guide one to success and bring good tidings of happiness. A closely related concept is *Wara'*, often translated as "scrupulous piety" or "religious consciousness." *Wara'* signifies a heightened spiritual vigilance where a person abstains not only from what is clearly forbidden (*haram*) but also from doubtful matters out of caution to protect their faith. It is placed between *Taqwa* and *Ijtihad*.

Link of Taqwa with Humility, Honor, Clemency and Equality

In Islam, honor is deeply spiritual and inextricably linked to piety and divine estimation. Honor belongs to Allah, to His Messengers, and to the believers. Humanity itself is considered a manifestation of Divine honor, created with inherent dignity and encouraged to uphold this status. Honor is achieved by submitting oneself to the truth when it comes, and it resides in obedience to Allah, not in servitude to a ruler or in worldly power. A significant aspect of honor is attained by

cutting off greed for what others possess and by giving up all hope of benefit from people. Contentment and treating people fairly also contribute to one's honor, leading Allah to increase it. Righteous work and good speech are crucial for achieving honor.

Humbleness is considered the ladder that leads to honor and dignity.

إن التواضع يزيد صاحبه رفعة، فتواضعوا يرفعكم الله.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **Humbleness increases its owner in high standing, so be humble and Allah will raise you up.**

— al-Kafi by Shaykh al-Kulayni, Volume 2, Page 121

الإمام علي (عليه السلام): ولا عز كالعلم

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said, **'There is no honor like clemency.'**

— Nahjul Balaghah, Saying 113

الإمام زين العابدين (عليه السلام): طاعة ولاية الأمر تمام العز

Imam Zain-ul-Abideen (peace be upon him) said, **'Obedience to the [divinely appointed] authorities of command is a completion of one's Honor.'**

— Tuhaful-Uqul, no. 283

ألتواضع الرضا بالمجلس دون شرفه، وإن تسلم على من لقيت، وأن تترك المراء وإن كنت محقا. (تحف العقول ص296)

Imam Mohammad Baqir (peace be upon him): **Humility and humbleness (means) is to be pleased and contented with sitting in, an assembly at a place lower than ones status and honor, and saluting anybody one meets and abandoning dispute even if one is right**

— Tuhaful-Uqul, P 296

عن السكوني، عن أبي عبد هلا (عليه السالم) عن آبئه (عليهم السالم) اقل: إن من التواضع أن يرضى ابللمجلس دون .المجلس، وأن يسلم عل من يلقي، وأن يترك المراء وإن كان محقا، وال تحب أن تحمد عل التقوى

From Al-Sakuni, from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him), from his forefathers (peace be upon them), he said: **Among the traits of humility is to be content with sitting in a lower position when there are higher positions available, to greet whoever one meets, to avoid arguing even if one is right, and to dislike being praised for piety.**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 28, Hadith 20501

عن السكوني، عن أبي عبد هلا (عليه السالم) اقل: من التواضع أن ترضى ابللمجلس دون .المجلس، وأن تسلم عل من تلقى .وأن تترك المراء وإن كنت محقا، وال تحب أن تحمد عل التقوى

From Al-Sakuni, from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) who said: **From humility is that you are content with a lower sitting place, that you greet whoever you meet, that you abandon argumentation even if you are right, and that you dislike being praised for piety.**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 12, Section 1, Chapter 75, Hadith 15779

عن سماعة اقل: اقل أبو عبد هلا (عليه السالم): إن هلا عز وجل فوض إلى المؤمن أموره كلها، ولم يفوض إليه أن يذل نفسه أما تسمع لقول هلا عز وجل: (وهلل العزة ولرسوله وللمؤمنين) افلمؤمن ينبغي أن يكون عزيزا، وال يكون ذليال يعزه هلا .اباليمان والسالم

From Sama'a who said: Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) said: **Indeed Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, has delegated all affairs to the believer, but He has not delegated to him that he should humiliate himself. Have you not heard the saying of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic: "And to Allah belongs all honor, and to His Messenger, and to the believers" [Quran 63:8]. So it is fitting for the believer to be honorable and not humiliated - Allah honors him through faith and Islam.**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 16, Section 2, Chapter 12, Hadith 21233

ألتواضع نعمة لا يحسد عليها. (تحف العقول ص489)

Imam Hasan Askari (peace be upon him): **Humbleness is a boon and beneficence which does not get subjected to the jealousy of people**

— Tuhaf al-Uqul. P 489

The honor of a Muslim, along with their life and wealth, is sacred. Encroachment upon these is prohibited. This protection extends even to the "People of the Book" (non-Muslims), whose honor is considered equal to that of a Muslim.

The most pivotal aspect of honor is its direct and absolute correlation with taqwa. Taqwa is the sole criterion for true distinction and nobility.

الإمام علي (عليه السلام): لا عز أعز من التقوى

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said, '**There is no Honor higher than piety.**'

— Nahjul Balaghah, Saying 371

عيل بن الحسين (عليه السلام) اقل: ال حسب لقرشي وال عربي إل بتواضع، وال كرم إل بتقوى، وال عمل إل بنية، وال عبادة إل بتفقه

Ali bin Al-Hussain (peace be upon him) said: **There is no nobility for a Qurayshi or an Arab except through humility, and no honor except through piety, and no deed except with intention, and no worship except with understanding of religion.**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 1, Section 2, Chapter 5, Hadith 85

أصل المرء دينه، وحسبه خلقه، وكرمه تقواه، وإن الناس من آدم شرع سواء

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (peace be upon him) said: **The root of a person is his religion, his nobility is his character, and his honor is his taqwa, and all people from Adam are equal.**

Piety is the measure of dignity and the criterion for dignity, meaning honor is a direct result of one's piety.

Human dignity depends on taqwa; without taqwa, there is no dignity. The deeper taqwa is in a person, the greater their detachment from baseness and pollution. The stronger one's taqwa, the more one benefits from the treasure of Divine dignity. Dignity without taqwa is not possible, because its necessary condition would be that any excess not be based on taqwa and would have been obtained without cause. Taqwa has an exclusive and exceptional role in the growth and elevation of human personality; personality is the support of taqwa, and the individual and society possessing personality make the greatest use of the jewel of taqwa.

Islam champions absolute equality among all human beings. It teaches that all human beings were created from a single person, share a common nature and common humanity, and trace their origin to Adam and Eve. This establishes an intrinsic brotherhood among believers and emphasizes that all humans are born with inherent dignity and purity. Islam rejects all forms of social hierarchy and discrimination based on color, physical attributes, wealth, lineage, or nationality. It does not sanction race or gender discrimination and has eliminated the principle of distinction and discrimination found in other social systems. No one social grouping is considered to have an advantage over any other.

While all individuals are equal in the eyes of Allah, the only merit that distinguishes people from one another is their level of piety. The Quran states that "**the most honorable of you with Allah is the one who is most pious among you**" (Quran 49:13). The only measurement of preference is God-fearing and righteous deeds. The division of humanity into nations and tribes is not for creating barriers or distinctions but "so that you may know one another (*li ta'arafu*)," facilitating recognition, relationships, and cooperation.

In an Islamic society, all members of society are equal and should be treated as such. The legal code is equally applied to all; there is no class in social affairs and civil aspects. The ruler and the ruled, the leader and the follower, the superior and the

subordinate, the free man and the slave, the man and the woman, the rich and the poor, the big and the small—all have equal status in Islam. While every individual should have equal rights, this does not mean that every individual should be entrusted with every responsibility and duty. Rather, individuals should be treated according to their natural abilities and strengths when it comes to duties and responsibilities.

Effects and Rewards of Taqwa

Taqwa yields profound effects on an individual's life, encompassing spiritual, mental, and practical benefits. It is a cure for the ailments of the heart, sight for the blindness of the core, healing for the illnesses of the body, rectification for the corruption of the chest, purification for the impurity of the soul, clarity removing night blindness, reassurance to the panicked fear of the spirit, and illumination dispelling darkness. It brings about a profound spiritual transformation and leads to a more righteous and moral life. It is a means of protecting oneself from sins and earning the mercy of God, ultimately saving one from chastisement and fire in the Hereafter.

Taqwa is the key to guidance, provision for the next world, freedom from all types of slavery, and deliverance from all ruin. It helps one reach goals, protects against enemies, and gives freedom in moral and spiritual issues. It is described as the key to achieving success. It gives a person insight, or the ability to make correct decisions, and the strength to overcome difficulties, because true piety brings knowledge, allowing one to discern right from wrong. Taqwa has a positive effect on strengthening the intellect and increasing insight. It grants ease in affairs and helps overcome difficulties, making life sweeter and more manageable. It gives strength to human personality and makes man the master of his own self.

Taqwa is a crucial condition for the acceptance of deeds. A deed accompanied by taqwa is never considered little, and "how can something that is accepted be little?" A small deed with taqwa is considered better than many deeds without taqwa, because taqwa is what truly matters for acceptance.

The Quran promises the pious guidance and discrimination:

و اتقوا الله و يعلمكم الله

"And be conscious of Allah, and Allah teaches you." (Quran 2:282)

God promises to cover the sins of the pious and forgive them: **"O you who have believed, if you fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion and will remove from you your misdeeds and forgive you. And Allah is the possessor of great bounty."** (Quran 8:29). Some interpreters distinguish between *Takfir* (covering/removing effects in this world) and *Ghufran* (forgiveness and relief from punishment in the Hereafter). The ultimate reward is entry into Paradise:

إن المتقين في جنات ونعيم

"Indeed, the pious will be in Gardens and pleasure." (Quran 52:17)

They will also be in gardens with springs:

إن المتقين في جنات وعيون

"Indeed, the pious will be in gardens and springs." (Quran 51:15)

In the Hereafter, the pious will have their desires instantly fulfilled without the need for effort or intermediaries.

The Quran promises a great victory or success for the pious:

إن للمتقين مفازا

"Indeed, for the pious there is a place of victory." (Quran 78:31)

This *Mafaz* implies reaching good and safety. Beyond material pleasures, the highest joy for the pious is God's satisfaction: Divine satisfaction is the highest spiritual pleasure. *Ridwan min Allah*. **"Allah has promised the believing men and believing women gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally, and pleasant dwellings in gardens of perpetual residence; but approval from Allah is greater. It is that which is the great attainment."** (Quran 9:72).

Characteristics of the Pious (*Muttaqin*)

The Quran outlines specific attributes for the pious, often grouping them to highlight their spiritual and moral stature. The primary traits include belief in the unseen, establishing prayer, and spending from what God has provided:

الذين يؤمنون بالغيب ويقيمون الصلاة ومما رزقناهم ينفقون

"Those who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend from what We have provided them." (Quran 2:3)

Additionally, they believe in the revelation sent to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) and previous scriptures, and they have certainty in the Hereafter:

وبالآخرة هم يوقنون

"And in the Hereafter they are certain." (Quran 2:4)

In another context, the pious are described with five specific qualities:

1. **Patience (*Sabr*):** They remain steadfast against hardships and sins.
2. **Truthfulness (*Sidq*):** They are honest in belief and action, avoiding hypocrisy.
3. **Devotion (*Qunut*):** They are humble and persistent in worship.
4. **Charity (*Infdaq*):** They spend their wealth and talents for God's sake.
5. **Seeking Forgiveness:** They seek pardon in the early hours of the morning:

والمستغفرين بالأسحار

"And those who seek forgiveness in the early dawn." (Quran 3:17)

The pious are also characterized by their constant supplication and fear of divine punishment, saying:

ربنا إنا آملنا فاعفر لنا ذنوبنا وقنا عذاب النار

"Our Lord, we have believed, so forgive us our sins and protect us from the punishment of the Fire." (Quran 3:16)

Piety also involves avoiding the company of those who commit sins, as associating with them increases the risk of falling into sin. The pious must also avoid mixing and associating with the people of sin and those who have torn the veil of God's majesty.

واعلموا أنه من يتق الله يجعل له مخرجا من الفتن ويسدده في امره ويهيئ له رشده ويفلجه بحجته ويبيض وجهه ويعطه رغبته مع الذين انعم الله عليهم من النبيين والصدقين والشهداء والصالحين... (تحف العقول ص232)

Imam Hasan (peace be upon him): **And know it that indeed whoever fears Allah (adopts piety) Allah paves his way of salvation out of the inequities. And makes him firm in his matter. And provides him (the path of) guidance. And makes his proof and arguments successful and enlightens his face and grants him what he desires. He is with those upon whom Allah has bestowed His beneficences and boons from among the Prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and pious ones**

— Tuhaf al-Uqul P 232

محمد بن عيل بن الحسين اقل: من أَلْفَاظ رسول هَلَا (صَل هَلَا عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) خَيْر الزَادِ التَّقْوَى.

From Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Al-Husayn who said: **Among the sayings of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) is: The best provision is taqwa (God-consciousness).**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 20, Hadith 20386

عن فضيل بن عثمان، عن أبي عبيدة، عن أبي جعفر (عليه السلام) (اقل: كان أمير المؤمنين) عليه السلام (يقول: ال يقل. عمل مع تقوى، وكيف يقل ما يتقبل

From Fudayl ibn Uthman, from Abu Ubayda, from Abu Ja'far (peace be upon him) who said: Amir al-Muminun (peace be upon him) used to say: **No deed accompanied by taqwa (* God- consciousness) is little, and how can something that is accepted be little? Translator: * Taqwa is a comprehensive concept that is often translated as "God-consciousness," "righteousness," or "piety," but these single-word translations don't fully capture its deep meaning. The best**

comprehensive translation would be "consciousness and fear of Allah that leads to protecting oneself from His displeasure by fulfilling obligations and avoiding prohibitions." It comes from the root "wa-qa-ya" which means to protect or shield. It implies being constantly aware of Allah's presence and includes both the internal state (fear and consciousness of Allah) and external actions (following commands and avoiding prohibitions)

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 20, Hadith 20383

فإني أوصيك بتقوى الله، فإن فيها السلامة من التلف، والغنيمة في المنقلب، إن الله عزوجل يقي بالتقوى عن العبد عذاب عذبه عنه عقله، ويجلي بالتقوى عنه عماه وجهله وباتقوى نجاه نوح ومن معه في السفينة، وصالح ومن معه من الصاعقة، وباتقوى فاز الصابرون... (بحارالانوار ج78 ص358)

Imam Mohammad Taqi (peace be upon him): **So I commend you to have fear of Allah (guarding against sins) since, there lies in it the safety and security from perishing and annihilation. And it is beneficial in confrontation and change of circumstances. Allah (SWT) sustains that thing for man in which he is driven away by his mind through his virtue of piety. And enlightens the darkness, blindness, and ignorance of His servant's mind by his piety. And saved Noah and his companions in the arc (ship) by and through piety. And saved Saleh and his companions from the lightening and those having patience are saved and secured by piety**

— Bihar ul-Anwar Vol. 78, P 358

Piety is not limited to one area; it has branches and subdivisions, including financial and economic taqwa, sexual taqwa, social taqwa, political taqwa, and similar dimensions. In Quranic terminology, piety refers to abstaining from all forbidden acts and is not restricted to specific sins like breaking covenants without cause. Justice is cited as a manifestation of piety:

واقول (عليه السلام) في قول هلال عز وجل: (إن هلالاً أيمراً يبلعدل والاحسان) العدل: النصف، . والاحسان: التفضل

Imam (peace be upon him) said regarding Allah's words: "**Indeed Allah commands justice and good conduct**" [Quran 16:90] - **Justice means fairness, and good conduct means being gracious.**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 16, Section 3, Chapter 1, Hadith 21576

Interpreting piety as withdrawing from society or remaining silent in the face of issues is wrong, as such false interpretations of piety and abstinence are in fact one of the factors of the decline of Islamic societies. True piety creates awareness and the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood.

The Historical Trajectory: From Unity to Division and Back

The historical cycle where humanity began in unity, fell into division due to selfishness and deviation, and is destined to return to unity through divine guidance.

Initially, «كان الناس امة واحدة» (Mankind was one community). Humans were originally a single nation without contradiction, but gradually, differences arose due to the instinct to appropriate benefits for oneself. "**Mankind was [of] one religion [before their deviation]; then Allah sent the prophets as bringers of good tidings and warners and sent down with them the Scripture in truth to judge between the people concerning that in which they differed. And none differed over the Scripture except those who were given it - after the clear proofs came to them - out of jealous animosity among themselves. And Allah guided those who believed to the truth concerning that over which they had differed, by His permission. And Allah guides whom He wills to a straight path.**" (Al-Baqara: Quran 2:213).

To resolve these conflicts, God sent prophets and revealed books: «فبعث الله النبيين مبشرين و منذرين و انزل معهم الكتاب بالحق ليحكم بين الناس فيما اختلفوا فيه» (**So God sent prophets as bearers of good news and warners, and revealed with them the Book in truth to judge between people in that wherein they differed**) (Al-Baqara: Quran 2:213). The purpose of religion is to restore this lost unity.

Prophets are described as the great architects of unity and solidarity. Their primary mission is to call people to the religion of Oneness and establish a monotheistic religious nation. They guide humanity to follow a path that fosters unity and cooperation, encouraging the worship of one God, adherence to one prophet, acceptance of one divine book, and facing one direction in prayer.

Division often stems from those who received divine guidance but deviated due to tyranny and aggression: «ما اختلف فيه الا الذين اوتوه من بعد ما جاءتهم البينات بغيا بينهم» **(None differed therein except those who were given it after clear proofs had come to them, out of tyranny among themselves)** (Al-Baqara: Quran 2:213).

Transgression and seeking status after knowledge was revealed are also cited as root causes of division.

The ultimate return is to God, where all differences will be resolved: «الى الله مرجعكم» **(To God is the return of all of you, and He will inform you concerning that over which you used to differ)** (Quran 5:48). This signifies an eventual reconciliation of all disparities in the divine presence.

Islamic Brotherhood as the Practical Manifestation of Unity

The theoretical concept of human unity is practically operationalized through the principle of Islamic brotherhood, which transcends all geographical, ethnic, and social boundaries.

The Quranic verse «انما المومنون اخوة» **(The believers are but brothers)** (Quran 49:10) is described as a fundamental slogan of Islam. Islam has raised the level of the bond of friendship among Muslims to such an extent that it presents it as the closest bond between two humans, based on equality and fairness, and that is the affection of two brothers for each other. This brotherhood creates a global family where Muslims of every race and tribe, and of every language and age, feel a deep brotherhood with one another.

رسول الله (صلي الله عليه وآله) : المسلمون إخوة ، تتكافأ دماؤهم ، يسعى بذمتهم أدناهم ، وهم يد على من سواهم

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **'The Muslims are brothers, their blood is co-equal, those under them strive to secure their protection, and they are like one hand against their enemy.'**

— Bihar al-Anwar, v. 100, p. 46, no. 6

رسول الله ﷺ (صلي الله عليه وآله) : المؤمنون إخوة، تتكافى دماؤهم، وهم يد على من سواهم ، يسعى بذمتهم أدناهم

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **'The believers are brothers, their blood is coequal, and they are one hand against others, the most inferior among them is empowered by their protection [of him].'**

— Amali al-Mufid, p. 187, no. 13

رسول الله (صلي الله عليه وآله) : المؤمنون تتكافأ دماؤهم ، وهم يد على من سواهم ، ويسعى بذمتهم أدناهم

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **'The believers' blood is coequal, and they are one hand against others, the most inferior among them is empowered by their protection [of him].'**

— Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 402

He also taught that a brother never encroaches upon the life, property, and honor of another brother.

The concept of brotherhood is considered one of the strongest and most deep-rooted links in human relations, characterized by love, benevolence, and shared joys and sorrows. Islam seeks to utilize this firm link to strengthen social order and improve human relations, allowing Muslims to support each other and fulfill their mutual responsibilities.

الاءاء الوفاء فى شءءه والراءاء. (بءارالانوار ء78 ص114)

Imam Hasan (peace be upon him): **Brotherhood is loyalty in hardship and comfort**

— Bihar ul-Anwar Vol. 78, P 114

The Fundamental Importance of Unity (Tawhid)

Unity is a paramount command in Islam, standing as a core concept underlying its theology and philosophy of society. It encompasses several dimensions:

Unity of God (Tawhid): At its theological core, Islam emphasizes the absolute oneness and indivisibility of God (Allah), His essence, attributes, and actions. This concept of Tawhid is fundamental, with Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) stating,

رسول الله ﷺ (صلي الله عليه وآله): التوحيد نصف الدين

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: '**Allah's divine Unity is half of religion.**'

— 'Uyun Akhbar ar-Ridha, v. 2, p. 35, no. 75

وفي (عيون الأخبار) أبسانيد تقدمت في إسباغ الوضوء عن الرضا، عن آبيه (عليهم السلام) اقل: اقل رسول هلا (صل هلا. عليه وآله وسلم): التوحيد نصف الدين، واستنزلوا الرزق ابصدقة

And in (Uyun al-Akhbar) with chains of narration that preceded in the chapter on perfecting ablution, from Al-Rida, from his forefathers (peace be upon them) who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said: Monotheism is half of religion, and seek to bring down provision through charity.

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 9, Section 8, Chapter 1, Hadith 12264

This oneness of God, coupled with the unity of prophets, their teachings, and the divine law, is intended to lead to harmony among people.

Unity of Humanity: Islam asserts that all human beings share a common origin, emphasizing that your Sustainer is one, and your father is one. All of you are from Adam, and Adam was from dust. This foundational belief aims to dismantle racial, ethnic, and tribal distinctions, asserting that true nobility is solely based on God-consciousness (taqwa), not lineage or material wealth.

Unity Among Muslims: Unity and reconciliation among Muslims is crucial importance for the community's well-being and prosperity. Unity is considered "Allah's protection" and a means to follow the right way, leading to social and spiritual happiness. It enables Muslims to stand firmly against enemies like a strong fort, presenting a unified force. The Quran commands believers: **"And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you - when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear to you His verses that you may be guided."** (Quran 3:103).

Nature of Unity: Islamic unity does not mean uniformity of beliefs or the merging of all institutions. Instead, it implies that despite differences in belief, there should be no quarreling or conflict. It encourages Muslims to put aside differences to work towards common goals, recognizing that in unity that power and strength are found. Education is highlighted as playing a crucial role in promoting this unity and brotherhood from a young age.

The Condemnation of Division

Conversely, Islam strongly discourages and condemns division, portraying it as a severe detriment to individuals and the community:

Consequences of Disunity: Division is considered a severe punishment and chastisement. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) explicitly warned,

رسول الله ﷺ (صلي الله عليه وآله): الجماعة رحمة والفرقة عذاب

'Congregation [upon the truth] is a mercy and division is chastisement.'

— Kanz al-Ummal, no. 20242

رسول الله ﷺ (صلي الله عليه و آله): أيها الناس، عليكم بالجماعة، وإياكم والفرقة

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **'O people, stay with the congregation and stay away from division.'**

— Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 1028

The Quran commands **"And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute and [thus] lose courage and [then] your strength would depart; and be patient. Indeed, Allah is with the patient."** (Quran 8:46)

Exploitation by Enemies: The enemies of Islam actively adopt a policy of 'divide and rule,' encouraging disunity and conflict among different Muslim factions, thus taking advantage of their divisions.

Narrations and Elaboration on the Tafsir of (Quran 49:13)

Several narrations provided shed further light on this verse:

The Story of Salman al-Farsi

The story of Salman al-Farsi's interaction with Umar Bin Al-Khattab concerning his lineage illustrates a profound declaration of identity rooted in faith and divine guidance, emphasizing spiritual affiliation over ancestral pride.

Salman al-Farsi's Background

Salman al-Farsi, originally the son of a Zoroastrian priest from the province of Fars, embarked on a quest for a true religion, one free from human interpolations. This spiritual journey led him through various experiences, including being sold as a slave multiple times, before he ultimately became a revered companion of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny).

The Inquiry into Salman's Lineage

The incident occurred while Salman was seated in the Masjid with a group of people, including individuals from Quraysh, who were boasting about their lineages and ancestral glories. As they continued to pride themselves on their family trees, the discussion reached Salman al-Farsi. At this point, Umar Bin Al-Khattab addressed Salman, inquiring about his lineage and origin, asking, "Who are you, and what is your origin, and what is your status?"

Salman's Resounding Reply

In response to Umar's question, Salman delivered a powerful and spiritually profound statement that redefined his identity and nobility: "I am Salman son of a servant of Allah. I had strayed, so Allah Mighty and Majestic Guided me by Muhammad, and I was needy, so Allah Made me to be self-sufficient by Muhammad, and I was a slave, so Allah Freed me by Muhammad. This is my lineage, and this is my nobility."

Salman's reply conveyed that his true lineage was not a matter of birth or worldly status, but rather his transformative journey from error to guidance, from neediness to self-sufficiency, and from servitude to freedom—all attained through the grace of Allah and the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny).

Salman's Report to the Prophet and the Prophet's Teaching

Following this exchange, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) entered the area. Salman immediately approached him and recounted the entire conversation, including how he had been questioned by Umar Bin Al-Khattab and the answer he had provided.

Upon hearing Salman's account, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) offered a profound teaching on the essence of true honor and lineage, stating: **"Surely, a man's lineage is his faith and bravery. A man's intellect is his temper."** This statement reinforced Salman's perspective, highlighting that spiritual and moral virtues are the ultimate measures of a person's worth, transcending superficial ancestral pride.

عدة من أصحابنا عن سهل بن زياد عن بكر بن صالح عن الحسن بن علي عن عبد الله بن المغيرة قال حدثني جعفر بن إبراهيم [بن محمد بن علي بن عبد الله بن جعفر الطيار] عن أبي عبد الله عن أبيه (عليهما السلام) قال قال رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله) حسب المرء دينه و مروءته . و عقله و شرفه و جماله و كرمه تقواه .

A number of our companions, from Sahl Bin Ziyad, from Bakr Bin Saaleh, from Al-Hassan Bin Ali, from Abdullah Bin Al-Mugheira who said: 'It has been narrated to me by Ja'far Bin Ibrahim Bin Muhammad Bin Ali Bin Abdullah Bin Ja'far Al-Tayyaar (as), from Abu Abdullah (asws), from his (asws) father (asws) having said: **'The Messenger (saww) of Allah (azwj) said: 'The status of the man is (in accordance to) his**

Religion, and his chivalry, and his intellect, and his nobility, and his beauty, and his generosity, and his piety.

— Al-Kafi (Vol. 8) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Yaqub al-Kulayni, Book 1, Chapter 34, Hadith #1

Prophet Muhammad's Sermon at the Conquest of Makkah

On the day of the conquest of Makkah, Prophet Muhammad declared that Islam had abolished the haughtiness and ancestral pride of the days of ignorance. He clarified that an "Arabian" is defined by a "speaking tongue" rather than a parental father, and that all humanity descends from Adam, who was created from soil. He concluded his address by citing this verse, reiterating that piety is the sole measure of honor with Allah.

Importance of Piety over Lineage

الإمام علي (عليه السلام): من أبطأ به عمله ، لم يسرع به نسبه (حسبه)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said, **'He who lags behind as a result of his deeds will not be accorded a front position because of his lineage.'**

— Nahjul Balaghah, Saying 23

ـ أبو علي الأشعري عن محمد بن عبد الجبار عن محمد بن إسماعيل عن حنان عن عقبة بن بشير الأسدي قال قلت لأبي جعفر (عليه السلام) أنا عقبة بن بشير الأسدي وأنا في الحسب الضخم من قومي قال فقال ما تمن علينا بحسبك إن الله رفع بالإيمان من كان الناس يسمونه وضيعا إذا كان مؤمنا ووضع بالكفر من كان الناس يسمونه شريفا إذا كان كافرا فليس لأحد فضل على أحد إلا بالتقوى.

Abu Ali al-Ash'ari has narrated from Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Jabbar from Muhammad ibn Isma'il from Hanan ibn 'Uqbah ibn Bashir al-Asadi who has said the following: "Once, I said to abu Ja'far (peace be upon him) 'I am 'Uqbah ibn Bashir al-Asadi and among my people my lineage is very prominent.' The narrator has said that the Imam then asked, **'What is it that makes you oblige us because of your lineage? Due to proper belief, Allah has exalted those whom people consider**

low. Due to disbelief, He has made low those whom people called men of dignity. No one is superior, because of any other reason, to the others except due to piety.”

— Al-Kafi (Vol. 2) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Yaqub al-Kulayni, Book 1, Chapter 134, Hadith #3

Conclusion

In essence, Islam eradicates all artificial and man-made marks of distinction. It teaches that all people are equal in origin and that true nobility and honor are rooted in one's faith and piety, not in wealth, status, lineage, race, or any other external factor. Taqwa—a deep consciousness of God, manifesting in righteous conduct and high morals—is the sole criterion for a person's merit and superiority in the sight of Allah. It is the best provision, the best spiritual clothing, a Divine light that creates knowledge, the key to Paradise, the basis of ethics and elevated human personality, and the condition for the acceptance of deeds. Without taqwa, no true honor exists. Social distinction based on piety and knowledge is recognized, but not in terms of legal privilege.

Islam emphasizes that God has removed all inferiorities and compensated for all defects through its teachings, replacing inferiority with nobility, making every Muslim respectable regardless of social status. The message of the Quran and the narrations is clear: if one seeks true nobility, honor, and value, the only way is to acquire taqwa and God-wariness.

Human unity in the Islamic texts is presented as an intrinsic truth derived from the Oneness of God and the common origin of humanity from a single soul. While historical and social factors such as selfishness and deviation have led to division, the divine mission of the prophets and the essence of Islam aim to restore this unity. This restoration is achieved by rejecting racial and tribal superiority in favor of piety and by fostering a bond of brotherhood among believers that transcends all artificial barriers. Ultimately, true unity is the natural state of humanity under the guidance of the One God, while division is an aberration caused by deviation from this truth.

The Quranic perspective on human diversity is that it is divinely ordained, purposeful, non-hierarchical, functional, and unifying. It is designed for mutual benefit, recognition, and the holistic development of human civilization. The ultimate message is that diversity should lead to enrichment and cooperation, not division and conflict, with taqwa (righteousness and God-consciousness) being the only legitimate criterion for distinction among human beings. As the verse concludes: **"Surely Allah has full Knowledge and is All-Aware"** (Quran 49:13).

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