

Strive for High Rank in the Sight of Allah (swt) Rather than Worldly Status in the Eyes of the People

Worldly status that is based on wealth, lineage and access to power and privilege cripples the one who is afflicted by it. It is a dangerous corruption that is an obstacle to individuals committing to Islam and honoring its commands. It prevents the one who perceives himself from a higher status and from listening to the good advice of others. It prevents the one who perceives himself of a lesser status from accounting others for their wrongs. Pomp, privilege and VIP protocol is extended to those who are conceived of higher status. People observe that within the initial formation of a new relationship; they are being sized up regarding their tribe, education and wealth to decide their "place" and status in society. In some, even acts of piety become a means to show-off and earn status. Status upon worldly standards is deserving of rejection, like the Hindu caste system and English class system, which are reviled. Not only does it reek of injustice and discrimination, such that people lament the lack of merit in society, it is far removed from the pure standards that Islam has set.

Allah (swt) and His Messenger (saw) provide the cure for this afflicting and debilitating disease of worldly status. Islam awakens within the human sole humility before the greatness of Allah (swt) and thanks for any privilege He (swt) has been extended. It incites a believer to avail all that he has of privilege to further the cause of Truth, rather than it becoming a wall that prevents him from seeing the Truth. It awakens within him envy of seeking knowledge in Islam. It drives him to consider sacrificing for the sake of Allah (swt), rather than looking down through at sacrifice of Dunya for Islam as a destructive and wasteful pursuit. It sets his eyes firmly on seeking the highest status in the Aakhira, by being the one with whom Allah (swt) is pleased. Islam does this uniquely because it firmly places in the hearts and souls that the criterion for rank, is Taqwa (تقوى Piety).

Allah (swt) said, ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ﴾ **"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes 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 Knowing and Acquainted."** [Surah al-Hujarat 49:13]. Let us remember that this noble Ayah was revealed to a society which was stricken by status in Dunya. Tribal origins were the basis for relations, justice and standing. Tribal lineage was held as an even higher standard for worldly status than wealth in our age, which is drowned in the cheap materialism of the Western so-called "civilization." Thus, Allah (swt) reminded us that He has created them all from a single person, Adam (as), and from that person He created his mate, Hawwa'. From their offspring He made nations, comprised of tribes, which include sub-tribes. Therefore, Allah (swt) reminded those afflicted with tribalism of their equal status in origin, for all peoples are the descendants of Adam (as) and Hawwa' and share this honor equally.

Allah (swt) forbade the belittling or raising up of others in terms of worldly status. Allah (swt) confirmed to mankind that they are all equal in their humanity in origin and then elevated on the basis of Taqwa alone. The tribal lineage is not for pride and status but for recognition alone. Mujahid said that Allah's statement, ﴿لِتَعَارَفُوا﴾ **"that you may know one another"** refers to one's saying, "So-and-so the son of so-and-so, from the tribe of so-and-so." Taqwa is the standard for status and that is known to Allah (swt) alone. Allah, the Exalted, said, ﴿إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ﴾ **"Verily, the most honorable of you with Allah is that**

(believer) who has At-Taqwa" meaning, 'you earn honor with Allah the Exalted on account of Taqwa, not family lineage.'

In our great Deen, the standard for high rank is that which is concealed within the hearts of men but in the plain sight of Allah (swt), Taqwa. RasulAllah (saw) gave a Khutbah to the people on the day of the opening of Makkah in which he (saaw) said: «يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَذْهَبَ عَنْكُمُ غُبَّةَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ وَتَعَظَّمَهَا بِأَبَانِهَا فَالنَّاسُ رَجُلَانِ رَجُلٌ بَرٌّ تَقِيٌّ كَرِيمٌ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَفَاجِرٌ شَقِيٌّ هَيْنَ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَالنَّاسُ بَنُو آدَمَ وَخَلَقَ اللَّهُ آدَمَ مِنْ تُرَابٍ» **O you people! Verily Allah has removed the slogans of Jahiliyyah from you and its reverence of its forefathers. So, now there are two types of men: A man who is righteous, has Taqwa and honorable before Allah, and a wicked man, who is miserable and insignificant to Allah. People are children of Adam and Allah created Adam from the dust.**" [Tirmidhi] Al-Bukhari narrated that Abu Hurayrah said, "Some people asked the Prophet (saw), 'Who is the most honorable among people?' He replied, «أَكْرَمُهُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْتَقَاهُمْ» **The most honorable among them with Allah is the one who has the most Taqwa.**" They said, 'We did not ask you about this.' He (saw) said, «فَأَكْرَمُ النَّاسِ يُوسُفُ نَبِيُّ اللَّهِ، ابْنُ اللَّهِ» **Then the most honorable person is Yusuf, Allah's Prophet, the son of Allah's Prophet, the son of Allah's Khalil.**" They said, 'We did not ask you about this.' He (saw) said, «فَعِنَ مَعَادِنِ الْعَرَبِ تَسْأَلُونِي؟» **Then you want to ask me about the Arab lineage**" They said, 'Yes.' He said, «فَخِيَارُكُمْ فِي الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ خِيَارُكُمْ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ إِذَا فَفَقَهُوا» **Those among you who were best in Jahiliyyah, are the best among you in Islam, if they attain religious understanding.**"

RasulAllah (saw) warned his Ummah about taking appearance or wealth as the standard for high rank. Wealth grants worldly status today such that the people flock around the wealthy, like bees to honey, praising and serving them, only to promptly abandon anybody who falls on hard times as if they never knew them. RasulAllah (saw) said, «إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى صُورِكُمْ وَأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَأَعْمَالِكُمْ» **Verily, Allah does not look at your appearance or wealth, but he looks at your hearts and actions.**" [Muslim]. Thus, RasulAllah (saw) reminded the Muslims to focus on that which really elevates them, their hearts, filled with fear of Allah (swt), and their actions, constantly undertaken for the pleasure of Allah (swt).

In the Islamic society, Taqwa is the standard for high rank and so the envy of those with an abundance of wealth is rejected. It is replaced by the envy for the one who gives from his abundant wealth for the cause of Islam and the one who has knowledge of the Deen in abundance and conveys it to other. RasulAllah (saaw) said, «لَا حَسَدَ إِلَّا فِي اثْنَتَيْنِ رَجُلٌ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ مَالًا فَسَلَّطَهُ عَلَى هَلَكَةٍ فِي الْحَقِّ وَرَجُلٌ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ حِكْمَةً فَهُوَ يَقْضِي بِهَا وَيُعَلِّمُهَا» **There should be no envy but only in case of two persons: one having been endowed with wealth and power to spend it in the cause of Truth, and (the other) who has been endowed with Hikmah (حكمة Knowledge of Deen) and he decides cases with the help of it and teaches it (to others).**" [Muslim].

In the Islamic State, Taqwa is the standard for high rank and so there is no favouritism for the privileged, as is commonly seen in the Muslim World in the absence of the Khilafah on the Method of the Prophethood. When it was requested that a woman who committed theft be pardoned because she was from a noble family, RasulAllah (saaw) warned the Muslims by saying «إِنَّمَا أَهْلَكَ الدِّينَ قَبْلَكُمْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا إِذَا سَرَقَ فِيهِمُ الشَّرِيفُ تَرَكُوهُ وَإِذَا سَرَقَ فِيهِمُ الضَّعِيفُ أَقَامُوا عَلَيْهِ الْحَدَّ وَإِنَّمَا ...» **The people before you were ruined because when a noble person amongst them committed theft, they would leave him, but if a weak person amongst them committed theft, they would execute the legal punishment on him. By Allah, were Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad, to commit the theft, I would have cut off her hand.**" [Bukhari].

And woe to those who lose themselves by using acts of Piety as a means to earn wordily status in the sight of the people. Indeed, Riyaa' (رياء Showing Off) is not Piety, for Piety is

seeking the pleasure of Allah (swt). Riyaa' is showing off in order to please the people and achieves nothing but the anger of Allah (swt). RasuAllah (saw) said, «يكون في آخر الزمان ديدان» فمن أدرك ذلك الزمان فليتعوذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم ومنهم، وهم الانتنون، ثم يظهر قلانس البرود فلا يستحيا يومئذ من الرياء، والتمسك يومئذ بدينه كالقابض على جمرة، والتمسك بدينه أجره كأجر خمسين، قالوا: أمنا أو منهم؟ قال بل منكم» **“At the end of the time there will be the worms of (Qur'an) reciters. So whoever lived at that time let him seek refuge by Allah from the cursed shaytan and from them, and they are the most evil smelling. Then there will appear hoods of the outer garments, and at that time there will be no shame of the showing off (Riyaa'). The one who holds to his Deen during that period will be like the one who holds his hand on a live coal, and the one who holds to his deen will have the reward of fifty men who act as he does. They asked: will they be like fifty of them or us? He said: They are rather fifty of you.”** [Al-Haakim]. No, the one who yearns for the high rank in the sight of Allah (swt) cares not for his worldly status through acts of Deen in the eyes of the people. It is he who truly will be driven by Piety, enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, regardless of whether the people are pleased with him. It is he who will speak firmly and act decisively to account the rulers regardless of the blame of the tyrants.

Islam removes the disease of striving for worldly status in the eyes of the people comprehensively. It liberates man from the cheap struggle for worldly status in this temporary life. It raises the ambition of the believer to pursue a high rank in the life that is never ending in Jannah. So, the one who is wise, seeks to raise his rank to that of the most favored of the inhabitants of Jannah, the martyrs. Thus, the believer makes Dua for the high rank of the martyrs, striving his utmost in obedience to Allah (swt) to earn that honor, forsaking the Dunya for the sake of Aakhira. RasulAllah (saaw) said, «مَنْ سَأَلَ اللَّهَ الشَّهَادَةَ بِصِدْقٍ بَلَغَهُ اللَّهُ مَنَازِلَ» **“He who asks Allah for martyrdom, Allah will raise him to the high rank of the martyrs, even if he dies on his bed.”** [Muslim]. Thus, the believer discards worldly ambitions and fixes his gaze firmly on the Aakhira, seeking the high status through making relations for the sake of Islam, without consideration of lineage and wealth. RasulAllah (saaw) said, «إِنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ لَأُنَاسًا مَا هُمْ بِأَنْبِيَاءَ وَلَا شُهَدَاءَ يَغِيظُهُمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءُ وَالشُّهَدَاءُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ بِمَكَانِهِمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى». قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ تُخْبِرُنَا مَنْ هُمْ. قَالَ «هُمْ قَوْمٌ تَحَابُّوا بِرُوحِ اللَّهِ عَلَى غَيْرِ أَرْحَامٍ بَيْنَهُمْ وَلَا أَمْوَالٍ يَتَعَاطَوْنَهَا فَوَاللَّهِ إِنَّ وُجُوهَهُمْ تَنُورُ وَإِنَّهُمْ عَلَى نُورٍ لَا يَخَافُونَ إِذَا خَافَ النَّاسُ وَلَا يَحْزَنُونَ إِذَا حَزَنَ النَّاسُ». وَقَرَأَ هَذِهِ الْآيَةَ «أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ» **“There are people from the servants of Allah who are neither prophets nor martyrs; the prophets and martyrs will envy them on the Day of Resurrection for their rank before Allah, the Most High. They (the people) asked: Tell us, Messenger of Allah, who are they? He replied: They are people who love one another for the spirit of Allah (i.e. the Qur'an), without having any mutual kinship and exchanging property. I swear by Allah, their faces will glow and they will be (sitting) in (pulpits of) light. They will have no fear (on the Day) when the people will have fear, and they will not grieve when the people will grieve. He then recited the following Qur'anic verse: ‘Behold! Verily for the friends of Allah there is no fear, nor shall they grieve.’”** [Abu Dawud] Thus, even though such believers are not better than Prophets (as) and martyrs, they will have the distinction that even the Prophets (as) and martyrs will acknowledge their high rank. And so let each believer play his part in laying the firm foundation for a new era of the dominance of Islam, a generation that strives for high rank in the sight of Allah (swt) alone.

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

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