

Importance of Modesty

Modesty is known as ‘*tawazau*’ in Urdu. The story of modesty began from the time of the creation of the first man - *Adam*. At that time when God created man, there existed two more entities - the *jinn* (whose head was *Satan*) and the angels.

God, according to His creation plan, made man in charge of the earth. This is stated in the Quran in the following verse in which God addresses angels saying:

“I am putting a successor on Earth”(2:30)

This charge was meant to put man to test and was not bestowed on him as a reward.

God wanted *Satan* (all *jinn*s) and angels to cooperate with man whether he uses or misuses his freedom. Hence, God commanded them to bow down in front of man as a symbol of their cooperation. Quran mentions this in these words:

“When we said to the angels, ‘Bow down before Adam,’ they all bowed. But not Iblis, who in his pride refused, and turned his face away.” (2:34)

Satan however, refused to bow down. Upon being asked the reason of his disobedience, he replied saying that he was superior to *Adam* as he was made out of fire. This has been cited in the Quran as follows:

“God asked, ‘What prevented you from prostrating yourself when I commanded you to?’ He replied, ‘I am better than he is; You created me from fire, while You created him from clay.’” (7:12)

On the other hand, the angels bowed before man. The main difference between the behaviour of the two entities is that **while angels chose modesty, *Satan* adopted the path of arrogance.**

Nature of man

According to the Quran, some people are like the brothers of *Satan* while others are like the brothers of angels. I used to always think about the deeper meaning of this. After deep study and contemplation, I have now realized its true meaning.

It brings forth two aspects of human nature - one being the ***appreciating nature***, and the other being the ***non-appreciating nature***.

Appreciating nature is what the angels possessed. They bowed before *Adam* when asked by God. But *Satan* did not appreciate *Adam*. He was not able to accept that which God gave to man.

The irony however is that the majority of people in the world today are of a non-appreciating nature. In most cases, **people are seen enjoying making fun of others; they discover a negative item about somebody and make a joke of it.**

Why do majority of people develop a non-appreciating nature?

Man falls prey to such thinking because he lives in self-glory. *Satan* puts this sentiment in a his mind that **“he is the best”** and that **“glory belongs to him alone.”**

People have become conditioned in this nature. Wherever they go, they unconsciously find some negative item and take home only that negative item.

We must always remember that **every human being has only two options**: either to stay in *Satan*’s party or to stay in angels’ party. There is no third option. We must consciously introspect to not let ourselves fall prey to such non-appreciating nature for that would mean that we have opted to be with *Satan*.

Why should man develop an appreciating nature?

Man is required to develop an appreciating nature for the simple reason that this is how man **addresses the nature of another man** and **inculcates universality** within him. I would use an example to illustrate this point.

A recent survey conducted by the Global Language Monitor revealed that the phrase “*Jai Ho*” was now one of the most popular phrases worldwide. As I read this piece of news I started the wondering about what led to this phrase gaining such immense popularity. I recalled at this time that a similar slogan had coined by our leaders, it was “*Jai Hind*”. However it did not gain much popularity and did not become a part of the mainstream usage. It got confined to the speeches of politicians.

As I thought about it, I realized that this was so because “*Jai Hind*” was confined to just one nation, whereas the phrase, “*Jai Ho*” on the other hand, was applicable for all. The latter had universality.

Understanding the Quranic wisdom

Few days back I visited Gujarat for an all-India conference. Representatives of several religions were present there and they all gave speeches about their respective religions. I spoke about Islam and the audience appreciated it very much. In fact people took the Islamic literature available with us with great enthusiasm.

This experience reminded me of a verse from the Quran:

“Blessed be He who has revealed the criterion to His servant that he may warn the nations.” (25:1)

It means that Quranic wisdom can be understood only if we can find universal meaning in it. The Quran says that *Prophet Muhammad* was sent for all humanity. Hence although the verses of the Quran give an immediate reference for those present, there is yet another universal aspect which is for those who were not present in those times.

Unfortunately, no commentary of the Quran takes into consideration this fact about the universality of the verses. For example, in the above below, the Quran talks about developing a common ground between the Muslims and the *madu*:

“Say, ‘People of the Book, let us come to an agreement.’” (3:64)

In the various commentaries, this verse is restricted only to the Jews, **though it means that a *dai* must develop a common ground with the *madu* while addressing him.** That is, the *dai* must first develop a rapport with the *madu*, soften his heart and then venture to do dawah work with him.

It is important to bear in mind that **man is governed 99% by his unconscious mind and only 1% by the conscious mind.** Beating of heart, breathing, blinking etc is all done by the unconscious mind. One does not train oneself to do this. The same happens when we become conditioned and develop a non-appreciating nature. Once developed, it requires a great deal of effort to de-condition and revert to the original nature.

During the speech that I delivered at Gujarat, I quoted a Hadith, according to which the Prophet of Islam has said, “I can sense cool breeze from India.” This was a prediction made by the Prophet that India would emerge as a spiritual country. The citation of this Hadith helped in developing a rapport with the people over there majority of whom were non-Muslims. This is an example of appreciating nature. Had I instead spoken on the negative points, e.g. the atrocities inflicted on Muslims in Gujarat, the discrimination done etc. then people wouldn’t have liked it and **consequently no one would have taken the dawah literature.**

Modesty is the foundation

A philosopher once said:

“Man radiates himself, every moment.”

This means that every moment man has the opportunity to create history for himself. At the time of a crisis, only two types of people exist –those who weep and those who manage and find their way out. Life is all about managing crisis. **One should bring to notice positive things about others. Doing this makes us an efficient crisis manager.**

The root to developing such a nature is modesty. When there is modesty, no disputes happen and only due to lack of modesty ego clashes happen. This in fact is chiefly the reason why marriages fail. Each partner only wants to be heard. No one wants to listen.

Modesty has capturing power

Modesty is the greatest source of wisdom. All companions personified modesty. This is best illustrated with the following example. At the time when Iran was ruled by the Sassanid Empire, Muslims and Iranians were on the brink of a war. The Iranian king, *Yazgurd* and his General, *Rustam* invited Muslims for a dialogue. When the Muslim emissary reached the court of *Yazgurd*, he went before him without extending the due curtsies. This angered the King so much that he ordered the immediate departure of the emissary. In order to disgrace him further, the King commanded him to return carrying on his head, a pot filled with sand. The emissary did not react at the humiliation and quietly returned to his General. Instead of getting angry, the General complimented the emissary. **It was his modesty that showed him positivity amidst this act of extreme humiliation.** He told his emissary that this was good tiding because the Iranians had given away their soil to them on their own.

When the battle ensued, *Yazgurd* lined up an array of elephants as their front line defence. The Arabs, having known only horses, were completely unaware about the battle usage of elephants. Seeing the elephants, their horses became still and refused to budge. The modesty of Arabs gave them such courage that they jumped off their horses and ran towards the elephants and cut their trunks. This made the elephants so furious that they turned and started running backwards, crushing their very own army.

Modesty therefore, is such a source of wisdom that it makes one a storehouse of bravery, courage and most of all positive thinking.

This is evident from the following Hadith, which states:

“God will raise those who are modest for Him.” (Sahih Muslim)

To conclude, I would say that **appreciating nature should become so much a part of us that it drives our unconscious self.** In other words, **appreciating others and coming out of the cocoon of self-glory, is the true secret of success in life.**

May God bless us and grant us wisdom!