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**Al-Ghazali's Ihyā 'ulum al-din 'Revival of
the Religious Sciences'.**

**BOOK 29 Warning against arrogance, self-
amazement**

An adapted and abridged translation by Thaqib Mahmood

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Degrees of Haughtiness in Relation to the Party towards whom Haughtiness is Displayed

You should understand that man was created with an inclination for transgression and ignorance. Sometimes he treats humankind with arrogance, and other times he displays arrogance towards his Creator. Therefore, pride, in relation to the party towards whom arrogance is shown, can be divided into three parts.

1. Haughtiness towards Allah is the gravest pride, stemming from ignorance and transgression. This includes those claiming divinity, like Fir'awn, who declared, 'I am your most exalted God,' refusing to serve Allah. Allah states: {.. 'Verily, they who are too proud to worship Me will enter hell, abased!'}.

2. The ego's arrogance toward the apostles includes a presumptuous attitude and refusal to submit to ordinary humans, as Allah illustrates with claims of those acting this way: '... Shall we believe [them] two mortals like ourselves - although their people are our slaves?' and '... "You are nothing but mortal men like ourselves! ...". Allah describes Fir'awn's attitude as: 'Thus arrogantly, without the least good sense, did he and his hosts behave on earth,' showing his haughtiness toward Allah and His apostles. The Quraysh also claimed, as Allah reports: '... "Why was not this Qur'an bestowed from on high on some great man of the two cities?"' Qatada explained: 'They asked for someone with greater leadership than the Prophet, peace be upon him, because they claimed: "How could Allah send to us an orphan youth?"' Allah also states: '... and in their wickedness and self-exaltation they rejected them, although their minds were convinced of their truths ...'.

3. Haughtiness towards [Allah's] servants involves magnifying oneself and looking down on others. The ego resists submission, demands arrogance, despises others, shows contempt, and refuses equality. Though less severe than earlier forms, this pride is serious because pride, glory, and majesty only belong to the Almighty. A weak servant claiming pride challenges Allah, the Most Exalted. Allah states in a hadith: ... "Pride is My cloak and majesty is My cover, anyone who contests Me in either I will cast him into hell."

The second point is that pride leads to disobedience of Allah's commands. When a proud person hears the truth from Allah's servants, he often rejects it and is determined to deny it. Pride causes him to look down on accepting advice, as Allah, exalted is He, states: {And whenever he is told, Be conscious,' his false pride drives him into sin .. }.

Ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, said: It is a grave sin for a man to reply, 'Just mind yourself,' when told to be God-conscious. The Prophet, peace be upon him, instructed a man: 'Eat with your right hand.' The man responded: 'I can't.' The Prophet then said: 'May you never.' Nothing prevented this man from using his right hand to eat except his pride in ignoring the Prophet, peace be upon him. Ibn Mas'ud added: 'That man would never lift his hand again after that.'

Displaying arrogance towards mankind is serious because it reflects arrogance towards Allah's commands. Iblis exemplifies this pride, which Allah's description of him serves as a lesson. Iblis claimed, 'I am better than him [Adam],' based on their origins—fire vs. clay. This pride led him to refuse prostration, Allah's command. His envy and pride turned into arrogance towards Allah's command, leading to his eternal ruin.

This is why Allah's Messenger, peace be upon him, described pride as involving two faults. Thabit ibn Qays asked if loving beauty meant being proud. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said no. Pride is ignoring the truth and looking down on others—despising Allah's servants or denying the truth. Anyone who considers themselves better, looks down on others, or rejects the truth shows arrogance.

Key points- Degrees of Haughtiness in Relation to the Party towards whom Haughtiness is Displayed

1. Humans are naturally prone to transgression and ignorance, leading to arrogance towards others and God.
2. There are three kinds of pride: arrogance towards Allah (the gravest, exemplified by Fir'awn), arrogance towards prophets, and looking down on Allah's servants.
3. Pride is a serious sin because it challenges Allah's majesty and leads to disobedience.
4. Examples include Fir'awn's claim of divinity, Iblis's refusal to prostrate to Adam, and a man disobeying the Prophet out of pride.
5. Pride results in rejection of truth, disobedience, and eternal ruin, as exemplified by Iblis.
6. Pride involves ignoring the truth and looking down on others, rather than superficial traits.

What Pride is All About

You should know that no one shall display pride except the one who glorifies himself, and no one shall do so except the one who believes he possesses a trait of perfection. The total causes of pride can be traced either to the perfection related to the din (kamal dini), which involves knowledge and action (amal), or to a perfection associated with this world (kamal dunyawī), which includes lineage, beauty, might, wealth, or an abundance of supporters. There are thus seven causes of pride.

1. Pride often causes scholars ('ulama') to boast and look down on others, viewing knowledge to elevate their status. They assume others are unknowing, expect privileges, and treat people as subordinates. While people visit them, they rarely seek others and may believe they are superior before Allah. This arrogance makes them more concerned with their own well-being than others', seeking salvation and reward mainly for themselves. This arrogance causes them to be more concerned about their own well-being than theirs, and they seek salvation and reward more for themselves than for others.

Calling someone an ignoramus is more fitting than calling them a scholar because true knowledge involves understanding oneself, the Sustainer, and the dangers of disobedience. True knowledge encourages humility and fear of Allah. Pride arises when someone confuses superficial knowledge with true understanding. Authentic knowledge includes awareness of one's state before Allah and the risk of being unseen by Him, leading to humility. Allah states: {Of all His servants, only those with [innate] knowledge truly fear God...}.

Apart from this, fields such as medicine, algebra, and grammar are more accurately called 'occupations' (sana'i) rather than sciences, as complete mastery can lead to arrogance. Additionally, if someone with a bad nature seeks knowledge without self-improvement, he remains of evil substance. Wahb in Munabbih illustrated this with an example.

Knowledge (al-'ilm) is like gentle rain falling from the sky: pure and soft. Trees absorb it through their roots and shape it according to their nature—bitter things become more bitter, while sweet things grow even sweeter. Similarly, knowledge enhances both pride and humility—intensifying the pride of the proud and deepening the humility of the humble. It is a primary way people show pride. That's why Allah advised His Prophet, peace be upon him: {.. and spread the wing of thy tenderness over all the believers who may follow thee }, and {..for if thou hadst been harsh and demanding of heart, they would indeed have broken away from thee . .}.

2. Action and worship. Ascetics and devotees are not immune to the flaw of self-glorification, arrogance, and pride, which often manifest in their attitude towards the affairs of the din and this world. Concerning this world, they believe it is more fitting for people to come to them rather than for them to seek others; they expect people to serve and venerate them, as if their worship is a favour to mankind. Regarding the din, the ascetic or devotee assumes that all others are in danger while he remains safe; in truth, he is the one truly in danger as long as he harbours such misguided thoughts. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'If you hear a man claiming that the people are in great peril, then [know that] he is in greater danger.' This hadith shows that the person making such a claim shows disdain for Allah's creatures and is deluded about Allah.

Someone who firmly believes they are above any of Allah's servants has, out of ignorance, nullified all their [good] deeds. Ignorance is the worst kind of offence, as it greatly distances the servant from Allah. To think oneself better than others is simply pure ignorance. It also shows that they feel secure from Allah's devising, and no one should feel secure from Allah's devising except those who are truly the losers.

3. Status (hasab) and lineage (nasab). The one who is of noble lineage shows contempt towards one who is not, even if the latter is higher than him in knowledge and works. Another person might display pride and look at people as if they were slaves and clients (mawāl), and thus would be repelled from frequenting or sitting with them. The outcome of such pride is bragging and addressing others by names such as: 'O you Nabatean!', 'O, you Indian!', 'And who are you?', 'And who is your father?', and things of this sort. This type of pride is a disposition deeply rooted in the soul, and no noble person is immune from it. Even if such a person is righteous and discerning, he is still not immune from this, except that it does not show in him unless he is angry. It was reported that Abu Dharr al-Ghifari said: 'I argued with a man in the presence of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and said: "O son of a black woman!" The Prophet, peace be upon him, upon hearing this said: "O Abū Dharr! You are all alike. You are all alike. The son of a white woman has no precedence over the son of a black woman. " Abū Dharr continued: 'I laid on the floor and said to the man: "Get up and step on my cheek."

4. Bragging (tafakhur) about beauty. In most cases, this happens with women. Bragging about beauty causes them to speak badly of others, to slander, backbite, and highlight others' flaws.

5. Wealth. This applies to kings and their treasuries, traders and their merchandise, and those who adorn themselves with regard to their dress and mounts. The rich display contempt and haughtiness towards the poor, and it is to this that Allah, exalted is He, alludes when He says: {And [one day] he said to his friend, bandying words with him: More wealth have I than thou, and mightier am I as regards [the number and power] of my followers!}. This claim stemmed from pride due to wealth and progeny. Then Allah, exalted is He, revealed what had become of him by saying: {... Oh, would that I had not attributed divine powers to any but my Sustainer.} One form of pride is that exhibited by Qarun.

6. Might. This involves demonstrating power and oppression over the vulnerable.

7. Followers and supporters. Such pride is also linked to one's clan, relatives, and descendants. It also appears among scholars who boast about the number of people they have helped through their work. More or less anything regarded as a gift or a sign of perfection, even if not truly so, can be used to display pride. To the point that even someone who appears effeminate, perhaps because he knows more about effeminacy, shows pride in his own type. This summarises all the ways servants display pride towards each other. We seek help from Allah through His kindness and mercy.

Key points- What Pride is All About

1. The key point of this text is that true knowledge fosters humility and a fear of Allah, whereas pride often arises from superficial understanding and can lead to arrogance. Genuine knowledge involves self-awareness, recognition of one's dependence on Allah, and a humble attitude, avoiding arrogance and the false sense of superiority.
2. True humility in faith is essential; arrogance and self-glorification—whether in worship or in one's perceived superiority over others—are dangerous, misguided, and can nullify one's good deeds. Recognising one's vulnerability and maintaining humility are crucial to avoiding divine peril.
3. That pride based on lineage and race is a common human flaw, even among noble or righteous individuals. True nobility lies in humility, not in social or racial status.
4. Bragging about beauty, especially among women, often leads to negative behaviours such as gossip, slander, backbiting, and criticising others' flaws.
5. Wealth can lead to arrogance and pride, as exemplified by the attitude of the wealthy towards the poor and the pride of Qarun. Such pride is condemned in the Islamic perspective.
6. This involves demonstrating power and oppression over the vulnerable.
7. Pride manifests in various forms, including pride in one's lineage, achievements, possessions, and even personal traits, and it is a common behaviour among people, including scholars and individuals with different characteristics. The text concludes with a supplication for help from Allah's kindness and mercy.

The Manners of the Humble and the Manifestations of Pride

Pride shows in many ways, like a man's manners—turning his face away, glancing askance, lowering his head, sitting cross-legged, or leaning over. It appears in speech, voice, tone, and how he walks, sits, stands, moves, and relaxes. It also shows in how he handles tasks and fluctuates emotionally, verbally, and in actions. Some display all signs; others only some, with humility in others.

This includes someone who prefers others to stand for him, such as when entering a gathering, or expects people to remain standing until he sits down. 'Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "Whoever wishes to see a man from the people of hell, let him look at a man before whom a group of people are standing while he is seated." This also applies to someone who does not walk unless someone walks behind him. 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Awf was so indistinguishable from his slaves that he bore no outward signs to distinguish himself from them.

The list also includes someone who does not visit others, even if they benefit from such visits; and someone who refuses to let others sit close unless they sit directly in front of him. This attitude contradicts humility. Additionally, not helping with household chores may stem from pride, since humility involves actively participating in such tasks.

Not bringing belongings home can reflect pride, as humility generally opposes such behaviour. Tha'laba ibn Abi Malik al-Qurazi saw Abu Hurayra, then a governor, coming from the marketplace with a bundle of wood. Abu Hurayra told others to make way for the emir, saying, "Make way for the amir, O Ibn Abi Malik!" Pride and humility are often expressed through clothing. However, wearing new clothes isn't always a sign of pride. The Prophet, peace be upon him, noted in the hadith of Thabit ibn Qays that he valued beauty and cleanliness, but not to be haughty. Still, this can stem from pride.

This also shows humility through patience, especially when dealing with verbal abuse, harm, or denial of rights. Essentially, it is the proper way to act. Overall, good manners and humility are exemplified by the Prophet, peace be upon him. His behaviour should serve as a model, and people should learn from him.

Key points- The Manners of the Humble and the Manifestations of Pride

1. Pride manifests through various manners, such as speech, actions, and behaviour, such as turning away, tone of voice, walking style, and handling tasks.
2. Pride can be exhibited in behaviours like expecting others to stand for oneself, not walking unless someone else walks behind, and distinguishing oneself from others.
3. Certain attitudes, such as refusing to visit others or not participating in household chores, reflect pride and contradict humility.
4. Not bringing belongings home and wearing clothes solely for display can also indicate pride.
5. Humility involves participation in chores, modest attire, patience, and respecting others.
6. The Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) conduct exemplifies perfect manners and humility, serving as a moral guide.