

# Pride and Arrogance

**Description:** A brief description of the dangers inherent in pride and arrogance and how to avoid it.

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## Objectives:

- To understand the meaning of the Arabic word *kibr* and how it relates to arrogance and conceit.
- To discover simple ways to banish pride and arrogance from our lives.

## Arabic Terms:

- *Shaytan* - sometimes spelled *Shaitan* or *Shaytaan*. It is the word used in Islam and the Arabic language to denote the devil or Satan, the personification of evil.
- *Kibr* - arrogance, pride, haughtiness, conceit or condescension.
- *Dunya* - this world, as opposed to the world of the Hereafter.
- *Sahabah* - the plural form of "Sahabi," which translates to Companions. A *sahabi*, as the word is commonly used today, is someone who saw Prophet Muhammad, believed in him and died as a Muslim.
- *Iblees* " the Arabic name for Satan.
- *Risq* " provision or sustenance. All aspects of a person's subsistence and livelihood fall under the definition of *risq*, including but not restricted to wealth and status.
- *Du'a* - supplication, prayer, asking Allah for something.

The first entity to show pride and arrogance was *Shaytan* or as he is often called especially in the story of Adam, *Iblees*. He was filled with pride and arrogance because he thought that he was better than Adam. He felt superior.



**oe...then We told the angels, ‘Prostrate to Adam’, and they prostrated, except *Iblees*, he refused to be of those who prostrate. (Allah) said: ‘What prevented you (O *Iblees*) from prostrating when I commanded you?’ *Iblees* said: ‘I am better than him (Adam), You created me from fire, and created him from clay’” (Quran 7:11-12)**

That feeling of superiority is the root of all pride and arrogance. I am better than you. I make more money, my house is bigger, my intellect is greater, I have travelled more, my muscles are larger, I cook more delicious meals; the list goes on. One thing that all the things that we feel superior about have in common is that they are almost exclusively related to matters of the *dunya*. Love of the *dunya* and all its trappings actually push us further away from Paradise. Being, or appearing superior by *dunya* standards might just be more of a hindrance than a help. It is our God consciousness that makes a difference; being superior in that respect is the only superiority that counts.

You might make more money, but did you spend it to please Allah? You might make delicious meals but did you feed them to the poor? If you answer yes and you are proud of your accomplishments then this is not the pride and arrogance that translates to the Arabic word *kibr* (unhealthy and unnecessary pride and arrogance). Islam is not against innovation and achievement, it rewards and encourages excellence and success, and thus motivation, desire for reward and even desire for recognition are not the sins. The sin is in doing things with an incorrect intention. While achievement for the sake of Allah and to serve humanity is the correct intention, doing something for self-gain or self-love is an incorrect intention. Doing something to benefit your sense that the needs and desires of the world somehow revolve around you is *kibr*.

*Kibr* has the unintentional effect of making people dislike you, even fear you; it strips away respect. In addition and of a far greater consequence is that it may deny you a place in Paradise. Prophet Muhammad often counselled the *sahabah* about the importance of humility. He said, oe...Anyone who possesses half a mustard seed of *kibr* in his heart will not be granted admission to Paradise”.[\[1\]](#)

**oelt will be said (to them), ‘Enter the gates of Hell to abide herein, and (indeed) what an evil abode of the arrogant.’” (Quran 39:72)**

*Kibr* puts our place in Paradise in jeopardy because it prevents us from acquiring the qualities of a believer. A prideful person is not capable of wanting for others what he wants for himself. Nor can he be humble or avoid envy. An arrogant person refuses to accept advice and is often unable to restrain his anger or wrath. A believer however, strives to remove these traits from his character. He is always mindful of his behaviour.

Prophet Muhammad said that on the Day of Judgment Allah will not look at the person who drags his robe behind him out of pride. His close confidante Abu Bakr then responded, "Oh Messenger of Allah, one side of my robe slacks down but I am very cautious about it (i.e. I raise it)." Prophet Muhammad replied, "But you do not do that out of pride." [2] Once again we can see how prideful behaviour, *kibr*, stems from the intention.

The remedy for *kibr*, and the means by which one can keep well away from pride and arrogance, is as simple as remembering who you are; just a human being, with a mother and father like everybody else. We all cry the same salty tears and bleed the same red blood. And we all have the same purpose in life; to worship Allah. We must also remind ourselves that all *risq* comes from Allah. One person might earn more money but it is Allah that allowed him to acquire the skills to do so. Another person might be more handsome or beautiful, but it is Allah that determined the quality of his or her genes. When we receive something that we perceive as a special blessing from Allah we should remind ourselves to be thankful and grateful. One step up from that would be to strive to use that blessing for the sake of Allah and to benefit humankind or this planet in some way.

Another remedy for *kibr* is to remember Allah; to keep Him in the forefront of our minds, if possible, at all times. Remember that Allah sees all, even what is in the hearts of each person. As Muslims we are blessed with a way or a system of remembering. We pray five times a day, we use specific words of remembrance, and we are encouraged to make *du'a* and remember Allah often. We use these methods to become close to Allah, to obey His commands and please Him. In doing so we protect our own hearts from the sins of desire and greed and the sins involved in feeling superior to those around us. This *dunya* is important because it is our ultimate test; not because it allows us to store up goods and chattels. We want to feel good about ourselves because we have achieved God consciousness and not because we take our *risq* and deceive ourselves into thinking we created it ourselves. Pride and arrogance should be banished from our lives and replaced with kindness and compassion.

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Endnotes:

[1] *Saheeh Muslim*

[2] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari & Saheeh Muslim*

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