

CHARACTER TRAITS

Khalq and *khulq* are two different terms. *Khalq* refers to external form, whereas *khulq* means the internal dimension. Man, while consisting of body and physical parts, also consists of spiritual forms: spirit (*rūḥ*) and lower self or ego (*nafs*). His physical body has been given the faculty of sight (*baṣāra*), which is exercised by the eyes of the body. Similarly, he has been given the faculty of insight or seeing with the eyes of the heart (*baṣīra*). The external eyes lack the ability to perceive the internal dimension.

Allāh Most High has created man with these two component parts in different moulds. He has bestowed them with different physical forms along with various internal forms. Some have a beautiful form and character and some have ugly form and character. The physical form is known as *ṣūra*, while the spiritual or internal form is known as *sīra*. The rank of *sīra* is higher than that of *ṣūra* because Allāh Most High has related the former to Himself. In this regard He says, “I blew in him [Ādam] My spirit (*rūḥ*)” (Qur’ān 15:29).

In this verse, Allāh relates *rūḥ* to Himself. In another verse, He says, “Say, the *rūḥ* is of the Command of my Lord” (Qur’ān 17:85). This indicates that the spirit is not lowly nor of dust. However, Allāh Most High relates the physical body to soil. He says, “Verily, I shall create man from soil” (Qur’ān 38:71). The meaning of “spirit” in this context is the substance, which was generated by the direct inspiration of Allāh Most High. Each such substance acquires cognition of things in proportion to its inherent ability.

It has thus been established that the object of greater honor and importance is the command of Allāh: the *sīra* of man. As long as beauty is not inculcated into the internal dimension of man, he will not be described as having a beautiful *sīra*. Allāh Most High has granted the physical body limbs: hands, feet, and so forth. Similarly has He bestowed “limbs” to the internal form. The “limbs” of the internal form are the faculties of knowledge, wrath, desire, and justice. A *sīra* cannot be called beautiful until these four faculties have been adorned. Imperfection in the *sīra* is comparable to deformity in the physical body (*ṣūra*). As a deformed physical body cannot be called beautiful, neither can a defective internal form. For example, if one’s faculty of anger (*quwwa ghaḍabiyya*) is below the level of equilibrium and one’s

faculty of desire (*quwwa shahwāniyya*) is excessive, one's character (*sīra*) cannot be called beautiful.

EQUILIBRIUM AND BEAUTY OF THE FOUR INTERNAL FACULTIES

1. THE FACULTY OF KNOWLEDGE

Equilibrium (*ītidāl*) of knowledge is man's ability to distinguish between statements of wrong and right, between beliefs of falsehood and truth, and between deeds of vice and virtue. When this ability has been cultivated, the fruits of wisdom (*ḥikma*) will be experienced. Regarding such wisdom, Allāh Most High says, "He who has been granted wisdom has indeed been granted abundant good" (Qur'ān 2:269). In reality, this wisdom is the root of all merits and excellence.

About Intelligence

Equilibrium in intelligence (*ʿaql*) makes man wise, cultured, sharp-witted, and farsighted. His advice will be sound and he will possess the ability to act correctly in all affairs. Ingenuity manifests in him. If intelligence exceeds equilibrium it will be called deceptive and fraudulent. Intelligence below the degree of equilibrium is ignorance, dim-wittedness, and stupidity. The consequence is that such a person is easily misled. In short, man is described as having a beautiful *sīra* only when all these faculties are in the state of equilibrium. It has been said that the best of affairs is its middle (its state of equilibrium). Allāh Most High says, "Our servants are such that when they spend they neither are extravagant, nor are they miserly, but they remain in a condition in between [in the state of equilibrium]" (Qur'ān 25:67).

Internal beauty (*sīra*) varies with people just as external beauty (*ṣūra*) differs. The possessor of the most beautiful *sīra* was the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and give him peace). About his excellence, Allāh declares, "Verily, you are of splendid character" (Qur'ān 68:4).

Among the Muslims, the degree of beauty of character (*sīra*) will be in proportion to the degree to which they resemble the character of the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and give him peace). The greater their resemblance to the character of the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him

the child anything, her statement merely being to lure the child to her, then such a statement would also be a lie (*Abū Dāwūd*).

The Remedy

When speaking, be cautious. Do not speak without thinking. Think before you speak, and be firm in confronting and curbing the urge to speak what is false. If falsehood is spoken, make up for this error by seeking forgiveness. Should any word contrary to the Shari‘a pass your lips, resort to repentance in profusion.

ENVY

Allāh Most High says:

Say! I seek refuge with the Lord of the morning ... from the evil of the envier when he envies (Qurʾān 113:1,5).

The Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and give him peace) said:

Do not envy each other (*Bukhārī*).

The Nature of Envy

To be displeased with another’s good position and to wish for its elimination is envy (*ḥasad*). Envy has three stages: the natural human quality—in this degree of envy, man is excused and is not at fault; acting according to the demands of envy—in this degree, man is a sinner; opposing the demands of envy—in this degree, man is laudable and will be rewarded.

Generally, the basis of envy is pride (*takabbur*) and deceit (*ghurūr*). Without any valid reason man seeks to withhold the bounties of Allāh Most High. He desires [at times consciously and at times subconsciously] that just as he withholds from giving to others, Allāh too should withhold His bounties from others. Envy is a disease of the heart. It is harmful to both one’s spiritual life and worldly life. The harm to man’s religion (spiritual life) consists in the eradication of his good deeds, and he becomes the victim of Allāh’s Wrath. The Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and give him peace) said, “Envy devours good deeds as fire devours wood” (*Abū Dāwūd*).