



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

## Humiliation and Analysis of its Conceptual Relationship with Spiritual Voyage

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### Abstract

**SUBJECT AND OBJECTIVES:** Dhull or humiliation is originally a Quranic word and all the Quranic subjects were of interest and importance to the Mystics. It is well-known that commendable characteristics and virtuous character in mysticism are both from the most important matters related to the ascending journey to the Lord. Humiliation is one of the mystical ethics which affects the voyage and motion to God. Humiliation of the soul for the obedience of God Almighty commands and staying away from sins are better than prayer and fasting, by which the traveler on the spiritual path gets closer to his Lord and makes him attain the Real Honor which is only something connected with the Honor of Allah, His messenger and believers.

**METHOD AND FINDING:** It must be mentioned that there are Spiritual Veils on the traveler's way to God which have also its humiliation and every veil is a trial from God Almighty who has tested His servants with it. The analytical-descriptive method of this research describes the nature of humiliation, not in its familiar meaning and its traces in the holy traveler's journey to God.

**CONCLUSION:** In this research we are going to see many important points from which the overflowing knowledge of God into the one who humiliated his soul for Allah's sake is becoming one of the most significant humiliation effects in the wayfarer's mystical life and how the worldlys' norm in defining the humiliation nature differs completely from the Divine one which based on the complete submission and surrendering to Him.

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## **Introduction**

Dhull or Humiliation in lexical meaning indicates to the submission, submissiveness and leniency. Humiliation is the opposite of pride and honor. (*Ibn Faris, 1984, Vol. 2: 344*)

Dhull technically is the station of being in want to God, helplessness and asking God for forgiveness. (*Ibn Arabi, 2001, Vol. 1: 104*)

humiliation is originally a Quranic word and it is not only Quranicly significant but also mystically. Mystics point out that human being is such a combination of body and soul, and the holy traveler needs practices for the both. Accordingly, he must act and worship. He acts for his body and worships for his soul. Actions are all about body and will affect the soul because of the relationship between body and soul while worshiping is

connected with the soul situations. So, in both practices whether is action or worshiping, the traveler must be present with humiliation and submission between His God's hands (*Qunawi, 2002, 238*) to reach Him and witnesses the Truth manifestation.

In this regard, Humiliation can't be taken literally that humiliated man is the poor and weak one. On the contrary, the more the wayfarer is humiliated to his Lord, the more he gets the honor from his Lord.

The importance of this research is that it shows the real nature of humiliation and how it is important to reach the Almighty God Quranicly and Mystically.

Regarding this research, it is true that humiliation has been discussed in several works, but so far no independent article

has dealt with the subject of humiliation and its relationship with spiritual journey and wayfaring, but we can see this subject as separate paragraphs in several mystical works such as: “Al-Futuh al-Makkiyya” for Ibn Arabi, “Mashrab al-Arwah” for Ruzbihan Baqli.

### **Theoretical Foundations of Research**

Dhull or Humiliation in lexical meaning indicates to the submission, submissiveness and leniency. Humiliation is the opposite of pride and honor. (*Ibn Faris, 1984, Vol. 2: 344*)

Dhull as a quranic term is the origin of worshiping, submission and humiliation and worshiping is obedience and the far most magnification for the Almighty God. (*Qurashi, 1992, Vol. 4: 278*)

One of the most important verses that illuminates that the dhull is the station of humiliation,

act of devotion and divine service is the verse number 43 of Al-Imran which shows what angles told the lady Mary about being humble to her God through worshiping. It is worth noting that prostrating in this verse precedes bowing down to indicate the significance of the complete humiliation and submission towards Allah and surrendering to Him.

The Lord says in the Holy Quran:

*“Mary, pray devotedly to your Lord, prostrate yourself before Him and bow down with those who bow down before Him”.* (*Al-Imran: 43*)

The holy Quran mentions the dhull in different verses. Dhull means what was because of conquering. For example, “Lower to them the wing of humility” (*Al-Isra: 24*) means be humble, submissive and lenient to them; or dhull in the

hereafter because of committing sins, for instance “*The recompense for the evil deeds will be equally evil (not more) and the faces of the evil-doers will suffer from disgrace*”; (*Yunus: 27*) and dull in the lowest world as a result of not worshipping God “*Those who worshipped the calf will be afflicted by the wrath of their Lord and disgraced in their worldly life*”; (*Al-A'raf: 152*) and finally dhull comes with the meaning of subservience and meekness “*It is He who has made the earth subservient to you. You walk through its vast valleys and eat of its sustenance. Before Him you will all be resurrected*” (*Al-Mulk: 15*). (Raghib Isfahani, 1992: 330)

Dhull technically is the station of being in want to God, helplessness and asking God for forgiveness. (*Ibn Arabi, 2001, Vol. 1: 104*)

Journey literally comes from walk and indicates to moving and flowing. (*Ibn Faris, 1984, Vol. 3: 120*)

Sayr word appears in the Holy Quran with its various derivatives 26 times, Allah says:

*“tell them to travel in the land and see what happened to those who rejected the Truth”.*  
(*Al-An'am: 11*)

Spiritual Journey in mysticism is the journey of conscience and hearts. (*Gilani, 2005: 319*)

Wayfaring in lexical meaning is derived from route and route is road. It is said I take the road. This word indicates to getting something into another. (*Ibn Manzur, 1993, Vol. 10: 442*)

This word with its different forms come 12 times in the Holy Quran, including the Almighty's saying:

*“Have you not seen that God has sent down*

*water from the sky and made it flow as springs out of the earth?"*  
(Az-Zumar: 21)

The wayfaring technically means refinement of morals, actions and knowledge by working on the worshiper's inner and outer. The worshiper in all of that is occupied with himself by refining his inward to prepare himself for reaching God. This arrival will be achieved when the manifestation of the Truth is revealed to him and he becomes absorbed in it. Then, When he looks at his knowledge knows nothing but Allah, and when he sees his force of spiritual decision, sees nothing but Allah. (Qunawi, 2002, Vol. 2: 425)

Suluk is the ascension in the stations of nearness to the presences of Allah, actually and spiritually, by refining the human being's inner and outer

by disobeying dictate of passions by constant efforts and struggling against the soul, so that he does not find in himself any embarrassment from that. (Kashani, 2005, Vol. 2: 435)

### **Human Being and Humiliation**

There are many verses in the Quran deal with dhull. This word appears in the Noble Quran 24 times with its various derivatives, including the Almighty's saying relating to parents:

*"Lower to them the wing of humility and say, "Lord, have mercy upon them as they cherished me in my childhood".*  
(Al-Isra: 24)

Dhull or humility in this verse is not in the familiar meaning of prostration and indignity, But it carries the meaning of kindness and mercy towards them, in other words, Lord refers to the way that

must be followed by man in treating their parents that he must be humble and merciful towards them.

This humiliation that raises the dignity of man which results from the humility and heart's breaking for God's sake. Mercy and leniency towards them in particular and the humankind in general, originates from the Divine Love.

It must be mentioned, that the birth or biological parents are not the only object of parents in this verse. There is another referent of this concept which is inward and esoteric one.

According to the prophetic traditions and Ahlulbait sayings, Ahlulbayt are superior to parents. The Messenger of Allah said:

*“Me and Ali are the fathers of this nation. We are more rightful to get their thanks than their parents. If they*

*obey us, we will rescue them from the Hellfire and join them with the free and righteous people”.*  
*(Majlesi, 1983, Vol. 36: 11)*

Thus, dhull in this regard means obeying and being humble to them, because following them with the submission to God's commands and surrounding to Him, ends up with a real freedom from corporal attachments and worldly ties.

In other Quranic verse, we can see that dhull's meaning manifested in the same content and significance. The Almighty God says:

*“Certainly Allah helped you at Badr, when you were weak [in the enemy's eyes]. So be wary of Allah so that you may give thanks”.*  
*(Al-Imran: 123)*

Before going deep into the meaning of dhull in this verse, we have to suggest that some interpretations of the word “adhallah” emphasize the meaning of weakness, namely their forces at Badr were much weaker than those of the enemy.

Some of the interpreters see that the meaning of weakness and humility are far away from the real indication of the word “adhallah”, that is because of the contradiction between this sense and the following verse “*Honor belongs to God, His Messenger and the believers*”; (*Al-Munafiqun: 8*) Then, how come they were weak and little while the ones who were fighting against the hypocrites were the Messenger and the believers. (*Sadeqi Tehrani, 2013, Vol. 5: 366*)

To solve this contradiction, we have to see the difference

between situation of believers at Badr and Uhud.

Although the believers at the Uhud Battle were strong in terms of forces and troops, they lost. When they were fighting the unbelievers, they began to lose courage, started quarreling with each other and disobeyed God's orders. Some of them wanted worldly gains and others wanted rewards in the hereafter. So Lord let them face defeat.

This scene was not in the Battle of Badr, but rather the opposite. The believers were weak in terms of troops, but the Lord gave them the victory on account of their humility and obedience to Him.

As a result, we can't take dhull here in its literal meaning. It is not related to the worldly and materialistic conditions. It is all connected to the obedience and submission to God and only

ignorant people see otherwise. So, If you are humble to God and obey him and His Messenger to the limit with which you become like a shadow to them, then you will be helped from the Lord.

This result can be emphasized with comparing the two following verses:

- *“Recall the time when you (the believers) were only a few and reckoned feeble in the land, afraid of being terrorized by the people. God gave you shelter, supported you with His help and bestowed on you pure provisions so that perhaps you would give Him thanks”. (Al-Anfal: 26)*
- *“Certainly Allah helped you at Badr, when you were weak. So be wary of Allah so that you may give thanks”. (Al-Imran: 123)*

This expression “a few and reckoned feeble” in the first verse corresponds to the following one in the second verse “weak-adhallah”, and the two verses end up with thanking the Lord. (*Sadeqi Tehrani, 2013, Vol. 5: 366*)

The two expressions refer that the only source of the real honor is God, and dhull and humility to him is the one and only way to get that Divine honor.

As for humiliation in terms of a small number and weakness that is not a dhull at all and when a man has a powerful connection with Allah and lives in His shadow, he will definitely get His support and help even if he is weak and decrepit apparently.

There are many examples in the holy Quran bring to light how ignorant and worldly men look at the humiliation matter.

In the verse 52 of Az-Zukhruf, Pharaoh was addressing his

people about how better is he, than the prophet Moses who is so contemptible, wretch, with no honor and respect. The pharaoh's vision originated from his outrageous fortune combined with arrogance.

The religious men and the people of Remembrance can sight and imagine the esoteric abode and dignity of the prophet Moses with which neither the king of Egypt nor any king can be greater than him in it. The weakness of Moses in expressing himself is not an affront as he can show realities and spiritual truths while pharaoh can reveal nothing but myths and claims. (*Sadeqi Tehrani, 2013, Vol. 26: 339*)

The Holy Quran says:

*“Am I not better than this one [Musa (Moses)], who is Mahin [weak and despicable] and can*

*barely express himself clearly?” (Az-Zukhruf: 52)*

The word Mahin in this verse coincides with the word dhull. This indicates that dhull in the Noble Quran has not only its derivatives, but also synonyms like (Mahin, Qulla Mustadafun).

The Almighty God explains in His Noble Quran who is the true weak and humiliated man. He is the disobedient transgressor who disobeyed and exceeded the limits with God, killed the Messengers unjustly and disbelieved in the signs of Allah:

*“Enter a city, so you will have what you ask for. And abasement and humiliation were brought down upon them and they became deserving of Allah's wrath; this was so because they disbelieved in the communications of Allah*

*and killed the prophets unjustly; this was so because they disobeyed and exceeded the limits". (Al-Baqarah: 61)*

The Divine view absolutely differs from the worldly people's one who confine dhull to the outward appearance. The unbelievers consider fortune, power and having plenty of children to be an integral part of honor while poverty, weakness and having few children are fundamentals in defining someone's humiliation. They made a big mistake when they specify honorable and humiliated ones in this way. Hypocrites didn't know that being in honor is connected only with being in obedience to God, and anything else hasn't any origin. (*Qushayri al-Naysaburi, 2000, Vol. 3: 589*)

Allah conveys His and their perspective about that in surah Al-Munafiqun:

*"They say, when we return to Medina, the honorable ones will certainly drive out the mean ones. Honor belongs to God, His Messenger and the believers, but the hypocrites do not know". (Al-Munafiqun: 8)*

As a result, we can say that worldlys' norm in defining the humiliation nature differs completely from the Divine one which based on the complete submission and surrendering to the Lord. This station (dhull) and what is related to it, will manifest on the Day of Resurrection in particular.

In the verse 45 of surah Ash-Shura we can see the true dhull for the ones who are unbelievers and disobedient to the Lord. This verse show the

true humiliation in the Divine point of view and who are the real humiliated men. They will be presented to the Fire, downcast because of humiliation, looking with stealthy glance on the Day of Judgment suffering from lasting punishment:

*“You will see them exposed to the fire, subdued in humiliation, looking sideways at it pleadingly; however, at the same time, the believers will say, the true losers are those who will lose their souls and families on the Day of Judgment. The unjust will certainly suffer everlasting torment”.*  
(Ash-Shura: 45)

Dhull is not only discussed at the level of the visible present world and the Day of Resurrection, but also it can be explore at the heart level,

namely spiritual combat. In this regard, there is an esoteric interpretation for dhull which is the heart's humility towards the ideas that come suddenly into it (khawater). When the heart won the war and took the victory against those incoming thoughts, then it will be honored by emerging its light which enables it (the heart) to be steady and powerful in its fighting.  
(Urabi, 2005, Vol. 1: 92)

This the esoteric exegesis of the verse 123 of surah Al-Imran, in which the victory at Badr interpreted into the heart victory.

### **Almighty God and Humiliation**

There are two points that must be mentioned here. The first one is the source of humiliation and honor. The second one is humiliation matter at the Divine Essence level.

For the first point, the matter of humiliating anyone and giving honor to someone is

only in God's hand. He is the Owner of the Kingdom, and the only one who gives authority to whomever He wants and takes it away from whomever He wants. In His hands is all virtue and He has the power over all things. (Ref: *Al-Imran*, 26) Lord is (Al-Mouez) the Honor Giver and (Al-Moudhil) the Humiliation Giver.

Allameh Tabatabai believes that the honor (Aleiz) is something hard to be reached unlike humiliation (dhull) which is easy to get and accessible.

For example the honorable man of a nation is hard to be defeated and it is hard to get in terms of his position among his people. Honor is only for God and essential property of authority. (*Tabatabai*, 1997, Vol. 3: 131)

So, we can see that the Real Honor in the Divine view is only something connected with the Honor of Allah, His

messenger and believers and any other kind of honor out of the Divine Honor is just a humiliation in the image of honor and glory.

As for the second point, Allah describes Himself in the Holy Quran, that He does not need any guardian or helper to help Him in His need; Because of His Perfection, the Almighty God has no humiliation in Him to need any help or protection from anyone in positions of weakness and times of lack of power (Ref: *Al-Isra*: 111) / (*Hosseini Tehrani*, 2013, Vol. 3: 353; *Ibn Ajiba*, 2009, Vol. 3: 244)

On the other hand, Allah asked Believers to help Him, because if they help God, He will help them and make them steadfast in their faith. (Ref: *Muhammad*: 7)

Surely, helping God here doesn't mean that He needs a help, but those who will do that, they seek God's pleasure

to be the chosen ones from Him, not because there is a humiliation in Him, not at all.

If we want to get deeply in the interpretation of “*and Who has not a helper to save Him from disgrace*” (*Al-Isra. 111*), we can see two qualifications here, the first one is who is the helper, and the second one is “*from disgrace*” which is humiliation. As a result, we have to glorify him and proclaim His greatness, that is because He has not any helper and has not any humiliation in Him, “*and proclaim His greatness magnifying*”. (*Ibn Arabi, 1989, Vol. 2: 586*)

### **Humiliation in Mysticism**

The mystical view about dhull doesn't differ from the Quranic one. Mystics consider dhull station is the same as submission and humility one (alkhushue) and khushue is in the heart. They look to khushue

as one of the predominant characteristics of the creatures and it has no entrance in the Divinity. (*Ajam, 1999: 322*)

Ibn Arabi regards that this description (dhull) has two faces: one in our lowest world in which dhull is commendable for praiseworthy people and the other is in the hereafter in which dhull is lawfully shameful for blameworthy people.

In other words, dhull is a situation move from the believers in the lowest world to the transgressing and proud people who are evil doers and want to impose their superiority over the others in the land in the hereafter.

Ibn Arabi when he describes dhull as an excellent merit for believers, doesn't restrict and define this matter to men only. He sees that praiseworthy dhull is for believers who are submissive to God in their prayers whether they are men

or women. (*Ibn Arabi, 1994, Vol. 2: 193*)

It is well-known that human-soul seeks perfection, that is because it isn't perfect and has shortcomings and merits. The soul's turn in this lowest world is to get rid of its flaws to reach its perfection. So, any shortcoming makes the soul far away from its completeness and causing it humiliation and destitution, not only in the lowest world, but also on the Day of Resurrection.

For example, one of the awfulest vices of the soul is greediness, and yearning for other people's property. Greediness doesn't save anyone's face, so this vice needs to be treated to get the human soul away from humiliation and make it closer to its perfection. The treatment is to apply the compatible remediation of Patience and Contentment with what the Almighty God has blessed and knowing that Greediness is the

cause of humiliation in the lowest world and the Hereafter. (*Ruzbihan Baqli, 2007: 37*)

### **Humiliation Practices**

In this paragraph we are going to discuss how the traveler to God becomes humiliated to Him.

Because the human being is such a combination of body and soul, the holy traveler needs some kind of practices for the both. Accordingly, he must act and worship. He acts for his body and worships for his soul.

In other words, actions are all about body and will affect the soul because of the relationship between body and soul while worshipping is connected with the soul situations. So, in both practices whether is action or worshipping, the traveler must be present with humiliation and submission between His God's hands. (*Qunawi, 2002: 238*)

Regarding worship practices and its relationship to humiliation, Ibn Arabi assures that standing at Arafah must be with humiliation, submission, and supplication by putting on a unsewn clothes. (*Ibn Arabi, 1994, Vol. 1: 359*)

Ibn Arabi points out in the Foutuh that staying up at night worshipping God with submission, causes the Divine Manifestation to the holy travelers. (*Ibn Arabi, 1994, Vol. 1: 199*)

In Mysticism, humiliation towards God must be in every movement and stillness. For instance, crying must be from God, to God. So, the traveler cries from the longing torture to Allah, fear of being separated from Him, standing in Allah's hands, fear that the road would be cut off and not reaching Him, fear that he was not fit to meet him, shyness

that with whichever He looks at him. Weeping must be in humiliation to seek His nearness and proximity. (*Abu Nasr as-Sarraj, 2016: 299*)

Mystics defines the radix of humiliation, that is their being. In other words, everyone is under the humiliation of "Be", (*Abu Nasr as-Sarraj, 2016: 363; Ruzbihan Baqli, 2005: 21*) which is Allah's Command to bring something into existence.

Finally, it must be noted that veil (hijab) has its humiliation. It is recognized that hijab in Sufism and Mysticism is not a physical being like heaven and earth, it is a divine veil that is standing between the salik and God and salik (traveller) must take the hijabs out to reach God and see His Manifestation (Tajlli) and feel His nearness.

Hijabs differ from salik to another and every veil is according to the traveler's

station. Because hijabs are also for the believers (such as serenity of worship, miraculous powers and wondrous deeds), no one has escaped the humiliation of the veil except the prophets and the truthful ones. Every veil is a trial from God Almighty, and God has tested His servants with it. (*Ruzbihan Baqli, 2007: 81*)

### **Conclusion**

- Dhull or Humiliation in general is related to submission, submissiveness and leniency. It is the opposite of pride and honor. The only dhull which gives the honor is the dhull To Allah, by worshiping Him and being in obedience to Him.
- The worldlys' norm in defining the humiliation nature differs completely from the Divine one which based on the complete submission and surrendering to the Lord. The true dhull will be for the ones who are unbelievers and disobedient to the Lord on the Day of Judgment suffering.
- The religious men and the people of Remembrance can sight and imagine the esoteric abode and dignity of the prophet Moses with which neither the king of Egypt nor any king can be greater than him in it. The weakness of Moses in expressing himself is not an affront as he can show realities and spiritual truths while pharaoh can reveal nothing but myths and claims.
- The word Mahin in this verse coincides with the word dhull. This indicates that dhull in the Nobel Quran has not only its

derivatives; but also it has synonyms like (Mahin, Qulla Mustadafun).

- The Almighty God explains in His Noble Quran who is the true weak and humiliated man. He is the disobedient transgressor who disobeyed and exceeded the limits with God, killed the Messengers unjustly and disbelieved in the signs of Allah. we can say that worldlys' norm in defining the humiliation nature differs completely from the Divine one which based on the complete submission and surrounding to Him.
- Dhull is not only discussed at the level of the visible present world and the Day of Resurrection; but also it can be explore at the heart level, namely spiritual combat.
- The Only source of humiliation and honor is God. He needs no helper to help him in His need. So He must be glorified, that is because He has neither helper, nor humiliation in Him.
- the Real Honor in the Divine view is only something connected with the Honor of Allah, His messenger and believers and any other kind of honor out of the Divine Honor is just a humiliation in the image of honor and glory.
- Actions and worshipping with humiliation are the means by which the traveler can get closer to His Almighty God.
- Veil (hijab) has its humiliation and no one

has escaped the humiliation of the veil except the prophets and the truthful ones. Every veil is a trial from God Almighty, and God has tested His servants with it.

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