

6 – Qualities of the People of Jannah

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When we talk of the People of Jannah who is or can possibly be superior to the Messenger ﷺ of Allah ﷻ? It is about him and those who followed him and will continue to follow him until the Last Day that Allah ﷻ said:

وَالسَّابِقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ
وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

Tawba 9:100. And the first to embrace Islam of the Muhajirun (Migrants) and the Ansar (Helpers) and also those who followed them exactly (in Faith). Allah is well-pleased with them as they are well-pleased with Him. He has prepared for them Gardens under which rivers flow (Jannah), to dwell therein forever. That is supreme success.

I ask Allah ﷻ for this for all of you. However in this Ayah as in every place in the Qur'an that Allah ﷻ has promised anything for people, He has always made His promises conditional upon our actions and conduct. There are no unconditional promises of reward in the Aakhirah or even in the world. You want something; you have to do something. You can't have what you want simply by wanting. As they say, if wishes were horses, beggars would ride. If therefore we want to be among the people of Jannah then we have to ensure that we do what the people who Allah ﷻ designated as the people of Jannah (Sahaba or Rasoolullah ﷺ) did. We need to develop those qualities that the Sahaba had and make our conduct as close to the conduct of the Sahaba which led to Allah ﷻ being pleased with them. In short, we need to follow the one

who the Sahaba followed – for it is his habits which are the habits of the people of Jannah. In following him, we will also be included among his people.

So let us see what the principle qualities we can identify from the life of Rasoolullah ﷺ are and try to inculcate them in our lives. Ramadan is a good time to start – with reflection and bringing about habit change so that we can make the change permanent and ask Allah ﷻ to include us in His Mercy. There are six qualities that I want to present to you from the Seerah of Rasoolullah ﷺ which are the principle qualities of the people of Jannah. I ask Allah ﷻ to give us the strength to inculcate them in our lives so that we will be counted among them. These are:

1. Love of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ
2. Complete certainty
3. No compromise
4. Putting himself on the line
5. Resilience: Face the facts + Absolute faith in success
6. Magnanimity and forgiveness

1. Love of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ

If there is one quality that distinguished Rasoolullah ﷺ and his Sahaba from all humanity it was love of Allah ﷻ. This is a quality that Allah ﷻ liked so much that He mentioned it specifically in His Book and said:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَندَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا
لِّلَّهِ وَلَوْ يَرَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِذْ يَرُونَ الْعَذَابَ أَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ

Baqara 2: 165. *And of mankind are some who take (for worship) others besides Allah as rivals (to Allah). They love them as they love Allah. But those who believe, love Allah more (than anything else). If only, those who do wrong could see, when they will see the torment, that all power belongs to Allah and that Allah is Severe in punishment.*

Imagine the honor of it being said by Allah ﷻ about you:

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ

But those who believe, love Allah more (than anything else).

What is the value of that? Does that have any value at all? If so what are you and I prepared to pay for it? Yet today we can have it for free – only if we do what is in any case intrinsically beneficial for us – obey Allah ﷻ and follow His Messenger ﷺ.

What does this love for Allah ﷻ give us? What does being loved by Allah ﷻ give us?

On the authority of Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه, who reported that Rasoolullah ﷺ said:

"If Allah ﷻ loves a slave [of His], He calls Jibreel (AS) and says: 'I love So-and-so, therefore love him.'" He (Rasoolullah ﷺ) said: "So Jibreel loves him. Then he (Jibreel) calls out in heavens, saying: 'Allah loves So-and-so, therefore love

him.' And the inhabitants of heaven love him." He (Rasoolullah ﷺ) said: "Then acceptance is established for him on earth. And if Allah® hates a slave [of His], He calls Jibreel (AS) and says: 'I abhor So-and-so, therefore abhor him.' So Jibreel abhors him. Then Jibreel calls out to the inhabitants of heaven: 'Allah® abhors So-and-so, therefore abhor him.'" He (Rasoolullah ﷺ) said: "So they abhor him, and hatred is established for him on earth." [Muslim, Bukhari, Malik, and at-Tirmidhi]

Hadith Qudsi: On the authority of Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه, who reported that Rasoolullah ﷺ said:

"Allah® said: Whosoever shows enmity to someone devoted to Me, I shall be at war with him. My slave draws not near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him, and My slave continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory (Nawaafil) works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him, and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it. I do not hesitate about anything as much as I hesitate about [seizing] the soul of My faithful slave: he hates death and I hate hurting him." [Bukhari]

One important point to reflect on in this is that the rewards are for Nawaafil (voluntary actions over and above the compulsory – Fara'idh). The compulsory action is a sign of belonging but can also be a sign of fear which a person does only because he fears punishment. But the voluntary action is a sign of love which a person does only because he wants to do more and more for the One he loves above all else. That is why the special rewards. It was to

reinforce this that Rasoolullah ﷺ said, 'Should I not be a grateful slave?' in the famous Hadith.

Now see this love of Allah ﷻ and Allah ﷻ's love for the slave in the light of the Sunnah and ask yourself what the proof is that it is necessary to follow the Sunnah to gain the love of Allah ﷻ and all that goes with it. Ask yourself if you can realistically gain Allah ﷻ's love while disobeying Rasoolullah ﷺ or following his Sunnah selectively – only what you like – meaning that you don't like other things that Allah ﷻ liked in His Messenger ﷺ? Get real people. Allah ﷻ said in His Book:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

A'al Imraan 3:31. Say (O Muhammad ﷺ to mankind): "If you (really) love Allah then follow me (emulate me), Allah will love you and forgive your sins. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

Ittiba is emulation with the only reason that you love the one you emulate and want to associate with him and become a reminder of him to whoever sees you. You want to emulate Muhammad ﷺ because you love him and want the world to remember him when they see you. The only way that will happen is if you look, talk, walk, deal and be like him in every respect. Study his appearance and make your own like him. Appearance first because that is the exterior – the packaging which will entice the observer to look inside. Packaging which is the essence of brand. Packaging which is the title of the message you want to give to the world – that you are a Muhammadi – that you are one of the people of Muhammad ﷺ.

Allah ﷻ said about the Sahaba and their love for Rasoolullah ﷺ:

النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ

Ahzab 33:6. The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves, and his wives are their (believers') mothers (as regards respect and marriage).

Allah ﷻ bore testimony to the love the Sahaba had for Rasoolullah ﷺ and said that they loved him more than they loved themselves. That is the standard – to love Rasoolullah ﷺ more than anyone and anything else including yourself. Allah ﷻ reiterated this in another place in much stronger language and said:

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ

Tawba 9:24. Say: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your kindred, the wealth that you have gained, the commerce in which you fear a decline, and the dwellings in which you delight ... are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger, and striving hard and fighting in His Cause , then wait until Allah brings about His Decision (torment). And Allah guides not the people who are Al-Fasiqun (the rebellious, disobedient to Allah).

Allah ﷻ not only made it a condition of belief that the Believer loves Muhammad ﷺ but that he/she loves him more than anything else in this world including all those things which are natural and Halaal to love, like your family and so on. Yet if someone makes the love of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ secondary to that and doesn't demonstrate that love in his life through his actions, then not only will Allah ﷻ be displeased with him but specifically discarded him, promised His punishment and promised not to guide him.

Rasoolullah ﷺ mentioned this love very specifically in the famous Hadith where he said:

None of you shall become a true believer until I become dearer to him than his own son, father and all mankind. [Agreed upon (i.e. Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood, At Tirmidhi, An-Nasai and Ibn Majah)]

It is reported that it is obligatory on the believer to love Rasoolullah ﷺ more than his own self, according to the following Hadith:

‘Omar ibn al Khattab رضي الله عنه said to Rasoolullah ﷺ, ‘ Ya Rasoolullah ﷺ! You are dearer to me than everything except myself.’ Rasoolullah ﷺ replied, ‘By the one in whose hand is my life, (your Imaan will not be complete) until I become dearer to you than your own self.’ Omar ibn al Khattab رضي الله عنه then said to him: ‘You are now dearer to me than my own self.’ Rasoolullah ﷺ said: ‘Now! Ya Omar’ (your Imaan is complete) [Bukhari]

This Hadith shows that the love of Rasoolullah ﷺ is obligatory and is a sign and measure of Imaan and must be greater than any other love, except the love of Allah ﷻ. Because the love of the Messenger ﷺ is subservient to the love of Allah ﷻ and is necessitated by it, and is a love for the sake of Allah ﷻ, which increases by increasing the love of Allah ﷻ, in the heart of the believer and decreases by the decrease of the love of Allah ﷻ. Whoever loves Allah ﷻ, must love Rasoolullah ﷺ who Allah ﷻ loves and must love everything else for the sake of Allah ﷻ. The love of Allah ﷻ’s Messenger ﷺ entails revering him, loving him, following him, preferring his way over every other way, seeing his Sunnah as a defining thing in our lives, following his Sunnah as a mark of our belonging to his Ummah and giving his statements priority, over every other statement of creatures. No human was dearer or more revered in the hearts of

the Sahaba than Rasoolullah ﷺ. Amr bin al-Aasؓ said after accepting Islam, 'No person was more hateful to me than Rasoolullah ﷺ, but when I became Muslim, no one was dearer to me than Rasoolullah ﷺ nor more revered in my sight.' He said: 'Were I to be asked to describe him to you, I would not be able to do so, because I never looked directly at him, out of the great reverence in which I hold him.' The Adab of the Sahaba was so great that they didn't even look at Rasoolullah ﷺ directly. Difficult to understand in our times, no doubt.

Selective obedience is disobedience. Selecting one Sunnah and leaving another reiterates that it is your love for your own desires and not love for Muhammad ﷺ that drives you. The one who loves Muhammad ﷺ loves everything that Muhammad ﷺ said, did and was. And it is only that one that Allah ﷻ loves. Not one who takes what he likes and leaves what he doesn't like. Allah ﷻ will note that this worthless slave disliked something that Allah ﷻ liked for His Messenger ﷺ and Rasoolullah ﷺ liked for himself and disliked something that Allah ﷻ liked for His Messenger ﷺ and Rasoolullah ﷺ liked for himself. Do you think Allah ﷻ will like such a person, much less love him? That nothing immediate comes to pass as a result of this arrogance on the part of the slave in rejecting a Sunnah is a sign of Allah ﷻ' s Mercy. It is a sign that He is giving some grace period to make Tawba and change. Take it as an opportunity to win His Forgiveness. Or as rope to hang yourself. The choice is ours to make. Let us choose wisely for we will not be given this choice again. We only live once. As Imam Shafee said, 'Life is an instant. Let it be an instant of obedience.' I ask Allah ﷻ for his help to change our hearts.

2. Complete certainty

The first thing that stands out about the Messenger ﷺ of Allahﷻ is the total certainty that he had in the truth of his message; his faith in Allahﷻ and in the fact that he himself was Allahﷻ' s Messenger and had been sent to convey that message to all of mankind.

Picture the scene for yourself. Rasoolullah ﷺ climbed on the hill of As-Safa and called out, 'Wa Subaha!' People came rushing to him from the Haram and the market surrounding it, not only because this was the alarm call demanding that people leave everything else and attend to the emergency but also because it was Muhammad ﷺ, As-Sadiq-ul-Ameen (The Truthful and Trustworthy – the title that the Quraysh gave to their favorite son) who was calling them. So if he called out, 'Wa Subaha!' it must be important. So they gathered around him at the base of As-Safa. Today when we go for Umrah and after completing Tawâf when we go to As-Safa for Sayii we need to stop and reflect on what this hill has seen. That this was the place where Rasoolullah ﷺ stood and announced to the world for the first time since Ibrahim ؑ, the message of Tawheed.

Rasoolullah ﷺ said to them, "O people, if I told you that there is an army behind this hill would you believe me?" They said, "You have never lied to us and we will believe you."

He ﷺ said, "I have come to warn you of a severe punishment (in the Hereafter, if you don't leave polytheism and worship Allahﷻ)."

The first leadership lesson we learn is that it is essential for the leader to have complete faith in himself; in his own vision, his strategy, his method and in the belief that anyone following him would certainly benefit from doing so. If the leader demonstrates the slightest doubt in his message, the power of his

leadership will be seriously compromised. People follow leaders for many reasons – Some because they believe in the message, others because the leader is powerful, still others because of various affiliations with the leader. If the leader remains firm on his path, then gradually his followership increases and the trickle becomes a flood. Remaining firm and unwavering is the single most important condition for this.

The importance of certainty in your message is true for all leaders – big or small and no matter what their message. You can see this even in the lives of highly successful leaders whose messages were really very negative, even positively harmful. But because they were totally certain that they were on to the right thing and communicated that with complete confidence, they carried the day – even if to the detriment of themselves and their followers and in many case to the detriment of many innocent bystanders. Complete certainty is the only thing that can give you complete confidence. You can't obviously be confident about things that you are not certain about. Any internal doubt shakes and even destroys confidence. This is true even about selling any product or service and even more so about selling an idea. It is the confidence of the seller which sells, not the product or service which is for the most part untried. Even more so once again about an idea which can't be sampled or tasted and has to be taken on faith. Imagine the confidence of Rasoolullah ﷺ that he could not only sell that idea but do it so well that it stands to this day. So it is important for the leader to ensure that he is sure of his message so that he can communicate it confidently.

Today greater damage is being done to the image of Islam by apologetic Muslims who are shaky internally about their faith, than by open enemies of Islam. People see apologetic Muslims as 'one of them' but by their speech and actions they 'apologize' for Islamic values and indeed for being Muslim.

Naturally the message that is received by others is, 'If this person who claims to be Muslim is himself or herself so shaky about his or her faith, then why should I even bother about it for myself?' The cure for being apologetic is to seek knowledge, ask questions and clarify doubts and decide once and for all who you are. In his entire life of Prophethood of 23 years, there is not a single instance even in the worst of hardship that it could be said that the faith and certainty of Muhammad ﷺ in his message and responsibility wavered in the slightest. That in itself is a miracle and a proof of the Divine mission that he had been entrusted with.

This faith, combined with the fact that Muhammad ﷺ was a man with noble qualities, widely known to be completely truthful and trustworthy, having beautiful manners, a flawless character, great wisdom, excellent judgment and great kindness made him highly credible. Many believed to begin with, because they believed Muhammad ﷺ and believed that if he said it, then it must be the truth. The importance of the personal character of the Messenger is clear from this and cannot be overemphasized and can seriously support or compromise his message. There is no such thing as a credible message from a discredited messenger. There is no such thing as a real leader who is not respected.

Allah ﷻ Himself said about the character of Rasoolullah ﷺ:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

Al-Qalam 68:4. And verily, you (O Muhammad ﷺ) are on an exalted standard of character.

Personal credibility is the foundation of leadership. People don't care what you say until they see what you do. You are your message. You are what people

see first. Then and only if they like what they see, will they even listen to the message. We as Muslims have to put our house in order. We have to clean up our act. I can't possibly overemphasize that. A great nation is never defeated from the outside. It is defeated when it destroys itself internally. Like a huge wooden structure that is infested with termites, looks perfectly sound outwardly while it is being eaten up internally until one day it collapses in a gust of wind because only the shell remained.

People look to see what they received from the leader prior to his message to judge whether the message is to be believed or not. Leadership can't be faked. Neither is it based on what you do in a particular situation or place. It is the effect of your whole life and all that you say, do and stand for. Rasoolullah ﷺ was given the title of As-Sadiq ul Ameen (The Truthful and The Trustworthy) by the people of Makkah long before he declared prophethood. That was based on his everyday behavior and dealings and didn't come from a theological base. Rasoolullah ﷺ said;

"Can a believer be a coward? He said, "Yes, he can be coward. Then it was asked whether a believer could be a miser? He replied, "Yes, he can be a miser", it was then asked whether a believer could be a liar? He replied, "No, a believer cannot be a liar." (Imam Malik, Mishkaat)

When I first read this Hadith I wondered why Rasoolullah ﷺ gave so much importance to being truthful, even over other more serious faults in character. Until I remembered two things – that lying is the root of all evil. Take any evil action and it is the result of lying to oneself and in the eyes of Allah ﷻ. The second was that when Rasoolullah ﷺ said that a Muslim can't lie, he was saying in effect that a Muslim is As-Sadiq ul Ameen. So Rasoolullah ﷺ was giving his own title to those in his Ummah who try to live by his standard.

What can be a bigger honor than that? I ask Allah ﷻ to enable us to live by that standard, a standard which comes with the honor of being called As-Sadiq ul Ameen by the Malaika. The importance of character can't be overemphasized, neither can its impact. Listen to this story from the Seerah:

Al-Husayn ibn Salam was a Jewish rabbi in Yathrib [Medina] who was widely respected and honored by the people of the city, even by those who were not Jewish. He was known for his piety and goodness, his upright conduct, and his truthfulness.

Al-Husayn lived a peaceful and gentle life but he was serious, purposeful and organized in the way he spent his time. For a fixed period each day, he would worship, teach and preach in the temple.

Then he would spend some time in his orchard, looking after date palms, pruning and pollinating. Thereafter, to increase his understanding and knowledge of his religion, he would devote himself to the study of the Torah.

In this study, it is said he was particularly struck by some verses of the Torah which dealt with the coming of a Prophet who would complete the message of previous Prophets. Al-Husayn therefore took an immediate and keen interest when he heard reports of the appearance of a Prophet in Makkah.

What follows is his story, in his own words:

“When I heard of the appearance of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) I began to make enquiries about his name, his genealogy, his characteristics, his time and place and I began to compare this information with what is contained in our books.

From these enquiries, I became convinced about the authenticity of his prophethood and I affirmed the truth of his mission. However, I concealed my conclusions from the Jews. I held my tongue.

Then came the day when the Prophet ﷺ left Makkah and headed for Yathrib. When he reached Yathrib and stopped at Quba, a man came rushing into the city, calling out to people and announcing the arrival of the Prophet ﷺ.

At that moment, I was at the top of a palm tree doing some work. My aunt, Khalidah bint Al-Harith, was sitting under the tree. On hearing the news, I shouted: “Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar!” (God is Great! God is Great!)

When my aunt heard me, she remonstrated with me: “May Allah ﷻ frustrate you... By Allah ﷻ, if you had heard that Moses was coming you would not have been more enthusiastic.”

“Auntie, he is really, by Allah ﷻ, the ‘brother’ of Moses and follows his religion. He was sent with the same mission as Moses.” She was silent for a while and then said: “Is he the Prophet about whom you spoke to us who would be sent to confirm the truth preached by previous (Prophets) and complete the message of his Lord?”

“Yes,” I replied.

Without any delay or hesitation, I went out to meet the Prophet ﷺ. I saw crowds of people at his door. I moved about in the crowds until I reached close to him.

The first words I heard him say were: “O people! Spread peace... Share food... Pray during the night while people (normally) sleep... and you will enter Jannah in peace.” I looked at him closely. I scrutinized him and was convinced

that his face was not that of a liar. I went closer to him and made the declaration of faith that there is no god but Allahﷻ and that he, Muhammadﷺ is the Messenger of Allahﷻ.

The Prophetﷺ turned to me and asked: “What is your name?” “Al-Husayn ibn Salam,” I replied. “Instead, it is now Abdullah ibn Salam,” he said (giving me a new name). “Yes” I agreed. “Abdullah ibn Salam it shall be. By Him who has sent you with the Truth, I do not wish to have another name after this day.”

I returned home and introduced Islam to my wife, my children and the rest of my household. They all accepted Islam including my aunt Khalidah. However, I advised them to conceal our acceptance of Islam from the Jews until I gave them permission. They agreed.

Subsequently, I went back to the Prophetﷺ and said: “O Messenger of Allah! The Jews are a people (inclined to) slander and falsehood. I want you to invite their most prominent men to meet you. (During the meeting however), you should keep me concealed from them in one of your rooms. Ask them then about my status among them before they find out of my acceptance of Islam. Then invite them to Islam. If they were to know that I have become a Muslim, they would denounce me and accuse me of everything base and slander me.”

The Prophetﷺ kept me in one of his rooms and invited the prominent Jewish personalities to visit him. He introduced Islam to them and urged them to have faith in Allahﷻ.

They began to dispute and argue with him about the Truth. When he realized that they were not inclined to accept Islam, he put the question to them:

“What is the status of Al-Husayn ibn Salam among you?”

“He is our Sayyid (leader) and the son of our Sayyid. He is our Rabbi and our Alim (scholar), the son of our Rabbi and Alim.”

“If you come to know that he has accepted Islam, would you accept Islam also?” asked the Prophet ﷺ.

“God forbid! He would not accept Islam. May God protect him from accepting Islam,” they said, horrified.

At this point I came out in full view of them and announced: “O assembly of Jews! Be conscious of Allah ﷻ and accept what Muhammad ﷺ has brought. By Allah ﷻ, you certainly know that he is the Messenger of Allah ﷻ and you can find prophecies about him and mention of his name and characteristics in your Torah. I for my part declare that he is the Messenger of Allah ﷻ. I have faith in him and believe that he is true. I know him.”

“You are a liar,” they shouted. “By Allah ﷻ, you are evil and ignorant, the son of an evil and ignorant person.” And they continued to heap every conceivable abuse on me.” (End of quote)

What convinced the great scholar of the Jews was the face of Muhammad ﷺ combined with what he knew about his character. He saw him and said, ‘This is not the face of a liar.’ It is Allah ﷻ’s mercy that this art of judging the character of a person by looking at his face seems to be lost today along with many other valuable arts – or I wonder what people with knowledge would say if they looked at my face. May Allah ﷻ continue to protect us with His Mercy and never remove His cover with which He has covered our faults. The art of face reading was taught in classical times. Omar ibn al Khattab ؓ knew this and so did Imam Ash-Shafee.

As I said, the importance of good character which begins and ends with truthfulness can't be overemphasized.

Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrates that Rasoolullah ﷺ said, "The signs of a hypocrite are three; whenever he speaks, he tells a lie; whenever he promises, he breaks his promise; if you have trust in him, he proves to be dishonest."

In another hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه who reported that Rasoolullah ﷺ said, "Whoever does not give up false statements (i.e. telling lies), and evil deeds, and uttering bad words to others, Allah ﷻ is not in need of his (fasting) leaving his food and drink." Let us remember this as we are on the threshold of Ramadan.

Today our character is our biggest problem. Especially our dealings. We have come to be associated with every kind of low quality work be it coming late, short delivery, deception or shoddy work. You want to see something ruined, give it to a Muslim. Every Muslim function begins late. We laugh and call it Arab Time or Muslim Time or whatever but it stinks. Systems don't work, even if there are any systems to begin with and the only thing you get is excuses. All Muslim writing is characterized by bad grammar or spelling mistakes not because the authors don't know the language but because they are too lazy to check. The word of a Muslim today is not worth the hot air it represents. Take any area of expertise, be it science, technology, literature, art, statesmanship, engineering, invention, law, architecture, trade and business and you will be hard put to find a Muslim name among those whose contribution stands out. How can you expect anyone to look up to such people or to follow them?

Rasoolullah ﷺ's life in Makkah was a series of increasing difficulties and escalating opposition. But resistance builds strength as long as you don't succumb to it. The greater the resistance the more it will build your strength

as long as you stand firm against it. As in body building, it is the lifting of weights that builds strength in your muscles. So also in Da'awa, calling people to the truth and being firm and patient against opposition builds Imaan. This was the practice that the Muslims were getting in Makkah. There are many stories of all kinds of persecution that Muhammad ﷺ was a victim of. Those who dared to follow him were also subjected to cruel persecution, even torture and some of them were murdered. All this was done with complete impunity by the rich and powerful chiefs of Quraysh. However all that this served to do was to make them even more firm in their belief in Allahﷻ.

Aqeel bin Abi Talibؓ narrated that the Quraysh complained to Abu Talib that Rasoolullahﷺ was disrupting their meetings. Abu Talib gently requested Rasoolullahﷺ to stop Da'awa: Rasoolullahﷺ said, 'My uncle do you see the sun? I am no more capable of stopping the sun and you are no more capable of getting a flame from it than I am of stopping this message.' Abu Talib said, 'I believe you. Go ahead and do what you must do.'

This last incident was the seal which demonstrates best his complete certainty in his belief, in the message that he had been charged with and his commitment to his responsibility. Nothing could deter him or slow him down or persuade him to dilute his message. Nothing could make him be politically correct or frighten him or to force him to give up preaching or compromise the message in any way to please anyone. He was only concerned with the pleasure of His Creator and worked only to achieve that, whatever be the cost that he had to pay.

Lesson

For any leader this complete certainty is the single most critical requirement on which hinges his very credibility. One can only give what one has. So if the

leader wishes to transfer his own passion into the hearts of his followers, his own belief can't be shaky. The leader will be tested in his faith and must stand firm and demonstrate his total commitment until it becomes clear to all concerned. Then he will see the tide turn and people will be won over to his side, as happened in the case of Muhammad ﷺ as well. People listen with their eyes. They don't care what you say until they see what you do. When they see the leader walking his own talk then they realize that he means business and will start to consider his message seriously. Then as they see the benefits that accrue, more and more start to follow him.

3. No compromise

The key thing to understand about compromise in the context of leadership and Da'awa is not whether one should do it or not but when one must be willing to do it and when one must stick to one's principles and be willing to pay the price. Today we see the opposite in our attitudes and behavior. Muslims are very rigid about minor matters and matters which are usually between the believer and Allahﷻ and which Allahﷻ will forgive while they are very lax and easy going about matters which are major sins and which Allahﷻ will not forgive because they relate to other people. For example Muslims are very rigid about the differences in the way we pray or the number of Raka'at in Taraweeh but have no problem with backbiting and slandering each other and pronouncing Takfeer on one another. Needless to say this demonstrates ignorance in religious knowledge that can only be pitied. Not every battle is worth fighting. Not every win is significant. Winning a battle to lose the war is a good way to extinction. It is essential for us to remember the important matters in our life – in Islam as well as our daily living – and focus on them and let the others take their own course. Compromise but only on the right things.

Let us look at some of the options that were available to Rasoolullahﷺ when he started preaching his message.

1. Heﷺ could have accepted the kingship of Quraysh and then made changes.
2. Heﷺ could have compromised and then tried to gradually make changes.

3. He ﷺ could have addressed social evils and become a social reformer first to get some local support then he could have presented his theological message.

But he didn't choose any of those options. Instead he did what all Anbiya have always done – he proclaimed his message, directly, in so many words. This is one of the many proofs of Divine guidance and the best example of Tawakkul on Allahﷻ because who other than the one who is being directed by Allahﷻ can do what he did?

This unwillingness to compromise on the principles is the theme in his entire life. He was the softest, most easy going person of all time in all personal matters. He was fun, he laughed and joked, he played with his family and friends, he ran races, he didn't walk around with an acquired air of pompousness that many people today imagine comes with the territory. Even though he was the best of creation he didn't have a self-righteous air about him and had no pretensions to holiness. When you have substance you don't need to pretend. Rasoolullah ﷺ was the perfect example of that. Personally he was the most approachable and friendly of people with an ever ready smile on his blessed face. Yet when it came to Islamic principles, he was completely rigid and unmovable. This is because he was setting the boundaries. Where it was a matter of his personal discretion, he was flexible as much as he could be. But when it came to the boundaries of Allahﷻ he considered himself to be the one to point them out – not the one to re-draw them to the convenience of the people. It is this exceeding of boundaries of the role that has led to the corruption in Christianity where the clergy who had no right to compromise the boundaries did so in the name of maintaining popularity. How else could idol worship become the norm in a religion where Esaﷺ is quoted in the Bible to this day condemning it? How else could the concept of Trinity come into a

21

religion where Esaﷺ is quoted as saying, “The Lord your God is One.”? It is this clarity of boundaries and clarity about the role that I mean when I say that Rasoolullahﷺ didn’t compromise his principles. It doesn’t mean that he was a rigid, angry man. But that he was a person who understood the real evil of compromising on the boundaries of religion and that this would open the doors to enormous evil. Gaining followers is a consequence of being on the right path. It is not a goal to achieve by compromising the integrity of the path.

Heﷺ didn’t accept the Islam of Banu Thaqeef of Ta’aif when they came with the condition that they would accept his Risala (Prophethood) and pray but wouldn’t pay Zakat – even though he needed support very badly at that time. Some people advised him to soften his stance and said that he should accept the Islam of the Banu Thaqeef and that they would perhaps pay Zakat in due course. However Rasoolullahﷺ refused to change his stance and said that the one who separates Salah from Zakat was not a Muslim. It was based on this ruling that Abu Bakr Siddiqueؓ declared war on those who refused to pay Zakat after Rasoolullahﷺ passed away. When he was asked how he could declare war on Muslims, he quoted the ruling of Rasoolullahﷺ who said that the one who refused to pay Zakat was not a Muslim.

The greatest damage to a cause is done by those who, perhaps in a well-meaning way, soften stances regarding principles. When that happens the clarity of differentiation is lost and the message loses significance. Differentiation creates Brand. Brand inspires loyalty. Loyalty enables influence.

This stance of complete integrity stands out in the Da’awa of Muhammadﷺ in that he was not willing to compromise his message, water it down or dilute it in any way to please anyone. This is one of the many proofs of the Divine

nature of the message which naturally Muhammad ﷺ being the bearer of the message felt and knew that he had no authority to change. There was huge moral and psychological pressure on him to accept at least in part, the religion of his polytheistic family and tribesmen and to go easy on them and their traditions and customs. He refused.

They tried every means of persuasion. As I've mentioned, they offered him gold, women, power and authority. They offered to make him their king. They threatened him with death. They even told him that they would be willing to worship his god one day if he would agree to worship their gods on the other day. They told him that they would accept his Message of monotheism if he would stop saying that polytheism and idol worship was wrong. Finally when his uncle Abu Talib who had given him his protection asked him directly, he replied, "My Uncle, even if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand, I will not give up this message that I have been charged with."

Before I go further let me reflect on what we do today in the name of all sorts of apologetic stances in Islam where we are willing to bend over backwards, water down the message, allow all sorts of innovations into it and do anything but speak clearly and directly. Just ask yourself, 'If Rasoolullah ﷺ were alive today and took the stance he took in Makkah, how many of us would be willing to stand by him? Today we are even afraid to follow his Sunnah and to be recognized as his followers. What a shame! May Allah ﷻ help us.

Lesson

For a leader, the most critical thing is to differentiate from the rest on the basis of his message. If the leader compromises his message for the sake of

popularity, material gain, followership or anything else, the uniqueness of the message will be lost and it will lose its value as a clear standard on which to model all actions. Taking this stand of integrity is naturally not easy to do, as there are a lot of societal and other pressures to conform to existing norms, values and customs. To stand out as different, especially when this means to go directly against the existing system is not easy. But it is an essential criterion that distinguishes the leader.

As I mentioned earlier a flag is after all, only a piece of cloth and if it is washed and is drying on a clothesline it has no special status. But when that same piece of cloth is raised on the flag pole and is unfurled and flaps in the breeze, people salute it. The flag has not changed its nature, but it has now differentiated on the basis of its nature. As long as it was one of the clothes on the line, it had no status. But once it stands out alone, clearly visible, a symbol of the identity of the state that it represents, it acquires respect and honor and is saluted.

For people to follow the leader, his identity, the goal he is leading towards and what the followers will gain as a result of following him, must all be clear, unambiguous and inspiring. A flag is a symbol but only when it is flying high.

When those who oppose Islam see that they can't stop the Da'ae from preaching, they try to force him to water down the message to make it more 'palatable' to those who have the disease of hypocrisy in their hearts. People who have no intention of subjugating their desires to the orders of Allah® but who don't mind pretending piety and agreeing to support the Messenger as long as he is willing to change or alter the message to suit their lifestyles and desires. This attitude of Fatwa shopping is visible today in the Muslims themselves where they go in search of those who are willing to twist the rules of the religion to permit them to indulge in their false desires. Such 'Ulama'

are appreciated and rewarded. But those who have the integrity to admonish them and to speak the truth and forbid evil are maligned, persecuted and oppressed.

It is critical for the leader not to be seduced with the promise of followership and never to change, dilute or modify the message to suit anyone in the desire to get converts. The message distinguishes the leader. If he compromises that message then he has lost everything.

This is the biggest argument in favor of differentiation and against assimilation and losing one's identity that I can place before you. Someone who does not have the confidence to differentiate and is content with being one sheep in a flock is completely unfit to be a leader. For people to follow the leader, his identity, what he stands for, the goal he is leading towards and what the followers will gain as a result of following him, must all be clear, unambiguous and inspiring. Being a leader means to take hard decisions and getting used to being lonely sometimes. The tiger walks alone. Sheep have lots of company.

4. Putting himself on the line

The fourth quality of the people of Jannah that distinguished Rasoolullah ﷺ was his willingness to put himself on the line. At no point did he send others out to do what he was himself not willing to do. The logical position of the Standard Bearer is in the frontline, ahead of everyone else where he is clearly visible so that others can rally to his standard. This naturally puts the leader in the line of fire but the willingness to accept this responsibility is a sign of leadership and inspires respect, love and loyalty.

Churchill ~ Success is walking from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm.

Gandhi ~ First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.

You can see this in the life of Rasoolullah ﷺ to a level of excellence. His entire time in Makkah of thirteen years of prophethood was one failure after another. He was shunned outright and cursed publicly by his own uncle. In a tribal society that was the biggest loss of face that anyone could suffer. Among the Arabs, the uncle – father's brother – is like the father in rank and is honored as such. Especially when the father is no more and the son is an orphan, the position and honor of the uncle and his importance in the life of the son becomes even more important. To have such a person curse you in public is to lose all credibility and respect. Yet Rasoolullah ﷺ had the confidence to risk that and when it happened to continue to walk through that failure, his enthusiasm for his mission, undiminished.

There were daily challenges with the leaders of Quraysh putting up the pressure on him to conform, to fall in line, to obey them. He faced them and the result was 'failure'. He always ended up suffering personally. It was he that

was assaulted. It was he on whose blessed head and shoulders when he was in Sujood, that the entrails of a camel were dumped. It was he whose good name was maligned and he was slandered. It was he who went personally to At-Ta'aif and it was he who was stoned and abused and suffered injuries to the body and spirit. It was he and his family who were shunned and boycotted, which once again in a tribal society was a punishment tantamount to a death sentence. And indeed it was during that period that both his beloved wife of twenty five years and his uncle who gave him protection both passed away. That was a time of such grief and suffering that it came to be known ever since as Al A'am il Huzn (the Year of Grief). Yet through all that Rasoolullah ﷺ never showed any signs of loss of enthusiasm, depression, giving up, hopelessness or despair.

Listen to this story from the Makkan period: The narrator said; 'I was standing on a hilltop in Mina after Haj. The plain was covered with the tents of the pilgrims who had come to make Haj. It was the height of summer and the middle of the day, very hot and dry. In this heat I saw a man going from tent to tent, inviting people to the worship of Allah ﷻ alone and warning them not to indulge in idolatry. Some would listen to him but turn away. Others would rebuff him. Still others would physically push him away. I didn't see anyone accepting his message. In the heat of the day I saw the man stop in the shade of a rock near his own tent to rest. His daughter came out of the tent with some water and washed her father's face and gave him some water to drink. She was very sad to see his state and said, 'O! Father, what have they done to you?'

The man replied, 'Don't be sad my daughter. A day will come when this message will reach every temporary or permanent dwelling on the face of the earth.' If there were no other proof of the Divine Mission of Rasoolullah ﷺ, this story would be enough proof in itself. Who but a Messenger of Allah ﷻ could

have the courage, fortitude and perseverance to continue on a mission when there was no material proof to show that it would ever succeed? Who but someone with total certainty in the worth of his mission and faith that in the end it would be successful could find the energy to continue onwards in the face of disappointment after disappointment? Who but a Nabi could have a heart big enough to take rejection after rejection, yet not falter in the least about taking his message to people who showed no sign of appreciating or wanting it?

It may be surprising for some to reflect on the nature of this goal as expressed by the statement of Rasoolullah ﷺ to his daughter when he said, 'Don't be sad my daughter. A day will come when this message will reach every temporary or permanent dwelling on the face of the earth.' Here was a man talking about his message reaching every temporary and permanent dwelling on earth when he couldn't even get it to reach the dwellings which he could personally call at. Here was a man speaking about freeing the world when he couldn't even guarantee his own freedom. Here was a man who was concerned about the eternal wellbeing of uncaring strangers.

I always wonder when I read this story at the heart of a man who in the face of all these defeats never lost hope. What was his heart made of? What was he connected to? What tune was he marching to which only he could hear, impervious to whatever the world could throw at him, marching on regardless to the success that he knew was at the end of the road. That is why I say:

Me ~ Remember that success is only at the finishing line. It is only the number of failures you have to walk through that differs. Remember that each failure you walk through only strengthens you. And that in the end, the only thing that matters is the end.

What must have been going through his mind as he stood before His Rabb in the night? What did he tell his Rabb and how did his Rabb answer him? What gave him the courage to continue when any ordinary mortal would have called it a day and justifiably given up. Today we know that the Makkan period was thirteen years long. But when Rasoolullah ﷺ was going through it, it was not told to him that it would last for thirteen years. Nor that the graduation would be to be banished from his home and land of his birth. For the Arabs, to be banished from the tribe was a death sentence. Because a man without a tribe to back him was as good as dead.

Remember also that all this was happening to a man who claimed to be the chosen messenger of Allah ﷻ. Yet he was meeting failure after failure in his mission. What did he feel? What did his followers feel who accepted him as their leader, who listened to him and had faith in him and who adopted his faith and left the faith of their forefathers. Yet all they saw was failure after failure. What questions of the credibility of the message and the messenger were raised in their minds and how did they deal with them? For in Makkah there were no Munafiqeen. Nobody who came to Islam, left Islam because of the hardship that they had to face as a result of their entering Islam. This shows the truth of the Arabic saying: The blow that doesn't break your back only strengthens you. Makkah was a period of strengthening the faith and building Yaqeen and Tawakkul. It was a genesis, the birth of a new way of being, a new way of thinking, a new way of facing the world. Every hardship reinforced the point that you have to pay a price if you want something of value. And what has greater value than Ta'alluq Ma'Allah ﷻ (Connection with Allah ﷻ)? Rasoolullah ﷺ understood this and those who followed him understood it and there was no price that they were not willing to pay to be called the Slaves of Allah ﷻ.

What could be more difficult than to talk about revolutionary change, not simply incremental change but much more seminal and intrinsic – a change of belief. A change the result of which could not be demonstrated in this life. After all you have to die to go to Jannah. And nobody returned to tell others how it was. So there you are asking people to change their age old beliefs and lifestyles, adopt alien values, give up benefits and pleasures that they have been used to and all you can promise them is a reward in a life after death. It is very important to understand the huge challenge that this poses because all action is a result of belief. People act in accordance with their beliefs, consciously or unconsciously. For example, people may act in accordance with religious beliefs, consciously and practice certain things and they act according to their belief that a particular course of action is profitable and invest in it. On the other hand, a person gets up and goes to work because of his unconscious belief that he will live that day and beyond it and that the world is not coming to an end. So beliefs form the very foundation of all our thought and action. To have that system challenged and to be told that it is completely false and that it would lead to eternal punishment was not easy. Yet Rasoolullah ﷺ's own belief in the truth of his message was such that nothing deterred him from taking it to the people. It is reported that he went to the house of Abu Jahl, one of his worst enemies, more than 100 times in the hope that he would accept the message of Islam. Who but a Nabi would work to save the one who did his best to cause him as much harm as possible?

There are innumerable stories from his Seerah where he was out ahead, facing any potential danger even before others were aware of its presence. At no point in his life did he put any of his companions in the way of danger or hide behind them. His travel to At-Ta'aif is a good example where he personally took the risks instead of sending someone else. He sent someone else when there was

30

no danger as in the case of Mus'ab Ibn Omair رضي الله عنه to Madina and Mu'ad bin Jabal رضي الله عنه to Christian Yemen. On another occasion in the battle of Hunain against the Hawaazim, when the Muslims broke ranks and retreated in confusion when they were suddenly ambushed, Abu Sufyan bin Harb رضي الله عنه saw the rout and said, 'Only the sea can stop them now,' meaning that they will not stop until they reach the shore of the Red Sea many miles away. Yet in that confusion and situation of chaos, Rasoolullah ﷺ forged ahead, refusing to show his back to the enemy. His companions tried to restrain him by pulling on the reins of his mule but he continued ahead. He called out, 'I am Muhammad the Messenger of Allah ﷻ. I am the son of Abdul Muttalib.'

He saw Abdullah bin Mas'ud رضي الله عنه and ordered him to call Al Ansaar and among them the Banu Najjar who were his special troops. And they came to him and surrounded him. In the end, it was just a little over 100 men who stood with Rasoolullah ﷺ in the field and turned back the tide of Al Hawaazim and won the day. Allah ﷻ helped them and it is these few men that He spoke of when he said that He sent tranquility on them and helped them with troops that they could not see. Such was the courage of Rasoolullah ﷺ that nobody could equal it. Allah ﷻ said:

لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيرَةٍ وَيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ إِذْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنْكُمْ شَيْئًا
وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُم مُّذَبِّرِينَ
ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ جُنُودًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا وَعَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ
ثُمَّ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ مَنِ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

***Tawba 9: 25.** Truly Allah has given you victory on many battle fields, and on the Day of Hunain (battle) when you rejoiced at your great number but it availed you naught and the earth, vast as it is, was straitened for you, then you turned back in flight. 26. Then Allah did send down His Sakinah (calmness, tranquility, reassurance) on the Messenger (Muhammad), and on the believers, and sent down forces (angels) which you saw not, and punished the disbelievers. Such is the recompense of disbelievers. 27. Then after that Allah will accept the repentance of whom He will. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*

Imagine the situation of Rasoolullah ﷺ. He was and had been ordered to declare himself as the messenger of Allah ﷻ.

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ فَاْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيِّ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَكَلِمَاتِهِ وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

***A'araf 7: 158.** Say (O Muhammad): "O mankind! Verily, I am sent to you all as the Messenger of Allah - to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. La ilaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He); It is He Who gives life and causes death. So believe in Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad), the Prophet who can neither read nor write (i.e. Muhammad) who believes in Allah and His Words (Qur'an) and follow him so that you may be guided."*

So there was Rasoolullah ﷺ, the declared Messenger of Allah ﷻ but apparently Allah ﷻ was not helping him. He was not some leader who believed in his vision or some sage or philosopher about whom it could be said that maybe he was wrong. Rasoolullah ﷺ had the full authority of the Word of Allah ﷻ to say that he was the Messenger ﷺ of Allah ﷻ and people had been ordered to believe in him and obey him unconditionally. I have mentioned all those Ayaat

in my Khutba on the importance of the Sunnah so won't repeat them here but suffice to say that Allah ﷻ stated all that very clearly with clear declarations about the fate of those who refused to accept Muhammad ﷺ as the Messenger ﷺ of Allah ﷻ and refused his message. Yet apparently he was not succeeding. The help of Allah ﷻ was not coming. But he was still expected to carry on his Da'awa (preaching, inviting) undiminished. Please put yourself in the position of Rasoolullah ﷺ and see what a tremendous challenge that would have been to his credibility and trust. That is why the Sahaba have the position they do. They truly believed in Al Ghayb. They truly loved Rasoolullah ﷺ and believed in him even when they saw the difficulties and defeats. They didn't doubt him. They stood by him. They supported him in every way. They lived for him and died for him. Allah ﷻ appreciated that and vouched for it and said:

النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ

Ahzaab 33: 6. The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves,

Through all this Rasoolullah ﷺ remained firm and continued in his work with persistence, tenacity and wisdom. It is interesting to note that notwithstanding his statement that his message would reach every temporary and permanent home, this didn't happen in his own lifetime. Yet as we know this did happen later and today we are living at a time where nobody in the world can say that they have not heard about the message of Islam, one way or another. Allah ﷻ has His own time frame in which to do His work. He requires us to be patient and to continue our part of the job – to convey what we have been charged with. To convey, not to convince.

Lesson

For a leader physical and moral courage is a major requirement. As they say, 'People don't follow titles, they follow courage.' Today, one may not need to take one's life into one's hands but the willingness to stand up for what one believes in or in support of one's followers at personal risk to oneself are amazingly powerful tools to build loyalty and to demonstrate your own commitment to the goal. Many of these situations can't be contrived. It is therefore essential that the leader has the courage of his convictions as an inherent trait so that when the challenge presents itself, it comes to the fore naturally. Leadership is always from the front and that is sometimes a dangerous place. But it is good to remember that there is no such thing as a cowardly leader.

As I have mentioned before people listen with their eyes. They don't care what you say until they see what you do. They watch what you do more than they listen to what you say. If they see you doing something different from what you told them, then they will believe and follow your actions and not your words. In the process your own credibility gets seriously compromised. Credibility falls through the gap between talk and walk.

Rasoolullah ﷺ was always conscious of this and demonstrated his message by living it. That is why when someone asked Sayyida Ayesha (RA) about the life of Rasoolullah ﷺ she replied, 'Don't you read the Qur'an?' She meant that his life was the manifestation of the Qur'an in action. Today we have forgotten this and think that Da'awa is to argue, distribute pamphlets, make videos, have a social media presence, chase likes and YouTube hits, give lectures and accost people on the street. The most powerful Da'awa however is to live and demonstrate Islam in every aspect of life. That is more difficult than all of the

above. But that is the way of Rasoolullah ﷺ and the Sahaba. And to this day, fourteen centuries later, it remains by far the most effective way despite all our technology. That is because the way of the Nabi has the help of Allah ﷻ behind it. The means of conveying is as important as what is being conveyed. Islam is the name of a practice. Not the name of a theory. A practice has to be lived and demonstrated. Not merely spoken about.

I want to emphasize the importance of studying the Seerah which we seem to have totally neglected. The Seerah is the living Tafseer of the Qur'an. It is the methodology of implementing what Allah ﷻ ordered. If we don't want to look there for guidance of how to follow Allah ﷻ's orders, then where else do we want to look? But sadly even in our religious schools, Seerah is not taught as an independent subject. It is essential to study the Seerah of Rasoolullah ﷺ because Allah ﷻ told us that his life is the best example for us to follow. Let us wake up and obey Allah ﷻ.

5. Resilience: Face the facts + Absolute faith in eventual success

One of the biggest, if not the biggest reason why great projects fail is because of lack of persistence. Perseverance is the great virtue that decides who is still standing at the end of the race. For it is only at the end of the race that the winner is decided. And many times the only reason a person wins is because he is still in the race. Failure is not to fall but to fail to get up. That quality of getting up every time you fall is called resilience. And that is in my view, the cardinal virtue of leadership.

When he was not successful in Makkah, Muhammad ﷺ decided to go to At-Ta'aif, which was the home of Banu Thaqeef which was the other big tribe in Al-Hijaz in the hope that they would be more receptive to his message. Banu Thaqeef were honored as the Quraysh were honored as one of the most important tribes of the Hijaz, and they also had a temple of a goddess in their town.

However they proved to be worse than the Quraysh when it came to receiving the message of Islam. Rasoolullah ﷺ presented the message to the leaders of the tribe of Banu Thaqeef. But such is the working of Shaytaan when Islam is presented that they responded in ways that broke their own traditions and etiquette and shamed themselves for posterity in the annals of the history of Banu Thaqeef and the Arabs. The Arabs were famous for their code of honor of honoring the guest. There are many famous stories in the history of the Arabs about people, especially tribal chiefs who literally impoverished themselves in their commitment to honoring their guests even when the guest was a stranger. The story of Hatim At-Tai and his horse is famous in Arabic literature and is even told in Urdu. I first heard that story from my mother

when I was a little boy. My mother used to tell me stories of prophets, Sahaba and great people of history, instead of about Red Riding Hood or whatever. Hatim At-Tai's hospitality is legendary but was not exceptional for the time, or even today, if you go out of the cities into the villages of Arabia. I have been the guest of honored Badu people in Madinah and can safely say that never in my life have I encountered such honor, hospitality and friendship. What added to it in my case was that I was the teacher of one of the sons. Nobody honors teachers like the Arabs do. The greatest reward of being a teacher, is to be a teacher of Arab students.

In this case Muhammad ﷺ was not a stranger but a well-known person from the nobility of Quraysh and most deserving of their courtesy and hospitality even if they did not want to agree with his message. Yet they treated him shamefully.

Rasoolullah ﷺ went to At-Ta'aif with Zayd bin Haritha رضي الله عنه as his companion and attempted to present the message of Islam to the three brothers who were the leaders of Banu Thaqeef. As I have mentioned hospitality and generosity towards the guest is a time honored code among all tribal societies, especially so among the Arabs. It must have been in the mind of Rasoolullah ﷺ that given this tradition and his own status, the chiefs of Banu Thaqeef would at least give him a hearing. But to his utter astonishment, instead of greeting him with the civility that was his right as a guest and as a member of the aristocracy of the Quraysh, the Banu Hashim, they violated every rule of honoring the guest and treated him shamefully dishonoring themselves and the honor of Banu Thaqeef. Their story is written in words of shame in the annals of history to the end of time and Allah ﷻ decreed that when the Banu Thaqeef of At-Ta'aif eventually came to Islam, they came as conquered people, losing all their

wealth to the Muslims. Allah ﷻ doesn't forgive those who trouble His Anbiya. Allah ﷻ doesn't forgive those who are disrespectful to Muhammad ﷺ.

Rasoolullah ﷺ tried to meet the three brothers who were the chiefs of the Banu Thaqeef. Two met him but one refused. One said, 'I will tear apart the Kiswatul Ka'aba if Allah ﷻ sent you as a Prophet.'

The second said, 'Could Allah ﷻ not find anyone better than you to send as a Prophet?'

The third simply refused even to meet him and said, 'I can't talk to you because if you are in fact the Prophet then I am not qualified to talk to you. And if you are a liar then why should I talk to you?'

In a last attempt at damage control Rasoolullah ﷺ said to them, 'If you can't accept my message at least keep this conversation private.' But they refused and instead they got their slaves and others to revile Rasoolullah ﷺ and to throw rocks at him and Zaid bin Haritha ؓ and drive them out of the city. Zaid bin Haritha ؓ tried to shield Rasoolullah ﷺ with his own body as best he could. But with people throwing rocks from all sides, both of them were wounded. Rasoolullah ﷺ bled from the wounds he received until his shoes stuck to his feet. It is tragic that people attack those who only want to help them. That is why Allah ﷻ said:

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ

إِذَا أُلْقُوا فِيهَا سَمِعُوا لَهَا شَهِيقًا وَهِيَ تَفُورُ

تَكَادُ تَمَيَّزُ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ كُلَّمَا أُلْقِيَ فِيهَا فَوْجٌ سَأَلْتُمْ خَزَنَتَهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَذِيرٌ

قَالُوا بَلَىٰ قَدْ جَاءَنَا نَذِيرٌ فَكَذَّبْنَا وَقُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ مِن شَيْءٍ إِنَّا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ
كَبِيرٍ

وَقَالُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ

فَاعْتَرَفُوا بِذَنبِهِمْ فَسُحْقًا لِأَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ

Mulk 67: 6. And for those who disbelieve in their Rabb (Allah) is the torment of Jahannam. And worst indeed is that destination. 7. When they are cast therein, they will hear the (terrible) drawing in of its breath as it blazes forth. 8. It almost bursts up with fury. Every time a group is cast therein, its keeper will ask: "Did no warner come to you?" 9. They will say: "Yes indeed; a warner did come to us, but we denied him and said: 'Allah never sent down anything (of revelation), you are only in great error.'" 10. And they will say: "Had we but listened or used our intelligence, we would not have been among the dwellers of the blazing Fire!" 11. Then they will confess their sins. So, away with the dwellers of the blazing Fire.

Imagine the scene, when an aristocrat from the Quraysh, the best man who walked the earth, is reviled, abused and beaten only because he brought the message that there is nobody worthy of worship except Allahﷻ. Remember that the Creator of the heavens and the earth was watching all this. Yet He allowed it to happen in order that the commitment of His Messengerﷺ would become clear and a benchmark for all of mankind to the end of time. It was Allahﷻ's intention that this Messengerﷺ was to be the last of them and that the message would henceforth be transmitted by his followers. And so it was necessary to establish a model of commitment and a criterion to judge oneself and one's experience against; which would be a shining beacon of guidance to anyone who faced any difficulty with respect to taking the message of Islam to an uncaring world. Nobody who studies the life of Muhammadﷺ today can

say that for him Da'awa is more difficult than it was for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

That is the reason why the One who created everything and in Whose Hand is the control of everything, did nothing to stop a single stone from hitting His Nabi but became Himself the witness in favor of His Nabi that he didn't leave any stone unturned in his effort to take the message of Islam forward.

Eventually Rasoolullah ﷺ and Zaid bin Haritha ؓ took refuge in a farm, which belonged to two people of Makkah. They saw Rasoolullah ﷺ's condition and sent their slave Addas (who was a Christian) with some grapes and water for him. Even though they were his enemies, they decided to help him in honor of the tradition of hospitality of the Arabs. When Addas gave the grapes to Rasoolullah ﷺ, he picked one up and said, 'Bismillah.' Addas said, 'The people of this land don't speak these words.' Rasoolullah ﷺ asked him, 'Where are you from and what is your religion?'

Addas said, 'I am a Christian from Nineveh in Iraq.' Rasoolullah ﷺ said, 'So you are from the land of the pious man Yunus ibn Matta, Nabi of Allah ﷻ.' Addas said, 'How do you know about Yunus?' Rasoolullah ﷺ said, 'He is my brother as he was a Prophet and I am a Prophet.' Allah ﷻ guides those who are sincere to the truth; so Addas bent down and kissed the feet of Rasoolullah ﷺ and his hands and his head. His masters looked at what was happening and said, 'See how he corrupts everyone? Now our slave has also gone into his religion.'

When Addas returned to his masters, they asked him why he'd kissed the hands and head of Muhammad ﷺ. Addas said, 'There is nobody in all the land who is finer than him. He told me something that nobody but a Prophet could

have told me.’ They said to him, ‘Don’t let him make you leave your religion because your religion is better than his.’ The amazing thing in this conversation is that the people advising Addas to remain Christian were themselves idolaters who knew nothing about Christianity. Yet they didn’t want him to accept Islam.

Enmity is a strange disease which blinds those afflicted by it to all good, just because it comes from someone they hate. Enmity is a disease of the heart. It leads to slander where the slanderer gives his good deeds to the one he slandered. Thank Allah ﷻ for the slanderer for he gives unasked.

Imagine the situation of Rasoolullah ﷺ. He had failed in his attempt to present Islam to the people in Ta’aif. He already had very little success with the people in Makkah. What must have been his feelings at that time which was the worst of all failures because he had been personally abused and assaulted? He fell in Sajda and made a dua that is famous in the Seerah.

Dua at Ta’aif

اللهم إليك أشكو ضعف قوتي وقلة حيلتي وهواني على الناس

يا أرحم الراحمين أنت أرحم الراحمين

أنت رب المستضعفين وأنت ربي

إلى من تكلني إلى عدو يتجهمني أم إلى صديق مكنته إمرى

إن لم يكن بك غضب علي فلا أبالي ولكن عافيتك هي أوسع لي

أعوذ بنور وجهك الذي أضاءت له السموات و الأرض

وأشرقت له الظلمات وصلح عليه أمر الدنيا والأخرة

أَنْ يَنْزِلَ بِي غَضَبُكَ أَوْ يَحِلَّ عَلَيَّ سَخَطُكَ
لَكَ الْعُتْبَى حَتَّى تَرْضَى وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِكَ

“O Allah! I complain to You of my weakness, my scarcity of resources and the humiliation I have been subjected to by the people. O Most Merciful of those who are merciful. O Rabb of the weak and my Rabb too. To whom have you entrusted me? To a distant person who receives me with hostility? Or to an enemy to whom you have granted authority over my affair? So long as You are not angry with me, I do not care. Your favor is expansive relief to me. I seek refuge in the light of Your Face by which all darkness is dispelled and every affair of this world and the next is set right, lest Your anger or Your displeasure descends upon me. I desire Your pleasure and satisfaction until You are pleased. There is no power and no might except by You.”

Allahﷻ heard the dua of His Nabi and sent Jibreelﷺ. He (Jibreelﷺ) came with another angel. Jibreelﷺ said to Rasoolullahﷺ, ‘Your Rabb has heard your dua and has ordered me to bring this angel and put him in your control. Order him and he will obey.’ The angel said, ‘Ya Rasoolullahﷺ. I am the angel of the mountains. Your Rabb ordered me to place myself at your command. Order me and I will bring together the two mountains on either side of the valley of Ta’aif and all those who tormented you will be wiped out.’

Rasoolullahﷺ said to him, ‘Allahﷻ didn’t send me to kill people. Allahﷻ sent me to guide people to that which is pleasing to Him. It is my hope from my Rabb that even if these people don’t accept my message today, their descendants will accept it one day.’ Reflect on this situation. The result of the dua after a severe test of the world was a test of faith. When the physical test was over, Allahﷻ sent a spiritual test. As the Nabi, Rahmatullil A’alameen, what would he do when he had been unjustly injured and assaulted and

abused and was then given the power to retaliate? Allah ﷻ knows everything. The test is to establish witnesses in favor of His slaves. Rasoolullah ﷺ proved true to his mission and chose mercy over revenge. Such was the Messenger of Allah ﷻ whose kindness and mercy is an example for all time. If only we could live by the Sunnah of Rasoolullah ﷺ, the world would break down our doors demanding Islam. But so far apart are our talk and walk that not only does our credibility fall through the gap but we bring a bad name to Rasoolullah ﷺ.

My question to you is, 'Who among those who wronged you, are you willing to forgive now?' Remember we are talking about forgiving those who wronged us and who we are entitled to feel bad about and demand retribution from. Yet Rasoolullah ﷺ forgave them. As his Ummatis, are we willing to follow his example? If not, then what is the good of talking about his life? What is the good of having big functions to talk about his Seerah? If we don't show by our actions that we love Rasoolullah ﷺ, love to follow his Sunnah and thereby invite others to do the same, how are we going to face the questioners in the grave who will ask us who we followed? My brothers and sisters, fear that day which will dawn for us all soon.

There are many lessons for us in this story apart from the major lesson about commitment. But one of the lessons we learn is about the devotion of the Sahaba towards Rasoolullah ﷺ. Zaid bin Haritha ؓ shielded Rasoolullah ﷺ by his own body. He took the rocks meant for Rasoolullah ﷺ on himself. Other Sahaba did the same in Badr and Uhud where they protected him from the arrows of the enemy. Abu Talha Al Ansari ؓ took so many arrows on his right arm that his arm and shoulder bristled with them and those who saw him marveled at how he continued to stand as a human shield for Rasoolullah ﷺ.

Today, to protect his Sunnah is equal to protecting the blessed body and person of Rasoolullah ﷺ. Abu Muslim Al Qawlaani (May Allahﷻ have mercy on him) the man who stood up to the false prophet Aswad Al-Ansi and walked out of the fire which was lit to burn him alive; said, 'Do the Sahaba of Rasoolullah ﷺ think that we are going to let them have Rasoolullah ﷺ to themselves? No, we will compete with them for the Baraka of Rasoolullah ﷺ and take our share of him.' Today when we protect the Sunnah by practicing it, defending the honor of Rasoolullah ﷺ and speaking out against those who seek to revile him, what we do may not be as great as what Zaidؓ or Abu Talhaؓ did but Allahﷻ will be pleased with us if we support His Messenger and his Sunnah and will reward us in keeping with His Own Majesty and Grace. Similarly leaving the Sunnah or attacking it or denying the importance of Ahadith, is tantamount to attacking the person and body of Rasoolullah ﷺ like the people of Ta'aif did. It is our choice who we want to be clubbed with – the Sahaba or the Kuffar and Munafiqeen; with the people of Jannah or People of An-Naar.

On a side note, Khalid al Udwani As-Thaqafiؓ was a small boy when Rasoolullah ﷺ spoke to the people of Ta'aif. He said: Rasoolullah ﷺ recited Sura At-Taariq and I listened to the Sura and memorized it. He heard it just once and memorized it.

Later when he accepted Islam, he said, 'I knew this Sura from that day when I memorized it when I was not even a Muslim.'

What stands out so clearly in the dua of Rasoolullah ﷺ is that he speaks of his own weakness and lack of influence. He does not curse those who rejected, insulted and tormented him. He does not call down the wrath of Allahﷻ on their collective heads, for refusing to accept his message. He faces his own

weakness and asks Allahﷻ to give him strength. He says to Allahﷻ that as long as He is pleased with him, he did not care about the opinion of the world. And if Allahﷻ is not pleased, then he (Muhammadﷺ) would do everything in his power to continue to work until Allahﷻ is pleased. The willingness to face yourself without flinching and recognizing your own situation without trying to give it a rosy tinge, is a sign of courage and integrity.

Being goal focused when you are being applauded for it is easy. Being goal focused when you are being criticized for it and when you have no apparent support is another matter. Especially when this criticism may take nasty forms of physical or psychological abuse. To continue to remain on your chosen path and to face your own failure to convince people; yet have no doubts about your eventual success is the test of the leader. In the dark of the night, when the darkness within the soul is more opaque than the darkness outside, when a man stands alone without any visible support, that is when he realizes that the real support for the mission has to come from within. And that comes with a connection to Allahﷻ, where he feels completely comfortable with taking his troubles to the only One who can solve them.

For Rasoolullahﷺ, At-Ta'aif was not intimidation or losing hope in his mission but a renewing of resolve and a strengthening of the spirit. After the incident of At-Ta'aif the situation deteriorated steadily. He lost the two major sources of support that he had in the persons of his uncle, Abu Talib and his beloved wife, Sayyida Khadija (RA) who both died within a short time of each other. The threat to his mission, his followers and to his own life got more and more severe and eventually he had to leave his beloved Makkah, the place of his birth and ancestors. But through all this what comes out most clearly is the fact that he did not let up his effort for his message even momentarily. He continued to work ceaselessly to take his message of the Oneness of Allahﷻ to

anyone who would listen to him and even to those who refused to listen. He did not lessen his effort nor did he lose hope.

This dua is a landmark for anyone who wishes to learn the right conduct for the one who wishes to lead. Despite his suffering, he did not curse those who persecuted him. Instead he recommitted to his covenant and declared that he would continue to brave all difficulties and strive until he satisfied Allahﷻ that he had completed his task to the best of his ability. It is this undiminished commitment which continues irrespective of the opposition or difficulty that is the hallmark of the exceptional leader. On the contrary difficulty seems to only make the commitment even more keen and strong.

For Allahﷻ will not ask, 'What happened?' He will ask, 'What did you do?'

Opposition is not necessarily proof that you are wrong. One must certainly take opposition seriously especially when it comes from well-meaning people who want you to succeed. One must examine one's approach and method. But once you are convinced that you are on the right path, you must not allow opposition to weaken your stance or change your goal. Every great change that resulted in eventual benefit for people was opposed. Every prophet was opposed. Every reformer was opposed. Opposition is often a sign that you are right for only then will you be opposed. The blow that doesn't break your back only strengthens you.

Victory and defeat is in the mind. Nobody can defeat a person who doesn't accept defeat. This was the particular characteristic of the Anbiya that they never accepted defeat. All the Anbiya worked ceaselessly all their lives irrespective of whether they met success or failure in terms of visible results in the world. If you examine their lives, you will see that except at the end they only faced one difficulty after another. In the case of Musaﷺ he never saw

success and died before his people could enter Jerusalem; which only happened in the next generation. Yet that didn't diminish his enthusiasm and commitment a whit. Esa (عليه السلام) didn't see success either and his people tried to kill him. So also many other Anbiya. Rasoolullah (ﷺ) also didn't see the fulfilment of his prophesy that Islam would enter every dwelling, temporary or permanent, in his own lifetime. Yet he never failed to do what was necessary to the level of excellence to ensure that his message was communicated clear and true, far and wide.

Resilience coupled with perseverance are the keys to success. To do that it is necessary to take the long term view and see success and failure not in worldly terms but in terms of the pleasure of Allah (ﷻ) and the reckoning on the Day of Judgment. It is only those who take the long view that can reach out across the boundaries of generations to achieve life changing goals and leave behind a legacy that lasts long after they have departed.

May Allah (ﷻ) give us the wisdom to face the challenges of our times with courage, wisdom, foresight and commitment. And to do that in the light of what pleases Allah (ﷻ). For in the end that is the only thing that counts.

In the end the only thing that matters is the end.

6. Magnanimity and forgiveness

Finally we come to that critical quality which is the adhesive, the binding force which takes everything else along. It is this quality the absence of which leads to utter failure, even in cases where the people involved were extremely talented, dedicated and committed and were on the right path. But it was their inability to hold together despite differences which destroyed all their efforts and themselves to boot. That is why Allah ﷻ said:

وَاَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُم مِّنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

A'al Imraan 3: 103. And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of Allah (i.e. this Qur'an), and be not divided among yourselves, and remember Allah's Favour on you, for you were enemies one to another but He joined your hearts together, so that, by His Grace, you became brethren (in Islam), and you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes His Ayat (signs, revelation) clear to you, that you may be guided.

Unity is an outcome of forgiveness. And that is what the final and most important lesson that I want to draw from the life of Rasoolullah ﷺ is: forgiveness and magnanimity. His conduct when he entered Makkah as its conqueror is an example for all humanity for all time, of personal humility, a big heart and mercy. The Quraysh who had tormented him and driven him from his home; who were directly and indirectly responsible for the deaths of those he loved the most, his uncles, wife, daughter; who had caused him immense physical and emotional pain were finally at his mercy. It would have

been both natural and legal for him to extract retribution. At least to seek compensation for loss of wealth and lives at their hands.

But what did he do?

He forgave them all. He announced a general amnesty and that there would be no revenge, no vendettas; an age-old custom among the Arab tribes who looted and killed the men and took the women and children as slaves. This was what people expected to see in Makkah also.

As the army was marching towards Makka for the final assault, Sa'ad bin Mua'ad (رضي الله عنه) the leader of the Banu Aws and the Commander of the Ansar of Madinah raised the slogan, 'Al Yawma Yawmul Malhama (today is the day of great slaughter).' Someone reported this to Rasoolullah (ﷺ). He immediately countered by saying, 'Al Yawma Yawmul Marhama (today is the day of great mercy).' He didn't stop with countering in word. He took away the command of the Ansar from Sa'ad bin Mua'ad and gave it to his son, thereby sending a very clear message about the seriousness of his intention that there should be no revenge taking or wanton killing. See the wisdom also in his action of not giving the command to a stranger but to the son of Sayyiduna Sa'ad bin Mua'ad thereby sending a message of his displeasure at his slogan but also allowing him to save face by keeping the command of the Aws and Ansar in his family. Every action of Rasoolullah (ﷺ) is worthy of reflecting upon and learning from.

Allah (ﷻ) mentioned infighting and disputing also in terms of its effect on the community and on their hearts as well as on the enemies of Islam. He said:

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ وَاصْبِرُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

Tawba 8: 46. And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute (with one another) lest you lose courage and your strength depart, and be patient. Surely, Allah is with those who are As-Sabirin (the patient ones)

This point hardly needs even mention, let alone emphasis. This is our cancer.

We have become a people who seek conflict in every form, at home, in the family, with neighbors, in the community. We abuse each other. We behave worse than dogs fighting over a bone. We are jealous of every little success of our brothers and our envy consumes us. We cast aspersions on them, we slander and backbite them, we donate our good deeds to them. That is why I say, 'Thank God for the slanderer for he gives unasked.' And while we are squabbling amongst ourselves, our assets are stolen from under our noses, our people are enslaved and we are manipulated and used against ourselves with impunity; even with our own compliance. The tragic and shameful result today is that more Muslims are killed by Muslims than by others. How much longer do we want this to continue? It is in our own hands, believe me.

Rasoolullahﷺ was entering Makkah after 8 years. They'd spent 13 years suffering all kinds of torture, physical and mental in Makkah before being driven out altogether and their wealth confiscated. But when he entered it now, he entered with humbleness reciting Sura Al Fatha, his head lowered so far down that his beard was almost touching the saddle of the camel. He was wearing a black turban and had a white banner.

He made Tawâf of Al Ka'aba and then called on Othman bin Talhaؓ to bring the key of the Ka'aba. Othman bin Talhaؓ's family Banu Abdid Da'ar are the keepers of the key, to this day. Othman's mother refused at first but then later she gave it to him. He brought it to Rasoolullahﷺ who opened the Ka'aba. There was an image of a pigeon made of wood which he destroyed. There were

pictures of angels and one supposed to be of Ibrahimؑ using divining arrows. Rasoolullahﷺ said, 'May Allahﷻ kill them, they have shown our elder doing something which he would never have done.'

Then he ordered Omar ibn Al Khattabؓ to wipe out all the paintings which were done. Then he came out and stood on in the doorway which is high up. This time they all came respectfully to listen to him – a far cry from their arrogance when he called them the first time when he received the first Revelation. When he went to Zamzam to make Wudhu the Sahaba with him rushed to take the water dripping from his arms as Baraka. The people of Makkah saw this and said, 'We have never seen such a king before.' Rasoolullahﷺ was the same person but today because he had power they all came to listen to him.

Rasoolullahﷺ spoke to the people: 'Alhamdulillah, Sadaqa W'ada, Nasara Abdah, Wa hazamal Ahzaaba wahda. Families of anyone killed accidentally will be paid blood money of 100 camels. All privilege of ancestry and pride that existed in Jahiliyya are finished. All these privileges are beneath my feet.' Rasoolullahﷺ had the key of the Ka'aba in his hand. Ali bin Abi Talibؓ said, 'Ya Rasoolullahﷺ combine for us the honors of feeding the Hujjaj and the key of the Ka'aba.' But Rasoolullahﷺ called Othman bin Talhaؓ and said, 'Take it and keep it forever and nobody will take it from you except a tyrant.' To this day it is the same family which holds the key of the Ka'aba and it is from them that the Governor of Makkah in the name of the Ruler of Saudi Arabia receives it to wash the Ka'aba at the annual ceremony and it is returned to them. Rasoolullahﷺ then went around the Ka'aba on his camel and pointed with his bow at the idols around the Ka'aba and they fell down. He did this with the 360 idols surrounding the Ka'aba. He would recite: Qul ja'al haqqa wa zahaqal baatil innal baatila kaana zahooqa (Say the Truth has come and falsehood has

51

disappeared. Verily it is the nature of falsehood to disappear). The Ka'aba was the first house of Allah ﷻ, the first masjid on earth which had been filled with idols and thereby desecrated. Rasoolullah ﷺ purified it and made it the way it was when Ibrahim عليه السلام and his son Ismail عليه السلام had built it; exclusively for the worship of Allah ﷻ.

Then he stood in the doorway of the Ka'aba and asked the Quraysh, 'What do you think I will do with you?' They said, 'Anta Akhil Kareem wa ibnul Akhil Kareem.' (You are our honorable brother, the son of our honorable brother). So he said, 'Idh-habu fa antumul tulaqaa.' (Go for you are the Released Ones.) They were the captives of Rasoolullah ﷺ and he could have executed them all but he released them and made them free without taking any ransom in return. So the people who became Muslim after the conquest of Makkah are called At-Tulaqa.

Rasoolullah ﷺ chose Bilal bin Rabah عليه السلام to give Adhaan and ordered him to stand on top of the Ka'aba to do it. One of the Muhadditheen said, 'He did it to enrage the Mushrikeen.' Rasoolullah ﷺ did it to destroy all the systems of caste and creed and to establish the fact that only those who have piety are the highest in the sight of Allah ﷻ.

Sayed bin Musayyib عليه السلام said, 'The night of the conquest was not a night of celebration in the normal sense. The Sahaba were making Tawâf around the Ka'aba, and making Takbeer and Tahleel all night. Abu Sufyan went to his wife Hinda and asked her, 'Do you think this is from Allah ﷻ?' She replied, 'Yes, this is from Allah ﷻ.' Later Abu Sufyan met Rasoolullah ﷺ and he said to him, 'You asked Hind if this is from Allah ﷻ and she told you that it was.' Abu Sufyan said, 'Ash haduallaailaha illAllahu wa Ash hadunna Muhammadar Rasoolullah.'

Rasoolullah ﷺ then declared Makkah as Al Haraam (a sanctuary) in which fighting, hunting game and cutting trees is prohibited. The same applies to Madinah in the area around Al Masjid An Nabawi.

In the time of Muawiyya ؓ one of the Tabiyeen wanted to invite Abu Hurairah ؓ to his place. (Abu Hurairah ؓ used to invite people the most and this Tabiyeen wanted to invite Abu Hurairah ؓ). So he prepared the food and invited Abu Hurairah ؓ. Abu Hurairah ؓ told him, ‘Sabaqtani (you beat me to it – meaning, ‘you invited me before I could invite you).’

When he came in the evening for the meal, he said, ‘Shall I tell you, O Ansaar, a Hadith that belongs to you?’ They all invited him to do so. He said, ‘When Rasoolullah ﷺ came to Makkah, Zubayr ؓ commanded one wing, Khalid bin Waleed ؓ the other and Abu Ubaidah ؓ commanded the foot soldiers. Rasoolullah ﷺ was in his battalion. He saw me and said, ‘O Abu Hurairah call the Ansaar to me and nobody but the Ansaar should come to me.’ So I called Al Ansaar and they surrounded Rasoolullah ﷺ from every direction. Rasoolullah ﷺ said, ‘Whoever enters into the house of Abu Sufyan is safe. Whoever enters his own house is safe.’ Then he said, ‘Did you say that I will leave you and stay in Makkah?’ They said, ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘I am a slave of Allah ﷻ. I made Hijra to Allah ﷻ and to you. My life is with you and my death is with you.’

They came crying to him and said, ‘We only said this because we love Allah ﷻ and His Rasool.’ He said, ‘Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ bear witness that you speak the truth.’

Lesson

To forgive those who persecuted you is perhaps the most difficult thing to do, especially when you have power. In the case of Rasoolullah ﷺ who had been persecuted and driven out of his home, Allah ﷻ gave him power over the same people. He would have been fully within his rights if he had chosen to take revenge. But he didn't. Instead by forgiving them he put them in his debt. They were fully aware of the precarious situation that they were in when he conquered Makkah and they were in his power and so were extremely grateful to him for his mercy.

Another huge benefit of this action of Rasoolullah ﷺ unilaterally forgiving his enemies was also to put an end to all potential feuds which would have resulted from any revenge that he may have taken. In a society given to feuding over the smallest excuse imagine the disruptive effect of any killings of his enemies. By forgiving them all he cemented them into the Muslim Ummah and secured his own home forever. Forgiveness is a balm for the soul, not only of the one forgiven but even more importantly for the one who forgives. But it takes a big heart to forgive and whose heart is bigger than the heart of the Nabi of Allah ﷻ?

Memories can be empowering or debilitating. Memories of evil done to us can stay with us all our lives and plague us and our relationships – if we allow them to do so. Forgiveness is the salve that heals the wound and Allah ﷻ in His mercy gave it into the hands of the one who was wronged. Only he can forgive. And if he does, then he heals himself as well as the one who wronged him. It may seem difficult to forgive someone who wrongs us until we reflect on how much more difficult it is to live, our life blighted by memories of the wrong. How much easier to forgive and shed that burden and move on to a new

dawn? And that is what Rasoolullah ﷺ did. Rasoolullah ﷺ defeated his enemies not by killing his enemies but by killing enmity. His enemies became his friends and greatest supporters.

Forgiving his erstwhile enemies also took the wind out of the sails of anyone who may have been tempted to plot a coup against him but putting him on the high moral ground. Who would support someone who wants to do ill to the one who just did good to you? At one stroke Rasoolullah ﷺ secured his rule, won new friends and supporters and opened the doors for the entry of Islam in his own motherland. The result of this was so profound that Makkah was almost the only place that didn't rebel when he passed away and Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه had no worries from there when he had to deal with rebellion from elsewhere. It is true that as a victor Rasoolullah ﷺ could have taken revenge. But that would have opened new wounds which would have set off a new series of conflicts all resulting in delay or defeat of his real mission, the spreading of his Message.

His actions are the Tafsir of the Ayah where Allah ﷻ mentioned this:

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

Fussilat 41: 34. *The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal. Repel (the evil) with one which is better (i.e. Allah ordered the faithful believers to be patient at the time of anger, and to excuse those who treat them badly), then verily! he, between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend.*

By forgiving those who had wronged him, he sent a powerful message that the mission was above all personal considerations and put those who had wronged him in his debt. Instead of fighting him or hating him they were now

grateful to him and wanted to please him. At one stroke, he laid to rest all future potential conflicts among his followers without which his mission would have failed. The leader must be prepared to sacrifice his personal benefits, especially his ego, for the sake of the goal and must be prepared to set a personal example in this respect. It is only when the followers see the behavior of the leader that they will follow suit. The result will be the success of the mission. Forgiveness is the foundation of this success.