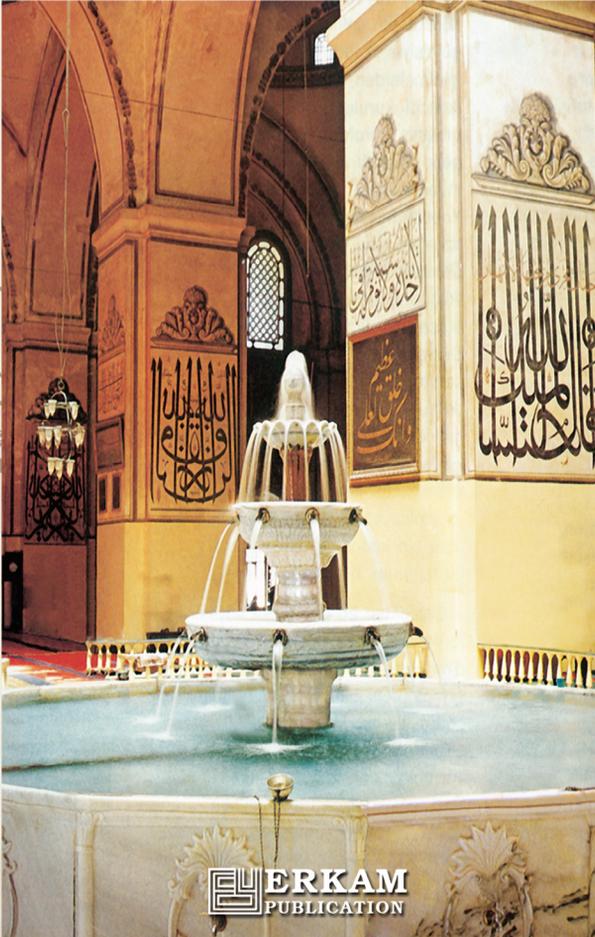


Civilisation of Virtues 1

Faith and Worship

Osman Nûri TOPBAŞ



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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PROLOGUE

Eternal thanks and praise be to Allah Most High for making the worth of all creatures, and in particular that of mankind, reach its peak with the Blessed Prophet, and Who, in swearing by the life of that Eternal Pride of the Universe, made Him a source of dignity and honor and who gave us the good fortune to be from his community.

Eternal peace and blessings be upon the Sultan of Prophets, Muhammad Mustafa, the mercy of all the worlds and the source of blessings, the one who crowned good character, displaying innumerable examples of virtuous behaviour and who was given an everlasting and unique model character for all of mankind.

Everything to be found in the heavens and the earth has been prepared especially for mankind. As such he should consequently live in a state worthy of and grateful for this divine favour. The way to do this is by serving Him as a virtuous and noble servant. The essence of this servanthood is ‘*makarim-i akhlak*’ a character praised and adorned with the best of behavior...

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (saw)¹ has said:

“I was sent for no other reason than to complete good character”. (Muwatta, Good Character, 8)

1. SAW in Arabic is short for “*sallallahu alayhi wa sallam*” and means “peace and blessings be upon him”. It is pronounced whenever the name of the Prophet is mentioned. (translator’s note).



Thus he expressed the fundamental wisdom in his duty and he stressed the importance of good character. It is indeed so, that from whichever aspect we look, the entire life of the Prophet ﷺ is like an exhibition of ultimate ideals, traits and merits.

Almighty Allah confirmed this truth by stating:

“O My Messenger. Indeed you are truly vast in character”. (Qalam, 68:4)

Consequently the Prophet was not just a teacher teaching the Qur’an in word only. Rather he practiced what he preached and was thus a living Qur’an and a guide, who taught the divine truths through his actions. This is why his dignified and blessed life is the best of examples for future generations to come until the Day of Judgement.

With the appearance of the Prophet, that Light of Creation, the dark horizons of the world were enveloped in light, a new morning of bliss awaited by mankind was born, hearts were enlightened, reflection became deeper, and discernment broadened. In short, it was he ﷺ who allowed the human being to attain to his true nobility and dignity, and to goodness and merit, to the truth, to justice and to virtue. It was he ﷺ who taught the secret of life and eternity.

Because no other prophet would come until the Day of Judgment, whatever beauty and virtue it is that mankind is in need of, have all been bestowed upon His superior person. From this point of view then, all goodness has reached its peak in him. Consequently:

He is the peak of love. He is the peak of courage. He is the peak of patience and perseverance. He is the peak of generosity, sacrifice, and putting others first. He is the peak of abstinence, scrupulousness, contentedness and humility even though great booty and worldly bounties were laid out before him. He is the peak of mercy and compassion and helping the needy. He is the peak of sincerity and piety. He is the peak of gaining Allah’s pleasure and he is the peak of gratitude. He is the peak of knowledge of Allah and wisdom, and grace and favour. He is the peak of prophet hood. He is the peak of teaching and education of divine etiquette and good manners. He is the peak of being the physician of wounded hearts. He is the peak of righteousness and trust. He is the peak of being the friend of Allah and His beloved. He is the leader of all people on the Day of Judgement. He is the

intercessor of the offenders. He is the peak of all manner of virtues, character and service. In other words, only He can be at the peak of the most perfect servanthood.

Every characteristic, behavior and virtue that constitutes good character of which Allah is well pleased, has been revealed to mankind through the blessed tongue and application of the Prophet.

Almighty Allah displayed the model of the ‘perfect human’ in the person of the Prophet ﷺ. This was what He intended with Islam and so He made him a model person for all of mankind.

In this way the words and principles of the Prophet constitute a collection of the most perfect examples lived in his own life and also lived by action in the lives of his community which will continue on until the end of time.

In contrast to this, those philosophers whose minds have not been trained by revelation, and their ideas, – both positive and negative - about social peace and tranquility and character have been left in the books on the dusty shelves of libraries. And the lives of those who have applied them have been rather short. At any rate, these philosophers have not been able to practice what they have preached, neither have they been able to show examples from other people’s lives. Their ideas have remained mere theories.

For instance Aristotle laid down the foundations for certain rules and regulations of moral philosophy, but these were removed from divine revelation. Consequently we do not see even one person who has applied this philosophy to his own life, having attained to happiness. Even the most important book of Farabi, which includes his hypothetical ideas on a city of virtues and the ideal republic have never had the chance to be applied and those ideas have not been able to emerge out of the lines of the book. Because these truths were not written down and spoken from experience, neither have they been applicable after being written down.

Whereas the Prophet ﷺ had endeared himself to everyone even before his duty of prophethood had begun and his personality was of such perfection that it caused the people to say “You are the trustworthy and loyal one”. Thus he began his duty of preaching after this open confirmation of his identity and character.

And thus it was through his elevated character and spiritual training that centuries and generations were reshaped; and humanity was presented with an ‘era of bliss’. One of the most important names in Islamic legal methodology, Karafi (v. 684), has the following to say:

“If the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had no other miracle, the generation of noble companions that he reared would have been enough to prove that he was a prophet”.

The essence of the Prophet, his words and his every state, from beginning to end, are a personified account of the beautiful character that is hidden in the Holy Qur’an. The most perfect and ultimate examples of all virtues were displayed in his life.

The greatest artwork of almighty Allah is mankind himself. And the peak of spiritual perfection of mankind is the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. This is the case to such a degree that Almighty Allah accepts, and proclaims as such, that obedience to the Prophet is on a par with obedience to His own Being and rebellion against the Prophet is equal to rebellion against Allah Himself.

It is stated in the Holy Qur’an:

‘Say, “If you love Allah, then follow me and Allah will love you and forgive you for your wrong actions. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful’ (Al’i Imran, 3:31)

Accordingly, all praise of the Blessed Prophet is permissible as long as one does not go so far as to commit *shirk*, or associating partners with Allah. Nevertheless our praise of him will reflect on our tongues only to the degree that we truly comprehend him.

At the head of the list of those who were able to comprehend in the best possible way – and within the limits of human ability - the Messenger of Allah, are his Blessed Companions. It is they who have transmitted traces of him to us. It was these blessed people who had the duty of transmitting to subsequent generations the beauty in the worship, social relations, and dealings of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. They had the honour of conversing with him. The Blessed Prophet spoke of them as being ‘like the stars in the heavens’.

Because they received a share of the prophetic character of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, his Companions understood that the true wealth

one possesses was relative to how much of good deeds one sent to the afterlife. Thus they were able to display unrivalled virtues such as generosity, thinking of others, and sacrifice for the sake of gaining the pleasure of Allah. They concentrated their lives on gaining Allah's pleasure and, by acting with compassion and mercy, they reached the peak of justice.

The most pleasurable and meaningful moments in the lives of that blessed generation were the moments when they were able to spread, with great enthusiasm in their faith, the message of the unity of Allah to mankind.

After the generation of Companions, all of the *awliyaullah* (friends of Allah) that will continue on until the end of time, have followed beautifully their principles of virtue. Thus they have and will be exalted due to the blessings that come from prospering in the Sun of Virtue that is the Messenger of Allah.

How beautifully Jalaladdin Rumi expressed this state:

“Come o heart! The true celebration is the union with the Blessed Muhammad. For the enlightenment of the world has come from the light of the beauty of that blessed person”.

The scholars and Gnostics who are the friends of Allah, and who have attained to the honour of being the heirs of the prophets, are paramount in terms of prophetic guidance and perfect behaviour manifested throughout the ages. That is, they too are virtuous guides, real and embodied for the rest of mankind who have not had the honour of seeing the Blessed Prophet and his Companions.

In short, it is without a doubt that the prophets exemplify the virtues that give life to hearts. As their leader we find the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) at the altar. In the next lot of rows and chains of virtue are those sincere scholars, righteous slaves, gnostics, and lovers etc, according to the degree of their attachment to him. They are the elite personalities due to their servanthood and beautiful lives of goodness. Because they too have lived beautifully with sincerity, they have presented to those around them rare memories of beauty that will never depart. In this way they have formed a ‘civilisation of virtues’. The stories of virtue that are transmitted from them give peace of mind to the spirit and bestow healing upon ailing hearts.

Consequently Abu Hanifa has the following to say about mentioning stories about virtue, a method that the Qur'an uses.

“Stories that tell of the beauties of the righteous scholars are more pleasing to me than most of jurisprudence. Because these stories teach us the etiquette and character of those who have become close to Allah”.

It is true that it is impossible for a person to truly comprehend a matter without being given an example. Good and evil are only made clear in the light of examples. Love becomes more lively and exuberant. Imbibing oneself in the character of one's beloved can only be realized through the beautiful example that they project. In this respect good examples are divine favours that allow one to reach true nobility and dignity.

Along the same vein, Malik bin Dinar رضي الله عنه has the following to say:

“The beautiful stories of righteous slaves are like gifts from heaven”.

Consequently each story of virtue is like a priceless pearl that has been presented to us as a gift.

In short, it is most important that we build good character and virtues. To this end the Prophet ﷺ has the following to say:

“On the Day of Judgement there will weigh nothing heavier in the scales of the believer than good character. Allah Most High is displeased with the one who commits ugly acts and who speaks ugly words”. (Tirmidhi, Birr, 62/2002)

The essence of good character emerges, undoubtedly by befriending the Blessed Prophet and those righteous slaves who walked in his footsteps. This is the first condition in holding on to the chain of virtues. What constitutes the essence of ugly character is to lose their friendship and to destroy oneself in the current of ignorance. On the basis of this truth, Almighty Allah has the following to say in a *hadith qudsi*² :

“I have waged war against the one who is hostile to those whom I have befriended (who serve Me in all sincerity). My servant draws nearer to Me with nothing more pleasing to Me than what I have made obligatory upon him, and then continues to draw nearer to Me with supererogatory devotions until I love him; and when I love him I become his hearing with which he

2. A *hadith qudsi* is a *hadith* whose words are from the Prophet but whose meaning has been either revealed or inspired to him (Translators note)

hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks, so that by Me he hears, by Me he sees, by Me he strikes, and by Me he walks. Should he ask Me I should surely grant him his request; should he ask Me for protection I shall surely protect him. Never do I hesitate³ in anything as I hesitate in taking the soul of my believing servant; he dislikes death and I dislike to displease him... (See Bukhari, Rikak, 38; Ahmad, VI, 256; Haysami, II, 248).

In order for us to attain to the superior virtues that will make us acceptable to Allah, we must nourish heartfelt love for the friends of Allah and the Blessed Prophet ﷺ to whom they are devoted. And it is him that we must follow.

For this reason it is hoped that, as we become truly acquainted with the Prophet ﷺ and take as our model his superior characteristics, which have been praised by Allah, we will have the honour of being amongst those 'brothers' that the Prophet gave glad tidings of.

If we recognize him today, he ﷺ will recognize us tomorrow in that great gathering on the last Day. If we reach a state in which we see him in reality then he will see us. If we listen to him and do as he says, then he will hear our cries and take us by the hand. In this way we will become for others, an exhibition of his beautiful example. This is the greatest virtue of all!



This book was written as a modest attempt to show these examples of virtue in this framework. The examples given consist primarily of the sublime examples from the exalted personality of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and then His Companions, the saints, the scholars and the righteous who are like smooth mirrors, reflecting his beautiful example.

In addition, we have not been restricted to the examples solely from the Prophet nor from those friends of Allah who have walked in the path of piety. We have also attempted to occasionally cite examples from historical figures, shaped and formed by political and social events and heroes who have had a role to play in the direction of the world. This is in order that

3. Almighty Allah is certainly above human characteristics such as hesitation. This expression has been used here to show the attention and care that He shows the slaves that He loves and to allow comprehension for human perception.



those who find themselves involved in such situations can find models of ideal behavior they may be in need of.

To properly convey that Sultan of both worlds ﷺ in whom all of the chains of virtue gather and from whose elevated personality a share has been distributed to other masters of virtue is obviously very difficult for us incapable ones. In any case, we know that we are incapable of portraying him completely. Rather our aim is to taste a droplet of that ocean of enlightenment, to move a few more steps closer to Him, to recharge our ardor and love for Him, to express our devotion to Him, to run to His endless Mercy, and to seek refuge in His intercession...

We thank almighty Allah that he has honoured us helpless and feeble servants with being from amongst the community of the Beloved Prophet ﷺ. Having grasped the truth of this divine favour, the only way to be worthy of the Messenger of Allah's love and to fulfill the compliment of being from amongst his 'brothers' is to embrace his practices and, like his heirs, the saints, to adopt his prophetic character to the best of our ability.

This is why we need today to imbue ourselves with love for the Messenger of Allah and be seekers in training for his exalted character just like the Companions and friends of Allah. We must strive to live and make live their beauty which will never fade nor grow old, no matter how many centuries pass. This is the price to pay in order to be worthy of the fortune and honour of being one of the true community of the Pride of the Universe ﷺ.

I would like to thank all of my academic brothers, particularly Murat Kaya, who have had a role to play in the preparation of this work. I pray that their efforts will be accepted as ongoing charity by Allah.

May Almighty Allah bestow on us a life illuminated by beautiful behavior and samples of virtue which will be a source of gaining His good pleasure. May He render us a close friend in every respect of His Messenger in both worlds. And may he allow us to attain to his great intercession....

Amen...

Osman Nuri Topbas
May 2006
Uskudar



Part 1



*Faith and
Worship*

1. To Live one's faith with a passion

Faith is the light of the intellect, the polish of the consciousness and the harmony of the emotions in the heart. Passing happily from this temporary world to the eternal realm will be possible only under the guidance of faith.

The guides of faith are the Prophets, the divine books and the friends of Allah who have ordered their lives according to the first two. It is only through the fervour of faith that the prophets, the saints and the righteous throughout history have been able to become living examples of the manifestation of achievable virtues.

Faith is a divine favour; trials in this life are a standard by which to measure the degree of soundness of one's faith. The preservation of one's faith with the patience and submission which are to be expected from a believer is the price to pay for the attainment of divine rewards. That is, Allah Most High desires that a price be paid by his servants in order for them to perceive the loftiness and value of the bounty of faith that he has bestowed upon them.

'Allah has bought from the believers their selves [lives] and their wealth in return for the Garden'. (Tawba, 9:111).

This verse is an evident expression of this truth.

Consequently the means to perfecting one's faith is the willing sacrifice in His path of the price desired by Allah (one's life, property, belongings etc) in order to gain His pleasure.





Overcoming all of the difficulties and struggles that the trials of life have to offer with contentedness and submission and following in the path of Allah and His Messenger is the most important sign of the believers.

Each believer is obliged to pay a price to Allah Most High for the bounty of faith. To assume ownership or to expect recompense for something which one has not paid the price for is to pass one's time in triviality.

The rise towards the peak of faith is dependent on performing good deeds, living with good intention, worship and beautiful behaviour that aims to please Allah. This is why in the Holy Qur'an and in the *ahadith*⁴, faith and good deeds have generally been mentioned together. Faith can be lived not with dry facts and theory but rather with truths that are felt and perceived, embroidered onto the heart and then reflected in one's behavior. Pondering and reflecting on the flow of divine power throughout the universe results in a heart that is suitable for worship and renders the believers able to taste true faith and become subject to endless manifestations of virtue throughout their lives.

Faith is the greatest of all forms of worship because worship is possible only through faith. Worship is carried out at specific times. The prayer too, the most virtuous of all deeds, is obligatory five times a day. Faith, however, is required constantly and thus it is necessary to keep it alive in our hearts at every instant. This is why we must avoid the trap of all manner of sins that lead the heart into heedlessness, and keep our faith protected by good deeds (which are like spiritual armour).

The jewel of faith is the most precious of assets for the believer. Satan, who in the Qur'an is proclaimed to be our open enemy, together with his accomplices, tries at every opportunity to steal that jewel of faith from the hearts of the believers with various tricks and whisperings. From this perspective then, it is a most crucial duty to be constantly vigilant of our hearts and embrace our faith with great love and zeal. We must strive to protect it and render it unshakeable with good deeds.

In order for our jewel of faith to reflect the manifestations of Allah like a pure and bright mirror we need '*zikrullah*' (remembrance of Allah).

4. *Ahadith* is the plural form of *hadith* which are the collection of sayings of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (Translators note)



Zikrullah is like embroidering the word ‘Allah’ on our hearts with love and yearning. In this way, the rust of sins and heedlessness will be erased from the heart and it will taste the true pleasure of faith due to it having attained to complete peace and contentedness.

The joy that arises out of the faith of those blessed and special servants who have attained to such a spiritual maturity is above all other fleeting pleasures and enjoyment. Moreover, all of the burning pain and suffering of this world is virtually non-existent in their eyes.

Let us now peruse some of the innumerable examples of patience, forbearance, fortitude, insight, sacrifice and aspiration displayed by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ who taught us our faith, and those righteous believers whose service has made it possible for this bounty to reach our day:

Scenes of virtue

When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was a child of a mere 12 years, Bahira the Monk said to him:

“Dear child, I am asking you in the name of Lat and Uzza⁵ to answer me”.

He replied: “Do not ask me anything in the name of Lat and Uzza. By Allah! I abhor nothing as much as I abhor those two idols”.

Even at such a young age the Prophet distanced himself from idols and unbelief with the sound nature that he carried within him. The exceptional resolution and effort that he showed in living his faith with a passion, and spreading and teaching it, after becoming a prophet is a fact every believer is aware of.



The sorcerers at the time of the Pharaoh rejected his claim to divinity and as a result were subject to unbearable torture. However they were able to challenge him due to the courage that came from their faith:

5. Lat and Uzza were two of the main idols in Mecca. (Translators note)



“Your oppression is in this world only. You are free to judge and do as you wish. In any case we will be returned to our Lord”.

At the command of the Pharaoh their hands and legs were cut off diagonally. Before they were hung onto the branches of palm trees, they raised their hands to the heavens in a display of human weakness. Anxious that they would be weak in faith they prayed:

“...O our Sustainer! Shower us with patience in adversity, and make us die as men who have surrendered themselves unto Thee”. (Araf 7:126)

Thus they sought refuge in Almighty Allah and were reunited with their Lord in the boundless pleasure to be found in martyrdom.



The first Christians who were sincere Muslims preserved their faith amongst the jaws of circus lions and they too tasted martyrdom with a passion.



Another group at the head of the list of heroes who lived their faith with a passion, were believers who were burned alive by the ‘People of Ukhdud’. The Jew, Dhu Nawas, who was the King of Yemen in the 4th century AD, forced the people of Najran, Christians devoted to the faith of monotheism (the Oneness of Allah), to change their beliefs. When they resisted, many of them were burned alive, having been thrown into pits of fire. It is reported that the number of people who died in this way reached 20 thousand.

These oppressors were named the ‘People of the Pits’ after the pits (called ‘*ukhdud*’) that they dug in order to burn the believers. But those who tried to destroy the faith that had become unyielding and which was engraved upon the hearts, failed and instead became subject to the vengeance and punishment of Allah. They were thus overcome and ruined, damned for eternity. Almighty Allah states:

‘They destroy (but) themselves, they who would ready a pit of fire fiercely burning (for all who have attained to faith’ (al-Buruj, 85:4-5)



Sumayya , a female Companion, who lived her faith with a passion in the Era of Bliss, was fortunate in attaining to the title of ‘the first female martyr of Islam’. Sumayya  (ra)⁶ used to be very afraid of the mere prick of a needle. However, after she had tasted the sublime pleasure to be found in faith, she displayed great tolerance in the face of the red hot rods of iron that the polytheists⁷ branded her with, not once compromising her faith. After being subjected to such savage torture, one of her legs was tied to a camel, and the other leg tied to another and she was torn apart brutally, thus becoming a martyr in a terribly painful way. Her husband, Yasir, also showed unbearable patience even though he was very old and weak. He too eventually tasted martyrdom. In fact the family of Yasir (may Allah be pleased with them) became the first martyrs of Islam. They paid the price of their faith by living it with a passion.



Even as the blood poured forth from the body of Bilal , which had become like jelly from the heavy torture of the wild and angry *polytheists*, he continued in his call to monotheism: “*Ahad, Ahad, Ahad*: Allah is one, Allah is one, Allah is one”. Beyond the pain and torture, he was experiencing the pleasure of meeting Allah, having tasted the sublime delight of faith.



During his caliphate Omar  asked one of the first Muslims, Habbab bin Arat :

“Can you tell us a little of the torture that you experienced in the way of Allah”.

Habbab replied:

“O Commander of the Believers! Take a look at my back”.

Having looked at his back Omar was horrified. He said:

“Never in my life have I seen a human back so disfigured”.

6. *ra* short for *radiyallahu anhu* (for males) and *anha* (for females). It means ‘may Allah be pleased with him or her’ and is used as a term of respect for the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (translator’s note).

7. In arabic ‘*mushrik*’, a person who commits the greatest sin, namely that of ‘*shirk*’, which means to associate partners with Allah. Many of the Quraysh, the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad were polytheists (Translator’s note).



Habbab continued:

“The unbelievers would light a fire and then put me into it with no clothes on. The fire was eventually extinguished when the melted fat from my body dripped onto it”.

The polytheists would put rocks that they had heated in fire onto Habbab’s back and the skin of this blessed Companion would peel off due to the intensity of this torture. Despite this he still refused to speak the words desired by the unbelievers. This is because the excitement of wuslat (meeting with Allah) that is vouchsafed by faith wipes away all worldly suffering.

Habbab bin Arat narrates:

One day when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was in the shade of the Ka’bah, we went to him and complained to him about the torture we had suffered at the hands of the polytheists. After that we asked him to ask for Allah’s help in saving us from this torture. He ﷺ said in reply:

“Amongst the generations before you were believers who were burned and thrown into pits, and then sawed into two from head to toe and whose flesh was raked with iron combs but who yet did not turn back from their faith. I swear by Allah, that He will complete this religion and make it reign supreme to such a degree that a person will be able to travel in safety from San’a to Hadramat fearing nothing but Allah and the attack of his sheep by wolves. But yet you are impatient...” (Bukhari, Manakibu’l Ansar 29, Manakib 25, Ikrah 1; Abu Dawud, Jihad 97/2649)



The enemies of Islam would beat Suhayb ؓ until he fainted. This torture continued until the migration to Madina. Eventually Suhayb was able to embark on his journey in the aim of emigrating to Madina after the Prophet. Some of the Meccans followed him and reaching him they said:

“You came here as a poor and weak person. You attained to great wealth amongst us. And now you want to go and take your wealth with you? By Allah we will never allow it!

Suhayb immediately got down from his animal. Taking out some arrows from his quiver he said to them:



“O people of Quraysh! You know that I am the best archer amongst you. And by Allah I will use up all of the arrows I have with me and when they are finished I will draw my sword. Whilst I am in possession of both of these none of you will be able to come close to me. Only after they have left me can you do as you wish to me. Now, if I tell you where I have left my treasure will you let me go?”

The polytheists accepted his offer. After that Suhayb told them where his treasure was and continued on his journey. It was the middle of the month of Rabiul awwal when he reached Quba (a village near Madina), and was reunited with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saw him he smiled and, implying that he had sacrificed all of his wealth in the cause of his faith he said:

“Suhayb has triumphed! Suhayb has triumphed! O Father of Yahya. Your trade has proven profitable. Your trade has proven profitable”.

According to the narrations, the following verse was revealed after this event:

‘But there is (also) a kind of man who would willingly sell his own self in order to please Allah; and Allah is most compassionate towards His servants’ (Baqara, 2: 207)



Zinnura Hatun ؓ was another female companion who suffered a thousand torments and cruelty at the hands of the polytheists. She was left blind due to the torture carried out by Abu Jahl.

Abu Jahl said to her:

“Do you see? Lat and Uzza have blinded you”.

Zinnura Hatun replied:

“No! By Allah! They are not the ones who have made me blind. Neither Lat nor Uzza can benefit or harm me. My Lord is capable of restoring my eyesight!”

When the morning came the polytheists, whose souls were enveloped in eternal darkness, were amazed to see Zinnura Hatun’s eyesight restored by the grace of Allah.



Many more of the first Muslims suffered such pain and torment. Such eminent Companions of the Prophet such as Amir bin Fuhayra, Abu Fukayha, Mikdad bin Amr, Ummu Ubeys, Lubeyna Hatun, Nahdiye Hatun and her daughter, were subject to extreme unimaginable torture. The polytheists would tie their feet with chains and drag them out naked, laying them down in the desert at the time of the most intense heat, and placing large rocks upon them. They would implement all forms of torture until they lost consciousness and did not know what they were saying. They would strangle them and not stop until they believed them to be dead.

These blessed Companions managed to preserve their faith in the face of unbearable torture and oppression. They struggled with their property and their lives so that this divine favour could reach us. This is because they were in a state of true perception of the greatness of the bounty of Islam. Thus they knew how to open the door of divine dignity in both worlds. Their mortal lives came to an end and they entered into eternal happiness having embodied the following divine command:

‘O you who have attained to faith! Be conscious of Allah with all the consciousness that is due to Him and do not allow death to overtake you ere you have surrendered yourselves unto Him’ (Al’i Imran, 3:102)



Sa’d bin Abi Waqqas ؓ was a son who was completely obedient towards his mother. On entering Islam his mother said to him:

“O Sa’d! What have you done? If you do not renounce this new religion, I swear I will neither eat nor drink and eventually die. And because of me, you will be known as the son who killed his mother.

Sa’d ؓ replied: “Mother please, I will not leave this religion for anything”. Hearing this, his mother did not eat for two days and two nights and lost a lot of strength. In order to make his mother, whom he loved very much, give up her obstinacy, Sa’d said to her with firm resolution:

“Dearest mother! Know this: Even if you had 100 lives and you lost them all one by one, I would never abandon this religion...”

On seeing the resolution of her son, his mother gave up her obstinacy and started to eat once more. After this event, the following verses were revealed:



‘And (Allah says): We have enjoined upon man goodness towards his parents: his mother bore him by bearing strain upon strain and his utter dependence on her lasted two years: (hence O man), be grateful towards Me and towards thy parents, (and remember that) with Me is all journeys’ end. (Revere thy parents) yet should they endeavour to make thee ascribe divinity, side by side with Me, to something which their mind cannot accept (as divine), obey them not; but (even then) bear them company in this world’s life with kindness, and follow the path of those who turn towards Me. In the end, unto Me you all must return; and thereupon I shall make you (truly) understand all that you were doing (in life)’ (Loqman, 31:14-15)



At the time when the Prophet was about to emigrate to Madina he called Ali and told him of the divine command to emigrate. After that he informed him that he was leaving him as his trustee so that he could return all of the property that was left in trust to him. This was because there hardly remained a person in Mecca who, having something valuable, did not entrust it to the Messenger of Allah, knowing his truth and honesty.

As a precaution against the plans of the polytheists, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to Ali:

“O Ali! Sleep in my bed tonight. And cover yourself with this cloak of mine. Fear not! Nothing you dislike will happen to you”.

With great courage of faith, Ali ﷺ slept in the Prophet’s bed under the shadow of the fierce spears that were ready to rain down on his body. The fiercely angry polytheists who had come to the Prophet’s house were determined to murder the Messenger of Allah. On seeing Ali under the covers they became enraged:

“O Ali! Where is your uncle’s son”? they shouted.

Ali ﷺ said:

“I know not. I have not an idea. And I am not a watcher over him. You told him to leave Mecca. And so he did”.

Upon this they berated and harassed Ali; in fact they took him to the Masjid al Haram and imprisoned him for a while before they let him go.



On one occasion the people of Najd came to the Prophet ﷺ and informing him of their desire to learn Islam, requested a teacher. Upon this, Allah's Messenger sent them about 70 *hafiz*⁸ who were from the *Ahl as-Suffah*⁹. They all knew Islam extremely well. When the Muslims came to Bīr-i Mauna in order to take a rest in a cave they were ambushed. A spear thrown by a polytheist called Jabbar bin Sulma, entered the back of Amir bin Fuheyra and came out through his breast. On realizing that he was about to become a martyr, Ibn-i Fuheyra, a mere 40 years old at the time, shouted out in extreme delight:

“By Allah, I have triumphed!”

Ibn-i Tufayl, who was the chief of those who had prepared this treacherous trap, took one of the Muslims who had escaped the massacre, and brought him to one of the martyrs, asking him:

“Who is this?”

The Muslim replied:

“It is Amir bin Fuheyra”.

“I saw his body being raised to the sky. I can still see him hovering there between the heavens and the earth. Then he was laid back down”.

Despite being witness to such an event, Ibn Tufayl, a famous poet, failed to become Muslim. However Jabbar, who had made a martyr out of Amir bin Fuheyra, eventually became a Muslim. The shouts of the person he had made a martyr of, “I have triumphed” rang in his ears for days. These words became an enigma for him. “I just killed him and he is saying that he has triumphed. How can this be so?” he thought to himself for weeks on end. One day he asked Dahhak bin Sufyan, famous for his bravery and fellow citizen of the Prophet who thought him worthy of 100 hundred people. What did this Companion mean when he said: “By Allah I have triumphed”? When he replied that it meant “I have reached Paradise”, Jabbar woke up from the deep sleep of heedlessness he had been in and became Muslim.



8. A hafiz is a Muslim who has memorised the entire Qur'an (Translator's note)

9. Literally “the people of the bench”. The ahl as-Suffa were a group of early Muslims who had nowhere to live and no means of sustenance. Thus they used to live on a bench outside the Prophet's mosque (Translator's note).

At the end of the Battle of Uhud, Safiyya ؓ wished to see her brother Hamza ؓ whose body was in pieces. With this intention in mind, she turned towards where the martyrs were located. Her son, Zubayr met her and said:

“The Messenger of Allah commands you to turn back”.

“Why? So that I do not see my brother? I know in what terrible way he was torn apart and dismembered. He was afflicted with this misfortune for the sake of Allah. And anyway, nothing other than this can give us consolation. Allah willing I will bear it and await the reward from Allah” she said.

Zubayr went to the Messenger and informed him of what his mother had said. The Prophet said:

“In that case let her go see her brother”.

Safiyya then went to the corpse of her brother, honoured with being the master of martyrs, and prayed wholeheartedly for him.



The courageous faith of the blessed Companions who took the letters written by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to various rulers of the time has become very famous. They delivered the Prophet’s message, having fear of no one but Allah in the face of oppressors who were famous throughout the world and executioners ready to cut off heads. They did not refrain from speaking bravely in the shadow of spears and lances. Some examples are as follows:

One day the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked:

“O people. Who will take this letter to the Muqawqis of Alexandria in anticipation of Allah’s reward and recompense?”

Hatib bin Abi Beltaa ؓ scrambled up and approached the presence of the Prophet:

“O Messenger of Allah! I will take it” he said

Allah’s Messenger said:

“O Hatib! May Allah bless you in this duty”.



When Hatib bin Abi Beltaa arrived in Alexandria he read the Prophet's letter to the King. Muqawqis called Hatib to his side and also gathered together his men of religion. Let us listen to the rest of the story from the words of Hatib:

“The Muqawqis said to me:

“I am going to speak to you about some things that I wish to understand”.

“Please let us talk” I said to him

The Muqawqis asked:

“Isn't your master a prophet?”

“Yes. He is the Messenger of Allah” I replied.

“If he is truly a prophet then why did not he pray to Allah against his people who forced him to seek refuge in another land having exiled him from his own land?”

I replied:

“You would bear witness that Jesus, the son of Mary was a prophet, correct? If he was truly a prophet then should he not have prayed to Allah to destroy his people who caught him and wanted to crucify him, instead of being raised to the heavens?”

The Muqawqis could find no answer. After he was silent in thought for a while he asked me to repeat my words. After I repeated what I had said the Muqawqis thought again for a period. After that he said:

“You have spoken well. You are a sage, you speak appropriately and you have come from one who must also be a sage”.

Following that I said to the Muqawqis:

“Before you there was a man who claimed that he was the most supreme god. Allah Most High caught that Pharaoh and punished him in both this world and the next. You should take heed from those before you and not be a lesson for those who come after you”.

The Muqawqis said:



“We have our religion and we cannot leave it until we see something better than it”.

To this I said:

“Islam is most certainly above the religion that you practise. We invite you to Islam, the religion that Allah Most High chose for his people. Muhammad Mustafa ﷺ invites not only you, but all of mankind. The people that were the harshest and crudest to him were the people of Quraysh. And the people that were the most hostile to him were the Jews. However those who are the closest to him are the Christians. Just as Moses heralded Jesus, so too Jesus gave good news of the coming of Muhammad ﷺ. Our calling you to the Qur’an is like you calling to the Gospels those who follow the Torah. Everybody should follow the prophet who was sent in his own time. You too are one who is living at the time of Muhammed ﷺ. Consequently by calling you to Islam we do not want to separate you from the religion of Jesus. On the contrary, we are proposing that you do what is appropriate to the message that he brought”.

The Muqawqis said:

“I have studied the religion of this prophet. I have seen that he neither commands to withdraw from the world nor does he forbid what is liked and accepted. He is neither a sorcerer who has lost his way, nor is he a liar who claims to have knowledge of the unseen. On the contrary there are signs that he is a prophet, as he has uncovered news from the unseen. However I still wish to reflect for a little while longer” he said.

Later he wrote a reply to the letter of the Prophet...However, the Muqawqis did not do more than this, neither did he become Muslim. And to me he issued this warning:

“Be careful! Do not let the Coptics hear a single word from you, lest they cause you harm”.

What a beautiful example are these words of Hatib. What an example of the foresight and bravery of a believer who lived his faith with a passion and who spoke with the courage of faith in front of a King.



The letter written to the Chosroes of Iran was taken by Abdullah bin Huzafa رضي الله عنه. On seeing the name of the Prophet being written before his own name, the Chosroes got angry and tore that blessed letter into pieces. He also insulted the envoy with harsh words.

With the courage and dignity that came from his faith, Abdullah addressed Chosroes and his men as follows:

“O people of Persia! You are passing your numbered days without prophet or book. You control a mere portion of the land that is in your hands. You are living life as a dream. Whereas the portion of earth that you are not in control of, is much greater.

“O Chosroes! Many a ruler came before you who reigned and desired either this world or the hereafter. Those who wanted the hereafter received their share in this world as well. Those who desired this world lost their hereafter too. You belittle this religion that we are proposing for you but by Allah wherever you may be, when that thing which you belittle befalls you, you will be terrified and you will not be able to protect yourself.

In response Chosroes said that property and kingdom were particular to him only and that he wasn't afraid of being defeated nor that anyone would claim partnership with him. Following that he ordered his men to throw Abdullah bin Huzafa رضي الله عنه outside.

As soon as he had left the presence of Chosroes, Abdullah mounted his horse and headed for Madina, with the following thoughts passing through his mind:

“By Allah I am not worried about either outcome for me (whether to be killed or to remain alive). I have carried out my duty of delivering the Messenger of Allah's letter and that is all that matters”.

This is the peaceful state of the conscience of one of the heroes of Islam who risked his life in order to fulfill a wish of Allah's Messenger.



Here is another story full of lessons to be taken, and displaying the peerless virtue and the courage of faith of Abdullah bin Huzafa:

During the caliphate of Omar, a Muslim army was sent against the Romans in the Qaysariyye district of Damascus. Abdullah bin Huzafa was

in that army. The Romans had taken him hostage. They took him to their king and said:

“This is a companion of Muhammed”.

After having Abdullah locked up in confinement with no food or drink, he then sent to him a portion of wine and some pork. They watched him for three days. Abdullah neither placed a hand on the wine nor the pork. They said to the King:

“He has lost much strength now. If you do not take him out of there, he will die”.

The King had him brought to him and asked him:

“What prevented you from eating and drinking?”

Abdullah answered:

“Actually necessity had made the eating of those things lawful for me, yet I did not want to make neither myself nor Islam a laughing stock in front of you”.

In response to this dignified attitude, the King said:

“What if you become a Christian and I give you half of my wealth, and if I make you a partner in all my kingdom and then I give my daughter to you in marriage?”

Abdullah replied:

“Even if you give me all of your wealth and in fact all of the wealth of Arabia, I would never turn away from the religion of Muhammad ﷺ for the blinking of an eye”.

The King said:

“In that case I will have you killed”.

To which Abdullah replied:

“That is for you to decide”.

Abdullah was then hung up on a crucifix. First of all the archers flung arrows at him but purposefully missed him in order to scare him. Then he was offered the chance to become Christian once more. That blessed



Companion did not show even the slightest of tendencies. Upon this the King said:

“Either you become Christian or I will place you in a cauldron of boiling water”.

When he refused again, a boiling cauldron made of copper was brought forth. The King had one of the Muslim slaves brought to him. He offered that he become Christian. When the slave rejected this offer he was thrown into the cauldron. Abdullah was watching. His skin instantly peeled away from his bones and came off.

The King again suggested to Abdullah that he become Christian. When he refused once more, he ordered that he be thrown into the cauldron. Just as Abdullah was about to be thrown into the cauldron, he began to cry. Thinking that he had changed his mind, the King had Abdullah brought to him and offered that he become Christian once more. When he saw how violently Abdullah refused, he asked in shock:

“Then why did you cry”?

Abdullah gave this superb reply:

“Do not think that I cried out of fear of what you wished to do to me. No. I cried because I only have one life to give in the path of Allah. I said to myself: “You have only one life and it is about to be thrown into that cauldron. In just an instant you are going to die in Allah’s cause. Whereas how I wish I had had lives to the number of hairs on my body, so that all of these lives could be sacrificed in order to gain Allah’s pleasure”.

This awesome act displayed by Abdullah due to his courage of faith and dignity impressed the King and he wished to let him go free.

“Kiss my head so that I may let you go”, he said

To this offer that could have no objection, Abdullah replied with an offer of his own:

“Will you let all of the other Muslim slaves go free together with me?”

When the King replied that he would, Abdullah said:

“In that case I will”.

Abdullah says later:



“I said to myself: “What objection could there be to my kissing the head of one of Allah’s enemies in order to free my own life and the lives of the Muslim slaves? Kiss it and be free”.

That day 80 Muslim slaves were set free. When they returned to Omar they told him what had happened. Omar said:

“To kiss the head of Abdullah bin Huzafe is a duty incumbent upon every Muslim! I will be the first to carry out this duty”. He thus got up and went to Abdullah and kissed his head.

Muslims who possess insight and discernment, observe events through the window of the afterlife. They can do this because their faith offers them a broad perspective. In this way they constantly take account of the positives and negatives, that is the benefit and harm. This is why all the worldly pain and suffering, and fleeting ordeals and distress are not worthy of mention against their love of faith.



Another hero who lived his faith with passion is Wahb bin Kabshah . The tomb of this blessed companion is in China. The Prophet sent him to China with the duty of propagating Islam. But at that time it used to take one year to reach China from Madina. After reaching China and staying there for a long time spreading Islam, he set out on the road back to Madina in order to satisfy, albeit slightly, the longing he had to see the Messenger of Allah. After an arduous journey that took one year he arrived in Madina. But alas he was unable to see the blessed Prophet as he had passed away. He returned to China, his longing having increased even more. This he did in order to complete the sacred duty he was commanded to do by Allah’s Messenger. He passed away while carrying out this duty. In this way, Wahb bin Kabshah was honoured with being the first representative of Allah’s Messenger in China. His mortal body remained in China however his eternal spirit went to the enlightened Madina to be together with the spirit of the Messenger of Allah .



The events that took place between Sultan Bayazid II and his brother Jem Sultan openly reflect the courage of faith of our forefathers and the beauty and virtue that Islam bestowed upon them:





Becoming a sultan in the year 1481, Bayazid II (who was even known as Bayazid the Saint due to his piety) spent the first 14 years of his sultanate dealing with the problems that arose as a result of his brother Jem Sultan's claims to the Ottoman throne. This situation hindered Bayazid II from active participation in the Christian world. Jem Sultan proposed the following to Bayazid II:

“Let us divide our country into two. You rule over half and I will rule over the other half”.

Bayazid II replied, rejecting his offer:

“My brother, this country is the property of the people. If we divide it, the government will lose power. We will become a series of weak principalities. This will have grave consequences. I would divide my body but the land of my people cannot be divided”.

A short time after that Jem Sultan was invited to Rhodes by the Knights of Rhodes. He was impressed by their polite words and heedlessly accepted their invitation. However the Knights broke the promises they had made and sold him to the Papacy like a slave. The Papacy were planning to use the prince in the next crusade against the Ottomans. However, realising that he was not going to be successful in this, Pope Innocent suggested that Jem Sultan become Christian. This offer greatly offended Jem Sultan. Deeply saddened he said to the Pope:

“Even if you give me the whole world, and not just the Ottoman Sultanate, I would never change my religion”.

The supplication that Jem Sultan made to Almighty Allah when he realised that the Crusaders wanted to use him against Islam is sufficient to show the aspiration of his efforts for his religion:

“O my Sustainer! If it is the case that the unbelievers wish to use me as a tool to bring harm to the Muslim world, then do not let this slave of yours live any longer. Take my soul to your honourable abode as soon as possible...”

His prayers must have been answered for at the age of 36 he passed away in Naples. In his last days, his last testament he made to those near him was as follows:



“Make sure to announce the news of my death all over the land. Do this for certain so that the games that the unbelievers wish to play with the Muslims, using me as a tool, can be over. After that, go to my brother Sultan Bayazid. Request that, however difficult it may be, he transports my body back to our country. I do not wish to be buried in the land of the unbelievers. Whatever has happened until now has happened. Make sure that he does not refuse this request of mine. Ask him to pay all of my debts. I do not want to go the Divine Presence in debt. Let him forgive my family, my children and those who served me. Let him make them content according to their states”.

His brother Bayazid II carried out his final testament.

These are the qualities that Islam bestows upon the human being. The reciprocal relationship between these two brothers displays their devotion to their faith and their love of their country. It is also a demonstration of sacrifice for the sake of the peace of their people, and an example of tolerance, the accounting of the conscience that results after realising one’s mistake, refraining from violating another’s rights, forgiveness and compassion amongst many other virtues.



The brothers Ilyas, Oruc and Hizir had an important place in the Ottoman navy. They were busy with sea trade before they opened up the banner of jihad in the Mediterranean. However, this business presented a great danger for the Mediterranean. When Oruc Reis was enslaved by Rhodesian pirates, his brother Hizir Reis began to search for a solution. Despite having sent large ransoms for his brother’s freedom, due to the tricks of the deceitful pirates who did not keep their word, his brother’s enslavement took a long time. Not content with this, the unbelievers sent to Oruc Reis a priest who had the audacity to suggest that he become Christian. However the reply of Oruc Reis was like a slap across their faces:

“O ignorant fools! How could I leave a true religion in order to become a member of a false one?”

The pirates became angry at this and said:

“In that case let your Muhammad come and save you” and chaining him to a skiff they made him a gallery slave.



Seeking refuge in Allah, Oruc Reis prayed:

“Just wait and see how my Sustainer will help me”.

A little while later with the help of a group of individuals wearing white kaftans and green turbans also visible to the unbelievers, his hands and feet were unchained and he was left free in the deep ocean and freed from slavery. In this way he attained to the bounty of the submission and reliance that comes from the strength of faith. After this event Oruc Reis, together with his brother Hizir Reis began a merciless battle against the pirates of the Mediterranean.



The Battle of the Dardanel is another superb example which illustrates the manifestations of living one's faith with a passion.

A retired colonel who was a commander in the Dardanel battle and who was wounded in the process, explains in his memoirs as follows:

“It was one of the days in which the Battle of the Dardanel was being fought. That day the battle, which lasted until the evening, was to result in our victory, despite the disproportionate superiority of the enemy in material terms. I was following excitedly the last stage of the battle from my observing point. The cries of “Allah, Allah” of the Muslim soldiers vibrated on the horizon and these awesome shouts were even able to drown out the sound of the cannon balls that represented the entire grandeur of a frightening civilisation.

At one point I heard the sound of footsteps next to me. When I looked back I came face to face with Sergeant Ali. There was terrible pain written all over his pale, yellow face. Before I had the chance to ask him what was wrong, he showed me his arm which was enough to explain everything. I shivered with terror. His left arm was about to fall off four finger lengths from his wrist from where he was hit. It was only a thin piece of skin that stopped his hand from falling to the floor. Sergeant Ali was grinding his teeth, trying to overcome the pain. He handed me the pocket-knife he carried in his right hand:

“Cut it off Commander!” he said

This statement of just three words expressed such a terrible wish and such necessity that I grabbed the knife almost unwillingly, without even thinking

and separated the hand that was hanging by its skin from his arm. While carrying out this blood curdling task I tried to lift his morale:

“Do not be distressed Sergeant Ali. May Allah restore health to your body”.

Not long after that, Sergeant Ali sacrificed not only his hand for his people but also his blessed body. As he closed his eyes, repeating the following sentences, he was surrounded by a pool of blood as he took his last breath:

“May my Muslim nation live long! May Allah keep it from straying from faith... May my life be sacrificed for my religion!”

And so it was that with faith in their breast the Ottoman soldiers in the Dardanelles, viewed the defence of their nation as a debt and requirement of their religion and did not refrain from paying this debt with their lives. This is why these soldiers embraced their religion as they did their guns, and they embraced their guns as they did their faith.



During the Battle for the Dardanelles, the Roman Mecidiye Bastion was almost completely wiped out as a result of a terrifying assault by the enemy. Much of their arsenal had been blown up into the air and sixteen artillery men were martyred. Only the captain and two soldiers remained of the entire battalion along with a cannon whose crane had been broken and which was not able to take in any cannonballs.

The captain had gone to inform the surrounding troops of their situation. Koca Sayyid, one of the soldiers, looked out at the enemy ships that were advancing over the sea spewing out fire and death and sighed deeply. His eyes filled with tears. His sorrowful heart quivered with the pain of helplessness in not being able to do anything in the face of the enemy and he raised his hands up to Allah and prayed:

“O my Sustainer! O Allah who is the Possessor of Might! Give me such strength at this moment that none of your servants be as strong as I”.

Suddenly it was as if Koca Sayyid had departed from this world... It was as if he were in the presence of his Lord and none other. The tears fell from his eyes over his cheeks. For a while he chanted: *“There is no power nor might except by Allah”.*



Then, all of a sudden he shouted “Allah!” and to the surprise and amazed look of his friend he reached for the 215 *okka* (approximately 276kg) canon ball and lifted it up. He climbed and then descended the iron steps three times. The crackling of his breast and shoulder bones could be heard. Pouring out sweat on the one hand, he was praying to Allah with cracked lips:

“O Allah! Please don’t take away my strength”.

Eventually the fate of that battle changed with the 3rd famous cannon ball that he placed in the mouth of the cannon. The Ocean, the name of the English armoured battle ship, had been hit and had been enveloped in fiery flames.

Learning of this event Cevat Pasha praised Almighty Allah, then congratulated Koca Sayyid and requested that he lift another cannon ball of the same weight. Koca Sayyid gave the following reply:

“My Pasha! When I lifted that cannon ball my heart was filled with the success of Allah and my body was subjected to divine help. I was a different person. Almighty Allah’s help and providence became manifest in response to the supplication I made to Him. This was an event particular to that moment. I cannot lift it now, Captain; you must excuse me please...”

At these words of Sayyid, Cevat Pasha said:

“My son! You have performed a very successful task. Ask me for some reward”.

This devoted hero who had erased all but servanthood to Allah from his heart, displayed even more heroism with the following words:

“My Captain! I have no request; however due to my build which is like a wrestler, one loaf of bread a day is not enough for me. Could you give orders that they give me two loaves so that I can be stronger against the enemy?”

Cevat Pasha, smiling at this request, granted him his wish. When evening fell and everyone received one loaf of bread and Colonel Sayyid received two, the heart of this great hero of faith could not accept this. In times of scarcity of food he did not want to be different from his friends. He returned one of the loaves given to him and never again took two loaves.

What a pure and brilliant heart!...Undoubtedly this state of Koca Sayyid was an embodied expression of his sincerity and devotedness that came from the courage of his faith.



To sum up, faith is not merely a dry declaration. Faith is a witness to the degree and perfection of a believer's heart. And its sign is self-sacrifice and devotion. Because faith is eternal capital, many lives have been sacrificed and unbearable torture and difficulties undergone throughout history in order to preserve and strengthen it. Unparalleled examples of virtue and heroism have been displayed for the sake of Allah. And today what we need more than anything else is this excitement of living faith with passion and fervour. As a debt of gratitude for the bounty of faith that has been bestowed upon us, we need to mobilise ourselves in order to invite all of humanity to *Dar-us Salaam* or the Abode of Peace. A believer who lives his faith with passion will feel responsible for the state of the community. Allah willing, we will attain to the divine reunion in the hereafter to the degree of our sacrifice for the perfection of our faith in this fleeting world.

May Almighty Allah make us all of those who attain to the perfection of our faith and make us servants who spend their lives to this end... Amen!

2. Sincerity¹⁰

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “*Actions are according to their intentions*” (Bukhari, Faith, 41; Muslim, Imare, 155)

As a result the essence of all good deeds, and primarily worship is that they are carried out in order to seek the pleasure of Allah. This can only take place with sincerity. In other words, it is only through sincerity and connection to a lofty aim that it is possible to raise the status of one's deeds to the level of worship. Consequently the real condition for the acceptance of one's deeds in the eyes of Allah is sincerity.

Sincerity is the performance of deeds for the sole purpose of pleasing Allah and abstaining from spoiling them with carnal desires and worldly

10. In Arabic *ikhlas*, from the root word (*khalasa*) which means to be pure, unmixed, and unadulterated. (translator's note)



aims. The spirit is to the body what sincerity is to deeds. An insincere deed amounts to nothing more than tiring oneself in vain, and becomes devoid of essence.

Sincerity is to preserve the heart from all manner of worldly benefit with the aim of moving closer to Almighty Allah. Sincerity is to purify one's deeds from all manner of spiritual blemishes, namely ostentation (*riya*) and pride (*ujub*), because these are diseases of the heart that destroy and contaminate one's sincerity.

To erase from the heart all aspirations other than seeking the pleasure of almighty Allah is an essential duty incumbent upon every Muslim. However, one must be careful about the following, which is that those in possession of sincerity are in constant danger of losing this beautiful state as a result of the triumph of the *nafs*¹¹. Just as it is extremely difficult to remain at the top, so too it is hard to preserve one's sincerity. The words of Zunnun Misri in regards to this matter are famous:

‘All people are dead, except for the scholars (those who know). All scholars are asleep, except for those who act on their knowledge. All those who act on their knowledge are at risk of being deceived, except those who have sincerity. And those who have sincerity are in perpetual danger in this world...’¹²

However those servants who are able to maintain their sincerity in spite of all manner of difficulty, are subject to much divine favours.

In short, sincerity allows one to attain to the greatest good, namely divine pleasure. Because Allah's aim for people's deeds is that they carry them out for the sole purpose of gaining His pleasure. It is stated in the Holy Qur'an:

‘We have sent down the Book to you with truth. So worship Allah, making your religion sincerely His’ (Az- Zumar, 39:2)

‘Say: “I am commanded to worship Allah, making my religion sincerely His’ (Az-Zumar, 39:11)

11. The *nafs* is the soul of the human being that inclines towards evil. It is the carnal and animal nature of the human being (translator's note).

12. Bayhaki, ShuAbu'l- Iman, Beirut 1990 V 345



Sincerity saves a believer from the assault of Satan, his greatest enemy, because Satan can only plague the one who is weak in his sincerity. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

‘He (Satan) said, “My Lord, because You misled me, I will make things on the earth seem good to them and I will mislead them all, every one of them, except Your slaves among them who are sincere.’ (Al-Hijr, 15: 39-40)

Those who possess sincerity will be saved from the fire of hell.

Almighty Allah gives glad tidings of this truth in the following verse:

‘You will definitely taste the painful punishment...except for Allah’s sincere servants’ (As-Saffat, 37: 39-40)

However small it may be, a deed done with sincerity, is enough to save the one who performs it. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has stated:

“Be sincere in your religion! If you do this, even small deeds will be enough for you”. (Hakim, IV, 341)

Sincerity attracts divine help. The Prophet ﷺ has also stated:

“Allah helps this community due to the supplication, ritual prayers and sincerity of the weak”. (Nesa’i, 43)

One should not doubt that sincerity will bring triumph. This is because sincere efforts will always be preserved and are never in vain. Throughout history there have been many small armies consisting of sincere and forbearing individuals that have triumphed, with the permission of Allah, over other armies much greater in number and better equipped. This situation shows that sincerity is the foundation of victory.

Scenes of Virtue

The life of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is filled with examples of the peak of sincerity. The following event that took place in the first days of his duty expresses this beautifully:



The polytheists wanted to send news to the Prophet ﷺ through his uncle, Abu Talib, in order to make him abandon his task of preaching. The Prophet ﷺ gave the following reply to his uncle:

“O my uncle! By Allah, even if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left in order to make me abandon the religion of Allah, I would never abandon this course of mine! Either Almighty Allah will spread it throughout the world and my duty will be ended or I will die in this path”.

The polytheists, uneasy at this birth of Islam, and having their attempts through Abu Talib meet with failure, then went to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ directly with the audacity to offer the following:

“If it is riches you want, we shall give you all the wealth you desire; such that there will be no one amongst the tribes richer than you.

“If you are after leadership we shall make you our leader; and you shall be the ruler of Mecca.

“If you desire to marry honourable women, we will give you whichever of the beautiful women of Quraysh that you desire.

“We are willing to do whatever you want so long as you abandon this course”.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ, in answer to all the lowly and sensual suggestions that those heedless people made and would further make, stated the following:

“I desire nothing from you. I want neither wealth, nor property, nor kingdom, nor leadership, nor any woman! The only thing I desire is for you to abandon your worship of pathetic idols and worship Allah alone”.

The Prophet ﷺ lived his life struggling to spread the religion of Allah and for this reason he remained independent of people and never desired anything for his own person. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the other prophets all repeated the following words:

“I do not ask you for any wage for it. My wage is the responsibility of none other than the Lord of all the worlds”¹³.

The following scene from the life of Prophet Moses is another magnificent display of sincerity:

Almighty Allah said:

“When he arrived at the water of Madyan, he found a crowd of people drawing water there. Standing apart from them, he found two women, holding back their sheep. He said, “What are you two doing here?” They said, “We cannot draw water until the shepherds have driven off their sheep. You see, our father is a very old man”. (Kassas, 28: 23)

These two women were Safura and Sufayra, the daughters of Prophet Shuayb عليه السلام. Despite going hungry for eight days, Moses عليه السلام drew water from the well enduring great hardship, and watered their animals. The women thanked him and left.

Later Shuayb invited Moses to his house for a meal. Moses was hesitant about eating though he had been hungry for days. Shuayb asked the reason. Moses answered:

“We are such a family that if we were to be given the entire world we would never exchange it for one deed of the hereafter. I did not help you in anticipation of this meal but rather to seek the pleasure of Allah”.

Shuayb was very pleased with this answer and said:

“This offer of ours is not because you helped us but because you are our guest. Come let us eat”.

At this, the tired and hungry Moses accepted the offer to eat.

This example demonstrates the necessity of refraining from tainting the sincerity in one’s intentions with any worldly expectations in order not to lose the reward of good deeds done for the sake of Allah.



Wasila bin Aska رضي الله عنه tells of an example of sincerity that took place during the campaign for Tabuk:

When it was the time to head out for Tabuk, I had neither material wealth nor an animal to mount. I did not wish to be deprived of this blessed campaign so I cried out in Madina:

“Who will let me ride their mount in return for my share of the booty?”





An old man from the Ansar said that he would let me take turns riding his animal and thereby take me to the battle. When I immediately said: “We have a deal” he responded:

“In that case come and walk with me, by the blessings of Allah”.

Thus I had made a good friend and so I set out with him. As a result Allah favoured me with booty: some camels fell to my lot. I led these to that old man from the Ansar. He said to me:

“Take your camels with you!”

“But according to the deal we made at the start, these are yours” I told him. Alas however much I repeated these words, the Ansari replied:

“O my brother! Take your booty, it was not this that I desired. My intention was to share in the reward from Allah, that is, I wanted to be a partner in your spiritual gain”. (Abu Dawud, 113/2676)

Those blessed Companions, who generously donated all that they had in order to please Allah, complied with their utmost to the secret of sincerity, whether it was whilst setting out for battle in the name of Allah or helping a believing brother.

They showed the greatest care in ensuring that the slightest shadow of any fleeting worldly benefit should not fall over the good deeds that they did for Allah.



Whenever Aisha رضي الله عنها helped the poor she would respond to the prayers for goodness made by the poor with a prayer of her own. She was asked about this:

“You give to them and you also pray for them. What is the reason for this?”

She responded:

“I fear that the prayer that they make will be the recompense for the charity I give. I make the same prayer that they make so that I can anticipate my reward only from Allah”.



What an excellent example of sincerity!...Those blessed people showed the utmost care in preserving their sincerity.



How superb is the following display of depth and sensitivity of the sincerity of Ali رضي الله عنه:

During a battle Ali had captured an enemy soldier and was about to kill him. The man suddenly spat on the blessed and radiant face of Ali, in response to the nasty inclination that had arisen within him.

It would have been mere child's play for that brave and gallant 'lion of Allah' to cut off the head of that enemy with one fell swoop. However Ali stopped suddenly, anxious that at that moment his *nafs* had tainted his intention which was to fight for Allah and nothing else. He stopped and slowly put down his sword, which had been named Zulfikar and had been a gift to him from the Prophet, deciding not to kill his enemy.

The shocked man on the ground lay in a wretched state awaiting his death. He had thought that Ali would display an even more intense effort with greater anger and rage as a result of his spitting in his face. However, it was not as he expected. Suddenly he came face to face with a truth that he could never have imagined. The enemy, who could not make sense of this action of this hero of Islam and hero of the hearts of people, asked Ali in shock and with great curiosity:

“O Ali! Why did you stop when you were just about to kill me? What brought about this change of mind? What happened that made you go from a violent rage to a remarkable calmness... You were like a bolt of lightning about to strike before you suddenly calmed down...”

Ali replied:

“I use this sword of the Prophet in the path of Allah only. I never let my *nafs* interfere... When you spat on my face you wished to anger and insult me. If I had succumbed to my anger at that point I would have killed you for the base reason of giving in to my own whims, which is something that does not befit a believer. Whereas I fight for the sake of Allah, and not for the satisfaction of my pride”.



As a result the heart of that enemy found life again in response to the lofty, praiseworthy character of the person he had come to kill. He took heed from Ali's faith, his sincerity and his opposition to his own desires. The man subsequently became Muslim.



One time a great fire broke out in the copper markets of Baghdad. Two children were trapped in one of the burning shops. Despite their cries for help, the flames were so intense that nobody was brave enough to try and save them. Their foreman was crying out outside in desperation:

“I will give 1000 pieces of gold to whoever saves my children”.

At that point Abu'l Hussain Nuri who happened to be passing by, immediately threw himself into the fire. The fire became like a rose garden for him. With the help of almighty Allah, this saint was able to save the children from those flames, to the amazement of everyone watching.

Happily the foreman presented the gold pieces to Abu'l Hussain Nuri, who suddenly grimaced and said:

“Take your gold and be grateful to Allah Most High! If I had done what I did not for Allah but for the hope of some material reward, I would never have been able to rescue those children from that fire”.

As can be seen from this example, many fires can become rose gardens with the blessings of sincerity. But to enter the fire is possible only when one becomes like Abraham, the friend of Allah. Because the lack of fear displayed by Abraham in the face of the fire was an exceptional favour that almighty Allah bestowed upon him in response to his submission out of his love and passion for Allah.



Sincerity shows its effect in everything. As long as it is given out with a sincere intention, the one who gives charity will be rewarded to the degree of their sincerity, even if the charity goes to one who is unworthy of it. According to the degree of one's sincerity there arise positive tendencies towards goodness in those who are given the charity. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has indicated this truth as follows:

“One time a man said: “I am going to give charity”.



That night he left his home with his charity and placed it in the hands of a thief without realising who it was. The next day the people of the town started to talk:

“What an amazing thing! Last night someone gave charity to a thief!”

The man said:

“O Allah! Praise be to you. I am going to give charity today as well”.

Again he left his home with his money and this time without realising it, he placed it in the hands of a prostitute. The next day the people of the town began to talk once more:

“It cannot be! Last night somebody gave charity to a prostitute”. The man said again:

“O Allah! Praise be to you even if I have given charity to a prostitute. I am going to give charity again”.

Again that night, the man took what he had set aside for charity and left his house, this time placing it in the hands of a rich man. The next day the people of the town began to chatter again in amazement:

“What is this! Last night charity was given to a rich man!”.

The man said:

“O Allah! I am grateful to you for being able to give charity whether it be to a thief, a prostitute or a rich man.

As a result of the sincerity of this man, he saw someone in his dream say to him:

“Perhaps the charity you gave to the thief will embarrass him and stop him from stealing. And perchance the prostitute will regret what she had been doing and become a chaste woman. And maybe the rich man will take heed and give out to the needy from the wealth that Allah has given him”. (Bukhari, Zekat, 14)

And so these are the blessings of sincerity and true devotion... What is indicated in this *hadith* is the necessary sincerity and devotion that needs to be within the heart of the person who is giving charity. It also expresses the idea that intentions are better than deeds. However, let it not be



assumed from this that it is a virtuous act to give out charity carelessly. On the contrary, when giving out charity and alms-giving, the believer should give it to those who are truly in need, and must search out the most worthy person if possible and give it to them.



What an admonition is the following event which is a practical demonstration of the above-mentioned hadith.

During a trip to Anatolia by Shaykh Sami Ramazanoglu, somebody stopped his car in Urgup and asked for money to buy some cigarettes. Despite the objections - not voiced, but felt in the hearts - of some of his fellow travellers, Shaykh Sami, who was an ocean of generosity, said:

“Since he is asking, [it is only right that] we should give” and to the surprised looks of those around him he gave him the money without hesitation. Being pleased at this, the poor man changed his intention and said:

“Now I am going to go and buy bread with this money” and he left to go.

This is an evident example of the manifestation of goodness that arises as a result of the degree of the purity of one’s intentions and the legitimate and pure source of one’s wealth.



During the first years in the history of Islam an unknown person used to leave a sack of provisions every morning at the door of various poor people in Madina. It so happened that one morning the poor people woke up to find that there was no sack at their door. While they were wondering the reason they heard a poignant proclamation of the death of the grandson of Ali ؑ, Zayn-al-abideen. The city of Madina was shaken up with this news and its people were deeply grieved.

The last duties began to be meticulously carried out for this heir of the Prophet. When it came time to wash his body, the person who performed the task saw some large boils on the back of the dead man. He was surprised



and could not understand the reason. Somebody from the *ahl'ul bayt* ¹⁴ who knew his secret explained:

“Every morning Zayn-al-abideen would carry sacks of provisions that he had prepared and take them to the doors of the poor. He would return without anyone seeing him. Nobody ever knew who it was that kept bringing these provisions. These wounds that you see on his back are what developed as a result of carrying them”. (Ibn-i Kathir, *al-Bidaya*, IX, 112,133; Abu Nuaym, *Hilye*, III, 136)

This is the manifestation of sincerity in the heart of a believer full of compassion. This is a sensitivity observed for a lifetime that refused to tarnish the reward for goodness with the compliments of mere mortals.



The following is another beautiful example of sincerity displayed by Sultan Alparslan whose heart was ever together with his Lord.

Before entering the Battle of Malazgirt in 1071, Alparslan donned pure white clothes and remarked: “This is my shroud”. In other words, he had prepared himself not for worldly fame but for martyrdom with the ecstasy resulting from pure faith. Before he went to battle he gave this short speech to his soldiers:

“Either I become victorious and reach my aim; or I become a martyr and go to heaven. Those of you who choose to follow me, let them do so. Those who choose to leave, let them go. There are no commanding sultans giving orders here, nor are there any soldiers needing to obey. Today I am one of you. I am a soldier going to war alongside you. Those who follow me and become martyrs having devoted their souls to almighty Allah - to heaven you go; those left alive will be war heroes. As for those who desert us, it is the fire of the hereafter and disgrace in this world that await them”.

As a result of the sincerity of Sultan Alparslan, almighty Allah made him victorious against the Roman Diogen, whose army was five times the size of his own.

As mentioned before only those people who possess sincerity will attain to true salvation. However the possessors of sincerity are in great

14. The *ahl'ul bayt* are the family of the Prophet (translator's note).



danger constantly and face a risky trial. Likewise the assassination attempt on the life of the great commander of Islam, Sultan Alparslan was such a trial. This is what happened:

In the year 1072 after the victory at Malazgirt, Sultan Alparslan went on an expedition towards Maveraunnehir. He had many horses with him. He besieged the Fortress of Hana which was on the River of Amuderya. The commander of the fortress was Yusuf al-Harazmi who was a member of a heretic group called *Batiniyye*. When he realised that the fortress was not going to be able to hold out much longer, he informed Alparslan that he had surrendered. However when this treacherous villain was brought before Alparslan he suddenly charged at him and wounded him with his dagger. He was immediately killed and Sultan Alparslan was also not to recover from his wounds. He was reunited with his Lord on the 25th of October, 1072. His last words were as follows:

“Whenever I was resolved against the enemy I would always seek refuge in Allah Most High and ask for His help. Yesterday when I climbed a mountain, it was as if the mountain beneath my feet shook due to the number of my soldiers and the greatness of my army. In my heart the following thought arose: “I am the ruler of the world, who can defeat me?” As a result of this, Almighty Allah punished me using one of His feeble servants. I ask Allah Most High for forgiveness for this thought that arose in my heart and for all of the mistakes and errors that I have committed in the past, and I turn back to Him. There is no Allah but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah...”

Undoubtedly this state is that of a sincere conscience and a pure heart taking itself to account.



One of the friends of Allah was once asked if he had ever experienced any event concerning sincerity that had left an impression on him. He replied:

“Indeed I have” and he explained:

“One time I lost my purse at Mecca and was left penniless. I was expecting money from Basra but it had somehow failed to arrive. My hair and beard had grown somewhat. I went to a barber and asked him:



“I have no money. Would you cut my hair for the sake of Allah?”

At that point the barber was shaving a man. Indicating the seat next to him he said: “Sit here” and leaving him he began to shave me. The man objected. The barber turned to him and said:

“I am sorry sir. I was shaving you for a fee but this person here asked me to shave him for the sake of Allah. Duties done for Allah always have priority and they have no fee. The servants can never know the price of those things done for Allah and never can they pay them”.

After he shaved me, the barber slipped a few pieces of gold into my pocket:

“You can attend to your immediate needs with this. This is all I have, I am sorry”.

A few days passed. The money I was waiting for from Basra arrived. I took a small pouch of gold to the barber but he objected:

“I will never take it! None of the slaves of Allah can ever have the ability to pay the price for a task done for Allah’s sake. Be on your way. May Allah give you peace”.

I made amends and parted from him but for forty years now I have been waking up in the middle of the night and praying for him”.

And so almighty Allah will reward those righteous deeds and all acts of goodness with goodness that is worthy of His glory as long as they are done in such a sincere manner, that is purely for the sake of Allah.



During the days of Ramadhan many rich people within the Ottoman community, used to wander around unfamiliar suburbs in uncharacteristic dress. Going to the markets, grocers and shops of the region they would ask them to take out their credit book. They would tell them to add up the debts of some of the pages at random from the beginning, the middle and the last pages. Having totalled them they would pay the resulting amount. They would then leave without identifying themselves saying:

“Clear these debts! And may Allah accept this deed from us”.



And so it was that the one in debt never knew who it was that had paid off his debts, and the one who wiped away the debt would never know who it was whom he had saved from debt. Those individuals knew that non-obligatory charity given in secret was more acceptable than that given out in the open and so they tried to help others as secretly as possible. Our forefathers were so sincere that their right hand was unaware of the charity that had been given out by their left hand and they would immediately forget the good that they had done.

The distinguished friends of Allah have advised people to forget two things:

1. The good deeds that you have done so that they do not boost your ego and make you vain and proud;
2. The bad things that have been done to you so that ill-will and rage do not germinate within your heart.

In short, sincerity is a jewel so hard to attain and preserve that no one other than Allah can truly evaluate its worth, because through it the windows of the heart are opened to Allah. Sincerity is a sublime quality that raises a servant to high ranks both in this world and the next and that brings one closer to Allah. Allah Most High does not accept deeds that are done devoid of sincerity. On the Day of Judgement, deeds done with self-satisfaction and for show, both of which indicate diseases of the heart, will be thrown at the faces of the ones who perform them. Sincerity on the other hand makes what is little great, through the bounty of Allah most High. It also makes one's life long and its abundance and prosperity continual.

3. *Taqwa*¹⁵ (Piety and God-consciousness)

Taqwa means protecting the heart from anything other than Allah or anything that distances one from Allah so that the heart becomes a mirror of beautiful manifestations. *Taqwa* is when the believer seeks refuge in the protective security of Allah and meticulously preserves himself from

15. *Taqwa* comes from the root word *waqa'a* which means to guard, preserve, safeguard. It has the meanings of godliness, devoutness and piety (translator's note).



things that will give harm and pain in the hereafter and distances himself from sins in order to embrace good deeds.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, stated in an address to Abu Dharr رضي الله عنه that *taqwa* was the sole standard of any worth and acceptance in the eyes of Allah:

“Know that you are above neither the red person nor the black person. It is only taqwa that makes you superior” (Ahmad, V, 158)

The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said:

“I am the most God-fearing amongst you”. (Bukhari, Iman, 13; Muslim, Siyam, 74). He acted with the standards of *taqwa* at every stage of his life. This is why it is necessary to comply with the *sunnah*¹⁶ of the Messenger of Allah in order to be a God-fearing believer.

The Prophet Jesus ﷺ has beautifully described *taqwa* as follows:

Somebody once came to Jesus and asked him:

“O teacher of goodness and righteousness! How does the slave become a possessor of *taqwa* in the sight of Allah Most High?”

Jesus responded:

“Easily. By loving Allah Most High as He deserves to be loved, with your heart and soul, and by performing righteous deeds to the best of your ability in order to please Him, and by showing mercy and compassion to all of the sons of Adam just as you would show for yourself”.

Then he said:

“Never do to another what you do not wish to have done to yourself! Then you will be a person who has proper *taqwa* of Allah”. (Ahmad, Az-Zuhd pg 59).

One day Omar رضي الله عنه asked Ubayy bin Ka'b رضي الله عنه to define *taqwa*. Ubayy bin Ka'b answered him:

“O Omar, have you ever walked along a prickly path?”

When Omar answered “Yes I have” he then asked him:

16. The sunnah are the collection of practices of the Prophet Muhammad (translator's note).



“So what did you do?”

Omar answered:

“I lifted up my garments and concentrated all my efforts into preventing the thorns from harming me”.

Upon this Ubayy bin Ka'b said:

“That is *taqwa*” (Ibn-i Kathir, Tafsir”ul Qur’an al Azim, Beirut 1988, I,42).

The essence of *taqwa* is to flee from unbelief and associating partners with Allah as one would flee from fire. The sign of this is that one performs the obligatory tasks properly and refrains from all sin.

The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said:

“Fear Allah wherever you happen to be, and perform a good deed after a bad one so that it erases it. And behave with good character towards people” (Tirmidhi, Birr, 55/1987)

The peak of *taqwa* is when the servant protects his heart from everything that will make it heedless of Allah and turns towards Him with his entire being, the degree of which has no limit. This last stage is the true *taqwa* that is commanded in the following verse:

“O you who have attained to faith. Be conscious of Allah with all the consciousness that is due to Him and do not allow death to overtake you before you have surrendered yourselves unto Him” (Al’i Imran, 3: 102)

In order to reach the peak of *taqwa* one must avoid doubtful things at all costs. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“The slave of Allah cannot reach a degree of true *taqwa* unless he abandons things that are not objectionable out of fear that he may do something objectionable” (Tirmidhi, Qiyama, 19/2451; ibn-Maja, Zuhd, 24)

Abdullah ibn Omar ؓ warns us of the following:

“A person cannot attain to a true level of *taqwa* without abandoning the things that make him uncomfortable and that trouble his heart”. (Bukhari, Iman, 1)

In order to gain *taqwa* the slave must constantly take his soul to account. This is because it is only possible to strengthen one’s *taqwa* by

resisting the intense desires of the evil-commanding soul, which is the greatest enemy of the heart, and protecting it from its deceptions.

In order to refrain from falling for all of the formidable allurements that were laid before him, the prophet Joseph عليه السلام showed that the only cure was to seek refuge in Allah with a high degree of *taqwa*. And this shows that *taqwa* is a must if one wishes to engage divine help.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would supplicate to almighty Allah and ask for *taqwa* to be bestowed upon him:

“O Allah! Grant piety to my soul, purify it as Thou art the best to purify it and Thou art its Guardian and Master”. (Muslim, Zikr, 73)

“O Allah! I ask you for guidance, piety, chastity and wealth of the heart”. (Muslim, Zikr, 72)

The most superior person in the eyes of Allah is the one who possesses the greatest degree of *taqwa* or piety¹⁷. Allah Most High loves his pious servants¹⁸ and is always with them¹⁹. He has promised the pious ones Paradise as wide as the heavens and the earth²⁰. Almighty Allah bestows upon his pious slaves the ability to distinguish between good and bad and He forgives their sins²¹. He shows them a way out in moments of distress and provides for them from where they would never have expected. He makes their task easy, forgives their evil and grants them great reward²².

According to a narration by Abu Darr رضي الله عنه the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“I know a verse. If people held tight to it, it would be enough for them”.

His Companions asked him:

“What is that verse, o Messenger of Allah?”

Allah’s Messenger recited the following from the Holy Qur’an:

17. See al Hujurat, verse 13

18. See Al’i Imran, verse 76

19. See an Nahl, verse 128

20. See Al’i Imran, verse 133

21. See Al Anfal, verse 29

22. See al Talak, verse 2-5



“...Whoever has taqwa of Allah – He will facilitate for him a way out”

(Talaq, 65: 2) (ibn Majah, Zuhd, 24)

Those who have piety are the ones who are closest to the Prophet spiritually. Muadh bin Jabal رضي الله عنه states the following:

“When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent me to Yemen as governor, he escorted me all the way to the outskirts of Madina to bid farewell to me. I was on my mount while he was walking. After he had given me some advice he said:

“O Muadh! It may be that you will not see me again after this year. It is possible that when you next come to visit this mosque of mine you will find my tomb in its place”.

Hearing these words I started to cry out of the sorrow that comes from parting from a friend such as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Messenger of Allah said:

“Do not cry o Muadh!”. And then turning his face to Madina, he said:

“Those who are closest to me are those who have piety before Allah wherever they happen to be” (Ahmad, V, 235. Haysami, Majmua'z-Zawaid, Beirut, 1988, IX, 22)

The Prophet also said:

“Undoubtedly my friends are the pious ones”. (Abu Dawud, Fiten, I/4242).

A heart that has attained to *taqwa* is honoured with being under the providence of the Divine, and becomes the site of the manifestation of divine wisdom and mysteries.

Scenes of Virtue

The true scholars and friends of Allah such as Abu Hanifa, Imam Shafi'i, Ahmad bin Hanbal lived their lives with the standard of *taqwa*. One time as Imam Abu Hanifa was trying to clean a tiny stain on his garment, he was asked:

“O Imam! According to a *fatwa*²³ you have given, this tiny stain is not an obstacle to the prayer; so why are you trying so hard to remove it?”

Abu Hanifa replied:

“That is *fatwa*, this, on the other hand, is *taqwa*”...

As can be seen *taqwa* is to display the greatest degree of meticulousness and care in the face of Allah’s commands and prohibitions.



The following story is very telling in showing the piety of a woman who, when she spoke, spoke nothing but verses from the Qur’an out of fear of falling into sin:

Abdullah bin Mubarak narrates:

One time I had set out with the aim of performing the *hajj* at Allah’s Sacred House, the *Kabah* and visiting the tomb of the Prophet ﷺ, when I saw something black in the middle of the road. I looked carefully and saw that it was a woman with a cloak made of wool on her back and a veil of wool over her head... I greeted her:

“*Salamu alaykum wa rahmetullahi wa barakatuhu* (May the peace, mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you)”.

She replied from chapter Yasin of the Qur’an:

“Peace!” A word from a Merciful Lord”.

“May Allah bring you good! What are you doing here?” he I asked.

She replied with the 186th verse of Chapter A’raf:

“If Allah misguides people, no one can guide them”.

I realised that she had lost her way. So I asked her:

“Where do you want to go?”

She replied with a portion of the first verse of Chapter Isra:

23. A *fatwa* is a legal ruling regarding the practices of Islam given by a qualified scholar (translator’s note).



“Glory be to Him who took His slave on a journey by night from the Masjid al-Haram to the Masjid al-Aqsa”.

I understood that she had made the pilgrimage and wanted to go to Jerusalem. I asked her:

“How many days have you been here?”

She replied with the 10th verse of Chapter Mariam:

“For three nights despite the fact that you are perfectly able”.

“Don’t you have anything to eat?” I asked her

She read the 79th verse of the chapter Shu’ara:

“He who gives me food and gives me drink”.

“How can you perform the ablution in this dry desert?” I asked her

She replied with the 43rd verse of Chapter Nisa:

“(If) you cannot find any water, then do *tayammum*²⁴ [cleanse yourself] with pure earth”.

“I have something to eat with me. Would you like to eat?” I asked. She responded with a part of the 187th verse of chapter Baqara:

“...then fulfil the fast until the night appears”.

“This is not the month of Ramadan” I said. She answered with a portion of the 158th verse of chapter Baqara:

“If anyone spontaneously does good, Allah is All-Thankful, All-Knowing”.

“To break the fast is permissible when you are on a journey” I said. She responded with a part of the 184th verse of chapter Baqara:

“But that you should fast is better for you, if you only knew”.

“Why don’t you speak to me in the way that I am speaking to you?” I asked her. She answered by reading the 18th verse of chapter Qaf:

24. *Tayammum* is a form of purification in cases where no water is available. It is performed by wiping one’s hands and face over clean earth, or some similar substance (translator’s note).



“He does not utter a single word, without a watcher by him, pen in hand!”

“Shall I let you mount my camel and take you to your tribe” I asked her. She replied with a portion of verse 197 from chapter Baqara:

“Whatever good you do, Allah knows it”.

I got my camel ready for her to mount it. She read a part of the 30th verse of chapter Nur:

“Say to the believers that they should lower their eyes”.

While she climbed up onto the camel, she read a portion of the 13th and 14th verses of chapter Zuhurf:

“Glory be to Him who has subjected this to us. We could never have done it by ourselves”.

When we started moving she read from the 20th verse of Chapter Muzemmil:

“Recite as much of the Qur’an as is easy for you”.

Inspired by the 269th verse of chapter Baqara I then said:

“He who has been given wisdom has been given great good”.

I said to her:

“You have been given much good”. She finished this verse:

“But no one pays heed but people of intelligence”.

At last we reached her caravan.

“Here is your caravan. Who do you have in it?” I asked

She read from the 46th verse of Chapter Kahf:

“Wealth and sons are the embellishment of the life of this world”.

I understood that she had sons in the group. I asked:

“What is their role in the pilgrimage group?”

She read the 16th verse of chapter Nahl:



“As well as other means of orientation; for it is by the stars that men find their way”.

I understood that her sons were the guides of the caravan. Indicating the tents and I asked her:

“Which of them are your sons? She answered:

“Allah took Ibrahim as an intimate friend, and Allah spoke directly to Musa. Yahya, take hold of the Book with vigour”.

I then shouted to the caravan:

“O Ibrahim, O Musa, O Yahya”. Three young men radiant as the moon came out. When they came and sat down, their mother recited to them from the 9th verse of Chapter Kahf:

“Send one of your number into the city with this silver you have, so he can see which food is purest and bring you some of it to eat”. (Kahf, 50:19)

One of the young men went to purchase something to eat and placed it in front of them. The women read the following verse from Chapter Haqqa:

“Eat and drink with relish for what you did before in days gone by!”
(69:24)

I said to the sons of the woman:

“May your food be unlawful for me if you do not inform me of your mother’s state”.

Upon this the young men said:

“For 40 years now, this here our mother has spoken nothing but verses from the Qur’an out of fear of falling into error before Allah, the Most Merciful”.

I then read from Chapter Jumu’ah:

“That is Allah’s favour which He gives to whoever He wills. Allah’s favour is indeed immense” (62:4)

A requirement of *taqwa* is that one abandons that which is doubtful and even lawful, out of fear that one may commit the unlawful. An example of this is as follows:

Sultan Abdulaziz Han, who brought his army and its fleet to a highly impressive rank, obliterating internal conflicts with adept political skill, and who was subsequently able to raise the position of the government to its former prestige, had attracted the attention of the entire world. As a result the Sultan was invited to France and England.

Abdulaziz Han, who was the most religious of sultans, took with him chefs from Bolu, thinking that the food of Europeans would be doubtful under *shariah* (Islamic legal standards).

Abdulaziz Han was a righteous person and led a very religious and ordered life. He had so much piety that throughout his life, he only drank *zamzam*²⁵ and never drank normal water. He would perform his prayer in the most ordered of fashions and he would read the Qur'an frequently. When he was brutally martyred, a Holy Qur'an opened at the Chapter Joseph, was found on the top of a small table in his room. This Holy Qur'an, which was stained with his blessed blood is preserved in the Topkapi Palace.

It is said in a *hadith* of the Prophet:

*"A person dies upon the state that they lived in, and they will be resurrected upon the state that they died"*²⁶.



Another historical personality who lived following highly sensitive standards of *taqwa* was Sultan Abdulhamid II. He used to order that he be woken up if anything urgent arose, at whatever time of the night it happened to be, and was never content to leave the task to the following day. His scribe, As'ad Bey, narrates in his memoirs:

"One night at midnight I knocked on the door of the Sultan to ask him to sign a most important document, but he did not open the door. I waited for a while before I knocked once more, but again he did not answer. I became anxious and wondered if the call of Allah had come to the Sultan. I

25. Zamzam is water from a well located in Mecca, found by Hajar, the wife of Abraham (translator's note).

26. See Muslim, Jannah, 83; Munawi, Fayzu'l Qadir, Beirut 1994, V, 663)



knocked again a little while later and the Sultan appeared at the door with a towel in his hand. He was drying his face. He smiled and said:

“My son! I realised that, at this hour, you must have come for something very important. I had woken up at the very first knock but I was late in answering the door as I went to take my ablution. This is because I have never signed any document for my people without having first taken my ablution. Bring it to me and let me sign it...” and pronouncing the *Basmala*²⁷, he signed the document”.

The wife of Abdulhamid II narrated the following as an illustration of the degree of his sensitivity:

“Abdulhamid Han always left a clean brick tile at the foot of his bed. When he got out of bed he used to perform *tayammum* with the tile before he went to the basin to perform his ablution with water in order to avoid stepping on the ground without his ablution. One time I asked him the reason for this. He responded as follows:

“As the Caliph of so many Muslims, if I am not careful about the standards of applying the *sunnah*, then the community of Muhammad may be harmed because of this...”

His life of piety made him a genius in the realm of politics too. His foresight has been recorded in world history due to his rule during the most difficult and dangerous of years.



In short, *taqwa* is at the head of those virtues that are the essence of the religion and that beautify one’s spiritual life. The greatest capital that one can possess in order to attain to happiness in the next world is *taqwa*. A life without *taqwa* is full of peril. A life that is not lived upon the principles of *taqwa* will result in misfortune at the last breath and thus eternal loss, as is indicated by the *hadith* “*However you live, that is how you will die*”. (Munavi, V, 663) – and may Allah protect us. In order to protect ourselves from the evil of our carnal desires in this temporary world, it is vital that we live as meticulous and careful a life as we would if we were walking through a minefield.

27. The *basmala* is the oft-repeated phrase by Muslims uttered before beginning anything and means ‘In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate’



Wars are fought and come to an end at particular times and in particular places. Whereas the struggle for *taqwa* against the evil-commanding soul must continue uninterruptedly for a lifetime. It is stated in a verse from the Qur'an:

“And worship your Lord until what is Certain (death) comes to you”.
(Hijr, 15:99).

May Almighty Allah bestow upon us a lifelong servanthood based on taqwa and a continued state of vigilance in the face of “heedlessness” which opens up the doors to the trickery and deceptions of our lower self.

Amen

4. Tawba and Istigfar

The human being has a tendency to incline towards sin when it is defeated by the desires of its *nafs* and when it loses the enlightenment of faith and its spirituality. When the moral support from the conscience decreases, discernment and spiritual depth also disappear. A serious weakness appears in the road to becoming a person of integrity. Sins become like sweet music to the *nafs* and are committed without feeling the heaviness of their evil consequences.

Whereas mankind comes to this world immaculately pure, like a clean and clear mirror of innocence. Religion then is a manifestation of mercy bestowed upon mankind by Allah in order to preserve this primal purity. Consequently if a servant has been able to preserve the purity within his nature and benefitted from the spirituality of religion, he will then be able to draw back the veils of heedlessness. This will then allow him to feel the enormity of his sin in his conscience, if he so happens to commit one. Having thus been injured, the virtuous feelings that have been hidden away in his inner world will be awakened. With great sorrow, his heart will burn with regret and he will open it up to his Lord with teary eyes. This burning and regret is called “*tawba*”. The cries for forgiveness that come after and flow from the heart, are termed “*istigfar*”.



Sins are obstacles to entering Paradise; in contrast *tawba* which is strengthened by good deeds and a penitent heart, are means of protection from the fire.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

“When a servant commits a sin, a black stain is imprinted upon his heart. If he abandons that sin and embraces istigfar and inclines towards tawba, his heart is then polished. If he does not do so and turns back towards the sin, the black spots increase and consequently cover the entire heart. This is the situation that Allah Most High has mentioned in the Qur’an:

“No indeed! Rather what they have earned has rusted up their hearts”. (Mutaffifin, 83:14) (Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 83/3334)

It has been stated in another hadith:

*“The biggest concern of a person is the anxiety of sin; its cure is to do istigfar in the darkness of the night”.*²⁸

Whenever one commits a sin, which can happen to everyone as a result of being human, one must immediately repent and ask for forgiveness and turn back towards Allah. Almighty Allah praises his pious servants that he is pleased with as follows:

“Those who, when they act indecently or wrong themselves, remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their bad actions (and who can forgive bad actions except Allah?) and do not knowingly persist in what they were doing. (Al’i Imran, 3:135)

“The part of the night they spent asleep was small and they would seek forgiveness before the dawn”. (Adh-Dhariyat, 51:17-18)

Almighty Allah informs us in many verses that He will forgive those servants of His who repent with sincerity. In fact, He states that He will transform the sins of those who turn towards him with sincere repentance into good deeds:

“...except for those who make tawba and have faith and act rightly: Allah will transform the wrong actions of such people into good – Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful”. (Furqan, 25:70)

The Blessed Prophet ﷺ has said:

“Allah Most High, opens up His hands at night time, in order to accept the repentance of those who commit sins by day. And for those who commit sins at night time He opens up His hands during the day. This continues until the sun rises from the place it sets, that is, until the Day of Judgement”.

(Muslim, Tawba, 31)

The most important condition for *tawba* is sincerity and genuineness. One who continually breaks their *tawba* has obviously become a plaything of Satan. Almighty Allah states:

“Allah’s promise is true. So do not let the life of this world delude you and do not let the Deluder delude you concerning Allah”. (Luqman, 31:33)

On the other hand, *tawba* and *istigfar* are means to free oneself of pain both in this world and the next. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ stated that:

“With the following verses Allah Most High revealed to me two assurances for my community:

1. Allah would not punish them (as a whole) while you were among them.

2. Allah would not punish them as long as they sought forgiveness.
(anfal, 8:33)

“When I part from them (my community) I leave for them (the second assurance, that is, istigfar which will prevent Allah’s punishment and protect them until the Day of Judgement”. (Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 8/3082).

Tawba and *istigfar* are two of the most effective means to approaching Allah, because their true nature is that they indicate genuine regret and the seeking of refuge in Allah. *Istigfar*, which has an important place in turning towards Allah and in the heart’s gaining an elevated rank, is the unique means to purifying oneself from spiritual blemishes. An acceptable *tawba* will raise the veils and remove the obstacles that lay between the servant and his Lord, and will leave one subject to the love of Allah Most High. As such, almighty Allah states:

“Allah loves those who turn back from wrongdoing and He loves those who purify themselves”. (Baqara, 2:222)





The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ gave the following example to describe the pleasure of our Lord when people make *tawba* to Him:

“The pleasure of Allah Most High when any one of you repent from his sins is greater than the pleasure of one who is travelling through the isolated desert and loses his camel which is carrying his food and drink. When all his attempts to find it fail, he loses all hope that he ever will and he lies down under the shade of a tree. Suddenly he sees his camel at his side and he sticks to his halter and, not knowing what to say out of extreme happiness he says:

“O Allah! You are my servant and I am your Lord”. (Muslim Tawba 7: Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 49, Deawat, .99)

In another *hadith*, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ explains the benefits of *istigfar*:

“If a person never abandons asking Allah for forgiveness, Allah Most High will show him a way out of all distress, and freedom from all sadness, and will provide for him from where he would never have expected”. (Abu Dawud, Vitir, 26/1518; Ibn-i Maja, Adab, 57)

Thus the most important matter for the servant is to purify his soul and cleanse his heart. What has been explained thus far about *tawba* and *istigfar* are only the beginning of this state. Once one has entered through the door, righteous deeds are a must. After one has performed the obligatory, necessary and *sunnah* deeds in the correct manner, one must also adopt beautiful virtues such as extreme care in guarding others' rights, compliance to the rights of the parents, giving out for the sake of Allah, and seeking nearness to all of creation by showing mercy, compassion and forgiveness towards them.

Scenes of Virtue

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ stated:

“O people! Repent towards Allah and ask forgiveness from Him. For I make tawba to Him one hundred times a day”. (Muslim, Zikir, 42)

The fact that the Messenger of Allah made *tawba* and *istigfar* to Allah continually, even though all of his past and future sins were forgiven, is



an important lesson for his community as well as being gratitude for the favours that Allah bestowed upon him.

The Blessed Prophet, who knew that the most vital duty of the slave is to remember Allah and to worship Him at every instant, did *tawba* and embraced *istigfar* at every opportunity believing that he needed to increase the amount of worship he did. He also used to do *tawba* and *istigfar* for his community.



Ibn-i Omar  states:

We used to hear the Messenger of Allah  say 100 times in a single sitting:

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَتُبْ عَلَيَّ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

“O Allah! Forgive me and accept my *tawba*. Because You accept *tawba* much and you are very merciful”. (Abu Dawud, Vitir, 26/1516; Tirmidhi, Deawat, 3434)

The *tawba* and *istigfar* carried out by Allah’s Messenger were not due to any mistake or fault on his part, but were rather in order to acquire a nearness to Allah Most High and to gain His pleasure. Because the Prophet was in a state of continuous spiritual growth, he would continually make *istigfar* for each previous state and degree.



During his last days, the Messenger of Allah  would frequently say:

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ

“I absolve Allah of all of those attributes that do not befit the position of divinity and I give praise Him.

The Prophet’s wife, Aisha  once asked him:

“O Messenger of Allah! I hear you saying these words often. What is the reason for this?”

The Prophet replied:



“My Lord informed me that I would see a sign within my community. Ever since I have seen this sign I have been saying this glorification. I saw that sign in the following verse from chapter Nasr, which points to the conquest of Mecca:

“When Allah’s help and victory have arrived and you have seen people entering Allah’s religion in droves, then glorify your Lord’s praise and ask His forgiveness. He is the Ever-Returning”. (Muslim, Salat, 220).

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also taught his community different ways of doing istigfar. The most important of these is the *Sayyid’ul Istigfar*, which he explained in the following *hadith*:

“The highest form of *istigfar* is for the slave to say the following:

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ رَبِّي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ خَلَقْتَنِي وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ وَأَنَا عَلَىٰ عَهْدِكَ وَوَعْدِكَ
مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا صَنَعْتُ أَبُوءُ لَكَ بِنِعْمَتِكَ عَلَيَّ أَبُوءُ ذُنُوبِي
فَاغْفِرْ لِي فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

“O Allah! You are my Lord. There is none worthy of worship but You. You created me. And I am your slave. I will keep my promise that I gave to You from before time immortal to the best of my ability. I seek refuge in You from the evil of the mistakes that I have made. I declare to You in Your presence, and with indebtedness for the favours that you have bestowed on me and I admit my sins. So forgive me, because there is none other who can forgive sins but You”.

The Blessed Prophet ﷺ continued:

“Whoever reads this *Sayyad’ul istigfar* by day with full conviction of the heart of its good rewards and virtues, will be of Paradise if he dies before the night. And whoever reads it at night believing fully in its rewards and virtues, then he will be for Paradise if he dies before the morning”. (Bukhari, Dawat, 2, 16; Abu Dawud, Adab, 100-101)



It is necessary to do *tawba* and *istigfar* and then to strengthen them by immediately performing a righteous deed afterwards. Ibn-i Omar ؓ explains:



“Somebody once came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and asked:

“I have committed a great sin. Is there any chance of *tawba* for me?”

The Messenger of Allah asked:

“*Is your mother still living?*”

The Companion replied “no”.

“*Well do you have an auntie*”, he asked.

The Companion replied:

“Yes, I do”.

When the Prophet heard this he said:

“*In that case treat her well. The maternal auntie is like the mother*”.

(Tirmidhi, Birr, 6; Ahmad, II, 13-14)

Here the Prophet advised his Companion who had been full of regret and carrying out *istigfar* to strengthen his *tawba* with good deeds. He made it known that good deeds and righteous acts can act as penance for bad deeds and thus eliminate them.



One night the Prophet Muhammad saw Bilal رضي الله عنه in his dream. The next morning he called Bilal, the muezzin, and said to him:

“*Bilal! Last night I heard the clicking of your shoes in front of me. Tell me which it is of your deeds that has taken you to Paradise ahead of me?*”

Bilal answered:

“O Messenger of Allah! Whenever I commit a small sin I immediately rise and pray two rounds of the prayer. And whenever I lose my ablution I immediately renew it”.

Upon this the Prophet said:

“*This is the reason*”.

Thus whenever we do anything wrong it is necessary for us to make *tawba* without losing time and to embark upon righteous deeds.



Ka'b bin Malik رضي الله عنه, who, due to his negligence left it too late to participate in the Tabuk Expedition and who then missed the convoy as a result, immediately made *tawba* and *istigfar* because of his mistake and was so full of regret that the world in all its greatness became a very narrow place for him. When he received news that his *tawba* had been accepted, he immediately prostrated out of happiness. (Ibn'i Majah, Salat, 192). Later, he wished to give out charity and thus entrusted all of his wealth to the Prophet. But the Messenger of Allah advised him to give out half of his wealth and leave the other half for his family. (Bukhari, Megazi, 79).

This is because Allah's Messenger accepted people's charity according to the state of their heart. He did not want them to later regret what they had given out and have their reward diminished.



Almighty Allah delivers from all manner of distress those of His servants who make *tawba* and *istigfar* and bestows upon them many favours. One time, four people came to Hasan al Basri with their complaints. One complained of drought, another of poverty, another about the infertility of his fields, and the last one complained that he had no children. They asked for his help. This great saint advised each of them to do *istigfar*. Those around him said:

“These people's problems and distress were all different and yet you advised them all the same thing”. Hasan al-Basri answered them by reciting the following verse from the Qur'an:

“Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Truly He is Endlessly Forgiving. He will send heaven down on you in abundant rain and reinforce you with more wealth and sons, and grant you gardens and grant you waterways. (Noah, 71:10-12) (Ibn-i Hajar, Fethu'l-Bari, XI, 98; Ayni, Umdetu'lKari, Beirut ts. XXII, 277-278)



To delay making *tawba* by succumbing to the temptation of Satan is like wasting one's life which is one of the worst things one can waste. A smart believer should hurry to repent for his sins and prepare himself for the moment of his last breath.

According to certain narrations a tailor once asked a righteous man:



“What do you have to say about the *hadith* of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ which says: “*Allah Most High will accept the tawba of a person while the soul has yet to reach the throat*” (Tirmidhi, Dawat, 98/3537). That righteous man asked the tailor:

“Yes this is true. But tell me, what is your profession?”

“I am a tailor, I sew clothes”.

“What is the easiest thing about tailoring?”

“To take my scissors and cut the cloth”.

“How long have you been doing this for?”

“For 30 years”.

“When your soul reaches your throat will you be able to cut cloth?”

“No I would not”.

“O tailor! If you will not be able to do what you have been doing for 30 years with ease and which you struggled with for a while in order to learn to do, then how will you be able to make *tawba* at that moment if you have never done it in your whole lifetime? Make *tawba* now while you still have your strength and power! Otherwise forgiveness and a good end may not befall you at your last breath... Haven’t you ever been given advice to hurry to make *tawba* before death comes to you”. (Munavi, V, 65)?”

Upon this the tailor immediately repented with all sincerity and became a righteous man.

The Prophet informed us that however people live that is how they will die and however they die is how they will be raised up”²⁹.



Bayazid-i Bistami once came across a doctor who was preparing some medicine. He asked him:

“O doctor! Do you have the cure for my sickness?”

The doctor asked:

“What is your sickness?”

29. See Muslim Jannah, 83 Munavi, V, 663



“The sickness of sin” he replied.

The doctor lifted his hands to both sides and said:

“I do not know the cure for the sickness of sin”.

At that moment an insane young man (*majzoob*) who happened to be there interrupted:

“I know the cure for your sickness” he said. Bayazid happily said to him:

“Tell me young man”.

The young man, whom the people thought was insane but who was in actual fact a true learned person, described the cure for the sickness of sin as follows:

“Take 10 drams of the *tawba* root and 10 leaves of *istigfar*. Put them in the mortar of your heart. Grind them with the pestle of *tawheed*. Sift them through the sieve of fairness. Knead them with your tears. Cook them in the oven of love and remorse. Swallow 5 spoons from the resulting paste every day; and nothing will remain of your illness”.

Bayazid’i Bistami who was listening intently, sighed and said:

“Woe to those who think they are clever and call wise ones such as yourself insane”.



In short, mankind is not immune from making mistakes and so must always have *tawba* and *istigfar* on their lips. He must also register and reinforce his intention with good deeds. *Istigfar* and good deeds are a necessary requirement of being a slave of Allah. It is said in a verse from the Qur’an:

“Mankind! Allah’s promise is true. Do not let the life of this world delude you and do not let the Deluder (Satan) delude you about Allah”.

(Fatir, 35: 5)

To delay repenting for one’s sins to the last part of one’s life by following one’s *nafs* and Satan, is the biggest deception whose end result will be loss. In that case it is necessary to repent and ask for forgiveness and to be



sincere and become upright with good deeds. Just as this state protects one from misfortune and troubles, it also allows one to attain to Divine favours and bounties.

5. Obedience to the commands of Allah and His Messenger

The spiritual degree of a believer is in accordance with the degree to which they obey the commands of Allah and His Messenger. And the perfection of one's faith increases with the degree of the meticulousness, sensitivity, love and ardour within this obedience. Those people who move up a step up in their love and obedience are those who are subject to divine bounties in both worlds. It is stated in a verse from the Qur'an:

“Whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger will be with those whom Allah has blessed: the Prophets and the sincere lovers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. What excellent company such people are! (Nisa 4:69)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has informed us:

“Your Lord – dignified and majestic is He – states: “If my servants obeyed Me in the manner required, I would make the rain pour down for them at night and make the sun rise over them during the day. And I would not let them hear even the roar of thunder”. (Ahmad, II, 359; Hakim, IV, 285/7657)

The hearts of those who carry out their obedience to Allah's commands with love and submission and who can preserve their state of contentment under changing conditions, will become conduits of wisdom, goodness and prosperity. In contrast to this, those hearts and bodies which have not been protected from unlawful and doubtful things, will turn into complete refuges of evil and nests of immorality.

Scenes of Virtue

Before embarking on the battle of Badr, Allah's Messenger ﷺ wished to learn the opinion of his Companions. Mikdad bin Aswad رضي الله عنه rose and gave the following speech:



“O Messenger of Allah! Do whatever you have been commanded to do. We are with you. I swear by Allah we will not say to you that which the sons of Israel said to Moses ﷺ. They said: “...So you and your Lord go and fight. We will stay sitting here” (Maida 5:24).

I swear by Allah who sent you as a true prophet that even if you make us walk to Birku'l Gimad³⁰, as long as we are with you we would withstand even greater difficulty. We are always ready to fight the enemy to the end, on your right, and on your left, and in front of you and behind you³¹. (Bukhari, Megazi 4, Tafsir 5/4; Wakidi, I, 48)

After Mikdad spoke Sa'd bin Muadh ﷺ arose:

“O Messenger of Allah! We have believed in you and We have confirmed you. We have born witness that the Qur'an that you brought with you and the *sunnah* are true. We have promised with certainty that we will listen to your every word and obey you. O Messenger of Allah! Do as you wish! I swear by Allah who sent you as a true prophet that if you were to show us that sea and dive into it, we would dive into it together with you, and none of us would stay behind. And we will not feel displeasure at your bringing us face to face with our enemies tomorrow. To show patience and forbearance during battle and to remain true to loyalty is our trademark. It is hoped that Allah will show you something from us that will brighten your eye. Come o Messenger of Allah, take us towards the bounty of Allah”.

Hearing these words of loyalty and submission, the blessed face of the Messenger of Allah filled up with a smile and he made a prayer asking for goodness:

“In that case come and walk with the bounty of Allah. Let it be glad tidings for you, Allah has promised us one of two unspecified groups³². By Allah, it is as if I can see now the places where the Quraysh will be defeated on the battlefield...” (Muslim, Jihad, 83; Wakidi, I, 48-49; Ibn-i HIsham, II, 253-254).

30. Birku'l Gimad – a place that is five days from Mecca al Mukarrama, near the Red Sea. It is also reported to be the name of a city in Yemen.

31. Ibn-i Mas'ud has said: “I was witness to such a certain word of Mikdad bin Aswad that to be the possessor of those words seemed more pleasing to me than all other worthwhile words that could be equal to it”...” (Bukhari, Megazi, 4, Tafsir, 5/4)

32. One of the two parties that was promised in the seventh verse of Chapter Al Anfal was the Quraysh themselves, that is them being defeated and taken prisoner, and the other was the large caravan of Quraysh coming from Syria.



How beautifully the words of the Companions registered their love for and obedience of Allah and His Messenger.



Anas رضي الله عنه narrates the following *hadith* which presents in the best way the sincerity, genuineness, sensitivity and immediacy of the obedience of the Blessed Companions to Allah and His Messenger:

“I was the cup-bearer at Abu Talha’s house. I used to serve the visitors and fill their glasses with wine. At that time alcohol suddenly became prohibited. Allah’s Messenger commanded a public crier to announce this prohibition to the people. We heard the news while we were still in the house. Abu Talha said to me:

“Go outside and find out what this cry is about”. I went outside and came back, saying:

“It is a public crier crying out: “Beware, beware, alcohol has been prohibited”. He turned to me and said:

“In that case take these and pour out all of this alcohol”.

From that point on, wine poured into the streets of Madina (Bukhari, Tafsir, 5/11)

These Blessed Companions obeyed the command as soon as heard that alcohol had been prohibited. They did not put forth excuses, and they did not say: Let me just finish what is in my hand and then I will leave it”. They did not linger. They were able to pour out all of the alcohol that was in their possession, including what they were drinking at that very instant.



A young man from the tribe of Aslam came to the Prophet and said:

“O Messenger of Allah! I wish to join the troops, however I do not have any equipment necessary for battle”.

The Prophet ﷺ said to him:

“Go to such and such person; he had prepared to go to battle but he got sick”. The young man went to that person and said:





“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ sends greetings of peace and says that you are to give what you have prepared for battle to me”. Upon this the man turned to his wife:

“My dear lady! Give everything I had prepared for battle to this young man. Do not leave anything behind. Do not leave anything behind for the right of Allah so that we may be blessed in this”. (Muslim, Imare, 134)

This Companion obeyed the command of the Messenger of Allah with great passion and ardour, and insisted that his wife give everything he had prepared leaving none of it behind. In this way he demonstrated his love, devotion and obedience to the Messenger of Allah and also the great desire and enthusiasm he had for performing good deeds.



Ibn-i Omar رضي الله عنه relates:

“On the day of Victory when the Prophet ﷺ entered Mecca, he asked one of the *hajibs*³³ of the Ka’bah, Othman bin Talha رضي الله عنه to bring the key to the Ka’bah.

Othman went to his mother in whose protection was the key. However the woman, who was a pagan, refused to give him the key. Othman said to her:

“By Allah! Either you give me the key or this sword will come out of its sheath”.

The woman handed him the key. Othman brought the key to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Prophet opened the door and entered the House of Allah. Usama رضي الله عنه, Bilal رضي الله عنه and Othman رضي الله عنه entered together with him. The Prophet ﷺ stayed in the Ka’bah for a long time before he finally exited. Following him many people raced each other to get inside.

The first person to get inside was Abdullah bin Omar رضي الله عنه. As soon as he entered he found Bilal رضي الله عنه standing behind the door.

33. A *hajib* is a person dedicated to the duty of ‘*hijabe*’, which involves such important duties like taking care of the Ka’bah, the safekeeping of the key and its door, the opening of its doors at certain times for visitors, the preservation and maintenance of the Station of Abraham, valuable gifts, and the inner and outer covers.



“Where did the Messenger of Allah ﷺ pray? He asked. Bilal pointed to the place where the Prophet prayed. Abdullah later said:

“I forgot to ask how many cycles he prayed”. (Bukhari, 127, Salat 30, 81, 96, Tahajjud 25, Hajj 51, 52, Megazi 77, 48; Muslim, Hajj 389)

In this example we witness the determination of Othman رضي الله عنه in obeying the command of the Messenger of Allah, and the praiseworthy meticulousness in following the Prophet by Abdullah bin Omar.



The Prophet said:

“Let no one make another person arise from where they are sitting and sit down in his space. Enlarge the circle and make room so that Allah will give you increase”.

When Abdullah bin Omar رضي الله عنه learnt of this command of the Messenger of Allah, he applied it his entire life and if someone happened to rise and give him his spot, he never sat there. (Bukhari, Isti'zan, 32; Muslim, Salam, 29)



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“When you are invited somewhere, accept the invitation”.

When Ibn-i Omar رضي الله عنه heard this, he made sure to accept all invitations, to weddings or otherwise, even if he were fasting. (Bukhari, Nikah 71, 74; Muslim, Nikah 103).

That is, if he were performing a supererogatory fast he would break it and then make it up later. If his fast was an obligatory or necessary one, he would still attend the invitation without breaking his fast, in order to comply to the command of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.



The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ one day allocated one of the doors of the Mosque for the ladies. Hearing this, Ibn-i Omar رضي الله عنه never again went through that door until the day he died. (Abu Dawud, Salat, 53/571)



Tufay, the son of Ubayy bin Ka'b رضي الله عنه, is considered to be of the *Tabi'een*³⁴. He used to meet with the Companions and benefit from their knowledge. From time to time he would visit Abdullah bin Omar رضي الله عنه and go to the market together with him.

Tufayl explains the meticulousness in the obedience of Abdullah to the commands of the Prophet:

“Whenever we went to the market, Abdullah bin Omar would give greetings of peace to everyone he came across. Whether it be someone who was selling used goods or valuable goods, poor or unknown, he would make sure to greet them all. One day I had gone to see him again. He suggested once more that we go to the market together:

“What are you going to do at the markets?” I asked him. “You know nothing about buying and selling. You don't ask the price of anything you buy. You never buy anything anyway. You don't sit where all the people sit and talk. Instead of going to the market let's sit here and talk”.

Hearing this Abdullah رضي الله عنه said to me:

“My brother! We are going to the market to give the greeting of *salam* (peace) of Allah to the people we come across. We have no aim other than this”. (Muwatta, Salam, 6; Bukhari, al-adab'ul Mufrad, s 348)

All of the Blessed Companions showed the utmost sensitivity in obeying the commands of Allah and His Messenger. By spreading peace amongst the people and increasing love, they fostered an exceptional foundation upon which the brotherhood of faith could be lived in the hearts of the believers. The enthusiasm and fervour of Abdullah bin Omar رضي الله عنه on this topic attracted much attention due to its exalted nature. The above examples show this in a most evident form.



One day the following verse from the Holy Qur'an was revealed: “**You who have faith! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet...**” (Hujurat, 49: 2)

34. The *Tabi'een* are the second generation of Muslims after the Companions. They are those Muslims who saw the Companions, but not the Prophet, during their lifetime (translator's note)



When Thabit bin Kays رضي الله عنه heard this verse, he sat in his home and wept.

When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ failed to see Thabit for a while, he asked where he was. A person there told him:

“O Messenger of Allah! I know where he is”. He went straight to his house and found him, head hung forth, crying.

“What is wrong? Why are you crying?” he asked.

“(Don’t ask). I have committed much evil. I have raised my voice above the voice of The Messenger of Allah. All my deeds have been in vain. I am destined for the fire”, he answered.

The Companion reported the words of Thabit back to the Prophet. The Prophet said:

“Go and tell him that he is not for the fire but rather he is for Paradise”.
(Bukhari, Menakib, 25, Tafsir 49/1; Muslim, Iman 187).

Thabit, who had a naturally loud voice, was devastated and grief-stricken, thinking that he had disobeyed a command of Allah. However, because his loud voice was a part of his nature and because he had a sincere heart, his situation was an exception and the Companion who brought him the news returned to him in joy at giving him the glad tidings of paradise.

The Companion who had gone to learn the condition of Thabit was also a beautiful example of how the Blessed Companions took any and all indications of the Prophet as commands and were ready to sacrifice their all for him.



The wife of Abdullah bin Rawaha رضي الله عنه narrates:

“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ had climbed the pulpit (to give his sermon). At the same time Abdullah رضي الله عنه was coming towards the Masjid when he heard the call from afar from the Messenger of Allah to “sit”. Even though he had not even reached the Mosque, he immediately sat down where he was. When this situation was relayed to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ he said to Abdullah:

“May Allah Most High increase the zeal in your obedience for Allah and His Messenger”.



Abdullah bin Abbas رضي الله عنه narrates:

“Uyayna bin Hisn once came to Madina to visit his nephew Hur bin Kays رضي الله عنه. Hur bin Kays was one of the members of the advisory committee of Omar رضي الله عنه. Whether they be young or old, all scholars were included in this advisory committee. For this reason Uyayna said to his nephew, Hur bin Kays:

“My nephew, your standing with the ruler of the government is high. Arrange a meeting for me with him”.

Hur asked permission from Omar رضي الله عنه. When Uyayna entered the presence of Omar he said to him:

“O son of Khattab! I swear by Allah that you do not give us much and you do not rule with justice amongst us”.

Omar got angry and wanted to punish Uyayna. Hur, who sensed this, immediately interjected:

“O Commander of the believers! Remember what Allah said to the Prophet – “Make allowances for people, command what is right, and turn away from the ignorant”. (Araf, 7:199). My uncle is of the ignorant ones”.

I swear by Allah that when Hur read this verse Omar رضي الله عنه immediately changed his mind about punishing Uyayna. Omar was ever devoted to the book of Allah. (Bukhari, Tafsir 7/5, P'tisam 2)

When reminded of a command of Allah, Omar immediately took control of his anger. He obeyed within an instant the divine command and abandoned that which he had wished to do himself. In this way he displayed the sensitivity of a perfect believer when it came to obeying Allah's commands.



Hisham bin Hakim رضي الله عنه, one of the Companions, was once in Palestine. He saw a group of non-Muslim farmers who had been imprisoned for not paying their taxes and who were being punished by having olive oil poured over them and left to wait under the sun. He went straight to the governor and told him that this was a very bad thing to do. Then he narrated to him a *hadith* that he had heard directly from the Prophet:

“Allah will most definitely inflict pain on those who unrightfully inflict pain on others”.

Upon this the governor immediately let the farmers go free. (Muslim, Birr, 117-119; Abu Dawud, Imare, 32; Ahmad III, 403,404,468).

These blessed people did not hesitate, even for a second, in responding to the prophetic announcements, and carried them out immediately.



Abdullah bin Abi Awfa  had pronounced the *takbir* (*Allahu Akbar*) at the funeral of his daughter four times. After the fourth *takbir*, he paused for the time between the two *takbirs*, and asked that his daughter be forgiven and prayed for her.

Those around him thought that he was then going to make *takbir* for the fifth time. Then he gave his greetings of *salam* to the right and the left. After the prayer they asked him:

“What was this that you just did”?. He replied:

“This is what the Messenger of Allah  used to do”. (Hakim, I, 360; Ibn-i Majah, Janaiz, 24).

The reply of Abdullah bin Abi Awfa  is very significant in showing the care that the Blessed Companions showed in taking the Prophet of Allah as a model in everything. Their standard was the *sunnah* of the Prophet. This is why all of their defences and explanations were in the form of providing proofs from the Qur’an and the *sunnah*. They organised their life according to the Qur’an and the *sunnah*. And how much we need, today especially, to apply the *sunnah* as our standard in everything we do and to benefit from the prosperity of the Qur’an and *sunnah* so that our proofs and debates can all comply with the divine direction. For the loftiness of our character and personality and the perfection of our Islam is proportional to the degree of our attachment to the Qur’an and the *Sunnah*.



One night when it was time for the *‘isha* (nighttime) prayer, the Prophet  said to his Companions:



“Gather together for the prayer tomorrow. There is something I want to tell you”. One of the Companions said to his friends:

“O so and so. You memorise the first thing that the Messenger of Allah says, and then you (o so and so) memorise the second thing, and then (o so and so) you memorise the next so that we do not miss any of what the Messenger of Allah has to say”. (Haysami, I, 46).

This care displayed by the Companions in learning and applying the commands of the Blessed Prophet are truly praiseworthy. For it is due to the meticulous efforts of this blessed generation that we have the opportunity today to become closely acquainted with each and every state and action of the Prophet of Allah. May Allah be pleased with them...



Abu Burda narrates:

Once Abu Musa al Ash'ari رضي الله عنه became ill and fainted whilst his head was resting on the lap of his wife. Upon this his wife let out a scream and began to sob loudly. However Abu Musa was not at that time in a position to stop his wife. When he came to, he said to his wife, in the form of a warning:

“Anything that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم was not pleased with and distanced himself from, I am not pleased with and I distance myself from. The Prophet dissociated himself from wailing women who tear their hair out and rip their clothes (out of grief)”. (Bukhari, Janaiz, 37, 38; Muslim, Iman, 167; Nesai, Janaiz, 17)

What great sensitivity in faith to try to obey the commands of the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم even when grappling with death.



Dihya bin Khalifa رضي الله عنه once saw some people acting contrary to the *sunnah* and he said to them:

“By Allah, I have come face to face with an event which would never have crossed my mind; Certain people have turned away from the *sunnah* of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and His Companions. O Allah! Please take my life now, that I may be with You”. (Abu Dawud, Sawm, 47/2413).



Bishr-i Hafi  states:

“One night I saw the Messenger of Allah in my dream. He said to me:

“O Bishr! Do you know why Allah has increased your worth?”

“No, I do not, o Messenger of Allah” I said. He continued:

“Because you follow my *sunnah*, and you serve the righteous. You advise your brothers in religion, and you love my Companions and the members of my family, and this is why Allah has raised you to the level of the righteous ones³⁵”.



How beautifully does Abdulhalik Gujduvani  explain true servanthood:

One day he was asked:

“Should we do what the *nafs* wants us to do, or oppose its demands?”

This saint answered as follows:

“It is very difficult to determine the difference between the two of these. The *nafs* generally misleads people as to whether these desires are from Allah, or whether they are from Satan. This is why one should only do what Allah commands and refrain from doing what He forbids. This is true servanthood”.



The journeyers on the path of truth must make it an undying principle to obey Allah’s commands and to serve and advise their brothers in religion. These are means to eternal happiness and they must be used in the effort to gain Allah’s pleasure. One day a person who was a habitual attendant at the talks of David-i Tai said to Maruf-i Kerhi:

“Make sure that you do not abandon good deeds as they will bring you closer to the pleasure of almighty Allah”. Maruf asked:

“What deeds should I perform?” That person replied:

35. Mahir Iz, Tasawwuf, Istanbul 1969, s. 184)



“Always be in a state of obedience to your Lord; serve the Muslims and counsel them...”



In short, obedience is the greatest sign of love. There is a principle that *“the one who loves will obey”*, and so the believers who love their Lord will always be in a state of obedience to Him. A small act of worship done obediently and submissively is more acceptable in the eyes of Allah than mountains worth of worship done disobediently and unwillingly. This is because servanthood begins with obedience and submission. Satan was cast out of the supreme presence of Allah not because of any deficiency in his worship but rather due to his refusal to obey and submit to the commands of Allah.

The Blessed Companions reached a state of perfection in accordance with the degree of their love for, devotion to and obedience of Allah and His Messenger. By submitting without objection to the divine commands with love and submission, they were able to become model star personalities amongst the entire community.

In his *Mathnawi*, Jalaluddin Al Rumi illustrates nicely the obedience of even lifeless beings to the divine commands:

“Do you not see? The clouds, the sun, the moon and the stars all move about in an orderly fashion. Each of these innumerable stars rises on time. They are never late, nor do they set before their time is due. How is it that we do not understand these wonders by looking at the miracles of the prophets? They gave intelligence to the rock and the staff. See these and then compare those other lifeless beings with the Staff (of Moses) and compare them with other pieces of rock.

The pieces of stone that obeyed the great Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the obedience of the Staff of Moses to Prophet Moses are an indication of how all other beings that we think are lifeless, in fact bow down to the commands of Allah.

They say through their tongues of disposition: “We know Allah and we obey Him. We are not randomly created things. We each resemble the Red Sea. Even though it was a mere body of water, it was able to recognise the Pharoah that it was about to drown and distinguish him from the sons of Israel...”



Wherever it happened to be, a tree or a rock would give greetings of peace to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ when they saw him; therefore know that everything which you once thought to be lifeless is in actual fact, full of life”.

That is, it is not just people and the jinn that are in a state of obedience to Allah and His Messenger, it is also all animals and in fact all non-living things. How sad it is that whilst all creatures are rushing to obey Allah, man is drowning in the pits of rebellion. In that case it is necessary to take heed from the obedience of all creatures created by Allah. We must train ourselves and perfect our conduct before the Divine Presence.

6. Fastidiousness in worship

This universe is like an eternal handiwork of The Divine in which He has embroidered His Greatness and Power. At the centre is man who has been created as the peak of this divine artistry and has been given the duty of worship in order to be assured of being together with Allah.

In many verses in the Qur’an, Almighty Allah commands man to embrace good deeds in order to save himself from eternal loss and to obtain to a sound heart, and a *kalb-i munib*³⁶.

Worship is a sign of one’s loyalty to the promise given by the servant to his Lord before time eternal. They are moments in time which bring the believer closer to Almighty Allah. From another point of view, worship is the most effective cure and source of peace and comfort that will free man of his fear and anxiety about what is to come after death. Worship is an essential source of prosperity in order for the servant to rise in degree and to assure peace and balance of the heart.

Consequently out of all of the matters that we must be extremely careful and sensitive about, our worship must take priority.

Scenes of Virtue

Because of its importance, it is necessary to touch on, first of all, the care that must be shown when taking one’s ablution. Because the lack of

36. A *Kalb-i munib* is a heart that ever turns towards Allah with fervour in order to be free of the slavery of ephemeral attractions



care and neglect that is shown during the ablution will negatively reflect on the worship that is to follow.

One time the Messenger of Allah ﷺ led the morning prayer. Some minor mistakes were made whilst the chapter *Romans* was being recited. After finishing the prayer the Prophet turned to the congregation and said:

“Some people are coming to the prayer without ablution and this is the cause for Satan interfering in our recitation. When you come for prayer, take your ablution as carefully as you can”.

Thus purification and the taking of ablution with care before prayer is crucial for the soundness of our worship.

It is also a great virtue to be always in a state of ablution to the best of one’s ability. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ liked to carry out all of his tasks while he had ablution.

According to Abu Juhaym ؓ, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ once came across someone as he was coming from the Well of Jamal. The man greeted him, but the Prophet did not return the greeting. He immediately went to a wall and wiped his hands and face over it to perform the *tayammum* (dry ablution), and then he accepted the man’s greeting of peace. (Bukhari, *tayammum*, 3)

With this action, the Prophet of Allah demonstrated how it is possible for one to always be in a state of ablution. This is also an indication of how virtuous it is to take ablution before carrying out a task, even though that task is not obligatory.



Ibn-i Abbas ؓ narrates:

“When the Prophet of Allah ﷺ finished relieving himself he would first pour water over his hands to wash them and then he would perform *tayammum* with dry earth. I once asked him:

“O Messenger of Allah, there is water available. Why did you do that?”
The Prophet replied:

“How can I be sure that my spirit will not be taken back from me before I reach water?” (Ahmad, I, 288, 303; Haysami, 263).



According to another narration whenever he needed to perform the major ablution, the Prophet ﷺ would wipe his hands over the walls and do *tayammum* in order not to be without ablution until he could perform his major ablution. (Haysami, I, 264).

This is the scope of the material and spiritual cleanliness that the Prophet demonstrated to his community...



One day the Messenger of Allah ﷺ went together with his Companions to a graveyard and said:

“May the peace of Allah be upon you o dwellers of the abode of Believers! Allah willing we will one day join you. How I wish to see my brothers. How much I have missed them”.

His Companions asked:

“Are we not your brothers o Messenger of Allah!”

The Prophet replied:

“You are my Companions. My brothers are those who have not yet arrived in this world”.

His Companions then asked:

“How will you recognise those who have not yet come as from your community o Messenger of Allah?”

The Prophet ﷺ said:

“Consider a man who has a horse whose forehead and feet are pure white. Would this man not be able to recognise his horse from a herd of other horses, all of which are pitch black?”

His Companions answered:

“Yes he would o Messenger of Allah”. Then the Blessed Messenger ﷺ said:

“And so my brothers are those who will come with faces radiant from their ablution and hands and feet shining. I will be waiting for them at the head of my fountain ready to offer them what they desire. But beware! Some





people will be cast out of my pool like a wild camel is thrown out of a herd and distanced. I will call out to them:

“Come here”. It will be said to me:

“They changed after you left. (They did not follow your sunnah and strayed far from it)”. Then I will say:

“Let them be distant from me. Let them be distant”. (Muslim, Taharat 39, Fedail 26).

Thus those believers who are careful about their ablution will be subject to the love of Allah’s Messenger and will be those whom he will address as his ‘brothers’. Those who are careless in their ablution and other worship and who deviate towards the wrong path will be cast out like wild camels on the Day of Judgement. They will be afflicted with the most terrible of misfortunes, namely that of being distanced from the Messenger of Allah.



Abu Hazim, from the Tabieen once saw Abu Hurayra رضي الله عنه taking his ablution and washing his arms right up until his armpits.

“Abu Hurayra, what sort of ablution is this?” He asked. Abu Hurayra رضي الله عنه replied:

“O Bani Ferruh! I did not know that you were here? Had I have known that you were here I would not have taken my ablution like this”.

He continued by way of explanation:

“I heard my friend, the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم say:

“On the Day of Judgement, the light of the believers will reach as far as their water for ablution reached”. (Muslim, Taharat, 40)



How beautifully the following words of Ali رضي الله عنه express the love of the Messenger of Allah for his worship:



“On the day of Badr, there was no horseman left other than Mikdad. I remember well that day that everyone slept except for the Messenger of Allah who performed the prayer under a tree and cried until the morning”.³⁷

This is an example of love of worship that never diminished, neither under conditions of peace nor war...

Almighty Allah states:

“**And worship your Lord until what is Certain (death) comes to you**”. (Hijr, 15:99)

“**Prostrate and draw near**”. (Alaq, 96:19)



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would praise Abdullah bin Rawaha رضي الله عنه who showed meticulousness in his prayer and he complimented him by calling him ‘my brother’:

“*May Allah have mercy on my brother, Abdullah bin Rawaha! Wherever the time for prayer comes he immediately stands and prays*”. (Haysami, IX, 316)



Jarh bin Abdullah رضي الله عنه narrates:

“One night we were sitting with the Messenger of Allah. He looked at the full moon and said:

“*Just as you can see that full moon easily, without having to push and shove each other, so too you will be able to see your Lord. Make every effort to perform all of your prayers before the rising of the sun and before its setting*”.

After that he recited the following verse:

“**...glorify your Lord with praise before the rising of the sun and before its setting. And glorify Him during part of the night and at both ends of the day, so that hopefully you will be pleased**”. (Taha, 20:130) (Bukhari, Mawakit 16,26, Tafsir 50/1, Tawheed 24; Muslim, Masajid 211).

Thus the greatest means to see our Lord is to show the utmost fastidiousness in performing the prayer.



37. Ibn-i Huzayma, Sahih, Beirut 1970, II, 52





Every act of worship that is carried out should be seen as an entry visa to Paradise and should be performed with care and with the enthusiasm of the loftiest spirit.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

“If a person performs his prayer in the best way by bowing down and prostrating properly then the prayer will say to that person:

“May Allah preserve you, just as you have preserved me. Prayer raises one’s rank.

If a person does not perform their prayer in the best way and does not bow down and prostrate properly then the prayer says to him:

*“May Allah waste you just as you have wasted me”. The prayer will be crumpled up like an old piece of clothing and thrown back into his face”.*³⁸

It is stated in a verse from the Qur’an:

“So woe to those who do salat, and are forgetful of their salat”. (Maun, 107:4-5)



It is a dire trait to delay the prayer until the last minute and then get up to pray unwillingly as if to get something over and done with and just pray the obligatory part of the prayer. It is so grave that it can lead one to hypocrisy, Allah forbid. Ala bin Abdurrahman ؓ narrates:

“One afternoon we went to see Anas bin Malik ؓ. When we arrived Anas immediately rose and prayed the afternoon prayer. After he had finished we told him that he had prayed the prayer early. He explained why he had performed the prayer early:

“I heard the Messenger of Allah say:

*“This is the prayer of the hypocrites. This is the prayer of the hypocrites. This is the prayer of the hypocrites”.*³⁹ *One of them sits and sits and then just when the sun has turned orange and it is about to set, when the sun enters in between Satan’s two horns, he gets up and rises and bows down four times*

38. Suyuti, Al Jamiu’s Sagir, Egypt 1321,I,58/364

39. This hypocrisy that is mentioned in this hadith is a hypocrisy of action not of belief.



quickly as if he is a pecking hen. He remembers Allah little during his prayer”.
(Muwatta, Qur’an al Kareem, 46; Muslim, Masajid 195)



Omar  once advised his governors as follows:

“Your most important duty for me is the prayer. Whoever preserves it and is careful about its times, will preserve his religion and whoever does not perform it and wastes it will lose their religion in a very short time”.
(Muwatta, Wukut’s salat, 6)



Miswar bin Mahrama  narrates:

“When Omar bin Khattab  was stabbed he fainted and lay unconsciously. One time I entered the room to visit him. They had covered him and he was lying down. I asked those around him:

“How is he?”

“As you can see, he is unconscious”, they answered.

“Have you called him for prayer? If he is alive nothing else can scare and wake him other than the prayer”. Upon hearing this they said:

“O Commander of the believers! The prayer, the prayer has been prayed. Omar woke up and said:

“Is that so? By Allah, the one who abandons the prayer will have nothing of Islam”. He rose and performed his prayer while the blood from his wounds flowed”. (Haysami, I, 295; Ibn-i Sa’d, III, 35; Muwatta, Taharet, 51)



While giving the sermon in Kufa, Ali  repeated what he had heard from the Messenger of Allah :

“On Fridays, Satan goes early to the shops and markets and tries to hinder people using a thousand and one obstacles. (If he fails here) he at least tries to delay them from going to the congregational prayer. The angels on the other hand go early to the mosques and wait at the doors. They record those who arrive as follows: those who came in the first hour, then those who came in the second hour, etc. This condition continues



until the imam ascends the pulpit. If a person sits down in a spot where he can see and hear the imam and listens with all ears and does not speak, then a twofold reward is written down for him. However if a person sits far away in a place where he cannot hear the imam, and if he remains silent and does not speak, one reward is written down for him. If, however a person sits where he can see the imam but speaks idly and does not remain silent he has two sins recorded for him... (Abu Dawud, Salat, 209/1051).

Those who come early to the mosque out of respect for the Friday prayer and sit where they can comfortably hear the imam and listen and reflect upon what is being said and who are in a state of deep reverence will certainly come out more profitable than those who do not.



One of the leading scholars on commentary and recitation of the Qur'an from the *Tabieen*, Mujahid رضي الله عنه says:

“Abdullah bin Zubayr رضي الله عنه had reached the peak in his worship of Allah, which no one else had reached. One time the area around the Ka’bah where people would walk around was flooded and the people were unable to make *tawaf* of the Ka’bah for a week. Abdullah, on the other hand, made *tawaf* of the Ka’bah for a week by swimming around it. (Ali al Muttaki, XIII, 471/37228; Zahabi, Sier, III, 370).



In his work called *Gulistan*, Shaykh Sadi expresses well the importance of not extinguishing one’s worship with mistakes of the heart:

“When I was a child I was very keen on withdrawing from the world and night worship. One night I was sitting next to my father. I had not closed my eyes the whole night and had not put the Qur’an down. Some people around me were sleeping. I said to my father:

“Not one of these people is lifting their heads to pray two cycles of night prayer; they are sleeping as if they are dead”. Hearing my words my father furrowed his brow and replied:

“My son Sadi! Would that you had gone to sleep too instead of gossiping about others. (Because even though those whom you are looking down upon right now are probably being deprived of divine mercy, at least



the angels are not writing down anything negative about them. But what has been written in your book of deeds? That you belittled your brothers in religion and you committed the sin of gossiping”.



The Muslims maintained the fastidiousness they showed in their worship even at times of battle and were consequently subject to the help of Allah. Travijani of Venice describes the brave and victorious army of Yildirim Bayazid as follows:

“There is no wine, gambling or women in the Ottoman army like there is in ours. In addition to their military training in which they never falter, they constantly remember the greatest and lofty name of Allah, and are preoccupied with worship day and night. This is why they always come out victorious”.



The Bayazit Mosque was opened for worship on a Friday and the first to lead the prayer there was the son of Fatih, Bayazid II himself. Evliya Chelebi explains this event as follows:

“After the mosque had been built, it was officially opened one Friday with great festivity. Bayazid II said to the congregation:

“Whoever has never abandoned the first *sunnah* prayer of the *asr* and *‘isha* prayers, may he come forth and be the imam at this blessed time”.

When no one in the congregation (which was like the ocean) rose, Bayazid Han had to rise:

“Praise be to Allah! We have never abandoned these *sunnah* prayers neither in war nor in peace...” and he became the imam and led the prayer”.



Safiye Hanim, or Muallima’i Selatin as she was otherwise known, was the Teacher of Sultans, appointed in order to raise and educate the children in the Ottoman Palace by Mehmed Rashad, the Sultan. One of the first commands to her by Mehmed Rashad was as follows:



“I will forbid salt and bread to those who do not pray and who do not fast. Let this wish of mine be declared to the student pashas and lady sultans by the lady teacher”.⁴⁰

Worldly rank and position did not allow these people to forget their sensitivity in worship nor did it prevent them from making efforts to make their provisions for the hereafter such as prayer and fasting, at the head of all of their duties.



The most dynamic example of fastidiousness in worship is from the glorious *mujahid* of the Caucasus, Shaykh Shamil. He had suffered several bayonet, sword and bullet wounds during the Defence of Gimri in 1829. A bayonet that had entered through his breast and came out his back had pierced his lungs, and broken his ribs and his right collar bone. He was treated by his father-in-law who was also his surgeon, and it was only after a period of nearly 6 months that he was able to recover. This young *mujahid* had been in a coma for 25 days since the day he had been wounded. When he came to and opened his eyes at the end of the 25th day he found his mother at his side. His first words to her were:

“Dearest mother! Have I missed the time for prayer?”



It was the eve of the Ramadan *eid* (festival) during the time when the Battle for the Dardanelles was being fought. The front commander, Wahip Pasha called the imam of the 9th battalion and said to him sadly and reluctantly:

“O Hafiz! Tomorrow is the *eid* of Ramadan. The soldiers wish to pray the *eid* prayer in congregation. No matter how I tried, I could not make them change their minds. But such a thing is very dangerous as it is an opportunity for the enemies to destroy us completely. Can you please try to explain the situation to the privates in a suitable way..”

The Imam had just left the Pasha’s side when a radiant-looking individual appeared and said to him:



“My son! Make sure not to say anything to the soldiers! Let us wait and see what the day brings. Whatever Allah says will be”.

The next morning a divine manifestation was experienced that left everyone in shock. Huge clouds hung down from the skies like bunches of fruit, covering the believing soldiers as they prayed in a state of love for Allah. The enemy soldiers who had been watching them with binoculars could see nothing but pure white clouds. That morning, the loud cries of *takbir* (Allahu Akbar) of the *eid* prayer ascended to the skies. Whilst the radiant old man read some verses from the chapter Victory from the Qur’an, the oneness of Allah overflowed from the hearts of the soldiers and could be heard from the enemy ranks.

It was at this point that chaos broke out amongst the British forces. The British had deceived various Muslim soldiers from their colonies and brought them to fight for them. When these Muslim soldiers heard the cries of *takbir* (Allah is the Greatest) and *tawheed* (La ilaha illallah) they realised that they were fighting Muslims like themselves and they subsequently rebelled. Not knowing what to do, the oppressive British executed some of them and others were hurriedly dragged to the back of the front.

Faith, the unwavering fortress in the hearts of the soldiers of Islam, enabled them to perform their worship even when on the battlefield and as a result divine success and help befell and enveloped the entire army.



The Blessed Prophet ﷺ stated that the speed with which a person will pass over the bridge of Sirat will be in accordance to the degree to which they gave importance to their worship.

“People will come to the Fire and then will pass by according to their deeds: the first group will pass by at the speed of lightning, the second group like the wind. The next group will pass by as quick as horsemen and the next will pass by at the speed of a camel rider. The next one will run and the one after that will walk”. (Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 19/3159).



In short, the aim of worship and servanthood is that the heart should be together with Allah. That is, it should have knowledge of Allah (gnosis)



and love for Him. Worship will bestow grace and beauty upon a person to the degree that faith has become apparent in their heart. Worship done with enthusiasm and ardour will bring depth to the soul and bring the servant closer to Allah. It will allow feelings of mercy and generosity to develop in their heart. Almighty Allah will become like the seeing eye and the hearing ear of such servants. That is to say, what they see, hear, think, and express will reach a state of divine illumination.

May our Lord make this possible for each of us. Amen!...

a. Supererogatory [optional] worship

Supererogatory worship reinforces the obligatory and is a means for the servant to approach Allah. As part of the nature of being human, it is not possible to perform obligatory worship completely and perfectly in a form that is the most acceptable to Allah. However much care may be taken, mistakes and faults will inevitably occur from time to time. Consequently there is no other remedy other than the supererogatory to make up for the deficiency. Allah’s Messenger ﷺ has informed us that:

“On the day of judgement, the first deed that the servant will be taken to account for is the ritual prayer (salat). If the ritual prayer is complete, his affairs will be set aright and he will come out profitable. If his prayer is not complete he will lose and be deficient. If there is any deficiency in the obligatory worship, then the Lord Most Supreme and Glorious will say:

“Look and see whether my servant has any supererogatory prayers”. The supererogatory will make up the deficiency in the obligatory. And then he will be taken to account in the same way for his other deeds”. (Tirmidhi, Salat, 188/413).

However it should not be concluded that it is correct to leave the obligatory and occupy oneself with the supererogatory. Just as it is wrong to only busy oneself with the obligatory and neglect the supererogatory, it is also wrong to only perform the supererogatory and neglect the obligatory. The correct way is to perform the obligatory and also make efforts to perform as much of the supererogatory as much as is possible. The practice of the Messenger of Allah and his Companions is the only guide in this matter.

On the other hand it is not right for those who have a debt in the obligatory to only make up for the obligatory and abandon the supererogatory all together. This is because one can make up for the obligatory prayers at any time of the day except for times which have been specifically identified as being reprehensible for worship. Whereas since all supererogatory prayers such as *tahajjud* (night prayers), *ishrak*, *kusluk* (the late morning prayers), *awabeen* (the late-evening prayer) are dependent on particular times, it is advisable to perform these prayers at these times⁴¹.

The servant cannot approach Allah with any deed better than the obligatory. They can then continue this elevated journey by performing supererogatory worship. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ relates in a divine *hadith* that Allah has said:

“I wage war against the one who becomes an enemy of the friend of Mine who serves me in all sincerity. My servant draws nearer to Me with nothing more pleasing to Me than what I have made obligatory upon him, and then draws nearer to me with supererogatory devotions until I love him and when I love him I become his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks, so that by Me he hears, by Me he sees, by Me he strikes, and by Me he walks. Should he ask Me, I shall surely grant him his request; Should he ask Me for protection I shall surely protect him. Never do I hesitate in anything as I hesitate in taking the soul of my believing servant; he dislikes death, and I dislike to displease him”. (Bukhari, Rikak, 38; Ahmad, VI, 256; Haysami, II, 248).

Supererogatory worship keeps the awareness of servanthood alive, and softens the heart. It refines the soul and bestows the light of gentle beauty upon the face. The excitement of faith of those who continue in their supererogatory worship with awe, contentedness and alertness of the heart, is greater and their desire for union is more exuberant. And of course their happiness and pleasure in the afterlife will manifest accordingly.

41. The *mujtahid* scholars of the Hanafi School of thought are adamant that the *sunnah* prayers cannot be abandoned. It is only when at *sinn-i kebir*, that is old age, that is when one has lost the strength to carry out both the obligatory and the *sunnah* prayers that one can make up for their past obligatory instead of performing the *sunnah* prayers.



Scenes of Virtue

The days and nights of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ were enlightened by much continued supererogatory forms of worship in addition to the obligatory. The *sunnah* prayers that he prayed before and after the obligatory, the *tahajjud* prayer that he continued to pray in the night, worship such as remembrance and reflection, his recitation of a certain portion of the Qur'an every day, his different prayers such as the late morning and evening prayers, his supererogatory fasting, his giving charity to the poor, his struggles in the path of Allah, his continued smiles that blossomed like a rose on his blessed face were all signs of his peaceful togetherness with Allah. Whenever he was happy about something or when he received happy news he would prostrate⁴² and pray⁴³ in order to thank Allah for this bounty. In the event of extraordinary events such as a solar or lunar eclipse he would immediately bow down in the face of such divine manifestations of magnificence⁴⁴. When he had a need to ask for from Allah he would again perform the prayer. In the blessed month of Ramadan the Messenger of Allah became even more spiritual with the worship he performed such as the *tarawih* prayers, his *itikaf* (seclusion), and the generosity in giving out of the Messenger of Allah. After Ramadan he would continue to perform from time to time supererogatory fasting. He would especially choose to fast on Mondays and Thursdays and he would explain the reason as follows:

“It is on Mondays and Thursdays that the deeds of a person are presented to Allah Most High. I like to have my deeds presented while I am fasting”. (Tirmidhi, Savm, 44/747).

On the 13th, 14th and 15th days of the *hijri* month called the ‘*days of white*’ (due to the full moon) he would take care to fast and advised his Companions to do the same. Ibn-i Abbas رضي الله عنه states:

“The Prophet would fast on the days of the full moon in both war and peace and would never abandon this practice”. (Nasai, Savm, 70)

42. The prostration of gratitude is like the prostration of recitation. While one has the ritual ablution, the intention is made to make the prostration of gratitude, the hands are raised and the takbir is pronounced, “*Allahu Akbar*”, then a person prostrates and stays for as long as possible in that position, and then rises.

43. Ibn-i Majah Salat, 192

44. Bukhari, Kusuf, 2-4; Ibni Hibban, Sahih, Beirut, 1993, VII, 8, 100

Allah's Messenger would spend six days of the month of *Shawwal* fasting⁴⁵ and would fast the *Ashura* fast on the 9th and 10th or the 10-11th days of the month of *Muharrem*⁴⁶.

The Prophet would explain the virtues of the Greater and Lesser Pilgrimages (Hajj and Umrah) and he would be in a state of constant remembrance, and would never cease his praise, glorification and asking for forgiveness. He would sacrifice an animal for himself and for those in his community who could not afford to.⁴⁷



Rabia bin Ka'b رضي الله عنه narrates:

"I used to prepare the Messenger's ﷺ water for ablution and bring the things he needed to his door at nights. For a while I would hear him say '*Sami Allahu liman hamida*' and then I would hear him say '*Alhamdulillah Rabb al alemin*'. (Ibn-i Sa'd, IV, 313).

One day The Messenger of Allah said to me:

"Ask me for whatever you want". I said:

"I want to be together with you in Paradise". The Prophet replied:

"Can't you ask for something else"? I said:

"This is the only thing I want" I said. Hearing this Allah's Messenger said:

"In that case, make much prostration so that you can help me help you". (Muslim, Salat, 226).

What is meant by prostration is generally the ritual prayer or *salat*. In that case those who want to enter Paradise and be a neighbour of the Beloved of Allah should pray much and increase their prostrations which are moments of closeness with Allah.

The station of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in Paradise is greater than that of all the other prophets. So if one desires to be close to the Prophet in

45. Muslim, Siyam, 204

46. Muslim, Siyam 115

47. Abu Dawud, Edahi, 3-4/2792: Ibn-i Sa'd, I, 249



Paradise, one should act in accordance with the *sunnah* and in particular, perform much ritual prayer (*salat*) in deep reverence.



Ummu Habiba  narrates:

“The Messenger of Allah  said:

“Allah will most certainly build a house in Paradise for whoever prays 12 cycles of supererogatory prayers in addition to the obligatory”. After hearing this good news from the Messenger of Allah I never abandoned any of these prayers”. (Muslim, Musafirin, 103).



On the day that Khaybar was conquered a man came to the Prophet and said:

“O Messenger of Allah, today I have made such a profit the likes of which none of the people of this valley have seen” The Prophet asked him:

“What did you earn?” The Companion replied:

“I continued to buy and sell without stopping so much so that I earned 300 *ukiyye*⁴⁸”.

In response to this the Prophet  said:

“Shall I tell you something that is the best of profits?”

The Companion replied:

“What is that o Messenger of Allah?” The Prophet gave the following response:

“Two cycles of supererogatory prayer that you pray after the obligatory prayer”. (Abu Dawud, 168/2785).



Allah’s Messenger  once sent a military troop to a certain region. In a very short period of time the soldiers of Islam returned with large amounts of booty. One individual said:



“O Messenger of Allah! We have never seen a troop return as quickly as these and with as much booty”.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked:

“*Shall I tell you something that has a faster return and brings more booty?*” and then continued:

“*If a man takes his ablution properly and then arrives at the mosque, and prays his dawn prayer and follows it up with two cycles of the midmorning prayer, then this man will have made a much faster return and will have gained much more*”. (Ibn-i Hibban, VI, 276/2535).



Ibn-i Omar  narrates:

I said to Abu Dharr :

“Dear uncle, can you give me some advice? He replied:

“You asked from me what I asked for from the Messenger of Allah. Allah’s Messenger said to me:

“*If you pray two cycles of the late-morning prayer you will not be written as amongst the ignorant; if you pray 4 cycles you will be written as a worshipper; if you pray 6 cycles, Allah will meet all of your needs; if you pray 8 cycles you will be recorded as a ‘qanitin’ (one who does much worship); if you perchance pray 10 cycles, a house will be built for you in Paradise*”.

There is no day, nor no night, and no second even in which Allah Most High does not bestow upon his servants what they wish and favours them. Allah Most High has not bestowed a bounty upon any of his slaves greater than the inspiration of His remembrance in his heart”. (Haysami, II, 236; Ali al-Muttaki, VII, 809/21511).



The Blessed Prophet  said:

“*There is a door to Paradise which is called the Gate of Duha. On the Day of Judgement a Crier will cry out:*



“Where are those who were continual in their Duha prayer? Here is your door, so enter into Paradise through it by the Mercy of Allah”. (Suyuti, I, 355/2323).



To pray at least two cycles of the ritual prayer after every minor and major ablution, and to thank almighty Allah for the bounty of Islam and the joy of carrying out ablution is a beautiful virtue.

As Othman رضي الله عنه once said after he had taken his ablution in order to teach people:

“I saw the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم take his ablution like this. And then when he had finished he said:

“Whoever takes ablution like I just did and performs two cycles of prayer and stays away from the whisperings of the nafs during the prayer, will have their past sins forgiven”. (Bukhari, Wudu, 24)



One time the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said to Bilal رضي الله عنه:

“O Bilal! Which of your worship is it that you performed after you became Muslim that you hope for the most reward from? Because I heard the sounds of your shoes ahead of me in paradise”. Bilal replied:

“After I have taken my ablution I pray as much prayer as I can, day and night. This is the worship that I hope for the most reward from”. (Bukhari, Tahajjud 17, Tawheed 47, FAdailus – Sahaba 108).

Allah’s Messenger saw Bilal in his dream walking ahead of him in Paradise. Almighty Allah showed the Prophet this dream to inform us of the importance of supererogatory prayers.



One day Abu Qatada came to the Mosque of the Prophet. When he saw the Blessed Prophet sitting amongst his Companions he went and sat next to him. Upon this Allah’s Messenger turned to Abu Qatada and said:

“What prevented you from praying two cycles of prayer before you sat down?” Abu Qatade replied:



“O Messenger of Allah! I saw that you and your congregation were sitting (so I did not pray)”. The Prophet then said:

“Whenever one of you enters the mosque let him not sit until he has prayed two cycles of prayer”. (Muslim, Musafirin, 70)



Whenever the Companions needed anything or whenever they were in distress they immediately prayed supererogatory prayers and sought refuge with Allah. One summer’s day the gardener of Anas رضي الله عنه came to him and complained that it had not rained and that the garden had withered. Anas asked for some water and took his ablution following which he performed the prayer. After he finished, he asked the gardener:

“Do you see anything in the sky?” The gardener replied:

“No I do not”.

Anas رضي الله عنه went back inside and continued to pray. He asked again for the third or the fourth time:

“Can you see anything in the sky?” The gardener answered:

“I can see a cloud the size of a bird’s wing”. Upon this Anas continued his prayer and supplication. A little while later the gardener went next to him and said:

“The sky is full of clouds and it has started to rain”. Anas said:

“Come, mount the horse that Bishr bin Shagaf sent and look and see how far the rain has reached”.

When the gardener mounted the horse and looked around he saw that the rain had not reached beyond Anas’s garden. (Ibn-i Sa’d, VII, 21-22).



The sensitivity of the blessed Companions for their supererogatory worship was also passed onto their children. Rubayyi’ bint-i Muawwiz رضي الله عنها, who was one of the female companions says:

“... We used to fast on the day of *Ashura*. And we used to make our small children fast too. We would go to the mosque and makes toys out of wool for our children. Whenever one of them would cry for food we would





hand him one of these toys and thereby distract them until the time came to break the fast”. (Bukhari, Sawm, 47; Muslim, Siyam, 136).



In short, worship that has been specified as obligatory and commanded to do is the bare minimum. In addition to this minimum, the believers need to continue on in and increase their supererogatory worship. This they should do to the best of their ability, both out of a desire to be close to their Lord, and as gratitude for all the bounties that have reached them in times of ease or distress. Because the meaning of worship is to appear before Allah Most High and converse with Him. This is a peerless standing that submerges the hearts in mystic pleasure and allows them to enter a spiritual atmosphere.

The experience obtained from supererogatory worship and the efforts shown to this end, all eventually lead the servant to the stage of ‘*ihsan*’, in which the servant is together with Allah always.

Supererogatory worship is the most fitting behaviour appropriate to the purpose of man’s creation. It is also the servant’s most vital provision for the hereafter.

b. Praying in Congregation

Social training is one of the most important principles of Islam. And the first lesson for the Muslim starts with praying in congregation. This is the most important deed that strengthens the feeling of unity and togetherness within the society of Islam, which is itself based on the oneness of Allah. A place in which the prayer is prayed in congregation is a place in which the spirit and societal structure of Islam has begun to be perceived.

Islam commands the believers to live within a community, to help and support each other in all matters, and to struggle as if they are one rank together and united in the path of Allah. Almighty Allah states:

“Allah loves those who fight in His Way in ranks like well-built walls”.

(As Saff, 61:4)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said:



“...I desire that you be a community and that you avoid separation and division with an intensity. This is because Satan is with those who live on their own. But he stays far from people who live together even if they are only two (people). The person who wishes to be in the midst of Paradise should continue to pray in congregation...” (Tirmidhi, Fiten, 7/2165).

During each cycle of the prayer, we repeat the verse **“You alone do we worship and from You alone do we seek help”**. (Fatiha, 1:4), thereby demonstrating to our Lord, at least 40 times a day, that we are part of a community.

The first thing that our Prophet did when he entered the cities of Quba and Madina was to build a mosque. He himself helped to build the mosque thereby laying the foundations of the brotherhood of Islam.

Our forefathers followed this practice of the Prophet. When they built cities they first of all built magnificent mosques at the centre and then developed the city around this mosque which acted as a circle of light.

Consequently to perform the prayer in congregation is most suited to the purpose of Islam and is a command of Allah.

The Prophet ﷺ has said:

“Allah Most High is as pleased and happy with the Muslim who frequents the mosque for both remembrance and prayer as a family who is away from home would be pleased when their relatives return”. (Ibn-i Majah, Masajid, 19).

“Whoever befriends the mosque, Allah will befriend him”. (Suyuti, II, 143).

“Shall I inform you how Allah Most High erases mistakes and how He raises one’s station? Taking ablution on a cold day, going to a congregation from a far-off place, and waiting in anticipation of the next prayer having just prayed the previous one. This is true devotion! This is true devotion! This is true devotion!” (Muwatta, Kasru’s Salat, 55).

Aisha  states:

“Whoever hears the call for prayer and does not go to the mosque, means that he neither desires good nor has no good been willed for him”. (Bayhaki, AS Sunan al Kubra, III, 57).



Allah's Messenger ﷺ made no concessions for the one who was neglectful of praying in congregation. One day he said:

“Whoever hears the call to prayer and does not go to the mosque even though he has no excuse to prevent him, will not have his solitary prayer accepted (as a perfect prayer). The Blessed Companions asked him:

“(O Messenger of Allah) What is the excuse?”

The Prophet replied:

“The fear of danger or sickness”. (Abu Dawud, Salat, 46/551).

To abandon praying in congregation will lead to the breaking up of the Islamic community. Almighty Allah condemns the one who splits the community as follows:

“As for those who divide up their religion and form into sects, you have nothing whatsoever to do with them”. (An'am 6:159)

Scenes of Virtue

Abu Hurayra ؓ narrates:

“One time during an expedition, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stayed at a place between Dacnan and Usfan. The polytheists said:

“The Muslims have a prayer which is more precious to them than their own fathers and sons. This prayer is the afternoon prayer (*asr*). Prepare yourselves, and attack them all at once (while they are praying this prayer)”.

Upon this the angel Gabriel came to the Messenger of Allah with the 102nd verse from Chapter *Nisa* which describes how to perform the congregational prayer during a battle. (Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 4/21).

Thus even during war, whatever the conditions, it was not even conceivable for the Muslims to delay their prayer or to abandon praying it in congregation.

Jafar bin Amr, narrates an anecdote he heard from his father:

“I saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ cut off the forearm of a lamb and begin to eat it. At that point he was called to pray. He immediately rose, left

the knife he was holding in his hand and without taking a fresh ablution, he stood to pray”. (Bukhari, Adhan, 43)

Allah Messenger was so sensitive about praying in congregation that he immediately abandoned his food and rose to pray at the first calling, which could well have been delayed until after he had eaten.



Yazid bin Amir  narrates:

“I arrived next to Allah’s Messenger whilst he was praying. I sat down and did not join the congregation. When the Prophet turned around after the prayer he saw me sitting in the corner:

“O Yazid! Are you not a Muslim?”

“Indeed I am o Messenger of Allah”. I said

“In that case what prevented you from joining in the congregation?” he asked.

“I thought that you would have already prayed the prayer so I prayed at home” I said. The Prophet then said:

“If perchance you come to the prayer and you see people praying, join them. If you have already performed your prayer then this will be accepted as supererogatory for you. The one you performed at home will be considered as obligatory”. (Abu Dawud, Salat, 56/577).



Even during the sickness of the Messenger of Allah , which was to be the cause of his death, one of the most important matters he was careful about was praying in congregation. According to Anas  it was only during the last three days of his illness that the Prophet was unable to join the congregation for prayer. (Bukhari, Athan, 46).

Aisha  said:

“During the time when the Prophet was intensely sick he asked:

“Have my Companions prayed?”

“No, o Messenger of Allah, they are waiting for you” I said





“*In that case prepare some water for me*” he said. I took him some water and he washed himself. When he tried to get up he fainted. He gained consciousness a little while later and asked once more:

“*Have my Companions prayed?*”

“No, o Messenger of Allah, they are waiting for you” we said.

“*In that, case prepare some water for me*” he said. I brought him some water and he washed. When he tried to get up he fainted. A little while later he regained consciousness.

This occurred again a few times. Meanwhile the people in the mosque were waiting for the Prophet so they could pray the ‘*isha* (nighttime) prayer. Then the Messenger of Allah sent word to Abu Bakr for him to lead the prayer. Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه was a very tender-hearted man so he said to Omar رضي الله عنه:

“O Omar, could you lead the prayer?” Omar could not accept his offer and responded:

“You are more worthy of this”. Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه led the prayers during that time. Later on when the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم was feeling a little better he went to the mosque for the noon prayer, holding onto the arms of two men. (I can still see him in front of me, his blessed feet dragging along the floor because of his lack of strength when he walked)⁴⁹.

At that time, Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه was leading the prayer. When he saw that the Prophet had arrived he wanted to move back. However the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم signalled to him not to move from his spot. Then he came and sat next to Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr followed the Blessed Prophet, while the people followed Abu Bakr, and thereby completed their prayer (Bukhari, Athan, 51).



Anas رضي الله عنه narrates:

“One time Abu Bakr was praying. It was a Monday and we were aligned in neat rows. The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم raised the curtain of his room and began to watch us. He was standing. His face was radiant. Then he smiled and his blessed teeth could be seen. When we saw the Blessed Prophet we were so happy that we were about to leave the prayer. Abu



Bakr  began to move back to enter the row behind him thinking that the Messenger of Allah would join the prayer. However the Prophet indicated to him to complete the prayer and closed his curtain. That was the last day that we saw him and the day he passed on to the world of eternity”. (Bukhari, Athan, 46)

The Messenger of Allah was delighted that he had left behind a community that stood in neat rows to pray, like a building strengthened with lead and which continued to pray in congregation. When he watched them, his blessed face was smiling. This smile that lit up the entire universe was a source of hope for the blessed Companions, (but they had to accept that) he had finally turned, with peace of mind, towards Allah and was waiting for the moment of reunion.

The last words of the Blessed Messenger  during his death were:

“Your prayer! Your prayer! Be especially careful about your prayer. And fear Allah about what is under your control”. (Abu Dawud, Adab,m 123-4/ 5156; Ibn-i Majah, Wasaya, 1).



Jabir bin Abdullah  narrates:

“The neighbourhood of my tribe, Bani Salim, was rather far from the mosque. There were some vacant sites around the Prophet’s mosque so we wanted to sell our house and move closer to the mosque. At that time the following verse was revealed:

“We bring the dead to life and We record what they send ahead and what they leave behind. We have listed everything in a clear register”. (Yasin 36:12)

When he heard of our intention, the Messenger of Allah  said to us:

“I hear that you wish to move closer to the mosque, is this true?” They said:

“Yes, o Messenger of Allah. We truly wish for this”.

Then the blessed Prophet said:

“O Bani Salim! Remain where you are and receive a reward for each step you take in coming to the mosque. Yes, remain where you are; and let there



be a reward written for every step you take in coming to the mosque". (Muslim, Masajid, 280, 281; Tirmidhi, Tafsiru'l Qur'an, 36/1).



Abdullah bin Ummi Maktum ؓ once asked the Prophet:

"O Messenger of Allah, the poisonous insects and wild animals of Madina are many. (I fear the harm that may come to me from these animals. Is there then a licence for me to stay in my home and pray rather than coming to the mosque?"

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied:

"Can you hear the words: "hayya ala's-salah" (come to the prayer) and "hayya ala'l falah" (come to success)? If so, you should come to the mosque". (Abu Dawud, Salat, 46/553).

Thus whatever the circumstances, the Prophet placed great importance on participation in the congregation even if one has to make a great effort.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to warn people to come to the congregation in various ways. Ubayy bin Ka'b ؓ narrates:

"One day the Messenger of Allah ﷺ led the dawn prayer and said:

"Did such and such come for the prayer?"

"No, he did not" we replied

"Did such and such come?" he asked

"No, he did not" we replied. Upon this he said:

"It is these two prayers (the dawn and the night time prayer) that are the hardest on the hypocrites. If you knew how much reward and merit there was in these, you would get down on your knees and crawl to join the congregation. The first row is like a row of angels. If you knew the virtue within it, you would race each other to pray in that row. A person's prayer prayed together with another person is much more bountiful and has more reward than a prayer performed alone. A prayer with two people is more bountiful and superior than a prayer with one other person. However great the number of people praying, the more Allah Most High is pleased". (Abu Dawud, Salat, 47/554; Nasai, Imamet, 45)



Abdullah bin Mas'ud  has the following to say:

“By Allah I have never seen a person, other than a hypocrite whose hypocrisy was known by all, who neglected his prayer. I swear by Allah that a (sick) man would be brought to the prayer even though he was teetering on two feet, held between two men and would be placed in the row amongst those two men as support”. (Muslim, Masajid, 256-257)



One day when Abdullah bin Omar  was walking in the marketplace, the time for prayer came. He saw the Muslims closing their shops and stalls as soon as they heard the call to prayer, and heading for the mosque. Seeing this he said:

“These are they who Allah Most High has praised in the following way:

“There are men who proclaim His glory morning and evening, not distracted by trade or commerce from the remembrance of Allah and the establishment of salat and the payment of zakat; fearing a day when all hearts and eyes will be in turmoil”. (An Nur, 24:37) (Ibn-i Kathir, Tafsir, III, 306; Haysami, VII, 83).



Shifa bint-i Abdillah  narrates:

“One day Omar bin Khattab  came to see us. When he saw two members of our family sleeping he asked:

“What is wrong with these men that they did not join me in the congregation?”

“O Commander of the Believers! They prayed together with everyone in the evening – this event took place during the month of Ramadhan – and they continued to pray until the morning. After that they prayed the dawn prayer and went to bed” I said. Omar responded as follows:

“To pray the dawn prayer in congregation is more pleasing to me than praying until morning”.⁵⁰



50. Abdurrazak, al Musannaf, Beirut 1970, I, 526; Muwatta, Salatu'l Jamaa, 7



One time Othman bin Affan ؓ had gone to the night time prayer. When he saw that the congregation was sparse he lay down at the back of the mosque and waited for more people to arrive.

At that point Ibn-i Abi Amre ؓ arrived and sat down next to Othman. Othman asked him who he was. He introduced himself. “How much do you know of the Qur’an? He asked. After replying to this Othman said:

“O son of my brother! I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say:

“The one who prays the night time prayer with the people (in congregation) is like the one who has spent half the night in prayer. The one who prays the dawn prayer in congregation is like one who has spent the whole night in prayer”. (Muwatta, Salatu'l Camaa' 7; Muslim, Masajid, 260)



Thabit bin Hajjaj narrates a hadith which reflects the attitude towards those who did not participate in the congregational (prayer):

“Omar bin Khattab ؓ once came to the mosque for prayer. He turned towards the people, ordered the caller to prayer to read the call to prayer, and stood up saying:

“We will not wait for anyone to pray”. After he had performed the prayer he turned to the congregation and said: “What is wrong with certain people that they refrain from praying in congregation and thereby make others refrain as well. By Allah it occurred to me to send some men to them to catch them and bring them here and warn them to join the prayer. (Abdurrazzak, 1, 519).



Ummu-d Darda ؓ narrates:

“Abu-d Darda ؓ once came to me angrily. I asked him:

“What is it that has angered you?”. He gave the following response:

“By Allah I know of nothing of the community of Muhammed ﷺ other than they're praying in congregation. (Why are these people behaving neglectfully towards the prayer?) (Bukhari, Athan, 31)



Whenever Abdullah bin Omar رضي الله عنه missed a congregational prayer he would occupy himself with worship until the next prayer. In fact this rule of his applied to the night time prayer as well. That is, in such a situation he would worship until the morning. (Ibn-i Hajar, Isabe, II, 349).



Harith bin Hassan رضي الله عنه one of the blessed Companions, was recently married. At that time it was the custom for a man who was newlywed to not leave the house for several days, so he did not go to the dawn prayer. However Harith attended the dawn prayer after the night he got married. He was asked by some:

“You were married last night, how can you have left your house already?” His response to them was:

“By Allah! How ruinous is a wife that would prevent me from praying the dawn prayer in congregation”. (Haysami, II, 41).



Ibn-i Jurayj, once asked Ata' رضي الله عنه who was from amongst the famous scholars from the *tabieen*:

“If someone is praying the obligatory prayer in his home and he hears (either of) the two calls to prayer, is he required to leave his prayer and go to the mosque?”

“If he is hopeful that he will be able to catch some part of the obligatory prayer, yes he is” Ata answered.

“What if I hear the second call to prayer, do I have to come to the mosque like I would if I heard the first call?” Ata answered ‘yes’ to this question. (Abdurrazzak, I, 514).

Likewise Ibn-i Omar (may Allah be pleased with) had once prayed two of the four cycles of an obligatory prayer in his home when he heard the second call to prayer and so he immediately went to the mosque (Abdurrazzak, I, 514-515).



Amir bin Abdullah was on his death bed. His breaths were numbered and those around him were crying. When he heard the evening call to prayer he said to those around him:

“Lift me up”.

“What’s the matter, where to?” they asked.

“To the mosque” he said. Those around him asked in surprise:

“In this state?”

With great fortitude, he said:

“Subhanallah! (Glory be to Allah!). Should I hear the call to prayer and not answer the call? Is this possible? Lift me up!”

“He went to the mosque accompanied by those close to him and after praying one cycle with the imam, he passed away while he was in prostration”.

What a beautiful manifestation of the *hadith*, “*However you live that is how you shall die?*” By the grace of almighty Allah, a servant who had placed so much importance throughout his life on praying in congregation took his last breath while in prostration.



Ata bin Thabit  narrates:

“We heard that one of the friends of Allah, Abdullah-i Sulami was sick. We thought that we should go and visit him. They told us that he was staying at the mosque. We thought this a little strange. For him to live in the mosque when he had a bed at home appeared a little strange to us. When we went to the mosque we found him praying. When we saw that he was having trouble breathing we were afraid and said:

“O Shaykh! Would not you be more comfortable if you were home in bed?”

He gave the following reply:

“According to a *hadith* that reached me, the Messenger of Allah  informed us that praying in congregation is better. I would wish that my soul be taken while I am praying at the mosque”.



Muhammad bin Sammad was a very worshipful individual. He was very sensitive when it came to the issue of praying in congregation. He says:

“I perform my prayers in congregation. For forty years I have never once missed the opening *takbir* of the prayer. Only once when I was busy with my mother’s funeral did I fail to reach the first cycle of a prayer. I performed this prayer 25 times in the hope that I would get the reward of the congregational prayer. That night in my dream it was said to me:

“O Muhammad! You have prayed your prayer 25 times, however how are you going to make up for the angels saying amen in the congregational prayer?” (Kandevli, *Fazail’i A’mal*, pg 275).

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ once said:

“When the imam finishes reading the Fatiha let the congregation say ‘amen’. Because if this word of the congregation coincides with the ‘amen’ of those in the heavens, then the entirety of that person’s past minor sins will be forgiven”. (Bukhari, Athan, 113).



According to the narrations, on the Day of Judgement Allah Most High will ask:

“Where are my neighbours?

The angels will ask:

“Who could be a neighbour to you o Lord?”

Allah Most High will say:

“Those who render my mosques prosperous (that is those who continue to pray in congregation)”. (Ali al Muttaki, VII, 578/20339).

Allah’s Messenger ﷺ states:

*“The mosque is the home of all of those who are pious. Allah Most High has promised those who make their homes mosques, comfort, mercy and passing over the Bridge of Sirat and into paradise, and gaining Allah’s pleasure”*⁵¹



51. Taberani, *Al Mu’jemu’l abir, tah. Hamdi Abdulmecid as Salafi*, Beirut, Daru Ihyai’t turasi’l Arabi, VI, 254/6143; Ali al Muttaki, VII, 580/20349



One of the first Ottoman historians, Asik Pashazade, once said:

“This family of Othman comes from a noble lineage. There has never appeared from them an unlawful act. They avoided with their utmost all behaviour and deeds which the scholars deemed to be sinful”

Their above-mentioned behaviour must be the reason that the Shaykhu'l Islam, Molla Fenari, had the courage to refuse the witnessing of Yildirm Bayazit in court because he did not (pray) in congregation. In reply to the Sultan who asked him the reason he said quite openly:

“My Sultan! I do not see you in the congregation. Whereas, since you are the guide of this nation, you should be in the first row. In other words, you should be a person of righteous deeds... If you do not join the congregation you will be a bad example for your people, which will prevent you from being accepted as a witness...”

After this event, and in another report as gratitude for the victory at Nigbolu, Yildirim Bayazid had the famous Ulu Mosque of Bursa built and prayed there in congregation five times a day.



In short, praying in congregation is a manifestation of the fidelity of one's faith. Likewise the Prophet ﷺ said:

“If you see a person regularly praying at the mosque then you can be a witness for his faith” and then he read the following verse:

“The mosques of Allah should only be frequented by those who have faith in Allah and the Last Day and establish salat and pay zakat, and fear no one but Allah. They are the ones most likely to be guided” (Tawba, 9:18) (Tirmidhi, Iman, 8/2617)

The friends of Allah have stated the principal benefits of praying in congregation at the mosque five times a day:

- Benefitting from the prosperity and bounty that Allah bestowed upon the mosques and the strengthening of social consciousness in the heart of the believer;
- Performing the prayer at the most acceptable of times, that is, at the first instant;



- Being subject to the supplication, seeking forgiveness for and witnessing of the angels;
- Being distant from Satan;
- Attaining to a great reward by being present for the opening *takbir*;
- Becoming purified of ostentation in one's deeds;
- Benefiting from the supplication and remembrance done in community;
- Ensuring the continuity of relations amongst the Muslims;
- Helping each other in matters of obedience and worship;
- Becoming acquainted with and learning the rules of recitation (of the Qur'an) in the prayers that are read out loud;
- Performing the prayer with perfection and in a peaceful manner;

As can be seen praying in congregation has many benefits. This is the reason that Allah Most High and His Beloved Prophet persistently ordered the believers to pray in the mosques and to continue praying in congregation.

c. Night Worship

It is an indescribable source of pleasure for the servant to be together with Almighty Allah in the depths of the night. It is also a means to unparalleled mercy, forgiveness and grace because Allah is pleased and content with such deeds. The Holy Qur'an states:

“Their sides eschew their beds as they call on their Lord in fear and ardent hope. And they give of what We have provided for them” (As Sajda, 32:16)

The mysteries, wisdom and prosperity that our Lord has bestowed upon the night become apparent according to the state of one's heart. Such divine favours as the Ascension and revelation, and also manifestations of divine revenge, have all taken place more often during the depths of night which is an indication that one should take extra care at this time of day.



For the believers who have aspired to draw nearer to Allah, the night is a peerless blessing due to the serenity and prosperity of the stillness of night time. It has been stated in a *hadith*:

“There is a certain time in the night in which if the Muslim makes a wish for good in this world or the next at this hour, then Allah grants it. This time occurs every night” (Muslim, Musafirin, 166).

Khaja Ali Ramitani  has said:

“It is when three hearts unite that the desire of the believer is granted; the sincere heart of the believer, the heart of the Qur’an which is chapter Yasin, and the heart of night which is the time just before dawn. Those who appreciate the value of this blessing find a most prosperous grounds for supplication, worship and turning towards their Sustainer, when all of creation has laid down to rest and there is a deep stillness throughout the world. Almighty Allah praises those happy slaves as follows:

“The part of the night they spent asleep was small and they would seek forgiveness before the dawn”. (Az Zariyat 51:17-18)

The night is the time to abandon the soft and sweet beds for the sole purpose of gaining Allah’s good pleasure. It is the time to enter the divine presence solely out of love and ecstasy. Consequently the prayers that are performed during the peaceful atmosphere of the night, and the Qur’an that is recited and the glorification that is performed have great importance in terms of approaching Allah. Worship that is carried out during the night is like meeting with an Exalted Lover and conversing with Him. Staying awake while everyone else is asleep, and entering the merciful atmosphere of Allah, the Most Dignified Protector, is to be included amongst the exceptional slaves who form an assembly of love and mercy.

The rush to do night worship is relative to the intensity of rapture and love of Allah felt in the heart. Certain worshippers who have tasted the spiritual pleasure and delight of night time worship have said: “I do not fear death, until it comes between me and my night prayers”.

How can someone who claims to love their Lord in truth, sleep in deep heedlessness until the morning? This is why to bring life to the pre-dawn is an expression of the sincere love and reverence felt by the slave for his Lord. On the other hand a night passed in heedlessness or one confined to

sleep is considered fruitless and an irreparable loss, just like the rain that falls in the desert.

Thus the Messenger of Allah ﷺ advised Abdullah bin Amr bin As ؓ as follows:

“Abdullah! Do not be like such and such. Because though he used to continue in his night worship, he has now abandoned it” (Bukhari, Tahajjud, 19).

Thus it is a great loss and source of harm to refrain from doing *tahajjud* in the night.

Benefitting from the night begins with “seeking forgiveness”; and continues with surrounding oneself in the spiritual atmosphere of *tawheed*, sending blessings upon the Prophet (*salawat-i sherif*) and remembering Allah. Remembrance during the pre-dawn, which is like the meeting of the slave with his Protector is, in regards to bringing the heart back to life, a singular opportunity not to be missed, and a need which cannot be overlooked. For just as our bodies have need for physical nourishment so too does our soul need spiritual sustenance. Almighty Allah places more value on the remembrance done during the pre-dawn than at any other time. It is stated in the Qur’an:

“Prostrate to Him during the night and glorify Him throughout the long night. These people love this fleeting world and have put the thought of a Momentous Day behind their backs”. (Man, 76:26-27)

Amr bin Abasa ؓ narrates:

I asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ:

“O Messenger of Allah! Is there a time out of all times that is more virtuous than others in terms of drawing nearer to Allah?”

He answered:

“Yes, the time at which the slave is nearest to his Lord is the middle of the last part of the night. If you have the capacity to be of those people who remember Allah at that time, then do so. Because the prayer at that time is witnessed (the angels are present during them)”. (Nesai, Mawakit’s Salat, 35).



In short, if the believer can make use of the night purposefully, in the way advised by Allah and His Messenger, and benefit from the spirituality of remembrance, then his night can be brighter than his day. Likewise Bayazid-i Bistami has said:

“No mystery has been revealed to me until my nights have become like my day”.

For those who know the value of the night which is full of great bounty and thus bring it to life in the proper manner, the spirituality of the pre-dawn will reflect throughout their whole day. In respect to this, in order to properly benefit from the atmosphere of spirituality and prosperity of the night we need to project the model of the pre-dawn to our days and guard our days from sin.

Scenes of Virtue

In terms of benefitting from the prosperous atmosphere of the night, Almighty Allah commands His Beloved as follows:

“And stay awake for prayer during part of the night as a supererogatory action for yourself. It may well be that your Lord will raise you to a Praiseworthy Station”. (Isra, 17: 79)

After this divine command was revealed the Messenger of Allah ﷺ never abandoned praying during the blessed and fruitful night, nor did he stop seeking forgiveness, reading the Qur’an and supplicating. He did this even during his times of sickness when he was weak and could not even stand on his feet. He did not neglect his *tahajjud* prayer and brought life to his nights even if sitting. (Abu Dawud, *Tatavvu’*, 18/1307).

The Blessed Prophet continued to pray his *tahajjud* prayer throughout his whole life. This was a total of 13 cycles, if the *witr* prayer is included, and 11 cycles during the final years of his life. He continued to pray 9 cycles of the prayer while he was sick and close to death. (Abu Dawud, *Tatawwu’* 26/1363).



“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ never prayed more than 11 cycles of prayer in the night, neither in Ramadan nor at any other time. First he would pray four cycles which were indescribable in terms of beauty and length. Then he would pray four more. Don’t ask about their beauty and length (for they are hard to describe). Then he would pray three more. One time I asked him:

“O Messenger of Allah! Are you going to sleep without praying the *witr* prayer?”

“Aisha! My eyes sleep but my heart never sleeps,” he replied. (Bukhari, Tahajjud 16, Tarawih 1; Muslim, Musafirin 125).

This *hadith* is an indication of how the heart of the Prophet was with Almighty Allah, not just during worship but at all times.



Huzayfa رضي الله عنه describes the state of the Prophet during worship one time when he was following the Prophet in a supererogatory prayer:

“One night I stood to pray with the Messenger of Allah. He began to read chapter *Baqara* from the Qur’an. “He will probably bow down when he comes to the one hundredth verse” I said to myself. When he came to the one hundredth verse he continued reading. “Maybe he is going to pray two cycles with this chapter” I thought to myself. He continued reading. “He will bow down when he finishes the chapter” I thought. However he still did not finish. He began to read from chapter *Nisa*. When he finished that he moved onto chapter *Al-i Imran*⁵². He was reading very slowly. When he came to a verse of glorification he would say “*Subhanallah* (Glory be to Allah). When he came to a verse about supplication, he would supplicate. When he came to a verse about seeking refuge in Allah, he would seek refuge in Allah. Then he bowed down. He began to say “*Subhana Rabbiya’l a’zim*” (Glory be to my Lord, Most Great) His bowing down lasted as long as his standing. Then he said “*Sami Allahu liman hamida. Rabbena laka’l hamd*” (Allah hears all praise. All praise is for you our Lord) and straightened

52. According to the explanation of this *hadith*, the Prophet ﷺ read first *Baqara*, then *Nisa*, then *Al-i Imran*. The reading of these in this order is not the same as the present order of the chapters in the Qur’an, which is *Baqara*, *Al-i Imran*, *Nisa*. (Commentators) of *hadith* explain the wisdom behind this in two ways: Firstly, the order of the chapters had not yet been determined at that time. Secondly, it is permissible to read the chapters in this order.



up. He stayed standing for almost as long as he stood bowing down. Then he went into prostration. He said “*Subhana Rabbiya’l ala*” (*Glory be to my Lord, most High*). His prostration lasted almost as long as his standing” (Muslim, Musafirin, 203).



Aisha رضي الله عنها has said:

“One night I realised that the Messenger of Allah was not beside me. I thought that he might have gone to one of his other wives. I began to look for him. After a while when I came back, I saw him either bowing down or in prostration saying the following:

سُبْحَانَكَ وَبِحَمْدِكَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

“(O Allah!) I absolve You of all faults and I praise You. (My Sustainer! There is no god but You”. Upon this I said to him, (a little embarrassingly):

“May my mother and father be sacrificed for you o Messenger of Allah! What have I been busying myself with and what have you...” (Muslim, Salat, 221).



The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم desired that his entire community perform the *tahajjud* prayer, which is one of the most important means of spiritual growth. He began to instill this practice firstly into those close to him. One night he knocked on the door of his son-in-law and daughter, Ali رضي الله عنه and Fatima رضي الله عنها and said: “*Are you not going to perform the prayer?*” He was persistent in his advice to them to benefit from the spiritual prosperity of the night.

To others of his Companions he said:

“*Make efforts to wake up in the night. For that was the practice of those righteous people before you and it is a means of approaching Allah. (This form of worship) will stop you from sinning, is an atonement for your mistakes, and will remove the worries from the body*” (Tirmidhi, Deawat, 101/3549). Stating so, he invited them to remain awake during the pre-dawn.



The mother of Solomon عليه السلام, the son of the Prophet David, said to her son Solomon:

“My dear child! Do not sleep much during the night. For too much sleep during the night will render a person poor on the Day of Judgement” (Ibn-i Majah, *Ikamet’us Salah*, 174).



The following event related by Ibn-i Omar رضي الله عنه evidently explains how the *tahajjud* prayer will keep a person far from the punishment of the hellfire:

“Whenever anyone had a dream during the lifetime of the Prophet, they would tell him about it. I dearly wished to have a dream and tell the Prophet about it.

At that time I was a single young man and I used to sleep in the mosque.

One time during one of my dreams, two angels came and took me to Hell. I saw that there were two columns built like the walls of a well. I was surprised as there were some people that I knew there. I began to scream:

“I seek refuge in Allah from the fire of hell. I seek refuge in Allah from the fire of hell”. At that time another angel came and said to me:

“Fear not, nothing will happen to you”

I shared this dream with my older sister Hafsa رضي الله عنها and she related it to the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم. Upon this the Prophet said: “*How beautiful and good a man is Abdullah! If only he prayed during the night as well...*”

From that day on, Abdullah رضي الله عنه spent a large portion of the night in worship and slept very little. (Bukhari, *Ashabu’n Nabi*, 19).



The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم, in a divine *hadith*, has praised those believers who secretly give out, who wake up for *tahajjud* prayer and who strive earnestly in the way of Allah as follows:

“*There are three types of people whom Allah loves. And there are three types of people who Allah detests. When it comes to the people that Allah loves:*



A man approaches a group of people and asks them for something, not out of any familiarity to them but merely for the sake of Allah. They do not give him what he wants. One person from this congregation slowly moves to the back, without anyone realising and secretly gives this person what he wants. (He does it so secretly) that only Allah and the person he has helped know.

(When it comes to the second person): a group of travellers have been walking all night. They become so tired that sleep becomes dearer to them than anything else. They stop somewhere for the night. (All of them sleep). Only one of them gets up and supplicates to Me with humility and recites my verses.

(The third one is as such:) a person has joined a military expedition. They face the enemy but meet with a crushing defeat. Only this person moves on and continues to fight until he is killed or made victorious.

The three types of people that Allah detests are the old person who commits fornication, the poor man who is arrogant, and the rich man who is an oppressor” (Tirmidhi, Jannah, 25/2568; Nasai, Zakat, 75).



According to a report by Ali ؓ, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“There are certain types of palaces in Paradise. The outside can be seen from the inside and the inside can be seen from the outside”. Hearing this, a Bedouin stood up and asked:

“Who are these palaces for o Messenger of Allah?” The Prophet replied:

“For the one who speaks his words sweetly and nicely, who is soft-spoken, who likes to feed others, who continues to fast and who performs the prayer for the sake of Allah while everybody is sleeping” (Tirmidhi, Birr, 53/1984).



Our most honoured teacher Master Musa ؒ has informed us of the character of the eminent guide Mahmud Sami Ramazanoglu. He speaks of his elevated character in the way of gnosis of Allah (knowledge of Allah) and servanthood and his state in bringing life to his nights as follows:

“Though the noble face and blessed countenance of Mahmud Sami Ramazanoglu was always smiling, his heart would be inwardly weeping.



He would shed tears for the community of Muslims and pray that they be freed from the hands of oppressors. He would cry for sinners to be saved and forgiven and his tears would flow inside. When the Qur'an was recited, he would listen in awe, and sometimes his tears would trickle down his cheeks. During the time of the Pilgrimage while he was moving between Madina and Mecca, his tears could be seen dripping down like pearls from his eyes, while his companions were sleeping, under the light of the moon,. This scene was of such beauty that even poets and literaries found it difficult to describe”



The fervour for night worship of the late Musa Topbas, can be compared to the indescribable longing and desire a lover feels in anticipation of the meeting with his beloved. This state of his continued even during his days of illness when his body was suffering and ailing such that he lived at a continual peak of divine love. After an eye operation and when he had just woken up from the effects of the anaesthetic the first question he asked those around him was:

“What time is it?”

When it was said to him

“Master! It is almost 3”, he said:

“Night worship is most crucial” and with the help of those around him he took his dry ablution (*tayammum*) and as if forgetting the painful state he was in, he offered his heart to his Sustainer and prayed two cycles of *tahajjud* prayer (by moving his eyes). He did this with indescribable pleasure and enthusiasm, and then he began to perform his regular remembrance of Allah and glorification. This state of his was like an explanation of the mystery of the following verse:

“Their sides eschew their beds as they call on their Lord in fear and ardent hope. And they give of what We have provided for them” (As Sajda, 32:16)



One day it was said to Ibrahim bin Edham:

“I cannot wake up for night worship, teach me a remedy for this”



He received the following reply:

“Do not rebel against Allah during the day and He will allow you into His presence during the night. To be in His presence during the night is the most elevated honour. Sinners are not worthy of this honour!”



Night worship is the most important means to attaining both spiritual and bodily health.⁵³ Night worship repels sickness, and bestows physical and spiritual strength, sagacity and majesty. How cautionary is the following event:

During the Battle of Yarmak when the two armies had approached each other, the Greek commander sent an Arab spy to determine the state of the Muslim soldiers. After the spy had carried out the necessary intelligence he was asked on his return:

“What is the state of the Muslims? What are they doing? The spy told them of what he had seen as follows:

بِاللَّيْلِ رُهْبَانٌ وَبِالنَّهَارِ فُرْسَانٌ

“They are a nation worshipful by night and cavalrymen by day”

Upon this the commander gave the following response:

“If what you say is true, then to be under the earth (that is, dead) would be better than fighting them above ground”



The following event is similar:

No enemy was able to overpower the Companions of Allah’s Messenger during battle. Heracles, the Greek commander of the army that was defeated, said to his army in anger:

“Shame on you! Are the people you are fighting not human beings like yourselves?”

“Indeed they are”, they answered.



“Well are you greater in number, or are they?” he asked

“Sir, we are much greater than them in all respects” they answered.

“So what is wrong with you that every time you face them you meet with crushing defeat?” Upon this a wise, old man from amongst the Greek old men stood up and made the following analysis:

“They pass their nights in worship, they fast during the day, they keep their promise, they command to good and they shun evil, and they share everything amongst themselves...(and this is why we cannot defeat them)”

Upon this Heracles said:

“You have spoken the truth” ⁵⁴



In conclusion, the night is a unique time for keeping the mind and heart clear; the perception, emotions and expression sharp; and the memory strong. It is a fast and easy way to advance both physically and spiritually. The night time is an opportunity not to be missed for those who wish to prepare for the great duties that await them during the day. It is a time to brew the character of those pious, committed and conscious people, who struggle for the reformation of society. The true mysteries of the peace-filled night can only be revealed to those righteous believers who are able to bring life to their nights by intensifying their worship and reflection. The hearts of those slaves who possess these mysteries and wisdom can extend as wide as the heavens and earth and become mirrors for divine manifestation, enveloping themselves in knowledge of Allah.

O our Sustainer! Save us from wasting our nights in ignorance and loss in this short fleeting life of ours. Bestow upon us some of the mysteries of the night! Rejuvenate our hearts with the showers of prosperity that fall during the nights which are brought to life. Allow us to attain to the morning of the hereafter from this world which is like one short night, as true lovers having obtained Your Pleasure and let our souls taste the pleasure of union with You... Amen!

54. Ibn-i Asakir, Tarihu Dimask, ts., II, 97)



d. Prayer and Supplication

When the slave comes face to face with Allah's greatness and majesty, he must admit to his own weakness. He then seeks His help and bounty amongst feelings of devotion and reverence. This is prayer and supplication.

Supplication, that is, seeking refuge through prayer, is of great importance in religion as it is an expression of one's helplessness and a sign of one's taking refuge at nowhere else but the Divine court.

The slave should perform his supplication to Almighty Allah, not merely with words, but wholeheartedly and in all sincerity. Prayers should be said in a spiritual state of being between '*khawf* and *reja*' that is, 'fear and hope'. Prayer must come from the heart; the heart must tremble with a desire that is consistent with the meaning of the words of the prayer. If one is asking to be forgiven for a certain sin, then there should be decisiveness and absolute determination in this prayer. Jalaluddin al Rumi has said:

"Supplicate and seek forgiveness with teary eyes and a heart burning full of regret. For flowers bloom where there is heat and moisture".

Under all circumstances and as a requirement of being a slave, the believer should be in a state of entreaty to his Lord. The aim of true religious training is for the spirit of the believer to be in a continual state of supplication. This is because prayer is the key to the highest door of the heart that leads one to Allah. The Holy Qur'an states:

"If My slaves ask you about Me, I am near. I answer the call of the caller when he calls on Me" (Baqara, 2:186)

As prayer is repeated it becomes engraved onto the spirit of the believer with profound and meaningful feelings, penetrating his personality until they become a part of his character. It is for this reason that great and elevated spirits live in a continual state of supplication.

Supplication is when we turn to Almighty Allah, who is the Possessor of eternal power, with true perception of our helplessness and bow our heads down in His presence in submission and a state of serenity. To begin our supplication admitting our helplessness and our faults is to invite Divine Compassion and thus has great influence on the acceptance of our prayer.

The Prophet ﷺ taught us how to pray in the best way. In addition to his *salat* which he performed in tears and until his ankles swelled up, he also sought refuge in Almighty Allah all the time with feelings of helplessness. He loved concise prayers and did not utter prayers that were not concise.⁵⁵ He used to advise the following:

“The point at which the slave is closest to his Lord is in prostration. For this reason you should look to making much supplication while in prostration”.
(Muslim, Salat, 215)

Aside from praying consistently, the believer should also make efforts to gain the prayers of his brother in religion, and the poor, weak and needy. Because our Prophet ﷺ said:

“There is no prayer that is accepted faster than the prayer a Muslim makes for another Muslim in his absence” (Tirmidhi, Birr, 50/1980).

Jalaluddin Al Rumi has the following to say:

“Look to giving out from yourself, your wealth, and your property in order to please hearts. So let the prayer of that heart be light and illumination for you, while you are in the pitch blackness of the grave....”

Scenes of Virtue

One day the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“If a Muslim asks for something from Allah, Allah Most High will definitely grant his wish or He will remove evil from him in proportion to what He would have given him, as long as he does not ask for anything sinful or does not cut his relations with his relatives”

One of his Companions said:

“In that case we desire many things from Allah”. The Messenger of Allah responded as such:

“Allah’s grace is greater than the things you ask from Him” (Tirmidhi, Deavat, 115/3573; Ahmad, II, 18).

55. Abu Dawud, Vitir, 23/1482)



Almighty Allah does not reject sincere prayers. However He does not accept certain demands made that do not comply with Absolute Destiny, even though they may be asked for in complete sincerity. However, the slave should never give up and should continue to pray. This is because in those cases the response to the prayer has been deferred to the afterlife. Almighty Allah has said:

“Your Lord says, “Call on Me and I will answer you” (Mu'min, 23:60)



The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

“The prayer of the slave will be answered as long as he does not ask for something that will lead to sin or to his relations with his relatives being severed and if he is not impatient about the result”

He was asked:

“O Messenger of Allah! What does it mean for him to be impatient (about the result)?”

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“The slave says: “I keep praying but my Lord does not answer my prayer”. He gives up when his prayer is not answered immediately and he stops praying. (This is how he becomes impatient). (Muslim, Zikir, 92).

Likewise the prophet Zaccharia ﷺ prayed ““My Lord, do not leave me on my own.... (Anbiya, 21:89)

In saying so he asked for a son with the purpose of strengthening the religion, yet his prayer was only answered 40 years later in the form of the prophet Yahya ﷺ.



One time the Messenger of Allah saw a man in ritual prayer, who did not send blessings on the Prophet before he started supplicating. Upon this he said:

“This man was impatient (in a hurry)”. Then he called that man to him and said as a caution to his entire community:



“Whenever one of you prays, let him first praise Allah Most High and then send blessings upon me. Then let him ask for whatever he so wishes” (Tirmidhi, Deavat, 64/3477).



The Prophet Muhammad advised that a believer pray for his brother in religion either in his presence or in his absence. To Omar رضي الله عنه, who asked him for permission to perform the Lesser Pilgrimage he said:

“My brother, include us in your prayers, do not forget about us” (Tirmidhi, Deavat, 109/3562).

Omar رضي الله عنه explains how he felt when he heard these words:

“If they gave me the whole world I would not have been as happy as I was when I heard these words” (Abu Dawud, Vitir, 23/1498).

The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم has stated:

“The prayer of the Muslim that he makes for his brother in religion in his absence will be accepted. Whenever somebody prays for good for their brother, the angel that is on duty beside him prays for him: “May Allah accept your prayer and give you the same” (Muslim, Zikr 87, 88; Ibn-i Majah, Manasik, 5).

In that case we should pray for our Muslim brothers and sisters and ask them to pray for us.



What we need most in this fleeting world more than anything else is the state of *taqwa* (piety), and thus this is what we should ask for in our prayers. A man once came to the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم and said:

“O Messenger of Allah! I am about to take a journey, please pray for me”.

The Prophet replied:

“May Allah bestow piety upon you”. The man said:

“A little more, o Messenger of Allah”.

Allah’s Messenger said:

“May Allah forgive your sins”. The Companion said:



“A little more, may my father and mother be sacrificed for you o Messenger of Allah”

The Prophet ﷺ said:

“*May Allah Most High make it easy for you to do good wherever you so happen to be*” (Tirmidhi, Deavat, 44/3444).



One day the Messenger of Allah read the following words of Abraham عليه السلام and the prayer of Jesus عليه السلام:

“My Lord! They have misguided many of mankind. If anyone follows me, he is with me...” (Ibrahim, 14:36).

“If You punish them, they are Your slaves. If you forgive them, You are the Almighty, the All-Wise”. (Maide, 5:118).

After that he raised his hands and wept, pleadingly:

“O Allah! Protect my community, have mercy on my community”. Upon this Almighty Allah said:

“O Gabriel! Though your Lord knows best (but in order for people to know), go to Muhammad and ask him why he is crying”

Gabriel went to him and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ told him that he was crying because he was worried about his community. When Gabriel returned to give this news Allah Most High said:

“O Gabriel! Go to Muhammad and tell him the good news that: “We will please you in regard to your community and We will never make you sad” (Muslim, Iman, 346).

So was our Prophet ever concerned with and merciful towards his community. As a response we need to deeply reflect on this *hadith* and ask ourselves how much we love him in return and if we do love him then we must ask ourselves how much of his *sunnah* have we applied to our lives and how much of his character have we adopted.



Ibn-i Abbas رضي الله عنه narrates:



“I once heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say the following supplication after the night time prayer:

“O Allah! I ask that You give me from Your Presence such mercy that with it You will guide my heart, regulate my affairs, and put order into my disorder. And that you will fill me with perfect faith, and bestow on my outer, good deeds and You will render my deeds pure and sincere, and inspire me with a suitable way to gain Your pleasure, and give us friends that will be familiar to me and protect me from all manner of evil.

O Allah! Give me such faith, such conviction that leaves no prospect for unbelief. Give me such mercy that with it I can reach a station in this world and the next, which is worthwhile in Your eyes.

O Allah! I ask you for salvation by Your grace in Your judgement of us. I implore of You a special rank worthy of the martyrs (who are close to You), I wish for the life of Your happy slaves, and I ask you for help against our enemies.

O Allah! Even though my understanding is limited and my deeds are few, I bring to your door my (worldly and otherworldly needs) and ask that You meet them. I am in need of Your Mercy, and I present my state to you.

O my Sustainer who judges all affairs and brings them about and who sees the needs of the hearts and offers the cure. As you have separated the seas, I ask that you separate me from the fire of Hell. I ask to be protected from destruction and from the torture of the grave.

O Allah! If there is any goodness in any of your slaves or any bounty that You have promised Your creatures that I have not been able to perceive or that has not been included in my intention and has thus remained outside of my petition, then O Lord of the Worlds, I ask You to bring it about and bestow it upon me out of Your mercy.

O Allah! O Possessor of the strong rope and correct path (such as the Qur'an and the religion). On the Day of Judgement on which you have promised the unbelievers hellfire , I ask you for safety against the hellfire, and on the day after which eternity begins I ask you for Paradise along with those angels that have attained to your Great Presence, together with those who made much bowing and prostration in this world, and who kept their promise. You are the Possessor of endless mercy, You are the Possessor of



endless love, You do whatever You wish (however much the petitioners ask for and no matter how big You are capable of granting them all.) O Allah! Make us of those who have not strayed nor caused others to stray and make us guides of guidance who have attained to guidance. Make us vehicles for peace amongst our friends and enemies to our enemies. We love those who love you because of their love for You. We are enemies of those who go against You because of their animosity to You.

O Allah! This is our prayer. It is up to you whether You accept it with your gracious beneficence. This is our struggle and You are our support.

O Allah! Fill my heart with light, and my grave with light; place light in front of me, and light behind me; place light on my right and light on my left; place light above me and light below me; place light in my ears and light in my eyes, and light in my hair and my skin and my flesh and my blood and my bones.

O Allah increase my light, give me such light that it is worth all of what I have said and a light that will encompass everything that I could not say.

Glory be to the One Who is enveloped in dignity and Who has made Himself known by His dignity. I glorify the One who has enveloped Himself in greatness and who, for this reason, continually offers extensive bounty to His slaves. I glorify the One who is the only One worthy of glorification and holiness. I glorify the One who possesses majesty and beneficence. I glorify the One who possesses majesty and kindness. He is above all faults". (Tirmidhi, Deavat, 30/3419)



One time people complained of the lack of rain to the Beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Upon this, the Messenger of Allah asked that a pulpit be brought. The pulpit was assembled where the congregational, *eid* and funeral prayers were held (the *musalla*). A day was determined for when the people should gather there. The Prophet ﷺ set off when the redness of the sun had just appeared on the horizon. He arrived at the (*musalla*) and ascended the pulpit. He pronounced the *takbir* by saying "Allahu Akbar", praised Allah and then said:

"You have complained that your country is in drought and that rain has not fallen at its usual time and is late. Allah (glorified and majestic is he) has

ordered you to supplicate to Him. He has promised that he will answer your prayer” and then the Prophet proceeded to make the following prayer:

“Praise belongs to the Lord of all the worlds. He is the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate. He is the Master of the Day of Judgement. There is no god but Allah. He does as He pleases. O our Sustainer! You are Allah, and there is no other god but You. You are rich. We are poor. Let the rains fall upon us. Make what you allow to fall be strength and power for us. Let it last us for a period”.

After saying this he held up his hands. He lifted them up so high that the whites of his underarms could be seen. Then he turned his back on the people. His hands were still up in the air as he was doing this. Then he turned back to the people. He left the pulpit and prayed two cycles of prayer. Allah Most High immediately sent the clouds. It thundered and lightning struck. By the permission of Allah it began to rain. Before the Prophet had a chance to return to the Mosque it started to pour down rain. When the Messenger of Allah saw the congregation hurrying to take shelter he smiled and said:

“I bear witness that Allah is capable of everything and that I am the slave and Messenger of Allah” (Abu Dawud, Istiska, 2/1173).

After asking for rain from Allah Most High, our Prophet performed the special ‘Prayer for Rain’ and in this way turned to supererogatory prayer for the acceptance of his supplication.



The Prophet’s wife, Aisha  has said:

“One night I awoke to find that Allah’s Messenger was not beside me (in bed). I thought that he might have gone to another of his wives. I fumbled around looking for him when my hands touched his feet. Then I realised that Allah’s Messenger was in prostration. I listened and heard him weeping and pleading as follows:

اللَّهُمَّ أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمُعَافَاتِكَ مِنْ عُقُوبَتِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ
لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ



“O Allah! I seek refuge in You from Your wrath. I seek refuge in Your forgiveness from your punishment. O Allah I seek refuge in You from You and from no other. I am incapable of truly praising You . You are as You have praised Yourself” (Muslim, Salat, 222; Tirmidhi, Deavat, 75/3493)



Omar رضي الله عنه narrates:

“On the day of Badr, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ looked at the polytheists and saw that they numbered a thousand men. His companions however numbered only 313⁵⁶. He immediately turned towards the direction of the Ka’bah and raised his hands in prayer. He began to implore loudly to his Lord as follows:

“O Allah! Grant me what You have promised. O Allah. Grant me victory. O Allah. If you destroy this community of Islam then there will be nobody left on the face of the earth to worship you”

He continued supplicating with his hands raised until his cloak fell from his shoulders. Seeing this, Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه went to him and lifted it up over his shoulder and then said to him:

“O Messenger of Allah! Your prayer to Allah is sufficient. Allah Most High will definitely bring about His promise to you”

At that point Allah Most High, full of Honour and Majesty revealed the following verse:

“Remember when you called on your Lord for help and He responded to you: “I will reinforce you with a thousand angels riding rank after rank”. (Anfal, 8:9)

And on that day too Allah Most High sent angels to help the believers. (Muslim, 58; Bukhari, Megazi, 4).



There was a companion called Abu Mi’lak who was involved in trade in partnership with others. He was an honest and pious person. One time he had set off (on a journey) when his path was cut by an armed robber who said:

“Take out whatever you have. I am going to kill you”

“If your aim is to take my wealth then take it” said Abu Mi’lak

“I only want your life” said the robber. Abu Mi’lak said:

“In that case, allow me to perform the prayer. The robber said to him:

“Pray as much as you like”. After he performed the prayer, Abu Mi’lak made the following supplication:

يَا وَدُودُ يَا ذَا الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدِ يَا فَعَالًا لِمَا يُرِيدُ أَسْأَلُكَ بِعِزَّتِكَ الَّتِي
لَا تُرَامُ وَمُلْكِكَ الَّذِي لَا يُضَامُ وَبِنُورِكَ الَّذِي مَلَأَ أَرْكَانَ عَرْشِكَ
أَنْ تَكْفِينِي شَرَّ هَذَا (اللِّصِّ) يَا مُعِيثُ اغْنِنِي

“O Beloved of hearts! O Possessor of the Mighty throne. O Allah, who does whatever He wills. In reverence for your unattainable dignity and your unobtainable kingdom and the light that envelops your throne, I ask that you protect me from the evil of this robber. O Allah who runs to everyone’s aid, please come to my aid”

Abu Mi’lak repeated this prayer three times. As soon as he finished his prayer a cavalryman appeared with lance in hand at ear-level and killed the robber. The companion, who was saved by the grace of Allah, said to that cavalryman:

“Who are you? Allah used you as a means to help me”

The cavalrymen replied:

“I am a heavenly resident from the fourth heaven. When you made your first prayer I heard the doors of the heavens crack. At your second prayer I heard the clamour of the residents of the skies. When you prayed for the third time it was said: “Someone in trouble is asking for help. When I heard this I asked Allah to appoint me to kill the robber. Allah Most High accepted my plea and I came. Know this, that whoever does the ablution and prays four cycles of prayer and says this supplication will have their prayer accepted whether they are in trouble or not”. (Ibn-i Hajar, al isaba, IV, 182)



The Prophet's wife, Ummu Salamah رضي الله عنها was once asked:

“O mother of the believers! Which prayer did the Messenger of Allah ﷺ read most when he was with you?” She answered:

“Most of the time he would pray:

يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى دِينِكَ

“O Allah who is the turner over of hearts! Make my heart firm upon your religion” (Tirmidhi, Deavat, 89/3522; Ahmad, IV, 182, VI, 91)



The Messenger of Allah made many prayers for the guidance of his community. For the guidance of the people of Yemen he prayed “O Allah! Turn their hearts toward us” (Tirmidhi, Menakib, 71/3934). The people of Taif turned him out of their town by stoning and insulting him in all manner of insults and continued to bring harm to the Muslims with their intense resistance until the 9th year of the *hijrah*. Yet for these people he prayed to Allah and sought refuge in Him: “O my Sustainer! Grant guidance to the *Thaqif*. Send them to us”.

When the Prophet ﷺ sent Ali to Yemen to act as a judge he placed his hand upon the chest of his nephew, anxious at the responsibility of the burden placed upon him, and prayed as follows:

“O Allah! Guide his heart toward the truth, and make his tongue steady on the path of truth”

Ali رضي الله عنه later said:

“After this prayer I never again hesitated when I had to judge between two people” (Ibn-i Maja, Ahkam, I).



During the halt of the Greater Pilgrimage, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ placed one of his hands on the halter of his camel and the other he raised and made a long supplication which expressed his servant hood and the sensitivity of his heart. A part of this beautiful supplication is as follows:



“O Allah! Praise be to you as You have praised Yourself and in a much better way than we could ever praise You. O Allah! My prayer, my worship, my life and my death are all for You. My return is to You alone.

O Allah! I seek refuge in You from the torture of the grave, from whisperings that swarm the heart, and from disorder in my affairs. O Allah! I seek refuge in You from the evil of disasters brought by strong winds.

O Allah! Bring light to my eyes, my ears and my heart. O Allah. Expand for me my breast. Make easy my task. O Allah. I seek refuge in You from health that turns into sickness, from your punishment that may strike suddenly and from your entire wrath. O Allah. Guide me to the straight path. Forgive my past and my future (sins).

O Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, who raises the degrees and who bestows bounty. Different tongues overflowing and resonating are all being raised to You and asking from You. My wish from You is this: in this arena of examination, when the people of the world have forgotten me I ask that You remember me.

O Allah! You hear my words. You see where I am. You know everything about me, both open and secret. None of my affairs are hidden from You. I am helpless and poor. I ask you for help and mercy. I am afraid. I admit my faults. Just as the helpless asks from You, so too do I ask. Just as a lowly sinner begs from You, so too do I beg. However it is that a slave of Yours hangs his head low in Your Presence, tears falling from his eyes, sacrificing his all for Your sake, placing his face on the ground and prays to You, so too do I pray to You. O my Sustainer! Do not deprive me of having my prayers answered. Be Kind and Merciful to me, o the Best of those who are asked and the most generous of givers”⁵⁷

What a sincere and concise prayer from the Messenger of Allah, who was free of sin. This prayer demonstrates the state that the heart should be in, in the presence of Allah Almighty...



A part of the supplication made at Arafat by our righteous predecessors (*salaf-i salihin*) is as follows:

57. See Ibn-i kathir, al Bidaya, V, 166-8; Haysami, III, 252; Ibn-i Kayyum, Zadu'l Mead, Beirut 1995, II, 237



“O Allah! Who can praise himself in front of You? O Allah! My tongue is tied up in sin and I have no useful deed nor any other intercessor, other than my hope in Your mercy, that will bring me to You. O Allah. I know because of my faults that I have no place in Your presence and I am ashamed to apologise to You. However You are the most generous of the generous. O Allah. Even though I am not worthy of attaining to your mercy, please let your mercy reach me nonetheless. Because your mercy is broad enough to encompass all. O Allah. However big my faults are, they are small compared to your forgiveness. Please forgive them O Possessor of Generosity.

My Lord. If you only forgive your obedient slaves, then who can the sinners turn to?

My Lord. If you only show mercy and compassion to your pious slaves then who will the reprobates turn to for help?

I am in need of you at every instant. You, on the other hand, have no need of me. Only You, as my creator can forgive me. Allow me to return from where I am with all of my needs having been met, with my desires and my wishes come true.

O Allah, o possessor and ruler of the needs of those who ask. O Allah, who knows what is within those who are silent. O Allah, besides whom there is no other Sustainer to turn to for help. O Allah, besides whom there is no other creator who is to be feared. O Allah for whom there is no intercessor to apply to and no doorkeeper whom one can bribe. O Allah, whose generosity and kindness increase as wants increase; and whose superior benevolence increases as needs multiply. O Allah! You are hospitable to each of your visitors. We too are Your visitors. Host us in Your Paradise.

O Allah! To each group is given a gift and to all askers is given what they ask for; offerings are made for all visitors. And to each person who hopes for it, reward is given to them. We have come, as a group, to Your Sacred House. We have halted at this great shrine⁵⁸ of Yours. We are present

here in these holy places. Our hope is to attain to the great reward and recompense that is with You. Do not let our hopes be in vain o Allah! ⁵⁹



Abu Umama  narrates:

“The Messenger of Allah  read many prayers but we were not able to memorise any of them. One day we said to him:

“O Messenger of Allah! You have read many prayers but we have been unable to learn all of them”. The Prophet then said:

“Shall I teach you a prayer that encompasses all of those prayers? Say as follows:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ خَيْرِ مَا سَأَلَكَ مِنْهُ نَبِيُّكَ مُحَمَّدٌ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
وَنَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا اسْتَعَاذَكَ مِنْهُ نَبِيُّكَ مُحَمَّدٌ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
وَأَنْتَ الْمُسْتَعَانُ وَعَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

“O Allah. We beg of You all the good things that Your Prophet Muhammad  sought from You and we seek Your protection against all the evils that Your Prophet Muhammad  sought Your protection. You are the only Helper who is asked for help. You are the One who will allow man to reach his aim in both this world and the next. There is no strength to avoid sin, nor no power to perform worship other than from Allah!”



Anas  narrates:

“The Messenger of Allah  once visited a sick person who had lost much weight and asked:

“Were you praying for anything from Allah or did you ask for anything from Him?” The sick person replied:

“Yes. I used to pray “O Allah! Give me the punishment now that you would have given me in the afterlife!”

The Messenger of Allah  said:

59. See Ghazalli, *Ihya Ulumi'd- Din*, Beirut, 1990, I, 337-8; Beyhaki, *ShuAbu'l Iman*, II, 25-6



“Glory be to Allah! You do not have the power to withstand this. Couldn’t you have prayed as follows:

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

“.. O our Sustainer! Give us good in this world and give us good in the hereafter and protect us from the punishment of the fire” (Baqara, 2:201).

The man then said this prayer and was cured. (Muslim, Zikr, 23; Tirmidhi, Deavat, 71/3487)

Thus we must be very careful about what we ask for from Allah and we must comply with the etiquette of supplication. We should always ask for goodness and well being from Allah.



According to a narration by Ali ؑ a contracted slave once came to him and said:

“I am not able to repay my debt, help me”. He said to him:

“Shall I teach you a prayer that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught me? As long as you continue saying it, Allah Most High will help you pay back your debt even if it as great as the Mountain of Thabir” and he read the following prayer:

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِي بِحَلَالِكَ عَنْ حَرَامِكَ وَأَغْنِنِي بِفَضْلِكَ عَمَّنْ سِوَاكَ

“O Allah! Bestow on me lawful provision and protect me from the unlawful! By Your grace do not make me dependent on any other than You” (Tirmidhi, Deavat, 110/3563).



When Sultan Murad I entered the plains of Kosovo he was met with a fierce storm which left dust in its wake. Not a thing could be seen. That night was the Night of Beraat (Forgiveness). After praying two cycles of prayer, Murad Han made the following prayer, tears flowing down his cheeks:

“O my Sustainer! If this storm has appeared due to the sins of this helpless slave of yours then please do not punish my innocent soldiers with



it. O Allah! They came here for the sole purpose of exalting Your Name and propagating Islam.

O my Sustainer! You have not deprived me of victory all of these years. You have always accepted my prayers. Again I turn to You, so accept my prayer. Give us some rain. Let it lift this dust storm. Let us see clearly the faces of the unbelievers and let us do combat face to face”

O my Sustainer! Wealth and this slave too are both Yours. I am a helpless slave. You know best my intention and my secrets. My aim is not wealth nor property. I wish only to gain Your pleasure.

O my Sustainer! Do not destroy these believing soldiers and defeat them at the hands of the unbelievers. Give them such victory that all of the Muslims can celebrate. And if You so wish let this slave of Yours be the sacrifice for that feast.

O my Sustainer! Do not make me the cause of the destruction of so many Muslim soldiers. Help them and grant them victory. I would sacrifice my life for them if only to be accepted by You into the community of martyrs. I am willing to surrender my spirit for these soldiers of Islam... You have made me a soldier. Bestow martyrdom on me now through your Grace and beneficence... Amen!”

After this sincere, heartfelt entreaty the Sultan began to recite from the Qur’an with extraordinary calm. It wasn’t long before the clouds of mercy appeared. A heavy rain poured over the plains of Kosovo. The winds stopped blowing. The dust disappeared...

The enemy was then attacked. The battle that lasted for eight hours ended in victory.

As Murad Han was walking amongst the wounded and martyrs of the battle field, a wounded Serbian shoulder stood up and said:

“Let me go. I’m going to the Sultan to kiss his hand and become Muslim”. The Serbian soldier who was pretending to be wounded made as if to kiss the hand of Sultan Murad. He then quickly plunged a sword he had hidden under his arm into the chest of the Sultan. And there the prayer of Sultan Murad was answered in the most perfect way and he was blessed with martyrdom...



In conclusion, supplication has a central position in the life of worship and servant hood. This is because one of the things Allah is most pleased with is that the slave perceives his helplessness and raises his hands to present his case to his Lord and to pray and seek refuge in Him. This is why Allah Most High punishes the one who refuses to lower himself and disdains from praying and does not humble himself in asking for anything.

The Holy Qur'an says:

“Say: “What has My Lord to do with you if you do not call on Him?”

(Furqan, 25:77)

Supplication is thus the key to the gates of mercy, the weapon of the believer, the pillar of religion and the light of the heavens and the earth. Whoever has had the gates of prayer opened for them has also had opened for them the gates of goodness, wisdom and mercy. The one who wishes to have their prayer accepted in times of distress and difficulty must make sure to pray much during times of plenty and comfort. Great souls are those who live their lives in a constant state of prayer.

e. Humility and deep reverence (*khushu*)

Khushu indicates the state of the heart being filled with the love and fear of Allah and the limbs finding peace and tranquillity as a result of these feelings.

Khushu, whose essence is in the heart but whose manifestations appear in the body, has two aspects:

The aspect that is of the heart is when it perceives its nothingness in the face of its Sustainer's magnificence and majesty. The *nafs* too then submits to the command of Allah, and attains to superior manners and feelings of reverence and respect. The outer aspect is when the effect of these feelings brings about dignity and tranquillity in the limbs of the body. For instance to stop the eyes from wandering when one is performing the prayer and to look at the place of prostration...

The best example of how to apply *khushu* to one's life and one's worship can be seen in the life of the Prophet ﷺ and his Blessed Companions. Allah's Messenger ﷺ did not evaluate any stage of his life without relating

it the hereafter. He drew attention to the importance of embodying oneself in a spiritual state during worship as one would at the last breath.

A Companion once approached the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said:

“O Messenger of Allah! Give me some advice, only let it be short and concise”. Upon this the Prophet ﷺ said:

“Perform your salat (prayer) as one who is saying farewell to his life. Do not utter any word that you will have to apologise for. Do not envy what others have” (Ibn-i Majah, Zuhd, 15; Ahmad, V, 412).

Worship is only of any worth when it is performed in a state of vigilance, deep reverence (*khushu*) and reflection. The most important virtue of the Blessed Companions and those righteous believers who followed them was this consistent character in their heart.

Abdullah bin Mas’ud رضي الله عنه would tell his friends:

“You pray more and struggle more than the companions. But they are yet more virtuous than you”

When it was asked of him:

“What makes them more virtuous than us?” he answered:

“They were more abstaining from the world and more determined for the hereafter than you”. (Ibnul Jawzi, Sifatul Safwa, Beirut 1979, I, 420).

The state of deep reverence during prayer is so important that the salvation of the slave occurs through this door. The Holy Qur’an says in Chapter *Mu’minun*:

“It is the believers who are successful: those who are humble in their salat” (Mu’minun, 23:1-2).

Our Prophet also informs us of how the slave will be treated according to how well he observed the prayer:

“A slave performs the prayer, however, only one-tenth or one-ninth, or one-eighth, or one-seventh, or one-sixth, or one-fifth, or one-fourth, or one third or half of it is recorded for him”. (Abu Dawud, Salat, 123-4/796).

That is, there is reward for the prayer of the slave only if it is performed with reverence and attentiveness.



Yet again our Sustainer explains how the believer can perform the prayer with reverence as follows:

“Seek help in steadfastness and *salat*. But that is a very hard thing, except for the humble: those who are aware that they will meet their Lord and that they will return to Him” (Baqara, 2:45-6)

That is, one will have reached a state of true *khushu* or deep reverence if one performs the prayer with the certainty that one day they will eventually appear in the presence of their Lord and have to account for everything that they did.

As this state of awe during the prayer continues it will in time extend to the whole of the believers life. This is why Jaluluddin Al Rumi رحمته الله explains the verse **“those who do *salat* and are constant in it”** (Ma’arij, 70:22-3) as follows:

“Your state after prayer should be the same as your state during the prayer”.

In order to be able to attain to this state it is necessary to become like the Messenger of Allah ﷺ by benefiting from his exalted character and by forming in the heart a sincere and deep bond with him. As he said:

“..Allah loves the heart that is full of awe, sorrow, and compassion and which teaches goodness to the people and calls to the obedience of Allah. And He abhors the heart that occupies itself with vain things, which spends its entire night in sleep even though it does not know whether or not its soul will be returned to it, and remembers Allah very little” (Deylemi, I, 158)

Scenes of Virtue

Abdullah bin Shihhir رضي الله عنه informs us of the deep reverence of the Prophet as follows:

“One time I had gone to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He was praying and crying and it sounded like his chest was boiling”. (Abu Dawud, Salat, 156-7, 904; Ahmad, IV, 25,26).

It is vital that one pays attention to the formal rules (*fiqh*) of the prayer. However, as the *hadiths* state we must also take particular care to

be scrupulous about our spiritual state. *Fiqh* prepares the slave in terms of purity, ablution and cleanliness, whereas purity of the heart, or *khushu* (deep reverence) allows the believer to attain to peaceful presence and perceptiveness of the heart and “divine meeting”.



The Prophet ﷺ expressed the necessity of performing the prayer in a state of great awe and entreaty to Almighty Allah:

“The prayer (salat) is performed in cycles (rakats) of two. At the end of each rakat the believer sits for the tashahhud⁶⁰. Salat is deep reverence, and an expression of one’s humility and lowliness before Allah. (At the end) you raise your hands to your Sublime Sustainer with the palms turned towards your face and you plead: “O my Sustainer! O my Sustainer!”. The prayer of the one who does not do this is deficient. (Tirmidhi, Salat, 166/385).



Aisha رضي الله عنها narrates:

“Abu Jahm رضي الله عنه once presented a gift of an embroidered, elegant dress to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ who performed the prayer with it. When he finished he said:

“Give this dress back to Abu Jahm. My eyes were distracted by the embroidery on it. It almost made me lose my presence in the prayer”. (Muwatta, Salat, 67; Bukhari, Salat, 14).



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught his community the rules of Hajj by personally applying them during the Farewell Hajj. He explained that it was necessary in particular to have deep reverence during Hajj just as with other forms of worship.

And so it was that the Prophet was once returning to Muzdalifa from Arafat on the Day of Arafat. He heard some people behind him screaming and shouting and hitting their camels and the camels were bellowing. He pointed his staff at them and said:

60. Tashahhud is the part of the ritual prayer when the believer sits and recites the tashahhud prayer (translator’s note).



“O people! (Slow down) Be steady. You cannot gain reward by rushing”
(Bukhari, Hajj, 94; Muslim, Hajj, 268).



Ali ؑ narrates:

“The Prophet once saw a man playing with his beard during the prayer. Seeing this he said:

“If his heart had felt any khushu (pious reverence) so too would all of his limbs” (Ali al-Muttaki, VIII, 197/22530).



Aisha ؓ narrates that her mother Ummu Ruman ؓ, once said to her:

“Once when I was praying I kept swaying to and fro. When Abu Bakr saw this state of mine he chided me so much that I almost interrupted my prayer. After he said:

“The Messenger of Allah has said:

“Whenever one of you stands to pray let every part of him remain still and in deep reverence. Let him not sway back and forth like the Jews. For the stillness of the limbs in prayer is one of the aspects that completes the prayer” (Alusi, Ruhul Ma’ani, Beirut ts., XVIII, 3).



Despite being given great wealth and kingdom, the prophet Solomon ؑ was able to free his heart from attachment to the world and live a life of servant hood, being in a continual state of pious reverence, humility and fervour. This virtue of his has been explained as follows:

“Despite having been given wealth, Solomon never once in his life lifted his head up towards the heavens out of the deep reverence he felt for Allah” (Ibn-i Abi Shayba, al Musannaf, Beirut, Darul-Fikr 1989, VIII, 118).



Abdullah bin Abu Bakr ؓ narrates:

“Abu Talha was once praying in his garden. A bird called ‘Dubsi’ tried to fly out of the garden and searched for a place to get out. This amused Abu Talha and his eyes followed the bird for a second. Then he turned back



to his prayer but he forgot how many cycles he had prayed. Thinking that this bird became a cause of distraction and ruined his state of reverence he then went to the Prophet and told him what happened:

“O Messenger of Allah! I give this bird of mine in charity. You may use it as you wish and give it to whomever you wish” (Muwatta, Salat, 69)



How exquisite is the following event which shows the deep reverence of the Companions during prayer.

“One time when the Prophet was returning to Madina after an expedition he stopped along the way. He turned to his Companions and asked:

“Who will keep watch tonight?”

Ammar bin Yasir  from the Emmigrants and Abbad bin Bishr  from the Helpers immediately responded:

“We will o Messenger of Allah”

Abbad  then asked Ammar :

“Which part of the night would you like to keep watch over; the beginning or the end?” Ammar  replied:

“I would like to keep watch at the end” and then went to sleep on his side. Abbad then began to perform the prayer. At that point a polytheist appeared. When he saw a dark figure standing he realised it must be a guard and he aimed an arrow at him. The arrow hit Abbad. Abbad removed the arrow and continued to pray. The man aimed again a second and third time and hit him each time. Each time Abbad would stand upright, take out the arrow and continue to pray. Then he bowed down and went into prostration. After he ended his prayer he woke up his friends and said:

“Wake up. I have been wounded”

Ammar immediately sprung up. When the polytheist saw them he realised that he had been seen and escaped. When Ammar saw Abbad bleeding profusely he said:

“Glory be to Allah! Why did not you wake me up when the first arrow was thrown?”



Abbad gave the following awesome reply which showed his passion and enthusiasm for the prayer and the deep reverence of his worship:

“I was reading a chapter from the Qur’an. I did not want to end my prayer without finishing it. But when the arrows kept coming without a break I stopped reading and bowed down. I swear to Allah if I hadn’t been afraid of losing my position of commander appointed to me by the Messenger of Allah I would have rather died than have that chapter interrupted”



Asma رضي الله عنها, the daughter of Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه, was once asked by her grandson Abdullah:

“Grandma! What did the Companions of the Prophet used to do when they listened to the Qur’an?”

Asma رضي الله عنها replied:

“Tears would flow from their eyes and their bodies would shudder just as mentioned in the Qur’an. (Bayhaki, ShuAbu’l Iman, II, 365).

Almighty Allah describes his servants who read the Qur’an with deep reverence as follows:

“When it (the Qur’an) is recited to them, ... weeping, they fall to the ground in prostration, and it increases them in humility”. (Isra, 17:109)

“The skins of those who fear their Lord tremble at it (the Qur’an) and then their skins and hearts yield softly to the remembrance of Allah” (Az Zumar, 3:23)



One time during a battle an arrow lodged itself into the foot of Ali رضي الله عنه. They couldn’t take it out due to the pain. Ali said to them:

“Let me perform the prayer, then you can take it out”

They did as he said. They were then able to remove it easily without any difficulty. When Ali, who felt no pain whatsoever, ended his prayer he asked them:

“What did you do?”



They replied:

“We took the arrow out”



Veysel Karani was once asked by his mother:

“My son. How are you able to worship for an entire night until morning? How do you bear it?”

That great friend of Allah responded:

“O my beautiful mother! I perform my worship with great care and precision. With deep reverence my heart expands to such a degree that just as I do not realise what it is to feel fatigue, I feel cut off from the world and all manner of feelings related to my body. And then before I know it, it is morning...”

“What is this state of *khushu* Uways?”

“*Khushu* is when your body is unaware of even a spear piercing it”.



According to a narration whenever Zayn al Abideen rose to take his ablution his face would turn pale and whenever he began to pray his legs would shake. When he was asked the reason he said:

“Are you not aware of Whose presence I am entering? (Abu Nuaym, Hilya, III, 133).

One time when he was praying his house caught fire. However he remained unaware of this. When he finished his prayer and was told of the situation they asked him:

“What was it that made you fail to notice that your house was on fire?”.

Zayn al Abideen replied:

“The fire that awaits mankind in the hereafter made me forget the fire of this world”.



The prayer of Muslim bin Yesar was of a similar nature. One time he was praying in a mosque in Basra. Suddenly the mosque came falling



down. However Muslim bin Yesar remained unaware of this event and continued his prayer. When he finished they asked him:

“The mosque came crashing down yet you did not move an inch. What is this state?”

Muslim bin Yesar asked in surprise:

“Did the mosque really come tumbling down?” as further proof that he truly did not feel any of it during his prayer.



A friend of Allah narrates:

“I was once praying the afternoon prayer behind Zunnun-i Misri. When that blessed Saint said “*Allahu Akbar* (Allah is the Greatest), the word “*Allah*” had such a great impact on him that it was as if there was no life left in his body. He froze and stood there just like that. When he said the word “*Akbar*” my heart crumbled to pieces from the majesty of the word.



Whenever Amir bin Abdullah stood to pray he would disconnect from the (outside) world completely and nothing that was other than Allah could damage his state of pious reverence.

“I would prefer spears to pierce my body rather than be aware of other people’s speech and actions during my prayer” he used to say.



Bahauddin Nakshiband ؒ was once asked:

“How can a slave gain pious reverence during the prayer?” He answered:

“There are four conditions:

1. His provision must be lawful
2. He must distance himself from heedlessness while performing the ablution
3. He must realise his presence (before Allah) with the first *takbir*.



4. He must never forget Allah outside of prayer. That is, his state of presence, tranquillity and abstaining from sin must continue after his prayer has ended”



In short, *khushu* is to carry out Allah’s commands with ardour and to meticulously refrain from what He has forbidden. *Khushu* (pious reverence), *taqwa* (God-consciousness), *ikhlas* (sincerity), and *ihsan* (beneficence) are similar in their states and meanings. The source of all of these is love for Allah. Love of Allah is an indicator of the state of the heart of the believer. This spiritual state manifests itself as worship that is carried out with pious reverence and perfection of one’s actions.

Pious reverence must fill our hearts at every instant of our lives and while we are carrying out all forms of worship, in particular the prayer. And it should be reflected to those around us from our limbs as a state of peace and tranquillity.

7. To be familiar with the Holy Qur’an

The Holy Qur’an is a teacher of guidance that shows us the true path. It is mercy for the believers, and a cure for the maladies of the heart. At the same time it is a divine mentor that takes mankind out of the darkness and brings him into the light and closer to Allah with His permission.

The Holy Qur’an is a divine decree that informs man of the purpose of the creation of all things. It proclaims the wisdom in the creation of mankind and commands that life be lived in a manner suitable to the divine order present throughout the universe.

Almighty Allah states:

“Allah has sent down the Supreme Discourse, a Book consistent in its frequent repetitions. The skins of those who fear their Lord tremble at it and then their skins and hearts yield softly to the remembrance of Allah. That is Allah’s guidance by which He guides whoever He wills. And no one can guide those whom Allah misguides”. (Az Zumar, 39:23)





This verse describes the kind of relationship our heart should have with the Qur'an.

The degree of our *taqwa* is related to our Quranic ethos which manifests itself in the form of a Quranic character consisting of sincerity in our worship, beauty in our behaviour, and depth of our hearts.

The Holy Qur'an is the most reliable handle one can hold onto. Allah Most High has extended it to those slaves of His who want to gain His good pleasure and who want to be saved from evil and from eternal punishment. Those who hold onto it are saved, and will be raised and dignified; those who reject it will be brought down low; they will be debased and they will stray far from the straight path.

The Holy Qur'an is a spiritual banquet that Allah Most High has prepared as an offering for His slaves. Those who accept this invitation from their Lord and partake of the feast will taste the pleasure of endless bounties which result in peace, happiness and joy.

The true dignity and honour of the human being depends on the degree to which they carry out its commands and perfect themselves with its character. That is, mankind can only attain to the dignity and honour that is in accordance with the purpose of his creation, to the degree that he envelops himself in the spirituality and prosperity of the Qur'an and obeys the divine commands. Almighty Allah commands us to reflect on life and events with the logic of the Qur'an by having properly comprehended it. Thus the mind, which can be a source of both happiness and dissipation, needs the direction offered through revelation.

If we did not have a door of reflection opened up for us by the Qur'an, we would be deprived of perceiving and expressing many truths. Accordingly thinking deeply about the contents of the Qur'an will ensure the discovery of many paths of goodness.

It is necessary to become familiar with the Qur'an and to occupy oneself with it much in order to properly learn the Islamic character.

It is stated in a hadith:

“If anyone of you loves to supplicate and converse (implore and speak with) your Lord, let him read the Qur'an with his heart fully attendant and attentive. (Suyuti, I, 13/360).



“Read the Qur’an! Because on the Day of Judgement, the Qur’an will appear as an intercessor for the one who read it” (Muslim, Musafirin, 252,253; Ahmad, V, 249, 251).

“On the Day of Judgement a crown will be placed on the heads of the parents of those who read the Qur’an and act according to it. The light from this crown is more beautiful than the light from the sun that would light up a house were it to be put into it. In that case, can you imagine the light of one who acts according to the Qur’an?” (Abu Dawud, Vitr, 14/1453).

To become very well-acquainted with the Qur’an is a righteous deed that Allah is pleased and content with. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

*“Allah Most High is pleased with nothing more than the recitation of the Qur’an by a prophet with a beautiful voice, loudly and with teganni”*⁶¹ (Bukhari, Fadailu’l Qur’an 19, Tawheed 32; Muslim, Musafirin 232-234).

“Allah listens to nothing as much as He listens to His slave who performs two rakats of prayer at night and who (reads the Qur’an). The mercy of Allah is spread over the head of the slave for the time that he spends in prayer. The slave can never approach Allah more than at the time they are one with the Qur’an” (Tirmidhi, Fadailu’l Qur’an, 17/2911).

It has been said that those people who forget the chapters of the Qur’an that they have memorised because they have not spent enough time with it, incur great sin (Abu Dawud, Salat, 16/461). Somebody who does not have even a small amount of the Qur’an in their heart is like a rundown house⁶²

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said:

“The hearts rust just as iron rusts”. His Companions asked:

“What is the polish for this Messenger of Allah?”

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied:

61. Teganni has the following meanings of embellishing the Qur’an, the most beautiful of words, in a manner suitable to it and with a beautiful voice. It is to emphasise (make obvious) the joy and sorrow in one’s voice when reading it and to read it clearly and with a loud voice. For a detailed explanation see M.Yasar Kandemir, Ismail Lutfi Cakan, Rasit Kucuk, Riyadhu-s Saliheen – Translation and Commentary, Istanbul 2001, V, 118).

62. Tirmidhi, Fadailu’l Qur’an, 18/2913; Darimi, Fadailu’l Qur’an, 1



“Reading the Book of Allah much and remembering Allah much”. (Ali al-Muttaki, II, 241).

On another day the Messenger of Allah advised his Companions:

“Give what is due to your eyes from worship”

“What is it that is due to our eyes o Messenger of Allah?” they asked him.

The Prophet replied:

“To look at the Mushaf (pages of the Qur’an), to reflect on what is in them and to take lesson from the subtleties within” (Suyuti, I, 39).

Another time the Prophet ﷺ said:

“For sure there are those amongst people who are close to Allah”

When he was asked:

“O Messenger of Allah! Who are they?” he replied:

“They are the people of the Qur’an, the people of Allah, and Allah’s special slaves”. (Ibn-i Majah, Mukaddima, 16).

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was especially pleased when people would get together in an effort to read and understand the Qur’an. He said about these people:

“...If a group of people gather together in one of the houses of Allah to read the book of Allah and discuss it and try to understand and comprehend it, there falls upon them a type of tranquillity and mercy envelops them. The angels surround them. Allah Most High mentions them in the company of those around him. For the one who has strayed behind (by neglecting his deeds), his lineage will not advance him...” (Muslim, Zikir, 38; Ibn-i Majah, Mukaddima, 17).

In that case we must increase the bonds of our hearts to the Holy Qur’an for the happiness of both of our worlds. We must read and understand it, feel it in our hearts, and struggle to apply its rulings in all sincerity.

Scenes of Virtue

The Prophet ﷺ used to read the Holy Qur'an in a manner befitting it and ponder deeply on its meaning and follow its commands without delay. He would read the Qur'an with wholeheartedly, truly feeling and living it. While reading, if he came to a verse which glorified Allah he would absolve Allah of all defects and faults) by saying 'SubhanAllah' (Glory be to Allah). When he came across verses about supplication he would pray to Allah. When he came to verses which mentioned seeking refuge in Allah he would immediately seek refuge in Allah. (See Muslim, Musafirin, 203; Nasai, Kiyamu'l Layl, 25).

The Prophet would regularly read from the Qur'an every day.⁶³ Aws bin Huzayfa ؓ who was from the tribe of Thakif that came to Madina narrates:

“One night, the Messenger of Allah did not appear before us for a long time after the night time prayer.

“O Messenger of Allah! Why did you wait so long to come out?” we asked him. The Prophet replied:

“I have made it a duty incumbent upon myself to read a hizb (1/60th) of the Qur'an every day. I did not want to come out until I had completed it”.

When it was morning we asked the Companions:

“How do you divide up the Qur'an to read it?” They answered:

“We call the first three chapters one *hizb*, then the next 5 chapters the second *hizb*, then the next 7, the next 9, the next 11, the next 13 are each a *hizb*. Lastly the chapter Kaf and the chapters that follow it are another *hizb*. Thus we read the Qur'an in 7 parts”. (Ahmad, IV, 9; Ibn-i Majah, Salat, 178).



Abdullah ibn-i Mas'ud ؓ relates:

“One time the Prophet ﷺ commanded me:

“O Ibn-i Mas'ud! Recite the Qur'an to me”. I replied:

63. Muslim, Musafirin, 142; Ahmad, IV, 9; Ibn-i Majah, Salat, 178)



“O Messenger of Allah! How can I recite the Qur’an to you when it has been revealed to you?”

Allah’s Messenger said:

“I like to hear the Qur’an being recited by others”.

I then began to read from the chapter *Nisa*. When I came to the verse:

“How then, [will the sinners fare on Judgement Day] when We shall bring forward witnesses from within every community, and bring thee (O Prophet) as witness against them” (An Nisa, 4:41) the Messenger of Allah said:

“That will do”.

At that point I looked to see tears like pearls falling from his eyes” (Bukhari, Tafsir, 4/9; Muslim, Musafirin, 247).

What a beautiful scene that demonstrates the mercy the Prophet had for his community...



One day when Aisha رضي الله عنها was late in appearing before Allah’s Messenger he asked her the reason. She replied that she wanted to listen to the Qur’an and that is why she was late:

“O Messenger of Allah! There was a man at the mosque. I have never heard someone reciting the Qur’an more beautifully than him”. Upon this the Messenger of Allah went to the mosque and saw that that man was Salim رضي الله عنه. He said:

“I praise Allah that there is someone like this amongst my community. (Ibn-i Majah, Ikamah, 176; Ahmad, VI, 165; Hakim, III, 250/5001).



A Companion once asked the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم:

“O Messenger of Allah! Which deed is the most pleasing to Allah?” The Beloved Prophet replied:

“The deeds of hal and murtehil”.

“And what are hal and murtehil?”. He answered:



“Reading the Qur’an from beginning to end and then once finished, starting again from the beginning”. (Tirmidhi, Kiraat, 11/2948).

It is now common practice that once an entire reading of the Qur’an has been completed, one then reads the last three chapters of the Qur’an and then begins again and recites the opening chapter, *al Fatiha*, and then the first five verses of the next chapter, *Baqara*. This is done in order to attain to the virtue that is mentioned in this hadith.

Thus a new reading is commenced and a righteous deed acceptable by Allah is carried out.



Allah’s Messenger ﷺ would give the utmost importance to the Qur’an and he loved those of his Companions who did likewise.

One time the Prophet was going to send a detachment great in number. He had them read Qur’an. Each of them recited as much of the verses of Allah that they had memorised. The Prophet approached the youngest of the Companions and asked him:

“O such and such. What have you memorised?” He replied:

“I have memorised such and such chapters and chapter Baqara”. The Prophet said:

“Have you memorised chapter Baqara?”

When the reply was “yes” he said:

“Off you go. You are their leader. This chapter comprises almost the whole of religion”

One of the leaders from the group said:

“O Messenger of Allah. My fear of not being able to apply what is in Baqara has prevented me from memorising it”.

Upon this the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“Learn the Qur’an, read it, have others read it and act by it. Because the one who learns the Qur’an, and reads and acts upon it, is like a bottle of musk which spreads its scent everywhere. The one who learns the Qur’an, but who sleeps (that is, is behind in his service of the Qur’an) is like a bottle of musk with its lid tightly closed”. (Tirmidhi, Fadailu’l Qur’an, 2/2876).



This event describes the degree of physical and spiritual learning of the one who reads and lives by the chapter *Baqara*. Also with this *hadith* the Prophet ﷺ announces the responsibility of the believers in becoming familiar with and teaching the Qur'an.



After the Companions had learnt 10 verses from the Messenger of Allah, they would not move onto memorising another ten before they had fully comprehended the commands and wisdom of the first ten and applied them to their lives. They applied the knowledge found in the Qur'an and they reached a state of perfection also with the wisdom contained within it. (Ahmad, V, 410).

Omar رضي الله عنه said:

“I completed the chapter *Baqara* in twelve years and as gratitude for that I sacrificed a camel” (Kurtubi, al-Jami li- ahkami'l Qur'an, Beirut 1985, I, 40).

Abdullah bin Omar رضي الله عنه completed *Baqara* in eight years. (Muwatta, Qur'an, 11).

Reading the Qur'an is of any value only if it is lived and taught to others.



The representatives of the tribe of Thaqif, who had come to see the Prophet had left Othman bin Abi'l As to mind the animals as he was the youngest of them. When the representatives had returned and fell asleep under the heat of the midday sun Othman, رضي الله عنه went to the Prophet ﷺ and asked him questions about religion, and listened to the Qur'an and learned it. In this way he had been able to read and memorise some chapters from the Prophet.

Whenever, Othman رضي الله عنه who had secretly made a pact with the Prophet and became Muslim before his representative friends, would come to learn the Qur'an, if the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was not available, he would either go to Abu Bakr, or Ubayy bin Ka'b and ask them what he had to ask and learn what he wanted to learn.

This pleased the Messenger of Allah greatly who loved him very much. When the representatives of Thaqif wished to return to their country they said:



“O Messenger of Allah! Will you make one of us a leader?”

The Prophet made Othman bin Abi'l As their leader even though he was the youngest amongst them. (Ibn-I Sa'd, V, 508; Ibn-I Hisham, IV, 185; Ahmad, IV, 218).



The Quranic verses, which were revealed for various reasons and one after the other, were a source of indescribable happiness for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his Companions, and would increase their determination and refresh their heart's bond with Allah. They had become so much at one with revelation that their sorrow was compounded when the revelation was interrupted with the death of the Prophet.

We can see this striking example of this love in the following event:

After the death of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ Abu Bakr said to Omar ؓ:

“Stand up and let's go to Ummu Ayman, one who was very dear and near to Allah's Messenger. Let us visit her as the Prophet used to do”

When they arrived at Ummu Ayman's ؓ she began to cry. They asked her:

“Why are you crying? Don't you know that the bounty with Allah is much better for the Prophet?”

Ummu Ayman replied:

“That is not why I am crying. Of course I know that the bounty with Allah is much better for the blessed Prophet. I am crying because the revelation has come to an end”.

These words that expressed the longing for Divine revelation touched Abu Bakr ؓ and Omar ؓ and they also began to cry along with Ummu Ayman ؓ. (Muslim, Fadailu's Sahabe, 103).



The Companions of the Prophet would read the Qur'an often, and would not wish a day to pass in which they had not read it or looked at its pages. They would begin their day with the Qur'an and would advise those who had problems with their eyes to look at its pages. (Haysami, VII, 165).



Othman, who was honoured with the title of ‘*Jami’ul Qur’an*’, or the Compiler of the Qur’an due to his service to it, had outworn two scripts because he was so preoccupied with it” (Kettani, *Nizamu’l Hukumeti’n Nabawwiyya* (at- Teratibu’l Idariyye), Beirut 1996, II, 197).



Usayd bin Hudayr ؓ narrates:

“One night I was reading chapter *Baqara*. My horse was tied up near me. At one point, it rose up on its two back legs. I stopped reading; the horse calmed down. I began to read again, and the horse reared up again. In fact I was afraid that the horse was going to stomp on my son Yahya, so I went next to it. At that point when I looked up at the sky I saw something that looked like candles. Then they rose up towards the sky and disappeared.

When it was morning I told the Messenger of Allah ﷺ what had happened. He said:

“Read o Usayd, read”... Then he said:

“O Usayd, do you know what it was that you saw?”

“No” I replied. The Messenger of Allah said:

“They were angels which had come to listen to you recite the Qur’an. If you had continued to read they would have listened to you until the morning. They would not have remained invisible to the people who would have been able to see them” (Bukhari, *Fadailu’l Qur’an*, 15, Menakib 25; Muslim, *Musafirin* 241-242).



One day the Messenger of Allah ﷺ addressed a lover of the Qur’an, Ubayy bin Ka’b as follows:

“Allah Most High commanded me to tell you to read the chapter “Lam yakunillethine kafaru”

Ubayy bin Ka’b ؓ asked:

“Did Allah Most High mention my name?”

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied:

“yes”.



Ubayy bin Ka'b was so touched by this divine compliment that he began to weep profusely. (Bukhari, Menakibu'l Ansar 16, Tafsir 98/1, 3; Muslim, Misafirin, 246).

Ubayy bin Ka'b was at the head of the list of *hafiz* (those who have memorised the Qur'an completely). He was one of those four fortunate ones about whom the Prophet said "*Learn the Qur'an from one of these four people*". He was the one who read the Qur'an in the most beautiful way and the most often. (Bukhari, Fedail'ul Qur'an, 8). And so the familiarity of Ubayy with the Qur'an in this way allowed him to attain to such a bounty, honour and dignity that is only possible for a very few select people other than the prophets; it made him subject to divine compliment. What a great honour, what great happiness...



As with all other matters, the Companions followed in the footsteps of Allah's Messenger when it came to living their lives as living Qur'ans by internalising their devotion to the Qur'an and its contents. Kinana al Adawi  narrates:

"One time Omar bin Khattab  wrote to his army commanders:

"Identify those individuals who have memorised the Qur'an and let me know so that I may honour them and favour them and dispatch them so that they can teach the Qur'an to people".

Abu Musa al Ashari informed Omar of the more than 300 *hafiz's* that were under his command. A portion of the advice from the letter that Omar wrote addressing them is as follows:

"Know that the Qur'an is a treasure of honour and reward for you. Abide by it and do not try to make it conform to you. Whoever tries to make the Qur'an conform to themselves will make them fall headfirst and straight into the fire. Whoever abides by the Qur'an, we be allowed in the Paradise of *Firdaws*. If you can, try to make the Qur'an an intercessor for you and do not let it become your enemy. Because the one that the Qur'an intercedes for will go to Paradise while the one it complains about will go to Hell. Know that the Qur'an is a source of guidance and the most enlightened of knowledge. It is the last book that has come from The



Merciful. With it blind eyes, deaf ears and closed hearts are opened... (Ali al Muttaki, II, 285-6/4019).



Whenever the bright and devoted servant of Allah's Messenger, Anas bin Malik رضي الله عنه would complete a reading of the Qur'an, he would gather his family together and read the *hatim* prayer (the prayer that is read on completion of the Qur'an). (Ibn-I Abi Shayba, al Musannaf (Hut), Riyadh, 1409, VI, 128).



From time to time Omar bin Khattab would say to Abu Musa al Ashari, who had a very beautiful voice and would read the Qur'an in a most perfect fashion:

“O Abu Musa! Come, remind us of our Lord!”

Abu Musa would then read from the Qur'an.

One time he said to Abu Musa al Ashari:

“My brother! Increase our zeal for our Lord”

And he began to read from the Qur'an. After he had read for a while, they called Omar to the prayer. The Caliph, who had been listening to the Qur'an with deep reverence, suddenly came to and asked:

“Were we not in prayer just now?” (Ibn-I Sa'd, IV, 109).



Nafi, Abdullah bin Omar's freed slave, was once asked:

“What did Abdullah used to do in his house?”

Nafi answered:

“People cannot do what he did. He would take a fresh ablution at the time for each prayer and he would open up and continually read the Qur'an between these two times”. (Ibn-I Sa'd, IV, 170).



Those true Memorisers of the Qur'an who become one with it attain to many divine favours both in this world and in the next. One of the



friends of Allah, Mahmud Sami Ramazanoglu  has informed us about the corpse of a Hafiz that he personally saw. This hafiz had died 30 years ago previously in Adana. His grave needed to be opened and transferred to another place due to a road that was to be built. When the grave was opened he saw the corpse intact, and its white shroud still gleaming.

It has been stated in a hadith:

“Whenever a Hamil-I Qur’an (a Memoriser of the Qur’an who has lived by its rulings, and taken on its character, and perfected himself with its wisdom) passes away, Allah commands the earth not to eat away his body. And the earth says in reply:

“O my Lord! How can I eat away at his body when he carries within his breast Your words?...” (Daylami, I, 284/1112; ali al- Muttaki, I, 555/2488).



We need to take the utmost care and sensitivity in our manners and respect for the Holy Qur’an which are the words of our Lord. This is because we are living at a time when we are most in need of the virtue and spirituality of the Qur’an.

For instance we should not read the Qur’an nor should we have it read without having taken our ablutions. The following verse openly and clearly states:

“No one may touch it except the purified” (Waqia) 56:79)

This verse indicates the minor ablution, the major ablution and menstruation and post-childbirth for women. The four orthodox schools of thought have all agreed that it is forbidden to touch the (script) of the Qur’an without being in a state of ritual purity (ablution). (Mavsuatul Fikhiyye, XVIII, 322).

At any rate this ruling has been applied for 1400 years since the time of the Blessed Prophet. It has been stated in a *hadith*:

“Neither the menstruating woman nor a person in a state of major ritual impurity can read from the Qur’an” (Tirmidhi, Taharah, 98/131).

“Let none other than the pure ones touch the Qur’an” (Hakim, I, 553/1447).



In addition, when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent Amr bin Hazm to Yemen he wrote a declaration that explained the *fard* (obligatory acts), *sunnah* (traditions of the Prophet) and the legal rulings. In that declaration Amr was told to teach the Qur'an to the people and in addition to preaching its commands and its wisdom he was told to also prevent people from touching the Qur'an if they were not clean. (Muwatta, Qur'an, I; Kattani, 216).

Imam Malik states:

“The one who is ritually impure cannot carry the script even within a cover or upon a cushion for this is a disliked act... This is due to respect for and exaltation of the Qur'an. (Muwatta, Qur'an, 1).

Moreover, one must be careful in all matters of showing respect and reverence for it including refraining from carrying the Qur'an below the waist, from extending one's feet out towards it, from putting any other book or any other item upon it, and from going into the toilet with it. This must be done with fervour of worship and this sensitivity should be passed on to new generations. Because the Holy Qur'an is the most important of the signs of Islam. The Holy Qur'an states:

وَمَنْ يُعْظَمِ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ

“As for those who honour Allah's sacred rites, that comes from the **taqwa in their hearts**”(Hajj 22:32)

In short, the Qur'an is a divine book sent in order for mankind to find the right path, to learn the matters that would be impossible to learn on his own, and to attain to the hereafter. In that case, to embrace it and adopt it is the smartest path to take.

The virtue of becoming one with the Qur'an is explained in a hadith as follows:

“The Qur'an is like a strong rope, one end of which is with Allah and the other end which is in your hands. Hold onto it tightly. Then you will not stray nor will you be destroyed”. (Haysami, IX, 164).

The more spirituality and prosperity we obtain from the Qur'an the more we will increase in our faith. Those who lose themselves in the Qur'an by gaining the pleasure of Allah and His Messenger, are subject to divine

bounties which are beyond comprehension. May Almighty Allah bestow such bounties upon us all and facilitate this state for each of us. Amen!...

8. *Zikrullah*⁶⁴ and *Salawat-i Sharifa*⁶⁵

The Arabic word for the human being, ‘*insan*’, is thought by some to come from the same root word as ‘*nisyan*’ which means ‘to forget’. ‘*Nisyan*’, which is the opposite of ‘*ziker*’ (remembrance) implies forgetfulness which is one of the greatest weaknesses of mankind. In order to make up for the harm caused by this ‘*nisyan*’, which is part of human nature, he needs *ziker* in order to keep ‘*Allah*’ and his perception of himself as ‘the servant’, constantly active and aware in mind. Because repetition strengthens the comprehension and understanding of the thing that is repeated.

The word ‘*ziker*’ occurs more than 250 times in the Qur’an, which indicates its particular importance in the duty of the servant. The servant needs to be a slave to Almighty Allah in the true sense of the word and reach the degree of ‘*marifetullah*’ (knowledge of Allah). But this will only occur to the degree of the depth of the rank and feelings that the heart gains through remembrance. This is why our Sustainer has said:

“Remember your Lord in yourself humbly and fearfully, without loudness of voice, morning and evening. Do not be one of the unaware” (Araf 7:205)

“And remembrance of Allah is indeed the greatest good” (Ankabut 29:45)

“For people with intelligence; those who remember Allah, standing, sitting and lying on their sides...” (Al’i imran 3:191)

Once the heart, which is the ruler of the body, has come back to life through remembrance of Allah, and become enlightened enough to distinguish between truth and falsehood, it becomes like a compass guiding

64. *Zikrullah* is the invocation of God. To perform *ziker* is to both remember Allah and to praise Him by mentioning His name and other certain words or formulas. (translators note)

65. *Salawat-I sharifa* is the name given to the benediction that is said after the Prophet Muhammad’s name is mentioned. It is to send blessings upon the Prophet which takes the form of many different prayers, the most common formula being “*saw*” which is abbreviated to *saw* throughout this book. (translators note)



the body to the truth and to goodness. It gives appropriate directions to all of the members of the body that are under its command. In the end it reaches a state of servant hood with which Allah is most pleased.

Allah's Messenger ﷺ explains the virtues of remembrance of Allah as follows:

“The comparison of the one who remembers Allah with the one who does not, is like the difference between the living and the dead” (Bukhari, Dawat, 66)

Likewise those people who are far from the remembrance of Allah are also far from being the recipients of Allah's love and are thus under divine threat. The Holy Qur'an says:

“You who have faith! Do not let your wealth or children divert you from the remembrance of Allah. Whoever behaves thus, they are the losers” (Munafikun 63:9)

“... Woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of Allah...” (az Zumar, 39:22)

If someone shuts his eyes to the remembrance of the All-Merciful, We assign him a shaytan who becomes his bosom friend “ (az- zuhruf, 43:36)

“But if anyone turns away from My reminder, his life will be a dark and narrow one and on the Day of Rising We will gather him blind”. (Taha, 20:24)

Because of the grave danger of remaining heedless of performing *zikrullah* (the remembrance of Allah) Almighty Allah has repeatedly warned his slaves about this matter. In one of these warnings He says:

“Is it not time that the hearts of all who have attained to faith should feel humble at the remembrance of Allah and at the truth He has sent down” (Hadid 57:16)

This verse was revealed as a warning to certain of the Companions who, having lived a painful and distressing life in Mecca, began to slacken once they had attained to bountiful provision and favour after the migration to Madina. (See Suyuti, Lubab, II, 151-52).

Even though Moses and Aaron (upon them be peace) were both prophets, Almighty Allah yet warned them when he sent them to preach to the Pharaoh as follows:

“Go, you and your brother, with My Signs and do not slacken in remembering Me” (Taha 20:42)

In this way by warning even these prophets of not distancing themselves from doing *zikr*, He willed them to be a lesson and an example (for mankind).

In speaking of the necessity of always being in a state of *zikrullah* and *murakaba* (vigilance), Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said:

“Do not delve into unnecessary talk and forget Allah. Because excessive talk that is done forgetting Allah, hardens the heart. And the one who is the furthest from Allah is the one with a hard heart”. (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 62/2411).

The way that the hearts of the believers reach a state of sensitivity that will allow them to be free of the hardness of heedlessness and gain the pleasure of Allah passes through continual remembrance. This is not however a temporary period or a phase; this is for a lifetime, and is only possible by being conscious of *zikrullah* in every breath taken, for it is only in this way that spiritual awakening can come about.

The Prophet’s wife, Aisha رضي الله عنها has said:

“Every state of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was a state of remembrance of Allah”. (Muslim, Hayz, 117).

Ibn-I Abbas رضي الله عنه, said the following about the verse:

“O you who have faith! Remember Allah with unceasing remembrance” (Ahzab, 33:41)

“Allah Most High has determined a limit for every act of worship that He has made obligatory for His slaves. He has accepted the excuse of those who are exempt (for whatever reason). The exception is *zikr*. Allah Most High has not set a limit that one can reach when it comes to *zikr*. He does not accept the excuse of anybody who abandons remembering Allah, except for the one whose mind has become disturbed. Almighty Allah has commanded all people to be in a state of *zikr* under all circumstances. (Taberi, Jamiu’l Beyan an Te’vili Ayi’l Qur’an, Beirut, 1995, XXII, 22; Kurtubi, XIV, 197).

In order to encourage the performance of *zikr* and being with the people of *zikr* the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has said:

“To sit from the morning prayer until the sun rises with a group of people that remember Allah, is more pleasing to me than rescuing four slaves from the tribe of the sons of Ishmael. Likewise to sit with a group of people who remember Allah from the time of the afternoon prayer until the sun sets, is more pleasing to me than freeing four people”. (Abu Dawud, Ilim, 13/3667).

In addition, the benedictions that we utter for the Prophet are among the statements of *zikr*. Almighty Allah states:

“Allah and His angels call down blessings on the Prophet. O you who have faith! Call down blessings on him and ask for complete peace and safety for him” (Ahzab, 33:56).

The Prophet explained the worth of these benedictions as follows:

“Whoever sends peace and blessings upon me once, Allah Most High has mercy on him ten times over⁶⁶, wiping away ten of his mistakes and raising his rank ten degrees” (Nasai, Sahv, 55)

“Those people who will be the closest to me on the Day of Judgement are those who send much blessings and peace upon me” (Tirmidhi, Vitir, 21/484)

In addition, acts of worship such as performing the prescribed prayer, *tasbih* (glorification), *tahmid* (praise), *takbir* (exaltation), *tahlil* (pronouncing the oneness of Allah) and *istigfar* (seeking forgiveness), and in particular reading the Qur’an and reflecting on its verses, are also considered *zikr*.

Scenes of Virtue

The Prophet’s wife, Aisha ؓ informs us that when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ woke up at night for worship he would pray and supplicate by reciting 10 times each “*Allahu akbar*” (Allah is the Greatest), “*Alhamdulillah*” (Praise be to Allah), “*Subhanallahi wa bihamdih*” (Glory be to Allah and praise belongs to Him), “*Subhana’l maliki’l quddus*” (Glory be to Allah,

The King and Holy One) “Astagfirullah” (I ask Allah for forgiveness), “La ilaha illallah” (there is no god but Allah) and then he would say ten times:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ ضَيْقِ الدُّنْيَا وَ ضَيْقِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامِ

“O Allah! I seek refuge in You from the distress and narrowing of this world and the hereafter”

The Prophet would then begin his salat”. (Abu Dawud, Adab, 101/5085).



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would prefer *zikr* and prayers that were concise but deep in meaning. One day the Prophet’s wife, Juwayriya رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا prayed the early dawn prayer and then sat in the spot where she prayed. The Prophet ﷺ left the house early and when he returned later that morning he found Juwayriya still sitting where he had left her.

“Have you been sitting here doing *zikr* since the time I left you?” he asked her. When she replied yes, the Prophet ﷺ said:

“If the four statements that I said three times each after parting from you were weighed against all of the *zikr* that you have said since morning you will find that they are equal in terms of reward:

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ عَدَدَ خَلْقِهِ وَرِضَا نَفْسِهِ وَزِنَةَ عَرْشِهِ وَمِدَادَ كَلِمَاتِهِ

“I absolve Allah from all defects that do not suit His station of divinity and I praise Him to the number of creatures, and till He is pleased, to the weight of the earth and to the number of words that never run out” (Muslim, Zikr, 79).



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said:

“There are two statements that are light on the tongue, but heavy when weighed on the scales and that are pleasing to Allah, the Merciful:

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ

“I absolve Allah of all attributes that do not suit His position of divinity and I praise Him. I again absolve Allah, the Great One, of all attributes that



do not suit His station of divinity” (Bukhari, Dawat 65, Ayman, 19, Tawheed 58; Muslim, Zikr, 31).

Almighty Allah desires that the heart of His slave is together with Him at every moment. In the following verse, these people are described as being **“those who remember Allah, standing, sitting and lying on their sides,** (Al’i Imran, 3:191)...

The above *hadiths* express the virtue of this *tasbehat* (prayer of glorification) that is carried out and the greatness of its reward. That is, in one aspect it is for encouragement and persuasion. However, we should not limit the remembrance of Allah to this *tasbehat* but we should be in a continual state of *zikr*. This is essential as is required by the Qur’an and the *hadith*.



Abdullah bin Busr ؓ narrates:

“Two Bedouins came to the Messenger of Allah to ask him a question. One of them asked:

“O Messenger of Allah! Who is the best of people?” The Messenger of Allah replied:

“The one who has a long life and whose deeds are righteous”. The other asked:

“O Messenger of Allah! The rulings of Islam have increased become numerous. Tell me one deed that I can adhere to”.

“Let your tongue be ever moist with the remembrance of Allah” (Ahmad, IV, 188).

As the Prophet said to be in a continual state of *zikr* is protection against heedlessness and forgetfulness for the believer. It is a means of increasing one’s obedience and submission to the commands and prohibitions of Allah. That is *zikr* is also a means of prosperity and spiritual reinforcement that increases the believers enthusiasm for the religious rulings.



One Companion came to the Messenger of Allah and asked:

“Which *jihad* has the greatest reward?” The Prophet replied:



“The jihad of the one who remembers Allah much”. The man then asked:

“Which fast has the greatest reward?”. The Prophet replied:

“The fast of the one who remembers Allah the most”.

After that the man asked the same question about the one who prays, who gives almsgiving, who goes for the pilgrimage and who gives charity. The answer was the same for each of these:

“The one who remembers Allah most”.

Upon this Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه said to Omar رضي الله عنه:

“O Omar! Those who remember Allah have taken the entire share of goodness”. The Prophet ﷺ then turned towards them and said:

“Yes, that is true”. (Ahmad, III, 438; Haysami, X, 74).

In all cases then, we will profit greatly if we train ourselves to be in a constant of *zikr*.



Muadh bin Jabal رضي الله عنه narrates:

“I once said to the Prophet ﷺ:

“O Messenger of Allah! Give me some advice”

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied:

“Have fear of Allah to the best of your ability. Remember Allah wherever you are, next to a stone or a tree. And for the sin that you have done in secret, seek forgiveness in secret, but for the one you have done openly, seek forgiveness openly. (Haysami, X, 74).



One day the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was telling his companions about the virtue of gatherings of *zikr*:

“When you come to the gardens of Paradise make sure to benefit from them properly”

“What do you mean by the gardens of Paradise o Messenger of Allah” they asked him.

The Prophet replied:



“The gatherings of zikr” (Tirmidhi, Deavat, 82/3510).



Whenever Abdullah bin Rawaha رضي الله عنه came across one of the Companions he would say:

“Come my brother! Let us sit for a while for Allah and refresh our faith in our Sustainer (Let us do zikr)”.

One Companion who did not understand what this meant went to the Prophet and informed him of the situation. The Prophet said to him:

“May Allah have mercy on Abdullah bin Rawaaha. He loves the chains of zikr which the angels praise” (Ahmad, III, 265).



Abdullah bin Shaddad رضي الله عنه narrates:

“Three people from the tribe of Bani Uzra came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and became Muslim. The Messenger of Allah asked:

“Who will undertake the care of these?”

Talha رضي الله عنه said:

“I will o Messenger of Allah”.

While they were with Talha, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ dispatched a small troop of soldiers. One of the three of these people came out of this unit and was martyred. Then he sent another small troop. From this the second person came out, but was also martyred. The third person died in his bed a little while later.

Talha narrates:

“I saw these three people who were staying with me in Paradise. The one who died in his bed was foremost, then the second martyr, then last came the person who was martyred first of all. I was surprised and a little upset at this situation. I immediately told the Prophet of Allah what I saw. He said:

“This is nothing to be surprised about. There is no one in the eyes of Allah who is of more virtue than the believer who constantly performs glorification



of Allah, takbir, and tahlil and who lives his life based on Islam. (Ahmad, I, 163).



One day Uftade went out to the countryside with his students for a talk. Following orders, all of the derwishes walked around the most beautiful parts of the countryside and brought a bunch of flowers for their teacher. However in the hands of the old Judge of Bursa, Mahmud Efendi, who would later find fame as Aziz Mahmud Hudayi, brought back a withered flower whose stem had been broken... After the others presented their flowers to their teacher with happiness, Mahmud Efendi, presented his broken and withered flower to Uftade his head bowed down. Amongst the curious looks of the other students, Uftade asked:

“Mahmud my son! Why, when everyone brought bouquets and bouquets of flowers, did you bring a withered broken flower?”

With great modesty of manners, Mahmud Efendi bowed his head and answered:

“Master! Whatever I present you would never be enough. But whichever flower I bent down to pick I found it in a state of remembrance of its Lord, and saying ‘Allah, Allah’. My heart couldn’t bear to hinder this remembrance of theirs. Helpless I was compelled to bring this flower which was unable to continue its *zikr*”.

For those with a soft heart, every atom in the universe consists of lessons to take heed from. All things, whether they be living or non-living perform *zikr* of Allah. It is stated in Quranic verse:

“The seven heavens and the earth and everyone in them glorify Him. There is nothing which does not glorify Him with praise but you do not understand their glorification. He is All-Forbearing, Ever-Forgiving. (Isra, 17:44).

And so man must be conscious of his true duty by taking heed from this magnificent scene in the universe and should not remain heedless of remembering his Lord.



The most virtuous of our *zikr* is



salawat – i sharif. A believer will benefit spiritually to the degree that he sends peace and blessings upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. This is because the value of our Prophet in the eyes of Allah is most high.

Firstly our Lord personally performs prayers on the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and has raised him in degree through his mercy and pleasure and has bestowed upon him mercy.

One of the times when we send blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ is during the prayer, when we read the *Tahiyyat* prayer⁶⁷. According to what has been transmitted, the Prophet said:

“On the night of the Ascension, I saw our Lord with the eye of my heart. Allah Most High said to me:

“Speak to me o beloved!”

I was frozen in my astonishment. Then Allah Most High inspired my heart to say the following words:

التَّحِيَّاتُ لِلَّهِ وَالصَّلَوَاتُ وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ

“All of worship, be it verbal like praise, active like prayer and fasting or financial such as the alms-giving, is particular to Allah – Most Glorious and Exalted”.

Upon this Allah Most High said:

لَسَّلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ وَرَحْمَةٌ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

“O Most Honoured Prophet! May the peace, mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you”.

In response I said:

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْنَا وَ عَلَىٰ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ الصَّالِحِينَ

“May the peace of Allah be upon us and upon all of Allah’s righteous slaves”.

Allah Most High then said:

“O My Prophet! I removed even Gabriel from between us. You have not removed your community from amongst us”.

Hearing these words intended to be humorous, Almighty Allah, Gabriel said:

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

“I bear witness that there is no god who is worthy of worship other than Allah. And I also bear witness that Muhammad the Trustworthy is His slave and Messenger” (See Qurtubi, III, 425).



Ubayy bin Ka'b  narrates:

“One time when one third of the night had passed, the Messenger of Allah awoke and rose and said:

“O people! Remember Allah! Remember Allah! The first trumpet will be blown and will upheave the earth from one place to another. Then the next trumpet will be blown. Death will come and strike in all of its intensity. Death will come and strike in all of its intensity”.

I asked the Prophet:

“O Messenger of Allah! I send abundant blessings and peace upon you, but I wonder, should I do more? [how much is enough]?”

“Do as much as you wish”, he said.

“If I allot a fourth of my prayer to sending blessings and peace upon you, would that be sufficient?” I asked.

“Allot as much as you wish. But if you do more, that will be better for you” he said.

“In that case I will assign half of my supplication to sending blessings and peace upon you” I said.

“Do as much as you wish. But if you do more, than that will be better for you”.

“In that case will two-thirds be enough?” I asked.



“As much as you like. But if you increase, it will be much better for you” he said.

When I said:

“In that case what if I assign all of my supplication to sending peace and blessings upon you?”, he replied:

“In that case Allah will remove all your distress and forgive you your sins”. (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 23/2457).



One time when the Blessed Prophet ﷺ saw one of his Companions begin his supplication by praising Allah and sending blessings upon the Prophet, he praised him and said:

“O you who performs the prayer! Supplicate (as long as you begin your supplication with praise and prayers upon me), and your prayers will be answered” (Tirmidhi Dawat, 64, 3476).

Omar bin Khattab رضي الله عنه said:

“(On its own), the supplication you make stands between the heavens and the earth. If you do not send blessings upon the Prophet, not one of your prayers will rise to Allah” (Tirmidhi, witr, 21/486).



Ka'b bin Ujra رضي الله عنه narrates that one day we said to the Messenger of Allah:

“O Messenger of Allah! We have learned how to send peace upon you, but we don't know how to send blessings upon you”. He responded:

Say these words:

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى (إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى)
 آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا
 بَارَكْتَ عَلَى (إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى) آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ

“O Allah! Have mercy on Muhammad and his family just as you had mercy on Abraham and his family. Truly You are worthy of praise and most



exalted. O Allah! Bestow goodness and bounty on Muhammad and on the family of Muhammad just as you bestowed goodness and bounty on Abraham and on the family of Abraham. Truly You are worthy of praise and most exalted". (Bukhari, Deawat, 32, Tirmidhi, Witr, 20; Ibn-I Majah, Iqama, 25).



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"The most virtuous of your days is Friday... For this reason, you should send much blessings and peace on me on this day, the day when they will be presented to me".

Upon this the Companions asked:

"O Messenger of Allah! How can our *salat-u salam* be presented to you once you have passed away and there is no trace of you". The Prophet replied:

"Allah Most High has forbidden the earth to decompose the bodies of the prophets". (Abu Dawud, Salat 201/1047, Witr, 26)



Ali ؑ has the following to say about the virtue of sending peace and blessings on the Prophet on a Friday:

"Whoever sends one hundred blessings on the Prophet on a Friday, will appear at the gathering on the Day of Judgement with a beautiful and radiant face. The people will ask each other longingly: "I wonder which deed this man used to perform". (Bayhaki, ShuAbu'l Imam, III 212)



Ka'b bin Ujra ؓ narrates:

"One day the Messenger of Allah ﷺ told us to approach the pulpit. We did so. He climbed the first step, then said "amen". He climbed the second step and said "amen". He climbed the third step in the same way, saying "amen".

When he had come down from the pulpit we asked:

"O Messenger of Allah! We have heard some things from you today that we have never heard before. (What is the wisdom in this)".



He replied:

“Gabriel came to me and said: Let the one who reaches the month of Ramadan without having his sins forgiven be far from mercy”. I said “amen”. When I had climbed the second stair, he said:

“Let the one who hears Your name but does not send blessings upon You be far from mercy”. I said “Amen”. When I had climbed the third step he said:

“Let the one who has not been able to gain Paradise because his mother or father, or both have reached old-age beside him but he has not been able to please them. And I said: amen”. (Hakim, IV, 170/7256; Tirmidhi, Deawat, 100/3545).



It has been reported by a righteous individual:

“I once had a neighbour who used to make copies of the books of scholars by writing them out himself. When he died I saw him in my dream. I asked him:

“How did Allah Most High treat you”. He said:

“He has forgiven me”.

“Which deed of yours was the means for this” I asked.

“Whenever I used to write the blessed and honourable name of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in a book I would never fail to send blessings and peace upon him. And so my Lord has bestowed upon me favours that no eye has ever seen, no ear has heard of, and no person has ever been able to imagine”. (Nebhani, Saadet’ul Dareyn, pg 101).



It has been narrated that an individual who had failed to adopt the character of the Prophet ﷺ saw him in his dream one night. The Messenger of Allah ignored him. Sadly he asked:

“O Messenger of Allah! Are you upset with me?”

“No”.

“In that case why are you ignoring me?”

“I don’t know who you are”.

“How can that be o Messenger of Allah! I am from your community. The scholars say that you can recognise members of your community better than a mother recognises her own child...”

“That is true. However, I do not see any trace of my character on you. In addition, no blessings or peace have ever come to me from you. Know that I only recognise those of my community to the degree that they have taken on my character”.

On awakening from his sleep deeply saddened, this believer then repented for his former state and took on the praiseworthy character of the Prophet. He spent a great portion of his time sending peace and blessings on the Prophet. A little while later he saw the Messenger of Allah in his dream once more. This time the Messenger of Allah said to him:

“Now I know you and I will intercede for you”...



In short, the Prophet ﷺ has said:

“A person will be together with the one he loves”. (Bukhari, Adab, 96). According to the principle ‘the lover loves everything about their beloved’, we must follow the Prophet ﷺ in all our actions and states. It is such that the love and ardour in this matter is like the backbone of love of Allah. All love contrary to this love has been invalidated by the way of the Qur’an and the *Sunnah*.

The only way to reach Almighty Allah, that is to be reunited with Him is achieved by love of His Beloved Prophet.

Zikrullah and *salawat-I sharif* are nourishment for our spiritual existence and assurance for our eternal happiness. The worlds of our heart and soul find completion with *zikr* (remembrance of Allah). Almighty Allah has said:

“Only in the remembrance of Allah can the heart find peace”. (Ar Rad, 13:28).

The way to being a servant who is dear to Allah passes through continual *zikr* (remembrance). It is only through this way that our lives can gain spiritual pleasure and sweetness. May Allah let us all partake of it. Amen...



9. The Worry about Last breath / Preparing for death and the afterlife

When a person looks at the order of the universe with the eye of discernment he realises that the issue that he should be most concerned with is the fact of death.

Almighty Allah has said:

“Everyone on it will pass away”. (Ar Rahman, 55:26).

“Every self shall taste death”. (Anbiya, 21:35).

How strange it is that people – visitors in this world for two or three days – (yet) delude themselves. Though they watch scenes of death every day, yet do they see death as being distant from themselves. They think they are the absolute possessors of the fleeting trust which it is possible they will lose at every instant. Whereas every person, on entering this world, has his soul clothed in a body and is destined to travel the path to death. He has entered the preparatory realm for that path but he fails to remember this. Then the day arrives when his spirit is separated from his body. In the grave, which is the door to the hereafter, he is farewelled to another great journey. Allah Most High says:

“When We grant long life to people, We return them to their primal state. So will you not use your intellect? (Do they not perceive this journey and take heed from it”. (Yasin, 36:68).

The principle aim of this worldly life for mankind is to live a life of servant hood that Allah is pleased with and to thereby gain eternal happiness. The Messenger of Allah has said:

“The intelligent person is the one who does not yield to the desires and whims of their nafs and who prepares for what is to come after death...”
(Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 25/2459).

How beautifully the late Najip Fazil expressed this:

*“O niggardly (merchant), sew yourself a different money-bag”.
And save up whatever currency is valid in the grave!”...*

Life is like the drops that fill up a glass of water. The clarity of the glass depends on how clear the drops are. The last drop to fill the glass is the person’s last breath.



It is stated in a hadith:

“Whoever’s last words in life are ‘La ilaha illallah’ will enter Paradise”.
(Abu Dawud, Janaiz, 15-16/3116; Hakim, I, 503).

That is, the one who eliminates unnecessary whims, pleasures and carnal desires from their heart and fills it with love of Allah and continues in this way living a spiritual life until their last moment, will, it is hoped, migrate from this world with faith and enter Paradise. Because it is very difficult for a person who leads a different life to say *‘la ilaha illallah’* at the last breath. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“A person dies as they live and will be raised up as they died”. (See Muslim, Jannah, 83; Munawi, V, 663).

A person’s last breath is like a clear mirror, free of mist. A person will know themselves most accurately at their last breath. The account of their life will be displayed before their heart and their eyes. This is why there is no scene more cautionary than the point of death.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

“According to one’s deeds, the grave is either a garden from the gardens of Paradise or a pit from the pits of hell”. (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 26/2460).

Thus it is vital that we prepare well our numbered breaths for the last breath that we will take if we want to leave this mortal world as a good slave and to make our grave a garden from the gardens of Paradise. A prosperous and guided worldly life, embellished with righteous deeds, is a must for a happy afterlife.

Almighty Allah has said:

“And worship your Lord until what is Certain comes to you”. (Hijr, 15:99).

Those special slaves who live their lives in this way, with love for Allah and His Messenger and who adorns them with righteous deeds – through the grace of Allah- will migrate with the spiritual peace of the ‘statement of witnessing’⁶⁸ in their last moments. In contrast, those unfortunate ones

68. The statement of witnessing is as follows: I bear witness that there is no Allahbut Allah and that Muhammad is hte Messenger of Allah (translator’s note)



who are deceived by the fleeting, relative and carnal attractions on this earth and who weaken their spiritual characteristics will, in the majority of cases, die according to how they lived their lives and will be subject to loss and abasement and contempt under the earth.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said as a warning to his community:

“There is nobody who will die and not feel regret”.

“What is that regret o Messenger of Allah” he was asked.

The Prophet replied:

“If the one who dies is a good person (a possessor of goodness and righteousness) then he will regret not increasing this state of his; if the person is bad, he will regret not giving up his evil and reforming himself”. (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 59/2403).

Almighty Allah warns his slaves in this matter:

“O you who have faith! Do not let your wealth or children divert you from the remembrance of Allah. Whoever does that is lost. Give from what We have provided for you before death comes to one of you and he says, “My Lord, if only you would give me a little more time so that I can give charity and be one of the righteous people!” Allah will not give anyone more time, once their time has come. Allah is aware of what you do” (Munafiqun, verses 9-11)

In short, our death and our lives in the grave which will continue until the Day of Judgement will take shape according to the state of our worldly life and our deeds.

How beautifully Jaluluddin Al Rumi has expressed it:

“My son, each person’s death is the colour of their own self. For those who abhor death and who are enemies to it, not realising that it is a reunion with Allah, death appears like a frightening enemy. For those who are friends with death, it appears as a friend.

O soul that fears and flees from death! If you want the truth of the matter it is not death that you fear, but rather your own self.

Because what it is that you see and thus fear and shiver about in the mirror of death is not the appearance of death but your own ugly

appearance. Your spirit is like a tree. And death is like the leaves of the tree. Each leaf is according to the type of tree (it is on)..."

Thus death becomes attractive depending on how much one beautifies one's life with righteous deeds.

Scenes of Virtue

Abdullah bin Omar رضي الله عنه narrates: "I was once with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. A man from the *Ansar* came to Allah's Messenger, greeted him and asked:

"O Messenger of Allah! Who is the most virtuous of the believers?"
The Prophet replied:

"The one who has the best character". This time the man asked:

"Well, who is the most intelligent of the believers?" The Prophet replied:

"The one who remembers death the most and who prepares for what's to come after it in the best way. That is true intelligence". (Ibn-I Majah, Zuhd, 31).



Bara رضي الله عنه narrates:

"We were once with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ at a funeral prayer. The Prophet ﷺ sat next to the grave and began to cry such that the earth around him became wet with his tears. Then he said:

"O my brothers! Prepare well for death (which is to befall us all)". (Ibni Majah, Zuhd, 19).



Omar رضي الله عنه ordered one of his servants to repeat the following sentence to him everyday:

"O Omar! Do not forget death". However when some white hairs appeared in his beard he said to his servant:

"That will do. My white beard is now a reminder of death for me at every instant".



In truth we must not forget our mortality. We must remember death in order to control the desires of our soul.



The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has informed us of certain scenes from the grave, the Day of Judgement and the afterlife in order for us to reflect and take heed and to prepare for our last breath, for death, and for what's to come after death. Some of these are described below:

“When a Muslim enters the throes of death, the angels of mercy appear before him with a silk white dress and say:

“Exit from your body, pleased with your Lord and your Lord pleased with you. Reunite with the mercy of Allah and the sweetest of scents and your Lord who has no anger towards you”.

The spirit then leaves the body accompanied by the most beautiful of musk scents. The angels hand him back and forth until they bring him to the gates of heaven and it is said:

“How beautiful is this smell that has come with you from the earth”. Then they take him to the other believing spirits. These believing spirits are more pleased with his coming than one of you would be if he found something that he had lost. They ask him:

“What happened to so and so? What happened to so and so?” That is, they ask about those left behind in the world. Some of the spirits answer (about one of those who has been asked about):

“Leave him alone. He has buried himself in the anxiety of the world”. Then the newly arrived spirit asks:

“So and so died. Did not he come to you?” They answer:

“Is that so? In that case, he has gone where he was supposed to, he has been taken to the Fire.

When a non-believer enters the throes of death, the angels of punishment appear with an ugly dress made of fine bristles and say:

“Leave this body, angry yourself and having drawn the wrath of Allah upon you and run to the punishment of Allah”.

Then the spirit leaves with the worst of smells. The angels bring it to the gate of the earth and say:

“How bad is this smell!” Then they take him to the other unbelieving spirits”. (Nasai, Jenaiz, 9).



Allah’s Messenger has informed us:

“On the Day of Judgement the son of Adam will be brought like a lamb and stood before Allah and Allah Most High will say to him:

“I gave you plenty of bounty and property. I showered you with such favours and blessings. What did you do in return?” He will say:

“O my Lord, I amassed it, I increased it, I left it behind in a much greater quantity than it was. Let me go back to the world and bring it back to You”.

Allah Most High will say:

“First show me what you have sent on for your afterlife”. He will say again:

“O my Lord, I amassed it, I increased it, I left it behind in a much greater quantity than it was. Let me go back to the world and bring it back to You”.

This is because this slave had not sent forth anything worth any good. And this is why he will be thrown into the hellfire”. (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 6/2427).

And so those people who have wasted the life of this world in heedlessness and have not made any preparations for the hereafter will meet with a dismal end. Almighty Allah informs us of this in the Holy Qur’an:

“But as for him whose record shall be given to him behind his back He will in time pray for utter destruction. But he will enter the blazing flame. Behold [in his earthly life], he lived joyfully among people of his own kind- for, behold, he never thought he would have to return to Allah”. (Inshiqaq, 84:10-14)

Another example of the grievous end of those who rely upon their worldly fortune, position, and power and become impertinent, and con-



ceited and smug as a result is Qarun. Almighty Allah informs us of his story full of warning for us as follows:

“Qarun was one of the people of Musa but he lorded it over them. We gave him treasures, the keys alone to which were a heavy weight for a party of strong men. When his people said to him, “Do not gloat. Allah does not love people who gloat. Seek the abode of the afterlife with what Allah has given you, without forgetting your portion of the world. And do good as Allah has been good to you. And do not seek to cause corruption in the earth. Allah does not love corrupters”. He said, “I have only been given it because of knowledge I have”. Did he not know that before him Allah had destroyed generations with far greater strength than his and far more possessions? The evildoers will not be questioned about their sins. He went out among his people in his finery. Those who desired the life of the world said, “Oh! If only we had the same as Qarun has been given! What immense good fortune he possesses”. But those who had been given knowledge said, “Woe to you! Allah’s reward is better for those who have faith and act rightly. But only the steadfast will obtain it”. We caused the earth to swallow up both him and his house. There was no group to come to his aid, besides Allah, and he was not someone who is helped” (Qasas, 28:76-81)

The story of Qarun is a clear example of the end affair of those heedless people who depend on and are self-satisfied with their wealth and power in this world and who forget that one day they too will die.



One day the Prophet ﷺ was asked:

“O Messenger of Allah! Will we be able to see our Lord on the Day of Judgement?” The Prophet asked them:

“Do you ever have any difficulty in seeing the sun at noon on a cloudless day?”

When they replied “no” he asked them again:

“Do you need to push and shove each other when you want to see the moon on a cloudless night?”



When his companions again answered “No, O Messenger of Allah”, he said:

“I swear by the One who holds my soul in His hands that there will be no pushing and shoving when it comes to seeing your Lord. Just as when you don’t have to push and shove each other to see the sun and the moon. In this way the slave will come face to face with his servant. Allah Most High will ask:

“O so and so. Did I not favour you? Did I not make you lord over all creation you? Did I not give you a wife? Did I not make the horse and the camel subservient to you? Did I not make you a leader, so that you could take one-fourth of the property from booty for yourself?” The slave will answer:

“Yes O Lord!”

Allah Most High will then ask:

“So did you not think that you would ever meet me?”

The slave will answer:

“No o Lord!”

Allah Most High will then say:

“In that case now it is I who is overlooking you. Just as you forgot Me in the world”.

Then a second slave appears before Allah. Allah Most High asks him the same questions. Then He asks a third slave the same questions. Each time, the slave is forced to confirm what His Lord says each time.

Allah Most High then says:

“Did it never occur to you that you would meet with Me?” The slave replies:

“O My Lord! I believed in You, and in Your books, and in Your prophets. I prayed, I fasted, I gave charity!” To the best of his ability he sings praises of Allah Most High. Allah Exalted and Majestic is He says:

“In that case stop! A witness will now come against you”. The slave thinks to himself:

“Who will be a witness against me?” The slave’s mouth will be sealed. His thighbone, his flesh and his bones will be told: “Come now speak up”.



His thighbone, flesh and bones will speak out and confess everything that the slave ever did. This is so the slave can not put up any excuses. This person is the hypocrite who has come up against the wrath of Allah". (Muslim, Zuhd, 16).

How can the slave hide his sins in a court in which all of his limbs and the earth will be a witness against him? Thus must we live our lives with the utmost care and vigilance if we do not wish to be put to shame there.



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"When the slave is placed in his grave and his close ones part from him – and he can hear their footsteps as they (walk away) – two angels appear before him. They sit him down and ask him:

"What did you use to think of Muhammad ﷺ?" If the person asked is a believer he replies to this question as follows:

"I bear witness that he is Allah's slave and Messenger!" They say to him:

"Look at your place in hell. Allah has transformed it into a garden from Paradise". The man looks and sees both places. Then Allah opens up a window in his grave that looks onto Paradise.

If the deceased person is an unbeliever or a hypocrite, he replies to the angels" question as follows:

"I don't know the person you are speaking of. I merely used to repeat what others were saying". It will be said to him:

"You did not understand and you did not follow". Then he will be beaten between his ears with an iron rod. He will scream with such pain (from the rod) that all creatures near him (except for man and jinn) will hear him". (Bukhari, Jenaiz, 68, 87; Muslim, Jannah, 70).



The Prophet Soloman, the son of the Prophet David عليه السلام once passed by a farmer who was ploughing a field. The farmer said:

"Undoubtedly the family of David has been given great dominion".

The wind transmitted these words to the ear of Soloman who immediately descended from his animal and walked towards the farmer:



“I walked over to you in order that you do not desire something that you cannot bear”. Then he continued his words:

“Glorification made by a slave that is acceptable to Allah Most High is undoubtedly better than all of the property and dominion given to the family of David”.

In truth, in this mortal world the good deeds that we do with sincerity will be our capital and happiness in the eternal realm. It is stated in a noble verse:

“You who have faith! Fear Allah and let each self look to what it has sent forward for Tomorrow. Fear Allah. Allah is aware of what you do”.
(Hashr, 59:18)



There is no way to escape death. The only way out then is to prepare for it. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said:

“The Prophet David ؑ was very passionate in his efforts in his religion and was very particular about his honour. Whenever he left the house he would make sure to close the door securely so that no one could enter until he had returned. One day he left his house and closed his door... When David returned, he saw a man sitting in the middle of his house. He said to him:

“Who are you?” The man answered:

“I am the one who fears no king, nor are any veils an obstruction for me”.
Hearing this, David said:

“In that case by Allah, you are the angel of death. Welcome by Allah’s command”.

A little while later his spirit was taken by the angel...” (Ahmad, II, 419).

This is the way that those who are always ready for death greet the Angel of Death, Azrail...

How beautifully the late Najip Fazil has expressed it:

(At that moment) in which the curtains rise and the curtains fall

The (skill) is to be able to say “Welcome Azrail”.



We should forward on the favours that Allah has bestowed upon us to the afterlife while we still have the chance and make preparations for the difficult and dire Day of Judgement. The following wise words of Abu Dharr رضي الله عنه are a nice summary of the necessity and the way of preparing for death and what follows it.

“There are three shareholders in any piece of property. The first is the owner, that is, you. The second is fate. It does not ask you whether it will bring good or evil such as misfortune or death. The third is your heir. It waits impatiently for you to lay your head down as soon as possible, (that is for you to die) and it takes away your property and you have to account for it. If you are able, do not be the most powerless of these three shareholders!

Allah Most High has said: *لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ*: “You will not attain true goodness until you give of what you love”. (Al-i Imran, 3: 92).

Here is my most beloved possession... this camel. In order to meet with it again in Paradise, I am sending it ahead of me (that is I am giving it away to charity)” (Abu Nuaym, Hilya, I, 163).



There was once a famous scholar named Ucbas Nureddin Hamza Efendi⁶⁹ who lived during the Ottoman period. He used to save his money because he could not bear to spend it. He would not mount a horse and would make do with old clothes and shoes. In this way he would save his money. This is why he used to be known amongst the people as ‘The money-loving Hodja’.

This hodja built Ucbas Madrese in Fatih Karagumruk and then later the Ucbas Masjid with the money he saved up. He had rooms made for scholars and poor people to live in and created many endowments for these. When those who knew him heard of this they were shocked and mocked him saying:

“Hodja, how could you part with your money which you love so much?”

69. This Hodja was given the nickname Ucbas because he was born in the village of Ucbas which is part of Karasu. He is from the scholarly class and (was a judge). He died in 948/1541. For his life and details about this particular event see Taskopruzade, As Shaiku'n Numaniyye (thk. A. Suphi Furat), pg 540-541).



The hodja gave the following significant and witty reply:

“My dear friends! You are right. I do love my money. This is why I couldn’t bear to leave it in this world. So I have sent it on ahead of me to the afterlife”.



Ali  has said:

“The world has turned its back and is leaving. The afterlife is ahead of us and awaits us. Each has its own children (followers). Be the followers of the hereafter, not of this world. Today is the day to do good deeds, while there is no accounting. Tomorrow is the calling to account, where there is no more chance to do any good”. (Bukhari, Rikak, 4).

Just like the student who leaves the examination hall can no longer answer any more of the questions or improve his grade...

Benefiting from these words of Ali, some friends of Allah have said the following:

“The world has turned its back and is leaving while the afterlife is headed towards us. How amazing is the one who turns towards that which has turned its back and is leaving, and yet he himself turns his back on and pays no heed to the one coming towards him...”



Abu Dharda  used to say:

“I fear for you that you will become absorbed in the blessings that amuse man and be carried away with secret desire. This desire arises when, though you are hungry in terms of knowledge, you fill your stomachs with food. The best of you is the one who advises his friend as follows:

“Come let us fast before we die”.

The worst amongst you is the one who says to his friend:

“Come let us enjoy ourselves before we die. Let us eat and drink and enjoy life to the fullest and get as much pleasure out of it as we can...” (Abu Nuaym, Hilya, I, 218).



The back of Sufyan-i Sevri became bent at a very young age. He used to say to those who asked him the reason:

“I had a teacher from whom I was learning knowledge. Even though I tried to convince him to say the testament of faith while he was dying he was not able to say it. Seeing this state bent my back”.

Apart from the prophets, no one is guaranteed the state of their last breath. In fact the prophet Joseph عليه السلام prayed to almighty Allah:

“... (o Allah!) ... take me as a Muslim at my death and join me to the people who are righteous”. (Yusuf, 12:101).

The fact that Joseph sought refuge in Allah shows that even the prophets were concerned about their last breath. This is why the believer must always struggle amongst feelings of hope and fear and must accumulate his provision for the hereafter.



When Shakik-i Belhi once passed by a grave he looked at it cautiously and said to those who were with him:

“Most of these here have realised now that that this world deceived them...”

“Why” they asked him. He answered:

“Did they not think that while they were living they had property, wealth, a house, a mount, relatives, gardens and fields? But now here you see that this is not the reality...”



The following state of the friend of Allah, Rabi bin Haysem رضي الله عنه, is a striking example of how one should frequently call one’s *nafs* to account in order to prepare for death and the hereafter:

Rabi bin Haysem once dug a grave in his backyard. At times when he felt that his heart had become hardened, he would enter this grave and lie there for a while. He would reflect on the fact that one day he would leave this world and be left in a position of having to seek refuge and accept charity while in the grave. Thinking that he would have to account for his actions in the hereafter, he would begin to seek forgiveness.



Then he would read the following verse:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ
لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ

“When death comes to one of them, he says, “My Lord, send me back again, so that perhaps I may act rightly regarding the things I failed to do!” (Mu’minuun, 23:99-100)

When he got out from the grave he would say to himself:

“O Rabi! Look, today you have been returned to life. There is going to be a day when this wish of yours will not be accepted and you will not be sent back to this world. Take your precautions now and increase your righteous deeds, your struggle in the path of Allah and your preparations for the hereafter...”



How beautiful is the following advice of Imam Ghazzali:

“Every day after praying the dawn prayer and before one begins the new day, each believer should come face to face with his own soul and make certain contracts with it and come to agreement about certain conditions. Just as if a merchant has to leave his capital to his partner he makes a contract with him. And he does not fail to warn him of certain things. Man too should warn and caution his soul of the following:

“My capital is my life. When my life departs from me, my capital will be lost and profit and gain will come to an end. However this day is a new day. Allah Most High has allowed me this day and has favoured me. If he had of taken my life I would certainly have hoped to be sent back for at least a day in order to be able to carry out good deeds. Now assume that your life has been taken away and you have been sent back. In that case do not commit sins or bad deeds today and do not spend even a moment of this day fruitlessly. Because each breath is a priceless blessing.

Know well that a day is 24 hours with its night and its day. On the Day of Judgement, 24 closed boxes for each day will be brought before man. When one of the boxes is brought forth and opened, the slave sees that it is full of light as a reward for his good deeds that he performed at that



hour. He is so pleased thinking about the reward that Allah will bestow, that if this joy of his were to be divided amongst the people of the hellfire they would not feel the pain of (it). When the second box is opened and it is full of darkness and a disgusting stench, then this is the hour that the slave passed in rebellion. The slave will be so sad at this that if this sadness were to be divided amongst the people of Paradise they would not be able to taste the joy of it due to their sadness. A third box will be opened and this will be entirely empty. This represents the time that the slave spent in sleep or performing lawful actions. However on that day when there is an intense need for the reward from even the smallest deed, the slave will burn with regret, even more so that a merchant who has lost an enormous gain even though he had plenty of opportunity and he will cringe with pain at having spent that hour in vain.

In that case, o my evil-commanding soul! Fill your box well while you have the chance and dare not leave it empty. Do not fall into laziness or you will fall from the greatest of heights!”



Halid-i Baghdadi, who reached the peak of the outer and inner sciences passed his entire life anxious at his last breath. He writes in his *Mektubat*:

“...I swear by Allah Most High that I do not believe that I have ever done a single act of goodness that is acceptable and valid in the eyes of Allah from the time my mother gave birth to me until today. (Yet do I seek refuge in the Mercy of my Lord). If you do not see your own soul as bankrupt in terms of performing all acts of good, then this is the peak of ignorance...”⁷⁰

The following extract from a letter he sent to a friend are a reflection of this anxiety of preparing for his last breath:

“...I hope that you occupy yourselves with what will be needed when you take your last breath, that you carry out acts suitable to the traditions of the Prophet, that you do not pay any attention to the deceptive beauties of this fleeting world, and that you do not forget to pray for this poor slave. Pray that he meets with success and a good end with faith in his heart having lived the way Allah wishes”. (Mektubat-I Mawlana Halid, p 175).

And so the great friends of Allah never relied on their own deeds and constantly sought refuge in the mercy and forgiving nature of Allah when it came to the matter of their last breath. In that case, we too should not rely upon our knowledge or our actions and must constantly pray to Almighty Allah that we meet with a good end.



At one time there was a man who used to run a store which was located at the exit gate of the city. Whenever a funeral used to pass by this gate this man would toss a seed into an urn that stood by him and at the end of the month he would count the seeds and say:

“This month, this many people fell into that urn”.

And so it was that one day he too passed away. Quite a while had passed when a friend, unaware of his death came to visit him. When he couldn't see him, he asked the neighbours:

“What happened to the owner of this store?”

They said:

“He too fell into the urn”...

What lesson to take heed from...Let us not forget that every person will fall into the urn of death... However, people in general watch others around them migrate to the eternal realm one by one, yet out of their heedlessness, they see their own death as far, far away...



The servant of Yavuz Sultan Selim Han, Hasan Can narrates: “Once a boil had formed on the back of Sultan Yavuz. The boil grew in a short time and became a deep cavity. It grew so much that we could see the liver of Yavuz through that cavity. He was suffering badly. He was like a wounded lion. But somehow he remained unable to accept his powerlessness and continued to give commands and directions to his soldiers. I approached him and indicating his own condition, he asked me:

“Hasan Can, what is this state?”



I sensed that his mortal journey had come to an end and that he was about to begin his eternal life. That is why I said to him sorrowfully, the pain of separation burning in my heart:

“My Sultan, I think your time has come to be with Allah Most High”.

The great Sultan turned to me and said in surprise: “Hasan, Hasan! Who do you think I have been with up until this time? Have you seen any fault in my (relationship with) Almighty Allah?”

Feeling ashamed at these words I said:

“(Allah Forbid) my Sultan! I meant no such thing. I just dared, as a mere precaution, to suggest that this time that you find yourself might be different from other times” I said.

The great Sultan, having delved into a completely different realm, addressed me for the last time and said:

“Hasan! Read chapter *Yasin*”.

With teary eyes, I began to recite. When I came to the verse “Salam (Peace)” the Sultan gave up his honoured spirit to his Lord.

Overall, those who are not with Allah throughout their lives are not subject to this type of favour at their last breath. This is why it is necessary to live our lives with purpose in order to have a fine death.



Sultan Murad II was one who thought not of his own comfort but of gaining the pleasure of Allah. He had a strong will and was very determined to the extent that he did not refrain from sacrificing his life to this end. His biggest concern was to be able to breathe his last breath having faith in his heart and to be able to appear before the presence of Allah on the Day of Gathering blameless and free of sin. After he had married off his son and daughter he said to his vizier, Candarli Ibrahim Pasha:

“O Candarli! Praise be to Allah that we have, with His permission, carried out our duties towards our children in this world. What is now left for us to do is to migrate from here with faith in our hearts...”



Officer Muzaffer, who had displayed great success in the Battle for the Dardanelles, later went to the eastern front where he fought with great courage. Whilst fighting a bloody battle here he was severely wounded. During his last moments when neither his voice nor his eyes could speak, he took out an envelope from his pocket. Then, taking a stick from the ground, he dipped it in the blood that flowed from his wound and began to write:

“Which way is the Qibla (the direction of Mecca)?

Realising that he was about to pass away, those around him immediately granted his request and turned him toward the *Qibla*. At the point of his death, as a last manoeuvre, the Officer turned to give his heroic soldiers the following message. On the one hand, the joy of reunion was written all over his face and yet on the other, there was disquiet and apprehension at the sacred duty he had been given of defending his country:

“Let the squadron continue in its *jihad* for Allah; Do not let my death be in vain...”

He was about to write his third message but he ran out of time. He became a martyr for the sake of his Lord.

What great sensitivity that made him draw blood from his veins when his tongue could no longer speak, in order to explain his need to submit his spirit to his Lord while facing the direction of Mecca. And so the last moments of a life spent in the way of Allah are also blessed and holy.



The state of one of the friends of Allah, Mahmud Sami Ramazanoglu, in his last moments is another good example for us. Sami Efendi was a friend of Allah whose heart was full of love for the Prophet. Just as someone who walks through the snow leaves footprints in the snow; and then one who tries to find their way follows those footsteps. This is how Sami Efendi lived his life, faithfully following in the footsteps of the Prophet. As a display of this he was blessed with passing away in the environs of the Prophet, whom he had spent his entire life following with love and enthusiasm. The moment of his death was the moment that the call to prayer was recited for the *tahajjud* prayer (late night prayer). Those who were with him in those final moments heard only the following words from his lips:





“Allah, Allah, Allah!”...

It was not just his tongue, but his entire body, together with all of its cells and his soul that continually cried out “Allah”...



In short, in order for the slave to depart this life with a beautiful ending, that is to breathe his last breath with faith in his heart, he must first purify his soul and cleanse his heart. He must rid it of its ugly inclinations, and allow it to arrive at a state of being adorned with elevated characteristics, and a place of manifestation of the beautiful names of Almighty Allah. For the heart to reach this state of piety is the most precious gift of guidance in this journey of life. The following lines by Jalaluddin al Rumi explain the nature of purification of the heart:

“You do not make your grave with stones or wood or felt. You must dig your own grave, within your own untainted heart and within the inner purity of your world, in order that you destroy your own claims and self in the face of the exalted Being of Allah”.

Then it is necessary to prepare for an eternal realm in the best possible way, with a soul that has been purified, with worship, obedience, and by performing good deeds and giving out.

At the last breath of the slave, Almighty Allah gives him the following good tidings if he is a slave who has embellished his life with good deeds and who has never forgotten his Lord throughout his life:

“The angels descend on those who say, “Our Lord is Allah,” and then go straight: “Do not fear and do not grieve but rejoice in the Garden you have been promised’ (Fussilat 41:30)

May our Lord bless us all by making us recipients of these glad tidings. Amen!...



Part 2



“Then he will neither die therein
nor live.”

(Al-A'la, 87:14)

*Islamic Character
and the Disposition
of the Heart*

1. Love

Love is what makes life pleasurable, peaceful and blissful. The dough of existence has been kneaded with the yeast of love. The capacity for love is one of the greatest favours that our Lord has bestowed upon His slaves. This is why we should direct our love to those hearts that have understood the reality of friendship. However, it is very unfortunate that most people waste their love, which is a divine favour, on fleeting and carnal desires. And what is the worth of a heart that has become so hardened that it fails to feel its need for Divine Love?

Jalaluddin Rumi gives the following example as a lesson for those who waste their capital of love on fleeting and relative creatures and who are deprived of the love of Allah:

‘Those who give their hearts to this world are just like hunters who hunt for shadows. And how can a person ever be able to own a shadow? A foolish hunter thought the shadow of a bird to be the bird itself and tried to catch it. Even the bird on the branch was surprised at this fool’.

Our ultimate aim is to be reunited with Allah. To forget this and become obsessed with fleeting beloveds such as property, wealth, position, riches or one’s family or children, is to ravage one’s heart. A poet has expressed this truth in the following way:

Remove from your lips all other than Allah, such that the truth can be manifest



The Sultan will not enter the Palace until it has been constructed perfectly

The victory of Majnun on his journey to Allah was that he did not remain obsessed with Laila, who had scattered his thoughts. In other words, he did not make her, his final stop in the stages of his love. He went from metaphorical love to real love, love of Allah. Of course this is an arduous path, in which many people failed. Laila can represent a variety of things – the opposite sex, property, position and status. These beloveds, which are called ‘metaphorical beloveds’, should be made bridges or stepping stones to true love.

a. Love for Allah (*Muhabbetullah*)

Man sees the result of his love to the degree that the one he loves is worthy of his love. This is why the human heart can only reach a perfected state of love if he directs the natural inclination to love found within him towards Almighty Allah. Because the only Being that is worthy of true love is Allah Most High, the *source* of all love. Because:

- The One who created everything, who favours living beings with provision, who protects and watches over them is Allah, the Possessor of Perfection and Power.
- He loves his slaves very much. He created Adam in heaven in the best form and with the greatest care. He also desires that his slaves enter into Paradise. The response for love can only be love.
- He has made easy for the slave, the ways to reunion with Him and the path to His love.
- He is the Sole Master of this world and the hereafter.
- In the end man will enter into Allah Most High’s Presence and will find no other refuge, shelter and helper other than Him. What a beautiful Protector and what a beautiful Helper is Allah, the Lord of the worlds.
- In addition to all of these divine favours, Allah has made us form amongst the community of the Prophet whom He loves the most, and has given us the most perfect



book, the Holy Qur'an. This is why our debt to Almighty Allah is endless.

Consequently it is a requirement of our servanthood that we direct our love towards Allah Most High.

Undoubtedly love will manifest itself differently for each lover of Allah. Thus Rumi was able to become a source of meaning and wisdom, both of which flowed from his lips like rare pearls, from within the deep ocean of his speech and the love that burned his heart. Hallaj-i Mansur was favoured with divine reunion in eternity that rendered the lover mortal in the One loved. For years Bahauddin *Nakshibend* occupied himself with tending to wounded and injured animals, with keeping the streets clean and with meeting the needs of the sick from whom all others stayed away from. In this way he gave his all in the service of Allah, and ended up becoming a deep ocean of knowledge of Allah and a means of His power of disposal. Their methods were different, but the quality of their hearts was ever the same. To be full of passion and love for Allah...

Almighty Allah has sent all His saints to the whole of mankind. They have each been subject to different manifestations and they are rare flowers who have been endowed with the science of knowledge and love of Allah.

In short, a believer who loves Allah must be aware and conscious of the fact that in reality he possesses nothing. Love requires sacrifice and therefore cannot be married with possession. That is, the one who loves must be willing to forsake their all for the sake of their beloved. Love gives birth to the natural tendency of the heart to give out, both materially and spiritually. And this takes place according to the intensity of the love felt. This is why people pay the greatest price depending on how much they love. Depending on the intensity of one's love, this can manifest itself in a form of sacrifice that goes so far as to abandon one's life for one's beloved.

Happy are those believers who hold love of Allah and His Messenger above all else and are not deceived by fake flowers in wild and weedy gardens.



Scenes of Virtue

Without a doubt, the peak personality in the matter of love of Allah is the Blessed Prophet Muhammad ⁷¹ﷺ. Seeking the love of Allah Most High in his prayers he would frequently repeat the following supplication of the Prophet Dâwud عليه السلام:

'Allahumma inni as'aluka hubbika wa hubba man yuhubbuka wa'l'ameleellezi yubellighunni hubbaka. Allahumma'jal hubbaka ahabba ilayya min nafsii wa ahliy wa minal maa'il baarid'

'O Allah I ask you for your Love, for the love of those who love you and the deeds that will allow me to attain to your Love. O Allah! Make my love for You dearer to me than my own soul, my family, my property and cold water' (Tirmidhi, Deawat, 72/3490).

Another prayer by the Prophet is as follows:

'O Allah! Bestow on me Your love and the love of the one whose love will be of any benefit in Your eyes. O Allah! Make the bounties that You have bestowed upon me and which I love strength for me to love You and to perform the deeds that You will be pleased with. O Allah! Make the things which I have asked You for but which You have not given me a means to turn to You in complete obedience and to occupy my mind with the things that You love'. (Tirmidhi, Deawat, 73/3491).

It is common knowledge that the lover never stops talking about their beloved and thinks about them constantly. Similarly, the Prophet would be in a state of remembrance of Allah in every state and would pray to his Lord at his every step, ever pondering and reflecting on His attributes, power and manifestations of greatness and the bounties that He has bestowed. Thus the prayers he said at different times and places, such as when he went somewhere, when he came back, when he sat down, when he rose, when he started a task, and when he finished it, had reached such a number that the Blessed Companions were almost incapable of memorising and were the reason they asked the Prophet for short and concise prayers.



71. saw in Arabic is short for "sallallahu alayhi wa sallam" and means "peace and blessings be upon him". It is pronounced whenever the name of the Prophet is mentioned (translator's note).

How cautionary is the following narration which informs us of how one can attain to the love of our Lord and reach a state of His pleasure and of deep reverence:

One day the Blessed Companions asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ:

‘We see two believers, one in a state of deep reverence (*khushu*) and the other deprived of this state. What is the reason for this difference?’

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied:

‘The believer who has tasted the pleasure of faith will have deep reverence. The other will not.’

‘In that case how does one obtain the pleasure of faith? How does one reach that state?’ they asked.

The Prophet replied:

‘It can be reached by remaining loyal in their love for Allah’

This time the Companions asked:

‘Well then, how is love of Allah obtained?’

The Prophet replied:

‘It is obtained through love for Allah’s Messenger. This is why you should seek the pleasure of Allah and His Messenger in love for Allah and His Messenger’ (Senderusi, Kashf-i Ilahi, II, 651; Halebi, Mawsuatu al-Ahadith, VI, 492/16010).



The Prophet passed his entire life in love for and devotion to Allah Most High. He awaited the time when he would be reunited with his Lord with the excitement that one would feel on his wedding night. His wife, Aisha رضي الله عنها⁷² narrates:

‘While Allah’s Messenger was living his final moments, his blessed head lay on my breast. I was praying “O Lord of mankind! Take away the

72. *ra* short for *radiallahu anhu* (for males) and *anha* (for females). It means ‘may Allah be pleased with him or her’ and is used as a term of respect for the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (translator’s note).



sickness. You are the true doctor and the only healer”. On the other hand he Prophet, was saying:

“No! O Allah! Reunite me with The Greatest of Friends (Refik-ı A'lâ). O Allah! Forgive me! Bestow Your Mercy upon me! Reunite me with the Greatest of Friends”. (Ahmad, VI,108, 231).

In another narration Aisha continues the story:

‘In his days of health the Prophet ﷺ would often say:

“No prophet has ever departed this life without having seen his position in heaven. Then he is left with the choice to either stay in the world or to take his position”.

When he got sick and his death was near, he lay with his head on my lap and then he fainted. When he came to, he turned his eyes towards the ceiling and said:

“O Allah! The Greatest of Friends!”

Then I said:

“The Messenger of Allah does not prefer us!” I realised that this wish of the Prophet was a sign that what he used to tell us about when he was healthy was coming true’ (Bukhari, Magazi, 84; Ahmad, VI, 89).



The following conversation that took place between the Angel of Death and the Prophet at the point of his death shows even more clearly the degree to which he loved Allah.

When it was time for the Prophet to depart this life the Angel of Death asked for permission to enter. Gabriel was there also and he said to the Prophet:

‘O Ahmad! This is the Angel of Death. He is here and he asks your permission to enter. He has never asked permission of anyone else before you. And he will never ask permission of anyone ever again. Let him enter!’

The Angel of Death entered and stood beside the Prophet and said:

“O Messenger of Allah! O Ahmad! Allah Most High has sent me to you and ordered me to obey your every command. If you order me to take your life I will, but if you order otherwise I will leave your spirit to you”.

Allah’s Messenger asked:

“*Will you really do that?*”.

The Angel of Death replied:

“I have been commanded to obey your every word”.

At that point Gabriel عليه السلام said:

“O Ahmad! Allah Most High longs for you”.

The Prophet then said:

“*What is with Allah is better and more everlasting. O Angel of Death! Come and do what you have been commanded to do! Take my spirit*” (Ibn Sa’d, II, 259; Haysami, IX, 34-35; Balazuri, Ansabu al ashraf, Egypt 1959, I, 565).



Many examples from the other prophets can be given to illustrate love of Allah. We mention some of them as follows:

Allah Most High had bestowed upon the prophet Ibrahîm an uncountable number of herds of sheep. Gabriel عليه السلام once appeared in the form of a man and asked him:

‘Whose are these herds of sheep? Will you sell me one of these herds?’

Ibrahîm عليه السلام replied:

‘These sheep belong to my Lord. At the moment they have been entrusted to me. If you mention Allah once, you can have a third; if you mention Allah three times you can take them all with you!’

Gabriel made mention of Allah three times as follows:

“*Subbuhun Quddusun Rabbunaa wa Rabbu’l malaaikati wa al ruhi*”

‘Our Lord, and the Lord of the Spirit and the noble Angels is free of all faults and pure and above all deficiencies’.



Ibrahîm said:

‘Take them all, they are yours.’ Gabriel then said:

‘I am not a human being. I am an angel. I cannot take them.’ Ibrahîm responded:

‘You are an angel and I am the Friend of Allah. It does not befit me that I should take back what I have given away’

Eventually Ibrahîm sold all of the herds. He bought property and turned them into an endowment for the poor and needy.

Ibrahîm was tried throughout his life with his life, his child and his property. At each of these times he showed great submission and love. He reached the peak of servant hood as the *Khalil al -Allah* (Friend of Allah).



A story of a Companion whose love for Allah manifested itself in listening to the words of Allah is as follows:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ once dispatched this Companion as the commander of an expedition. That blessed Companion led the prayer for his friends but each time he would finish each recitation by reading the chapter *Ikhlas*. When they returned to Madina they told the Messenger of Allah of this situation. The Prophet said:

‘Ask him why he did this’. When his friends asked him the reason for this, the Companion said:

‘This chapter is about the attributes of the Most Merciful. That is why I love to read it’

On learning of this the Prophet said:

‘Tell him that Allah Most High loves him too’ (Bukhari, Tawheed, I).



Whilst Ammar ibn Yasir ؓ was walking along the shore of the Euphrates River in order to join an expedition he expressed his love for Allah as follows:



“O Allah! If I knew that throwing myself off that mountain would be a means for making You more pleased with me then I would not hesitate to do it. If I knew that throwing myself into a big fire would make You more pleased with me that I would do it immediately. O my Lord! If I knew that throwing myself into the sea and drowning would draw your pleasure more, then I would do it straight away. O Allah! I am fighting here merely to gain Your pleasure. I ask that You do not let me meet with harm. It is You only that I seek” (Ibn Sa‘d, III, 258).



Abdullah ibn Umar  was one of the rich and leading companions. He would never let his wealth accumulate and would distribute whatever came to him to the poor. He would put aside the possessions that he loved the most to be used in the path of Allah. He had begun to set free all of the slaves that he saw in a good state and especially those whom he learned had begun to pray. One of his friends warned him that some of the slaves that he had set free were coming to the mosque not for the sake of Allah but rather for the purpose of being set free. Abdullah gave the following beautiful reply which reflected the love of Allah that he carried within his heart:

‘We are willing to be deceived by those who choose to deceive us using Allah’ (Ibn Asir, Usdu’l Gabe, III, 343).



Fudayl ibn Iyadh was a gnostic and a virtuous man who frequently used to weep out of fear of Allah. He was also a trustworthy narrator of *hadith*. Fudayl once encountered Shi’vane Hatun who also lived at that time. Shi’vane Hatun was a lady in constant worship who had abandoned all worldly pleasures. She would weep often out of both love and fear of Allah. Fudayl said to her:

‘Pray for me’.

Shi’vane Hatun gave the following reply:

‘Fudayl! Is there no closeness between you and Allah that will make your prayers answered so that you are now asking me to pray for you?’



Hearing these words Fudayl lost his self-control and wept and sobbed. (Ibn Jawzi, Sifat al Sahaba, IV, 56).



Before he was executed, Hallaj-i Mansur made a prayer that is a fine display of the degree and sincerity of the love he felt for Allah:

“O Allah! Your slaves have gathered together to kill me due to their closeness to You and their devotion to their religion. Please forgive them. Because had You bestowed upon them the mysteries that You have bestowed upon me, they would have a different opinion of me. Had You have hidden from me the things You have hidden from them, I would not have disclosed them so. O my Lord! Forgive them. Because they are the means for uniting me with You.”

It has been narrated from those who were witness to the spiritual state of Hallaj that when he was being hung on the gallows Satan came to him and asked him:

‘You said “Ana” (“I”) and I said “Ana” (“I”)⁷³. How can it be that this word that we both uttered can be the means for mercy being rained down upon you and at the same time me being cursed?’

Hallaj gave the following reply to Satan:

“By saying ‘I’ you saw yourself superior to Adam and put forth your arrogance. Whereas when I said “*Ana al Haqq*”, I lost myself in Allah. Pride which asserts its own self is an indication of Hell. Whereas to do away with yourself and become lost in Allah is an expression of one’s nothingness. This is why there is mercy for me and a curse and disgrace upon you”.

It has been narrated that Hallaj said to Ibrahim ibn Fatik who once visited him:

“O son! Some people think that I have fallen into unbelief and some believe me to be a saint. Those who declare me a heretic are more pleasing

73. *Ana al Haqq* meaning “I am the Real or I am the Truth” were the words uttered by Hallaj. In the case of Satan, when Allah asked him “What am I and what are you?” he insolently replied: “Ana ana wa anta anta” (I am I and You are You) (translator’s note).

to me and are more pleasing in the eyes of Allah than those who say that I am a saint”.

When he was asked why he replied:

‘Those who believe me to be a saint do so out of their good opinion of me whereas those who are of the opinion that I am an unbeliever, believe so due to their devotion to their religion. The one who shows devotion to his religion is more pleasing to Allah than the one who merely has a good opinion.



Jalalluddin Rumi expressed beautifully that his burning with divine love, his annihilation in Allah (*fana fillah*), his eternity with Allah (*baka billah*) and the fire that burned within his soul would not be extinguished even by death.

“After my death open my grave and see the smoke that rises from my shroud out of the fire that is within me! What makes death frightening is this body which is like a cage. Once you open up the body with ‘love’ as you would an oyster, then will you see how death resembles a pearl...”

One of the most important characteristics of the friends of Allah is how they burn with divine love. Rumi would search for those true lovers who passed their lives in a state of divine love that he expressed in the above words. He expressed this wish of his as follows:

‘I am in search of such a lover that the flames within him should ignite the Day of Judgement and the heat from his heart should turn fire into ash...’



Once Maruf-i Karhi was asked by one of his friends:

‘O Maruf! What is it that drives you to worship so much?’

Maruf was silent. His friend persisted:

‘Is it remembering death?’ he asked

Maruf-i Karhi replied:

‘What is this thing you call death?’





‘Is it thinking about the grave and the intermediate realm?’

‘What is this thing you call the grave?’

His friend persisted still:

‘Is it fear of Hellfire or hope for Paradise?’ Then Maruf gave the following splendid reply:

‘What are all of these? Allah almighty who holds all of these things in His hands is such an exalted Lord that if you truly possessed deep love and ardour for Him, you would forget all of these things that you have just mentioned’ (Babanzade Ahmad Naim, “Islam Ahlakinin Esaslari, Istanbul,” 1963 p 66).



The following state of Majnun is striking in terms of reflecting the state of those who have attained to the love of Allah:

One day Majnun suddenly fell ill as a result of being separated from Laila. Those around him called for a physician to find a cure. When the physician arrived he said:

‘There is no other solution but to bleed him.’ He tied Majnun’s arm in order to bleed him. He had just taken the lancet in his hand when Majnun cried out:

“Stop Doctor. Take your fee and leave. If I die from this disease then let me die. It is no loss. What does it matter if this worn out body perishes?”

In amazement the doctor asked Majnun:

‘You do not fear roaring lions in the desert and yet you fear having your blood taken?’

Majnun’s reply was as follows:

‘It is not the lancet that I fear...the whole world knows that my patience and forbearance are greater than that of a mountain of rock. I am a man who fears nothing and who does not possess even a bale of hay in this world. If my mortal body did not endure pain it would not rest. Wounds are cures for my love; for this I would run to be wounded...’

However my body is filled with Laila; there is nothing other than Laila within me. This body of mine which is like a mother of pearl contains



within it the characteristics of that pearl. And so, o doctor. While you are bleeding me I fear that your lancet may suddenly strike Laila and I am afraid that you might injure her...Because the special slaves of Allah know that there is no difference between Laila and me”.

Years later Laila appeared before Majnun but Majnun paid no attention to her. Laila said to him:

“Was it not for me that you lost yourself in the desert?” Majnun answered:

“The relative shadow called Laila melted and departed”.

Laila, who at one time had been the aim of Majnun’s entire life represented only a step in the journey towards divine love. Once Majnun had found his place in the realm of divine love, the truth of which he had been searching for, the role of Laila in his life came to an end.

Laila, who is mentioned in the stories of the *Mathnawi*, is a symbol of divine passion which is transformed into divine love and of a personality that becomes lost in Allah. In other words Laila is a sphere of divine love that makes the hearts go crazy and destroys physical will. This is why if incidences of love that begin with Laila find peace in Allah, then they will become precious.



Majnun had taken to the desert for the sake of Laila and out of his passion for her. One time he caressed and kissed the eyes of a dog whose fur had fallen out and from whose mouth dribbled saliva. Someone who saw this state of his could not bear it and said to him:

‘O crude Majnun! What is this madness of yours? Why are you hugging and kissing this animal?

Majnun replied:

‘You are nothing but appearance. You are a shape and a body from top to toe so how can you understand what I do? Enter within and look inside, that is, delve into the realm of my spirit and then look at it through my eyes. Do you know what virtue this dog has? There is a divine secret within this dog that you have not grasped. Allah has hidden within its heart the



treasure of love and loyalty that it feels for its owner. And look, out of all the villages, it has gone and made Laila's village its home and has become a guard of that village...!

Do not underestimate this dog, look at its zeal. It is the blessed-faced Qitmir of the realm of my heart. He is a partner to my happiness and my sorrow. I wouldn't change one of its hairs for many lions. Pay attention to its heart, its soul, and its insight so that you may see its virtue. For me even the ground that the foot of this dog steps on is dear to me because it has chosen to make Laila's village its home..."

A heart that burns with love for Allah will love all of His creatures due to this love. Everything that reminds him of Allah represents, according to the degree of its closeness to Him, a priceless jewel.



One of the friends of Allah relates the following event which shows the fruit of love felt for Allah:

"I was passing through a wide and desolate land when I came across a strange shepherd. I saw that he was performing the prayer in deep reverence and wolves were guarding his sheep. I was amazed. I waited in wonder for him to finish his prayer and then asked him:

"O shepherd! How can it be that wolves have befriended your sheep? How did the spirit of animosity and savagery within them leave and be replaced with peace and love?"

The righteous shepherd, his face radiating light as a result of his prostration to Allah, gave the following reply:

"O strange traveller! The mystery of the friendship between these wolves and lambs lies with the true owner of shepherds, herds and wolves. This state is a mystery of love".



The lover sacrifices his all for his beloved. The following event related by Molla Jami (may his mystery be sanctified) is an example of this:

There was once a young man in the discussion circle of our Master, Mawlana Sadeddin Kashgari. This young man was foremost in terms of



asceticism, seclusion and love for Allah. However, like me, he too had become obsessed with a mortal love. And so it was in a split second that he transferred the treasure of love that had accumulated in his heart to her.

He bought a very valuable gift made of gold and diamonds, placed it in the path that he knew that beauty would take, and hid there so that no one passing by would take it. His plan was that his lover would pass by there, see the gift and take it. But she would not know who it came from and how. When I learnt of this I said to him:

“What a strange thing it is that you do. You are leaving this thing that you have obtained with much trouble in her path. But even if she finds it, sees it and takes it, she is not going to know who it is from and why it was given to her. At least do something so that she will know it is from you”.

The young man, shaken with tears replied:

“What are you saying? Don’t you think I know the strangeness of the thing that I am doing? I do not expect anything in return for what I am doing. I do not want her to feel any obligation to me because of this gift”.

I trembled at his answer. If such a common love felt towards a mortal human being could display such depth, delicacy, and grace, then what elevated manifestations would be reflected by those who have attained to ‘love of His essence’.



In short the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

‘*Allah is beautiful and loves beauty*’ (Muslim, Iman, 147).

Accordingly Allah, who is the possessor of all of the beauty that we see around us is also the source of true love. Because He is *Al-Wadood*⁷⁴. This sacred Name of Allah means ‘the one who loves much’ and also ‘the one who is loved much’⁷⁵. This is why the duty of the believer is to be a gate of mercy that instils the hearts with divine love. Because if the believer does not place the love he feels for his Lord (*muhabbetullah*) above everything other than Allah, that he loves and feels bound to, then he cannot be said

74. See Al Buruj, (verse 14.)

75. Fakhruddin Ar-Razi, Mefatihul’l Gayb (at Tafsir al-Kabir), Beirut, 1990, XXXI, 112)

to have properly attained to the ‘*Sirat al-Mustaqim*’ (the Straight Path). Almighty Allah says in a verse from the Qur’an:

‘Some people set up equals to Allah, loving them as they should love Allah. But those who have faith have greater love for Allah’ (Al-Baqara, 2:165).

That this state is crucial for the believer is expressed as follows in another verse:

‘Say: ‘If your fathers or your sons or your brothers or your wives or your tribe, or any wealth you have acquired, or any business you fear may slump, or any house which pleases you, are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and doing *jihad* in His Way, then wait until Allah brings about His command. Allah does not guide people who are deviators.’ (Al-Tawba, 9:24).

In order to arrive at this state of *muhabbatullah* (love of Allah) it is necessary to recognise Allah in one’s heart, that is, to be a subject to the manifestations of His *Asma al-Husna* or His Beautiful Names.

Remembering Allah (*zikrullah*) is a means for advancing in the direction of *muhabbetullah*. However this advance will be realised only to the degree of the quality of the *zikh* that is performed, that is, the degree to which it is felt in the heart.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has said:

“A sign that one loves Allah is that one loves to remember Allah Most High” (*zikrullah*)’ (Suyuti, II, 52).

In order to progress in the direction of *muhabbetullah*, one needs to acquire a heart that is sufficient and worthy of bearing it. This can be achieved through practice with human loves. This is why, because it acts as preparation for the heart, mortal love is looked on with lenience so long as it takes place within lawful limits, and this is why it is called ‘metaphorical love’. Just as one loves one’s family...

Continuing on in this state and reaching the state of *muhabbetullah* means the realisation of the purpose of mankind’s creation and the gaining of Allah’s pleasure. Because the peak and ultimate aim of the divine proposals that are presented to man through Islam is to be a ‘*wasil ilallah*’,

that is, a means to Allah. And the most important asset for this is love. Other deeds are a manifestation of this love.

A believer who attains to *marifetullah* and *muhabbetullah* will be distanced from the evil of his own soul and from the wiles of Satan, and will live desiring only the pleasure of Allah. The pages of the book of the universe will be opened to him and all of creation will befriend him. That is he will acquire the ability to look at creation through the 'eyes' of The Creator. He will watch with the eye of discernment, the divine wisdom and flow of secrets throughout the universe. After performing, with great reverence, the obligatory and compulsory minimum duty of servant hood required by Allah, he will then try to increase his supererogatory worship simply out of the great love and ardour that comes from the heart, and even though it is not compulsory. This he will do with perfect manners, reverence and zeal. Doing away with all carnal pleasures he will find the secret of true pleasure in faith.

b. Love for the Messenger of Allah

May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon the Master of both worlds, Muhammad Mustafa!...

May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon the Messenger to both humans and jinn, Muhammad Mustafa!...

May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon the Leader of the two holy cities, Muhammad Mustafa!...

May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon the grandfather of Hasan and Hussain, Muhammad Mustafa!...

The stages of mortal love can reach their peak in the love felt for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. No other person can be considered more worthy of mortal love than Him. This is because:

- The existence of all creation owes its existence to Allah Most High's love for the Prophet.
- Allah's Messenger is a means for both man and jinn to encounter eternal truth and thereby is a means for them being saved from eternal pain in the hereafter.



- Allah Most High has displayed the bounties of the Qur'an and Islam to His servants through the pure heart of the Prophet.
- He endured the greatest of pain for the sake of his community and was subject to trials and distress that no other human being has ever been subject to.
- He is filled with deep compassion and mercy for the believers. He is an ocean of kindness. He cares a great deal about his community and it is very hard on him when his community undergoes distress of any kind.
- He is an ideal and model example of servanthood.
- He is the most crucial means of allowing servants to acquire knowledge of Allah Most High
- Out of all of the Prophets, it was on the Prophet's life that Allah Most High swore by, ('*Le'amruka*' - I swear by your life'), thereby desiring that the community of Muslims focus their attention on the best example of the Messenger of Allah's life.
- Allah Most High made obedience to His Noble Beloved a condition of His own love and forgiveness. He says in a verse from the Qur'an:

'Say, 'If you love Allah, then follow me and Allah will love you and forgive you for your wrong actions. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful' (Al'i Imran, 3:31).

- Love for the Messenger of Allah is a means to salvation from divine punishment. Almighty Allah has said: **Allah would not punish them while you were among them** (Al-Anfal, 8:33).
- Most importantly of all, Almighty Allah loves him and he is favoured as being called '*My Beloved*' by Allah (*Habibullah*). What a great honour, then, it is to love the Beloved of Allah.

In that case we must engrave upon our hearts the subtle name of that peerless sultan. We must do this with words of love that can never be

erased. We must send blessings upon him such that our hearts can begin to become worthy of that elevated worth given to him.

It is worth keeping in mind, however, that the ultimate aim is not love of the Blessed Prophet in itself. The only Being that man should direct his love to is Allah Most High, the Creator of the entire universe. Love for the Beloved Prophet then is the most important means in guiding us to knowledge and love of Allah.

Scenes of Virtue

The Blessed Companions paid great attention and devotion to the Messenger of Allah out of their love for him. They would obey his every word, his every command and even any slightest indication made by him, with the following words:

‘May my mother, my father, my wealth and my life be sacrificed for you o Messenger of Allah!’...

It was a source of much satisfaction for those who were able to touch his skin:

‘See! It was with these two hands of mine that I made a pact with Allah’s Messenger’ (Ibn Sa’d, IV, 306; Haysami, VIII, 42).

Abu Asma As-Shami  is an example:

He came to the Blessed Messenger as an envoy. He had learned the principles of Islam and was to transmit them to the tribe that he had come representing. He took the blessed hand of the Messenger of Allah and shook it, thereby making his pact. He must have been very moved after touching the Prophet’s hand and wishing to feel the blessings of the warmth of that blessed hand forever, Abu Asma promised himself that he would never shake hands with anybody again. And so it was that he did not touch any other hand until the day he died (Ibn Hajar, Al-Isabe, IV, 7).



The degree of love felt for the Messenger of Allah by the Companions was so great that some of the female Companions would chide their sons if they did not spend a long period of time with him. When Huzayfa  did



not see the Messenger of Allah for a few days his mother got angry with him and berated him. He narrates this event as follows:

‘One day my mother asked me:

“When did you last see the Prophet?.”

‘I have not seen him for a number of days.’ She got very angry and spoke very angrily with me.

I said:

‘Mother dear! Stop! Do not get angry! Let me go right away to the Messenger of Allah. I will pray the evening prayer with him and will ask him to ask for forgiveness for both you and me’... (Tirmidhi, Manakib, 378; Ahmad, V, 391-2).



Jabala, the brother of Zayd ibn Harith, رضي الله عنه explains the devoted love of the Companions for the Prophet as follows:

‘I once went to the Blessed Prophet and said:

“O Messenger of Allah! Send my brother Zayd back with me”. Allah’s Messenger responded:

“Here he is. If he wants to return with you I will not prevent him”. However Zayd rejected my offer and said instead:

“O Messenger of Allah! I would not choose anyone over you”.

Later I was to learn that this stance of Zayd’s was more justified than mine (Tirmidhi, Manakib, 39/3815).



After the second pledge of Aqaba, Mus’ab رضي الله عنه, who was the head of the tribe, went first to Allah’s Messenger’s House even before his own. He brought the news that the people of Madina were entering into Islam in great haste. Allah’s Messenger ﷺ was very pleased with this news.

When the pagan mother of Mus’ab learned that he had gone first to the Prophet she became very angry. Mus’ab, on the other hand, said:



‘I would not go to anyone else before the Messenger of Allah. I would not give priority to anyone else while he is alive’.

After asking permission from the Prophet, he then went to his mother and invited her to Islam (Ibn Sa’d, III, 119).



While they were heading for the cave of Thawr during the emigration to Madina, Abu Bakr  would sometimes walk ahead and sometimes behind the Prophet. Allah’s Messenger asked him:

“O Abu Bakr! What is the reason for this?”

Abu Bakr replied:

‘O Messenger of Allah! When I think that your enemies might catch up to you from behind I walk behind you; then when I think that they might ambush you from ahead, I start to walk in front of you’.

Eventually they reached the Cave of Thawr. Abu Bakr said:

‘O Messenger of Allah! Wait here while I clear the cave’. He went inside the cave and cleaned it. Whenever he felt a hole with his hands he tore a piece off his robe and used it to plug the hole. In this way he used the entire upper portion of his robe to plug up the holes, however there remained one hole left. When he stopped it with his heel in it, he called out to the Prophet:

‘Now you may enter o Messenger of Allah’.

When it was morning and the Messenger of Allah saw that Abu Bakr had nothing on his upper body, he asked him in amazement:

“Where are your clothes o Abu Bakr?”

Abu Bakr told him what he had done the previous evening. Extremely touched by this big-hearted act, the Messenger of Allah raised his hands and began to pray for Abu Bakr.⁷⁶

When the Quraysh pagans came to the mouth of the cave, Abu Bakr al Siddiq began to get nervous and said to the Messenger of Allah :

76. See Hakim, III, 7/4268; Ibn Kathir, Al Bidaya, III, 222-3; Ali al-Kari, Mirkat, Beirut, 1992, X, 381-2/6034; Abu Nuaym, Hilya, I, 33).



‘If I am killed, it is of no consequence for I am but one man. But if anything happens to you then this whole community will be ruined’.

The Prophet was standing in prayer while Abu Bakr was on guard. Abu Bakr said:

‘The Meccans are looking for you. By Allah I am not worried for myself. But I am afraid that they will harm you’.

The Blessed Prophet ﷺ then said to his friend in the cave:

“*O Abu Bakr! Do not worry. Allah is most certainly with us*” (Ibn Kathir, al-Bidaya, III, 223-4; Diyarbekri, Tarihu’ al-hamis, Beirut ts., I, 328-0).



At one time while they were in the Cave of Thawr, Allah’s Messenger ﷺ lay his blessed head down on the knee of Abu Bakr and fell into a light sleep. At that time Abu Bakr was stopping a hole that had remained open in the cave with his foot.

A little while later, it turned out by divine trial that Abu Bakr was in fact justified in his fear for a snake appeared and bit Abu Bakr on the foot and spat out his venom. Despite his feeling great pain, he did not move so that the Messenger of Allah would not waken, however he could not prevent a few teardrops from flowing from his eyes. One of these drops of pearl dribbled onto the blessed face of the Messenger of Allah. He woke up and asked:

“*What is wrong o Abu Bakr? What happened?*”

However much Abu Bakr tried to reassure the Prophet in answering ‘Nothing is wrong o Messenger of Allah!’, upon the insistence of the Prophet, he was forced to explain.

‘May both my mother and father be sacrificed for you o Messenger of Allah! A snake bit my foot’.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ spat some of his saliva onto Abu Bakr’s foot. At that point it was as if nothing had happened and Abu Bakr’s pain and suffering came to an end.

Years later, after the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had passed away, this very same venom began to show its effect and was to be the cause of Abu Bakr’s

martyrdom (*Bayhaki, Dalail an-Nubuwwa wa Ma'rifeti Ahwali Sahibi as-Shariyya*, ta'lik: Abdulmu'ti Kal'aci, Beirut, 1985, II, 477; Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidaya*, III, 223).



When Umar رضي الله عنه once heard some people saying that he was a more superior caliph than Abu Bakr he said:

'By Allah, that single night of Abu Bakr is more superior than the entire dynasty of Umar! When the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم left his home to go to the cave it was Abu Bakr who was with him... (Hakim, III, 7/4268).



Bara رضي الله عنه tells of her father's desire to hear any memory of Allah's Messenger:

Abu Bakr al-Siddiq رضي الله عنه bought a saddle from my father for three dirhams and said:

'Tell Bara to take it to our house.' My father said:

'No! Not until you tell me how the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم migrated from Mecca to Madina.'

Abu Bakr then narrated the journey of their migration at length. (Bukhari, *Ashabu an-Nabi*, 2; Ahmad, 1,2).



After the Muslim army had settled at their headquarters at Badr, Sa'd ibn Muadh made the following speech which demonstrated his love for the Messenger of Allah and how he trembled at his every command:

'O Messenger of Allah! Let us make some shade for you. Let your animals graze near you. Then we can fight the enemy. If Allah gives us power and victory then how wonderful! If the opposite occurs then you can mount your horse and go back to our brothers whom we have left behind. O Prophet of Allah! They love you as much as we do. If they had of known that you were going to enter into battle they would never have stayed behind. Allah will protect you through them. They are devoted to you and will fight in your path'



The Prophet praised Sa'd and prayed for good for him. Sa'd took out his sword and kept guard at the door of the shaded place that had been made.



Abdurrahman Ibn Awf narrates the following cautionary event which shows how all of the blessed Companions, both young and old were filled with love for the Prophet:

'On the Day of Badr I looked to my left and my right. I saw that I was behind two youth from the Ansar. I was not very happy about this. I wanted to be amongst more powerful people. Without letting his friend hear, one of them said to me:

"O uncle! Would you recognise Abu Jahl if you saw him?" I answered:

"Yes I would. What are you going to do (to him)?" The youth said:

"From what I hear he swears at the Messenger of Allah. I swear by Allah who holds the power of my existence in His hands that if I ever see him I will not part from him until either one of us is dead".

I was left in awe at the words of this youth. The other youth said the same thing. It was then that I felt very happy that I was between these two youths. A little while later I saw Abu Jahl moving about in the battlefield and I said:

"Look, there is the person you were asking about".

The youths immediately drew their swords and ran to Abu Jahl, jabbing their swords into him. These two youth were Muadh ibn Afra and Muadh ibn Amr (Bukhari, Megazi, 10; Muslim, Jihad, 42).



One time when Prophet Muhammad was wounded during the Battle of Uhud he said:

"Allah Most High is very angry at the tribe that has wounded the face of His Messenger".

Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas said:



“By Allah when I heard these words I was filled with an ambition to kill the one who wounded him like I had never felt an ambition for anything before.

The one who wounded him happened to be my brother, Utba ibn Abi Waqqas”.

That day Sa'd  whose heart was filled with love for Allah's Messenger, tore through the rows of pagans and made many attempts to kill his brother. However the Messenger of Allah  prevented him from doing so each time.



Talha ibn Ubeydullah narrates:

When the Companions dispersed at Uhud, the pagans set off on the attack and surrounded Allah's Messenger on all sides. I wasn't sure how to defend him, and from where – from in front, from behind, from his right or from his left. I drew my sword and drove away the fighters one time from in front and another time from behind until they had eventually dispersed. (Wakidi, I, 254).



Another time during the Battle of Uhud, one of the best archers from amongst the Pagans, Malik ibn Zuhayr, aimed his spear at the Messenger of Allah. Realising that the arrow was headed straight for the Prophet, Talha ibn Ubeydullah placed his hand in front of the arrow and subsequently injured his finger (Ibn Sa'd, III, 217).



One time some of the Companions from amongst the Emigrants and the Helpers surrounded the Messenger of Allah, whom they loved more than their own lives; they made a vow to Allah that they would be martyred for him:

“Let my face be a shield for your face, and my body effaced in yours. May the peace of Allah be upon you always. We will never leave your side o Messenger of Allah!” and saying so they fought until the end (Ibn Sa'd, II, 46; Wakidi, I, 240).



Abu Talha رضي الله عنه was a very skilled archer. On the day of the battle of Uhud two or three of his bows broke. The Messenger of Allah told everyone who passed by with their bag of arrows:

“Empty your quivers next to Abu Talha”.

The Prophet kept raising his head to look at the pagans behind him. Abu Talha then said:

‘O Messenger of Allah! May my mother and father be sacrificed for you. Do not raise your head. One of the arrows from the pagans may hit you. Let my breast be a shield for your breast. Let whatever is aimed at you hit me instead’ (Bukhari, Megazi, 18).



In order to protect the Messenger of Allah, Qatada ibn Numan رضي الله عنه used to stand in front of him and shoot arrows at the pagans until his bow bent. Eventually he was hit in the eye with an arrow. His pupil fell out onto his cheeks. When Allah’s Messenger saw Qatada like this his eyes filled with tears. The Prophet took Qatada’s pupil in his hand and placed it back into its socket. After that, that eye became more beautiful and had sharper vision than the other one (Hakim, III, 334/5281; Haysami, VI, 113; Ibn Sa’d, III, 453)



Ummu Umara رضي الله عنها was one of the female Companions who protected the Prophet at the Battle of Uhud with a bow and arrow. On returning to Madina after the Battle, the Prophet said:

“During the battle whenever I looked around me I saw Ummu Umara fighting right next to me” (Ibn Hajar, Al-Isaba, IV, 479).

Ummu Umara Hatun was complimented by the Prophet on different occasions. The Prophet also prayed for her. One time she said to him:

“Pray to Allah that I may be your neighbour in Paradise”. The Prophet replied:

“O Allah Make her my neighbour and friend in Paradise”. Following this, Ummu Umara said:



“From now on whatever misfortune comes to me in this world is of no consequence” (Wakidi, I, 273; Ibn Sa’d, VIII, 415).



During the Battle of Uhud, a group of believers heard a rumour that the Prophet had been martyred and fell into deep despair and confusion. Anas ibn Nadr  screamed out to them:

“What does it matter if you live or die if the Prophet is slain? Come and fight and become martyrs as he did”. He then attacked the pagans. A little while later he was martyred, having received over eighty wounds (Ahmad, III, 253; Ibn Hisham, III, 31).



When the battle of Uhud was over the Prophet  sent one of his Companions to find Sa’d ibn Rabi  and learn what state he was in. No matter how much the Companion searched for him he was unable to find him and no matter how much he shouted out for him he received no answer. As a last ray of hope he shouted out in the direction where the wounded and martyred lay:

“O Sa’d! The Messenger of Allah has sent me. He commanded me to find out if you are amongst the living or the dead”.

At that point, Sa’d was breathing his last breath and had no strength to reply. However on hearing that the Prophet was worried about him, he gathered all his strength and managed to say with a whimper:

“I am amongst the dead”. It was obvious that he was destined for the hereafter. The Companion ran to where Sa’d lay. He found him, his body in pieces as a result of numerous sword wounds. He managed to hear as a mere whisper the following words which expressed the epic love he felt for the Prophet:

“By Allah, as long as your eyes are able to move, but yet you refrain from protecting the Prophet from the enemy and allow misfortune to befall him then there is no excuse that you can put forth in the presence of Allah” (Muwatta, Jihad, 41; Hakim, III, 221/4906; Ibn Hisham, III, 47).



The women of Madina had exited the city in the hope that they could receive some news from the battlefield. Aisha was amongst them.

When Aisha arrived at Harra she encountered Hind ibnt Amr, a righteous woman. Hind had loaded the martyred bodies of her husband, Amr ibn Jemih, her son Hallad, and her brother Abdullah onto a camel and was leading it. Aisha asked her:

“What news is there?”

Hind ibnt-i Amr gave the following superb reply:

“Good news, the Prophet is alive! As long as he is alive, any other misfortune is of no importance”... (Wakidi, I, 265; Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bari, Daral Fikr, ts., III, 216; Ibn Abdiller, al-Istiab, Cairo, ts., III, 1168).



Another scene from Uhud is described below:

On the day of Uhud, Madina was shaken by some news. It was said that ‘Muhammad (pbuh) has been slain’.

A clamour broke out in the city and the shrieks reached the skies. Everybody headed for the road trying to get news from those who were coming back. When Sumayra Hatun, from amongst the Helpers, received the news that her two sons, her father, her husband and her brother had been martyred, that blessed woman was not shaken but was anxious to learn of the matter that had truly worried her. What had happened to the Messenger of Allah:

“Has anything happened to Him?”, she kept asking.

The blessed Companions said in response:

“Praise be to Allah he is all right. He is alive, as you wish”.

Sumayra hatun said:

“I will not rest until I see him, show me the Messenger of Allah”.

When they showed him to her, she immediately went to him and holding the edge of his robe she said:



“May my mother and father be sacrificed for you o Messenger of Allah! As long as you are alive nothing else matters” (Wakidi, I, 292; Haysami, VI, 115).

Thus the peak of the love felt for the Messenger of Allah, and the sacrifice and examples of virtue showed by these believers whose hearts were filled with love for him.



One day the Messenger of Allah went to visit the martyrs of Uhud. Indicating the martyrs he said:

“I bear witness to their faith and loyalty”.

Abu Bakr  asked:

‘O Messenger of Allah! Are we not their brothers? Just as they became Muslim, did we not become Muslim? Just as they carried out jihad, did we not carry out jihad?’

The Prophet replied:

“Yes what you say is true, but I do not know what sort of innovations you will invent after I am gone”.

Abu Bakr, who could not stand even a moments separation from the Prophet began to weep and then asked:

“Do you mean that I will be left alive after you have gone o Messenger of Allah?” expressing the anxiety and sorrow he felt at having to live a life without him (Muwatta, Jihad, 32).



The Messenger of Allah  would send teachers to neighbouring tribes to teach them Islam. The tribes of Adal and Kare also requested the Prophet send a teacher to them. A group of ten people headed out to meet these tribes. However they fell into a trap. Eight of the teachers were martyred and enslaved. Zayd ibn Dasina and Hubayb were then given up to the Meccan polytheists where they too were subsequently martyred. Before he was martyred they asked Hubayb:

“Do you not wish that your Prophet was in your place so that you could go free?”



Looking pitifully at Abu Sufyan who had asked the question, Hubayb replied:

“Forget me wishing to be amongst my family and the Prophet in my place, I would not even wish that He be pierced by a mere thorn that I might go free”.

Abu Sufyan was left frozen in amazement at this scene of unparalleled love and said:

“This is amazing! Never have I seen two people love each other more than the Companions of Muhammad love him” (Wakidi, I, 360; Ibn Sa’d, II, 56).

Before he was martyred Khubayb had a single request to send a greeting of peace filled with love to the Prophet.

But who could he send it with? Helplessly he turned his eyes to the heavens and prayed:

“O Allah! There is no man here who will take my greeting of peace to the Messenger so please take my greeting of peace to him”.

At that point the Messenger of Allah was sitting with his Companions in Madina when he said ‘*Wa alayhissalam*’ (‘And upon him be peace’). Hearing this, his companions asked in surprise:

“O Messenger of Allah. To whose greeting did you respond?” He replied:

‘To my brother Khubayb’s greeting of peace. Here is Gabriel who brought it to me’.



The love of the Companions for the Prophet was sometimes so great that they could not share the Prophet amongst them. Ka’b ibn Ujra رضي الله عنه narrates the following event:

“One day we were sitting in the presence of the Messenger of Allah in his mosque. There was a group from the Helpers, the Emmigrants and the Sons of Hashim. We began to wager: ‘Which is it amongst us that the Prophet loves more?’ We, the Helpers said:



‘We believed in the Messenger of Allah, we followed him, we fought against his enemies. Therefore the Messenger of Allah loves us more’.

Our brothers amongst the Emigrants said:

‘We migrated for the sake of Allah and His Messenger. We left behind our family and children. We gave up our property. We also took part in the battles that you fought in. Thus the Prophet (should) love us the most’.

Our brothers from the sons of Hashim said:

‘We are the relatives of the Prophet and we fought in the battles that you fought in. This is why the Prophet loves us the most’.

The Messenger of Allah approached us and said:

“You were saying something? What was it that you have been talking about?”

We each repeated what we had said. The Messenger of Allah said to each group:

‘You are right. Who could claim otherwise?’ Later he said:

‘Would you like me to make a judgement amongst you?’

‘Of course o Messenger of Allah. May our fathers and mothers be sacrificed for you’. The Messenger of Allah said:

‘You o Helpers. I am your brother’.

In happiness the Helpers said:

“Allahu akbar (Allah is the Greatest). By the Lord of the Kabah we have (won) him”.

The Prophet then said:

“O Emmigrants! I am one of you”.

In happiness the Emmigrants said:

‘Allahu Akbar! By the Lord of the Ka’bah we have won him (he is ours)’

Then the Prophet said:



“O sons of Hashim! When it comes to you, you are from me and you came to me”.

The sons of Hashim in their joy said:

“Allahu Akbar! By the Lord of the Ka’bah he is ours”.

In this way we were all left content. Each group was happy and satisfied with the compliment of the Messenger of Allah. (Haysami, X, 14).



To love what the Prophet loved was a great pleasure for his Companions. Anas رضي الله عنه narrates:

“A tailor once invited the Prophet to a meal he had prepared. I accompanied him. The host brought to the table bread made with barley, a soup containing gourd, and dried meat. I saw him seeking to eat the pieces of gourd from the various sides of the dish. Since that day I have liked to eat gourd.” (Bukhari, At’ime, 33, Buyu’ 30; Muslim, Ashriba 144; Muwatta, Nikah, 51).

To love what one’s beloved loves is the most patent sign of one’s love.



The following state of Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه is an unparalleled example of love and sensitivity: On the day that Mecca was conquered he brought his blind and aged father to the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم in the hope that he would become Muslim. When the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم saw them he said:

“O Abu Bakr! Why did you bring your aged father all the way here and cause him discomfort? We could have gone to him”.

Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه replied:

“I brought him to you because I wanted Allah to reward him”.

When Abu Quhafa, the father of Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه held out his hand (to the blessed hand of the Prophet) to make a pact with him, Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه could not contain himself and began to weep. When the Prophet asked Abu Bakr why he was crying, Abu Bakr replied, tears falling down his cheeks:

“O Messenger of Allah! Would that this hand that is now reaching out to you to make a pact with you had been the hand of your uncle Abu Talib and not that of my father so that it would be you who Allah Most High



pleased rather than me. How much you would be happy then! Because you loved him very much and wanted him to have faith..." (Haysami, VI, 174; Ibn Sa'd, V, 451).



When the Prophet ﷺ went for the *Hajj*, he would stop to lead the prayer for the Muslims at various halts along the way. Later the Muslims built mosques at these sites as a sign of their loyalty and love and to keep his memory alive for ever. (Ibn Sa'd, II, 173).



The Companions displayed many examples of virtue when it came to the belongings of the Prophet, which they considered to contain great blessings. During the farewell *hajj* when the hair from the forehead of the Prophet was being cut, Khalid ibn Walid begged the Prophet:

'O Messenger of Allah! Give some of your hair to me and not to anyone else. May my mother and father be sacrificed for you!'⁷⁷ When the hair was given to him he brushed it over his eyes and then placed it in the front of his cap. Due to the blessings of this hair there was no one who was able to defeat him on the battlefield. Khalid said:

'Wherever I go with this hair, that place is conquered' (Wakidi, III, 1108; Ibn Esir, Usdu al-Gabe, II, 111).



A female Companion once brought to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ a cloak she had woven. She said to him:

"I wove this with my own hands so that you could wear it".

The Prophet ﷺ was in need of just such a cloak and he put it on and then went to his Companions. One of them who saw him said:

"What a beautiful cloak! Would you give it to me so that I can wear it o Messenger of Allah". The Prophet replied:

77. At this point Abu Bakr was thinking about what Khalid had done to the Muslims at Uhud, the Battle of Hendek and at Hudaibiya. He was thinking about that and then watching his state now and was left in amazement.





“*Alright*”. After sitting with them for a while he went home, folded up the cloak and sent it to the man. The Companions said to that man:

“You did not do a good thing. The Messenger of Allah wore that cloak because he was in need of it. And you asked for it knowing that he never refuses a request”.

The Companion explained:

“By Allah I asked for that cloak not to wear but so that it could be my funeral shroud”.

And so it was that that cloak ended being the man’s funeral shroud (Bukhari, Janaiz 28, Buyu 31, Libas 18).



Sahl ibn Sa’d رضي الله عنه narrates the following event which shows how even little children had the same degree of love for the Messenger of Allah:

One time a drink was brought to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He drank a little from it. On his right sat a child and on his left were some of the older Companions. When it came to offering anything the Prophet was in the habit of starting with those on his right side. The Prophet said to the child with great sensitivity, delicacy and courteousness:

“Would you allow me to offer this drink first of all to the elders (on my left)?”

That intelligent child gave the following amazing reply which surprised everyone there and which was a lesson for all:

“O Messenger of Allah! I would never let anyone else take away from me something that you yourself have offered me”.

The Prophet then offered the drink to the child first. (Bukhari, Ashriba 19).



It was a source of much distress and hurt for the Companions when it came time for the Messenger of Allah to depart them, as they loved him more than they did their own lives. Anas ibn Malik رضي الله عنه narrates:



‘When the Messenger of Allah’s sickness got worse his distress increased. Seeing his circumstances, his daughter, Fatima  said to him:

“O father! What great pain you are in!” The Messenger of Allah  replied:

“My daughter, after this day there will be no more pain for you father”.

When Allah’s Messenger passed away Fatima cried as follows:

“O dearest father besides whom there is no one closer to his Lord.

O dearest father who accepted the invitation of his Lord.

O dearest father whose station is the Paradise of Firdaws⁷⁸.

O dearest father. We will share the dark news of your death only with your friend Gabriel”

After the Messenger of Allah  was buried, Fatima expressed her loss) and sorrow as follows:

“How could your hands act so quickly to cover the Messenger of Allah with earth. How could your hearts accept this?” (Bukhari, Megazi, 83; Darimi, Mugaddima, 14. See Ibn Majah Janaiz, 65).



One day Abdullah ibn Zayd al-Ansari  came to the Messenger of Allah  and said, in tears:

‘O Messenger of Allah! You are dearer to me than my own soul, my property, my children and my family. If I were not able to come and see you I would wish to die’.

Upon this the Messenger of Allah said:

“Why are you crying?”

Abdullah ibn Zayd answered:

“O Messenger of Allah! I cried because I was thinking that one day you will die and we will die. You will be in a high state with the other prophets

78. *Firdaws* is one of the levels of Paradise



in Paradise while we will be in a lower place, even if we do go to Heaven and so I was crying thinking that I was not going to be able to see you”.

The Prophet, that ocean of compassion was silent for a while and did not reply. At that point the following verse was revealed:

‘Whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger will be with those whom Allah has blessed: the Prophets and the truthful ones, the martyrs and the righteous. What excellent company such people are!’ (Nisa 4:69)

One day when Abdullah ibn Zayd was working in his garden his son came running breathlessly and brought the news that the Prophet had passed away. Abdullah’s world turned upside down. He made the following prayer:

“O Allah! Take away my sight so that I do not see anything other than the only thing I love, the Messenger of Allah”

The prayer of Abdullah was answered and he lost his sight there and then. (See Qurtubi, V, 271).



Another Companion who lost sight after the death of the Prophet carried the same emotions as Abdullah ibn Zayd. After losing his sight some of his friends came to console him. He responded to their attempts at consolation as follows:

‘I needed those eyes in order to look at the Messenger of Allah. What does it matter now if I have the eyes of the most beautiful gazelle since he has gone’ (Ibn Sa’d, II, 313).

After the death of the Prophet ﷺ, the Companions became like candles burning and melting out of their sorrow. That day the Companions were scorched with the pain of being separated from the Messenger of Allah and went from state to state. Even Umar ؓ lost himself for a moment. Abu Bakr ؓ had a very difficult time trying to calm them all down. Those loving hearts had not been able to tolerate not seeing him for even a day. Now how were they going to cope not being able to see him at all.



After the death of the Prophet ﷺ Bilal, was no longer able to read the call to prayer due to his sadness, even though he had the most beautiful voice. Whenever he tried to read it, not being able to withstand the insistence of the Companions, he would look at the altar where the Prophet used to stand. Not being able to see him there he would get a lump in his throat, his voice would fail him, and he would not be able to read the call to prayer. He left Madina in order to smother the fire of love that was burning within him and went to Syria. One day he saw the Prophet ﷺ in his dream and he said to him:

“What is this separation o Bilal? Isn’t it time you came to visit me?”

Bilal awoke in sorrow and immediately headed off for Madina. He went to the grave of the Prophet.

While he was crying in the presence of the Prophet, the Prophet’s grandsons, Hasan and Hussain came. Bilal embraced them and kissed them. They said to him:

“O Bilal! We wish to hear your call to prayer” When they insisted he began to call out. At that point Madina was shaken. When he came to the line ‘I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’, every person, man and woman, came out and went to the Prophet’s mosque thinking that the Prophet had come back to life. Not since the death of the Prophet had the people of Madina cried so much (Ibn Esir, Usdu al-Gabe, I, 244-5; Zehebi, Siyer, I, 357-8).

This blessed Companion, who loved the Prophet dearly, died in Damascus when he was over sixty years of age. While he was dying he said:

“Tomorrow Allah willing I am going to be reunited with my dearest friends – The Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his friends”. Hearing this, his wife began to cry:

“Oh dear”. However Bilal, whose heart was full of longing said:

“O but how beautiful, how nice”. (Zehebi, Siyer, I, 359).

Those people embraced the Prophet’s announcement - ‘You will be together with the one you love’. They tried to increase their love for the

Messenger of Allah ﷺ which was their greatest asset and sole source of consolation. Anas ؓ said:

“After the bounty of becoming Muslim there was no other good news than “You will be together with the one you love” that pleased us more. And so I love Allah, I love His Messenger, and Abu Bakr and Umar. However much I could not perform the deeds that they did, I still hope to be together with them.” (Muslim, Birr, 163).



Once whilst Umar ؓ was patrolling the streets of the city he saw a candle alight in one of the houses. When he approached the house he saw an old lady spinning some wool and reciting a poem at the same time:

“Peace and blessings of the righteous be upon Muhammad Mustafa. O Messenger of Allah! May all of the distinguished people send wishes of mercy upon you. You used to worship at night and weep much during the dawn hours. However death comes to everyone in stages. Oh! If only I knew whether the life of the hereafter would reunite me with my dearest Prophet”.

Umar began to cry when he heard this emotion-filled poem. Then he knocked on the door. The old lady asked who it was.

“It is Umar ibn Khattab” Umar replied. The lady asked anxiously:

“What could Umar want with me at this time of night?

“For the love of Allah please open the door, do not fear”

When the woman opened the door Umar said to her:

“Would you please read that poem that you just read again?” The woman did so. When she came to the last line he said:

“I ask that you include me amongst you”. The woman then read the last line of the poem again:

“If I only knew whether the life of the hereafter would reunite me and my dearest Prophet and Umar. O Most Forgiving Allah! Forgive Umar”. Umar then left very content. (Ali al-Muttaki, XII, 562/35762).



After the death of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ Fatima was never seen smiling again. (Ibn Sa'd, II, 312).

There was never a time that Abdullah ibn Umar ؓ mentioned the Prophet's name without crying. (Ibn Sa'd, II, 312).

Anas ؓ : said:

“I have never had a dream in which I did not see the dearest Prophet” (Ibn Sa'd, VII, 20).

Because Anas was one who knew the Prophet better than anyone, he lived exactly as the Prophet did and would pray like him too. He always kept on him a stick that belonged to the Prophet and a strand of his hair. When he died this stick was placed next to him in his grave and the strand of hair was placed under his tongue, upon his request.



Whenever the Blessed Companions would talk about the Prophet they would use terms of endearment such as ‘beloved’, and ‘my friend’. This would give them great pleasure⁷⁹. Everything on the face of the earth would remind them of their Beloved Friend. Abu Dharr said:

“By Allah the migration to the other world of the Messenger of Allah left us in such a state that if we saw a bird flap its wings we would be reminded of a *hadith* of the Messenger of Allah. Because the Blessed Prophet said:

“All has been explained to you including that which draws you nearer to Paradise, and that which keeps you away from the Fire”. (Ahmad, V, 153, 152; Haysami, VIII, 263).



Ukbah ibn Haris ؓ narrates:

One day Abu Bakr ؓ had finished praying the afternoon prayer and left the mosque. He began to walk with Ali. They came across the Prophet's

79. Bukhari, Tahajjud 33, Sawm 60; Muslim, Mûsafirin 85, 86; Abu Dawud, Witr 7; Nasai, Siyam 81, Qiyamu'l Layl 28; Ibn Majah, Sadaqat 10; Darimi, Sawm 38; (Ahmad V, 159, Ibn Sa'd, IV, 229).





son Hasan, playing with other children. Abu Bakr immediately grabbed him and placed him up on his shoulders and said:

‘May my father be sacrificed for you. By Allah you look like the Messenger of Allah and not like Ali’, as Ali watched them with a smile on his face (Bukhari, Manakib, 23).



When narrating a *hadith* from the Prophet, his Companions were very careful about not saying anything that the Prophet did not say. Amr ibn Maymun narrates:

“I never used to miss the talks of Ibn Mas’ud on Thursday nights. During these talks I never once heard him say ‘The Messenger of Allah said’ due to his sensitivity. However on one of these nights he started his talk by saying ‘The Messenger of Allah said’... then he bowed his head and did not finish his words. After waiting a while I looked at him. The buttons of his shirt had come undone and there were tears streaming down from his eyes. He stood up, the hollows of his cheeks swollen. After standing like that for a while he continued:

“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said... or he said something like that, or he said something similar...” (Ibn Majah, Muqaddima 3).



After the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had died whenever Abu Bakr ﷺ would narrate a *hadith* he would begin to cry remembering the Prophet ﷺ and he would have difficulty talking. Abu Huraira ﷺ explains his state as follows:

“One day Abu Bakr ﷺ mounted the pulpit and said:

“You all know that last year the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stood amongst you here where I am standing now”... Then he began to cry. Then he repeated his words but began to cry again. He tried again a third time but he could not control himself and began to cry once more...” (See Tirmidhi, Deawat, 105).



Aisha ﷺ tells of the time when her father Abu Bakr ﷺ was sick on his deathbed. She expressed the excitement that her father felt at being reunited with his only friend, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ.



“One day when my father was on his deathbed, he asked:

“What day is it today?”

“Monday”, we told him.

“If I die tonight do not let me wait until tomorrow (to be buried). Because for me, the dearest of days and nights is that which is closest to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ (that is the moment when I will be reunited with him as soon as possible)’ (Ahmad, I, 8).

After the Prophet ﷺ passed away, Abu Bakr ؓ ever felt like a stranger in the world. Now that he was about to die he felt excited about making a new migration to Allah and His messenger.



When certain of the Companions who loved the Prophet ﷺ and desired swift reunion with him, became ill, other of the Companions envied them as this meant that they were soon to be reunited with Allah and His Messenger. They would send greetings of peace filled with love via those ill people. One example is Muhammad ibn Munkadir ؓ who once visited Jabir when he was very ill. When he realised that he was near his death, Muhammad ibn Munkadir said to Jabir (who was longing to be with the Messenger of Allah):

“Take our greetings of peace to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ”. (Ibn Majah, Janaiz 4).



It was a sign of the Companions to love the relatives and loved ones of the Prophet. For instance Umar had nine plates on which he would place fruit, nuts and other things and send them to the wives of the Prophet ﷺ. And he would send a plate to his daughter last of all. If there was anything missing on this plate, he would fill it up from his own share (Muwatta, Zekat 44).



One time Umar set aside 3500 dirhems for Usama, the son of Zayd ibn Harise, the slave that the Prophet had set free. And he gave his own son Abdullah 3000 dirhem.

Abdullah protested against this division by saying:



“Why are you favouring Usama over me? He has not participated in more battles than I have”.

Umar رضي الله عنه gave the following reply which demonstrated his unparalleled sense of justice and in addition the depth of his heart:

“My son! The Messenger of Allah loved the father of Usama more than he loved your father. And he had more love for Usama than he had for you. This is why I prefer the beloved of the Messenger of Allah over my own beloved” (Tirmidhi, Manakib, 39/3813).



Anas رضي الله عنه narrates the following event:

“I once went on a journey with Jarir ibn Abdullah⁸⁰. Jarir began to attend to me when I said to him:

“Please do not do that”. He said in reply:

“I saw the people of Ansar serve and attend to the Messenger of Allah many times and I promised myself that “If I ever make friends with someone from the Ansar I am going to attend to him”. (Bukhari, Jihad 7; Muslim, Fada'il-as Sahaba, 181).

What elevated love!...



Many of the Companions lived with the memories of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. For instance Abu Mahzura رضي الله عنه would not cut the hair on his forehead nor would he part it. This was because the Messenger of Allah (pubh) had once touched his hair.



One day the Messenger of Allah said to a woman from Gifari:

80. Jarir ibn Abdullah was the leader of the tribe of Bajila in Yemen. He had come to Madina in the 10th year Hijri during Ramadhan, that is 3 months after the death of the Prophet. With him was a group of 150 people who came to Madina to become Muslim. He loved the Prophet very much. And the Messenger of Allah loved him too and would smile whenever he saw him.



“Take a container of water, place some salt in it. Then wash the stains of bloody cloth with it”.

That female Companion took this advice of the Prophet and applied it throughout her lifetime, with great love, and never again washed her clothes without adding salt. In fact when she died she had it put in her will that she be washed with salty water. (Abu Dawud, Taharah, 122/313). What an amazing love. This was a love that never lost its intensity for an entire lifetime and increased with time.



One day the nerves in Ibn Umar’s foot contracted and strained. Abdurrahman ibn Sa’d who was beside him said to him:

“Speak the name of the one you love the most”. Ibn Umar then said:

“O Muhammad!” His foot was immediately healed (Ibn Sa’d, IV, 154).



In indicating the deep love felt by his community for him the Prophet had the following to say:

“From amongst those who love me will be a group of people who will come after me. They will sacrifice their property and their family in order to be able to see me” (Muslim, Jannah, 12; Hakim, IV, 95).

Thus there have lived many friends of Allah from the time of the Era of Bliss until our day who have burned with love for Allah and His Messenger. Some examples are as follows:

Abdullah ibn Mubarak narrates:

“I was once with Imam Malik. He was narrating some *hadiths* from Allah’s Messenger. While he was talking a scorpion came and stung him repeatedly. The colour of his face changed and went pale but he continued to relate the *hadith* of the Prophet ﷺ. When the lesson was over and the people had left I said to him:

“O Abu Abdullah! There was something odd about you today”





“Yes”, he replied. “A scorpion stung me over and over again but I patiently bore it. This was only possible because of the love and reverence I have for the Messenger of Allah” (Munawi, III, 353; Suyuti, *Miftahu al-Jannah*, p 52).

Imam Malik  lived with a passion to identify entirely with the Messenger of Allah. Out of respect for the spirit of the Messenger of Allah he would not mount an animal in Madina nor would he relieve himself. Whilst he was the imam at the *Rawdah* (the room in the Prophet’s Mosque in which he died), he would always speak with a soft voice. One time when the caliph Abu Jafar Mansur spoke with a loud voice, immediately he warned him:

“O Caliph! Lower your voice in this place. The caution of Allah was sent to people more virtuous than you” and then he read the following verse:

‘You who have faith! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet and do not be as loud when speaking to him as you are when speaking to one another, lest your actions should come to nothing without your realising it’ (Hujurat, 49:2).



Even from a young age Imam Malik took the utmost care in showing respect for the *ahadith* of the Prophet. He placed great importance on showing great reverence in order to memorise them correctly and also tried to listen to them calmly and in a peaceful state. This is why he never listed to a hadith being narrated while standing, nor would he take *hadith* lessons when he was distressed, sad or indecisive. He feared making a mistake when it came to narrating any *hadith*. One day he was asked:

“Have you ever heard a *hadith* narrated by Amr ibn Dinar?” He replied:

“I saw him narrating a *hadith* and there were people standing around him writing (down what he said). However I have never approved of writing down any *hadith* of the Prophet whilst standing”.

Imam Malik was a majestic personality, just as he was of the best character in all his states and during his lessons. Whether it was whilst giving a *fatwa* or whether it was whilst he was narrating a *hadith* from the Prophet, his face would shine. Whenever he was about to narrate a *hadith*



from the Prophet, he would take ablution, get ready and put on his best clothes. He would only sit at the pulpit if he were to read a *hadith*.

When people came to his house his servant would come out and say to them:

“The Imam asks: ‘Do you want to listen to *hadith* or do you want to ask about a legal ruling?’” If they wanted to ask about a matter of jurisprudence the Imam would come out and answer their questions. However if it was a *hadith* that they wished to listen to, he would tell them ‘Sit down.’ Then he would immediately go and take his ablution, put on the finest perfume, wear new clothes, tie his turban and mount the pulpit where he would give his *hadith* lesson in deep reverence. Inside there would be some burning aloeswood and its smoke would send out a beautiful smell until the end of the lesson.



Abida as-Salmani was one of the leading *fiqh* and *hadith* transmitters from the generation of the *Tabi'een*⁸¹.

He had become Muslim two years before the Prophet died, but had not been fortunate enough to have seen him. The following words of Abida demonstrate the love felt for the Prophet by the first Muslims:

“A strand of hair belonging to the Prophet is dearer to me than all of the treasure in the world” (Ahmad, III, 256).

After reading the above-mentioned words of Abide as-Salmani, the famous scholar Zehebi also expressed his love for the Prophet as follows:

“The words of Abide which express his preference for a single strand of hair of the Messenger of Allah over all of the gold and silver possessed by men are a sign of the peak of love. If that great scholar can speak such words only fifty years after the death of the Prophet then what would we have to say if after 700 years since his passing away we were to obtain one strand of his hair or a strap of his sandal or one piece of the earthen cup that he drank water from?”

81. The *Tabi'een* were the generation who came after the Companions. They were Muslims who had met with or spoken to the Companions but not the Prophet himself (translator's note).



If a rich man were to spend a major part of his wealth in order to obtain such an item would you look at him as someone who foolishly spends his money or who wastes it? Indeed not. Do not refrain from spending whatever you have in order to visit the Prophet's Mosque which he built with his own hands and to send him a greeting of peace from near his Blissful Room in that dearest of cities.

When you arrive in Madina look longingly at his beloved mountain of Uhud and you too love it. Because the Blessed Prophet ﷺ dearly loved the mountain of Uhud. Visit over and over again his *Rawdah* and the places where he sat and look to completely satisfy your soul. Because you cannot be a (true) believer unless you love that individual more than you love your own life, your child, everything you own, and everyone in the whole world..." (Zehebi, Siyer, IV, 42-3).



One of the students of Imam Shafii', Rabi ibn Sulayman narrates:

"One day Imam Shafii' said to me:

"Rabi, take this letter to Ahmad ibn Hanbal and then bring me the reply"

I took the letter and went to Baghdad. I met with Ahmad ibn Hanbal at the dawn prayer which we prayed together. When Imam Ahmad came away from the altar I presented the letter to him and said:

"This letter is from your brother in Egypt, Imam Shafii". He asked me:

"What is the letter about, do you know?"

I replied that I did not know.

Then Ahmad ibn Hanbal took the letter, removed the seal and began to read it. Suddenly his eyes filled with tears. I asked him:

"O Imam. What is it? What does the letter say?" He said:

"Imam Shafii' saw the Blessed Prophet in his dream. The Messenger of Allah said to him:

'Write a letter to Ahmad ibn Hanbal and send him my greetings of peace. He will be subject to instigation and it will be asked of him to make



a ruling and say that ‘the Qur’an is created’. Beware and do not bow down to their demands. Allah will make his name be remembered and exalted until the day of Judgement’.

I said to him:

“O Imam! What great news this is for you!”

Then out of happiness the Imam took off his shirt and gave it to me. After receiving the reply I then left for Egypt. I gave the letter to Imam Shafi’ who then said:

“We would not wish to sadden you by taking from you the shirt that he gave to you. But at least take it and dip it in water and then give us that water so that we may receive a share of the blessings of that shirt”. (See Ibn al-Jawzi, *Manaqibu’l Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal*, (thk, Abdullah ibn Abdulmuhsin at Turki) Cairo 1409 pg 609-610).



The scholar of hadith and the *mujtahid* (renewer of the religion), Imam Nawawi had imbued every state and act of his life with following the Messenger of Allah and had become so much at one with the Prophet that he never ate watermelon his entire life because he did not know whether the Prophet ate his watermelon by breaking it or cutting it.



It is worth mentioning the love that Imam Bushiri had for the Messenger of Allah:

One day the famous writer of the Qasida Burda, Imam Bushiri, met a weak old man who had abandoned the world, on his way home. The old man said to him:

“O Bushiri! Did you see the Messenger of Allah in your dream last night?” Imam Bushiri answered:

“No I did not”.

The old man said nothing further and left. However his words ignited in his heart the fire of love and ardour for the Blessed Prophet. That night the Imam saw the Prophet in his dream and woke up with a feeling of joy



and peace in his heart. Upon this, he began to write verses of praise for the Prophet which would result in many lovers of the Prophet being enveloped in an ocean of love for him.

Some time later half of his body became paralysed to the degree that he could no longer walk or move. It was at that time that he wrote the famous *Qasida Burda* using it to ask for a cure from Allah. The night he finished writing the *Qasida* he saw the Prophet again in his dream and he read it to him. After he finished reading it, the Messenger of Allah massaged the paralysed limbs of Imam Bushiri with his blessed hands. What a sign of deep love it was that when he awoke, Imam Bushiri saw that his paralysis had left him and he thanked Allah.

Having been restored to health the morning of that night he went to the mosque in blissful happiness. He met Shaykh Abu' ar-Reja on the way, who said to him:

“O Bushiri! Would you please read your *Qasida* that praises the Prophet Muhammad, the pride of the universe?”

Imam Bushiri asked him:

“I have many *qasida's* that praise the Prophet. Which one do you want me to read?”

Shaykh Abu ar-Raja said:

“I want you to read the one you read in the presence of the Prophet. Because I saw that the Prophet was very happy with this *Qasida*”.

Imam Bushiri was amazed as he knew that no one else had heard this *qasida* (See Ilhan Armutcuoglu, “*Qasida-i Burda Manzum Tercumesi*,” Konya 1983,p 7-10).



Sayyid Ahmad Yasavi was a great Saint who nourished the light of Islam and its effulgence in the hearts, from Central Asia to the Balkans. When he reached the age of 63 he dug himself a representative grave and said:

“After this age I do not need to live above the earth”. According to reports he was said to have spent the remaining 10 years of his life of

worship and guidance in this grave, in the hope of becoming (one) with the Messenger of Allah.



The conqueror of India, Gazneli Mahmud, had a much beloved servant by the name of Muhammad. He would always call him by his name. One day he called his servant not by his name but by his father's name. His servant was very hurt by this act of Sultan Mahmud and his heart was broken. When he asked him why he addressed him such, Gazneli Mahmud answered:

“My dear child. I have called you by your name everyday. And on every one of those days I had my ablution. However I do not have ablution at the moment. This is why I was ashamed to say your name without being purified. That is why I called you by your father's name”.



The Ottoman state was a state, the entire nation of which was distinguished by its love of the Prophet. From shepherd to Sultan, they would send peace and blessings upon the Prophet whenever his name was mentioned and place their hands on their heart out of reverence for him. They would stand whenever they listened to verses which related his birth from the *Mawlud-i Sharif*⁸². These innumerable displays of respect have become tradition. There was never a single Ottoman Sultan who did not renew his ablution whenever the post would arrive from Madina, or kiss and wipe the paper over their eyes or read it without standing.

In addition the Ottomans who repaired the Prophet's mosque would handle each stone having first made sure that they had their ablution and first saying 'Bismillah' (In the Name of Allah). They were of such good breeding that they would cover their hammers with felt in order to avoid disturbing the spirit of the Messenger of Allah. These are examples of good character and respect, the likes of which have never been seen before.

82. The *Mawlud-i Sharif* is a booklet which contains poems depicting the birth and characteristics of the Prophet.



The *Surre Alayi*⁸³ which was sent to Madina during the time of the Ottomans, would stop by at a close location before entering the city and would prepare themselves for entering the spiritual atmosphere of Madina. They would perform the *istikhara* prayer⁸⁴ and then enter into the presence of the Messenger of Allah having received a spiritual signal. On their return to their nation, they would take back some of the blessed earth from Madina for its curing properties and its blessings.

The tufts that can be seen on the tops of the turbans of the Ottoman Sultans in various miniatures, which can be considered to be the portraits of that time, symbolise brooms. By these, they meant to imply that they were the sweepers of the *Haramayn- Sharif* (the two sacred cities of Mecca and Madina) and this is how they considered themselves. The Ottoman Sultans would also pay the salary of the individuals who undertook the cleaning of the *haramayn* out of their own pocket.



Another sign of the great love and respect felt for the Blessed Prophet is the keeping of the strands from the Prophet's hair and beard which were kept in the pulpits of the mosque. These were wrapped in 40 layers and were an esteemed souvenir. They were given the title '*Sakal-i Sharif*', and have been a source of blessings and mercy for the community for centuries.



Yavus Sultan Selim Han conquered Egypt and the governing of the region of Hijaz had been given to him. On Friday the 20th of February in the Malik Mueyyed Mosque the preacher of the Friday sermon mentioned him as being:

'*Hakimu al-haramayn ash Sharifayn*' that is the 'Ruler of the two blessed places of Mecca and Madina'. Yavuz immediately interrupted and with teary eyes, he spoke:

83. The "*Surra Alayi*" was a pageant which was put on every year before the season of the Pilgrimage in the month of Rajab. Parcels consisting of money, gold and gifts would be sent from the wealthiest people of Istanbul to the poorest people in Mecca and Madina.

84. The *Istikhara* prayer is a prayer that is carried out when one wishes to make a decision about a particular event (translator's note).

‘No, no! On the contrary. Say ‘*Khâdimu al-Haramayn’ ash Sharifayn*, ‘the *servant* of the two blessed places’. After that he lifted up the rug and prostrated on the earth, praising his Lord. And to express his being the ‘servant of the two blessed places’ he placed a tuft in the form of a broom on top of his turban.

Later the words he spoke to Piri Pasha, to whom he gave the governorship of these blessed lands, are a sign of his sincere love for the Prophet:

“Pasha! The sultanate of Mecca and Madina are in the hands of the noble sons of the Master of the Universe. I did not take those lands by military force. They showed me obedience in the way of Islamic unity out of their own perfection, their beautiful manners, and their own goodness. I am compelled to reward this honour. I praise Allah day and night that my name is remembered in those blessed lands during the reading of the Friday sermon. I would not substitute this joy and happiness for the kingdom of the entire world. Therefore do not withhold whatever is necessary for the people of the *al Haramayn ash Sharifayn*. And beware that you do not interfere in the affairs of those two blessed lands”.



For centuries our blessed forefathers have shown indescribable respect and love for the belongings and sacred keepsakes of the Messenger of Allah. In order to see just a few amazing examples of this, it will suffice to take a look at the history of the Sacred Trusts, the service of which our forefathers have always considered a great honour.

The Ottoman Sultans who did not wish to be distant from the *Hirka-i Saadet*, the Blessed Cloak of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ for even a moment, took it with them wherever they went by various means. A case was built in the Istavroz Palace, the present location of Beylerbeyi Palace, in order to house the Blessed Cloak, as was done in the Old Edirne Palace, and just like there is in Topkapi Palace today.

The Blessed Cloak was also taken to battle. A miniature painting of one of these expeditions is worthy of attention. From what can be concluded from this miniature, the Blessed Cloak was carried by various appointed protectors throughout the journey.



Mehmed the third, one of the Ottoman Sultans, was very severe in character and quite an angry sultan. Despite this, he was filled with love of the Prophet. Whenever the name of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was mentioned he would immediately rise and express his love and reverence for him. When Mehmed III went to the Egri expedition he took with him the blessed banner and the Blessed Cloak. Seeing the Muslim soldiers lose hope at one stage of the battle when the threat of defeat was imminent, the mentor of the Sultan, Sadeddin Efendi, said to him:

“My Sultan! In situations such as this one, it befits you, as Sultan of the family of Uthman and a caliph in the way of the Prophet, to put on the Blessed Cloak and pray to Allah Most High”. Thus he gave him permission to wear the Blessed Cloak. Mehmed Sultan III then prayed for peace and blessings on the Prophet and saying ‘*Allahu Akbar*’ he put on the Blessed Cloak. As a result, he was a source of encouragement for his soldiers and facilitated a certain victory as a result.



When Sultan Ahmet I, had his mosque built, he had the blessed preserved footprints of the Prophet Muhammad brought to the tomb of Ayyub Sultan. They were brought from the tomb of Sultan Kayitbay in Egypt. Once the mosque had been built he had them placed in it. However the night that this transfer was taking place, he saw a dream which can be described as follows:

“A great assembly consisting of all of the Sultans had gathered together and the Blessed Prophet was sitting amongst them in the position of judge. A type of court had been set up in which Sultan Kayitbay was a claimant against Sultan Ahmet. He was complaining that he had taken the blessed footprints of the Prophet to Istanbul. The footprints had been a means of people visiting his tomb. As judge, the Messenger of Allah ruled that the footprints be returned immediately...”

Sultan Ahmet woke in extreme fear and terror. He went to certain scholars and shaykhs, including Aziz Mahmud Hudayi and had them interpret his dream. They told him:

“My Sultan! Your dream is quite clear. There is no room for interpretation. The trust must be returned immediately”.



Sultan Ahmed I, who loved the Prophet dearly, obeyed the ruling at once and with great care and sorrow had it returned. However his heart was left burning with love for the Prophet and so he had a model made of the blessed footprints on marble. He had the model placed in his turban as a source of prosperity. The following lines which were penned by him reflect the love he felt for the blessed Prophet:

Would that I could make the pure footsteps of the King of Prophets ever be the crown on my head.

The owner of those footsteps is the rose of prophethood.

Then touch your face to that rose, o Ahmad...



Abdulaziz Han was another sultan who loved the Messenger of Allah dearly. He once sent a poignant letter addressing the Prophet, to Madina to be placed in the *Rawda Mutahhara*⁸⁵. Some of the lines from this letter are written below:

In the name of Allah Most Compassionate, Most Merciful

Praise be to Allah who is One

And the peace and blessings be upon you, O Messenger of Allah

And peace and blessings be upon you o Beloved of Allah

And peace and blessings be upon you o Prophet of this community!...

O Prophet Muhammad... You are the truest of friends. You are the model of kindness and generosity. You are the one about whom Allah said: *'Were it not for you, I would not have created the universe'*. You are the source of pride of all of creation. Our intercessor, our refuge. The one whose every act is pure and gracious. Even the dust from your footsteps would sparkle. The greatest teacher of all of creation. Your every deed was of the sweetest essence. Your love fills the entire universe. You are the last of the prophets and their refuge. You are our leader on the day of judgement and the intercessor of the sinners within your community. You are the one who best demonstrated the Unity of Allah and the embellishment of the

85. This letter can be found in Topkapi Palace in the Chamber of the Hirka-i Saadet.



prophets. You are the judge of the assembly of prophets and the prophet of those who enter the path of Allah, the Clement One. You are the Beloved of the Most Merciful Allah.

O Muhammad Mustafa! It is you to whom all of these characteristics are addressed...

In my weakness I have had the temerity to wipe my darkened face over your radiant tomb, your radiant chain, and over the pure and clear earth of your land. This I have done in humility and modesty, pleading and with respect. I have shown the nerve to present my case to your threshold which radiates the most beautiful of scents, with my sinful forehead deserving of punishment, amongst thousands of feelings of shame and modesty, to express my sorrow with respect...

All praise be to Allah that He has allowed me to be from amongst that perfect community of the Prophet in loyalty and delight, with honour and faithfulness. That Beloved of Allah who is most generous and bountiful...

I seek forgiveness from Allah for all of my sins. Again and again I seek forgiveness...

Mercy! Mercy! Of Messenger of Allah!. Do not send us back deprived...

O father of Fatima Zahra ؑ.

O grandfather of Hasan and Hussain! ؑ.

O Master of those who came before and after. Peace and blessings be upon you...⁸⁶



Sultan Abdulhamid Han II had the Hijaz Railway built so that the Muslims of the world could travel in ease to the *Haramayn*. In order to comply with the traditions of the Prophet, he had stations made where the Prophet had rested during his expeditions. In this way the railway has taken people to Madina in an atmosphere of love.



The epithets and commemorative eulogies that poets have written to express their love for the Messenger of Allah could fill volumes. The poet Nabi expresses his love most beautifully:

‘The reason I have dared to praise you is this – that even trees and stones, plants and inanimate creatures have entered into your blessed presence to speak with you’



It is true that from time to time even animals and plants, and not just human beings, have expressed their deep love for the Messenger of Allah. An example of this is given by Safina , the freed slave of the Prophet:

‘I had gone out to sea and the boat that I was in had been shattered to pieces. I held onto a piece of wood which took me to a place where the trees were thick and where lions could be found. One of those lions lunged at me in order to tear me apart. I said to it:

“Hey ravenous one! I am the slave of the Messenger of Allah, such and such is my state, and such and such has befallen me...”

Suddenly the lion stopped, lowered its head and moved towards me. It pushed me with its shoulders until I found myself emerged from the thick trees. After bringing me back to the main road it began to purr. I then realised that it was farewelling me. And that was the last I saw of it” (Hakim, III, 702/6550; Abdurrazzak, XI, 281-2; Tabarani, VII, 94).



Many more words and innumerable more examples can be narrated about the epic love felt by the community for their Prophet. We have only presented a mere drop from a deep ocean.

This we know for certain, that when it comes to all of the virtues that can be found in the community of the Messenger of Allah, they come from their love for the Him. They are sparkles of his love reflected in their hearts. These virtues include the spirituality of their worship, the civility of their conduct, the refinement of their character, the elegance of their hearts, the radiance of their countenance, the fluency of their speech, the delicacy of their feelings, and the depth of their outlook.



The Blessed Prophet ﷺ is the sole spring of mercy and love that can take one to the ocean of love of Allah. It is such that love of the Prophet is considered equal to love felt for Allah, obedience to the Prophet is like obedience to Allah and rebellion against the Prophet is considered to be rebellion to Allah.

May Allah Most High bestow upon us an exalted share from the spiritual heart of that unique guide to the Straight Path, the Blessed Prophet. And may He plant prosperity in our hearts from his deep spirituality. May our hearts be eternal manifestations of love for both Allah and His Messenger. May Almighty Allah allow us all to attain to his Great Intercession. Amen...

If You please, o Messenger of Allah!...

Help us, o Messenger of Allah!...

Intercede for us, o Messenger of Allah!...

c. Love for our fellow Muslims

As love for Allah increases in the servant, it becomes a requirement that this love extends first of all to love of the radiance of Muhammad, and then to his exalted being, then to the friends of Allah, and then expands to include every creature esteemed by Allah according to their degree. In thus turning to Allah, such a circle of love becomes a source of healing and mercy for the souls. In their dealings with each other then, the believers should be careful to never move outside of this circle of mercy and love. This is the path to and the result of loving Allah and drawing closer to Him.

Allah Most High says in the Holy Qur'an that the believers are brothers. (Al Hujurat 49:10) The Prophet also informs us that it is not possible to reach a state of true faith without establishing strong ties of love amongst the believing brothers. In order to establish this love, he advises his community to spread peace amongst themselves.⁸⁷

Fellow love amongst the believers is a virtuous trait that Allah is most pleased with. Happiness in both worlds is also dependent on this love. The Prophet has said:



“On the Day of Judgement Allah Most High will say:

Where are those believers who showed love for each other out of obedience to me? On this day where there is no shade to be found, I will shade them with My own shade, and I will protect them” (Muslim, Birr, 37)

“There are platforms of light for those who showed love for each other in order to please Me, that even the Prophets and Martyrs will long for”⁸⁸. (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 53/2390).

In another *hadith* the Prophet informs us that on the Day of Judgement, when there will be no shade to be found, the believers who loved each other for the sake of Allah and who met and parted for the sake of Allah will be shaded by the shade of the Throne of Allah⁸⁹. This is evidently the brotherhood of difficult and troublesome times.

Taking offense and refusing to talk to one’s Muslim brother is a contemptible action that is never sanctioned. The Prophet has said in regard to this:

“It is not lawful for a Muslim to stop talking to his brother in Islam for more than three days. If three days have passed since he has stopped talking to him, he should greet him when he meets him. If his brother accepts his greeting then they will both share in the spiritual reward. If he does not, then he will be the one who will have sinned. And the one who greeted him will have made amends” (Abu Dawud, Adab, 47/4912).

“Whoever stops talking to his fellow Muslim for one year will be considered to have committed a sin equivalent to spilling his blood”(Abu Dawud, Adab, 47/4915).

According to the Prophet, deeds done by the servant are presented to Allah on either a Monday or Thursday. Allah forgives the sins of all His servants except those who stop talking to their fellow Muslim and who associate partners with Him. He cautions the angels to delay the process

88. According to the exegetes of hadith what is meant by the ‘prophets and martyrs longing’ is not that this group of people will be above the prophets and martyrs but rather to express the exalted state and position of those who love each other for the sake of Allah, it is expressed as a form of consolidation.

89. Bukhari, Adhan, 36



of forgiving these two people who stopped talking until they have made peace with each other (Muslim, Birr, 35-36; Abu Dawud, Adab, 47).



Scenes of Virtue

One day the Messenger of Allah ﷺ held Muadh's hand and said to him:

“O Muadh! I swear by Allah that I truly love you”. Muadh ﷺ replied:

“May my mother and father be sacrificed for you o Messenger of Allah. I love you too, very much”. Later the Prophet said to him:

“O Muadh. I advise you to never abandon saying the following supplication after performing each prayer: ‘O Allah! Help me to remember You, to thank You and to be a good servant to You’ (Ahmad, V, 244-5; Abu Dawud, Witr, 2; Nasai, Sahw, 60; Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 30).

What a beautiful display of love. The Messenger of Allah loved his fellow Muslim Muadh, and as a sign of this love he offered him some beneficial advice.



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“There are certain people amongst the servants of Allah, who are not prophets, nor are they martyrs, yet on the Day of Judgement they will have attained to such a position that even the prophets and the martyrs will look at them in admiration”.

The Companions asked:

“Who are these people and what sort of good deeds will they have done? Let us know so that we can love them and be close to them, o Messenger of Allah”. The Prophet answered:

“They are such people that though there are no blood relations amongst them, nor any business or trade relations, yet they love each other for the sake of Allah. By Allah their faces are radiant with light and they are upon pillars of light. When others fear, they do not fear, and when others feel sorrow, they do not feel sorrow”.



He then recited the following verse:

‘Yes, the friends of Allah will feel no fear and will know no sorrow:

those who have faith and are conscious of Allah, there is good news for them in the life of this world and in the afterlife. There is no changing the words of Allah. That is the great victory!’ (Yunus, 10:62-64)



Abu Idris al-Hawlani (may Allah have mercy on him) narrates:

“I had gone to the mosque of Damascus, where I saw a young man there with a smiling face. A group of people had gathered around him. Whenever they fell into dispute about some matter they would immediately go to that young man and ask for and accept his opinion. I asked who this young man was. They told me it was Muadh ibn Jabal .

The next day I ran to the mosque as early as I could. When I got there I saw that that young man was there already performing his prayer. I waited until he had finished and then approached him and greeted him with the greeting of peace and then said to him”:

“By Allah! I love you”.

“Do you love me for the sake of Allah?” he asked.

“Yes for Allah” I said. Then he asked me twice:

“Do you really love me for the sake of Allah?” Both times I answered:

“Yes I truly love you for the sake of Allah”. Then he held me by my robe and pulled me towards him and said:

“I congratulate you. I heard the Messenger of Allah say:

“Allah Most High has said: ‘Those who love each other merely for My sake, and those who gather together to please Me, and those who visit each other for My sake and who give charity and do good for My sake... They will be the ones who (will) have earned my love’” (Muwatta, Sha’r, 16).



The Blessed Prophet ﷺ narrated the following story as a demonstration of how loving one's fellow Muslim for Allah will allow one to attain to Allah's love.

“One time a man set out to visit his Muslim brother who lived in another village. Allah Most High appointed an angel with the duty of watching him on his way. When the man came to the angel, the angel asked him:

‘Where are you going?’

The man replied:

‘My Muslim brother lives in that village. I am going to see him.

The angel asked him:

‘Is there something that you wish to benefit from that friend?’

The man replied:

‘No, no. It is just that I love him for the sake of Allah and I am going to visit him.’

The angel then said:

‘Just as you love him, so does Allah love you. I am a messenger sent to you by Allah in order to give you this good news’ (Muslim, Birr, 38; Ahmad, II, 292).



Anas ibn Malik ؓ relates the following event which explains how one who practices Muslim brotherhood in truth will gain Paradise.

‘Once we were sitting with the Blessed Prophet, when he said:

‘A man from Paradise will come here now’.

When we looked we saw a man from the Ansar, whose beard was dripping with the water from his ablution and who was carrying his shoes in his left hand. The next day the Prophet repeated his words, and the man appeared again as before. The third day the Prophet repeated his words, and the man appeared as he did the first day. When the Prophet rose to leave, Abdullah ibn Amr got up and followed that man and asked him:

“I had an argument with my father and swore that I would not go to see him for three days. Would you let me stay with you during this time?”

The man replied:

“Okay”.

Later, Abdullah ibn Amr  told us:

“I spent those three nights with him. But never did I once see him get up to pray during the night. But he did perform *zikr* and pronounce the *takbir* until he awoke for the dawn prayer. I never heard him speak anything but good. After the third night, I felt as if I had belittled his deeds as I said to him:

“O slave of Allah! There was no argument between me and my father. But I heard the Messenger of Allah say about you three times: ‘*A man from Paradise will appear now before you*’. And you appeared each of those three times. I wanted to stay with you to find out what it is that you do, and I wanted to follow your example. However I have not seen that you have done anything extraordinarily great. What is the deed that allowed you to reach such a station praised by the Messenger of Allah praised?”

The man replied:

“Nothing other than what you have seen”.

When I went to leave he spoke after:

“My deeds are none other than what you have seen. However I never hold a grudge for any of my Muslim brothers (my heart is filled with love for all Muslims). And I never envy any good that has been given to anyone by Allah”.

I then said to him:

“This is that which has allowed you to reach this state” (Ahmad, III, 166).

This is the heart of a Muslim who looks at all of the believers as his true brothers and behaves virtuously towards them...



Zubayr ibn Awwam  narrates an unrivalled scene of brotherhood that took place at the Battle of Uhud.



“During the battle of Uhud my mother took off two cardigans that she had brought with her and said:

“I brought these so that you could make a shroud for my brother Hamza with them”.

We took the cardigans and went to where Hamza رضي الله عنه lay. There was a martyr from the Ansar lying next to him and no shroud had yet been found to cover him. We felt embarrassed to use both of the cardigans to cover Hamza and leave this man without a shroud. We covered Hamza with one of them and we let the other be a shroud for the man from the Ansar. We drew lots as to who would get the large cardigan and who would get the small one” (Ahmad, I, 165).

This is a real story that shows that Muslim brotherhood can rise above the ties of blood kinship.



Ibn Umar رضي الله عنه speaks of the mature hearts of the Era of Bliss with the following beautiful words:

“We have lived in such times in which no one amongst us considered themselves more worthy of silver and gold than their Muslim brother. Now we are in such times where we love gold and silver more than we love our Muslim brother” (Haysami, X, 285).



A believer should be interested in his Muslim brother, and he should be considerate of him and concern himself with his concerns. In fact, he should think about him before he thinks of himself. And he should try to meet his needs. It is possible to see one of the best examples of this in the actions of Dawud al-Tai.

One day a student who was in his service said to him:

“I prepared some meat; would you like to eat with me?”

When his teacher was silent he brought him some meat. However, Dawud al-Tai (may his spirit be sanctified) merely looked at the meat and said:



“What news is there of such and such orphan, my son”? His student sighed, and implying that they were in a bad state, said:

“As you know, sir”. That great friend of Allah then said:

“In that case, take this meat to them”. His sincere student who wished that his master would eat the meat that he had prepared then said:

“It has been a long time since you have eaten meat, master’.

Alas, however much he persisted, Dawud al-Tai did not accept and said:

“My son! If I eat this meat, all that will happen is that it will be expelled from me a little while later. However if those orphans eat it, it will rise to the Exalted Throne of Allah to remain there eternally, (that is, I will have received a great reward for it)...”



Thus those who are friends with Allah are friends with all of creation, and with their fellow Muslims in particular. They look upon their Muslim brothers and sisters with the mercy and compassion of Allah. They bear deep love for them. This love expands so much that they become concerned with saving all of humanity. Even as the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, who was at the peak of friendship, was being stoned at Taif, he was praying for the guidance of the people of that land.

In the story of Habib an-Najjar, which is told in the Chapter Yasin of the Qur’an, when the veils of this world closed upon him, and the veil of the Divine opened up, he showed mercy to those who stoned him, saying:

‘If my people only knew how my Lord has forgiven me and placed me among the honoured ones!’ (Yasin, 36:26-7)

This is a display of the mercy and compassion in the heart of a believer who yet desired the salvation of the very people who made a martyr of him.



Abu al-Hasan Harakani expresses his feelings about Muslim brotherhood as a way of expounding the bounties given to him:



“If a thorn happens to prick the finger of anyone, from Turkestan to Damascus, it is as if it is my finger that has been pricked. And if anybody hits their foot on a rock, it is as if it is my foot that has been hurt. I feel their pain. If there is sorrow in another’s heart, that heart is my heart”.



Sahl ibn Ibrahim, gives another example of amazing Muslim brotherhood as follows:

“I was friends with Ibrahim ibn Ethem. One time I had become very sick. Ibrahim ibn Ethem spent whatever he had for my health. Then I began to recover. At one time I asked him for some food that I was craving. Because he had nothing left to give, he sold his mount in order to fulfil my wish. When I had fully recovered we needed a camel to go somewhere and so I asked him:

‘O Ibrahim, where is your camel?’

Ibrahim ibn Ethem replied:

‘We sold it’. Because my health did not allow me to walk I asked:

‘Well what will we mount now?’

‘I will carry you’ he said and he carried me on his back for the distance of three stopping places.



After Istanbul was conquered, Fatih Sultan Mehmed asked certain fair-minded priests who had been thrown into the dungeons during the Byzantine rule, their opinions and observations about the Ottoman Empire. They answered that they would only be able to inform him of their opinion after a period of examination and analysis.

The priests went about travelling everywhere, given the decree that they had been given. One early morning they entered a shop in order to buy something. The shopkeeper said to them:

“Sirs, I have already made my first selling for today. Go and buy something from my neighbour here who is yet to make a sale”.



This scene of Muslim brotherhood left them amazed...we cannot envy enough such a sublime heart, purified of worshipping benefit and thinking of his Muslim brother as much as himself.



In short, Allah most High desires that fellow Muslims be like two hands that wash each other. True friendship for the sake of Allah is when two separate creatures dwell in the same heart. The responsibility of religious brotherhood and the lives of those who put effort into serving with sensitivity and sacrifice will continue on after their mortal lives have passed away. They will be remembered always with mercy. Just like the Emmigrants, the Helpers and all believers who have made their hearts like foundations ...

In these modern times, the most important duty of brotherhood that will be a source of gaining divine pleasure is to act with mercy and compassion to those who are seeking guidance, to the weak, the orphans and the helpless in a background of a brotherhood full of love.

d. Love for all creatures

All creation has been created for the service of the human being. Everything is there for him to take lesson from and has been entrusted to him in this worldly life. This is why it is a duty of the conscience for the human being to treat all creatures with love.

The bee lives in order to offer its honey to mankind. The sheep spends its entire life giving us meat, milk, wool and baby lambs. Cats and dogs are also at the service of man. As a manifestation of almighty Allah's majesty and awesomeness, snakes, centipedes, scorpions and other similar creatures are reminders of divine punishment and also have various duties in nature. They are therefore amongst the bounties bestowed upon man. Stones, soil, trees, clouds, mountains and meadows were all made for the human being...

The Holy Qur'an states:



‘And He has made everything in the heavens and everything on the earth subservient to you. It is all from Him. There are certainly Signs in that for people who reflect (Al-Jathiyah, 45:13)

To oppress the creatures that have been created subservient to us is a stupidity that will come back to cause us harm. To be cruel to animals is a weighty sin for which we will have to face the consequences on the Day of Judgement. The Holy Qur’an states:

‘There is no creature crawling on the earth or flying creature, flying on its wings, who are not communities just like yourselves – We have not omitted anything from the Book – then they will be gathered to their Lord’ (Al-Anam, 6:38)

On the other hand, love for all creatures on account of their being products of the Creator, is a duty incumbent on the slave.

Other creatures have a right to this world and its bounties. To violate their rights will result in a grave account-taking on the Day of Judgement.

The poet, Firdawsi says in his poem entitled *Shahname*:

‘Do not injure even the ant which is carrying a piece of wheat. Because even it has life. And life is sweet and pleasurable’.

The Prophet Muhammad forbade the unnecessary, and baseless killing of animals for pleasure. He stated in a *hadith*:

‘Whoever kills a sparrow just for the sake of fun will hear that sparrow cry out to Allah on the Day of Judgement as follows:

‘O my Lord! So and so killed me for no reason, nor for any benefit nor purpose’. (Nasai, Dahaya, 42).

Scenes of Virtue

Abdullah ibn Mas’ud رضي الله عنه relates:

‘We were once on a journey with the Messenger of Allah, when he parted from us in order to attend to his needs. At that point we saw a bird with two of its chicks. We took its chicks and then the bird began to flutter up and down cheeping. When the Prophet came back and saw this, he said:

“Whoever took this poor bird’s chicks and tortured it let him return them immediately” (Abu Dawud, Jihad, 112/2675, Adab 163-4).



One day when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was sitting together with his Companions, a man approached the Prophet with something wrapped in his hands, and said to him:

“O Messenger of Allah. When I was coming to you. On the way I passed by a cluster of trees and heard some chicks cheeping. I immediately took them and wrapped them in my dress. Then their mother came and started fluttering around me. I had opened up the chicks and the mum came and sat upon them. Then I covered them up again and here they are”.

“Take them back right away”, the Prophet ordered him. The man then let them go. Instead of running away the mother bird stayed by her chicks and did not abandon them. Seeing this, the Messenger of Allah asked his Companions:

“You are amazed at the compassion of this mother towards her chicks, are you not?”

“Indeed o Messenger of Allah”, they answered. The Prophet then said:

“I swear by the Glorious Being who has sent me with the truth, that the mercy of Allah towards his servants is greater than the mercy of this bird towards her chicks. Take them and put them back where you found them and let them be together with their mother”.

The Companion immediately returned them (Abu Dawud, Janaiz,).



One time Aisha رضي الله عنها had mounted an ill-tempered camel. She tried to calm it down by moving it back and forth in a harsh manner. Allah’s Messenger said to her:

“Be gentle with the animal. Because, wherever it is found, gentleness will render everything beautiful. Every act that is not gentle is ugly” (Muslim, Birr, 78,79).





The Messenger of Allah explains in the following nice example how the pleasure of Allah can be gained in even the smallest of deeds:

“One time a man was walking down a path when he became very thirsty. He found a well, went down it, drank some water and then came out. As he came out he saw a dog with its tongue drooping and licking the moist earth out of thirst. The man thought to himself:

“This dog is thirsty just like I was”. Then his conscience began to bother him. He went straight back down the well, filled his shoe with water, put it into his mouth and came back up and gave the water to the dog. Allah Most High was most pleased with this act of the man and forgave him all of his sins”.

The Companions asked:

“O Messenger of Allah. Do we get reward for our actions with animals as well?” The Prophet replied:

“There is reward on account of all living beings” (Bukhari, Shurb, 9; Muslim, Salam, 153).



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ once went to the garden of a man from the Ansar and saw a camel there. When the camel saw the Prophet he began to wail, and tears fell from his eyes. The Prophet approached the camel and began to pat him gently behind his ears. The camel calmed down. The Prophet then asked:

“Who does this camel belong to?” A young man from Madina approached him and said:

“This camel is mine o Messenger of Allah”. The Prophet then said:

“Have you no fear of Allah? Allah bestowed this animal upon you. But it has just now complained to me that you leave it hungry and very tired” (Abu Dawud, Jihad, 44/2549).



The Prophet also warned people of unnecessary conversation and causing harm, while mounted on their animals.



“Beware of using the backs of animals as your pulpits. Allah has given them at your service to take you places where it would be very difficult for you to go alone. And he made the earth for you to live in. In that case, see to your needs on the earth (that is get down from the backs of your animals and meet your needs on the ground)” (Abu Dawud, Jihad, 55/2567)



One day the Messenger of Allah ﷺ went outside in the early hours of the morning to relieve himself. He saw a camel kneeling down at the door of the mosque. When the Prophet passed by the same place later that afternoon he saw the camel in the same position. He asked:

“Where is the owner of this camel?”

They looked for the owner of the camel, but could not find him. The Prophet was very upset at the camel being left hungry and without water and he said:

“Fear Allah and do not oppress this poor animal who cannot voice his concerns. Only mount these animals when they are strong, powerful and well-fed”. (Ahmad, IV, 181).



Sahl ibn Amr رضي الله عنه narrates:

“One time when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ passed by a camel whose sides were so skinny that his bones could be seen, he said:

“Fear Allah when it comes to these animals which cannot speak for themselves. Mount them when they are well-fed, and eat them when they are well-fed” (Abu Dawud, Jihad 44/2548).



One time the Prophet saw a man slaughtering a sheep. After laying the sheep down in order to slaughter it, the man began to sharpen his knife (in sight of the sheep). The Prophet warned the man of this harsh and emotionless act:

“Do you wish to kill this animal over and over again? Couldn’t you have sharpened your knife before you laid him down?” (Hakim, IV, 257, 260/7570).



Another time the Prophet passed by an animal who had been branded on its face, and said:

“*May Allah curse the one who branded this animal on his face*” (Muslim, Libas, 107).



One time when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was going to Mecca, he left Madina in the state of *ihram*⁹⁰. He arrived at the location of Usaya, which is a place between Ruwaysa and Arc. Here he saw a gazelle curled up sleeping in the shade. The Prophet ordered his Companions not to pause too long before the gazelle and make it uncomfortable or anxious (Muwatta, Hajj, 79; Nasai, Hajj, 78).



As the Prophet and his Companions were heading out to conquer Mecca, they demonstrated another amazing example of how to treat animals. This act is also an expression of looking upon animals through the perspective of the Creator. While travelling from Arc to Talub with his army of ten thousand men, he saw a dog which had stretched itself out over its puppies who were suckling him. He immediately called Juayl ibn Suraka from His Companions and placed him as a guard over this dog and its pups. He cautioned that this army of Muslims should not scare the mother or her pups (Wakidi, II, 804).



Another example of the care shown towards animals is narrated by Anas ibn Malik who grew up in the care of the Prophet.

“Whenever we would stop at a place to rest, we would first undo the camels and let them rest and calm down before we began to glorify Allah (by performing our supererogatory prayers) and worship” (Abu Dawud, Jihad, 44/2551).

Muslim scholars have ruled that whenever a traveller takes a rest, he should first feed his animals before he eats himself and have even ruled this to be *mustahab* (a deed that is rewarded) (Abu Dawud, Sunan, III, 51).



One day ibn Umar  came across some youth from Quraysh who were shooting arrows at a bird. When they missed their target they paid money to the owner of the bird. When the youth saw ibn Umar they dispersed. Ibn Umar shouted after them:

“Who did this? May Allah curse them. The Messenger of Allah  also cursed the one who took as their target a living animal and shot at it” (Bukhari, Zabaih, 25; Muslim, Sayd, 59).



Bayazid Bistami would become so spiritually sensitive and delicate through the intensity of his love for Allah, that he would feel the pain of all creatures in his heart.

One day this Friend of Allah saw a donkey bleeding from behind after being beaten. At that moment, blood started to seep from the legs of Bayazid Bistami.

Another time while on a journey, this great friend of Allah took a rest under a tree and then continued on his journey. On his way he saw a few ants from his resting place moving around on his bags. In order to not separate them from their new home and so that they would not miss it, he took them back all that way. He went back to the place where he had rested and put the ants back in their old spot, where they had been.



The great friend of Allah, Shah-i Nakshibend, tells of his peerless example in his behaviour towards animals:

During my first days when I was searching, I came across one of Allah’s most beloved of servants, Emir Kulal. At that time I was in a highly ecstatic state of love for Allah. He said to me:

“Look to winning the hearts of people. Serve the weak and powerless. Protect the helpless and broken-hearted. They are such people that they have no income from other people. At the same time they remain in a state of contentment of the heart, modesty and humility. Search them out.”

I obeyed this command of this valuable man. I strove for a long time in the path that he spoke of. After that, that friend of Allah ordered me to



look after some animals. He told me to treat their illnesses. He advised me to wrap their wounds and to clean them. And he advised me to do all of this with pure intention and with sincerity.

I carried out this duty as well. I did whatever he said in the way he said it. After a while I had reached such a state that if I happened to see a dog in the road I would stop, wait for him to pass and never put a step forward before it”.

Then he commanded me to treat dogs with love and respect and try to attain to divine favour using this service of mine as a means. He said to me:

“You will feel great happiness while you are serving those dogs”.

I considered his commands to be a godsend. I put all of my effort into following them. I understood the meaning in his commands and awaiting the good tidings that would arrive, I went to one of the dogs. A great state came over me. As I stood before it, something made me cry. It was as if that dog was Qitmir of the Sleepers of the Cave...

Whilst I was weeping, it lay down, its legs raised up, pointing towards the sky. Then it began to make sorrowful sounds, and it began to cry and moan. Then I raised my hands in prayer and with a humbled and broken heart I said:

“Amen”. As if understanding me the dog became silent and turned around and departed.

It was another one of those days. I left home to go somewhere. On the way I saw an animal whose colour changed according to the colour of the sun. It was virtually in a state of spiritual ecstasy. As a result a state of great ecstasy came over me. I stood before it with perfect manners and respect. I raised my hands. Whilst I did so that blessed animal was going through state after state, having delved into another realm. It then laid down, its face facing the sky. Whilst in this state I said:

“Amen”.



One day Sulayman the Magnificent asked for a *fatwa* (a legal ruling) from the Shaykh al-Islam, Abu as-Suud in order to kill the ants that were drying up the pear trees in the garden of the palace. His request was in the form of the following lines:



Will it be of much harm to kill the ant that harms the tree?

Abu as-Suud responded to the request for a *fatwa* with the following verse:

“Tomorrow when it stands before the court of Allah

The ant will ask for justice from Sulayman”

Sulayman the Magnificent was a most skilful and capable commander, a very intelligent and organised statesman, a scholar and an erudite personage. Yet did he hesitate before a mere ant, having been trained in perfect spiritual manners.



Pertevniyal Valide Sultan had the Valide Mosque in Aksaray Istanbul built. After her death, a righteous person saw her in his dream having reached a beautiful state and asked her:

“Is it because of the mosque that you had built that Allah raised your position?”

Pertevniyal Valide Sultan answered:

“No”.

That righteous person asked in amazement:

“In that case, which is it of your deeds that enabled you to reach this state?”

Valide Sultan gave the following reply:

“It was a very rainy day. We were going to visit the Mosque of Ayyub Sultan. I saw a tiny, skinny little kitten struggling in a small puddle of water by the side of the road. I stopped the carriage and said to the servant girl next to me.

“Go get that kitten, otherwise it is going to drown”...

Not wanting to get it, she said:

“O my Sultan! Both your and my clothes will be sullied.”



I did not want to offend her, so I got down from the carriage, walked into the muddy water and saved the little kitten. It was trembling and shivering. I felt sorry for it and took it into my lap to warm it up. Before long, the poor little thing came back to life, perked up and recovered.

Allah Most High bestowed upon me this exalted state because of that tiny little act and mercy I showed towards that little kitten.”

Sometimes, an apparently simple and unimportant act of goodness can attract the mercy of almighty Allah to such a degree that it can become a means of great favour and grace. This is why the human being should not see himself having no need of doing something good and which he deems insignificant. Man is ever in need, both in this world and the next, of the spiritual grace that comes from good acts, be they big or small.



My father, Musa Topbas Efendi (may his spirit be sanctified) relates the following event which concerns befriending all creatures:

“About 40 years ago we had rented an apartment in Madina with my spiritual guide, Sami Ramazanoglu (may his spirit be sanctified). At that time the houses were made out of sun-dried brick. We had prepared my guide’s room in order for him to take a rest. When he entered it, we saw a snake curled up in the corner. Against our own will we panicked and felt a slight trepidation. However, he was quite cool and calm.

“Leave this creature of Allah to itself and do not touch it” he said.

A little while later we saw that the snake had disappeared.



Musa Efendi (may his spirit be sanctified)relates:

“It was the season of the Pilgrimage. We were together with my spiritual guide Sami Efendi and his family in Mecca, near the Baytullah Mosque, in the house of Abdussettar from Turkestan, in the suburb of Ajjad. The Sheikh’s room overlooked the street, whereas our rooms were inside and did not. One time at noon he came to the door of our room and said:

“It looks like someone outside needs something to eat”.



I immediately prepared some food and took it outside to give it to the poor person but when I went out the door I could not see anybody. I assumed that he did not wait and left, so I turned back to go inside. Eight or ten minutes later Sami Efendi (may his spirit be sanctified) appeared at our door again and said:

“That needy one has come back and is looking inside”.

When I got the food ready again and went to the door what did I see but a hungry dog, with its tongue hanging out, peering inside. Right away I put the food down before him. He must have been very hungry because he finished it all”.

This is the graciousness and modesty of such great people. Sami Efendi did not use the word ‘dog’ but ‘someone’ for that hungry dog. In fact most of the time, he would not use the word ‘creature’ when talking about animals, but he would use the term ‘Allah’s servant’. Because the beautiful character that is shown towards creatures on account of their Creator is in reality, the beauty of a sound heart, a heart that is completely devoted and dedicated to its Creator.



Our great religion of Islam inspires us to behave nicely towards all creatures, both living and non-living, at every opportunity and by all means. Accordingly various fines have been determined for certain acts, such as cutting trees, pulling out any plants or weeds, hunting, and even pointing out the position of prey to a hunter, whilst in the sacred precincts of Mecca and while in the state of *ihram*²¹. In this way it is desired that whilst in the sacred precinct, the believers do not commit even the smallest of sins and reach a state of ‘harmlessness’ in the full sense of the word, towards plants and all living things.

Through the practices carried out during the Hajj season, the believer acquires such a state of sensitivity that he will reach a state of eliminating all types of dissipation, sin and argumentation. He will not even be able to pull out a weed. Whilst performing all the rites of the pilgrimage including

22. *Ihram* is the name given to the white robes that are worn by the Pilgrims during the Hajj. It is also a condition in which pilgrims are meant to abide by certain rules particular to the sacred precinct. (translator note)



tawaf (circambulation of the Ka'bah), *sa'y* (walking seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwa) and *wakfa* (stopping over at several of the sites), both man and woman, will be preserved from sin, and be freed of dissipation and argumentation as a result of continually lowering their glance...

This sensitivity of Islam is not only limited to the sacred precincts and the state of ihram. The Messenger of Allah has said:

“Allah will put in the Fire, the head of the one who cuts down a sidre tree” (Abu Dawud, Adab, 158-9/5239).

When asked about this *hadith* Abu Dawud gave the following answer:

“This hadith has been abridged and its meaning is this: Allah will place the head of the following person in hell: the one who unjustly cuts down a sidre tree whose shade benefits travellers and animals in the hills and countryside, having no rights to it”



The following event has an important lesson for us all. It demonstrates how the love and consideration of Islam extends to mankind, animals and even plants:

One time Abu ad-Darda , one of the leading Companions, was in the process of planting a tree in Damascus.

Somebody approached him and said in surprise at the state he saw before him:

“Though you claim to be the friend of the Messenger of Allah, you are busy planting a tree”. Abu ad-Darda gave the following reply:

“Now wait a minute. Do not be so rash in judging me! I heard the Messenger of Allah say:

“Whoever plants a tree from which people or any other of Allah’s creatures eat the fruits of, that tree will be considered charity from that person” (Ahmad, VI, 444).

Of course, in contrast to this, harming plants and other organisms is an act that bears its own sin. Our forefathers have expressed this very



concisely as: ‘the one who cuts down a living tree is like the one who cuts off heads’.



The Prophet urged people to plant trees and green their environment. He was a personal example of this to his companions. Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه relates:

One day when the Messenger of Allah was passing by two graves, he said:

“They are both being punished, but not because of a sin that was great in their eyes. The first is being punished for talking about people, and the second for not taking the necessary precautions to prevent splashing himself after relieving himself”.

After that he asked for a moist branch of a date tree. He broke it into two and then planted one each at the head of each grave. Then he continued:

“It is hoped that this will relieve some of their punishment, as long as they do not dry up” (Muslim, Taharah, 111).

Even a moist leaf is in a state of zikr (remembrance of Allah) even though we are not aware of it. It is stated in the Holy Qur’an:

“The seven heavens and the earth and everyone in them glorify Him. There is nothing which does not glorify Him with praise but you do not understand their glorification. He is All-Forbearing, Ever-Forgiving” (Isra, 17:44).



In short, sometimes it so happens that the pleasure of Allah can be found in a great act, in an average act or sometimes it can be hidden in the smallest of deeds. The same is true for his punishment. In that case we must approach all of the creatures of Allah with compassion, mercy and love and run to their aid if need be.

Islam commands that we treat all living things, humans, animals and plants with kindness and love. Mankind has duties towards every one of them. The beauty of Islam is its understanding of a universal and all-embracing love and mercy which encompasses all of creation. A Muslim is like a long-running river bearing blessings for a thousand and one living



things – animals, trees, the rose and the nightingale. The place it runs to can only be eternity and the ocean of reunion (*wuslat*).

However impossible it is for the sun to not give out heat, so too it is impossible for great souls to act unfeelingly towards other creatures. Mercy is a divine treasure that has been dispersed throughout the universe. And the source of that love and mercy is almighty Allah. Those who are deprived of mercy are like those who have lost the key to the greatest of treasures, that is the door to happiness.

Those friends of the Truth, who have attained to the source of love, Allah and his Messenger, will remain friends to all of creation for ever. They will not be considered gone and their lives will continue on after their death. The friend of Allah, Yunus Emre expresses this very nicely:

*They have called the call to prayer at the death of Yunus
But it is the flesh that dies, the true lover never dies...*

2. Fear and hope

One of the distinguishing traits of those believers who have attained to perfection in their faith, is their fear of Allah that is born of their reverence and love for Him. In reality fear of Allah is fear and anxiety that the servant may lose the infinite love, pleasure and contentment that our Lord has for us. That is why the ever-vigilant hearts of those believers who have perfected their faith, tremble with awe when the name of Allah is mentioned. This state also brings about other elevated traits, such as correct etiquette towards Allah, sincerity and *taqwa* (Allah-consciousness or piety). Almighty Allah states in the Holy Qur'an:

'The believers are those whose hearts tremble when Allah is mentioned, whose faith is increased when His Signs are recited to them, and who put their trust in their Lord' (Al-Anfal, 8:2).

'...(O Prophet) Give good news to the humble-hearted, the obedient and the sincere, whose hearts quake at the mention of Allah' (Hajj, 22:34-35).

Whenever the knowledge, gnosis and love of Allah increase in a person, that person's fear of Allah also increases proportionately. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

“My knowledge of Allah is greater than any of you and I am also the one who fears him the most” (Bukhari, Adab, 72: Muslim, Fadail, 127).

On another day the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was asked:

“What type of voice and recitation is best when it comes to reading the Qur’an?”

The Messenger of Allah replied:

“The voice and recitation of the one in whose voice you hear the fear of Allah when he recites”. (Darimi, Fadail al-Qur’an, 34).

Those who fear Allah in truth, fear nothing else. Fear of Allah is the light of happiness in their hearts.

The believers who fear Allah are those whom Allah is pleased with and who are pleased with Allah. (Al Bayyina, verse 8) Almightly Allah invites such of these servants to two Paradises. (Al Rahman, 46)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said:

“There is no believer who has wept tears out of fear of Allah, be they as small as a fly but enough to wet their cheeks, for whom Allah has forbidden the (eternal) fire” (Ibn Majah, Zuhd 19).

“The one who weeps out of fear of Allah will not enter Hell until the milk returns to the mother’s breast. The dust that is raised in the path of Allah and the smoke of the hellfire will never come together” (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 8/2311).

“There are two drops and two marks that are more pleasing to Allah than anything else: the two drops are the teardrops that fall out of fear of Allah, and the drops of blood that are shed in the path of Allah. The two marks are the mark one leaves behind after struggling in the path of Allah, and the mark left behind after one has performed any of the obligatory forms of worship” (Tirmidhi, Fadail al- Jihad, 26/1669).

Allah Most High has censured those hard-hearted people, deprived of the fear of Allah as follows:

‘Then your hearts became hardened after that, so they were like rocks or even harder still. There are some rocks from which rivers gush out, and others which split open and water pours out, and others which



crash down from fear of Allah. Allah is not unaware of what you do'
(Baqara, 2:74).

The Most Beloved Prophet ﷺ has said:

“O Allah, I seek refuge in You from knowledge which is of no benefit, from a heart that does not fear (You), from a soul that is never satiated, and from a prayer that is not answered” (Muslim, Zikr, 73).

One who does not fear Allah is lower than the animals and minerals. In the same vein, our forefathers have said: ‘Fear the one who does not fear Allah’. In truth, it is their end affair which is a frightening one. For their hard hearts, the darkness of their ignorance and lack of feeling is not found even in inanimate beings.

It is true that, according to divine decree, even beings which are considered lifeless go through states of fearing Allah. The following verse expresses the truth of this:

‘If We had sent down this Qur’an onto a mountain, you would have seen it humbled, crushed to pieces out of fear of Allah. We make such examples for people so that hopefully they will reflect’ (Al-Hashr, 59:21)⁹²

There must always be in the heart of the believer, fear that one may be deprived of gaining Allah’s pleasure and love and being afflicted with His punishment; and at the same time hope of attaining to His endless mercy and compassion. That is, the heart of the believer must oscillate between the two poles of fear and hope. This balance between the feelings of fear and hope has been expressed as *‘bayn al- hawfi wa al-rajā’*, (between fear and hope). The believer must preserve this balance in his heart, through

92. The purpose behind this analogy is to make clear the importance of the contents of the Qur’an and how great is the responsibility of the human being to whom it is addressed. It is also possible to derive from this verse the following meaning: If a mountain had been given the consciousness which human beings have been given, that agent of grandeur would have bowed down with reverence and awe in the face of Allah’s greatness, power and absolute control over the universe as a result of recognising His attributes the responsibility that comes along with it. Not being content with this it would tear itself apart in order to serve Allah. The human being on the other hand is adamant in resisting the feeling of the burden on his shoulders and wastes his life in heedlessness. Thus man, in order to receive his share of fear and love of Allah, must distance his inner world from sin and adorn it with a life of piety.

constant prayer, in recognition of his state of nothingness and seeking refuge, until Certainty, that is death comes to him. It is stated in the Holy Qur'an:

'...Call on Him fearfully and eagerly. Allah's mercy is close to the good-doer' (A'raf, 7:56)

'...and are hoping for His mercy and fearing his punishment. The punishment of your Lord is truly something to be feared' (Isra, 17:57).

The Prophet ﷺ has said:

"If the believer truly knew the intensity and quality of the punishment of Allah, he would never be able to hope for Paraidse. And if the non-believer truly comprehended the mercy of Allah, he would never give up hope of entering Paradise" (Muslim, Tawba, 23).

"Paradise is closer to each of you than the strap of his own shoe. And Hellfire is likewise" (Bukhari, Rikak, 29).

Thus the path to eternal happiness and peace passes through keeping the heart in balance between fear and hope of Allah. This is because the lover is in constant fear of hurting and losing their beloved. The believer, too, must fear losing the love of Allah but be always hoping to attain to His Mercy.

Scenes of Virtue

Anas رضي الله عنه narrates:

"The Messenger of Allah would frequently make the following supplication:

"O turner over of hearts. Make my heart firm upon Your religion".

One day I asked him:

"O Messenger of Allah! We have believed in you and in what you have brought. Are you afraid for us?" He answered me:

"I am indeed. Because the heart is ever between the two fingers of the Merciful. He moves them about as He pleases" (Tirmidhi, Qadr, 7/2140).





Aisha  narrates:

When the following verse was revealed:

‘...and who give whatever they [have to] give with their hearts trembling at the thought that unto their Sustainer they must return; it is they who vie with one another in doing good works, and it is they who outrun [all others] in attaining to them!’ (Al-Mu’minun, 23:60-61).

I asked the Messenger of Allah:

“Is this verse talking about forbidden things such as adultery, stealing and drinking alcohol?” He replied:

“No, o daughter of Siddiq! What is meant in this verse is those who pray, fast and give charity but who are not anxious about whether these things will be accepted of them” (Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 23/3175; Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 20).

The Muslim mustn’t feel content with the deeds and good things that he has done. There is no other way but to seek refuge in the mercy of Allah.



Suhayl ibn Amr was one of the orators of the Quraysh. He used to speak against Islam at a time when eloquent speech was a very effective tool. This person was taken prisoner during the battle of Badr. Umar  said to the Prophet:

“O Messenger of Allah! Give me permission to remove Suhayl’s front teeth and leave his tongue hanging out. From then on he will no longer be able to make any speeches against you anywhere”

The Messenger of Allah replied:

“Let him be o Umar! I would not harm any part of his body in this way. Should I do so, Allah would have the same thing done to me, even though I am a prophet. Do not be hasty, for one day he may make a speech that you will praise and be pleased with” (Ibn Hisham, II, 293).

This action of the Prophet was a lesson in the necessity of being ever fearful of Allah and taking the utmost care not to draw upon oneself His wrath.



And so it was that after the death of the Prophet, at a tumultuous time in which people were showing signs of turning back from their religion, Suhayl ibn Amr made that praiseworthy speech that the Prophet had given news of years before. A part of what he said is as follows:

“... By Allah, I know that this religion will prevail as long as the sun and the moon rise and set...”

When Suhayl ibn Amr finished his speech, the people listening had calmed down. When Umar رضي الله عنه heard these words of Suhayl, he remembered the words of the Prophet and could not help saying:

“O Messenger of Allah. I bear witness once again that You are the Messenger of Allah” (Ibn Hisham, IV, 346; Wakidi, I, 07; Belazuri, I, 303-4; Ibn Abdulberr, II, 669-71; Hakim, III, 318/5228).



According to narrations by Aisha رضي الله عنها, whenever the weather was very windy or if dark clouds could be seen in the sky, the face of the Prophet would change colour. Sometimes he would stop and look at the cloud, sometimes he would turn back, enter his home and come out again. When it rained, however, he would be very happy. When he was asked the reason for these actions of his, he would say that they were a result of his anxiety that the punishment that came to the people of Ad would come to his community (Muslim, Istiska, 14-16).

The compassion of the Prophet for his community was greater than the compassion a mother and father have for their child. Almighty Allah informs us of this:

‘A Messenger has come to you from among yourselves. Your suffering is distressing to him; he is deeply concerned for you; he is gentle and merciful to the believers (Tawba, 9:128)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has decreed that no mortal has ever been as frightened as much as him, nor seen as much pain and distress, nor been subject to as much hunger as the Prophet himself.⁹³

93. Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 34/2472



This struggle was endured in order to turn the servants of Allah back to the path of Allah. The Prophet never complained about anything. According to him the salvation of a single person even, was better than anything that the sun rose and set over. He was stoned at Taif, his feet were left bloodied, yet did his heart find comfort when straight after this event a slave was guided to Islam.



Abu Bakr as Siddiq رضي الله عنه narrates:

“While I was with the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم the following verse was revealed:

‘Anyone who does evil will be repaid for it. He will not find any protector or helper besides Allah’ (Nisa, 4:123)

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said to me:

“O Abu Bakr! Shall I read to you a verse which has just been revealed to me?”

“Certainly, o Messenger of Allah!” I replied.

He read the above verse. I felt as if my back had been broken into two, and come apart, and I was left as if I had a seizure. The Prophet asked me:

“What is wrong, what has happened to you o Abu Bakr?”

I replied, showing my despair:

“May my mother and father be sacrificed for you o Messenger of Allah! Which of us is it who has not done any evil? Shall we be definitely punished for the evil that we have done?”

The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم explained:

“Abu Bakr! You and the other believers will be punished for the mistakes that you have made in this world (by meeting with certain distress and trouble), such that you will be reunited with Allah, freed of sin. As for the others, their deeds will accumulate and their punishment will be given to them on the Day of Judgement” (Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 4/3039).



The following example of the fear of Allah felt by Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه has a lesson for us all:

Abu Bakr had gone outside on a clear day. He was looking at the sky, at the thousands of manifestations of power that were displayed for the servants of Allah in order for them to take heed. His glance became fixed on a bird which had perched itself on a branch and was cheeping away with a sweet sound. Abu Bakr sighed. Longingly he looked at the bird and said:

“How happy for you little bird. By Allah I would have loved to be like you... You perch yourself on a tree, eat of its fruits and then fly away. Not having to account for yourself and no punishment awaiting you.

By Allah, how I would rather be a tree by the side of the road, waiting for a camel to come along and eat from my branches and chew me up, rather than be a human being who will have to be taken to account before the presence of my Lord” (Ibn Abi Shayba, VIII, 144).



Another day Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه became lost in thought, pondering on the verses which talked about the Day of Judgement, on the balance of the scales, on Paradise and Hellfire, on the angels in rows, on the wrapping up of the heavens, on the dispersing of the mountains, on the folding up of the sun, and the scattering of the stars. Then he said, out of fear of Allah:

“How I would have wished to be green grass so that an animal could come and chew me up and I could disappear and be gone”. At that point the following verse was revealed:

‘For those who fear the Station of their Lord, there are two Gardens.’

(Al-Rahman, 55:46) (Suyuti, Lubabu an Nukul, II, 146; Alusi, XXVII, 117).

The Companions never let the following warning from Almighty Allah, leave their thoughts:

‘You who have faith! Have *taqwa* of Allah with the *taqwa* due to Him and do not die except as Muslims.’ (Āl-i Imran, 3:102).



One Friday Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه went to the people and said:



“Let us gather together tomorrow for the division of the camels that are to be given as alms; however let nobody come to us without first asking permission”.

The next day a woman took a halter and gave it to her husband saying:

“Take this and go; who knows maybe Allah Most High will give us a camel”.

When the man arrived with his halter to where the camels were to be divided up he saw Abu Bakr and Umar there and without asking permission he entered their presence. When Abu Bakr saw him, he said:

“How did you get here?” Then he took the halter from his hand and lightly hit him with it, as a warning. However, he felt very bad after this. When the camels had all been given out he called that man, gave him back his halter and said:

“Here, take this and hit me back as reprisal”.

Umar then said:

“I swear by Allah that that will never happen. Do not leave such an action to be adopted as a habit for those after you”. Abu Bakr said:

“In that case who will save me from the wrath of Allah on the Day of Judgement?”

Umar then gave him the following advice:

“Then make it up to him”. Abu Bakr then ordered his servant to bring a camel, together with its horsecloth to give to the man. He also gave him five dinars. The man then forgave Abu Bakr ﷺ. (Ali al-Muttaki, V, 595-6/14058)



There was a youth from the Ansar whose heart was filled with fear of the hellfire. Whenever Hell was mentioned he would begin to weep. Eventually he locked himself up in his house and would not come out. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) was informed of his situation and then went to him. The youth looked at the Messenger of Allah longingly, immediately got up and flung his arms around him. His spirit then left him and he fell to the floor. The Prophet said:



“Wash your brother and wrap him in his shroud. The fear of Hell has torn apart his liver. I swear by Allah, who holds my soul in His hands, that Allah has protected him from the Fire. Whoever desires a thing he will find a way to attain to it and whoever fears a thing, he will flee from it” (Hakim, II, 536/3828; Ali al-Muttaki, III, 708/8526).



Qasim  narrates:

“Whenever I used to leave my house in the morning I would stop by the house of (my relative) Aisha and greet her. On one of these days that I had gone to her house, she was praying a supererogatory prayer and reciting the following verse:

“(The pious ones will say:, Thank Allah, that... **Allah was gracious to us and safeguarded us from the punishment of the searing wind.**” (Al-Tur, 52:27).

She was praying while standing and crying and she kept repeating this verse. I waited until I was tired of waiting and then I went to the market to buy some things that I needed. When I had finished and returned, Aisha  was still standing, praying and crying” (Ibn al-Jawzi, Sifatu as-safwa, II, 31).



Ibn Abi Mulayka has said:

“I managed to see 30 of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah. They all feared hypocrisy for themselves. None of them could say that they had faith like the faith of the angels Gabriel and Michael” (Bukhari, Iman, 36).



One day Abu Bakr came across Hanzala and asked him how he was. Hanzala  replied in great sorrow and anxiety:

“Hanzala has become a hypocrite, o Siddiq”.

Abu Bakr replied:

“*Subhanallah* (Glory be to Allah). What a thing to say”. Hanzala explained:





“While we are in the company of the Messenger of Allah, he reminds us of Heaven and Hell and it is as though we can see them with our own eyes. However, whenever we leave the presence of Allah’s Messenger and go back to our families and our children and occupy ourselves with the world, we forget most of what we have heard. (and we lose the spiritual state and prosperity of his words)”.

Abu Bakr said:

“By Allah, we go through a similar state”.

Upon this we both stood up and went straight to the Messenger of Allah and told him our problem. The Prophet ﷺ replied:

“I swear by Allah, who holds my life in His hands, that had you been able to maintain your state that you are in when with me, and be continual in your remembrance of Allah, both while sleeping and walking, then the angels would shake hands with you. Then he repeated three times:

“O Hanzala! Sometimes like this, and sometimes like that”. (Muslim, Tawba, 12).

As can be seen the blessed Companions continually took themselves to account for their actions. Despite all of the troubles of their lives, their true anxiety was to preserve their hearts from weakness.



One day when Umar ؓ was passing by someone’s house, he heard the owner of the house reciting the chapter Tur, with a loud voice. When the man came to the verse:

‘Your Lord’s punishment will certainly take place. No one can ward it off’ (Al-Tur, 52:7-8)

Umar got down from his camel, put his ear to the wall and listened. When he went back home later, he was bedridden for a period, having fallen ill due to the intensity of the warning nature of this verse.⁹⁴



Umar  has said:

“If a voice were to appear from the heavens saying: “O people. Only one of you will enter the Hellfire”, I would fear that that person might be me. And if the voice were to say: “O people. Only one of you will enter Paradise”, I would wonder whether that person might be me”.⁹⁵

This is the spiritual state of the believers, that is, it is a state between hope and fear which is commanded in the following verse:

‘(those Allah-conscious ones) whose sides eschew their beds as they call on their Lord in fear and ardent hope (in the night). And they give of what We have provided for them’. (As-Sajda, 32:16)



Umar  was once thinking about the difficulty of having to account for himself in the presence of Allah. He picked up a piece of straw from the ground and said:

“Ah, would that I were such a piece of straw, and that I had never come into to this world. If only my mother had never given birth to me, and I could be forgotten entirely”.(Ibn Sa’d, III, 360-1).



Ali  was once asked:

“O Commander of the believers. Why is it that the colour of your face changes when the time for prayer arrives and you begin to tremble?”

He replied:

“This is the time to pay back the trust for which the heavens and earth could not bear and the mountains expressed their helplessness. I do not know whether I will be able to carry it out perfectly”.



The Prophet’s grandson Hasan’s face would turn pale whenever he performed his ablution. One day, someone who saw him asked:

95. Ali al Muttaki, XII, 620/35916. See also Ibn Rajab al Hanbali, al Tahwif mina’n Nar, Damascus, 1979, pg 15





“O Hasan. Why do you pale and turn yellow whenever you take your ablution?”

He replied:

“This is the time to appear before the presence of the Sole Possessor of Power, Allah the Great and Majestic”.

When Hasan ﷺ used to enter a mosque he would pray as follows:

“O my Sustainer. Your slave is at Your door. O possessor of Grace. Your sinful servant has come to You. You have ordered Your righteous slaves to forgive the evil of those who do wrong. Because You are the Forgiving and Generous One. O Allah. Forgive the wrongs that I have done with that same forgiveness and grace of Yours and have mercy on me”.



Abu Bakr Warraq had a small son who was learning the Qur’an. One day he came back early from his lesson, pale and drawn, and trembling. In surprise Abu Bakr asked him:

“What is wrong my son? What is this state? Why are you back so early?”

The fear of Allah had firmly established itself in the tiny heart of that little boy and had left his face as faded and blanched as an autumn leaf. He replied:

“O father! Today my teacher taught us a verse from the Qur’an and as I reflected on it and perceived its meaning I found myself in this state”. His father then asked him:

“Which verse is that?” The little boy began to read:

‘How will you safeguard yourselves, if you are reject Allah, against a Day which will turn children grey’ (Al-Muzemmil, 73:17)

Later that little child fell ill in the face of the terror and awe of this verse. He became bedridden and passed away not long after. His father was very moved by this event. He would frequently go to the grave of his son and weep and say to himself:



“O Abu Bakr! Your son learnt a verse from the Qur’an and gave up his spirit from fear of Allah. You however, have been reading the Qur’an all this time and you still do not fear the rights of Allah as much as a child”.

This event displays the sensitivity of a child’s faith in whose heart Allah had placed tenderness and compassion. But it also indicates the way in which we should reflect on His words with a tenderness of heart together with a fear and awesomeness in the face of the greatness of Allah. Almighty Allah explains the way that we can reach this state in the following verse:

‘What of him who spends the night hours in prayer, prostrating and standing up, mindful of the afterlife, hoping for the mercy of his Lord? Say: ‘Are they the same – those who know and those who do not know?’ It is only people of intelligence who pay heed.’ (Al-Zumar, 39:9)

Accordingly true knowledge in the eyes of Allah is knowledge that will impel one towards consciousness and fear of Allah. That is true knowledge is knowledge of Allah. In order to attain to such knowledge, the above verse indicates three conditions that must be complied by:

1. To stand in the night and prostrate thereby establishing a togetherness with almighty Allah in the heart.
2. To continually remember one’s mortality and always be in a state of anxiety at the account one must give on the Day of Judgement at every stage, time and with each of our actions
3. To always hope for the mercy of our Lord, and to be continual in our prayer to Him and in seeking refuge in Him. The great people of this world have always lived in a state of continual supplication.



Mansur ibn Ammar relates:

One night, I went outside thinking that the morning had come. But I saw that it wasn’t morning. As I was passing by someone’s house I heard them weeping sadly and saying the following prayer:

“My Lord! I have committed many sins. I have ruined myself. My aim was not to test Your words. But I gave in to my *nafs*. And I saw that whatever bad I did, You did nothing in response. I was deceived by Your



attribute of Veiler. I committed my sins out of ignorance. Now I know that I made a mistake. If you punish me what will become of my state? Woe to me. O my Lord. On the day that you command Your servants to pass by the Bridge of Sirat, some of them will fall into the Hellfire and some will enter Heaven. I wonder which group this wretched servant of Yours will fall into?”

At that point a verse about Hell was heard. A sigh was heard from the young man who was praying inside and then he could no longer be heard.

“I wonder what happened?” I said to myself. When I had identified which house it was I went back home. When I went back in the morning there was a coffin at the door.

When I asked what had happened his mother told me:

“It is my son who has died. He was from the lineage of the Prophet. When it was nighttime he would pray and weep until the morning. He would give out what he had earned during the day to poor people. When he heard a verse about Hell being read he could no longer bear it and he fell down, weeping. Then he passed away”.

I said to her:

“Dear lady. Your son has gone to Paradise. Because the one who weeps out of fear of Allah cannot enter Hell. How can such a person who submitted his spirit in this way ever enter Hell? Be grateful to Allah”.



Yavuz Sultan Selim was a sultan who with a very hot temper. He would get very angry at any mistakes and acts of ignorance. However, just as with his beauty, his anger would melt when it came to the commands of Allah. His fear of Allah was above everything else. One time he had ordered that forty people be killed when there was a burglary in the treasury as a result of neglect. Learning of this situation the Shaykh al-Islam, Zenbilli Ali Efendi, went in haste to Yavuz’s side in order to prevent the execution being carried out and without taking permission. He listened to the truth behind the event from the Sultan. Yavuz responded harshly:

“Respected Sir. What you have heard is true however you do not have the right to interfere in matters of the State...”

The Shaykh al-Islam, Zenbilli Ali Efendi, responded with the same degree of harshness:

“My Sultan. I came here to inform you of the legal ruling. Because our duty is to protect your afterlife”

Sultan Yavuz calmed down in the face of the standards of Islam, finer than a hair, and sharper than a sword. He said:

“Isn’t there allowance to kill one group in order to reform a general situation?”

Zenbilli Ali Efendi replied:

“There is no connection between these people being killed and the reforming the world. A punishment which fits their crime will do...”

The great Sultan who had subdued many a great army bowed his head down and changed his decision. Greatly pleased at this state Zenbilli turned back around just as he was about to leave. He said to Yavuz, who looked at him curiously:

“My Sultan. My first request consisted of informing you of a legal ruling of our religion. I have another request, but this is just a wish...”

Then he continued:

“My Sultan. These criminals are responsible for the crime that they have committed. But who will look after their innocent families while they are in prison? My request is thus that you set up an allowance for their families until their sentence has ended”. (See, Mustafa Nuri Pasha, *Netajj al-Wukuat*, Ankara, 1987, pg 90-91).

Yavuz granted this second request also, no doubt indicating his awareness of his divine responsibility by Allah.



On another occasion Zenbilli Ali Efendi similarly warned the Sultan. But because the Sultan considered himself justified with his decision he said to the Shaykh al Islam as he did the previous time:

“It is not your duty to interfere in the affairs of the state”



Undaunted, Zenbilli Ali Efendi responded to this threatening address:

“My Sultan. These are affairs of the hereafter and therefore we do have the right to interfere. If you do not turn back from your incorrect decision be prepared for an intense punishment on Judgement Day..”

After these words, the Shaykh al Islam turned around and left, without even saying goodbye. Yavuz Sultan Selim, who was just about to leave for a journey, was a little incensed as he had never been treated as such by anyone before. However he realised the truth and accepted the warning by the Shaykh al Islam and changed his decision. He left a letter of apology for Zenbilli Ali Efendi.

In spite of the fact that he was the Sultan of the world, the fear of Allah he harboured within his heart, prevented him from acting according to his own desires. The Shaykh’s own fear of Allah on the other hand gave him great courage and he was able to risk everything in order to warn, without fear, as harsh a Sultan as Yavuz.



One of the viziers of that time met with the great Sufi saint, Zunnun-i Misri and said:

“Please help me. I am busy serving the Sultan day and night. I hope for the best for him, but I am afraid that he will scold and rebuke me.”

Zunnun wept and said:

“Had you feared Allah as much as you fear this sultan you would have been accepted into the group of truthful ones”



In short, “the start of all things good is love for Allah, and the foundation of wisdom is fear of Allah.

One who loves and knows Allah will be ever careful about their acts, for fear of not being worthy of His love and of being subject to his punishment. He will live his life in the best way. If the servant properly fears Allah (as He deserves to be feared), his life will be given direction under the blanket of Islam and he will be safe from all worldly and otherworldly fears. The Prophet has said:



“There are three things that will save a person: Fear of Allah, both in secret and in the open, maintaining justice in states of pleasure and anger, being economical in times of both poverty and wealth. The following three things will ruin a person: the desires that make one follow them; miserliness, and being satisfied with oneself” (Munawi, III, 404/3471).

We must fear Allah in the way he deserves to be feared if we want to have peace and happiness both in this world and the next. We must also seek refuge in Him whilst bowing down and in prostration, with our prayers and our supplications, watered by our tears, and hoping for His mercy and forgiveness.

3. *Tazim* or reverence

Tazim is the outcome of certain fine feelings, such as *taqwa* (Allah-consciousness), love, humility, appreciation of value, and sensitivity of the heart that are born of faith. The essence of Islam can be described in the two following concise notions:

a. *Tazim li-emrillah* – that is, carrying out the commands of Allah with meticulousness and respect.

b. *Shafkat ala khalkillah* – showing mercy and compassion towards created beings out of deference to their Creator.

The greatest of etiquette is to show reverence for Almighty Allah. And the best and strongest sign of this is worship. Later it is to approach other beings with respect according to the degree of their closeness to Allah. It is said in the Holy Qur’an:

‘As for those who honour Allah’s sacred rites, that comes from the *taqwa* in their hearts’ (al-Hajj, 22:32)

The prayer (*salat*), the Holy Qur’an, the call to prayer, the sacrifice and other sacred trusts, along with the Ka’bah, the Hills of Safa and Marwa and other sacred sites are all considered to be the sacred rites of Islam. It is necessary to respect them without fault, and to show reverence for these during the times of *Hajj* and *Umrah* (The Greater and Lesser Pilgrimages to Mecca). Extending one’s feet towards the Ka’bah when sitting in front

of it, lying down, vain and empty talk in those holy places, recitation of or listening to of the Qur'an in a disrespectful manner or putting it on the ground, are all offensive actions that will harm one's feelings reverence and should be avoided.

Allah (glorious and majestic is He) has promised eternity to those of his servants who show respect and reverence for His Own Being, His prophets, saints and sacred trusts and has showered His mercy upon them constantly. As an example of this, the polytheists of Mecca were not punished as long as the Prophet ﷺ was amongst them⁹⁶.

One of the best examples of the outcome of those who show reverence for Allah's sacred rites is the story of the magicians of Pharaoh, told in the Qur'an. When the Pharaoh was left helpless in the face of the miracles shown by Mûsa ﷺ, he gathered up the sorcerers of Egypt and promised them a great reward. However when the sorcerers embarked on the challenge with Mûsa, they politely respected him and gave him the choice of first priority. This polite act must have pleased Almighty Allah for the seeds of love of guidance that was in their hearts began to develop at that point.

The miraculous manifestations that were displayed after that then became a means for them to be honoured with faith. And this was such faith, such perfect faith, that it responded with the sacrifice of their lives, without them compromising in the slightest...

Jalaluddin al-Rumi explains the secret of showing reverence for Allah's sacred rites in this story:

‘Those sorcerers came to the creed of unity as a result of the courtesy, compliment and respect they showed for a great Prophet, a servant close to Allah, which they did by giving him first priority. At the same time however, they were also punished for attempting to compete with that great Prophet’.

Another famous event is the dream of Uthman Gazi as a consequence of his respect and reverence for the Holy Qur'an. This dream was interpreted by Shaykh Edebali who then married his daughter to him as a result. Thus it is possible to say that the Ottoman Empire, the longest running empire

in the world, was founded on respect, reverence, love, courtesy and service to the Qur'an.

This exalted Empire, which drew its strength from the impressive respect it showed for the Holy Qur'an later came to be in charge of the sacred trusts and preserved them with unparalleled reverence. In addition they served the two Holy sites of Mecca and Madina with the respect and sacredness worthy of them in an appropriate manner for centuries.

Scenes of Virtue

According to a narration by Abu Huraira , the Prophet  saw some phlegm laying in the direction of the *Qibla* in his Mosque. He turned towards the people and said:

“What is wrong with some of you that when you turn towards your Lord you spit. Would any of you like it if someone turned to you and spat in your face?” (Muslim, Masajid, 53).



When Junayd al-Baghdadi went to visit someone whom he was told was a person of piety, he saw him spit in the direction of Mecca. He left the man without having met him as he realised that the man was not a man who followed the *sunnah* (practices of the Prophet).



According to a narration by Anas , whenever the Messenger of Allah  would go to relieve himself, he would take off his ring that had engraved upon it ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’ out of respect for Allah (Abu Dawud, Taharah, 10/19).



During the Hajj, when the Messenger of Allah sighted the Ka'bah he raised his hand and prayed:

“O Allah. Increase the honour, greatness, nobility and majesty of this House. And also increase the honour, nobility, majesty, reverence and goodness of the ones who respect it during the Greater and Lesser Pilgrimages” (Ibn Sa'd, II, 173).



Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

‘We have appointed the sacrificial animals for you as one of the sacred rites of Allah (one of the signs that remind you of Allah)’ (al-Hajj, 22:36)

Thus the animals sacrificed at the time of Qurban festival are also from the rites of Islam. This is why it is necessary to show respect for these animals for the sake of Allah. As with all forms of worship, the feelings of reverence and *taqwa* are of the essence. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

‘Their flesh and blood does not reach Allah but your *taqwa* does reach Him’ (al-Hajj, 22:37)

The following event is a nice example of the respect shown for Allah by the Prophet when it came to the sacrifice of the animals for the festival of Qurbani.

The Muslims had arrived at Hudaybiya in order to perform the Lesser Pilgrimage, however the polytheists had prevented them from entering Mecca. The Companions had brought with them their sacrificial animals. Amongst these was a pedigree camel which had been taken as booty during the Battle of Badr. This camel had belonged to Abu Jahl and had a silver ring in its nose. When the camels were laid out to be sacrificed, this camel escaped and fled all the way to Mecca to the house of Abu Jahl. Amr ibn Anema رضي الله عنه went after it. Some of the people did not want to give it back to Amr. Later they offered to give 100 camels for this one camel. When the Prophet learned of this he said: *“If we had not decided that this camel be sacrificed we would have accepted your offer”* (Wakidi, II, 64).

Here we can see the leniency and tolerance of the Prophet and also the reverence which he showed towards Allah. The Prophet was the most soft-hearted of people. It was not his habit to deny the lawful requests of people. Here too he would have granted this wish of the unbelievers had he not reverence for the sacred laws of Allah and His religion which were above all else. This is why he did not use a camel which had been designated to be sacrificed for Allah for any other purpose.



We can also take heed from the reverence shown by the friends of Allah on the matter of sacrificing animals.

Shaykh Sami Efendi and the late Mûsa Topbas Efendi (may their spirits be sanctified) were very sensitive when it came to sacrificing their animals. They would never sacrifice two animals in the same place. They would blindfold the animal. They would not allow the animals to be pushed and shoved to the place where they would be sacrificed but rather, if it was a small animal, request that they be carried kindly and gently. They would take care that the knife to be used was sharp. They would also request that the animal be cut in a way as to avoid hurting him and that the blood be allowed to flow fully. They would not sit down while the animal was being cut but rather wait standing until all of the blood had flowed from the animal.

All of this they did because the sacrificing of the animal is a form of worship that must be carried out consciously just like any other kind of worship. It is an expression of reverence for Allah, gratitude for the bounties He has given, and sacrificing all in His path. Allah Most High created animals for the benefit of the human being and left them at their service. All of the bounties that come from animals, such as their meat, milk, leather, and wool are a great favour for the servants of Allah.

To thank someone for a simple glass of water is a requirement of humanity. In that case we must be in a constant state of gratitude for the endless bounties that Allah has favoured us with. We must show reverence and act with delicacy, compassion and kindness when sacrificing these blessed animals that Allah has provided for our benefit.



Umar and Uthman  were in the habit of kissing the Blessed Copies of the Qur'an with reverence when they awoke every morning. Abdullah ibn Umar also would take the holy script in his hands, kiss it with great reverence and hold it close to his chest, saying:

“This is the covenant of my Lord. This is the open decree of my Lord”
(Kattani, II, 196-7).



Ikrima رضي الله عنه would also take the holy script, and rub it over his face and eyes. He would cry and say, as an expression of his reverence and love for almighty Allah:

“These are the words of my Lord, the words of my Lord” (Hakim, III, 272/5062).



In previous times, whenever anything written with ink was to be erased, it would be washed with water. Anas رضي الله عنه has informed us that during the time of the four rightly Caliphs, the students who had washed the verses of the Qur’an would not throw the water out just anywhere. Rather they would let it accumulate in a special container and then pour it out by the side of a grave or in clean wells where nobody walked. They also used this water with the intention of healing. (Kettani, II, 200).



Before the Qur’an was revealed the people of Mecca were in the habit of hanging on the wall of the Ka’bah the names of seven poems that had been chosen for their exemplary eloquence and expressiveness. One of these poems belonged to Labid ibn Rabia. The works of Labid had been hung on the wall of the Ka’bah for years. When Labid became Muslim, he refused to write or speak another poem out of reverence and respect for the words of Allah. The last poem he wrote was when he (first) became Muslim:

‘Praise be to Allah that I too was able to put on that radiant garment of Islam before the appointed hour arrived’ (Ibn Abdilber, al-Istiab, III, 1335).



The prophet Sulayman عليه السلام once sent a letter to Belqis, the queen of Sheba in order to invite her to Islam. Belqis, who was an idol-worshipper at that time, read the letter and said:

“O sirs and peers. A blessed letter has been sent to me. It is from Sulayman and it begins “In the Name of Allah, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate”...



Some scholars have said that it was out of this reverence and respect that she showed for the letter of Sulayman that she was blessed with becoming Muslim.



During the first half of his life Bishr-i Hafī, one of the friends of Allah, was a sinner. One day as he walking about drunk, he found a piece of paper with the words 'In the Name of Allah' written on it. He kissed it and placed it on his forehead (out of respect). He scented it with perfume and kept it in a nice place. That night, he saw a dream in which he heard a voice say:

"You have scented my Name with a beautiful scent, and you have showed it reverence and respect. Now, out of My own dignity and greatness, I am going to make your name be respected in both worlds".

Upon this, Bishr awoke, repented and turned to Allah with loyalty and sincerity.⁹⁷



Our forefathers, who used all means to show reverence for Allah Most High and His Messenger, made this a principle of their lives. When they wrote books they would not write the name of Allah openly, out of respect. Instead, they would abbreviate the name of Allah, such as *bihi* meaning by Him (by Allah) out of fear that their books may be placed on the ground.



According to narrations, one day Ibrahim ibn Edhem, one of the friends of Allah, went to see Abu Hanifa. The students who had gathered around Abu Hanifa, looked at Ibrahim ibn Edhem belittlingly and strangely. Abu Hanifa noticed this and said to Ibrahim ibn Edhem:

"Please come in sir, you have honoured us".

Ibrahim greeted him ashamedly and then turned to go. When Ibrahim ibn Edhem left, Abu Hanifa's students asked him:

"What makes this person worthy of greatness and respect? How can someone like you call him 'Sir'?"

97. Attar, Tadhkirat al-Anbiya, Tahrān, 1372, p 128)



At this, Abu Hanifa gave the following reply which showed his feelings of reverence for the friends of Allah and which also expressed his own high degree of humility:

“He is constantly occupied with Allah, whereas we are merely occupied with idle talk and gossip”.

Abu Hanifa had sewn himself a garment out of precious and beautiful material that he used only to make the late night prayer. This he did out of his reverence for Allah, thereby showing us the importance of manners and the respect with which we must approach our worship.



Ahmad ibn Hanbal رحمته الله would frequently visit the great saint, Bishr-i Hafi, in order to converse with him. He had become very devoted to him. One time his students said to him:

“O Imam! You are a scholar of the Qur’an and *Sunnah*. Despite this you often go and visit an ordinary man. Is this befitting of you?”

The great Imam gave the following reply:

“It is true that in the topics that you have mentioned I am better than him. However, he knows and recognises Almighty Allah better than I do”.

Thus Abu Hanifa and Ahmad ibn Hanbal both respected the Gnostic servants of Allah out of love and respect they felt for Allah, and tried to benefit from them by visiting them.



The desert of Sinai is a treacherous place that nobody had ever been able to succeed in crossing. Through the determination and decisiveness of Yavuz Sultan Selim, the Ottoman army entered that desert. A little while later, Yavuz got down from his horse and began to work. His soldiers were left in amazement and terror: “Why did the Sultan get down off his horse and begin to walk in this desert which is enough to boil the blood of horses”. They began to whisper amongst themselves and then they too got down from their horses and began to walk. The pashas asked Hasan Can who was the close friend of Yavuz:

“Please ask the Sultan, what sort of thing is this?”



Hasan Can, asked Yavuz, very curiously what it was that he was doing.

“Can’t you see Hasan? The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is walking ahead of us. How can we remain seated on our horses when that Sultan of the Worlds is on foot?”



For the Ottomans the sign of the sultanate was not the crown, but taking up the sword. However much the word ‘crown holder’ was used in official documents, the sultanate of a sultan took place through a pledge of alliance and the taking up of the sword. This continued up until the time of the 36th Ottoman Sultan, Sultan Wahiduddin.

After Istanbul was conquered, the site of the taking up of the sword took place at the tomb of Ayyub Al-Ansari. The ceremony that took place was called the “Kilic Alayi” (The Ceremony of the Sword).

The sword that the new Sultan took up was the sword that once belonged to Umar رضي الله عنه, and is now housed in the Topkapi Palace. This sword was placed upon the new Sultan by the most eminent and respected man of religion of that time. This would then be followed by a public prayer and congratulations for the Sultan. Eyub area was chosen for this ceremony because many Companions of the Prophet, both known and unknown, have been buried in this area which is considered sacred, just as the earth of the Blessed Harem in Mecca is sacred.



During the time of Murad IV, a flood occurred which resulted in two of the walls of the Ka’bah collapsing. The head architect, Ridwan Aga was immediately sent to Mecca to repair the damages. After identifying the problem, the architect refrained from using such words as ‘collapse’ and ‘crumpling’ about the Magnificent Ka’bah and instead expressed himself as follows:

“The such and such portions of the House of Allah have bowed down in prostration”.

He displayed his respect in a number of other ways too, such as taking the necessary precautions to prevent the animals that carried the equipment for the repair work, from dirtying that blessed place.



The reverence of the Ottomans for those blessed lands actually began when they came to power. During the journey of the pilgrimage, the first stop on the way from Europe to Asia was given the name 'Harem' (Sacred). This place still carries the same name even today and it was from that point that the manners necessary for arriving in the two sacred cities were assumed. No act on that journey expressing any manner of ignorance was allowed.



In the year 1678 Sair Nabi set off on a pilgrimage with certain statesmen. When the group approached Madina, Nabi was unable to sleep out of his excitement. When he saw a pasha heedlessly extend his foot in the direction of Madina, he was extremely affected by this act and subsequently began to write his famous epithet.

When they neared Madina close to the dawn prayer, Nabi heard the epithet he had written being read out from the minarets of the Prophet's Mosque.

'Beware of acting contrary to courtesy in this watchplace of Allah, and the station and blessed land of His beloved Prophet, Muhammed Mustafa ﷺ.'

'O Nabi, enter this place abiding by the rules of courtesy. This is the place that sacred souls follow like moths and a blessed station which the prophets have kissed'

Extremely excited at this situation the poet, Nabi, immediately went to find the caller to prayer:

"From whom did you learn this epithet and how? He asked him.

The caller to prayer replied:

"Last night the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to me in my dream:

"A poet from my community called Nabi, is coming to visit me. This person loves me devotedly and is full of respect and reverence for me. Greet him with his own epithet from the minarets of my mosque, due to this love he has for me".

So we complied with this command of the Prophet"

Nabi began to weep uncontrollably. He was crying and saying at the same time:

“So the Messenger of Allah said that I was from his community. The Prophet of Allah ﷺ has accepted me into his community!....



The last Sultan of the Ottomans, Abdulaziz Han, was very devoted and full of reverence for the Prophet ﷺ. One day whilst he was lying in bed ill, pale and semi-conscious, he was told:

“Here is a petition from a the people of Madina”. Hearing this, the Sultan gathered all the strength that he could muster and said to his helpers:

“Take me downstairs immediately. Let me listen to the petition that has come from the Haramayn whilst standing. A request from the neighbours of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ cannot be listened to whilst seated and with my legs stretched out, contrary to courtesy”...

Whenever the post came from Madina, he would renew his ablution and kiss the letters saying “They have the blessed dust of Madina on them”. He would then hand them to the head scribe to open and read them”.



The respect shown by our forefathers to the scholars and practitioners of virtue is also worth mentioning. On the matter of showing respect to the friends of Allah, Ertugrul Gazi gave the following valuable advice to his son, Uthman Gazi and on his behalf as a means of showing direction for all those who would follow him:

“Look my son. You may hurt me, but you are never to hurt Shaykh Edeballi. He is the spiritual sun of our people. He is what keeps us in balance, and his scales are not out even by a dirham.

You may defy me, but never defy him. If you defy me, I will be sad and hurt; but if you defy him, my eyes will no longer look at you, and even if they do they will not be able to see you.

My words are not for Edeballi but for you. Let these words of mine be my last testament to you”.



Uthman Gazi gave the following advice to his son Orhan Gazi:

“...always show respect, act kindly and favourably to those righteous scholars, and possessors of virtue, who give spiritual strength to our government. If you hear of a mature scholar, a gnostic, or a saint who is in another country, politely and reverently invite him to our nation. Let your affairs of state and religion be guided through their blessings and support...”



During the reign of Orhan Gazi, a Gnostic friend of Allah called Geyikli Baba settled in the region of Uludag. Hearing of his fame, Orhan Gazi sent him an invitation. However, this friend of Allah, who was in the habit of wandering the mountains with his deer, refused the invitation. In addition he sent news saying: “Do not let Orhan come to see me, either”.

When Orhan Gazi was curious and asked the reason he received the following reply:

“The people of the Darwish order are people of foresight and people of the heart. It is a must that they act appropriately. If they act contrarily and stray from the right path, their prayers will not be accepted. You on the other hand are the trustees of the community. In this situation you are the frontier soldiers, whereas we are the soldiers of prayer. Victories are obtained through the mutual efforts of both the soldiers of prayer and the soldiers on the frontier. Just as the soldiers on the frontier equip themselves with knowledge of war and with courage in order to attain to this victory, so too the soldiers of prayer must of necessity keep themselves away from worldly inclinations and love. Thus I fear that the probable favours and offerings that will take place as a result of my coming to see you, will plant seeds of worldly love in the hearts of our dervishes and decrease their love for the afterlife. As a result, harm will come to both of us. My sultan! Know that when the time comes, we will be destined to see each other by the will of Allah”.

A little while later, Geyikli Baba came to Bursa and planted a plane tree in the courtyard of Orhan Gazi. They informed the Sultan of this, who immediately went there. Geyikli Baba said to him:



“We planted it for its blessings. As long as it stands, may the prayers of the dervishes be accepted for you and your offspring.”

Despite the conditions given to him previously, Orhan Gazi offered Geyikli Baba the region of Inegol and its surroundings. However, Geyikli Baba, who had no desire or need for any of these refused and said:

“Property belongs to Allah alone. He gives it to those who are worthy of it. We are not worthy”

The Sultan insisted. Geyikli Baba, fearing that to refuse what had been offered would be a type of pride said:

“Let that piece of land that lies this side of that hill be the courtyard of the dervishes”.

Refraining from erring in the case of showing respect for the friends of Allah and basing the foundations of the state on them, Orhan Gazi felt great happiness when Geyikli Baba accepted his offer and wished to kiss his hands; he did in fact kiss them repeatedly... later on his death, he had a tomb and mosque built for him. This tomb is still visited today.

History is witness that the reverence shown to the friends of Allah by the Ottoman sultans was the main reason for divine help being bestowed upon them.



The reverence shown to Akshamsaddin by Sultan Fatih Mehmed was very great. It was such that on the day that Istanbul was conquered, he said to those around him:

“The joy and peace you see in me today is not merely a result of this fortress being conquered. It is because a great and blessed friend of Allah, such as Akshamsaddin is with me in my time and in this place...”



Kemal Pasazade, a famous Ottoman scholar, used to be a very good soldier but later left the military and gave himself to his studies. According to some sources the reason he gave for this preference is as follows:



“We were on an expedition once with Sultan Bayazid. Next to the Sultan was his vizier Ibrahim Pasha, and the famous commander Evranosoglu. Evranosoglu was such a commander that no other commander was ahead of him, and nobody would sit in front of him in any gathering. But at that time a scholar came wearing a ragged old robe and sat above the commander. I was surprised that nobody said anything to prevent this situation and so I asked those near me:

“Who is this person who can pass and sit in front of a commander such as Evranosoglu?”

“He is a scholar of virtue called Molla Lutfi”.

“What is his salary?” I asked.

“30 dirhems” they replied.

In amazement I said:

“How can a person with such a low salary be ahead of such a peerless commander?” Then they said to me:

“The scholars are shown such reverence due to the exaltedness of the religious knowledge that they possess. And at any rate, a pasha or commander who has been kneaded with faith, wisdom and courtesy would not wish it otherwise...”

After hearing this, I realised that I was not worthy of becoming one of those commanders, and with the feeling that it was only in the field of knowledge that my potential could become truly realised, I decided to leave the army and occupy myself with studying knowledge”.

After this choice Kemal Pashazade reached a state of knowledge in which he was known as being ‘Unique in his age’. After the death of Zenbilli Ali Efendi, he became the 9th Shayk al-Islam of the Ottoman State.



One day when Sultan Ahmad Han went to Uskudar, he encountered Aziz Mahmud Hudayi in the marketplace. Immediately getting down off his horse, he mounted the shaykh on it in his place, and began to walk behind him. The heart of Hudayi could not bear to let the great Sultan walk and so he said to him a little while later:

“I only mounted this horse so that the prayer of my shaykh and the command of my Sultan be obeyed”. He then got down off the horse. Thus the prayer of his shaykh Uftade came true: “My son! May sultans walk behind you...”



Sultan Ahmad Han would show exceptional respect for Aziz Mahmud Hudayi and would not show any defect in his kindness to him. One day Aziz Mahmud Hudayi was sitting in the palace conversing with him. At one point they brought an urn and a bowl of water for Aziz Mahmud Hudayi to renew his ablution. The Sultan took the urn out of respect for his teacher and began to pour water for him. From behind the screen the mother of Sultan Ahmad Han was ready waiting with a towel for him. At one point the following thought occurred to the heart of the Sultan’s mother:

“If only I could see a miracle of Aziz Mahmud Hudayi”. Becoming aware of the thought that occurred to her as a bounty from Allah, Hudayi said:

“Is it not amazing? Some people expect to see wonders from us. Whereas what greater miracle can there be than the Caliph of the earth pouring water over my hands and his respected mother waiting on me with a towel in hand?”



In low spirits and depressed at the assault of the enemy bombardments of the harbour, Mirliva Jawad Pasha, the Commander for the stronghold of the Dardanelles, fell into a light sleep due to his excessive fatigue. In his dream he heard a voice call out to him softly:

“O Jawad! You show respect and reverence for the exalted speech of Allah Most High, and for this almighty Allah gives you good tidings of His help. Look out over the sea”.

When Jawad Pasha looked at the Dark Quay, he saw amongst an intensity of light the letters ‘kaf’ and ‘waw’. Then he awoke.

The next day as he was reading the Fatiha at the head of a grave he heard the voice from his dream once again:



“O Jawad! Lay the 26 mines that you have in stock over the sea”

He was full of excitement. He was faced with a spiritual mystery. Whilst he was thinking about how to solve it he saw a little way ahead of him, a radiant looking man who was observing him. That man approached the Pasha and asked him if there was a problem. Jawad Pasha told him everything that had happened. That friend of Allah explained the mystery with much depth of comprehension:

“My child! That light that you saw upon the sea is a sign of victory. It is an indication that the unbelievers will fail to take control of this land. The letters ‘kaf’ and ‘waw’ add up to 26, according to my calculations. In that case, laying those 26 mines over Dark Quay is going to be one of your greatest manoeuvres for victory.”

After these words that radiant man disappeared.

Normally the mines were required to be laid vertically over the harbour, but according to the dream they were to be laid out parallel to the land. Because this quay was an inactive part of the harbour, it was not strategically suitable to lay down the mines in this way.

In spite of all of this, Jawad Pasha immediately ordered that the mines be laid without delay, as a result of this spiritual opening. The Nusret Mine ship, under the command of Captain Hakki Bey, carried out this duty perfectly. Each mine that was laid out in the middle of the night was placed upon the sea to the accompaniment of the words ‘Allah is the Greatest’. That morning, having completed his duty, Captain Hakki Bey became a martyr after suffering a heart attack.

The next day, when the enemy battleships entered the harbour, the mines that had been laid out the previous night began to explode. The result was that these important enemy battleships became buried in the harbour, and the attack by the enemy was warded off.

In the 1930 edition of ‘Revue de Paris’ journal, Winston Churchill analysed this event:

“The main reason for so many people dying, for the heavy expense of the war, and for the sinking of 5000 trade and warships during World War

I, were 26 mines that were swung on the end of a thin rope of steel laid down the previous night by the Turks.”

These are the unique blessings bestowed by Allah Most High in response to the respect and reverence shown for the Divine Speech...



In short, the most important matter that is commanded in the Qur’an after faith is performing good deeds. And what is desired after repentance is also performing good deeds. That is, the rising of the station of servants in the eyes of Allah and the acceptance of their repentance is connected to whether or not they perform good deeds. And performing good deeds consists of ‘*tazim li-emrillah*’ and ‘*shafkat ala halkillah*’, that is, reverently following Allah’s commands, and serving His creatures with mercy and compassion.

4. Honouring one’s trust and Keeping One’s Promise

The word ‘*amanah*’ or trust, comes from the same root as ‘*iman*’ or faith. The expression ‘*mu’min*’ which is the collective name for those who believe in Allah, is also one of the beautiful Names of Allah, and indicates that He is the source of security, He instils trust in his servants, and it is He who makes them trustworthy. He is also the One who has given His prophets the characteristic of ‘trust’ and is the One Who has made them trustworthy. From this respect then, the ‘*mu’min*’ is the one who has *iman* or faith, who has been given a trust, who engenders trust, and who can be trusted.

Abu Mûsa  said: “I asked the Messenger of Allah , “O Messenger of Allah! Who is the most virtuous of the Muslims?” He replied: “*The one from whose tongue and hands Muslims are safe*” (Bukhari, Iman 4,5, Rikak 26; Muslim, Iman 64,65).

Being trustworthy and keeping one’s promise, that is, loyalty to one’s word is one of the fundamental principles of individual and social life. The peace of society is based on people being trustworthy and on their keeping their word. Without this characteristic, the reform of neither religion nor the world can be considered.



The following verses touch especially on the characteristic of trustworthiness of the prophets:

‘[I am] transmitting my Lord’s Message to you, and I am a faithful counsellor to you’. (Al-a’raf, 7:68).

‘I am a faithful Messenger to you’. (Al-Shu’ara, 26:107)⁹⁸

These beautiful characteristics are also a sign of the community of Muhammad. Because the Prophet was known for being and addressed as ‘the trustworthy one,’ even before his call to prophethood began.

Aside from trustworthiness, keeping one’s word is another important characteristic. Almighty Allah commands that the promises one makes be kept:

‘You who have faith! Be true to your covenants’ (Al-Maida, 5:1)

‘...And be true to every promise – for, verily, [on Judgement Day], you will be called to account for every promise which you have made’ (Isra, 17:34)

Almighty Allah also expresses the characteristics of a believer who has attained to salvation as follows:

‘Those who honour their trusts and their contracts’ (Al-Mu’minuun, 23:8)

Let us never forget that the promises and all manner of contracts made to, and with, people are also promises made to Allah. One must definitely abide by the agreements one makes before Allah and keep one’s promise meticulously.

Almighty Allah praises and honours Prophet Ibrahim as:

‘...and of Ibrahim, who paid his dues in full’ (Al-Najm, 53:37)

The Prophet Muhammad gave the following good tidings to trustworthy and honest merchants:

“The merchant who speaks the truth, is honest and trustworthy will be next to the Prophets, the righteous and the martyrs on the Day of Judgement” (Tirmidhi, Buyu 4/1209; Ibn Majah, Tijarah, 1).

In contrast to this, there are severe dire warnings to those people who are not trustworthy and do not keep their word. For example the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“The one who has no sense of trust also has no faith” (Ahmad, III, 135).



It is a sign of weakness of faith, loss of one’s dignity, and loss of Islamic sensitivity, if a person does not instil a sense of trust to those around him/her. The person is merely a believer in name only, having had the essence of his worship emptied, and having nothing left but an ostentatious and insincere appearance. Umar ﷺ informs us of this in a nice way:

*“Do not look at the prayer that a person prays or the fast that he fasts. Listen to see if when he speaks, he speaks the truth, and when something is entrusted to him he does not betray the trust, and whether he inclines towards the world and does not care about the lawful and unlawful”*⁹⁹

When this state of betraying trust and not keeping one’s word is not treated, it can lead as far as the worst of all traits which is hypocrisy. The Prophet ﷺ has said:

“There are four characteristics, which if they are found in a person, then he is a complete hypocrite. If he has one of these characteristics, then he has some hypocrisy: 1. He betrays a trust that has been entrusted to him; 2. When he speaks, he lies; 3. He turns back from his word, having given it; 4. He oversteps the limits in being hostile and he does wrong” (Bukhari, Iman 24; Mezalim 17; Muslim Iman 106).

Almighty Allah has said: *“On the Day of Judgement I will be the enemy of these three groups of people: 1. The one who swears by My name and then breaks his promise; 2. The one who sells a free man as a slave and who spends the money; 3. The one who hires an employee but does not pay him after he has had his work done”* (Bukhari, Buyu 106; Ijarah 0).

99. Bayhaki, *Sunan al Kubra*, Daru’l Fikr ts. VI, 2888; Shuab’l Iman, IV, 230, 326)



Thus trustworthiness and keeping one's promise are the signs of the Muslim. A believer's not being trustworthy and breaking his promise is an appalling characteristic that incurs the wrath of Allah and drags one down to the lowest of the low.

Scenes of Virtue

In terms of generosity, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was considered superior by his tribe, and the noblest in lineage and the best in character. He was the one who would attend to the rights of neighbours, and the most superior in terms of forbearance and loyalty. It was he who was the most trustworthy and trusted, and the one who refrained the most from hurting and harming others. He was never known to condemn or blame anybody unjustly, and he was never seen arguing with anybody. Almighty Allah gathered in him all of the beautiful characteristics and qualities such that his clan had seen him worthy of the title '*Al-amin*' (The Trustworthy one).¹⁰⁰

The title of '*Al-Amin*' became like a second name of the Prophet. In fact when he was 25 years old, this was the only name that he was called by.¹⁰¹ During the time of the debate about the Ka'bah, when the Quraysh saw the Prophet coming, they were pleased and cried: "Al-Amin is coming!" They had confidence in him and consulted with him in every affair. Aside from his Blessed Companions, who were ready to sacrifice their lives, their property and their everything for him, his enemies too, who had planned to kill him, were unable to say anything against his trustworthiness.

The polytheists too constantly used the term *Muhammad' al-Amin* and entrusted their valuable belongings to him rather than to their own sympathisers. Even when the Prophet ﷺ was about to migrate to Madina he had in his trust certain belongings of the polytheists. And in spite of their death threats to him, he left Ali in charge of returning them.



100. Ibn Hisham, I, 191; Ibn Sa'd, I, 121

101. Ibn Sa'd, I, 121, 156

One of the events that resulted in the Messenger of Allah being given the titles ‘*Al-Amin*’ and ‘*As Sadik*’ (The Loyal One) is narrated by Abdullah ibn Abi'l Hamsa رضي الله عنه:

“I once went to the market with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ before he became a prophet. I had borrowed some money from him and told him that if he just waited a little while, I would bring the money immediately. I then left but forgot my promise. Three days later I remembered and went back to the place we had agreed to meet. I found him waiting there. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not rebuke me for the mistake I made, but rather said:

“Young man. You have caused me discomfort. I have been waiting here for three days” (Abu Dawud, Adab, 82/4996).

The Prophet was unsurpassed in trustworthiness and keeping his word, however his waiting for three days was not a simple matter of money. What made him go to the trouble of waiting for three days was his great sensitivity when it came to keeping his word.



Huzayfa رضي الله عنه narrates:

“My father Husayl and I had left Mecca and were heading for Madina, when the tribe of Quraysh caught us and said: “You are going to join Muhammad’s ranks”. We told them: “No, we are not going to Madina for that reason, we are going for something else”. After that, they made us promise that we would not join the ranks of Muhammad and participate in battle with him. When we arrived in Madina and told the Messenger of Allah ﷺ what had happened, he said:

“Go. We will keep your promise and ask for help from Allah against them”. This is why I was unable to take part in the Battle of Badr” (Muslim, Jihad, 98).



It was the time of the treaty of Hdaybiya and the articles that were agreed upon were being written down. Just at that point, Abu Jandal, the son of Suhayl ibn Amr, the representative of Quraysh, appeared before the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, having dragged his feet in chains. Abu Jandal رضي الله عنه, was



being tortured because he became Muslim. He had found an opportunity to escape and fled to where the Muslims were. Suhayl insisted that the first person to be sent back was his own son, according to the pact, and he hit Abu Jandal on the face with a stick. Sad at the events that took place, the Prophet repeatedly and insistently requested from Suhayl that Abu Jandal be immune from the pact and be sent to him. However the hard-hearted polytheist would have none of it. Abu Jandal was delivered back to the Quraysh, amongst cries and pleading of the Muslims. Terribly upset he asked:

“Will you send me back and throw me into the same oppressed fire”? The hearts of the Muslim were torn apart, and they began to cry, not being able to bear it. In an effort to try and console him, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to Abu Jandal:

“Abu Jandal. Please be a little bit more patient. Await the reward for this from Allah. Allah will undoubtedly give you expanse and a way out, both for you and the other weak Muslims who have no one to save them. We have made an agreement with this tribe and we have made a promise to them by Allah. And they have promised us by Allah. We cannot break our promise. This would not befit us” (Ahmad, IV, 325; Wakidi, II, 607-8; Ibn Hisham, III, 367; Belazuri, I, 220).



After the treaty of Hdaybiya a Meccan name Abu Basir ؓ, who had become Muslim, also sought refuge in Madina. However, according to the conditions of the treaty, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was forced to send him back to the polytheists. At first Abu Basir ؓ could not understand this act of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and asked him in amazement:

“Will you send me back to a people of idol-worshippers?”

The Prophet quietly consoled him by saying:

“Abu Basir! We cannot break our pact. But if you are patient, Allah Most High will find a peaceful way out for you and for those like you”.

After these words Abu Basir ؓ had nothing more to say and submitted to the will of the Prophet ﷺ. He considered the situation of all of the Muslims and surrendered himself to the polytheists. However, he knew



that it was not to Mecca that he was going but to his own death. Knowing this, he decided to defend himself and attacked those taking him at the first chance. He killed Hunays, one of the two people with him, but the other escaped. Abu Basir then took Hunays' dress, belongings and sword to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said:

“O Messenger of Allah! Take one fifth of these and keep them for yourself”. The Prophet ﷺ replied:

“If I take these I will have broken the pact I made with them. However your situation is different. Your act and the belongings of the man you killed are your responsibility”. (Wakidi, II, 626-7).

Acting with foresight, Abu Basir left Madina a little while later. He settled on the shore of a place between Mecca and Damascus called Îs. A little while later that place was designated neutral and became a place of refuge. Abu Jandal رضي الله عنه, mentioned above, also escaped from his oppressors and went to join Abu Basir. In this way the number of Muslims reached 300. The trade route of the Meccans to Damascus was now threatened. Helpless at these events, the Meccan polytheists requested that the Prophet remove the relevant article of the treaty. That is, they requested that the Muslims who had escaped from Mecca be accepted in Madina. In this way the article that was the hardest for the Muslims to accept, was now made favourable for them as a result of their keeping their promise.¹⁰²

Thus the loyalty of the Prophet ﷺ to his word was a source of mercy and blessings for all of the Muslims.



One morning, during the conquer of Hayber, Yasser, who made his livelihood by shepherding sheep belonging to one of the leading Jews, was herding his sheep outside the fortress, when he encountered the Prophet.

After conversing for a short period, Yasser accepted Islam. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ changed his name to ‘Aslam’. Later, Aslam رضي الله عنه asked the Prophet ﷺ what he was to do with the sheep he was herding. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied:

102. See Bukhari, Surut, 15; Ibn Hisham, III, 372



“Turn them around and head them back. Have no doubt that they will return to their owner”. Aslam ﷺ took a handful of pebbles and threw them at the sheep saying:

“Go back to your owner! By Allah I will never be with you from this moment on”.

The sheep went off together, and entered the fortress as if someone was leading them. As soon as he became Muslim, Aslam joined the battle, and was martyred a little while later.¹⁰³

Even at a time of battle, when provisions were scarce, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent back sheep belonging to the enemy which had come to his very feet. The shepherd too, did not betray the property of the owner with whom he had a contract. And this is only fitting for a ‘trustworthy’ Prophet ﷺ and his community of believers.



After Mecca was conquered the Prophet ﷺ sent word to Uthman ibn Talha who had possession of the key to the Ka’bah to bring it. Uthman, fearing that the key would not be returned to him said:

“I am giving this key to you as a trust of Allah” (Wakidi, II, 833; Haysami, VI, 177).

After entering the Ka’bah and praying, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ came out and gave a victory sermon. At the end of his sermon he asked:

“Where is Uthman?” Uthman ibn Talha arose. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ then recited the following verse:

‘Allah commands you to return to their owners the things you hold on trust and, when you judge between people, to judge with justice. How excellent is what Allah exhorts you to do! Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing’ (Al-Nisa, 4:58)

After that he said:

“O sons of Abu Talha. Take this trust of Allah promising to keep it with you always and to act with honesty. Nobody can take it from you as long as

you do not become oppressors. Today is a day of goodness and keeping one's word". He then gave the key back to Uthman ibn Talha. (Ibn Hisham, IV, 31-32; Wakidi, II, 837-838; Ibn Sa'd, II, 137).

Many of the leading Companions were hoping that the key to the Ka'bah would be given to them, as they considered it a most noble honour and sacred duty to be able to serve the House of Allah. However the Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave it to the one most worthy of it. Everyone was amazed at this righteousness and in fact some people became Muslim as a result.



Because Mecca was conquered through the path of peace there was nothing taken as booty¹⁰⁴. The Prophet ﷺ asked for a loan of money and armour from the rich men of Mecca in order to meet the most urgent needs of the army of Islam, which had become great in number. He later paid it back with the booty from Khawazin and said:

"The response to borrowing is to give thanks and pay the loan back" (Wakidi, II, 863; Abu Dawud, Buyu, 88/3562: Muwatta, Nikah, 44).

The rich who had given the loans were at first afraid that a victorious commander would take all of their property. However, not long had passed before they were to affirm once that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was definitely 'Al-amin', or the trustworthy one.



When Mûsa ﷺ came to Madyan, he saw a lot of people there watering their animals. Much further to the back were two young girls who were waiting to water their animals, and would not approach until the shepherd had left. After Mûsa helped them, they went to their father and told him what happened and asked that they invite this young man who had helped them. The younger of the daughters said:

'...Hire him, father. The best person to hire is someone strong and trustworthy.' (Al-Qassas, 28:26)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ informs us that:

104. Abu Dawud, Kharaj, 24-25/3023



“...Shuayb رضي الله عنه said to them:

“O my daughter, how do you know that he is strong?”. The young girls answered:

“He took a heavy stone and placed it over the well”. Shuayb then asked:

“Well, then how did you know that he is trustworthy?” His daughter answered:

“When I invited him here in your name he said to me: “Walk behind me and not in front”. From these words of his I gathered that he was trustworthy” (Haysami, VIII, 203-4).



The father of Jabir رضي الله عنه was martyred during the Battle of Uhud and left behind a large family in need and a lot of debt. Jabir explains:

“One day the Prophet ﷺ said to me:

“If alms money arrives from Bahrain I will give you (some of it)”.

However no money came from Bahrain until the death of the Prophet. Later when it did arrive, Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه said:

“If there is anybody whom the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has made a promise or who has a debt to be collected let him approach us”.

Later I entered his presence and said:

“The Prophet ﷺ said ‘such and such’ to me.” Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه dug his hand into the money from the booty and took out a handful. When he counted it, I saw that it amounted to 500 dinars. Then Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه said to me:

“Take two more handfuls like these”. (Bukhari, Kafalet, 3)

Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه carried out the promise made by the Prophet ﷺ and thereby demonstrated his faithfulness in keeping his word.



Anas رضي الله عنه narrates: “My uncle Anas ibn Nadr did not participate in the Battle of Badr and this weighed heavily upon him. He said to the Prophet ﷺ:

“O Messenger of Allah! I was not present at the first battle you made with the polytheists. If Allah Most High allows me to join in another battle with them, then He will definitely see what I will do”.

When the Battle of Uhud consequently took place, he was there. When the Muslims abandoned their ranks he said, indicating his friends: “O my Lord, I apologise to You on behalf of them”, and indicating the polytheists he said: “I declare that I distance myself from what they do”. He then moved ahead and came across Sa’d ibn Muadh رضي الله عنه to whom he said:

“O Sa’d! What I desire is Paradise. I swear by the Lord of the Ka’bah that I can smell the scent of Paradise by the skirt of Mount Uhud”.

Later when Sa’d related this story he said:

“I could not do what he did, o Messenger of Allah”.

We found my uncle martyred. He had over seventy wounds from swords, bayonets and arrows. The polytheists had cut off his limbs so that no one could recognise him. It was only his sister who was able to identify him by the tips of his fingers. The following verse was revealed in regard to my uncle and others like him:

‘Among the believers there are men who have been true to the contract they made with Allah. Some of them have fulfilled their pact by death (by fighting and being martyred) and some are still waiting to do so, not having changed in any way at all’ (Al-Ahzab, 33:23) (Bukhari, Jihad 12).



Bara ibn Ma’rur رضي الله عنه was one of the twelve representatives at the Treaty of Aqaba. Bara had promised the Prophet that he would go to Mecca during the season of Hajj. However, when it came time for the pilgrimage he fell ill and was on his death-bed. He said to his family:

“Turn me to the direction of the Ka’bah as a way of fulfilling my promise to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. I told him that I would come”. In this way he became the first to turn to the Ka’bah while both still living and after he died.

When the Prophet ﷺ arrived back in Madina, he went to the grave of Bara ibn Ma’rur رضي الله عنه together with his Companions. They stood in rows and he led the funeral prayer over him, praying:



“O Allah! Forgive him. Have mercy on him and be pleased with him”.
(Ibn Abdilber, I, 153; Ibn Sa’d, III, 619-20).



Hanesh رضي الله عنه has said:

“I saw Ali while he was in the process of sacrificing two rams and I asked him:

“Why are you doing that?”. He replied:

“The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم told me to sacrifice an animal for him after his death. I am carrying out his wish. And I will continue to do so” .



The Caliph, Muawiya ibn Abu Sufyan, had made a peace treaty with the Byzantines. Before the period of the treaty was completed, Muawiya set off with his army for the Byzantine lands. He was going to wait at a nearby location and then fight against them when the period was completed. As the army headed for Byzantine, a man on a horse was seen. The man cried out:

“Allahu Akbar, Allahu akbar! Promises must be kept and there can be no turning back from one’s word”

When they looked carefully they could see that it was Amr ibn Adese رضي الله عنه, one of the first Muslims. The Caliph sent a man to him to ask him what he meant. Amr رضي الله عنه explained:

“I heard the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم say: *“Whenever one makes a pact with a tribe of people, let him not break it or renew it until the period is complete or until they have informed the other party of their breaking their pact”*.

Hearing this, Muawiya withdrew with his army. (Abu Dawud, Jihad, 152/2759; Ahmad, IV, 111, 113, 385-6).

Thus we see that there is no difference between a promise being made to a Muslim or a non-Muslim. When a Muslim makes a pact with someone he must keep his word and fulfil his trust.



Amongst the Ottomans, exalted virtues such as bravery, keeping one's word and loyalty had become engraved as exalted virtues and traits and characters that adorned the hearts. These traits had virtually become part of their personality. It was such that in Europe, the words 'turkishness' and 'muslimness' had become synonymous with each other. Consequently it was said:

"To be a Turk means to be a trustworthy person, whose word can be relied upon. It was known that in contrast to other nations, the Ottomans would never falsely swear an oath.

The old French general, Comte de Bonneval, sought refuge in the Ottoman Nation during the reign of Ahmad III. He has the following to say about what he witnessed:

"The Turks show a religious loyalty to the promises they make".

The Swedish ambassador said:

"The Muslim Turks are extremely loyal to their word and their promise. They struggle to not let the name of Allah leave their lips. There is no other proof needed when they make a promise other taking Allah as their witness".

Henri Mathieu, the French author, famous for his animosity to the Turks has the following confession to make:

'To fail to affirm the dignity and morals present in the very nature of the Turks as an unparalleled gem would be a great injustice. They are people who believe it sacred to keep their promise and who accept honesty and uprightness as the foundation of virtue.'



In short, almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

'...He who breaks his pledge only breaks it against himself. But as for he who fulfils the contract he has made with Allah, Allah will pay him an immense reward' (Al-Fath, 48:10).

When a Muslim makes a promise he should take Allah as his witness. Thus each promise he makes to people will be a promise made to Allah. In that case what befalls the believer is to keep one's word, and be a trustworthy and reliable person from whose tongue and hands others are safe.



Allah Most High has informed us that He is the Possessor of all things and that all affairs belong to Him, and that **'Allah will not break His promise'**¹⁰⁵

The Muslim too must keep his promise, having need only make it once and be trustworthy and reliable. That is, he must reflect the 'attributes' of Allah.

Loyalty is a spiritual state that crowns human life at the highest degree and it is a characteristic of the prophets, saints and other people of virtue. In this respect some commentators on the Qur'an have described Islam as being submission and faithfulness to Allah in whatever befalls us, with conviction of the heart and repetition on the tongue.

5. *Sadaqat* (Loyalty and devotion)

One of the most significant traits of the prophets is '*sidq/sadaqat*' which means being honest in word and in essence and being sincere and devoted.

The prophets were in a constant state of propagating loyalty through their states and their words and under divine direction. In describing the characters of some of the prophets, the Holy Qur'an states that **'He was a true man and a Prophet'** (Maryam, 19:41,56).

The Holy Qur'an also states:

'So that Allah might recompense the truthful ones for their sincerity'
(Al-Ahzab 33:24)

In order to acquire such a characteristic one must make efforts to that end. The most important of these is mentioned in the Qur'an:

'You who have faith! Have *taqwa* of Allah and be with the truly sincere' (Al-Tawba, 9:119)

That is, being together with the sincere will allow one to acquire the state of loyalty and be a means of taking on their character. Shaykh Sadi-i

105. Al Bakara 2:80; Al' Imran 3:9; Al Rad 13:31; Hajj 22:47; al Mu'minin 23:27; Al Rum 30:6; al Sajda 32: 13; Al Zumar 39:20; al Qaf 50:29



Shirazi expresses the virtues of being together with the true ones and the opposite, that is, the end affair of parting from them as follows:

‘Qitmir, the dog of the Companions of the Cave acquired a truly noble state as a result of being with the sincere ones and as a result his name was mentioned in the Qur’an¹⁰⁶. On the other hand, the wives of Nûh and Lot will be subject to Hellfire because they chose to be together with the sinners¹⁰⁷’.

On the Day of Judgement, when people will be in the most need and when no one will be able to benefit another, loyalty will be a very valuable asset. Those who assumed that trait in this world will have their true recompense there, and at the time of their greatest need, they will attain to peace with the help of this loyalty. Allah Most High describes that day as follows: **‘This is the Day when the sincerity of the sincere will benefit them’** (al-Maida, 5:119)

In another verse Allah says about that day: **‘Allah has prepared forgiveness for them (men and women who are truthful) and an immense reward.’** (Al-Ahzab, 33:35)

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ expresses the importance of truthfulness as follows:

‘*Sidq* (truthfulness) leads one to goodness and goodness leads one to Paradise. If a person continues to tell the truth he will become one of the *siddiqun* (the truthful ones). Deceit leads one to sin and sin leads one to Hellfire. If a person continues to lie, Allah writes him down in the register of ‘liars’. (Bukhari, Adab, 69; Muslim, Birr, 103-5)



Scenes of Virtue

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was the peak of truthfulness. Even his staunchest enemies, like Abu Jahl, Ahnes ibn Sharik, Nadr ibn Haris and

106. See al Kahf chapter 18. In addition, the commentator Bursevi says that dog of the Companions of the Cave will be one of the limited number of animals that will go to Paradise, due to his being together with the true ones.

107. See al Tahrim, 66:10



Abu Sufyan (who later became Muslim) had to admit this about him¹⁰⁸. Allah's Messenger ﷺ never once spoke an untrue word, and even managed to speak truthfully and honestly whilst joking.



Before Abu Sufyan became Muslim, he was one of the leading enemies against Islam. One time, when he had gone for trade someplace he had a long conversation with the Byzantine King Heraclius. Abu Sufyan has narrated that conversation as follows:

“Heraclius said to me:

“Had you ever accused him of being a liar before his claim to be a prophet?”

I replied: “No”.

“Was it ever the case that he did not keep his word?” he asked.

I replied:

“No. He would definitely keep his word but now we are in the process of a treaty with him. We do not know what he will do in this period of time”. I could find no other words other than this to defile him.

Heraclius asked me once more:

“What does he command of you?”

“Only that we be a servant of Allah, that we perform the prayer, pay alms, give to charity, live with honour and keep the ties with our relatives”. Then Heraclius said:

“If what you say is true, then before long, that man will rule over the land that I am now standing on” (Bukhari, Badu al-Wahy, 6; Muslim, Jihad 74).



The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has said:

“Promise me these six things and I will guarantee you Paradise:

108. Bukhari, Badu al-Wahy 6; Muslim, Jihad, 74; Taberi, Tafsir VII, 240; Ibn Kathir, Al Bidaya III, 113)

1. *When you speak, speak the truth!*
2. *When you make a promise, keep it*
3. *Be trustworthy when you have been entrusted with something.*
4. *Protect your honour*
5. *Preserve your eyes from looking at the forbidden.*
6. *Keep your hands away from forbidden things” (Ahmad, V, 323)*



Abdullah ibn Amir  narrates:

“One day my mother called me while the Messenger of Allah  was sitting in our house. My mother said to me:

“Come let me give you something”. The Messenger of Allah  replied:

“*What are you thinking of giving him?*”

My mother replied:

“I wanted to give him a date.” The Messenger of Allah  then said:

“*Know that if you had not given him anything, then the sin of lying would have been written down for you”*. (Abu Dawud, Adab, 80/4991; Ahmad, III, 447)



One day the Messenger of Allah  approached a seller in the marketplace. He placed his hand into the pile of wheat and noticed that it was wet. He asked the seller:

“*What is this?*”. The man replied:

“O Messenger of Allah! It got wet from the rain”. The Prophet then said:

“*Could you not have put the wet parts on the top so that people could have seen them. The one who deceives is not one of us”*. (Muslim, Iman, 164).

Consequently Muslims must never, under any circumstances, and in all states and acts, depart from the direction of honesty and deceive anybody.



The Blessed Companions and those righteous believers who followed in their path would, if need be, travel for a month under the difficulties of that time in order to gather a *hadith* from a narrator of *hadith*. Having been trained by the Prophet ﷺ, they had reached such a state of virtue that when they saw a person trying to trick his animal into coming towards him by showing him an empty bag of food, they lost trust in that person and did not consider them to be of reputable character. That is, they did not consider such a person who can trick and deceive even an animal, as worthy of transmitting *hadith* because they did not live as required by those same traditions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.



Imam Malik (may Allah have mercy on him) narrates:

“As he told me, one day Luqman Hekim was asked:

“What is the essence of the virtues and merits that we see in you?”

He replied:

“Honesty, carrying out a trust, abandoning that which does not concern me, and being true to my word” (Muwatta, Kalam, 17).



When the Prophet ﷺ was about to inform the polytheists of the events that took place on the Night Journey and the Night of the Ascension, he said to Gabriel:

“O Gabriel! My people will not believe in me”.

Gabriel ﷺ replied:

“Abu Bakr will confirm what you say. He is as-Siddiq”. (Ibn Sa’d, I, 215).

As a result when the polytheists heard about the events of the Ascension, they went straight to Abu Bakr ﷺ and said:

“Your friend says that in one night he went to the Mosque of Aqsa and then from there he rose to the heavens and returned to Mecca before the morning. What do you have to say about that?”

In a show of true loyalty of faith to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, Abu Bakr ﷺ replied with great enthusiasm:



“If that is what he says, then it is true. Because there is no way and no possibility that he would lie. I believe from the start everything that he says and brings...”

The polytheists asked him once more:

“Do you believe what he says... that he went to Baytu’l Maqdis in one night?”

“Yes. What is there to be amazed about? By Allah he tells me that whatever time of the day it is, news comes to him from Allah and I believe him”.

Later Abu Bakr  went to the Ka’bah where the Prophet  was sitting. He listened to the events told from the mouth of the Prophet himself and then said:

“You have spoken the truth o Messenger of Allah”.

Allah’s Messenger  smiled with a smile that lit up the world as a sign that he was very pleased with this sign of confirmation by Abu Bakr  and said to him:

“O Abu Bakr! You are the Siddiq (truthful one)” (Ibn Hisham, II, 5).

From that day on, Abu Bakr  became famous for his nickname of *Siddiq*.

This is the loyalty to be found in faith... All that needs to be done is to find the truth and do not depart from it.



The Messenger of Allah  once bought a horse from a Bedouin. The Prophet requested that the Bedouin bring the horse to his home and there he would pay him. He went on ahead of him rather quickly; but because the Bedouin moved slowly he lagged behind. During that time some people came to the Bedouin and began to bargain with him over the horse and offered him a greater price. They did not know that the Prophet had already bought the horse. The Bedouin called out to the Prophet:

“If you are going to take this horse, take it otherwise I am going to sell it”. When Allah’s Messenger heard his voice he turned around and said:



“I already bought it from you”. But the Bedouin began to deny it:

“By Allah I did not sell it to you”.

The Prophet said:

“On the contrary, I bought it from you”.

This time the Bedouin said:

“Call a witness”. Huzayma ibn Thabit ؓ immediately came forth:

“I am witness that you bought it from him” he said

Allah’s Messenger ﷺ bent towards Huzayma ؓ and asked him:

“You were not with us when we made the deal, so how can you be witness?”. Huzayma ؓ then said:

“I can be a witness because I believe in you, O Messenger of Allah”.

As a result of this depth of loyalty, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ considered the witnessing of Huzayma ؓ to be as strong as that of two witnesses. (Abu Dawud, Akdiye, 20/3607; Nasai, Buyu, 91; Ahmad, V, 215-6).

According to this narration the Messenger of Allah ﷺ later asked Huzayma ؓ:

“You were not with us during the transaction. What made you bear witness?”

“I believe in the message that you have brought and so I know that you do not say anything other than the truth”.

Allah’s Messenger ﷺ then said:

“If Huzayma ؓ bears witness against or for someone this will be sufficient for his witnessing is like that of two witnesses.”

This is just one example of the peak of loyalty to Allah and His Messenger...



Ka’b ibn Malik ؓ had accompanied the Messenger of Allah ﷺ on all of his expeditions. However, he was late to join the expedition to Tabuk. The army left and Ka’b ؓ was left in Madina. When the Messenger of Allah

ﷺ returned from his expedition all of those who did not participate put up their excuses but Ka'b ﷺ and a few other of the Companions told the truth and asked for forgiveness from Allah. The verse that informed them of their being forgiven was revealed exactly 50 days later. Before this time they suffered great distress. Despite its expanse, the world became very narrow and constricted for them. But because they repented in all sincerity they became subject to divine forgiveness. Ka'b ibn Malik ﷺ who embraced the truth and admitted his fault explains the benefit he received from his truthfulness as follows:

“I swear by Allah that the greatest favour that Allah bestowed upon me after becoming Muslim was telling the truth before the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and being saved from being destroyed along with the liars. Because Allah Most High informed us about the end-affair of those who did not participate in the expedition to Tabuk and who lied about their reason in the following verse:

They will swear to you by Allah when you return to them so that you may turn aside from them; so do turn aside from them; surely they are unclean and their abode is hell; a recompense for what they earned. They will swear to you that you may be pleased with them; but if you are pleased with them, yet surely Allah is not pleased with the transgressing people. (Al-Tawba, 9:95-96) (Bukhari, Magazi, 79).

After the Battle of Uhud, some of the ladies of Madina went to the outskirts of the city in the hope of receiving some news. Aisha ﷺ was one of these women. She came across a righteous woman called Hind ibnt Amr ﷺ in the region of Harra. Hind had loaded the corpses of her husband Amr ibn Jamuh, her son Hallad and her brother Abdullah who had been martyred in the battle and was leading them back to Madina. Aisha ﷺ asked her:

“What news is back there?”

Hind ibnt Amr ﷺ replied:

“All is well. The Messenger of Allah is alive. As long as he is alive all other misfortunes amount to nothing”. Pointing to the bodies on the camel, Aisha ﷺ asked:



“Who are they?” The righteous woman replied:

“My brother Abdullah, my son Hallad and my husband Amr”.

Aisha رضي الله عنها asked her:

“Where are you taking them?”. Hind replied:

“I am taking them to Madina to bury them”.

When Hind tried to force the camel to move, it collapsed. Aisha رضي الله عنها said to her:

“Is it because of the heavy load upon it?” Hind replied:

“I do not know why it collapsed now. At other times it can carry twice this load. But now I sense something different about this camel”.

When it was forced a bit more the camel rose. But when it was turned to Madina, it collapsed again. However, when it was turned to face Uhud, it began to run. Hind ran back to the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم and informed him of the situation. The Prophet said to her:

“The camel has a task to carry out. Had Amr left a will?”

Hind replied:

“When Amr was about to set off for Uhud he turned to the direction of Mecca, and prayed: “O Allah. Bestow martyrdom upon me. And do not return me to my family in a deprived and hopeless state”.

The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم then said, as an expression of the exaltedness of truthfulness to one’s word:

“This is why the camel will not move. O people of Ansar. Whoever of you makes a promise to Allah, let him be true to it. O Hind, your husband Amr is of the truthful ones. From the moment he was martyred the angels shaded him with their wings and looked around to see where to bury him. O Hind! Amr ibn Jamuh, your son Hallad and your brother Abdullah will be together in Paradise”.

At this good news Hind said:

“O Messenger of Allah. Please pray to Allah that I will be amongst them”. (Wakidi, I, 265-66; Ibn Hajar, Fathu'l Bari, III, 216; Ibn Abdilber, Al-Istiaab, III, 1168).



Before the treaty of Hdaybiya the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had sent Uthman ؓ to Mecca to meet with the Quraysh. Uthman ؓ immediately set off for Mecca as commanded. He explained to the polytheists that their intention was to make the Lesser Pilgrimage and turn back immediately. Despite this, the polytheists refused them permission to do so. Moreover they kept Uthman under supervision and said to him:

“If you wish to do so, you can make *tawaf* of (circumambulate) the Ka'bah”....

The Muslims were longing to make *tawaf* and they yearned for the Ka'bah. In fact there were many who envied Uthman ؓ thinking that he was going to make *tawaf*. Others of them were doubtful. Maybe Uthman would display great loyalty and selflessness and refuse to make *tawaf* unless all of the Muslims were allowed to do so.

The situation turned out to be as the latter group thought. As confirmation of his loyalty, this faithful Companion who had dedicated himself to Allah and His Messenger said to the polytheists: “As long as the Blessed Prophet does not make *tawaf*, I will not either. I will only visit the House of Allah with him in front of me. I will not be in a place where the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is not accepted”... (Ahmad, IV, 324).



Despite being known for his tendency to become enraged, Yavuz Sultan Selim Han also had a very sensitive and delicate soul. However the belief in the importance of the unity and continuity of the empire compelled the Ottoman Sultans to make some very difficult decisions. One example of this is that Yavuz Sultan Selim was compelled to eliminate his brother Korkut. He subsequently appeared at his funeral and carried the coffin himself and said while weeping:

“O my brother! If only you had not done what you did, I would not have had to do what I did”.





He praised Piyale, the loyal servant of Korkut as follows:

“I forgive you because of your loyalty which is a great virtue. And as a reward for your loyalty I am appointing you to whichever position you so wish. You may be my vizier if you wish”.

Piyale thanked him and as further confirmation of his loyalty he responded:

“My Sultan! From now on my duty is to be the guardian of my master Korkut’s tomb...”



In short, the believer must be true to his words, his essence and his intentions and be written amongst the ‘loyal ones’. Thus he will see the benefits of his loyalty both in this world and the next. How beautifully Ziya Pasha has expressed it:

*‘It is loyalty that befits man, even though he may meet with aversion.
For Allah is the helper of all things true’*

6. Acceptance of one’s condition

Both extreme happiness and extreme pain constitute a great trap for the human soul. Accepting one’s condition, on the other hand, and patience and reliance on Allah are the distinguishing characteristics of the believers who have reached a state of perfection.

An unshakeable rule of happiness is that the mind follows revelation, the heart is adorned with beautiful character and one is accepting of the unexpected surprises that occur in one’s life. Once again true happiness is only possible when one accepts the ups and downs of life, when one tolerates the difficulties, and one tries to reform oneself and looks to the good of everything and submits to the Lord of the worlds.

How nice is the following advice of Luqman Hakim:

‘My child! Do not occupy your heart with worries and sadness. Beware of greed. Be accepting of your fate. Be content with what Allah has given you so that your life is made beautiful, your heart is filled with joy and you can receive pleasure from life’.



To be accepting of the manifestations and events that bring one happiness and then to be upset with worrying and saddening events does not comply with the spirit of Islam. Nevertheless, so long as the human being does not reach a peak of spiritual maturity, he will find it very difficult to be free of this human weakness. When, on the other hand, he has purified his soul and reached a state of contentedness, he can submit without hesitation, and be pleased with the rulings of his fate that manifest as a form of divine will, either good or bad. He will never complain. How great is the divine good news about such people:

‘O self at rest and at peace, return to your Lord, well-pleasing and well-pleased! Enter among My slaves! Enter My Garden.’ (Al-Fajr, 89:27-30).

It is easy to do something that one loves or has accepted or to tolerate it. What is easy will be done without hardship, in comfort and with pleasure. For the believer who loves Allah, everything that comes from Him will be easy, and will give pleasure and joy.

Those righteous people who have certain faith will be pleased with the decrees of Allah. They know that no misfortune can befall them that has not been ‘written’ by Allah. This is why everything that happens to them in this world is tiny compared to the pain of the hereafter.

Allah Most High bestows a state of peace on such people. In fact for them, the different manifestations of Allah in their eyes are a thousand times greater than the fleeting dreams and world of mirages. Because they have withdrawn themselves from those things that the common people turn to and consider to be bounties.

The Blessed Prophet ﷺ has said:

“The greatness of one’s reward is according to the intensity of one’s misfortune. Allah allows misfortune to befall those that he loves. Whoever is accepting of what has befallen them, Allah will be pleased with them. And whoever is dissatisfied, will be subject to the wrath of Allah” (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 57/2396; Ibn Majah, Fitan, 23).

In another *hadith* the Prophet ﷺ has said:



“In the eyes of Allah, the believer strong in his faith is better and more pleasing than the believer who is weak in faith. But there is good in both. You should try to obtain what is beneficial for you. Ask for help from Allah and do not show weakness. If something happens to you, do not bemoan and say: ‘If only I had done this, such and such would have happened’ but say instead: ‘This is the decree of Allah. He does whatever He wills’. The phrase ‘If only’ opens the door to the acts that please Satan”. (Muslim, Qadr, 34; Ibn Majah, Muqaddima, 10).

The person who is not content with his situation and says ‘If only I had done such and such’, will become subject to states that are contrary to faith, such as discontentment, objecting to one’s fate, and disliking the will of Allah. And these states please Satan and lead a person to ruin. Being content with one’s state, on the other hand, will allow one to gain the pleasure of Allah. After enumerating all of the happiness in this world and the next, the Qur’an says: **“And Allah’s good pleasure is even greater. That is the great victory”** (Al-Tawba, 9:72).

Scenes of Virtue

Usama ibn Zayd ؓ narrates:

“One day Zainab, the daughter of the Prophet sent news to her father:

“My son is about to die, please come to us”. The Prophet sent back greetings to his daughter saying:

“The one who gives and the one who takes is Allah. Everything has its time. Let her be patient and await her reward from Allah”.

His daughter sent news again:

“Please tell him he must come”.

This time the Messenger of Allah ﷺ arose and went to his daughter’s house, along with some of his Companions, such as Sa’d ibn Ubada ؓ, Muadh ibn Jabal ؓ, Ubayy ibn Ka’b ؓ, and Zayd ibn Thabit ؓ. They gave the child to the Prophet who took him in his arms. The little child was having difficulty breathing. The tears started to flow from the blessed eyes of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Seeing this Sa’d ibn Ubada ؓ asked:

“What is this state of Messenger of Allah?”

Allah’s Messenger replied:

“This is the feeling of compassion which Allah has put into the hearts of those of his servants he wishes. And Allah will only show compassion to those of his servants who are compassionate” (Bukhari, Janaiz, 33, Ayman 9, Merda 9; Muslim, Janaiz 9,11).

The first greeting and advice that the Prophet sent to his daughter were of the nature of being content with one’s fate. The real skill is to be able to be content and submit to one’s fate at the time it occurs despite the pain. The second state of the Prophet, was not, as some of the Companions assumed at first, rebellion against one’s fate by screaming and wailing and tearing one’s clothes which the Prophet forbade, but it was rather a display of the feeling of compassion that Allah has bestowed on his servants.



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has informed us of the reward of the believer who has been content with his fate as follows:

“When a servant’s child dies Allah Most High says to his angels:

“Did you take the soul of my servant’s child?” The angels answer: “Yes, my Lord”. Allah then says:

“Have you broken off the fruit of his/her heart?”

“Yes, our Lord” the angels reply once more. Allah Most High says:

“And what did my servant say?” The angels reply:

“He/She praised you and seeking refuge only in You, said: ‘Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji’uun’... ‘We belong to Allah and to Him we will return’ (Al-Baqara, 2:156).

Then Allah Most High says:

“In that case build a house for my servant in Paradise and name it ‘The House of Praise’ (Tirmidhi, Janaiz, 36/1021).



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has stated:



“When a servant falls ill, Allah sends two of his angels and says to them:

“Go and have a look, what does my servant say to his helpers”.

If, when the angels arrive, the servant is praising Allah, they send this information to Allah, (who knows everything anyway). Allah Most High, who sent His angels merely so that they can be a witness to the deeds of the servant, then says:

“If I take back the soul of my servant, then to put him in Paradise is his right on Me. If I cure him, it is a right on Me to replace his flesh with better flesh, to change his blood with better blood, and to forgive him his sins”
(Muwatta, Ayn, 5).



Abu Huraira رضي الله عنه narrates:

One day the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said to his Companions:

“Who will take these words of mine and teach others to act according to them?”

I immediately jumped up.

“I will o Messenger of Allah”. The Prophet then took me by the hand and said the following five things to me:

“Beware of forbidden things and you will be a worshiping servant of Allah”.

“If you are content with what Allah has set aside for you, then You will be the wealthiest person”.

“Show kindness to your neighbour and you will be a perfect believer”.

“Desire for others what you desire for yourself so that you can become a perfect Muslim”

“Do not laugh too much. Too much laughter kills the heart”. (Tirmidhi, Zud, 2/2305; Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 24).



Allah's Messenger ﷺ was once sitting with Abu Bakr ؓ. Abu Bakr was wearing an old cloak. It was so old that he had fastened the skirt of his cloak to his breast using little pieces of wood.

Just at that point the angel Gabriel appeared. He greeted him with the greeting of peace from Allah and said:

“O Messenger of Allah! What is this state of Abu Bakr? He is wearing an old dress and he has fastened the ends with wooden sticks?”

The Prophet replied:

“O Gabriel! He spent everything he had on the religion of Allah before the conquest of Mecca, this is why he is in this state”. Then Gabriel said:

“Give him greetings of peace from Allah Most High. Say to him: ‘Your Lord asks you: Are you pleased with me as a result of this poor and needy state you are in or do you complain about your situation?’”

Allah's Messenger ﷺ turned to his friend and asked:

“O Abu Bakr! Here is Gabriel and he has brought you greetings of peace from Allah Most High. Our Lord wants to know whether you are pleased with your poor and needy state, and thus pleased with Allah, or do you have any complaints?”

Abu Bakr ؓ did not know what to do out of happiness in the face of this divine compliment. He was tongue-tied. He cried and cried for a period and then said:

“Am I to complain of my Lord? I am pleased with my Lord! I am pleased with my Lord! I am pleased with my Lord!” (Abu Nuaym, Hilya, VII, 105; Ibn al-Jawziya, Sifat as-Safwa, I, 249-250).



According to narrations the Prophet Yūnus ؑ once asked the angel Gabriel:

“Can you show me the most worshipping person on the face of the earth?”



Gabriel showed him a man whose hands and feet had rotted from leprosy and who had lost his eye. In spite of all of this, the man kept repeating:

“O Allah! Whatever has been given to me through these hands and feet have only been given to me by You. Whatever you have made distant from me, it is only You that has made them distant. O Allah. You have left only one desire in me and that is only the desire of being reunited with You”



The Prophet Ayyûb (Job) عليه السلام was experiencing the most intense days of his illness. His wife Rahima Hatun said to him:

“You are a prophet. Why do you not ask Allah for health and well-being so that you can be free of this illness?” Ayyub replied:

“How many days did we pass in health and wealth-being?” Rahima Hatun replied:

“80 years”. Ayyûb then said:

“O Rahima! Almighty Allah bestowed upon me 80 years of health. The period of my illness is very little compared to the time of my life which was passed in health. This being the condition, I would feel ashamed to complain to Allah about my situation. We are well-pleased when Allah Most High bestows bounties upon us, so why should we not show patience when misfortunes come from Him? I am pleased with my Lord.”

This attitude of the Prophet Ayyûb is a beautiful example of contentment. Despite all of his misfortune and distress, the Prophet Job refrained from complaining to almighty Allah about his illness and asking for health and well-being so as not to fall into a state of complaint and to refrain from being defective in being pleased with Allah’s decree. However at the insistence of his wife, he eventually prayed:

‘Great harm has afflicted me and You are the Most Merciful of the Merciful’ (Al-Anbiya 21:83)

It was upon this prayer that Allah Most High removed his affliction as a reminder of his mercy to those who are consistent in their servanthood.



He cured him and bestowed upon him wealth and sons once again. In terms of showing forbearance and gratitude, and being content with one's state, almighty Allah compliments the Prophet Ayyûb as follows: **“What an excellent slave’** (Sa'd 38:44)



In the following story Rumi tells of how true love and friendship is possible when one responds with kindness to the pain and harshness one receives from one's friends and by accepting and submitting to the event:

“Some close friends who had come to visit a man brought with them a melon as a gift. The man called his loyal and deeply emotional servant Luqman, whom he loved dearly and who was his confidante.

When Luqman arrived, his master cut a slice of the melon and offered it to Luqman. Luqman ate that slice of melon as if it were honey or sugar. He ate it with such enjoyment and pleasure that the appetites of those who saw him were wetted and they envied him. His master gave him a second slice as he was happy at the pleasure felt by his loyal servant Luqman. At last, there was only one slice of melon left. The master then said:

“Let me eat this slice and see how sweet a melon it is”. However, as soon as he ate the melon, his mouth was burned by the bitter taste of the melon. His tongue immediately developed cold sores and his throat burned. He said to Luqman:

“O my dear servant. How did you eat such poison as if it were the sweetest thing? How could you consider such an unbearable thing to be a bounty? What patience is this? Who knows how much pain you put up with in order to be patient and not sour your face. Are you an enemy to your sweet soul? Why did you not say anything? Why did you not at least say: “Please excuse me I cannot eat right now.”

Luqman replied:

“I have eaten such sweet food from the hands of you, my lord. I have received such rare nourishment, both physical and spiritual, that I have been ashamed at not being able to reciprocate. How can I say about something that you have presented to me with your own hands: “This is bitter and I cannot eat it”. And anyway, all bitterness that is from your



hands is sweet to me. Because each cell in my body has been nourished with your bounties”.

Then Luqman continued expressing his feelings in excitement and with words filled with love:

“My lord. If I ever complain about anything painful that comes to me from you, let dirt be thrown over me. How can your hand, which is always in a state of bestowal, cause pain? It is through love that pain becomes sweet, and copper turns to gold. It is through love that cloudiness and vagueness is resolved and gains clarity. Love allows incurable diseases to be cured. Love brings to life what is dead. Love turns sultans into slaves. Love turns dungeons into rose-gardens. Love illuminates dark houses. It is because of love that fire becomes light. It is because of love that the ugly become like beautiful nymphs. It is through love that worries, anxieties and sadness become joy and happiness. Those who have strayed from the path and brigands become guides of happiness through love. It is because of love that illnesses are transformed into health and well-being. It is through love that great sorrows become mercy”.

This is a most apparent sign of love of Allah and a true state of contentment.



Whenever Umar ibn Abdulaziz  was asked:

“What do you love?” he would answer:

“I love whatever is in my fate. I love the decree of Allah”...



The following conversation between a master and his servant is very telling:

A man once bought a slave. The slave was a pious and righteous believer. When the master took the slave home the following conversation took place between them:

The master said: “What would you like to do in my home?”

The slave replied: “Whatever you tell me to do”



“What sort of clothes would you like to wear?”

“Whatever you give me to wear”.

“In which room would you like to sleep?”

“In whichever room you would like me to”.

“Which of my chores would you like to do?”

“Whichever of your tasks you would like me to do.”

After this last reply, the master reflected for a while and then wiping the tears that fell down his face he said:

“If only I could submit like this to my Lord. Then how happy I would be!...

At that point the slave said:

“O my master. Can the slave carry out his will and choose over the Master?”

The master then said:

“I am setting you free. You are free for the sake of Allah. However I would like it if you stayed with me, so that I can serve you with my life and my property”...

Whoever knows Allah in reality will submit to Him with true love, and if he is content with the state decreed by Him, he will forego his willpower and his freedom to choose. He will only say:

“Who am I to ask for anything from Allah”...¹⁰⁹



One day one of the friends of Allah, Sunbul Sinan Efendi asked his followers:

“Just imagine that almighty Allah gave the reigns of the administration of this universe to you, what would you do?”

His students were shocked at this question that they had never come across before. However they did not want to be impolite in not replying so they put forward their various opinions:

109. Abdulqadir Gaylani, "Al Fathu al-Rabbani". Istanbul 1987, pg 421)



“Master, I would not leave one unbeliever living on the face of the earth”

“I would eradicate all evil”.

“I would destroy all those who drank alcohol”.

One of them however was silent and did not reply at all. His master noticed him and looked at him asking:

“My child. And what would you do?”

The student blushed due to his manners and in great humility said:

“My master. Is there a flaw in Allah Most High’s administration of this universe that would require me to do anything different? The divine order in the universe continues to flow in a manner beyond my comprehension. How on earth could I, with this incapable, limited, and narrow mind and will have the audacity to say: “I would change such and such and I would do such and such”... then he lowered his eyes out of his embarrassment.

His Master was, however, very pleased at this knowledgeable answer. Looking over his student with a smiling and radiant face he said to him:

“Now the matter is settled and has found its centre.”

From then on, this student was known as “Merkez efendi” (Master of the Centre) and his real name of Musa Muslihiddin was forgotten.



In short, being content with one’s state is a manifestation of one’s love for Allah and trust in Him. Being content with whatever Allah gives is an elevated state that only those slaves who have been freed from jealousy and greed, and have attained to knowledge of Allah can attain to.

Allah Most High knows what is best for his slave, more so than the slave does himself. This is why the safest path is to be content with the divine decree and to show gratitude in all situations. Almighty Allah gives the following warning:

‘It may be that you hate something when it is good for you and it may be that you love something when it is bad for you. And Allah knows and you do not know.’ (Al-Baqara, 2:216)



7. *Tawakkul* and Submission

Tawakkul means to rely upon another, to appoint a trustee and to put one's trust in that trustee.

One of the beautiful names of Allah is '*Al-Wakeel*'. This name has the meanings of 'the one who takes care of matters which have been referred to Him, (in a most suitable way), and the One who takes care of affairs in the best way, the One who is relied upon, and the One who controls and who rules over everything'.

It is a must that the sole Source to be relied upon in all matters is the immortal, everlasting Absolute One of Power. It would be meaningless to trust somebody who is in fact the opposite. Almighty Allah says in the Qur'an:

'Put your trust in the Living who does not die and glorify Him with praise' (Al-Furqan, 25:58)

Allah Most High desires that we, His servants, rely upon Him only. He says in the Qur'an:

'So let the believers put their trust in Allah'. (Ibrahim, 14:11)

'Whoever puts his trust in Allah – He will be enough for him' (al-Talaq, 65:3)

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has said:

"If you were able to rely on Allah properly, you would be provided for just like birds who leave their nests hungry and return full" (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 33/2344; Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 14).

When it comes to submission, this has the meaning of acquiescence and acceptance of whatever events befall one without objection and thus arriving at peace. Submission is an act of the heart, and it is to be free of any doubts that arise in matters that have come from Allah. It is to be free of carnal desires that are contrary to divine commands, desires that are not compatible with sincerity, and the curse of resisting divine decree and Islamic law. It is stated in a verse from the Qur'an:

'No, by your Lord, they are not believers until they make you their judge in the disputes that break out between them, and then find no

resistance within themselves to what you decide and submit themselves completely.’ (An Nisa, 4:65)

The word ‘*teslimiyet*’ or *submission* has the same root as the word ‘*islam*’. This is why to truly live Islam and to be a true servant of Allah is only possible through submission. This is because Allah (exalted and glorified be He) is not pleased when His servant yields to any other than Him.

Submission is an act of obedience based on love. It was through the blessings of this obedience and submission that nothing – not his life, his property or his son- could hinder the Prophet Ibrahîm (Abraham) عليه السلام from the path of his exalted Lord. Thus his act of worship, of which the pilgrimage is the best symbol for his reliance and submission to his Lord, will continue until the end of time. The tongue of Ibrahîm was an interpreter of what was in his heart and he would constantly pray:

‘I am a Muslim who has submitted to the Lord of all the worlds.’ (Al-Baqara, 2:131)

The aim of *tasawwuf*, which takes love as its foundation and which is the essence of Islam, is the establishment of feelings of submission and contentedness with Allah by allowing the servant to live under divine guidance and move closer to Allah with every breath. The effects and deceits of the soul that arise from the thousand and one worries, anxieties and pains that are rife in this fleeting world, will only begin to abate as a result of contentment and submission to Allah. How beautifully Ibrahim Hakki Erzurumi puts it:

Rely upon Allah

Submit and find peace

Be content with all His affairs

And let us see what Allah has in store

For whatever it is, it will be for the best

Scenes of Virtue

Once a Bedouin came to the Prophet ﷺ and asked him:

“O Messenger of Allah! Shall I tie my camel and then trust in Allah or should I trust in Allah without tying my camel?”

The Prophet ﷺ replied:

“Tie your camel first, and then trust in Allah”. (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 60/2517).



According to reports by Ummu Seleme ؓ, whenever the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would leave the house he would always make sure to turn his face to the heavens and say the following prayer:

“In the name of Allah! I put my trust in Allah. O Allah, I seek refuge in You that I should stray or be led astray, that I should slip, or be made to slip, that I should oppress or that I be oppressed, and that I should show ignorance or be subject to others ignorance” (Abu Dawud, Adab, 102-3/5094; Tirmidhi, Deavat 35).



Once during an expedition when they had come to a valley with lots of trees at noon, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ let his army rest and so his soldiers dispersed in order to rest in the shade. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ too took shade under a tree called *Semure*, which had dense foliage, having hung his sword on the tree.

The rest of this event is narrated by Jabir ؓ:

“We had slept for a little while when we heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ call us and we ran to him straight away. We saw a Bedouin next to him. The Prophet said:

“Whilst I was sleeping this Bedouin took my sword. When I woke he had taken the sword out of its sheath and was holding it in his hand. He said to me:

“Who will save you from me now?” I repeated three times:

“Allah”. (Bukhari, Jihad, 84, 87; Muslim, Fadail, 13).

Though the Prophet had come face to face with death he did not feel any fear due to his reliance upon Allah and he was able to say very confidently: “Allah will save me”. Hearing these words the sword fell from the hand of the Bedouin and he surrendered. The Prophet ﷺ did not punish this Bedouin who had intended to kill him, but rather told him about Islam and suggested that he become Muslim. The Bedouin, who practically



melted at this sublime act could not help but tell his tribe when he returned to them:

“I am coming from the best of people”. (Ibn Kathir, al-Bidaya, IV, 87).



Abu Bakr as Siddiq رضي الله عنه narrates:

“While we were in the cave with the Messenger of Allah, on our journey to migrate to Madina, I saw the feet of the polytheists walking above us and I said to the Messenger of Allah:

“O Messenger of Allah. If one of them kneels down and looks he will certainly see us”.

The Messenger of Allah replied:

“*O Abu Bakr, what do you think of two when their third is Allah.*” (Bukhari, Tafsir, 9/9; Muslim, Fadail as-Sahaba, 1).



Ismet ibn Malik رضي الله عنه relates:

We used to keep watch over the Messenger of Allah throughout the night until the following verse was revealed:

‘...Allah will protect you from people’ (Al-Maida, 5:67)

(Suyuti, Lubabu'n Nukul, I, 148)

Aisha رضي الله عنها narrates:

“One night the Messenger of Allah could not sleep. I asked him:

“What is the matter o Messenger of Allah?” He answered:

“Is there not a righteous man who will keep watch over us this night?”

While we were talking so, we heard the sound of swords outside. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“*Who is it?*” A voice replied:

“It is Sa'd and Huzayfa o Messenger of Allah. We have come to keep watch over you. After that the Messenger of Allah fell asleep. In fact I could hear the sound of his regular breathing. Upon this the verse: **‘Allah will**



protect you from the people' was revealed. The Prophet poked his head outside of the tent and said:

"People you may go. Allah is now keeping watch over me".¹¹⁰

The Prophet would take his precautions and then put his trust in Allah. After almighty Allah had promised to protect and guard him, he no longer felt any anxiety and fully put his trust in Allah.



According to a narration by Abu Said Al-Hudri , a man once came to the Messenger of Allah  and told him that his brother was suffering from a stomach ache. The Prophet said:

"Give him a syrup of honey to drink"

The man did what he said. A little while later he came back and said:

"I gave him the honey to drink but it did nothing but make him worse". The man went back and forth in this way three times. At last the Prophet told him:

"Truly Allah speaks the truth and the stomach of your brother lies". Then when the man gave his brother honey syrup to drink once more, he was cured. (Bukhari, Tibb, 4; Muslim, Salam 91).

With these words the Messenger of Allah  pointed to the truth expressed in the verse: **'Verily honey contains healing for mankind'** (Al-Nahl, 16:69), and proposed reliance upon and submission to Allah. Later the Companion was healed after doing the same.



According to a narration by Abdullah ibn Abbas, the following words were said by Ibrahim when he was put into the fire. And the Prophet Muhammad spoke these words when it was said that the polytheists had gathered against him and to beware. Upon this the believers' faith increased and they said all together: **"Allah is enough for us and the Best**

110. Wahidi, "Esbabu' Nuzul'I Qur'an," thk: Kemal Besyuni Zaglul, Beirut 1990, p 204-5



of Guardians’ (Al’i-Imran, 3:173). Thus they displayed great submission to Allah.¹¹¹

Almighty Allah praises the Muslims, the people of reliance upon on Allah as follows:

‘...those to whom people said, ‘The people have gathered against you, so fear them.’ But that merely increased their faith and they said, ‘Allah is enough for us and the Best of Guardians. So they returned with blessings and bounty from Allah and no evil touched them. They pursued the pleasure of Allah. Allah’s favour is indeed immense.’ (Al’i Imran, 3:173-174). (Wahidi, p 135).



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ informed us that almighty Allah would preserve and protect those who relied upon him both in this world and the next and that they would enter Paradise without account and without punishment:

“Past nations have been shown to me. I saw a prophet with a small group of three or five people. I saw another prophet with two people with him. And I saw a prophet with no one beside him. At that point a great crowd appeared before me. I thought it was my own community. They told me: ‘This is the community of Mûsa, look upon the horizon’. I looked and I saw a dark mass. ‘This is your community. There are 70 thousand people amongst them who will enter Paradise without being taken to account and without being punished”, they said.

Ibn Abbas ؓ said:

‘At this point, the Messenger of Allah rose and went home. The Companions who were there began to discuss who these 70 thousand people could be. Some of them said: ‘they must be those who were in conversation with the prophet’, some of them said: ‘they are those who were born after Islam, who never knew polytheism. Others put forward other views. Whilst they were debating this, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ came back. His Companions asked him:

“We are discussing who it is that will enter paradise without account or punishment”. The Prophet then said:

“They are those who did not cast spells, nor had them cast, who did not believe in bad luck, and who rely upon their Lord”.

Hearing this, Ukkasha ibn Mihsan  jumped up and said:

“Please pray for me that I be included in that group o Messenger of Allah”.

The Prophet then said:

“You are of them”... (Muslim, Iman, 374; Bukhari, Rikak, 50).



Almighty Allah tested the Prophet Ibrahîm, his son Ishmael and his wife Hajar so greatly that they have been recorded in history as models of submission. As a reward, almighty Allah made the Greater and Lesser Pilgrimage an eternal sign of the sincerity in their submission.

When Allah befriended Ibrahîm, the angels asked him:

“O our Lord. How can Ibrahîm be a friend to you? He has a soul, property and sons. His heart will incline towards them...” Later they witnessed the following scenes as a lesson and the great trial of Ibrahîm:

When Ibrahîm was about to be catapulted into the fire, the angels became nervous. Some of them asked Allah if they could help Ibrahîm. The angels asked Ibrahîm if he had any wishes. He said to them:

“Do not come between friends”.

Later Gabriel asked him:

“Do you need me?”

Ibrahîm replied:

“I have no need of you. Allah is enough for me. And He is the best of Guardians”.

As a result this great submission of the Friend of Allah and his submission to Allah only, made Allah command the fire, before he was even thrown in:





‘...Fire, be coolness and peace for Ibrahîm!’ (Al-Anbiya, 21:69)

With this command the place where Ibrahîm fell turned into a rose garden. And in it a sweet spring began to flow.



The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ narrates:

‘The Prophet Ibrahîm ؑ brought Hagar and her little son Ishmael, who was still nursing, to Mecca...He brought his wife and son to this place and left them there with a bag of dates and a bottle of water for reasons unknown to us but full of much wisdom. When Ibrahîm turned around to leave, Hagar called out to him:

“Ibrahîm! Where are you going, leaving us here in this valley with nobody to talk to or see, and nothing to eat or drink?”

She repeated her question many times, but Ibrahîm remained silent. Then Hagar asked him:

“Was it Allah who commanded you to do this?” This time Ibrahîm answered:

“Yes. Allah has commanded me”. Hagar found consolation with this reply and, in a demonstration of the peak of her submission to Allah, she said:

“In that case Allah will protect us and not let us go to ruin...”

Then she turned around and Ibrahîm went on his way. When he arrived at the location of Seniyye, with no one to see him, he turned his face towards the Ka’bah, raised his hands and prayed:

‘Our Lord! I have settled some of my offspring by Your Sacred House in an uncultivated valley. Our Lord! Let them establish *salat*! Make the hearts of mankind incline towards them and provide them with fruits, so that hopefully they will be thankful’ (Ibrahim, 14:37) (Bukhari, Anbiya 9)



Ishmael had reached the age of playfulness and was at his most lovable stage. However, Ibrahîm was required to sacrifice his son in order to



keep the promise that he had made to Allah. When they had made their preparations they headed off. The angels were again restless:

“A prophet is taking another prophet in order to sacrifice him”, they said.

Ishmael عليه السلام said to his father:

“O my father! Do as you have been commanded. Allah willing you will find me of the patient ones. Sharpen your knife well; let it cut immediately; it will be easier for me to die... and do not look at my face when you hold the knife. Maybe your fatherly compassion will delay you in keeping your promise to Allah. My only sorrow is that you will have to feel the pain of having sacrificed your son with your own hands and you will miss me for the rest of your life...”

While both father and son were in this state of submission, the angel Gabriel came to the rescue. He blunted the knife and let the ram down from paradise that was to be sacrificed instead. (See Taberi, Tarih, I, 275; Ibn Esir, el Kamil, I, 112; Hakim, II, 606/4040).



Almighty Allah tells of the reliance and submission of the Prophet Mûsa as follows:

‘A man came running from the furthest part of the city, saying, ‘Mûsa, the Council are conspiring to kill you, so leave! I am someone who brings you good advice. So he left there fearful and on his guard, saying, ‘My Lord, rescue me from the people of the wrongdoers!’ (Al-Qassas, 28:20-21)

Mûsa thus demonstrated the nature of true reliance upon Allah:

First he consulted, then he made a resolved decision, followed by taking precautions and leaving the result to Allah. In other words, he was in a state of prayer, submission and contentment. This is true reliance upon Allah...



When the people of Yemen used to go to make pilgrimage, they would not take any food with them on the journey, believing that this was reliance upon Allah:

“We are going to visit the House of Allah. Surely He will provide for us”.

When they arrived in Mecca, they would find themselves asking from others. Then the following verse was revealed: “**Take your provision**’ (Al-Baqara, 2:197).

Umar would rebuke those who did not work and put in effort and were lazy and who then said: “We are people who rely upon Allah”. He would say to them: “You are consumers of other people’s property and thus cannot be considered people who rely upon Allah. The one who truly relies upon Allah is the one who plants the seed in the earth and then trusts in Allah”. (Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbali, “Jami al Ulum wa al Hikem” Amman 1990, s 650).



Abu Huraira  relates the following hadith which is very telling:

The Messenger of Allah  told us of the beautiful state of a person from the sons of Israel. That person had asked for a loan of a thousand dinars from another person. The one who was asked for the loan said:

“Bring me your witnesses and I will give you the money in front of them”. The one who was asking for the loan replied:

“Allah is enough of a witness”. The lender then said:

“In that case bring me a guarantor”. The borrower said:

“Allah is enough of a guarantor”. The lender then said:

“You have spoken the truth” and gave him the money for a particular term.

The man then went on a sea trip and met his needs. Then, in order to return and pay the man back in the term that they had agreed upon, he searched for a boat to take him back, but he could not find one. In desperation, he found a wooden plank and carved out its centre. Into the



hole he placed the thousand dinars together with a note addressed to the lender. Then he re-covered the hole and went to the seashore:

“O Allah! You know that I borrowed a thousand dinars from so and so. When he asked me for a witness I told him that “Allah was enough for a witness”. And he was content with You as a witness. And when he asked me for a guarantor, I told him: “Allah is enough as a guarantor”. And he was content with You as his guarantor. Now I have struggled to find a boat, but have not been able to find one. So I am entrusting this to You”. Then he threw the plank of wood into the sea. The wooden plank floated upon the sea and then disappeared from view.

The man then parted from there and continued to search for a boat.

Meanwhile the lender was awaiting a boat to bring back his money. There was no boat but he found the wooden plank which contained his money. He took it to use it in his house. When he sawed it apart he came across the letter and the money.

A little while later, the borrower of the money found a boat and returned to his hometown. Thinking of the possibility that the man did not find the plank with the money, he went to the man, taking a thousand dinars with him.

“I searched continuously for a boat to bring back your money. However I could not find one before the boat that brought me back now”. The lender of the money said to him”

“Did you not send me anything”.

“I told you that I searched for a boat but could not find one”. The lender said:

“Allah Most High paid me back that money in your place and brought it to me in a plank of wood as reward for your sincerity. Consequently the thousand dinars that you have brought now is yours. Now you can return in peace having been reunited with your thousand dinars”. (Bukhari, Kefalet I, Buyu 10).



When Allah is a guarantor of an affair, the seemingly impossible can take place easily. What befalls the servant is to trust in him sincerely and in truth...



According to a narration by Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه, Umar ibn Khattab رضي الله عنه once set off in the direction of Damascus. When he arrived at the place called Serg, he was met by the leading commander of the army, Abu Ubayda ibn Jarrah and his friends in command, who informed him that plague had begun to appear in Damascus. Umar said to Ibn Abbas:

“Call the first Emigrants here’ Umar consulted with them and told them that there was an epidemic of plague in Damascus. They differed as to how to act. Some of them said:

“You came here for a certain purpose; we do not think it is right that you turn back now”. Others said:

“The rest of the Muslims and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ are with you. We do not think it is right that you bring this plague upon yourself”.

Umar said to them:

“You may go”. Then he turned to ibn Abbas and said:

“Call the Helpers here”.

When just like the Emigrants, the Helpers also fell into disagreement, Umar told them that they too could go.

“Now call the elderly Emigrants from the Quraysh who are here and who migrated to Madina before Mecca was conquered”. I went to call them. Not even two of them fell into disagreement and they said:

“We think you should make the people turn back and not take this plague with you”. Upon this, Umar called out to everybody:

“I will be on the back of my mount in the morning. You too do the same”. Abu Ubayda ibn Jarrah رضي الله عنه asked:

“Are you running away from the fate of Allah?” Umar replied:

“Would that someone other than you had said this, o Abu Ubayda!”



Umar did not like to be in opposition to Abu Ubayda.

Then he continued:

“Yes. We are running away *from* the fate of Allah *to* the fate of Allah. What would you say if you had some camels and they went into a valley with two sides, one fertile, the other barren. And you let your camels graze on the fertile land and then you let them graze in the barren land. Would both of these (situations) not be the fate of Allah?”

Just at that point, Abdurrahman ibn Awf  who had disappeared in order to attend to some of their needs, reappeared and said:

“I have some knowledge about this matter. I heard the Messenger of Allah  say:

“If you hear that there is plague in a place, do not enter that place. If the plague breaks out somewhere and you are there, then do not try to run away from the disease and leave” Hearing this, Umar praised Allah and continued on his way, leaving Damascus. (Bukhari, Tibb 30; Muslim, Salam, 98).

This event perfectly demonstrates the concept of reliance and fate in Islam. To knowingly drag yourself and other believers into danger does not confer with true reliance upon Allah. In other words submission allows taking precautions but not putting your trust in them.



Mayyit-zade who lived at the time of Sultan Ahmad I, was a great Ottoman scholar famous for his virtuous character and wisdom. The reason he was given the name ‘Mayyit-zade’ which means ‘son of the dead one’ was because of the following event which befell him as a divine manifestation:

The father of Mayyit-zade was a brave soldier. Like many other heroes, he was called to take part in the Egri Expedition of 1596 carried out by Sultan Mehmed III. But at that time his wife was pregnant and she was due to give birth. However, this heroic father who valued fighting in the path of Allah as superior to all else, made preparations for the expedition and asked his wife to forgive him. He raised his hands courteously to the elevated court of almighty Allah. He petitioned his Lord amidst tears of mercy that had welled up in his eyes:





“O my Lord! I am going to holy war in Your path. I have nobody other than You. My Lord. I entrust this child of mine that is soon to be born to this faithful and long-suffering wife of mine. Please protect him with your grace and favour”

The heroic father then jumped onto his horse and disappeared quickly from view. Through the help and grace of Allah, the Ottoman army was victorious.

On returning home, the heroic father asked his commander for permission to go straight home. But when he arrived at his house there was nobody there. Whereas his wife should have heard of the victory of the army as the news spread all over and she should have been waiting for him. In great curiosity and anxiety he ran to the neighbours to ask about his wife. When his neighbours saw the father they look at him sadly and said:

“O brave one. May Allah bless your victory and make your life bountiful”.

Understanding the meaning behind this sentence, a burning pain stung his heart and he stuttered unwillingly:

“No, it cannot be”. Then he said softly:

“It cannot be. I entrusted my baby to the Lord of the Worlds. He is the Best of Protectors...”

The sorrowful father fell into a deep silence for a period and looked at those around him. Then through inspiration he said:

“Of course Allah is the possessor of mercy and is the best of those to protect and preserve; show me my wife’s grave immediately”.

Together they went to the cemetery. When the grave was shown to him, he placed his ear on the earth of the grave and began to listen. Then he shouted out:

“Yes, I can hear my baby’s cries!”

The grieved father grabbed a spade and shovel and began to dig open the grave. Those who had come with him began to help him, as they too could hear the cries of a baby coming from the grave. When the grave had



been completely dug up, the scene that awaited them was amazing and shocking:

In the grave was a dead mother who had given birth to a lovely little newborn baby, stuck to his mother's chest. The war veteran father immediately grabbed his child and held him tight to his chest. He kissed his rosy cheeks over and over again. Then he wrapped his child up tightly. He read a farewell prayer for his wife and then carefully closed up the grave. All those around were in a state of shock at this miracle and were praising and glorifying Allah with great reverence and awe. With teary eyes, the father prostrated and praised his Lord, both sad at the death of his wife but at the same time joyful because of his child.

This child grew up in an atmosphere of great learning and manners. He became a virtuous scholar, famous throughout the Ottoman lands. He was always known as 'Mayyit-zade' due to what happened to him. He was a blessing of Allah, full of wisdom and caution, and a result of absolute and sincere submission.



In short, peace of heart in this world and attaining to eternal happiness in the hereafter is only possible when one perceives divine greatness and relies and submits to it, and is content with what Allah has allotted for them. Hearts that obey Allah, submit to Him and are pleased with Him become a source of wisdom, goodness and prosperity. Submission to Allah in a perfect sense, and reliance upon and obedience to Him is dependent upon whether one possesses a heart filled with the pleasure of faith. It is only with such love and the resulting raising in rank of the heart that the human being can turn to his Lord with his entire being and free his heart of attachment to the world and what is in it.

The submission of the servant to Allah is proportional to his knowledge of and his faith in Him. In terms of being the essence of servanthood, submission is the most important inclination of the heart to Allah. This inclination begins with faith, and continues to increase as knowledge of Allah increases. Rumi explains the mystery of attaining to the degree of '*fana fillah*' (annihilation or losing oneself in Allah) as lying in absolute submission:



“Seawater carries upon it the head of the dead body who has completely submitted itself to it. How can the one who is alive and has the slightest doubts free itself from the sea? In the same way through the mystery of ‘*die before you die*’, if you die having freed yourself of your human attributes, the ocean of mysteries will lift you up and carry you”.

8. *Ihsan* and the state of being alert

The state of *ihsan* implies the perception and recognition of the believer that he is under continuous divine supervision, that is, that he is under the watchful eye of a type of ‘divine camera’. *Ihsan* is the ascension of the spirits of those who are close to Allah.

The fact that almighty Allah sees every action of His servants and that He will call them to account for them when the time comes is expressed in the following verses from the Qur’an:

‘We will tell them about it with knowledge. We are never absent.’
(Al-Araf, 7:7)

‘Do they not know that Allah knows their secrets and their private talk, and that Allah is the Knower of all unseen things?’ (Al-Tawba, 9:78)

‘(Luqman said to his son:) ‘My son, even if something weighs as little as a mustard-seed and is inside a rock or anywhere else in the heavens or earth, Allah will bring it out. Allah is All-Pervading, All-Aware’.(Luqman, 31:16)

In our daily lives there are many people who refrain from saying and doing the wrong thing when they perceive a pair of eyes watching over them. And this is because of a feeble pair of eyes that cannot even punish him... in the same way, the believer who lives in a state of *ihsan* perceives that Allah sees him and knows everything he thinks, says and does.

Another meaning of *ihsan* is to perform anything one does or to act in the best way one can.

One of the most important matters in preparing for one’s last breath is to establish the feeling of *ihsan* in the heart. That is, to establish a union of the heart with almighty Allah and to feel that one is always under His

watchful supervision. This union of the heart can only be established through much remembrance of Allah.

The second step in attaining to the state of *ihsan* and alertness is to reflect upon the following verses of the Qur'an:

'Allah is with you wherever you are' (Al-Hadid, 57:4)

'...We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.' (Qaf, 50:16)

'Know that Allah intervenes between a man and his heart and that you will be gathered to Him' (Al-anfal, 8:24)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ says on this matter:

'The highest station of faith is to know that Allah is with you wherever you are' (Haysami, I, 60).

There is no doubt that Allah's Messenger ﷺ was in a constant state of *'ihsan'*, day and night, in times of constriction, and in times of ease and comfort, in times of war and in times of peace. His state of constant remembrance of Allah, his prayers and supplications made with each act, his supererogatory worship that he continued to perform, his performing the prayer during the night until his ankles would swell up, his meticulousness in fulfilling other's rights, his distribution of rights and justice at all times and other of his virtues, are strong proofs of his deep consciousness of *ihsan*.

Umar ibn Khattab ؓ narrates the following *hadith* (which is called the *hadith of Gabriel*), which illustrates how they were informed of and taught the state of *ihsan*:

'One day when we were sitting with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ a man appeared wearing the whitest of clothes, and his hair was the blackest of black. He had no indication of being a traveller and none of us knew him. The man sat in front of the Messenger of Allah, placed his knees on his knees and his hands on his own knees and then asked:

"O Muhammad! What is Islam?"

The Prophet answered:



“Islam is to bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, to perform the prayer properly, to pay the alms completely, to fast without fault during the month of Ramadhan and to visit the Ka’bah if one is able to”.

The man said:

“You have spoken the truth”.

We thought it strange that he asked the question and then confirmed the answer. This time the man asked:

“And what is *iman* (faith)?”

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ answered:

“It is to believe in Allah, in His angels, in His books, in the prophets and in the last day. It is to believe in fate and the good and evil of it”.

“You have spoken the truth” said the man again.

“In that case, what is *ihsan*?” he asked.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied:

“Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him. Even though you do not see Him, He sees you”.

The man repeated:

“You have spoken the truth”. Then he asked:

“When will the day of judgement take place?” The Messenger of Allah answered:

“The one asked has no more knowledge about this matter than the one who asks”. The man then asked:

“In that case, what are its signs?” The Prophet replied:

That the slave-girl will give birth to her mistress and master, that you will find barefooted, destitute goat-herds vying with one another in the construction of magnificent buildings.”¹¹².

112. This is how this hadith (the maidservant will give birth to her master or lady) has been interpreted, namely that mothers will give birth to rebellious children who will treat them like their slaves. On the matter of barefoot, bare-headed shepherds who will build tall and

The man then left silently. I stood like that there for a while. Then the Prophet said to me:

“O Umar. Do you know who it was that asked these questions just now?” I replied:

“Allah and His Messenger know best”.

He replied:

“*It was Gabriel. He came to teach you your religion*” (Muslim, Iman, 1,5 Bukhari, Iman 37 Tirmidhi, Iman, 4; Abu Dawud, Sunan 16).



Our scholars have said that this *hadith* is the essence of the *sunnah*. Thus reaching perfection in one’s Islam and one’s faith is dependent on reaching the state of *ihsan*. The religion of the believer who has not reached the state of *ihsan* is thus lacking. Such faith is like a fruitless tree that is unable to continue its existence. There is a strong possibility that it will soon dry up.

This *hadith* also most evidently indicates that *tasawwuf*, which is at the heart of faith and Islam, and cannot be considered anything different from them, aims to establish the state of *ihsan* in the heart of the believer.

In actual fact the greatest joy for the slave of Allah is for him to be together with his Lord. The Creator of the entire universe desires to be with his slave at every instant and as an indication of this, He says in the Qur’an:

‘Those who remember Allah, standing, sitting and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: ‘Our Lord, You have not created this for nothing. Glory be to You! So safeguard us from the punishment of the Fire.’ (Al’i Imran, 3:191)

On the other hand, a mind that is not connected to the heart and that has succumbed to the desires of its *nafs* will be incapable of perceiving the

perfect buildings, it is an indication of the increase in luxury and wealth, and people who used to be poor becoming rich enough to vie with each other to build huge and luxurious buildings. The world will present all of its wealth to mankind and money and wealth will become the only measurement of worth or value and people will become obsessed with consuming and displaying their wealth.



pleasure to be found in togetherness with almighty Allah. That is, it is ignorant of the greatest virtue and happiness.

To be able to receive pleasure and joy from worship, and not to tire from it is only possible through the feeling of *ihsan*. The one who does not feel this *ihsan* in his heart will quickly tire of prayer and it will become exhausting for him. If he is rich he will refrain from giving alms and charity and spending for the needy out of his wealth. Because he has distanced himself from divine supervision and cannot taste the pleasure of faith. From this respect it can be said that the prayer that is prayed in the proper manner, the charity that is given from the heart, the fasting that is done out of love, the pilgrimage that is done with ardour, the sound heart that is between hope and fear, good character and every other virtue is a blessing of the state of *ihsan*.

Scenes of Virtue

Abdullah ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه narrates:

One day I was sitting behind the Messenger of Allah on his camel. He said to me:

“My child. I will give you some advice”. Then he continued:

“Obey Allah’s commands and He will protect you. If you hold the pleasure of Allah above all else, then you will find Allah in front of you. If you ask for something, ask from Allah. If you want help with something, ask Allah for help” (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 59/2516).

And in another narration:

“Beware of Allah’s commands and prohibitions and you will find Allah in front of you. Know Allah by staying bound to His commands while you are in prosperity and He will recognise you (and save you) when you fall into distress...” (Ahmad, I, 307)

These words of our Prophet nicely summarise the essence of the state of *ihsan* and its signs.

One time Abdullah ibn Umar رضي الله عنه had gone to the outskirts of Madina with some of his friends. They prepared a table of food for him. At that point a shepherd appeared and greeted them. Ibn Umar said to him:

“Come shepherd and eat with us”. The shepherd replied:

“I am fasting”. Ibn Umar then said:

“Are you fasting in this intense and suffocating heat? And you are herding sheep as well?”

Later, in order to test the shepherds scrupulousness and *taqwa* he suggested the following:

“Will you not sell us one of the sheep from your herd and we will pay you and give you some of the meat so you can break your fast with it?”

The shepherd replied:

“This is not my herd. They belong to my master”. Ibn Umar then said:

“You can tell him that you lost one. How is your master to know otherwise?” The shepherd averted his head, lifted his finger up to the heavens and said:

“And where is Allah?”

Ibn Umar was left very much moved by the *ihsan* and awareness of this shepherd. He became lost in thought as he reflected on the shepherds words. He kept saying to himself: *The shepherd said: “Where is Allah? The shepherd said: And where is Allah?”*

When he returned to Madina, he sent an envoy to the shepherd’s master and bought both the herd and the shepherd. After setting the shepherd free he also gave him the herd of sheep. (Ibn Asir, Usdu al-Gabe, III, 341).

Thus the beauty of the state of *ihsan* and awareness of Allah and the blessings and reward of this beauty even in this world... Who knows what the reward will be in the afterlife?



As was his habit, Umar رضي الله عنه was once again walking the streets of Madina in the middle of the night. All of a sudden he stopped. He was drawn by the



sounds of an argument coming from one of the houses he was passing by. A mother was saying to her daughter:

“My daughter. Add some water to the milk that we are going to sell tomorrow”

The daughter replied:

“Dearest mother, did not the caliph forbid us to mix our milk with water?”

The mother berated her daughter:

“And how is the caliph to know at this time of night, that we have added water to our milk?”

But it was to no avail. The daughter whose heart was alive with both love and fear of Allah did not accept this deceit of her mother’s.

“Dearest mother! Let us assume that the caliph cannot see us. Can Allah not see us too? It will be easier to hide this deceit from the people, but how is it possible to hide it from Allah, the Creator of the universe, who sees and knows everything...?”

The reply of this daughter to her mother moved Umar to the utmost. This was a girl with a pure conscience and a living heart full of divine truths and a deep fear of Allah. Umar, the Commander of the Believers, arranged for her to be the bride of his son, as he recognised her extraordinary piety, and did not see her as being the mere daughter of an ordinary milk seller. And so it was that the famous Umar ibn Abdulaziz, the fifth Caliph, was born of this pure lineage. (See Ibn Jawzi, *Sifatu as-Safwa*, II, 203-4)

This example is an illustration of how the state of *ihsan* can go beyond the individual to be a means of bounty and virtue for an entire community.



During his caliphate, Umar رضي الله عنه once sent Muadh رضي الله عنه to the tribe of the sons of Kilab. He was to pay whatever necessary money was to be paid from the state treasury, give out whatever property was to be given out and distribute the wealth taken from the rich to the poor and needy.



Muadhth  carried out his duty with the utmost care and, winning hearts, he returned with many sweet anecdotes. When he came back, he had only the scarf around his neck, as a worldly good. This scarf was with him when he went anyway. One time his wife could no longer stand it and she said to him:

“People who take up such a duty take a certain fee, and bring back gifts for their family. Where are your gifts?”

Muadhth replied:

“I was accompanied by an escort wherever I went and this escort never left my side. He accounted for everything I took and gave out”.

His wife got angry:

“The Messenger of Allah  trusted you with everything. So did Abu Bakr. Now Umar came and he sent an escort with you? And he followed you in everything you did?”

These words reached the wife of Umar and from there they reached the ears of Umar  himself. He called Muadhth  and asked him reproachfully:

“What is this I hear o Muadhth? I sent no escort to follow you and yet I hear the opposite? Do you think that I do not trust you?”

The reply of Muadhth was most significant:

“O Commander of the Believers! This was the only excuse I could put forward to my wife. And when I said escort I did not mean your escort. I meant that I was being watched by Allah. I would not wish to lose the reward and I could not take any fee for myself for the duty I carried out, even though there is permission...”

Umar understood what he meant by these words. Muadhth was above taking anything from the world for himself. However, in order to win his heart, Umar gave him a gift from his own possessions and told him:

“Take this and go and please your family”



Another nice example that expresses concisely the state of *ihsan* and awareness of Allah is as follows:



A preacher was once giving his sermon about the hereafter. Amongst the congregation was Shaykh Shibli. The preacher was talking about the questions that Allah would ask in the hereafter:

“It will be asked of you – for what purpose did you use your knowledge? It will be asked of you – where did you spend your wealth? And again how did you spend your life? What is the state of your worship? Were you careful about avoiding the forbidden and only taking from the lawful?” He went on to list all the things that would be asked about.

So much detail was discussed but the heart of the matter was overlooked and so Shaykh Shibli called out to the preacher:

“O preacher. You forgot the most vital of questions. Allah Most High will ask: **O my slave! I was with you at every instant. Who were you with?**”



On the deathbed of one of the friends of Allah, Abu Bakr Kattani (may his spirit be sanctified), he was asked which good deeds he had done during his life. He gave the following beautiful response:

“If I did not know that my death was near I would not speak of my deeds out of fear of ostentation. For a whole forty years I kept watch at the door of my heart. I tried not to open it to any other than Allah. Eventually my heart reached such a state that it was unable to recognise anything other than Allah”.



According to narrations, the prophet Jesus ﷺ once encountered a sick man with piebald skin and with both his temples drawn. The man was virtually unaware of his sickness and kept saying to himself:

“O my Lord! Endless praise and thanks be to you that you have freed me from the worries that befell much of mankind...”

In order to determine the degree of this man’s perception and his spiritual perfection, Jesus asked him:

“O man. Which worry has Allah freed you from?”

The sick man replied:



“O spirit of Allah! The most disastrous of sickness and misfortunes is for the heart to be heedless and deprived of Allah. Thank God that I am in a state of pleasure of being together with Almighty Allah. It is as if I am completely unaware of the sicknesses of my body...”



A rumour was once spread that Shaykh Muhammad Nur al-Arabi, the famous Sufi scholar of the 19th century, denied that the human being had any will, that is, he denied the concept of ‘*juz’i irada*’ or the partial will of man. Hearing of this, Sultan Abdulmajid Han asked that the man be invited to talk with him where he could be asked about this matter. This took place and the Shaykh was invited to talk. When he was asked about the matter at hand, he gave the following reply:

“I did not deny that there was partial will in a general sense. However I said that for certain people it is as if it does not exist. Because for the great friends of Allah who are constantly in the presence of Allah, for them to carry out their own will is virtually impossible, so it is as if they have no partial will at all. These people do not act according to their own will but rather in accordance with the will of almighty Allah whose dominion they are in. In the opposite case they would be acting contrary to manners and would be at fault.

For instance, now we are in the presence of the Sultan. If it is said to us ‘come’, we come, if we are told to ‘go’, we go. It is not possible for us to use our will for our own desires and in opposition to the Sultan’s who has surrounded us. Whereas look around at the heedless ones and other creatures; they are quite free and uninhibited in their will”.

Quite satisfied with this reply, the Sultan showed great hospitality to the Shaykh.

Those unique people of *ihsan* and awareness who live knowing that Allah is ever present and watching over them, will be in a state of submission not to their own will but rather to the divine will in all situations...



In short, the state of *ihsan* and awareness is the essence and jewel of faith. The fruits of knowledge of Allah such as *khushu* (deep reverence),

ikhlas (sincerity) and *taqwa* (piety) amongst other virtues of worship and behaviour are all possible only when one's heart has reached this state. Every righteous deed that is done in a state of 'seeing' Almighty Allah will result in *ikhlas* blossoming, *taqwa* blooming with *khushu* as the fruit. To be on the right path even when people cannot see you, to refrain from sin even where you are far away from the watchful eyes of man, is only possible if one is conscious of the fact that 'Allah sees me everywhere and all the time'. This is why Sufism aims for the heart to reach this degree, in all of its methods and principles. The friends of Allah are seekers of this state for an entire lifetime.

What then befalls us is to raise the degree of our heart to the level of being in a state of consciousness and perception of Allah's continual watchfulness over us. Then it is to measure our character against the most embodied state of *ihsan*, that of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and then to give it direction accordingly. '**...Allah's mercy is close to the good-doers**' (Al-Araf, 7:56).

9. *Tawadhu'* (Humility)

Tawadhu' is to be humble and to be aware of one's nothingness before Allah. A person may have been given knowledge, position and property. However, he must not, as a result, oppress either physically or spiritually others who have been deprived of such things and claim to be superior to them.

The poet has expressed it well:

'Do not be proud of your property and wealth, and do not say 'is there any other like me?

For an adverse wind may come and blow everything away'...

Every instant and every tomorrow belongs to Allah and no one knows what will befall him in the future.

Almighty Allah says in the Qur'an: '**...and spread the wings of thy tenderness over all of the believers who may follow thee**' (Shu'ara, 26:215).

‘The slaves of the All-Merciful are those who walk lightly on the earth and, who, when the ignorant speak to them, say, ‘Peace’ (Furqan, 25:63).

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said:

“Allah has commanded me as follows:

Show such humility that none of you boasts to others and none of you oppresses another” (Muslim, Jannah, 64).

“Whoever shows humility in the face of other of Allah’s servants purely to gain the pleasure of Allah, Allah will raise him in degree” (Ibn Maja, Zuhd, 16)

The prophet Idris عليه السلام would offer advice to his people with wise words. One of these pieces of wisdom is as follows:

“As the degree of the intelligent person rises, so does their humility”.

Yusuf-i Asbat explains how to perfect the state of *tawadhu’*, which is a type of ‘nothingness’, as follows:

*“Whenever you leave your house in the morning look on whoever you come across as being superior to you. *Tawadhu’* is such that you accept a truthful word told to you no matter who it comes from, and that you see those inferior to you as being above you. Let those who disparage you and those who praise you be equal in your eyes...”*

Allah Most High will bestow the bliss of the afterlife on those who did not boast of pomp and grandeur in this world, who did not make mischief nor cause sedition, and whose hearts were filled with the love of Allah. Those who distanced themselves from the blessing of *tawadhu’* and embraced vile traits have not been able to escape becoming a Pharaoh. In that case we need to embrace *tawadhu’* and free ourselves of such contemptible traits.

The Holy Qur’an states:

‘That abode of the afterlife – We grant it to those who do not seek to exalt themselves in the earth or to cause corruption in it. The successful outcome is for those who have *taqwa’*. (Qassas 28:83)

The poet has also expressed it very beautifully:





A seed that has not been planted in the ground cannot develop

(So too) the mercy of the Most Merciful will nourish the one who is humble.¹¹³

The Companions of the Prophet never took advantage of the worldly position and status entrusted to them by Allah and never became disillusioned with pride and arrogance as a sort of superiority. They adopted the humble lifestyle of the Prophet ﷺ and made it a principle in their lives. The city state of Madina was established with approximately four hundred families, but within 10 years its borders had reached Iraq and Palestine. At the time of the death of the Prophet ﷺ, there was a war between the Byzantines and the Persians. Booty was flowing into Madina. However that state of the Companions 10 years ago, that is, their state of disattachment from the world, and their modest lifestyles, the economy of their houses and their enthusiasm for giving out, did not change in the slightest. They were terrified that the pleasure they received from their faith would be harmed and so they were painstakingly careful about not using worldly bounties for their own purposes. This is why they directed their lives towards gaining the pleasure of Allah.

Scenes of Virtue

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who was sent as a mercy to all the worlds and was the reason for the creation of the universe, managed to preserve his state of *tawadhu'* and humility despite possessing most elevated virtues and traits. He would repeat constantly: "La fakhr", or "I do not boast".

One time the Companions were talking amongst themselves. They were expressing their wonder at how Allah had befriended a human whom he had created, that is the prophet Ibrahim, how He spoke with the prophet Musa, how the prophet Jesus was His Word and Spirit, and His choosing the prophet Adam. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ came and heard them. He confirmed what they said by saying: "Yes, it is just as you say". Then he mentioned his own particular characteristics:

113. Unless the seed is planted in the earth it cannot germinate and grow. In this respect Allah's mercy does not nourish and fall on those who are proud and arrogant but rather on those who are humble and modest.



“I am the master of the prophets, but I am not boasting! I am the last of the prophets, but there is no boasting! I will be the first to intercede for my community and my intercession will be the first to be granted, but in no way am I saying this in order to boast” (Darimi, Mukaddima, 8).

“On the Day of Judgement, when the earth will be split open, I will be the first to be resurrected, however I am not saying this to boast. The banner of praise will be given to me, but I do not boast of this. I will be the master of the People on the Day of Judgement, but there is no boasting. I will be the first to enter Paradise, but I do not make this a reason for me to boast.” (Darimi, Muqaddima, 8. Also see Tirmidhi, Manakib, 1/3616).



The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ had a food tray called ‘Garra’, which could only be carried by four people. After they had prayed the Duha prayer, the tray was brought forth, containing ‘tirit’ a type of gravy-soaked bread. The Companions gathered around. When their number had increased, the Prophet kneeled down beside them. A Bedouin who saw him said:

“What sort of a way to sit is this?” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied:

“Allah Most High made me a noble servant, not an obstinate tyrant”. Then he continued:

“Start eating from around the edges of the plate. Do not start from the centre, so that our food will be blessed” (Abu Dawud, At’ime, 17/3773).



Abdullah ibn Jubayr رضي الله عنه narrates:

“One day, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was walking with a group of his Companions when someone came forth and wished to shade him from the sun with a type of covering. When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ noticed the resulting shadow he lifted his head and saw that it was caused by the covering. The Prophet told the man to let the sheet go, then he took the covering and placed it on the ground, saying: *“I am a human being just like you”* (Haysami, IX, 21).



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:



“It is enough of a sin for a man to (want to) be distinguished from others”

He was asked:

“Even if he is distinguished by his goodness, o Messenger of Allah?”

The Prophet replied:

“Even if he is good, except for that which Allah has preserved. If he is noticed for his evil, then this state is bad anyway” (Tabarani, Kabir, XIII, 138/14971. See also Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 21/2453).



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not like to be treated differently from his friends. One time during an expedition, he asked his Companions to slaughter and cook a sheep. One of his Companions said:

“O Messenger of Allah, let me slaughter it”

Another said:

“O Messenger of Allah and let me skin it”

Another said:

“O Messenger of Allah, and let be the one to cook it”

The Prophet then said:

“In that case, let me fetch the firewood”.

His Companions said:

“O Messenger of Allah. We will do that too. Do not tire yourself”

The Prophet then said:

*“I know that you can do my tasks. However I do not like to be given privilege over you. Because Allah Most High does not like for his servants to be shown privilege amongst his friends”*¹¹⁴

The entry of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ into Mecca after he had conquered it, is another example of great humility. The Companions who were present have described it as follows:

“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was at the head of the army that had entered Mecca after its conquest. The victory had taken place with great ease and as he entered Mecca on his camel, his head was hung so low out of humility towards his Lord, that his beard was virtually touching the saddle of the camel. He was practically prostrating out of gratitude. All the while he kept saying:

“O Allah. There is no life but the life of the hereafter” (Wakidi, II, 824, Bukhari, Rikak, I)¹¹⁵.



One day the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had gone to farewell Muadh ibn Jabal  whom he had appointed as governor of Yemen. With him were some Companions from the Emigrants and the Helpers. Muadh  was upon his animal, whilst Allah’s Messenger was beside him on foot. Out of embarrassment, Muadh  said to the Prophet:

“O Messenger of Allah! I am astride my animal while you are on foot. Can I get down and walk together with you and your Companions?” The Prophet consoled him and expressed the matter that was occupying his mind:

*“O Muadh! It is my wish that these steps I take be steps taken in the path of Allah.”*¹¹⁶

Thus the Prophet  was such a paragon of humility. His concern was never for himself. The only thing he cared about, to the degree that it wore him out, was that people would be guided and gain happiness in this world and the next.



115. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would frequently repeat this as an expression of the importance of the hereafter compared to this world. According to the narrations, he is said to have repeated it during the construction of the Masjid-i Nabawi (The Prophet’s Mosque), while the trenches were being dug at the Battle of Hendek, whilst entering Mecca after its conquest, and when he saw the multitude of believers on the Day of Arafah during the farewell pilgrimage. (Bukhari, Jihad 33, 110, Manakibu’l Ansar 9, Magazi 29; Muslim, Jihad 126, 129; Tirmidhi, Manakib 55; Ibn Majah, Masjid 3)

116. Diyarbakri, "Tarihu'l Hamis," Beirut ts. II 142)



Anas رضي الله عنه had grown up under the nurturing care of the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. Whenever he passed by some children he would greet them and say:

“The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would similarly greet children like this” (Bukhari, Isti’zan, 15; Muslim, Salam, 15)

In another narration, Anas says:

“On one of those days during my childhood when I was playing a game with the other children, the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم approached and greeted us. He took me by the hand and sent me off on an errand. He himself waited by the shade of the wall until I returned” (Abu Dawud, Adab, 135-13/5203).

From what we have learned again from Anas رضي الله عنه is that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would go to visit the Ansar from time to time. When he arrived at their houses he would greet the children, pat their heads and pray for them. (Nasai, as “Sunan al-Kubra,” VI, 90).



Anas رضي الله عنه narrates:

“Any of the female slaves of Medina could take hold of the hand of Allah’s Apostle and take him wherever she wished.” (Bukhari, Adab, 61).

One day a woman called Ummu Zufer, who was a little unbalanced, came to the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم. She said to him:

“O Messenger of Allah! I have something I need done by you”.

The Prophet replied:

“*So be it. Let us meet where you like and let me help you*”. He then moved to the side of the road and listened to the woman until her matter had been taken care of (Muslim, Fadail, 76; Abu Dawud, Adab, 12/4818).



Aisha رضي الله عنها, the Prophet’s wife, was asked:

“What did the Prophet used to do at home?”

She replied:



“He would help his family and when it came time for the prayer he would pray”. (Bukhari, Athan 44, Nafakat 8, Adab 40).



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would see to his own needs and he would help his family. From the narrations on this topic, the following can be concluded:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would clean his own clothes, he would milk the sheep, mend his clothes, repair his shoes, sweep his house, tie his camel and give it its food, eat with servants, knead dough with them, and carry what he bought from the market. One time when Abu Huraira ؓ tried to carry some clothes the Prophet had bought, he said to him:

“It is more fitting for a person to carry his own things. Only when he is incapable of this, can his Muslim brother help him”. (Haysami, V, 122). Umar ؓ and Ali ؓ who had modelled their lives on the Prophet’s life, would wander the markets themselves, attending to the needs of their homes, even while they were caliphs.



Aisha ؓ again narrates the following even which shows how the Prophet would help her with household chores with great humility:

“One night, the family of my father, Abu Bakr, sent us a leg of lamb. Allah’s Messenger held it while I cut it, or I held it and he cut it”.

Someone who was listening asked:

“Did you do this in the dark, with no light?”

Aisha ؓ replied:

“Had we any oil to place in the lantern, we would certainly have dipped our bread into it and eaten it. One month would pass where the family of Muhammad ﷺ would find no bread to eat, and no pots would boil on their stove” (Ahmad, VI, 217; Ibn Sa’d, I, 405).



The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has said:



“If I am invited to eat a leg or shoulder-blade of meat, I attend immediately. If a gift of either a shoulder blade or leg of meat is made to me, I immediately accept it”. (Bukhari, Hibe 2, Nikah 73; Muslim, Nikah 104).

Thus the size of the gift is not important. The aim is to please and increase one’s fellow love. To be able to reach this state of heart one must don the robe of humility.



For Allah’s Messenger ﷺ there was nothing above being a servant of Almighty Allah. A narration that elaborates on this belief of the Prophet is as follows:

One day the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was sitting talking with the angel Gabriel. At that point another angel descended from the heavens. Gabriel told him that this angel had appeared on earth for the first time. The angel said:

“O Muhammad! My Lord sent me to you. He asks whether you would want to be a king prophet or a servant prophet”.

The Prophet looked at Gabriel, who said:

“O Messenger of Allah! Be humble before your Lord”

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“I wish to be a servant prophet”. (Ahmad II, 231; Haysami, IX, 18, 20).

He thus displayed an exceptional model of humility. After this choice of his, servanthood became the most honourable position that mankind could aim for. To those who showed him excess reverence, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ warned:

“Do not exalt me anymore than I deserve. Because before He sent me as a messenger, Allah Most High made me a servant”. (Haysami, IX, 21). Thus the Prophet expressed the value and virtue of being a servant of Allah.



Despite having a stern nature, the second Caliph Umar ﷺ was a very humble person. He would wear patched clothes, carry water and food to the houses of widows and orphans, sleep on a straw mat, and would



groom and clean his camels with his own hands. During the time when he was Caliph, he would roam the streets at night listening to the people's complaints. Abu Mahzura رضي الله عنه reports of his humility as follows:

“One day while I was sitting next to Umar ibn Khattab رضي الله عنه, Safwan ibn Ummaya brought a bowl of food, and placed it in front of Umar. Umar called the poor and needy and the slaves located near him. They all came and ate with Umar. While they were eating Umar said:

“Allah will not bring success to those who are embarrassed to eat with slaves”. Upon this Safwan ibn Umayya said:

“By Allah! We are not ashamed to eat with them. However we prefer them over ourselves such that when we have delicious and tasty food to eat then we offer it to them (Ali al-Muttaki, IX, 198/25650).



Another time during the caliphate of Umar رضي الله عنه, he was walking with Jarud ibn Mualla, one of the Companions, when they encountered Khawlah ibnt-i Sa'laba. Khawlah, who was a young lady during the time of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, was now an old woman. It was her complaint about her husband to the Prophet that was the reason for the first verses of the chapter '*Mujadila*' being revealed. When this lady Companion saw Umar, she wished to give him some advice:

“O Umar!”

When Umar stopped, Khawlah spoke to him:

“We used to call you ‘little Umar’ for a long time. Then when you grew up we called you ‘young Umar’. Now we address you as ‘Umar, the Commander of the Believers’. O Umar, fear Allah and concern yourself with the affairs of the people. For the one who fears the punishment of Allah, whatever is far becomes near. The one who fears death will be anxious about not missing any opportunity.”

Umar was very moved by these words and began to cry. Jarud, who felt for him, turned to Khawlah and said:

“That is enough woman! You have upset the Commander of the Believers”. However Umar turned to him and said:



“Leave her be. Let her say what she wishes. Do you know who this woman is? This is Khawlah, esteemed by Allah Most High, who heard her complaint from His Mighty Throne. By Allah if she wished to keep me here all night, I would go and pray and then come back and listen to her”.¹¹⁷

This is an evident example of the humble state of a believer such as Umar رضي الله عنه, who was exceptional in his character, especially in matters such as fear of Allah, reverence and love for Allah, truth, justice and responsibility.



In his own unique style Jalaluddin al-Rumi tells of the following event that is a good example of the humility of Umar رضي الله عنه, and that has a lesson for all:

One time an envoy from Rome came to Madina for a political meeting. He asked where the palace of Umar was. He was given the following reply:

“The title of the Caliph is the ‘Commander of the Believers’, and though his reign may have spread all over the world, he has no palace to his name. Rather his heart is his own shining palace. He has a small hut in which he lives, which is similar to that in which the lonely, poor and wayfarers take refuge. However, due to the defect in your eye you will not be able to see this spiritual and unworldly palace of his heart”.

The Roman envoy was terrified at these words. He left his load, his horse and his gifts, and began to search for Umar al-Faruq. He asked for him everywhere. Unable to find him and in amazement he mumbled to himself:

“So there is a ruler in this land who is able to remain invisible to the watch of people, just like a spirit...” Nevertheless, he continued to search for the Caliph.

Finally an Arab woman said to him:

“The Caliph that you are looking for is right there under that date tree. While everybody lies down in their bed and on their (soft) mattress, he

117. See Mehmed Zihni Efendi, "Meshur Kadinlar," Istanbul ts., I, 250; M. Yasar Kandemir, I. Lutfi Cakan, Rasit Kucuk, "Riyadhush Saliheen - Translation and Exegesis," III, 508



does the opposite and lies down on the sand. Go and see for yourself the ‘shadow of Allah’, lying down in the shade of that date tree...”

The envoy sensed a certain majesty about the sleeping Umar, and his spirit was pleasantly moved. He was amazed at the two feelings of both love and awe which though they are opposites, came together within his own soul. He said to himself:

“I am a person who has met with emperors and been praised by them. Though I have never seen such majesty in them, this man’s awe and love have made me lose consciousness.

This Caliph lies here sleeping defenceless and without a sword. And yet here I am standing before him, my entire body trembling. What is this state? How can this be? This awe must come from Allah. It cannot belong to this person here wearing this coarse cloak...”

While the envoy was in this mixed-up state, Umar  woke up. The envoy greeted him with reverence. The Caliph responded to the greeting. He then began to speak to the envoy, inviting him to the palace of his soul where he then found peace. He mended and healed his heart which had formerly been in ruins. He spoke to him the most subtle, deep and wise of words.

As he listened, the envoy witnessed different states and degrees. The envoy who had come to Umar  as a stranger now became a dear friend. He was ecstatic with the pleasure he received from his words. He forgot that he was an envoy and that he had come to give and receive a message.

Sensing his state, and receiving a certain pleasure of his own, Umar  continued to speak to him. He spoke of the stopovers that the soul must take and the journey of the spirit. He spoke of time beyond time, the elevated states of the precious friends of Allah, and the unlimited potential of the soul which has been brought to this world.

Eventually the light of faith shone in the heart of the envoy and he pronounced the declaration of faith in the presence of the Caliph. Thus he joined that (happy) caravan travelling to eternal happiness.





One day Ahnaf ibn Qays ؓ went to visit Umar ؓ along with some of the leading men of the Arabs. When they arrived they found him running around with his cloak folded up over his belly. When Umar ؓ saw Ahnaf, he said to him:

“Come and help. A camel belonging to the state has escaped. Do you know how many people have a share in this camel?”

Somebody then said to him:

“What are you so worried about? Can you not appoint a slave to catch the camel for you?” Umar ؓ replied:

“Can there be a better slave than me?”

What an elevated character! What subtle understanding and what great humility...



Whilst Salman ؓ was the governor of Madain, somebody belonging to the tribe of the sons of Taym arrived from Damascus. He had brought with him a load of figs. Salman ؓ had on him a dress and a coarse cloak. The Damascan did not know Salman. When he saw him in this state he said to him:

“Come and carry this”.

Salman ؓ took the load upon his shoulders. When the people saw him they recognised him and said to the man:

“This man carrying your load is our governor”.

The Damascan immediately apologised:

“I am sorry, I did not recognise you”. However Salman ؓ replied:

“No harm done. But I will not let down your load until I have carried it to your house” (Ibn Sa'd, IV, 88).



One day when the grandson of the Prophet, Hussain ؓ, was walking the streets, he encountered some poor people eating breadcrumbs. The poor people called out to him:



“O servant of Allah. Come and join us...”

Being a very humble person, Hussain accepted their invitation. He immediately got down from his horse and began to eat from what they were eating. When they had finished, this beautiful grandson of the Prophet said:

“I have accepted your invitation. Come now, I am inviting you to my house...” And then they all went together to eat at that most blissful of houses.



The great scholars of this noble and pure community of believers have their own examples of humility. One day, the Caliph, Harun al-Rashid asked Imam Abu Yusuf about some matter.

Abu Yusuf replied:

“I do not know” The Caliph’s assistant said to Abu Yusuf:

“You are paid a good salary and an allowance and yet you say “I do not know”.

Abu Yusuf replied:

“My salary is according to my knowledge. If I were given a salary for all the things I did not know there would not be enough money in the treasury to pay me...”

In a confession of his weakness, Al-Ghazzali also displayed similar humility:

“If I could put all of the things that I did not know compared to all the things I do know under my foot, my head would touch the sky”.



Whilst still a student and without having received his license to teach, Khalid al-Baghdadi, was yet distinguished in his knowledge and had attracted the attention of all. At that time, the governor of Sulaymaniye, Abdurrahman Pasha, came to visit him and was amazed at his knowledge and wisdom:



“Choose whichever of the schools of Sulaymaniye and I will appoint you as its teacher”. However, out of respect for the tradition of knowledge and not having yet received his license to teach, he did not accept this offer and said instead: “I am not qualified for this position”¹¹⁸



Yildirim Bayazid Han invited all of the great shaykhs and scholars, most notably Amir Bukhari to the opening of Ulu Cami (the great mosque in Bursa).

It was a Friday morning and everyone gathered together for the ceremony. A little while later, Yildirim Bayazid Han appeared and said to Amir Bukhari, his son-in-law:

“O Amir! Come and open the doors of the Mosque and lead the prayer. As one of the great men of this community, this honour belongs to you”.

It was with great modesty that Amir Bukhari objected and said:

“No my Sultan! You should give this honour to Shaykh Abu Hamiduddin”

However, Bayezid Han had never heard of this person and asked:

“Who is this?”

Amir Bukhari replied:

“My Sultan. You may have heard of a person known as Somuncu Baba who is a baker. He gave out much bread during the construction of Ulu Cami. This person is none other than Abu Hamiduddin, a great friend of Allah”.

Upon this, the Sultan accepted this offer. Amir Bukhari then rose and introduced Somuncu Baba to the congregation and then invited him to the pulpit. Greatly embarrassed, Somuncu Baba said:

“O my commander! What have you done? You have disclosed me...” as he slowly walked to the pulpit in the greatest of humility.

118. Heyet, "Islam Alimleri Ansiklopedisi," Istanbul, ts. Turkiye Gazetesi Publications, XVIII, 78

That day on the pulpit, Somuncu Baba gave seven different commentaries on the opening chapter of the Qur'an, Al-Fatiha. After that, however, he left Bursa and took his student Haji Bayram-i Wali with him to hajj, a necessary step, his secret having been disclosed to the public.



On the 15th of February in 1517, Yavuz Sultan Selim Han entered the palace of the Mamluks under great ceremony. The historian of that time explains how the public received Yavuz in Egypt as follows:

“The public poured onto the streets and ran to their windows to see the magnificence of Yavuz. They thought Yavuz would be different, his clothes and turban unique from those around him. However, Yavuz was not at the head of the ceremony, but rather in the middle amongst the warriors. Neither his dress, nor his turban was any different to those around him. He walked very humbly looking straight ahead”.



After the expedition to Egypt, Yavuz Sultan Selim Han returned to Istanbul in the daytime via Uskudar. Having been informed that the people of Istanbul were going to receive him with much ceremony and praise, he said to his personal tutor Hasan Can:

“Let the night fall, let everyone return to their homes, let the streets be empty and then I will enter Istanbul. Let not the applause of mortal beings, and the compliments and decorations of victory defeat our souls and bring us down...”

Thus we see Yavuz - a frightening lion in the Desert of Sinai; a teary-eyed humble and grateful believer at the gates of Egypt; and a darwish taking his soul to account and ever seeking divine and deep pleasure. He read to Hasan Can the following lines:

To be the sultan of the world is a dry claim

To be a saint is better than all of it...



When news arrived at the palace of the epic victory at Kanije, Sultan III. Mehmed Han, was more than pleased and offered the position of vizier to Tiryaki Hasan Pasha who was the greatest agent of the victory. In addition he sent the Pasha many precious gifts and a letter written in the Pasha's own handwriting.

Reading this letter in front of the war veterans, Tiryaki Hasan Pasha nonetheless displayed great humility, in spite of his peerless victory. He was very modest as he said to those around him: "The Sultan of our state has appointed us as vizier and has even sent me a letter written with his own handwriting in reward for our mere defence at Kanije. However, all we did was our duty. Is this aged old man worthy of the viziership of such a great state? May Allah protect our state and our nation!"



The great Sinan, the genius of Ottoman architecture considered himself a tiny ant in the face of Allah, despite having such great success. This was because he was a peerless leader of humility.

Mimar Sinan put all his efforts into ensuring that the Sulaymaniye Mosque would remain erect until the Day of Judgement. He made many prayers in this vein and as a result, with the grace of Allah, he produced a masterpiece that has no equal. However when it came time to making his own tomb, he lodged it in a corner of the mosque as a modest signature. Despite having built such famous and magnificent mosques and so that he did not become proud and arrogant, in addition to signing his name as '*Ser-Mimaran-i Hassa* (the Head of the Master Architects) he would also use the titles '*Mur'i Natuvan*' (weak ant), and '*Al-Fakiru'l Hakir*' (the poor lowly one). Likewise at the completion of his greatest masterpiece, Selimiye Mosque, he was asked to write his name in the plaque to be placed at the door of the mosque. In response he said:

"Who am I to place my name in the house of Allah!..." Thus he displayed a deep spirituality that was equal to the splendour of his works...



One day, Sultan Ahmad Han sent a very precious gift to his beloved teacher Mahmud Hudayi. However, Mahmud Hudayi did not accept the gift. Since Sultan Ahmad Han had already promised to give the gift away, he



then sent it to the shaykh of those times, Abdulmajid Siwasi. He accepted, and later, when Sultan Ahmad Han went to visit Abdulmajid Siwasi he said to him:

“My master! I previously sent this gift to my master Mahmud Hudayi, however he refused it. But you have accepted.”

Understanding what was implied, Sivasi gave the following significant reply:

“My Sultan! Master Hudayi is such an elevated bird that he does not condescend to eating dead carcasses”.

The Sultan was pleased at this response and a few days later he went to visit Master Hudayi. He said to him:

“My master. Master Abdulmajid accepted my gift that you refused”

With a smile on his face, master Hudayi replied:

“My Sultan! Master Abdulmajid is a deep ocean. A tiny drop of dirt falling into a great ocean cannot harm its purity”.

What a beautiful example of Islamic courtesy and what an unparalleled example of humility...



A. Brayer, the French doctor who resided in Istanbul for many years, and who meticulously observed the social life of the Ottomans has the following to say:

“As a result of their modesty and manners the qualities of pride and arrogance have virtually disappeared from the Muslim Turks. This is because pride and arrogance are two negative traits that Islam has strongly banned. The Muslims are always warning each other of the following:

“Do not walk proudly on the earth and do not turn away from the people out of arrogance”.

“Allah loathes the one who is self-conceited and arrogant”

“Be humble in your actions, and speak with a soft voice”

“Pride comes from ignorance, the scholar is never proud”.

“Humility gives a person dignity”



It is because of this that there is a dignity and majesty in the walk of the Ottoman, but at the same time, there is no pride, nor pomp. They always speak softly. You can never sense a dictatorial air in their gestures. And there is a sweetness and ease in their service”.

And so this state of mind in the social life of the Ottomans could be found right throughout the entire community from the most ordinary individual to the Sultan. Thus from its beginnings to its destruction, the Sultans of the Ottoman Empire would, as they attended each Friday sermon, order their paid soldiers to call out to them:

“Do not be arrogant my sultan; Allah is greater than you...” They had made this official warning a tradition.

In short, there are many bounties in being humble. The humble person is generous. The generous person is compassionate. The compassionate person is full of joy and enthusiasm in serving other creatures. And this is a means of attaining our Lord’s pleasure. A person who is distant from humility is deprived of all of these beautiful traits.

Because discernment and insight develop in the humble person, he can then distinguish between friend and foe.

Humility is a very important trait as it beautifies a person, matures them in their servanthood, and brings form to their character. Rumi has said:

“Even in the season of spring you will not find life coming out of hard rock. Be humble like the earth so that flowers and roses of all colours can blossom from within you?”

In reality, the living beings that walk upon the earth trample it and leave dust in their wake. However, the earth, with its great humility, soaks and cleans up of all of this dust. And then from within it, bloom all variety of beautiful plants which nourish the creatures that walk upon it. So too the heart of a righteous believer should be just like the fruitful earth. It should reflect all of the beauty present within it and present it to the people and to all of creation in the form of a beautiful poem.



10. *Hilm* and *Musamaha* (gentleness and tolerance)

Hilm is a term that describes a person who does not feel any resentment in their hearts even towards those who hurt them in some way. It is to be patient and tolerant of others.

Hilm or clemency and gentleness of nature is a trait that is most beloved to Allah Most High. It is the opposite of wrath. Harshness and austerity, which are the opposites of *hilm*, are vile unpleasant traits that hurt people, that cause them to fear and hate and to turn away. Thus *hilm* is one of the characteristics of the prophets. The one who is not *halim*, or clement and gentle, cannot carry out an important duty such as that of prophethood. Having learned of this matter from their books, and then having witnessed the gentle and clement nature of the Prophet Muhammad, various Jewish scholars became Muslim. Allah Most High says in the Qur'an:

'It is a mercy from Allah that you were gentle with them. If you had been rough or hard of heart, they would have scattered from around you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them, and consult with them about the matter. Then when you have reached a firm decision, put your trust in Allah. Allah loves those who put their trust in Him' (API Imran, 3:159).

Islam has accepted as an essential principle the adoption of a stance of moderation, without going to extremes, especially in matters such as teaching human beings and in propagation of faith. This principle can only be realised through the attribute of *hilm*.

Almighty Allah informs us that He is *Al-Halim*, that is, the possessor of *hilm*. And all of the gatherings of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, the mildest of human beings, were places where traits such as clemency, knowledge, modesty, patience, reliance upon Allah, and trust were present and in fact dominant.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ desired that this principle of gentleness and toleration be present throughout his entire life. He spoke of the virtue of this beautiful trait being applied to trade as follows:

"May Allah have mercy on the one who shows ease in matters of buying, selling and asking for payment of his debt" (Bukhari, Buyu', 1; Ibn Maja, Trade, 28)

The Prophet also said:

“There was once a man who loaned money to people. He said to his servant (who collected his debts):

“If you come across a poor person in dire straits (whom we have lent money to), forgive him his debt immediately; then we can hope that Allah will forgive us our sins”

Eventually that man returned to Allah and Allah Most High forgave him all his sins” (Bukhari, Anbiya, 54; Muslim, Musakat, 31; Bukhari, Buyu’ 18)

Another *hadith* of the Prophet is as follows:

“On the day when there will be no shade, Allah Most High will shade (protect) the one who gives respite to the one who owes him money, (or who cancels his debt)” (Muslim, Zuhd, 74)

However this does not mean that the one who borrows money should take advantage of this virtuous trait of the one who lends money. The topic of lending money is so important that whenever a dead body was brought for the funeral prayer, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would firstly ask:

“Did he have any debts?” If he did so, he would have it paid and then he would pray his funeral prayer and if his debt remained unpaid he would not pray it.

On the other hand, the Prophet would always be very tolerant of new Muslims and those who did not have the opportunity to learn enough about religion. Thus clemency and tolerance are two most important traits of the saints and righteous believers who have taken on the character of the Prophet.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ once said to Ashajj of the sons of Abdulqays:

“You possess two traits which are most beloved to Allah: hilm (mildness of nature) and being careful in one’s actions” (Muslim, Iman, 25,26)

Luqman Hakim said:

“O my son! Three things can be known only by three other things: Hilm at the point of anger; bravery on the battlefield; and brotherhood in times of need”.

Just like with all other virtuous traits, clemency and tolerance have their measure. To yield to oppression out of clemency and to show tolerance for the infringement of Allah's laws is never a correct stance to take. Such behaviour is docility or complaisance¹¹⁹ and is wrong as it leads to evil people becoming more prone to carry out their desires and encourages them.

Scenes of Virtue

Abu Said al-Khudri  narrates:

One time a Bedouin came to the Messenger of Allah  and asked for his loan and he did this very harshly. In fact he said:

“I am not going to leave you be until you pay your debt.” The Companions rebuked the Bedouin, saying:

“Shame on you! Do you know who you are talking to?” The man replied:

“I am asking for my right”. The Prophet  then said to his Companions:

“*Why are you not on the side of the one who is in the right?*” Then he turned to Khawlah bnt-i Kays and said:

“*If you have any dry dates pay my debt for me; when our harvest of dates come in I will pay you back*”.

Khawlah replied:

“By all means! May my father be sacrificed for you o Messenger of Allah!”

The woman loaned some dates to the Prophet who then paid back his debt to the Bedouin. He also offered him a meal. The Bedouin said, in an expression of his gratitude:

“You have paid back your debt nicely. May Allah reward you completely”

The Prophet  then said:

119. Hilmi khimari which indicates the docility of an animal



“Those who pay back their debts are the best of people. A society in which the weak cannot obtain their rights without being hurt will never prosper”
(Ibn Majah, Sadaqa, 17)

As can be seen, the life of the Prophet is full of the most beautiful behaviour and is a model for the human being for each and every state that can ever befall him. All we need to do is study him well and make efforts to follow in his footsteps.



Jubayr ibn Mut'im رضي الله عنه narrates:

On returning from the battle of Hunayn, some of the Bedouin Arabs who were walking with the Prophet began to insist on their share of booty. They eventually stopped the Messenger of Allah ﷺ under a Semura tree, where his robe got tangled in a branch of the tree. The Prophet stopped his camel and said:

“Give me back my robe! Had I as many animals as these trees that you see here I would share them all with you. And you would see that I was not miserly, deceitful or cowardly!” (Bukhari, Jihad 24, Humus 19).

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was mild and tolerating even with people who had recently become Muslim and had not yet imbibed within their spirit the delicacy and subtlety of the religion.



Anas رضي الله عنه narrates:

“I never touched anything, neither satin nor silk, that was softer than the hands of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. I never smelt any scent sweeter than the scent of the Messenger of Allah. I served the Messenger of Allah for an entire ten years. Never once did he say “oof” to me. Never once did he ask me about something I did: “Why did you do that?” nor did he ever ask me about something that I did not do: “Couldn’t you have done so and so?” (Bukhari, Sawm 53, Manakib 23; Muslim, Fadail 82).

This is how, in action and state, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ trained and educated Anas, who was entrusted to his care when he was only ten years old. This is also the method of training in tasawwuf. A person admires



a certain personality and character and begins to imitate the person they admire. This is because the tendency to imitate is one of the most foundational tendencies in the nature of the human being. This is why both the physical and spiritual development of a person - whether positive or negative - is realised under the influence of the one that they are in admiration of and whom they are imitating.



Muawiya ibn Hakem  narrates:

While we were praying in congregation behind the Messenger of Allah , somebody sneezed. I immediately said: “Yarhamakullah”¹²⁰. The congregation began to stare at me angrily. I then said to them:

“What is wrong? Why are you looking at me like that?”

Then they began to strike their knees with their hands. Realising that they were trying to silence me, I became angry but I still chose to remain silent.¹²¹

May my mother and father be sacrificed for the Messenger of Allah . I never saw a more beautiful teacher than him, neither before him nor after him. By Allah he neither rebuked me nor did he strike me. After the prayer, he said to me very gently:

“This worship that we do is called salat. While we are in salat, we do not speak any words that pertain to this world. Because salat consists of glorifying and extolling Allah and reciting from the Qur`an”.

I then said to him:

“O Messenger of Allah! I have only just recently become Muslim...”
(Muslim, Masajid, 33).



120. Yarhamakullah is an expression said after a person sneezes and means: ‘May Allah have mercy on you’ (translator’s note)

121. To perform an action in prayer that is not worship is obviously in contradiction to the spirit of the prayer. However we must excuse this Companion who got angry and the Companions whom he got angry with who displayed such behaviour. This is because at that time, the society consisted of people who had newly converted to Islam and who were only beginning to learn about worship and its etiquette.



Zayd ibn Sa'na, one of the Jewish scholars, was analysing whether the written descriptions of the awaited last prophet that were contained in the Torah, could be applied to the Messenger of Allah. One day he saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ leaving his house with Ali beside him and he began to follow him. At that time a man dressed like a Bedouin approached the Messenger of Allah and said:

“O Messenger of Allah! I told such and such tribe that if they became Muslim, Allah Most High would make their provision plenty. They then became Muslim. However unfortunately they met with drought. They are now in a very bad state. I now fear that having become Muslim out of worldly hopes they will now turn back to their former religion, having not had their expectations met. If you would like to help them, I will take whatever you give to them”

On sensing an opportunity to test the Messenger of Allah, Zayd ibn Sa'na who was listening to this conversation interrupted and said:

“O Muhammad! If you decide to help these people I will make a contract with you and give you a loan”

The Prophet ﷺ accepted a loan of 80 dinar from that man and gave it to the Companion to take to the people. He then said to him:

“Go to them immediately and help them”.

Another day, the Prophet, along with Abu Bakr ؓ, Umar ؓ and some other of the Companions, were taking a corpse to be buried in Jannatu al-Baqi.¹²² After the Prophet led the man's funeral prayer, Zayd approached him and with all his might, pulled his robe off his blessed back. Not yet having realised why Zayd did this, the Messenger of Allah first looked at the fallen robe and then at the sour face of Zayd in amazement. Having already planned his words, Zayd then began to speak to him:

“Are you not going to pay back your loan o Muhammad? You sons of Abdulmuttalib are always late with paying back your debts”

However, the term of the Prophet's loan that he accepted from Zayd was not complete.

122. Jannatu al-Baqi is the famous graveyard in Madina located just 100 metres from the Prophet's Mosque.

Zayd, who narrates this event has the following to say:

“I then turned to look at Umar. When I saw that he was full of rage, my heart skipped a beat. Umar looked at me harshly and said:

“O enemy of Allah! Are these words of yours addressed to the Messenger of Allah? You are disrespectful to him and you speak very ill-manneredly. I swear by the One who sent him as a prophet that if the Prophet did not owe you money I would cut your head off”...

Umar could not stand to see a Jew insult the Messenger of Allah. Seeing how enraged Umar became, the Prophet smiled and said:

“Calm down o Umar! At this moment both I and this person here expect a very different sort of behaviour from you. You should have advised me to pay back my debt in the best way and you should have advised him to ask for his money with a more suitable tone, even though I still have three days to pay back my loan. Now rise and pay back my loan for me. And give him some extra money because you frightened him”.

Having received more than he gave, Zayd then confessed to Umar:

“Look here o Umar! Every time I looked at the Messenger of Allah I could see signs of prophethood in his face. However until this day, I was still unsure as to whether or not he had two particular qualities. Did he forgive those who behaved harshly towards him? And did his clemency and tolerance increase as the harshness towards him increased? And so today I tested both of these. And I now have firm conviction that he is the awaited prophet. Bear witness that I accept Allah as my Lord, Islam as my religion, Muhammad ﷺ as my prophet and I pledge half of my wealth in charity to the community of Muhammad”

Umar ﷺ was very pleased at Zayd’s becoming Muslim and he gently cautioned him:

“You do not have enough wealth for all of the Muslims. At least say that you give charity to some of the Muslims”

Zayd then said, in correction of his previous words:



“You are right. I pledge half of my wealth to some of the Muslims”
(Hakim, III, 700/6547).



Allah’s Messenger’s ﷺ elevated character and personality captivated people with its gentle nature, tolerance, and patience. By the grace of Allah he was able to spread Islam over the whole of the Arabian Peninsula in a very short time.

Amongst the prisoners of war that were taken during the expedition of Abdullah ibn Jahs ﷺ to Batn-i Nahla was Hakem ibn Kaysan. The Prophet invited Hakem to Islam. He explained at length all of the beauty of Islam. He repeated himself over and over again in order to dispel his doubts. Despite all of these efforts of the Messenger of Allah, Hakem still do not become Muslim and this angered Umar ﷺ greatly.

“O Messenger of Allah! What are you still talking to him for? By Allah he will never become Muslim. Allow me to strike his neck so that he can go at once to Hell, his ultimate destination”. However the Prophet continued to tell Hakem about Islam. At one point, Hakem became all ears and asked:

“What is Islam?”. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied:

“It is to serve Allah without attributing any partners to Him and to bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger”.

Hakem then said:

“I have become Muslim.”

The Prophet then turned to his Companions and said to them:

“Had I complied with your wishes just now, this man would have been for the Hellfire”.

Umar ﷺ says after:

“When I saw Hakem become Muslim, I felt as if my entire past and future were constricting me. I said to myself: “The Prophet knows better than you so how can you go against him”. Then I consoled myself by saying: “My only aim was to gain the pleasure of Allah and His Messenger”.



Hakem became Muslim. And by Allah he became a very good Muslim. He struggled in the path of Allah and was martyred at Bi'r-i Mauna" (Ibn Sa'd, IV, 137-138; Wakidi, I, 15-16).



Abu Huraira  narrates the following event:

"One of the Bedouins had relieved himself in the Prophet's Mosque. The Companions immediately began to rebuke him. The Prophet then said:

"Leave the man be. Pour a bucket of water over the place where he relieved himself. You were brought to make things easy, not to make things hard" (Bukhari, Wudu', 58; Adab 80).



Anas  narrates:

"I was once walking with the Messenger of Allah . He was wearing a cloak made from Najran cloth, which was very hard and thick. A Bedouin approached the Messenger of Allah  and tugged his cloak harshly. This action of the Bedouin left a red mark on the Prophet's neck. The Bedouin later said:

"O Muhammad! Order that some of the property of Allah that is with you be given to me".

The Prophet turned to the Bedouin and smiled. Later he complied with the Bedouin's request (Bukhari, Khumus 19, Libas 18, Adab 8; Muslim, Zakat 128).

What amazing tolerance and clemency...



Once when Abu Darda was wandering around the city, he saw the people abusing a sinner with very harsh words. He asked them:

"If you saw a man who had fallen into a well, would you not try to help him out?"

The people said:

"Yes we would help him out" Then Abu Darda said to them:





“In that case do not abuse your brother. And praise Allah that He has given you well-being”.

The people asked him:

“Are you not angry with this sinner?”

This beautiful Companion who had been raised under the guidance of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ answered them:

“I am not angry with him, but rather with his deed. When he abandons his sin he is still my fellow brother” (Abdulrazzak, XI, 180; Abu Nuaym, Hilya I, 225).



During the time of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ there was a man by the name of Abdullah. This man who was known as “Khimar” would make the Prophet laugh with his jokes. However the Prophet would also punish him from time to time because he would drink alcohol...

One day after another episode of punishing him and after Abdullah had left, those present made a prayer against him by saying: “O Allah curse him”. The Prophet then turned to them and said:

“Do not speak such words. Do not help Satan against your brother. By Allah I know that he loves Allah and His Messenger. Instead of cursing him you should pray: “O Allah. Forgive him his sins. O Allah have mercy on him” (Bukhari, Hudud, 4, 5; Abu Dawud, Hudud 35).

This event is an evident example of the clemency and tolerance that sprang from mercy, compassion and love that the Prophet had for his community.



One time while Rabi ibn Haysam was performing the prayer, his horse worth 20 thousand dirhams was stolen right before his very eyes. But instead of heading off after the thief, he preferred to finish his prayer in great peace of mind.

Hearing of his great loss, his friends ran to console him. He said to them:



“I saw the thief as he was untying my horse. However at that time, I was busy with something more important and beloved to me. That is why I did not drive out the thief”

Upon this, his friends began to curse the thief. Rabi ibn Haysam said to them:

“Calm down, he has not harmed me. He has harmed his own soul. As if it is not enough what the poor man has done to himself, let us not harm him too” (See Babanzade Ahmad Naim, “Islam Ahlakinin Esaslari,” p 85-6).

What a peerless example of the peak of mercy and compassion... This is the unique state of the friends of Allah, who look upon creation through the eyes of the Creator...



Imam Sha’bi, who was one of the leading Tabi’een once said to a corrupt man who had insulted him:

“If what you say is true, then may Allah forgive me! If you are a liar, then may Allah forgive you!”

What an example of great virtue...



In short, clemency and tolerance which are the result of beautiful traits like mercy, compassion and love, are the essence of social relations. They are the divine command of Almighty Allah and the essential nature of the Prophet ﷺ, who said:

“The one who has a share of rifa (gentleness and kindness) has been given much good. However the one who has no share of rifa has been deprived of goodness” (Tirmidhi, Birr, 67/2013).

11. To have a good opinion of everything

To possess *husn-i zann* (a good opinion) is to think positively, to hope for the best, to distance oneself from negative thoughts and having a bad





opinion or bad thoughts. As long as Muslims succeed in harbouring a good opinion of others they will be protected from falling into error.

The following verse from the Holy Qur'an closes all doors that lead to having a bad opinion of others:

'You who have faith! Avoid most suspicion. Indeed some suspicion is a crime. And do not spy and do not backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat his brother's dead flesh? No, you would hate it. And have taqwa of Allah. Allah is Ever-Returning, Most Merciful.' (Hujurat, 49:12)

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has said:

"Beware of suspicion. Because suspicion or unfounded accusation is the most dishonest of speech. Do not eavesdrop on what other people say, do not search for other people's faults and do not boast and brag to each other. Do not envy one other, do not spite one another and do not turn away from each other. O slaves of Allah! Be like brothers just as Allah has commanded you..." (Muslim, Birr, 28-34)

Another hadith of the Prophet is as follows:

"Let no one from my Companions come to me with conveying the faults of another. I want to appear amongst you with a sound heart." (Abu Dawud, Adab, 28/4860)

To have a good opinion of others is no bother nor does it burden one with any load. On the contrary it frees one from responsibility and weariness. The fourth Caliph, Ali ﷺ, has said:

"Have a good opinion of the servants of Allah. If you do so, you will be freed of much tiresomeness".

In order to have a good opinion of those who have passed away, Muslims must believe that they will be forgiven. To think the opposite is of no benefit to anyone.

One should have a continual good opinion of everyone and everything without losing one's control. When the entire reality of a situation is not known, it is a principle of the Muslims that they act with a good opinion and think positively about each other. Because we will be held responsible



for our negative opinions. In contrast, even though we may be mistaken in our good opinion, we will not be taken to account for it. Our entire loss will merely consist of being mistaken as a result of our good intention. However if we have a bad opinion of someone or we are suspicious of someone we will be forced to give an account for our actions.

Scenes of Virtue

According to a narration by Abdullah ibn Amr رضي الله عنه, during one of the circumambulations of the Ka'bah, the Prophet addressed the Ka'bah as follows:

“How pure you are and how beautiful is your scent! How lofty you are and how great is the esteem in which you are held. I swear by the All Glorious Being Who holds the soul of Muhammad in His hands, that the worth of a believer in the eyes of Allah is even greater than your worth. The value of the property and the blood of the believer are the same. We have nothing but a good opinion of the believers” (Ibn Majah, Fitan, 2).

Thus for the believers to harbour a good opinion of others is a crucial principle of Islam.



The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم suffered much distress and agony as a result of the event of *Ifk*¹²³ which came about due to the mischief and discord of the hypocrites. The Prophet consulted with his wife Zaynab ibnt-i Jahsh رضي الله عنها and Barira رضي الله عنها, the slave-girl of Aisha رضي الله عنها and asked for their opinion about Aisha رضي الله عنها¹²⁴. Both of them bore witness of her righteousness. Aisha رضي الله عنها has the following to say about this matter:

“When the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم was investigating this matter he asked Zaynab ibnt-i Jahsh her opinion of me:

“O Zaynab, what do you know of this matter, and what have you seen?”

She replied:

123. This event involved a slanderous accusation against Aisha, the prophet's wife, made by the hypocrites (Translator's note).

124. Bukhari, Shahadah 16



“O Messenger of Allah! I am ever protecting of what my ears have not heard and my eyes have not seen. I know nothing other than good about Aisha”.

Amongst the wives of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ, Zaynab was one who, due to certain virtues could be considered to be a rival to me. (Having had the chance, she could have disparaged me in the eyes of the Prophet in order to make herself more favoured with him). However because of her piety and religion, Allah protected her from being amongst my slanderers” (Bukhari, Shahadah, 15, 30; Muslim, Tawba, 56).

What a beautiful example of *husn-i zann*... While many people could have fallen into error, Zaynab took refuge under the umbrella of *husn-i zann* and was saved from the divine punishment that befell the slanderers of Aisha. Later verses were revealed that cleared Aisha of the slanders. Verses too were revealed that contained a terrible warning for the slanderers and those who abandoned their good opinions along with them. It made known that had Allah not been forgiving, they would have all been destroyed in a terrible way. The fact that these warnings and threats were repeated several times is enough to show how ugly an act is suspicion and false accusation. The verses have the following to say:

‘Why, when you heard it, did you not, as men and women of the believers, instinctively think good thoughts and say, ‘This is obviously a lie?’ (Al-Nur, 24:12).

‘Were it not for Allah’s favour to you and His mercy, both in this world and the afterlife, a terrible punishment would have afflicted you for your plunging headlong into it’ (Al-Nur, 24:14).



It was again during the time of the incident of *Ifk*, when Ummu Ayyub, the wife of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari asked her husband:

“Have you heard what people are saying about Aisha?” Abu Ayyub replied:

“Yes I have. But they are all lies and fabrication”

Then he asked his wife:



“Would you do such a vile thing?” She answered:

“No! By Allah I would never do such a thing”

Upon this Abu Ayyub  said to her:

“By Allah! Aisha is much better than you are”. (Ibn Hisham, III, 347; Wakidi, II, 434).

What a nice example of the good opinion of that model generation of people...



Ibn Mas'ud  narrates the following:

“When you see your fellow brother committing a sin, do not be a helper of Satan saying things like: “O Lord! Degrade him. O Allah! Curse him”.

Rather say: “O Lord! Forgive him and direct him to the straight path”. As Companions of the Prophet Muhammad we would never say anything about anyone that we did not know in what state they died. If his life ended well, we would say “He has met with good”. If he died in a bad way, we would fear saying anything about him” (Abu Nuaym, Hilya, IV, 205).



A visitor to Abu Dujana  who was ill in bed saw that his face was radiant with light and asked him:

“Why does your face shine so?”. He answered:

“I have two deeds:

“One is that I remain silent about matters that do not concern me, and the other is that my heart is distant from thinking negative thoughts about the believers. I have a good opinion about all believers” (Ibn Sa'd, III, 557).



Jalaluddin al-Rumi explains with a metaphor, the ugly and destructive traits that lurk in man's inner world, such as suspicion, envy, and jealousy:

One time a Sultan bought two slaves. In order to perceive the level of their reason and their heart, he began to converse with the first slave. The slave gave such answers to the Sultan that other people would have had



to have thought long and hard about the answers. The Sultan was very pleased with the understanding nature, intelligence and sweet words of this servant. He then called the other slave to him.

The second slave appeared in the presence of the Sultan. The slave's breath smelled bad and his teeth were black from negligence. Though the Sultan was not very pleased with the outer appearance of this slave, he yet began to converse with him in order to understand his state and character and in order to understand his inner world:

“With your appearance and your bad breath, stay a little way away, but not too far away. Let us first find a cure for your mouth; you are a pleasant person and I am a skilled physician. It does not become us to regard you with disdain nor to disgrace you. Sit down, tell us a few stories and let us understand the degree of your reason”

The Sultan then turned to the first slave and said to him:

“Now you arise, go to the hamam and have a good wash”

After his friend left, he addressed the second slave, whom he wished to make speak and said to him in order to test him:

“This friend of yours whom I just conversed with said many things about you. But I see that you are not as he says. That envious one tried to make me dislike you. Your friend said about you: “He is a thief. He is not honest. He sits with criminals and he is undignified”. What do you have to say about him?”

The second slave replied to the Sultan:

“I cannot say about such a one who is reasonable and speaks the truth that he is crooked. On the contrary, as a result of his words, I would try to reform myself, thinking that I may have such faults. My Sultan! Maybe he has seen many faults in me that I am not aware of”.

The Sultan said to the slave:

“Just as he has told me about your faults, now you tell me his faults”.
The slave replied:

“My Sultan! He truly is my good friend. My heart prevents me from disclosing his faults. This is why all I have to say is this: In my opinion his



faults are not faults but rather virtues. He is a model of love, loyalty and humanity. His state is one of uprightness, intelligence and true friendship. He is generous and he helps the needy. He is so generous that he would give his life if necessary. Another trait of my friend in fate is that he is not arrogant. He is good with everybody and is against only his own soul”

The Sultan then said to the slave:

“Do not exaggerate in your praise of your friend and do not try to praise yourself while praising him. Because I will test him and then you will regret your words”

The slave then said:

“No indeed. I was not exaggerating in my praise of him. The virtues of that friend of mine are many times better than I have said. I have told you about the character of my friend. However, o my noble Sultan. What can I do if you do not believe me? My heart necessitates that I speak so”.

When the first slave returned back from the hamam, the Sultan called him to him and said:

“May you be given health and unending bounty. However how much better it would have been for you if you did not possess the evil traits that your friend told me you had. Then those who saw your beautiful face would be pleased and happy. Then it would have been worth the entire treasure of the world to look at you”.

The slave said to him:

“My Sultan! Would you please tell me what that tactless one had to say about me?”

The Sultan replied:

“He told me first of all about your hypocrisy. He said that though you looked like a cure, you were in fact misfortune itself.”

Hearing these words from the Sultan, the first slave became filled with rage, he began to foam at the mouth, and his face turned red with anger. The slave began to criticise his friend, setting no limit. He said:





“At first he was a friend to me, but then I found that he had a very foul mouth. He was like a dog in times of famine. He would eat rubbish a lot of the time”.

The first slave began to toot like a horn in order to criticise his friend. He began to reveal the ugliness that lurked within his inner world. The Sultan then said to the slave: “That is enough”. And he put his hand over his mouth saying to him:

“I have now seen the difference between the two of you. His mouth smelled only because of a physical illness. However your soul reeks of bad odour. O soul who reeks. Distance yourself. Your friend will be your commander and you will be under his command. You will learn from him good manners, humanity and how to speak. Take a lesson from his virtuous nature. Abandon suspicion and envy. You are a pitiable soul who is like one who has tied a rock to his stomach; you can neither swim nor walk with it”.

The second slave who harboured a good opinion about his friend became subject to both spiritual and material bounties due to his being at the peak of virtue. On the other hand, the first slave who bore negative thoughts and succumbed to his anger without learning the truth of the matter was disgraced and reviled and met with great loss.



In essence then, to harbour good feelings about people is a fruit of the virtue of being able to look upon creation from the perspective of the Creator. To wish for the best for people and to see their good side is a very important trait that will lead one to the pleasure of Allah and to people’s love.

12. Generosity and Selflessness

Generosity is to give something one has to another who is deprived of that thing. The peak of generosity is *isar* or selflessness or self-sacrifice. The best definition of *isar* is to be found in the following verse from the Qur’an:

“They give food, despite their love for it, to the poor and orphans and captives: ‘We feed you only out of desire for the sake of Allah. We do not want any repayment from you or any thanks. Truly We fear from



our Lord a glowering, calamitous Day.’ So Allah has safeguarded them from the evil of that Day and has made them meet with radiance and pure joy’ (Al-Insan, 76:8-11).

Generosity is a product of compassion that arises from faith. And compassion is to run to the aid of others in order to make up for their deprivation.

However generosity is not to squander one’s wealth and give it out haphazardly. Allah bestows upon His slaves with care and knowing the worth of the bounty. On this matter, Almighty Allah has placed the following measure:

‘Do not keep your hand chained to your neck but do not extend it either to its full extent so that you sit there blamed and destitute’ (Al-Isra 17:29).

Generosity is one of the attributes of Allah. One of His Names is ‘Al-Kareem’, which means ‘the One who is extremely giving and full of favour, and infinitely generous’¹²⁵ Other Names of Allah such as Rahman, Rahim, Wahhab, Lateef, Tawwab, Gaffar, Afuww, Rauf and Hadi also express the generosity of Allah from different aspects.

It is said in a hadith:

“Allah Most High is Al-Jawwad, that is He is a possessor of generosity and bounty and this is why He loves generosity. He loves good character and is not pleased with bad character” (Suyuti, I, 60).

“Allah is undoubtedly Tayyib, that is, He loves goodness and what is beautiful. He is Tahir, He loves cleanliness; He is Kareem, He loves nobility. He is Jawwad, He loves generosity” (Tirmidhi, Adab, 41/2799).

Taking his share from the generosity of Allah, a believer should be like moonlight on a dark night, deep, sensitive, gentle, thinking of others, compassionate, a possessor of mercy, full of enthusiasm to give out, and with a wealthy heart. Allah says in a verse from the Qur’an:

‘You who have faith! Give away some of what We have provided for you before a Day arrives on which there is no trading, no close friend-

125. See Infitar verse 6



ship and no intercession. It is those who deny the bounty which has been given to them, who are the oppressors.’ (Al-Baqara, 2:254)

‘...But anything you expend will be replaced by Him’ (Al-Saba, 34:39)

Ali ؑ has the following to say:

“People are asleep and when they die they wake up”... (AjJuni, Kashfu al-Hafa, II, 312/2795). If we do not want to wake up empty-handed in the eternal realm and we do not want to be in a state of deprivation, then we must prepare our provision for our afterlife by taking on the character of generosity and selflessness in this world. Rumi explains it beautifully:

“The life of this world is but a dream. To be a possessor of fortune in this world is like finding a treasure in your dream. The wealth of this world gets transmitted from generation to generation and remains in this world”.

“The Angel of Death awakens the ignorant sleeper in order to take his soul. That person then laments about all of the struggle that he went through in order to possess the property in this world that is not his true possession. He becomes extremely sorry. However it is too late and it is all over...”

Such is the life of this world, and such is the life of the hereafter...

It is said in a verse from the Qur’an:

‘Give from what We have provided for you before death comes to one of you and he says, ‘My Lord, if only you would give me a little more time so that I can give charity and be one of the righteous!’ Allah will not give anyone more time, once their time has come. Allah is aware of what you do’ (Al-Munafiqun, 63:10-11)

Almighty Allah praises those of His slaves who are generous and whose hearts are awake as follows:

‘...they would prefer them to themselves even if they themselves are needy’ (Al-Hashr, 59:9)



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who never denied the request of anyone,¹²⁶ has said as a declaration of the virtue of those who possess the trait of generosity:

“Generosity is like a tree whose branches extend from Paradise to this world. Whoever holds onto one of the branches it will take him to Paradise. Miserliness on the other hand, is like a tree whose branches extend from this world down to Hellfire. Whoever holds onto one of its branches will be led into the fire...” (Bayhaqi, Shuabu’l Iman, VII, 435).

“The state of the generous one versus the miserly one is like the state of two people who wear armour from their breast to their collarbone. As the generous one gives out, his armour expands and lengthens to cover his toes and wipes away his footprints. When the miser wants to give something away, his armour contracts and restricts him; however much he tries to expand it, it is of no avail” (Bukhari, Jihad 89, Zakat 28; Muslim, Zakat 76-77).

“The generous person is close to Allah, Paradise and people; and is distant from Hellfire. The miser however, is distant from Allah, Paradise and people, and is close to Hellfire. The ignorant generous one is more pleasing to Allah than the worshipping miser” (Tirmidhi, Birr, 40/1961)

“Pardon the generous one, for Allah holds him by the hand whenever he stumbles” (Haysami, VI, 282)

Asma ؓ, the daughter of Abu Bakr ؓ narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to her:

“Do not tighten the strings of the money-bag, for Allah may constrict what He has hither forth given to you” (Bukhari, Zakat, 21)

“Give out, and do not keep count or Allah will count what He has given you and withhold it from you. Do not hide your money in the pot otherwise Allah will hide it from you” (Muslim, Zakat, 88).

Thinking of others over oneself, generosity, sincerity and genuineness – in their perfect sense- are all a result of the maturation of the spirit. It is only possible to remain distant from worldly and carnal distractions

126. See Bukhari, Adab 39; Muslim, Fadail, 56)



that spoil the peace and spirituality of the heart, by being generous and thinking of others.

Rumi has expressed very nicely the virtue of generosity and the obsession with miserliness as follows:

“Generosity is a branch of a tree of Paradise. Woe to the one who lets go of this branch. The one who plants the seed must first empty his grain house, but then his harvest is great. But the one who keeps his seeds in the grain house will have it end up as food for the mice”

“Just as beautiful people seek clear and pure mirrors, so too does generosity seek out poor and weak people. The beauty of beautiful people becomes manifest with a mirror, just as the beauty of offering and bestowal becomes manifest with the poor and forlorn”

“Those hearts which are suffocating in neediness and poverty are like a house full of smoke. As you listen to their worries, open up a window to their house so that the smoke can exit and your heart can soften and your spirit become light”.

Today too we need people who – according to their means – embark on a serious campaign of generosity and giving out. Let us not forget that we could have been in the place of needy and disadvantaged people. This is why it is a debt of gratitude to our Lord to be generous and selflessness to the sick, forlorn, lonely, needy and hungry.

Let us share the bounties we have been given with the needy in order that those hearts that we please and make happy will increase our spirituality in this world, be our aid in the hereafter and our happiness in the next world.

Scenes of Virtue

Anas رضي الله عنه narrates:

The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم would always give out whatever was asked of him for the sake of Islam. One time, he gave a man who came to him, a large herd of sheep. When the man returned to his tribe, he said to them:



“O people. Run to be Muslim. Because Muhammad is giving out great wealth without fear of poverty or need”.

In fact some people became Muslim merely to obtain worldly wealth. However it was not long before Islam became more valuable to them than the world and everything in it. (Muslim, Fadail, 57-58)



Even though Safwan ibn Umayya, one of the leading men of the pagans of Quraysh, was not yet Muslim, he fought side by side with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in the battles of Hunayn and Taif.

While walking amongst the booty that was gathered in Jirana, Safwan eyed a portion of it in great admiration. Seeing him, the Prophet said:

“Does it please you?”

“Yes” Safwan answered.

“Take it. It is all yours”

Safwan was beside himself and said:

“No heart but the heart of a Prophet could be so generous”. He then pronounced the declaration of faith and became Muslim. (Wakidi, II, 854-55)

The Prophet ﷺ was at the peak of all virtue. He would make much offerings to people in the aim of reforming their weaknesses and would work to guide them.



Abdullah ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه narrates:

“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was the most generous of people. The times when his generosity was overflowing was at the time when he would meet with Gabriel during Ramadan. Gabriel would meet with the Prophet every night during Ramadan and they would recite the Qur’an to each other. This is why the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was more generous than the wind that blew without hindrance” (Bukhari, Bad’u al-Wahy 5, 6, Sawm 7; Muslim, Fadail 48, 50).



One time a man came to the Prophet and said:

“O Messenger of Allah! I am hungry”.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent word to one of his wives to send something to eat. However this mother of the believers said:

“I swear by the One who sent you as a Prophet that we have nothing but water at home”

When the Prophet learned the situation was the same with his other wives he turned to his Companions and asked:

“*Would any of you like to have this man as your guest tonight?*”

A man from the Ansar said:

“I will host him, o Messenger of Allah” He then took the needy man home. When he arrived he said to his wife:

“Do we have anything to eat?” His wife replied:

“No, there is only enough for our children”.

The Companion then said:

“In that case distract the children with something. If they ask for something to eat, put them to bed. When our guest comes inside, turn off the light and we will act as if we are eating together with him”.

They sat down to eat. The guest filled his stomach and they went to bed hungry.

That morning this same Companion went to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Seeing him, the Prophet said to him:

“*Allah Most High was most pleased with your conduct to your guest last night*” (Bukhari, Manakibu'l Ansar, 10; Tafsir, 59/6; Muslim, Ashribe, 172).



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ once sacrificed a lamb. After giving much of it out to many people the Prophet asked Aisha what was left. When Aisha ﷺ answered:

“Just the shoulder blade”, the Prophet ﷺ said:

“You mean to say that we have the reward of everything but the shoulder blade”. (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 33)

That is, our true fortune is what we have given out...



One day a needy person came to the Messenger of Allah and asked him for something. The Messenger of Allah said:

“I have nothing with me to give you but go and buy what you need in my name, and I will pay for it when it arrives”.

Umar  who could not stand to see the Prophet enter into debt said:

“O Messenger of Allah! If you have something with you, you would give it, but Allah has not burdened you with what is beyond your power”

That the Messenger of Allah  was not pleased with these words of Umar became obvious from his blessed face. Upon this a man from the Ansar said:

“May my mother and father be sacrificed for you o Messenger of Allah. Give out! Do not be afraid that Allah will lessen it”

These words of this Companion pleased the Prophet very much and he smiled and said:

“This is what I have been commanded to do” (Haysami, X, 242).

What an exemplary heart... it is a source of much peace for a believer to comfort his fellow Muslim.



One of the leaders of the Tabi'een Abdullah al-Harawi, knew of the generous nature of the Messenger of Allah . However he wished to learn more. One day while he was in Aleppo, he encountered Bilal Habeshi , the caller to prayer of the Prophet. Having found the opportunity he asked about the Messenger of Allah :

“O Bilal! Tell me about how the Messenger of Allah used to give out”

Bilal  explained:



“From the day that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was sent as a Prophet by Allah, until the day he died, I looked after many of his affairs. For instance, whenever a Muslim would come to him and he saw that he was poor, he would command me to go and get a loan and buy some food and clothes for that man. One day a pagan appeared before me and said:

“O Bilal. I am a rich man and I have much opportunity. From now on, do not go to others for a loan, but come to me”. And that is what I did. One day I had taken my ablution and was about to read the call to prayer when I saw that pagan approaching with a group of merchants. When he saw me, he called out:

“Hey Bilal”

“What is it?” I answered. The man soured his face at me, looked at me very sternly and began to speak certain harsh words:

“How much time until the beginning of the month?” he asked.

I said:

“Not long now”.

He said:

“There are only four nights. When that day comes I am going to get what you owe me. I did not give that money neither for your sake nor for the sake of that man. I gave it to you so you could be my slave. You can take my sheep to pasture just as you used to do”.

When I heard these words I was very distressed. I went to read the call to prayer. After praying the late evening prayer, Allah’s Messenger returned to his family. I asked permission to speak with him. He allowed me to enter and I said:

“O Messenger of Allah! May my mother and father be sacrificed for you. Do you know that pagan that I took a loan from? He said such and such. Neither you nor I have the means to pay him back. He will disgrace me. Allow me to take refuge with one of those tribes who have just become Muslim. Allow me to stay with them until Allah Most High provides for the Messenger of Allah to pay back my debts”.

Upon receiving permission from the Messenger of Allah I left and arrived home. I put my sword, my bayonet, my lance and shoes under my head, turned my face towards the horizon and lay down to sleep. I was ill at ease and kept awaking. Just as I was about to depart I heard somebody outside call out to me:

“O Bilal. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is calling you”

I walked to the door of the house of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and what did I see but four camels laden with their loads. I asked for permission to enter and went inside. The Prophet ﷺ said to me:

“*Good news o Bilal. Allah Most High has sent me these to pay back your loan*”. I praised Allah. The Prophet said to me:

“*Did you not see the four camels in front of the door?*”

“I saw them” I said.

“*They are yours together with what is loaded on them. The chieftain of Fedek sent them. Take them and go and pay back your loan*”.

I did as the Prophet said. I unloaded the camels, gave them something to eat and went to call the dawn prayer. After the Prophet led the prayer I went to the Graveyard of Baqi, raised my hands to my ears and yelled out:

“Whoever is owed something by the Messenger of Allah, let him come now and be paid back”.

By selling some of the load and turning it into cash I was able to pay back all of the debts of the Messenger of Allah, to such a degree that there was nobody left on the face of the earth to whom the Prophet owed anything. In fact there was even some money left over. When the evening came I went to the Mosque. I saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ sitting there in the mosque all by himself. I greeted him and he asked me:

“*What happened? What did you do?*”

“Allah Most High paid back all of the debts of the Messenger of Allah, and you have no debt left”

“*Was anything left over?*” he asked.

“Yes, two dinars” I replied.





“In that case, save me from those two dinars and give them out too. I am not going to go back to my family until you release me from those two dinars and put me at ease”.

But because nobody came to whom I could give the dinars, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ waited for a long time at the mosque. Eventually towards the evening, two horsemen arrived. I took them to the market and bought food and clothes for them with the two dinars. After the Prophet had led the evening prayer he called me and asked:

“What happened to that which was with you?”

“Allah has put you at ease” I said.

Upon hearing my answer, the Messenger of Allah pronounced the takbir “Allah is the greatest”.

Having been freed of the fear of dying with the responsibility of those two dinars upon him, he praised Allah. Then he rose and I followed him. He stopped by to see each member of his family and greeted them. After that he retired to his room.

And so o Abdullah. This is the answer to your question” (Abu Dawud, Haraj, 33-35/3055; Ibn Hibban, Sahih, XIV, 262-264).

The Prophet was so generous that he would go into debt in order to give to others. How much have we as his community resembled him in his generosity?



A poet has expressed the peak of the generosity and selflessness of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ as follows:

“If he had nothing but his mere life and soul in his hands he would give that to whoever asked for it. That is why the one who asks from Him should fear Allah and be fair in their request”

Another poet has said:

“If one day somebody likens your generosity to the clouds then he would be mistaken in his praise. Because the clouds give out whilst weeping but you give out whilst smiling”.



Thus this was the degree of the generosity of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He willingly gave everything he ever had in the path of Allah. Khalid-i Baghdadi has made the following comparison about the peak of generosity of the Prophet:

“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was such a great model of generosity that the oceans produce pearls for the sake of His existence, rubies emerge from hard rock, and roses bloom amongst thorns. If His beautiful character was mentioned in a garden, there would not be a rose bud that did not smile, that is, that did not open up and bloom”¹²⁷



The selflessness of Aisha رضي الله عنها, the Prophet’s wife, was amazing. Whilst Umar رضي الله عنه was awaiting his death, after having been stabbed, he called his son Abdullah and said to him:

“...Go to Aisha, the mother of the believers and tell her that Umar sends his greetings of peace to her. Do not dare say ‘The Commander of the Believers’ sends his peace. For today I am no longer the Commander of the Believers. Say to her: ‘Umar ibn Khattab asks your permission to be buried besides his two friends’”.

Abdullah رضي الله عنه continues:

“I asked permission to enter and greeted Aisha رضي الله عنها. She was crying. I said to her:

“Umar sends you his greetings of peace. He asks to be allowed to be buried beside his two friends”.

Aisha replied:

“I had reserved the only place left beside the Messenger of Allah ﷺ for myself. However today I prefer Umar over myself”. (Allah’s Messenger and Abu Bakr were both buried in Aisha’s cell. Aisha thus wished to be buried in the only place left herself, next to the Prophet and her father)

When I returned it was said to Umar:

127. Khalid-i Baghdadi, *Divan*, trans Sadreddin Yuksel, Istanbul 1977, p 65-66



“Here is Abdullah. He has returned”. Umar رضي الله عنه tried to rise in excitement and curiosity:

“Lift me up” he said. He held onto another person for support and asked me:

“What news have you brought?”

“Your wish has been fulfilled. Aisha has granted you permission”.

After I said this, he said:

“*Alhamdulillah* (All praise be to Allah). There was nothing more important to me than this matter. When my spirit is taken back from me, take me there. When you arrive, again give my greeting of peace to Aisha and say “Umar asks permission”. If she allows you, take me inside, if not take me and bury me amongst the graveyard of the Muslims”.

When he passed away, they took him and walking they went to the cell of Aisha. Abdullah greeted her and said:

“Umar asks for permission”. The honourable Aisha replied:

“Allow him in”. He was immediately brought inside and buried beside his two respected friends. (Bukhari, Ashabu al-Nabi 8, Janaiz 96, Jihad 174, Tafsir 59/5, Ahkam 43).

The great selflessness of Aisha رضي الله عنها and the delicacy, manners and courtesy of Umar رضي الله عنه are of such an elevated nature that words cannot express them.



Zaynab ibnt-i Jahsh رضي الله عنها, another of the wives of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was a woman who was very skilled in handicrafts. She would earn money doing so and would spend her gain in the way of Allah. The Prophet had said to his wives:

“She of the longest reach will be the soonest to join me”

Aisha رضي الله عنها says:

“Out of our desire and longing to be with the Messenger of Allah, we set about measuring our arms in order to know which of us it would be who would be reunited with the Prophet first. It was only after that we realised that by ‘the longest reach’ the Prophet had indicated Zaynab. Because it was



she who would make things with her hands and was extremely generous in giving out to others” (Muslim, Fadail as Sahaba, 101).



After the emigration to Madina, each family of Madina (the *Ansar*¹²⁸) took in a family from the newly arrived Muslims from Mecca (The *Muhajirah*¹²⁹). In this way there would be realised a pact of brotherhood between the two and they would work together and share what they earned. The Ansar had pledged much of their lands to the Prophet and he then distributed these amongst the Muhajirah. The Ansar or Helpers went further and made the following generous offering:

“O Messenger of Allah! Take our date palms and share them amongst the Muhajirûn”.

When the Prophet did not accept this offer the Helpers turned to the Emigrants and said:

“In that case, take on the task of watering and looking after the palms so that we can share in the harvest”. When the Prophet approved both sides said:

“We have heard and we have obeyed”. (Bukhari, Hars 5).

How much need we are in of such lofty character in today’s world in which there are so many needy people...”



When the Prophet arrived in Madina the Emigrants said to him:

“O Messenger of Allah! We have never seen people so generous and charitable as this tribe to which we have migrated. The one with much wealth gives out exceedingly, the one with little wealth also sacrifices what he can and helps out. They have removed all our worries of livelihood and they have made us partners in their wealth. We are afraid that they will get all the reward and there will be nothing left for us”.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

128. The Ansar was the title given to the Muslims of Madina and means the ‘Helpers’

129. The Muhajirah was the title given to the first group of Muslims who left their homes and migrated to Madina along with the Prophet and means the Emigrants. (Translator’s note)



“No indeed. As long as you pray to Allah for them and keep praising them for what they have done for you, you too will get your reward” (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 44/2487).



Jabir رضي الله عنه explains the generosity of the Helpers towards the Emigrants as followers:

“Whenever the Helpers would gather their harvest of dates they would divide it into two piles. They would then put many dates in one pile, and less dates in the other. Then they would place palm leaves in the smaller pile to make it look bigger than it really was. They would then say to the Emigrants: “Take whichever pile you prefer”. Thinking that the bigger pile should go to the Helpers, the Emigrants would take the smaller looking pile. In this way the Emigrants would receive more dates. The Helpers too would then have ensured that they were left with the smaller pile...” (Haysami, X, 40).



One day the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم had distributed the booty taken from the Bani Nadir amongst the Emigrants. He had not given anything to any of the Helpers, save three people who were in need. Later he turned to the Helpers and said:

“If you wish, let what you have previously given to the Emigrants be theirs and you can take your share of this booty. If you so wish, you take back what you have given and leave the entirety of this booty for them”.

Upon this, the Helpers gave the following response as an indication of their great selflessness and preference for the Muslim brother over themselves:

“O Messenger of Allah! We will give our Emigrant brothers a share of our wealth and houses and we will leave them all of the booty too”.

Upon this the following verse was revealed which gave good tidings of the salvation of those servants who made such a sincere sacrifice:

‘Those who were already settled in the abode, and in faith, before they came, love those who emigrated to them and do not find in



their hearts any need for what they have been given and prefer them to themselves even if they themselves are needy. It is the people who are safe-guarded from the avarice of their own selves who are successful!

(Al-Hashr, 59:9) (Al-Razi, XXIX, 250; Qurtubi, XVII, 25).

The heart of every believer should then feel peace as they give out, just like the Helpers, and not fear that their wealth will be lessened.



One day, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was about to distribute the land of Bahrain when he made an offering to the Helpers. The Helpers displayed such sacrifice and abandoning that has no parallel:

“O Messenger of Allah! Do not give us anything until you have given our Emigrant brothers double this”

The Prophet then said:

“O Ansar! Since you have preferred your Muslim brothers over your own selves and you do not wish for anything, then have patience with the trials of this world, until you reach me at the fountain of Kawthar¹³⁰. Because after me there will come a time when others will be preferred over you” (Bukhari, Manakibu'l Ansar 8).



One day whilst Aisha ؓ the wife of the Prophet ﷺ, was fasting, a poor person came and asked her for something. Aisha ؓ had nothing but a loaf of bread at home. She said to her servant:

“Give the bread to him”

The servant said:

“There is nothing but this loaf of bread with which to break the fast”

Aisha ؓ said again:

“Give the bread to him”

The servant continues the story:

130. *Kawthar* is a fountain or river from Paradise, the source of all rivers of Paradise (Translator's note).



Upon the order given by Aisha, I gave the bread to that poor person. When it was night time somebody sent us a portion of cooked lamb. Aisha called me and said:

“Here you are, this is tastier than your loaf of bread”. (Muwatta, Sadaqa 5).

It is said in a verse from the Qur’an that “**Allah acknowledges their charity**” (Al-Tawba, 9:104). Almighty Allah bestows upon His slaves according to the degree of their heart.



One time a gift of a head of lamb was made to one of the Companions. He said to the giver of the gift: “My brother, such and such family is more needy of this than we are” and he then took it to the family. That family gave it to another... and so on and so on until it passed through seven houses until it eventually arrived back at the original Companion’s house. (Hakim, II, 526).



The following event told by Huzayfa al-Adawi  is noteworthy in reflecting the generosity and selflessness of the Companions even at their last breath.

“We were at the Battle of Yarmuk. The fierceness of the fighting had passed and the Muslims who had been injured with sword and arrow wounds had one by one begun falling on the hot sand and eventually passing away. Meanwhile I tried very hard to gather my strength in order to search for the son of my uncle. After roaming amongst the wounded I finally managed to find what I was looking for. But alas, my uncle’s son was lying in a pool of blood and could barely manage to speak even with his eyes. I pointed to the water canteen I had brought with me and asked him:

“Would you like some water?”

It was obvious that he did because his lips were parched from the heat. However he did not have the strength to answer. His eyes indicated his pained state.

I opened up the water canteen and had just handed it to him when we heard an ‘aagh’ from amongst the wounded.



As soon as he heard this cry of pain, my uncle's son abandoned his own self, and, with his eyes, he indicated that I take the water to the other wounded.

Running over the scorching hot sand amongst the martyred I reached him. I saw that it was Hisham ibn As. I asked him:

“Would you like some water?” With his eyes he indicated ‘yes’. Just as he was about to drink we heard another sound of ‘aagh, aagh’. Hisham indicated that I should take the water to him.

When I got to him he had passed away. I immediately went back to Hisham, however when I handed the canteen to him, alas he too had become martyred.

I may as well reach my uncle's son, I thought to myself and I ran to him. But it was not to be and I found him passed away on the scorching hot sand... the full canteen of water was left in my hands amongst three martyrs.¹³¹

Huzayfa later speaks of his state of mind at that moment:

“I have had many experiences in my life. But none of them moved me as much as this one. Though there was no blood bond amongst these three Companions, their state of sacrifice and compassion and giving priority to the other left a deep imprint in my memory. This was such courage of faith that I could only watch with the greatest of awe. These people were able to farewell life displaying the same virtue at their last breath as they did throughout their lives and, awareness of the following verse: ‘**Do not die except as Muslims**’¹³² alive in their minds.



The famous opponent of the Sufis, Gulam Khalil, had a hostile attitude to all Sufis. He had a group of Sufis, amongst whom was Abu al-Hussain an Nuri, arrested and sent to the Caliphate. As a result of the decree imposed by the Abbasi Caliph at the time, they were sentenced to death. Just as the executioner was about to behead one of the darwishes, Abu al-Hussain Al-Nuri, stepped forward willingly and joyfully. The people were amazed at this act. The executioner said:

131. See Qurtubi, XVII, 28; Zaylai, Nasbu ar-Raye, II, 318; Hakim, III, 270/5058

132. See Al'I Imran, 3:102



“O hero. You have put yourself forward but this blade is not something to be vied for. Your turn has not yet come, why are you in such a hurry?”. Abu al-Hussain answered:

“My way is a way of selflessness. The most precious and valuable commodity is life itself. I want to sacrifice this last moment of my life so that my brothers can live a little longer. For us, time to take even one more breath is more pleasing and precious to us than a thousand years in the hereafter. Because this is the land of service, there however is the place of closeness to Allah. And closeness to Allah is obtained through service. Despite this I want to sacrifice my last breaths for my friends”¹³³



Upon the death of Uthman Ghazi, Aladdin Bey, who was supported by the leaders amongst the chiefs and who was destined to take the throne according to tradition, preferred his brother Orhan Bey over himself and said:

“My brother! You have the prayer and protection of our forefather. Whilst he was alive he gave the command of the army to you. As a result you deserve to be ruler”.

Alaaddin Bey, who displayed such selflessness and sacrifice, became his brother’s greatest supporter and became his vizier.¹³⁴



On the 8th of October, 2005 Pakistan was shaken with a large earthquake, and more than 70000 people died. Those left living faced hunger and poverty. A young child from Turkey sent the following letter to them on the 24th of November. In it he pledged half of his wealth to his Muslim brothers thus displaying the peak of selflessness:

“I am the son of a poor household. I have no father and my mother is ill. We have two lira to buy bread, but I am sending you one of these liras, because today I found another loaf of bread in the rubbish. We are going to break our fast with that. Please buy bread for the children that suffered in the earthquake with this one lira. This money is lawful and pure. I could

133. Hujwiri, "Kashfu'l Mahjub," trans. Sulayman Uludag, Istanbul 1996 p 302

134. Ziya Nur Aksun, Ottoman History, Istanbul 1994, I, 36



not send all of the money because I need the rest to buy a stamp. I am sorry”¹³⁵

What amazing generosity, selflessness and virtue... a gentle breeze blowing in from the Era of Bliss...



In short, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was at the peak of generosity in times of both wealth and poverty. He would advise his Companions to be generous and give out whether they were rich or poor. In a hadith, he explained how generosity would not decrease one’s wealth or property:

“Every day that the sun rises two angels call out: “O people come to the mercy of your Lord. A small amount of provision which is sufficient for you is better than much wealth that will spoil you”. All creatures except humans and jinn hear this call.

Every day that the sun goes down two other angels take their place and call out: “O Allah, give the one who gives out a successor, and the one who does not, give him ruin”. This call too is heard by all creatures that dwell on earth except for humans and jinn” (Ahmad, V, 197).

In that case, the real achievement is to be able to fill the heart with feelings of generosity and selflessness to make it an ocean and to transform the bounties and trade of this world that Allah has bestowed into wealth of the hereafter. From this aspect then the best of wealth is that which is sent to Paradise ahead of its owner; and the best of souls is that which is used in gaining the pleasure of Allah.

13. Kanaat and istigna (Contentedness and being free from want)

Kanaat, or contentedness is to be pleased with what Allah has decreed, to suffice with what is enough, to meet one’s needs with the minimum of standards and to suffice with whatever material wealth one has been given. It is not to covet what others have, thereby eliminating greed.

135. See <http://www.presidentofpakistan.gov.pk/NewsEventImagePopUp.aspx?ImageID=129> (28/12/2005)



Human beings have come to this world in order to be tried and tested and thus should not forget the purpose in their creation and become anxious about their provision using all of their opportunities to gain wealth. One should strive to turn the property and opportunities that Allah has bestowed into capital for the hereafter. Because Allah Most High has taken on the responsibility of the provision of all of His creatures upon Himself, and has desired that they be content and free of want. Allah says in the Qur'an:

‘There is no creature on the earth which is not dependent upon Allah for its provision.’ (Hud, 11:6)

‘And We put livelihoods in it both for you and for those you do not provide for’ (Hijr, 15:20)

‘How many creatures do not carry their provision with them! Allah provides for them and He will for you. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing’ (Al-ankebut, 29:60).

‘So seek your provision from Allah’ (Al-Ankebut, 29:17).

‘This is Our provision which will never run out’ (Sa’d, 38:54).

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ praised contented people as follows:

“Prosperous is the Muslim who has been given sufficient provision and is content with the bounties that Allah has bestowed upon him”. (Muslim, Zakat, 125)

Again the Prophet ﷺ used to pray:

“O Allah! Make the provision of the family of Muhammad just enough to meet their needs” (Muslim, Zakat, 126)

A rich person who is yet unsatisfied is more restless and suffers more distress than does a poor and needy person. For however much wealth he gains, he is never full, and always wants more. Allah’s Messenger ﷺ has described the state of those who are poor in terms of contentedness as follows:

“Even if mankind were to have a valley full of gold, he would desire another. Nothing will satisfy him other than the dry earth. However, Allah

accepts the repentance of the one who repents” (Bukhari, Rikak, 10; Muslim, Zakat 116-119)

Thus one must repent of the sin of dissatisfaction. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ advised people in this situation as follows:

“Whenever one of you looks at another who is superior to you, let him also turn his glance to those who are below him.” (Bukhari, Rikak, 30)

Luqman Hakim gives the following advice:

“My child! Do not occupy your heart with worries and sorrow. Beware of greed and avarice. Accept what has been decreed for you. Be content with what Allah has provided for you and your life will improve, your heart will become full of joy and you will receive pleasure from life”

However let us not misunderstand contentedness as if Islam recommends abandoning work and being lazy and falling to a position in which one becomes dependent on others. Contentedness is a matter of the heart and of the character. The Muslim should earn his livelihood from what is lawful and pure and perform his financial duty and give out to the needy around him.

Another beautiful virtue is *istigna*, or being free from want. *Istigna* means being satisfied, having wealth of the heart, being content with what Allah has provided, not expecting anything from others and not presenting one’s needs to others. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said:

“The Angel Gabriel came to me and said: “O Muhammad! Live as long as you like, for in the end you will die. Love whatever you like, but in the end you will have to part from whatever it is. Strive for whatever you like, and in the end you will see its result. Know this, that the honour of the believer is in his standing in prayer in the night; his dignity is that his is free from asking from others”. (Hakim, IV, 360-361/7921).

Istigna is a characteristic of the heart of those righteous and sincere people who have freed themselves from their basic nature and have reached perfection. It is wealth of the heart. It is to avoid lowering oneself and coveting what others have and being content with what one does have.



In another *hadith*, it has been said that: “Contentment is a treasure that never runs out” (Daylami, III, 236/4699). Thus as required by this *hadith*, *istigna* is when the heart reaches a state of peace by becoming spiritually wealthy as a result of moving closer to Allah. A heart that has been enriched with *istigna* and contentedness finds peace from all worldly anxieties and fears. The spirit perceives eternity and for the believer the attraction of fleeting pleasures meets its end. Allah Most High renders him free from want of everything but Himself, through His attribute of ‘*Al-Mugni*’¹³⁶.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said:

“Whoever finds himself in need and discloses this need to others, his need will never end. But whoever discloses his need to Allah, it is hoped that Allah will provide for him either immediately or later”. (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 18/2326; Abu Dawud, Zakat 28/1645)

Istigna is not just about property, wealth and fortune. It is to preserve the heart from being occupied with all creatures and preoccupations that make one ignorant of one’s Lord.

Scenes of Virtue

From time to time the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who was the most content of people, would make his Companions promise not to ask for anything from anyone. Sawban ؓ narrates:

“One time the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“Whoever promises me that he will not ask for anything from people, I will guarantee him Paradise”

I then said to him:

“I promise”

Sawban ؓ, the Companion who narrated this *hadith* says that after that he never asked for anything from anyone his entire life. (Abu Dawud, Zakat, 27/1643)

136. *Al Mugni* is one of the Divine Names of Allah and means ‘The One Who enriches’ (Translator’s note)

This *hadith* expresses the virtue of being able to remain independent of other people. Maruf-i Karhi has said, indicating the great sensitivity of *tasawwuf* on the matter of contentedness and *istigna* as follows:

“*Tasawwuf* is to receive the truth and to abandon one’s desire for what other people have”



The following event narrated by Awf ibn Malik , is noteworthy in terms of the Prophet Muhammad  teaching his Companions about contentedness and *istigna*:

“A group of seven or eight of us were sitting with the Messenger of Allah . He asked us:

“*Are you not going to make a pact with the Messenger of Allah?*” Whereas we had just recently made a pact. We said:

“O Messenger of Allah! We already made a pact with you”. Then he asked again:

“*Will none of you make a pact with the Messenger of Allah?*” Again we replied:

“O Messenger of Allah! We already made a pact with you”. The Prophet repeated his question:

“*Will you not make a pact with the Messenger of Allah?*”. This time we held out our hands and said:

“O Messenger of Allah! We already made a pact with you. Now what is it that you wish us to make a pact about?” The Prophet replied:

“*Pledge that you will worship Allah and not associate any partners with Him, that you will pray five times a day, that you will obey, and – then lowering his voice, he said– that you will never ask for anything from anyone*”. I swear that I saw some people from this group who, if their whip fell while they were astride their horse, they would not ask anyone to give it to them”. (Muslim, Zakat, 108)

Allah’s Messenger  repeated his words three times and lowered his voice, thus indicating the importance of the matter.



Whenever Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه used to drop the reigns of his camel, he would immediately stop his camel to fetch them himself. Those around him would say:

“Had you commanded us to we would have gotten it for you”.

Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه gave the following reply:

“The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered me never to ask for anything from anyone” (Ahmad, I, 11).



Amr ibn Taglib رضي الله عنه narrates:

“Booty – or slaves – were once brought to the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم. From these he gave to some and did not give to others. However when word reached him of the talk of those who were not given anything, he praised Allah and then he said:

“I swear by Allah that I give to some and I do not give to others. In actual fact, those to whom I do not give are more pleasing to me than those to whom I do give. I gave to some people in whose hearts I saw impatience and greed. And I left to themselves those in whose hearts I saw contentedness and goodness. Amr ibn Taglib is one of those”.

Amr ibn Taglib then said:

“I swear by Allah that these words that the Prophet spoke about me were more precious to me than the whole world” (Bukhari, Jum’a 29, Humus 19, Tawheed 49).



Umar رضي الله عنه narrates:

“From time to time, the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم would give me a salary for having served in battle and I would say to him:

“Could you not give this to someone needier than me”. Allah’s Messenger would reply:

“Take this. You can take money that is given to you without you having coveted or desired it. Obtain money for yourself and if you so wish you can



then give it away. However, do not seek money that is otherwise” (Bukhari, Zakat, 51).



When the tribe of Bani Tujib wished to return to their country after visiting the Prophet, he was more generous in his offerings to them than to the other tribes and he asked them:

“Is there anyone left amongst you who has not received anything”

“Yes, we left behind a youth who is the youngest of us to look after our mounts”, they replied. Allah’s Messenger said to them:

“Send him here”. When they returned to their mounts they said to the youth:

“Go to the Messenger of Allah and receive your gift. We have taken ours and farewelled him”. When the youth arrived next to the Prophet, he said to him:

“O Messenger of Allah. I am from the tribe of the sons of Abza. I am from the group that was just with you, for whom you granted their wish. Would you grant my wish too?” The Prophet replied:

“What do you wish?”

“O Messenger of Allah. My wish is not like that of my friends. I want you to pray for me that Allah forgives me, that he deals with me mercifully, and that he enriches my heart”

The Prophet then said:

“O Allah. Forgive him, deal with him mercifully. Enrich his heart!” Then he commanded that he also be given a gift just like the others.

The tribe of Bani Tujib returned to their country. A group from this community met with the Prophet at Mina during the season of Hajj. They said to him:

“We are from the tribe of the sons of Abza”. The Prophet, who was a model of loyalty asked them:

“What is that youth that came with you last year doing?”



“O Messenger of Allah. We have never seen someone more content with the provision that Allah gave him. If people were to divide the world amongst themselves that youth would not even condescend to it”, they replied. The Prophet listened to these words with pleasure, praised Allah and prayed for good for the youth.

With his behaviour this youth became a model of virtue amongst his people. He continued to live his life as a servant of Allah, who gave no value to this world and who was fully content with the provision that Allah gave him. After the Prophet ﷺ died, he was foremost in reminding the people of Yemen who had turned back from Islam about Allah and their religion. Because of him there was not one person from his tribe who turned back from their religion. After that Abu Bakr ؓ was to investigate that youth. He asked about him and he wrote a letter to the governor of that region, advising him to treat him well. (Ibn Qayyim, III, 650-652; Ibn Sa'd, I, 323).



The pact of brotherhood between the Emigrants who had migrated from Mecca to Madina, and the Ansar of Madina was a unique scene the likes of which history has never seen. It was such that the Ansar of Madina declared all of their wealth and put it forward to be distributed equally amongst their Emigrant brothers. In response, the Emigrants, whose hearts were treasures of contentedness, displayed a lack of want and were able to say:

“May your property and wealth be blessed for you, my brother, just show me the path to the market, that will be enough” (Bukhari, Buyu, 1).



One day a poor man from the Muslims of Madina came to the Prophet and asked him for something to eat.

Allah’s Messenger ﷺ asked him:

“Have you nothing in your house?”

The man replied:

“Yes. We have a cloth, a part of which we cover ourselves and a part of which we use to cover the floor, and we have an urn of water”



The Prophet ﷺ replied:

“Bring them to me”. The man brought his cloth and urn of water. The Prophet took them in his hand and asked those about him:

“Who would like to buy these?”

One of the Companions said that he would give one dirham for them. The Prophet called out a few times:

“Is there no one who will give more?”

He then sold them to a Companion who offered two dirhams. He gave the poor man the money and said:

“Go and buy food for your family with this dirham. With the remaining money go and buy an axe and bring it to me”.

When the man returned with an axe, the Prophet attached a handle with his own hands and said to him:

“Now, off you go. Chop wood with this and sell it. Work like this for fifteen days and then come back to me”

The poor man returned to the Prophet fifteen days later. He had earned ten dirhams and was able to buy clothes and food for himself and his family.

The Prophet was very pleased at this and said to him:

“This is much better for you than having your begging be a taint for you on the Day of Judgement...” (Abu Dawud, Zakat, 26/1641; Ibn Majah, Tijarah, 25)

A Muslim must perceive the virtue in giving his fellow believer a profession. And needy Muslims must remain free of want from other people and strive to work in the direction showed by the Messenger of Allah.



Abu Said رضي الله عنه was one of the Companions who used to tie a rock to his stomach to suppress his hunger. His mother said to him:

“Rise and go to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Ask him for something. Such and such went to the Messenger of Allah, and he came to his aid. And



such and such went also, and he was also given bounty. Come now, you go too. Maybe you will return with some good”.

Abu Said رضي الله عنه replied to his mother:

“Let us wait a while and look for something. If we can’t find anything, then we will go”. However much he looked he could not find anything to eat. Having no other choice, he decided to go to the Messenger of Allah. When he arrived in the presence of Allah’s Messenger, he found him giving a sermon and he began to listen to him. In his sermon the Prophet was speaking about the following:

“Allah will make the one who shows lack of want and preserves his honour independent of all of creation...”

After hearing these words, Abu Said رضي الله عنه could not bear to ask for anything from the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم and returned home empty handed. He tells of his state afterwards as follows:

“After I returned home from the Prophet empty-handed Almighty Allah sent us our provision, and our affairs were put into such order that there was no one from the Ansar who were richer than we were” (See Ahmad, III, 44).

This is the importance of being able to know our Lord well. The importance of knowing that our Lord is *Al-Razzak*, The Provider, who bestows provision on His servants and distributes it. The stronger our trust in, reliance upon and submission is to Him, the wealthier and more at peace will be our hearts.



Hakim ibn Hizam رضي الله عنه narrates:

“I once went to the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم and asked him to give me a portion of the booty that they had obtained. He gave me one hundred camels. I asked him for some more and he gave me another one hundred camels. I asked him for more and again he gave me one hundred camels. Then he said to me:

“O Hakim! This wealth is truly attractive and sweet. It will be blessed for whoever takes it without feeling greed for it. Whoever takes it with greed and

coveting it, it will not have any blessings for him. Such a person is like one who keeps eating and eating and is never satiated. The hand that gives is superior to the hand that takes”.

Upon this I said:

“O Messenger of Allah! I swear by Allah who sent you with the true religion that I will never accept anything from anyone other than you as long as I live”

Hakim رضي الله عنه then took the first one hundred camels that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم offered him and left the rest. The day came when (during his caliphate) Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه was to distribute property from booty and he called Hakim رضي الله عنه to him. However Hakim refrained from taking anything from him. Yet again (during his caliphate), Umar رضي الله عنه invited Hakim رضي الله عنه in order to distribute some booty to him. Again Hakim رضي الله عنه did not accept anything. Following this Umar رضي الله عنه then said to the people:

“Muslims. I ask you to look here at Hakim. I am giving him the share that Allah has allocated for him from this booty but he will not take it”. Thus it was that after the death of Allah’s Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم, Hakim رضي الله عنه never accepted anything from anyone. (Bukhari, Wasaya 9; Wakidi, III, 945).

This is a unique example of determination to be content with what one has, of being free of dependency on others and of love for the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم...



Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who was known for his asceticism and piety was once asked:

“Which is superior, wealth or poverty?”

He replied:

“Continue going to the market (that is, do your trade) and do not be dependent on others. I know of no greater virtue than being independent of people”



Ibrahim ibn Adham once saw a man complaining of poverty and said to him:



“Did they give you poverty without paying its price that you are now complaining of it?”

The man asked in surprise:

“O sir. Is there a price paid for poverty?”

Ibrahim ibn Adham then said:

“Yes. When I saw the value of poverty I willingly and happily gave the land of Belh in order to buy it”

The matter that is aimed at here is to be wealthy in terms of contentedness by breaking the greed of the *nafs*. The patient poor people and the grateful rich are equal in terms of Allah’s pleasure. The spiritual worth of poverty when it is borne with patience has no measure...



Abu Hazim was once asked:

“How much wealth do you have?”

“I have two things: the first is that I am content with Allah; and the second is that I am independent of people”.

“In that case you are poor”, it was said to him.

He replied:

“How can I be poor when the heavens and the earth and all that is between them belong to Allah, and I am His sincere servant?”

Real poverty is the heart which is heedless of Allah. A heart that has been given the bounty of being together with Allah is the richest heart in the world. And the one that is distant from Allah is the most deprived.



The following story reflects the virtue of contentedness and *istigna* and contains a lesson for us all:

One time during Ramadan when it was time to break the fast, a man whose face bore a nobility that people had never seen, arrived at a bakery. After the crowd had dispersed he said to the baker:



“My son. I was not able to earn my livelihood for today. Would you give me a quarter of a loaf of bread that I will pay for tomorrow if I am still alive?”

His voice was trembling and his face was red. The baker said to him:

“Of course sir; I will give you a whole loaf of bread. You don’t need to pay for it”. However that odd man said:

“No my child, one quarter is enough... Maybe three other needy people will come and ask for some bread. And anyway only a quarter of my face can blush. I cannot bear anymore than that. And my condition for taking the quarter is that I pay you for it tomorrow”.

The surprised baker gave him a quarter of a loaf. The man took the bread, kissing it and silently and slowly walked away. A dog appeared before him just up ahead. He was looking at the old man with begging eyes that revealed its hunger. That blessed radiant man said: “So, half of this is meant for you” and he gave half of the quarter to the dog. After that he walked off to the mosque. He broke his fast with what was left of the bread and some water. He thanked Allah for the bounties that He had bestowed upon him.

The next day a storekeeper said to him:

“Sir, take these water bottles and fill them up from that fountain and then carry this new stock inside”. The man then gave him one lira for this.

The peculiar old man immediately ran to the bakery and paid 25 cents for the quarter loaf. The baker did not want to take it but the radiant looking man insisted and he could no longer resist; he was forced to accept the money with his eyes full of tears.

This is a person who was a model of contentedness and free of want. He was also a generous servant of Allah who was able to give some of his bread away, despite his poverty and did not withhold his compassion for Allah’s creatures.



The following are two examples of contentedness and *istigna* that we witnessed at the Foundation of Aziz Mahmud Hudayi in Istanbul:



Our Foundation was in the process of giving aid to a mother and her son. The son was paralysed but had finished university. One day the mother came to the Foundation and thanking us she said:

“I am no longer going to receive any help from you. You may help people who may be more needy than I am, because my son has now passed away. With the last amount of money I received I was able to pay for my son’s funeral. Now however I am left on my own. And I can look after myself. Please give the money that you would have given me to a needy family that may be in our former position”.

Another family we were in the process of aiding was a family from Holland. The mother had lost her husband and her children were left orphaned. One day she wrote a letter thanking our Foundation in which was written:

“I have now paid back my husband’s debts. I have saved him from being indebted to other people. I am now able to get by with my own efforts”.

And so, dignity has nothing to do with wealth nor poverty; real dignity is a jewel that lies in the heart.



The servant of Allah must never be in a state of dependency on others, but neither should he act independent of the bounty that comes to him from Allah. The following *hadith* explains this well:

“The Prophet Ayyub عليه السلام had taken off his robe to wash it when a pile of gold pieces fell down before him. He immediately began to fill his robe with them. Upon this Allah Most High called to him:

“O Ayyub! Did I not free you from this desire for the world that I see in you now?” Ayyub responded:

“I swear by Your Dignity that indeed You did my Lord. However I am not free of want of the blessings that come to me from You”. (Bukhari, Ghusul, 20).



Hasan Basri once prayed to Allah Most High:

“O Allah! Enrich me by making me needy for You. And do not impoverish me by making me independent of You”. (Baqillani, I’jazu al-Qur’an, Beirut 1998, p 107).



In short, the Prophet ﷺ declared that true wealth is determined by wealth of the heart and not with property.¹³⁷ Thus everyone is rich according to the degree of their contentedness and *istigna*. Contentedness is, according to the *hadith*, a treasure that never depletes¹³⁸. True believers are those who possess this bounty of wealth and give it away.

14. Abstinance from the world.

Zuhd, is to remain free of desire for all worldly and physical pleasures, that is not to give them any worth and to adorn one’s inner world with worship and beautiful dealings with others. As a result everything other than Allah loses its importance in the heart.

The *zahid*, or the possessor of *zuhd*, is the one who avoids even doubtful things thus fleeing from sin, and who, out of love for and fear of Allah, uses the bounties of this world purposefully.

The great men of Islam have always displayed a superior servanthood in their hearts, and have lived with *zuhd* and *istigna* which reflected their withdrawal from the world and its pleasures. Thus in their world, everything but love for and fear of Allah had lost its value. In this way, *zuhd* is like a firm shield against love and greed for this world, which makes one forget the afterlife.

This deceiving world, with its attractions and its charm has made many people yield to it. Whereas one should keep the world outside one’s heart and benefit from it and turn it into trade for the hereafter. Almighty Allah has described the life of this world lived with its desires and whims as follows:

137. Ahmad, II, 389

138. Bayhaqi, Kitabu az-Zuhd, Beirut 1996, II 88)



‘Know that the life of this world is merely a game and a diversion and ostentation and a cause of boasting among yourselves and trying to outdo one another in wealth and children: like the plant-growth after rain which delights the cultivators, but then it withers and you see it turning yellow, and then it becomes broken stubble. In the afterlife there is terrible punishment but also forgiveness from Allah and His good pleasure. The life of this world is nothing but the enjoyment of delusion’ (Al-Hadid, 57:20).

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said:

“The worth of this world as compared with the hereafter is as if one of you puts his finger into the ocean and then looks at it to see how water it brings when taken out” (Muslim, Jannah 55).

“Whoever desires the Afterlife, Allah will enrich his heart and order his affairs and the world will then lower itself and follow him. Whoever’s aim is this world however, Allah will place poverty between his two eyes and disrupt his affairs. As a result nothing more than what has been decreed for him from this world will come to him”. (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 30/2465)

Allah’s Messenger ﷺ gave the following advice for his community to abstain from the world and be grateful for the bounties that Allah has provided:

“Look at those whose conditions are worse than you, and do not look at those who are better off than you. This is more suitable for you in order that you do not belittle the bounties that Allah has given you”. (Muslim, Zuhd, 9)

Zuhd and *taqwa*, which are the signs of those who have adopted the prophetic way in response to life and its events, is sometimes misunderstood. It is thought that they imply withdrawing entirely from the bounties and riches of the world. Whereas to be able to execute one’s financial duties, which is also a type of worship, is also very valuable in the eyes of Allah. The word ‘*infaq*’ or giving out is mentioned in many places in the Holy Qur’an. Two of the five pillars of Islam, *zakat* and *hajj*, can only be performed when one possesses the ‘*nisab*’, or the minimum amount of property liable to payment of *zakat*. The prophetic *hadith*, that the ‘one who gives is superior to the one who takes’ also encourages one to at least possess this minimum amount, or *nisab*, in order to be able to carry out

these acts of worship. In that case *zuhd* cannot be contrary to matters that the religion encourages.

To remain free of desire for worldly bounties out of fear that one may commit a sin or fall into heedlessness is a requirement of *zuhd* and *taqwa*. However this *istigna* is a matter of the heart and does not pertain to one's actions or outward behaviour. That is, *zuhd* and *istigna* consist of taking part in worldly bounties without the heart becoming attached to them. In this respect, *zuhd* is not poverty; it is an attitude of the heart that must be adopted by all believers, be they rich or poor. If a person is living in apparent poverty as a result of the divine decree but his heart desires the world, then he cannot be considered a person of *istigna* and *zuhd*. *Zuhd* and *istigna* do not mean that one is forced to be content with little as a result of one's fate; rather they imply willingly protecting one's heart from becoming a slave to the world.

Allah's Messenger ﷺ has described the state of *zuhd* beautifully:

“Zuhd of this world is neither by making the lawful prohibited nor by abandoning property and wealth. Zuhd of this world is rather relying upon Allah's property rather than what is in one's hands; it is to be hopeful to the utmost of the reward and merit to be obtained from any calamity that may befall one” (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 29/2340).

Scenes of Virtue

Iyas ibn Sa'labe رضي الله عنه narrates:

“One day the Companions were discussing the world next the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Upon this the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“Do you not hear? Do you not hear? To live simply is from one's faith; to live simply is from one's faith” (Abu Dawud, Tarajjul, 1/4161; Ibn Majah, Zuhd 4).

That is to live like a *zahid*, humbly and free of want...



According to a narration by Aisha رضي الله عنها, a lady from the Ansar once came to her and saw that the bed of the Prophet consisted of nothing more than a thin mattress folded up. She then immediately ran to her house and



brought back a mattress filled with wool. When the Prophet ﷺ saw that his bed had been changed he was not happy and he said to Aisha:

“O Aisha! Give this bed back to its owner. I swear by Allah that had I so desired, Allah would make mountains of gold and silver move for me and put them under my command”. (Ahmad, Kitabu az Zuhd, p 30).



Abdullah ibn Mas’ud ؓ narrates:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ had once laid down to sleep on a straw mat. When he awoke, the mat had left marks on the side of his body. We said to him:

“O Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Can we not get a mattress for you?” He replied:

“What have I to do with this world? I am like a rider in this world who takes shelter beneath a tree and then goes on his way and leaves it behind him” (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 44/2377).



Abu Huraira ؓ once encountered a group of people who had before them a fried sheep. The people invited him but he did not wish to eat and he said:

“Allah’s Messenger moved on from this world without having filled his stomach even with barley bread” (Bukhari, At’ima, 23)



One day Sahl ibn Sa’d ؓ said:

“From the day he was sent as a messenger until the day he died, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ never saw sifted flour”. It was said to him:

“Did they used to use sifted flour in the time of the Messenger of Allah?”

Sahl answered:

“From the day he was sent as a messenger until the day he died, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ never saw a sieve”

They asked him:



“How did you use eat to sifted barley flour?”

He replied:

“We used to grind the barley and scatter it. The bran would blow away; and we would wet the remaining flour and make dough with it” (Bukhari, At’ima, 23).



Anas  narrates:

“Some merchandise from Bahrain was once brought to the Prophet. Allah’s Messenger  said:

“Bring it and stack it in the mosque”.

Up until that time, this property was more than had ever been brought to the Messenger of Allah. He went to pray and did not even look at the property. After he had finished praying he came and stood before the goods and distributed them to whoever he saw... The Messenger of Allah  did not leave from there until he had distributed it all and not a single dirham was left behind” (Bukhari, Salat 42, Jizya 4, Jihad 172).



The Messenger of Allah  once cautioned those of his wives who had inclined towards the riches of the world with a decree from the Qur’an. He asked them to choose whether they preferred the finery of this world or Allah, His Messenger and the life of the hereafter. He then distanced himself from them for one month. After this event, which was known as ‘Ila’, the following verse was revealed:

‘O Prophet, tell your wives: ‘If you desire the life of the world and its finery, come and I will give you all you need and release you with kindness.

But if you desire Allah and His Messenger and the abode of the hereafter, Allah has prepared an immense reward for those among you who are good-doers.’ (Ahzab, 33:28-29)

Following this the Prophet , beginning with Aisha , said to her:

“I am going to speak to you about a certain matter. Do not hurry to give me a reply. You can reply after you have consulted with your family”. Aisha asked him:



“What is this matter, o Messenger of Allah? The Prophet ﷺ then recited the above verse to her. Upon this Aisha immediately answered:

“Am I to consult with my family in a matter concerning my preference for you? Never! I choose Allah, His Messenger and the life of the hereafter”. The Prophet’s other wives responded in the same way. (Muslim, Talaq, 29)



The freed slave of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, Sawban ﷺ narrates:

Whenever Allah’s Messenger ﷺ was to leave on a journey he would farewell his daughter Fatima ﷺ, last of all. And the first person he would go to when he returned was Fatima. It was a time when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had returned from another of his journeys. Fatima had hung a curtain over her door and had placed two bracelets of silver on her two sons Hasan and Hussain. The Prophet arrived at Fatima’s house, however he did not enter. Fatima realised that the reason the Prophet did not enter his house was due to what he saw. She immediately pulled down the (decorative) curtain, and removed the bracelets from her sons’ wrists. She shared one of these amongst the two of them. Hasan and Hussain began to cry and went to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Allah’s Messenger ﷺ took the bracelets and said to Sawban:

“O Sawban. Take these bracelets to such and such family. Hasan and Hussain are from my Ahl’ul Bayt¹³⁹. I do not want them to use up in this world, the beauties that Allah is going to bestow on them (in the next). O Sawban. Go and buy a necklace made of bone for Fatima and two bracelets again made of bone for her children”. (Abu Dawud, Tarajjul, 21/4213).

Allah’s Messenger ﷺ wanted the members of his *Ahl’ul Bayt* to live in the simplest, most humble way, free of desire for the world, as an example for his community.



Abu Dharr ﷺ narrates:

“I was once walking in the district of Harra in Madina with the Prophet of Allah ﷺ, when we saw the mountain of Uhud. The Messenger of Allah said:

“O Abu Dharr!” I replied:

“Yes o Messenger of Allah. I am at your command”. He replied:

“If I had as much gold as this here mountain of Uhud, it would not please me at all. I do not wish for three days to pass in which I have money with me other than to pay back a debt, even if it is a mere dinar - Allah’s Messenger made a gesture of giving, moving his hands in front of him, on his right, on his left and behind him – I would wish to distribute that which was with me to the servants of Allah”.

Then he walked a little further and said:

“Those who have the most wealth in this world will have the least reward in the hereafter. Except for those who give it out like this to those on their right, on their left, and behind them. But how few indeed are those” (Bukhari, Istikraz 3, Rikak 14; Muslim, Zakat 32).



One day a man came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said:

“O Messenger of Allah. Tell me such a deed that I can do that when I do it Allah loves me and the people love me”.

Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said to him:

“Be indifferent to the pleasures of the world, do not vie for it and Allah will love you and be indifferent to what others possess, and do not covet it and the people will love you” (Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 1).



One day the Messenger of Allah ﷺ went to the marketplace. There were Companions around him. Allah’s Messenger came across a dead baby goat with ears that had been cut, lying in the road. He held it by the ears and asked:

“Which of you would like to buy this for one dirham?” His Companions replied:



“We would not like to have it for less than that. It is of no use to us”.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ then asked:

“*Would any of you like to have it for nothing?*” They replied:

“We swear by Allah that even if it was alive it would be defective because it has no ears. So what use is it now that it is dead?” The Prophet then said:

“I swear by Allah that this world in the sight of Almighty Allah is more worthless than this dead goat you see in front of you”. (Muslim, Zuhd, 2).



According to a narration by Amr ibn Awf ؓ, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ once sent Abu Ubaydah ibn Jarrah to Bahrain to collect the *jizya*¹⁴⁰. Abu Ubaydah ؓ returned from Bahrain with the *jizya* money. Hearing that Abu Ubaydah had returned, the Ansar gathered together to pray the dawn prayer with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. When the Prophet finished praying and rose to leave, the Ansar approached him. When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saw them in this state, he smiled and said:

“I see that you have heard that Abu Ubaydah has returned from Bahrain with the money”.

“Yes, o Messenger of Allah” they replied.

“Be pleased and hope for things that will please you. I swear by Allah that I do not fear poverty for you. Rather I fear that the world and all its pleasures will be laid out before you like it was with those before you, and you will begin to vie for it just as those before you did. And I fear that this world will destroy you just as it did those before you” (Bukhari, Rikak 7; Muslim, Zuhd 6)



The following example has a very important lesson in showing the danger of inclining towards the world and forgetting the hereafter:

During the rule of the Umayyads, the Muslim army under the command of Abdurrahman, the son of Khalid ibn Walid, had set off in the

140. Jizya is the tax that non-Muslims had to pay in return for protection by the Muslims (Translator’s note)

hope of conquering Istanbul, the good news of which had been predicted by Allah's Messenger. Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari رضي الله عنه was in that army. While the Byzantines were fighting from behind the city fortresses, a man from the Ansar drove his horse right into the centre of the Byzantine army. In surprise and in reference to the verse: '**Do not throw yourselves into danger**', the believers who saw this began to exclaim:

"La ilaha Illallah! Look at him. He is throwing himself into danger willingly". Upon this Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari said:

"O Believers. Let it not be misunderstood. This verse was revealed about us, the Ansaris. When Allah helped His Messenger by making his religion reign, we said: "Let us now stay back with our property and manage it". Upon this, Allah Most High revealed the following to His Prophet:

'Spend in the Way of Allah. Do not cast yourselves into destruction. And do good: Allah loves good-doers.' (Al-Baqara, 2:195)

What is indicated by the verse "Do not cast yourselves into destruction" is do not put all your efforts into working for worldly property like gardens and harvests and ignore and abandon your efforts in the way of Allah".

Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari رضي الله عنه who heeded this divine warning in all sincerity never once condescended to the pleasures and comforts of this world. He never desisted in his efforts to serve Allah and was eventually martyred near one of the fortresses and was buried in the region of Ayyub which still bears his name to this day. (See Abu Dawud, Jihad, 22/2512; Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 2/2972)



The blessed house of the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم was very simple. Hasan Basri, whose mother was the maidservant of Ummu Seleme, the Prophet's wife, passed his childhood near this blessed house and described how he could touch the ceiling of the room of the Messenger of Allah when he was a child¹⁴¹. From this it has been concluded that the rooms were not very high. The doors of the rooms of our Prophet's house were made from black felt cloth.¹⁴²

141. Ibn Sa'd, VII, 161; Zuheyli, I, 248

142. Ibn Sa'd, I, 499



Said ibn Musayyab, one of the great imams from the Tabi'een once expressed his sorrow that these rooms had to be pulled down during the reign of the Umayyads, in order to be added to the Prophet's Mosque:

“By Allah how I wish that these could have remained as they were. In this way the new generation and those who come here as visitors could see how little the Prophet sufficed with and they would not try to increase their wealth and boast about it” (Ibn Sa'īd, I, 499-500).

That the Prophet ﷺ lived in a tiny house was not due to poverty, but rather due to the fact that he did not give an iota of importance to this world. If he had merely kept his share of booty and not distributed it, he would have been able to have built splendid palaces and mansions. However he willingly preferred a meagre and humble life and was not at ease unless he gave out the share of booty that befell him. This is because Allah's attribute of '*Al-Rahman*' (the Most Compassionate) had manifested itself perfectly in him.



The Prophet Sulayman ﷺ considered himself a poor person because he had eliminated from his heart love of property and wealth. When he rose in the morning he would go to poor and needy people and sit with them in great humility. He would say:

“It is only befitting that a poor person sits with other poor people”.



According to narrations, when death approached the prophet Nūh (Noah) عليه السلام, he was asked:

“O long-living prophet. How did you find this world?” Nūh replied:

“I found it to be a house with two doors. I entered through one and left through the other”. (Ibn Asir, Al-Kamil, I, 73).

The prophet Nūh had built himself a little hut made of bamboo. When it was said to him:

“If only you had made a more solid house for yourself”, he replied:

“For someone who is going to die, this is even too much”. (Abu Nuaym, Hilya, VIII, 145).



Jabir ibn Abdullah رضي الله عنه narrates:

The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم had appointed Abu Ubaydah رضي الله عنه as our commander, and sent us to meet the caravan of the Quraysh. For our provision he gave us a sack of dates. He could not find anything else to give us. Abu Ubaydah would give us the dates one by one. Someone who heard this asked:

“How did you get by on dates alone?”

Jabir responded:

“We would suck them like a child suckles on the breast, then we would drink some water and that would suffice us that day until night time. We would shake the leaves off the trees with our sticks, wet them with water and then eat them” (Muslim, Sayd, 17).

Even though the blessed Companions did not possess even the necessities of this world, they never once complained about this. Neither would they desist from struggling in the way of Allah.



One day Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه was offered a drink of honey. However just as he was about to drink it he began to cry. Those around him could not contain themselves and they too began to cry. When he was asked the reason why he cried, Abu Bakr replied:

“I was once with the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم. At that point he began to say “*Stay away from me, stay away from me*” and he was pushing something away from him. However I could see nothing. When I wished to learn what it was the Prophet said:

“The world with all its glory was shown to me. I told it to stay away from me. It moved away however it called out: “I swear by Allah that even if you manage to flee and be saved from me, those who come after will not be able to escape me”.

Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه continued:

“And so I cried out of fear that I would fall in love with this world” (Abu Nuaym, Hilya, I, 30-31).



During his caliphate Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه lived a very simple life. On his death bed he left instructions that a piece of land he owned be sold in order to pay back the salary he received from the state treasury while he was caliph. (Ibn Esir, Al-Kamil, II, 428-9).



While Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه was on his death bed he left instructions to his daughter, Aisha رضي الله عنها to give the camel that they drank milk from, the container from which he dyed his clothes and the velvet robe he wore to Umar رضي الله عنه. His reasons for this were that he had benefited from these while he was managing the affairs of the Muslims. After the death of her father, Aisha رضي الله عنها gave these items to the new caliph, Umar رضي الله عنه. Taking them Umar رضي الله عنه said:

“Abu Bakr! May Allah’s mercy be upon you. You have left those who came after you in a dilemma” (Ahmad, Az Zuhd, p 110-111; Suyuti, Tarih al Khulefa, Egypt 1969, p 78-9).



During the reign of Umar رضي الله عنه, the lands of Syria, Palestine and Egypt were conquered and Iran was incorporated. into the borders of the Islamic State. The wealthy treasures of Byzantine and Iran began to flow into Madina, the centre of the Islamic world. The welfare of the Believers began to increase. However the heart of the caliph of the Believers, Umar رضي الله عنه remained free from desiring this state of welfare and despite the magnificence of the state and the wealth of the state treasury he continued to preach the sermon wearing a patched robe. From time to time he would be forced to go into debt and he lived his life in dire straits. This is because he would only take the minimum amount needed from the treasury and this would be barely enough for him.

The leading men of the Companions could no longer bear this state of his. They considered increasing the salary of the Caliph. But because they hesitated to suggest this to Umar رضي الله عنه, they approached his daughter and the wife of Allah’s Messenger رضي الله عنها, Hafsa رضي الله عنها. They asked her to make this offer to her father without giving him their names. Without disclosing their names Hafsa رضي الله عنها presented their offer to her father. Having witnessed the



Messenger of Allah ﷺ remain hungry for days¹⁴³ with not even a single date to fill his stomach, Umar ؓ asked his daughter:

“My daughter. How did the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to dress and eat?”

“Just enough as was necessary” she replied. Umar ؓ continued:

“My two friends (Allah’s Messenger and Abu Bakr) and I are like three travellers who travel the same path. The first of us (Allah’s Messenger) reached his destination. The second (Abu Bakr) following the same path, was reunited with the first. And as the third, I would like to reach my friends. If I go with too much baggage then I will not be able to reach them. Or do you not want me to be the third traveller on this path?”¹⁴⁴



Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari ؓ who loved living a simple and humble life, far from luxury, was once allocated four thousand dinars from the state treasury. However he only used a very small portion of this and distributed most of it to the poor” (Abu Nuaym, Hilya, I, 163).

This Companion, who used to say that the account of the one who has two dirhams will be much more difficult than the one who has one dirham once returned the three hundred dinars that was sent to him by the Governor of Damascus, saying:

“Could the Governor not find anybody needier than me? We have a home to shelter us, sheep that we benefit from and a servant to serve us. I fear having any more than this” (Ahmad, Zuhd, p 147).



The zeal of faith after the time of the Companions had so enveloped the world that the army of Tariq ibn Ziyad, consisting of five thousand men was able to defeat the Spanish army of 90 000 men. Tariq had placed his foot on the treasure of the king and said to himself:

“Tariq! Yesterday you were a slave with a chain around your neck; then the day came when Allah set you free. Then you became commander of an

143. See Muslim, Zuhd, 36

144. See Ahmad, Zuhd, p 125; Shahbenderzade Ahmad Hilmi, *Tarih'i Islam*, I, 367



army. Today you find yourself having conquered Andalusia and standing in the King's Palace. Know this well and never forget that tomorrow you will find yourself in the presence of Allah”.

What sort of training is this that it builds the personality of a slave and raises him to the peak of virtue. It stops his heart from inclining towards the goods of this world and makes him live his life always taking himself to account”.



The great saint and student of Shaykh Nakshibend, Muhammad Parisa, once approached a radiant-looking young moneylender in the city of Baghdad, while on his way to Hajj. He became sad thinking that the youth was constantly occupying himself with worldly pursuits, having to spend too much time trading with customers. He thought to himself:

“How unfortunate. Just at the age when he can perform much worship, he has lost himself in worldly trade”.

When he went to inspect him he found that the heart of this youth was together with Allah and he was amazed. This time he thought to himself, and he praised the youth:

“*Mashallah*. His hand is in profit yet his heart is with the True Beloved”.

This state is what is known as ‘*halvet der encumen*’, that is, being together with Allah while living amongst the people, managing to focus on Him only and being able to live a state of unity within multiplicity.

When Muhammad Parisa arrived in Mecca, he encountered a white-bearded old man who had embraced the cover of the Ka’bah and was sobbing and weeping. Firstly looking at the outer appearance of the old man and the way he was entreating Allah in such a moving way, he thought to himself:

“If only I could weep so and seek refuge in Allah”, and he envied the old man.

Then when he looked at his heart he found that all of his weeping and prayers were for this fleeting world. His soft heart was then saddened.



In short, remaining indifferent to the world is not merely in times of poverty but is an attitude of the heart that should be constant. The important thing is to be able to continue one's worldly pursuits without neglecting one's hereafter.



The following state of Jalâluddin Al-Rumi is very beautiful and reflects how he managed to adopt the state of *zuhd* of the Prophet out of his love for him.

Whenever he arrived home he would ask: "What do we have to eat today?" If he received the reply: "Nothing", he would be pleased and say "Praise be to Allah. Today our home is like the home of the Prophet ﷺ". Under no circumstances would Rumi accept charity and he would also prevent his students from doing the same, instead encouraging them to work".¹⁴⁵



Malik ibn Dinar once saw Rafi', one of the friends of Allah, in his dream. He was bareheaded and walking barefoot. He asked him:

"Where are you going".

Rafi' replied:

"Thank God, I have escaped from prison".

The next morning Malik immediately went to Rafi's house, where he found that Rafi had passed away.

The Prophet ﷺ had said:

"This world is the prison of the believer and the paradise of the unbeliever".

(Muslim, Zuhd, 1).



After Sultan Murad Han II gave up the throne in order to dedicate more time to worship and retired to Manisa he penned a poem which indicated that he had carried out his duty solely to gain the pleasure of Allah:

145. Ali Nihat Tarlan, "Mawlana," Istanbul 1974, p 29





Let us go and remember Allah for at least one or two days

We did not come to this world in order to possess it.



Another brave man who adopted an attitude of living free of desire for property and wealth and worldly position and who accepted the bounties of this world not to satisfy his own soul but rather to use in the service of the slaves of Allah was Yavuz Sultan Selim Han. One day he addressed those under his command as follows:

“If your aim is to continue in your rebellion then let me know and I will immediately withdraw myself from the government. I accepted this sultanate from my father for the sole purpose of serving Islam and I have sacrificed my brother and my brother’s children for the reformation of this world. I offered you a pact (bey’ah) and you have accepted. I have abandoned my sleep, my comfort and peace of mind in my efforts to establish this religion. If your aim is not to revivify Islam then I too have no desire for this sultanate”.



In short, the slave of Allah should turn towards desiring the pleasure of Allah, the Creator of all things. When the heart submits to Allah the state of *zuhd* becomes manifest in the slave. And when the state of *zuhd* becomes manifest, then all property and wealth becomes worthless in the sight of the *nafs* and only gains any worth when it is attributed to Allah, that is, it is given out. In this way it returns to its true destination. This is because the heart is now nourished by love for Allah and by good deeds, and these deeds that are beloved to his beloved begin to give pleasure to his soul.

15. Patience and fortitude

Sabr (patience) is when one remains constant in the face of changes in one’s physical and spiritual states and to preserve one’s composure, to endure trials, deal with pain, meet distress and difficulties with cool-headedness, and to restrain one’s human feelings within the limits of reason and religion.



Matanah (fortitude) is when one meets whatever befalls one with strength of character, firmness, toleration, and steadfastness.

Patience is the foundation of good character. It is half of faith and the key to happiness and bliss. It is a great virtue that reunites one with the bounties of Paradise. Patience is to envelop oneself in peace without destroying one's balance, in the face of the events that may displease one and cause pain. It is to submit to Allah.

The prophets and the saints have always displayed paramount examples of patience and have been subject to divine help. This is why they should be our models in the matter of patience.

The worldly aspect of patience is pain but the otherworldly aspect is very bright indeed. Those who bear the pain of being patient will be rewarded with Allah's pleasure and the eternal realm of Paradise.

To reflect on the favours in the commands and prohibitions of Allah, to ponder on their wisdom and the divine reward that is to follow makes being patient easier.

The first condition of patience is that one displays it when one first encounters the event that necessitated it. Patience that is not shown at the time of the event does not have as much reward.

Because patience includes all aspects of good character, it has a very great position in our religion. Patience is mentioned over seventy times in the Holy Qur'an. Patience is recommended to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and to his entire community:

'O You who have faith! Seek help in steadfastness and prayer' (Al-Baqara, 2:153)

'O You who have faith, be steadfast; be supreme in steadfastness; be firm on the battlefield; and have *taqwa* of Allah; so that hopefully you will be successful' (Al'i Imran, 3:200).

In a commentary on this verse, Elmalili Muhammad Hamdi Yazir has the following to say:

"One of the divine names of Allah is *Al-Sabur*, or The Patient One. Whoever has patience has had manifest Allah's power within him. And

especially if these patient people come together to form a community, then they will be subject to Allah's help in all situations. Allah is their constant friend and guardian".¹⁴⁶

The greatest of rewards always come after one has displayed the greatest of patience and tolerated calamities and trials. The Holy Qur'an states:

'The steadfast will be paid their wages in full without any reckoning'

(Az Zumar, 39:10).

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has informed us of the varieties of patience and its virtue as follows:

"Patience is three: patience in the face of calamities; patience in serving Allah; and patience in refraining from committing sin" (Suyuti, II, 42; Daylami, II, 416)

Again the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has informed us that Allah Most High has said:

"Whenever Allah takes back from the world a friend of His that He loves, the reward for the believer who shows patience and awaits his reward from Allah is Paradise" (Bukhari, Rikak, 6)

"If My servant is steadfast when I test him by making his two eyes blind, then I will give him Paradise in return for his eyes". (Bukhari, Merda, 7; Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 58)

Patience and steadfastness is one of the most important disciplines in our religion. And the test of patience is one of the hardest trials. This is why Abu Bakr ؓ has said:

"It is more accepting to me to be in health and grateful than to be subject to trial and have to be patient".

Scenes of Virtue

The life of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is full of beautiful examples of patience. From his childhood to the time of his death he encountered great

sorrow, all manner of distress and grief. He lost his father before he even came into this world. He lost his mother at the age of six, his grandfather at the age of eight, and in the tenth year of his prophethood he lost his uncle who had given him protection. Three days after this he lost his greatest supporter, his beloved wife, Khadijah. He farewelled the Master of Martyrs, his uncle Hamza at the Battle of Uhud, and six of his seven children and many of his grandchildren, some at a young age and some as adults. He buried many of his beloved Companions with his own hands. He was subject to torture, insults, slander, hunger and poverty. He was injured in battle and subject to feverish illnesses. However none of these managed to upset his fortitude or his balance. He was a model of patience and acceptance under all circumstances.

How many of us have buried six of our children with our own hands? How many of us have held our little babies and grandchildren in our arms watching them struggle to breathe and then finally pass away? Has anybody had the emaciated body of their uncle ripped apart and his liver bitten into? In short, is there any other person, other than the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who has been tried with such manner of agony and extreme tribulation and showed such patience and acceptance in each case?



In the time of the days of ignorance, and during the season of Hajj, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would set up a stand from which he would preach Islam. He became subject to much distress, difficulty and torture as a result. However he met each with patience and never complained. One time he invited to Islam the tribe of the sons of Amir ibn Sa'saa as he did with many other tribes. They listened to the Prophet, asked him some questions however they did not become Muslim. When Allah's Messenger ﷺ left them and mounted his camel, a pagan by the name of Bayhara provoked his camel. The camel suddenly rose making Allah's Messenger ﷺ fall to the ground. A Muslim woman named Dubaa ibnti Amir who saw this insult to the Messenger of Allah cried out:

“O tribe of Amir. Is there not one of you who sees this cruelty to the Messenger of Allah and does nothing to protect him, even for my sake?



Three men who were her uncle's sons rose and assaulted Bayhara. After this event the Messenger of Allah ﷺ prayed for them as a sign of his loyalty:

"O Allah. Bestow your blessings upon them". As a result of the blessings of this prayer, Allah Most High made those brave men become Muslim and they eventually became martyrs. (Ibn Hajar, Al-Isaba, IV, 353).

Tarik ibn Abdullah Al-Muharibi narrates how he witnessed the patience which Allah's Messenger ﷺ displayed in the face of the difficulties he encountered in preaching Islam:

"I once saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ at the Zulmajaz Stand and he was preaching to the people:

"O people! Say 'la ilaha illallah (there is no god but Allah) and be saved". A man there was following him with a rock and screaming:

"O people! Never believe him, do not dare follow him. He is a liar". He threw the rock at the Prophet and made his ankles bleed. I asked those who were there:

"Who is this man (preaching)?" They replied:

"He is a youth from the sons of Abdulmuttalib". Then I asked:

"And who is that man who is following him and throwing rocks at him?" They replied:

"That is his uncle, Abu Lahab".¹⁴⁷



Mudrik Al-Asdi narrates another example showing that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was a model of patience:

"I was once with my father performing the hajj (during the days of ignorance). When we came to Mina, we encountered a group of people. I asked my father:

"Why have these people gathered here?" He answered:

“For that person there who has abandoned the religion of his tribe”. When I looked at who he was pointing at, I saw that it was the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and he was saying:

“O people! Say ‘la ilaha illallah’ and be saved”.

Some of the people spat in his face while others threw dirt over him and yet others reviled him. This situation continued until midday. Just at that point, a young girl whose shoulders were bare, came carrying a container of water and a handkerchief. She was crying. The Messenger of Allah took the water and drank from it and washed his hands and face. He raised his head and said:

“My dear child! Cover your shoulders with your headscarf. Do not fear that your father will fall into a trap and be killed or be disgraced”.

We asked who this girl was. They answered: “His daughter, Zaynab”. (Haysami, VI, 21)



Abdullah ibn Mas’ud رضي الله عنه narrates:

While the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was distributing the booty from the Battle of Hunayn he gave more of a share to certain people than others.

He gave one hundred camels to Akra ibn Habis and the same amount to Uyayna ibn Hisn. He gave some of the leading Arabs even more. One of the people there said:

“By Allah, there is no justice in this distribution of booty, and Allah’s pleasure was not obtained”.

I said:

“I swear by Allah that I am going to tell the Messenger of Allah what you said”. I went to him and told him what the man had said. The blessed face of the Messenger of Allah turned red from his sadness. He said:

“If Allah and His Messenger are not just then who can be just?” Then he continued:

“May Allah have mercy on Mûsa (Moses). He was subject to an even more difficult trial than this and he was patient”.



From then on I decided never again to tell Allah's Messenger ﷺ what other people said about him. (Bukhari, Adab 53; Muslim, Zakat, 145)



According to a narration by Anas ibn Malik ؓ, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ once passed by a woman weeping and wailing at the grave of her child. He said to her:

"Fear Allah and be patient".

The woman responded:

"Go away and leave me alone! The calamity that has befallen me has not befallen you"

The woman had not recognised the Prophet. Later they told her that he was the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. As soon as she heard this she ran to his door. Because there was no one there to prevent her, she directly entered the presence of Allah's Messenger and apologised:

"O Messenger of Allah. I did not recognise you".

Allah's Messenger ﷺ said:

"True patience is at the time the calamity hits" (Bukhari, Janaiz, 32).



Abdullah ibn Mas'ud ؓ narrates:

I once entered the presence of Allah's Messenger ﷺ. He had contracted malaria. I said to him:

"O Messenger of Allah! You have contracted a very severe degree of malaria". He replied:

"Yes. I am bearing the pain that two of you can bear".

"This must be so that you can get twice the reward", I said. He replied:

"Yes, that is true. Allah forgives the sin of the Muslim who pricks his foot or endures greater pain. The sins of that Muslim fall away like leaves fall from a tree" (Bukhari, Marda, 3, 13, 16; Muslim, Birr, 45).



Allah's Messenger ﷺ once asked the angel Gabriel:

“To what degree did the emotional pain of Yaqub (Jacob) reach after being separated from Yûsuf?”

Gabriel replied:

“The emotional pain that seventy mothers who had lost their children would feel.” The Prophet then said:

“In that case how much reward did he receive?”

Gabriel replied:

“The reward of seventy martyrs. Because not once did he harbour a bad opinion of Allah” (Taberi, XIII, 61; Suyuti, ad Durru al Mansur, IV, 570; Yusuf, 86).

This patience is what is mentioned as being ‘*sabrun jamil*’ in the Qur’an, or ‘beautiful patience’.



Abdullah ibn Mas’ud ؓ narrates:

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ once began to tell us of a prophet who had been sent to his people. His people had beaten him and made his face bleed. That prophet was wiping his face and saying at the same time:

“O Allah, forgive my people because they do not know”. I can still see the Messenger of Allah ﷺ as he was telling us about this prophet. (Bukhari, Anbiya 54; Muslim, Jihad 104).



The following event has a lesson for us all in showing that the reward for patience can only be Paradise:

One day Abdullah ibn Abbas ؓ said to Ata ibn Abi Rabah:

“Shall I show you a woman of Paradise?” He replied:

“Yes, show me”. Ibn Abbas then said:

“Do you see that black woman? That woman once approached the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said to him:



“I have epilepsy and when a fit comes over me my clothes unveil me. Would you pray to Allah that He heals me?”

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied:

“If you show patience, Paradise is for you. But if you still wish I will pray to Allah to heal you”. Upon this the woman said:

“I will be patient with my illness. However would you pray that my clothes do not reveal me when I have a fit?” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ prayed to Allah for this. (Bukhari, Marda 6; Muslim, Birr, 54)

Thus this is the elevated value in the sight of Allah of the patience that is shown when one is tried...



Abu Said ؓ narrates:

“I once sat with some poor people from the Emigrants. Because some of them did not have any clothes to cover themselves, they were sitting in the shadow of the others to cover themselves. At that point somebody began to recite from the Qur’an. Allah’s Messenger then appeared and sat with us. When Allah’s Messenger appeared, the person reading Qur’an stopped. The Messenger of Allah greeted us and asked:

“What are you doing?”

We answered:

“O Messenger of Allah! That is our teacher and he is reading from the Qur’an. We are listening to the Book of Allah”.

The Prophet then said:

“Praise be to Allah that He has created people amongst my community for whom I have been commanded to be patient with”.¹⁴⁸

148. With these words the Prophet was referring to the following verse from the Qur’an: **‘Restrain yourself patiently with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, desiring His face. Do not turn your eyes from them, desiring the attractions of this world. And do not obey someone whose heart We have made neglectful of Our remembrance and who follows his own whims and desires and whose life has transgressed all bounds’** (al Kahf, 18:28). Here Allah Most High commanded the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and those poor and needy people who first entered Islam with him to show patience in the face of distress and to be very sensitive in his dealings with them.



Then Allah's Messenger ﷺ sat amongst us as if he was equal to us. He indicated with his hands and said:

"Make a circle".

The group immediately made a circle around him and turned their faces towards him. Then the Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave us the following good news:

"O you Emigrants who are poor and needy. Good news for you. On the Day of Judgement you will be surrounded by light and you will enter Paradise half a day earlier than the rich people of this world. This half a day is equal to five hundred years of this world" (Abu Dawud, Ilim, 13/3666)

And this is the reward of poor patient people...



According to a narration by Fadala ibn Ubayd رضي الله عنه, the following event is a magnificent example of the epic patience and fortitude shown by the special students of the Prophet, His Companions, in the face of the great deprivation and difficulties that they faced:

"Whilst the Prophet was leading the prayer for his Companions, some of them were unable to stand any longer and fainted due to lack of strength resulting from hunger. These were the 'Ashab-i Suffa¹⁴⁹, or the People of the Bench. The Bedouins who came from the desert used to say about them: "They are mad". When Allah's Messenger ﷺ finished praying, he went next to them and consoled them saying:

"If only you knew what Allah had prepared for you, you would desire to be even poorer and more in need than you are now" (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 39/2368).



Abu Huraira رضي الله عنه narrates:

"I saw seventy people from the People of the Bench. None of them had clothes that completely covered their body. They either had a skirt that they wore to cover their thighs or they wore a robe which covered them

149. Literally "the people of the bench". The Suffa ashabi were a group of early Muslims who had nowhere to live and no means of sustenance. Thus they used to live on a bench outside the Prophet's mosque (Translator's note).



from their waist up. They would tie their clothes around their neck. Some of them would reach half of their calves, whilst others would reach their heels. They would gather up their clothes so that their private parts could not be seen” (Bukhari, Salat, 58).

As can be seen the Blessed Companions endured all manner of difficulties, including hunger, poverty, war and calamity in order that the religion of Islam could reach us today.

We too must follow in their footsteps in order to be able to carefully transmit this sacred trust to the next generations.



Abdurrahman ibn Awf ؓ has said:

“Islam brought difficult commandments which were hard on the *nafs*. We found the best of the best to be in these difficult commandments that displeased the *nafs*. For instance we left Mecca and migrated to Madina with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. This migration which was hard on our *nafs* became a means of superiority and victory for us. Allah Most High says in the Qur’an:

‘Just as your Lord brought you out from your house with truth, even though a group of the believers disliked it, arguing with you about the Truth after it had been made clear as though they were being driven to their death with open eyes’ (Al-Anfal, 8:5-6)

Just as Allah so described we came out at the Battle of Badr, in the company of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and here too Allah Most High gave us victory and the upper hand.

In short, we encountered the greatest good as a result of these hard commandments of our *nafs*.” (Haysami, VII, 26-27)



The following words which are from Muhammad Iqbal express the virtue in showing patience and endurance in the face of difficulties:

“A gazelle was once complaining to another gazelle:



From now on I am going to live in the Ka'bah, the sacred sanctuary. I will sleep there and graze there. Because here in these grassy plains the hunters have set their traps and roam around night and day for us. I want peace from these hunters. And I want peace for my heart..."

The other gazelle who was listening to him said:

"O my clever friend. If you want to live, live in danger. Keep up the struggle and keep yourself sharper than a jewelled sword. Danger tests strength and power. It shows us of what our bodies and souls are capable of".



The essence of the matter is this: patience is a treasure to be found in the depths of the human being.

It is the strongest shield against calamities and misfortunes. It is a virtuous trait with which Allah Most High is most pleased and promises great rewards. In the words of Allah's Messenger ﷺ:

"*Patience is light*" (Muslim, Taharat, 1). This is because it illuminates one's world and one's afterlife.

16. Hamd (Praise) and Shukur (Gratitude).

Hamd is to extol and exalt the infinite greatness of Almighty Allah, His divine art and the manifestations of His attributes. *Shukur* is to praise and thank Him for His infinite bounties, favours and offerings through one's words, actions and in the heart. Both words are very close to each other in meaning.

Every manner of exaltation is particular to Allah only and praise can only be for Him. To praise Allah for all of the bounties that He has bestowed is one of the duties of the Muslim. Even though this is a debt incumbent on the Muslim, Allah Most High informs us that He is pleased with His servant who praises Him.¹⁵⁰ This too is a great bounty and favour and it is a manifestation of His infinite Mercy.

150. Muslim, Zikir, 89



Allah Most High is the only Being truly worthy of praise. The Holy Qur'an states:

'Praise belongs to Allah who created the heavens and the earth and appointed darkness and light' (An'am, 6:1).

Allah Most High desires that His servants praise Him at every opportunity. He states in the Qur'an:

'And say: 'Praise be to Allah' (Isra, 17:111)

'The end of their call is: 'Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds!' (Yunus, 10:10)

We are encouraged to praise Allah during every cycle of our prayer with the first verse of the first Chapter of the Qur'an, Al-Fatiha:

'Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds' (Fatiha, 1:1)

It is not possible to hope for any good from any task or action that is begun without having first praised Allah Most High. In warning his community about this matter, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said:

"Every important task that is not begun without praising Allah is without blessings" (Abu Dawud, Adab, 18/4840)

Hamd is at the same time an important form of *zikr* (remembrance of Allah). The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has explained the virtue of praising Allah as follows:

"Cleanliness is half of faith. The words 'Alhamdulillah' (Praise be to Allah) is its balance, 'Subhanallahi wa'l hamdulillah' (Glory and Praise be to Allah) fill the space between the heavens and the earth with rewards. The ritual prayer is radiance; charity is proof; patience is light. The Qur'an is evidence either against you or for you. Everybody leaves in the morning (for the market) to sell their soul; some of them end up setting it free, while others end up destroying it" (Muslim, Taharah 1; Tirmidhi, Deawat 85/3517)

Like *hamd*, another important duty of the servant is *shukur*. *Shukur* is when the servant is pleased with the bounties and goodness that have been bestowed upon him and he speaks various words and actions in sincere servitude to His Lord who provided him with them. *Shukur* is to know the True Bestower of bounties.

It is not enough just to know and express verbally the bounties that Allah has bestowed in order to be considered a servant who is truly grateful. It is also vital that we perform our worship and do good deeds as necessitated by our Lord.

One of the most profound matters of this religion is that praise and gratitude is a requirement of being a human being. The human being is at the peak of the hierarchical chain of beings from the simplest to the most perfect, and has been created as the *'ashraf-i mahklukat'* (the most noble of creatures).

Allah's Messenger ﷺ has said:

"Shukur (Gratitude) is half of faith..." (Suyuti, I, 107)

Every human being who has preserved the dignity and nobility with which they have been created will feel in their conscience this duty of gratitude towards someone who merely offers them a glass of water. This being the case then, to remain heedless and ungrateful towards our Lord, the Source and Bestower of all of these bounties is contrary to reason, understanding and the human conscience. This state can only be a result of lack of intelligence and lack of feeling.

In spite of this, unfortunately there are many people who are in great heedlessness of the endless bounties and favours that Allah has bestowed upon them. In reference to this deep ignorance Allah says in the Qur'an:

'But very few of My slaves are thankful' (Sebe, 34:13)

The state of ingratitude is a condition that our Lord is most displeased with. It is also a cause for the bounties that have bestowed upon us by Him to decrease. Almighty Allah says in the Qur'an:

'Remember Me – I will remember you. Give thanks to Me and do not be ungrateful.' (Al-Baqara, 2:152)

'If you are grateful, I will certainly give you increase, but if you are ungrateful, My punishment is severe.' (Ibrahim 14:7)

'Whoever gives thanks only does so to his own good. Whoever is ungrateful, Allah is Rich Beyond Need, Praiseworthy.' (Luqman, 31:12)

Scenes of Virtue

Whenever the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would gather up his table he would say:

“O our Lord. We praise you with the purest of feelings, with an endless praise that never decreases and that will be accepted by you and not turned back” (Bukhari, At’ima, 54; Abu Dawud, At’ima 52; Tirmidhi, Deawat, 55)



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ once said:

“Allah Most High is most pleased with his servant who, after he eats or drinks anything he praises Him” (Muslim, Zikr, 89; Tirmidhi, At’ima 18)



One time two people sneezed in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ. To one of them the Prophet said ‘*yarhamukallah*’ (May Allah have mercy on you), while to the other he said nothing. The person to whom he did not say these words asked him:

“When so and so sneezed you said *yarhamukallah*; why did you not say it to me when I sneezed?”

“That person said ‘alhamdulillah’ (praise be to Allah), you said nothing”. (Bukhari, Adab 127; Muslim, Zuhd, 53).



One time the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ saw Umar wearing a shirt. He said to him:

“Is this shirt of yours new or has it been washed?” Umar ﷺ replied:

“It is not new, it has been washed, o Messenger of Allah”. The Prophet then said:

“Wear something new, live as one who praises Allah, and die as a martyr” (Ahmad, II, 89)

These miraculous words of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ eventually came true and Umar ﷺ did indeed die as a martyr.



The most important task performed by the slave is undoubtedly to praise Allah. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has informed us of the virtues of praising Allah as follows:

“One of the slaves of Allah said: “O my Lord! Praise be to You with a praise worthy of the Majesty of Your Countenance, for the Greatness of Your Power and Dominion”. This slave left the two angels appointed with the duty of writing down his deeds incapable of writing down the reward for this praise. They rose to the heavens and said:

“O our Lord. Your slave has uttered such words that we do not know how to write down their reward”. Allah Most High, asked, though He knew the words His slave uttered better than any other:

“What did My slave say?” The angels replied:

“O our Lord. That slave of Yours praised you in the following way:

“Ya rabbi laka’hamdu kama yanbaghiy l’jalaali wajhika wa li’athiyimi sultaanika”. (O Lord. Praise be to You with a praise worthy of the Majesty of Your Countenance, for the greatness of Your Power and Dominion”).

Upon this, Allah Most High said to those two angels:

“Write down those words of My slave as he uttered them until He is reunited with Me and I then give him his reward for those words of praise that he uttered” (Ibn Majah, Adab, 55).

May our Lord bestow on us the sincerity of this prayer...



Abu Huraira رضي الله عنه has said:

“I grew up as an orphan and I migrated as a poor man. I worked for the daughter of Gazwan (Busra) in return for the mere filling of my stomach and a pair of shoes. While on a journey I would gather wood for them and when they mounted their animals I would urge on their camels with sweet tunes in order to speed them up; Praise be to Allah for strengthening the religion of Islam and for making Abu Huraira an imam” (Ibn Majah, Ruhun, 5/2445).



Aisha رضي الله عنها narrates:

“One night the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to me:

“O Aisha! If you allow me I want to spend this night in worship of my Lord”. I responded:

“By Allah! I love to be together with you; but I love what pleases you more than that”

Then he rose, took his ablution and stood to pray. He was crying... He was crying so much that his robe, his blessed beard and even the place of his prostration was soaking wet due to his tears. While he was in this state, Bilal رضي الله عنه came and called him to prayer. When he saw him crying he said:

“O Messenger of Allah. Why are you crying when Allah Most High has forgiven your past and future sins?”

The Prophet replied:

“Shall I then not be a slave who praises Him much? I swear by Allah that such verses have been revealed to me that it is woe to the one who reads them and does not reflect on them”. Then he read the following verses from the Qur’an:

‘In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are Signs for people with intelligence: those who remember Allah, standing, sitting and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: ‘Our Lord, You have not created this for nothing. Glory be to You! So safeguard us from the punishment of the Fire’ (Āl-i Imran, 3:190-191)



Whenever the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saw that bounties that had been given to him had not been given to others, he immediately praised Allah. One time he went to visit a man who was paralysed and when he saw his state, he immediately got down from his animal and prostrated out of gratitude. (Haysami, II, 289)

A sign that one loves Allah’s Messenger is that one takes on his character. How many times do we prostrate out of gratitude in the face of all of the scenes that are full of lessons for us?



Sa'd ibn Abi Wakkas رضي الله عنه narrates:

“One day I had set out from Mecca in order to go to Madina with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. When we arrived at a place called Azwara the Messenger of Allah ﷺ descended from his camel. Then he raised his hands to the sky and prayed for a while, then he prostrated and stayed in prostration for a long time. He repeated this three times. Finally he said:

“I asked for a request from my Lord and I prayed for intercession for my community. And Allah promised me one third of my community. Then I prostrated out of gratitude to my Lord. Then I raised my head once more and asked my Lord to forgive my community; then he promised me another third of my community. Upon this I prostrated once more out of gratitude. Then I raised my head once more and asked for my community; He then promised me the remaining third of my community. Then I prostrated once more to my Lord out of gratitude” (Abu Dawud, Jihad, 162/2775).

The good news that pleased our Prophet so much and drove him to prostrate out of gratitude was that those members of his community who committed major sins would not remain in Hell forever, even though they may be punished for their sins, but they would eventually enter Paradise as a result of his intercession. And those who committed minor sins would be forgiven, perhaps even without meeting with any punishment.

That those who have no faith will not enter Paradise is not under discussion here.



Abdurrahman ibn Awf رضي الله عنه narrates the following event which shows the sensitivity of the Prophet ﷺ in the matter of being grateful to Allah for His favours and bounties:

One time the Messenger of Allah ﷺ left the mosque and I followed him without him noticing. He went into a date field. There he faced the direction of Mecca and prostrated. He prolonged his prostration to such a degree that I thought he had passed away. I immediately went to him and kneeled down to look at his face. He raised his head and asked me:

“What is the matter o Abdurrahman?”





“O Messenger of Allah. You stood so long in prostration that I feared that you had passed away and I immediately came to your side”. The Prophet replied:

“When I entered this garden I encountered Gabriel. He gave me the good news that Allah Most High said: “Whoever greets you with the greeting of peace then I bring peace upon that person. Who sends blessings upon you then I bless that person”. This is why I prostrated to my Lord out of gratitude”.
(Hakim, I, 344-345/810).



All of the bounties that we have been given are undoubtedly from Allah Most High. To thank the means by which these bounties reach us is a sign of loyalty and courtesy. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has said in a hadith:

*“If a person prays to Allah for the one who does him a favour as follows:
“May Allah bring you good”*

Then he will have paid his debt of thanks in the best way...” (Tirmidhi, Birr, 87/2035)



Aisha رضي الله عنها narrates:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would frequently say to me:

“O Aisha. Would you recite some of the poems that you have memorised?”

I would reply:

“Which verses would you like o Messenger of Allah? I know many poems”.

He would then say:

“The ones that are about gratitude”. One time I said:

“May my mother and father be sacrificed for you. I then read the following poem:

“Hold the weak person that you see by the hands and help him to stand. Do not let the fact that he is weak deceive you. The day will come when



calamities will befall you and envelop you. Then will come the time when that poor person will recompense you or if he cannot do anything he will at least praise you. Because someone who praises you for something that you did for them will have rewarded you. If you wish to disgrace someone who is noble know that weak forces cannot weaken a strong rope”

Upon this the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“O Aisha! According to what Gabriel has told me, on the Day of Judgement when all of creation will be resurrected, Allah Most High will say to His slave who has been the recipient of a favour by another:

“Did you thank My slave who was good to you?”

He will reply:

“O my Lord. I knew that any good that comes to me is from You so I thanked You only”. Then Allah Most High will say:

“You will not have thanked Me as long as you have not thanked My slave who has been the means for this good reaching you”. (Ali al-Muttaki, III, 741-742).

In another *hadith* of the Prophet, Allah Most High has expressed the close connection between being grateful to Allah and thanking someone who has done them a favour as follows:

“The one who does not thank the people has not thanked Allah”. (Abu Dawud, Adab, 11/4811; Tirmidhi Birr, 31).



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said that one of the greatest bounties bestowed upon mankind is a grateful heart. Sawban  narrates:

“We were once on an expedition together with the Messenger of Allah when the following verse was revealed:

‘As for those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in the Way of Allah, give them the news of a painful punishment’ (Tawba, 9:34).

Some of the Companions said:



“What is to be revealed about gold and silver has been revealed (we will no longer hoard them). If only we knew which goods were better we could obtain some of those”. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ then said:

“The most valuable possessions are a tongue that is in constant remembrance of Allah, a heart that is full of gratitude, a righteous wife who helps her husband in his faith” (Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 0/3094).



The prophet Dawud عليه السلام used to thank Allah very often. One time he said:

“O Lord. How can I truly praise You? For I can only be truly grateful to you through Your bounties.”

It was revealed to him:

“Are you aware that all of the bounties that come to you are from Me?”

Dawud answered:

“Yes”

Upon this Allah Most High said:

“That you believe so is enough for Me to be pleased with you”.¹⁵¹



Umar رضي الله عنه once came across a believer who was continually praying as follows: “O Allah make me of those who are very few”. Umar رضي الله عنه did not know what the man intended by this prayer and he asked him:

“Why do you pray like this?” That believer replied:

“Allah Most High has said: ‘**..very few of My slaves are thankful**’ (Saba, 34:13) I wish to be of that happy minority”.

Umar رضي الله عنه was left in awe of this beautiful way of thinking and he lamented to himself:



“Woe to me; everyone is more intelligent and knowledgeable than Umar” (Ibn Abi Shayba, Musannaf, VII, 81).



When Junayd al-Baghdadi was seven years old his uncle Seriyi-i Sakati took him to Hajj. During one of their wise talks which used to take place in the Harem, they began to discuss shukur, or gratitude. After each of the scholars made their own evaluation, Seriyi Sakati turned to Junayd and asked him to give his opinion. After pausing to think for a moment, Junayd gave the following magnificent reply:

“Gratitude is not to be rebellious towards the bounties that Allah has bestowed nor to use those bounties in order to commit sins” (Feriduddin Attar, p 318)



The following discussion about *shukur* which took place between Ibrahim ibn Adham and Shakik-i Belhi has an important lesson for us all:

Shakik-i Belhi asked Ibrahim ibn Adham:

“How do you earn your livelihood?”

Ibrahim ibn Adham replied:

“I am grateful for whatever I find; and when I don't find anything I am patient”

Shakik-i Belhi then said:

“The dogs of Khurasan do this too”. This time Ibrahim ibn Adham asked:

“Well, what do you do?”

Shakik-i Belhi gave the following reply:

“Whatever we find we are grateful for and we give it away; and if we don't find anything we are again grateful and patient”.



It is not possible to thank Allah for all the bounties that He has bestowed upon us as He should be thanked. However if we praise and



thank Him as much as we can then Almighty Allah will accept what little we do as if it were great and He will be pleased with us. Bishr-i Hafi, one of the friends of Allah, is a good example of this:

This individual was seen in a dream after he passed away. He was asked:

“What judgement did Allah decree for you?” He responded:

“Allah forgave me and bestowed upon me Paradise and he said:

“O Bishr! Even if you prostrated upon burning embers for Me, you would not have been able to thank me for the love that I have placed for you in the hearts of My servants” (Kushayri, Risale, Beirut 1990, p 406)



Andrea Dorya was defeated by Barbaros Hayreddin Pasha at Preveze. Andrea Dorya was then forced to abandon his fleet and flee in a wretched state and he barely managed to save his life.

With the enemy warships with their masts down and thousands of slaves in front of him, Barbaros entered the Halij from Sarayburnu. The surface of the sea was covered with enemy warships full of war slaves.

Sultan the Magnificent, his viziers and pashas watched this awesome scene in Sarayburnu from a shore that is not present today. One of the pashas said in excitement:

“My Sultan, I wonder how many times the world has witnessed a scene such as this? You must be very proud”

The famous Sultan the Magnificent gave the following response:

“Pasha! Does it befit us to be proud and boast or to praise and thank our Lord who bestowed this victory upon us?”

What great Islamic training and what a magnificent inner world of the heart...



In conclusion, it is a most vital duty that we live every moment that we have feelings of praise and gratitude. At the same time to carry out this



duty will be a means of bringing us closer to Allah and a means of those bounties increasing. Jalaluddin Rumi has the following to say:

“To be grateful for a bounty is nicer than the bounty itself. Would the one who loves to be grateful leave being grateful and focus on the bounty itself? To be grateful is the soul of all bounties. The bounty is like the skin or the peel. Because the only thing that can take you to the door of your Friend is gratitude. Bounties can make a person heedless, which is the opposite of awareness. However gratitude always brings awareness. Come to your senses and hunt for the true bounty with the bounty of gratitude”.

17. *Shajaa'* (Courage)

Shajaa' has the meanings of valour, bravery, heroism, fortitude of the heart, and showing courage in the face of violence and danger. It is the moderate way between the emotions of anger and rage and cowardliness which is its opposite.

The essence of *shajaa'* is acceptance of Allah's decree and submission to it. This is why a Muslim who believes in destiny and relies upon Allah will never experience cowardice or humiliation.

According to a narration by Sawban , the Messenger of Allah  has said:

“The time is near when foreign forces will attack you just like greedy animals call each other to eat at the table”

One of those present asked:

“Is it because we will be few in number o Messenger of Allah?” He replied:

“No, on the contrary you will be great in number. However you will be like the foam that accumulates after a flood, with no weight behind you. Allah will take the fear out of the heart of your enemies and place a weakness in your heart”

“What is that weakness o Messenger of Allah?” He replied:

“Love of this world and fear of death”. (Abu Dawud, Malahim, 5/4297).

Thus we can conclude from this that when courage and bravery are removed from the hearts and inclining towards the world and fear of death replace them, then the believers will be subject to humiliation and disgrace. In this state they will have no weight against the enemy.

Scenes of Virtue

It is not possible to conceive of a more courageous person than the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He displayed patience and fortitude in the most exceptional of circumstances. Nor did he ever succumb to fear and anxiety or behave inappropriately.

When Almighty Allah commanded His Prophet to migrate to Madina, the polytheists of Quraysh who became aware of this, surrounded his house and drew their swords ready to kill him as soon as he exited his house. The Prophet Muhammad however showed no fear as he opened his door and threw dust over the heads of the pagans. Reciting the first verses of the chapter *Yasin*, he walked passed them with dignity and escaped. (Ibn Sa'd, I, 227-228).



Ali ؑ has said:

“During the Battle of Badr, we took shelter behind the Messenger of Allah. That day he was the one closest to the enemy out of all of us, and the most brave and courageous” (Ahmad, I, 86).

Abdullah ibn Umar ؓ narrates:

“I never saw a more munificent, brave and courageous person than the Messenger of Allah ﷺ” (Ibn Sa'd, I, 373).



During the Battle of Uhud, a man from the pagans moved onto the battlefield on his camel and asked for a man to fight. When he saw that everyone stepped back and refrained from his challenge, he repeated his wish three more times. Then Zubayr ibn Awwam ؓ moved towards him. He jumped onto his camel and went for the man's throat and they began to fight. The Prophet said:



“Bring him down, make him fall to the ground”. Before long the pagan was on the floor. Zubayr then kneeled upon him and finished him off. After this, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“If Zubayr had not done so, I would have fought him, since everyone else stood back”¹⁵².



Ubayy ibn Halef, one of the pagans from Mecca was one of the most violent of the enemies of Islam. Before the migration to Madina he said to the Prophet:

“I have a horse which I am preparing with the best of food. One day I shall mount it and slay you with it”

Another time the Messenger of Allah ﷺ responded to him:

“God willing, it is I who shall slay you”.

During the Battle of Uhud, this mindless pagan was looking for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and saying:

“If he escapes today, then this is the end of me”

With these thoughts in mind, he approached the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in order to assault him. The Companions wanted to cut off his head while he was still far away. However the Prophet said:

“No, let him come”

When Ubayy ibn Halef came nearer the Prophet took a spear from one of the Companions. This time, Ubayy began to run away. However the Prophet said to him:

“O liar, where are you running to?” then he threw the spear at him. The spear lightly struck Ubayy on the neck. However even with this slight hit, he fell off his horse; he somersaulted a few times and harrowingly began to flee back to his own side. He was running and screaming at the same time, his eyes almost falling out of their sockets:

“I swear that Muhammad has slain me”

152. Halabi, *Insanu al-Uyun*, Egypt 1964, Ii, 235



The pagans who came near him and saw his wound said:

“It is only a light scratch”. However he was not to be consoled and said:

“While still in Mecca Muhammad said to me: “I will slay you”. I swear that even if had spat upon me, it would have killed me...”

He continued to wail, sounding like a bellowing bull.

Abu Sufyan chided him, saying:

“How can you scream so much at such a little scratch?”

Ubayy responded to him:

“Do you know who it was that gave me this scratch? This is a wound opened up by Muhammad. I swear by Lat and Uzza that if they were to distribute throughout the Hijaz the pain that I am feeling from this wound then they would all be destroyed. Muhammad told me that he would definitely kill me. Even from that time I knew that I would die at his hands and I would not be able to escape him”.

Thus it was that Ubayy, the fiercest of enemies of Allah’s Messenger, died a day before the pagans reached Mecca. (Ibn Ishaq, p 89; Ibn Sa’d, II, 4; Hakim, II, 357)



Muhammad ibn Maslama has the following to say:

I heard with my own ears and I saw with my own eyes the Muslims running back to the mountain after they had dispersed at Uhud. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was calling out to them:

“Hey so and so. Come back to me. Hey so and so. Come here to me. I am the Messenger of Allah” (Wakidi, I, 237).

Almighty Allah reveals this truth in the Qur’an as follows:

‘Remember when you were scrambling up the slope, refusing to turn back for anyone, and the Messenger was calling to you from the rear’ (Al’i Imran, 3:153)



According to the treaty made on the day of Uhud, the Muslims were to again fight with the pagans after a year had passed. As a result of this treaty, Abu Sufyan came to the region of Marru'z Zahran at the head of his army. However fear soon enveloped his heart and he was forced to turn back. Since he did not wish his pride to be hurt, he sent a man to Madina to tell the Muslims that a great army had gathered against them in the hope of frightening the believers and preventing them from entering upon battle.

When this news reached Madina, the Messenger of Allah had long completed their preparations for battle and he had given the command to embark. The man who had brought news from Abu Sufyan knew of his fear and his turning back and he tried as hard as he could to make the Muslims nervous and prevent them from heading off for battle. He added lies to the lies he had been told to tell and told them that if the Muslims were to fight outside the bounds of the city with the Meccans, their end would be terrible. As a result of his and the other hypocrites efforts some Muslims began to feel fear and hesitated to enter upon battle. Upon this, the Prophet said to them:

“I swear by Allah who holds my existence in His hands that even if no one comes with me, I will go to Badr all by myself”. After that Allah Most High helped the Muslims and made their hearts firm” (Ibn Sa'd, II, 59; Wakidi, I, 386-387).



Another place that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ displayed heroism was Hunayn. That day everyone was fleeing from the enemy while the Prophet of Allah was constantly heading towards them on his horse, paying no heed to his Companions who were trying to prevent him. (Muslim, Jihad, 76)

Anas رضي الله عنه narrates:

On the day of Hunayn the tribes of Hawazin, Ghatafan and others came to the battlefield with their children and their camels. That day there were ten thousand men in the army of Allah's Messenger ﷺ. The Meccans who had been forgiven after the conquest of Mecca were also in the ranks of the Prophet. As soon as the battle began however they began to move back. The Prophet was left alone. That day, the Prophet made two calls and



he did not speak any other words between them. The first time he turned to his right and called:

“O *people of Ansar*”. They responded:

“Yes o Messenger of Allah. Good news, we are with you”.

Then he turned to his left and called out again:

“O *people of Ansar*”. Those on that side responded:

“Yes o Messenger of Allah. We are with you”.

The Prophet was mounted on a white mule. He descended from it and said:

“I am Allah’s slave and His Messenger”. Upon this the Muslims collected themselves and began to attack and the pagans were completely defeated. (Bukhari, Magazi 56, Humus 19, Manakib 14, Manakibu al-Ansar 1; Muslim, Zakat 135).

One man came to Bara Ibn Azib رضي الله عنه and said:

“O Abu Umara! Did all of you flee on the day of Hunayn?”

Bara responded:

“I bear witness that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم did not flee. However the soldiers in front whose burden was light and those who were not wearing any armour walked towards a wing of the Hawazin. However waiting for them were archers and they sent arrows against them. Thus they had to disperse. This made the enemy turn towards the Messenger of Allah. Abu Sufyan ibn Haris رضي الله عنه was pulling the mule of Allah’s Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم. The Prophet got down from his mule and began to pray and plea to Allah. He was saying:

“I am a prophet, it is no lie. I am the son of Abdulmuttalib. O Allah, rain down your help upon us”.

Then he ordered his soldiers. Bara continued:

“By Allah when the battle reached its most intense state we took shelter behind the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم. The bravest amongst us was the one who could stand in line with the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم” (Muslim, Jihad 79; Bukhari, Magazi 54, Jihad 52, 61, 97, 167)



Anas ibn Malik رضي الله عنه narrates:

“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was the most beautiful, the most generous and the bravest of people. Whenever there was a cry of danger in Madina or a state of fear, the Prophet would immediately borrow Abu Talha’s horse, whose name was Mandub, and go to the place where the cry had come from. We never heard any cry or call for help except that we would see Mandub there like the wind. One night the people of Madina heard a cry and were frightened and went towards the direction in which the cry had come from. However the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had already gone there and encountered the others on returning after he had gone to investigate. He was saying to his Companions, whilst on Abu Talha’s horse and with his sword around his neck:

“Do not fear! Do not fear!” And he said about Mandub: *“I have found him to be as fast as a wild flood”*. (Ibn Sa’d, I, 373; Bukhari, Adab, 39).



The Blessed Companions of the Prophet Muhammad displayed great sacrifice and heroism during the Battle of Badr. In particular, Hamza رضي الله عنه, the ‘lion of Allah’ was a model of bravery and courage. He caused one of the leading men of the pagans Umayya ibn Halef to ask Abdurrahman ibn Awf of the Companions:

“Who was that man who had an ostrich feather attached to his chest?”

When he received the reply “That is Hamza ibn Abdulmuttalib”, he said:

“Whatever was done to us was done by him” (Ibn Hisham, II, 272).



When the fighting during the Battle of Uhud intensified, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ took up a sword and said:

“Who will take this sword from me?” The Companions responded:

“I will, I will” and they reached out their hands to take it from him. Allah’s Messenger ﷺ then asked once more:





“Who will take this sword and give it its right?” The Companions were then hesitant to take it.

Abu Dujana رضي الله عنه from the Ansar rose and said:

“I will take it and give it its right”. (Muslim, Fadailu as-Sahaba, 128).

When Abu Dujana took up the sword he asked:

“What is the right of this sword o Messenger of Allah?”

The Prophet replied:

“Its right is that you use it against the enemy until it is bent and broken”.

Abu Dujana took up the sword, took his red turban and wrapped it around his head and then began to walk between the ranks of the Muslim and pagan soldiers in a swaggering and proud manner.

When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saw him walk in such a proud and swaggering way he said to him:

“This is such a walk that Allah loathes it (when one walks like this out of arrogance for his own self) except in cases such as these”. (Ibn Hisham, III, 11-12).



The aunt of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ, Safiyya رضي الله عنها was present at the Battle of Hendek with other women and children. They were in the large wooden house named Fari which belonged to Hassan ibn Sabit. A group of ten Jews came and began to shoot arrows at the house and attempted to enter it. One of them was wandering around outside trying to find a way in. At that point, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his companions were fighting the enemy at Hendek.

When Safiyya رضي الله عنها realised that they were helpless and there was no one else who could help them against this threat, she tied her head tightly with a scarf and took a stake in her hand. She opened the door and silently crept up behind the Jew who was wandering around. She hit him on the head with the stake and killed him. When the Jews saw their dead friend, they were enveloped by fear and said:



“They told us that there were only women here with no protectors”. Then they dispersed and left (Haysami, VI, 133-134; Wakidi, II, 462)



Khalid ibn Walid  has said:

“On the day that the Battle of Muta took place I broke nine swords with my hands. Only one thick and broad sword made in Yemen was able to resist” (Bukhari, Maghazi, 44).



Harezm, the hometown of the great Sufi, Najmaddin-i Kubra was once attacked by the Mongols. Najmaddin Kubra was a man who walked in the footsteps of Allah’s Messenger and his Companions. Together with his students he put up a brave stand but they were eventually martyred. These people were known as *alperen*. The *alperen* are those heroes who live on the borders in order to protect them, and who constantly long for martyrdom which has an important place in the culture of tasawwuf. They are the most important representatives of courage and bravery.



When the united Crusader army entered the Ottoman lands with the aim of destroying the Ottomans, rescuing Byzantine and taking back Jerusalem which was in the hands of the Muslims, they laid siege to the fortress of Nigbolu on the shore of the Tuna River.

When Yildirim Bayazid was informed of this, he immediately went to Nigbolu as fast as lightning as befitting his name¹⁵³. In fact in order to command the Muslims not to cede the fortress he mounted his horse in the middle of the night and stealthily rode through the enemy forces to reach the fortress where he called out to the commander of the fortress:

“Look here Dogan!”

Dogan Bey who recognised the voice of the Sultan immediately, answered in great surprise:

“At your service your Majesty”

153. ‘yildirim’ means lightning in Turkish (translator’s note)



Sultan Yildirim Bayazid gave his commands briefly:

“Dogan! I have come here with my army. Under no circumstances are you to surrender this fortress”. And then he quickly returned amongst the darkness and disappeared. The next day the bloody battle that took place between the large crusader army ended with the clear victory of Yildirim Bayazid. All of the European nations, large and small, had sent soldiers to this army of Crusaders. Amongst them were ten thousand French knights who had boasted: “If the skies come crashing down we will hold them up with our spears”. But it was not to be for the Crusaders melted away in the face of the manoeuvres of the Ottomans, kneaded by their faith.

That day Yildirim Bayazid was wounded in many different parts of his body and when his horse was also wounded he fell to the ground. However he took no heed of this and mounted another horse and commanded the battle with all his strength until they were bestowed with victory.



After the victory at Nigbolu, Yildirim Bayazid Han took many knights and noblemen as prisoners of war. Amongst the prisoners was the famous French knight, Fearless Jean. Yildirim Bayazid Han let them go free in return for a ransom. In addition the day they were to return to their homelands he gave them a feast. When they reflected on the humane behaviour of the Sultan and then considered their own torturous and vile treatment of their own prisoners, all of the knights felt very ashamed and said:

“From this moment on we swear on our honour that we will never again stand against the Sultan of Anatolia and Rumelia nor use our swords against him...”

Upon these words which they had spoken out of gratitude, the great Sultan Yildirim Bayazid Han, a model of courage against the unbelievers, addressed the knights with his strong voice:

“I am returning the oath made by Fearless Jean and his friends that they will never again take up arms against me. No, indeed! I say go back, gather up new armies and come back against me. Know that this act of yours will bring another opportunity for victory for me. For I am a Sultan



conscious of the fact that I have come to this world in order to gain the pleasure of Almighty Allah by exalting His religion. So from this aspect the help and providence of Allah is with us. And whoever's helper is Allah there is no force or might who can defeat them!..."



When Timurlane besieged the Fortress of Sivas with elephants, the tanks of those times, the son of Yildirim Bayazid Han, Shahzade Ertugrul gathered up the noblemen of the city and addressed them:

"My duty is to try with all my might to protect you. The forces of Timur may be stronger and beyond comparison to ours. This is the destiny of Allah. What befalls me is to bravely withstand their attack and defend you and this fortress in a manner which befits our glory. Know that Timur can never enter this city without first stepping over our dead bodies..."

Having spoken these words, Shahzade Ertugrul then took action and with a handful of brave men he put up an incredible resistance and fought bravely against Timur's army. However he and his heroes were eventually martyred in the face of the enemy army which attacked them like a wild deluge.

Timur who had eliminated the shahzade sent news to those in the fortress that if they surrendered he would not harm any of them. However he savagely murdered all of the defenders of the fortress who came out having trusted his word.



The following event is another example of the bravery of the Ottoman soldiers:

"The lad that brought the news at full speed of the victory at Preveze entered the Topkapi Palace. When he pulled the reins of his horse, it remained for a while on his two feet. Sultan Sulayman who was watching this scene, said to him:

"What a wild horse you have come here with!" The lad replied:



“My Sultan! The Mediterranean was a wild horse. And we were even able to tame that”, displaying a manifestation of self-confidence that resulted from being reared with the courage of faith.



During the Battle for the Dardanelles it was decided to move the Sultan and his government to Eskisehir as a precaution and out of fear that the enemy fleet would be able to enter the Sea of Marmara. When Abdulhamid Han, who had been removed from his throne and imprisoned in the Palace of Beylerbeyi, was informed of the events he rejected this decision and with great courage and bravery he said:

“I am the grandson of Fatih Sultan Mehmed...! I shall never fall short of Constantine, the emperor of Byzantine, who even when Fatih was taking Istanbul, fought to the death at the head of his army. If the enemy really does enter the Dardanelles – may Allah forbid it – I will take my gun and fight as a soldier and die if need be. The enemy will only be able to enter Istanbul by stepping over my dead body. Tell my brother, Rashad, who is at the head of the government that he too is not to go anywhere. If he and the government move from Istanbul, they will never be able to return...

As a result of his firm stand the Sultan and his government remained in Istanbul. In this way the abolition of the government was prevented.



The French traveller, A.L. Castellan, has described the bravery of the Ottoman as follows:

“The belief in fate and destiny is firmly established in the mind of the Ottoman. This belief leads to their bravery; and it increases their fortitude and steadfastness. With their reliance upon Allah, it becomes a means for them to risk death even. This is why evident danger that they see with their own eyes does not deter them.

They throw themselves upon the bayonets of the enemy and upon their fire and even if their bodies are mutilated and defiled, if they are not convinced that the time of their death has come they do not lose hope of living”



In conclusion, the believers fear Allah only and due to their reliance upon Him they do not fear anything else. They apply the commands of Allah with courage and fortitude. Using their courage with foresight and discernment they act however the situation requires. Almighty Allah praises them in the Qur'an as follows:

'...those who conveyed Allah's Message and had *taqwa* of Him, fearing no one except Allah' (Al-Ahzab, 33:39)

18. *Istiqama* (Uprightness)

In its general sense *istiqama* has the meanings of advancing towards one's goal without straying and without hesitation in a continual path. Its meaning in tasawwuf is to preserve the innocence and purity of one's creation without staining or tainting it.

Another meaning of *istiqama* is to obtain one's share from the model personality of the Messenger of Allah by keeping one's love for him fresh and to take on his character. In addition it is to pass one's life in the spiritual atmosphere of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, to distance oneself from carnal and worldly pleasures and to remain aware of one's worship, one's servitude to Allah and to know the secrets of gnosis of Him.

Just as there is no path other than *istiqama* which leads to Allah so too there is no greater state than preserving one's *istiqama* in all matters and no other command as difficult as being able to maintain it as required. This is why *istiqama* in the path of Allah is the greatest marvel.

Almighty Allah gives good tidings to the people of *istiqama* as follows:

'The angels descend on those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah,' and then go straight: 'Do not fear and do not grieve but rejoice. We are your protectors in the life of this world and the afterlife. You will have there all that your selves could wish for. You will have there everything you demand. Hospitality from One who is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful' (Fussilat 41:30-32)

'Those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah,' and then go straight will feel no fear and will know no sorrow. Such people are the Companions of the



Garden, remaining in it timelessly, forever, as repayment for what they did' (Ahqaf, 46:13-14)

The path of the people of *istiqama* is the '*sirat al-mustaqim*' or the straight path. The Qur'an has the following to say about those who travel this straight path as is its due:

'Whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger will be with those whom Allah has blessed: the Prophets and the truthful ones, the martyrs and the righteous. What excellent company such people are!' (Nisa, 4:69).

The straight path is the path of the chosen ones. The essence of *istiqama* is faith and piety. And the location of these two is the heart. In this respect *istiqama* is the harmony of the body as a result of this faith and piety found in the heart. The faith, sincerity and sobriety of the heart ensure that *istiqama* is constant and consistent. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has said:

"Faith cannot be upright if the tongue and the heart are not upright"
(Ahmad, III, 198).

In this mortal world, it falls upon the believer to remain upright and never to stray from the path of truth. The poet has expressed it well:

*Do not fear the enemy for even his fire cannot burn you
Be upright and Allah will not disgrace you*

Scenes of Virtue

Almighty Allah has the following to say to His Prophet and on his behalf to his entire community:

'Go straight as you have been commanded, and also those who turn with you to Allah, and do not exceed the bounds' (Hud, 11:112)

Referring to this verse, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said the following:

"The Chapter Hud has aged me..." (Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 56/3297; Qurtubi, IX, 107).

Abdullah ibn Abbas ؓ has said the following about this verse:

“There has not been a more intense address to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in the Qur’an than this verse”¹⁵⁴

Even though this verse was initially addressed directly to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and it did weigh heavily upon him, it was not just his own personal uprightness that worried him, for he had been validated with a divine confirmation:

‘Truly you are one of the Messengers, on a Straight Path’ (Yasin, 36:4). What concerned him enough to age him was that this command included all of the believers.



The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has said in a *hadith*:

“Be upright. You cannot appreciate nor comprehend (the reward in) this. And know that the best of your deeds is the (ritual) prayer...” (Muwatta, Taharah, 6)



Sufyan ibn Abdullah  narrates:

Once I said to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ:

“O Messenger of Allah! Tell me about Islam in such a way that I no longer feel the need to ask anybody else about it”

He replied:

“Say ‘I believe in Allah’ and then be upright” (Muslim, Iman, 62).



According to a narration by Anas  the Messenger of Allah ﷺ once recited the following verse from the Qur’an:

‘The angels descend on those who say, ‘Our Lord is Allah,’ and then go straight: ‘Do not fear and do not grieve but rejoice in the Garden you have been promised’ (Fussilat, 41:30).

He then said:

154. Nawawi, "Sharhu Sahih-i Muslim", Egypt, 1981, II, 9



“People have always uttered these words. However after that most of them rejected Allah. Whoever dies upon these words (that is, ‘our Lord is Allah’) has died in state of uprightness” (Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 41/3250)



One time a great man encountered an old man carrying a load of wood on his back and struggling to walk. He looked at him and said:

“O old man! Have you lost your trust in Allah as your Provider that you are suffering this hardship? Or have you no one to look after you?”

The old man looked up and raised his hands to the heavens in order to mend the spiritual deficiency of the one who was addressing him and said:

“O my Sustainer! Turn this wood into gold”

As soon as he had spoken thus, the pieces of wood became pieces of gold.

The person who saw this miracle then asked in great wonder:

“Why does a person who has reached such a state continue to carry wood?”. The old man replied:

“My child! I do this so that my *nafs* knows that I am a slave and so that it does not exceed the bounds of servitude. For the acceptance of one’s servitude in the sight of Allah is to the degree of one’s uprightness...”



Bayazid-i Bistami has said:

“If you ever see a person floating in the air cross-legged, do not believe that this is a miracle until you see this person preserving the commands and prohibitions of Allah, following the *Sunnah* and acting in conformance with divine justice”



Bayazid-i Bistami has again said:

One day I crossed the Dijla river. When I approached it, the two banks of the river came together to allow me to pass over to the other side. I immediately gathered myself and said to the river:



“I swear that I will not be deceived by this. For boatmen take a man across for half a coin. But you are after 30 years of my deeds! In this case I will not waste my 30 years of good deeds which I have prepared for the Day of Judgement on half a coin. What I need most now is Allah the most Generous One, and not a miracle”



One day the students of Shaykh Nakshibend asked him to show them a miracle. He said to them:

“Our miracles are evident. Look at me; despite the heavy load of sin upon my shoulders I am still standing and walking the earth. Can there be a greater miracle than this?”

After that and in an attempt to remind them that the important matter in *tasawwuf* was not showing miracles but rather being upright, he said:

“If any of you ever enter a garden and you hear the leaves of the trees address you saying, “Greetings o friend of Allah”, do not be fooled and do not pay heed to this voice, either openly or in secret. On the contrary, the determination and efforts of the slave should increase in such circumstances”.

Some of his students then said:

“Master, however much you try to hide them, occasionally some of your miracles are obvious...”

That great model of humility then said:

“Those things that you witness are the miracles of my students”

This person was in a state of great humility, meaning that he wished to hide the state of his spiritual depth. This is why he did not allow one of his students, Husameddin Haja Yusuf to write down his miracles and words while he was still alive.

The great men of Islam were able to reach the elevated stations that they did, not through their miracles but by adopting the principles of uprightness.



They expressed that their miracles did not make them any more valuable than the birds that flew in the sky or the fish that swam in the water. Yet again they expressed that the only thing of any value was not trying to imitate birds or fish, but to live one's life in submission to the will of Allah with great awareness of one's servitude. They showed this too with their actions and their behaviour.

Because they do not condescend to ostentation, the friends of Allah do not display their miracles unless they are compelled to for a particular reason. They present themselves as models of perfect character that people can follow.

The following advice of Hasan-i Basri to his students on the matter of miracles is noteworthy:

“Do not be fooled by high degrees of knowledge, state and wisdom. Remember what happened to Bel'am ibn Baura who reached such a state as to be able to read the *Lawh-i Mahfuz*¹⁵⁵ of Allah”.

The story of his state is given in the Qur'an as follows:

‘Recite to them the tale of him to whom We gave Our Signs, but who then cast them to one side and Shaytan caught up with him. He was one of those lured into error. If We had wanted to, We would have raised him up by them. But he gravitated towards the earth and pursued his whims and base desires. His metaphor is that of a dog: if you chase it away, it lolls out its tongue and pants, and if you leave it alone, it lolls out its tongue and pants. That is the metaphor of those who deny Our Signs. So tell the story so that hopefully they will reflect’ (A'raf, 7:175-176)

Mawlana Khalid-i Baghdadi has said:

“Uprightness and struggling in the way of Allah is better than displaying endless miracles and uncovering the mysteries of the unseen. In addition it should be known that if these discoveries and miracles are not a means to increase the compliance with the commands of religion, then they are nothing other than trouble and mischief-making”.



155. The *lawh'i mahfuz* is a tablet on which all of the knowledge of Allah is written (translator's note).



Muhammad Asad (may Allah have mercy on him) has warned of the importance of uprightness especially for those who are in positions of superiority:

“Whether he be a scholar or a shaykh, whoever does not wear the turban of uprightness on his head will eventually end in ruin.

“If your back has not been burdened by the load of uprightness then can your arrow of desire ever reach its target of closeness to Allah?” (Divan, Istanbul, 1991, p 27)

If the matter of uprightness made the hearts of those friends of Allah, with all their miracles, tremble with anxiety, then let us faulty believers reflect on its importance...



In short, uprightness is a must for every believer. It is however very difficult to obtain as well as to maintain. The honour of reaching one’s aim is in degree to the difficulties one endures in the process, thus those people who are upright will be subject to elevated honour and endless reward in response to the great price they have paid.

19. Appreciativeness and loyalty

Appreciativeness and loyalty are one of the most important signs of Islam. They are of the traits that make a person human. They are spiritual virtues that are characteristic of the prophets, the saints and people of virtue and they crown human life with the highest of stations. This elevated emotion is a precious measure which is given to those loved or those who deserve to be loved. Those who do not possess the feeling of loyalty are selfish people who think only of their own selves, their pleasure and benefit.

The human being must first of all be loyal to his Lord. This can only take place however through complying with His commands. Almighty Allah has said in the Qur’an:

‘Do not be like those who forgot Allah so He made them forget themselves. Such people are the deviators’ (Al Hashr, 59:19)



After loyalty to Allah, the most lofty and necessary loyalty is that which is towards the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. This loyalty is an expression of one's gratitude to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, whose priority was his community as he expressed in his prayers to Allah "*My community, my community*". This loyalty, which begins when one's feelings of love for the Prophet deepen, is possible when one is devoted to his *Sunnah*.

Every believer should harbour feelings of loyalty for the great men of this religion, that is, for the friends of Allah. For it is these friends of Allah who have transmitted the commands and prohibitions of Allah and His Messenger, and his beautiful character, to us.

Those to whom we must show loyalty are not limited to those we have just mentioned. On the contrary we must establish loyalty in our hearts for our friends and brothers and sisters in religion. Moreover, loyalty to our forefathers, our living and our dead, our country, and to the trusts that we have been entrusted with are all characteristics of sound character and personality.

Jalaluddin Rumi has nicely expressed the virtue of appreciativeness and loyalty as follows:

"Traits such as love and ardour and friendship all depend on loyalty and always seek out the loyal person. They are never befitting for a heart which is disloyal.

The pen wrote: "The response to loyalty is loyalty; and the response to harshness is harshness" and then the ink dried.

A sultan would cut off the head of the one who was treacherous to him, even if it were his son. However if an Indian slave were to show loyalty to the sultan, then hearts will be loyal to that slave, and appreciate him... the regard in which is he held will not be shown to one hundred viziers.

And the slave; even if he were a loyal dog at the door then the owner of that dog will feel pleased and content with that dog hundred times over and the owner will caress that dog with love..."

Scenes of Virtue

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said:



“I am the result of the prayer of my father Ibrahim, the good tidings of my brother Jesus, and the dream of my mother Amina¹⁵⁶”. In saying so, he displayed superior loyalty to them.

In the year of the treaty of *Hudaybiya*, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ once passed by Abwa, on a journey to Mecca to perform the lesser pilgrimage. The Prophet asked Allah for permission to visit his mother’s grave (which was located in Abwa). He smoothed over his mother’s grave with his blessed hands and then began to cry out of his sorrow. The Muslims who saw him also began to cry. Then they asked him why he did so and he answered:

“I remembered the compassion and mercy of mother for me and it made me cry” (Ibn Sa’d, I, 116-117; Also see Muslim, Janaiz, 105, 108).



When Allah’s Messenger blessed the world with his presence, a lady name Suwayba Hatun who had a son named Masruh, wet-nursed him for a period of time¹⁵⁷. A model of loyalty, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ paid much attention to and concerned himself with Suwayba Hatun when he grew up. While they were in Mecca both Allah’s Messenger, and his wife Khadijah, were very good to her and made her many offerings. When the Prophet migrated to Madina, he always sent Suwayba Hatun food and clothes and continued to meet her needs. In the seventh year after the migration, on returning from the expedition to Haybar, he was informed of her death. Allah’s Messenger asked:

“What is her son Masrun doing?”

He received the reply:

“He passed away before his mother”.

156. Ahmad, V, 262; Hakim, II, 453. Ibrahim ؑ made the following prayer about the Prophet Muhammad: Our Lord, raise up among them a Messenger from them to recite Your Signs to them and teach them the Book and Wisdom and purify them’ (Al Baqara, 2:129). Jesus ؑ gave good tidings of a prophet who would come after him and who would be called ‘Ahmad’ (as Saf, verse). Amina, the mother of the Prophet once saw in her dream before the Prophet was born, a light that was emitted from her and which illuminated the entire universe. (Ibn Sa’d, I, 102)

157. Ibn Sa’d, I, 108



Upon this, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked whether there were any other living relatives and was told that there was nobody. (Ibn Sa'd, I, 108, 109).



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was ever loyal to his milk-relatives for his entire life. Whenever he saw his foster mother, Halima Hatun (who wet-nursed him as a baby), he would address her as: “*Mother dearest, mother dearest*” and show great affection, love and respect for her. He would lay down his *rida* (upper garment) for her to sit on and immediately grant any request she may have had to make. (Ibn Sa'd, I, 113, 114)

One day when the Prophet was sitting in his house, the husband of his foster mother came to see him. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ immediately laid down part of his garment for him to sit on. A little while later, his foster mother also came. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ stood up for her and sat her down in front of him. (Abu Dawud, Adab, 119-120/5145).

One day Halima Hatun came to Mecca to see the Prophet. At that time, he was married to Khadijah. They hosted Halima Hatun as their guest. Halima spoke to them of the drought and shortage that was current in their land and the plight of their animals. When the Prophet told his wife about the situation of his foster mother, she made a gift to her of forty sheep and a camel to carry them and their load. In this way, Khadijah showed her own loyalty to our Prophet (Ibn Sa'd, I, 114).



During the conquest of Mecca, while the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was in the area of Abtah, the sister of Halima Hatun came to visit him. He made her a gift of some skim-milk cheese and butter amongst other things. Allah's Messenger immediately asked her about his foster mother. When she told him that she had passed away, the Prophet's eyes filled with tears. He asked who was left behind. He later gave orders that this lady be given clothes to wear, and a gift of a camel and 200 dirhams of silver coins be made to her. On returning to her country in great happiness she said:

“What a wonderful relative you were when you were small and now that you have grown” (Wakidi, II, 869; Belazuri, I, 95).



Along with the victory and the booty that had been obtained at the Battle of Hunayn, there were also many slaves taken. Amongst these slaves was the foster sister of the Prophet, Shayma.

He had her brought to him and took off his upper garment and laid it down for her. He showed great loyalty for this precious foster sister of hers with whom he had grown up with at Badiye and he was very kind to her and welcomed her. As he remembered the old days his eyes filled with tears. He asked about her mother and father. Shayma informed him that they had passed away. Allah's Messenger asked about their other relatives and then he said:

"If you wish you can stay with me and be the recipient of love and respect. If you wish I can give you goods and send you back to your tribe. I will do this for you".

Shayma replied:

"Give me goods and send me back to my people". She later became Muslim. Allah's Messenger gave Shayma Hatun and those of her relatives who were still alive, camels and cattle. He also bestowed upon her a male and female slave whom she later married to each other (Ibn Hisham, IV, 101; Wakidi, III, 913).

A little while later declared that he had set free those of the slaves who had fallen to him and to the sons of Abdulmuttalib including his foster relatives. He said to his Companions:

"Whoever of you likes to please their siblings by setting free the slaves for no ransom and purely for the sake of good let him do so. And whoever does not wish to let those of the slaves who fall to them go without a ransom, we will pay them with the booty that Allah has bestowed upon us. Let whoever so wishes do so..."

In a display of great virtue the Companions said:

"We too have pledged our slaves to the Messenger of Allah" (Bukhari, Maghazi, 54; Ibn Hisham, IV, 134-135).

On the day thousands of prisoners of war were returned to the Hawazin in return for nothing. As a result of the loyalty of Allah's Messenger,

thousands of people were revived and blessed with faith and reunited with their freedom.



When he was six years old the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ went to Madina to visit his father's grave with his mother. On their return his mother also passed away in the village of Abwa. Allah's Messenger ﷺ was thus left orphaned and returned to Mecca with their servant, Ummu Ayman ؓ.

Throughout his life the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would often visit his nanny, Ummu Ayman and would address her as "Mother". He would compliment her and show her great love and respect saying: *"She is my mother after my mother. She is all that is left me of the people of my house"*



Fatima Hatun, the wife of Abu Talib, was a very virtuous and good-hearted woman. After the Prophet migrated to Madina, he would frequently visit this blessed lady and would take his late-morning nap in her house (Ibn Saïd, VIII, 222).

When Fatima Hatun passed away, Allah's Messenger ﷺ wept with tears that fell from his blessed eyes like pearl drops. *"Today my mother passed away"* he said, and then made his shirt into a funeral shroud for her. He prayed her funeral prayer, and then lay down in her grave for a period of time. When he was asked about the reason for this act, he replied:

"After Abu Talib, there is no other person who was as good to me as this woman. I made my shirt her funeral shroud so that she could wear clothes of Paradise in Heaven. And I laid down in her grave so that it would be warm for her".

Allah's Messenger ﷺ would say to those who were surprised at how he was saddened by Fatima Hatun's death:

"She was my mother after my own mother. While her own children went hungry and soured their faces, she would feed me first, comb my hair and rub rose oil over me. She was my mother". Then he prayed for her as follows:

"May Allah forgive you and reward you with good. May Allah have mercy on you dearest mother. You became my mother after I lost my mother.



You would remain hungry so that I could eat. You would favour me so that I could be clothed (and not worry about yourself). You would let me taste the most delicious of bounties, and you would deprive your own self. And you would only do this in hope of pleasing Allah and reaching the afterlife... (Hakim, III, 116-117; Haysami, IX, 256-257; Yaqubi, II, 14).



Aisha  tells of the loyalty the Prophet Muhammad showed for his first wife, Khadijah :

“I was never jealous of any of the wives of Allah’s Messenger as much as I was of Khadijah. And I never even saw her. However the Messenger of Allah would remember her often. Whenever he would sacrifice a lamb, he would send the various pieces to Khadijah’s close friends. Sometimes I would say to him:

“It is as though there is no other woman in the world except Khadijah”. He would then begin to enumerate her virtues saying:

“She was such and such....” And then he would say: *“She was the mother of my children”* (Bukhari, Manakibu al-Ansar’, 20; Muslim, Fadailu as-Sahaba, 74-76).



At the time that the Messenger of Allah  gave the command to bury the martyrs from the Battle of Uhud, he said about Amr ibn Jamuh  and Abdullah ibn Amr ibn Haram :

“Those two stood shoulder to shoulder in one rank and they were very intimate friends. Lay down these two martyrs, who loved each other dearly, in the same grave, next to each other side by side”. (Ibn Hisham, III, 49; Ibn Sa’d, III, 562).

What a magnificent display of loyalty...



There used to be a black lady who would sweep the Prophet’s Mosque. One time, the Prophet failed to see her. He was curious and asked where she was. They told her that she had passed away. As a paragon of loyalty, the Prophet said:





“Should you not have informed me?” Later he said: “Show me her grave” and then he went to it and prayed the funeral prayer for her. (Bukhari, Janaiz, 67).



Years had passed after the migration to Abyssinia. One time, the envoys of the Ruler of Abyssinia entered the presence of Allah’s Messenger. The Prophet paid close attention to them, and in fact served them himself. His Companions told him that they could carry out this service themselves but the Prophet’s response was most significant:

“These people showed those of my Companions who had migrated to Abyssinia, a place to stay and showed them great hospitality. Now I want to serve them in response”. (Bayhaqi, Shuabu al-Iman, VI, 518, VII, 436).



The Negus of Abyssinia passed away in the month of Rajab, after the return from Tabuk. Allah’s Messenger ﷺ informed his Companions’ of the Negus’ death that same day and he said:

“Pray the funeral prayer for your brother who has passed away in a far-off land”. His Companions asked him:

“O Messenger of Allah. Who is it?” He replied:

“The Negus, Ashama. Today, Ashama, the righteous servant of Allah passed away. Ask for forgiveness from Allah for your brother”. He then performed the Negus’ funeral prayer in his absence. (Muslim, Janaiz 62-68; Ahmad, III, 319, IV, 7).

Later they were to learn that the Negus had passed away on the exact day that the Prophet had informed them.



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ stayed for fifteen days in Mecca after its conquest. During this time, some of the Ansar from Madina became concerned that the Prophet ﷺ would not return to Madina. Because Allah Most High had made possible for him the conquest of the blessed and sacred land in which he had been born and grew up. As he prayed on the



hill of Safa, the Prophet sensed this anxiety of the Ansar and after finishing his prayer he went to them and said:

“What is that you are talking about?”

When they expressed their concerns, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, in a display of great loyalty:

“O Ansar! I seek refuge in Allah from doing such a thing. I migrated to your land. My life is your life; and my death will be at your side”.

After these words, the anxieties and concerns of the Ansar vanished (Muslim, Jihad, 84, 86; Ahmad, II, 538).



Allah’s Messenger ﷺ never forgot those of his Companions who fought for the cause of Islam with their wealth and their lives, nor did he forget those of his Companions who were martyred in the process. From time to time he would visit the grave of Baqi and other graves where the martyrs lay and he would pray for them. His Companions narrate:

“One time the Prophet ascended the pulpit. After pronouncing the declaration of faith (I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger), the first thing he did was to pray to Allah to forgive the martyrs from the Battle of Uhud”. (Ibn Sa‘d, II, 228).

After that in display of loyalty to the Ansar, he said:

“O people. Other people are on the increase while the Ansar are decreasing in number. In fact they will become as small in quantity as the salt in food. Whoever of you reaches a position in which he has the power to bring benefit or harm to people, then let him respond to the goodness of the Ansar with good and let him forgive those of them who do him wrong” (Bukhari, Manakibu al-Ansar, 11).

“I advise you to treat the Ansar well. They are my community, my confidants, and my trustees. They have carried out fully the duties that have befallen them. The reward for their service has not however been totally given (It will be paid many times over in the afterlife. This is why you should accept the good that they do and discourage them from doing wrong” (Bukhari, Manakibu’l Ansar, 11).



The Prophet of Allah ﷺ also never forgot the sacrifices made by the Emigrants and in assigning various duties to his Companions he always made sure to consider those who gave their support to Islam from the beginning. Amongst these Abu Bakr ؓ had a special place. Allah's Messenger ﷺ has expressed his gratitude to him as follows:

“We have recompensed all of those who have been good to us, either equally or with increase. However, not so Abu Bakr. He has done so much good that Allah Most High will be the One to give him his recompense on the Day of Judgement. No other person's wealth has been of more benefit to me than that of Abu Bakr's. If I were to choose an intimate friend, I would choose Abu Bakr. Know that your friend (indicating himself) is the intimate friend of Allah Most High” (Tirmidhi, Manakib, 15/3661).



When Abu Bakr ؓ became caliph, he made a pronouncement that whoever the Prophet Muhammad had made a promise to come and collect it, and he paid for these with the wealth that came from Bahrain (Bukhari, Kafale, 3).

After the Prophet's death, Ali ؓ also made a pronouncement saying:

“Whoever has been promised something by the Messenger of Allah or are owed something by him, let them come to me and receive it”. As long as he was alive he would send a man to Mina on the Day of Sacrifice and continue to make this pronouncement. He would give whoever came to him whatever they requested. In the same way, his son Hasan did the same, as did his son Hussain until he was martyred (Ibn Sa'd, II, 318).



Abdullah ibn Umar ؓ was famous for his loyalty and devotion to the memory of Allah's Messenger. After the death of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, Abdullah ibn Umar ؓ would walk the same path that he had walked, thinking about Him. He would sit and remember the Prophet as he sat under the very same tree that the Prophet had rested under. He would make sure to water these trees wherever they were, on a mountain side or plain, so that they did not dry up. All of this was proof of his peerless loyalty to the memory of the Prophet of Allah and his great love for him ﷺ.



Feriduddin Atar describes the state of those who forget the bounties given to them by Allah and display disloyalty by becoming slaves to the most base of their carnal tendencies:

There was once a hunting dog who had attracted the special attention of the Sultan. He was very talented and an expert at hunting. The Sultan valued him dearly and would always take him with him on all hunting expeditions. He had his collar embellished with jewels, and would place rings and bracelets of gold and silver around his ankles. His back was covered with cloth of silver-threaded satin.

One day the sultan again took this dog with him and went out to hunt with the other men of the palace. The sultan was in high spirits as he moved forward on his horse in a dignified manner, holding the silk leash of the collar in his hand. But all of a sudden, he saw something which took away the joy he had been feeling. The dog that he loved so much had forgotten all about him and was occupying himself with something else. In great sorrow the sultan pulled on the leash, but the dog resisted, continuing to gnaw on the bone that was in front of him. Amongst feelings of astonishment and anger the sultan cried out:

“How can you stand there in my presence and occupy yourself with something else, forgetting all about me?”

He was deeply saddened. The ingratitude, disloyalty and lack of feeling the dog showed had affected him greatly. He could not bring himself to forgive him, even though he was just a dog. This act of disloyalty was enough to break his heart and it was an act impossible to forgive, in the face of all of the honour, bestowal and offerings he had made to the dog who had forgotten him in an instant for a mere piece of bone. In anger he said:

“Make way for this most uncouth of creatures”.

The dog understood the meaning behind his anger, however it was too late and there was nothing left to do. Those around the sultan said to him:

“My sultan. Let us first remove the jewels, gold and silver on him and then let him go”. However the sultan replied:

“No, let him go as he is” and then he added:





“Let him go as he is. Let him go and be left forlorn in the vast, scorching, empty desert, hungry and thirsty; let him go and remember the bounties and offerings that he has lost and live continually the pain of that loss...”

This story is very significant in telling of the state of those unfaithful people who forget the endless bounties that Allah Most High has bestowed upon them, not appreciating their value but rather destroying themselves in pursuit of simple, fleeting and base benefit.



The duty of decorating the dome of the Sulaymaniye Mosque was given to the calligrapher Karahisari. Karahisari began his work in an extraordinary effort to match his calligraphy with the magnificence of the mosque. He had given himself so much to this task that the moment he finished the last stroke he lost his eye sight.

When the mosque was finished and it was about to be opened for worship, Sultan Sulayman the Magnificent said:

“The honour of opening our mosque for worship goes to the head architect, Sinan, who designed and built it in such splendid fashion”

The architect Sinan who began his trade by first learning humility, in a display of outer unparalleled modesty together with maturity of the heart, thought about the sacrifice made by the calligrapher Karahisari and responded to the words of Sultan the Magnificent in all courtesy:

“My Sultan! The calligrapher Karahisari sacrificed his eyes in order to embellish this mosque with his calligraphy; he became blinded as a result. Please let this honour go to him...”

Upon this, Sulayman the Magnificent, in great appreciation and amongst the tears of those present, decreed that Karahisari open the mosque.



My late Persian teacher who was originally Christian but became Muslim after reading the Mathnawi of Jalaluddin Al-Rumi and took the name Yaman Dede, when he was asked the reason for his love of Rumi, he answered:



“My son, Jalaluddin Rumi took me by the hand, and leading me to the door of the Blessed Prophet, he became the means for my being guided to Islam. For me to refer to someone who has saved me from the fire this much is even too little”.

What great loyalty and subtlety of thought...



Our father and teacher, Musa Efendi was known amongst those who loved him as ‘*Sahibu’l Wafa’*, that is the master of loyalty. We can relate just a few of the many examples of loyalty of Musa Efendi as follows:

He would become very emotional whenever he saw forlorn and old people in society, abandoned to their solitude and left alone with their pain. He would say:

“We should take these poor people into our houses, however this is not possible for us. In that case, we should build refuges for them”.

In fact, together with some of his close friends, they managed to bring this idea to fruition. From time to time they would also visit these people and concern themselves with their needs.

The heart of Musa Efendi would be concerned even with the cats in his garden and he would name them according to their character, and would treat them each according to their own loyalty and compassion for their kittens.

There was a nurse who looked after me when I was still in my crib, and he searched for this lady 55 years later, finding her and honouring her showing her hospitality.

In particular, his loyalty to his spiritual guide, Sami Efendi, was known by all. The first place he would visit on the *eid* celebrations was Sami Efendi’s house. Again the first sacrificial animal he would have sacrificed would be for him. He would be the means for the Qur’an being read and dedicated to him and his loyal heart would be very pleased when every year tens of thousands of ‘*hatm-i sharif*¹⁵⁸’ would be completed and dedicated to his beloved teacher.

158. A *hatm-i sharif* is a complete reading of the Qur’an



In short, he taught us, through the beautiful behaviour that encompassed his entire life, what and how the loyalty of the one who loves should be. In this way he was similar to Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه in his love and devotion.

May Almighty Allah bestow this beautiful state of his upon us all.

O Allah! Include us in the group of righteous people by bestowing on us the beautiful states of the people of loyalty. Bestow loyalty and sincerity in our deeds and make us heirs of Paradise. Bestow upon us from our offspring, children that will be the apples of our eye and be leaders of piety. Make us loyal to You, to Your Messenger, to our mothers and fathers, our relatives and to all of the people of this faith, to our country and our nation and to the other trusts that we behold. Allow us to live in the spiritual atmosphere of your pleasure in both worlds...

Amen!...

20. Chastity and modesty

Chastity and virtuousness is to preserve one's self from being enveloped by all manner of animal appetites and base desires. It is the feature that most distinguishes the human being from all other creatures. To lose it is to lose one's humanity and to fall to the level of other creatures.

Chastity and honour are the life blood of all moral virtues. Honour, dignity, and self-respect are all dependent on virtuousness.

Almighty Allah has given examples of two personalities who have reached the peak of virtuousness as models for the believers and has praised them in the Qur'an. These are the prophet Yûsuf عليه السلام whose story is told in the chapter Yûsuf, the 'best of stories.' The other personality is Mary, the mother of Jesus, who is praised in many different places in the Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an states:

'And [remember her] who guarded her chastity, whereupon We breathed into her of Our spirit and caused her, together with her son to become a symbol [of Our grace] unto all people' (Al-anbiya, 21:91)



Those men and women who preserve their chastity will be subject to the profound forgiveness of Allah Most High and will be given great reward.¹⁵⁹ Almighty Allah praises those of His servants who are chaste as follows:

‘...those who are mindful of their chastity, [not giving way to their desires] with any but their spouses – that is, those to whom they rightfully possess [through wedlock]; for then, behold, they are free of all blame, whereas such as seek to go beyond that [limit] are truly transgressors’
(Al-Mu’minun 23:5-7)

Just as the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ taught people the principles of faith and worship, so too he taught them moral principles of uprightness, chastity and looking out for one’s relatives. When the Ruler of Byzantine, Heraclius, asked Abu Sufyan what the Prophet commanded of the people, he answered: “He commands us to be honest and virtuous, and to look out for our relatives”. (Bukhari, Badu al -Wahy, 6, Salat 1; Muslim, Jihad 74).

Allah’s Messenger placed so much importance on chastity that he would take an oath from the ladies in particular that they would preserve their chastity¹⁶⁰. In address to all believers he said:

“Whoever promises me what is between their two lips (their tongue) and their chastity, I promise them Paradise” (Bukhari, Rikak, 23).

In addition, the matter of modesty, chastity, purity, and civility between men and women is a matter of great importance. Islam has forbidden all evil deeds, immodesty and shamefulness.

The unlawful relationship and attention between men and women begins with a mere glance. This is why the believing men and women have been commanded not to look at each other passionately and to bow their heads when talking to each other:

‘Say to the believers that they should lower their eyes and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Allah is aware of what they do. Say to the believing women that they should lower their eyes and guard their private parts and not display their adornments – except for what

159. See al Ahzab, 33:35

160. See al Mumtithana, 60:12



normally shows – and draw their head-coverings across their breasts. They should only display their adornments to their husbands or their fathers or their husbands' fathers, or their sons or their husbands' sons or their brothers or their brothers' sons or their sisters' sons or other women or those they own as slaves or their male attendants who have no sexual desire or children who still have no awareness of women's private parts. Nor should they stamp their feet so that their hidden ornaments are known. Turn to Allah every one of you, believers, so that hopefully you will have success' (Nur, 24:30-31).

The following verse, though it is addressed to the wives of the Prophets, is a matter that all believing women should pay attention to:

'Wives of the Prophet! you are not like other women provided you have piety. Do not be too soft-spoken in your speech lest someone with sickness in his heart becomes desirous. Speak correct and courteous words. Remain in your houses and do not display your beauty as it was previously displayed in the Time of Ignorance. Establish the ritual prayer and pay zakat and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah desires to remove all impurity from you, People of the House, and to purify you completely' (Ahzab, 33:32-33).

Another verse from the Qur'an is as follows:

'O Prophet! Tell your wives and daughters and the women of the believers to draw their outer garments closely round themselves. This makes it more likely that they will be recognised and not be harmed. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful' (Ahzab, 33:59).

Those men and women who are canonically strangers, whenever they want something from each other or need to say something to each other should as much as possible speak to each other from behind a door or a curtain.¹⁶¹

People should not enter each other's houses without first obtaining permission. In fact, people who share the same house should ask for permission when they enter each other's rooms and should let the other



person know that they are approaching. Almighty Allah informs us that in all cases it is better to behave virtuously¹⁶².

Almighty Allah places great importance on His servants being chaste and virtuous and indicates this in many verses.¹⁶³ This is why it has been considered a great sin to slander virtuous people and the punishment of *'hadd-i qazf'* (the punishment of slander) has been applied to such people. Almighty Allah has said in the Qur'an:

'[But], verily those who [falsely, and without repentance] accuse chaste women who may have been unthinkingly careless but have remained true to their faith, shall be rejected [from Allah's grace] in this world as well as in the life to come; and awesome suffering awaits them on the Day when their own tongues and hands and feet will bear witness against them by [recalling] all that they did' (Nur, 24:23).

This is why the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

"...Do not accuse virtuous women of fornication"... (Tirmidhi, Isti'zan, 33/2733).

It is true that the most distinguishing feature of a woman is her chastity or virtuousness. The above decrees show the weightiness of the crime of accusing chastity. Accordingly in any case of witnessing, it is one of the most severe of crimes to transmit what one has heard about other people's chastity and honour and bring them under suspicion, without verifying the information first.

In other related matters it is particularly necessary to be dignified when one asks for something from another person. Almighty Allah has praised his dignified servants as follows:

It is for the poor who are held back in the Way of Allah, unable to travel in the land. The ignorant consider them rich because of their reticence. You will know them by their mark. They do not ask from people insistently. Whatever good you give away, Allah knows it' (Baqara, 2:273)

The Prophet ﷺ has said:

162. See, Nur, 24:58-60

163. See Nisa, 4:25; Maida, 5:5; Anbiya, 21:91; Nur, 24:4, 23; Tahrir, 66:12

“Thereal poor person is not the simple beggar who was turned away with one or two dates The true poor person is the one who though he is in dire need, does not ask for anything from anybody due to his dignity and honour. If you wish recite the verse: ‘they do not ask from people insisntently’ (Al-Baqara, 2:273). (Muslim, Zakat, 102).

“Those who are of Paradise are three: 1- The just, successful governor who gives out in charity; 2- the soft-hearted person who is compassionate to his close ones and the Muslims; and 3-the dignified Muslim who though his family is large, refrains from asking from others and avoids unlawful income” (Muslim, Jannah 63).

“Allah bestows dignity on the one who refrains from asking from others. And Allah saves from being dependent on others, the person who acts content towards others” (Bukhari, Zakat, 18).

Dignity is one of the branches of faith and it involves staying away from evil and ugly acts, acting with balance and measure in one’s actions and behaviour, and not overstepping one’s limits. The feeling of dignity is the foundation of all good and is the opposite of all evil and ugly behaviour.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has said about *hayâ* (feeling shy before Allah), one of the traits that is most loved by Allah:

“Hayâ is from faith” (Bukhari, Iman, 3).

“Hayâ and faith go together; when one disappears, so does the other” (Suyuti, I, 53).

“Hayâ only results in good” (Bukhari, Adab, 77).

“All of hayâ is good” (Muslim, Iman 61).

“A crude word can bring nothing but rudeness. Hayâ and courtesy on the other hand will adorn wherever they go” (Muslim, Birr, 78)

“O Allah! I ask you for guidance, piety, dignity and wealth of the heart” (Muslim, Zikr, 72).

It is only the traits of dignity and modesty that can protect a person from all manner of immorality, evil and carnal thoughts. Decency and modesty in preserving the believer from all manner of ugly behaviour are more effective than a hundred laws and police. In any matter it is enough

to merely caution a person of dignity and modesty with the words: “Aren’t you ashamed of yourself?”

Uthman  was a lofty personality and a model example on account of his modesty and feeling of shame. Allah’s Messenger  informed us that even the angels were shy in front of him.¹⁶⁴

Almighty Allah has warned those immodest people and people who try to spread immodesty as follows:

‘People who love to see ugly words and acts being spread about concerning those who have faith will have a painful punishment both in this world and the afterlife. Allah knows and you do not know’ (Al-Nur, 24:19).

Those who wish to see immodesty spread throughout society will have done their nation and their country the greatest evil. Those who act in such a manner are those who meet with the greatest of loss and harm. Because as the Prophet Muhammad said, immodesty is a cause of destruction:

“Undoubtedly when Allah, Great and Majestic is He, wishes to destroy a person he first takes away his hayâ. Once He has taken this, there is nothing left for that person but to meet with His wrath. When he meets with Allah’s wrath, he loses his trustworthiness. Once he has lost his trustworthiness he becomes a villain. Once he has become a villain all mercy is lifted from him. And when all mercy has been lifted from him, there is nothing left but for him to be cursed and damned. And when he is cursed and damned, the tie that he has with Islam is broken completely” (Ibn Majah, Fitan, 27).

Scenes of Virtue

Abu Said Al-Khudri  narrates:

“The Messenger of Allah  was more modest than a young girl who has just reached puberty. Whenever he saw something he did not like it would be immediately known from his blessed face” (Bukhari, Manakib, 23; Abu Dawud, Haraj, 34-36).

164. Ahmad, I, 71; VI, 55



The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ never raised his voice when he spoke. He would pass by people slowly and with a smile on his face. Whenever he heard an ugly word which did not please him, he would not say anything. Because the expression on his face revealed his feelings, those around him were very careful about their words and their behaviour. He would not laugh out loud due to his *hayâ*, manners and courtesy. He would only smile. He said in a *hadith*:

“Modesty is from faith and the modest person is destined for Paradise! Immodesty results from a hard heart; and the one who has a hard heart is destined for the hellfire” (Bukhari, Iman, 16).



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would never stare and gape into a person's face out of the elevated modesty that he possessed. (Munawi, V, 224).



The grandfather of Bahz ibn Hakim once came to Allah's Messenger ﷺ and asked about the covering up of one's private parts. The Prophet replied:

“Protect your private parts from everybody except your wife and any slaves that you possess”. The same person then asked about the matter of dressing when there is no one around. He received the following reply:

“Allah is more worthy of being shown hayâ (shyness) than people” (Abu Dawud, Hammam, 2/4017)

In another *hadith* the Prophet said:

“Beware of nakedness! There are (angels) who never leave your side, except when you relieve yourselves and when you approach your wives. Be modest in front of them and treat them well”. (Tirmidhi, Adab, 42/2800).



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was undoubtedly more modest than any other person. Even before he became a prophet, this elevated trait of his distinguished him in a period in which immodesty had become rife in society. The best example of this is as follows:



When the Ka'bah was being rebuilt, the Prophet was carrying some stones with his uncle, Abbas. In order that his naked shoulder not be injured, Abbas رضي الله عنه said to his nephew:

“Place your *izar* (lower garment) under your shoulder”. As soon as the Prophet tried to place his *izar* on his shoulder he fell to the ground and fixing his eyes at the sky he said:

“*Show me my izar*”. He immediately picked it up and covered himself with it (Bukhari, Hajj, 42).



One day the Prophet saw somebody washing himself in the open and wearing no lower garment. Upon this he climbed the pulpit and said:

“*Allah, exalted and majestic is He, is very modest and very private. This is why He loves modesty and covering oneself up. In that case whenever one of you washes himself, let him cover himself*” (Abu Dawud, Hammam, I/4012).



Miswar ibn Mahrama رضي الله عنه narrates:

I had loaded a heavy stone onto my shoulder and was carrying it. I had on a light robe. While the stone was on my shoulder, my robe came undone. I did not let go of the robe and carried it as I was. Upon this the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

“*Go back and fetch your robe. Do not walk around naked*”. (Muslim, Hayz, 78; Abu Dawud, Hammam, 2/4016)



Ibn Mas'ud رضي الله عنه narrates:

One day the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

“*Be shy (have haya) in front of Allah as is His due*”. We said:

“O Messenger of Allah! Praise be to Allah we are modest in front of Him”.

The Prophet then explained:



“What I meant was not the shyness that you think. To be shy in front of Allah as is His due is to preserve the limbs of your head and your body and to remember the decaying of death and the grave. The one who wishes for the afterlife should abandon the embellishments of this world and choose the afterlife over it. Whoever does so, will have shown true shyness to Allah as is His due”. (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 24/2458).

Junayd-i Baghdadi has said:

“Modesty is to see the endless bounties of Allah and to perceive how faulty and deficient we are in the face of them”.



The family of the Pharaoh who ruled Egypt were very oppressive and arrogant people. Whenever a foreign and beautiful woman would enter the city from the border, the Pharaoh would immediately be informed. If she was married her husband would be killed, if she had a brother, she would be asked for from him. When the prophet Ibrahîm عليه السلام entered the border with his wife Sarah, the palace was informed of this. They were told that a beautiful woman had entered Egypt. They took Sarah to the palace. There is a hadith in relation to this matter which is as follows:

“When Sarah entered the palace, she immediately took her ablution and prayed two cycles of prayer. When she finished she supplicated to Almighty Allah as follows:

“O Allah! If I am one who has believed in You and Your prophet and have meticulously preserved my chastity from all except my husband then please do not let these unbelievers assault me” (Bukhari, Buyu’, 100).

The Pharaoh wanted to approach Sarah. All of a sudden he lost his breath and became paralysed. Thus Allah protected Sarah from his evil. This took place several times.

The Pharaoh let her go out of his fear and gave her his maid servant Hajar as a gift. In shock he said to those around him:

“This woman is a *jinn*. If she stays with me any longer I will be destroyed. I gave her Hajar in order to be free of harm from her”¹⁶⁵

What a great example of preserving one's modesty, chastity and good manners...

The Holy Qur'an states:

'Seek help in steadfastness and salat' (Al-Baqara, 2:45).



One lady from the Ansar once went to a Jewish goldsmith to buy something. The Jew began to harass the lady in an attempt to stain her modesty and honour, and behaved very indecently towards her. When the lady began to cry out, a Muslim who happened to be passing by and who had witnessed the event came to her aid and began to attack the Jew. They began to wrestle each other. The Muslim came out victorious and killed the Jew. The Jews that had gathered there then made a martyr of the Muslim. Things got very much out of hand and the pact that had been made with the Jews was broken completely.

Upon this, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ gathered the Jews together and addressed them:

"O community of Jews. Fear Allah. And beware of the punishment and calamity that befell the Quraysh and become Muslim. Because you (of all people) know that I am a prophet sent by Allah. You have seen this in your books and in the promise that Allah gave you".

Then he suggested that their pact be renewed. However the response of the Jews was very insolent. Upon this, the Prophet then declared war on the tribe of Bani Qaynuqa¹⁶⁶.

This is the importance of the honour of a Muslim woman.



Abu Shahm  narrates:

One time in Madina, a young girl passed by me. I grabbed her by the collar and then let her go. The next morning the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was taking a pledge from the people. I went to him but he refused to accept my pledge and said:

166. Ibn Hisham, II, 426-329; Wakidi, I, 176-180; Ibn Sa'd, II, 28-30



“And now has the one who grabbed the collar come?” then I said:

“By Allah I will never do that again”. Upon this, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ accepted my pledge (Ahmad, V, 294).



Allah’s Messenger ﷺ once passed by a Muslim from Madina who was advising his shy brother to give up his modesty. As he passed him by he said to him:

“Leave him be for hayâ is from faith” (Bukhari, Iman 1, Adab 77; Muslim, Iman 57-59).



Ummu Khallad ؓ was a female Companion from Madina. She had sent her son to the battle fought with the Jewish tribe of Bani Qaynuqa. Some of the Muslims who learned that the Muslim soldiers were returning from the battle and that Khallad had become a martyr immediately ran to Ummu Khallad’s house to tell her the news. That woman of Islam grabbed her head-covering and ran to learn of the fate of her son from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Someone who saw her with her head covering said to her:

“Your son Khallad has died and you are standing there concerned about your head scarf”.

Ummu Khallad gave this superb reply which put forth the mentality and perspective of a woman of Islam:

“I have lost Khallad but this does not mean that I have lost my modesty (hayâ)”.

This reply of Ummu Khallad was passed on to the Prophet who said:

“There are two rewards of martyrdom for Khallad”.

“Why o Messenger of Allah?” he was asked.

“Because he was killed by the Jews, who are of the people of the book”. (Ibn Sa’d, III, 531; Ibnu al-Asir, Usdu al-Gaba, II, 140).



One time a group of Damaskan women came to Aisha , the Prophet's wife. She said to them:

“I believe that you have come from a place where the women enter the public baths neglecting their modesty”. The women replied “Yes, that is so”. Aisha replied:

“But I heard the Messenger of Allah  say: “A woman who takes off her clothes in a place other than her own home has rendered the veil between her and Allah”. (Abu Hammam, 1/4010; Tirmidhi, Adab, 43/2804).

A woman who acts such has rendered the veil of her dignity and her modesty. Because Allah Most High has commanded that she preserve herself with the garment of piety. However with this action she has violated both of Allah's commands of covering up and being pious.



When the wife of one of the three great satirical poets of the Ummayyad Dynasty, Ferezdak, died, Hasan Basri was present at the funeral. At one point Hasan Basri indicated the grave and asked this poet who had defiled people with his poems and injured their dignity:

“What have you prepared for the afterlife?” The old poet replied:

“For seventy years I have been preparing my testimony of faith”. Hasan Basri replied:

“What good preparation”, and then he added:

“However there are conditions for the testimony of faith. So beware of slandering chaste women”.

Somebody once said to Wahb ibn Munabbih:

“Is not “la ilaha illallah” the key to Paradise?”

He replied:

“Yes, it is. What is a key without any teeth? If the key has teeth you can open the door, but if it has no teeth, the door will remain closed” (Bukhari, Janaiz, 1).





The teeth of the key of *tawheed* (belief in the oneness of Allah) are goodness and righteous deeds.



The honour and dignity of people in the Ottoman State were assured. For instance in a decree he made after the conquest of Bosnia, Fatih the Conqueror said:

“Let my soldiers beware and make sure they are not present when the Serbian girls come to their fountains to gather their water...”

With this decree Fatih preserved both the dignity of his own soldiers and that of the Christian subjects who were under his rule.



During the reign of Sultan Sulayman the Magnificent, the phenomenon of public dancing, that immodest and indecent of acts, had just started to appear. Hearing this Sulayman immediately sent instructions to the French King:

“... I have heard that a base form of entertainment called dancing has been invented in which men and women embrace each other in front of the people, and behave contrary to all morals and modesty. There is a chance that this disgraceful act will spread to my nation as we border each other. Thus as soon as this letter reaches you, you must put an end to this scandal. In the event that you do not, I am certainly capable of coming there and putting an end to it myself”.

The historian, Hammer, has recorded that as a result of this letter, public dancing in France was forbidden for an entire century.



Our forefathers used to place ‘charity blocks in certain districts of Istanbul. These blocks which had become quite famous, were where people placed money and other needs for people to come and take what they needed. In this way, those who were too noble and ashamed to ask for anything were not offended and were not forced to ask or beg from people.



These charity blocks have been witness to a great competition for doing good and serving people. In the darkness of the night those who were wealthy would come to place their charity in the hollows found at the top of these blocks. This they did in the spirit of the notion that “their left hands are unaware of what their right hands have given out”.

Later, the poor but virtuous and dignified people living in those areas would come to these blocks and take as much as they needed, never more. Especially those who were too proud and dignified to beg even though they were in great need, would approach the blocks and take only as much as they needed. A French traveller who wrote about Istanbul in the seventeenth century, writes that he once spent a week observing one of these blocks which had money in it but that he never saw anybody come to take it.



In short, the believer should be dignified and modest. Because the entire power of carnal desires and feelings lies in conception and visualization, it is necessary to occupy the heart with positive emotions and the mind with exalted thoughts in order to preserve one’s dignity and honour and control one’s nafs. In addition it is very important to stay away from friends who are a bad influence.

Allah’s Messenger ﷺ has said:

“Be modest in front of women who are foreign to you so that your women can also be modest. Be good to your fathers so that your children will be good to you. When a brother of yours comes to apologise to you, accept his apology whether he be right or wrong. Otherwise you will not be able to be with me in my Fountain in Paradise” (Hakim, IV, 170/7258).

Modesty, which is the adornment of the human being, is like a spiritual shield that protects one from all forms of evil. It allows a person to carry out their responsibilities to Allah and His servants. Allah’s Messenger ﷺ has elaborated on the effect and importance of modesty as follows:

“One of the sayings of the early Prophets which the people have got is: If you don’t feel ashamed do whatever you like.” (Bukhari, Anbiya, 54, Adab 78).



21. Intelligence (Fatanah) and Discernment (Firasah)

Fatanah which means extraordinary intelligence is one of the five distinguishing features of the prophets. *Fatanah* is not merely dry intelligence or logic but rather it is perception beyond genius. It is an expression of the mind, of discernment and foresight, in connection with the heart.

In order to carry out their duty of preaching perfectly and without fault, all prophets must have had to possess this extraordinary intelligence. Otherwise they would not be able to bring strong proofs to support their case and they would not be able to convince and persuade people.

The prophets are superior to other people in all characteristic and primarily in intelligence, aptitude and discernment. They possessed a strong memory, a high degree of discernment and a powerful capacity for logic and persuasion. They were able to solve the most difficult and complex of problems quite easily. They spoke using '*sehl-i mumteni*¹⁶⁷' when they explained matters and thus those whom they addressed had no difficulty in understanding them even though their powers of perception may have differed greatly.

One of the characteristics of the prophets which is *frasaḥ* has the meaning of have such fine intelligence as to be able to address the one being spoken to according to their level. An act that can please one person may in fact sadden another. Thus training and teaching people involves being able to determine their psychological state and predict events and reactions beforehand.

The following event is noteworthy as it shows how the Messenger of Allah ﷺ treated people who were far from intelligence and foresight and who gave rulings without knowing fully the commands of the religion and thus were the means of people being subject to harm as a result.

Jabir ؓ narrates:

We were once on an expedition when one of our friends was hit in the head with a rock and his head began to bleed. The man later lost his major

167. *Sehl-i mumteni* are expressions which they though appear on the surface to be easy, simple and plain [clear, straightforward] are in fact difficult to produce and imitate.



ritual ablution (due to a wet dream) and became ritually impure. He asked those around him:

“Is there licence for me to perform the *tayammum* (dry ablution)?”

They replied:

“You are able to use water so we do not think there is any licence for you”

The man washed himself while in that wounded state and as a result he passed away. When we arrived back in the presence of Allah’s Messenger, he was informed of this event.

The Prophet got very angry and said:

“... *the cure for ignorance is to ask. It would have been enough for him to perform the dry ablution, then wrap his wound with a bandage and wipe over the bandage and then wash the rest of his body*” (Abu Dawud, Taharah, 125/337; Ibn Majah, Taharah 93).

Consequently it is a requirement for those Muslims who follow in the footsteps of the Prophet to possess intelligence, to be knowledgeable, clever, attentive, and possess foresight.

Firasah is a light that Allah places in the heart of those of His servants that He loves. It is the manifestation in the heart of the characteristics of high intelligence, perception, knowledge and understanding as the spiritual ability to perceive. It is to perceive the inner face of events and to correctly assess and determine what passes through the mind and the hearts as a result of the sincere feelings and inspiration that rise in the heart. This *firasah* can only be the lot of those free themselves from the arrogance of the *nafs* and who look at events with the light of Allah.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

“*Beware of the *firasah* of the believer. Because when he looks, he looks with the light of Allah*” (Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 15/3127).

With this hadith he indicated that each believer’s *firasah* is according to the degree of their faith. In this respect then the *firasah* of the friends of Allah, those perfect believers is much greater than that of other believers.



The best of *firasah* begins with struggling to solve the mystery of death. It is only possible to know the truth of the mysteries and truths of this fleeting world by 'dying before one dies'. Jalaluddin al Rumi has said:

"The intelligent ones are those who weep first and laugh later; The fools are those who first of all immerse themselves in laughter and then later bang their heads out of regret. O human being! Be discerning and see the end result of your affair from the beginning and then be saved from burning with regret on the Day of Judgement..."

The condition of *firasah* is that one eats from what is lawful and one delves into reflection and developing one's heart. The first step in reflection and having a heart that is capable of feeling is to look at events around one with the eye of discernment. Allah has invited His servants to look at the events around him with foresight and to take lesson and in many verses He has said:

'Have they not looked at the how We created the camel, the clouds, the rain, the mountains, how the green plants die in winter and then We bring them back to life in the spring, and at the remains of past nations?'¹⁶⁸

After counting the endless bounties of Allah in the Qur'an, Allah then repeatedly addresses people 'o people of insight'¹⁶⁹.... And desires they look at the universe with the eye of discernment. Many other verses similar to this ask:

'Will you not reflect? Will you not ponder?' Will you not use your mind'¹⁷⁰

Thus man has been invited to look upon the universe not from an empty and unintelligible perspective but rather with foresight and intelligence to understand its wisdom.

The following verses from the Qur'an demonstrate the importance of foresight:

'There is instruction in that for people of insight' (Al'i Imran, 3:13)

168. Qaf, 6; Yunus 101; Ghashiyah 17-20; Nur, 43; Haj, 63; Ra'd 3; Anbiya 31; Nahl 65; Rum, 50; Muhammad 10...

169. Al'i Imran, 13; Nur, 44; Hashr, 2...

170. An'am, 50; Baqara, 219, 266; Muhammad, 24; Nisa, 82; Yasin 68...

‘And remember Our slaves Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya‘qub, men of true strength and inner sight. We purified their sincerity through sincere remembrance of the Abode. In Our eyes they are among the best of chosen men’ (Sa’d, 45-47).

‘Say: ‘This is my way. I call to Allah with inner sight, I and all who follow me’ (Yusuf, 12:108)

Scenes of Virtue

One day the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was asked:

“O Messenger of Allah! Have you ever worshipped any other than Allah?” The reply was:

“No”

He was then asked:

“Have you ever drunk alcohol?”

He replied:

“No, never! Even before I was aware of what the Book and faith were I knew that those things were from unbelief” (Diyarbekri, I, 254-255).

The pure nature of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ was created with the peak of intelligence, foresight and discernment.



Five years before the prophethood of Allah’s Messenger began, the Quraysh attempted to rebuild the Ka’bah. The Prophet, together with his uncle, Abbas, helped in this task. When it came to placing the Black Stone into its place, each tribe wanted the honour of doing this for itself and a huge quarrel broke out as a result. The event resulted in much jealousy and greed, so much so that blood was about to be spilt. The sons of AbduDarr brought a bowl full of blood and made a pact with the sons of Adiy ibn Ka’b to fight until the death and they began to prepare to do battle. In order to strengthen their oath they dipped their hands in the bowl of blood. The Quraysh remained in this state for about four or five nights.



Eventually the oldest man amongst the Quraysh, Abu Umayya said in a loud voice:

“O my people. We only want good and we do not want evil. Do not enter into a race of jealousy amongst yourselves. Leave the quarrel. Since we have not been able to solve this problem amongst ourselves, let us appoint whoever first enters the Ka’bah to be a judge amongst us. And let us be content with his judgement”. And he showed them Bani Shaybah, the door of the Ka’bah.

Just as that point the Messenger of Allah ﷺ appeared at the door. A smile appeared on the faces of everyone present, for the one who had come was Muhammad the trustworthy. The love, respect and trust that the Quraysh had for the Prophet had grown day by day. In fact, when they were about to sacrifice a camel, they would search out the Prophet and ask him to make a prayer of blessing for this task.¹⁷¹

This is why as soon as they saw him, the Quraysh said:

“Look, it is *Al-amin* (The trustworthy one). We accept him as a judge amongst us”.

They explained the matter to him. He then selected one man from each tribe and then took off his cloak and laid it down on the ground. Then he placed the Black Stone in the centre of his garment and had each person from each tribe hold a corner of it. They brought the blessed stone like that and then the Prophet himself took the stone and put it in its place. In this way the Prophet prevented a probable battle from erupting between the tribes and displayed his intelligence and foresight. (Ibn Hisham, I, 209-214; Abdurrazzak, V, 319).

The acumen of Allah’s Messenger which he displayed in all of the battles he fought in the way of Islam, and the foresight he showed in the peace treaties he made, at Hudaibiya in particular, and at the conquest of Mecca, at Hunayn, and the extraordinary tactics he displayed at Taif and the justice that he brought were elevated and exalted above anything that ordinary men could do.

And people have always been in awe and trusted people of foresight and strong personality.



When the prophet Yûsuf was vindicated of any crime and freed from prison, a messenger was sent to him. Yûsuf, however did not want to leave prison until the King was fully aware of what had happened, and until the matter was made absolutely clear and until everyone had fully accepted that he had been put into prison unjustly. By using his intelligence and by putting forth a patient and dignified stance he prevented those who were jealous of him from causing more mischief. He only consented to being released from prison when it was proven that the lies and accusations made against him were unjust and when he was genuinely free of suspicion.

This is why all Muslims should take heed from the foresight of Yûsuf and should be meticulous in raising any suspicion that may be had against them and avoid creating suspicion against them.



Even as a young child the prophet Sulayman عليه السلام was extremely intelligent and perceptive. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ narrates the following event which relates to this characteristic of his:

“... one time there were two women walking along a path with their children. Suddenly a wolf came and ran off with the older ladies child. Upon this the woman said to the other (younger) woman:

“The wolf has run off with your child”. The other woman responded:

“No, he has taken your child”.

These two women then went to the prophet Dâwud (David) so that he could judge between them. Dâwud عليه السلام judged that the child belonged to the older woman¹⁷². After they left that court, they went to Sulayman, the son of Dâwud and asked for his judgement. Sulayman said to them:

172. One of the characteristics of the prophets is ‘ismah’ that is being free of sin. However they are not immune to ‘zelle’, or making small mistakes, as a result of being human. Zelle are mistakes made by prophets made unwillingly. There are many instances of wisdom in this. Sometimes it so happens that as a result of these small mistakes, Almighty Allah wills that a particular command come into place. Sometimes He allows



“Bring me a knife. Let us share this (remaining) child amongst the two of you”.

Upon this, the younger mother, who was the real mother of the child ran forward:

“No, please stop! May Allah have mercy on you. The child is this woman’s”

Upon this, Sulayman judged that the child belonged to the younger woman” (Bukhari, Anbiya, 40)



There is a story from the book *Arais-i Majalis* which is as follows:

There are two women who are the most superior in terms of foresight. Both of them were accurate in their analysis of the prophet Mûsa.

One of them is Asiya, the wife of the Pharaoh. (When Mûsa was brought to the palace in a chest, her heart inclined towards him and she took him to Pharaoh and said:

“Let this child be the apple of our eye. Do not slay him”.

The other is the daughter of the prophet Shuayb. She perceived the elevated character of Mûsa and said to her father:

“Dearest father! Hire him to herd our sheep. He will be the best of those you hire, the strongest and the most trustworthy”.

With her foresight, Safura, the daughter of Shuayb, had correctly perceived the trustworthy nature of Mûsa. When she was asked how she did this she answered:

“He did not even look at our faces. And when he walked, he walked in front of us. Thus we could see that he was very trustworthy”



It befalls every Muslim to receive his own share of the *fatana*h of the prophets, that is their intelligence coming from the heart, their foresight

His prophets to feel their human weakness and sometimes He wants to remind people that these exceptional individuals are also human beings and that they too can err occasionally thus preventing ‘divinity’ from being attributed to them.



and discernment and to use this bounty of intelligence given to them in the best way. They should know what to say to the right person, at the right time, in the right way and at the right place.

For instance the subtle manner in which Jafar Tayyar رضي الله عنه spoke to the Negus of Abyssinia, informing him about Islam, is very significant in showing the insight that a Muslim should have. When the Christian Negus asked Jafar-i Tayyar to recite some verses from the Qur'an, he did not immediately recite the verses that challenged the unbelievers, but rather he recited the verses that mentioned the prophet Jesus and his mother Mary. After he listened in deep reverence to the awesome verses recited by Jafar رضي الله عنه, the Negus said with tears in his eyes:

“These words have truly sprung from the same source as that which Jesus brought”. A little while later he became Muslim. (Ibn Hisham, I, 358-360)



According to a narration by Anas رضي الله عنه himself, one day as he went to visit Uthman رضي الله عنه he saw a woman along the way. The beauty of the woman left an impression on him. With these thoughts of the woman still on his mind he approached Uthman, who said to him:

“O Anas. Here you are entering with the traces of fornication still in your eyes”.

Anas was shocked at these words and asked:

“Is there revelation still being revealed even after Allah’s Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم has passed on?”

Uthman replied:

“No, this is foresight and correct observation”¹⁷³



When Abdullah ibn Umar رضي الله عنه was told that Hussain رضي الله عنه, the grandson of the Prophet, had set out for Iraq, he immediately followed him and after travelling for three days, finally caught up with him. He asked him:

“O Hussain! Where are you going?”

173. Kushayri, Risale, p 238



Hussain رضي الله عنه replied:

“I am going to Iraq”. Ibn Umar looked at Hussain and saw that he had scrolls of paper with him. Hussain said to him:

“These are letters from the Iraqis”. Ibn Umar said to him:

“Do not be deceived by their letters, and do not go to them”

However, no matter how much Ibn Umar insisted, Hussain still persisted in going.

“If I do not go, then who will go?” he said. Ibn Umar then addressed Hussain رضي الله عنه as follows:

“In that case let me remind you of a hadith of the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم:

One time Gabriel came to the Messenger of Allah. He left him with the choice of staying in this world or going to the hereafter. Allah’s Messenger preferred the hereafter to this world. You are a piece of Allah’s Messenger. I swear by Allah that not one of you from the *ahl’ul bayt* (the family of the Prophet) will prosper in the world until the Day of Judgement, that is you will not possess wealth, nor property, nor position or repute for a long period of time. What prevents you from being successful in this world is that the afterlife is much better for you, and you have already preferred it over this world.

Hussain رضي الله عنه still did not consent to returning with Ibn Umar. Upon this Abdullah ibn Umar embraced him and wept and then said:

“May Allah protect you, you are going to your death”. (Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidaya* VIII, 152; Zahabi, *Siyer*, III, 296).

The brother of Hussain رضي الله عنه, Hasan رضي الله عنه also wrote a letter to Muawiya in order to dispel the trouble and strife that had arisen amongst the Muslims and in order to prevent any blood being shed. He then renounced his caliphate.

Thus these events that demonstrate the foresight of Abdullah ibn Umar and also the pain and troubles that that the family of the Prophet endured as a result of their sacrifice, responsibility and love of service to Islam.



Abdulqadir Geylani  narrates an event that happened to him:

One day I saw a light appear before my eyes and encompass the entire horizon. While I was trying to understand what it was a voice sounded from the light:

“O Abdulqadir. I am your Lord. I am so pleased with the good deeds that you have done up till now that I have made the unlawful lawful for you”.

However as soon as the voice stopped, I realised that it had come from Satan and I said:

“Off with you cursed one. The light that you have shown me is eternal darkness”.

Upon this Satan said:

“You have again managed to escape from me as a result of the wisdom and discernment that your Lord has bestowed upon you. But I have managed to make stray from the path hundreds of people with this method”. Then he disappeared.

I raised my hands to the heavens and thanked Allah in awareness of this bounty from my Lord.

Somebody who was listening to these words of mine asked me:

“O Abdulqadir how did you know that it was Satan?”

I replied:

“From what he said about making the unlawful lawful for me...”

This is the kind of discernment that each of us need our entire lives.



In the difficult and dark period of the Ottoman Empire, when the princes were competing with each other for the throne, the public were very sound, mature and had a great awareness of history to such a degree that is beyond comparison with the people of today. They did not show bias towards any of the princes-in-waiting, and they preferred to await the result of the clashes that arose amongst them. This is why when Musa



Chelebi arrived in the suburbs of Bursa, the capital of that time, the people sent their representatives to him saying:

“None of us are supporters of you nor are we against you. As brothers, you take care of this matter yourselves. Do not involve us in this clash of yours, or you will open up wounds that will be impossible to heal. The loyalty of each soldier under your command is a debt of conscience to you princes. However our request from you is that you do not allow this disagreement to divide our nation...”

And so one of the most powerful agents in preventing the division of the Ottoman State, was this very foresight, discernment, prudence and sound character of its people. Otherwise, as seen in many other nations there would have been bloodshed and rancour amongst the people as a result of stubborn partisanship and blindly following a particular leader.



Timurlane who defeated Yildirim Bayazid at Ankara, had the Ottomans pay protection money which continue for several years.

After that the Ilhans continued this agreement saying that they had taken the place of Timur. This agreement lasted until Murad Han II. Then, during his reign the Ottomans regained their power and addressed the Sultan as follows:

“My Sultan. Why are you still paying these people protection money? Let us rid ourselves of them...”

Murad II, who was a very intelligent and prudent ruler gave the following reply in response to this emotion-filled request:

“They are not yet aware of our rise and our current power. If we do not give them the money they want now they will gather together an army, albeit a small one, against us. Even though they will be defeated, Muslim blood will be shed... Thus continue to pay them the money that they want for now. I do not want to shed Muslim blood in return for money...”

However you can display the magnificence of our army to the envoys of the Ilhans and let them become aware of our power and strength. In this



way they will not have the courage and nerve to ask for protection money from an elevated nation much superior to themselves...”

And so it was that events turned out the way that Murad II predicted.



One of the reasons that Murad II persisted in his wish that his son, Mehmed Fatih II ascend the throne was the great potential he saw within him. This is because even from a young age, Prince Mehmed would reflect on and do many things that older people never even considered. He would ask his father very deep questions. One time he saw his father in the garden of the palace and ran to him. After he asked him how he was, he said:

“O my sultan father. I don’t know the wisdom behind it but despite the great responsibility and burden upon your shoulders I do not see the signs of age in you that I see in other old people. You have aged like other people, but you are not bent over like them. Even though you have endured much trouble and distress, you still have the energy and alertness, the heroism and bravery of a young man and you are able to use your intelligence and will power appropriately. I look and there you are victorious on the battlefield. I look and there you are - a wise teacher in circles of learning. I look again and there you are a dervish sincerely serving the people... neither your days nor your nights are your own. How do you gather the strength to manage all of these without breaking your back. You are like a young sapling upright and sound. You have managed to preserve that subtle and delicate spirit of yours? How can this be father? The continual occupation of the mind is enough to weary and tire a person out, but this has brought no change in you and has not ruined your state of peace. What medicine do you use for this extraordinary character of yours, what type of elixir do you drink for your superior intelligence? Please teach me, so that I can follow in your path...”

Surprised at such questions from his young son, but at the same time very pleased Murad II gave the following historical piece of advice to his son:

“O my dearest son. You have made me very happy. May our exalted Lord, whom the universe and everything in it worships, increase the



superior qualities He has bestowed upon you. May He allow you to continue in your wonder for such great and encompassing matters.

O my son. No matter what anyone says, I believe that when those people who live their lives based on the principles of uprightness and honesty leave this world, they will meet with endless bounties that are hard to imagine. I have no doubt about this. That is why I try to worship Allah in the most sincere and heartfelt way. I believe that Allah will recompense me for the pain and struggles of this world that I have endured and I seek refuge in Him for every matter. In addition I believe that within His decree or fate that He has written for me there is great ease and pleasure.

O my son. It is necessary to keep yourself distant from believing and being fooled by every word that is uttered. It is also necessary to consider and learn the inner aspect of every situation and to come closer to your own true reality.

Just as a fruit can only be eaten once it has matured; those people who have lived through life and who have knowledge and experience are always those who chosen over others. In contrast, to eat an unripe grape while there are delicious, ripe grapes in your reach is a flaw of the mind.

O my son. From time to time I remember my great forefathers. And sometimes I ponder on the end affair of the generations to come after me. Praise be to Allah, we have arrived at this day, having been the subject of love, respect and devotion. I hope to continue in the same way after this day too. However I came into this world that is how I would like to leave.

Know this - that the continuation of anything is not possible through crude force, the sword, heroism or oppressiveness. Intelligence, prudence precaution, patience, foresight, and being tried and tested are very important. The first tactic is not always valid and also has many drawbacks. And the second way does not amount to anything on its own. It is necessary to apply both in order to meet with great success. Do not forget the great victories of our great forefathers. Though on the surface they appear to have taken place under the shadow of the sword, in truth they were only possible through intelligence, logic and love.

O my son. Do not abandon justice if only for an instant. Because Allah Most High is just and loves those who are just. From one aspect, you are

His vicegerent on earth. He has willed to bestow on you many bounties and favours and has made you a commander over people. Never forget this...

O my son. There are three types of people in this world:

The first group are those are intelligent and reasonable and who think more or less about the future and who are not abnormal or strange in anyway.

The second group are those who are far from knowing which path is straight and which is crooked. However they have fallen into this situation not through their own choice, but as a result of the influence of those around them. When they are advised they turn back to the straight path; they accept the truth and they listen to reason. However they also live according to what they hear around them most of the time.

The third group of people are not aware of anything around them and nor do they take heed to the advice and warnings given to them. They only follow their own desires and think they know everything. These are the most dangerous of people.

O son. If Allah Most High has created you to be from the first group of people, then this will please me much and I thank and praise Him. If you are from the second group, then I advise you to listen to the advice and warnings that are given to you. But beware! Do not be amongst the third group of people. They are not in a good state neither in the sight of Allah, nor in the eyes of people.

O son. Sultans are like people who hold scales in their hands. The true sultan is however the one who holds his scales correctly. When you become a sultan I advise you to balance your scales well. Then Allah Most High will desire good for you. He will make you from those of the righteous. And He is aware of all things..."

What extraordinary foresight and intelligence of both father and son...



In addition to the many types of service of Bayazid Wali II such as establishing trust foundations, complexes and hospitals, the importance he



placed on the Islamic sciences and culture was great. The period in which he ruled was the period in which the foundations were laid for Ottoman culture and civilisation. When the famous Italian architect and painter, Leonardo da Vinci, wrote a letter to Bayazid II, offering to design the plans and projects for the mosques and other buildings in Istanbul, the viziers of the Kubbealti were very pleased. However, Bayazid II, who had a very deep and delicate understanding of tasawwuf rejected his offer saying:

“If we accept this offer, the architecture of our nation will be a copy of church architecture in both style and spirit. Our own Islamic architecture will not thrive and gain its own personality”.

This attitude expresses the perspective of the intelligent, prudent and heartfelt Muslim. After Bayazid II the lands of Islam increased to 24 million square kilometres. In the same way Islamic art reached its peak. It was due to this attitude that the spirit of Islam was embroidered into the architecture of places of worship such as Selimiye and Sulaymaniye which have been able to preserve their value and will continue to do so until the Day of Judgement.



It is without a doubt that the first victim of Palestine was Abdulhamid Han II. He showed great sensitivity in the matter of Palestine and put forth a very cautious and prudent approach in the face of the hopes and desires of the Jews which at first glance seemed innocent. Abdulhamid Han said to Theodore Hertzl who offered to pay the entire foreign debt of the Ottomans in return for Palestinian land:

“I will not sell one handspan of Palestinian soil. For this land does not belong to me, it belongs to my people. And my people gained these lands by spilling their blood. A piece of land that is obtained by the blood of martyrs cannot be sold for money. Know that I will never allow the treacherous surgical procedure that you plan to perform on this living body”. He also took serious measures to eliminate this most dangerous of dangers.

Knowing what we know today we can better understand the foresight and prudence of Abdulhamid Han II.



To this day, the most popular name for boys in Palestine is Abdulhamid. The Palestinians honour him with the words: “We are the orphans of Abdulhamid”.



In short, foresight and discernment are necessary traits of the believer. Shah Al-Kirmanī says:

“Whoever protects his eye from the unlawful, and keeps his soul distant from carnal desires and pleasures; whoever is cautious about what is within him, and who externally follows the *sunnah* or way of the Prophet; and whoever is nourished by lawful provision – this person will never falter in his foresight and discernment”.

22. Purification of the heart and soul

One of the first steps in gaining good character, which makes up one’s Islamic personality, is to refine one’s *nafs*¹⁷⁴ and purify one’s heart. This purification and refinement is also the most definitive factor in determining whether one’s end affair will be misfortune or happiness.

In order to refine one’s *nafs* and purify one’s heart, one must first of all submit oneself to the divine will and struggle to resist the greed of the appetites and other ugly behaviour. Every believer must be able to perceive their own defects, flaws, weakness and nothingness and ignorance in the face of their Lord’s greatness, power and perfection. They should give direction to their actions as a result of this perception. In the instance that this can be done successfully, the *nafs* can arrive to an acceptable state, being rid of its blameworthy traits which in the Qur’an is mentioned as being the ‘the self that commands to evil acts’¹⁷⁵.

To struggle to refine one’s *nafs* and to embark on this path with sincere effort is considered the ‘greatest jihad’, due to its importance and degree of its difficulty. This is the expression that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used

174. The *nafs* is the soul of the human being that inclines towards evil. It is the carnal and animal nature of the human being. The word *nafs* will continue to be used in the text. (translator’s note).

175. See chapter Yusuf, 12:53



when they returned from the difficult Battle of Tabuk. In this battle, the Companions had travelled one thousands kilometres before returning back home. They endured hunger and thirst amongst other difficulties. Their hair and beards became unkempt, and their skin stuck to their bones due to their hunger. It was whilst they were in this state that the Prophet said to his Companions:

*“Now we are returning from the little jihad to the greatest jihad; we are returning to do battle with the desires and caprices of our nafs”*¹⁷⁶.

In various other hadiths, the Messenger of Allah said:

“The true mujahid or struggler in the way of Allah, is the one who struggles against his own nafs” (Tirmidhi, Fadailu al-Jihad, 2/1621; Ahmad, VI, 20).

“The intelligent one is the one who controls his nafs taking it to account, and striving for what is to come after death. The fool is the one who follows the desires of his nafs but yet continues to desire good from Allah” (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 25/2459; Ibn Maja, Zuhd, 31).

“The thing I fear most for my community is that they will follow the desires of their nafs” (Suyuti, I, 12).

The prophetic training of the Prophet took place as a result of the endless struggle against the *nafs*. As a result of this refinement of the *nafs* and purification of the heart, the Companions, reared on this prophetic training became perfect people purified of all immature qualities and became a model generation.

Under the instruction and guidance of the Prophet was Ibn Mas’ud رضي الله عنه, who experienced the state of praise, gratitude, and remembrance of Allah. Despite the deep knowledge that he had of *hadith* as a result of his closeness to the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم, he only narrated 848 *hadith* because he was so particular and meticulous about narrating anything said by the Prophet. Ibn Mas’ud expressed his state of mind under the spiritual guidance of the Prophet of Allah as follows:



“We were so affected by the spiritual state of the Messenger of Allah, that we could hear the food that we ate doing *zikr* of Allah” (See Bukhari, Manakib, 25)

In his past, Ibn Mas’ud رضي الله عنه was a camel shepherd. However after being guided to Islam and passing through the spiritual training of the Messenger of Allah, his heart became like an ocean, deeper, finer and more subtle and a mirror of divine manifestations. The famous school of Kufa is a product of this famous Companion. The greatest legal mind in the world, Abu Hanifa, was trained at this academy. Solon and Hammurabi, who are considered the greatest legal minds in the world, could not hold a candle to the great Abu Hanifa. As the Hanafi school of thought established by Abu Hanifa continued, the reward of ongoing charity would go to Abu Hanifa. Thus Ibn Mas’ud and other similar Companions continue to be remembered even though their bodies may have become buried under earth. Their reign will be remembered in the hearts of the community of Muhammad until the Day of Judgement.

The most important means of the Prophet and friends of Allah for influencing the heart and soul in the spiritual training of human being is the ‘*suhbah*¹⁷⁷’. The words of a person who has refined their *nafs* and purified their heart are filled with emotion. These feelings and their words which are spoken in sincerity find a way to the heart of whom they are addressed to and result in a positive influence and become the means for the spread of success and spirituality.

The scholars and Gnostics, who are the heirs of the prophets, first prepare the heart by softening it and making it ready to be reformed, before they attempt to mend a person’s negative traits. They prepare the background for the sweet winds of regret to blow and still the anger and storms of rage of the *nafs*.

The prosperity that flows from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to the hearts of those perfect guides who have followed on down from Him, makes its

177. *Suhbah* comes from a root word having the meanings of companionship, social intercourse and friendship. Henceforth the word will be translated as discourse (translator’s note).

way to the believers through a type of bonding and discourse. In this way the model personality of the Prophet is reflected onto the hearts of the believers according to the capacity of their hearts.

However much this discourse is conducted with the ardour of worship, that much manifestation will arise. One's discourse is adapted according to the heart of the one being addressed. Discourse with a person is like writing a spiritual prescription for the one whom one is conversing with. The discourse which is performed and listened to with a pure and sincere heart is a deep state of discovery; its revelations emerge according to the state of the heart of the one who is listening.

The most influential method that Allah's Messenger ﷺ used in training and guiding his Companions was discourse. Almighty Allah revealed the following to the Prophet:

'And remind them, for truly the believers benefit from being reminded' (Zariyat, 51:55)

'...So remind them! You are only a reminder' (Ghasiya, 88:21)

It is noteworthy that the words '*sahabi*' (Companion) and '*suhba*' (discourse) derive from the same root. Amongst their feelings of love, respect and courtesy felt by the Companions for the Prophet, they are the most embodied and perfect example of the benefit to be obtained from spiritual converse and guidance. As if in explanation of the condition for benefiting from the discourse and conversation of the Prophet and in describing their resulting peaceful state and etiquette, they have said:

"(We used to listen to the Prophet with our heads so still) as if there was a bird perched upon them and we were afraid to move for fear it would fly away" (See Abu Dawud, Sunnah, 23-24/4753; Ibn Majah, Janaiz, 37; Ibn Saïd, I, 424).

Thus the circles of conversation of the Messenger of Allah were conducted with such ardour. As he spoke, those around him listened with such longing and attentiveness, that their state of peace and ecstasy could be witnessed by others. The manners and courtesy which transferred from him to his Companions was such that they considered it impudence to ask him a question. This is why they would wait for the Bedouins to come

from the desert and ask the Prophet a question so that it could lead to some words from the Prophet from which they too could benefit.

The Blessed Companions, whose pasts were full of ignorance, reached such a state after being guided to Islam and being subject to the prosperous conversation and spiritual training and guidance of the Prophet and after refining their souls and purifying their hearts, that they became the most perfect people in the world. Their tales of virtue which have travelled from mouth to mouth and made their place in people's hearts have surpassed all ages and lands.

Thus the acts of refining the soul and purifying the heart have a very important place in establishing the Islamic personality. Firstly one has to cleanse oneself of unbelief, ignorance, ill feeling, incorrect creed and evil traits. That is, one must purify oneself from all manner of errors pertaining to belief, character and action and which are averse to this most clearest of religions. After cleansing the heart and protecting it from all evil, one must then train and adorn it with characteristics of piety such as faith, knowledge, wisdom, positive feelings and traits, thus filling it with spirituality.

Because mankind has been brought to this world in order to be tried and tested, he will be subject to a chronic affliction called the '*nafs*' until his death. This affliction is full of a thousand ills. Even if he reaches the highest degree of sainthood he is in constant danger of being subject to the wiles, whisperings and traps of the threesome of worldly inclinations, the *nafs* and Satan. The worth of the servant begins when he eliminates these dangers and rids himself of the enticing lures of this mortal world and envelops himself in piety and eventually turns back to Allah.

Jalaluddin Rumi expresses the inner ups and downs of the human being as follows:

“The one who possesses a *nafs* is like the prophet Mûsa عليه السلام. His body however, is like the Pharaoh. The one who possesses a *nafs* forgets that very *nafs* within him and searches for enemies outside.

O traveller on the path of truth! If you want to know the truth, neither Mûsa nor Pharaoh have died; they are living within you. They have concealed themselves within your existence and they continue their struggle in your

heart. This is why you should look for these two individuals, enemies to each other, within your own self”

Again Rumi says:

“Do not look to fully nourishing and developing your body. Because it is a victim that is headed for the grave. What you should in fact do is nourish your heart. It is destined for greatness and is the thing that will be honoured.

“Give your body only a little amount of fat and sugar. Because the one who overfeeds it will fall prey to its desires and whims and will end up disgraced.

Give your soul spiritual nourishment. Present it with mature thought, subtle understanding, and spiritual nourishment so that it can go to its destination sound and strengthened”.

In truth the *nafs* has a dual aspect whereby when it is refined and trained the human being can rise to the most honoured of ranks amongst all other creatures. In contrast when this does not occur, it can fall to the lowest of the low. It is virtually like a double-edged sword.

Every *nafs* that is deprived of spiritual guidance and control is like a painful veil of deprivation that covers the truth with ignorance. Only when the human being can rid itself of these blameworthy traits in spite of the hindrance of his *nafs*, and to the degree that he can refine and purify his heart and soul can he then turn towards Allah and towards goodness and surpass even the angels who do not possess a *nafs*. The honour of such a victory is in accordance with the struggles that one had to eliminate to achieve it.

Consequently refinement of the *nafs* and purification of the heart are a must in order to train the inclinations to do evil that are a part of human nature and to plant the seeds of piety. Every human being is charged with the responsibility of knowing Allah and increasing in his knowledge of Him to the degree of gnosis, according to their potential and capacity. They are charging with carrying out good deeds and praising and honouring Allah Most High. This is true ‘servanthood’. For servanthood to reach this target is dependent on surpassing the obstacle of one’s *nafs* and equipping



it with lofty feelings which is in effect what refinement of the soul and purification of the heart is.

Purification of the soul is a matter that is given so much importance that Almighty Allah swears by it many times. Allah says in the chapter Shams:

‘By the sun and its morning brightness, and the moon when it follows it, and the day when it displays it, and the night when it conceals it and the sky and what erected it and the earth and what extended it, and the self and what proportioned it and inspired it with depravity or piety, he who purifies it (the nafs) has succeeded, and he who covers it up has failed. (As Shams, 91:1-10)

When Allah Most High swears by something, this is an indication of the honour and worth of those things that are sworn by and are in fact to express the importance and greatness of the divine decree that follow the oath. The verses here are the same, with one exception:

Almighty Allah swears an oath exactly ten times in these verses, one after the other. Then after that, in order to strengthen the meaning, He uses the term ‘*qad*’ which indicates certainty, after which He informs us that:

‘...the one who purifies it (the nafs) has succeeded, and the one who covers it up has failed’

It is noteworthy that nowhere else in the Holy Qur’an and upon no other matter other than purification of the *nafs* does Almighty Allah swear an oath ten times, back to back. This truth is enough to demonstrate to the human being how important and necessary purification of the *nafs* is for the human being’s salvation.

In *tasawwuf*, purification implies reducing the wants of the *nafs* and breaking its reign over the body and thus allowing the spirit its dominion. This is only possible by strengthening the will against the *nafs* through the method of *riyazat*, which involves being moderate in the way one eats, drinks, sleeps and talks. It is because of this that in *tasawwuf* the method of reining in the *nafs* is by ‘killet-I taam’ (eating little), killet-I man’am (sleeping little) and killet-I kelam (speaking little). These are the first steps in controlling the *nafs*. However just as with every other matter, it is



necessary not to abandon moderation when carrying out these methods. This is because the body is a trust endowed to the human being by Allah.

In any case in the struggle against the *nafs*, it will not be eliminated, but rather brought under control. What is desired is that one does not eliminate it entirely, but rather preserve it from extremes and limit and train it with desires and inclinations that are conformant with the divine will.

Another important matter in addition to refining the *nafs* is bringing the heart to a state of purity and cleanliness. In terms of its being a jewel in its essence, the heart is a place of divine observation. That is, it is an honoured place where the glance of Almighty Allah becomes manifest. However, just as it is not possible for anyone but the King to sit on the throne of a palace, so too the palace of the body which is the heart, needs to be rid and cleansed of everything other than Allah, of all carnal and worldly desires, or ugly inclinations and sin. In the opposite case, the heart will be closed to divine bounties. However this does not imply that one should not harbour feelings of love to any other than Allah. Those who have managed to refine their *nafs* and purify their heart and who have attained to a sound heart are in fact freed of the love of other than Allah. However other people are not able to wipe away completely love for property, children and other things. In truth this type of love is allowed as long as it does not overstep a particular limit.

In order to be able to comprehend the importance of purification of the heart it is enough to look at both its physical and spiritual position in life. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ indicated the importance of the heart as follows:

“There is a piece of flesh in the human body, where if it is sound, the whole body is sound, but if it is corrupt the whole body is corrupt. That piece of flesh is the heart” (Bukhari, Iman, 39)

Rumi says that it is a futile task to try to fill a sack which has a hole in it without first mending the hole. Likewise it is obvious that it is only when deeds are done with a purified heart can they be a means to the happiness and salvation of the individual. This is because deeds are judged according to their intention. And intention is one of the acts of the heart. In this

regard then the rectification of one's intention and embellishing it with sincerity is essential.

This quality is a condition that can come about only as a result of a master carrying out the training of the heart.

The aim of those friends of Allah who are trying to train their heart is for the heart to reach the state of *ihsan* or an awareness of always being together with Allah. In this way they will gain a heart that is alive. In order for the heart to reach this state, it must be purified of the love of and attachment to all other than Allah.

A heart that has reached this state will become well-acquainted with the most subtle and deep of truths. Such a heart will become a mirror of Divine Names and secrets according to the degree that it is freed of mire and becomes enveloped in fineness. In this way one can reach a state of *marifetullah* which is when the heart becomes truly aware of Allah. Such knowledge then becomes gnosis.

It is only those who arrive in the presence of Allah with a sound heart, who are purified of all spiritual illnesses and who have a pure heart full of divine love, who will eventually be saved. Almighty Allah says in the Qur'an:

'... the Day when neither wealth nor sons will be of any use – except to those who come to Allah with sound and flawless hearts' (Shu'ara, 26:88-89)

There are certain conditions that must be conformed to if one wishes to obtain a sound heart and a *nafs* which has reached a state of contentment. They are:

- a. Lawful provision
- b. Seeking forgiveness and supplication
- c. Reciting the Qur'an and following its commands
- d. Performing one's worship with deep reverence
- e. Giving out

- f. Bringing spiritual life to one's nights
- g. *Zikrullah* (remembrance of Allah) and awareness of Him
- h. Continuing to send blessings and peace on the Messenger of Allah and loving him
- i. Reflecting on death
- j. Keeping company with the righteous and the truthful ones
- k. Possessing good character

When one seriously conforms to these conditions and struggles to do so, the sound heart that results will be purified of all other than Allah and will be like a bright mirror that has become a place of manifestation of the beautiful attributes of Allah.

Our Lord is the Creator and Possessor of all things. This is why He is free and independent of all creation. There is no precious gift that can be presented to him that is not already to be found within his endless treasury. He is the absolute Good; and the source of all goodness and beauty. This is why the most beautiful and precious of things in all of creation is a pure and clean heart that reflects His Divine Names. Consequently the most worthy gift to be presented to our Lord is a sound heart, which is what He desires from us anyway.

Scenes of Virtue

When the Battle of Mûta was taking place, from the pulpit of his mosque, Allah's Messenger ﷺ was notifying his Companions of all that took place at each stage of the battle. The battlefield appeared right before his very eyes. Those martyrdoms that were taking place each second were being sadly and sorrowfully narrated to the Companions, speaking of the struggle made with the enemy on one hand, with Satan on the other and with their own selves:

"Zayd ibn Harith has taken the banner. Satan has immediately approached him. He is trying to show him how sweet life and this world is and how ugly and displeasing is death. Zayd however said to him and moved on:

“This moment is the moment to strengthen the faith in the hearts of the believers. Whereas you are trying to make me fall in love with the world”. He has entered the battle and has just been martyred. Ask for forgiveness for him from Allah”.

Then the Prophet continued:

“He is now in Paradise and is running and frolicking about there. Now Jafar has taken the banner. Satan has immediately run to his side. He is trying to show him how sweet this life and this world is and how ugly and displeasing is death. Ja’far however said to him:

*““This moment is the moment to strengthen the faith in the hearts of the believers”, then he ran to attack the enemy army and has now been martyred. I bear witness that he is a true martyr”.*¹⁷⁸

He continued:

“Ask Allah to forgive your brother. He has entered Paradise as a martyr. Now he is in Paradise, flying wherever he wishes to go, with two wings made of rubies”

“Abdullah ibn Rawaha has now taken the banner”, said Allah’s Messenger ﷺ and was then silent for a period. The faces of the Ansar were pale as they began to think that Abdullah ibn Rawaha might have done something displeasing to Allah and His Messenger. However at that point, Abdullah had taken the banner and was running towards the enemy, and was at the same time struggling with his *nafs*:

“O my nafs. I swore that I would make you submit to me. Either you will do this willingly or I will make you do it. I see that you are not very fond of Paradise. What are you but a vessel filled with water? O my nafs. If you do not die now, do you think that you will never die? If you do as those two did before you and choose martyrdom you will have done the right thing. If you delay you will be of the unfortunate ones”.

178. Ibn Umar رضي الله عنه narrates: “We searched for Ja’far and found him amongst the martyrs. He was in such a state that we counted over ninety arrow and spear wounds [on his chest]. None of these were on his back” (Bukhari, Maghazi, 44). Ja’far رضي الله عنه was thirty three years old when he was martyred (Ibn Hisham, III, 434)

At that point Abdullah's ﷺ finger was wounded. He descended from his horse and stepped on his wounded finger, reading a poem which had the meaning of:

“Are you not a mere bleeding finger? And you have found yourself in this state having struggling in the way of Allah” He then quickly tugged at his finger and pulled it off. Then he continued to fight. He was fighting the minor jihad against the enemy while at the same time fighting the major jihad against his *nafs*:

“O my *nafs*. If your worry is that you will be separated from your wife, then know that I have divorced her. If it is because you will be separated from your servants, then know that I have set them free. And if it is that you will lose your garden and trees then know that I have given them to Allah and His Messenger”.

The Prophet ﷺ then continued to narrate the scenes taking place on the battlefield:

“Abdullah ibn Rawaha gathered his courage and then with banner in hand he fought the enemy until he was martyred. He entered Paradise after a hesitation. Ask Allah to forgive him”.

The Ansar were hurt and offended to learn that Abdullah ﷺ had entered Paradise after hesitation. They asked:

“O Messenger of Allah! What was his hesitation?”

The Prophet replied:

“When he was wounded he hesitated to continue fighting the enemy. Then he blamed his *nafs*, gathered his courage and became a martyr. He entered Paradise. They were shown to me in Paradise resting on golden thrones. Abdullah's throne was a little lower than the throne of the other two. When I asked why I was told:

“Abdullah only began to fight after having certain doubts”.

The fact that Abdullah was martyred and eventually entered Paradise pleased the Ansar and comforted them.

The sorrow of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ increased as he continued to narrate these events and tears like pearls began to flow from his blessed eyes. He said:

“Now a sword from the swords of Allah has taken the banner. As a result Allah has made the conquest easy for the *mujahids*”. (See Bukhari, Maghazi, 44; Ahmad, V, 299, III, 113; Ibn Hisham, III, 433-436; Wakidi, II, 762; Ibn Sa’d, III, 46, 530; Ibn Asir, Usdu al-Gabe, III, 237).

As can be seen both the *nafs* and Satan do not leave a person’s side until they die. In that case we must be constantly awake and in a state of struggle and take refuge in the protection of our Lord. Allah says in the Holy Qur’an:

‘And worship your Lord until what is Certain (death) comes to you’
(Al-Hijr, 15:99)



Abdulqadir Gaylani, one of the great saints, had reached a state of perfection in his knowledge of the outer sciences. However in order to attain to the state of ‘nothingness’, that is to preserve himself from the wiles of his ego and his *nafs*, he retreated to the ruins of Baghdad for a long period of time in order to protect his heart from everything that distanced him from Allah.

In his first years of becoming attached to his shaykh, in order to reach the state of ‘nothingness in the face of Allah’ which is the opposite of pride and arrogance, and to refine his *nafs*, Shaykh Nakshibend began to serve sick and distressed people and wounded animals without owners. He took care of them, in fact he swept the streets that people walked on for seven years, living a life of incredible service.

This is how difficult it is to purify one’s *nafs* and how great its reward is in response.



Even though Imam Ghazzali was at the peak of all of the sciences of his time, he lived as if he was nothing for a long time, and abandoned all of the desires of his *nafs*.

Imam Ghazzali explains the state of the peak of his knowledge as follows:

“I was occupied with the rational and legal sciences. I had many students. I began to ponder my state. I saw that I had been entangled with various passions. I thought about the intention of my knowledge. I found it devoid of sincerity and not to gain the pleasure of Allah, but rather mixed up with love for position and fame. I realised with certainty that I was in a dangerous whirlpool and on the edge of a precipice. I said to myself:

“Hurry and make haste, you only have a little time left from your life. If the knowledge that you have obtained does not become true and you do not begin to apply it then it will be nothing but mere deceit. If you do not sever your relationship with unnecessary things now, and do not remove all obstacles, then what will your end be?”

Then something happened. For six months, I found myself in a valley of wonder, torn between wanting to flee from the world and the worldly and desire for the world and the afterlife. For six months I wailed and wept. My heart was in a state of distress. I saw and understood my weakness. I watched my willpower completely slip through my hands. I was like somebody with an incurable disease, with an insoluble problem. I pleaded with Allah and weeping I sought refuge in Him and I supplicated in all humility. Eventually in accordance with the following verse, Allah accepted my prayers and kindled my heart:

‘...He Who responds to the oppressed when they call on Him and removes their distress...’ (an Naml, 27:62)

The desire for wealth and position was removed from me. I averted my face from them all. I began to occupy myself with *zikr*, solitude and isolation, struggle, abstinence, purification of my soul and perfecting my character. I realised with certainty that those who reach Allah and who are travellers on the path of guidance are the greats of the people of tasawwuf. They have the best of character and personalities. This is because their inner and outer states have taken their light from the prophets. And there is no other light on the face of the earth that can surpass the light of the prophets” (See, Ghazzali, “al-Munkizu mina al-dalal,” Istanbul, 1994 p 35-39).



The story of how Ibrahim ibn Adham, the sultan of Balh, began to embark on refining his soul and purifying his heart is as follows:

One time Ibrahim ibn Adham fell asleep on his throne during the middle of the night. Suddenly a great clamour broke out on the roof of the palace. The shouting and hollering increased and eventually woke the sultan, who immediately gathered himself and called out in the direction of the roof:

“Who is there and what are you doing on the roof at this time of night?”

A voice from the depths called out:

“We are looking for our lost camel my sultan”.

Ibrahim ibn Adham angrily shouted to them:

“O ignorant fools! Who looks for a camel on a roof?”

This time however the reply that came back was a very meaningful form of guidance and warning:

“O Ibrahim! You know that you do not look for a camel on a roof but don’t

you know that you cannot find Allah while you sit on your throne with silk robes on your back, a crown on your head, and with a whip in your hand?”

This event made more frequent the spiritual ebbs and surges that had began to arise in the spirit of Ibrahim ibn Adham for quite a long time. It left him in an amazed and uncertain state. However the sultan was still not able to entirely abandon his former lifestyle.

Ibrahim ibn Adham was addicted to hunting and he had made this a habit. During one of these hunting trips he experienced a second spiritual warning which finally made him a true traveller on the path of truth:

One day as he had set out hunting on his horse he began to pursue a gazelle. He galloped behind it and had gone so far that he had moved far away from his soldiers. His horse was left sweating and out of breath. However Ibrahim ibn Adham was so determined to hunt the gazelle that



he did not abandon his pursuit. He had just cornered the gazelle when that fine and beautiful animal turned to him and said:

“O Ibrahim! Is this what you were created for? Did Allah create you from nothing just so that you could hunt me? And what will you gain if you catch me? What will you have gained other than having taken a life?”

When Ibrahim ibn Adham heard these words such a burning sensation enveloped his heart that he threw himself to the ground. He began to run towards the desert. A little while later he looked around him and saw that there was nobody else in that great desert other than a shepherd. He immediately ran to him and pleaded with him:

“Please take these jewels, this sultan’s gown, these weapons and this horse from me and let me wear that robe that you are wearing. And do not tell a soul”.

In front of the shepherd’s astonished looks he put on the shepherd’s robe and disappeared. The shepherd looked after him and thought to himself: “The sultan has gone mad”. But in fact, Ibrahim ibn Adham had not gone mad but had rather come to his senses. He had gone on a gazelle hunt but instead Allah Most High had hunted him with a gazelle.

It is not possible to rein in and purify one’s *nafs* without putting up a struggle and by doing everything one desires. A serious effort is needed in order to bring it to the mould desired by our Lord and to safely take it to the hereafter in peace. And one must embark on this struggle and effort immediately without wasting any time, for death may catch up with a person at any moment...



One time one of the friends of Allah, Najmaddin-i Kubra, attended the funeral of a righteous man with some of his students. As the imam began to prepare the deceased for the questioning that would take place in the grave, Najmaddin smiled. His students were surprised that he would smile at such a moment and they asked him the wisdom behind it. However Najmaddin wished to remain silent. When they insisted however, he responded:



“The heart of the one preparing the deceased is ignorant, yet the heart of the deceased in the grave is alive and well. I was amazed at how an ignorant person can prepare someone whose heart is very much alive and well”.

A believer who has refined his *nafs* and purified his heart continues to live even after death. Those who have not managed to do so however are no different from the dead even though they may still be living.



Mawlana Khalid-i Baghdadi once set off with some of his friends to visit Shaykh Abdullah-i Dahlawi. After a journey that took months –it is said that the journey in fact took an entire year- they eventually reached their destination of Dahli (Jihanabad). Mawlana Khalid was impatient to enter the presence of his shaykh and went to his dervish lodge with his friends. Those with him said to the dervish who opened the door for them:

“Al-Hajj Mawlana Khalid Ziyauddin and his friends, scholars from Sulaymaniye, Damascus and Baghdad have come to visit the shaykh”.

Abdullah-i Dahlawi who was already aware of their arrival sent the following message:

“Let Khalid stay! Let the others return to their land after a short visit”

This command was obeyed and then another command followed:

“Let Khalid immediately begin cleaning the ablution hall”.

Knowing that this was the only way of being accepted as a student and without even seeing his shaykh, Mawlana Khalid did not object in the slightest even though he was famous throughout the Islamic world and had deep knowledge. He took a bucket and broom in hand and immediately began his duty.

He began to gather the water needed for the chore of cleaning from a well that was quite a distance from the dervish lodge. He would fill his bucket with water and carry it on a thick stick on his shoulders. He would travel from the dervish lodge to the well many times a day in order to carry out this task of cleaning. In this way he showed great effort and determination to train his *nafs*. If his *nafs* happened to show any sign of



hesitance or reproachfulness he would immediately repent and ask for forgiveness. Months passed in this way.

One day he was extremely tired from cleaning the tiles of the lavatory. At that moment his *nafs* found him in a weakened state and began to whisper to him:

“O you unique ocean of knowledge of the lands of Baghdad and Damascus. O you great man from the greatest of men, Mawlana Khalid! You journeyed for so long to come all the way here upon the words of someone who you don’t know whether he is a saint or just crazy. And have you found what you were searching for? Look around you, there is no shaykh and no spiritual journey. What have they made you do except clean the lavatory for months on end? Is this the exalted inner knowledge that you were searching for...?”

Khalid-i Baghdadi was terribly startled in the face of this dangerous wile of his *nafs* and he immediately made the following warning to it in order to immediately lift the veil of heedlessness with the incentive of sincerity:

“O my *nafs*. If you do not accept this honourable task that my teacher has given to me with gratitude and you try to abstain from it for even an instant then I will make you sweep the floors not with a broom but with my own beard...”

Abdullah-i Dahlawi was observing this state of his from a distance and smiling. With this last manoeuvre Mawlana Khalid managed to eliminate his *nafs* and he then began to observe the angels carrying his bucket and broom. In addition a light began to shine from his shoulders, which had become sore and wounded from carrying so much water, the light of which radiated up towards the heavens. Being extremely pleased at this, Abdullah Dahlawi called this peerless student of his to his side and said to him:

“My son Khalid! You had reached an unparalleled degree of knowledge. However you needed to embellish it with spirituality. And for this you needed to train your *nafs* and purify your heart. Otherwise your *nafs* would have dragged you to the pits of arrogance and pride and destroyed you in the process. Praise be to Allah that you have managed to sweep your *nafs*

under your feet and you have ascended the peaks of perfection. Now the angels carry out your chores for you”.

“My son. Our masters to whom we have devoted ourselves are those individuals who have achieved the reality of the shariah, the way, the truth and knowledge of Allah. Now you have joined them and entered their circle as a renewer of this religion. Now the guidance of other spiritual circles awaits you. May Allah Most High give you high aspiration.”¹⁷⁹

In the absence of a raw *nafs* that has not been purified and a cloudy heart that has not been cleansed, all of the knowledge in the world is yet insufficient to guide a person. It is only after these two vital conditions have been met that a person can benefit and be benefitted from spiritually.



Aziz Mahmud used to be a grand qadi (judge) before he entered under the spiritual teaching of Muhammad Muhyiddin Uftada. For this reason Muhammad Muhyiddin Uftada had him sell liver in the markets of Bursa and also clean the lavatories of the dervish lodge in order to first make him feel his nothingness. As a result of this training of his *nafs* Qadi Mahmud became subject to a perfection that would guide sultans and he was given the name ‘*Hudayi*’ (meaning the one who guides) by his teachers.

One time a man who heard that Aziz Mahmud Hudayi was competent in the knowledge of alchemy came to him and asked:

“Master I heard that you know the science of alchemy, what do you say about this?”

Without saying a word, Aziz Mahmud Hudayi reached towards the grape vine that was near him and pulled off three grape leaves. By the permission of Allah those three leaves became leaves of gold.

The poor man who watched this phenomenon in amazement tried to do the same thing but was unsuccessful. Aziz Mahmud Hudayi said to him:

179. Muhammad ibn Abdullah al Hani, Adab, translation Ali Husrevoglu, Istanbul, 1995, p 107-108; Heyet, Islam Alimleri Ansikolopedisi, Istanbul ts. Trukiye Gazetesi Yay. XVIII, p 81-82



“My son! Know that learning the science of alchemy is all about learning the alchemy of the *nafs*”.

The aim and purpose of life and servanthood is not to master wonders and miracles but to refine one’s *nafs*, purify one’s heart and be free of immature characteristics thus becoming a perfect believer.



The great poet and thinker Muhammad Iqbal explains in a poem of his the importance of training one’s *nafs* and filling the heart with love:

One night whilst in my library, I heard one moth say to another moth:

“I settled myself in the books of Ibn Sina. I saw the works of Farabi. (I flew amongst their unending dry sentences and the pale letters of their words and I ate away at them. I travelled the streets and avenues of Farabi’s ‘City of Virtues’. However I never understood its philosophy. I became a traveller in their nightmare dead end streets. I have no sun to illuminate my day...”

In response to this lament of the first moth, the other moth showed it its burnt wings:

“Look”, it said. “Look I have burnt my wings for the sake of love”. Then it continued:

“What makes life more alive is struggle and love; and what gives life its wings is ardour and devotion”.

That is by showing the first moth its burnt wings, the second moth was in effect saying:

“Save yourself from being destroyed in these dead end streets of philosophy. Take your share from the love, passion, ardour and prosperity of the Mathnawi, the ocean of meaning and open your wings onto reunion...”

Thus in order to refine one’s *nafs* and purify one’s heart one must attach oneself to a spiritual sun and flutter around it with deep love and devotion, showing a superior struggle and a life of service.



When Mahiz Iz Hodja (A Turkish sufi lived in the 20th century, teaching the subject of Sufism in religious schools) saw that the depths of his heart was deprived of true knowledge, he realised that spiritual guidance was the only cure in supplementing this deficiency and he spent the last years of his life travelling the path of spiritual training. He expressed his state as follows:

“Because it is not possible to gather all of what people have said about knowledge in one point, one must never leave the study and analysis of knowledge. However, I believe that it is only possible to truly know the truth as a result of the guidance of the experts. This is why, after being shown an indication in a state akin to unconsciousness I attached myself to the wisdom and knowledge of Master Ramazanoglu Mahmud Sami using my will to ascend to the heavens of knowledge.

In order to open one’s wings to the sky of knowledge one must rely upon a sun of knowledge to climb the stairs of will, love and service.



In conclusion, refining one’s soul and purifying one’s heart is a deed that must continue without pause for an entire lifetime. The believer must be in a constant state of awareness of his *nafs*, and never think that he has reached perfection and be defeated by the wiles and deceit of his *nafs*. Rumi warns of this matter as follows:

“This base and lowly *nafs* wishes to drive you to a fleeting gain. How long will you be distracted with this fleeing gain? Isn’t it enough that you have distracted yourself thus far?”

“Even though your *nafs* has made you promises of righteousness over and over, yet it has broken those promises a thousand times over and has ruined your repentance”

“Even if you were given a thousand years to live, your *nafs* would find a different excuse each day”

“If that despicable *nafs* of yours wants a spiritual gain for you, that is it wants you to perform righteous deeds, do not be deceived by it because behind that request is a trick of your enemy *nafs*”



“In the right hand of the *nafs* is a rosary bead and a Qur’an yet hidden in its sleeve is a sword and a dagger”



Tasawwuf, which views refinement of the *nafs* and purification of the heart as vital is an ocean that has no bottom. It is a divine knowledge that encompasses the entire universe. It cannot be described however everyone can talk about it according to their share, their understanding and their level.

The people of *tasawwuf* are people with good character, who are generous, merciful, courteous and humble. They get along with everybody and they see the future with their foresight and caution. All of their acts and behaviour is in accordance with the commandments of the holy Qur’an, and the character, manners and acts of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. They love Allah Most High and His Beloved more than their own selves, their property, wealth and children.

May Almighty Allah allow us to live such a similar life of servanthood and let us spend the capital of our lives in the best way and in a way that pleases Him....

O our Lord. Adorn our hearts with the love of faith. Make us from those who are able to see the ugliness of unbelief and rebellion and distance ourselves from them as required. Allow us to take on the character of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and become living Qur’ans. Allow us all to live our lives in the state of *ihsan* and as models of virtue. Fill our hearts with your love. Make us worthy of your address to your noble and beloved ‘servants’ and worthy of being called ‘my brothers’ by your Beloved. Let us raise righteous generations who will be the apples of our eye in both worlds and who will pray for us after we leave this world.

O Lord! Protect our nation and our people from being deprived of the Qur’an and faith and protect us from bad character. Allow us to live a life of Paradise while still in this fleeting and mortal world and by enveloping ourselves in the true majesty of the Qur’an. Let us serve you in such a way that will allow the coming generations to prosper from the Qur’an...

Amen...

