

LEADERSHIP LESSONS
from the Life of
RASOOLULLAH ﷺ



MIRZA YAWAR BAIG

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Above and before all I thank Allahﷻ, The Creator and Sustainer of the Universe for giving me the Tawfeeq to write this book. I ask for His forgiveness for my shortcomings and mistakes in this book and for His acceptance of this work.

Mirza Yawar Baig

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Mirza Yawar Baig

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Foreword

The topic of leadership has captivated the minds and imaginations of the layperson and has been a source of preoccupation for commanders, group leaders and the elite throughout the centuries. Today, theory refuted by theory and bookstore shelves laden with pockets of restricted knowledge on the do's and don'ts, quick fixes and principles of how to become a good leader are testimony to the fact that the very concept of leadership is still as significant, still as ambiguous and still as pertinent today as it was in bygone times. Despite the growing industry and popularity of such publications, they are nevertheless tailored to craft leaders in a limited scope or sphere of life.

The Muslims on the other hand, already have an impeccable example of the Messenger of Allahﷺ whose diverse and unconstrained leadership qualities transformed a marginalized community into the best of people to walk on the face of this earth after the Prophets of Allah, peace be upon them all. Not only was he (Muhammadﷺ) himself a leader, *par excellence*, but he created leaders. He was able to nurture the likes of demoralized and oppressed slaves, enabling them to become leaders of the highest calibre: Rabi' b. Amirؓ was able to stand in the presence of the second most powerful man on the face of the earth, Rustum, and deliver a speech that penetrated Rustum's heart more deeply than any arrow or sword could ever

have achieved. Umar ibn Khattabؓ, by his own admission, before Islam found it difficult to maintain a flock of sheep but the Messenger of Allahﷺ moulded a leader out of him who, within a period of ten and half years, became Commander and Ruler of the expanding Muslim world. If the Muslims want to revive the greatness of the past, they must be educated and motivated by a leader whose leadership qualities connect humans with their Creator; transcending the material and bringing to life the spiritual. With this book, Shaikh Yawar Baig has provided us with an essential source of reference for those of us who wish to take lessons from a leader who was inspired by His Creator and who, for the last 1400 years, has continued to inspire His creation; a man with clarity of vision and purpose of goal unparalleled in history.

Naturally, when Shaikh presented me with this book, I was overcome with happiness. I know of no person more worthy of writing on this topic than our beloved Shaikh. Having attended a five-day course on leadership delivered by Shaikh Yawar, the immense benefit of which I can testify to, I have full confidence in the Shaikh to do justice to this expansive topic. We make du'aa that Allahﷻ makes this work a source of guidance and revival for the Muslims of today and tomorrow. We pray that Heﷻ accepts this work from our beloved Shaikh and showers His infinite Mercy and Blessings upon him and his family.

*Zahir Mahmood, Director, As-Suffa Institute, Birmingham,
UK*

Preface

I was recently reading the much celebrated book, *'Muhammad, A biography of the Prophet'*, by Karen Armstrong. This is one of the books about Rasoolullah ﷺ which, in today's world culture of increased hostility against Islam and Muslims, is a real breath of fresh air. It is a portrayal of the life of Rasoolullah ﷺ which is fair and markedly free from the cynical misrepresentation of many Western writers. Another book I read, which was also very complimentary about Muhammad ﷺ, is the book by John Adair, called *'The Leadership of Muhammad'*. However, what struck me was the tone of writing which reflects the fact that Karen Armstrong and John Adair are not Muslim.

To them, Muhammad ﷺ was a great Arab leader. He had some great intrinsic strengths, took some good decisions, circumstances helped him and he became the predominant leader of Arabia. His followership grew and his followers spread all over the world by a series of military campaigns and through trading expeditions. He claimed to receive revelation from God and launched a new religion called Islam. His period was a significant period in Arab history and the history of the world.

There is a distinct difference between how one whose core faith is that Muhammad ﷺ was the Messenger of Allah ﷻ and how someone who does not hold this belief, writes

about him. *This* book, however, is not simply an analysis of history. It is a labor of love and reverence while being analytical and objective. It is an attempt by one who not only believes that Muhammadﷺ was the best leader that ever existed but who believes in him and his message and wants to share it.

The life of Muhammadﷺ the Messenger of Allahﷺ is rich and full of lessons. It has been so well documented and so much has been written about his life over the centuries that another attempt is almost unnecessary. However, I decided to write this for two reasons: to make the lessons from the life of Rasoolullahﷺ relating specifically to leadership easily accessible to the seeker, whether Muslim or not; and to make an attempt to see how these lessons are applicable today in a world that is in principle, very similar to the world he lived in.

My premise is this: Since he was able to change his world and take his people from being the most insignificant, oppressed and weakest to becoming the predominant, admired and strongest in just one generation; if we learn how he was able to do it, we will be able to learn how to succeed in our world today.

From the many lessons which can be learnt, I have identified 11 that I believe are critical for us to learn. I remind myself and the reader that in the end, it is implementation of these lessons that will spell success or failure. Knowledge is only as good as its practice and so I

ask you, the reader to approach this work from the perspective of exploring how to apply these lessons in your public and private life. That is why I have spent some time and gone into detail in matters of practice because I believe that ultimately that is the only thing that counts. Not what happened but what did we do. That is what we will also be asked when we stand before Allahﷻ. ‘What did you do?’

I hope that this book will not only be a book of stories but will result in people taking action to change their lives and access the power and mercy of Allahﷻ. A final word for my Muslim readers – you will notice that I have used the Arabic (Jalla Jalaaluhu) for Allahﷻ and the Arabic (Salallahu alaihi wa sallam) and the Arabic (Radhiyallahu Anhu) after the name of the Sahaba. I have used (RA) for the Sahabiyaat as I don’t have the Arabic (Radhiyallahu Anha). I have not written the Arabic (Salallahu alaihi wa sallam) after every ‘he’ referring to Rasoolullahﷺ for ease of reading and reducing the number of words. This is the form that all Muslim writers have adopted for the same reasons, including in the classical books of Hadith. Needless to say no disrespect is intended. I urge all Muslims to send Salatu-was-salaam on Rasoolullahﷺ and blessings on His Sahaba wherever you see their names. A glossary of terms has also been included for those unfamiliar with the Arabic terms.

I ask Allahﷻ to make this useful for us all and to forgive any mistakes that I may have made. I ask Allahﷻ to make it easy for us to follow the glorious example of

Rasoolullahﷺ in our lives and to fill our lives with the Baraka of following his Sunnah. I ask Allahﷻ to accept this work.

Mirza Yawar Baig

The Opening

If greatness of purpose, smallness of means and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius then who could dare to compare any great man in history with Muhammad?

Lamartine, French historian and educator.

It was 3 days after Hajj, 2008. I had been invited to speak at the Annual Haj Conference in Makkah by the Ministry of Haj, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. After having done that and performed Haj, my wife and I were traveling from Makkah to Madina. Al-Madinatur Rasool, the city of Rasoolullahﷺ. The city that got the title of Munawwarah (The Brilliant, Shining One) when he decided to live there. A very special place which you never want to leave. What must it have been when Rasoolullahﷺ was alive and living here, I wondered. Even now, when he is resting in his grave, his glory and presence permeate the very atmosphere and give this whole city and its people a very special character that makes them stand apart from every other city that I have ever been in. For a Muslim to come to Madina is to come home. To a home he holds dearer than his place of birth. To a home which he hopes he can die in and be buried in. Madina to a Muslim is not Saudi Arabia. It is Islam, it is his heart, the place he has always yearned to go to; a place which is the home of Muhammadﷺ. How many poets have written beautiful poems about this yearning for Madina!

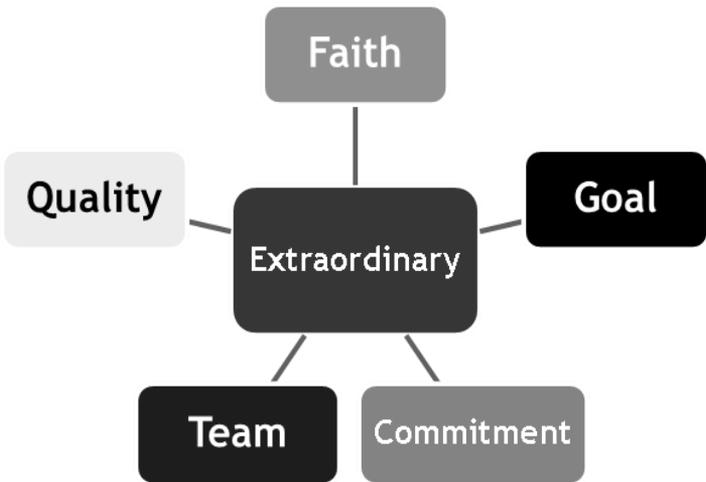
I presented my Salam to him at Tahajjud time, well before dawn, jammed between the millions who love him and who come to visit him. How must it have been when they used to come and he was there in person to return their Salam and to bless them with his glorious smile that was more precious to them than their own lives. How fortunate were those who prayed behind him and listened to the one on whom the Qur'an was revealed, reciting what he had personally received. Tilaawatil Qur'an-il-Kareem bi sawthi Muhammad ibn Abdillah, Rasoolullahﷺ. Recitation of the Message in the voice of the Messengerﷺ.

So it is today 1435 years later; we, who did not see him or hear his beautiful voice still love him more than we love anyone or anything else. As my tears flowed I asked Allahﷻ to bless him and to give him the best of rewards for having guided us to Islam. Madina is Rasoolullahﷺ. As I mentioned earlier, the Arabs call it Al-Madinatur Rasool, the City of the Prophet. Those who live here take great pride in that fact. Many choose to live here earning far less than they would be able to do elsewhere simply because they don't want to leave Madina. The lamp which he lit shines undiminished across the ages, generations and centuries and spreads its light across the earth and into the lives of all those who are willing to open their hearts to his message.

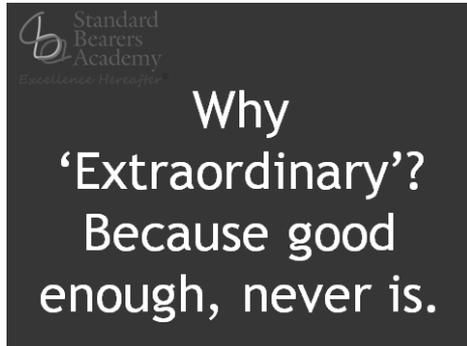
I would like to begin by mentioning five extraordinary qualities that Rasoolullahﷺ exemplified and successfully

inculcated in those who followed him, such that he was able to forge a team the likes of which the world had never seen; from a collection of totally disparate tribes who were best known for internecine fighting over inconsequential matters. Yet they became benchmarks to the world and torchbearers of guidance wherever they went.

These qualities were:



Being Extraordinary



First of all let me try to define what I mean by 'Extraordinary' for that is the key to the rest. To quote a famous French educator: Alphonse de Lamartine - *"If greatness of purpose, smallness of means and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who would dare to compare any great man in history with Muhammad? Philosopher, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational beliefs, of a cult without images, the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?"* [Histoire de le Turquie, Paris 1854, Vol.11.Pages 276-77]

The key is to do more than what others think is wise, reasonable or logical. To be extraordinary is to be abnormal in the best of ways. To listen to a message in the mind that others can only wonder at. To march to a beat that others are unable to hear – yet to be able to inspire them to fall in step. It is only those who are extraordinary who are

inspiring. To live is not simply to draw breath. So if one aspires to lead one must do more than merely exist. One must do what nobody else does, not because he wants to impress them but so that they will be able to see that it is possible for them also to do the same. There is nothing sublime in pretending to be less than you are. What is required of the leader is that he constantly pits himself against his own assumptions and self-imposed boundaries because the only real barrier to surmount is in one's own mind.

The leader must have the courage to go where nobody dared to venture before in the world of the minds and spirits of men. He must question what was always assumed to be correct. He must challenge beliefs handed down from generation to generation and accepted as being real. He must stand for the truth no matter what the cost. He must support the oppressed, the weak and the deprived and stand up to the raw power of the oppressors, no matter who they may be. All these things help the leader to inspire trust, the very foundation of leadership. A leader must not only be trusted personally but people must have faith that to follow him will benefit them. Leading, by definition, is from the front. And so leading is a matter of great courage. People don't rise to low expectations. They rise to high expectations. People need leaders they can look up to; not down on.

The leader must simultaneously have great clarity of vision and strategy. It is not sufficient to merely dream of great

things if one has no clue about how to achieve them. The leader must be able to dream and then to lead his people on a path that actually leads to the fulfillment of that dream. To be extraordinary is to be able to do both the ephemeral task of dreaming and the concrete task of translating the dream into an actual roadmap with milestones. Then it consists of finding people to fulfill the many roles that are bound to emerge because no leader can do everything himself. Without a team of highly competent and dedicated people to implement the strategy, the greatest of dreams must remain relegated to the realm of desires. Recruiting a team, inspiring them to give their best, training and directing them and finally watching them from the sidelines as they fulfill the tasks that they have been trained to do are all roles that the extraordinary leader must perform.

Finally the extraordinary leader must create a system that can take his legacy onwards, long after he has gone the way of all life. For personal charisma that remains untranslated into processes is destined to die with the leader – remembered with nostalgia perhaps, but of no benefit to those who come after. For any great enterprise to succeed, its leader must lead its transformation from being person-led to becoming process-driven. Failure to do this successfully invariably leads to the legacy of the leader not transcending the generation change.

Rasoolullahﷺ set the standard of extraordinary leadership so convincingly and clearly that even his worst enemies

were forced to speak in his favor. The most famous incident which illustrates this is the conversation of Abu Sufyan with Heraclius, the Roman Emperor of Byzantium, when the Emperor received Rasoolullahﷺ's letter. I have narrated this incident in detail later in this book.

To be extraordinary is not a choice for a leader. It is an essential part of being for anyone who aspires to lead. To be extraordinary in ways that people find inspiring, invigorating, energizing and empowering. Only the courageous can encourage and there was nobody in the history of mankind who exemplified the extraordinary leader in every aspect of his life as did Muhammadﷺ. That is why his companions displayed a level of loyalty to him that is an example in itself. They loved him and he loved them.

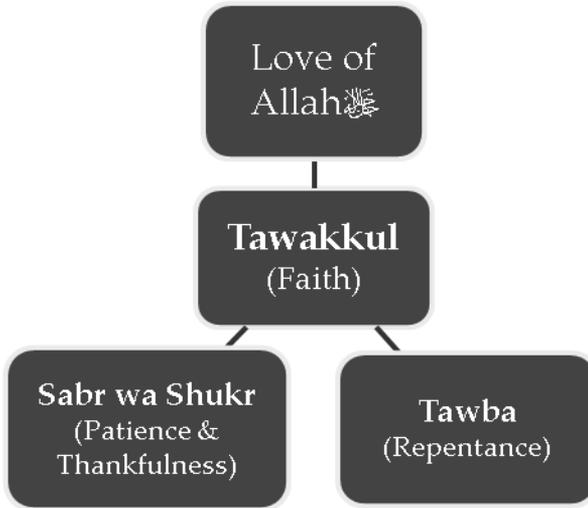
What is Extraordinary Faith?

To look at the first of the extraordinary qualities that Rasoolullah ﷺ displayed in his character – Faith – I like to quote from Barbara Winters about the essential character of faith – the ability to trust enough to take risk.

“When you come to the end of the light of all that you know and are about to step off into the darkness of the unknown, faith is knowing that one of two things will happen. There will be something firm to stand on or you will be taught how to fly.” ~ Barbara Winters

Notice the use of words – she doesn’t say, ‘Faith is believing.’ She says, ‘**Faith is knowing,**’ and in that is a world of difference. To believe with complete certainty without the possibility of doubt is to know. That is what enables one to take risk. To step off the edge knowing that you will not be allowed to crash; but that instead you will step on to another level of awareness and connection with Allah ﷻ that you never thought possible.

Faith is essential because without it, the monumental task of changing people’s hearts is impossible. It is a small word with big meaning. It means different things to different people. So let me define what I mean by ‘Faith’.



To me, faith is a dynamic process that is based on the interaction of three factors: Patience in the face of hardship and thankfulness for Allah’s bounties; repentance for our transgressions and mistakes and seeking Allah’s pleasure and closeness to Him by His worship because we love Him.

Faith as Barbara Winters puts it, **‘is to know’** when there is no sign that one is right. Faith is not blind as the materialistic world likes to believe. Faith is to be able to see beyond material to that which can’t be described or seen with the eyes of the head but which is clearly perceptible to the eyes of the heart. I recall an incident reported from World War II.

It was reported that after a very intense engagement with the Germans, a soldier asked permission from his officer to

go into no-man's land to bring back the body of his partner who had fallen during the battle. The officer tried to reason with the man and said, 'Look he is dead. What is the good of risking your life to bring back a dead body?' But the soldier was adamant and persistent and so in the end the officer gave in and ordered the company to lay down covering fire while the soldier went out to the body of his friend. A few minutes later, he returned unharmed, with the body of his friend. The officer asked him, 'So was that worth risking your life? To get back a dead man?'

The soldier replied, 'Yes Sir. It was worth it because when I reached him, he was still alive and said to me, 'I knew you would come for me.' He was waiting for me and he died in my arms. Yes Sir, it was worth it.'

Faith is not blind. It sees what those without faith cannot see. It sees through the lens of love, of devotion, of gratitude for favors done – without reason. Faith is the yearning to be with the beloved. Faith lights the dark road of disappointment at the end of backbreaking effort because it knows that success and failure in this path is not measured in miles but by the willingness to stand up and make that effort to please the One who knows what is in your heart. Faith is the smile on the face of the one who walks on when all others have turned their backs because he is listening to a voice that they cannot hear.

As he walks, others stop to look and wonder; then slowly they turn around and join him until there is a caravan. They

follow him because that gives them meaning and they find their own fulfillment.

Faith, in the language of Islam is Tawakkul. About this Allah ﷻ said:

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ

Talaaq 65:2-3 And for those who fear Allah, He (always) prepares a way out (of difficulty), And He provides for him from (sources) he never could imagine. And if any one puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is (Allah) for him.

Tawakkul or Faith is the result of three things as mentioned above.

Tawba (Repentance)

Allah ﷻ orders us to make sincere repentance for our sins. Tawba is the first condition of guidance because Tawba indicates an attitude of wanting to change. No change or correction can happen unless a person is conscious of the need for it. So when we make Tawba we are showing that we have become conscious of the need to change our attitudes and ways.

The first lesson that Allah ﷻ taught Adam and Hawwa ﷺ was Tawba. Both Adam & Hawwa ﷺ and Iblis disobeyed Allah ﷻ. But the difference was in their attitude when they

became conscious of their mistake. Adam and Hawwa عليهما السلام were immediately contrite and repentant and said:

قَالَ رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَعْفُوْا لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

A'araf 7:23. They said: "Our Rabb! We have wronged ourselves. If You don't forgive us and don't grant us Your Mercy, we shall certainly be of the losers."

Allah ﷻ forgave them and guided them and made them a source of guidance for others.

Iblis on the other hand was not repentant and asked for time and said:

قَالَ فَأَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ

A'araf 7:14. (Iblis) said: "Allow me respite till the Day they are raised up."

Today when we are told to leave our evil ways, we ask for time. Let us reflect and see whose attitude we are reflecting; the attitude of Adam and Hawwa عليهما السلام or the attitude of Iblis (Shaytaan)? To insist on sin (*Israar ala al ma'asee*) is a reason for (*Soo al Khaatima*) a bad ending.

In Arabic we say, '*La kabeera ma'al Istighfaar wa la Shagheera ma'al Israar*' (There is no major sin with Tawba and there is no minor sin with insistence). Insisting on sin eventually results in the doors of Hidayah being shut and invites the

wrath of Allah ﷻ on our heads. Allah ﷻ said about those who refuse to correct themselves and insist on sinning:

فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَرِحُوا بِمَا أُوتُوا
أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بَعْتَةً فِإِذَا هُمْ مُبْلِسُونَ

Al An'aam 6:44 Then, when they had forgotten all that they had been told to take to heart, We threw open to them the gates of all [good] things until -even as they were rejoicing in what they had been granted - We suddenly took them to task: and lo! They were broken in spirit.

Allah ﷻ is *Ghayoor* (proud, honorable) and after giving multiple opportunities to correct ourselves, when we insist on rebelliousness, He shuts the doors of Hidayah. Instead He opens the doors of all that the rebellious person wants until he is immersed in his rebellion and then suddenly death comes upon him and he does not have the opportunity to make Tawba. We ask Allah ﷻ to save us from such a fate.

Allah ﷻ warned us against all forms of disobedience and sin. One must not consider sins as being 'small or minor' because any sin is a sign of disobedience of Allah ﷻ and such an attitude is a very serious matter. So it is not the specific action that one needs to look at but the whole matter of our attitude which leads to the Fire.

Out of all sins, the worst sin is shirk and it is the only sin that Allah ﷻ will never forgive, if one dies on it.

Allah ﷻ particularly warned us against cherry picking in the Deen things we like and leaving out what we don't like. This is the ultimate form of arrogance and invites the wrath of Allah ﷻ. Today there are Muslims who have legitimized all that Islam has prohibited and still they pray. They will not leave what Allah ﷻ dislikes so with what face do they stand before Him and say: *Iyyaka Na'abudu wa iyyaka nastaeen* (Only You we worship and only from Your we ask help). This kind of arrogance – of taking what we like and discarding what we don't – leads to punishment both in this world and the next.

It is essential therefore that we make Istighfaar and Tawba immediately and instantly leave everything that is disobedience of Allah ﷻ and against the Sunnah of His Messenger ﷺ. How long do we have before we need to do this? As long as we expect to live.

Tawba means to turn towards Allah ﷻ and Istighfaar is the way to do it, by seeking Allah ﷻ's forgiveness. The two are related and one follows the other. I have quoted from Imam Ibn Al Qayyim's book which explains the process very beautifully.

The Meanings of Tawba and Istighfaar
(Madaarijus Salikeen – Imam Ibn Al Qayyim)

Scholars interpret Tawba (repentance) to mean all of the following: (i) immediate renunciation of the sin, (ii) firm intention and determination to not return to the sin ever again,

(iii) regret over having committed a sin, and, if the sin was against the rights of another human being, then one must also, (iv) compensate for it. These are known to be the conditions of *Tawba*, or repentance. However, in the words of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ *Tawba* has a wider meaning, and includes not only the aforementioned conditions, but also generally carrying out all the commandments of Allah ﷻ with persistence. *Tawba* also requires disliking and renouncing those people who refuse to repent, encouraging them to repent and advising them against ignoring the practice of repentance. So repentance is the opposite of committing sins in every way, and, in its general sense, does not consist merely of renouncing the sin and regret over it.

The essence of *Tawba* is to return to Allah ﷻ and to adhere to what He loves and renounce that which He dislikes. ***Tawba is a journey (Hijra) from the disliked to the liked; from disobedience to obedience; from Allah ﷻ's anger to His grace.***

Istighfaar and Tawba

Istighfaar means to seek forgiveness and *Tawba* means to 'return to Allah ﷻ.' When one realizes his mistakes then he seeks the forgiveness of Allah ﷻ and then becomes obedient to Allah ﷻ and so by his actions he is returning to Allah ﷻ. Both are required for the person wanting to connect to Allah ﷻ. He/she must admit their mistakes, sins and evil deeds before Allah ﷻ and seek his forgiveness. They must simultaneously give up those evil deeds, unconditionally and immediately and become obedient to

Allah ﷻ. For example if a person did not pray then he was guilty of one of the most evil of deeds. He then realizes the seriousness of what he was doing so he makes Tawba and asks Allah ﷻ to forgive him. And then he immediately starts to pray regularly. So he sought forgiveness (Istighfaar) and started praying (Tawba). His action of praying regularly is Tawba in itself without which his Istighfaar would have no meaning.

Istighfaar, meaning seeking forgiveness, is mentioned in the Qur'an in two ways: either by itself or coupled with Tawba (repentance). The single mention of Istighfaar (without the mention of Tawba) finds an example in the saying of Saleh to his people:

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ لِمَ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ لَوْلَا تَسْتَغْفِرُونَ اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

Naml 27:46. He said: "O my people! Why do you seek to hasten the evil (torment) before the good (Allah's Mercy)? Why seek you not the Forgiveness of Allah, that you may receive mercy?"

Allah ﷻ also said:

وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Baqara 2:199. And ask Allah for His Forgiveness. Truly, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most-Merciful.

And He said that seeking forgiveness protects the person from His ﷻ's anger:

وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَأَنْتَ فِيهِمْ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ مُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ

Anfal 8:33. *And Allah would not punish them while you (Muhammad) are amongst them, nor will He punish them while they seek (Allah's) Forgiveness.*

The mention of Istighfaar coupled with Tawba appears in the following Ayaat:

وَأَنْ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ يُمَتِّعْكُمْ مَتَاعًا حَسَنًا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَيُؤْتِ كُلَّ ذِي فَضْلٍ فَضْلَهُ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ كَبِيرٍ

Hud 11: 3. *And (commanding you): "Seek the forgiveness of your Rabb, and turn to Him in repentance, that He may grant you good enjoyment, for a term appointed, and bestow His abounding Grace to every owner of grace (i.e. the one who helps and serves the needy). But if you turn away, then I fear for you the torment of a Great Day*

وَيَا قَوْمِ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِدْرَارًا وَيَزِدْكُمْ قُوَّةً إِلَىٰ قُوَّتِكُمْ وَلَا تَتَوَلَّوْا مُجْرِمِينَ

Hud 11:52. *"And O my people! Ask forgiveness of your Rabb and then repent to Him, He will send you (from the sky) abundant rain, and add strength to your strength, so do not turn away as Mujrimun (criminals, disbelievers)."*

وَالَّذِي تَتَمَنَّوْنَ أَصْحَابَهُمْ صَالِحًا قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ هُوَ أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ إِنَّ رَبِّي قَرِيبٌ مُّجِيبٌ

Hud 11: 61. *And to Thamud (people, We sent) their brother Salih (Saleh). He said: "O my people! Worship Allah, you have no other Ilah (God) but Him. He brought you forth from the earth and settled you therein, then ask forgiveness of Him and turn to Him in repentance. Certainly, my Rabb is Near (to all by His Knowledge), Responsive."*

Of course, if one insists on sinning and demands from Allah ﷻ forgiveness (without fulfilling its conditions), then this is not a true Istighfaar, and it does not prevent the punishment. Istighfaar (seeking forgiveness) includes Tawba (repenting), and Tawba includes Istighfaar: each one is implied by the other in its entirety.

This comprehensiveness of the meanings of Istighfaar includes its meaning of asking for forgiveness as a shield or cover: cover from our human shortcomings and faults that are harmful and destructive. And the greatest and most harmful of all human shortcomings are his ignorance (of one's faults) and transgression. By virtue of this ignorance and transgression, the enemy drags a human being into what utterly destroys him. The shield against these two errors is to be aware of one's faults and be keen to bring out in one's character the God-given virtues of knowledge, justice and righteousness. The more a person ignores his human nobility bestowed upon him by Allah ﷻ, when Allah ﷻ put into him his spirit (Rooh), the more he lowers himself to the animalistic ground, and the more his ignorance and transgression are fuelled.

When the two words Tawba and Istighfaar are used together, (always Istighfaar followed by Tawba), then the first one (Istighfaar) means asking for safety from the evil and harm of what has occurred, and the second one (Tawba) means returning to Allah ﷻ and begging for safety from the evil of what one fears in future. So here we are concerned with two things: one is the sin that has already occurred, and Istighfaar (in its specific sense) is to seek protection from its evil effects; and the other is the repetition of the same sin in future, which we fear, and Tawba is the determination to not do it again. A complete return to Allah ﷻ (Rujoo) includes and necessitates both of these: Istighfaar as well as Tawba. When used in a couple, both aspects of this return to Allah ﷻ are emphasized individually, whereas, when used alone, either one of these two words implies the other.

The biggest benefit of Tawba is that by itself it connects us with Allah ﷻ; by itself it focuses our attention on our lives, because to make Tawba we have to take stock of what we have been doing with our lives. Tawba inculcates humility in us and focuses our attention on the fact that one day we will die and to Allah ﷻ is our return.

But one must never despair of the Mercy of Allah ﷻ for He said:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ
الدُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

Az-Zumar 39:53. Say: "O 'Ibâdî (My slaves) who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and

sins)! *Despair not of the Mercy of Allâh, verily Allâh forgives all sins. Truly, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful*

It is our Aqeeda that as long as one makes sincere repentance Allah ﷻ will forgive all sins and so we never despair of the Mercy of Allah ﷻ. It is only when we refuse to repent and continue to rebel and commit excesses and sins that the doors of Hidaya close and this denial leads to Kufr. Allah ﷻ said:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أُنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

Al Baqarah 2:6. Verily, those who disbelieve, it is the same to them whether you (O Muhammad Peace be upon him) warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe. 7. Allâh has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearings, (i.e. they are closed from accepting Allâh's Guidance), and on their eyes there is a covering. Theirs will be a great torment.

There are three conditions for Tawba to be accepted:

1. ***That one must be genuinely repentant and contrite and hate the action that one is making Tawba for.*** In the case of Adam & Hawwa عليهما السلام, which we are using as our example, they were sincerely repentant and immediately begged the forgiveness of Allah ﷻ. They did not try to justify their action. They did not delay or ask for time. They realized the seriousness of disobeying Allah ﷻ because they realized the Majesty

and Greatness of Allah ﷻ. No sin is 'minor' in this respect because all sins are disobedience of Allah ﷻ who is not 'minor'.

2. *That one must make every effort to ensure that he never repeats that action.* How many times did Adam & Hawwa ؑ disobey Allah ﷻ? Once. They never committed any other sin in their whole long lives after that one time. Not repeating the sin is an indicator of our sincerity in seeking forgiveness.
3. *That one must make amends where the sin is of a nature that it caused any harm to others – seek their forgiveness, return their property, compensate loss.* Sometimes the nature of the sin is such that one caused material or other loss to someone else. In that case one must make amends and compensate the person and seek his/her forgiveness. Without this Allah ﷻ will not forgive the individual even if he seeks His forgiveness because the one wronged is not Allah ﷻ but another person. When the rights of people are violated (Huqooqul Ibaad) Allah ﷻ does not forgive the violator until the one who has been wronged forgives him first. If this is not done, then on the Day of Judgment Allah ﷻ will give the good deeds of the violator to the victim and the evil deeds of the victim to the violator and throw the violator in the Hellfire.

Finally see the Mercy of Allah ﷻ for those who make Tawba

الَّذِينَ يَحْمِلُونَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِلَّذِينَ
 آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَاتَّبَعُوا سَبِيلَكَ وَقِهِمْ
 عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ

رَبَّنَا وَأَدْخِلْهُمْ جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ الَّتِي وَعَدْتَهُمْ وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ
 إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

وَقِهِمُ السَّيِّئَاتِ وَمَنْ تَقِ السَّيِّئَاتِ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمْتَهُ وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

Ghafir 40:7. Those (angels) who bear the Throne (of Allâh) and those around it glorify the praises of their Rabb, and believe in Him, and ask forgiveness for those who believe (in the Oneness of Allâh) (saying): "Our Rabb! You comprehend all things in mercy and knowledge, so forgive those who repent and follow Your Way, and save them from the torment of the blazing Fire! 8." Our Rabb! And make them enter the 'Adn (Eden) Paradise (everlasting Gardens) which you have promised them, and to the righteous among their fathers, their wives, and their offspring! Verily, You are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. 9." And save them from (the punishment, because of what they did of) the sins, and whomsoever You save from (the punishment, because of what they did of) the sins (i.e. excuse them) that Day, him verily, You have taken into mercy." And that is the supreme success.

For those who do take the trouble to treat Tawba seriously Allahﷻ in His Mercy promises not only to forgive them but to convert their sins to good deeds.

إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ
عَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

Furqan 25: 70. Except those who repent and believe (in Islâmic Monotheism), and do righteous deeds, for those, Allâh will change their sins into good deeds, and Allâh is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful

We ask Allah ﷻ to grant us the Tawfeeq (Divine Guidance) to make Tawba and to frequently seek His forgiveness. We ask Him to accept our Istighfaar and to help us to live our lives such that when we are presented before Him we will not be humiliated and will be shielded by His Mercy from His Wrath. All spiritual development begins with turning to Allah ﷻ and so I have put this as the first conditional step to all that follows.

Sabr wa Shukr (Patience & Thankfulness)

The second step is thankfulness for the bounties of Allah ﷻ. It is only when a person is thankful to Allah ﷻ for His bounties that he can be content and have peace of mind. Allah ﷻ said about thankfulness:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

Ibrahim: 14: 7 And (remember) when your Rabb proclaimed: "If you give thanks (by accepting Faith and worshipping none but Allâh), I will give you more (of My Blessings), but if you are

thankless (i.e. disbelievers), verily! My Punishment is indeed severe."

The biggest bounty to thank Allahﷻ for is the opportunity and Tawfeeq to make Tawba. What would we have done if the door of Tawba had not been opened by Allahﷻ? The more a person thanks Allahﷻ for His bounties, the more he becomes aware of them and the more he loves Allahﷻ. Thankfulness increases the person's awareness of the magnificence and glory of Allahﷻ and of the fact that this Creator and Owner of the Heavens and Earth has taken the trouble of being kind to him. The biggest blessing of thankfulness is greater enjoyment of what a person is blessed with and the first punishment of thanklessness is that the enjoyment of the blessing is taken away and a person doesn't enjoy what he has and lives a life of self-inflicted pain.

About Shukr, Allahﷻ has said clearly that to be grateful to Him is His right on us and He will reward it by increasing His bounty. The very first ayah of the Qur'an after Bismillah is an ayah of Shukr: *Al Hamdulillahi Rabbil A'alameen* (all praise and thanks be to Allahﷻ, the Rabb of the Worlds). Not only has Allahﷻ mentioned the benefits of expressing gratitude, Allahﷻ has also mentioned the problem of not doing so and of actually being ungrateful for which He used the word Kufr (Denying). And for such as those He warned of His punishment.

An interesting point to note is that Allah ﷻ promised those who do Sabr, His help and rewards for which the natural reaction would be Shukr. Sabr and Shukr are therefore inter-related.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

Baqara 2:153 *O you who believe! Seek help in patience and As-Salât (the prayer). Truly! Allâh is with As-Sâbirin (the patient ones)*

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

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

Hand in hand with thankfulness is Sabr (patience). The concept of Sabr is unique in Islam because it is not what is commonly understood by patience, i.e. bearing difficulty in silence. It is important to remember that in Islam patience or Sabr is not merely a fatalistic acceptance of whatever happens. It is to strive in the cause of Allah ﷻ with all one's might and wealth and then to leave the result to Him. Allah ﷻ used the word 'sabiroom' to mean 'mujahidoon' in several places. A mujahid does not simply sit and wait for the help of Allah ﷻ to come. He strives in the path of Allah ﷻ with all that he has and then he prays for help. Obviously someone fighting in battle is not sitting silently

bearing the difficulty. He is fully alive, engaged, thinking, planning and making the utmost effort that he can make to win the battle. But at the end of his effort, he stands before his Rabb and asks for His help because he knows that without that help he can achieve nothing.

Sabr is action; to make the ultimate effort and then to rely on Allah ﷻ. The embodiment of this concept of Sabr is the action of Rasoolullah ﷺ at the Battle of Badr where after making all preparations that he could do, using his meager resources to the best of his ability, then stood before his Rabb and made his famous dua. Rasoolullah ﷺ prayed ceaselessly for help from Allah ﷻ and said, "O Allâh! The conceited and haughty Quraysh are already here defying You and belying Your Messenger. O Allâh! I am waiting for Your victory which You have promised me. I beseech You Allâh to defeat them. O Allâh! Should this group (of Muslims) be defeated today, there will be nobody left to worship you on the earth."

He continued to call out to his Rabb, stretching forth his hands and facing the Qiblah, until his cloak fell off his shoulders. Then Abu Bakr ؓ came, picked up the cloak, and put it back on his shoulders and said: "Ya Rasoolullah ﷺ you have cried out enough to your Rabb. He will surely fulfill what He has promised you."

Immediate was the response from Allâh, Who sent down angels from the heavens to help His Messenger ﷺ and his companions. Allah ﷻ revealed:

إِذْ يُوحِي رَبُّكَ إِلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ أَنِّي مَعَكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا سَأَلْتَنِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا الرَّغْبَ فَأَضْرِبُوا فَوْقَ الْأَعْنَاقِ وَاضْرِبُوا مِنْهُمْ كُلَّ بَنَانٍ

Anfal 8:12 “Verily, I am with you, so keep firm those who have believed. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who have disbelieved.”

إِذْ تَسْتَعْيِثُونَ رَبَّكُمْ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَكُمْ أَنِّي مُمِدُّكُمْ بِالْفِ مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُرَدِّفِينَ

Anfal 8:9 “I will help you with a thousand of the angels each behind the other (following one another) in succession.”

Rasoolullah ﷺ was in the lean-to that had been made for him and he dozed off a little and then raised his head joyfully crying: · “O Abu Bakr ﷺ, glad tidings for you: Allah’s victory has approached. By Allah, I can see Jibreel on his mare in the thick of a sandstorm.” He then came out reciting:

سَيُهْرَمُ الْجَمْعُ وَيُوَلُّونَ الدُّبُرَ

Qamar 54:45 “Their multitude will be put to flight, and they will show their backs.”

On the instruction of Jibreel ﷺ, Rasoolullah ﷺ took a handful of sand and gravel, cast it at the enemy and said:

“Confusion seize their faces!” As he flung the dust, a violent sandstorm blew like a furnace blast into the eyes of the enemies.

With respect to this, Allah ﷻ said:

فَلَمْ تَعْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ وَلِيُبْلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْهُ بَلَاءً حَسَنًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Anfal 8:17 “And you [Muhammad] threw not when you did throw but verily Allâh threw.”

The records of *Hadith* speak eloquently of the fact that the angels did appear on that day and fought on the side of the Muslims. Ibn ‘Abbas ؓ said: “While on that day a Muslim was chasing a disbeliever and he heard over him the crack of a whip and the voice of the rider saying: ‘Charge! Haizum’. He saw that the enemy soldier had fallen on his back, beheaded. An Ansaari came to Rasoolullah ﷺ and related that event to him. Rasoolullah ﷺ replied: ‘You have spoken the truth. This was the help from the third heaven.’ In Badr Rasoolullah ﷺ demonstrated the epitome of the Qur’anic injunction to take the help of Sabr and Salah when faced with difficulty. He made all preparations and then asked His Rabb.

Love of Allah ﷻ

When one makes Tawba wal Istighfaar and thanks Allah ﷻ constantly for His Mercy, it is only natural that one begins

to love Allah ﷻ. However the love of Allah ﷻ is not to be confused with any other kind of love that we may feel. The love of the Creator is worship and comes with its own rules. It is not something to be expressed or professed in any way we like. People who love Allah ﷻ are always totally obedient to Him and never use what He has given against Him in his disobedience. To use what Allah ﷻ gave us – our life, time, strength, wealth, education, power and influence – in His disobedience is the greatest of all ways to express thanklessness. That is why the way to get close to Allah ﷻ is Kasratu Sujood – increase in prostration. The Sajda is the iconic symbol of the Muslim where he submits himself completely, without any reservations and conditions, to Allah ﷻ. That is the reason the Sajda is Haraam to anyone other than Allah ﷻ - because the Muslim is not permitted to submit himself and present himself in such a helpless way to anyone other than his Creator. To do so is against human dignity and a denial of the truth – that only Allah ﷻ is worthy of such obedience. All worship is only for Allah ﷻ except whom there is nobody and nothing which is worthy of worship.

The question to ponder upon is how to get Allah ﷻ to love us? Allah ﷻ gave the answer directly when He said to Rasoolullah ﷺ:

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

A'al Imraa 3: 31. Say (O Muhammad): "If you (really) love Allah then follow me (follow my Sunnah), Allah will love you

and forgive your sins. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

The way to express our love for the Creator is by becoming obedient to Him and following the Sunnah of His Messenger ﷺ. And when we do this, then Allah ﷻ will love us. That is the key. To get Allah ﷻ to love us.

The path to the love of Allah ﷻ and connection with Him is through obedience to Him and through following the Sunnah of His Messenger ﷺ. There must not be any doubt in our minds about this. If anyone believes that he can disobey Allah ﷻ or ignore the Sunnah of His Messenger ﷻ or go against the Sunnah of Rasoolullah ﷺ and still be able to have Ta'alluq Ma'Allah ﷻ (Connection with Allah ﷻ), he is only fooling himself. Allah ﷻ mentioned love for Him which supersedes everything else as being a sign of the Believer. The believers love Allah ﷻ more than anyone and anything else and that is expressed by their complete obedience to Him. He said:

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

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

Allah ﷻ mentioned the position of the Believers when they hear a command of Allah ﷻ. He said:

وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا عُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ

Baqara 2:285. *And they say, "We hear, and we obey. (We seek Your Forgiveness, our Rabb, and to You is the return (of all))."*

And Allah ﷻ also mentioned those who give precedence to their own desires and fancies over His commands and said:

أَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهُهُ هَوَاهُ أَفَأَنْتَ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِ وَكِيلاً

أَمْ تَحْسَبُ أَنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ أَوْ يَعْقِلُونَ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ سَبِيلاً

Furqan 25:43-44. *Have you (O Muhammad) seen him who has taken as his Ilaah (god) his own desire? Would you then be a Wakil (advocate or a watcher) over him? Or do you think that most of them hear or understand? They are only like cattle; nay, they are even farther astray from the Path. (i.e. even worse than cattle).*

The lines are drawn clearly. We need to make our choice.

Allah ﷻ said about His slaves who He is close to:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ

Nahl 16:128. *Truly, Allah is with those who fear Him (Muttaqoon) and those who are Muhsinun*

And He said to those who claim to love Him and want to connect with Him:

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

A'al Imraan 3:31. Say (O Muhammad ﷺ to those who claim to love Allah ﷻ): "If you (really) love Allah then follow (imitate) me (follow the Sunnah), Allah will love you and forgive you of your sins. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

Allah ﷻ created a connected world where our actions have two kinds of consequences: benefit or harm in this life and reward or punishment in the Aakhira. Every action produces these two kinds of consequences. One in this life and an attendant one in the Aakhira.

Note that only when Allah ﷻ loves a slave, is love for him established in the world and all of creation. And when Allah ﷻ hates a slave, hatred for him is established on earth and all of creation. People love, honor and respect us or hate, malign and disrespect us based on whether Allah ﷻ likes us or not.

Those interested in leadership and in influencing people must realise that without a connection with Allah ﷻ and without becoming obedient to Allah ﷻ, they can't expect people to love them.

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

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

Hadith Qudsi: On the authority of Abu Hurairahؓ, who reported that Rasoolullah ﷺ said:

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

These are the three steps to establishing Tawakkul (Faith) in our hearts and getting close to Allahﷻ and accessing His Power.

The most powerful story about Tawakkul (Faith) from the Seerah is at the very beginning of Prophethood where Rasoolullahﷺ stood on the top of the hill of Safa and called out, 'Wa Subaha!'

Narrated Ibn `Abbas: When the Ayah: 'And warn your tribe of near-kindred – was revealed, Rasoolullahﷺ ascended the Safa (mountain) and started calling, "O! Bani Fihri! O! Bani `Adi!" addressing various tribes of Quraish till they were assembled. Those who could not come sent their agents to see what was happening. Abu Lahab (one of Rasoolullahﷺ's uncles) and other people from Quraysh came. Rasoolullahﷺ then said, "Suppose I told you that there is an (enemy) cavalry in the valley intending to attack you, would you believe me?" They said, "Yes, for we have not found you speaking anything other than the truth." He then said, "I am a warner to you about a terrible punishment (in the Hereafter) if you don't leave the worship of idols and worship Allahﷻ without ascribing any partners." Abu Lahab said (to Rasoolullahﷺ) "May your hands perish on this day. Is it for this that you gathered us?" Then it was revealed: "Perish the hands of Abu Lahab, and perish he! His wealth and his children will not profit him...." (111.1-5)

حَدَّثَنَا عُمَرُ بْنُ حَفْصِ بْنِ غِيَاثٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبِي، حَدَّثَنَا الْأَعْمَشُ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي عَمْرُو بْنُ مُرَّةَ، عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ جُبَيْرٍ، عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ . رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا . قَالَ لَمَّا نَزَلَتْ { وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ } صَعِدَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَلَى الصَّفَا فَجَعَلَ يُنَادِي " يَا بَنِي فِهْرٍ، يَا بَنِي عَدِيٍّ " . لِيُطَوِّنَ فُرَيْشَ حَتَّى اجْتَمَعُوا، فَجَعَلَ الرَّجُلُ إِذَا لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ أَنْ يَخْرُجَ أَرْسَلَ رَسُولًا لِيَنْظُرَ مَا هُوَ، فَجَاءَ أَبُو هَبٍ وَفُرَيْشٌ فَقَالَ " أَرَأَيْتَكُمْ لَوْ أَحْبَبْتُمْ أَنْ خِيَلًا بِالْوَادِي تُرِيدُ أَنْ تُغَيِّرَ عَلَيْكُمْ، أَكُنْتُمْ مُصَدِّقِي " . قَالُوا نَعَمْ، مَا جَزَيْنَا عَلَيْكَ إِلَّا صِدْقًا . قَالَ " فَإِنِّي نَذِيرٌ لَكُمْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ " . فَقَالَ أَبُو هَبٍ تَبًّا لَكَ سَائِرَ الْيَوْمِ، أَلْهَذَا جَمَعْتَنَا فَتَنَزَلَتْ { تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي هَبٍ وَتَبَّ * مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ }

Sahih Bukhari Vol. 6, Book 60, Hadith 293

If you reflect, Rasoolullah ﷺ had several choices in the way to introduce Islam to his polytheistic community. He could have claimed the right of tribal superiority and nobility. He belonged to the most noble of the noble – Banu Hashim from Quraysh. So he could have attempted to establish himself as the primary tribal leader and then introduced Islam.

Alternatively, he could have gone the social reformer route. Makkah was a place that was characterized by social evils of excess, oppression and sin. Muhammad ﷺ could have spoken out against those first, got a lot of people on his side and then introduced Islam as the doctrine on which his social reformist movement was based.

Finally he could have introduced Islam as an alternate religion, a new way of looking at things, a new theory – equal to everything else that exists, an alternate way at arriving at the truth, another road to Rome. Not as the only road that leads to Jannah, the only way to salvation, the only religion of truth other than which nothing will be acceptable to Allahﷻ on the Day of Judgment. He could have presented Islam as one of the many new age theories and fads that do the rounds today, which in a polytheistic society have, wide acceptance.

Yet he did nothing of the sort. He didn't use any of the alternatives that were available to him but stood out clear from everything and announced to his people, 'Leave the worship of idols and worship Allahﷻ alone without ascribing any partners to Him or be prepared to be punished when you meet Allahﷻ.'

By this method of calling, at one stroke he managed to antagonize everyone in Makkah because ideologically he attacked their religion and showed up its imaginary nature. Its mythology stood out for what it was; a myth. And he introduced the concept of accountability to Allahﷻ from whom nothing is hidden. Not a comfortable thought for those who had become used to doing whatever they liked on the basis of their own personal wealth and power. The rich and powerful of all times never take kindly to the thought that they will be called to account one day and will have to pay for their deeds. All these things were so foreign and alien to the people of Makkah in general and the

Quraysh in particular that they instantly rebelled. The Quraysh were particularly affected because they were the priestly class, the custodians of the Ka'aba in which they had housed their idols – 350 of them; the worship of which, especially during the annual pilgrimage was a major source of income for them.

Muhammadﷺ's message threatened not only their beliefs but much more importantly in their eyes, their economy and that they couldn't bear. So they fought him, tooth and nail. The only way to understand why Rasoolullahﷺ chose this particular way to preach Islam is to go the Qur'an and see what all the Anbiya of Allahﷻ did. They all did the same thing. They announced their message clearly and directly without beating about the bush or disguising it in any way.

They didn't ask for any reward from the people, either monetary or social or political. They performed their actions fearing nobody other than Allahﷻ and looking for reward from nobody other than Allahﷻ. This directness in preaching and teaching without material reward was the hallmark of the Anbiya of all times. Muhammadﷺ was merely repeating what the brotherhood of Anbiya had always done through the ages, as long as mankind needed guidance. To this day the inheritors of the Anbiya – the people of knowledge who take the word of Allahﷻ to the rest of mankind – also follow the same method. They speak clearly and directly and they work without expecting or accepting any reward from the people. Anyone who

changes this methodology has cut himself off from the glorious continuous tradition of the Anbiya and from the help of Allahﷻ that comes with it.

I always think of this story about the very beginning of the preaching of Islam whenever I think of the powerful, deep, enduring and unshakable faith of Rasoolullahﷺ because it illustrates his complete reliance on Allahﷻ for success whereby he simply did what he had been ordered to do without allowing anything, including his own judgment, to interfere in the way that he had been ordered to follow.

Allahﷻ ordered him to warn his people. And that is what he did. It is not that there is anything bad or incorrect about using your own reasoning but for the one receiving Revelation there is no option but to follow what he receives without question. The same logic applies to those who bear that Revelation today – the Muslims – who believe in what was revealed, in its truth, its address to all people, its Divine origin and in its unchanging applicability until the end of time. We do what we have been ordered to do without question, without changing or altering the message in any way. That demonstrates our own integrity.

This is what distinguishes the Muslims from those who also received the Revelation before them – for they changed and interpreted and altered until the Revelation lost its Divine qualities and the Word of God became the Word of Man. Muslims through the ages have never been guilty of this.

The whole period of Prophethood in Makkah of 13 years is a period of disappointment after disappointment, failure after failure. If one were to look for material signs of potential success, there are none. How then did Rasoolullah ﷺ still continue with his mission, his energy and commitment undiminished, standing in the night and connecting to His Rabb and working through the day to take his message to anyone who would stop to listen – whether or not they accepted what he had to say. No matter how they reacted or what they did, he never lost patience, never got angry, never reacted to them and their bad behavior and he never gave up his mission or even slacked in the slightest in propagating it. For him and his mission there were no weekends, no holidays, no intervals – he worked constantly day and night without respite. What, other than complete and total faith can sustain such effort? And who other than the Messengers of Allah ﷺ can have that to a level of excellence? In our lives one of the many critical lessons to learn is this capacity to sustain effort in the face of disappointment and apparent failure. It is not the fastest but the most resilient who wins the race. We give up too easily, are too easily discouraged and are too focused on getting visible results. We forget that Islam enters the heart and that entry is for the most part, invisible. From the biography of Omar ibn Al-Khattab ؓ we have this beautiful story which illustrates how Islam enters the heart but it takes a while for it to show itself outwardly.

There's an incident when Allah ﷻ introduced Islam to Omar ﷻ. He narrated this incident himself. Omar ﷻ liked his liquor and had his drinking partners. One night very late, Omar ﷻ wanted to have a drink but couldn't find any of his drinking partners. Since he had nothing to do he decided to make Tawaf. When he went to the Ka'aba at that very late hour, he saw Rasoolullah ﷺ standing in front of the Ka'aba praying. So Omar ﷻ went behind the Ka'aba and slid behind the Kiswa (cover) of the Ka'aba and came around until he was right in front of Rasoolullah ﷺ. He wanted to ambush Rasoolullah ﷺ who was standing in Salah reciting Al Haaqqa.

Omar ﷻ thought to himself, 'These must be the words of a poet.' Rasoolullah ﷺ recited,

Al Haaqqa 69:41. It is not the word of a poet, little is that you believe!

وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَاعِرٍ قَلِيلًا مَّا تُؤْمِنُونَ

Omar ﷻ was shocked and he thought to himself, 'These must be the words of a Kaahin (soothsayer).' Rasoolullah ﷺ recited:

Al Haaqqa 69:42. Nor is it the word of a soothsayer (or a foreteller), little is that you remember!

وَلَا بِقَوْلِ كَاهِنٍ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ

Omarؓ was shocked and simply stood there unable to move. However it was several years later that he actually accepted Islam as narrated in the famous incident which most of us are familiar with. For those who are not, let me narrate it here because once again it shows how the recitation of the Qur'an itself has the power to turn hearts. As I have said many a time, the Qur'an was revealed as the spoken word and has its maximum power when it is listened to. There is something in its cadence, its tone of address, its majesty of command and its clarity of communication that touches the heart of anyone who is genuinely seeking the truth. I am also including it here as it is a very important story of the Seerah which illustrates how the faith of Rasoolullahﷺ was able to influence even his worst enemies.

One day when the Quraysh and their friends were discussing what to do with Rasoolullahﷺ they asked, 'Who will agree to kill Muhammadﷺ?' Omar volunteered and said, 'I will do it.' He took his sword and went off towards Darul Arqam. On the way he met Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqasؓ who asked him, 'Where are you headed?' Omar said, 'I am going to kill the man who has disunited us and cursed our gods.'

Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqasؓ asked him, 'Do you think that the Banu Abd Manaf will let you walk on the face of the earth if you kill their man?' An argument started and Omar said to him, 'I think you have become Muslim and if I am sure of that, I will kill you first before I kill Muhammadﷺ.'

Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas ؓ said to him, 'Before you go to kill Muhammadﷺ why don't you take care of your own household?' Omar asked him, 'What do you mean?' The Sahabi said, 'Your sister and her husband are Muslim.' His sister Fatima bint Al Khattaab (RA) and her husband Sayeed bin Zayd ؓ were Muslims. Sayeed bin Zayd ؓ was the cousin of Omar and one of the ten who were given the good news of Jannah. They were being taught Qur'an by Khabbaab bin Al Arat ؓ and when Omar reached their house he heard the Qur'an being recited.

He knocked on the door and when they saw it was Omar, Khabbaab ؓ hid himself. Omar demanded, 'What was that sound?' Fatima said, 'Nothing. We were talking.' Omar was angry and said, 'Don't lie to me. Have you become Muslim?' Sayeed ؓ said, 'What if Islam is better than your religion?' Omar attacked him, threw him on the ground and sat on top of him. Fatima (RA) came to defend her husband but Omar hit her in the face and her face bled. She was however his sister and was not intimidated by him. She stood back and said, 'O You enemy of Allahﷻ. You hit me because I believe in Allahﷻ? So know that there is nobody worthy of worship except Allahﷻ and Muhammadﷺ is his Messenger. Now do whatever you want.'

Omar was struck by her strength and when he saw the blood on her face, he was very sorry for what he had done. He released Sayeed ؓ and sat down and said, 'Give me your scrolls.' She refused so he told her, 'What you told me

has touched me and I promise to return your scrolls to you safely.’ She said to him, ‘You are a Mushrik (polytheist) and you are impure. So go and take a bath first.’ Omar bathed and returned and she gave him the scroll. Omar started to recite the Ayaat in the scroll.

طه

مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَىٰ

إِلَّا تَذِكْرًا لِّمَن يَخْشَىٰ

تَنْزِيلًا مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَاوَاتِ الْعُلَىٰ

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَىٰ

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَىٰ

وَإِن يَجْهَرُ بِالْقَوْلِ فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَىٰ

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ

Taha 20:1. Ta-Ha. 2. We have not sent down the Qur'an unto you (O Muhammad) to cause you distress, 3. But only as a Reminder to those who fear (Allah). 4. A revelation from Him (Allah) Who has created the earth and the heavens on high. 5. The Most Beneficent (Allah) Istawa (rose over) the (Mighty) Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty). 6. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth, and all that is between them, and all that is under the soil. 7. And if you (O

Muhammad) speak (the invocation) aloud, then verily, He knows the secret and that which is yet more hidden. 8. Allah! La ilaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He)! To Him belong the Best Names.

Omar read these Ayaat and said, 'Is this what Quraysh are against? Truly the One who said these words must be worshipped. Show me where is Muhammadﷺ?' When Omar read the scrolls and said that he wanted to meet Rasoolullahﷺ, Khabbaab bin Al Aratؓ, came out of hiding and said, 'O Omar, Allahﷻ has accepted the dua of Rasoolullahﷺ.' Rasoolullahﷺ had made dua, "O Allahﷻ honor (strengthen) Islam with one of the two men who you love the most, Amr bin Hisham or Omar bin Al Khattaab.'

They told him where Rasoolullahﷺ was and he headed straight there. He knocked on the door. The Sahaba saw him there and got frightened and all sat down. Hamzaؓ looked at them and said, 'What is the matter with you?' They said, 'It is Omar.' Hamzaؓ said, 'So what if it is Omar? If he came for good it is good. If he came for evil I will kill him with his own sword. Open the door.' As Omar entered, Hamzaؓ and another Sahabi caught him by his arms and brought him to Rasoolullahﷺ.

Rasoolullahﷺ said to them, 'Leave him alone.' They released him. Rasoolullahﷺ grabbed him by his collar and said, 'Ya Ibn Al Khattaab, why have you come here? Are you going to fight Islam until Allahﷻ destroys you?' Omar said, 'Ya Rasoolullahﷺ I came to testify that there's nobody

worthy of worship except Allahﷻ and that you are His Messengerﷺ.' Rasoolullahﷺ made Takbeer and the whole place erupted in Takbeer. It was so loud that they had to immediately disperse to avoid detection.

The Extraordinary Goal

The most beautiful story from the Seerah that I can recall about the extraordinary goal of Rasoolullahﷺ, about the absolute certainty with which he believed in his message; the truth of it, the importance of it and the criticality of it for the wellbeing of all mankind is as follows. The story relates to the early days of Islam in Makkah where it had no support and Rasoolullahﷺ was preaching his message almost alone.

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

The man replied, ‘Don’t be sad my daughter. A day will come when this message will reach every temporary or

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

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

But then, it is in the very nature of the extraordinary goal to inspire extraordinary effort. People don’t rise to low

expectations. They rise to high expectations. A climber standing at the base camp of Mount Everest doesn't need a motivational lecture. The mountain motivates him. The thought of the joy that he will feel when he finally breasts the last ridge and stands on the peak motivates him while he is still standing at the base and continues to motivate him as he goes through hour after hour of grueling effort. It is the difficulty of the climb itself that is the motivation. After all, ask yourself, how motivated would you be to walk 11 km down the road from your home? To climb Everest is, no doubt, to walk on the earth but it is the incline which adds value. The satisfaction at the achievement of a goal is directly proportional to its difficulty.

What could be more difficult than to talk about revolutionary change, not simply incremental change but much more seminal and intrinsic – a change of belief. It is very important to understand the huge challenge that this poses because all action is a result of belief. People act in accordance with their beliefs, consciously or unconsciously. For example, people may act in accordance with religious beliefs, consciously and practice certain things and they act according to their belief that a particular course of action is profitable and invest in it. On the other hand, a person gets up and goes to work because of his unconscious belief that he will live that day and beyond it and that the world is not coming to an end. So beliefs form the very foundation of all our thought and action. To have that system challenged

and to be told that it is completely false and that it would lead to eternal punishment was not easy. Yet Rasoolullah ﷺ's own belief in the truth of his message was such that nothing deterred him from taking it to the people. It is reported that he went to the house of Abu Jahl, one of his worst enemies, more than 100 times in the hope that he would accept the message of Islam. Who but a Nabi would work to save the one who did his best to cause him as much harm as possible?

Another thing about working towards an extraordinary goal is that the work itself is training. As the Arabs say, 'If it doesn't break your back, it only strengthens you.' So also in working towards an extraordinary goal, one is only strengthened. This was also the case of Rasoolullah ﷺ and the early Muslims. All the opposition, torture and punishment only made them and their connection with Allah ﷻ stronger and made them more resilient. The extraordinary goal makes the effort feel worthwhile. If it is worth doing, then it is worth the effort. And what could be more worthy of effort and sacrifice than the effort to save all of mankind from the Hellfire and enter them into Jannah? Rasoolullah ﷺ and the Sahaba saw what we call sacrifice as their investment in earning the pleasure of Allah ﷻ and so it was possible for them to make it without hesitation.

Extraordinary Commitment

It is only when people realise the return that they get from something that they are able to commit to it. For Rasoolullahﷺ this was never a matter of the slightest doubt. But his major achievement was in building a generation which shared his commitment and proved it to the final extent by giving their lives for the cause. He was able to do this by setting a personal example which left no doubt in anyone's mind about the extent of his own commitment to the message of Islam; living it and propagating it. Not only did Rasoolullahﷺ demonstrate this commitment but so did his Sahaba who learnt this lesson very well from him. There are many instances in the Seerah which show the level of this commitment.

During the Battle of Badr, as they were proceeding to the wells of Badr where the battle was to take place, the Sahaba were very ill equipped. They were not prepared for a full battle and were only going to take over the caravan of Abu Sufyan which was returning from Ash-Shaam with goods purchased from the confiscated wealth of the Muhajiroon. There were only 2 horses and 70 camels in the group. Three people would take turns to ride one camel. Rasoolullahﷺ had Ali ibn Abi Talibؓ and Ulubabaؓ with him as his partners. They offered the camel to him and he said, 'You are not stronger than I am and I need the reward as much

as you do.’ His leadership was from the front and he always demonstrated an equal if not higher level of commitment that he demanded from his people.

During the Battle of the Trench (Ghazwatul Khandaq) Rasoolullahﷺ held a Shura to brainstorm the battle strategy. Salman Al Farisiؓ who was from Persia said, ‘In my land if we fear cavalry we dig a trench. So why don’t we dig a trench here?’ Rasoolullahﷺ agreed and they decided to dig the trench to the North of Madina which was vulnerable. In the east and west Madina was protected by Al Harra (a volcanic tract) and in the south were the date farms which were impenetrable. Every 10 men were given 40 feet of trench to dig. The Muslims were poor and hungry and weak. Anas ibn Maalikؓ says that on one cold night Rasoolullahﷺ went out to them and when he saw their state he made dua and said, ‘O Allahﷻ indeed these are for the Aakhira. O Allahﷻ forgive the Muhajiroon and the Ansaar.’ It was not lost on the Sahaba that while they were sleeping in the open and were bitterly cold, their leader was not sleeping warmly in his tent or his home, but was walking among them, checking their situation and making dua for them. People are loyal to other people, not to titles or ranks.

Al Bara’aؓ says, ‘On the day of Khandaq I saw Rasoolullahﷺ carrying earth until there was so much mud on him that I could not see his skin anymore.’ This is an example of the commitment of Rasoolullahﷺ. There was no job that he considered beneath his dignity to do. There was

nothing that he ordered others to do that he didn't do himself. Leadership after all is always from the front. People follow leaders because the leader is walking ahead of them. Sometimes we forget this.

At this time Rasoolullahﷺ himself was so hungry that he would tie two stones to his belly. Jaber ibn Abdallaﷺ saw the condition of Rasoolullahﷺ while they were digging the trench; people had one stone tied on their bellies while Rasoolullahﷺ had two. He went to his wife and said, 'I have seen Rasoolullahﷺ in an unbearable condition. Do you have any food for him?' She said, 'All I have is some barley and a small goat.' So Jaber bin Abdullahﷺ slaughtered the goat and told his wife to make some dough for bread. While the meat was cooking and his wife was baking the bread, he went to Rasoolullahﷺ and said, 'Ya Rasoolullahﷺ, I have some food for you so please come with one or two of your companions.' Rasoolullahﷺ asked him how much food he had and Jaberﷺ told him. Rasoolullahﷺ said, 'O that's plenty. Tell your wife, not to move the soup from its place until I come.'

Then Rasoolullahﷺ stood up and called out, 'O Muhajiroon, O Ansaar; Jaber has invited you to his house for a meal.' Jaberﷺ was shocked because he expected Rasoolullahﷺ to come with one or two companions while Rasoolullahﷺ had now invited the whole camp. He ran back home, very embarrassed and told his wife what had happened. She asked him, 'Did he ask you how much food we have?' He said, 'Yes.' She asked, 'Did you tell him?' He

replied, 'Yes.' So she said, 'Then don't worry, Allahﷻ and His Messengerﷺ know best.' He said, 'Those words comforted me.'

Rasoolullahﷺ entered the house of Jaberﷺ and took charge of distributing the food. He would crush the bread and dish out the meat and soup and told the Sahaba to come in groups of 10. Rasoolullahﷺ would prepare the meal and dish it out and they would eat their fill and leave and another 10 would come in and eat. In total 800 Sahaba ate. When Rasoolullahﷺ went back to the pot the pot was full and the bread was still baking. So he told the wife of Jaberﷺ to feed her neighbors. It is hardly a surprise that the morale of his people was so high. What else would you expect with a leader who shared all your hardship?

Miracle: Prophecy

A boulder stood in the path of the trench diggers and would not break despite their best efforts. So they came to Rasoolullahﷺ. He went with them and took the pickaxe and struck the boulder once. Lightning flashed and he said, 'Allahu Akbar.' Then he struck it a second time and lightning flashed again and he said, 'Allahu Akbar.' Then he struck it a third time and the boulder disintegrated to dust. Salman Al Farisiﷺ asked him, 'Ya Rasoolullahﷺ what was the lightning and why did you say Allahu Akbar?' He replied, 'The first time I struck it I was given the good news of the conquest of the Roman Empire and I could see the red palace of Ash-Shaam from here. The second time I was

given the good news of the conquest of Persia and I could see the white palace of Al Kisra. The third time I was given the good news of the conquest of Yemen and I could see the gates of Sana'a. That is why I said, 'Allahu Akbar.'

Speaking of the commitment of the Sahaba one story which illustrates this very well is when Rasoolullah ﷺ appointed Ammar bin Yasir ؓ and Abbad bin Bishr ؓ as guards during one expedition. Between themselves they decided that one of them would sleep half the night while the other stayed awake and then when half the night was over, he would awaken his brother. It was Abbad bin Bishr ؓ' s turn to be awake and he decided to pray while guarding the camp. One of the enemy scouts sneaked up behind Abbad ؓ and shot an arrow which hit him in the side. Abbad ؓ continued to stand and pray . The enemy soldier shot another arrow which also hit Abbad ؓ. But he remained standing and continued his prayer without interruption. The enemy shot a third arrow upon which Abbad ؓ woke up Ammar ؓ. When the enemy soldier saw that Abbad ؓ had a companion, he ran away. When Ammar bin Yasir ؓ saw him in the state where he was dying from loss of blood he said to him, 'Subhan'Allah why didn't you wake me up?' Abbad ؓ said, 'If it wasn't for the fact that this man kept shooting arrow after arrow and I was afraid that I may die and thereby fail my responsibility to Rasoolullah ﷺ, I would not have woken you up until I finished my entire recitation.'

The Sahaba were living examples of Islam. This incident shows us the level of Imaan of the Sahaba where Abbad bin Bishrؓ could actually continue to pray and retain his Khushoo despite taking 3 arrows in his body. This also shows the importance of our responsibility to Islam. Abbadؓ used a phrase which means, 'Guarding my gate' i.e. preventing the enemy from entering from the gate that I am guarding. This is the responsibility of every Muslim. The enemy is Shaytaan or anyone who wishes ill for Islam or the Muslims. It is the duty of every Muslim to use whatever means Allahﷻ has given to prevent any harm from happening to Islam or the Muslims and to help Islam and the Muslims in any way. We will not be asked, 'What happened?' We will be asked, 'What did you do?'

Extraordinary Team

Allahﷻ created a generation of people around His Nabi who were benchmarks in themselves. As I mentioned earlier it was the Will of Allahﷻ that Muhammadﷺ was to be the last of the Messengers and so it was necessary to create successors who would take the message onward. They were the Sahaba of Rasoolullahﷺ, who he called the Best Generation.

Narrated `Abd Allahﷺ: Rasoolullahﷺ said, "The best people are those living in my generation, and then those who will follow them, and then those who will follow the latter. Then there will come some people who will bear witness before taking oaths, and take oaths before bearing witness." (Bukhaari)

To quote from one of the best books on the subject called: Men Around the Messenger by Khaalid Muhammad Khaalid:

"It was neither invented discourse nor false rumor that was recorded in history about the great company of men who came into the world of belief and faith. That is because the entirety of human history has never witnessed such accurate documentation, honesty, and investigation of facts as did that epoch of Islamic history and its men. An extraordinary human effort has been exerted to study and pursue its tidings. Successive generations of

able and brilliant scholars have not left unexamined even the smallest details or minutest explanations concerning that early epoch without putting them under microscopic investigation, scrutiny, and criticism.

The spectacular magnitude we encounter on the pages of this book of those colossal men of the Companions of the Messenger (PBUH) is not something legendary, even though they may seem like legends due to their miraculous nature! These are facts characteristic of the personality and life of the Prophet's Companions. They soar high and are exalted and ennobled, not because of the author or, depicter, but because of what the Companions themselves desired and the extraordinary and righteous effort they exerted for the sake of excelling and attaining perfection."

Rasoolullahﷺ had a task very different from any Nabi and much more complex. The task of all the Anbiya before him was to get people to accept their message. So they had followers. The task of Muhammadﷺ, who was to be the last of the Messengers of Allahﷻ and the Seal of Prophethood, was not only to convey his message but to create a generation of people who would take his message onwards across the lands and down through the centuries until the end of time. It is the Baraka of the Seal of Prophethood that the work of Da'awa was given to the Ummah.

So in short, other Anbiya created followers while Muhammadﷺ created leaders.

The first among them was his Khalifa – Khalifatur Rasoolillah – Abu Bakr Siddique ؓ. How well he learned the lesson of leadership from his teacher Muhammad ؐ can be seen in his first action when Rasoolullah ؐ passed away. I am going to tell that story in some detail both because it is a story that we need to remind ourselves about repeatedly as also because from the story it becomes clear that Rasoolullah ؐ clearly indicated to the Sahaba who was to be his successor. He did it in terms that they understood clearly without any doubt and so they chose him.

Those who like to cast doubts and aspersions today on this matter indicate either their own ignorance of the life and times of Rasoolullah ؐ or their ulterior motives which are obviously highly questionable.

The Last Days

Rasoolullah ؐ said, ‘When any calamity befalls you think of my death and that calamity will seem like nothing.’ The biggest disaster for the Muslims was the death of Rasoolullah ؐ not only because they were deprived of the Baraka of his company but also because with his death, Wahi stopped and the connection with Allah ؑ that they had, came to an end.

In the month of Safar, the beginning of the end commenced. Rasoolullah ؐ had received many Ayaat and indications that he would die like other Messengers before him and he was prepared and waiting for that day. Allah ؑ said:

إِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَإِنَّهُمْ مَيِّتُونَ

Zumar 39:30. Verily, you (O Muhammad) will die and verily, they (too) will die

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا لِبَشَرٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ الْخُلْدَ أَفَإِن مِّتَّ فَهُمُ الْخَالِدُونَ

Anbiya 21: 34. And We granted not to any human being immortality before you (O Muhammad), then if you die, would they live forever? **35.** Everyone is going to taste death, and We shall make a trial of you with evil and with good, and to Us you will be returned.

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِن مَّاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ وَمَن يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَن يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ

A'al Imraan 3:144. Muhammad is no more than a Messenger, and indeed (many) Messengers have passed away before him. If he dies or is killed, will you then turn back on your heels (as disbelievers)? And he who turns back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to Allâh, and Allâh will give reward to those who are grateful. **145.** And no person can ever die except by Allâh's Leave and at an appointed term. And whoever desires a reward in (this) world, We shall give him of it; and whoever desires a reward in the Hereafter, We shall give him thereof. And We shall reward the grateful.

إِذَا جَاء نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ

وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا

فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا

An-Nasr 110: 1. When comes the Help of Allâh (to you, O Muhammad (Peace be upon him) against your enemies) and the conquest (of Makkah), 2. And you see that the people enter Allâh's religion (Islâm) in crowds, 3. So glorify the Praises of your Rabb, and ask for His Forgiveness. Verily, He is the One Who accepts the repentance and forgives.

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

Al Ma'aidah 5: 3 This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islâm as your religion.

It is the Sunnah of Allah ﷻ that when the mission of His Messengers is completed, He calls them back. And He indicated many times that in the case of Rasoolullah ﷺ this wouldn't be any different. Allah ﷻ also indicated that the work of Prophethood would not end with Muhammad ﷺ but that his Ummah was to be given that responsibility and that the help of Allah ﷻ would come for them as it did for Rasoolullah ﷺ as long as they continued his work.

Ahadith pointing to the death of Rasoolullah ﷺ :

He said at the beginning of his Khutba of Hajj:

'Learn from me the Manaasik of Hajj for I may not make Hajj after this year.'

He said to Mua'ad bin Jabal as he was sending him to Yemen:

'When you return you may pass by my grave and my masjid.' And Mua'ad wept.

Rasoolullahﷺ said, 'Jibreel used to recite Qur'an with me once. This year he made did it twice and affirmed its correctness.'

Rasoolullahﷺ woke up and called Abu Muwayhibaؓ, his servant late one night and said, 'O Abu Muwayhiba, I have been commanded to ask forgiveness for the people of Al Baqee'a. So come with me.' They went there and Rasoolullahﷺ said, 'As salaamu alaikum Ya Ahlal Maqaabir. Congratulations that you do not experience what people here are experiencing. Trials and tribulations come like dark portions of the night following each other in succession, the last being worse than the first. (then he looked at Abu Muwayhiba and said) I was given the choice of the keys of the treasures of the earth and to live in this world as long as the world exists and then Jannah; or to meet Allahﷻ now and Jannah.' Abu Muwayhibaؓ said, 'Choose us Ya Rasoolullahﷺ ' Rasoolullahﷺ said, 'No I have chosen to meet Allahﷻ and Jannah.' Then he made dua for the forgiveness of the people of Al Baqee'a and then

they left. When he reached home, his terminal illness began.

Ayesha (RA) said, 'O My head, O my head!' Rasoolullah ﷺ said, 'No I should say O My Head.' When she complained of her headache more, he joked with her and said, 'Actually if you were to die it wouldn't be such a bad thing because I would wash you and pray for you and attend your funeral.' She said, 'Ya Rasoolullah ﷺ let someone else have this good fortune because if I die you will still have your other wives to care for you.'

Rasoolullah ﷺ 's illness increased. His headache was in spasms and he had a severe fever. One of the Sahaba put his hand on Rasoolullah ﷺ and then removed his hand and said, 'I can't bear to keep my hand on your body. You have a very severe fever.' Rasoolullah ﷺ said, 'Yes, we Anbiya get double the suffering of the people.' He went to visit his wives and was in Maymuna (RA) quarters when he had another attack of severe pain so he went from there to Aisha's (RA) quarters and asked all of them to attend to him there. His wives agreed to nurse him there. His head was wrapped tightly in a cloth and he was leaning on Ali bin Abi Talib on one side and Al Abbas on the other. There he lay down.

Rasoolullah ﷺ wanted to go to the masjid to talk to the people and to give them a covenant and so he asked for water from 7 different wells of Madina to be brought and

poured over him to reduce his fever. Then he was helped with Ali bin Abi Talib on one side and one of the sons of Al Abbas on the other to go to the masjid. He had become so weak that he could not walk on his own. He gave a Khutba, he praised Allah ﷻ and thanked Him and then he asked Allah ﷻ to forgive the Shuhada of Al Uhud. Rasoolullah ﷺ was very loyal to his companions and to those who supported him in his mission. Rasoolullah ﷺ lived for his Ummah.

He said, 'O Muhajireen, you are increasing in number while the Ansaar are not increasing. They are the ones who supported me in the beginning so honor the honorable among them and forgive the ones who make mistakes. O Men, carry out the expedition under Usama. Your complaint against his leadership is the same as your complaint against the generalship of his father before him. By Allah ﷻ Usama is as fit for generalship as was his father.'

Rasoolullah ﷺ stopped for a while and there was absolute silence. Then he said, 'O People there is a slave of Allah ﷻ who was given the option of this world or what is in the hands of Allah ﷻ and he chose what is with Allah ﷻ. (Abu Bakr ؓ started to weep and people wondered why he was crying. Three days later they knew). Abu Bakr ؓ said, 'We will sacrifice ourselves and our children for you Ya Rasoolullah ﷺ . Rasoolullah ﷺ stopped him and said, 'The person most faithful to me in his friendship and his wealth is Abu Bakr. If I was going to choose anyone other than

Allahﷻ as a Khaleel, it would be Abu Bakr. But I am the Khaleel of Allahﷻ and Abu Bakr is my friend and companion in Islam. All the doors into the masjid are to be closed except the door of Abu Bakr.' Then he said, 'May Allahﷻ curse the Jews and Christians for building houses of worship over the graves of their prophets. No other religion should exist in the Arabian Peninsula. Take care of your Salah. Take care of those in your control. Fear Allahﷻ in the matter of your women. Send out the army of Usama.'

Rasoolullahﷺ could not go out to lead Salah so he ordered that Abu Bakrﷺ should be told to lead the Salah. He said, '*Mooroo Aba Bakr fa yusalli bin naas.*' (Order Abu Bakr to lead the people in Salah). Ayesha (RA) did not want her father to lead the Salah as she was afraid of controversy and so she said, 'Ya Rasoolullahﷺ he is a very soft hearted man and he may be overcome if he stands in your position.'

Rasoolullahﷺ was irritated when this objection was repeated and said, 'Order Abu Bakr to lead the people in Salah. You women are like the women of Yusuf.' Later Ayesha said, 'I did not want my father to lead the Salah as people may not like him to stand in the place of Rasoolullahﷺ.'

To understand a historical event one must see it in the context of the times, its cultural connotations and in terms of what was the norm among the people. We can't apply our present day standards to something that happened 14 centuries ago and insist that unless the matter was dealt

with in a way that 'makes sense' in our present day terms, we won't accept it. Among the Arabs, as among those who went out to occupy the so-called Wild West in the United States of America, their word was their bond. Many major deals took place simply on the verbal promise of one man given to another. Some deals were recorded not because the word was not good enough but because some specific details may have been too complex simply to be remembered. But the deal was sealed on the basis of the spoken word. The recording of the agreement was a secondary matter that didn't add in the least to the sanctity of the agreement. Once a matter had been agreed upon, both parties honored that agreement, whether or not it had been written down. That is why to call someone a liar was a killing matter because if a person allowed that to happen and did nothing about it, then effectively he would have accepted that allegation and that put an end to his ability to live in society. Even today, the worst curse that you can use against an Arab is to call him a liar.

The Munafiqeen (hypocrites), a new group of people who came to be in Madina were cursed by Allahﷻ even more severely than those who opposed Rasoolullahﷺ in Makkah because of the fact that they pretended to be Muslims but actually opposed Rasoolullahﷺ in secret. They were cursed because they were liars. Islam places huge importance on truthfulness even if it means bearing witness against yourself, your father or brothers and family. Islam is truth and is against all kinds of falsehood.

Here, in the case of the succession of Abu Bakrؓ, we are not talking about the word of an ordinary man. We are speaking about the word of the Messenger of Allahﷺ himself on which was based their very faith. The Sahaba were used, not only to obey Rasoolullahﷺ unquestioningly but also to respond even to his unstated wishes, simply because they loved him, were close to him and understood the nuances of his communication. So if he indicated that Abu Bakrؓ was to be his successor, nobody of the time raised any objection that this had not been put in writing.

It must be understood that for the Sahaba, Salah was the most important of all matters. The religion came before everything else for them and the Salah is the head of the religion. The Imam of Salah was their Imam in life. The Imam of Salah during the life of Rasoolullahﷺ was always himself. And so it was very clear to them that when Rasoolullahﷺ in his terminal illness, specifically designated and ordered Abu Bakrؓ to lead Salah, then it meant that he was choosing Abu Bakrؓ as his successor. It is my belief that the reason Rasoolullahﷺ didn't cause this to be written down was because he was so sure of his training and because he knew how much the people respected Abu Bakrؓ. If indeed he had considered it necessary to put this in writing or even to designate anyone else, including Ali bin Abi Talibؓ as his successor, then there was enough time and opportunity for him to do so from the beginning of his terminal illness on Thursday to his passing away on Monday. From this it is clear that he had no doubt in his

mind about who would succeed him and about the fact that his followers, the Sahaba, would honor his wishes and accept his choice. And indeed that is what happened and everyone including Ali bin Abi Talibؓ accepted Abu Bakr as the Khalifa of Rasoolullahﷺ without any dispute.

Abu Bakr Siddiqueؓ was their Shaikh. They respected him more than anyone else, came to him for advice and rulings and they came to ask him to intercede with Rasoolullahﷺ on various matters. Who did Omar ibn Al-Khattabؓ go to at Hdaybiya when he had objections about the treaty? What did Rasoolullahﷺ say to the woman who came to him to ask about a matter and he told her to come the next day? She asked him, 'What if you are not here when I come?' He replied, 'Ask Abu Bakr.' She asked, 'What if Abu Bakr is also not here?' He said, 'Ask Omar.' It is essential for the Muslim to study the Seerah of Rasoolullahﷺ with great seriousness and from authentic sources and not be misguided by people with vested interests who fabricate lies against the very people who Rasoolullahﷺ trusted above all others. Little do they realise that to cast aspersions on the integrity of a Sahabi is to cast aspersions on the authenticity of the Qur'an and the entire edifice of Islam. For it is the Sahaba who communicated the Word of Allahﷻ and the rulings of Rasoolullahﷺ to us. If we can't trust them in one matter then how can we trust them in another? So what does that do to the whole of Islam as a religion? Or maybe these enemies of Allahﷻ and His

Messengerﷺ do realise the evil of their actions and do this because they want to harm Islam.

For the Sahaba it was clear what the intention of Rasoolullahﷺ was when he ordered Abu Bakrﷺ to lead Salah. That is why nobody asked him to name a successor or to put it in writing even though there was plenty of time and opportunity for him to do so from his last Khutba on Thursday evening to his death on Monday mid-morning. He was lucid and in full control of his faculties during this entire period. Many people met him and he spoke to them. He could easily have named Ali bin Abi Talibﷺ or anyone else as his successor if he has so wished. He could also have ordered Ali bin Abi Talibﷺ to lead Salah. But he didn't. He was guided by Allahﷻ and what he did was what Allahﷻ intended. Let us remember this always.

Abu Bakrﷺ led Salah on the order of Rasoolullahﷺ from Thursday onwards until Monday when Rasoolullahﷺ passed away. On one occasion when the Adhaan was called and Abu Bakrﷺ was not present the Muezzin asked Omar ibn Al Khattabﷺ to lead Salah. Rasoolullahﷺ heard Omarﷺ's voice and said, 'Allahﷻ and the Mu'mineen don't wish that the Ameer should be anyone other than Abu Bakrﷺ.' This is a clear indication that Rasoolullahﷺ had selected Abu Bakrﷺ as his successor.

Fatima (RA) used to visit her father every day. He would kiss her and give her his seat. She came to visit him and kissed him. He whispered into her ear and she started to

cry. Then he whispered something else and she smiled. Aisha (RA) tried to get her to tell her what Rasoolullahﷺ had told her but she refused. After Rasoolullahﷺ passed away she said, 'He told me that this was the illness with which he would die and I cried and then he told me that I was the first person from his household who would join him and I smiled.' On the last day of his illness, Fatima (RA) said, 'O My Father, how much pain you are suffering.' He replied, 'After today your father will not suffer any pain.' We need to put ourselves in the place of the family of Rasoolullahﷺ and his Sahaba to understand what they went through in those last days yet they continued to function. There were 7 dinars in the house of Rasoolullahﷺ. He ordered that they should be given away in charity. In the course of his illness Aisha (RA) forgot to do that. Rasoolullahﷺ was losing consciousness and regaining it. During one such episode he asked about the dinars. Aisha (RA) told him that they were still there. He asked for them and she put them in the palm of his hand. He said, 'What spectacle is this, if Muhammadﷺ should meet his Rabb in this state?' The money was immediately given away.

Sunday night passed relatively peacefully.

Finally on Monday the Sahaba were in Salah being led by Abu Bakrؓ, Rasoolullahﷺ moved aside the curtain between his house and the masjid. Anas bin Maalikؓ said, 'Rasoolullahﷺ stood and watched us and his face was like a piece of the moon. He then came into the masjid leaning on

Ali bin Abi Talibﷺ and Fadh ibn Al Abbasﷺ. People were so happy to see him that they almost left the Salah. Abu Bakrﷺ raised his voice in recitation to indicate that the Salah must go on. Abu Bakrﷺ realized that this commotion could only mean that Rasoolullahﷺ was coming, so he started to move back but Rasoolullahﷺ pushed him forward and said, 'You lead,' and he sat down beside him and finished his Salah in a sitting position. This was the last thing that Rasoolullahﷺ saw; his Ummah standing together in Salah.

This was the indication of the completion of his mission and the thing that made him happiest.

After Salah he spoke to the congregation in a clear voice heard even outside the masjid. He said, 'O Men, the fire is ready. Subversive attacks are advancing like waves of darkness. By Allahﷻ I shall not be held responsible for anything after this. I never allowed anything but that which the Qur'an has made legitimate and I have never forbidden anything but that which the Qur'an has forbidden. May Allahﷻ 's curse be on those who take graves for their masaajid (make graves places of worship).

The Muslims were so overjoyed at the apparent recovery of Rasoolullahﷺ that Usama bin Zaydﷺ asked for permission to leave. Abu Bakrﷺ asked Rasoolullahﷺ, 'Ya Rasoolullahﷺ, it is clear that Allahﷻ has granted you His blessing and given you good health as we all had prayed. I have promised to visit the Daughter of Kharija (his wife) to

spend the day with her. Can I have permission to do that?' Rasoolullah ﷺ permitted him and he went to Sunh on the outskirts of Madina. Omar ؓ and Ali ؓ returned to their businesses. Rasoolullah ﷺ returned to Aisha(RA)'s quarters. Abdur Rahman bin Abi Bakr ؓ the brother of Ayesha (RA) came to see Rasoolullah ﷺ . He had a miswak in his pocket. Ayesha (RA) noticed Rasoolullah ﷺ looking at the miswak, so she asked him if he wanted it. He nodded so she took the miswak and chewed it to make it soft and then she put it in the mouth of Rasoolullah ﷺ to clean his teeth. Ayesha (RA) would recite Sura Al Falaq and An Naas and blow into the hands of Rasoolullah ﷺ and then pass them over his body.

Rasoolullah ﷺ's condition deteriorated rapidly and he would put his hand into a bowl of water and wipe his face and say, '*As sakaraathil mawoti bil haq*' (The stupor (suffering) of death is true.)

Then came the final moment. Ayesha (RA) said, 'I saw him looking towards the heavens and saying, '*Bal il Rafeeqil A'ala Bal il Rafeeqil A'ala Bal il Rafeeqil A'ala.*' So I knew that the angel of death had come and asked his permission and he chose Allah ﷻ and did not choose us.' Then his head turned towards me and I screamed.

The news spread all over Madina. Omar ؓ and Mugheera ؓ rushed into the room. Omar ؓ said, 'He is unconscious.' Mugheera ؓ said, 'He is dead.' Omar ؓ said, 'You are a man who wants to create fitna. He will not die until he

eliminates the Munafiqeen.’ Omar ﷺ went to the masjid and pulled out his sword and said, ‘People are saying that Rasoolullah ﷺ is dead. He is not dead but he is unconscious as Musa was unconscious and he will return. If anyone says that he is dead, I will cut off his head with this sword.’

The news reached Abu Bakr ﷺ who was on the outskirts of Madina and he rode back. He did not speak to anyone but went straight into the house of Ayesha (RA) where Rasoolullah ﷺ’s body was. He uncovered the face of Rasoolullah ﷺ and kissed him and wept and said, ‘You were pure in life and you are pure in death. The death which was ordained for you, you have passed through.’

He then came into the masjid and saw Omar ﷺ shouting at the people. He said, ‘Ijlis Ya Omar,’ (Sit down, O! Omar). But Omar ﷺ ignored him. So Abu Bakr ﷺ ascended the Minbar and started to speak to the people and they all left Omar ﷺ and came to listen to him. He said, *‘man kaana ya-abudu Muhammadan in kaana Muhammadan qad-maat. Wa in kaana ya-budullah fa innallaha hayyun la yamooth.* (Whoever worshipped Muhammad ﷺ know that Muhammad ﷺ is dead. Whoever worshipped Allah ﷻ know that Allah ﷻ never dies.) Then he recited the ayah:

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ
 أَعْقَابِكُمْ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ

A'al Imraan 3:144. Muhammad is no more than a Messenger, and indeed (many) Messengers have passed away before him. If he dies or is killed, will you then turn back on your heels (as disbelievers)? And he who turns back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to Allâh, and Allâh will give reward to those who are grateful.

Omarؓ said, 'Is this ayah in the Qur'an?' He knew the ayah but said that it was as if it was the first time that he'd heard it. Then he collapsed and said, 'My knees can't support me anymore.' The narrator said, 'Everyone was reciting this ayah as if it was the first time they had heard it.'

I narrated this incident in so much detail to underline the nature of the people who surrounded Rasoolullahﷺ who he had personally trained. There was nobody among the Sahaba who loved Rasoolullahﷺ more than Abu Bakrؓ and nobody who Rasoolullahﷺ loved more. If there was one person who would have been justified in collapsing with grief and becoming totally dysfunctional at the death of his dearest friend, it was Abu Bakrؓ. However he was the one who was able to override his own grief and become a pillar of strength from which others took support. It was Omarؓ, the strong one, who simply refused to accept that Rasoolullahﷺ was no more and who collapsed when the reality hit him. But Abu Bakrؓ who loved Rasoolullahﷺ more than anyone was able to stand firm and lead the Ummah. The mark of the training lies in what happens when the leader is not present to direct his followers. And it is at that time that the leadership training of Abu Bakrؓ,

the primary student of Rasoolullahﷺ was seen at its best. By his actions he demonstrated that Rasoolullahﷺ had chosen the best.

Rasoolullahﷺ's mission was not merely to convey his message but to prepare a generation to take it forward from generation to generation. Abu Bakrؓ led that generation. It is sufficient to end this chapter with this story because history is witness to what happened thereafter and continues to happen to this day fourteen centuries later in times and lands that Rasoolullahﷺ neither knew about nor did he ever see.

The most difficult task for the leader is not to get people to follow his commands, but to get them to dream his dream. To get them motivated to commit fully to a vision that only he can truly see. It is only when people fully commit to the vision, that they will do what it takes to make it come true. For any leader in any field, this is the most difficult task.

Muhammadﷺ was able to do this successfully not only with his own generation but was able to pass this on to generations yet unborn. Those who didn't live in Muhammadﷺ's time, didn't know him and haven't heard his voice, still carry his message far and wide as if it had come to them directly from him. They love him more than they love their own parents and children and stand up to defend his honor, willing to sacrifice their own lives in the process if necessary and consider it an honor to be able to do so. What was it in the leadership style of Rasoolullahﷺ

that made all this possible? What was it that made him a truly remarkable leader by any standard? What was it about him that even his worst enemies were forced to speak good about him even when they had no desire to do so. The incident with Heraclius, the Emperor of Byzantium which I mentioned earlier is a case in point.

Extraordinary Quality

Finally as they say, you can only take the result to the bank. And results depend on quality. Quality is the single biggest differentiator, the single biggest inspiration for followers and the single biggest guarantee of ongoing success.

As I mentioned, for Rasoolullah ﷺ and his Sahaba, the Salah was the meter to measure everything. Salah was the definer of their lives. Salah was what they turned to for all their needs. Salah was their quiet time, their time with their Rabb, the recharging of their energy. Salah was their way of relaxation, de-stressing tool and their strength. Rasoolullah ﷺ used to call to Bilal bin Rabah ؓ and tell him to call the Adhaan for Salah, saying, '*Farehna biha Ya Bilal,*' (Give us happiness through it O Bilal).

It was Salah through which Rasoolullah ﷺ gave his final message about his successor and it was the Salah of the Sahaba which made him so happy, which was the last sight that he saw of the outside world before he met his Rabb. So it is only natural that Rasoolullah ﷺ described quality also in terms of Salah. In the famous Hadith Jibreel, Rasoolullah ﷺ is reported to have answered the question of Jibreel ؑ with respect to Al-Ihsan (one translation would be – excellence) as follows. I have narrated the famous Hadith in total for its blessing but will focus only on the part concerning Al-Ihsan (excellence) for the purpose of our discussion here.

عَنْ يَحْيَى بْنِ يَعْمَرَ، ... فَأَنْطَلَقْتُ أَنَا وَمُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ الْحَمِيرِيُّ ... فَوُفِّقَ
لَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عُمَرَ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ دَاخِلًا الْمَسْجِدَ ... ثُمَّ قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي أَبِي عُمَرُ بْنُ
الْخَطَّابِ قَالَ بَيْنَمَا نَحْنُ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ذَاتَ يَوْمٍ إِذْ طَلَعَ عَلَيْنَا
رَجُلٌ شَدِيدُ بَيَاضِ الثِّيَابِ شَدِيدُ سَوَادِ الشَّعْرِ لَا يُرَى عَلَيْهِ أَثَرُ السَّفَرِ وَلَا يَعْرِفُهُ مِنَّا
أَحَدٌ حَتَّى جَلَسَ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَأَسْنَدَ رُكْبَتَيْهِ إِلَى رُكْبَتَيْهِ وَوَضَعَ كَفَّيْهِ
عَلَى فَخْذَيْهِ وَقَالَ يَا مُحَمَّدُ أَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ الْإِسْلَامِ . فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
وَسَلَّمَ " الْإِسْلَامُ أَنْ تَشْهَدَ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَتُعِيمَ الصَّلَاةَ
وَتُؤْتِيَ الزَّكَاةَ وَتَصُومَ رَمَضَانَ وَتَحُجَّ الْبَيْتَ إِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا . قَالَ صَدَقْتَ .
قَالَ فَعَجَبْنَا لَهُ يَسْأَلُهُ وَيُصَدِّقُهُ . قَالَ فَأَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ الْإِيمَانِ . قَالَ " أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ
وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَتُؤْمِنَ بِالْقَدَرِ خَيْرِهِ وَشَرِّهِ " . قَالَ صَدَقْتَ . قَالَ
فَأَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ الْإِحْسَانِ . قَالَ " أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ " .
قَالَ فَأَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ السَّاعَةِ . قَالَ " مَا الْمَسْئُورُ عَنْهَا بِأَعْلَمَ مِنَ السَّائِلِ " . قَالَ
فَأَخْبِرْنِي عَنْ أَمَارَتِهَا . قَالَ " أَنْ تَلِدَ الْأُمَةُ رَبَّتَهَا وَأَنْ تَرَى الْخِفَاءَ الْعُرَاةَ الْعَالَةَ رِعَاءَ
الشَّيْءِ يَتَطَاوَلُونَ فِي الْبُنْيَانِ " . قَالَ ثُمَّ انْطَلَقَ فَلَبِثْتُ مَلِيًّا ثُمَّ قَالَ لِي " يَا عُمَرُ أَتَدْرِي
مِنَ السَّائِلِ " . قُلْتُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ . قَالَ " فَإِنَّهُ جَبْرِيلُ أَتَاكُمْ يُعَلِّمُكُمْ دِينَكُمْ "

It is narrated on the authority of Yahya b. Ya'mur that he came across Abdullah ibn Umar ibn al-Khattab ﷺ, while he was entering the mosque. ... He (Abdullah ibn Umar) said: My father, Umar ibn al-Khattab ﷺ, told me: One day we were sitting in the company of Messenger of Allah ﷺ when there appeared before us a man dressed in pure white clothes, his hair extraordinarily black. There were no signs of travel on him. None amongst us recognized him. At last he sat with the Messenger ﷺ.

He knelt before him, placed his palms on his thighs, and said: Muhammad, inform me about al-Islam. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: Al-Islam is that you testify that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and you establish prayer, pay Zakat, observe the fast of Ramadan, and perform Hajj if you are able (to bear the expense of) the journey. He (the inquirer) said: You have spoken the truth. He (Umar ibn al-Khattab ؓ) said: It amazed us that he would put the question and then he would himself verify the truth. He (the inquirer) said: Inform me about Iman (faith). He (Rasoolullah ﷺ) replied: That you affirm your faith in Allah, in His angels, in His Books, in His Messengers, in the Day of Judgment, and you affirm your faith in Qadr about good and evil of it. He (the inquirer) said: You have told the truth. **He (the inquirer) again said: Inform me about Al-Ihsan. He (Rasoolullah ﷺ) said: That you worship Allah as if you are seeing Him, for though you don't see Him, He, verily, sees you.** He (the inquirer) again said: Inform me about the hour (of the Resurrection). He (Rasoolullah ﷺ) remarked: The one who is asked knows no more than the one who is inquiring (about it). He (the inquirer) said: Tell me some of its indications. He (Rasoolullah ﷺ) said: That the slave-girl will give birth to her mistress; that you will find barefooted, destitute goat-herds vying with one another in the construction of magnificent buildings. He (the narrator, Umar ibn al-Khattab ؓ) said: Then he (the inquirer) went on his way but I stayed with him (Rasoolullah ﷺ) for a long while. He then, said to me: Umar, do you know who this inquirer was? I replied: Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ know best. He (Rasoolullah ﷺ) said, 'He was Jibreel. He came to you in order to instruct you in matters of religion.' (Sahih Muslim, 8)

The highlighted lines about Al-Ihsan are in my view the best illustration about the concept of excellence in the life of Rasoolullah ﷺ which he practiced and which he left as a benchmark for us to judge ourselves by. As I mentioned, in Islam and in the teachings of Rasoolullah ﷺ, all important things were mentioned in terms of religion but their implication was not restricted to prayer but was extended to every aspect of life. That is why Allah ﷻ declared the entire life of His Messenger ﷺ, not only his worship, to be an example for all of mankind to follow. In the famous Ayat of the Qur'an, Allah ﷻ said:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ
كَثِيرًا

Ahزاب 33:21. Indeed in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad) you have a good example to follow, for him who hopes in (the Meeting with) Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much.

Islam is a complete way of life that extends from the Creed (Aqeeda) to Worship (Ibaadah), to Manners (Akhlaaq), Dealings (Mu'amilaat) and Society (Mu'ashirah). So, though principles and standards may be mentioned in terms of worship, they also extend to all other aspects of life.

Excellence as expressed by Rasoolullah ﷺ in this Hadith simply means to live our entire lives with the certain knowledge of the presence of Allah ﷻ in our lives. That He is watching, will help, will forgive our transgressions, will support our efforts and will be pleased with us. To live

with this constant awareness in every aspect of our lives; in everything we say or do. In every transaction we make, in every conversation we have, in every relationship we enter into. Imagine what sort of society that would create where everyone was aware of and concerned about the fact that he is accountable to the One from Whom nothing can be hidden and that one day he will be called to account and will be rewarded or punished based on how he lived his life? It would be a society where people would compete with each other, not for material resources but to be good to each other, to fulfill each other's rights and more. Rasoolullahﷺ created such a society in his own lifetime.

It was the life of Rasoolullahﷺ which distinguishes him from other teachers where it was a living example of what he preached. In his life there was no gap between talk and walk. He did what he told others to do and was a living, walking, talking Standard Bearer of Islam. In his life, Islam was not a theory or an ideology or a philosophy but an actual living practical methodology of action. He followed that in every aspect of his life; private, religious, temporal and collective. He lived with a sense of who he was and what he represented and his Sahaba followed suit.

Just to quote one example from the life of his student Abu Bakrؓ:

When Khalifatur Rasoolillah Abu Bakr Siddeeq ؓ passed away he had two pieces of cloth and one mule. He gave instructions that he was to be shrouded in one of the pieces of cloth and that the other cloth and mule were to be

handed over to Sayyidina Omar Ibn Al-Khattabﷺ who was to be the Khalifa after him. When this was done Sayyidina Omarﷺ wept and said, 'Abu Bakr has set a very high standard and made it very difficult for the Khulafa who come after him.'

Another illustration: Every morning before Fajr, Abu Bakr Siddeeqﷺ used to go to the outskirts of Madina to a small camp. He would enter the tent and spend some time there and then would return. After he passed away Omarﷺ decided to find out who lived there. He went to the camp and found an old woman who was almost blind with age. He asked her about herself and she replied, 'I am an old woman who has nobody in the world and I live alone here with my sheep. Every morning there is a man from Madina who comes here, sweeps my tent, cooks my food, milks my sheep and takes care of them and leaves. Without him and his care I would have been unable to survive.' Omarﷺ asked, 'Do you know who that is?' She said that she had no idea who the man was. He had never told her.

Omarﷺ told her, 'That was Khalifatur Rasoolillah Abu Bakr Siddeeqﷺ.'

Imagine living in a society where the ruler serves the weak and destitute himself. A society where the rulers are not afraid of the people but afraid of answering to Allahﷻ about those under their rule.

About Ameerul Mu'mineen Omar ibn Al-Khattabؓ it is reported that one day when he was the Khalifa he came to a place with some Sahaba and said, 'All praise to Allahؓ who is Glorious and He gives whoever he wants whatever he wants. There was a time when I used to be a shepherd for my father for his camels. I would come here with those camels. My father would exhaust me with work and if I did not work, he would beat me. And I used to wear some very harsh and rough clothes. But look at me today, where Allahؓ has raised me up so that there is nobody between me and Allahؓ.'

Abdur Rahman ibn Awfؓ narrated that one day Omarؓ called the people to the masjid and when they assembled, he stood on the Minbar and said, 'I used to be a shepherd for some of my aunts and when I returned home in the evening, they would give me a handful of dates or raisins and I would have a miserable day.' He then descended from the Minbar. Abdur Rahman ibn Awfؓ said to him, 'What was the point of this Khutba? All you did was to belittle yourself in front of everyone. So what is the benefit of that?' Omarؓ said, 'Woe to you Ibn Awf, my Nafs was telling me, 'You are Ameerul Mu'mineen. So who is better than you?' I wanted to teach my Nafs who it really is.'

Omar ibn Al Khattabؓ could not be fooled by anyone including himself.

Abdullah bin Mas'oodؓ described the Sahaba and said, 'By Allahؓ they were the best of this Ummah. And they had

the most pious hearts (most taqwa). And they had the deepest knowledge. And they were the least superficial (least formality).’ He did not say ‘most knowledge’ but ‘deepest knowledge’. This is because they learnt directly from Rasoolullah ﷺ. So even though individual Sahaba did not know as many Ahadith as Imam Bukhari or Muslim, they lived those Ahadith and were witness to the circumstances of the particular Hadith. They were the only generation who actually heard Rasoolullah ﷺ saying what he said and knew why he said that. They were there when the Qur’an was revealed and saw the revelation being received. They saw Jibreel (عليه السلام) and heard his voice when he came in the form of a man. The Sahaba were clean and their lives were simple and pure. They were a nation which had not been affected by the philosophy of the Greeks or the civilizations of the Persians and Romans and so when Islam came, they accepted it and practiced it in its pure and pristine form and did not add anything to it.

Even before Islam, in the period of Jahiliyya they were simple people of the desert. Their language was free from affectation and flowery speech. Their poetry was simple and descriptive, not allegorical and symbolic. They had no mythology like the Hindus or Greeks with lots of convoluted philosophy, symbolism and argument. Even when they worshipped idols, they simply bowed to the idol and sacrificed to it and that was it. There were no complicated stories and philosophical justifications. There was no mythology associated with them.

When they accepted Islam they brought this directness and simplicity to the Deen. They did not engage in philosophy and argument. They took the Qur'an and Sunnah at face value and practiced it in sincerity and with dedication in their lives. They didn't seek hidden meanings behind Ayaat. They heard and they obeyed. Allah ﷻ said about them:

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْ رُّسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ

Baqara 2:285. *The Messenger (Muhammad) believes in what has been sent down to him from his Rabb, and (so do) the believers. Each one believes in Allah, His Angels, His Books, and His Messengers. They say, "We make no distinction between one another of His Messengers" - and they say, "We hear, and we obey. (We seek) Your Forgiveness, our Rabb, and to You is the return (of all)."*

And Allah ﷻ said about those who seek hidden meanings and create convoluted philosophies:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخْرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

A'al Imraan 3:7. It is He Who has sent down to you (Muhammad) the Book (this Qur'an). In it are Ayaat that are entirely clear, they are the foundations of the Book [and those are the Ayaat of Al-Ahkam (commandments), Al-Fara'id (obligatory duties) and Al-Hudud (criminal law)]; and others not entirely clear. So as for those in whose hearts there is a deviation (from the truth) they follow that which is not entirely clear thereof, seeking Al-Fitnah (polytheism, conjecture, tests), and seeking for hidden meanings, but none knows the hidden meanings except Allah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in it; the whole of it (both clear and unclear Ayaat) are from our Rabb." And none receive admonition except men of understanding. (Tafsir At-Tabari).

The Sahaba learnt the Qur'an directly from the one who it was revealed to – Muhammadﷺ. They were the only generation who were witness to the circumstances of each revelation, each Ayah. They understood not only the literal meanings of the words, but the reason for those words to be revealed. That is the reason the understanding of the Sahaba has always been considered the Gold Standard by the scholars of Islam in all matters dealing with the Book of Allahﷻ and the Sunnah of His Messengerﷺ. Even in matters of linguistics, it is the Sahaba's understanding of certain words that is taken as the final argument in favor of what that word means with respect to the Qur'an and Sunnah.

That is why they are considered the best generation as mentioned by Rasoolullahﷺ in his famous Hadith where he

said, 'The best generation is my generation and then those that come after them and those that come after them.' The scholars of Hadith state that this refers to them chronologically as well as ideologically – meaning that the best Muslims are those who are closest to Rasoolullah ﷺ and his Sahaba in terms of their belief and actions.

Bida'at in Islam did not start in Makkah and Madina. All the philosophy and complex theories that are current today and on which many books have been written, came to be long after the period of the Sahaba when Islam spread and came into contact with Coptic Christianity and Hinduism. That is when philosophy entered Islam. The Sahaba were action oriented, connected to Allah ﷻ and concerned about meeting Him. They had neither the time nor the inclination to indulge in conjecture and guesswork that has no value and can only lead to confusion and weakening of faith.

With the Sahaba simplicity and clarity were signs of learning. Not complexity, convoluted argument and philosophy. They were not diplomatic. They were direct. They feared the anger of Allah ﷻ more than the opinion of people. They feared becoming unpopular with Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ more than becoming unpopular with people. So they said what needed to be said, no matter what anyone thought. It is essential in Islam to develop the character of the Sahaba and not simply to listen to their stories, because they are the standard by which we will be judged.

This is what the Sahaba understood by excellence; Al-Ihsan; and they practiced it in their lives. There are too many stories from the lives of the Sahaba which I don't need to repeat here. It would be most interesting and instructive for anyone in today's time to read them and try to visualize what it must have been like to live during the lifetime of Rasoolullah ﷺ and his generation.

I believe it is absolutely essential for anyone interested in the wellbeing of his fellowmen to read about the life and times of Muhammad ﷺ and to do his best to recreate those times in today's world. We would then have a world characterized by justice, compassion, truthfulness and concern for one another. These are the major deficiencies in modern society as a result of which we have a world characterized by cruelty, indifference and inequity. It is our choice what we want to live with.

The Migration – Al Hijra

I believe it is essential to spend a little time to remember the migration of Muhammad ﷺ from Makkah to Madina – the Hijra.

The migration from Makkah to Madina is such a critical incident in the history of Islam that when it came to deciding on a date from which to begin the Islamic calendar, the Sahaba, during the time of Sayyidina Omar ibn Al Khattab ؓ did not choose the birth or death date of Rasoolullah ﷺ but on the date of his migration from the land of polytheism to the land which was to become the home of

Islamic Monotheism. It was to symbolize that life itself begins from the time that a person chooses to accept the Will of Allah ﷻ over his own desires and submits to the orders of Allah ﷻ knowing that in that alone lies his salvation and success. The Hijra is also the moment when the Ummah of Rasoolullah ﷺ came into being. That is when the Muslims became one nation – not on the basis of nationality or race or color but on the basis of faith. That was when centuries old bonds of tribal and national identity were wiped out and a new bond of faith was established. That was the moment when the reason for brotherhood was established. That the worship of Allah ﷻ alone and the following of His Messenger ﷺ were the only criteria for belonging. How tragic that today not only has the Muslim Ummah stopped using the Hijri calendar but has once again embraced all the old bases of bonding which Rasoolullah ﷺ had wiped out. The result is clear.

Ayesha (RA) narrates: One day at noon we saw a man approaching our house and his face was covered. When he came close my father recognized him. He said, “Muhammad ﷺ will not come at this time unless it is important.” He entered the house and said to my father, “Please ask everyone to leave.” Abu Bakr ؓ said, “Ya Rasoolullah ﷺ there is nobody here except your family.”

It is essential to reflect on every aspect of the Seerah. What manner of friendship was it that your friend could enter your house and say something like, ‘Please ask everyone to leave,’ and receive a response, ‘Ya Rasoolullah ﷺ this is

nobody here except your family.’ Abu Bakr As-Siddeeqؓ was the closest friend and companion of Rasoolullahﷺ who loved and was loved by him more than anyone else. The roots of this love and friendship were very deep and are a lesson for us.

Rasoolullahﷺ then said, “I have been given permission to leave Makkah and make Hijra.” Abu Bakrؓ asked, “Can I be your companion?” Rasoolullahﷺ said, “Yes”. Abu Bakrؓ started to weep with happiness. Ayesha (RA) said, ‘This was the first time that I saw someone weep with joy.’ It was a dangerous journey but Abu Bakrؓ was so happy that he was to be the companion of Rasoolullahﷺ . Rasoolullahﷺ asked Abu Bakrؓ to get two camels ready. Abu Bakrؓ said to him, “I already have them ready Ya Rasoolullahﷺ . I had a feeling that Your Rabb would permit you to leave Makkah and so I prepared the camels.” Rasoolullahﷺ said, “I will pay for them.”

Abu Bakr said, “Whatever it pleases you to do is acceptable to me.” This is the basic principle of hospitality – to do what is pleasing to the guest and not to inflict your will on the guest.

Rasoolullahﷺ directed Ali bin Abi Talibؓ to sleep on his bed and to return the Amanaat (some things that some people had given him for safekeeping) to their owners. Aliؓ did not hesitate to do so. It was a hallmark of the companions of Rasoolullahﷺ, the Sahaba, that none of them ever hesitated to put the comfort and safety of

Rasoolullahﷺ before and ahead of his own and that of his family. The Messengerﷺ was to them, more beloved and valuable than anything and anyone, including their own lives.

So the two companions, Muhammadﷺ and Abu Bakrؓ, left Makkah by a circuitous route to avoid capture. Abu Bakrؓ walked sometimes in front of Rasoolullahﷺ and sometimes behind him. When he was asked why, he said, when I sense danger ahead I walk in front and when I sense danger from behind I walk behind. Rasoolullahﷺ said, 'Would you rather have harm happen to you or me?' He said, "To me Ya Rasoolullahﷺ ." Then they reached Al Ghar At-Thawr. Abu Bakrؓ went in to check the cave to ensure that it was safe for Rasoolullahﷺ . They settled in for the night but they were far from safe.

The Quraysh of Makkah got wind of his escape and came in hot pursuit to capture him alive or to kill him. The servant of Abu Bakrؓ drove a flock of sheep over their footprints so that there was no clear track in the desert sand. But the Arabs who hunted gazelle and hare didn't need much sign. So they eventually reached the cave and stood at its entrance where Abu Bakrؓ could see their feet. He said, "O Rasoolullahﷺ, if they only look down, they will see us," Rasoolullahﷺ said, "O Abu Bakr, what do you say about two the third of whom is Allahﷻ ?" Rasoolullahﷺ was completely at peace and not afraid at all. Instead he said to Abu Bakr which Allahﷻ later revealed as follows:

إِلَّا تَنْصُرُوهُ فَقَدْ نَصَرَهُ اللَّهُ إِذْ أَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثَانِيَ اثْنَيْنِ إِذْ هُمَا فِي الْغَارِ إِذْ يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَنَا فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَيَّدَهُ بِجُنُودٍ لَمْ تَرَوْهَا وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا السُّفْلَى وَكَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

Taubah 9:40. If you help him (Muhammad SAW) not (it does not matter), for Allâh did indeed help him when the disbelievers drove him out, the second of two, when they (Muhammad SAW and Abu Bakr) were in the cave, and he (SAW) said to his companion (Abu Bakr): "Be not sad (or afraid), surely Allâh is with us." Then Allâh sent down His Sakînah (calmness, tranquility, peace) upon him, and strengthened him with forces (angels) which you saw not, and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowermost, while it was the Word of Allâh that became the uppermost, and Allâh is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

There was a special bond between Abu Bakr ﷺ and Rasoolullah ﷺ that was the envy of everyone else. A bond strengthened through shared hardship and danger which like the fire that tempers steel, strengthens friendship. Omar Ibn Al Khattab ﷺ, when he was Khalifa one day heard that people were discussing who was better, Abu Bakr or Omar. He rushed towards them and said to them, "One day in the life of Abu Bakr is better than the entire family of Omar." This is one of the many signs which show the recognition of the superiority of Abu Bakr ﷺ among the Sahaba.

He was a natural leader, a scholar, an advisor to the Messenger ﷺ and a man who they deferred to and elected as

their Ameer when Rasoolullahﷺ passed away. He was called Khalifatur-Rasoolullahﷺ. A title restricted to him and not shared by anyone else. Abu Bakrﷺ was their Shaikh because Rasoolullahﷺ loved him the most.

They stayed in the cave for 3 days. Abdullah bin Abi Bakrﷺ used to spend the day in Makkah gathering intelligence and then would spend the night in the cave with Abu Bakrﷺ and Rasoolullahﷺ. When he went in the evening he would have A'amer bin Fuhairaﷺ the servant of Abu Bakrﷺ follow him with a flock of sheep to provide milk and to wipe out his tracks.

Abdullah ibn Uraiqaat was the guide to take them to Madina to take them by a different route. He was not a Muslim but he agreed to guide Rasoolullahﷺ.

The Quraysh had set a bounty of 100 camels each on the heads of Rasoolullahﷺ and Abu Bakrﷺ dead or alive. This was huge wealth in a tribal society where camels were a source of income and status. Suraaqa bin Ma'alik, one of the enemies of Rasoolullahﷺ, was sitting with his people when someone came and said that he saw two men and that he suspected that they were Muhammadﷺ and Abu Bakrﷺ. Suraaqa deliberately scoffed at the man and convinced him that he was mistaken because he wanted the bounty for himself. When the man left, Suraqa quietly left his companions and got his weapons and mount ready. He held his lance low to avoid being spotted by anyone and quietly left in pursuit in the direction mentioned by the man.

Rasoolullahﷺ was walking ahead reciting the Qur'an but Abu Bakrؓ looked back and saw Suraaqa. He told Rasoolullahﷺ and he made dua. Suraaqa's horse sank in the sand and he fell off. Suraaqa was very surprised. For someone who grew up on the back of a horse to simply fall off was not natural. He mounted again and rode in hot pursuit and once again Rasoolullahﷺ made dua and Suraaqa's horse sank in the sand and he fell off. Once again Suraaqa mounted and set off but this time the sand exploded in his face and he fell off his horse again. Suraaqa realized that this was something beyond the natural and begged for peace. Rasoolullahﷺ granted him peace. Suraaqa asked Rasoolullahﷺ to give it in writing. Rasoolullahﷺ asked Abdullah bin Uraiqat to write it down and Suraaqa kept it safely. Many years later when Rasoolullahﷺ laid siege to At-Ta'aif Suraaqa was arrested and pulled out this document which saved his life. Rasoolullahﷺ told Suraaqa to weaken the resolve of anyone who wanted to pursue him and Suraaqa was true to his word. Suraaqa returned to Quraysh and told them that they are not going to find Rasoolullahﷺ and all effective pursuit stopped thereafter.

The companions, Muhammadﷺ, Abu Bakrؓ and their guide continued along their way. I want you to picture the scene. Three men in the desert, walking and riding in the hottest part of the summer, pursued by their enemies who are out to kill them. Today we talk about the Hijra in one sentence – he migrated from Makkah to Madina – with no

actual appreciation and understanding of what that journey actually entailed. The hardship, the hunger and thirst, the danger and insecurity and the calmness and courage of the Messengerﷺ in the middle of all that. Personal courage is a preeminent requirement of leadership and there was nobody braver than Muhammadﷺ. All through his life he led from the front and faced danger.

As they traveled they came upon a small camp of a shepherd as is common to this day in Arabia, where the shepherd lived with his small family and his flock of sheep. He would take them out to graze and his wife would mind the camp in his absence.

In this case it was Ummu Ma'abad who was in the camp when Rasoolullahﷺ and his companions reached there. Rasoolullahﷺ asked her, 'Can you please give us something to eat?' She replied, 'If I had anything to eat, you wouldn't need to ask me.' Hospitality to the guest was a cardinal principal in desert tribal society. Rasoolullahﷺ noticed that there was a sickly looking sheep in one corner of Ummu Ma'abad's tent. He asked her, 'Will you permit me to milk that sheep?' She replied, 'If that sheep was any good, it would be out grazing with the others. It has no milk. It is barren and dry.' But Rasoolullahﷺ insisted and so she agreed to allow him to milk the sheep. Rasoolullahﷺ asked her for the biggest container in the camp. Ummu Ma'abad was surprised but brought her biggest container. Rasoolullahﷺ stroked the back of the goat with his right

hand and started milking it and the milk flowed until the container was filled to the brim.

Rasoolullahﷺ gave the container to Ummu Ma'abad and asked her to drink to her fill. When she finished, he gave the container to Abu Bakr and then to the guide before he drank from it himself. When all had finished the container still had milk in it. Such was the Baraka of the touch of the Messengerﷺ of Allahﷻ. When her husband returned that night, Ummu Ma'abad described Rasoolullahﷺ in words that have echoed down through the centuries telling the world in some of the most beautiful words, what Ummu Ma'abad saw that fateful afternoon.

She said, "I saw him to be a man of evident splendor. Fine in figure, his face handsome, slim in form, his head not too small, elegant and good looking, his eyes black, eyelashes long, his voice deep, very intelligent, his brows high and arched, his hair in plaits, his neck long and beard thick. He gave an impression of dignity when silent and of high intelligence when he spoke. His words were impressive and he was decisive, not trivial not trite, his ideas like pearls moving on their string. He seemed the most splendid and fine looking man from a distance and the very best of all from close by. Medium in height, the eye not finding him too tall nor too short. A tree branch as it were between two others but he was the finest looking of the three. The best proportioned. He was the center of his companions' attention. When he spoke they listened well and if he ordered they hurried to obey. A man well helped well served, never sullen, never refuted."

Her husband said, "This man must be Muhammad ﷺ who Quraysh are pursuing. If I meet him I will pledge allegiance to him and become Muslim." Ummu Ma'abad had already accepted Islam at the hands of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah ﷻ.

Rasoolullah ﷺ prayed for the love of Madina to enter the hearts of the Muslims: *Allahumma hab-bab ilaynal Madina ka hubbina Makkah au ashadd.* Rasoolullah ﷺ made dua for barakah in Madina: {O Allah ﷻ double the blessing of Madina compared to what you have given to Makkah.} Madina is protected from Ad-Dajjal. There's a special reward for being patient in the hardship of Madina.

Madina was swampy and had fevers. It would get very cold in winter. The Sahaba from Makkah would get ill and found it very hard to live there. So Rasoolullah ﷺ said, 'If anyone is patient in the hardships of Madina, I will be his intercessor on the Day of Judgment.' Rasoolullah ﷺ said, 'Whoever can die in Madina then let it be so because I will intercede for you on the Day of Judgment.'

Allah ﷻ accepts the duas of those who are sincere. Omar Ibn Al Khattab ؓ used to pray for Shahada in Madina. He was stabbed by a Christian while he was leading Salat-ul-Fajr in Masjid an Nabawi and died as a Shaheed. Rasoolullah ﷺ said, 'Whoever plots against the people of Madina Allah ﷻ will dissolve him as salt dissolves in water.' Madina is also sacred and so cutting trees, killing animals, fighting and carrying arms is prohibited.

I believe it is essential for us to look at some of the lessons in this journey which is considered so important in Islam that it is the beginning of the Islamic calendar. As I mentioned earlier, it is the journey of the Messenger ﷺ from the land of polytheism and corruption to the land which was ready to give him succor and support for his Message and not the birth or death date of the Messenger ﷺ himself, which was chosen as the beginning of the Islamic calendar. This is indicative that Islam is a religion of action and that to move away from a place where obeying Allah ﷻ was not possible or was difficult to a place where it was possible to live according to the orders of Allah ﷻ is considered the most significant of all actions.

The concept of Hijra therefore has both a figurative and a literal meaning. Figuratively to make Hijra is to leave what Allah ﷻ dislikes and do what He likes. Hijra is to bring about positive changes in your life that reflect obedience to Allah ﷻ and to His Messenger ﷺ. Figuratively speaking Hijra is to emigrate from the state of sin to the state of obedience to Allah ﷻ. This type of Hijra is mandatory on all Muslims; to consciously move from all kinds of disobedience to the obedience of Allah ﷻ. Literally speaking Hijra is to move from a place of evil to a place which is better. Shaytaan stops this by pointing out that no place is perfect but the reality is that in some places there are intrinsic problems which make the proper practice of Islam almost impossible. It is for each of us to decide what he should do.

Hijra is a reality of the history of Da'awa. Many Anbiya were driven out of their lands. Some were killed. Many other people who were not Anbiya but who stood for the truth were killed and this opposition to the truth continues. Waraqa bin Nawfal predicted this opposition for Rasoolullahﷺ when he heard the story of the Revelation. That is why the reward for Hijra is so great.

The Qur'an is called Al-Furqan because it separates good from evil. The Battle of Badr was also called Al-Furqan for the same reason. Islam came to proclaim good and forbid evil so that all people can live in peace and harmony in an ethical and moral society. Shaytaan and his agents oppose this and will continue to do so. This is the primordial struggle. Islam will always call for its followers to make the choice between good and evil so let us be prepared.

This was Muhammadﷺ who came with a message of love and mercy and forgiveness from the One and Only Creator of the Universe who sent him with this message for all mankind.

As we neared the city, I could see the minarets of the Haram of Rasoolullahﷺ, Al Masjid An Nabawi Ash Shareef. We were traveling on the road from Makkah; the same route that Rasoolullahﷺ took when he made the Hijra to Madina. HM Fahad bin Abdul Aziz A'al As-Saud, the King of Saudi Arabia insisted that the highway from Makkah to Madina must follow the exact route of the Hijra and so it was done at a huge cost because it was not the easiest route

and traversed some very deep ravines. But thanks to that, Muslims today can actually follow the route that Rasoolullahﷺ took 14 centuries earlier.

Of course today we travel in air-conditioned comfort whereas Rasoolullahﷺ and his two companions walked that route and climbed up and down the steep sides of the ravines. It is instructive to stop your car on one of these bridges and look over the side to see how deep the ravine is. Life for him was not easy, to say the least but he was a very tough man – a warrior and a man totally committed to his goal.

As I mentioned, it is easy for those who read his Seerah (biography) to read: He migrated from Makkah to Madina. One short sentence which doesn't even begin to describe what this term – migrated – meant, physically, emotionally and spiritually. It meant leaving behind his motherland, the hometown of his people; the land of his ancestors. In a tribal society there was no greater punishment than to be banished from your land of birth. The tribe never took that step even for the worst criminal, of putting him beyond the security of the tribe. Yet they did it for Muhammadﷺ who had committed no crime.

Loyalty to the tribe came before anything and everything else – even before justice and fair play. In the tribal society of the day, you supported your tribesman whether he was right or wrong. Many years later Rasoolullahﷺ used this tradition of tribal loyalty to teach a very important lesson.

He said: 'Support your brother whether he is right or wrong.' His companions asked him, 'We can understand if you say that we should support him if he is right but how can we support him if he is wrong?' He replied, 'Support him by stopping his wrongdoing. Otherwise Allahﷻ will punish him. If you stop his wrongdoing, you are in fact supporting him.' But his own tribe withdrew their support not because he did wrong but because he was trying to help them. Sadly, today people have gone back to the old ways of ignorance where racial, national and tribal loyalty once again comes before justice and truth. In such an atmosphere of the darkness of injustice and oppression, the teachings of Muhammadﷺ stand out as a beacon of guidance for all people.

Strange are the ways of the world and they never change. The rule – kill the Messenger who tries to bring you a message that will save you – remains valid to this day.

So 'migrating' was not really a migration by choice but really banishment from the place he loved the most. The place where he had an identity and where he knew every nook and cranny; where every building, hilltop and valley had a memory. A place where he was born and lived for 53 years of his life. A place where he was married to his beloved Khadija (RA) who bore him children and who supported him when he had no other support among the people. A place where he experienced great grief, the death of Sayyidatina Khadijat-ul-Kubra (RA) and his other great supporter, his uncle Abu Talib. Makkah was the place

where his children were born and raised, where he was wealthy and poor, happy and sad. A place where he was loved, revered and then reviled – all in the course of conveying the message which intends only good for all mankind. And so he left Makkah. His work was the hardest there is and attracts the worst opposition. That is why Rasoolullah ﷺ said: ‘All Anbiya are opposed and tortured and I was tortured the most.’

Allah ﷻ himself mentioned this tendency of people to mindlessly fight that which is most beneficial to them – Hidayah (guidance) – when He said after narrating the incident of the man who was killed when he invited his people to follow the Messengers.

يَا حَسْرَةً عَلَى الْعِبَادِ مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِّن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ

Ya-Seen 36:30. Alas for mankind! There never came a Messenger to them but they mocked him.

Migration also meant leaving behind his family in a state where their safety was not assured. It meant leaving behind whatever remained of his property, without a hope of ever getting it back. It meant walking in the hottest part of the year, through the desert, 450 kilometers – while being pursued by every bounty hunter because as I mentioned earlier, his tribe had put a price of 100 camels on his head. This bounty was a huge amount of wealth and as was its intention, turned the hands of many against him. Migration from Makkah to Madina was to look back on a life of 13

years of Prophethood, struggling to preach his message, with nothing to show for it.

All that we are able to see is failure after failure with very limited success. A heartbreaking scenario for anyone but a Nabi. The hearts of the Anbiya are strengthened by their connection with their Rabb. A life that teaches us one of the lessons of leadership which we shall see later – resilience.

The ability to face the brutal facts, yet have absolute faith in eventual success, when there is no evidence to show that you can or will succeed.

I tried to imagine the view that he must have seen as he neared Madina. Obviously none of the tall and imposing buildings we see today. He would have seen only sand and date palms; dark green fronds waving in the breeze, to welcome him. In the distance, the village comprised of mud walled huts that was to become the center of transmission of his message. A small village that today is completely covered by the beautiful structure of Al Masjid-an-Nabawi Ash Shareef. It is the wisdom of Allahﷻ that every inch of land that Rasoolullahﷺ lived and walked on in Madina, has become a place of Sajda. A place which attained this significance because its inhabitants extended their hand of support to the Messengerﷺ of Allahﷻ.

One small village, but from it arose a light that illuminated the whole world that existed at the time and then reached out across the centuries and continues to illuminate the lives and worlds of those who came later, century after

century. So what was it that the lighter of the lamp did to create this brilliance? What are the lessons of leadership that we can learn from his blessed life? The life of Rasoolullah ﷺ is the one that Allah ﷻ quoted as the example for all mankind and so the lessons to be learnt from it are legion. Nobody can claim to do full justice to that and neither do I.

In this book I have tried to look at some aspects of his blessed life to see what lessons of leadership could be learnt and share them with you. Principled leadership with a sense of accountability, high integrity and a commitment to social justice is the single biggest and most visible deficiency leading to our present day crisis. We seriously lack principled leadership globally.

The world that we live in today and even more the one in the future as we can envisage it, is a world of high complexity. Where information is ever easier to access; power is concentrated in the hands of an elite; the balance of factors that dictate the very survival of our planet is in great danger of being upset – perhaps irretrievably. The society we live in is one that is stratified on lines of economic, racial, national, religious and power divisions. And this divide is growing.

Materially, in terms of gadgets, tools, resources and money, we have more than we have probably ever had before. What we don't have are criteria for decision making that are based on ethical and moral values, criteria that are

inclusive and take into account those who have little and that little is in danger of being eliminated. Criteria that place greater importance on integrity than on accumulating material wealth. Criteria that focus on the long term impact of short term strategies. Criteria where we hold ourselves accountable for our actions, even if nobody else does. Criteria where we stand by our word, live by our creed and act according to our values; concerned about leaving a legacy of honor for those who will come after us.

When we read the Seerah (biography) of Rasoolullahﷺ we realize that the world that he lived in was uncannily similar to the one we live in today in terms of its trends, focus of attention and problems. This gives us great hope when we look at learning leadership lessons from his life because if the problems were very like our own and they were solved using his methods, then we have reason to believe that those methods will transcend the centuries and come to our aid today when we are reeling under the negative impact of the forces we face. A tried and tested method which works is preferable to a theory that is new and at best experimental. Especially when that method was Divinely inspired and the one implementing it was Divinely guided. Such a method can never fail.

Al-Hijaz and its society

Let me briefly describe for you the key elements of pre-Islamic Arab society in the region we know of as Al-Hijaz

the chief city of which was Makkah, the city which derived its significance from the House of Allah ﷻ - the Ka'aba. Though at the time of the birth of Muhammad ﷺ the town Arabs, prominent among them the major tribes of Quraysh of Makkah and Banu Thaqeef of Ta'aif, were very wealthy and powerful thanks to flourishing trade with Ash-Shaam (Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon) in the North and Yemen in the South. This was a comparatively recent phenomenon. The tribes of the Arabian Peninsula (*Jazeeraatul Arab*) still remembered their poverty just one generation earlier and so were very jealous of their prosperity.

Religion was just another means to be used to promote business and to acquire power and wealth and not as a means of regulating human behavior to ensure justice for all. Gods brought pilgrims to the Ka'aba and so the more the better. Over the years this number grew to over 350 idols which were placed inside and around the original house of Allah ﷻ built by the Prophet Ibrahim ﷺ for the worship of Allah ﷻ alone. Makkah was a trade and pilgrim center and the pilgrimage and its associated activities were the source of prosperity for local merchant chiefs who became very wealthy and powerful.

Material wealth was the primary and only consideration. Its trappings were status symbols. How people dressed, what perfume they wore, how many slaves and servants they had, what kind of transportation they used, were all matters that were discussed and served to fuel the imagination and ambition of those who aspired to be like

them. The phrase, 'If you got it, flaunt it,' may not have been known then but lifestyles certainly reflected this philosophy. Arrogance was the right of the powerful and their ability to oppress unopposed was a status symbol. Anyone who challenged them tasted their wrath. Self-indulgence was the right of those who had wealth and no law regulated what they could or couldn't do. Just a generation earlier their economic situation had been very different. So those who had grown wealthy still had personal memories of less happy days and were very touchy about their wealth. Money was the only consideration and once you had it, then the focus was to enjoy it in any way you could think of, with only your ability to get away with whatever you were doing, being the boundary of what you could do. Those who were poor or weak were mercilessly oppressed by the wealthy. Slaves and women were commodities to be used and discarded and this was done without thought or comment.

Slavery was rampant. Women were property to be bought, sold and inherited and disposed of at will. The society that Muhammadﷺ faced was a tribalistic, capitalistic society, the only criterion of success in which was the accumulation of wealth and power. Moral values were prominent by their absence. Prostitution was rampant and accepted. Women had no rights and were treated as chattels, the most horrific sign of which was widespread female infanticide. Those who escaped an early and horrible end of being buried alive, lived to grow up to become the playthings of men at best or property to be used at will, at worst. Tribe and race,

color and family, were all means of some being given preference over others. Some women had social status and held property but these were the exception which proved the rule. For the rest, life was nasty, brutal and short.

Money was power and those who had little, who were weak in terms of tribal alliances or slaves were the object of raw oppression and lived at the mercy of the ruling elite. The Quraysh of Makkah, the tribe to which Muhammad ﷺ belonged, were traders with the additional and very important distinction of being the custodians of the Ka'aba. In today's terms they were merchant priests who regulated worship at the Ka'aba and were revered as a result of their association with the chief house of worship in Arabia. The family of Muhammad ﷺ the Banu Hashim had the highest status among the Quraysh and had the special honor of taking care of the pilgrims by providing them with food and water from the holy well of Zamzam of which they had custody. This special position also gave Quraysh protection in a society which existed on the time honored principle of raiding each other.

The caravans of Quraysh however went South to Yemen in the winter and North to Ash-Shaam in the summer, unmolested by tribes whose occupation was to raid caravans, because the Quraysh were the custodians and High Priests of the Ka'aba. Makkan aristocracy was an aristocracy of rich merchants and not the usual hereditary aristocracy of land owners and royalty that we see elsewhere. It was a society where upward mobility was

comparatively easy. If you made enough money you could rise in society and enjoy its benefits. So acquisition of material wealth was the single primary focus of all people. Religion was a means of getting rich.

As mentioned earlier, if we look at the social and economic factors described you can easily see how closely that society mirrored our modern capitalistic society. We may not have slaves in the same sense that the Arabs of Al-Hijaz had but our slavery is even more powerful because it is ideological in nature, has global reach, is enforced by an education system which promotes its values, an economic system which locks people into it and an executive which ensures that it is not threatened by misplaced ideals of freedom and equality.

Internationally, the two super powers of the day were the Byzantine (Roman) Empire and the Persian Empire which were engaged in ongoing wars in which sometimes one side had the upper hand and sometimes the other. Neither of them cared to rule Arabia which was mostly dry, uncultivable and inhospitable desert populated by nomadic tribes with occasional oasis towns and the two trade centers of Makkah and Ta'aif. Not the best environment to levy taxes or get soldiers and supplies from or to conduct campaigns to subdue the tribes if need be. The Romans and Persians looked down on and ignored the Arabs of this area who were consequently left alone and were not subjugated by either empire.

The Arabs lived by their own tribal laws, were ruled by their own clan chiefs and jealously guarded their independence. An important point to note is that they were a people who had never been subjugated and so did not have the common characteristics of people who understand being enslaved. In all their apparent unruliness and internal strife, their fierce independence was a factor that stood out clearly. These were people who were a law unto themselves and did not care for or accept the rules of others.

They had never bowed to anyone and were very proud of this. Eventually when they bowed their heads to Allahﷻ they did it with the same sense of high self-worth that ensured that they never bowed before anyone else and preserved the essence of Tawheed in every sense of the term. It was only when Islam came to the lands of kings and empires that Muslims started taking to the ways of others and started to imbibe cultural trappings and philosophical arguments which had nothing to do with the pure, clean and simple doctrine that Muhammadﷺ brought which was as clean and pure as the desert air in which it was revealed to him by the Creator of the Universe.

It is very important to keep this characteristic in mind to understand both the nature of Arabian tribal society as well as the nature of opposition to the message of Islam which was seen as something that sought to take away this independence from them and rearrange their hierarchy and power base.

From this brief sketch of the nature of Arabian society at the time of Muhammadﷺ, it must be clear how closely it matches the nature of the dominant global culture today. The focus on money power, objectification of women (although it is sold today in the name of freedom) for pleasure and profit, widespread promiscuity and license, breakdown of moral and social values, race for material wealth, society stratified on economic and race/caste lines and any attempt to bring in justice, moral responsibility and accountability – which is what religion seeks to do – is seen as unnecessary and undesirable and so is opposed vehemently. Once again the poor and the weak have no voice, power or even identity and the rich are focused on getting richer with little or no concern for what happens to the rest of the world as a consequence of their shortsighted pursuit of personal power. The world is groaning under the yoke of oppression with no solution in sight.

It was in this society that Muhammadﷺ was born and grew up and in which he preached his message – a message that sought to create a revolutionary change aimed at ensuring justice for all irrespective of race, caste, gender or economic status. A message of dignity for the individual, respect for human rights and compassion for the weak. Freedom from slavery to men and bowing to the rule of the Creator of men, with rules of life that ensure peace, harmony and safety for all concerned. What else do we need today more than this message?

A message that we desperately need today because it has in it, the solutions that the world is desperately seeking.

It is in this context that I have tried to glean what I believe are critical lessons in leadership and to put them in a modern, application oriented format. I believe that the purpose of learning is to act. And that without acting on it knowledge can't benefit us. That is why I request you to read this book with the intention to implement these lessons in your own life.

The Leadership Lessons from the life of Rasoolullahﷺ are:

- 1. Complete certainty**
- 2. No compromise**
- 3. Putting himself on the line**
- 4. Resilience: Face the facts + Absolute faith in success**
- 5. Goal comes first – before personal preferences**
- 6. Living his message**
- 7. Risk taking**
- 8. Sacrificing short term for long term**
- 9. Magnanimity and forgiveness**
- 10. Transiting from Person-led to Process-driven**
- 11. Succession planning & leadership development**

In the rest of this book, we will look at each of them in some detail with evidence from the Qur'an, Sunnah and Seerah. I ask Allahﷻ for His guidance and help in presenting this as clearly as I can and to forgive my mistakes.

Complete certainty in His Belief and Message

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

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

Rasoolullah ﷺ said to them, "O people, if I told you that there is an army behind this hill would you believe me?"

They said, “You have never lied to us and we will believe you.”

He ﷺ said, “I have come to warn you of a severe punishment (in the Hereafter, if you don’t leave polytheism and worship Allah ﷻ).”

Abu Lahab the closest relative of Muhammad ﷺ the Messenger of Allah ﷻ, his father’s brother, spoke for many of them when he said, “*Tabbal-laka saaral yawm a-li haatha jamaatana?*” (May evil befall you for the rest of this day; is this why you gathered us here?) According to Abu Lahab talking about the Aakhira was a waste of time and he considered being called out of his shop a loss. Such people don’t mind spending time to talk about anything in the Duniya but not about salvation or the Aakhira. To this day, if you say that you are going to speak about how to make a million dollars, people will take time out and even pay money to listen to you. But if you say that you want to tell them how to escape the Fire and enter Paradise, they will accuse you of wasting their time.

Abu Lahab considered talking about the Aakhira a waste of time and he considered being called out of his shop a loss so he cursed his nephew. But his nephew was the Messenger ﷺ of Allah ﷻ and Allah ﷻ doesn’t like those who curse His Messengers. So Allah ﷻ said:

تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي هَبٍ وَتَبَّ

مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ

سَيَصَلَّىٰ نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ

Masad 111:1-3. *Perish the two hands of Abu Lahab and perish he! 2. His wealth and his children (etc.) will not benefit him! 3. He will be burnt in a Fire of blazing flames!*

This Sura is one of the many proofs of the Divine origin of the Qur'an, for those who need proof, because it predicted that Abu Lahab would die without Islam.

All that Abu Lahab had to do to 'prove' the Qur'an wrong was to simply even pretend to accept Islam and thereby the prediction would have been proved wrong. But he didn't and many years later he died without Islam of a horrible disease where his corpse was left rotting because people didn't want to touch it to bury him. Eventually after three days, his sons using long poles, pushed his corpse into a pit and threw stones to fill the pit. So Abu Lahab was stoned by his own sons and will be in the Fire of Jahannam as Allah ﷻ promised.

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

Some because they believe in the message, others because the leader is powerful, still others because of various affiliations with the leader.

If the leader remains firm on his path, then gradually his followership increases and the trickle becomes a flood. Remaining firm and unwavering is the single most important condition for this.

In his entire life of Prophethood of 23 years, there is not a single instance even in the worst of hardship that it could be said that the faith and certainty of Muhammadﷺ in his message and responsibility wavered in the slightest. That in itself is a miracle and a proof of the Divine mission that he had been entrusted with. This faith, combined with the fact that Muhammadﷺ was a man with noble qualities, widely known to be completely truthful and trustworthy, having beautiful manners, a flawless character, great wisdom, excellent judgment and great kindness made him highly credible. Many believed to begin with, not because they believed in the message but because they believed Muhammadﷺ and believed that if he said it, then it must be the truth. The importance of the personal character of the Messenger is clear from this and cannot be overemphasized and can seriously support or compromise his message.

In today's world where Islamic Da'awa organizations use all sorts of methodologies, some good, some bad in the name of inviting to Islam, it is good to remind ourselves of

the Da'awa of the Anbiya and its special characteristics; that they did it for the pleasure of Allah ﷻ alone and didn't seek any reward from the people, directly or indirectly.

Allah ﷻ said about His Anbiya:

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ فَبِهِدَاهُمُ اقْتَدِهْ قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ
لِلْعَالَمِينَ

An'am 6:90. They are those whom Allah had guided. So follow their guidance. Say: 'No reward I ask of you for this (the Qur'an). It is only a reminder for the 'Alamin.'

The Anbiya came to be followed and their way is the only way which is certified by Allah ﷻ and which Allah ﷻ taught them.

The Da'awa of the Anbiya is characterized by the following;

1. Direct & clear, no compromise
2. No convoluted complex philosophies
3. Conscious of the power of Allah ﷻ
4. Reliance only on Allah ﷻ
5. Seeking no reward from the people
6. Working only for Allah ﷻ's pleasure

So what was the message?

1447 years ago a window opened in the heavens and Allah ﷻ spoke to man. Jibreel ﷺ came to Muhammad ﷺ hugged him and commanded, 'Iqra' (read). Muhammad ﷺ replied, 'I can't read.' This happened 3 times. Then Jibreel ﷺ delivered the message that he had been sent with and recited the first Ayaat of Sura Al-Alaq; the very first set of Ayaat of the Qur'an to be revealed.

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ

اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ

الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ

عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

Al-Alaq 96: 1-5. Read! In the Name of your Rabb, Who has created (all that exists) 2. Has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood) 3. Read! And your Rabb is the Most Generous 4. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen 5. Has taught man that which he knew not.

This was the first communication between the Creator of the Universe and His Messenger ﷺ; sent with His other Messenger Jibreel ﷺ. It was a meeting of two different forms of creation from different dimensions. It was the first

time that Muhammad ﷺ had experienced such a meeting and so naturally he was terrified.

Muhammad ﷺ went home to his wife Khadija (RA) in a high state of fear, shivering and said, 'Zammilooni, Zammilooni'. (cover me with something). He was afraid that the one who he saw may have been a Jinn because he hated anything to do with Jinn or sorcerers. He explained to her what had happened to him and his fear that it would destroy him, but she said, 'Allah ﷻ will not forsake you because you support the needy, you help the poor and you are generous towards guests.'

It is interesting that all the qualities she named were to do with treatment of people, with manners and kindness. This is something that we seem to have relegated to the back burner in our lives and that is the reason for our sad situation globally. We were sent to give to the world. The world loves those who give, those who are considerate and generous and hates those who are grasping, scheming and seeking to take from others. Need I go further for us to be able to look in the mirror to see what fits our image today? Rasoolullah ﷺ and his Sahaba set an example which is conspicuous by the fact that those who claim to follow them don't practice their ways. So what is the meaning of 'following'? We need to ask ourselves and correct our lives before it is too late and we are left standing alone before our Rabb with the Sahaba as witness against us.

When we look at great leaders in all times and especially at Rasoolullahﷺ we see that the basic qualities of goodness, kindness, compassion, willingness to forgive transgressions against themselves, concern for others and the willingness to help, truthfulness, trustworthiness, generosity and the willingness to stand up for the weak and helpless; were all in the leader from the very beginning; long before he started to preach his message. It was these qualities that endeared him to people, inspired their respect and love and enhanced his credibility with them. From this it would be safe to say that these qualities are the basis of inspiring leadership.

These are the qualities which make the leader worthy of respect and of being followed. It is logical to say that people are not likely to follow someone they neither like nor respect. Anyone aspiring to lead must seriously examine his own character and assess where he or she stands with respect to these qualities and make every effort to bridge any gap because these qualities will decide his success or failure as a leader.

Muhammadﷺ not only had these qualities at a level of excellence but he was iconic and seen as a role model in them. People gave him the title of As Sadiq-ul-Ameen (The Truthful and the Trustworthy). This was a very big honor for a young man in a tribal society where being trusted was a measure of his eminence. Muhammadﷺ was trusted in full measure which gave him access to the councils of his elders and people looked up to him for advice.

We have become used to living in impersonal urban societies where our personal qualities at best affect our personal circle of friends and relatives. But in tribal societies a man's success or failure was dependent on his reputation for being trustworthy. A man's word was his honor and to be dishonored was a sentence of death. That is why to be called a liar was a killing matter because people dealt with you only if they saw you as being trustworthy. Business transactions often involving large sums of money were sealed between parties by word of mouth, only on each other's promise to honor the deal.

There was no question of anyone renegeing on the deal except the lowest of the low who would break a promise. Lying, cheating and breaking a promise were all serious crimes. Even before Islam the Arabs of Al-Hijaz lived by these noble rules even though as we have mentioned, their lives were immoral and cruel. It may sound strange to say that a man would not lie but wouldn't hesitate to kill another man or to behave immorally but such dichotomy existed among the Native Americans and the people who first opened the American West for example, for the same reasons.

Muhammadﷺ had all the noble qualities of his people without their weaknesses which enhanced his honorable status in their eyes. It is human nature to recognize your own weakness and to respect someone who does not have it. That is why the people of Makkah looked up to and

loved Muhammadﷺ very much and that is what his wife Khadija (RA) referred to in order to comfort him.

Khadija (RA) took him to her cousin, a Christian scholar and monk called Waraqa bin Naufal and he asked Rasoolullahﷺ to explain what had happened. When he heard the story of the encounter – an encounter between two different beings in creation, between two different worlds across boundaries of time and space, he responded and said, “That was Al-Mamoos-al-Akbar – Greatest Angel – who descended on Musa. I wish I was young (so that I could help you) when your people drive you out of your land.”

Muhammadﷺ was astonished and questioned the statement of Al Waraqa bin Naufal and asked, “Will they drive me out of my land?” He was surprised because he was the most beloved of people and from the most noble family and lived in a culture where it was impossible to drive anyone out of their land/tribe especially not someone like him with his lineage and ancestry. Yet here was Waraqa who was predicting that the same people who loved him more than anyone else would not only oppose him but would actually do the unimaginable in tribal Arab society, drive him out of his motherland. Waraqa said, ‘Anyone who presented the people with something similar to this was always driven from his land.’ This was the advantage of knowledge of history and the study of the scholar that he had perspective and could see the results of the action.

This is because the conflict of Da'awa is the conflict between truth and falsehood, between good and evil, between the Anbiya and Shaytaan. It is the original primordial conflict which will remain until the Last Day when Allahﷻ will establish the Judgment and all debts will be paid. But in this life this struggle continues.

To this day we see the truth of these words, for nobody opposes the Muslim if he simply wants to practice his religion quietly. But the moment he brings it into the public space, either in the form of his dress (clothes, beard, turban, hijab) or in the form of Da'awa, opposition is swift and severe. Strange to see if one realizes that all that a person who is presenting Islam is doing, is to speak about an alternate way of being; one which will save the practitioner from the Hellfire and give him entry to Jannah.

The Muslim only wants the best for those he presents Islam to, not just best in this world but the best that is everlasting. If someone gives a hungry person a single meal he is considered a good person. But if someone wants to save him from everlasting suffering, he is opposed, maligned and attacked. All this happened to every prophet before Muhammadﷺ and all this happened to Rasoolullahﷺ at the hands of his own people. And in some measure or the other, this is what anyone who wants to present Islam to the world must be prepared to face. Shaytaan fights tooth and nail those who seek to protect others from Hellfire and does everything in his power to oppose them.

Public space today is filled with people advertising and promoting all sorts of alternate ways of doing things, be they alternative medicine, architecture, diets, education or therapy. All of these are accepted and welcomed and the right of their proponents to propagate their ways, no matter how bizarre, is fiercely defended. But the minute you talk about an alternate way of being called Islam, this defense flips sides and the person propagating it is attacked. This attack is actually the most reliable indicator that the propagating of Islam is a fight against the Shaytaan. These words of Waraqa were an early warning for Rasoolullah ﷺ that his work would not be easy.

Rasoolullah ﷺ like other prophets before him was trained directly by Allah ﷻ and his faith was strengthened through the most powerful way there is; inviting others to his faith. Allah ﷻ ordered:

وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ

Ash-Shua'ra 26:214. And warn your tribe (O Muhammad) of close relatives

The first challenge came when Allah ﷻ ordered Muhammad ﷺ to call his relatives to the faith and warn them of the result of continuing in their current lifestyle of polytheism and social corruption. I have already mentioned the incident when Rasoolullah ﷺ went out and stood on Safa and called out 'Wa Subahaa'.

This is the way of the Anbiya who Allahﷻ ordered to convey the message plainly, without any doubt and confusion. So the Anbiya did not use diplomacy, sweet talk or any other way. Rasoolullahﷺ spoke clearly and directly. The people were surprised. For a materialistic society, material is supremely important. They believe what they can see and hold, buy or sell. But talk to them about death and the Hereafter and their eyes glaze over and they look askance at the speaker as if he were mad. In their eyes to talk of something in Al Ghaib (the Unseen) is to show that you are not intelligent, modern or scientific. Materialistic societies live as if they will never die and as if there is no resurrection and reckoning. And anyone who reminds them of the reality of death and the Hereafter is not welcome and they oppose them. Same rules today, 15 centuries later.

Rasoolullahﷺ's life in Makkah was a series of increasing difficulties and escalating opposition. But resistance builds strength as long as you don't succumb to it. The greater the resistance the more it will build your strength as long as you stand firm against it. As in body building, it is the lifting of weights that builds strength in your muscles. So also in Da'awa, calling people to the truth and being firm and patient against opposition builds Imaan. This was the practice that the Muslims were getting in Makkah. There are many stories of all kinds of persecution that Muhammadﷺ was a victim of. Those who dared to follow him were also subjected to cruel persecution, even torture

and some of them were murdered. All this was done with complete impunity by the rich and powerful chiefs of Quraysh. However all that this served to do was to make them even more firm in their belief in Allahﷻ.

The Quraysh of Makkah of which Muhammadﷺ was himself a member and belonged to the pre-eminent among them – Banu Hashim – were the foremost in persecuting him. They tried every means at their disposal. They threatened him, spread propaganda against him, maligned his good name and character and even attacked him physically. When none of these things served to either intimidate him or stop him from preaching his religion of Islam, they decided to tempt him with kingship and wealth.

Ibn Abbasؓ said, “The leaders of Quraysh sent someone to call Rasoolullahﷺ who came eagerly thinking that they may have changed their stance and softened. Utbah said, ‘We have called you to reconcile with you. We have never seen anyone who has brought so much evil on his people. You have reviled our ancestors, criticized our religion, cursed our gods and done everything to bring about a rift between us. If you are doing this because you need money, we will collect money and give it to you until you are the wealthiest among us. If you want power, we will elect you our king. If you want women, we will choose the 10 most beautiful women and give them to you. If you are obsessed with devils, we will spend all our money until you are cured.’

Rasoolullahﷺ said, 'What you have said does not apply to me. I have not brought this message seeking wealth or honor from you. Neither am I interested in sovereignty over you. Allahﷻ has sent me as a Messenger. He has revealed a message to me and has ordered me to give you good news and to warn you. I have brought you a message from my Rabb and have given you counsel. If you accept my message it will be good for you in this world and the next. If not I will wait for Allahﷻ's decision when He will decide between you and me.'

They said, 'So you are rejecting our offers. You know how narrow our land is and how poor we are and how difficult our lives are. So why don't you tell your Rabb to move these mountains and give us some rivers like there are in Syria and Iraq. And tell him to bring back to life our forefathers (Kusai bin Kilaab) and if they tell us that you are speaking the truth, we will follow you.' Rasoolullahﷺ said, 'This is not why I have been sent. I have only brought from Allahﷻ what I have been sent with and I have conveyed it to you. If you accept it, that is good for you on the earth and the Hereafter. If you reject it then I must wait patiently for Allahﷻ to judge between us.'

Then they said, 'Why don't you ask your God to send an angel to testify that you are speaking the truth? And why don't you ask him to give us some castles and gardens and gold and silver. And also why don't you ask him to give you livelihood without working. We see that you are doing business like us. Tell your Rabb to give you wealth so that

you will be prestigious among us. You are like all of us.’ He refused.

Then they said, ‘Okay ask your Rabb to bring down the punishment that you have been promising us. Tell your Rabb to bring down the sky on our heads if you are truthful. Doesn’t your Rabb know these questions that we are going to ask you? How is it he is not helping you to answer them? We know who is teaching you all these things. It is a man in Yamama called Ar-Rahman. We will not believe in him or in you.’

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

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

of His Creator and worked only to achieve that, whatever be the cost that he had to pay.

Lesson

For any leader this complete certainty is the single most critical requirement on which hinges his very credibility. One can only give what one has. So if the leader wishes to transfer his own passion into the hearts of his followers, his own belief can't be shaky. The leader will be tested in his faith and must stand firm and demonstrate his total commitment until it becomes clear to all concerned. Then he will see the tide turn and people will be won over to his side, as happened in the case of Muhammad ﷺ as well. People listen with their eyes. They don't care what you say until they see what you do. When they see the leader walking his own talk then they realize that he means business and will start to consider his message seriously. Then as they see the benefits that accrue, more and more start to follow him.

Rasoolullah ﷺ's character was such that even his enemies had to acknowledge his truthfulness and sincerity. One of the most famous stories that illustrates this is about Abu Sufyan's meeting with Heracles, the Byzantine Emperor. This was before Abu Sufyan became Muslim and was the leader of the opposition against Muhammad ﷺ and his most powerful enemy in Makkah.

In the period following the Treaty of Hudaibiya between the Quraysh of Makkah and Rasoolullahﷺ, he sent letters to the kings of neighboring countries inviting them to Islam.

Rasoolullahﷺ said to the Sahaba, 'I want to send some of you to foreign kings. Don't dispute among yourselves about me as the Bani Israel disputed about Eesa son of Mary.' They said, 'Ya Rasoolullahﷺ, 'We will never disagree about you over anything. Order us to go forth.' To go to foreign kings, who for the most part were hostile, was no easy task. It was a journey fraught with danger but the spirit of the Sahaba was such that each one vied with the other for the honor of being selected as the Ambassador of Rasoolullahﷺ.

Rasoolullahﷺ appointed Yahya bin Thaleesa al Kalbiؓ to take his letter to the Heraclius the Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium Empire). This was the name they used to refer to themselves and the Muslims used to call them Rum. Byzantium was a word coined less than a century ago and was not used at the time of Rasoolullahﷺ. The capital of the Empire was Istanbul (Constantinople). The Roman Empire was split into the Western (with its capital in Rome) and the Eastern (with its capital in Istanbul). Heraclius was a military commander from Carthage (Tunis) who rose from the ranks to become Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire in 610 AD.

The Roman Empire was going through a very difficult time and was being pounded by the Persians and they were

losing to them in battle after battle. In 613 AD Damascus fell and then in 614, Jerusalem fell and the Persians carried away the so-called 'True Cross'. This was a wooden cross that Christians believe that Jesus was crucified on. However since Eesa ﷺ was not crucified at all, it is not an authentic thing but Christians believe it is the most important relic of Christendom. Heraclius was a strong leader and a good military commander but his army was losing to the Persians. In 621 Heraclius himself led a campaign against the Persians and took over one city after another and retrieved what was taken from them including the True Cross. He eventually entered Persia itself and defeated the Persians in their own country. Allah ﷻ prophesied this in Sura Rum (1-2). In 630 Heraclius marched into Jerusalem barefoot as a pious Christian pilgrim to fulfill his vow and he restored the Great Cross to its place in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. He was given a tremendous welcome, with carpets and flowers and was received with great honor. It was at this time, when he was at the height of his power and glory that he received the letter from Rasoolullah ﷺ. Heraclius listened to the Da'awa of Rasoolullah ﷺ but in the end he rejected it. Allah ﷻ reversed the victories of the Romans and he lost city after city, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon and in the end, in the time of Muhammad al Fateh the Eastern Roman Empire ceased to exist when Constantinople fell to the Muslims.

Yahya Al Kalbi ﷺ who was a very handsome man. When Jibreel ﷺ would come to Rasoolullah ﷺ in human form, he

would sometimes come in the form of Yahya Al Kalbiؓ. Heraclius read the letter and said, 'Turn Ash-Shaam upside down and bring me some people from the people of this man.' His soldiers found Abu Sufyan and his companions in Gaza and brought him to Heraclius. Heraclius ordered the men of Abu Sufyan to stand behind him and said to them, 'If he lies, make a sign to me.' Abu Sufyan says, 'I have never met a man more astute and intelligent than this man. I knew my men would not betray me before him but I was a man of honor and dignity and didn't want to lie before them. Also I feared that they would tell others and I would be known as a liar.'

Heraclius asked, 'Who is Muhammadﷺ?' Abu Sufyan said, 'Huwa Saahirul Kazzab' – He is a magician and a liar.'

Heraclius said, 'I am not interested in hearing cursing. I want you to tell me about him.'

Heraclius: 'What sort of family lineage does he have among you?'

Abu Sufyan: 'His ancestry is a distinguished one.'

Heraclius: 'Were any of his forefathers kings?'

Abu Sufyan: 'No.'

Heraclius: 'Has anyone among you come out with a similar claim before him?'

Abu Sufyan: 'No.'

Heraclius: 'Do the majority of his followers belong to the aristocracy or are they poor people?'

Abu Sufyan: They are poor.

Heraclius: 'Are they on the increase or decrease?'

Abu Sufyan: 'They are on the increase.'

Heraclius: 'Does anyone of them turn away from his religion after accepting it?'

Abu Sufyan: 'No.'

Heraclius: 'Have you ever known him to lie before he started to make this claim?'

Abu Sufyan: 'No.'

Heraclius: 'Is he given to treachery?'

Abu Sufyan: 'No. We however have an armistice agreement with him but we don't know what he will do in this period.' (Abu Sufyan said, 'That was the only negative thing that I was able to sneak in.')

Heraclius: 'Have you ever fought him?'

Abu Sufyan: 'Yes.'

Heraclius: 'How did the fighting go?'

Abu Sufyan: 'Sometimes he wins and sometimes we win.'

Heraclius: 'What sort of commandments does he give you?'

Abu Sufyan: 'He tells us to worship Allahﷻ alone without ascribing divinity to anyone else. He tells us not to follow our fathers. He commands us to pray, to be truthful and chaste and to be kind to our fellow human beings.'

Then Heraclius said: You said he enjoys distinguished ancestry. This is the case with all Prophets and Messengers. You said nobody made such a claim among you before him. So I can't say that he is imitating anyone. You also denied that any of his forefathers was a king, so he is not the claimant of a kingdom. You also said that he was not known to tell a lie before he came out with this message.

Well, I know that he would not start by lying about Allahﷻ. You stated that the poor are his followers. This is the case with all Messengers from Allahﷻ. The fact that his followers are on the increase is always associated with true faith until it is complete. You have also mentioned that no one turns away from his religion after having embraced it. This is a characteristic of true faith when its light shines in people's hearts. You also denied that he was treacherous and no Messenger of Allahﷻ was a treacherous person. You also told me that he calls upon you to believe in the Oneness of Allahﷻ, to pray, to be truthful and chaste. If what you have told me is true then he will have the supremacy right here where I stand. I knew his time was due but I did not think that he would belong to your people. Had it been in my power I would certainly have taken the trouble to meet him and to wash his feet.

The letter to Heraclius: delivered by Yahya Al Kalbiﷺ

*In the name of Allahﷻ the Merciful, the Beneficent
From Muhammad, the Messengerﷺ of Allahﷻ
To Heraclius, the Great One of the Romans....*

Peace be on those who follow the right guidance. I call you to believe in Islam. Accept Islam and you will be safe and Allahﷻ will give you double the reward. If you decline you shall bear the responsibility for the farmers (your people) disbelief.

After the letter was read, Abu Sufyan said, 'When he said what he said and he finished reading the letter, the noise became loud so we were driven out. I said to my people,

‘This (Ibn Abu Kabsha) affair has gone to the point where he even scares the kings of the pale skins. Thereafter I was convinced that he would prevail and thereafter Allah ﷻ drew me into Islam.’

Heraclius tried to tell his Patriarchs that they should accept Islam but they got very angry so he told them that he was only testing them in their faith. He was afraid for his kingdom. Abu Sufyan said that sweat was falling from the forehead of Heraclius when the letter was being read to him. He knew what the truth was but did not have the courage to accept it. He told someone, if I could reach Muhammad ﷺ I would have done so but he feared for his kingdom and did not accept Islam.

There is a great lesson in this whole matter of Heraclius where clearly it was love for his kingdom which overcame his acceptance of faith and he rejected Islam and chose his kingdom in this world. How many times do we fall into the same trap, not with respect to entering Islam but with respect to following its rules? Rules which are for our own benefit in this world and the next, but we fall into the trap of Shaytaan or bow to the pressure of our misguided friends and companions as Heraclius did and break the rules of Allah ﷻ. We forget that this life is a test and the result of that test is what we will see when we meet Allah ﷻ.

The second lesson we learn is that if the character of the leader is pure and he is sincere in his mission, then even his

enemies will be forced to speak in his favor. This is very clearly visible in the life of Rasoolullah ﷺ. Even those who try to malign him are reduced to making false allegations and slander because they can find nothing in his character which can be criticized. Their slander is clearly visible for what it is; frustrated anger that will not allow them to accept the truth.

On the other hand the vast majority in any situation which is primarily neutral watch and listen and gradually their hearts are drawn to the one who is noble and truthful. And gradually a following is created. However in the work of Islam we must never lose sight of the fact that in the end it is only the pleasure of Allah ﷻ that matters; not the number of followers or the extent of popularity. This is what happened in the case of Rasoolullah ﷺ where in a period of 23 years he went from being the most hated to becoming the most beloved of people. But it took 23 years. Patience is not easy. But patience always pays.

Not willing to compromise his Message

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

1. He ﷺ could have accepted the kingship of Quraysh and then made changes.
2. He ﷺ could have compromised and then tried to gradually make changes.
3. He ﷺ could have addressed social evils and become a social reformer first to get some local support then he could have presented his theological message.

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

This unwillingness to compromise is the theme in his entire life.

He ﷺ didn't accept the Islam of Banu Thaqeef of Ta'aif when they came with the condition that they would accept his Risala and pray but wouldn't pay Zakat – even though he needed support very badly at that time. Some people

advised him to soften his stance and said that he should accept the Islam of the Banu Thaqeef and that they would perhaps pay Zakat in due course. However Rasoolullahﷺ refused to change his stance and said that the one who separates Salah from Zakat was not a Muslim. It was based on this ruling that Abu Bakr Siddiqueؓ declared war on those who refused to pay Zakat after Rasoolullahﷺ passed away. When he was asked how he could declare war on Muslims, he quoted the ruling of Rasoolullahﷺ who said that the one who refused to pay Zakat was not a Muslim.

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

This stance of complete integrity stands out in the Da'awa of Muhammadﷺ in that he was not willing to compromise his message, water it down or dilute it in any way to please anyone. This is one of the many proofs of the Divine nature of the message which naturally Muhammadﷺ being the bearer of the message felt and knew that he had no authority to change. There was huge moral and psychological pressure on him to accept at least in part, the religion of his polytheistic family and tribesmen and to go easy on them and their traditions and customs. He refused.

They tried every means of persuasion. As I've mentioned, they offered him gold, women, power and authority. They offered to make him their king. They threatened him with

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

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

Lesson

For a leader, the most critical thing is to differentiate from the rest on the basis of his message. If the leader compromises his message for the sake of popularity, material gain, followership or anything else, the uniqueness of the message will be lost and it will lose its value as a clear standard on which to model all actions. This is

naturally not easy to do, as there are a lot of societal and other pressures to conform to existing norms, values and customs. To stand out as different, especially when this means to go directly against the existing system is not easy. But it is an essential criterion that distinguishes the leader.

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

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

When those who oppose Islam see that they can't stop the Da'ae from preaching, they try to force him to water down the message to make it more 'palatable' to those who have the disease of hypocrisy in their hearts. People who have no intention of subjugating their desires to the orders of Allahﷻ but who don't mind pretending piety and agreeing to support the Messenger as long as he is willing to change

or alter the message to suit their lifestyles and desires. This attitude of Fatwa shopping is visible today in the Muslims themselves where they go in search of those who are willing to twist the rules of the religion to permit them to indulge in their false desires. Such 'Ulama' are appreciated and rewarded. But those who have the integrity to admonish them and to speak the truth and forbid evil are maligned, persecuted and oppressed.

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

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

Putting himself on the line

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

There are innumerable stories from his Seerah where he was out ahead, facing any potential danger even before others were aware of its presence. At no point in his life did he put any of his companions in the way of danger or hide behind them. His travel to At-Ta'aif which I've mentioned in detail later, is a good example where he personally took the risks instead of sending someone else. On another occasion in the battle of Hunain against the Hawaazim, when the Muslims broke ranks and retreated in confusion when they were suddenly ambushed, Abu Sufyan bin Harbؓ saw the rout and said, 'Only the sea can stop them now,' meaning that they will not stop until they reach the shore of the Red Sea many miles away. Yet in that confusion and situation of chaos, Rasoolullahﷺ forged ahead, refusing to show his back to the enemy. His companions tried to restrain him by pulling on the reins of his mule but he continued ahead.

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

Another example is his treatment of Abdullah bin Abi Sarh who was one of 7 people condemned to death for blasphemy and causing harm to Islam and to the person of Rasoolullahﷺ himself. Rasoolullahﷺ passed sentence on them and said that they were to be killed even if they were found hanging from the covering of the Ka'aba. Abdullah bin Abi Sarh took refuge with Othman ibn Affanؓ, who was his brother because of breast feeding. Othman took him to Rasoolullahﷺ. Abdullah bin Abi Sarh said, 'I came to give you Bai'ah.' Rasoolullahﷺ did not respond. Abdullah bin Abi Sarh repeated his request twice. Rasoolullahﷺ kept silent. When he said this for the third time Rasoolullahﷺ accepted his Bai'ah and he became Muslim. When he left Rasoolullahﷺ said to the men around him, 'Was there nobody among you who was wise enough to get up and kill him when you saw that I was silent?' The Ansaar said, 'Ya Rasoolullahﷺ if you had only made a signal we would have killed him.' Rasoolullahﷺ said, 'Prophets do not kill by giving signals.' Abdullah bin Abi Sarhؓ became a good

Muslim and held some high positions of authority during the Khilaafa of Omar ibn Al Khattabؓ and Othman ibn Affanؓ and died in sujood in Salat-ul-Fajr.

In this incident Rasoolullahﷺ demonstrated his commitment to truth and trustworthiness where even for his worst enemy he would not do anything in a clandestine manner.

Lesson

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

As I have mentioned before people listen with their eyes. They don't care what you say until they see what you do. They watch what you do more than they listen to what you say. If they see you doing something different from what you told them, then they will believe and follow your

actions and not your words. In the process your own credibility gets seriously compromised. Credibility falls through the gap between talk and walk.

Rasoolullahﷺ was always conscious of this and demonstrated his message by living it. That is why when someone asked Sayyida Ayesha (RA) about the life of Rasoolullahﷺ she replied, 'Don't you read the Qur'an?' She meant that his life was the manifestation of the Qur'an in action.

I want to emphasize the importance of studying the Seerah which we seem to have totally neglected. The Seerah is the living Tafseer of the Qur'an. It is the methodology of implementing what Allahﷻ ordered. If we don't want to look there for guidance of how to follow Allahﷻ' s orders, where else do we want to look? But sadly even in our religious schools, Seerah is not taught as an independent subject. Students learn about the life of Rasoolullahﷺ from the study of Hadith and from the circumstances of revelation (*Asbaab-un-Nuzool*) of the Qur'an when they study Tafseer. This is not adequate by a long shot. It is essential to study the Seerah of Rasoolullahﷺ because Allahﷻ told us that his life is the best example for us to follow but we don't consider it necessary to study that blessed life. Now how logical is that? Wake up people!!

Resilience: Face the brutal facts + Absolute faith in success

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

They proved to be worse. He presented the message to the leaders of the tribe of Banu Thaqeef. But such is the working of Shaytaan when Islam is presented that they responded in ways that broke their own traditions and etiquette and shamed themselves for posterity in the annals of the history of Banu Thaqeef and the Arabs. The Arabs were famous for their code of honor of honoring the guest. There are many famous stories in the history of the Arabs about people, especially tribal chiefs who literally impoverished themselves in their commitment to honoring their guests. Muhammadﷺ was not a stranger but a well-known person from the nobility of Quraysh and most deserving of their courtesy and hospitality even if they did not want to agree with his message.

Rasoolullah ﷺ went to At-Ta'aif with Zayd bin Haritha ؓ as his companion and attempted to present the message of Islam to the three brothers who were the leaders of Banu Thaqeef. As I have mentioned hospitality and generosity towards the guest was a time honored code among all tribal societies, especially so among the Arabs. It must have been in the mind of Rasoolullah ﷺ that given this tradition and his own status, the chiefs of Banu Thaqeef would at least give him a hearing. But to his utter astonishment, instead of greeting him with the civility that was his right as a guest and as he was a member of the aristocracy of the Quraysh, the Banu Hashim, they violated every rule of honoring the guest and treated him shamefully dishonoring themselves and the honor of Banu Thaqeef. Their story is written in words of shame in the annals of history to the end of time and Allah ﷻ decreed that when the Banu Thaqeef of At-Ta'aif eventually came to Islam, they came as conquered people, losing all their wealth to the Muslims. Allah ﷻ doesn't forgive those who trouble His Anbiya.

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

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

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

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

Imagine the scene, when an aristocrat from the Quraysh, the best man who walked the earth, is reviled, abused and beaten only because he brought the message that there is nobody worthy of worship except Allahﷻ.

Remember that the Creator of the heavens and the earth was watching all this. Yet He allowed it to happen in order that the commitment of His Messengerﷺ became clear to all of mankind to the end of time. It was His intention that this Messengerﷺ was to be the last of them and that the message would henceforth be transmitted by his followers. And so it was necessary to establish a model of commitment which would be a shining beacon of guidance to anyone who faced any difficulty with respect to taking

the message of Islam to an uncaring world. Nobody who studies the life of Muhammad ﷺ can say that for him it is more difficult than it was for the Messenger ﷺ of Allah ﷻ.

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

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

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

and said, 'See how he corrupts everyone? Now our slave has also gone into his religion.'

When Addas returned to his masters, they asked him why he'd kissed the hands and head of Muhammad ﷺ? Addas said, 'There is nobody in all the land who is finer than him. He told me something that nobody but a Prophet could have told me.' They said to him, 'Don't let him make you leave your religion because your religion is better than his.' The amazing thing in this conversation is that the people advising Addas to remain Christian were themselves idolaters who knew nothing about Christianity. Yet they didn't want him to accept Islam.

Enmity is a strange disease which blinds those afflicted by it to all good, just because it comes from the one they hate.

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

Dua at Ta'aif

اللهم إليك أشكو ضعف قوتي وقلة حيلتي وهواني على الناس
يا أرحم الراحمين أنت أرحم الراحمين
أنت رب المستضعفين وأنت ربي
إلى من تكلني إلى عدو يتجهمني أم إلى صديق مكنته إمري

إن لم يكن بك غضب علي فلا أبالي ولكن عافيتك هي أوسع لي
 أعوذ بنور وجهك الذي أضاءت له السموات و الأرض
 وأشرقت له الظلمات وصلح عليه أمر الدنيا والأخره
 أن ينزل بي غضبك أو يحل علي سخطك
 لك العتي حتى ترضى ولا حول ولا قوة إلا بك

“O Allah! I complain to You of my weakness, my scarcity of resources and the humiliation I have been subjected to by the people. O Most Merciful of those who are merciful. O Rabb of the weak and my Rabb too. To whom have you entrusted me? To a distant person who receives me with hostility? Or to an enemy to whom you have granted authority over my affair? So long as You are not angry with me, I do not care. Your favor is expansive relief to me. I seek refuge in the light of Your Face by which all darkness is dispelled and every affair of this world and the next is set right, lest Your anger or Your displeasure descends upon me. I desire Your pleasure and satisfaction until You are pleased.

There is no power and no might except by You.”

Allah ﷻ heard the dua of His Nabi and sent Jibreel ﷺ. He (Jibreel ﷺ) came with another angel. Jibreel ﷺ said to Rasoolullah ﷺ, ‘Your Rabb has heard your dua and has ordered me to bring this angel and put him in your control. Order him and he will obey.’ The angel said, ‘Ya Rasoolullah ﷺ. I am the angel of the mountains. Your Rabb ordered me to place myself at your command. Order me

and I will bring together the two mountains on either side of the valley of Ta'aif and all those who tormented you will be wiped out.'

Rasoolullah ﷺ said to him, 'Allah ﷻ didn't send me to kill people. Allah ﷻ sent me to guide people to that which is pleasing to Him. It is my hope from my Rabb that even if these people don't accept my message today, their descendants will accept it one day.' Such was the Messenger of Allah ﷺ whose kindness and mercy is an example for all time.

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

Today, to protect his Sunnah is equal to protecting the blessed body and person of Rasoolullah ﷺ. Abu Muslim Al Qawlaani (May Allah ﷻ have mercy on him) said, 'Do the Sahaba of Rasoolullah ﷺ think that we are going to let them have Rasoolullah ﷺ to themselves? No, we will compete with them for the Baraka of Rasoolullah ﷺ and take our

share of him.’ Today when we protect the Sunnah by practicing it, defending the honor of Rasoolullahﷺ and speaking out against those who seek to revile him, what we do may not be as great as what Zaidؓ or Abu Talhaؓ did but Allahﷻ will be pleased with us if we support His Messenger and his Sunnah and will reward us in keeping with His Own Majesty and Grace. Similarly leaving the Sunnah or attacking it or denying the importance of Ahadith, is tantamount to attacking the person and body of Rasoolullahﷺ like the people of Ta’aif did. It is our choice who we want to be clubbed with – the Sahaba or the Kuffar and Munafiqeen; with the people of Jannah or People of An-Naar.

On a side note, Khalid al Udwani As-Thaqafiؓ was a small boy when Rasoolullahﷺ was speaking to the people of Ta’aif. He said: Rasoolullahﷺ recited Sura At-Taariq and I listened to the Sura and memorized it.

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

What stands out so clearly in this dua is how Rasoolullahﷺ speaks of his own weakness and lack of influence. He does not curse those who rejected, insulted and tormented him. He does not call down on their collective heads, the wrath of Allahﷻ for refusing to accept his message. He faces his own weakness and asks Allahﷻ to give him strength. He says to Allahﷻ that as long as He is pleased with him, he does not care about the opinion of the world. And if He is

not pleased, then he (Muhammadﷺ) will do everything in his power to continue to work until He is pleased.

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

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

effort for his message even momentarily. He continued to work ceaselessly to take his message of the Oneness of Allahﷻ to anyone who would listen to him and even to those who refused to listen. He did not lessen his effort nor did he lose hope.

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

Opposition is not proof that you are wrong but that you are right for only then are you opposed. The blow that doesn't break your back only strengthens you.

Lesson

Resilience consists of two apparently paradoxical positions: facing the facts about the failure without any attempt at disguising the reality; simultaneously having absolute faith in eventual success even when you can't see any signs that your work is succeeding.

Research tells us that when people are going through times of disruptive change they feel:

- Disorientation: Drifting at sea, buffeted by waves of hatred and disapproval.
- Depression: Intimidated, attacked, lost, wanting to hide but nowhere to do it.
- Loss of purpose: Lack of leadership, looking everywhere for direction.
- Fear of elimination: Fearful about personal safety, looking over the shoulder.

It is during these times that we see the siege mentality that we are seeing today in Muslim speech, writings and actions. People who feel besieged react in two ways: They get intimidated and internalize the criticism and propaganda to the extent that they become apologetic and overly self-critical. Or they go to the other extreme and become militantly defensive and defend everything that their members do no matter how indefensible it may be.

There are three keys to survival in such times of disastrous and disruptive change:

1. Face the brutal facts without losing hope
2. Make sense of what is happening and create a roadmap out of the mess

Extensive research with inmates of concentration camps shows that those who eventually survived and escaped were those who faced the brutal facts of their situation

without any attempt at painting them in a 'rosy' hue or indulging in hope bordering on fantasy. They did not tell themselves that rescue was round the corner nor did they wait for a messiah to come to save them. They did not imagine that their captors would suddenly see the error of their ways or would become inclined towards them. In short, the survivors did not fool themselves. They said to themselves in so many words, "We are in serious trouble and our very existence may be in danger. These are the reasons we are here. These are the things that can happen to us including our elimination." They did not spend time complaining or blaming their captors or in abusing themselves or wallowing in self-pity.

Instead they objectively took stock of their situation and had the courage to look it fully in the face and to recognize it for what it was; very grave and potentially lethal.

Yet these people also did not lose hope in their eventual success. They had faith and took the help of their ideology and belief and strongly believed that eventually they would survive and would outlast their captors. They believed that they had the capability to resist and absorb any punishment that was dished out to them. This confidence is critical to resilience. Coupled with this is the sense that though they may be losing temporarily they are on the right path and will win in the end.

Two apparently paradoxical attitudes: looking at the brutal facts yet not losing hope in eventual success, no matter how

impossible it may seem at that moment. This was the key to the success of people interned in some of the most brutal concentration camps in the world. And history tells us that they did survive.

Let's look at the steps in a little more detail:

1. Face the brutal facts (What really happened?)
 - Face facts as they are without giving them a 'rosy' hue or indulging in hope bordering on fantasy
 - Yet not lose hope in eventual success
 - Don't blame self or others for what happened
 - No praise, No blame
 - Ask, 'What, Why and How.'
2. Make meaning of it (What do these facts indicate?)
 - Analyze reasons for what happened
 - See how you could have prevented it
 - See how this fits into the larger scheme of things and happenings
 - Look to a future beyond this which will be better
 - Create immediate goals to work towards
3. Improvise your way through (What to do about this?)
 - Look for action steps given the present scenario
 - Get out of the 'Why me?' syndrome

- What can you do, now that this has happened?
- How can you protect yourself, gather resources, plan for the future?
- Action is critical

Another good example of continuing to work despite the absence of observable success is the story of the weighing scale.

Have you ever seen a traditional weighing scale in a shop in India selling food grains? It is called a 'Balance' and has two pans on either side of a pivot, hanging from a horizontal beam at the top. The weight measure is put in one pan and material being weighed in the other. There is an extremely important life lesson to be learnt in this. The next time you go to buy rice or some other grain, notice what the seller does.

First he puts the weight measure in one pan. Say 20 kilos. Then he uses a scoop and starts to put rice into the other pan. As the pan fills, even when he has put 19 kilos in it, what do you see happening to the pans? Nothing. There is no change in the situation. The pan with the weight remains firmly on the counter top. And the pan with the rice remains in the air. However you notice that the man does not stop putting the rice into the pan because he is not seeing any result to his efforts. He knows the result will come and continues to put the rice in with his scoop until he sees a small movement in the pans and the pan with the

rice starts to descend. Once that happens and the pans are almost level, the man changes his method of putting in the grain. Now instead of the scoop, he uses his hand. He takes a handful of rice and very gently he drops a few grains at a time into the pan. And then lo and behold, the pan with the rice descends to the counter top and the pan with the weight rises in the air.

When I saw this, I learnt two essential lessons in life; both equally true:

Lesson # 1: Until 19 kilos, nothing will happen.

Lesson # 2: The last few grains always make the difference

So also in life, even when 19 kilos of effort have gone into the issue and we start to lose hope because 'nothing is happening' it is good to remember that nothing is supposed to happen. One who understands this does not lose hope or energy but smiles in anticipation of reaching the last stage when he knows that the pan will start to descend to the counter-top.

Goal comes first: before personal preferences

For the leader the biggest test often is to see which he gives precedence to; his personal likes and dislikes, friendships and enmities or the ultimate success of the goal? The reason this is a tough test is because often it becomes necessary to put your own preferences aside and work with people who you may not like and would prefer not to work with.

Rasoolullahﷺ demonstrated the example of this to a level of excellence. Khalid bin Waleedؓ, the famous military commander had been an enemy of Rasoolullahﷺ and Islam all his life. He was responsible for the debacle in the Battle of Uhud which resulted in the Shahada of 70 Sahaba including the uncle of Rasoolullahﷺ, Al Hamza bin Abdul Muttalibؓ. Hamza was about the same age as Muhammadﷺ and was a childhood friend and one of the earliest supporters of Islam. He was a source of great support and strength to Rasoolullahﷺ. His death caused him immense grief. Yet when Khalid bin Waleedؓ and Amr ibn Al-A'asؓ decided to go to Madina to accept Islam, Rasoolullahﷺ welcomed them and forgave their enmity against himself.

Amr bin Al A'asؓ said, 'I fought against Muhammadﷺ in Badr and Allahﷻ saved me. I fought against Muhammadﷺ

in Uhud and Allahﷻ saved me. I fought against Muhammadﷺ in Khandaq and Allahﷻ saved me. I was beginning to feel that no matter what, Muhammadﷺ is going to win. His army is getting better and better and his Da'awa is getting stronger and we are getting more and more restricted. So my heart was heavier and heavier.' So he decided to leave Makkah and go and live alone. He took his wealth and family and lived for a while until the Treaty of Hudaibiyya, when the Quraysh were forced to acknowledge Rasoolullahﷺ and signed a treaty with him. I have mentioned this famous treaty in detail later as there are many critical leadership lessons to be learnt from it. Amr bin A'asؓ knew that it was inevitable that Rasoolullahﷺ would conquer Makkah. He ruled out living in Makkah and At-Ta'aif as these two cities would fall to Muhammadﷺ. So he called some people who trusted him and said, 'This affair of Muhammadﷺ is rising in a horrible way and will overcome Quraysh. Therefore I don't think it is a good idea for us to stay in Makkah so let us go and stay with An-Najashi, the Christian King of Abyssinia. If Muhammadﷺ is victorious we are away from him and if the Quraysh win then they know our position with them.' He used to say, 'Even if all Quraysh become Muslim, I will not become Muslim.'

So they all decided to leave Makkah and go to Abyssinia. They took leather handicrafts as gifts for An-Najashi, the King of Abyssinia, which he used to like very much and they took a boat and sailed to Abyssinia. When they

reached there, they saw Amr bin Umayya Al Damariؓ coming out of the court of An-Najashi. Rasoolullahؐ had sent him as his Messenger to marry Umm Habeeba the daughter of Abu Sufyan who had emigrated to Abyssinia where her husband died; to Rasoolullahؐ and An- Najashi performed this marriage and was the representative of Rasoolullahؐ.

Amr ibn Al A'as entered the court of An-Najashi, who was a friend of his. He entered the court and made Sajda to An-Najashi as was the custom. An-Najashi welcomed him very warmly and asked him if he had brought any gift for him. Amr ibn Al A'as presented the leather items he had brought and the king was very pleased and distributed some to his courtiers and sent the rest to his treasury. Amr ibn Al A'as got carried away with the reception and said to the king, 'O King I have seen a man leave your court just now who is from our enemy who has killed the noble among us. Would you hand him over to me so that we can kill him?' An-Najashi was so angered by this statement that he hit Amr ibn Al A'as in the face so hard that he fell down bleeding profusely from his nose which he thought had been broken. He didn't know what to do. He was in the court of the king and had been publicly humiliated but obviously couldn't retaliate. He said, 'I wished the earth would swallow me for the embarrassment and fear I felt.'

To try to salvage his dignity he said, 'O King, if I knew that you disliked what I said, I wouldn't have said it.' Then An-

Najashi said, 'Ya Amr you are asking me to hand over to you the Messenger of the man who receives Al Mamoos al Akbar?'

Amr ibn Al A'as said, 'I felt my heart change. I thought to myself – all the Arabs and non-Arabs recognize this and I don't?' So he asked An-Najashi, 'Is this your testimony?' An-Najashi said, 'That is my testimony before Allah ﷻ.' Then An-Najashi said, 'O Amr, listen to me and follow him. Because in the name of Allah ﷻ he will prevail against all his enemies as Musa prevailed against Firaun.' It is amazing to realise in this story that here was the King of Abyssinia An-Najashi who had never met Rasoolullah ﷺ but who believed in him and had become Muslim even though his kingdom was officially Christian; giving Da'awa to Amr ibn Al A'as who lived with Rasoolullah ﷺ for 13 years and fought him all those years. Da'awa has no logic. Amr ibn Al A'as gave his Baya'a to An-Najashi to obey Rasoolullah ﷺ and to accept Islam and An-Najashi accepted his Baya'a. An-Najashi ordered some new clothes for Amr ibn Al A'as as his clothes were covered with blood. Amr ibn Al A'as then left the court of An-Najashi and went to his camp.

His friends saw him in the new clothes and were very happy. They asked him if An-Najashi had agreed to hand over Amr bin Umayya Al Damari ؓ. Amr ibn Al A'as ؓ said, 'I did not ask him this time as it is the first time. I will ask him when I meet him again tomorrow.' His companions thought that was a good strategy. Then he told

them that he had to attend to some business and took a boat and left for Madina. He simply abandoned his friends in Abyssinia without any explanation or even telling them where he was going.

When he reached Marradh Dahran, he saw two men – one in a tent and another was tying the camels. They were Khalid ibn Al Waleed and Osman ibn Talha. He went to them and asked them where they were going. So Khalid ibn Al Waleed said, 'Nobody worth anything is left among us anymore. Muhammad ﷺ is prevailing and so I thought we should join him.' Amr ibn Al A'as said, 'That is what I was also thinking.' So they decided to travel together. Someone saw them coming and said to Rasoolullah ﷺ, 'Makkah has handed over its reins to you after these two men.' These men were the cream of leadership of the enemies of Islam. They inherited from their fathers – Al Waleed bin Mughayrah, Utbah bin Rabiyya, Umayyah bin Khalaf, Abu Jahl, Abu Lahab and others were all killed. Abu Sufyan was the only one left of that generation because he was not in Badr. So the second generation was now in the lead.

Rasoolullah ﷺ was extremely happy to see them. He had a beaming smile on his face as he saw them coming. He forgave them all the evil they had done to him. He recognized the benefit of having these young leaders with him and the good they could do to the Da'awa of Islam. Amr ibn Al A'as said, 'Ya Rasoolullah ﷺ I accept Islam on condition that you ask Allah ﷻ to forgive all my past sins. I

forgot to ask him to ask Allahﷻ for forgiveness of my future sins.’ Rasoolullahﷺ said, ‘Ya Amr, don’t you know that Islam erases everything (sins) before it, and Hijra erases everything (sins) before it and Hajj erases everything (sins) before it?’ Amr said, ‘Rasoolullahﷺ used to take great care of us all through his life and so did Abu Bakr and Umar. Umar’s relationship with Khalid was not the same as he disapproved of some of the things that Khalid did.’

Fatha Makkah

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

He made Tawâf of Al Ka’aba and then called on Othman bin Talhaؓ to bring the key of the Ka’aba. Othman bin Talhaؓ’s family Banu Abdid Da’ar are the keepers of the key, to this day. Othman’s mother refused at first but then later she gave it to him. He brought it to Rasoolullahﷺ who opened the Ka’aba. There was an image of a pigeon made of wood which he destroyed. There were pictures of angels and one supposed to be of Ibrahimؑ using divining arrows. Rasoolullahﷺ said, ‘May Allahﷻ kill them, they have shown our elder doing something which he would never have done.’

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

Rasoolullahﷺ spoke to the people: *‘Alhamdulillah, Sadaqa W’ada, Nasara Abdah, Wa hazamal Ahzaaba wahda.* Families of anyone killed accidentally will be paid blood money of 100 camels. All privilege of ancestry and pride that existed in Jahiliyya are finished. All these privileges are beneath my feet.’ Rasoolullahﷺ had the key of the Ka’aba in his hand. Ali bin Abi Talibؓ said, ‘Ya Rasoolullahﷺ combine for us the honors of feeding the Hujjaj and the key of the Ka’aba.’ But Rasoolullahﷺ called Othmanؓ and said, ‘Take it and keep it forever and nobody will take it from you except a tyrant.’ To this day it is the same family which holds the key of the Ka’aba and it is from them that the Ruler of Saudi Arabia receives it to wash the Ka’aba at the annual ceremony and it is returned to them. Rasoolullahﷺ then went around the Ka’aba on his camel and pointed with his bow at the idols around the Ka’aba and they would fall down. He did this with the 360 idols surrounding the

Ka'aba. He would recite: *Qul ja'al haqqa wa zahaqal baatil innal baatila kaana zahooqa* (Say the Truth has come and falsehood has disappeared. Verily it is the nature of falsehood to disappear).

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

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

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

this is from Allah ﷻ and she told you that it was.’ Abu Sufyan said, ‘Ash haduallaailaha illAllahu wa Ash hadunna Muhammadar Rasoolullah ﷺ.’

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

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

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

stay in Makkah?’ They said, ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘I am a slave of Allahﷻ. I made Hijra to Allahﷻ and to you. My life is with you and my death is with you.’ They came crying to him and said, ‘We only said this because we love Allahﷻ and His Rasool.’ He said, ‘Allahﷻ and His Messengerﷺ bear witness that you speak the truth.’

Lesson

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

Another huge benefit of this action of Rasoolullahﷺ unilaterally forgiving his enemies was also to put an end to all potential feuds which would have resulted from any revenge that he may have taken. In a society given to feuding over the smallest excuse imagine the disruptive effect of any killings of his enemies. By forgiving them all he cemented them into the Muslim Ummah and secured his own home forever. Forgiveness is a balm for the soul, not only of the one forgiven but even more importantly for the

one who forgives. But it takes a big heart to forgive and whose heart is bigger than the heart of the Nabi of Allah ﷺ?

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

Forgiving his erstwhile enemies also took the wind out of the sails of anyone who may have been tempted to plot a coup against him but putting him on the high moral ground. Who would support someone who wants to do ill to the one who just did good to you? At one stroke Rasoolullah ﷺ secured his rule, won new friends and supporters and opened the doors for the entry of Islam in his own motherland. The result of this was so profound that Makkah was almost the only place that didn't rebel when he passed away and Abu Bakr ؓ had no worries from there when he had to deal with rebellion from elsewhere.

Living his message

He preached the importance of the rights of neighbors and he was the best to his neighbors. He preached about the rights of women and he gave the world a law that gives women rights that they don't have in many other modern legal jurisprudential systems even today, 14 centuries later. He preached the value of truthfulness and was himself called 'Al Sadiq ul Ameen': the Truthful & Trustworthy One, even by his enemies, the Quraysh. He demonstrated Islam in every aspect of his life. And he taught his companions to do so, themselves. The result was that Islam spread far and wide, not by warfare and conflict with other religions but by ordinary Muslims living by the code of behavior that he taught them. Applied Islam has more power to convince people than any other method of preaching or propagating. Rasoolullah ﷺ demonstrated this to perfection.

Allah ﷻ said:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ
كثيْرًا

Al Ahzab 33:21 *Indeed in the Messenger of Allâh you have a good example to follow for him who hopes in (the Meeting with) Allâh and the Last Day and remembers Allâh much.*

I am reminded of the saying of the famous Muhaddith, Imaam Az-Zuhri who said, "Islam spread so fast after Fatha-Makkah because for the first time the non-Muslims were able to see the life of an ordinary Muslim up close." It is interesting to note that he mentions the normal life of the ordinary Muslim as the best means of convincing others about the goodness of Islam. People 'listen' with their eyes. They are only convinced that a way of life is good when they see its proponents living it. No amount of preaching or talking will convince people about the method when they see that those who preach it don't follow it themselves.

This destroys all credibility in the message. Rasoolullahﷺ and his companions never allowed that to happen.

Rasoolullahﷺ preached a message of human rights and social responsibility. He emphasized the rights of neighbors irrespective of whether they were Muslim or not. Rasoolullahﷺ once asked the Sahaba, 'Do you know what the rights of the neighbor are?' He then said:

1. Assist him when he asks for assistance.
2. Give him a loan if he needs it.
3. Help him if he is needy.
4. Visit him when he is ill.
5. Accompany his funeral when he dies.
6. Congratulate him on happy occasions.
7. Console him in adversity.
8. Do not build your house higher than his without his permission lest his ventilation is obstructed.

9. If you buy fruit, send some for him as a present. If you cannot do so, take the fruit into your house concealed so that he cannot see it. Don't allow your children to take it out and eat openly in case his children see it and become grieved.

10. Don't let the smoke from your house get into his house causing him annoyance.

These are the rights of the neighbors." Thereafter Rasoolullahﷺ declared, "By Allahﷻ, no one will ever understand these rights unless Allahﷻ has mercy on him."

In another Hadith it is mentioned that Rasoolullahﷺ took an oath thrice saying, "By Allah he is not a Believer, By Allah he is not a Believer, By Allah he is not a Believer." Someone asked, "Who is not a Believer?" Rasoolullahﷺ said, "The person who causes suffering to his neighbor." Another Hadith mentions that such a person will never enter Jannah.

Lesson

At the end of the day it hardly needs to be emphasized that a picture is worth a thousand words but an action is worth a million. Imagine a world that lives by these values. People listen with their eyes and so it is essential for the leader to walk his own talk if he wants others to follow him. That is his test.

Risk taking

Battle of Badr

The first military challenge that the Muslims faced was at Badr. It was not a planned confrontation but something that was in the nature of taking advantage of an emerging opportunity with its attendant risks. We will discuss the lessons about risk taking later in this chapter but for the present let us take a look at the events as they happened.

Rasoolullah ﷺ dispatched Talhah bin 'Ubaidullâh ؓ and Sa'id bin Zaid ؓ northward to scout around for any movements of caravans of Quraysh. The two scouts stayed at Al-Hawra' for some days until Abu Sufyan, the leader of the caravan, passed by them. The two men hurried back to Madina and reported to Rasoolullah ﷺ that great wealth amounting to 50 thousand gold Dinars guarded by 40 men moving relatively close to Madina could be had. This was a tempting target for the Muslims who had been driven from their homes and all their wealth looted by the Quraysh. At the same time this constituted a potentially heavy economic, political and military strike that was bound to shake the entire structure of the Makkan polytheists.

Rasoolullah ﷺ immediately exhorted the Muslims to rush out and waylay the caravan to make up for their property and wealth they were forced to give up in Makkah. He did

not give orders binding on everyone, but rather gave them full liberty to go out or stay back, thinking that it would be just an errand on a small scale. Some people asked to go back to their dwellings to bring their camels and weapons but Rasoolullah ﷺ refused and said that only those who were ready should go with him. That is why there were more from Khazraj than from Aws because the Aws lived a little way away from Al Masjid An Nabawi and so not many of them could join Rasoolullah ﷺ.

Rasoolullah ﷺ decided to stop in Badr at a particular place and ordered this. Habbab ibn Al Mundhir ؓ asked Rasoolullah ﷺ, 'Is this a Wahi from Allah ﷻ that we have been ordered not to proceed beyond this and to stop here or is this a matter of opinion and battle tactics?'

Rasoolullah ﷺ said, 'It is a matter of opinion and battle tactics.' So he said, 'We should go ahead to the well that is nearest to their force and stop there. Then we should stop up the wells and build a cistern and fill it with water so that we can fight with water and they won't have water.' Rasoolullah ﷺ liked his advice and accepted it and ordered likewise.

The night of the battle Rasoolullah ﷺ saw a dream in which he saw the army of the enemy smaller than it really was. Next morning there was rain. The rain on the Muslims dampened the earth and made it firm and refreshed them. On the Quraysh it fell so hard that it made their movement

difficult and the ground muddy. The same rain fell on both but did different things to them. This is one of the many miracles of Badr. Allah ﷻ mentioned this mercy and said:

إِذْ يُغَشِّبِكُمُ الثُّعَاسَ أَمْنَةً مِّنْهُ وَيُنزِلُ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لِّيُطَهِّرَكُم بِهِ وَيُذْهِبَ
عَنكُم رِّجْزَ الشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيَرْبِطَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتَ بِهِ الْأَقْدَامَ

Anfal 8: 11. (Remember) when He covered you with a slumber as a security from Him, and He caused water (rain) to descend on you from the sky, to clean you thereby and to remove from you the Rijz (whispering) of Shaitân and to strengthen your hearts, and make your feet firm thereby.

The Muslim army was made up of 300-317 men, 82-86 Emigrants, 61 from Aws and 170 from Khazraj. They were not well-equipped nor adequately prepared. They had only two horses belonging to Az-Zubair bin Al-'Awwam ﷺ and Al-Miqdad bin Al-Aswad Al-Kindi ﷺ, 70 camels, one for two or three men to ride alternatively. Rasoolullah ﷺ himself, 'Ali bin Abi Talib ﷺ and Murthid bin Abi Murthid Al-Ghanawi ﷺ had only one camel between them. The two companions of Rasoolullah ﷺ offered the camel to him but he refused saying, 'You are not stronger than I am and I need the reward as much as you.'

He set a standard of leadership that the leader is the equal of his men in all things except that he leads. It is such things

that inspire love and encourage people to follow the leader without reservation.

Disposition of the affairs of Madina was entrusted to Ibn Umm Maktumؓ but later to Abu Lubabah bin 'Abdul Mundhirؓ. The overall leadership was given to Mus'ab bin 'Umair Al-Qurayshi Al-'Abdariؓ, and their standard was white in color. The little army was divided into two battalions, the Muhajiroon with a standard raised by 'Ali bin Abi Talibؓ and the Ansaar whose standard was in the hand of Sa'd bin Mu'adhؓ. Az-Zubair bin Al-'Awwamؓ was appointed to the leadership of the right flank, Al-Miqdad bin 'Amrؓ to lead the left flank, and the rear of the army was at the command of Qais bin Abi Sa'sa'ahؓ. Rasoolullahﷺ personally commanded this force and marched out along the main road leading to Makkah. He then turned left towards Badr and when he reached As-Safra', he dispatched two men to scout about for the camels of Quraysh.

Abu Sufyan, on the other hand, was on the utmost alert. He was well aware that the route he was following was dangerous. He was also anxious to know about the movements of Rasoolullahﷺ's people. His scouts reported to him that the Muslims were lying in wait to ambush for his caravan. To be on the safe side, he hired Damdam bin 'Amr Al-Ghifari to communicate a message asking for help from the Quraysh. The Messenger rode fast and reached Makkah in a frenzy. Jumping off his camel, he stood

dramatically before Al-Ka'bah, slashed the nose and the ears of the camel, turned its saddle upside down, tore off his own shirt from front and behind, and cried: "O Quraysh! Your merchandise! It is with Abu Sufyan. The caravan is being intercepted by Muhammadﷺ and his companions. I cannot say what would have happened to them. Help! Help!"

The effect of this hue and cry was instantaneous and the news stunned Quraysh and they immediately remembered their pride that was wounded when the Muslims had intercepted the Hadrami caravan. They therefore swiftly mustered almost all of their forces and none stayed behind except Abu Lahab, who delegated someone who owed him some money. Abu Lahab said that he was sure that he would be killed in the battle with Rasoolullahﷺ. It is strange how the enemies of Rasoolullahﷺ believed everything he told them except that they should worship Allahﷻ. The Quraysh also mobilized some Arab tribes to contribute to the war against Rasoolullahﷺ. All the clans of Quraysh gave their consent except Banu 'Adi.

Soon an excited throng of 1300 soldiers including 100 horsemen and 600 soldiers in armor with a large number of camels was clamoring to proceed to fight the Muslims. For food supplies, they used to slaughter an alternate number of camels; ten on one day and nine the next day. They were however afraid that Banu Bakr, on account of old long deep-seated animosity, would attack their rear. At that

critical moment, *Iblis* (Satan) appeared to them in the guise of Suraqa bin Malik bin Ju'sham Al-Mudlaji — chief of Bani Kinana — saying to them: “I guarantee that no harm will happen from behind.”

Allahﷻ described this: · “...boastfully and to be seen of men, and hinder (men) from the path of Allâh. ” [8:47]

They moved swiftly northward to Badr. On the way they received another message from Abu Sufyan asking them to go back home because the caravan had escaped the Muslims. Abu Sufyan, on learning the intention of the Muslims, led his caravan off the main route, and inclined it towards the Red Sea. By this maneuver, he was able to slip past the ambush and was out of their reach.

On receiving Abu Sufyan's message, the Makkan army showed a desire to return home. Abu Jahl, however haughtily and arrogantly insisted that they proceed to Badr and stay three nights and make festivities. Badr was a seasonal market as well and Abu Jahl wanted to demonstrate the strength of the Quraysh to the people and impress on the Arabs that Quraysh still had the upper hand and enjoyed supremacy in that area. Abu Jahl's threats and insistence notwithstanding, Banu Zahrah, acting on the advice of Al-Akhnas bin Shuraiq, broke away and returned to Makkah. Thenceforth Al-Akhnas remained 'the well-rubbed palm tree' for Bani Zahrah and was blindly obeyed in all relevant matters.

Banu Hashim were also inclined to break away, but Abu Jahl's threats made them desist from that idea. The rest of the army, now 1000 soldiers, approached Badr and encamped themselves beyond a sand dune at Al-'Udwat Al-Quswa. 'The intelligence corps' of the army reported to Rasoolullah ﷺ that an encounter with the Makkans was inescapable, and that a daring step in this context had to be taken.

Rasoolullah ﷺ held an advisory emergency meeting to review the developing situation and consult with the army leaders. Admittedly, some Muslims feared the encounter and their courage began to waver; in this regard, Allâh says:

كَمَا أَخْرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَيْتِكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَكَارِهُونَ
يُجَادِلُونَكَ فِي الْحَقِّ بَعْدَمَا تَبَيَّنَ كَأَنَّمَا يُسَاقُونَ إِلَى الْمَوْتِ وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ

Anfal 8:5-6 "As your Rabb caused you (O Muhammad [Peace be upon him]) to go out from your home with the Truth, and verily, a party among the believers disliked it, disputing with you concerning the Truth after it was made manifest, as if they were being driven to death while they were looking (at it)."

Rasoolullah ﷺ addressed his followers and apprised his men of the gravity of the situation and asked for their advice. Abu Bakr ؓ was the first who spoke on the occasion and assured Rasoolullah ﷺ of unreserved obedience to his command. Omar ibn Al Khattab ؓ was the next to stand up and supported the views expressed by his noble friend.

Then Al-Miqdad bin 'Amrؓ got up and said: "O Messenger of Allâh! Proceed where Allahﷻ directs you to, for we are with you. We will not say as the Children of Israel said to Musaؑ: "Go you and your Rabb and fight and we will stay here;" Rather we shall say: "Go you and your Rabb and fight and we will fight along with you." By Allah! If you were to take us to Barq Al-Ghimad, we will still fight resolutely with you against its defenders until you gained it."

Rasoolullahﷺ thanked him and blessed him. The three leaders who spoke were from the Muhajireen, who only constituted a minor section of the army. Rasoolullahﷺ wanted to hear the Ansaar's view because they were the majority of the soldiers and were expected to shoulder the brunt of the war activities. Moreover, the clauses of Al-'Aqabah Pledge which the Ansaar of Madina gave to Rasoolullahﷺ in Mina only committed them to protect him within the boundaries of Madina and did not commit them to fighting beyond their territories. I have mentioned this very important pledge in detail later but for this discussion it is important to realise how Rasoolullahﷺ was cautious and careful to ensure that he had the support of all his people, even those as committed as Al Ansaar. Rasoolullahﷺ wanted to know where the Ansaar stood at this very critical time when they were not bound by their formal treaty. So Rasoolullahﷺ once again said: "Advise me my men!" by which he meant the Ansaar, in particular.

Upon this Sa'd bin Mu'adhؓ stood up and said: "By Allahﷻ, I feel you want us (Ansaar) to speak." Rasoolullahﷺ directly said: "Yes!" Sa'dؓ said: "O Messenger of Allahﷻ! We believe in you and we bear witness to what you have brought to us and we declare in unequivocal terms that what you have brought is the Truth. We give you our firm pledge of obedience and sacrifice. We will obey you most willingly in whatever you command us, and by Allahﷻ, Who has sent you with the Truth, if you were to ask us to plunge into the sea, we will do that most readily and not a man of us will stay behind. We do not grudge the idea of encounter with the enemy. We are experienced in war and we are trustworthy in combat. We hope that Allahﷻ will show you through our hands those deeds of valor which will please your eyes. Kindly lead us to the battlefield in the Name of Allahﷻ."

As they say, the rest is history. The Muslims won the battle and the Quraysh were roundly defeated. More than 70 of their leaders were killed, including Abu Jahl. Allahﷻ sent angels to help the Muslims. The Qur'an says about this day:

وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَأَنْتُمْ أَذِلَّةٌ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

A'al Imraan 3:123 And Allah has already made you victorious at Badr, when you were a weak little force. So fear Allah much that you may be grateful.

Lesson

There are 3 major lessons in leadership from this entire episode:

1. The ability to see the potential advantage in a high risk situation: The leader must have the judgment to assess the risk to see if it is worth taking. There has to be a balance between getting overly extended on the one hand and losing out on major potential gains by being risk averse on the other. The ability to see the advantage and correctly assess the chance of success is the first major requirement of the leader.
2. Consultative decision making: It is essential to take people into confidence if you want their commitment to your cause. The leader must share all relevant information, must trust his people and must be prepared to put his own credibility on the line. He must ensure that he has the genuine support of all his people and make sure that he takes steps to unearth and hesitation or conflict as early as possible. It can be disastrous to go into the challenge and then discover that you didn't have the support of key people. At the same time there must be an upbeat atmosphere to the whole thing; a focus on the certainty of success and the potential gains from it. Without that positive energy will drain away and be replaced by fear. The possibility of success is very important. Excitement after all is fear that is optimistic of success.
3. Internal faith and connection with Allahﷻ: Ultimately leadership is about the willingness to stand alone before your Rabb and ask for His help for the mission. It needs

enough of a connection with Him to enable the leader to do this with the confidence that He hears and will answer. I believe that it is this connection that is often missing and in that case is a critical deficiency.

Sacrificing short term for long term

If there is one incident in the life of Rasoolullahﷺ that can be described as a threshold it is the Treaty of Hdaybiya. The treaty between Rasoolullahﷺ and the Quraysh was the most one-sided agreement that one could imagine. At this stage I believe it will be in order to give a brief account of what led to this famous treaty and the circumstances around it. This incident was like a 'graduation exam' for Rasoolullahﷺ and his Sahaba which they passed with flying colors. It was a test of obedience of the most severe kind to see if they would obey Allahﷻ in a matter where they were will to do it or not.

Sulah Al Hdaybiya

Rasoolullahﷺ had a dream. He saw that he was making Tawâf around the Ka'aba and then they shaved their heads. It is now 6 years since they had left Makkah so they were all longing to go to Makkah. Allahﷻ called His House – *Mathaaba lin Naas* – a place which you like to return to again and again – so the Sahaba were very keen to go. All believers when they see the Ka'aba the first time they are affected and feel the Haram to be their home and feel at home there even if they are foreigners.

The dream of the prophet is Wahi (Revelation) and so Rasoolullahﷺ invited the Muslims for Umrah and a total of 1400 people left with Rasoolullahﷺ . At Dhul Hulaifa they put on Ihraam and marked the sacrificial animals and started to make Talbiya. The procession of pilgrims moved towards Makkah and were peaceful and not armed except for their personal arms which every Arab man would wear. They were not an army going to battle. However Rasoolullahﷺ had 20 scouts under the command of Abbad bin Bishrؓ, on horseback ahead of him as a protection and to clear the way. Bishr ibn Sufyanؓ was sent to Makkah to gather intelligence. Umar ibn Al Khattabؓ said to Rasoolullahﷺ , 'Ya Rasoolullahﷺ , are you going to enter upon a people who are at war with you, without any weapons? Let us be prepared for battle if they bring it to us.' So Rasoolullahﷺ agreed with him and sent for weapons from Madina but they were to be kept separate so that the peaceful nature of the procession would not be disturbed.

Bishr bin Sufyanؓ returned from Makkah and said, 'Quraysh have allied themselves with Al Ahabeesh (3 or more tribes of Bedouins) and are marching for war.' This was a very serious matter because in Arab society it was Haraam to prevent anyone from making Hajj and Umrah. It was considered a totally unacceptable thing to do this. Yet this is what the Quraysh appeared to be planning to do and some other tribes had joined them.

So Rasoolullahﷺ asked the Sahaba for their advice and asked, 'Shall I attack the tribes in their homes (women and children) so that they will leave the Quraysh and then we can deal with Quraysh?' Abu Bakrؓ said, 'Ya Rasoolullahﷺ, we did not come to fight anyone. So let us not attack anyone. Let us proceed for Umrah and if someone stops us, we will deal with them but unless that happens, let us not be the first to attack anyone.' Rasoolullahﷺ agreed and said, 'Proceed onwards in Allahﷻ's name.'

Quraysh sent their army under the command of Khalid ibn Al Waleed and Ikrimah bin Abi Jahl. Rasoolullahﷺ asked if there was anyone who knew of a route to Makkah that could bypass the route the Quraysh army was taking. A man from Aslam offered to guide them through a path which was very rough and difficult terrain but they reached the plain of Al Hudaibiyya. When Khalid ibn Al Waleed learnt this, he rushed back to Makkah with his troops and the Quraysh now knew that Rasoolullahﷺ was just a day's march from Makkah. When they reached Hudaibiyya, the camel of Rasoolullahﷺ, Qaswa sat down and refused to move. When they tried to move her and said, 'Hal Hal', she would not move. So people said, 'Qaswa has become rebellious.' But Rasoolullahﷺ said, 'It is not in the nature of Qaswa to rebel. She has been held back by the one who held back the elephant.' Ibn Al Hajr Al Asqalani said, 'Allahﷻ knew then and now that the people of Makkah would become Muslim and so he held back the elephant of Abraha and Qaswa to prevent bloodshed. In

the case of Abraha, Allah ﷻ destroyed him and his army. In the case of Rasoolullah ﷺ Allah ﷻ held him back so that bloodshed would be prevented.'

Rasoolullah ﷺ was not interested in fighting the Quraysh. There were his own family and old friends among them. He had come to make Umrah as he had seen in his dream and all he wanted to do was to complete that worship and go home. Rasoolullah ﷺ said, 'By Him who holds my soul in His Hand, I will accept any offer they make that will protect and honor the sanctuaries and prevent bloodshed.' He made it clear to everyone that he was not intending to make war or to shed any blood.

There was a well in Al Hudaybiyya but the Sahaba discovered that it was dry. So they told Rasoolullah ﷺ and he gave them an arrow from his quiver and told them to drop it in the well and it filled with water enough to water the whole caravan as long as it remained there.

The situation was delicate and tense. Rasoolullah ﷺ wanted to send an envoy to explain to the Quraysh that he had not come to fight but only to make Umrah. So he chose Kharaash bin Umayya from the tribe of Khuza'a. When Kharaash entered Makkah the Quraysh killed his camel and almost killed him until the Ahabeesh intervened and protected him. Quraysh were desperate and frustrated and so they treated the envoy of Rasoolullah ﷺ in a way that was not in keeping with the norms of diplomacy. When Kharaash returned, Rasoolullah ﷺ wanted to send another

envoy. So he called Omar ibn Al Khattabﷺ and asked his opinion about going as his envoy. He said, 'If it your order I will go, but I have no family (Banu Adi) left in Makkah and nobody to give me protection and Quraysh know my animosity to them.' Rasoolullahﷺ was silent so Omarﷺ then suggested the name of Othman ibn Affanﷺ, who was from Banu Umayyah which was a branch of one of the major clans of Quraysh Banu Abd Manaaf. Quraysh had two major branches, Banu Makhzoom and Banu Abd Manaaf. Abu Jahl, Al Waleed bin Mugheera and Khalid Ibn Waleed were from Banu Makhzoom. Banu Abd Manaaf had two major branches: Banu Hashim (family of Rasoolullahﷺ) and Banu Umayyah. Othman ibn Affanﷺ agreed to go. When he reached Makkah he was immediately given protection by Abban bin Sa'eed ibn Al A'as (Abu Sufayan was away from Makkah at that time so Abban bin Sa'eed was the next in command). Abban took Othmanﷺ on his camel and announced his protection for him. Othmanﷺ addressed the leadership of the Quraysh and said to them, 'Rasoolullahﷺ has sent me to you to call you to Islam and to Allahﷻ and to enter the religion of Allahﷻ because Allahﷻ will give victory to His religion and will honor his Messengerﷺ. Secondly let someone else take care of this affair so that if they defeat the Messengerﷺ of Allahﷻ you will get what you want and if not you can then decide what to do. In the meanwhile you get some rest as war has exhausted you and the best among you have been killed. Rasoolullahﷺ sent me to tell you that we have not come here to fight anyone but have come for Umrah

and to slaughter our sacrificial animals and then we will leave.' He gave them a very direct and blunt message.

Abban bin Sa'eed told Sayyidina Othman ibn Affanؓ, 'If you want to make Tawâf, you can do that under my protection. Nobody will stop you.' Othman ibn Affanؓ said, 'I will not make Tawâf until Rasoolullahﷺ makes Tawâf.' Some of the Sahaba had been saying that Othman is lucky as he is now making Tawâf. But Rasoolullahﷺ heard them and said, 'It is my expectation from Othman that even if he stayed in Makkah for x-years he will not make Tawâf until I make Tawâf.' And that is what happened.

Quraysh sent Budair bin Waraqah from the tribe of Khuza'a to meet Rasoolullahﷺ. Budair went with some men from his tribe. This tribe was very sympathetic to Rasoolullahﷺ and both the Muslims and Mushrikeen among them were advisors of Rasoolullahﷺ. Khuza'a were allies of Banu Hashim and since Rasoolullahﷺ was the head of Banu Hashim they considered themselves allied to him and were loyal to their old tribal alliance. So Rasoolullahﷺ had inside information about the Quraysh and their people. Budair Ibn Waraqah told Rasoolullahﷺ that the Quraysh have come out ready for war, have put on their tiger skins and milking camels and are prepared to stay for a long time.

Rasoolullahﷺ said, 'I have not come to fight anyone. Quraysh have been consumed by war and are exhausted. I

am willing to give the Quraysh some respite. Let them leave me alone and give me access to the people and if I convince the people they can decide what to do. If I lose they would have rested and gained some time. If not and they want to fight, then I swear I will not give up until I perish and Allahﷻ will decide between us.’ Budair bin Waraqah returned and told the Quraysh what he had learnt but they didn’t like it and ignored him. Then Quraysh sent Mikraz bin Hafz. Rasoolullahﷺ said, ‘He is a man who is untrustworthy.’ Later Mikraz came with 50 men and tried to circle around the camp of the Muslims with the intention to take prisoners. However they were all captured by the Muslims except Mikraz who ran away but Rasoolullahﷺ released them all without any conditions as he had not come for war and wanted to give that message clearly to everyone. Then Al Hulais bin Alqama the head of Ahabish offered to go meet Rasoolullahﷺ. Rasoolullahﷺ said, ‘He is the head of a people who are devout. So drive out the sacrificial animals before him so that he can see that we have come only for Umrah.’ The Muslims did that. As soon as Hulais saw that he was so moved and convinced that he did not even meet Rasoolullahﷺ but returned to the Quraysh and said, ‘All glory is for Allahﷻ, it is not right to prevent these people from coming to the Ka’aba. This is not permitted in our traditions and we can’t prevent anyone from worshipping at Al Ka’aba. By Allahﷻ we allow the, Jidam, Kindah, Himyar Laham (tribes from Yemen) to come and visit the house of Allahﷻ while the son of Abdul Muttalib is himself prevented.’

Quraysh told him, 'Just sit down. You are a Bedouin without any sense.' Hulais became so angry with that, that he said, 'You have no right to prevent people who have come to worship at the house of Allahﷺ from coming here. If you don't stop this I will mobilize all the Ahabish against you, to the last man in them.' Eventually the Quraysh managed to calm him down and he was silent.

Then Urwah bin Masood offered to go to mediate with Rasoolullahﷺ. His mother was from Quraysh and he was from Al Thaqeef from At Ta'aif and was considered one of the great men of Arabia. He was a very powerful and famous man. He said to them, 'Am I not one of your sons? Do you want me to go and speak to this man?' They agreed, so he said, 'I have seen however that you send envoys but if they return without what you want then you demean and insult them. Now I don't want any part of that. So assure me about that and I will go to speak to Muhammadﷺ.' They agreed.

Urwah bin Masood was very arrogant and conscious of his exalted status among the Arabs. He went to Rasoolullahﷺ and said, 'Hey now Muhammadﷺ, have you not seen that you are ruining your own people? Have you heard of any Arab who ruined his own people? I don't see faces here (meaning, 'I don't see anyone noble or noteworthy). I just see a hodgepodge of people who are capable of running away if you lose.' Some of the tribes like Aslam and Ghifaar and Juhayan who were with Rasoolullahﷺ were

considered as second class by people of the major tribes like Quraysh and Thaqeef and Asad and Ghatafaan. Rasoolullah ﷺ said, ' On the Day of Judgment these small tribes will be far heavier on the scales than the big tribes who are honored today.'

When Abu Bakr ﷺ heard what Urwah bin Masood said he saw this as a great insult which would not be unnoticed and cursed him with a very bad curse. Urwah bin Masood was so badly affected by his words that he said to him, 'If it was not for the fact for your favor on me, I would have responded to your insult. But I will remain silent and with this silence of mine, I have paid your debt back in full.' His debt was 10 camels which Abu Bakr ﷺ had paid for him in a matter of blood money before Hijrah. Abu Bakr ﷺ's response was an indicator of how much he and the Sahaba loved Rasoolullah ﷺ. They would not allow any aspersion, insult or disrespect of Rasoolullah ﷺ go by silently and unpunished. They always stood up for Rasoolullah ﷺ irrespective of what it cost them. Their way of addressing him, 'May our fathers and mothers be sacrificed for you Ya Rasoolullah ﷺ,' was not a mere formality. They proved the truth of their love and commitment, time and again.

Ibn Al Hajar Al Asqalani says, 'Urwah saw the two options as disliked (fighting his own people or being defeated) because of the norms of the time and social and cultural traditions. But in the Shari'ah both are praiseworthy, for to fight even your own people for the sake of Islam and win,

is praiseworthy and to lose such a fight and become Shaheed fee Sabeelillah is also praiseworthy.’ So Islam changes our criteria of judgment and changes the way we look at life and what is right and wrong and what is winning and losing.

Urwah would extend his hand to hold the beard of Rasoolullahﷺ as he spoke as this was a custom of those days. Al Mugheera bin Uqbaﷺ who was standing beside Rasoolullahﷺ as his guard would strike the hand of Urwah with the flat of his sword and say, ‘Keep your hands to yourself or your hand will not return to you.’ Urwah bin Masood was upset at this treatment because he was a famous man and he was not used to having his hand slapped. So he asked, ‘Who is this man?’ because he could not see Al Mugheeraﷺ as he was completely covered in armor. Rasoolullahﷺ said, ‘This is your nephew Mugheera.’ Urwah was shocked at this treatment from his own nephew (among the Arabs the uncle is honored like the father) but it shows how Islam changes loyalties and that the loyalty to Rasoolullahﷺ supersedes all others.

Urwah said to the Quraysh, ‘I have gone in to Kings. I have had audiences with Caesar and Khusro and the Negus. But I have never seen any people love and venerate their kings as do the followers of Muhammadﷺ. If he spits it falls into the hands of one of them and he then rubs it on his face or body. When he speaks they rush to obey him and when they speak they lower their voices and they never look

directly at him out of their veneration. They will never leave him. He has made you an offer, so accept it.' Urwah bin Masood later accepted Islam and became a man blessed in both Dunya and Aakhira.

Othmanؓ was still in Makkah and a rumor spread that he had been killed. Rasoolullahﷺ headed for the camp ground of Banu Najjar. Umme Ammara (RA) said, 'I saw him coming to our camp and thought he needed something.' When he reached there, he sat down and said, 'Allahﷻ has commanded me to take a pledge (Baya'a).' Banu Najjar were from Khazraj and they were the relatives of Rasoolullahﷺ from his mother's side. He stayed with them when he first came to Madina and now he went to their tents first. They were his personal guards and closest to him. The pledge was taken in their camp. It was: 'We pledge to die. We pledge not to flee from battle. We pledge to you according to whatever is in your heart.' This is called Baya'a Al Ridwaan. See the level of trust that the Sahaba had for Rasoolullahﷺ that they were willing to pledge to 'whatever was in his heart' without knowing what it was and knowing that it meant giving up their lives for it if need be.

Umme Ammara (RA) said, 'I pulled out a pole from the tent and stuck a dagger in my belt as I wanted to be ready to defend Rasoolullahﷺ if anyone attacked him. My husband took the Baya'a with his sword in his hand.' The Sahaba were special and the Ansaar were special even among the Sahaba.

Rasoolullahﷺ called Salama ibn Al Akwaﷺ and ordered him to take Baya'a and he took Baya'a. Rasoolullahﷺ saw that he didn't have any armor so he gave him a small shield. Then he saw him again and said, 'Come and give Baya'a.' Salamaﷺ said, 'Ya Rasoolullahﷺ I have already given Baya'a.' Rasoolullahﷺ said, 'Come and give it again.' So Salamaﷺ gave it again. Then Rasoolullahﷺ asked him, 'What happened to the shield I gave you?' He said, 'I gave it to my uncle who did not have anything.' Rasoolullahﷺ said, 'The example of you is like the one who said, 'O Allahﷻ give me someone who loves me more than he loves himself.' Then Rasoolullahﷺ saw him again and called him, 'Come and give Baya'a', and Salamaﷺ gave Baya'a a third time.

The Shia blame Othmanﷺ for not giving Baya'a and for not taking part in Badr. This is a false accusation because first of all Sayyidina Othman ibn Affanﷺ couldn't take part in Badr as Rasoolullahﷺ ordered him to remain with his wife who was the daughter of Rasoolullahﷺ and was on her deathbed. As for Baya'a Al Ridwaan; for one thing it was for the sake of Othmanﷺ in the first place and secondly Rasoolullahﷺ put one of his hands in the other and said, 'This is the hand of Othman in my hand and I am giving the Baya'a on his behalf.' So his Baya'a was the best of all because Rasoolullahﷺ took it for him.

Allahﷻ said about this:

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا

لِتُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُعَزِّرُوهُ وَتُوَقِّرُوهُ وَتُسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَمَنْ نَكَثَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنْكُثُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ فَسَيُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Al Fath 48: 8. Verily, We have sent you (O Muhammad SAW) as a witness, as a bearer of glad tidings, and as a warner.⁹ In order that you (O mankind) may believe in Allâh and His Messenger (SAW), and that you assist and honor him (SAW), and (that you) glorify (Allâh's) praises morning and afternoon.¹⁰ Verily, those who give Bai'â (pledge) to you (O Muhammad SAW) they are giving Bai'â (pledge) to Allâh. The Hand of Allâh is over their hands. Then whosoever breaks his pledge, breaks only to his own harm, and whosoever fulfills what he has covenanted with Allâh, He will bestow on him a great reward.

Then Allah ﷻ said about this Baya'a:

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا

Al Fath 48:18. Indeed, Allâh was pleased with the believers when they gave their Bai'â (pledge) to you (O Muhammad SAW) under the tree, He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent

down As-Sakinah (calmness and tranquility) upon them, and He rewarded them with a near victory.

Allah ﷻ announced His praise for the Sahaba who took part in this Baya'a. Allah ﷻ witnessed this and said that it was His hand on the hand of Rasoolullah ﷺ. When the Baya'a was over Rasoolullah ﷺ said, 'You are the best of the people on the face of the earth.' *Antum khiyaarul ardh.*

Later it was discovered that Othman ؓ had not been killed and that the news of his death was only a rumor. The Baya'a was a test for the believers and they were rewarded even though there was no fight after it. In another hadith it says: Everyone was forgiven by Allah ﷻ except the owner of the red camel. This was Ajad bin Khais who did not pledge allegiance and was hiding behind his red camel to escape from pledging allegiance.

Quraysh sent Suhail ibn Amr to negotiate with Rasoolullah ﷺ. Suhail was very insistent on not allowing Rasoolullah ﷺ and Sahaba to enter Makkah on this trip and made it a condition of the treaty. This is a mark of Jahiliyya – the tribal pride of the Quraysh – which prevented them from accepting the fact that they were wrong in preventing pilgrims from coming to the Ka'aba. Rasoolullah ﷺ tried to argue this point but to no avail. In the end Rasoolullah ﷺ wanted this agreement to happen so he gave in. Rasoolullah ﷺ was obviously being guided by Allah ﷻ to do whatever he did but it was still a very severe test for him

and the Sahaba. After all they had all set out to make Umrah on his invitation and here they were being prevented unjustly.

Omar ibn Al Khattab ﷺ was very upset with what he was hearing in the discussion. So he went to Rasoolullah ﷺ and said, 'Aren't you the Messenger ﷺ of Allah ﷻ?' He said, 'Yes'. He asked, 'Aren't we the Muslims?' He said, 'Yes'. He asked, 'Aren't they the Mushrikeen?' He said, 'Yes.' He then asked, 'Then why should we demean our religion before them and bargain?' Rasoolullah ﷺ said, 'I am the slave of Allah ﷻ. I will not disobey him and he will not abandon me.' Omar ﷺ then went to Abu Bakr ﷺ and asked the same questions. Abu Bakr ﷺ said, 'Follow him. He is the Messenger ﷺ of Allah ﷻ and He will not forsake him.' Omar ibn Al Khattab ﷺ later regretted these arguments. He realized that what Rasoolullah ﷺ was doing was as a result of Wahi and so he had to do whatever he had been commanded by Allah ﷻ. Sayyidina Omar ﷺ's intention was pure in making his arguments as he was very sensitive about Islam and its prestige. But when he realized his mistake in arguing with Rasoolullah ﷺ he said, 'I have gone on fasting, praying, giving Sadaqa and freeing slaves in return for what I did that day and out of fear for what I said that day, so that Allah ﷻ will forgive me.'

Rasoolullah ﷺ dictated the terms and Ali bin Abi Talib ﷺ was writing them down. Rasoolullah ﷺ said, 'Write Bismillah hir Rahman nir Raheem.' Ali ﷺ wrote it. Suhail bin Amr who was the negotiator on behalf of Quraysh

objected and said, 'We know Allahﷻ but we don't know Ar Rahman and Ar Raheem. So write Bismikallahumma.' Rasoolullahﷺ told Ali to write that but Aliﷺ hesitated to erase what he had written. So Rasoolullahﷺ erased it himself. Then he said, 'Write 'Sulah between Muhammad the Messenger of Allahﷻ and the Quraysh of Makkah.' Aliﷺ wrote but Suhail objected and said, 'We know Muhammad bin Abdullah but we don't know any Rasoolullah. If we accept you as the Messenger of Allahﷻ then there is no quarrel between us. So write Muhammad bin Abdullah.' Rasoolullahﷺ ordered this change but Aliﷺ refused once again. Rasoolullahﷺ then made the change himself. For Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talibﷺ to make these changes was impossible because his faith was based on them. To now be told to erase the name of Allahﷻ and the name of Rasoolullahﷺ was something impossible for Aliﷺ to contemplate or agree to.

Terms of the Agreement of Al Hundaybiya

1. Both have agreed to a complete truce for a period of 10 years during which all the people will enjoy peace and security and will not attack one another.
2. If anyone from Quraysh should join Muhammad without permission from his guardian or chief he shall be returned to Quraysh.
3. If anyone from the camp of Muhammad joins Quraysh, they are not required to return them.

4. Both sides agree that they harbor good intentions towards one another.
5. No theft or treachery shall be condoned.
6. Whoever wants to enter into an alliance with Muhammad may do so and whoever wants to enter into an alliance with Quraysh may do so.
7. It is further agreed that you Muhammad shall return home this year without entering Makkah. At the end of one year we shall evacuate Makkah for you so that you may enter Makkah with your followers to stay there for 3 days only. You shall carry only the arms necessary for the traveler namely your swords in their sheaths. You shall not carry any other arms.

By agreeing to the unequal terms, Rasoolullahﷺ opened the door to the peaceful propagation of Islam. When hostilities ceased, Muslims were able to move about freely and to show and preach their message. The result was that most of Arabia accepted Islam. In order to win in the long term it is often necessary to sacrifice temporary or short term gains. This may be painful especially as this may require sacrificing one's personal pride in the process.

Hudaybiyya was a very severe test which I call the 'graduation' of the Sahaba after the years in Makkah and the Hijra and battles in Madina. This was the final exam to test their obedience in stressful conditions. So Allahﷻ tested them with a test so severe that it put some of the

leaders of the Sahaba like Omar ibn Al-Khattabؓ in a difficult position.

The test didn't end with the treaty itself. Just as they were about to sign the agreement, Abu Jindalؓ appeared. He was the son of Suhail bin Amr and had accepted Islam and had escaped from the Quraysh who had imprisoned him. He didn't know what was happening or anything about the treaty and was happy to get to the camp of Rasoolullahﷺ and was rejoicing at his escape. Suhail bin Amr saw him and made a point of this and said, 'This is the first person whose case I take up. You have to hand him over to us or we will not accept this entire agreement.' He would not budge to any amount of persuasion so Rasoolullahﷺ eventually told Abu Jindalؓ to go with Suhail bin Amr. Abu Jindalؓ was shocked. He said, 'Are you handing me back to them Ya Rasoolullahﷺ for them to test me in my faith?' Rasoolullahﷺ said, 'Be patient and Allahﷻ will help you and those who are suffering with you out of your hardship.'

This was a terrible test for the Sahaba and a big blow to their morale. It was also a test of their obedience to Rasoolullahﷺ in matters which they clearly hated and disagreed about. For the Sahaba who had dignity and honor and trust in Allahﷻ it was very difficult to see their Muslim brother being taken away by the Kuffar. And to know that Rasoolullahﷺ had agreed to this and they could do nothing to stop it. It is important to note that this is a

special case where despite the fact that he hated doing this, Rasoolullah ﷺ agreed only because of Wahi and the promise of Allah ﷻ that He would help the Muslims. This is not evidence that Muslims can be handed over to the Kuffar. It is Haraam to do so and anyone doing so has committed treason left Islam and will enter the Hellfire.

Omar ؓ walked near Abu Jindal ؓ as he was being taken away and tried to give him his sword so that he could attack Suhail bin Amr and escape. But Abu Jindal ؓ didn't take it and Omar ؓ said, 'He preserved his father and did not attack him.'

Now when the treaty had been signed and Suhail bin Amr had left Rasoolullah ﷺ ordered the Sahaba to shave their heads and slaughter their sacrificial animals. But for the first time nobody moved to obey. Rasoolullah ﷺ was very angry and upset at this apparent disobedience. He didn't repeat his command because he knew that if he had done that and the Sahaba didn't obey him, their faith would have become negated. He left them and entered his tent and said, 'The Muslims are ruining themselves. I have ordered them and they are disobeying me.' Umm Salama (RA), his wife who had accompanied him on this journey said, 'Ya Rasoolullah ﷺ the Muslims are under great stress because of all the trouble that you have taken in coming to this agreement. If you want them to obey, then go out and do it yourself and they will follow you.' Rasoolullah ﷺ accepted her advice and went out and ordered his own head to be shaved and slaughtered his camels. As one man, the Sahaba

all did the same. They were all very sad but obeyed Rasoolullah ﷺ even though it was with a heavy heart. They wept as they shaved each other's heads and tears mixed with blood as some of them cut the skin which shaving. What a strange sight it must have been to see great warriors weeping but obeying their leader without protest. Allah ﷻ liked this so much that he revealed the Qur'an.

For people like Omar ؓ and others, who were themselves warriors, this was a very humiliating treaty. However this was a test of their obedience to Rasoolullah ﷺ. And Allah ﷻ' s plan was for the future which only He was aware of. When the Sahaba rose to the occasion and obeyed their leader despite their own anger, frustration and disappointment at not being able to perform the pilgrimage, Allah ﷻ called it a manifest victory.

Allah ﷻ said:

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُّبِينًا

Al Fath 48:1 Verily, [O Muhammad,] We have laid open before you a manifest victory,

Lesson

Two key lessons in this incident:

1. For the leader it is essential to always keep the goal in sight and be willing to make everything, especially his *own* ego subservient to the accomplishment of the goal.

If the leader insists on his own esteem needs often the long term needs of the mission are compromised. The leader must always remember that his success, fame, value and legacy all depend on one thing alone and that is the success of his mission. Everything else must therefore be subject to that goal. If it is necessary for the leader to take a step back temporarily so that the doors for the propagation of his mission are opened, then he must be prepared to take that step. It is like drawing your hand back to draw the arrow. The further you are able to pull back the greater the distance that the arrow will travel.

Leaders, who don't understand this, sacrifice their ultimate success at the altar of their ego and are remembered for this rather than for any good that they may have done. Rasoolullahﷺ proved for all time his own ability to be so confident and secure in his own identity and self-worth that he was able to put everything aside for the success of his mission. The trust of his followers was demonstrated by the fact that he was able to sign a treaty that they did not approve of and they trusted him, stood by him and supported him. Victory comes not only by having good leaders but even more by having good followers.

2. Followers must be willing to trust the leader and stand by him even if he does something that they don't like at the time or don't understand fully. Once the leader has

been elected, then he must be trusted implicitly. In the case of Rasoolullahﷺ this trust was a part of the faith itself because they knew him to be the Messengerﷺ of Allahﷻ and the recipient of Wahi (Revelation) and so understood that if he did something he was being Divinely guided and so even if they didn't understand something they supported him in it. Needless to say, later events proved this support to be the right decision to have taken.

However even with ordinary leaders who are not divinely guided it is essential that they build enough credibility with their followers to be trusted implicitly and without question. This does not mean that followers must never question a leader or that a leader must not allow them to question him. This refers to the nature of the questioning; is it to understand or is it a challenge to his authority?

If it is the former it is to be encouraged but if it is the latter then it is a danger signal that the leader needs to mend his communication channels. This is also a reason why it is necessary for a leader to communicate openly, freely and often. The more approachable the leader is, the more people understand what he does and why he is doing it, the more he shows respect for his people and the more his people consider him as a role model; the more he will be trusted and looked up to. It is essential for a leader to consciously develop these qualities in himself.

Magnanimity and Forgiveness

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

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

People were shocked, astounded. They could not believe their eyes and ears. They hid in their homes at first, fully expecting the victorious Muslim soldiers to break into their homes to loot and rampage as victorious forces are wont to do. But nothing happened. Eventually, Hinda, the wife of Abu Sufyan; a woman who was a bitter enemy of

Rasoolullahﷺ and who was responsible for the mutilation of the body of the uncle of Rasoolullahﷺ, Hamza bin Abdul Mutallibؓ in the battle of Uhud after he had been killed by Wahshiؓ, an incident that caused untold suffering to Rasoolullahﷺ; left her home to see what was happening. And what did she see? She saw Rasoolullahﷺ and his companions praying in the Haram and asking for Allahﷻ's mercy and thanking Him for His help.

It is true that as a victor Rasoolullahﷺ could have taken revenge. But that would have opened new wounds which would have set off a new series of conflicts all resulting in delay or defeat of his real mission, the spreading of his Message. By forgiving those who had wronged him, he sent a powerful message that the mission was above all personal considerations and put those who had wronged him in his debt. Instead of fighting him or hating him they were now grateful to him and wanted to please him. At one stroke, he laid to rest all future potential conflicts among his followers without which his mission would have failed. The leader must be prepared to sacrifice his personal benefits for the sake of the goal and must be prepared to set a personal example in this respect. It is only when the followers see the behavior of the leader that they will follow suit. The result will be the success of the mission. Forgiveness is the foundation of this success.

The cause is greater than personal emotions.

Perhaps the best and most poignant incident that illustrates Rasoolullahﷺ's commitment to the cause and his willingness to sacrifice his personal emotions for its sake was his treatment of the man who killed Sayyidina Hamza bin Abdul Muttalibﷺ, his beloved uncle and great supporter.

Out of the 70 Shuhada at Uhud, Al Hamza bin Abdul Muttalibﷺ was given the title of Sayyidus Shuhada. Two of the Taabi'een went to visit Al Wahshiﷺ who was old at the time and asked him to tell them the story of how he killed Hamzaﷺ. Wahshi said, 'Shall I tell it to you just as I did to the Messenger of Allahﷺ when he asked me about it? I was a slave of Jubair bin Mut'aim whose uncle was Tuaima bin Udaibi who was killed in Badr. When the Quraysh went forth to Uhud, Jubair told me, 'If you kill Hamza, Muhammadﷺ's uncle in retaliation for my uncle, then you will be a free man.' I am Abyssinian and like my countrymen I am good at throwing the spear and I rarely miss with it. When the armies met in battle I went forth looking for Hamza to lie in wait for him. I found him right in the midst of the fray like an enormous camel striking out viciously at our men with his sword. Nothing could withstand him. I made use of bushes and rocks to get close to him but Sibaa bin Abdul Uzza got to him before me. Hamza called out to him, 'Come over here you son of a woman who does circumcisions.' He then struck a blow so fast that it seemed to miss his head. But his head flew off and so I knew that he had not missed. I aimed my spear

carefully and when sure of it threw my spear which hit him below the navel and emerged between his legs. He tried to move towards me but was overcome. I left him with the spear until he died. Then I went and retrieved my spear and went back to my camp. I had no business with anyone there except Hamza who I killed only to gain my freedom.'

Rasoolullahﷺ heard of the death of his uncle and he was devastated by it. It was one of the saddest moments in the life of Rasoolullahﷺ. He went to see the body of his uncle. When he saw him, his stomach had been opened and his insides were pulled out. The man who took him there said, 'This is not how I found him. He has been mutilated.' This was because Hind bint Utbah the wife of Abu Sufyan had sworn to eat his liver and she ordered that his liver be pulled out. This appearance and violence to him after his death only added to the grief of Rasoolullahﷺ and he wept profusely.

Wahshi then said, 'I went back to Makkah and stayed there until Rasoolullahﷺ opened Makkah. Then I fled to Ta'aif and stayed there until the delegation left to go to Rasoolullahﷺ to accept Islam. Now I didn't know where to go. I told people that I would go to Syria or Yemen or some other country. Then someone said to me, 'He will not kill anyone who testifies to his religion. He will forgive you.' So I went to Madina and surprised him and testified to the truth of Islam before him. Then he asked me, 'Are you Wahshi?' I said, 'Yes Ya Rasoolullahﷺ.' He said, 'Sit down and tell me how you killed my uncle Hamza.' So I related

this story as I related to you. When I finished he said, 'Wahshi please remove your face from me. Now go and fight in the path of Allah ﷺ as you fought against Allah ﷺ.' 'So I used to avoid Rasoolullah ﷺ wherever he may be so that he would not see me and then Allah ﷻ took him to Himself.'

Wahshi ﷺ then joined the army that went to fight Musailima Al Kazzab (Musailima the Liar), the imposter who had declared Prophethood during the life of Rasoolullah ﷺ. Rasoolullah ﷺ met Musailima and advised him against this but he refused to accept the advice and raised an army to attack Madina. Rasoolullah ﷺ sent an army against him which was victorious and Musailima Al Kazzab was killed. Wahshi ﷺ described his role in this battle and said, 'I took my spear with which I had killed Hamza ﷺ and I saw Musailima standing with his sword. I aimed my spear at him and when I was sure of my aim, I threw it. At the same time another Muslim attacked him from the other side with his sword. My spear struck him first then the other Muslim struck him.' That man was Abu Dujaana ﷺ who had been given the sword of Rasoolullah ﷺ. Wahshi ﷺ said, 'If it was I who killed him, then with this spear I killed the best of men and the worst of men.'

Another story which illustrates this amazing ability of Rasoolullah ﷺ to put aside his personal preferences, likes

and dislikes in the interest of his cause is the story of how Khalid bin Waleedؓ came to Islam.

Khalid bin Waleedؓ said, 'I attended so many battles against Muhammadﷺ and at the end of every battle I felt that I had wasted my time and that in the end Muhammadﷺ would prevail.' 'One day before Hudaibiya, I was leading 200 men (kuffar) and saw Muhammadﷺ face to face and he was leading his people in Salah (praying Dhuhr) and it was a great opportunity for me to attack them in Salah and finish them. But something held me back and I did not attack them. I decided to attack them in the next Salah but by then they were praying differently and I knew that he was being protected.' The Ayaat for Salat-ul-Khawf had been revealed and the Sahaba were now praying in a way that they could not be attacked. Khalid bin Waleedؓ was an intelligent man and read the signs.

When Rasoolullahﷺ came to Makkah to do Umrah-tul-Qadha'a in the year after the Treaty of Hudaibiyya to make up for the Umrah which he couldn't do in the year of Hudaibiyya, Waleed bin Waleedؓ the younger brother of Khalid who was a Muslim and accompanied Rasoolullahﷺ went to visit his brother. Khalid was not there as he had vacated Makkah along with the other Kuffar and so Waleedؓ left a letter for him. It said, '*Bismillah hir Rahman nir Raheem. I know of nothing more strange than your antipathy towards Islam. Being as intelligent as you are, can anyone disregard something like Islam? Rasoolullahﷺ asked me about you and asked me 'Where is Khalid?' I told him, 'Allahﷻ will*

bring him to Islam.’ Then he said, ‘Could someone like him disregard Islam? If he were to put his bravery and energy to work for Islam it would be better for him. We would certainly give him precedence over others.’ Take note brother of what good things you are missing.’

Khalidؓ said, ‘When Rasoolullahﷺ asked about me, it moved me a lot and made me go to him.’ To be able to completely concern for others is to worry about their A’akhira. This is the essence of Da’awa.

Khalidؓ had a dream where he saw himself in a constricted place and he was walking out of there into a vast and very beautiful place. Later after Islam he asked Abu Bakrؓ for its interpretation and he told him that it meant that he was going to leave shirk and enter Islam.

Khalid bin Waleedؓ went to meet some of his friends to ask for their advice about becoming Muslim. He went to Safwan bin Umayya and told him what was on his mind. Safwan told him, ‘If no one but me remains I will not accept Islam.’ Then he went to Ikrimah bin Abi Jahal and said, ‘Our situation with Muhammadﷺ is like a fox in a hole. If you throw a bucket of water in the hole it will come out running.’ Ikrimah refused to accept Islam so Khalid told him not to tell anyone else about him. Then he went to Othman bin Talhaؓ who had lost 7 family members in Uhud. At first he was hesitant to speak to him as he felt that Othman would certainly be opposed to Islam but then he

decided to talk to him anyway as his own mind was made up. Othman, to his great surprise agreed to go with him immediately. Shows how we must not have preconceived notions about people with respect to Da'awa. Allah ﷻ guides who He wills. When Khalid ﷺ, Amr ﷺ and Othman ﷺ reached the outskirts of Madina and put on their best clothes to meet Rasoolullah ﷺ. After they accepted Islam Rasoolullah ﷺ said, 'Alhamdulillah who guided you to Islam. I saw that you were intelligent and I hoped that your intelligence would only guide you to the good.'

Rasoolullah ﷺ recognized the abilities of people and gave them positions in relation to those abilities. That is why he gave Khalid bin Waleed ﷺ and Amr ibn Al A'sas ﷺ positions of authority over others. Rasoolullah ﷺ made Khalid bin Waleed ﷺ Commander in Chief of the army over the heads of Sahaba who were his seniors and gave him the title of Saifullah (Sword of Allah ﷻ). Khalid ﷺ proved his mettle and justified the decision of Rasoolullah ﷺ. Many years later when Khalid bin Waleed ﷺ was dying a friend came to visit him. Khalid ﷺ appeared very distressed and said to his friend, 'There is not a place on my body from the top of my head to the bottom of my feet which doesn't bear the mark of a wound from an arrow, spear or sword, taken in the path of Allah ﷻ. Yet I am dying here like a camel in my bed instead of falling in the field of battle as a martyr.'

His friend comforted him and said, 'Don't distress yourself. Allah ﷻ will reward you for your effort. But your fate was

sealed when Rasoolullahﷺ gave you the title of Saifullah. How can the Sword of Allahﷻ fall in battle?’

Lesson

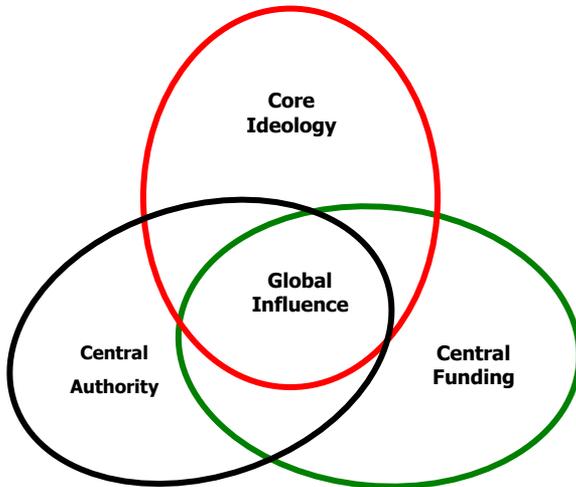
It is clear from this that the cause must supercede the personal likes and dislikes of the leader. Despite his own personal emotions and immense grief at the death of his beloved uncle and anger at his killer, Rasoolullahﷺ wanted Wahshiؓ to be on the right path and forgave him and accepted his Islam. Therefore it is essential for the leader not to allow his own likes/dislike to harm the Deen or the common benefit of humanity. Even when we have strong feelings about someone or something, these should not bind us to the past to the extent that we forget to see the greater good. It is almost as if these tests come to open doors. When we pass the test, then the doors to the hearts of people open and people admire the leader for his ability to put his own interest aside for the benefit of the cause. The test comes to ask, ‘How much do you truly want your cause to triumph?’ Our actions have to answer.

This is easier said than done and is perhaps one of the strongest and clearest indicators of the commitment of the leader to his cause. To be able to be completely committed to the cause, yet keep the boundary between personal and the cause is the balance that the leader must create. It is the emotional commitment of the leader which overshadows every other difficulty and enables him to continue to work for the cause in the face of every discouragement and

setback. However these very emotions must sometimes be sacrificed so that the interest of the cause can be furthered. That is a very great sacrifice and perhaps it is for this reason that Rasoolullahﷺ is reported to have said once, 'Every prophet is tortured and troubled by his people and I have been tortured the most.' However he proved true to his covenant and worthy of the Divine message that he was charged with and his patience eventually won even his worst enemies over to his cause.

Transitioning from Person-led to Process-driven

Any leader who is serious about the long term impact of his leadership and is keen that his message must continue to be spread after his death must seek to transition the nature of his leadership from being Person-led to Process-driven. So what are the requirements for a movement to become global in nature and to survive and grow long after its founder? I believe there are three which if fulfilled, result in Global Influence.



Core Ideology

The first requirement for a global movement is a Core Ideology that has clear simple but powerful concepts, appeals to people and attracts believers, and is easy to teach and follow. The leaders would be the ideologues; who teach the ideology, make necessary periodic adjustments, interpret it, propagate it and above all, preserve its integrity. Included also are the schools and universities, the writers, researchers and scholars who study the ideology and become its lifelong proponents.

When people start to follow a leader they come from their various origins so the leader quickly needs to create a binder that transcends their inherent original boundaries. Without this he will not be able to weld them together into one people.

When Rasoolullah ﷺ brought Islam, the Arabs were a tribal people, identified by their tribal identity, loyalty to which was a cardinal principle of their existence. It was for this reason that some of the tribes supported Rasoolullah ﷺ even when they had not accepted Islam. However strangely and in direct defiance of this principle, his own people, the Quraysh opposed him. However tribal loyalty was also the reason why in pre-Islamic times, the Arab tribes were famous for their vendettas that spanned generations, often over some trivial matter that would have long been forgotten. Yet enmity on its account continued and was handed down from father to son.

In Madina this internecine warfare between the two major Arab tribes of Aws and Khazraj reached a stage where by the time Rasoolullahﷺ made Hijra, effectively all their major leaders had been killed in skirmishes. The major task that Rasoolullahﷺ had was to unite all these disparate Arab tribes under one banner and give them one common identity which would serve to cement them together into one people. This was something that was unheard of at the time and which sadly today once again has become a story from the past.

Brotherhood of Faith

It is interesting that the Islamic calendar does not start from the date of birth or of death of Rasoolullahﷺ but from the date of his journey to Madina with the intention of starting a brotherhood of faith, the Ummatul Muslima and the establishment of the Islamic state. Structures are important because they influence behavior.

Without structures and systems behavior depends on the personal will of individuals which can change and the work of a generation may be completely lost. However if robust structures are created which can serve to give meaning to generation after generation, then you can be assured that the core ideology which gave them birth will remain vibrant and powerful. As I mentioned earlier, the biggest challenge that Rasoolullahﷺ faced was to bring together people who were hereditary enemies, not only on one platform but make them brothers to each other and to

get them to love one another such that they would be willing to sacrifice even their lives to protect someone who used to be their enemy. It was a challenge that anyone other than the Messenger ﷺ of Allah ﷻ would not even have attempted and as such it is one of the proofs of the Divine nature of the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ. Finally it was a challenge that could not have been accomplished without the help of Allah ﷻ.

For a people used to thinking in terms of race, tribe and lineage and to discriminating against one another on all those bases, what was the amalgam, the adhesive that would bind them despite all their racial and tribal diversity? This is where the power of the Core Ideology – Islam – came into play and Islam became the binding force. A man became the brother of another man, not because of his tribe or family or race but because of what he carried in his heart – a belief that there was nobody worthy of worship except Allah ﷻ and that Muhammad ﷺ was His last and final Messenger ﷺ. It was this belief that joined not only Arab tribesman to Arab tribesman, but Arab to non-Arab, black to white to red to yellow across the world. All this may seem strange today because we seem to have lost it all and gone back into the age of pre-Islamic darkness of ignorance, discrimination and racist thinking but Allah ﷻ is witness that this miracle of Rasoolullah ﷺ did happen.

Allah ﷻ revealed about forming an identity on the basis of religion:

إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ

Anbiya 21:92. Truly! This, your Ummah [brotherhood] is one religion, and I am your Rabb, therefore worship Me (Alone).

وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُونِ

Mu'minoon 23: 52. And verily! This your religion (of Islâmic Monotheism) is one religion, and I am your Rabb, so keep your duty to Me.

Allah ﷻ reminded the people about their past with which they were themselves very unhappy because of the immense suffering of insecurity and tragedy that they brought on themselves thanks to their pre-Islamic customs and that it was Islam which released them from this slavery to ignorance and misguidance. He said:

وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

A'al Imraan 3: 103. And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of Allâh (Qur'ân, Islam), and be not divided among yourselves, and remember Allâh's Favour on you, for you were enemies one to another but He joined your hearts together, so that, by His Grace, you became brethren (in Islâm), and you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus Allâh

makes His Ayât (proofs, evidence) clear to you, that you may be guided.

Allah ﷻ also said:

وَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ لَوْ أَنْفَقْتَ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مَا أَلَّفْتَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ
أَلَّفَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

Al-Anfaal 8: 63. *And He has united their (i.e. believers') hearts. If you had spent all that is in the earth, you could not have united their hearts, but Allâh has united them. Certainly He is All-Mighty, All-Wise*

Just to give you an example about how this happened in Madina when Rasoolullah ﷺ made one Mahajir (Immigrant – foreigners to Madina who migrated there for the sake of Islam) with one Ansaari (Supporter – inhabitants of Madina); the Ansaar went to Rasoolullah ﷺ and said, “Please split the palm groves between the Muhajiroon and us.” Rasoolullah ﷺ refused. So they said, “Then let the Muhajiroon work in the farms and we will split the crop with them.” So Rasoolullah ﷺ agreed. But then the Ansaar did most of the work and then they would split the harvest with the Muhajiroon. So the Muhajiroon came to Rasoolullah ﷺ and said, “Ya Rasoolullah ﷺ, we have never seen people like these. They comfort us when they are poor and they are generous when they are well off. They work in their farms and then they still split the harvest with us. We are afraid that they will take all the reward from Allah ﷻ

and leave us with nothing.” Rasoolullahﷺ said, “No, as long as you are grateful and make dua for them, Allahﷻ will also give you reward.”

O! Allahﷻ what has happened to us today? Where did all this disappear to? Will it ever return or are we, those who love you and love your Deen, destined to weep our tears until we meet you?

New Rules of the Ummah – Breaking of old ties

The political situation in Madina was very complex with several communities with different political ties. Rasoolullahﷺ was building a new nation based on faith which was a new bond and went against the grain of their traditional bonds. Allahﷻ was revealing Ayaat to declare the need to break the old relationships and to form new ones based on Islam. He said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا آبَاءَكُمْ وَإِخْوَانَكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ إِنِ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْكُفْرَ عَلَى
الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَوَلَّيْنَاكُمْ هُمْ الظَّالِمُونَ

قُلْ إِن كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا
وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِينُ تُرَضُّونَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي
سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ

At-Tawba 9: 23. O you who believe! Take not for Auliya' (supporters and helpers) your fathers and your

brothers if they prefer disbelief to Belief. And whoever of you does so, then he is one of the Zâlimûn (wrong-doers). 24. Say: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your kindred, the wealth that you have gained, the commerce in which you fear a decline, and the dwellings in which you delight ... are dearer to you than Allâh and His Messenger, and striving hard and fighting in His Cause, then wait until Allâh brings about His Decision (torment). And Allâh guides not the people who are Al-Fâsiqûn (the rebellious, disobedient to Allâh).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا عَدُوِّي وَعَدُوَّكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ تُلْفُونَ إِلَيْهِمْ بِالْمَوَدَّةِ وَقَدْ كَفَرُوا
بِمَا جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ الْحَقِّ يُخْرِجُونَ الرَّسُولَ وَإِيَّاكُمْ أَنْ تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ رَبِّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ خَرَجْتُمْ
جِهَادًا فِي سَبِيلِي وَابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِي تُسِرُّونَ إِلَيْهِمْ بِالْمَوَدَّةِ وَأَنَا أَعْلَمُ بِمَا أَخْفَيْتُمْ وَمَا
أَعْلَنْتُمْ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْهُ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ
إِنْ يَتَّفِقُواكُمْ يَكُونُوا لَكُمْ أَعْدَاءً وَيَسْطُوا إِلَيْكُمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ وَأَلْسِنَتُهُمْ بِالسُّوءِ وَوَدُّوا لَوْ
تَكْفُرُونَ

لَنْ تَنْفَعَكُمْ أَرْحَامُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

Mumtahinah 60:1. O you who believe! Take not My enemies and your enemies (disbelievers) as friends, showing affection towards them, while they have disbelieved in what has come to you of the truth (Islâm), and have driven out the Messenger (Muhammad) and yourselves (from your homeland) because you believe in Allâh your Rabb! If you have come forth to strive in My Cause and to seek My Good Pleasure, (then take not these disbelievers as your friends). You show friendship to them in secret, while I am All-Aware of what you conceal and what you

reveal. And whosoever of you (Muslims) does that, then indeed he has gone (far) astray, (away) from the Straight Path. 2. Should they gain the upper hand over you, they would behave to you as enemies, and stretch forth their hands and their tongues against you with evil, and they desire that you should disbelieve. 3. Neither your relatives nor your children will benefit you on the Day of Resurrection (against Allâh). He will judge between you. And Allâh is the All-Seer of what you do.

Allahﷻ ordered the Muslims to break their old tribal relationships and to form relationships on the basis of faith. Company is extremely important in the building of faith and the brotherhood and Allahﷻ was underlining this critical element. This was critical because as mentioned earlier the tribal bonds were age-old and sanctified by tradition. The new relationship of faith was something that the Arabs had no experience of and which required them to transcend all their old prejudices against each other and treat each other as brothers no matter what they had done in the past. This bonding was a severe test of faith because it was Islam and their belief in the Qur'an and in the prophethood of Rasoolullahﷺ that was being tested. The true test of any faith is action on its basis and the Sahaba proved true to the test.

New Bonds – Basis of friendship

After cutting the old ties Allahﷻ now set another basis for relating to each other. Allahﷻ told the Muslims who their real friends were and on what basis friendships must be

formed. This is critical to remember because friends corrupt or guide one. Allah ﷻ described the believers and their qualities by which they are recognized. Allah ﷻ pointed the believers to the sources of help and guidance that they must align towards. Allah ﷻ pointed out the mistakes of those who had received the scripture before the Muslims and what they did with it and He warned the Muslims against repeating those mistakes. He assured them that if they were truthful and faithful to their religion then they would become winners in this world and the next.

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ

وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَإِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْعَالِيُونَ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَكُمْ هُزُؤًا وَلَعِبًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ
مِن قَبْلِكُمْ وَالْكَافِرَ أَوْلِيَاءَ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ كُفْرَكُمْ مِّنْكُمْ

وَإِذَا نَادَيْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ اتَّخَذُوهَا هُزُؤًا وَلَعِبًا ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

Ma'aidsa 5: 55. *Verily, your Walî (Protector or Helper) is Allâh, His Messenger, and the Believers, - those who establish As-Salât (Iqâmat-as-Salât), and give Zakât, and they bow down (submit themselves with obedience to Allâh in prayer).*
56. *And whosoever takes Allâh, His Messenger, and those who have believed, as Protectors, then the party of Allâh will be the victorious.* **57.** *O you who believe! Take not for Auliyâ' (protectors and helpers) those who take your religion for a mockery and fun from among those who received the*

Scripture before you, nor from among the disbelievers; and fear Allâh if you indeed are true believers.58. And when you proclaim the call for As-Salât [call for the prayer (Adhân)], they take it (but) as a mockery and fun; that is because they are a people who understand not.

By means of these Ayaat of the Qur'an, Rasoolullahﷺ was able to set forth clearly the criteria of differentiating good from evil, right from wrong and to give those who followed him a basis on which to form new ties that were free from their racist and tribalistic thinking and values. This was the new identity that bound them together.

Lesson

We don't want to repeat all that we have already mentioned about the first of the requirements to create a global movement. What is important to note here is that in the initial stage the personality of the leader plays a huge role in drawing people to the movement. It was the personality, manners, diplomacy, nobility and grace of Rasoolullahﷺ which drew people to him and to Islam. There was nobody who accepted Islam purely on the basis of theological argument even though he did not like Rasoolullahﷺ. The Sahaba loved Rasoolullahﷺ more than they loved anyone else including themselves. Allahﷻ bore witness to this and said:

النَّبِيِّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ وَأُولُو الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ
بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَفْعَلُوا إِلَىٰ أَوْلِيَائِكُمْ مَعْرُوفًا
كَانَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا

Al Ahzab 33:6 The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves, and his wives are their (believers') mothers (as regards respect and marriage). And blood relations among each other have closer personal ties in the Decree of Allāh (regarding inheritance) than (the brotherhood of) the believers and the Muhajirûn (emigrants), except that you do kindness to those brothers (when the Prophet joined them in brotherhood ties). This has been written in the (Book of Divine Decrees)

So it is critical for the leader to be liked and loved in order to be obeyed because initially that is the reason why he will be obeyed especially in situations where the followers may not agree with or like his decision in a particular case. This became very clearly evident in the case of the Treaty of Hudaibiyya where the Sahaba clearly didn't like the terms of the treaty but followed Rasoolullah ﷺ simply because their love for him and trust in him and in the fact that he was being Divinely inspired overcame their own personal feelings and hesitation.

Not being rigid in decision making

At the time of the Battle of Uhud, when the attack of Quraysh on Madina was imminent there were two opinions about the preferred course of action to protect Madina.

One was to fight in Madina, in the streets so that the women and children could also take place in the fight. This was the opinion of Rasoolullahﷺ and the leader of the Munafiqeen, Abdullah ibn Ubayy; for different reasons of course.

Another opinion was to fight outside Madina. This was the majority opinion mostly of the youth, all those who could not take part in Badr and who felt that they had lost out and that the enemy would never dare to enter Madina and so if they didn't go out to fight they would miss the battle. They said it was shameful to allow the enemy to come inside Madina and so they should fight outside. They put pressure on Rasoolullahﷺ to do this and so he went inside his house to put on his armor.

Given his stature, and the Sahaba's love, admiration and respect for him, Rasoolullahﷺ could have easily imposed his will, and none would have opposed him. He however decided according to the will of the majority. As this was on Friday, in the subsequent Khutba Rasoolullahﷺ emphasized the need for resoluteness in the battle field. After the prayer some of the Sahaba felt that they had perhaps insisted on their view and persuaded Messenger of Allahﷺ to do something against his better judgment and view. Sa'ad ibn Muaadhﷺ and Usayd bin Hudayrﷺ two of the more influential leaders of the Ansaar carried this message that they were sorry that they put pressure on him and that they were willing to go with whatever he wanted to do. Hamzaﷺ carried this message to Rasoolullahﷺ who

was inside his private apartment. Rasoolullahﷺ came out and said, 'It is not appropriate for a prophet to put on his armor and then to take it off until Allahﷻ judges between him and his enemy.'

Other Lessons

1. Those in authority should not impose their will on their subordinates. Leaders should not be rigid in their decision making and should be prepared to listen and take into account the views and emotions of those under their authority. This is not because the leader does not know what to do but because in the end proper implementation of the decision will happen only if there is commitment to it from all those who are affected by it. If the leader does not listen to his followers and does not take into account their concerns then there is every likelihood that especially those who are lacking in total commitment to him will either do things halfheartedly or defect altogether. Many times, listening to the opinions of others does not mean to change your decision but simply to give them a patient and respectful hearing so that they are reassured that their concerns, fears and aspirations have been taken into account by the leader before he came to his conclusion.

Another reason to listen to subordinates and holding your decision in abeyance is because it is entirely possible that people may have critical information that will affect the outcome of the actions that you are about to take. If this information is withheld from the leader and he is not

informed either because he will not listen or because people are afraid to tell him something that appears to be contrary to his known preference, then his decision will necessarily be faulty. Not only will such a decision not have the commitment of all those who had the information and did not share it but it is most likely to have a negative impact which will seriously undermine future credibility of the leader.

One must consult his companions because in consultation there is blessing in the decision and brings the hearts of people together. Consultation also alerts the leader to incipient conflicts which can become critical if not addressed early. Finally consultation gives the leader a measure of the commitment of his people. That is the reason Allah ﷻ advocated Shura (consultation) even for Rasoolullah ﷺ who was the recipient of Wahi (Revelation) and so the question of his either being wrong or ill-informed does not arise. Shura will benefit the leader no doubt but its chief benefit is in its nature to build consensus.

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

Ash-Shura 42:38. And those who answer the Call of their Rabb [i.e. to believe that He is the only One Rabb (Allâh), and to worship none but Him Alone], and perform As-Salât (Iqâmat-as-Salât), and who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation, and who spend of what We have bestowed on them

2. Once a decision is made, as far as possible it should be carried out and everyone including those who were not in favor of the decision should help to see it followed through till the end. This is the essence of teamwork. Once team members have expressed their opinions then it is essential that they stand firmly behind the leader in his decision even if the final decision is not to their entire satisfaction. This demonstrates a commitment to the cause which the leader represents and to which they have committed is a critical quality of followership. Today we are very vocal about the lack of leadership but we forget the importance of followership. From the Seerah of Rasoolullah ﷺ and his Sahaba there are innumerable examples of the Sahaba having been in disagreement with the leader's decision and expressing their disagreement but then standing firmly behind the leader and demonstrating their commitment, even if it meant losing their lives in that process. The incidents of Al Hudaibiyya, the army of Zayd ibn Haritha ؓ and its dispatch to Mo'ata, the war against the Murtaddeen (apostates) are all examples of this spirit of followership which was the secret of the success of the leadership of Rasoolullah ﷺ and his Khalifa, Sayyidina Abu Bakr As Siddeeq ؓ. Hesitation after a decision is made is highly undesirable. At critical junctures to vacillate between different points of view could be extremely harmful.

3. Make every person you come into contact with feel important. One of the essential qualities of a leader is to

keep those who follow him and are under his authority satisfied that he or she is not being neglected and feels left out by the leader. Amongst the remarkable attributes of Rasoolullahﷺ was that he interacted with the Sahaba in such a manner that every Sahabi felt that he was closest to him. Rasoolullahﷺ would give his complete attention to the person he would be speaking to and would look directly at him and turn towards him. Even in his public addresses it was his way to speak, looking directly at people so that each person felt that he was being directly addressed. Abdullah ibn Amr ibn Aasؓ was one of these and one day asked Rasoolullahﷺ, 'Ya Rasoolullahﷺ, who is the closest to you among the people?'

Rasoolullahﷺ replied, 'Ayesha.' Abdullah ibn Amrؓ persisted and asked, 'And among the men?' Rasoolullahﷺ said, 'Her father.' This answer was not only because Abu Bakr Siddeeqؓ was in fact the closest companion and friend of Rasoolullahﷺ but because there was a religious dimension to this answer as Abu Bakrؓ was to follow Rasoolullahﷺ as his Khalifa. Notwithstanding this answer it was a fact that every Sahabi felt that he was the closest to the Messengerﷺ due to the high regard and close attention he received from Rasoolullahﷺ. This was one of the reasons they loved him beyond everything else and were willing to sacrifice anything for him.

Central Authority

The second requirement for a global movement is a central authority that can create the necessary conditions to propagate the ideology and for people to practice it. This would consist of three distinct parts:

Legislature: A Law which prescribes permitted and prohibited actions with concomitant rewards and punishments. The Law must necessarily cover all aspects of life and must have within it enough flexibility to cater to emerging situations that may not have existed at the time of the inception of the ideology.

Judiciary: Those who interpret the Law and deal with any infringements, questions and clarifications. The Judiciary must at once be well versed in the Law as well as be well aware of modern issues and how they affect the lives of people. Only then will they be able to interpret the Law in a way that it continues to be applicable as one century succeeds another and times, lives and people change.

Executive: The Civil Administration which ensures that the Law is followed, those adhering to it are facilitated and those who break it are punished. The Executive is the arm of the Central Authority and ensures that individual intransience does not jeopardize the fabric of the Core Ideology. The Executive must possess great integrity, wisdom, diplomacy and firmness in order to ensure that it treads the narrow middle path between anarchy and

dictatorship. Both are detrimental to the long term viability of the Core Ideology.

Rasoolullahﷺ's big challenge in Madina was to create an Islamic government in a state which was pluralistic and multi-religious. Madina at the time of the Hijra had two major Arab tribes, Aws and Khazraj, who had Muslims and polytheists among their members. There were the Muhajiroon who had emigrated from Makkah and elsewhere to Madina to be with Rasoolullahﷺ and the Muslims. There were three major Jewish tribes, Banu Nadhir, Banu Qaynuqah, Banu Quraidha and then there were sundry people who were polytheists and some Muslims. It was essential therefore that a new law be created which would take into account the rights of all concerned and ensure that justice was done to everyone. Rasoolullahﷺ created what was perhaps the first Constitution of any state until that time.

The Covenant

Rasoolullahﷺ drew up an agreement between the Migrants (Muhajiroon) and the resident population of Madina. This included the Muslims and the Jews who also lived in Madina. The agreement was binding on both parties and it was its violation by the Jewish tribes later that led to their eventually being expelled from Madina. This agreement can be said to be the Constitution of the Islamic State that Rasoolullahﷺ founded and as such would perhaps be the first document of its kind in the history of the world which

gave equal rights to all people irrespective of their religious belief. More than anything else, for the writer of such a document to be the head of a new religion that he founded is astounding to say the least. It is true that Islam was not a new religion because it was the religion of all the Anbiya since the beginning of time but as far as the people of the time were concerned it was new to them and Muhammad ﷺ was its founder. Yet here he was prescribing equal rights to all people whether they belonged to his religion or not.

Ibn Ishaq: Contract between the Muhajiroon and Al Ansaar.

In the name of Allah ﷻ the Beneficent and Merciful. This is a document from Muhammad ﷺ the Unlettered Prophet between the Believers and Muslims of Quraysh and Yathrib and their followers, allies and supporters establishing that they are one nation apart from all others.

The immigrants from Quraysh will maintain their current practice and will honor blood money contracts between themselves and will treat their weaker members with kindness and justice. The Banu Awf shall maintain their current practice and honor their former blood money contracts each party treating their weaker members with kindness and justice among all believers. (He mentioned all the clans of the Ansaar and all the families from them).

The believers shall not leave anyone among them burdened by debts without giving to him in kindness and paying for him any ransom money or blood money he owes.

A believer shall not ally with any freed man of a second believer against that man. Pious believers act against any of their own who practice evil, or seek to bring harm, sin, aggression or corruption among believers. Believers will unite against anyone doing this even if he be one of their own sons.

No believer shall kill any believer for any non-believer nor shall he help any non-believer against a believer. Allahﷻ's protection is all one, the least of them can offer protection to others. Believers are allies to one another excluding others.

Whoever from among the Jews follows us shall receive help and equality. They shall not be maltreated nor shall help be afforded to others against them. No peace shall be accepted for any one believer to the exclusion of others when the battle is for Allahﷻ's cause. Among them equality and justice must prevail. In any expedition we engage in riders will take turns on their mounts. Believers shall avenge one another for blood, shed in Allahﷻ's cause. Believers who are pious are well guided on the straightest of paths.

No polytheist shall be allowed to offer protection for the property or persons of Quraysh. Nor try to interfere with any believer. Anyone who has clearly aggressed and caused the death of any believer shall be subject to retaliation unless the dead person's executor can be satisfied. Believers as a whole shall take action

against him and no excuse for their not doing so shall be acceptable. It shall not be permissible for any believer who accepts what is in this document and who believes in Allah ﷻ and the Day of Judgment to give help or shelter to any wrong doer. Any believer who does so will be the object of Allah ﷻ' s curse and anger on Judgment Day and neither compensation nor excuse will be accepted from him. Any matter in which you disagree must be referred to Allah ﷻ and to Muhammad ﷺ.

The Jews shall pay expenses along with the Muslims so long as they are allied in warfare. The Jews of Bani Awf are one nation with the Believers. The Jews shall have their religion, the Muslims their own. This applies to their freedmen and to themselves except to those who commit sins and are unjust. Such people only harm themselves and their families.

What applies to Bani Awf shall also apply to the Jews of Banu Najjar, Banu Harith, Banu Sa'ada, Banu Jushan, Banu Aws, Banu Thalaba, Jufna and Banu Shutaiba. The close associates of the Jews shall be viewed as themselves. None of them shall go to war without Muhammad ﷺ' s permission. However he is not thereby constrained from taking revenge for injury.

Whoever attacks another shall do so to protect himself and his family and act not unjustly. For Allah ﷻ condemns such acts. The Jews shall bear their own expenses, the Muslims theirs. Each must help one another against those who fight those who adopt this document. They must give one another advice and consultation and do good and avoid evil. A man is not held

blameworthy on behalf of his ally. Help must be given to those wronged.

The center of Yathrib shall be a sanctuary for those who agree to this document. One's neighbor shall be treated as oneself without being harmed or sinned against.

No property shall be entered upon without the permission of its owner. In the case of any dispute or incident occurring between those agreeing to this document and involving consequences likely to be harmful the matter must be referred to Allah ﷻ and to Muhammad, Rasoolullah ﷺ. Allah ﷻ acknowledges what is very good and very pious in this document.

Quraysh and those who help them shall receive no protection. Those accepting this document must help one another against anyone attacking Yathrib. If they are called upon to make peace and do so and keep to it, they will be making peace. If they make a similar demand it is up to the Muslims to agree except if the warfare is over faith.

Each participant shall receive whatever portion is due to him from his own side's winnings.

This document will not provide protection for anyone sinful or unjust. Whoever goes to war will be safe and whoever stays in the town will be safe except those who have sinned or been unjust. Allah ﷻ provides protection for those who are good and pious.

Key elements of the Covenant

1. The law maker is the leader. Rasoolullah ﷺ wrote a document to regulate relationships and so his authority was established and he became the judge. All disagreements must be referred to Allah ﷻ and Muhammad ﷺ. The only name mentioned is the name of Rasoolullah ﷺ. The relationship of Rasoolullah ﷺ to Allah ﷻ is clearly defined in this and so is the fact that the authority of Rasoolullah ﷺ came from Allah ﷻ and so it is the rule of Allah ﷻ that was being established here.
2. The Muslim Ummah is one community excluding others. So the distinct identity of the Muslim is an important part of this.
3. Jews had equality, permission to practice their religion freely and had the protection of the Muslims. They had to support the Muslims and give them advice and counsel. Nobody could leave Madina without the permission of Muhammad ﷺ much as you can't leave your country without a passport today.
4. Madina was made Al-Haram – the center of Yathrib was made a sanctuary i.e no hunting, cutting trees or fighting.

Lesson

In a new situation it is essential for the leader to cease initiative and consolidate his position. Creating a law that is fair to all concerned and of which the leader is the arbiter

also serves to move the focus of the community from being person-led to becoming followers of a system. This is very important because all people perish one day but systems transcend generations and critical for any leader who wants his message to outlast his lifetime. The success of the leadership of Muhammad ﷺ is not merely in his popularity with those who were lucky enough to share his life and times but in the fact that even after 14 centuries and constant persecution, his message continues to dominate the global platform.

Another benefit of the establishment of the Law was to give a basis for those who would succeed Rasoolullah ﷺ to continue the chain of command and for future generations to continue to pledge allegiance and obey the Law. This became clear right in the first instance when Abu Bakr Siddeeq ؓ became the Khalifa and said in his inaugural address, 'O People, obey me as long as I obey Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ and correct me if I deviate from this.' He was renewing the pledge that he had given and which every Muslim has given to obey the Law no matter who the representative of the Law is. It also reiterated the principle that the representative of the Law is himself subject to the same Law and is not above it. This was a unique feature in a world that believed in the Divine Right of Kings where the king was above the law. But in the case of Muhammad ﷺ though he was the Messenger of Allah ﷻ and so perhaps most fitted to place himself above the law that he brought, he did the opposite and declared himself and all those who come after him as being subject to the law.

This is the true meaning of Rule of Law and differentiates civilized society from the merely feudal which works on the basis of Rule of Man.

This centralization of authority is essential to avoid confusion and to preserve the integrity of the message especially after the original leader is not there any longer to ensure it personally.

Funding

It may not be an appropriate saying to use here but I am reminded of the common proverb, 'Money makes the world go around.' Islamically our belief is that it is Allahﷻ who provides with His Power and by His Grace and Mercy but that one must make the necessary effort to ensure that all material means are adopted and all material rules are fulfilled. There are many examples from the life of Rasoolullahﷺ, our litmus test for all matters, to show that he took all precautions, made all material preparations and made every physical effort before he turned to Allahﷻ in prayer and dua. Islam doesn't limit the amount of money that one can make but regulates the methods that can be employed in making it. Islam is concerned with the means of earning wealth and with how it is spent, not with how much of it is earned.

Islam insists that wealth is earned using fair means, without deception of any kind, without usury and interest, without exploiting labor or society. Islam insists that wealth must not be made at the expense of the wellbeing of others

and so prohibits hoarding of civil supplies, especially food items. Islam insists that wealth is spent for the good of society and so makes charity compulsory and encourages one to give more after having fulfilled one's obligation. Rasoolullah ﷺ never prevented or stopped anyone from trade and making money and even said that Allah ﷻ put 9 out of 10 parts of blessing (Baraka) in trade. On one occasion when prices were very high, Rasoolullah ﷺ refused to enforce price regulation and instead encouraged people to behave responsibly towards all constituents of society. Islam follows the principle of free enterprise with social responsibility based on accountability to Allah ﷻ and eventual reward with him in the Aakhirah.

It is with this principle in mind that we suggest that for any global movement to succeed, it is essential to have in place a mechanism for a centralized collection and administration of funds. This would consist of a structure for the collection of funds that is rooted in the Core Ideology, a method for collecting the funds and the infrastructure necessary for the collection and administration of the funds. It is necessary to have both obedience to the Central Authority and payment of the funds enshrined in the Core Ideology itself so that 'believers' will automatically become active financial supporters of the ideology. In this way also the movement is assured of a certain base amount annually which can be administered in accordance with its principles for its benefit. Our contention is that without these three elements working in consonance it is not possible for any movement to become global or to remain viable over time.

Historical Examples of success and causes of failure

Let us briefly, look back in history to see how this model has been in operation in various global movements.

The Catholic Church

The Catholic Church in its heyday controlled Europe and the New World. The Pope dispensed favors, excommunicated the recalcitrant, including kings, ordered the Inquisition, blessed the wholesale destruction of the South American civilizations in the name of spreading Christianity, approved of the Black African slave trade, initiated and sanctified the Crusades and decided how people should lead their lives. Believers tithed 10% of their income to the Church and the Vatican and its Popes became fabulously rich and powerful. The model of ideology, authority and funding was working well.

Then came the Reformation, Protestantism (started in Germany – Martin Luther), Anglicanism (Church of England with the British Monarch as its head instead of either the Pope or any ecclesiastical), the French Revolution (with its ideas of equality & fraternity), Communism (Karl Marx in Germany) and general atheism in the name of science and consequently the power of the Catholic Church waned.

The Wikipedia encyclopedia mentions the Reformation as follows:

*“The **Protestant Reformation**, also referred to as the **Protestant Revolution** or **Protestant Revolt**, was a*

movement in the 17th century to reform the Catholic Church in Western Europe. The Reformation was started by Martin Luther with his 95 Theses on the practice of indulgences. On October 31, 1517 he is said to have posted these theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg (Germany), commonly used to post notices to the University community. In November he sent them to various religious authorities of the day. The reformation ended in division and the establishment of new institutions. The four most important traditions to emerge directly from the reformation were the Lutheran tradition, the Reformed/Calvinist/Presbyterian tradition, the Anabaptist tradition, and the Anglican tradition. Subsequent protestant traditions generally trace their roots back to these initial four schools of the reformation. It also led to the Catholic or Counter Reformation within the Roman Catholic Church through a variety of new spiritual movements, reforms of religious communities, the founding of seminaries, the clarification of Catholic theology as well as structural changes in the institution of the Church.”

The income of the Catholic Church was drastically reduced as was its power, both temporal and religious. Today the Catholic Church and its power are confined within the walls of the Vatican. Its influence is only among the Catholics of the world who in Europe are mostly nominally religious. European cathedrals are visited more by sightseeing tourists than by the faithful for prayer. Churches in Europe and America are progressively more and more empty. The final sign of decline in Catholicism and Christianity is that many churches have been sold to other religious groups to establish their own forms of

worship. The current attacks on Islam and support for making war on Islam and Muslims worldwide is the last ditch attempt of the church to revitalize Christianity.

Another example to illustrate the validity of this model is the Ismaili Shias led by their leader, the Aga Khan and the Dawoodi Bohras led by their leader the Sayyidina. There again we see an ideology that binds its believers into one group with the Aga Khan/Sayyidina at its head. We see a central authority (the Aga Khan/Sayyidina) that claims divine sanction and justification for its existence and a funding system (every Ismaili/Bohra in the world tithes 12.5% of his income to the leader who has unquestioned right to use it in any way he wants) that is scrupulously followed and enforced through religious sanction and fear of excommunication. There are also many subsidiary payments for favors and various rites and rituals that must be made for an Ismaili/Bohra to be able to remain within the fold. It is true that these monies put the heads of the communities among the billionaires of the world, but a considerable part of the funds are used for developmental work among their people through educational and social development foundations and trusts.

As we can see from all the examples above; as long as the three elements of global movements work in consonance, the movement has energy and progresses. When one or more of the elements becomes defective or ceases to function, the movement loses momentum and can even completely shut down.

The Global Movement model in Islam

Core Ideology

Islam presented an ideology that promoted justice, social responsibility and activism against all forms of oppression. The theological basis was translated into actual actions and rules of life which became the temporal/social model. It is not enough in Islam simply to believe in the Oneness of Allahﷻ and in the Messenger-ship of Muhammadﷺ. There are clearly specified actions that must be done to prove that one actually believes. The first among these is the Salah and the second, spoken of in the same breath is Zakat, the compulsory charity that every Muslim who has the means as specified in the Shari'ah must pay into a central fund. One is not separated from the other and in fact reinforces the other. Interestingly if you read early Islamic history it becomes abundantly clear that all the opposition to Islam was really rooted in the unwillingness to act according to the rules of Islam, almost all of which were social, family and state related, rather than any opposition to the central belief itself. This trend continues to this day and those who have difficulty in following Islam, including modern day Muslims, must look to their personal desires to identify the root of their reluctance or opposition. It is not the theological argument itself but the fact that in Islam is it not merely intellectual in nature but must be affirmed through action. If Islam were just a matter of believing conceptually in Tawheed the work of Rasoolullahﷺ would have been very easy.

There is an incident recorded where the leaders of Makkah came to Rasoolullah ﷺ and told him that they were prepared to worship Allah ﷻ on one day provided he (Muhammad ﷺ) would agree to worship their gods the next. In today's world this may seem like a very reasonable argument and people may actually call you 'extremist' or 'fundamentalist' if you don't agree to such a 'reasonable' stance. However Rasoolullah ﷺ did not accept this proposal, because accepting this would have been to nullify the entire philosophy of a religion that claimed to be directly from Allah ﷻ and was diametrically opposed to polytheism and which He (Muhammad ﷺ) had been sent to propagate. These are tests that the leader has to face and no matter how difficult, refuse to compromise his stance in favor of any logic. If he doesn't, he will then lose the edge that is his as a result of his differentiating from the rest.

Central Authority

Islam created the institution of the 'Constitutional Ruler' – the Khalifa who rules by the Divine Law. He rules by a law that he did not create and under which he is also answerable just as the lowest of the citizens under his care. The Khalifa was the true servant of the people, was elected on the basis of demonstrated piety, wisdom and ability at statecraft. As is clear from early Islamic history, the Khulafa-e-Rashida were elected by their peers who agreed to obey them because of the high respect in which they held them. This can be seen also from incidents where ordinary

citizens disagreed with the Khalifa and this disagreement was upheld. So obedience was subject to the ideology.

Funding

Islam legislated that a minimum of 2.5% of savings (Zakat) must be remitted into a common fund controlled by the state which is to be spent in welfare activities. The purpose of this was twofold. One was to enforce circulation of money into the economy. That is why Zakat is payable not only on monetary savings but also on gold and silver which is the most common way of securing one's savings. Similarly Zakat is payable on crops, trade goods in stock, land purchased for the purpose of trade. All this to ensure that those who are rich cannot take money out of circulation and that a certain amount will always be forced back into the system.

The second purpose of Zakat was to give enough funds in the hands of the Central Authority to be able to utilize them according to an overall development plan. Zakat is the most effective way of development financing and if Muslims pay Zakat in the way it was meant to be paid; pay it in full and pay it into a common fund; then not only will there not be a single destitute Muslim in the world but the Muslims will be able to do a huge amount of social development of other deprived people all over the world. This would be the most powerful method of Da'awa which is the underlying intention in Zakat anyway.

As we can see from all the examples above; as long as the three elements of global movements work in consonance, the movement has energy and progresses. When one or more of the elements becomes defective or ceases to function, the movement loses momentum and can even completely shut down.

Historical changes in the Islamic model

History does not spare anyone who changes its rules. And neither did it spare the Muslims. As Muslims changed the purity of the model of global movement so also their fortunes were and continue to be affected. Their effect became less and less global and their presence was seen more in history books than in actual observable fact. It is interesting, though painful, to examine some of the dilution that took place and its effect on Islam and Muslims worldwide.

Ideology

As Islam moved out of the Arabian Peninsula and further away from the times of Rasoolullahﷺ in terms of time and entered Egypt, Syria, Iran and India it took into itself influences from Coptic Christianity, Greek and Roman philosophy and mythology, Zoroastrianism and Hinduism. The purity of the doctrine of Tawheed – the Oneness of Allahﷻ without partners and interceders, the direct connection between the Creator and the slave – was clouded by theories of partnership in various ways. New philosophies played on the vulnerabilities and fears of the

human being and pandered to his innate laziness to develop his own spiritual self and offered him non-existent sops of helpers who promised him everything from Divine Grace to Jannah itself. People who should have known better did not ask by what authority these promises were made. They believed these promises and paid for the false sense of security they brought by giving the liars money, position and influence.

But as the unique identity of Tawheed was corrupted, correspondingly Islam lost its own uniqueness. Islam and Muslims started resembling Hindus, Christians and others in terms of their lifestyle, rituals, customs and practices. They stopped being standard bearers to an ideology that was as clean and pure as the desert air that bore witness to its glory first. It became as cloudy as the muddy stream that meanders through the gloom of the forest, its waters moving slowly, unable to carry even the flotsam of dry leaves and its bottom murky with decomposing vegetation and slush.

As people stopped seeing the uniqueness of Islam, so also they stopped being attracted to it. What they saw was not much different from whatever they believed in and did not have any solutions to the problems that they suffered from and nothing much was changed except the name of the ritual or the "idol" that was worshipped.

Above all of this however, the true tragedy was the breakup of the Ummah. As different interpretations,

philosophies and cults started, the Muslim Ummah started to break up. And correspondingly the conflicts became more internal than external against shirk and Kufr. Leaders of the different sects fanned the flames of mutual hatred in order to build their own little islands of support at the cost of the whole Ummah. Muslims started killing Muslims. Muslims refused to cooperate with Muslims. Muslims worked against Muslims. Race, nationality, tribe, color and sect all became more important than being Muslim. All the boundaries that had been erased with so much effort by Rasoolullah ﷺ once again came back into the Ummah and the Muslim Ummah went down the road of fragmentation as did those who came before them. And with the same results in terms of lost influence, power and wealth.

Central Authority

This was actually one of the first things to be attacked and weakened. The beginning was the change from the Khilafat being an elected office to becoming a hereditary one. The Khalifa therefore became a king, though he was still called the Ameer-ul-Mo'mineen. The structure remained in the form of an empty shell under which lived a different being. Since competence was no longer a criterion of leadership and leadership had become hereditary, competence came to be seen as a threat by the incumbent leaders. Brilliant generals like Tariq bin Ziyad and Mohammad bin Qasim were recalled at the peak of their campaigns and were punished for being successful in their tasks. This hereditary lineage became the norm even among the religious leaders

and sons inherited their father's place as the head of a Sufi order or a religious school or teaching institution. The example of Rasoolullah ﷺ in not choosing his own relatives to inherit his mantle of leadership ended very quickly after his death. Consequently Islam and its global position of dominance suffered and gradually and steadily declined.

Times changed and so did the behavior of the Khalifa. Khulafa like Sayyidina Abu Bakr Siddeeq ؓ and Umar ibn al Khattab ؓ would not have dreamt of using a single dirham out of the treasury on themselves. This integrity changed to a situation where the treasury became the personal property of the Khalifa/king and his family. They built palaces and accumulated wealth that became legendary. Taxes were levied not to raise money for public welfare but to pay for the lifestyle of the king and his nobility. Wars were fought, not to open the doors of the world for the message of Islam but to acquire land and wealth. New converts to Islam were told that they would still have to pay the jizya in addition to the Zakat that they were liable to pay as Muslims because they did not belong to the ruling class. Muslim rulers became the cause of people staying away from Islam instead of being the facilitators for people to enter Islam.

Eventually at the end of the 1st World War even the pretense of the Khilafat ended with the deposing of the last Khalifa who was overthrown by the British educated and indoctrinated apostate, Kamal Pasha also known as Ataturk. The real tragedy there was how the British were

able to sow the seeds of racial and tribal discrimination between the Turks and Arabs and broke up the Ottoman Empire. The lands of the Muslims were carved up among the victors who put their own puppets in the driving seats in each little principality which was ultimately ruled by the British. None of these puppets had the foresight not to allow the institution of the Khilafat to die. And the institution was allowed to die and in its place arose small principalities ruled by men with no vision who merely perpetuated the traditions of self-indulgence that the Khilafat itself had espoused for several centuries before. Of such incidents is the history of a people comprised. The sun of the Khilafat of the Muslims set, perhaps forever.

Funding

We come to the third element of global movements. Islam created the institution of Zakat as a compulsory payment to be made to the state. As explained earlier Zakat has two purposes: to keep money in circulation to fuel the economy of the nation and to collect enough money centrally to be able to spend it in a systematic and impactful manner. Without a central method of collection and distribution it is not possible for the state to carry out any strategic development. The institution of Zakat was so important that it was combined with prayer itself and was declared to be another form of prayer – prayer in a financial form. People who refused to pay Zakat were declared to have exited Islam itself. And in the time of Sayyidina Abu Bakr Siddeeq ﷺ when there was a rebellion where people refused

to pay Zakat to the state's collectors, he sent the army after them on the principle that anyone who refused to pay Zakat had left Islam.

Allah ﷻ ordered Rasoolullah ﷺ to collect Zakat from the people and called it a 'purification' of their wealth. The idea was for Zakat to be collected by the state and then used for different purposes. These were also specified.

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ صَلَاتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Tawba 9:103 [O Messenger ﷺ] Take Sadaqah (Zakat) from their wealth in order to purify them and sanctify them with it and invoke (make dua) Allah for them. Verily your duas are a source of security for them and Allah is All-Hearer, All-Knower

إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَاتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْعَامِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا وَالْمُؤَلَّفَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْعَارِمِينَ وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

Tawba 9:60 As-Sadaqaat (means Zakat here) are only for the Fuqara (poor) and Al-Masakeen (poor who don't ask) and those employed to collect (the Zakat funds) and to attract the hearts of those who have been inclined (towards Islam) and to free slaves (captives) and for those in debt and for Allah's cause and for the wayfarer (traveler who is cut off from everything); a duty imposed by Allah. And Allah is All-Knower, All-Wise.

All this importance to Zakat was not only on account of its payment but of its payment into a central fund. It is this collective administration of Zakat which has become practically non-existent. Today we have reached a state where not only do many Muslims not pay Zakat at all, but there is no central system of collection and administration of Zakat at a global level. In some Muslim countries there is a local system of collection but in countries where Muslims live in large numbers like India, China, Russia, America; there is no system for centrally collecting and distributing Zakat. Consequently the leverage of the fund is lost.

The tragedy is that even though the total amount of Zakat paid annually runs into billions, because it is paid piecemeal and in a dispersed manner, the leverage is lost. No major project can be undertaken because there is no surety of an assured annual inflow. The needs of some institutions are never met in full and the quality of their service suffers. In other cases there is a surplus which is often frittered away by way of small charity to large numbers of people like public feeding. Nobody benefits in the long term, though they may well gain some small benefit momentarily.

Succession planning & Leadership development

No goal can be achieved by anyone alone, no matter how talented or powerful or wealthy that person may be. The biggest challenge for any leader; indeed the single factor which can mean success or failure of his mission; is his ability to inspire others to follow him and commit time, energy, wealth and talent for the achievement of his goal. The key to achieving this attention and commitment of people does not lie in paying money or granting favors or making inspiring speeches but in showing how much you really love and care for your followers. By showing I don't mean any pretension because acting cannot be sustained. Showing means to express the love and concern for followers that you truly and genuinely feel so that they also know it.

As they say, 'They don't care what you say, until they know that you care.'

Rasoolullahﷺ's concern was not only for his followers but even for those who denied him and tried to harm him only because he wanted to invite them to the truth and save them from the Hellfire. This sounds like a strange thing because in all worldly matters people love those who are willing to give them things for free. But when someone

invites a person toward eternal success some people find that offensive and fight that person and oppose him and even try to harm him.

This happened to Rasoolullah ﷺ many times and in many ways. Most of all was his own frustration and grief at the fact that despite his best efforts his own people refused to listen to him. His concern for them was such that Allah ﷻ revealed:

لَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَفْسَكَ أَلَّا يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ

Ash-Shua'ara 26:3 Would you, torment yourself to death [with grief] because they refuse to believe?

فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَفْسَكَ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ إِنْ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا

Al Kahf 18:6. Perhaps, you, would kill yourself (O Muhammad) in grief, over their footsteps (turning away from you), because they believe not in this narration (the Qur'an).

It was this concern that came through and to which they responded and not only believed in him but then supported him and were willing to do anything to protect him and propagate his message even if it meant losing their lives.

Allah ﷻ said about the love of Rasoolullah ﷺ for his followers:

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَؤُوفٌ
رَّحِيمٌ

Tawba 9:128. *Verily, there has come unto you a Messenger (Muhammad) from amongst yourselves (i.e. whom you know well). It grieves him that you should receive any injury or difficulty. He (Muhammad) is anxious over you (to be rightly guided, to repent to Allâh, and beg Him to pardon and forgive your sins, in order that you may enter Paradise and be saved from the punishment of the Hell-fire), for the believers (he is) full of sympathy, kind, and merciful.*

If there is one thing that is crystal clear about the character of Rasoolullah ﷺ as a leader it is his patience and gentleness. There are several instances in his life where others behaved with him in such foolish and harsh ways that those who were with him drew their swords to teach the person a lesson. But Rasoolullah ﷺ never allowed them to take that course. His way was to deal with the harshest of treatment with calmness, gentleness and a smile.

Allah ﷻ said

فِيمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ
عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ
الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

A'al Imraan 3:159 *And it was by Allah's grace that You [O Muhammad] dealt gently with your followers: for if you had been harsh and hard of heart, they would indeed have broken away*

from you. Pardon them then, and pray that they be forgiven. And take counsel with them in all matters of public concern; then, when you have decided upon a course of action, place your trust in Allah: for, verily, Allah loves those who place their trust in Him.

There is the famous story of a woman of Makkah who out of sheer hatred for Rasoolullahﷺ used to lie in wait for him in an upper storey of her house and when he would pass through the street below her, she would throw garbage on him. He would say nothing and would just brush his clothes clean and would continue on his way. This was a regular pattern for a long time. One day however when he passed by that house nothing happened. So on his return Rasoolullahﷺ knocked on the door and asked about the lady. The person who answered the door said that the lady was ill. Rasoolullahﷺ asked to see her and went in and enquired about her welfare. The lady was so ashamed at her own conduct and so astonished at the fact that despite the fact that Rasoolullahﷺ had only suffered ill at her hands, he had actually stopped by to enquire about her welfare that she accepted Islam.

There is another story where Rasoolullahﷺ saw an elderly lady standing by the wayside with some luggage. He enquired and she said that she was waiting for someone to help her to take her luggage to a place where she could join a caravan going out of Makkah as she had decided to leave the city. Rasoolullahﷺ took her luggage on his head and shoulders and walked with her to the caravan camp

ground. On the way the lady told him that the reason she had decided to move was because of how unhappy she was with this young man called Muhammad ﷺ who claimed to be the Messenger of Allah ﷻ and was persuading people to leave the polytheistic religion of their forefathers and worship Allah ﷻ alone. She went on in this vein and warned Rasoolullah ﷺ from coming under the influence of this man. She said to him, 'You are such a nice young man, so helpful and kind. Stay away from this man or he will misguide you as well.' Just then they reached their destination and the old lady thanked Rasoolullah ﷺ profusely for being kind enough to help her when she was in need. Then she said, 'And what is your name my son?' Rasoolullah ﷺ said, 'My name is Muhammad, O Mother.' The lady was so shocked that it was the very person who she had been criticizing who had not only helped her but hadn't said a word and listened to all the criticism without complaint that she said, 'If you are Muhammad ﷺ then I believe that your claim that you are the Messenger of Allah ﷻ is correct. I bear witness that there is nobody worthy of worship except Allah ﷻ and that you are his Messenger ﷺ.'

On one occasion in Madina, Anas bin Malik ؓ narrates 'Whilst we were in the Masjid with Rasoolullah ﷺ a blind Bedouin came and started to urinate in the Masjid. The companions rushed to stop him. Rasoolullah ﷺ said, 'Do not interrupt him until he is finished.' Rasoolullah ﷺ was thinking of the likely consequence if he were stopped while in the process of his action, he would most likely run away

from the companions leading to the impurity spreading over a wider area of the masjid. Rasoolullahﷺ had the far sightedness to see that leaving him alone until he had completed what he was doing, was the lesser of the two evils. After he had finished Rasoolullahﷺ led him out and told him what he had done and then had the place washed.

As mentioned earlier Rasoolullahﷺ would follow the command of Allahﷻ scrupulously, to consult with his Sahaba before he took any decision. This may seem strange because for one thing he knew more and better than they did as he was the recipient of Wahi (revelation) as well as being the wisest and most experienced of them. Yet we realize the wisdom of this when we reflect on the effect that this consultation had on the Sahaba themselves.

1. It made them feel included, valued and responsible for the effort and outcomes.
2. It ensured their commitment to the cause because they had been consulted.
3. Sometimes they had critical information about local matters which came to light when they were consulted and enabled a better decision.
4. It was training in decision making for them for the future for the time when Rasoolullahﷺ would no longer be among them.
5. It served to create cohesion among them and enabled them to think across their tribal and local boundaries

for the benefit of all concerned and the success of the mission of propagating Islam.

A combination of picking the right people, setting a high personal example and intensive hands on training, Rasoolullahﷺ created not one but a set of leaders who were able to take his message forward long after he had passed away. It is true that there were various conflicts three decades after he passed away which led to consequences that he wouldn't have wanted or approved of but this fact only underlines the reality that no great effort is sufficient for all time. It must be continued generation after generation if one is to continue to reap its benefits.

Whatever happened in history, the example and model that Muhammadﷺ left for the world remains clear, vibrant and valid for anyone who is interested in benefiting from it. It is true that the world has changed beyond recognition from the world of Muhammadﷺ but the principles he laid down are still as true as other laws of nature that don't change because society changes. Just like gravity or the law of aerodynamics, the law of success in this world and the next remains the same. That is what Muhammadﷺ was sent to teach the world. To that we bear witness and ask Allahﷻ to make us worthy of being his followers.

Conclusion

As I have been writing this book over the past year, the world seems to be speeding towards self-destruction. I am reminded of what Allah ﷻ said about this:

وَالْعَصْرِ

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَّصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَّصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

Asr 103:1. *By Al-'Asr (the time). 2. Verily! Man is in loss, 3. Except those who believe (in Islam) and do righteous good deeds, and recommend one another to the truth and recommend one another to be patient*

I believe that especially at a time like this what human beings need above all else is great, principle based leadership. What better model for that than the life of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, Muhammad ﷺ. A life that is clearly documented, free from legend and mythology and a living example that it is indeed possible to live ethically, morally and responsibly with compassion for others and courage to stand up against oppression and yet be highly successful in life. That is the reason I decided to do what I could to put before you whatever I know about his blessed and remarkable life in modern language and idiom, understood by all of us, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. It is my hope that you will find it beneficial.

Afterword

I have only experienced the brilliance of Shaikh Yawar Baig twice. The first time was at a leadership course in the UK and the second was when I read this book. Both encounters made me feel extremely empowered and liberated from the shackles of the ephemeral nature of the world. Shaikh Yawar 's style and approach to leadership is direct, to-the-point, enlightening and powerful.

Leadership Lessons from the Life of Rasoolullah is a book that should have been written 25 years ago, when Da‘wah and aspiring Muslim leaders were beginning to emerge in the West. This book takes a unique look at the life of our beloved Prophet (upon whom be peace) and presents timeless lessons that is relevant to aspiring leaders and *duaat*. Shaikh Yawar produces a myriad of lessons from the life of Rasoolullah (upon whom be peace), and every single one of these lessons must be framed and placed on our walls in our bedrooms, so when we wake up in the morning we are reminded that we should awaken from our current psychological and spiritual state and live a life emulating and internalising the essential elements of the Prophetic path.

Shaikh Yawar highlights that the Prophet (upon whom be peace) was a successful leader because he had complete certainty in his mission. This is paramount for any Muslim

who has taken up the immense responsibility of leadership. Certainty, in other words knowing that your vision and mission in life is based on the *haq*, gives one the ability to achieve and do things that were deemed impossible by others (including the your own self!). It removes that veil that blinds us to our undiscovered potential and ability. It sounds very simple, however if we were to truly internalise the truth of Islam, and know that Allah's promise is true, that *jannah* awaits the believer, that Allah is our helper, and that no one can benefit or harm us unless Allah has willed it, it would have a tremendous effect on our psyche. We would be able to take a small village in Kent and take over the whole of Europe. This is exactly what the Prophet (upon whom be peace) achieved with the Sahaba (may Allah be pleased with them). They came from the modern equivalent of small villages, Mecca and Medina, without any sophisticated technology or mountains of wealth, but yet managed to fulfill the vision of Rasoolullah (upon whom be peace) and take the peace and justice of Islam to the entire world. We are the fruits of their work; we are the fruits of their certainty.

If I were to summarise what I have taken from *Leadership Lessons from the Life of Rasoolullah*, I would argue it is being resilient in the face of adversity, knowing who Allah is and what He has promised us. I still remember sitting in the Shaikh's leadership course and hearing the words "*Allah is not a concept. He is a reality*". The book follows in this direct style and I feel these key lessons from the book will help us with regard to our self-pity and incapacitated state of

victimhood. For me, this is what the book achieves, empowering us to realise who we really are and how we can transform our situation.

John W. Gardner, the Secretary of Health under US president Lyndon Johnson once described self-pity as, *“easily the most destructive of the non-pharmaceutical narcotics; it is addictive, gives momentary pleasure and separates the victim from reality”*. Gardner referred to self-pity as a narcotic, and if true, then victimhood would be the pathology. Victimhood involves the belief that being a victim renders a group or individuals powerless, with a lack of agency or the ability to change the context of a problem. Victimhood is not the same as being a victim. People do, many times justifiably, see themselves as victims, and you need to be a victim to suffer from victimhood, however they are not one and the same thing.

Victimhood, or in the word of the Shaikh *“those who feel besided”*, differs from being a victim as it involves the belief that violence, propaganda, aggression or a bad situation is tragically unavoidable, this belief leads to passiveness or halfhearted attempts to transform the negative situation. From an ideological perspective victimhood is based upon something false, and is an illusion which instills in the victim a mentality or a state of being that things cannot change, thereby accepting the negative situation as their destiny. Victimhood also assumes that power can only be viewed in absolute terms, as negative or positive. This view of power is one sided with its positive aspects belonging to

those inflicting the violence or suffering, and the negative aspects belonging to the victims. Essentially this mentality disempowers us, as Professor of Sociology C. R. Ronai argues, *"The language of victimhood...is disempowering"*.

■ In reality we should migrate from a state of victimhood to servant-hood. This is where Shaikh Yawar 's lesson of resilience comes in. If we understood the facts about who Allah is and if we were absolutely convinced about the inevitable success, which is a promise of Allah, things would be so different. This is how Shaikh Yawar describes the mentality of the Nazi concentration camp survivors *"They did not spend time complaining or blaming their captors or in abusing themselves or wallowing in self-pity. They objectively took stock of their situation and had the courage to look it full in the face and to recognize it for what it was; very grave and potentially lethal. Yet these people also did not lose hope in their eventual success. They had faith and took the help of their ideology and belief and strongly believed that eventually they would survive and would outlast their captors. They believed that they had the capability to resist and absorb any punishment that was dished out to them; as in the Arabic saying: The blow that does not break your back only strengthens you."*

■ So how can we as Muslims develop this resilience? From Shaikh Yawar's book I have learnt that we should know who we are and that we should take great responsibility with our own actions. So who are we? We

Muslims believe that Allah has created us, and therefore has given us a purpose in life. This purpose is servanthood, the acknowledgement that we have been created to worship Allah and submit to Him, subsequently freeing ourselves from the slavery of the illusory nature of the world, also known in Islamic terminology as *dunya*.

■ Interestingly, the word *dunya* is the feminine form of the word *adna* meaning near, close and lowly. The word *dunya* also relates to a word in Arabic which has the meaning of trying to get some grapes you cannot reach, hence giving us a picture of the ephemeral nature of the world. This however, should not be confused with the world as a creation of God, which must be seen as the stage of divine attributes, about which we are told as Muslims to reflect on in order to know and appreciate Allah. The word for creation in this sense is *alam*, which shares the same root as the words *alim*, meaning the one who knows, and *ilm*, meaning knowledge. So the creation of the world is a place to know Allah, and is seen as something positive in the Islamic tradition. It is no wonder Allah mentions in the Qur'an, *yatafakkaroon*, for those who reflect, coming from the root *fa ka ra*, which has connotations of reflecting deeply on creation and reality. This type of reflection is unlike being a desert romantic, touching the sand and looking at the stars, rather it indicates that the thing you are reflecting upon you must enquire about its implications, and the

implications of reflecting on creation is that we have a purpose.

When we realise that our purpose is to worship Allah alone, we will understand that He is the only true source of power. In a Prophetic tradition we are taught to say when leaving the house, *"bismillahi tawakkaltu alayhi la hawla wa la quwwata illa billah"*, meaning, *"in the name of Allah I put my trust in Him, there is no true power except the power of Allah"*. However, do we ever reflect on what its implications are? Essentially, it means that power does not belong or come from anyone or anything, even the perpetrators of violence or suffering; rather it comes from only one source, Allah.

This fact if understood will free our minds and give us tremendous scope to affect change. Because from our servant-hood to Allah, we would realise that the so-called power of those who inflict pain and injustice, doesn't really belong to them, and they are just tools that Allah uses to manifest His will. Therefore, the realisation that people don't really have any intrinsic power will free us to stand in an emotional and intellectual space where we can create a new realm of possibility, because we don't know what the will of Allah is, and we could then be the tools He uses to manifest it in the world. The possibilities become endless.

This outlook or worldview liberates us from the victimhood mentality, as our state of being is one of *"I can achieve anything, as long as Allah wills it"*. The *"as long as"* part of the statement is not restrictive as Allah's will is only known to

Him, hence the possibilities are never ending. Even if after trying our best we “fail” or do not “succeed”, then that is not because of any power attributed to creation, rather it was because of Allah's will, and since it is Allah's will then it is all good. As the Prophet (upon whom be peace) told us in an authentic tradition, *“How wonderful is the affair of the believer, for his affair is all good, and this applies to no one except the believer. If something good happens to him, he gives thanks and that is good for him, and if something bad happens to him, he bears it with patience, and he will be rewarded for that, so everything that Allah has decreed for the Muslim is good.”* One of the many reasons that this applies only to the believer is because with the understanding of the fact that power comes from Allah alone, it frees him from the shackles of victimhood, in other words he is liberated from the restrictive view that there are only two unchangeable camps; the powerful and those who are inflicted with the misuse of power.

In this light, the Islamic tradition is very post-modern as it places the responsibility to act and change the situation on our selves, as we cannot attribute the source of our problems or power to those who we claim oppress or inflict harm on us. This lesson essentially teaches us what the Qur'an has argued for over a thousand years, *“God does not change the condition of a people unless they change what is in themselves.”* (Qur'an 13:11)

If we want to transform our situation, we would have to take responsibility to transform ourselves, and what better

way of doing that then to ponder on reality and adopt a state of being that reflects the correct view on power: that there is no true source of power apart from the power of the One true God - Allah. This intellectual and emotional paradigm shift is eloquently summarised in the Qur'an,

"If God touches you with affliction, no one can remove it except Him, and if He touches you with good, He has power over all things: He is the Supreme Master over His creatures, the All Wise, the All Aware." (Qur'an 6:17 – 18)

Many of these lessons we read in Shaikh Yawar 's books all relates to the power of *tawhid* (the Oneness of Allah). For me, the Shaikh has taken the light of *tawhid* and has passed in through the prism of Rasoolullah's (upon whom be peace) leadership, and exposed its various colours. This book has taught me that for someone who believes in the Oneness of Allah, and understands the manifestations of *tawhid* through the life of our beloved Prophet (upon whom be peace) nothing in this world seems as strange or emotionally distant. He will view everything in the universe as belonging to the same God that he belongs to. Therefore his empathy, compassion, service and love will never be confined to any particular community. Significantly, his emotional and intellectual scope is enlarged and his vision expands, because nothing in reality has the power to restrict or de-scope his perspectives apart from the will of Allah.

An atheist or someone who ascribes power to created things, known as a *mushrik*, cannot have the same outlook. If someone believes that the material world is all that exists, then it renders matter with efficacy, the ability to determine one's life. If someone believes in a deity that has limited powers like a man or an idol, whether material or conceptual, how can they be freed from the consciousness and fear that the material world determines your destiny.

The Islamic view produces in the human being the highest level of self-esteem and self-respect. As a contemporary Islamic thinker once wrote,

"The believer knows that God alone is the Possessor of all power, and that none besides Him can benefit or harm a person, or provide for his needs, or give and take away life or wield authority or influence. This conviction makes him indifferent to, and independent and fearless of, all powers other than those of God. He never bows his head in homage to any of God's creatures, nor does he stretch out his hand before anyone else. He is not overawed by anybody's greatness. This attitude of mind cannot be produced by any other belief. For it is necessary that those who associate other beings with God, or who deny God, should bow in homage to some creatures, regard them able to benefit or harm them, fear them and place their hopes in them."

I pray to Allah that you have benefitted from this book as I have. It is a much needed piece that will be used as a reference for our global transformation in years to come.

May Allah bless and preserve our Shaikh and grant him
and his family jannatul-firdeous!

Hamza Andreas Tzortzis

Glossary of Terms

Rasoolullah ﷺ	Muhammad, Messenger of Allah
	The Arabic script after the English means: Peace & Blessings be on him
Allah ﷻ	The personal name of God.
	The Arabic script after the English means 'The Glorious
Rabb	Lord, Sustainer, Protector, Provider for all needs: One of the names of Allah ﷻ
Aakhira	Hereafter
Jannah	Paradise
Jahannam	Hell fire
Ribâ	Bank Interest and other similar gains
Shari'ah	Islamic Law
Sunnah	Teachings of Muhammad ﷺ which is the second source for Islamic Law
Fajr	Dawn prayer

Dhuhr	Mid-day prayer
Asr	Afternoon prayer
Maghrib	Sunset prayer
Isha	Night prayer
Tahajjud	Prayer in the last part of the night, before dawn
Dhikr	Remembering Allah ﷻ in any way
Jibreel	Angel Gabriel
Wahi	Revelation: the Qur'an
Ali bin Abi Talib	Cousin of Muhammad ﷺ who the Shia ask for help instead of asking Allah ﷻ

About the Author

MIRZA YAWAR BAIG



Founder of YAWAR BAIG & ASSOCIATES™ and Chairman of Standard Bearers Trust, International Speaker, Author, Life Coach, Corporate Consultant, engaged in setting up the Standard Bearers Academy, aimed at creating Global Leaders on the basis of the leadership principles of the Prophet of Islam. Yawar specializes in Family Business consulting and his book, 'The Business of Family Business' shows business families

how to grow, yet stay together, by drawing on his extensive consulting experience with both family businesses and multi-national corporations. Yawar is a life coach and mentor for prominent family businesses in India, South Africa & Sri Lanka. In 27 years of training and consulting Yawar has taught more than 200,000 managers, administrators, teachers, technologists and clergy on 3 continents. He combines Eastern values with Western systems to transcend cultural boundaries. Yawar speaks five languages. He writes blogs, articles and books focusing on applying learning to create models of excellence in local communities. Yawar speaks internationally on Islam, especially about the need for Muslims to become Standard Bearers of Islam.

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Business
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Journey of Faith An
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Clients Include

GE, Microsoft, Motorola,
AMKA, Unilever, Siemens,
Accenture, JP Morgan, Olam,
Reuters, J&J, Verizon, Mars,
Expolanka,

I decided to write this for two reasons: to make the lessons from the life of Rasoolullah ﷺ relating specifically to leadership easily accessible to the seeker, whether Muslim or not; and to make an attempt to see how these lessons are applicable today in a world that is in principle, very similar to the world he lived in. My premise is that since he was able to change his world and to take his people from being the most insignificant, oppressed and weakest to being the predominant, admired and strongest in just one generation, if we learn how he was able to do it, we will be able to learn how to succeed in our world today. I ask ﷻ to be pleased with this work and for His help.



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