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The Phenomenon of Emotion in the Normative Conduct and Precedents of the Noble Prophet (s)

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[Abstract](#)

Emotion comprises a significant part of the human psyche, and the course of nurturing one’s sentiments and feelings with the intention of implanting and strengthening faith in God encompasses all perfections, the most important of which are truth, justice, love, affection, and devotion. When emotion and thought become rooted in such an atmosphere the path of perfection can be treaded upon. The Noble Prophet (s) is the pre-eminent epitome of these ideals and his normative conduct and precedents aim at establishing and presenting an exact embodiment of these lofty notions. In this exposition, after delineating the foregoing notions, various instances of the Noble Prophet’s comportment—both private and public, as well as in different conditions—have been examined.

Keywords: Prophet Muhammad, sirah, sunnah, emotion, love, mercy.

In so far as emotion comprises a significant part of the human psyche, and in so far as Islam is a religion grounded in reality, it behoves us to pay more attention to this topic. Imam ‘Ali (‘a), while describing the pre-existing harmony between the constituent elements of the human personality—namely, intellect, thought, emotion, the senses, and willed action—has said, “The intellects are the masters of thoughts, and thoughts are the masters of the hearts, and hearts are the masters of the senses, and the senses

are the masters of the limbs.” (Majlisi, vol. 1, p. 98). Through each one of these five levels, Islam makes every effort to nurture man:

It nurtures the element of instinctive intellection in man and propels him towards reflection, meditation, contemplation, ratiocination, and the like.

It lays emphasis on logical methods of reasoning and eschews every method that is against sound discussion or damages the results thereof.

It fosters the emotional element [in man] and satiates it with pure and original love for the Noblest Beloved, namely God Almighty, who encompasses all absolute perfection; it also takes sentiment to the apex of height and magnificence.

It endows its divine code of law (the shari’ah) to be in line with man’s innate disposition which regulates his modes of conduct and draws up a plan for his felicity and well-being.

It nourishes a strong will and awareness in man which, more than any [other] kindled sentimental motive, gives man the surety that an orientation towards emotion is correct. At the same time, it protects his freedom in shaping his conduct, and it is from this very freedom that responsibility is born. We are not of those who portray ‘will’ as ‘kindled sentiments’, for by doing so we will get entrapped [and enmeshed] in ‘determinism’—a doctrine which both our conscience and the Islamic faith rejects. Emotions and feelings too play an effective role in [shaping] man’s will and comportment, and that is why Islam lays emphasis on them through a variety of ways and methods, such as:

Direct instructional mandates which warn us against unbridled desires and rebelliousness. The Glorious Qur’an says:

***Have you seen him who has taken his desire to be his god? Is it your duty to watch over him?
(25:43)***

Indirect [instructional] allusions, including the use of allegories and stories which praise people like the prophets (‘a) who had gained mastery over their carnal desires and wills and had taken control over their own lives.

The presentation of the practical examples from the conduct of the Noble Prophet (s) and other key figures from the magnanimous Ahl al-Bayt (his household) and his noble companions who were nurtured within his school [of thought].

The call to Muslims to heighten and magnify [their] love for God, the Noble Prophet (s), the impeccable Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), and the sincere companions of the Prophet (s) to the greatest extent possible; it is only in this case that emotions and sentiments can be well-regulated within an illuminated order that is compatible with reason and engenders good actions.

On the one hand, this course of nurturing emotions and sentiments with the intention of implanting and strengthening faith in God encompasses all perfections and is also man's strongest connection with Him. On the other hand, such a course fosters his conceptions of existence and life with a focus on basing these two conceptions on certain principles, the most important of which are truth, justice, love, affection and devotion. The Noble Prophet's mode of conduct and normative traditions are also discussed with the aim of firmly establishing these principles and lofty notions and presenting a higher objective epitome of them. To expound on this further, we will make reference to each one of these principles:

1. Haqq (Right, or Truth, or Reality) is the Secret of Being

In his Mufradat, Raghīb Isfahānī says that haqq means conformity and agreement, like the conformity between the hinge of a door and its constant rotation (Raghīb Isfahānī, p. 125). Isfahānī then goes on to relate a number of meanings for haqq which is summarized below:

The first meaning refers to the existence of a thing which is necessitated by wisdom. It is for this reason that God is called al-Haqq (i.e. the Truth, or the Real):

Then they are returned to Allah, their real master ... (6:62)

The second meaning connotes the one who brings [a thing] into being as necessitated by wisdom. It is for this reason that the actions of God the Almighty is all true:

... Indeed it is the truth from your Lord ... (2:149)

The third meaning connotes belief in a thing [that is] in agreement with what one has [been convinced of] in their [inner] self, like our saying that our belief in the Resurrection and divine reward (and retribution) is true:

... Then Allah guided those who had faith to the truth of what they differed in ... (2:213).

The fourth meaning connotes transpired action or speech that is in accord with what is necessary, to the degree that it is necessary, and at the time in which it is necessary, like our saying that someone's deeds are true (i.e., they will transpire).

... My word became due: 'Surely I will fill hell ...' (32:13)

It can be concluded from the foregoing applications that haqq, in short, means 'fact and reality'. What is meant by 'fact' is that very same being [that is] delimited in objective reality or the world independent of mental conception. And what is meant by 'reality' is a thing that is in agreement with the requirements of external actuality.

The greatest correspondence of haqq is in the Divine Essence—it is so manifest and clear to the human innate disposition (fitrah) that belief in it is an absolutely self-evident conviction. For instance, the lights

of God the Almighty have embraced the whole of being to such an extent that it is only Him that is seen in all things and is thus manifested as the Undoubted Truth and the Indisputable Reality.

Creation and divine codes of law, which have been referred to as haqq in the noble Qur'an, have derived this attribute of haqq from the following two aspects:

From the aspect that they are (tangible) realities though perhaps concealed from man's senses.

From the aspect that they have appeared within the framework of God's universal plan for the world of existence wherein each of their parts is necessary for the perpetuation of existential motion along with the fact that they have a role to play in realizing the very goal of Creation; all things, whether engendered creatures or legislated laws, fall within this domain. God the Almighty says:

That is so because Allah has sent down the Book with the truth ... (2:176)

It is He who created the heavens and the earth with the truth ... (6:73)

The weighing [of deeds] on that Day is a truth ... (7:8)

It is He who has sent His Apostle with the guidance and the religion of truth ... (9:33)

Say, 'Allah guides to the truth ...' (10:35)

... and enjoin one another to [follow] the truth, and enjoin one another to patience. (103:3).

2. Justice is Current throughout Existence

Despite the fact that theological discussions and disputations which took place among Islamic schools of thought would sometimes arrive at definitive conclusions wherein at times proponents of justice would emerge as victors in the debates and at other times their opponents (albeit by instilling doubts), what is indisputable from the viewpoint of a Muslim is that justice, in whichever sense it is construed, begins with divine justice. Moreover, the term is understood with the very same meaning which the Glorious Qur'an has explained and which has both an essential and practical manifestation in each and every atom of being.

The point is that the concept of 'universal justice' is a powerful spiritual force and factor in the beliefs of Muslims. It plays a role in the question of whether there is justice in the world. In contrast, injustice and oppression, viewed independently, are considered as causes of annihilation and degeneration.

This is a brief account of the Muslims' general viewpoint with regard to this issue and we will suffice it to that. Let us end this section with a few verses on this topic:

... I have been commanded to do justice among you ... (42:15)

Indeed Allah enjoins justice and kindness ... (16:90).

The word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and justice. Nothing can change His words ... (6:115)

We did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves. (11:101)

... from among my descendants?’ He said, ‘My pledge does not extend to the unjust.’ (2:124)

So there lay their houses, fallen in ruin, because of their wrongdoing. (27:52)

Indeed Allah does not wrong [anyone] [even to the extent of] an atom’s weight ... (4:40)

... They will find present whatever they had done, and your Lord does not wrong anyone. (18:49)

We shall set up the scales of justice on the Day of Resurrection, and no soul will be wronged in the least ... (21:47)

... There will be no injustice today ... (40:17)

Allah bears witness that there is no god except Him—and [so do] the angels and those who possess knowledge—maintainer of justice ... (3:18)

O you who have faith! Be maintainers of justice and witnesses for the sake of Allah ... (4:135)

3. Love is the Basis of the Bond that Ties the Various Parts of Being Together

A Muslim, under the aegis of the Glorious Qur’an, believes that the world of being is founded on kindness and affection and [that] relations between the Creator and His Creation are based on [mutual] love and devotion. The essence of the relations between created beings having a common goal and instilled with divine values is also based on love and devotion. The relationship that the believers of the world have with the various parts of the world of existence which are not endowed with human reason is based on reciprocal and affectionate love as well.

The reasons and grounds for this love are, under the auspices of Islamic beliefs and Qur’anic teachings, completely clear and manifest. If we look at the amiable and loving relations that exist between man and his Creator, we will see a most noble loving relationship whose levels differ depending on the individual in question: it begins from the expediential, albeit overflowing love, of the common man, to the pure and conscious love—which itself is expressive of the pinnacle of this lofty meaning—of the saints and sincere servants of God.

Islam is endowed with the characteristic of ‘starting everything with the basics’. This applies to the

amiable and loving relationship between man and God, which it initially bases on expediency and then raises it [to a higher level] by making it part and parcel of man's being. Thereafter, it brings it out as an inner motive in controlling man's conduct and as his guidance to the benefit of humanity. But the love and affection which is from God the Almighty, no matter how simple in the hearts of the believers, evokes the very same human resonations and conceptions of love among living creatures. In reality, however, it shows the mode of expressing God's love and bestowal and the ever-increasing volume of His kindness and generosity.

That initial conception or understanding at first glance exists even in the most devout believers of God. This conception is, in its turn, ideal and desirable, because in one sense love denotes ecstasy, ardour, eagerness, and a burning desire, and Qur'anic verses have always emphasized different ways of evoking emotions and kindling feelings for God the Almighty. One example is the very conception that God the Glorified spreads the shade of His love on His devoted servants. Every human being can, by recourse to their readily disposed conscience in such circumstances, attain certitude with respect to this matter.

Islamic sources verify the existence of a loving relationship among informed believers—which include the righteous, the penitent, the immaculate, the abstemious, the forbearing, those who put their trust in God, and those who fight in the way of God:

... who love those who migrate toward them, and do not find in their breasts any need for that which is given to them, but prefer [the Immigrants] to themselves, though poverty be their own lot ... (59:9)

Qur'anic verses and [Prophetic] traditions have also established [the existence of] an amiable and loving relationship between man and nature. It considers man's emotion from the perspective that nature is at his service and [it] is for his convenience and that God's gracious hand has blessed the earth and its produce.

It has been reported that the Noble Prophet (s), when returning from the battle of Tabuk and on reaching the threshold of Madinah, said: This is Taba and this is also Mount Uhud which love us and which we also love. (Safinah al-bahar, p. 668; Sahih Muslim, vol. 2, p. 1011 and Sunun Bayhaqi, vol. 6, p. 72). The Noble Prophet (s) has also said: Love and affection for one's motherland is a part of (or emanates from) faith. (Mizan al-hikmah, vol. 10, p. 522).

One of the most magnificent rings of this love which the Glorious Qur'an has considered to be equivalent to the reward for the Prophetic Mission of Islam and for the Prophet's services to this community (ummah) is the following: the ring which connects the whole Islamic community with the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), a family which comprises the most competent people to lead the Islamic community and a household which is, in fact, considered as the ship of deliverance and the coast of safety:

... Say, 'I do not ask you any reward for it except love of [my] relatives.' ... (42:23)

As for the smallest ring of love, namely the love and friendship between husband and wife, the Qur'an says:

... and He ordained affection and mercy between you ... (30:21)

Islamic sources (Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions) have sometimes spoken about the rupture [that occurs] in the relationship between God and people who are outside [the embrace] of His commands—trespassers, unbelievers, oppressors, egoists, traitors, sinners, mischief-makers, the arrogant, and pleasure-seekers. These sources have also spoken about the break-up of relations between people who follow God and those who follow Satan:

You will not find a people believing in Allah and the Last Day endearing those who oppose Allah and His Apostle ... (58:22)

The conclusion that is drawn from the foregoing discourse is that Muslims believe that they live in world of reciprocal love and friendship. This belief has significant influence in producing hope in man's heart—constructive hope which gives him zeal in the pursuit of felicity and well-being.

4. Mercy and Kindness are the Origin of the Whole of Being

This section explains the most splendid part, as well as the secret and key, of Islamic belief. It has been narrated in some traditions that the whole Qur'an has been summed up in the Opening Chapter (Surah al-Fatihah) and that the Opening Chapter has been summed up in Bismillahi al-Rahman al-Rahim ("In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful"). These traditions indicate that the Opening Chapter has been considered the heart and soul of the Glorious Qur'an because it contains a summary of the basic principles and tenets of Islamic belief—i.e., it acts as the ideological framework of all that the Glorious Qur'an has uttered.

Now if we move to the second level, we will see that on its own Bismillahi al-Rahman al-Rahim also constitutes the heart and foundation of Islam because it stresses the point that in the first stage everything in the world of being has emanated from the Name of God the Almighty and in the last stage everything has issued from the framework wherefrom this origin has sprung from. The origin of all things is Bismillah and its concomitant is infinite mercy.

We perceive that this reality corresponds with the various parts of the Glorious Qur'an which are expressive of one of the manifestations of perfection in the Essence of God. The Qur'an establishes firm belief among Muslims that man has his origins in the fountainhead of mercy, has been settled in a world of mercy, and moves in the discomfiture of the protection of this mercy, which in many instances possibly overlooks and forgives deviations in his conduct.

When we examine the effects of supplication, particularly in the supplications transmitted from the Imams ('a), we come across many pedagogical tools of an ideological nature which put emphasis on this

aspect [of the role of mercy]. In the Glorious Qur'an as well, we come across many noble verses which harmonize God's attribute of glory with that of His mercy and graciousness. These include the following examples:

Indeed He is the All-mighty, the All-merciful. (44:42)

... You are the best of the merciful. (23: 109 & 118)

... He has made mercy incumbent upon Himself ... (6: 12)

Your Lord is the All-sufficient dispenser of mercy ... (6: 133)

... There has already come to you a manifest proof from your Lord and a guidance and mercy ... (6: 157)

... Indeed Allah's mercy is close to the virtuous. (7:57)

So observe the effects of Allah's mercy: how He revives the earth after its death ... (30:50)

Say [that Allah declares,] 'O My servants who have committed excesses against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah ... (39:53)

The All-beneficent, settled on the Throne. (20:5)

Even on the most difficult and most frightening of occasions, the quality and attribute of mercy is mentioned:

On that day they will follow a summoner in whom there will be no deviousness. The voices will be muted before the All-beneficent, and you will hear nothing but a murmur. (20: 108)

Therefore, besides the two elements of right and justice—which more than anything else denote balance and parity—Muslims also believe in two other elements, namely love and mercy, which denote ever-increasing goodness and more than deserved generosity.

Till now, we have become acquainted with the fundamental laws governing the world of being, namely truth, justice, love, and mercy. [What is important to note is that] Islam has placed its noble messenger to be the model par excellence of these fundamental realities and his conduct and precedents have deeply infused these essentials into the hearts of Muslims.

The Noble Prophet (s) is the Greatest Embodiment of these Notions

If we take a look at the normative conduct and precedents of the Noble Prophet (s), we will see them as

the clear manifestation of these realities—i.e., truth, justice, love, and mercy—and we will see him (s) as the rightful completer of noble ethical traits as well as a mercy bestowed to mankind.

We will examine this point in the following sections, particularly through various traditions, but first we wish to quote sayings from the Nahj al-balagha wherein Imam 'Ali ('a) has ascribed the most magnificent attributes to the Apostle of God and has described him (s) as his own mentor, teacher, prophet, and beloved one. Imam 'Ali ('a) says,

God the Glorified raised Muhammad (s) to the prophetic mission in order to actualize His promise and culminate His delegation of prophets ('a). He had gotten pledges from the former prophets ('a) regarding him (s). His characteristics which had been explicitly stated in the [Divine] Books of former prophets and of which they had given glad tidings were well known.' (Nahj al-balagha, p. 44).

He fulfilled Your command to the fullest possible extent and strived more than any man to please You. He guided the people without resting for one moment, and he was never lax in this regard. He did not conceal Your message from anyone, a message he [himself] accepted wholeheartedly. He persevered in executing Your orders until people's inner beings became illuminated under the auspices of Your creed. He taught all people the secret of Creation and existence and lit the dark facets of life with his effulgence. Those who had gotten submerged in the morass of sedition and insurrection became peaceful and tranquil, and people who were plunged in ignorance were set free. (Ibid., p. 101).

His course of action is resistance and fortitude and his method is guidance and beneficence. His speech is victorious and audible, and his command is fluent and just. (Ibid., p. 139).

The Noble Prophet (s) persisted a lot in giving advice and instruction and continued on this course of action and called on all people to [see] reason, wisdom, and goodly exhortation. (Ibid., p. 140).

...until God appointed Muhammad (s) to the Prophetic Mission and gave him the certification of all people and ordered him to give the good tidings of divine reward to doers of good and to warn the malevolent of divine retribution. In his infancy, he was the best of created beings and in his old age, he was the most beloved of all. His temperament was purer than that of any impeccable man, and his acts of generosity were carried out secretly and far beyond the expectations of the requesters. (Ibid., p. 151).

...his mission in life is performing the good, and his anticipation is death with salvation. He considers the world a place of suffering and describes the resurrection as a court of justice and a place of giving account of one's actions; he calls heaven his reward and the recompense of other immaculate people ... O God! Make this magnanimous messenger the source of blessings, happiness, and tranquility for Your creatures. (Ibid., pp. 153, 154).

A wise doctor who prepared his ointments, lancet, and other tools to the best possible extent and placed them in blind hearts, deaf ears, and dumb tongues. (Ibid., p. 156).

And Muhammad is that same chosen, immaculate servant and messenger of His. His virtue and magnanimity are far beyond measure and his prophethood cannot be compensated with anything. In his presence, this boundary and borderline was transformed into light after being infected with misguidance and darkness; he banished ignorance, cruelty and disorder from it... (Ibid., p. 210).

He (s) used to sit on the ground and eat like a slave. He would sit on the ground on his two knees and tie his shoes with his own hands. He used to sew the patches on his clothes. He used to ride on an unsaddled donkey and would carry an extra man with him. (Ibid., p. 229).

... he [is] the Seal of the Prophets (‘a) and the one entrusted with divine revelation. He is the giver of the glad tidings of God’s mercy to the pious and the warner of the divine retribution in that world to the impious. (Ibid., p. 247).

More beautiful and perfect descriptions [of the Prophet] cannot be found than these, and there is no particular one amongst them that can be preferred over another. We will now quote some traditions on this topic with brief explanatory remarks after each series. They have been classified under the following titles as general examples in the life of the Noble Prophet (s):

One: General Customary Mercy and Kindness to One and All

It has been reported that the Noble Prophet (s) said, ‘When God created the world, He wrote in the Book that is with Him on the Throne: My mercy and kindness precede My wrath.’ (Ibn Hanbal, vol. 2, p. 260; Muslim, vol. 4, p. 2107, hadith no. 14; Majlisi, vol. 11, p. 182).

This notion is also commonly found in the supplications of the Imams (‘a) from the Ahl al-Bayt.

It has also been reported that the Noble Prophet (s) said, ‘On the day that God created the heavens and the earth, he also created a hundred mercies, each of which is in a layer between the sky and the earth. From among these mercies, He placed a [particular kind of] mercy for the earth from which a mother shows mercy to her child and wild animals and birds show mercy to each other, and when the day of resurrection comes He will complete it with this mercy.’ (Muslim, ibid., p. 2109, hadith no. 21; Mustadrak al-Hakim, vols. 1, p. 56, 4. p. 247).

This is [God’s] custom pertaining to existential matters; the legislative (shar’i) implication, however, must also be in line with and equivalent to this existential fact.

According to Ibn Mas’ud, ‘Thus we see the Prophet of God narrating the story of Prophethood when his people [physically] hit him and whilst cleaning the blood from his face, he was saying, “Forgive my people for they do not know what they are doing”.’ (Ibn Hanbal, ibid., vol. 1, p. 441, Muslim, vol. 3, p. 1917, hadith no. 1792).

This same mercy and kindness is extended even to aggressive unbelievers.

Jabir ibn Samarah has narrated, 'I performed my first ritual prayer with the Noble Prophet (s). After the prayers he went to see his family, and I followed him. Two of his children came to welcome him. He caressed their cheeks and then caressed mine as well, and I smelled something like a perfume in his hands.' (Muslim, vol. 4, p. 1814, hadith no. 80).

The Noble Prophet (s) says, 'You see the believers being merciful and kind to each. The reason is because they are one body; when one of the bodily limbs has pain, the other members cannot be calm.' (Muslim, *ibid.*, p. 1999, hadith no. 66; Majlisi, vol. 74, p. 274).

The strongest affectionate relations, therefore, are established among believers.

The Noble Prophet (s) has also said, 'When one is leading people in ritual prayers, he should not prolong them because there are among them weak, sick or old people. But if one is praying alone, they can prolong the prayers for as long as they want.' (Muslim, vol. 1, p. 341, hadith no. 185; Tahdhib al-ahkam, vol. 3, p. 283, hadith no. 1139).

Malik ibn al-Hawirith has narrated, 'We, a number of youths of the same age, went to see the Noble Prophet (s) and stayed twenty nights with him. The Noble Prophet (s) thought we were missing our families, so he asked us about our families and each one of us told him [about our family]. The Noble Prophet (s) was full of affection and love, and said, "Go back to your families and teach them Islamic instructions. You should perform the ritual prayers in the same way that you saw me performing them. When the time for prayer comes, one of you should stand up and recite the call to prayer and the eldest of you should take charge of leadership of the prayers".' (Muslim, *ibid.*, p. 465, hadith no. 466; 'Ilal al-shara'i, p. 326, hadith no. 2).

Some Muslims brought some captives of war to the Noble Prophet (s). Among the captives was a woman with breasts full of milk and whenever a child among the captives cried she would carry them and nurse them. The Noble Prophet asked, 'Do you think this woman has cast her own child in the fire?' The Prophet's Companions answered, 'No, and she is able to not do it.' The Noble Prophet (s) said, 'God is more kind to his creatures than this woman is to her child.' (Muslim, vol. 4, p. 2109, hadith no. 22; al-Mu'jam al-saghir, vol. 1, p. 98).

After the battle of Uhud the angels descended on the Noble Prophet (s) with the message that if he so wished they could curse his enemies. The Noble Prophet (s) said, 'No, [I do not wish to curse them]. I only desire that God should raise from among their progeny people who will worship none other than God the Almighty and who will not associate anyone (or anything) with Him.' (Sharh al-sunnah al-Baghawi, vol. 13, p. 214-333).

The Prophet of God said, 'While a dog was dying of unbearable thirst, one of the Children of Israel felt pity for it and gave it water, and thus earned God's forgiveness.' (Bukhari, vol. 3, p. 1279, hadith no. 52; Muslim, vol. 4, p. 1761, hadith no. 155).

Osama ibn Zayd has narrated, 'The Noble Prophet (s) used to take me in his hands and make me sit on his legs, and he would take Hasan and Hussein and put them on his other leg. He would then bring both legs close together and say, "O my Lord! Be kind to them since I too am showing them kindness."' (Bukhari, vol. 5, p. 2236; Shaykh Saduq, p. 34, hadith no. 153).

The Noble Prophet (s) performed the funeral rites and prayers over the body of a deceased individual and [then] said, "O God! Forgive him and be kind to him." (Muslim, vol. 2, p. 662, hadith no. 85; Fiqh al-Ridha, p. 19; 'Awali al-Li'ali, vol. 2).

The Noble Prophet (s) says, 'I, Muhammad, Ahmad, ... am the gatherer and the prophet of repentance and mercy.' (Muslim, vol. 4, 1828, hadith 126; 'Ilal al-Shara'i, vol. 1, p. 128, hadith no. 2; Majlisi, vol. 103, p. 104).

The Prophet of God (s) has likewise said, 'May God have mercy on one who is just in business transactions and judgement.' (Bukhari, vol. 2, p. 730, hadith no. 1970).

The Noble Prophet (s) also used to say, 'God does not forgive a person who does not forgive other people.' (Bayhaqi, vol. 9, p. 41, Ray Shahri, vol. 4, p. 1416).

Some people said to the Noble Prophet (s), 'O Prophet of God! Curse the polytheists.' He answered, 'I have not been raised to prophethood to be a curser [of people]. On the contrary, I am a mercy for all inhabitants of the earth.' (Muslim, vol. 4, p. 2006, hadith no. 87; Ray Shahri, vol. 9, p. 3684, hadith no. 18234).

Islamic mercy and kindness, therefore, embraces all creation and even the whole order of existence, and this is the point that can be inferred from the expression Bismillahi al-Rahman al-Rahim (In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful) in the Glorious Qur'an and from the tradition which says that everything begins in the Name of God Who has been described as the All-beneficent, the All-merciful. This mercy and kindness encompasses aggressive unbelievers; it embraces all Islamic social relations between the believers; it also applies to children and even animals; in general, it envelops all things. In reality, a knowledgeable Muslim is an individual who is merciful and kind vis-à-vis all people and all things.

Two: Benevolence and Altruism are Manifestations of Mercy

A look at the normative precedents and conduct of the Noble Prophet (s) clearly shows that benevolence and altruism are as universal as mercy and kindness. Attention to the following set of traditions clarifies this matter further:

Acting humanely to every man and being good to any living animal earns divine reward. (Ibn Hanbal, vol. 2, p. 735; Bayhaqi, vol. 4, p. 186 and vol. 8, p. 14; Sadr, p. 160).

By citing this same tradition, Imam Zayn al-ʿAbidin (ʿa), considered it permissible to give food to the Kharijites—the fiercest enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa).

Every good deed is [an act of] charity. (Muslim, vol. 2, p. 697, hadith no. 52; Mustadrak al-wasaʿil, vol. 12, p. 343, hadith no. 20).

Do not undervalue any good deed, even if [it means] meeting your brother with a happy face. (Muslim, vol. 4, p. 2026, hadith no. 144; Thawab al-aʿmal, vol. 2, p. 1240, hadith no. 7).

Muslims are brothers to each other; no Muslim oppresses or abandons a fellow Muslim, and God obviates the needs of anyone who tries to obviate needs of their brother. On the Day of Resurrection, God will solve the problems of whoever solves the problems of a fellow Muslim, and on that Day, He will clothe whoever clothes a Muslim. (Muslim, vol. 4, p. 1996, vol. 58).

A believer is a mirror of another believer, and a believer is a brother of another believer; he takes care of his brother and defends him in his absence. (Abu Dawud, vol. 4, p. 280, hadith no. 4918; Ahwazi, p. 41).

Whenever the Ashʿarites become widowed or whenever the food for their families diminishes, they share whatever they have equally among themselves; they are from me and I am from them. (Muslim, vol. 4, p. 1944, ch. 39).

Food for two people is sufficient for three people and food for three people is sufficient for four people. (Bukhari, vol. 5, p. 2061, hadith no. 5077; Duʿaʾim al-Islam, vol. 2, p. 16).

There are forty virtues, the best of which is donating a goat to be used for the provision of milk. God will take into paradise whoever harbours hope of attaining the reward for one of those virtues. (Bukhari, vol. 2, p. 927, hadith no. 2488; Saduq, al-Khisal, vol. 2, p. 1543, hadith no. 1).

Those who attend to the needs of widows and the poor are like those who fight in the way of God. (Bukhari, vol. 5, p. 3048, hadith no. 5037; Muslim, vol. 1).

Your slaves are your brothers. (Bukhari, vol. 1, p. 20, hadith no. 30; Muslim, vol. 3, p. 1382, hadith no. 28; Tanbih al-khawatir, vol. 1, p. 57).

Whoever wishes that God solve their problems on the Day of Resurrection should solve other people's problems [in this world]. (Muslim, vol. 3, p. 1196, hadith no. 32; Thawab al-aʿmal, vol. 1, p. 179, hadith no. 1).

Thus, a Muslim who follows the Noble Prophet (s) is transformed into a beneficent man who acts humanely towards other human beings and does good—no matter how small it may look—to any living animal. Such a Muslim also shares in the joys and sorrows of his brother and considers him to be his own mirror, and, like the Ashʿarites, he shares his bread with other people and helps widows and the poor.

Three: Some Attributes of the Noble Prophet (s)—Veneration, Generosity, Good Speech, Tolerance, and Trust

All these are indications of the Noble Prophet's emotion, love, and affection, and the following traditions bespeak this:

It has been reported from Jabir ibn 'Abdullah ('a) that at 'Arafa the Noble Prophet said in a sermon, "Your blood and wealth is as inviolable (haram) as the inviolability of this day, this month and this place." (Muslim, vol. 2, p. 889, hadith no. 147, Du'a'im al-islam, vol. 2, p. 413, hadith no. 410; Mustadrak al-wasa'il, vol. 18, p. 206).

Fear God with respect to your women whom you have taken under the protection of God and who have become permissible to you by the Name of God. (Du'a'im al-islam, vol. 2, p. 214, hadith no. 789).

Advise [men] to be good to women. (Bukhari, vol. 3, p. 1212, hadith no. 3154).

Whoever kills an ally will never smell the scent of paradise; he will smell it from a distance of forty years. (Bukhari, ibid., p. 1155, hadith no. 2995; Majlisi, vol. 16, p. 217).

The Noble Prophet (s) used to advise the Muslim soldiers thus: "Fight, but do not commit treason and excesses, and do not mutilate the slain, and do not kill children." (Nasb al-rayah, vol. 3, p. 380; Du'a'im al-islam, vol. 1, p. 369).

Greet people audibly, speak goodly words, maintain family ties, and pray at night when people are sleeping. You will enter paradise if you do this. (Ibn Hanbal, vol. 2, p. 493; Razi, vol. 2, p. 17; Mustadrak al-wasa'il, vol. 8, p. 364).

Soft words are [acts of] charity. (Ibn Hanbal, ibid., p. 213; Kafi, vol. 2, p. 103, hadith no. 4).

We smile to a people whom we curse in [our] hearts. (Bayhaqi, vol. 8, p. 197).

Tolerance towards people is [an act of] charity. (Ibn Hanbal, vol. 2, p. 216; Ray Shahri, vol. 27, p. 1154, hadith no. 5496).

It can be seen that the Noble Prophet (s) used to advise people to respect every individual. He would preach civility, peace, and security among Muslims, and used to advise men to be good to women. Likewise he used to preach that one ought not to betray their ally and that human etiquettes must be observed during war. He would say that good attributes—such as mutual peace, good speech, observance of familial ties, prayer in the depth of the night, soft words, and tolerance with people against whom we have grudges in our hearts—have to become widespread in the Islamic community. These are attributes that we are in need of today more so than any other time.

Four: During Times of Difficulty, the Noble Prophet (s) used to Seek Assistance from Human Emotion

When we look at the Noble Prophet's conduct and comportment, we see that he was full of affection and love. He used to work alongside his companions in all ventures. He would be able to rouse their vigour and zeal so much so that they would forget the hardships of the way and get drawn towards self-sacrifice and altruism. In this regard, the third caliph, 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, said:

I swear upon God that we were in the company of the Noble Prophet (s) both at home and on journeys; he used to visit our sick people, bury our dead, take part in war together with us, and would be content with whatever we had. (Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 70, Razi, sermon no. 100).

It has also been reported that Imam Sadiq ('a) said:

Poor and indigent people used to spend their nights in the Mosque. One night the Noble Prophet (s) broke his fast with them near the pulpit. He used their own particular plate to break their fast—thirty men partook of the food from that plate and then went home (with the remaining food) by which their wives were also fed and their hunger was satisfied. (Majlisi, vol. 16, p. 219).

The Noble Prophet (s) and his companions were together digging the trench of Khandaq and suffered many inconveniences, one of which was acute hunger. It has been reported that Imam Ridha ('a) quoted his forefathers as saying that Imam 'Ali ('a) said:

We were together with the Noble Prophet (s) when digging the trench of Khandaq. Then Fatima Zahra ('a) came with a piece of bread and gave it to the Noble Prophet (s). The Noble Prophet (s) asked her, "What is this piece of bread of for?" Fatima Zahra ('a) answered, "I baked a loaf of bread for Hasan and another one for Husayn and brought this one for you." The Noble Prophet (s) said, "O Fatima! This is the first food that will enter your father's stomach in three consecutive days". (Majlisi, vol. 16, p. 225; Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, vol. 2, p. 114).

The most impressive aspect of the Noble Prophet's conduct was that on sensitive matters, he would interact in an affectionate and intellectual manner. He used to make people ecstatic and awaken the vigour and zeal in their hearts, encouraging them towards altruism and self-sacrifice. Imam 'Ali ('a) says:

With the Noble Prophet (s), we used to go to war and kill our fathers, brothers, and uncles [who were antagonistic towards Muslims and Islam] in the way of God. This would show our faith, obedience and fortitude, prove our endurance in the face of pain, and increase our efforts in the holy war against the unbelievers. Each one of us would bravely face his rival and courageously fight the unbeliever until he killed him; in these fights sometimes we would kill the rival and at times we would lose the fight. When God saw our firmness and rightness, He humiliated our enemy and made us victorious. (Nahj al-Balagha, p. 92).

Hereunder we will mention two interesting examples of the Prophet's conduct [during difficult occasions]:

1) Hamra' al-Aswad

It has been narrated in history that the Quraysh, after killing and defeating the Muslim soldiers in the Battle of Uhud, left the battlefield in jubilation on account of having achieved victory. When they reached an area called al-Ruha', they realized (or rather, some of the evil-minded amongst them suggested it to them) that they would not reap the full benefits of this victory unless they returned to Madinah and massacre all the Muslims in accordance with the orders of their commander, Abu Sufyan. This news was relayed to the Noble Prophet (s), whereupon he began to mobilize the Muslims and prepare them for war. He encouraged and incited them to fight, arousing the strongest ideological feelings in them. Then he accompanied them into the battlefield. The Muslim soldiers, despite the wounds and blows they had suffered [earlier], left for war like wounded lions and arrived at an area they used to call Hamra' al-Aswad, ready for any kind of self-sacrifice for their beliefs. Abu Sufyan understood that it was not possible to defeat this excited and self-sacrificing group. When he asked Ma'bad al-Khaza'i what was transpiring in the Prophet's camp, he answered, "I swear that I left Muhammad and his Companions very eager [for war] and zealously awaiting to fight you." In Sirah Ibn Hisham, it has been reported that Ma'bad al-Khaza'i said:

Muhammad and his companions are overfilled with valour and zeal to pursue and fight you. Those who had left and abandoned him on that day have regretted their deeds and are [now] as overfilled with enmity against you as I have never seen before. (Ibn Hisham, vol. 3, p. 108; Majlisi, vol. 20, p. 99).

In such a manner, he frightened Abu Sufyan so much that he sent a letter to the Noble Prophet (s) through his commander 'Abd alQays informing the Noble Prophet (s) that he had changed his mind [with respect to fighting the Muslims]. At this the Noble Prophet (s) said, "I swear upon the God who controls my life that I had prepared them so well that had they carried out their wishes, the enemies would have been badly defeated." Then twice he recited the Qur'anic verse "Allah is sufficient for us, and He is an excellent trustee."

Through this, the Prophet (s) showed his adherence to the Qur'anic teachings in Surah al-An'am and also [other] tens of verses, each of which was given to Muslims after the defeat of Uhud, and called upon them to fight and mobilize their forces. Among the noble verses include the following:

Those to whom the people said, 'All the people have gathered against you; so fear them.' That only increased them in faith, and they said, 'Allah is sufficient for us, and He is an excellent trustee.' So they returned with Allah's blessing and grace, untouched by any evil. They pursued the pleasure of Allah, and Allah is dispenser of a great grace. (3: 173-174).

These verses and lessons have nurtured Muslims to the extent that, under the auspices of God's help

and by dint of putting their trust in Him, they are able to change trying times into opportunities.

In books of history, the heroism of the Prophet's companions have been narrated in the most splendid manner. Take the following historical narrative as an example: Zamira ibn Sa'id quotes his grandmother, who was giving water to Muslim soldiers during the Battle of Uhud, as saying:

I heard the Prophet of God say, "The position of Nasiba daughter of Ka'b is higher than the position of so and so and Bahman." He was referring to a woman who was fighting bravely and fiercely. She had tied a piece of cloth around her stomach and finally suffered thirteen wounds. When this woman was on her death bed, I was one of the people bathing her, so I counted her wounds and found out that they were thirteen wounds in all. She would say, "I was looking at Ibn Qami'ah while her shoulder was hit and this was the worst wound she had—a wound she would treat for one year. Then the Prophet's caller called, "Forward to Hamra' al-Aswad!" This woman covered her wounds with her cloth but was not able accompany the Prophet's companions because of the intensity of the bleeding. (Waqidi, vol. 1, p. 270).

The Prophet's valour and zeal was so great that he is reported to have said, "I swear upon Him who controls my life that if no one accompanies me I will go by myself." (Ibid., vol. 2, p. 327).

One of the most splendid summits of this story is that the Noble Prophet (s) ordered his caller to announce, "The Prophet of God calls on you to search your enemies out and only those people who took part in the battle yesterday should accompany us." In response, Sa'd ibn Khazir, who had suffered seven wounds and was intending to treat them, said, "We have heard and we obey God and His Prophet!" Then he got his sword and did not wait for the treatment of his wounds.

When the Prophet's call reached the ears of two wounded Muslims, one of them said to the other, "I swear upon God that we will be losers if we do not accompany the Noble Prophet (s) even in one war." And thus, while carrying each other on their shoulders in turns, they accompanied the Noble Prophet (Ibid., p. 335).

2) After the War of Hawazin

Here we will reflect on the Prophet's manner of dealing with the state of weakness that arose among some Muslims following his distribution and apportionment of the booty and spoils of Bani Hawazin. The Noble Prophet (s) gave a large portion of these spoils to the migrants from Mecca who had participated with him in this war at the beginning of their Islamic life and who had fought against the unbelievers despite the fact that they themselves were the leaders of the unbelievers; this generous bestowal was, in fact, socially and politically motivated as he was trying to win their hearts and show them the difference between the profit-seeking life of the Age of Ignorance and the dignified life of Islam. The hypocrites among the Ansar (the Helpers, or the Muslims of Medinah) spread [malicious] rumours that the Noble Prophet (s) was favouring his relatives. These rumours produced a state of weakness among the Ansar and produced a wave of questions and anger.

The Noble Prophet (s) found it hard to bear this condition in a society that he was just beginning to establish and which was to be the cornerstone of his great apostolic mission to the world. For this reason, he gathered them together and this conversation took place between them: The Noble Prophet (s) said, "O group of Ansar! What are these words I have heard from you and what is this you have taken to heart? Were you not lost and God guided you? Were you not in need and God made you self-sufficient? Were you not enemies of one another and God inclined your hearts to one another?" The Ansar replied, "Yes, O Prophet of God! Do whatever you want and give whomever you want." The Noble Prophet (s) said, "Why don't you answer me, O group of the Ansar?" The Ansar said, "What response should we give of Prophet of God? Whatever God and His Prophet do is right." The Noble Prophet (s) said:

I swear upon God that if you had wanted you could say the following (and you would be speaking the truth and I would believe you): "all people called you a liar and yet we believed in you; all people deserted you but we made haste to help you; you were driven from your home and were homeless, but we provided you with refuge and gave you shelter; you were poor and we obviated your needs ..."

After these words, he (s) added:

O group of the Ansar! Now you have set your eyes on a trifle of worldly things and some people have tied their Islam to it but I have brought you Islam. Will you be happy to earn sheep and camels but revert with the Noble Prophet (s) to the old covenant? I swear upon He who controls Muhammad's life that if there had not been the Hijrah (the migration from Makkah to Madinah), I too would have been one of the Ansar and if other people followed another path I would have followed the path of the Ansar. O God! Have mercy on the Ansar and their children and their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren.

Here the Ansars were greatly affected and their emotions were aroused and, while crying, announced that they were pleased with the Prophet's manner of distribution and apportionment of the booty and spoils. (Ibn Hisham, p. 142).

This sensitive condition had the least conformity with their ideological backgrounds and also with their experience of the relatively long presence of the Noble Prophet (s) and their opinion of the Noble Prophet (s) as the most just and informed person.

In order to prevail over this condition, there are two types of solutions: the first is a long term solution, namely putting emphasis on belief and removing all flaws of weakness of the human soul; the other is concentrating on the issue [at hand]. The second solution mainly depends on emotional aspects, because the Noble Prophet (s) said to them, "O group of the Ansar! Will you be happy to earn sheep and camels but revert with the Noble Prophet (s) to the old covenant?" Before these words he had praised them and their position regarding the prophethood and their ideological viewpoint and aroused their sentiments and feelings so much that they too were influenced and, while crying, announced that they were happy and pleased with the Prophet's manner of distributing and apportioning the booty and

spoils.

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