The Perfect Role Model: The Prophet of Islam

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This book introduces the Noble Prophet of Islam (s) as the role model for all of mankind and the best example for Muslims of all ages.

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Preface

The invaluable legacy of the Household [*Ahl al-Bayt*] of the Prophet (may peace be upon them all), as preserved by their followers, is a comprehensive school of thought that embraces all branches of Islamic knowledge. This school has produced many brilliant scholars who have drawn inspiration from this rich and pure resource. It has provided the Muslim *ummah* with many scholars whom, following in the footsteps of Imams of the Prophet's Household (*'a*), have done their best to clear up the doubts raised by various creeds and currents within and without Muslim society and to answer their questions. Throughout the past centuries, they have given well-reasoned answers and clarifications concerning these questions and doubts.

To meet the responsibilities assigned to it, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) has embarked on a defense of the sanctity of the Islamic message and its verities, often obscured by the partisans of various sects and creeds as well as by currents hostile to Islam. The Assembly follows in the footsteps of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (*'a*) and the disciples of their school of thought in its readiness to confront these challenges and

tries to be on the frontline in consonance with the demands of every age.

The arguments contained in the works of the scholars belonging to the School of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (*'a*) are of unique significance. That is because they are based on genuine scholarship and appeal to reason, and avoid prejudice and bias. These arguments address scholars and thinkers in a manner that appeals to healthy minds and wholesome human nature.

To assist the seekers of truth, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly has endeavored to present a new phase of these arguments contained in the studies and translations of the works of contemporary Shi'ah writers and those who have embraced this sublime school of thought through divine blessing.

The Assembly is also engaged in editing and publishing valuable works by leading Shi'ah scholars of earlier ages to assist the seekers of the truth in discovering the truths which the School of the Prophet's Household (*'a*) has offered to the entire world.

The Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly looks forward to benefit from the opinions of the readers and their suggestions and constructive criticism in this area.

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating the genuine Islamic teachings as preached by the Prophet Muhammad (*s*).

We beseech God, the Most High, to accept our humble efforts and to enable us to enhance them under the auspices of Imam al-Mahdi, His vicegerent on the earth (may Allah expedite his advent).

We express our gratitude to Mr. Himmat Suhrab Pur the author of the present book, and Mr. Hasan Kashani, its translator. We also thank our colleagues who have participated in producing this work, especially the staff of the Translation Office.

Cultural Affairs Department
The Ahl al-Bayt (*'a*) World Assembly

Author's Preface

Man's need for a virtuous role model stems from his need to be influenced. Man has been created in such a way that he is influenced by others. Such influence plays a great role in his development as well as in the development of society. It is for this reason that the Noble Qur'an, amongst its methods of instruction, strives to introduce outstanding individuals, the most superior of them being the Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family).

The Qur'an explicitly introduces the Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) as the role model for all of mankind and the best example for Muslims of all ages. Fortunately, a precious treasure composed of the sayings (hadiths) and history of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) has recorded the most minute details of his life, and this book, inspired by this valuable treasure, is a brief look at his manner of living.

Even though the title of this book suggests that it offers an explanation of the practices of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), it is not completely out of place for us to make reference to the spiritual stations of this eternal example. Therefore, his spiritual stations have been summarized under the following headings:

1. The Highest of All Creation

The Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) is an individual unrivaled amongst all mankind for all time, and history will never see another like him. Concerning this topic, the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, peace be upon him, said,

"There is nothing God has created superior to Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him and his family."[1]

Though Khidhr crossed the Water of Life,

Muhammad passed beyond the Spring of the Spirit,

And if Solomon set his throne upon the winds,

Muhammad refrained from playing with the wind.

If Moses' enclosure was built from mountain rocks,

The palace of Ahmad was made of pure light

And if the cradle of Jesus reached the celestial sphere,

Muhammad leapt out of the cradle himself[2]

2. The First Among Creation

God has created in accordance with a particular system and in it He has provided the order of "the most noble, then the most noble after that" (*al-ashraf fal-ashraf*). He has made the first among creation "The Muhammadan Truth"[*haqiqat-e Muhammadiyyah*]. Sometimes this is also referred to as "The First Manifestation" [*tajalli-e Awwal*], or "The Far-Reaching Mercy" [*rahmat al-Wasi'ah*]. Numerous traditions support this concept. Jabir ibn 'Abdullah has narrated,

"I asked the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), 'What is the first thing God created?' He answered, 'The light of your prophet, O Jabir! He first created it then from it He created all other things.'"[3]

The line from start to finish is one,

The whole of creation has become a journey to Him,

an this road prophets are like camel-drivers, being

conductors and guides of the caravan.

From among them our master has become chief,

Both first and last with regard to this affair,

With him, the end of this road has been reached;

Concerning him has been revealed:

"I invite others to God." [***verse 108 of chapter 12 of the Holy Qur'an***]

3. Favored with Support from the Unseen

Since God is aware of the future decisions people will make and the deeds they will perform, He grants particular favors to individuals who have the spirit of pursuing the truth and choosing the path of virtue. For this reason, beginning in their childhood years, He places them under the umbrella of His guardianship. Spiritual individuals in general and the Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) in particular, were the recipients of such gifts.

"Verily, from the beginning of the Prophet's childhood (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) God sent the greatest of His angels to be his companion in order to familiarize him with the path of noble traits and the virtues of universal ethics (akhlaq)."[4]

History books have recorded numerous instances where the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) received unseen support.

4. The All-Embracing Mercy [rahmat al-wasi'ah]

Another instance that shows the spiritual station of the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) is that he was the manifestation and fountain of God's providence. This station was granted to him due to his inner purity. This trait was manifest in his blessed existence from childhood and continued until the end of his life. For this reason and due to his noble existence, God refrained from

punishing this community (*ummah*, the community of the Prophet).

"God will not punish them while you are amongst them and God will not punish them so long as they ask for forgiveness."[5]

In other words, just as the manifestation of God's mercy is to be found in repentance and seeking forgiveness, it is also to be found in the existence of the "Noble Prophet" (peace and blessings be upon him and his family).

5. Favored with The Greatest Form of Infallibility ['ismat al-Kubra']

Infallibility is a faculty of the soul that prevents man from sinning or committing errors. If this is found in an individual in its highest form, it is referred to as "the greatest form of infallibility". And if a lower form of this faculty exists in an individual, it is called "the lower form of infallibility"[*'ismat al-sughra'*]. Without a doubt, the Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) benefited from the highest level of infallibility.

This is a matter that both Sunni and Shi'ah scholars have unanimously agreed upon. A great number of verses of the Qur'an as well as narrations (*hadiths*) make reference to his station of infallibility. The following verse is one such reference:

"God desires but to remove impurity from you, O People of the Household (of the Prophet, peace be upon them), and to purify you thoroughly (of all imperfection)."[6]

6. Favored with Closeness to the Divine

Though it is true that all of God's prophets (peace be upon them) had very high spiritual capacities and for this reason, they were able to communicate with the unseen world and receive the waves of revelation which they caused to flow to the hearts of mankind, this ability and attribute of perfection was found in the Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) with a particular intensity. Even the angels drawn close to God could not comprehend this station.

The intensity of his ability meant that at certain times, he could form a direct relationship with God. The Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) explained his capacity and great existence as such, *"I have a particular time with God that not even an angel drawn close (to God), a prophet sent (by God), nor a believing servant whom God has tested his heart for faith can attain."*[7]

That which was mentioned in this introduction was merely a drop in the limitless ocean of the spiritual stations of the Great Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) since only God, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) himself and the infallible Imams (peace be

upon them) are truly aware of his spiritual stations and it is not the purpose of this book to relate them.

Rather, this is a look into the ethical behavior and practices of this great example. We hope that the *Islamic ummah*, the youth in particular, will emulate his behavior and ways of life and quench the thirst of their souls with the abundance of this fountain of ethics and spirituality, God-willing.

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1. Al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 440.
2. All poetry has been translated by 'Ali Kashani.
3. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 15, p. 24.
4. Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon 234.
5. Surah al-Anfal 8:33.
6. Sura al-Ahzab 33: 33.
7. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 18, p. 360.
8. According to the Iranian calendar, a reference to the number of solar years that have passed since the Prophet's migration to Medina.

Worship

The most pleasurable of all things for the Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) was his relationship with the Worshipped and private and intimate talks with God. He would never grow tired of his servitude towards God. Sometimes he would experience states in his prayer that only God's intimate friends are worthy of experiencing. Without a doubt, expressing servitude towards God as well as these private and intimate talks bring about a particular form of enthusiasm that causes all other than God to be left in the valley of the forgotten. The field of man's heart is transformed into a salt marsh where the love of other than God can never grow.

The heart speaks naught but the language of love,

The soul seeks nothing but the way to your love,

Your love made my desert heart like a salt-marsh,

Such that affection for no one else can ever grow there.

It is by means of serving and worshipping God that a person can experience peace and serenity within himself. He finds himself and discovers his place in the order of existence. The Great Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would maintain this state of worship in the most complete manner. The gnostic form of worship that he experienced could not be experienced by many.

‘Aishah (the Prophet's wife) said, *"The Messenger of God would be speaking to us and we would be speaking to him, until the time for prayer would set in, and then it was as if he did not know us and we did not know him."*[1]

The Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali (peace be upon him) said, *"The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would never procrastinate his prayer for dinner or anything else. When the time for prayer arrived, it was as if he did not know his family and friends."* [2]

Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him) has clarified the Prophet's desire and enthusiasm for worship as such, *"The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would stand on the tips of his toes, then God revealed the following verse, **"Ta Ha, We have not revealed the Qur’an to you for you to experience great discomfort"**[3] (**chapter 20, Ta Ha, of the Holy Qur’an , verse 1**)’.*

It has also been narrated that: One night, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) was in the home of one of his wives (Umm Salamah). After a little of the night had passed, Umm Salamah saw that the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) was not in bed. She got up and went looking for him. All of a sudden she noticed that he was standing next to the room with his hands raised, his eyes full of tears and he was saying the following; "O God, don't take away the good you have given me. O God, don't please my enemies and those who are jealous of me. O God, don't allow their evil from which you saved me to come back. O God, don't leave me to myself, even for one moment."

At this point, Umm Salamah began crying. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "Why are you crying, Umm Salamah?"

She said, "May my father and mother be your sacrifice, why shouldn't I cry? Even though you have such a high station and the fact that God has forgiven your past and future sins, you talk to God in this way (it is more appropriate for us to fear God and to cry in His presence)."

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "How can I be safe when God left Prophet Jonas (peace be upon him) to himself for only a moment when that which afflicted him took place."[4]

As one can see, The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) perpetually saw himself in the presence of God and he would remember God with his heart and tongue and in this way, he caused the water of monotheism to flow across the land of his spirit, to the point where the tree of proximity to God was rooted in his heart and mixed with his being.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 84, p. 257.
2. Majmu'ah Warram, vol. 2, p. 78.
3. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 16, p. 264.
4. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 6, p. 218.

Health and Hygiene

Islam is a religion that takes all aspects of mankind into consideration. For this reason, the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) gave great importance to personal hygiene and he encouraged others to do so as well. There are numerous instances concerning the emphasis the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) placed on health and here reference will be made to a few of these:

1. *He (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would not breathe in his cup while drinking. If he wanted to take a breath, he would remove the cup from his mouth."*[1]

2. When asked why Muslims do not become ill as often as others he replied, *"We are a people who do not eat until we become hungry and when we eat, we do not fill ourselves."*[2]

3. The Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali, peace be upon him, said, *"We would soak raisins or dates in water for the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family). The first and second days he would eat from it, but when they started to putrefy, he would say to throw it out."*[3]

4. *"The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) was never seen to have used the restroom without performing the ritual ablution (wudhu’) afterwards, and this he would begin with brushing his teeth."*[4]

By cutting his nails, applying oil to his body, using collyrium, removing body hair and clipping his moustache which were all part of his weekly routine of personal grooming, the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) made Muslims aware of the importance of personal hygiene. His sayings concerning cutting one's nails and clipping one's moustache clarify the physical and psychological benefits as well as the benefits in this world and the Hereafter. Amongst his sayings is the following: *"If one cuts his nails on Friday, God will remove sickness from his fingers and put a remedy in its place."*[5]

Elsewhere he (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, *"None of you should grow your moustache long, for Satan (perhaps a reference to bacteria) takes it as a refuge in which he hides."*[6]

1. Makarim al-Akhlaq, vol. 1, p. 32.
2. Sunan an-Nabi, p. 181.
3. Da‘a’im al-Islam, vol. 2, p. 128.
4. Muhajjah al-Baydha’, vol. 1, p. 296.
5. Makarim al-Akhlaq, vol. 1, p. 123.
6. Makarim al-Akhlaq, vol. 1, p. 125.

Living Modestly

The principle of living modestly and not drowning oneself in pleasure, material acquisitions and the life of this world is an enlightened and constructive principle that uncovers man's potential and allows his spirit to soar. The extent to which man pays attention to material embellishments and the more his ties to this world increase, the more he is deprived of spiritual pleasures, radiant wisdom and inner light.

Spiritual men of God, who have high goals and lofty destinations in sight, never tie themselves down to the embellishments of this world. They realize that being attached to worldly pleasures and attaining spiritual perfection are like the East and the West; when a person gets close to one of them, in reality he has moved away from the other. For this reason spiritually minded persons apply themselves totally in trying to reach proximity to God which is the goal of creation.

They do not waste their valuable lives on worthless matters, for arriving at this exalted destination is not possible without living modestly and expressing disinterest in matters related to this world.

Of course what we have said here does not contradict things like developing society or making progress in various fields of knowledge, handicraft and industry, all of which are amongst man's duties in this material world. Rather, that which is objectionable consists of two things: the first is being attached to worldly affairs [in other words, this world becomes the goal rather than a means for accomplishing a higher goal, realized in the Afterlife] and one's heart becomes tied to transient favors. The second is becoming drowned in pleasures and having a luxurious lifestyle.

The Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), the greatest role model for all of mankind, paid careful attention to the principle of living modestly and in this way, guided mankind toward the vast possibilities of spiritual advancement. A point worth making here is that the principle of simplicity is a relative principle that differs with regards to time and conditions. It is possible that a particular lifestyle might be considered very comfortable under particular circumstances and that same lifestyle, under different circumstances, due to changes in society, might be regarded as simple.

Therefore, when it is said that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) lived a simple life and that we should make him our role model, this does not mean that our homes, method of transportation, food and clothes should be exactly like his in terms of quality and quantity. Rather, what is intended is that the current general understanding of people today regarding present conditions, changes and advancements in technology must be taken into consideration in order to determine what type of lifestyle is considered simple and free of hassle.

In other words, from this principle one should not draw the conclusion that since the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), for example, lived in a house made of clay or ate out of dishes made of clay or rode a particular animal, one should do the same today. Rather, what is important is

observing the principle of living simply while paying attention to the particular present conditions of time and place. Some aspects of the simplicity of the Noble Prophet's lifestyle will now be discussed.

1. Anas ibn Malik has said, *"The Messenger of God* (*peace and blessings be upon him and his family*) *would not eat out of a tray or a platter, nor would he eat thin, refined white bread* (*apparently the food of the elite of that time*)*."*[1]

2. 'Aishah (the Prophet's wife) has said, *"The Messenger of God* (*peace and blessings be upon him and his family*) *would never eat his fill."*[2]

3. Imam al-Baqir (peace be upon him) has said, *"Halva* (*a jellylike sweet*) *was brought to the Prophet* (*peace and blessings be upon him and his family*) *but he refused to eat it. He was asked: 'Do you consider this to be forbidden?' He said, 'No, but I despise* (*getting used to it and*) *craving it.' Then he read the verse of the Qur'an that says, 'You did away with pure food in your life in this world'*.[3]

4. Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him), describing the Great Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) has said, *"He took only that which he absolutely required from this world and he did not take the smallest look at it. He had the thinnest waist and the hungriest stomach of all the people of this world. He* (*peace and blessings be upon him and his family*) *would eat on the floor, sit like a slave, mend his shoes with his own hands, patch his clothes with his own hands, ride a bare donkey* (*without a saddle*)*, seat another person behind him and when there was a design on the curtain hanging on the door of his house, he said to one of his wives, 'O so-and-so, take it away from my sight, for when I look at it I remember this world and its embellishments'."*[4]

1. Makarim al-Akhlaq, vol. 1, p. 171.
2. Majmu'ah Warram, vol. 1, p. 101.
3. Mahasin, p. 343.
4. Nahj al Balaghah, sermon 159.

Performing Personal Chores

Even though he possessed lofty spiritual stations, had found a special place in the hearts of the Muslim faithful and was granted a particular form of respect from members of his family, the Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) never liked for others to perform his personal chores. Rather, he sought to be completely independent in taking care of his personal affairs. By so doing, he succeeded in showing respect towards others and not thinking of himself as better than others as well as teaching others to be self-reliant.

Daylami, in his book entitled *Irshad al-Qulub*, narrated the following: *"The Prophet would patch his*

clothes, mend his shoes, milk his sheep, eat with slaves, sit on the floor and was not too shy to procure whatever he needed from the market and take it to his family."[1]

Similarly, it has been narrated that: During a particular journey, the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) was with a group and they had traveled for hours. Both the riders and the animals they were riding were showing signs of weariness. The caravan stopped at a place with a well full of water. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) made his camel lie down and got off. Certain individuals were determined to get to the water as soon as possible and prepare themselves for prayer.

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) proceeded towards the well as soon as he got off his camel but shortly after, he returned without saying anything. His companions and friends were astonished and said to themselves, "What, is this not an acceptable place to stop? Is he going to tell us to start moving again?" They looked and listened carefully, waiting to hear his command. Their astonishment became even greater as he (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), immediately upon arriving at his camel's side, took knee braces and placed them on his camel's knees and then once again, headed towards the well.

The companions, perplexed, asked, "O Messenger of God, why did you not ask us to do it for you instead of burdening yourself by returning to your camel? It would have been our honor to perform this service."

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) replied, "Never seek the help of others in performing personal chores and do not rely on others even if it be for a piece of wood with which to brush your teeth."[2]

1. Irshad al-Qulub, chapter 32, p. 155.
2. Kuhl al-Basar, p. 69.

Outward Appearance

Paying special attention to outward appearance was one of the perpetual rituals of the Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family). He saw no conflict in paying attention to the inner-self while enhancing one's outward appearance. His attention towards disciplining the soul and serving God did not prevent him from maintaining an attractive physical appearance.

For example, he would use pleasant fragrances and comb his hair. His clothes were always clean and attractive. When he wanted to leave home, he would look in the mirror. And whenever he made the ritual ablution (wudhu') he would brush his teeth. His clothes and shoes would always match. The turban he

wore would elegantly compliment his stature and would increase his attractive and imposing presence. He (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) himself has said, *"Verily, God is beautiful and He loves beauty."*[1]

Numerous examples of the importance the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) placed on beauty have been mentioned in books narrating his traditions. Here are a few of them:

1. Tabarsi has said, *"The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would look in the mirror, straighten and comb his hair. Sometimes he would look (at his reflection) in water to straighten his hair. He would beautify himself for his companions as well as for his family and he would say, 'Verily, God loves for his servant to prepare himself and beautify himself when he sets out (to meet) his brothers (in faith).'"*[2]

2. Amongst the things that enhances a pleasant appearance is applying perfume, something the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) liked very much: *"The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would spend more on perfume than he would on food."*[3]

3. A disheveled man with long hair and a long beard that were both uncombed, came to the Most Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family). He (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) asked, "Could this man not find oil with which to straighten his hair? Some of you come to me with the appearance of Satan."[4]

4. Imam al-Baqir (peace be upon him) has said, "Anytime the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) passed somewhere, two or three days afterwards, people would understand that he had passed by due to his fragrant smell. He would put on any sort of perfume that was brought to him and he would say, 'The smell of perfume is nice and pleasing and carrying it is not difficult'."[5]

1. Nahj al-Fasahah, p. 159.
2. Makarim al-Akhlaq, vol. 1, p. 36.
3. Makarim al-Akhlaq, vol. 1, p. 66.
4. Muhajjah al-Baydha', vol. 1, p. 309.
5. Makarim al-Akhlaq, vol. 1, p. 66.

Respect towards Women

Before the Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) was appointed as a prophet, Arab society generally considered women to be worthless and did not hold them in any great esteem. In addition, Arab society was negligent in relation to fulfilling women's personal and societal rights. However, from its very onset, Islam gave importance to all of mankind and considered the lives of both men and women to be precious.

The Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) commanded others to fulfill women's rights and to honor their individuality and he showed a particular form of respect towards women himself while implementing these principles. The entirety of his life is a display of this truth.

Imam as Sadiq (peace be upon him) has said, *"The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would say "Salamun 'alaykum" to women and they would reply to his salutation. The Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) would also greet women but he disliked greeting young women for he would say, 'I fear that her voice will be pleasing to me and more than I desired in reward (by giving salutation) will be given to me (in terms of harm, for hearing her pleasing voice)'."*[1]

This action of greeting women by the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) conveys a reality; by doing this, he wanted to convey to his followers the value of women and their due respect.

Another example of his respect towards women is his being helpful to his wives. "The Most Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would sew his own clothes, open the door and milk sheep and camels himself. Whenever his servant would grow weary, he would mill wheat or barley himself. Before going to bed, he would prepare water for his ritual ablution (wudhu') himself. He would cut up meat himself and when his family members were burdened with many things to do, he would provide them with help."[2]

With regards to showing respect towards women the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) has said, *"Beware, the best of you is he who is the best towards his women, and I am the best among all of you toward my women."*[3]

1. Usul al-kafi, vol. 2, p. 648.
2. Sunan an-Nabi, p. 73.
3. Muhajjah al-Baydha', vol 3, p. 98.

Sense of Humor

That which can be derived from the etiquette and teachings of Islamic society and the way (*sunnah*) of the Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) is that joking is desirable when it does not lead to sinful acts such as disparaging, ridiculing or slander and only has the intention of making a brother in faith happy. The Most Noble Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), in addition to encouraging his companions to make jokes, would himself joke with them.

The Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) has said, *"The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), in order to make one of his companions happy who had been*

upset, would joke with him and he would say, 'Verily, God hates one who snarls in his brother's (*in faith*) *face."*[1]

There are numerous instances of the Prophet's tendency to joke recorded in books of his traditions and lifestyle. Reference will be made to some of these:

1. A servant of the Messenger of God named Anjashah would say "*huda*" (something they say to make a camel go faster) to the camel of the Prophet's wife. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "O Anjashah, be careful (when dealing) with glass"[2] (an allusion to the fact that women are fragile and it is possible that at a high speed they may get scared, fall and hurt themselves).

2. A women came to the Most Noble Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and mentioned her husband's name. He asked, "Is your husband the one who has white in his eyes? She replied, "No, he doesn't have white in his eyes." When that woman went home and told her husband what had happened, he said, "Don't you see that the white part of my eyes is more than the black part?"[3]

3. The Prophet's lifestyle was such that he permitted his supporters to say humorous things in his blessed presence. Following the example of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), they would stay away from inappropriate jokes. But they did not hold back when it came to acceptable forms of jesting.

"Nu'ayman was the type of person who liked to joke. One day he saw a Bedouin with a sack of honey. He bought it and took it to the Prophet's house. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) thought he had brought this as a gift. Nu'ayman left and the Bedouin came standing in front of the Prophet's house. After waiting for a long time, he yelled, 'Whoever lives here, if you don't have money, give the honey back.' The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) discovered what had happened and paid that man for the honey.

When the Prophet met Nu'ayman, he asked, 'Why did you do that?'

Nu'ayman said, 'I figured, the Messenger of God likes honey and that Bedouin man had a lot of honey.' The Messenger of God laughed at what Nu'ayman had done and did not show any signs of being upset. "[4]

1. Sunan an-Nabi, p. 60.
2. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 16, p. 294.
3. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 16, p. 294.
4. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 16, p. 296.

Chastity and Abstinence

Chastity and abstinence are amongst the highest human values. They provide the power to control man's natural instincts and to use them in the path towards perfection. The closer man goes to the treasures of chastity and abstinence, the closer he becomes to his own humanity and the farther he distances himself from animalistic behavior. If it were not for chastity and abstinence, man would know no boundaries while seeking to please his carnal desires and as a result, he would sink in the cesspool of corruption and sensuality.

Since pious men are the embodiment of virtue and perfection, the most complete role model for mankind, the Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), was adorned with chastity and abstinence of the highest nature. Not once did he become contaminated with sins that contradict infallibility or chastity.

Rather, he was the manifestation of chastity and abstinence and this state was so strong in him that he even refrained from permissible actions containing even the slight possibility of a lack of chastity. Imam as-Sadiq (peace be upon him), in a narration concerning the Prophet's behavior, has said, "When the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would sit with somebody, he would not take of his clothes (outer garments) until the man would rise (and leave).[1]"

Similarly, Abu Sa'id Khidri has narrated that: "The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) was more chaste than virgin women behind curtains and if he did not like something, we would understand so from his facial expression (he would not tell us anything).[2]"

1. Tafsir al-'Ayashi, vol. 1, p. 203.
2. Makarim al-Akhlaq, vol. 1, p. 17.

Caring for Children

Children who are the future of society, are usually not treated with a lot of importance by their elders. Sometimes they are even looked down upon. The Messenger of God, however, was different. He considered children to be precious in value and he kept their feelings and particular circumstances in mind.

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) told grownups and parents to play with children at home. Without a doubt, this type of attitude gives children the feeling that they are individuals and that they are important. In this way, if children have problems with their parents they can more easily

solve them and they can see their parents as friends, rather than as rulers. Also, while playing, parents can teach their children lessons about life.

Here reference will be made to a few examples of the respect the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would show towards children:

1. *"If the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) heard the sound of a child crying while he (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) was leading the prayer he would make the prayer short so that the child's mother could attend to her child sooner."*[1]

2. When the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) saw the children of the Ansar [those who provided the Prophet with help amongst the people of Madinah] he would stroke their heads with his hand, greet them with peace and pray for them.[2]

3. When the Eminent Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would return from a journey, children would come to welcome him. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would wait and ask them to ride with him. He would seat some of them on his steed, some sitting in front and others behind. He would also tell his companions to give some of them a ride.[3]

4. *"Small children would be brought to the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) for him to name them and pray for them. He would put such children on his lap out of respect for their families. Sometimes a child would urinate while in his lap and those who witnessed this would often yell at the child. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would say kindly, 'Do not prevent a child from urinating with harshness, (rather wait) until he finishes urinating.' When the Prophet had finished praying for or naming the child, the family would be filled with delight and they would see no signs of annoyance in the Prophet as a result of the urine of their child. When the family would leave, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would wash his clothes."*[4]

1. 'Ilal ash-Shara'i', vol. 2, p. 33, also to be found in Sunan an-Nabi, p. 273.
2. Sharaf an-Nabi, p. 65.
3. Sharaf an-Nabi, p. 85.
4. Makarim al Akhlaq, vol. 1, p. 25.

Forgiveness

Forgiving others and overlooking their faults is a virtue that is held in high esteem by all schools of thought and all nations. People consider those who are willing to forgive others to be unparalleled in value.

The Noble Qur'an, the Disciplinarian of all mankind, advises all of us to adhere to this enlightened value,

saying:

"And they should pardon and excuse their faults. Do they not love for God to forgive them? And God is very forgiving and merciful."[1]

The Noble Qur'an does not just consider forgiving the mistakes of others to be desirable; rather, it considers doing good to one who has harmed you to be of even more value and to be one of the attributes of true believers:

"And they ward off evil with good and they give in charity from that which We have given them in sustenance."[2]

Doing good when one has been wronged is a fine art that only those with strong (spiritual) foundations can accomplish. Regarding this, Khwajah 'Abdullah Ansari has said, "Doing bad in response to bad is dog-like behavior. Doing good in response to good is donkey-like behavior. Doing good in response to bad is the work of Khwajah 'Abdullah Ansari."

In other words, responding to evil and good in kind are natural and normal. But doing good in response to bad is superior to the behavior of animals and is a quality to which only humans can aspire.

The Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), who derived his discipline from the Qur'an, was always forgiving and he would also do good (*ihsan*) when he was wronged. This was also true of the other infallibles (peace be upon them).

Concerning the Prophet's virtues, it has been related that: *"The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would never take revenge (on someone) for (having wronged) him. Rather, he would pardon and excuse."*[3]

The following story is an example of the Prophet's tendency to pardon others: "One day a Bedouin man came to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and requested something from him. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) gave it to him and asked, 'Have I done good to you?' The man replied, 'No, you've never done good to me.' His companions got upset as a result of the man's ungratefulness and intended to harm him. The Prophet, however, prevented them from showing aggression. At that point, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) went home and gave the man even more and asked, 'Now have I done good to you?' The man said, 'Yes, may God reward you with goodness.'

The Messenger of God said, 'As a result of what you said in front of my companions, it is possible that they may think negatively about you. If you like, go to them and announce your contentment.' The man went to the Prophet's companions and the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said: 'This man has become satisfied with me, hasn't you?'

The man responded, 'Yes, may God reward you and your family with goodness.'

Then the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, 'This man and I are like one whose she-camel has run away, others follow it but the camel only runs further away. But the owner of the camel says, 'Let her go. I know how to tame her.' The camel comes back and he pats her head and face and dusts her body and face and takes her bridle in his hand. Yesterday, if I were to have given you (speaking to his companions) permission, you would have killed this man due to his foul tongue and (if he had died) in such a state he would have entered Hell.'"[4]

In addition to being the type of person who overlooked the faults of others, the Noble Prophet of Islam also made others conscious of this eminent, spiritual and humanistic principle and he said, *"You must pardon others for verily pardoning others only increases the servant (of God) in might. So be forgiving so that God may make you mighty."*[5]

Similarly, on another occasion he stated eloquently: *"Shall I inform you of the best (most beneficial) traits for this world and the Hereafter? They are pardoning one who has done injustice to you, bonding with one who has cut off ties with you, doing good to one who has wronged you and giving to one who has withheld from you."*[6]

1. Surah an-Nur 24: 22.
2. Surah al-Qisas 28: 54.
3. Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol. 2, p. 87.
4. Safinah al-Bihar, vol. 1, p. 416.
5. Mir'at al-'Uqul, vol. 8, p. 194.
6. Mir'at al-'Uqul, vol. 8, p. 192.

Courteousness

Being polite and showing others respect are admirable traits that both Islamic law [*shari'ah*] and the methodology of religious leaders have advised us to follow. The Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) placed great importance on such principles and always preserved the dignity of others by treating them with respect. There are numerous instances of the Prophet's behavior that teach us to honor others. Here reference is made to a few of such instances:

1. *"Whenever a man would sit next to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), he would not get up until that man got up."*[1]

2. *"He (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would address his companions by their kunyah (referring to one as the father of such-and-such or the mother of such-and such which was a sign of respect in Arab culture), in order to show them respect and win their hearts. And he would give a kunyah to whosoever did not have one and, thereafter, such a person would be addressed by this kunyah.*

Similarly he would give kunyahs to women who had children as well as those who did not. He would also give kunyahs to children."[2]

3. One of the memorable things the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) reported about sitting with the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) was that: "The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would never stretch his legs towards anyone."[3]

4. The Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would even treat his servants with courteousness. Anas ibn Malik is quoted as saying, *"I swear by the One who dispatched him (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) with truth! Never would he say, 'Why did you do that?' if I did something he didn't like. And whenever one of his wives would blame me for something, he would say, 'Leave him alone. This was prescribed and (divinely) ordained."*[4]

5. He (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would show extraordinary respect to guests. Escorting his guests to the door is one of the customs of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family). Similarly, when the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) entertained guests, he would eat with them and he would continue to eat so long as his guests had not finished eating.[5]

1. Makarim al-Akhlaq, vol. 1, p. 15.
2. Ihya' al-'Ulum, vol. 2, p. 363.
3. Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 22.
4. Ihya' al-'Ulum, vol. 2, p. 361.
5. Sunan an-Nabi, p. 67.

Humility

Behaving humbly towards others and distancing oneself from arrogance and conceitedness are some of the greatest human attributes. The Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) possessed these attributes to a high degree and it can be said with certainty that one of the reasons this spiritual role model was so beloved was the humility he displayed in dealing with others. To give the reader a deeper appreciation of this, some examples of such behavior will be mentioned:

1. *"When the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would enter a social gathering, he would sit in the nearest place possible upon entering [the would not give importance to sitting in a particular place]."*[1]

2. *"He disliked for others to stand up for him, so people [his companions] would not stand up when he would arrive since they knew he did not like them to do so. Then, when he would stand up (to leave) they would get up and accompany him until he entered his house."*[2]

3. Abu Dharr al-Ghaffari (one of the Prophet's greatest companions) said, *"The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would sit amongst his companions and when a stranger entered, the stranger would not know which of these men was the Prophet and would have to ask. We requested the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) to arrange the seating in our gatherings in such a way that a stranger would be able to tell which one is the Prophet. So, we built a bench out of clay and he (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would sit on it and we would sit around him."*[3]

4. Just as the Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would show humility towards God's servants, he would also show the highest form of humility in God's presence so that, God forbid, even the smallest amount of pride would not enter his blessed heart: Abu 'Abdullah (Imam as Sadiq, peace be upon him) said, *"From the day he was sent by God, Mighty and Sublime is He, until the day He took his soul, The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would never lean back while eating. He would eat like a slave and sit like a slave." The narrator of this tradition asked the reason behind it. He replied, "Out of humility towards God, the Mighty and Sublime."*[4]

1. Makarim al-Akhlaq, vol. 1, p. 25.
2. Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol. 2, p. 113.
3. Makarim al-Akhlaq, vol. 1, p. 15.
4. Da'a'im al-Islam, vol. 2, p. 119.

Fulfilling Promises

Fulfilling one's promise shows one's true personality and being true to one's word plays a great role in strengthening social ties. It is one of the greatest virtues which can be witnessed in every aspect of the Prophet's life, in family relations and social and political interactions alike.

Both before and after he was appointed as a prophet, when it came to fulfilling promises he (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) held a high position and a well-deserved station. He would fulfill his promises under all circumstances, whether they were made to friends or enemies. If the other party had not negated their side of the agreement, he would always honor his word. Not even one case has been related where the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) was the first to fail to act in accordance with an agreement. Instead, he tried to fulfill his promise at any cost, even when doing so caused him harm. Mention will be made of some examples demonstrating the importance he placed on this characteristic.

1. Abu 'Abdullah (Imam as Sadiq, peace be upon him) is quoted as saying, *"The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) made an arrangement with a man that they would meet next to a boulder and so he said, 'I will wait for you here until you come back.' Then the heat of the*

sun began to beat down where he was standing and his companions urged him, 'O Messenger of God, what would happen if you were to just move to the shade?' He (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, 'I promised him (I would meet him) right here so if he doesn't come, he will be the one to have violated his oath.'"[1]

2. In the Age of Ignorance (the period before the dawn of Islam) a number of youth from the tribe of Quraysh contracted an agreement called "*hilf al-fudhul*" aimed at defending the rights of the oppressed. The Most Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) was one of those who took part in this agreement. Not only did he fulfill his word prior to his prophetic mission but also afterwards, whenever reference was made to this agreement, he would say, "I'm not willing to violate my oath even if I were to be offered the most valuable possessions to do so."[2]

3. 'Ammar Yasir has said, "I would graze our own sheep. Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would also graze sheep. One day I said to him, 'I know of a good pasture located at 'Fajj'. Would you like to go there tomorrow?' He answered, 'Yes.' The next morning I saw that Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) came sooner than I but he had not taken his sheep to the pasture. I asked, 'So why are you standing (here)?' He replied, 'I made a promise with you that we would take our sheep to the pasture together and I didn't want to violate my oath and take my sheep to the pasture before you.'"[3]

4. It was the month of Dhu'l-Qa'dah and the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) had decided to set out for Mecca in order to perform the lesser pilgrimage (*'umrah*). He invited all the Muslims to take part in this journey with him. Then the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) headed for Mecca with a group of his followers. While on their journey, they were told, "(The tribe of) Quraysh (in Mecca) have learned of your journey and have prepared themselves for war, having set up at Dhi Tuwa, swearing not let you enter Mecca."

Since the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) had not set out with the intention of engaging in war, but had intended to perform *'umrah*, he (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) started negotiations with them and they made a treaty that came to be known as the treaty of *Hudaybiyyah*. In this treaty, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) agreed to a number of things, including: "Any individual from the Quraysh who runs away from Mecca without his guardian's permission and becomes Muslim and joins the Muslims, Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) must send him back to the Quraysh. But if a Muslim runs away and goes to the Quraysh, they are not obliged to return the Muslim."

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) made this pact with Suhayl, the representative of the Quraysh. However, Suhayl's son, Abu Jandal, who had become Muslim, and had been imprisoned by his father, ran away from Mecca and joined the Muslims.

When Suhayl saw him he said, "O Muhammad, this is the first case where you can fulfill your promise. If

you want us to have peace, you must return him to us."

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) accepted to do so. Suhayl took his son by the collar and headed towards Mecca.

Abu Jandal cried, "O Muslims, are you going to allow them to take me back to the idol worshippers and be in their clutches?"

The Most Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "Be patient, Abu Jandal. God will provide relief for you and others like you. We have made an oath with them and we cannot violate our oath."[4]

5. One of the clearest examples of the Prophet keeping his word in social matters is the incident concerning Abu Basir. Abu Basir was one of the Muslims in the battle of Mecca who fled to Madinah after the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah. The elders of the Quraysh wrote a letter to the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and gave it to a particular individual who, along with his slave, was to take it to Madinah in order to implement the law in regards to Abu Basir and bring him back to Madinah. When the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) received the letter, he requested Abu Basir to come and he said to him, "You know that we have made an oath with the Quraysh and it is not right for us to violate our oath. God will provide relief for you and others like you."

Abu Basir said, "O Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family)! Are you going to return me to the enemies who will cause me to forsake my religion?

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "Go back, Abu Bas'ir. God will provide relief for you and others like you."

And so Abu Basir headed back with the two that were sent to take him. When they arrived at Dhil Halifah, they stopped next to a wall. Abu Basir looked at the man and asked, "Is that sword of yours sharp?"

"Yes it is," the man replied.

"Can I see it?" asked Abu Basir.

"Yes, if you would like," replied the man. Abu Basir took the sword and killed the man without hesitation. His slave, who saw this incident, ran to Madinah out of fear. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) was sitting in a mosque when all of a sudden the slave entered. As soon as he (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) saw him he said, "This man has seen a frightening scene." Then he asked, "What has happened?"

"Abu Basir killed that man," he replied.

At this point, Abu Basir arrived and said, "O Messenger of God, you were faithful to your oath in turning me over to these two men. But I feared my faith was in danger…"

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "If this man has supporters, this event will cause a great war." Abu Basir realized that if he stayed in Madinah the Makkans would send people after him once again. So he left Madinah and headed for the shores of the Red Sea. There, the Qurayshi caravans would pass by on their way to the province of Sham[5].

When the Muslims who were enslaved in Mecca heard the story of Abu Basir and what the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) had said to him, they escaped at all costs in order to join Abu Basir. After a while, his supporters numbered about 70 in all. At this point, they had become a serious threat to the caravans of the Quraysh that passed by. They killed all members of the Quraysh that they could. And they would harass the Qurayshi caravans that passed that way.

In order to put an end to this harassment, the Quraysh wrote a letter to the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) urging him to request these men to come to Madinah and thereby relieve the Quraysh of this hardship. The Most Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) summoned them and they came to Madinah.[6]

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 75, p. 95.
2. Sirah al-Halbi, vol. 1, p. 131.
3. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 16, p. 224.
4. Sirah ibn Hisham, vol. 3, p. 332.
5. Modern Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and Syria
6. Sirah ibn Hisham, vol. 1, p. 337.

Encouraging Industriousness

Even though The Most Noble Prophet's generosity would prevent him from depriving a beggar of his charity, he (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) did not like people to beg out of laziness or without good reason. Therefore, in order to discourage laziness, develop manpower and wipe out the inclination to seek help, at certain times he would suggest to beggars that they find work or a profession and seek their daily bread by means of labor. He (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) considered work to be sacred to such an extent that the esteem of one who did not work would be diminished in his eyes:

"When he would look at a man and was pleased with him, he would ask, 'Does he have a profession?' If a negative reply was given, the honor of that man would be diminished in his eyes. He was asked, 'Why so, O Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family)?' He replied, 'The reason is

that if a believer does not work, he lives by means of his religion.'"[1]

There are two events that are worthy of mention here:

1. One of the companions of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) was short of money. His wife told him, "If only you were to go to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and ask him for help (we would receive financial help)."

So the man went to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and when the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) saw him he said, "One who seeks something from us, we will give it to him. But if one shows freedom from want, God will make him free of want."

The man said to himself, "This remark of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) was directed towards me." So he returned home and told his wife what had happened.

She said, "The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) is human just like the rest of us (he cannot read your mind so his statement was not directed towards you). Go back and tell him about your (financial) situation." The man went back to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) who, upon seeing him, repeated the same sentence. This happened three times. After the third time, the man borrowed an axe and started gathering firewood. He would then take this firewood to town and sell it. He continued to do so until he gathered enough capital to buy equipment and an animal to help him in transporting the firewood and in time he became very wealthy.

Afterwards, he came to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and told him what happened. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "I told you that if one asks us for something, we will give it to him. But if one shows freedom from want, God will make him free of want."[2]

2. A man came to the Most Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and said, "I have not eaten for two days." He told him, "Go to the market and seek your daily bread there." The next day he came to him and said, "O Messenger of God, I went to the market yesterday, but I did not find anything and last night I slept without having eaten."

He (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said again, "Go to the market."

The third time he received the same response, he headed for the market and saw that a caravan had arrived. He helped the people of the caravan to sell their products. In the end, they gave him a share of the profit they had made from the goods they sold. Once again, the man went to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and said, "I did not find anything." He (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "Yes you did. They gave you a share." The man acknowledged this. "Then why did you lie?" the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) asked. The man said, "You are right but I wanted to find out if you are aware of people's actions. I also wanted to get

something from you."

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, *"One who shows freedom from want, God will make him free of want. And one who opens the door of begging for himself, God will open 70 doors of poverty for him that cannot be closed. It is not permissible to give charity to one who is free of need or one who has healthy limbs giving him the strength to remove his state of need."*[3]

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 103, p. 9.
2. 'Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 112.
3. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 18, p. 115.

Kindness

Since Islam is the religion of love and friendship and the Most Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) is the one entrusted with developing this school, love and affection were constantly flowing in the ocean of his existence. The scope of his kindness was so broad that it encompassed his closest family members, companions, supporters, children, orphans, those who had been taken captive and those who were lost. This was but an example of the radiance of God's mercy that had been cast in his existence (as supported by the Qur'an ic verse stating) ***"Due to a mercy from God, you were kind to them."***[1]

Here reference will be made to some examples of the far-reaching mercy of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) that have been mentioned in books about his life:

1. His loving attitude towards servants and subordinates is a manifestation of his kindness. Anas ibn Malik has said, "I worked for the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) for ten years and not once did I even hear him say '*uff*' to me and he never asked me, 'Why did you do this?' or, 'Why didn't you do that?'. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would have something to drink for *ift'ar* (breaking the fast) and something to drink for *sahar* (the meal before dawn) and sometimes he would have one drink for both.

Sometimes that drink was milk and sometimes it was bread that had been mixed with water. One night, I prepared a drink for him, but he (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) came home late that night. I thought that some of his companions had invited him [*for ifar*] so I drank that which I had prepared for him. An hour later, the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) came home and I asked one of his companions if the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) had eaten *ift'ar* or if someone had invited him.

The companion replied in the negative. I came to regret what I had done very much and that night, God knows, I was very upset right until morning. This was because I was expecting the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) to look for his drink any moment and not find it. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) spent the whole night until morning without eating anything even though he had been fasting. Afterwards, he never asked me and he never mentioned anything about the drink."[2]

2. The Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) had particular affection for those who believed and loved the message he brought. "He constantly enquired as to how his companions were doing and would speak to them in an affable and encouraging manner. If he had not seen one of them for three days, he would ask about him. If they told him that he had gone on a journey, he (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would pray for him. And if he had not gone on a journey, he would go and see him. If he was sick, he would go and visit him."[3]

3. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (peace be upon him) has said, "A man named Thamamah ibn Uthal, who was being held captive, was brought to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family). He was the leader of Yamamah people and it was said that his rulings were influential amongst the people of Tayy and Yemen. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) recognized him and ordered that he be treated well. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would send him food from his home every day. He (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would go and see him and invite him to accept Islam. One day he (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) went to him and said, "I will give you the opportunity to choose one of three courses of action: The first is that I kill you." He replied, "If you do that, know that you would have killed a great personality."

"The second is that you give money in exchange for your freedom." He said, "In that case, it would have to be a very large amount since my price is very high (my people would have to pay a large sum since I am a great personality)."

Then the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "The third course of action is that I should be kind to you and free you (without receiving anything in return)."He replid, "If you do that, you will find me to be a grateful individual."

Then the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) ordered that he be set free. The man accepted Islam and said, "I swear by God, when I saw you, I knew you were a prophet but I considered you my greatest enemy in the world. Now, you are the most beloved person to me." [4]

4. It was a difficult time for the Prophet's companions when his teeth were broken and his blessed face wounded and stained with blood during the Battle of Uhud. They requested to be allowed to curse the disbelievers and the enemies. But he (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "I was not appointed (as a prophet) for cursing. Rather, I am the Prophet of Mercy and I will pray for them, so that

God may guide my people, for they are ignorant."[5]

5. His method of dealing with the enemy in times of war and dealing with army personnel, demonstrated the magnificence of the soul of this ambassador of God, a soul full of kindness. Imam as Sadiq (peace be upon him) has said, *"Whenever the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his family) wanted to dispatch an army, he would request at them to come to him and he would tell them: 'Go in the name of God, the Exalted. Seek perseverance from Him and fight for His cause. Do not steal from the war booty. Do not mutilate the disbelievers. Do not kill old men, children or women. Do not kill monks who live in caves. Do not uproot trees unless you are forced to do so. Do not burn palm trees nor destroy them. Never poison the water of the idol worshippers. Do not be deceptive nor treacherous. If a Muslim gives asylum to an idol worshipper, he is a refugee until he hears the word of God and Islam is presented to him. If he accepts, he is your brother in faith. If he does not accept, he is to be returned to a safe place (amongst his own people).'"*[6]

6. The scope of the Prophet's mercy and affection was so wide that he would not even take part in hunting birds. If a bird had been hunted, he would make use of it. But he would never hunt birds himself: "The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would eat the meat of birds that had been hunted but he would not pursue them himself nor would he hunt them."[7]

1. Surah Al 'Imran 3:159.
2. Muntaha al-Amal, vol. 1, p. 18.
3. Sunan an-Nabi, p. 51.
4. Sirah Rasul Allah, vol. 2, p. 1092.
5. Muhajjah al-Baydha', vol. 4, p. 129.
6. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 19, p. 177.
7. Ihya' al-'Ulum, vol. 2, p. 369.

Opposition to Negative Asceticism

Negative asceticism refers to behaving in an extreme manner or living in an austere way that is opposed to the common practice of Muslims. For example, one might refrain from bounties that are deemed permissible, one might behave abnormally in social settings, one might behave in a very dry and pseudo-pious fashion or one might not speak to others and behave as if he alone existed in this world. These sorts of behaviors have been seen amongst some proponents of pseudo-asceticism and amongst some *Sufi* sects.

Without a doubt, the Islamic legal system is a complete and comprehensive one. Its principles for life are based on man's innate nature as well as on his natural needs and desires. For this reason, any form of thinking or behavior that opposes man's innate nature is not to be considered Islamic.

Those who imagine that they can reach gnosticism (*'irfan*) and perfection by means of negative asceticism are making a great mistake. The greatest personality that this world has ever known is the Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) who, not only did not behave in such a manner, but also strongly opposed such thinking.

That which Islam and religious leaders are constantly warning us about consists of two things. The first thing we are warned to avoid is being attached to this world and to material possessions. The second is drowning ourselves in pleasure and lust. Making appropriate use of that which God has bestowed upon us while refraining from unnecessary luxuries, however, is the way of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and our religious leaders.

The Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) strongly opposed negative forms of asceticism and ignoring one's natural desires:

1. The Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, peace be upon him, has said, *"A group from amongst the companions* (*of the Prophet*) *would abstain from women, eating during the day and sleeping at night. Umm Salamah* (*the Prophet's wife*) *informed the Messenger of God* (*peace and blessings be upon him and his family*) *of this and so he went to these companions and said, Do you turn away from women? For verily I approach* (*my*) *women and I eat during the day and I sleep at night and he who turns away from my way of life* (*sunnah*) *is not of me."*[1]

2. One day, three women came to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family). One of them said, *"O Messenger of God, my husband has decided not to associate with women anymore."*

Another one of them said, "*O Messenger of God, my husband has decided not to eat meat anymore."*

The third one said, *"O Messenger of God, my husband has decided not to use pleasant fragrances anymore."*

The Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) became upset upon hearing this for he came to realize that deviant ideas were becoming prominent amongst the Muslims. He went to the mosque even though it was not the customary time. He was in such a hurry that his blessed turban was partly on his shoulder and partly dragging on the ground as he walked. He ordered that the people gather [to hear what he had to say]. They came to the mosque. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) went on the pulpit and said, *"I have heard that erroneous ideas have become common amongst my companions. What sort of mistaken way of life is this that has become apparent amongst Muslims? I, being a prophet, eat meat. I consume tasty foods. I wear good clothes. I use fragrances. I associate with my wives. So he whose way is not my way of life is not of me."*[2]

1. Da'a'im al-Islam, vol. 2, p. 191, as well as Jami' al-Akhbar, p. 118.
2. Wasa'il ash-Shi'ah, vol. 14, p. 74.

Reviving and Honoring Universal Human Values

Human ethical values such as self-respect, honor, honesty, forgiveness, justice, empathy, serving others, perseverance, etc., are virtues that all people consider sacred and have been praised in all schools of thought.

The Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) exerted the utmost effort in reviving and revering moral excellences. Islam is a school of thought that, at the heart of its rules and legislations, holds humanity in high esteem and its goal in dispatching the Prophet was to guide society towards humanitarian values and towards the noble traits of morality. How could the prophet of such a school of thought be indifferent in regards to such values?"[1]

When studying the public and private behavior of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), numerous examples that show the particular attention that he paid to reviving and honoring ideal values become evident:

1. The Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali, peace be upon him, has said,

"When they brought the captives of the tribe of Tayy, one of the female captives said to the Prophet, 'Tell the people not to bother me and to treat me with respect for I am the daughter of the leader of my tribe and my father was one who fulfilled his oaths, freed captives, gave food to the hungry, greeted people constantly and would never turn down the needy. I am the daughter of Hatam Ta'i.' At that point the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, 'These attributes that you have mentioned are the attributes of true believers. If your father was a Muslim, I would certainly have shown him mercy. Then he said, set her free and do not bother her, for her father was one who revered noble traits and God likes those who adhere to the noble traits of morality.'"[2]

2. Imam as Sadiq (peace be upon him) has said,

'Captives were brought to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and he ordered for all but one of them to be killed. The one whose life was spared asked, 'How is it that you have decided to free me?' The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) replied, 'Gabriel has informed me that God, the Exalted, has said that you have five characteristics of which God and His Messenger approve. The first is that you take a great amount of vigilant care (ghayrah) in regards to your family and maharim [those in a degree of consanguinity precluding marriage], secondly, you are generous, thirdly, you possess good character, fourthly, you are honest and last of all, you are brave.'"[3]

According to the Noble Qur'an, the criteria for value and virtue are not wealth, race, language, skin color or ethnicity. Rather, the criteria are such things like God-wariness, fighting for God's cause, martyrdom,

struggling for God's cause, migrating for the sake of religion, piety, purity and knowledge. The Most Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), the role model of the Islamic community, held those who possessed these excellent qualities in high esteem. Those who preceded others in faith, migrating [*hijrah*] and fighting for God's cause [*jihad*], were given particular respect by him:

1. When Ja'far ibn Abi Talib was emigrating to Ethiopia, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) escorted him some distance and prayed for him. When he returned after a number of years, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) got up and went to welcome him back and kissed him. Since Ja'far's return took place after the victory of Khaybar, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "I don't know whether to be happy for the victory of Khaybar or for Ja'far's return."[4]

2. After the war of Dhat al-Salasil, which took place in the eighth year after the Prophet's migration, ‘Ali (peace be upon him) headed for Madinah along with his victorious troops. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) informed the people of the victory of the Muslims and along with the people of Madinah, travelled three miles outside of Madinah (to welcome them back). When ‘Ali (peace be upon him) saw the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), he got off the animal he was riding. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) also got off his steed out of respect for ‘Ali, kissed his forehead, dusted off his blessed face and said, "Thank God, O ‘Ali, that He has supported me with you and has strengthened me against the enemy by means of you."[5]

3. The first battle that took place between the Muslims and the disbelievers was the Battle of Badr. Those who participated in this battle alongside the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) were known as *Ahl al-Badr* and were of a special status according to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and the Muslims in the early phase of Islam.

"One Friday, the Most Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) was sitting in the mosque and due to the large number of people present, there was not much space. At that point, a group from amongst Ahl al-Badr, including Thabit ibn Qays, entered the gathering and stood in front of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), looking at the crowd of people sitting around him. None of them would make room for them. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) told a number of the Migrants (Muhajirin) and the Helpers (Ansar) who were sitting close to him (who were not present at the Battle of Badr) to get up and allow the Ahl al-Badr to sit in their place. This was difficult for the people who the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) told to get up and dissatisfaction was written on their faces. One of the hypocrites (munafiqin) seeking to take advantage of the situation said to the Muslims, 'Do you consider your prophet to be just in dealing with people? Then how is it that he did not implement justice in this situation? Certain individuals had arrived sooner and taken a seat for themselves. They wanted to sit close to their prophet and then he made them get up and seated those who came later in their place.'"[6]

The honor and respect the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) showed towards *Ahl al-Badr* demonstrated the valued position of those who fought for God's cause and the reverence given to eminent values in the society. After this event, a verse was revealed that endorsed the Prophet's action,

"O you who believe, if you are told to make room in social gatherings, then make room. (*As a result*) *God will make room for you. And if you are told to get up, then get up."*[7]

4. The Prophet honored martyrs and the family of martyrs: "In the eighth year after his migration to Madinah, in the event of the Battle of *Mutah*, Ja'far ibn Abi Talib was entrusted with command of the Muslim army. They fought a difficult war against the enemy and both of Ja'far's hands were cut off and his body was inflicted with numerous wounds. As a result, he attained the high station of martyrdom. In describing his station, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) has said:

'Verily, in exchange for his two arms, God has given Ja'far wings by which he flies in Paradise wherever he so desires.'

After this battle, the Muslim Army headed towards Madinah. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), along with other Muslims and a group of children singing songs, went out to greet them. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) who was riding an animal said, 'Sit the children (on the animals you are riding) and bring me Ja'far's son.'

Then he sat 'Abdullah ibn Ja'far in front of himself. 'Abdullah has said, 'The Messenger of God told me, 'I give you good tidings that your father is flying with the angels in the sky.'"[8]

1. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) has said, "Verily I was dispatched in order to perfect the noble traits of morality Mizan al-Hikmah, vol.3, p. 149.
2. Muhajjah al-Baydha', vol. 4, p. 122.
3. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 18, p. 108.
4. Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 249.
5. Nasikh at-Tawarikh, vol. 2, p. 357.
6. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 17, p. 24.
7. Surah al-Mujadalah 58:11.
8. Sirah al-Halbi, vol. 3, pp. 9, 68.

Opposition to Superstition

Islam is the religion of knowledge, awareness and cognition. Seeking truth is interwoven in its essence. Therefore, it cannot be in agreement with ideas that are distant from reality, nor mere conjecture and superstition. Islam does not promote such things, nor does it remain silent concerning them. Rather, the

message of this religion is opposition to erroneous ideas that are distant from reality.

The Great Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), who propagated this great message and implemented God's law, spent his entire lifetime guiding people to reality. He cautioned them of the danger of ideas that were not based on reality. His campaign against idol worship and the superstitious belief that idols administer the system of creation demonstrated that this prophet of God opposed invalid ideas.

Prior to the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) appointment to prophethood, superstitious beliefs had cast a shadow over the land of Hijaz[1] and had darkened the minds of its inhabitants. With the rising of the sun of Islam, many of these superstitions were removed from people's lives because abiding by the teachings of Islam necessitates that one act in contrast to the previously mentioned superstitions. Whatever remained of superstitious beliefs was removed from the hearts and minds of the people by the efforts of the Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family).

The following story has been mentioned in books of the Prophet's narrations. Even Sunni Muslims have narrated this story which clearly demonstrates the Noble Prophet's sensitivity towards superstition:

The Most Noble Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and his wife Mariyah Qibtiyyah had a son named Ibrahim. The Most Noble Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) loved his son very much but the boy passed away when being eighteen months of age. The Most Noble Messenger, a man full of affection, was moved by this incident and he cried, "The heart burns, tears flow, O Ibrahim. We are sad because of you (r loss) but we will never say anything that contradicts contentment with the Lord."

The Muslims were upset that the dust of sadness had settled on his blessed heart. Coincidentally, that same day, there was a solar eclipse. The Muslims thought that this was a sign that the higher world was also mourning. This idea spread amongst the people of Madinah and men and women alike were saying: "The solar eclipse is due to the sadness that has come over the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family)."

Even though this caused the faith of the people to grow stronger, the Prophet did not want to take advantage of their vulnerabilities and ignorant thoughts so he went on the pulpit and proclaimed: "This solar eclipse was not due to my son ('s death). Solar and lunar eclipses are among God's signs."[2]

1. Modern Saudi Arabia.
2. Seyri dar Sireh-ye Nabawi, p. 136.

Supplication

Supplication (*du'a'*) and seeking God's help, which have been referred to in some narrations as 'the weapon of the believer' and 'the reality of worship', are important factors in overcoming difficulties and crises. Supplicating strengthens the morale of the one who prays to God and keeps hope alive in his heart. By means of supplication, man connects with the Source of Existence. By seeking His help, man takes a step towards perfection. The Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) maintained the spirit of supplicating and seeking God's help in all his actions. He sought God's help in a particular manner:

"He (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would raise his hands when supplicating and would beseech (God) just as the poor who beg for food."[1]

In this section, mention will be made of some instances of his prayers in various circumstances:

1. When he would hear the call to prayer (*adhan*), in addition to repeating the sentences of the *adhan*, at the end he would say,

"O God, Lord of this complete invitation and established prayer, give Muhammad that which he seeks on the Day of Judgment and allow him to reach the rank of forgiveness in Paradise and accept his intercession for his community."[2]

2. In the middle of the night, he would prostrate upon the soil and say,

"O God, never entrust (leave) me to myself for even one moment (the time it takes to blink)."[3]

3. When he would sit to eat, he would say,

"O God, You are above (any imperfection), how great is that with which You test us. You are above (any imperfection), how plentiful is that which You give us. You are above (any imperfection), how often it is that You protect us from sickness. O God, increase us (in sustenance) and likewise (increase in sustenance) the poor amongst the believers."[4]

4. When preparing to sleep, he would seek help from God in the following manner:

"In the name of God I die and I live and unto Him is the return. O God, replace my fear with security, cover my faults and help me to fulfill that with which I have been entrusted."[5]

5. When he would see the new moon (which heralds the beginning of a new month in the Islamic calendar), he would raise his hands and say,

"O God, accompany it (the new moon) with safety, faith and health for us."[6]

6. At the start of the New Year, he would seek help from God in the following manner:

"O God, You are the infinitely pre-existing God, and this is a new year, so I ask of you protection from Satan, the strength to overcome this soul that commands to do evil and to be occupied with that which brings me closer to You, O Generous One, O Possessor of Splendor and Kindness, O Supporter of him who has no support, O Source of Provision of him who has no provision, O Refuge for him who has no refuge, O Helper of him who has no help..."[7]

1. Sunan an-Nabi, p. 315.
2. Da'aim al-Islam, vol. 1, p. 146.
3. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 16, p. 218.
4. Sunan al-Nabi, p. 323.
5. Sunan al-Nabi, p. 322.
6. Amali al-La'ali, vol. 2, p. 109.
7. Sunan an-Nabi, p. 339.

Observing the Rights of Others

The Most Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) was the manifestation of the implementation of truth and justice and God dispatched him to establish equity and justice. For these reasons, he placed great importance on safeguarding the rights of others and protecting the public treasury. This principle was made manifest in all of his social interactions, including:

1. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) owed a Jewish man some money. One day, the man came to collect his money. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "I do not have the money." The man did not accept this. He declared: "Then I will sit right here." The Jewish man sat until the noon, afternoon, evening, night and morning prayers were performed. The companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) threatened him for behaving in such a manner towards the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family). The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) prevented them from harming him and said, "God did not dispatch me that I may do injustice towards those who are protected or towards those who are not protected."

When morning set in and the sun had risen slightly, suddenly the Jewish man said, "I bear witness that there is no god but (the One, True) God (Allah) and I bear witness that Muhammad is the slave and apostle of God." At that point, he gave half of his money in the way of God and said, "I wanted to see if the attributes of the Prophet of the end of time stated in the Torah were present in you. (Those attributes are) that he will be born in Mecca, his place of migration is Madinah, he is not ill-tempered, he does not raise his voice and he does not curse. I have seen that those attributes are present in you and for this

reason, I am placing half of my money in your hands."[1]

2. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), being the administrator of Islam, was entrusted with the great responsibility of protecting the public treasury. His actions in this matter are indeed educational:

"In the ninth year after the Prophet's migration to Madinah, a man by the name of Ibn al-Laythiyyah was sent by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) to gather *zakat* (an Islamic tax) from a particular group of Muslims. After he gathered the *zakat*, he went to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and said, "This money is *zakat*, and this is a gift which they gave to me."

After hearing this, the Most Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) went to the pulpit and said, "I sent a group to carry out a certain task, that which God has made me the administrator of, but one comes and says, 'This is *zakat*, and this is a gift they gave to me.' Why do you not sit in your parents' home and see that they do not bring you any gift (in other words, those who gave you this gift did not have pure intentions and it was not a random act of charity. Rather, they bribed you). I swear by God who has power over my life, no one removes *zakat* from his property without it being removed from his neck on the Day of Judgment: if it (the *zakat*) is a camel, then a camel (will be removed from his neck), if it is a cow and a sheep, then a cow and a sheep." Then he said, "O God, I have conveyed the message."[2]

His practice of observing the rights of others was also evident in issues related to fulfilling trusts. The slightest infraction or betrayal was never seen in any of his deeds, whether in private or public, in financial affairs or matters unrelated to money. He was so careful in observing the rights of others and fulfilling that with which he was entrusted that in his youth he was known as "Muhammad the Trustworthy" [Muhammad al-Amin]. The people of Mecca gave him this honorable title and whenever they saw him, they would say to one another, “The Trustworthy One has arrived.”

1. Hayat al-Qulub, vol. 2, p. 117.
2. Nasikh at-Tawarikh, vol. 2, p. 159.

Sharing in the Difficulties of Others

The Most Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) was a religious leader who shared in the life of the people in every way. He never considered himself to be separate from his community and it was never the case that his friends and followers lived in difficulty while he lived in comfort. Rather, he was in the front line of all events and shared in their happiness and sorrow and he exerted himself with regard to difficulties. Reference will be made to a number of examples of his custom

of sharing in the difficulties of others:

1. The Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali, peace be upon him, has said, "When digging the ditch (known as *khandaq*) I was with the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) when Fa□imah (the Prophet's daughter and ‘Ali's wife, may peace be upon them all) came and brought some bread. The Messenger of God asked, 'What is this?'

Fa□imah (peace be upon her) replied, 'I made a loaf of bread for Hasan and Husayn (the two sons of ‘Ali and Fa□imah, may peace be upon them all) and I have brought some of it for you.'

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, 'After three days of being hungry, this is the first thing your father will eat.'"[1]

2. A number of Arab tribes set out for Madinah in order to overthrow the newly instituted government of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family). The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), who had become aware of the enemies' plans, gathered his companions and consulted with them concerning how to defend themselves and oppose the enemies.

Salman al-Farsi suggested that they dig a trench on the outskirts of Madinah to prevent the enemy from entering the city. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) endorsed this idea.

The Most Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) appointed groups of Migrants [Muhajirin] and Helpers [Ansar] to dig a ditch every twenty to thirty steps apart. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) himself took a pick and started digging where the Migrants stood and the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) would take the loose dirt out of the ditch. They continued until the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) began sweating and grew tired from working so hard. At that point he said, "There is no comfort other than the comfort of the Afterlife. O God, forgive the Migrants and the Helpers."

Jabir ibn 'Abdullah has said, "When we were digging the ditch, we came upon a hard spot. We said, 'O Messenger of God, we have arrived at a hard spot. What should we do?' He said, 'Pour a little bit of water on it.' Then, when he was so hungry that he had tied a rock to his stomach, he took his pick and said God's name three times and then struck. He shattered those rocks to the point that they became like gravel."[2]

3. During the last days of his life while lying on his death bed, the Messenger of God, (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) told Bilal to summon the Muslims. Then the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) went to the mosque, ascended the pulpit and asked them, *"My companions, what kind of prophet was I to you? Did I not take part in jihad with you? Were my teeth not broken (in battle)? Was my face not covered with dirt? Did blood not flow over my face to the point where it covered my beard? Did I not tie a rock to my stomach out of hunger?"*

His companions replied, "Yes, O Messenger of God. Verily, you were patient and you forbade evil. May God reward you with the best reward."

He replied, *"May God reward you with an outstanding reward as well."*[3]

1. Hayat al-Qulub, vol. 2, p. 119.
2. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 20, p. 198.
3. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p.508.

Generosity

Generosity is the tangible manifestation of human self-sacrifice. It is a sacred attribute that is held in high esteem and considered to be of great value by all nations. The Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), the source of human virtues, possessed this attribute in its highest form. He (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) has said,

"I am the one who has been disciplined by God, and 'Ali has been disciplined by me. My Lord has commanded me to be generous and do good and He has forbidden me from being stingy and from oppressing others. There is nothing that God hates more than stinginess and being ill-tempered."[1]

Similarly, after returning from the Battle of Hunayn, the Bedouins formed a circle around the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) in order to get their share of the war booty. As the crowd gathered, someone snatched the Prophet's cloak. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) stood up and said,

"Give me back my cloak. What, are you afraid of (me behaving with) stinginess? If I had as much gold as these thorny shrubs here, I would have divided it amongst you. You will not find me to be stingy."[2]

Included here are a few examples of the Prophet's generosity:

1. One day, a group of under clothed people came to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and asked him for clothes. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), who could never turn down a request, went home to gather clothes but found nothing other than a curtain that belonged to his daughter Fa□imah (peace be upon her) and which had been placed over some goods. The Messenger of God asked her, "O Fa□imah, would you like to be protected from the fire of Hell by means of this curtain?"

She (peace be upon her) replied, "Yes."

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) tore that curtain into pieces

and gave it to the poor to wear.[3]

2. One day the Most Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) went to the market with only eight *dirhams*. On the way, he saw a female slave crying. He asked her why she was crying. She replied, "My master sent me with two *dirhams* to buy something for him, but I have lost those two *dirhams*." The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) gave her two *dirhams* from his money and continued towards the market with only six *dirhams*. There he bought a shirt four *dirhams* and then headed for home.

On his way, he saw an emaciated, old man crying, sitting unclothed, saying, "Whoever clothes me, may God clothe him with heavenly clothing."

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), upon seeing this, clothed him with the shirt he had bought and once again headed for the market. There he bought a shirt for two dirhams. On his way home, once again, he saw the same female slave. She was sitting and crying. He (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) asked, "What happened?"

She replied, "I bought that which I was supposed to buy, but I am afraid I will be punished for being late."

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) told her, "Show me the way to your house." He followed her until they arrived at the house of one of the Helpers. The men were absent and only the women were at home. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) greeted them from behind the door saying, "*As-salamu 'alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh* (may peace, mercy and blessings be upon you)." The women recognized the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) voice but did not reply to him until he said so three times. At that point they said, "*wa 'alaykumus-salam wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh*, may our parents be sacrificed for you, O Messenger of God." The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) asked them, "Did you not hear my voice?" They said, "Yes, we did, but we wanted you to greet us and our children with peace (*salam*) many times."

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "Your female slave is late and she is afraid of your punishment. For my sake, do not punish her."

They said, all together, "We have accepted your intercession, forgiven her punishment and, due to your blessed footsteps, we have freed her."

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) turned back and said, "I have never seen eight *dirhams* more blessed than these. They have turned fear into safety, freed a slave and clothed two unclothed people."[4]

3. A woman told her son to go to the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and greet him and ask him for some cloth so that she may make it into a shirt. He went to the

Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and said what his mother had told him to say. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "I have no cloth (to give you) at present..." The boy said, "My mother said for you to give me your cloak so that she can make a shirt out of it." The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "Allow me to go to my chamber." When he went to his chamber, he took off his cloak and then gave it to the child. The child gave it to his mother.5

1. Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 17.
2. Al-Wafa bi Ahwal al-Mustafa, vol. 2, p. 442.
3. Sharaf an-Nabi, p. 78.
4. Sharaf an-Nabi, p. 70.
5. Sharaf an-Nabi, p. 78.

Perseverance

Persistence, or remaining firm, in the face of difficulty, is the secret to overcoming problems and being victorious. It is by means of this rescue ship that man can traverse the ocean of straightened circumstances and difficulty and arrive at the harbor of his goals.

It is impossible to arrive at a sacred goal without patience, perseverance and great tolerance. For this reason, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), in spreading his message, wiping out the traces of disbelief and polytheism and establishing the system of monotheism, was ordered by God to persevere and was spoken to by God in this regard:

"Persevere, you and those with you, as you have been ordered to."1

The Most Noble Messenger's perseverance in pursuing his goals was so clear that friend and enemy alike were amazed. Even though they accused him of sorcery, insanity, lying and soothsaying and said hurtful words, engaged in war with him and constantly annoyed him and his friends, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) stood firm like a mountain and related his divine message to the very end.

It would require many pages to mention all the circumstances in which the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) persevered. However, in order to make us more acquainted with the personality of this unrivaled role model, a few of such examples will be mentioned.

1. While in the land of Ta'if, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) met with three brothers named 'Abdya'il, Habib and Mas'ud ibn ‘Amru, who were from among the great ones of the Thaqif (tribe) and invited them to Islam. One of the three said, "If you are a prophet of God, then I have stolen the Ka'bah."

The second one said, "Did God send you because He was incapable (of sending another)? He could have sent another who had the power to convey His message."

The third one said, "I swear by God, I will not speak to you from now on." Then they mocked the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and disparagingly spread the news of his invitation to others.

When the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) wanted to leave Ta'if, those brothers incited some people to surround him on both sides of his path and stone him. As a result of this stoning, the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) feet became wounded and bloody.2

2. Munib ibn Mudrik has narrated that ancestor has said, *"In the Age of Ignorance, we saw the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) inviting people to say: 'Say there is no god but Allah, so as to be delivered.' At this point, one of the disbelievers slapped him in the face. Another poured dirt on his head and face and yet another used abusive language to him. At that point, a young girl came to the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) with a container of water and he (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) washed his hands and face. Then he told her, "Be patient and do not be grieved (by thoughts) that one will overcome or abase your father (the Prophet)."*3

3. Abu Lahab and his wife Umm Jamilah, were amongst the people who annoyed and tormented the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family). For this reason, they have been cursed by God in the Holy Qur'an. The chapter that begins with *tabbat* was revealed concerning them. In this chapter, the Qur'an refers to Umm Jamilah as *hammalatul-ha□ab* for she would sow dissension and spread hatred amongst people. She would fan the flames of the fire of dispute amongst people. It has been narrated that: *"This damned and wicked woman would take thorns, motes and sharp pieces of wood and lay them on the path he crossed so that whenever he wanted to go to pray, his feet would become bruised and wounded."*4

4. Unbelievers used threats, to instill fear, and they used enticement, to create desire, in trying to do away with the prophets (peace be upon them), in general, and the Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), in particular. When the leaders of the polytheists in Mecca saw the Most Noble Messenger's resoluteness and perseverance in relating his message, they made plans to threaten and entice him.

For this reason, they came to Abu Talib (the Prophet's uncle) and said, *"Your nephew says disparaging things about our gods. He mentions our religion in an ugly fashion. He laughs at our form of thinking and beliefs and considers our ancestors to be misguided. Either order him to leave us alone or leave him in our hands and do not support him."* In some history books it has been mentioned that they said: *"We will give him whatever he wants including the most beautiful women."*

When Abu Talib told the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) what they said, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) answered in the following manner, demonstrating his perseverance and firmness:

"I swear by God, if they were to put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand for me to give this matter (spreading the message of Islam) up, I will not give it up until God makes it (Islam) victorious or I die in doing so."[5]

5. Abu Jahl was one of the Prophet's most obstinate adversaries. In a threatening letter to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) he wrote the following:

"O Muhammad, the imaginations in your head have made Mecca too small for you and made you a migrant to Madinah. So long as these ideas remain in your mind, they will make you a migrant and cause you to fall into corruption to the point where they will corrupt the people of Madinah as well and will cast them into the flames of the fire that has been kindled by your hands. I do not see this ending in any other way than for the Quraysh to make a special place for you and put you and the deceived who surround you in it in order to be free of your influence and to prevent the harm and disruption you cause.

In addition to this, the non-Muslims of Madinah and those who hold a grudge against you are going to support the Quraysh, for today, they only support you because they are afraid of you. But as soon as they realize that when you perish, they will perish as well and their families will be faced with difficult circumstances and that they and those alongside them will face poverty and helplessness as you become helpless, they will not continue to support you.

They know very well that when the enemies defeat you and enter their land by force, they will not differentiate between your friends and enemies. They will completely eradicate then as well as you; the enemies will take their wives and children captive and will plunder their property, just as they will do to your wives, children and property. Without a doubt, he who has warned you knows no limits and he who has clarified this matter has not been negligent in relating this message."

The Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said to the one who delivered Abu Jahl's letter, "Verily, Abu Jahl has threatened me with difficulty and the Lord of the Worlds has promised me support and victory. Of course, the news God relates is the most truthful of news and more appropriate to be accepted. When God supports Muhammad and His generosity and magnanimity envelop him, the anger and betrayal of none can harm him."[6]

1. Surah Hud 11: 112.
2. Hilyah al-Abrar, vol. 1, p. 177.
3. Mizan al-Hikmah, vol. 9, p. 671.
4. Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 27.
5. Sirah ibn Hisham, vol. 1, p. 283.
6. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 17, p. 343.

Cooperation

Cooperation and helping other members of society are the foundations of social life. Providing help and removing the needs of one another bring about both progress in social affairs and increase in friendliness amongst the members of society. The Qur'an has drawn our attention to these principles and advised us with the following:

"Help one another in doing good and in piety and do not help one another in sin and hostility"[1]

The Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), in addition to ordering the Muslims to work together and support one another, practiced what he preached and took part in laborious tasks. Even though his companions offered and even insisted to work in his place, he would not accept their offers. Some instances of the Prophet's custom of providing help in social situations are mentioned below:

1. Prior to his appointment to prophethood, the people of Mecca suffered great poverty and economic pressures. Even though Abu Talib (the Prophet's uncle) was the most respected member of the tribe of Bani Hashim, he also experienced great pressure in trying to support his large family. When the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) saw his situation, he could not find comfort until he sought his other uncle, 'Abbas, who was relatively better off and said to him, "O 'Abbas, your brother, Abu T'alib, has a large family and you can see that people are under pressure (financially). Let us go together and decrease (the load of) his family members. I will take one of his children and you take another." 'Abbas accepted to do so. The Most Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) took 'Ali with him and 'Abbas took Ja'far. By this deed that pleased God, (the economic responsibility of) two members of the family of Abu Talib was removed.[2]

2. When the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) entered Madinah, it became apparent that a mosque was needed for performing worship and handling the political and social affairs of the Muslims. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) proposed that a mosque be built and the Muslims gladly endorsed this proposal. Land was purchased for the mosque and excitement surrounded its construction.

Everyone took part in building the mosque and the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) took part in this good deed as well. Usayd ibn Hudhayr has said, "The Prophet picked up a stone and was bringing it. I said, 'O Messenger of God, give me the stone to carry.' He said, 'No, go and bring another stone.'"[3]

3. On one of their journeys, as soon as the Most Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and his friends dismounted their animals and placed their belongings on the ground, they decided to prepare a sheep to eat. One of the companions said, "I will slaughter the sheep."

Another said, "I will take off its skin." A third said, "I will cook the meat." And the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "I will gather firewood from the desert."

The companions said, "O Messenger of God, do not burden yourself. Sit comfortably. We will gladly do everything ourselves."

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "I know you (are) will(ing to) perform them, but God does not like to see his slave being distinguished amongst his friends such that he considers himself to be privileged in relation to others." Then he went to the desert and gathered some bristles and motes and brought them.4

1. Surah al-Ma'idah 5:2.
2. Sirah ibn Hisham, vol. 2, p. 263.
3. Bih'ar al Anwar, vol. 9, p. 111.
4. Kuhl al-Basar, p. 68.

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