

Tolerance

When *Hazrat* Tufail Bin 'Amr Ad-Dausi embraced the faith of Islam, he sought permission of the Prophet to go to his tribe to preach Islam among them. The Prophet permitted him to do so. He went there but nobody accepted Islam. He came back dejected and narrated his experience to the Prophet and out of anger request him to curse the tribe. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) raised his hands for prayer. People became apprehensive that now Daus tribe was to be ruined because God never turns down his prayer. But lo! The Prophet who was a mercy for the mankind prayed thus: O my God guide the tribe of Daus and enter them into Islam [unanimous]. *Hazrat* Tufail went back to his tribe again and called them towards Islam. This time all of them embraced Islam. The Messenger of Allah was a tolerant, forbearer and perspicacious person. He used to pray for the good of the people and never cursed anybody.

One night, *Hazrat* Umar Bin Abdul Aziz was on a round along with his guard. They entered a masjid. Because there was complete darkness, he tumbled upon a sleeping person. Being disturbed the man said: Are you mad? *Hazrat* Umar replied coolly: No. I'm not mad. The guard wanted to punish the man on his impudence but the Khalifah stopped him. He explained it away by saying that he merely asked if I was mad. I told him no I was not mad. The matter was over at that. A tolerant right thinking man behaves like that. *Hazrat* Ahnaf Bin Qais (RA) was a well known companion of the Prophet. His capacity for tolerance was unrivalled. He was a forbearer and tolerant person. People used to cite his example. Once, on his way, a person started to abusing him. He made no response and went on. But that person was a queer man. He pursued him and kept on abusing him. When *Hazrat* Ahnaf reached near his quarter he stopped and asked the man to have his full right here. Because I don't want the people of my quarter hear your speech then hurt you. There is another episode about him. Once, some mischievous people sent to him a man, after tutoring him. The man started abusing him continuously and talking nonsense but the *Hazrat* heard all this patiently. Meanwhile, it was meal time. *Hazrat* Ahnaf asked him to join him in his meal. Come first take food with me. He was ashamed at this and moved away.

Nature of Tolerance:

Tolerance means self-control. It means suppression of one's anger, bearing the undesirable behavior and repaying the evil with goodness. Tolerance does not mean cowardice or suffering of indignity. Rather it represents the nobility of human character that abuse should not be matched with abuse and that lapses of others should be overlooked.

Allah's Tolerance:

Tolerance is an attribute of God Almighty. He is defied and disobeyed by His own creature. They not only defy him but also deny him and incites others to deny him. In spite of all this God Almighty gives them relaxation, keeps them alive and does not take revenge from them immediately. This is because of tolerance of God. Allah (T) declares:

﴿وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُوٌّ حَلِيمٌ﴾ البقرة: ٢٣٥

Translation of Meaning: "And know it that Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Tolerant" (Al-Baqarah: 235).

Allah (T) has granted this attribute to his apostles also. About *Hazrat Ibrahim* Allah declares:

﴿إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَأَوَّاهٌ حَلِيمٌ﴾ التوبة: ١١٤

Translation of Meaning: "Verily Ibrahim was a God-fearing tolerant man" (At-Taubah: 114). In response to his supplications Allah gave him the tidings of the birth of a tolerant child. Allah (Ta'ala) says:

﴿فَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِغُلَامٍ حَلِيمٍ﴾ الصافات: ١٠١

Translation of Meaning: "So We gave him the glad tidings of a forbearing boy." (As-Saaffat: 101).

The Messenger of Allah *Hazrat Muhammad* was the most tolerant human being. He always overlooked the lapses, oversights and errors of others. People treated him very badly but he never took revenge from anybody for his own sake. Instead he always exercised self-restraint. He never got angry. Instead of cursing he always prayed for right guidance for others.

The Virtue of Tolerance:

- **Tolerance** is an attribute favoured by God Almighty. The Messenger of Allah told a companion of him that: Translation of Meaning: "Allah favours two of your attributes: one tolerance and the other leniency" [Muslim].
- **Tolerance** begets Allah's pleasure and paradise. The Messenger of Allah said:

«مَنْ كَظَمَ غَيْظًا وَهُوَ قَادِرٌ عَلَى أَنْ يُنْفِذَهُ، دَعَاهُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَلَى رُءُوسِ الْخَلَائِقِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ حَتَّى يُخَيِّرَهُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْحُورِ الْعِينِ مَا شَاءَ» (أبو داود ، الترمذي)

Translation: "One who suppresses his anger even though he is capable of expressing it Allah (Ta'ala) will invite him on the Day of Rising over the heads of his creatures and give him an option to choose from the wide-eyed maidens" [Abu Daud; Tirmidhi].

- **Tolerance** is a manifestation of a man's will power. Tolerance represents one's ability to control his emotions. The Messenger of Allah said:

«لَيْسَ الشَّدِيدُ بِالصُّرْعَةِ إِنَّمَا الشَّدِيدُ الَّذِي يَمْلِكُ نَفْسَهُ عِنْدَ الْغَضَبِ» (مسلم)

Translation: "A strong man is not one who puts down others but a strong man is one who restrains himself in rage." [Muslim].

- **Tolerance** is an asset which not only facilitates deals smoothly but also Leads to winning the heart of the adversary. Allah (Ta'ala) proclaims:

﴿ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ﴾ (فصلت: ٣٤)

Translation of Meaning: "Ward off the wrong-doing with what is better than that, then lo! he, between whom and you there was enmity [will become] as if he was a bosom friend" (Fussilat: 34). A tolerant person combats ignorance with silence and counteracts mischief by overlooking it. A tolerant person remains immune from pitfalls and intrigues of the Satan.

Anger:

Anger is a negative phenomenon of human nature which is disliked by all. It is undesirable under all conditions. Once a person came to the prophet and requested: O Messenger of Allah please give me some advice. The Prophet replied: Translation of Meaning: "Don't become angry" [Bukhari]. And anger is in fact a natural weakness. It expresses man's inability to control his emotions. One who cannot control himself is

let loose in anger. In anger, he becomes abnormal and can be swayed to do something wrong unconsciously, which he regrets afterwards. The sequel to anger is nothing but remorse. By that time the matter is spoilt and he has only regret. Once a person misbehaved towards *Hazrat* Abu Bakr in the presence of the prophet. The first time he ignored him. When he misbehaved second time he kept silent. But when he offended him third time he was provoked and hit back. At this the Messenger of Allah left the meeting place. Now *Hazrat* Abu Bakr apprehended that perhaps the Messenger of Allah has become cross with him. So following him he asked, “O Messenger of Allah is you displeased with me?” The Messenger of Allah replied, “When you kept silent over his offence an angel from the heavens was replying to him on your behalf and defending you. But when you hit back the angel departed and his place was taken by the Satan. How could I sit in the company of Satan?”

The Remedy of Anger:

- **The** Messenger of Allah has prescribed silence as the remedy of anger. He said: Translation of Meaning: "If any one of you becomes angry he should keep silent" [Ahmad].
- **Another** remedy is to sit down on earth. The Messenger of Allah exhorted:

« أَلَا وَإِنَّ الْعَضْبَ جَمْرَةٌ فِي قَلْبِ ابْنِ آدَمَ، أَمَا رَأَيْتُمْ إِلَى حُمْرَةِ عَيْنَيْهِ وَانْتِفَاحِ أَوْدَاجِهِ، فَمَنْ أَحَسَّ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَلْيَلْصِقْ بِالْأَرْضِ » (أحمد ، الترمذي)

Translation: "Hark! Anger is like a spark in the heart of son of Adam. Don't you see redness in his eyes and swelling of his veins? So whenever a man feels like that he must sit down on earth [Ahmad; Tirmidhi]. The Messenger of Allah advised:

«إِذَا غَضِبَ أَحَدُكُمْ وَهُوَ قَائِمٌ فَلْيَجْلِسْ، فَإِنْ ذَهَبَ عَنْهُ الْغَضَبُ وَإِلَّا فَلْيَضْطَجِعْ»
(أحمد ، أبو داود)

If someone of you becomes angry he must sit down if he is standing. If his anger subsides well. If not he must lie down [Ahmad; Abu Daud].

- **Ablution** or bath. The Messenger of Allah pronounced:

«إِنَّ الْعَضْبَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ، وَإِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ خُلِقَ مِنَ النَّارِ، وَإِنَّمَا تُطْفَأُ النَّارُ بِالْمَاءِ، فَإِذَا غَضِبَ أَحَدُكُمْ فَلْيَتَوَضَّأْ» (أبو داود)

Translation: "Anger is from the side of Satan. Satan has been created of fire. Verily fire can be extinguished by water. Therefore, if you become angry perform ablution" [Abu Daud].

- The self should be trained for tolerance gradually. The divine injunction is:

﴿ خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴾ الأعراف: ١٩٩

Translation of Meaning: "Keep to forgiveness [O Muhammad] and enjoin good behaviour and turn away from the ignorant" (Al-A'raf: 199). Avoidance of the ignorant has been declared to be an attribute of the favorites of God:

﴿ وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا ﴾ الفرقان: ٦٣

Translation of Meaning: "When they are confronted by the ignorant they say peace be upon you" (Al-Furqan: 63). It is declared again:

﴿ وَإِذَا مَا عَضِبُوا هُمْ يَغْفِرُونَ ﴾ الشورى: ٣٧

Translation of Meaning: "And whenever they become angry they forgive" (Ash-Shura: 37). All wisdom is summed up in the prophet's dictum: Translation: "Don't become angry" [Bukhari; Tirmidhi]. All these exhortations are meant to inculcate the attribute of tolerance in ourselves.

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