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Prophet Muhammad (saw): Our Guide

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“My Lord! I ask You for beneficial knowledge, and I seek refuge with You from non-beneficial knowledge.”

Our Guide

By : Dr Fazlur Rahman Ansari

After fourteen centuries, the world of Islam stands today exactly where the Arabs stood before the Holy Prophet Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam united them into a single nation. The political conditions of the world in those days were more similar to what we are seeing today.

In those days, there were two dominating political powers, viz. the Byzantine and the Persian. The world today is dominated by two world powers, America and Russia (to a lesser extent). China stood in those days exactly as it stands today- a power by itself.

The Arabs were then divided into many tribes, each tribe constituting a separate political unit. They were engaged in ceaseless wars against each other, killing, robbing and enslaving one another. Because of their disunity, they constituted neither a political power nor a military power, despite the fact that they were better fighters and were more daring and courageous than the cultured people of Byzantium and Persia. Whenever an Arab tribe became insolent or did anything that displeased the Super Powers of those days, they would set some of their vassal princes against it and force it into subjugation. Today, the world of Islam stands exactly where the Arab tribes stood in those days, because of their disunity, not because of a lack in manliness or courage. Today, whenever a Muslim state becomes 'insolent' and begins to form its own independent policy, paying no heed to the dictates of the "Super Powers", it is brought back to its 'right sense' through the military might of some vassal nation. This striking similarity is also found in the moral aspect. The Arabs of the pre-Islamic era were at the lowest point of moral degeneration- and so are we today. Gross selfishness, corruption and obscenity are the most outstanding features of our social life. Our personal gains always reign supreme in our mind, we are willing to sacrifice the national interest for our petty personal interest- nay, we are even willing to sell our nation into slavery in exchange for some paltry personal gain.

From the time that the Holy Prophet Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam began his mission to the moment he breathed his last, was a period of 23 years. Within this short span of time, what he did was the greatest miracle ever wrought in human history. The picture of Arabia stood completely changed. The ferocious and warring tribes were united and welded into a strong and powerful nation. This revolution did not go unnoticed by the Super Powers of those days, and the Arabs were soon engulfed in hostilities with them. It finally resulted in open warfare. What was the result of this? The very Arabs who used to be subjugated and suppressed by petty vassal princes, swept

through the mighty Persian empire and set the emperor fleeing to China. Byzantium suffered many defeats and lost much of its territory.

This was only one aspect of the Holy Prophet's Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam reform. The political supremacy thus gained had resulted from the moral reform wrought by him. He created a society free from racial, linguistic and tribal prejudices, free from class strife, free from selfishness and conscious of common interests. It is certainly difficult for man to be free from selfish motives, but if the individuals are not taught and trained to forego personal interests for the sake of common interest, the nation soon falls a prey to the selfishness of its component parts.

How did the Holy Prophet Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam accomplish this moral reform? Nothing can thrive in a void, it requires a support and the support of moral values is faith - not traditional, but a living and vibrant faith in Almighty Allah. It is quite true that every act an individual performs has its effect on the society and the effect produced on the entire society also reverts to the performer of the act as a member of the society. But this complicated system of action and reaction is too much for a layman to realise. Hence he is always motivated by the immediate gains, neglectful of the consequences in the long run. He can only be restrained by a sound and living faith in Allah. Sometimes it also happens that an evil-doer escapes the consequences of evil wrought by him, leaving the entire nation to reap the bitter fruit thereof. Hence, no consideration or fear of material consequences has greater effect on the preservation of moral values than faith in Allah.

The first and foremost lesson, therefore, taught by the Holy Prophet Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam to his followers was that faith in Allah, an Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient Allah, who watches His servants and remains by their side wherever they are. An Allah who will reward them for acts of virtue and punish them for vices. To have faith in the unseen Lord is perhaps the most difficult task man can accomplish. The faith which is commonly professed is not conviction, it is the admission of authority as a convenient idea. As regards such faith, Allah says in the Holy Qur'aan:

"The villagers said 'we believe'. Say: you did not believe, but rather say: 'we have surrendered', for faith has not yet entered in your hearts." [S49:V14]

This feeble faith does not enable one to risk his all, even his life, for the cause of virtue. Faith in Allah is not a mere

dogma, it has got to be obtained through observation of the creation of Allah and sound argument and judgement.

Meditation and argument lead man only half the way. The sort of faith which is obtained thus may be termed as probability, not certainty. Yet this probability is a valuable understanding as it sets man probing still further into the unknown realm of spiritual realities. This is the state where one cannot

lay implicit faith on reasoning without risking the peril of being lost in the labyrinth of thought. This is the stage where Divine help should be invoked through prayer and the observance of a disciplined moral life. The Holy Prophet Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam has said that man is never closer to Allah than the moment when he lies prostrate before Him in prayer. This is why he has termed prayer as Me'raj of the believers. Those who want to experience spiritual realities should observe a disciplined life and seek the closeness to their Lord by appearing often in His August Presence. When this stage is attained, faith is perfected. Such are the people who rise high above all considerations of sorrow and fear. They live in a state of perpetual bliss. They become impregnable.

This is what the Holy Prophet Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam did for the first thirteen years of his mission. He taught them moral values, and how to live a morally disciplined life. He infused in them a living and vibrant belief in Allah. Then began the second phase of his mission, which was unavoidable, i.e. the spread of Islam to the tribes all over Arabi, and then to the neighbouring countries. This was done more by example than in any other way. This nation continued in prosperity just as long as they were steadfast to the way of the Holy Prophet Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam. And when they turned away.....