

Prophet: a perfect guide

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ACCORDING to the Qur'an, there is for us in the ideal pattern of the Prophet's life, the best example to follow. This unequivocal declaration of the Qur'an entails a number of significant implications. First of all, he is a human being, albeit, the best of them. When we testify at the end of every prayer that he is Allah's messenger, we precede this declaration by another testimony that he is Allah's best servant, *Abd Kamil*.

Unless he is recognized as a human par excellence, he cannot be acknowledged as a messenger. For a human being alone could be an example to be emulated by other human beings. An angel cannot be an example for human beings for obvious reasons.

Second, he has led an eventful life in this world. He did not avoid the problems of worldly life. Rather he addressed them with faith, courage and wisdom and successfully presented their viable and easy solutions. He did not leave any significant branch of human endeavour without setting the best example of conduct in it. He lived with full involvement in human society, taking a positive interest in the improvement of human conditions so as to lead them to a successful culmination of human career on earth. He himself tasted all the sweet and bitter experiences of human life and on that account, he was able to view human condition with empathy and affection.

He lived as the leader and guide of a small persecuted minority at Makkah for thirteen long years of trial and torture at the hands of his Makkah enemies and set the best and the most balanced example of coping with such situations of hardship and adversity. He emerged in the same city nine years later as an unrivalled teacher, as the victorious commander of a winning army and as head of a powerful socio-political enterprise symbolized in the State of Madinah.

In this latter role also, he set a unique example of balance and moderation. Unaffected by the long saga of tragic trials and travails enacted in Makkah, he set his arch enemies free and declared a general amnesty for all. This generous gesture brought almost all of them in the fold of faith.

The Prophet (SAWS) married and raised children, maintained a happy home and lived a successful family life. He practised trade and commerce. He fought wars and entered treaties of truce and peace. He took care of his kith and kin and managed the affairs of the entire community of believers.

He played host to guests at his home, consoled the grieved ones, amused the children with his light humour, and looked after the sick and the wretched of the earth. He maintained personal friendships and fulfilled all obligations ensuring from them. At

and private life was fully transparent. His vision of reality, his view of life, and his response to events and accidents was known to all and sundry. Whoever now wants to know as to what is the best and the most balanced conduct in life that is surely approved by Allah, can easily find it out from the treasures of hadith.

Thus, the Prophet's life pattern provides the best possible example of a balanced and moderate conduct in all kinds of conditions. It is the best guide for the strong as well as the weak, the best model for the affluent and the deprived, the best way of conduct for the ruler and the ruled, for the victorious and the vanquished, for the learned as well as for the unlettered. That is why the Qur'an characterized his community as *ummat wast* — the moderate community. This moderation which found its highest manifestation in the Prophet's own con-

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He achieved this purpose by developing the latent potential for immense good that is inherent in every human being. Through this reformatory transformation of individuals, he laid the foundation of a balanced community and a moderate society, humane culture and a just political order.

This moderation has been anchored in the cardinal doctrine of human *fitrah*: archetypal human personality. Since human beings tend to lose balance under various subjective and objective factors of influence, human life is threatened by unlimited forms of excesses and lapses. Therefore, the lasting basis of a moderate society could be established only by including a balanced and temperate behaviour among the individuals.

This purpose can only be achieved by a serious and concerted effort directed at curbing all excesses, limiting all lapses and inculcating values of moderation in individual lives.

Before addressing himself to correct the mistakes and rectify the errors of human beings, he fully acknowledged the worth, value and the vast treasure of natural human qualities inherent in all individuals. In other words, he respected every individ-

nity for all times to come. By doing so, he also acknowledged the natural human weaknesses and frailties. Thus he never laid down a rule of behaviour which only the strong and the sturdy could follow, while the frail and the feeble would be lagging behind.

Moreover, the pattern of the Prophet at once catered for the varieties of human disposition as it duly acknowledged the permanent features of human nature. While mankind shared certain traits of nature that are known as "cultural universals" in the sociological parlance they also display many individualistic peculiarities at the level of the individual. The Prophet's ideal pattern is applicable to both these elements of universalities and particularities as it regulates factors of constancy and variability.

Among his companions, we find men of different dispositions and various predilections. For example, his closest companion and dearest friend Sayyidina Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (R.A.) had certain singular qualities. By contrast, his other companion Sayyidina Umar Faruq (R.A.) was a different type of personality. The greatness of the Prophet lies in the fact that he guided and reformed both these prominent men in accordance with their peculiar personal tendencies. In this way, he helped them develop their inherent natural gifts and talents so as to utilize them for the furtherance of the mission of Islam.

Similarly, once he was asked by another companion to grant him a political office. The Prophet in view of his inability for that task declined his request. Yet on another occasion, the Prophet paid extraordinary tributes to the honesty and truthfulness of the same companion. This companion was Abu Zarr Ghifari who was known for his ascetic tendencies. About the moral qualities of this man, the Prophet had the following to say: "the shadow of sky has not covered, nor the earth has carried a man more truthful than Abu Zarr!"

The famous military genius of Islam, Khalid bin al-Walid was entrusted with the command of Muslim armies soon after he embraced Islam, while there were in the community many others who had entered the fold of faith much earlier than Khalid b. al-Walid. However, they were not given that responsibility because they were not found appropriate for that task. Likewise, some individuals among the Prophet's companions were known as the people of Suffuh. They were devoted to the worship of Allah and took residence in an enclosure in the Prophet's mosque. Some other men were assigned the onerous task of educating the community in view of their special qualities appropriate for that task.

Lack of balance and moderation often comes from a rigid rule when it is applied to all individuals in all situations. The pattern of the Prophet is free from such a literal regimentational approach. Balance and moderation is also hurt when the change of circumstances is ignored and the same remedy is considered fit for all maladies in all

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Alongside these engagements, he was unsurpassed in worshipping Allah, in seeking His proximity through constant remembrance, prayer and obedience. In this way, he provided posterity the only comprehensive example of such an ideal and balanced life that can be followed for all times and in all circumstances by all men and women of different tastes and temperaments.

The Prophet lived in full view of history. No aspect of his eventful life was concealed from his companions, nor it remained hidden from the microscopic examination of his most meticulous biographers. His public

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Before addressing himself to correct the mistakes and rectify the errors of human beings, he fully acknowledged the worth, value and the vast treasure of natural human qualities inherent in all individuals. In other words, he respected every individual and his individuality. Further, he granted to his disciples and followers their inalienable freedom of choice and action and guided them to employ this freedom in the most purposeful and productive manner. In this respect also he established a balance between human free will and the determined course of action.

This balance and moderation as a hallmark of his community was achieved by the Prophet at every level by closing the door of all excesses and extremes in human condition and by opening all avenues and opportunities for healthy development of human skills and abilities. In a significant tradition, it has been reported that whenever the Prophet faced any situation offering many options, he invariably adopted the most convenient of these options. In this, he was setting a great precedence for the commu-

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It is only a true prophet and messenger guided by the explicit writ of Divine revelation, who has the capacity to provide light, wisdom, instruction, guidance, example and inspiration that can cater for all possible constants and variables of human life. According to Shah Wali Allah, this capacity constitutes one of the greatest living miracles of the Prophet (SAWS) after the Qur'an. May Allah shower His choicest peace and blessings upon him. May he enable us to understand and follow his great pattern of balance and moderation.