

A True Muslim does not hurt people by his words

Friday Khutba by Dr Zahid Aziz, for Lahore Ahmadiyya UK, 2 April 2021

In the last *Khutba* I quoted from verses of the Holy Quran which show how a Muslim should speak to various kinds of people. The expressions used in the Quran for this, which I mentioned, were:

قُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا — “speak good words to all people” (2:83).

قُلْ لَهُمْ قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا — “speak to them a generous word” (17:23).

قُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا — “speak to them a kind word” (4:5 and 4:8).

فَقُلْ لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَيْسُورًا — “speak to them a gentle (or easy) word” (17:28).

فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَيِّنًا — “speak to him a gentle (or lenient) word” (20:44).

In today’s *Khutba* I want to read extracts from an article by the Lahore Ahmadiyya scholar and prolific author Dr Basharat Ahmad, originally written in Urdu, entitled *Islam and Civilized Behaviour*. He writes:

“The Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him, has given a definition of a ‘Muslim’ — A Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands other Muslims are safe [Bukhari, hadith 10. I may add here that there is another version of this: “A Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands other people are safe” — Nasā’ī, hadith 4995]. In this age, which is considered an era of education and civilized society, there could be no better definition of civilization. Does not a civilized society mean that when one person has to deal with another, he should not hurt or harm the other by his tongue or by an action? This is the requirement of a civilized society. Islamic culture has not made any rule which is impossible to act upon. It has made it obligatory that not only should you refrain from hurting the feelings of another person but you should not cause him any kind of harm, so that civilized behaviour is complete in both aspects, in the physical sense as well as the moral sense. Thus, according to the definition given by the Holy Prophet a Muslim is a perfect embodiment of civilized behaviour, not harming anyone either by his word or by his action.

Unfortunately, just as the Muslims have suffered a decline in all other spheres of life, their civilized behaviour has also deteriorated. I am not speaking of the coarse and crude sections of society, but of decent and respectable people, people who are of a serious mind and cultured. They too, in their conversations, speak in such a manner or behave in such a way as to hurt the feelings of others. This is termed by them as ‘Islamic simplicity and frankness’. I am greatly pained by this, because they are using the name of Islam to shield their own weakness and thereby degrade the Islamic concept of civilization. The definition of a Muslim is of one from whose words and actions other Muslims are safe. So, when the heart of another Muslim is made to feel hurt, it means that the standards of Islamic civilization have been breached.

I am deeply saddened when I see that cold and unfriendly treatment is given the name of Islamic simplicity, religious behaviour and purity. It is considered that a sign that a person is religious and God-fearing is that, when he meets someone, he is curt, irritable, bad-tempered and blunt-speaking, caring not in the least for the self-respect of others.

Was this the example set by our Holy Prophet Muhammad? Did he not behave as a most civilized and a most informal friend? Was it not his practice that he would mix freely with his friends, working with them, eating with them, laughing and talking with them? In any gathering he would be mixed in with the people, talking and smiling, so much so that you could not distinguish him from other people and could not pick him out as the one who was the messenger of God.

When I was a child and lacked knowledge, as one does in childhood, and I kept on seeing the grave and serious faces of our religious and spiritual leaders, and observed their fiery temperaments and displays of superiority, it became fixed in my mind that this was what being ‘religious’ meant. A religious person does not care for anyone’s feelings, he tells you exactly what he thinks, no matter how insulting this may be to you. He can scold you in a humiliating way because he is a man of God and does not fear anyone else. Because he is not bothered by anything of this world, he can treat the people of this world as rudely as he likes. He can sneer at respectable people, call

them bad names and scold them. To sum up, the concept which formed in my mind was that ill-tempered and rude behaviour was part and parcel of being religious. So, whenever I heard that a certain man was a saint or a very religious person, I used to be terrified of him in case the saint attacked me or cursed me and I got punished for no good reason. This was the mental image of godly and holy men in my mind. If I came across any well-known religious personality, and I was fortunate enough to return unscathed and unharmed from my encounter with him, I would thank God that I had not displeased that *maulvi* or saint and had escaped being cursed by him. ”

Dr Basharat Ahmad at this point describes his first meeting with the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad:

“ In the early days I was absolutely astonished that Hazrat Mirza sahib met me just as one man meets another, as a very courteous, loving friend meets you. My conception was that he would be sitting in a haughty manner, with his eyes closed. Then he would cast a critical look on my behaviour, my appearance, my clothes, and find every kind of fault with me and thoroughly castigate me. But what I saw was that he arrived smiling cheerfully and made me sit besides him. He would ask how I was doing, how was my family, how my medical job was going, what was the news about the plague epidemic. While talking he would be laughing, he would call for tea and offer it to me with great affection. The first time this happened, I did not partake of the tea due to respect, and it became cold. Maulana Nur-ud-Din said to me, Why aren't you drinking your tea, do take it, you won't be doing anything wrong. Hazrat Mirza sahib noticed that the tea was cold and he called his servant to bring hot tea for me. The servant started to take my cup away but Hazrat Mirza sahib stopped him and said: Bring the hot tea first and then take this cup away.

To sum up, he was talking to me freely like a friend, being happy with me, encouraging me in every way. He would not initiate any preaching or religious talk unless someone asked a question and broached a religious topic.

The gist of it is that the Promised Messiah would meet all people with such courtesy and hospitality that it was absolutely astonishing. A beautiful picture of Islamic civilization was seen in his morals and manners which was so pleasing to the mind; far be it that he would hurt someone. But when I see certain people among the followers of this righteous man, whether they are at a meeting or a social occasion, not caring that what they are saying or doing is hurting another brother's feelings, I am deeply pained by this. This cannot be called a requirement of religious behaviour. They say: "We speak bluntly, we are like bare swords", so that they are entitled to speak to anyone in whatever way they want to. Even in preaching it is not necessary to use hurtful language. If saying the truth is going to injure someone's heart, what is the need to say it? If it is necessary to say it, it can be put in such a way that you make your point without causing offence. Of course, it is a different matter if you have to speak to correct false religious beliefs or refute un-Islamic ideas or expose hypocrisy.

A society cannot be called civilized and cannot remain united until its members follow the principle that everyone of them should be safe from being injured by the hands or tongue of another member. Humour, levity and the making of jokes is good only as long as it makes people jovial and cheerful. But when humour hurts someone or is directed at exposing a fault or weakness in them, then it does not remain humour and entertainment but falls in the category of bad behaviour. Joking of this kind leads to resentment and discord. To make sarcastic comments to hurt someone is not the way of a civilized society. Similarly, to disregard the opinion of a lowly and ordinary person, and to reject it with contempt, cannot be called Islamic manners. To look down upon a person scornfully because of some flaw in him, is what constitutes the spiritual illness known as arrogance, which cannot be tolerated by Islamic civilized values.

In the history of Islam there are such lofty examples of superb Islamic manners that it completely astonishes and overwhelms the mind, and the present day civilization collapses into dust in comparison with those examples. Nasir-ud-Din Shah was a king in India who took no pay from the treasury but made his living by writing copies

of the Quran. Once a scholarly man came to see this king and, looking through his manuscripts, told him that there was a word which was copied inaccurately and needed correction. The king made the correction just as the scholar indicated. When the man left, the king changed the word back to what it had been before. Someone asked why he had done that. The king said: what I had written was right and the correction which the learned man pointed out was wrong, but I did not want to embarrass him by telling him in front of people that he was wrong. So I made the correction that he wanted and changed it back as soon as he left! ”

May Allah enable all Muslims to learn Islam’s values of what is civilized behaviour and to act according to those values, setting a good example of Islam and the Muslims before the rest of the world!

بَارَكَ اللهُ لَنَا وَنَاوَكُمُ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعَنَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِالْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، إِنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَوَادٌ كَرِيمٌ
مَلِكٌ بَرٌّ رَوْوْفٌ رَحِيمٌ-
