

Be Patient in the face of verbal abuse, advises Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad

Friday Khutba by Dr Zahid Aziz, for Lahore Ahmadiyya UK, 9 July 2021

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا ﴿٦٣﴾ ...
وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَشْهَدُونَ الزُّورَ وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِاللَّغْوِ مَرُّوا كِرَامًا ﴿٦٤﴾

“And the servants of the Beneficent are they who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, Peace! ... And they who witness no falsehood, and when they pass by what is vain, they pass by nobly.” — ch.

25, v. 63 & v. 72

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿١٦٩﴾

“Stick to forgiveness and enjoin good and turn away from the ignorant.” — ch.

7, v. 199

These verses of the Holy Quran teach Muslims how to deal with the ignorant, those people with whom you cannot reason or hold a decent conversation. Their aim is to mock, or ridicule, or hurl abuse. No argument you put to them can make any difference to them because they ignore it, distort what you are saying or laugh at it. The Quran teaches Muslims not to entangle themselves with such people, not to try replying to them, but to maintain their own dignity instead of engaging with such people at their low and uncouth level.

The followers of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad have always had to face such opponents who have made it their habit or hobby or profession to make false accusations against him in a way as to get cheap laughs from the general public. It is easy to get involved in trying to answer them in a tit-for-tat way. In line with the teaching of the Quran mentioned above, he urged his followers not to be provoked but to show patience. It is reported in Bukhari: “The Messenger of Allah and his Companions used to forgive the idolaters and the People of the Book, as Allah had commanded them, and they used to show patience on hearing hurtful words” (hadith 4566).

In one of his poems Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has written several lines about this. He starts by asking his followers to adopt the habit of tolerance and patience, and he says that if others are spreading a stench and bad odour, you should be like a fragrance. He then tells them to subdue their own lower desires, as that is their greatest enemy. This enemy, in a silent and sly way, creates the means of your destruction. In other words, your greatest enemy is not the person who is hurling abuse at you, mocking you and laughing at you. He can't harm you like your own lower self can harm you. Often such discussions become a matter of personal pride and ego, in which we are trying to win a victory for ourselves and not for the cause that we are defending. Then even if we win over our opponent, we have lost the battle against our own egos.

In the next verse in the poem, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad says: He who has the courage to crush his own lower desires, even Rostam and Isfandiyar are nothing before him. Rostam and Isfandiyar were mighty and powerful Persian warriors before the time of Islam. Here he indicates that defeating the most powerful forces of the world is easy if you have managed to defeat your own lower self. The early Muslims are an example of this. They overcame the most powerful empires of the world because they were not slaves to their own selfish desires. This meant, for one thing, that they were more disciplined and united than their enemies. Their leader, the Caliph, was not living in luxury like a king, and they were not fighting to maintain his personal position. Nor were they fighting for plunder or material gain. If you can overcome such mighty enemies because you are able to hold your personal desires in control, then you can also defeat the opponents who verbally abuse you if you keep your impulses and reactions under control and behave with dignity.

Our behaviour in a dignified manner can often shame the attacker himself. And it can certainly impress an on-looker, a neutral, fair-minded observer, who can see one side behaving in a foul-mouthed way and the other side showing restraint. There is an incident of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad when once he was visiting Lahore in 1892 in the early days of his mission. It was witnessed by Dr Mirza Yaqub Baig when he went to see him for the first time before he became an Ahmadi. He writes:

“I witnessed a strange incident after entering the drawing room where Hazrat Mirza was sitting. He was deeply engrossed in conversation with a group of people when suddenly a man barged in and started abusing him verbally. Hazrat Mirza bowed down his head and listened silently to the man’s vitriolic outburst. When the abuser finally ran out of steam, Hazrat Mirza replied: ‘Brother, if you have anything further to say, feel free to do so.’ The man was totally taken aback, felt penitent and sought forgiveness. An educated Hindu who happened to be present at the time remarked: ‘I had read about the forbearance of Jesus in the Bible but I only saw an example of it today.’ He also added: This man (Hazrat Mirza) is going to be successful’.”

The reporter of this incident says that this was one of the things which drew him towards Hazrat Mirza and induced him to join his Movement. In the poem, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad says next: “After listening to their abuse, pray for them; after suffering this from them, give them comfort. Seeing in them a display of arrogance, you should show humility.” In other words, a clear contrast is seen between their behaviour and your behaviour. These days we encounter many incidents of mockery and ridicule directed at the Holy Prophet of Islam. Muslims generally respond by saying: This has deeply hurt our feelings. Then protests and demonstrations take place. Hardly any Muslim responds by saying: you are hurting the truth, and here is the real truth about our Holy Prophet. No, it just becomes about us and our feelings. People also observe the behaviour and reaction of the protesting Muslims. Does it present any example of Islamic morals? Many of the protestors and demonstrators have some other motive than the defence of the Holy Prophet. They use it as a vehicle for their own ambitions to gain prominence and leadership of the community. This is why they have failed to stop such incidents from recurring. In fact, the malicious opponents of Islam have discovered that they can provoke a reaction from Muslims which portrays them in a bad light, so they keep on repeating it to get that reaction.

As regards praying for your opponents who have persecuted you, there is an incident from the life of the Holy Prophet that during his last period of stay in Makkah before his migration to Madinah, a drought afflicted Makkah. This is said to have been a punishment from God for the people of Makkah for persecuting the Holy Prophet.

The drought continued after his forced move to Madinah. It became very severe, so the leader of the Quraish, Abu Sufyan, travelled to Madinah and said to the Holy Prophet: “O Muhammad! You have come to order people to do good to relatives, but the people of your tribe are dying, so call on Allah (for them).” Maulana Muhammad Ali writes about this as follows: “The coming of the Quraish to request the Holy Prophet for prayer at a time of their utmost hostility towards him (he having been expelled from his native city) shows the great confidence people had in his kind behaviour. There is nothing strange in this, because when, after the conquest of Makkah [eight years later], the opportunity arose to administer the severest punishment and the Holy Prophet asked these people what treatment they expected from him, they replied: ‘noble brother, son of a noble brother’. The most bitter enemies approached him for their needs and he fulfilled their needs with an open heart. This example is not found in the life of any other prophet. Just as the enmity of his opponents had reached its height, so also did his mercy reach its height” (*Fadl-ul-Bari*, translation of Sahih Bukhari, under hadith 1020).

Now regarding what happened at the conquest of Makkah, the question here arises: how did the people of Makkah, defeated by the Holy Prophet, know that they could expect magnanimous and generous treatment from him, and not vengeful treatment? They knew this from the Holy Prophet’s previous dealings with them, so they, as they said, expected him to treat them as if he was their brother. It was not that the Holy Prophet suddenly decided to change his ways of the past and now forgive his enemies.

In that poem Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad goes on to advise his followers not to be worried by the opponents’ abuse, hate and anger, and to let them publish in their books and newspapers whatever insulting and false comments they are publishing. He then says that they regard his mission and movement as a complete fabrication and forgery but in fact he has worked hard for the betterment of the world, working till his heart was bleeding. The “war” which he conducted, by his writings and debates, was with the intention of establishing peace, and not done out of enmity. He goes on to say: Those who make false accusations against a pure heart are despicable people.

Their eyes are closed at present, but they will in the end meet the fate which is destined for them.

I should add here that when he advises his followers to show humility, patience and restraint, and let their opponents publish whatever falsehood they wish to, it does not mean that they should not respond to the attacks of the opponents. A considerable part of his mission was to answer the false allegations of the opponents of Islam directed against Islam, its Holy Prophet and its holy Book. He carried out this work through his writings, lectures and public debates. Whenever he came across any accusation against Islam, he did not rest until he had refuted it thoroughly. His responses were powerful, comprehensive and effective. This was acknowledged by Muslim leaders of his time. Likewise, he answered the large number of accusations directed against his own claims, his work and his mission.

What he is advising his followers here is that, in the face of abuse and provocation, they must not allow their emotions to overwhelm them, so that they forget that they are meant to be setting a good example to others. Their work is to call people to the service of God and to show people the greatness of God, not greatness of themselves. In the face of verbal abuse, they must neither be intemperate and out of control, nor be worried and depressed. In the end their opponents will meet their fate ordained by God.

بَارَكَ اللهُ لَنَا وَكُنْمُ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعْنَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِالآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، إِنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَوَادٌ كَرِيمٌ
مَلِكٌ بَرٌّ رَوْفٌ رَحِيمٌ-
