

Fast 21: Holy Prophet's concern for the most ordinary of people

- The Holy Prophet is told by Allah:

“And do not drive away those who call upon their Lord, morning and evening, desiring only His pleasure. Neither are you accountable for them at all, nor are they accountable for you at all, that you should drive them away and thus be one of the wrongdoers.” — 6:52

وَلَا تَطْرُدِ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ
يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ مَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَ
مَا مِنْ حِسَابِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَتَطْرُدَهُمْ فَتَكُونَ
مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

This verse was revealed when some leading chiefs of the Quraish expressed their willingness to accept the Prophet if the poorer Muslims were not allowed to remain in his company at the time. The poor and the rich are here brought to the same level; they have equal claims to learn and practise the truth. Truth is equally accessible to all. Before the Great Master the differences of rank, wealth and colour sink into insignificance, and therefore before Allah's Messenger, as before Allah Himself, they must all stand upon one level.

The Prophet is not accountable for them means he cannot guarantee that they will necessarily turn out to be good people and be blamed and held responsible for their deeds. They are not accountable for the Prophet, meaning that if the Prophet drives them away unjustly he will be held responsible for it and not they.

- An exchange between the prophet Noah and those who rejected him is recorded as follows:

“They said: Shall we believe in you when the lowest (people) follow you? He said: And what knowledge do I have of what they did? Their reckoning is only with my Lord, if you could perceive. And I am not going to drive away the believers; I am only a plain warner.” — 26:111–115

قَالُوا أَنْتُمْ مِنْ لَدُنَّا وَأَتَّبَعَكَ الْأَلَذَّةُ فَأَنْتُمْ
عَلَيْهِمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾ قَالَ وَمَا
رَبِّي لَو تَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾ وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
﴿١١٤﴾ إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿١١٥﴾

The same happened in case of the Holy Prophet. The important and higher up people refuse to accept the prophet, objecting that his followers are from the lowest classes. The prophet replies: How can I judge them merely on the basis that they are “low”? They can only be judged on account of their deeds, and only God can judge them thereby. He refuses to drive them away, just to accommodate the important ones.

- There is a chapter in the Quran entitled *He Frowned*. It begins as follows:

“¹He frowned and turned away, ²because the blind man came to him. ³And what would make you know that he might purify himself, ⁴or be mindful, so the Reminder should benefit him? ⁵As for him who considers himself free from need, ⁶to him you do attend. ⁷And no blame is on you, if he does not purify himself. ⁸And as to him who comes to you striving hard, ⁹and he fears — ¹⁰to him you pay no regard. ¹¹No! surely it is a Reminder. ¹²So whoever wishes, let him be mindful of it.” — from ch. 80

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّى ۖ أَنْ جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَىٰ ۚ وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ
لَعَلَّهُ يَزْكِي ۚ أَوْ يَذَّكَّرُ فَتَنْفَعَهُ الذِّكْرَىٰ ۚ
أَمَّا مَنْ اسْتَعْزَىٰ ۚ فَأَنْتَ لَهُ تَصَدَّىٰ ۚ
وَمَا عَلَيْكَ أَلَّا يَزْكِي ۚ وَأَمَّا مَنْ جَاءَكَ يَسْعَىٰ ۚ
وَهُوَ يَخْشَىٰ ۚ فَأَنْتَ عَنْهُ تَلَهَىٰ ۚ
كَلَّا إِنَّهَا تَذْكِرَةٌ ۚ فَمِنْ شَاءَ ذَكَرَهُ ۚ

This an incident early in the Holy Prophet’s mission at Makkah, when a blind man came to the Holy Prophet while he was explaining the doctrines of Islam to a gathering of the leaders of the Quraish. He interrupted and asked the Holy Prophet to teach him what Allah had revealed to him. The Holy Prophet did not like this untimely interruption — *he frowned* and did not pay any attention to his question. God then sent this revelation to the Prophet. It tells him that he should not have frowned and turned away from the blind man because it could have been that he would have benefitted from his teaching. The Prophet is told that the leaders he was attending to, don’t consider themselves as needing his teaching, although he is not to blame for it. But the blind man had struggled to come to him to learn what he was teaching, because he feared the consequences of not accepting the Prophet’s teaching.

In this way God revealed to the Holy Prophet, very early on, that while preaching his message he must regard even the most ordinary of people to be as important, and as deserving of his time and attention, as those persons who occupy the highest positions.

- It is reported in Bukhari that there was a black man or black woman who used to sweep the Prophet’s Mosque and she died. It continues:

The Prophet did not know about his (or her) death. One day he remembered him (or her) and said: “What happened to that person?” People said: “He (or she) has died, O Messenger of Allah.” He said: “Why did you not inform me?” They said: “His story was so and so” (meaning that they considered him to be insignificant and unworthy of mention). He said: “Show me his grave.” So he went to the grave and said prayers over it. (hadith 1337)

Another version of this hadith says that it was a black woman. By going to her grave and saying the funeral prayer for the deceased, the Holy Prophet taught that in

Muslim society no one is to be regarded as inferior, whatever kind of lowly, unskilled or commonplace work he or she may do. In other societies and communities the situation was that those who did so-called “menial” work were treated as inferior members of society. This is also evidence of the high moral qualities of the Holy Prophet, that he accorded full honours to an ordinary sweeper woman who had died.