

The Holy Prophet Muhammad's dealings with people

Friday Khutba by Dr Zahid Aziz, for Lahore Ahmadiyya UK, 22 October 2021

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

“And We have not sent you (O Prophet) but as a mercy to the nations (*rahmat-un lil-‘alamīn*),” — ch. 21, v. 107.

Right at the beginning of the Holy Quran, Allah is described as “the Lord of the worlds”, Lord of the *‘alamīn*. This is followed by *Rahmān* and *Rahīm*, which both indicate the great mercy of God. The above verse connects God’s mercy or *rahmat* with the *‘alamīn*, i.e. “the worlds” or “the nations”. Allah is Merciful to all the worlds and all the nations by sending the Holy Prophet Muhammad as a mercy from Him to all of them. So the Holy Prophet reflected God’s mercy in this world in how he treated other people.

Another verse about the Holy Prophet is as follows:

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢٨﴾

“Certainly a Messenger has come to you from among yourselves; very painful for him (or very hard on him to bear) is your falling into distress, most concerned (he is) for you, to the believers (he is) compassionate, merciful.” — ch. 9, v. 128

Before the last words, “to the believers (he is) compassionate, merciful,” all humanity is addressed by the word “you”. The Holy Prophet himself is one of the human beings, as stated at the start of the verse. The troubles and problems faced by humanity, their degraded moral condition and their misdeeds, bear very hard on him. He is most concerned about their welfare. And lastly, his relationship to the believers is mentioned, that he is compassionate and merciful to them, *ra’ūf-un rahīm-un*. Many other verses of the Quran tell us that God Himself has these two qualities, of being compassionate and merciful, *ra’ūf-un rahīm-un*, towards all humanity: إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ

لَرءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (2:143, 22:65). Another verse makes it quite clear in different words that God is compassionate and merciful, *ra'ūf-un raḥīm-un*, to all mankind. It says that God has created animals which “carry your heavy loads to regions which you could not reach but with distress to yourselves. Surely your Lord is Compassionate, Merciful” (16:7).

In the same chapter 16 it is mentioned, as regards those who were persecuting the Holy Prophet and the Muslims, and making evil plans against them, that God might humiliate them on earth, or take them by surprise with His punishment, or catch them so that they will not be able to escape, or reduce their numbers and power gradually. But immediately after this the Quran says: “Your Lord is surely Compassionate, Merciful” (16:47). These verses were revealed while the Holy Prophet was still at Makkah before his *Hijra*. And all this did happen. They lost the various battles they waged against the Muslims, and by the time of the conquest of Makkah their numbers, power and morale had been so reduced that they surrendered without fighting. It was then that God displayed His attributes of being Compassionate and Merciful through the Holy Prophet when the Holy Prophet forgave them all their crimes and let them go without any punishment. God is *ra'ūf-un raḥīm-un* and the Holy Prophet reflected these qualities by being *ra'ūf-un raḥīm-un* towards people, both his own followers and his enemies.

I will mention in this connection a few incidents from his life. A Jewish scholar had lent some money to the Prophet Muhammad. He demanded it back. The Prophet said: “I have no money that I can give you.” He said: “Muhammad, I will not leave from here until you pay what you owe me.” The Prophet said: “All right, I will stay with you.” So he remained with him through the *Zuhr*, *'Aṣr*, *Maghrib* and *'Ishā* prayers, and the next morning's *Fajr* prayers. His Companions threatened the Jew and told him they would throw him out. When the Holy Prophet saw this, he stopped them. They said: “O Messenger of Allah, Can a Jew hold you up?” He said: “**Allah has forbidden me to do injustice to anyone who is under our compact of security, and such people** [the words ‘and such people’ may also mean ‘and anyone else’].”

As the sun rose, the Jew said: “I bear witness that there is no God but Allah, and I bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah. I give a half of my property in the way of Allah. I swear by Allah that I did what I did only because I was testing you to see if the qualities that are recorded in the Torah about the promised prophet are found in you or not. The Torah says: ‘... He will not be abusive in language nor hard-hearted, nor will he shout loudly in the streets, nor will he indulge in foul talk ...’ Here is my property. You may give any order with regard to it.” (Mishkat, *Kitab-ul-Fitan*, ch. ‘Morals and habits of the Holy Prophet’, sec. 3)

In this hadith, the Jewish scholar has mentioned a prophecy about the Holy Prophet to be found in the Torah. It is possible that he is referring to the following in the book of Isaiah, where God says: “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. ... In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope” (Isaiah, 42:1–4). Isaiah lived about 1300 years before the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

Safiyyah was a wife of the Holy Prophet who was a Jew. Hafsah was a wife of the Holy Prophet from his own tribe of the Quraish and a daughter of Umar. Hafsah once described Safiyyah, with contempt, as “daughter of a Jew”. It is reported in Hadith: “The news reached Safiyyah that Hafsah said: ‘The daughter of a Jew’, so she wept. Then the Prophet came to her while she was crying, so he said: ‘What makes you cry?’ She said: ‘Hafsah said to me that I am the daughter of a Jew.’ So the Prophet said: ‘And you are the daughter of a Prophet, and your uncle is a Prophet, and you are married to a Prophet, so what is she boasting to you about?’ Then he said: ‘Fear Allah, O Hafsah’.” (Tirmidhi, book 49: ‘Virtues’, hadith 4268)

According to another version of this report, the Holy Prophet’s wives Aishah and Hafsah (daughters of Hazrat Abu Bakr and Umar) had said about Safiyyah: “We are more honoured to the Messenger of Allah than her,” and “We are the wives of the Prophet and his cousins”. Upon this, the Holy Prophet said to Safiyyah: “Why did you not say (to them): How can you be better than me when my husband is Muhammad,

my father is Aaron, and my uncle is Moses?” (Tirmidhi, book 49: ‘Virtues’, hadith 4266)

The Holy Prophet was asking Safiyyah to tell Hafsa and Aishah (God be pleased with them all) that she was related to three prophets, to two of them by descent and to one by marriage, while they were related to only one prophet! On the same subject, of the Holy Prophet’s Jewish wife being looked down upon by the other wives, another report is as follows from Aishah: “The camel of Safiyyah was fatigued, and Zainab had a surplus mount. The Messenger of Allah said to Zainab: ‘Give her the camel.’ She said: ‘Should I give to that Jewess?’ Thereupon the Messenger of Allah became angry and kept away from her during (the months of) Dhu al-Hijjah, Muharram, and a part of Safar” (Abu Dawud, book 42: *Kitab-us-Sunnah*, ch. 4, hadith 4602). This shows how highly displeased the Holy Prophet was that a person should be referred to in this way because of belonging to a certain religious group.

The Holy Prophet was always humble about his status. It is reported: “A man came to the Messenger of Allah and said (addressing him as): ‘O the best of creation (*Khair al-Bariyya*)!’ Thereupon the Messenger of Allah said: ‘That is Abraham, peace be upon him’.” (Sahih Muslim, book 43: ‘Virtues’, ch. 41, hadith 2369a)

Another report is as follows: “Umar said: I heard the Prophet saying, ‘Do not exaggerate in praising me as the Christians praised the son of Mary, for I am only a servant of Allah. So call me the servant of Allah and His Messenger.’” (Bukhari, book 60: Prophets, ch. 48, hadith 3445)

In line with this, Muslims refer to the Holy Prophet as ‘*abdu-hū wa rasūluh*, and they have never elevated him to a category beyond that of mortal human beings, even though some Muslims have exaggerated in adding certain supernatural attributes to him which are not supported by the Quran.

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