



Learning from the life of Rasoolullah (SAW)

By Abdur Rahman

We are the community of Muhammad (SAW), the last Messenger, the beloved of Allah Ta'ala. This is a blessing for us from Allah; we are fortunate to be in the position which all the other Prophets asked Allah for. Many of us are regular in proclaiming our love for Rasoolullah (SAW), loudly singing durood during Mawlid ceremonies and fiercely opposing those who seek to dishonour the majesty of Rasoolullah (SAW). But deep down, in our everyday lives, how much do we actually love the Prophet (SAW)? Are we simply a community that shows occasional outpourings of love for Rasoolullah (SAW), which we store away for the next mawlid gathering, or the next verbal attack against the Prophet (SAW)? The time of the Mawlid of Rasoolullah (SAW) is apposite for reflection in this regard.

There is a lesson and an example for us in every aspect of the life of Rasoolullah (SAW). Whichever facet of his life we choose to analyse, there is always something there for a believer to learn and apply in his daily life. I would like to take this opportunity to discuss two such things: the mercy of Rasoolullah (SAW), and his courage.

That Rasoolullah's mercy was boundless is common knowledge, for example his reaction to the violent attack by the people of Taif. He was chased out of the city and pelted with stones till his blood flowed freely. Rasoolullah (SAW) later described that day as a day worse than the defeat at the Battle of Uhud. However even after such an experience, Rasoolullah (SAW) did not accept Allah's offer to destroy the people who had treated him in such an appalling manner, rather he prayed that Allah Ta'ala would give them offspring who would be more accepting of the invitation to Tawheed. However, we the community of the Final Messenger, have been unable to take on board this noble characteristic. Countless times we see argument and dispute even between Muslims over issues ranging from the petty to the serious, sometimes even resulting in violence, so what about disputes between Muslims and non-Muslims? Naturally, dispute will arise between independent, free-willed humans, however it is how we resolve these issues that mark us out as implementers of the noble characteristics of the Prophet (SAW). He did not go out looking for argument, nor did he turn to violence at every opportunity.

In our times, we see on an alarmingly regular basis examples of Muslims abandoning the example of Rasoolullah (SAW). Recently, we have seen several attacks on innocent civilians by a number of young men purporting to be righting the wrongs of international politics. Looking back at the actions of Rasoolullah (SAW) at the time of the Conquest of Makkah Shareef, we see that the Beloved of Allah (SAW) did not want any bloodshed to take place. He announced a declaration of safety, whereby those who remained at home would not come to harm, nor those who sought refuge in the house of Abu Sufyan (RA) and nor those who sought refuge in the Haram Ash-Shareef.

This was a hugely emotional return for the Prophet (SAW) and his Muhajir companions, who had been forced to flee their homes because of persecution by their fellow Makkans, and who now returned in a position of power. The opportunity to use force and to exact revenge was open to Rasoolullah (SAW), though he chose to be merciful and to show compassion on his return. How then is it that we see some people, albeit only a handful, who feel it is somehow their duty to dole out justice in the streets of London or Paris for the injustices faced by Muslims around the world? They kill and injure innocent people, yet they then claim to be the standard bearers of the religion of the Prophet of Mercy? Rasoolullah (SAW) faced greater injustice at the hands of the Quraish than these people had ever faced, yet he showed leniency and mercy to those who inhabited Makkah at the time of his victorious return, proclaiming that only those who came out to fight the Muslims would be dealt with in the manner which they themselves had preferred. Thus, if we are truly the community of the Last Prophet (SAW), it is necessary for us to learn this lesson, that we should treat people with kindness and compassion.

I would like to now move to another aspect of the Prophet's noble personality: his courage. Courage can be displayed in any number of scenarios, though the only courage worthy of honourable mention is that which is displayed in upholding what is right, especially in the face of adversity.

There are numerous accounts of the bravery displayed by Rasoolullah (SAW) on the battlefield, which have been discussed in countless books and articles. However, I will argue that one of the greatest examples of the courage of Rasoolullah (SAW) was in the early stages of the Prophethood, when Allah Ta'ala ordered him to spread the message of Islam openly. We must look at the wider context of the period in order to fully comprehend the enormity of the mission Rasoolullah (SAW) was tasked with and to realise just how much bravery was required of him in order to carry out his mission.

The idols worshipped by the Makkans had a twofold utility; they were simultaneously objects of worship and veneration, as well as the means of earning a livelihood. The Ka'ba was filled with these idols, and pilgrims flocked from all across Arabia to Makkah Shareef to worship and pray to them. As a result, many Makkans were dependent for their livelihoods on the trade opportunities these pilgrims brought. Makkah became a thriving centre for religion and commerce, to the envy of other cities across Arabia, as was evidenced by the futile efforts of Abraha to develop a metropolis to rival Makkah Shareef.

Thus, it was the most daunting of tasks to forbid the people from worshipping these idols from the epicentre of idol-worship itself, calling people to forgo their beliefs as well as to risk their livelihoods. The message of Rasoolullah (SAW) also shook the foundations of the traditional hierarchical social structure of the Makkans, replacing the criteria for superiority from wealth, lineage and other social constructions to superiority judged according to levels of piety. It was abundantly clear that the Makkans would not take to this message easily as too many had too much to lose from it, and as such would fight tooth and nail to make sure that Rasoolullah (SAW) would not succeed in his endeavour. Despite this, Rasoolullah (SAW) took up his mission of dawah, despite the severe hostility and violence from all sides. It was a task that only the most courageous could fulfil, and Rasoolullah (SAW) was this most courageous person. He took his message, as ordered by Allah Ta'ala, into the arena of hostility and stood firm and did not waver. He was on the path of truth and his enemies were on the path of falsehood. Thus, even in the face of torture and persecution, Rasoolullah (SAW) did not abandon his position on the path of what was right. This is true courage and this is the courage we should aspire to practice. It is our Islamic duty to encourage the good and forbid the evil; we should not feel afraid in carrying out this duty because we are, no doubt, on the path of the truth, the path of Rasoolullah (SAW).

To conclude, my argument has been that there is so much to learn from the life of Rasoolullah (SAW). Alhamdulillah, there are many Muslims nowadays who study the life of the Prophet (SAW) and the Hadis Shareef. However, the pressures of the life of the dunya often cause us to leave aside the example shown to us by Rasoolullah (SAW). If we truly love the Prophet (SAW), it is our duty to first of all understand how he conducted himself in the various situations Allah Ta'ala put him in, and to draw out lessons that we should learn and apply in our own lives. This article has sought to identify two of these lessons: compassion and leniency in conduct, and courage in standing on the side of truth in the face of hostility. Insha Allah, by implementing these traits in our daily lives, we can show that our love for Rasoolullah (SAW) is not simply seasonal, rather it is an intrinsic part of our lives.

May Allah Ta'ala give us the tawfeeq and increase our love for Rasoolullah (SAW).