Three Important and Fate Deciding Traits in the Life of a Person

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The Prophet Muhammad (S) has said, “O' ‘Ali! If the following three traits are not found within a person, then his actions shall not be complete: Wara’ which prevents him from committing transgressions against Allah, the Noble and Grand; noble moral traits through which he acts with tolerance with the people; and forbearance through which he repels the ignorance of the ignorant person.”

This tradition is specifically geared towards those who work alongside others and have regular contact with people in their day to day activities.

In the beginning of the tradition, the Prophet (S) has stated that, “If these three characteristics are not present in a person, then there shall be no prosperity in his actions, he shall not have any positive outcome in his dealings, and his entire program (of life) shall be destroyed.”

In reality, these three characteristics are issues that need to be reviewed and studied in detail - a person's relationship with Allah (SwT); His relationship with his friends; and his relationship with his enemies.

Part 1: The relationship between a person and Allah (SwT) is summarized in: “…Wara’ which prevents him from committing transgressions against Allah, the Noble and Grand…”

There are some scholars who have gone through great troubles to define the word Wara’ and its scope, however to keep this discussion brief we state that Wara’ is a state which results in a person keeping himself away from performing sins and this is the same state which we refer to as being 'just' (possessing the state of ‘Adalat). The habit or second-nature of Wara’ does not guarantee 100% protection (from sins), since if it was a 100% guarantee, then that would result in complete ‘Ismah - immunity from all sins.

We can better explain this issue by presenting the following example. For some people, the road to performing sins is a smooth and paved route which which they are able to traverse with no difficulty. However, there are others who find obstacles while traveling on the road - things such as barbed wire, deep valleys, rough rocks and other such things which make it difficult for them to travel the road of sins and actually prevent them from moving on this path.

The state of Wara’ are the obstacles which prevent a person from committing sins. In other words, the path of sins is one which the people of Wara’ find very difficulty to travel upon and they find themselves faced with numerous impediments as their inner strength seeks to pull

them away from this road - the state of being of Wara' and 'Adalah.

Question: How does a person know if he possesses the habit and second-nature of 'Adalah - justice?

:Answer: It is actually very easy to recognize this trait since

إِنَّ الإِنْسَانَ عَلى نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةٌ وَ لَوْ أَلْقى مَعَاذِيرَهُ

Surely mankind is witness over his own self even if he puts up excuses."[1] "

If in the face of being able and needing to lie, backbite, earn wealth from forbidden sources, etc… a person sees that there is a force which is preventing him from these things, then he should know that this hidden force is nothing other than Wara' and Taqwa.

However if he is free in his actions and if his eyes, ears, tongue and all other parts of his body are without limits and restraints, then it is clear that he has no Wara' and Taqwa! Without doubt, the person who does not possess Taqwa will not see fruition in any of his endeavours. Although it is possible that such a person may temporarily be successful in some of his endeavors, however in the end, he will fall flat on his face in shame! Thus, in addition to having knowledge, we must also seek to acquire Taqwa and this is the first responsibility which all of us have.

In his work, Mustamsik al-'Urwatul Wuthqa, the late Ayatullah al-hakim stated that, "The level of Taqwa which a Marja' Taqlid must possess is different than the Taqwa which the 'common people' must have. The 'Adalah which he (the Marja') possesses must be at a very high level and if not, then he will fall prey to sins, since the more the knowledge and status a person acquires within the society, the more the danger of him committing sins.

Thus in summary, in the same proportion that the pull towards sins becomes stronger (through a higher status in the society), the more the power of refraining from these sins must become stronger in the person."

Part 2: The relationship between a person and his friends: "…noble moral traits through which he acts with tolerance with the people…"

As we know, everyone has his or her own taste and style, and normally they can be grouped :under the following thought

صَاحِبُ الْحَاجَةِ لاَ يُرى إِلاَّ حَاجَتَهُ

The person who has a need will not see anything other than the need which he has (and" having that fulfilled)."

Thus, when a difficulty arises, a person would not see the difficulties of anyone other than

himself and would actually expect that everyone should focus their attention on him and his problems!

The person who wants to be considered as one of the leaders of the society has a Divinely-granted calling which can not be fulfilled except through his noble ethical traits. In other words, such a person must be lenient with the people and must be ready to bear his friends, their expectations and their harassment of him since in this situation, he must observe patience and must bear the difficulties.

The person who is granted a higher status in the society would realize that such an issue would be seen more in his life and it is just like that person who grabs the hand of the scholars and leaders of the society to kiss it. However when he is told not to grab the hand, he would say, “I simply want to kiss his hand (out of respect for him).” When they are further told that if they grab the person's hand in that fashion that they may break it, they would retort and state, 'It doesn't matter if it breaks! It is he who wanted to reach to this station (and thus, he must by ready to put up with these inconveniences'

We must learn how to be lenient and this can best be seen in the lives of the true servants of Allah - the Infallibles (as). It was they, who in the face of evil, showed goodness to the opposing party and treated them with a good demeanor resulting in their opponents being humbled and submissive!

With this said, we must learn how to interact with people - and what better way than through (the conduct of the Noble Prophet of Islam (S.

An Example of the Etiquette of the Prophet (S)

Even though the victory of the Prophet of Islam (S) was through the help and assistance of the Divine, however there are many apparent factors that were also at play - one of the most important of these being the ethical traits of the Prophet (S) that attracted others to him. He possessed such lofty humanistic characteristics and noble ethical traits that even the hard-headed enemies were captivated by his morals and were forced to submit to him! In addition, those close to him were also attracted to him. If we refer to the etiquette and morals of the Prophet (S) as being his miracle, then we would definitely not have overstated the fact!

An example of this ethical miracle can be seen in the victory (fath) of Makkah. When the blood-thirsty and revenge-seeking polytheists were working crimes and transgressions (against the Muslims) and had been fighting against the faith of Islam and even the Prophet (S) himself for many years, were put face to face with the Muslims and were finally thrown in the grips of the believers, we see that the Noble Prophet (S), going against what all of his friends

and enemies thought he would do, ordered the Muslims to forgive all of the polytheists of Makkah - thus, all of their crimes were forgotten! It is due to this fact that this verse of the Qur'an became manifest during the lifetime of the Prophet (S):

يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْواجاً

And you see people entering into the faith of Allah inn groups…""

The books of tafsir, history and even the story books are full of events in relation to the good demeanor, forgiveness, mercy, altruism, self-sacrifice and consciousness of Allah (SwT) which the Prophet (S) displayed. However it is enough for us to state that in the tradition from Husayn b. 'Ali B it has been mentioned that he said, "I asked my father the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali b. Abi Talib B about the characteristics of the Prophet (S) and his etiquette and my father, in a very detailed manner, explained to me by stating…"

In this long tradition, it has been mentioned that, "The Prophet (S) was always cheerful and smiling with those whom he was in the company with, and was always found to be gentle and soft-spoken. He was never seen to be angry, hard-hearted, rude, foul speaking, picking faults of others, nor excessively praising anyone. Not a single person was ever made to feel hopeless by him and anyone who entered his house did not leave disparaged.

There are three things that he kept away from himself: arguing with others, speaking too much and entering into things which were none of his business.

There are two things which he kept away from in relation to the people: he never ridiculed or rebuked people and he never went forth to seek out the slips, hidden mistakes and errors of the people.

It is only in relation to that area in which the Divine reward of Allah (SwT) was possible did he speak. When he spoke, his words had such an impact on the hearts of the people that everyone present would remain quiet and did not move an inch and it is only when he stopped speaking and remained quiet did they begin to speak.

However it is also seen that while in his presence, those around him did not indulge in arguments or wrangling… Anytime a stranger or un-aware person began to speak with anger and asked him for something, he would bear that person's attitude with patience and would tell his companions, 'Anytime you see a person who has some need, ensure that you fulfill it for him.' He never cut anyone's speech short and waited for the person to finish what he wanted to say."

Yes! If the noble ethical traits and Divinely granted persona of the Prophet (S) was not there, then the backwards, ignorant 'Arab nation and the angry, hard-lined 'Arabs would not have

:come into the faith of Islam and would have been the manifestation of the verse which reads

لاَ نْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ

they would have dispersed from around you (Muhammad)…"…"

How good it would be that this Islamic etiquette is today, brought back to life and instilled within the life of every single Muslim, the greatness which is exemplified in the morals and etiquette of the Prophet (S)!

In this regards, the narrations - whether in regards to the Prophet (S) or the general responsibilities of all Muslims - are replete with words of guidance. In this section, we shall narrate some of these traditions as have been mentioned in Majma' al-Bayan:

:1. It has been narrated that the Prophet (S) said

إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لأُتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الأَخْلاَقِ

Surely I was appointed (to a Prophet) only to perfect the noble ethical traits.""

In this tradition we see that one of the main goals of the appointment of the Prophet (S) was to perfect and complete the great ethical values.

:2. In another tradition from the same individual we read

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُ لِيُدْرِكَ بِحُسْنِ خُلْقِهِ دَرَجةَ قَائِمِ اللَّيْلِ وَ صَائِمِ النَّهَارِ

Surely the true believer, through his noble ethical traits, shall reach to the stage similar to" those who stand up in the night (in prayer) and fast during the day."

:3. The Prophet (S) has also stated that

مَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ أَثْقَلَ فِي الْمِيزَانِ مِنْ حُسْنِ الْخُلْقِ

There is not a single thing which is heavier in the scale of (goods) deeds than a good" demeanor."

:4. The Prophet (S) has also told us that

أَحَبَّكُمْ إِلـى اللّٰهِ أَحْسَنُكُمْ أَخْلاَقاً أَلْمَوْطُؤَنَ أَكْنَافاً، أَلَّذِينَ يَأْلَفُونَ وَ يُؤْلِفُونَ. وَ أَبْغَضُكُم إِلـى اللّٰهِ أَلْمَشَّاؤُونَ بِالنَّمِيمَةِ، أَلْمُفَرِّقُونَ بَيْنَ الإِخَوَانَ، أَلْمُلْتَمِسُونَ لِلْبَرآءِ الْعَثَرَاتِ

The most beloved of you to Allah is the one who has the best etiquette, the most humble and" modest, is attracted to other people (due to the morals) and whom other people are also attracted to (due to his morals). The worst of you to Allah is the person who indulges in

gossiping, makes divisions between brothers, and tries to find faults in those people who are free of error."

:5. The Messenger of Allah (S) has said

إِنَّكُمْ لَنْ تَسَعُوا النَّاسَ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ فَسَعُوهُمْ بِـبَسْطِ الْوُجُوهِ و حُسْنِ الْخُلْقِ

Surely you can never answer the needs of the people with your wealth, thus, answer them through your cheeriness and good demeanor."[2]

6. It has been narrated from Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) from his forefathers that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

عَلَيْكُم بِحُسْنِ الْخُلْقِ، فَإِنَّ حُسْنِ الْخُلْقِ فِي الْجَنَّةِ لاَ مَحَالَةَ، وَ إِيَّاكُمْ وَ سُوءُ الْخُلْقُ، فَإِنَّ سُوءَ الْخُلْقِ فِي النَّارِ لاَ مَحَالَةً

"I advise you to have a good demeanor since surely the person with a good demeanor shall necessarily be in Paradise and I advise you to refrain from having a negative demeanor since surely the person with negative ethical traits will necessarily be in the Hell-fire."

7. Jabir b. 'Abdullah al-Ansari has narrated from Imam Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Baqir (as) that he said:

تَبَسُّمُ الرَّجُلِ فِي وَجْهِ أَخِيهِ حَسَنَةٌ

"A person smiling in the face of his brother is a good deed."[3]

:8. Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) has said

أَلتَّبَسُّمُ فِي وَجْهِ الْمُؤْمِنِ الْغَرِيبِ مِنْ كَفَّارَةِ الذُّنُوبِ

"Smiling in the face of the true believer who is a stranger (in a land which is not his home) is a penitence for one's sins."[4]

:It has also been related from Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) that .9

بِشَاشَةُ الْوَجْهِ عَطِيَّةٌ ثَانِيَةٌ

"A cheery face is a second gift."[5]

3. The relationship between a person and his enemies: "…and forbearance through which he repels the ignorance of the ignorant person."

Even in the face of ignorant people, a person must not show anger and rage since in Islam, anger and rage are limited to certain instances.

We must learn from the Qur'an as there are 114 chapters and all of them, with the exception of one (Suratul Tawbah) start with the words "al-Rahman" or the Most Merciful and "al-Rahim" or the Most Compassionate. Thus, in the face of our enemies, as much as we are able to do and without them taking unfair advantage of us, causing us difficulties and overpowering us, must show patience and forbearance.

Who is the Forbearing (halim) one?

In regards to the explanation of one who is halim, we are told that: "This is a person who, even though is able to do something, does not go forth to perform it before its time and does not make haste in regards to punishing a guilty person for his crime. He (SwT)s one who has a spiritually large soul and is in complete control over his emotions."

In his work al-Mufradat, Raghib has stated that, "hilm means to maintain one's composure during a period of anger. Since this state of being comes forth through a person's intellect and cognizance, sometimes this trait (of forbearance) is referred to as a person's intellect and cognizance."[6]

The halim and Forbearing Person in the Islamic Narrations

1. The Noble Prophet (S) was once passing by a group of people, amongst who was a very strong person who was able to lift large stones. Those around this man referred to him as a very strong person and were amazed at his weight lifting abilities.

The Noble Prophet (S) asked these people, "What is this gathering for?" The people replied that they were watching a very strong and powerful weightlifter. The Prophet said to them, "Should I not tell you of the one who is even stronger than this person?" The Prophet (S) then said:

رَجُلٌ سَبَّهُ فَحَلُمَ عَنْهُ، فَغَلَبَ نَفْسَهُ، وَ غَلَبَ شَيْطَانَهُ وَ شَيْطَانَ صَاحِبُهُ

"The person who is even stronger than this weightlifter is the one who when is cursed or sworn at, is able to show forbearance and is victorious over his own soul (and desires) and is victorious over his Satan while the Satan is alongside him."

2. Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has said:

لاَ تُمَارِيَنَّ حَلِيماً وَ لاَ سَفِيهاً فَإِنَّ الْحَلِيمَ يُقَلِّيكَ وَالسَّفِيهَ يُؤْذِيكَ

Never argue with a person who has forbearance nor with a foolish person since surely the" forbearing person shall take in whatever you tell him (and bear it), while the foolish person shall bug you for arguing with him."[7]

Hilm (an extreme form of patience) and the Halim in the words of Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad [(as-Sadiq (as

أَلْحِلْمُ سِرَاجُ اللّٰهِ يَسْتَضِيءُ بِهِ صَاحِبُهُ إِلـى جَوَارِهِ، وَ لاَ يَكُونُ حَلِيماً إِلاَّ الْـمُؤَيَّدُ بِأَنْوَارِ الْمَعْرَفِةِ وَالتَّوْحِيدِ وَالْحِلْمُ يَدُورُ عَلى خَمْسِ أَوْجُهُ: أَنْ يَكُونَ عَزِيزاً فَيَذِلُّ، أَوْ يَكُونَ صَادِقاً فَيُتَّهَمْ، أَوْ يَدْعُوا إِلـى الْحَقِّ فَيَسْتَخَفَّ بِهِ ، أَوْ أَنْ يُؤذَى بِلاَجُرْمٍ، أَوْ أَنْ يُطَالِبَ بِالْحَقِّ فَيُخَالِفُوهُ، فَإِذَا أَتَيْتَ كُلاَّ مِنْهَا حَقَّهُ فَقَدْ أَصَبْتَ. وَ قَابِلَ السَّفِيَةَ بِالإِعْرَاضِ عَنْهُ وَتَرْكِ الْجَوَابِ يَكُنِ النَّاسُ أَنْصَارَكَ، لأَنَّ مَنْ جَاوَبَ السَّفِيَّهَ: فَكَأَنَّهُ قَدْ وَضَعَ عَلى النَّارِ

Forbearance is the torch of Allah and through the light of it, the person is brought closer to His" presence. A person can never become a halim (one with forbearance) except through assistance with the Celestial Illumination of Monotheism and Cognizance (of Allah). Forbearance comes about through the following five conditions: in that instance in which a person has the ability to show greatness however he humbles himself; when he is speaking the truth however he is charged with lying; when he invites others to the Truth however the people ridicule him; the time when others accuse of him sinning while he is innocent; the time when he asks other people for his right, however they oppose him.

If you give all of those (five points mentioned) their right, then you have done the right thing. Respond to the foolish person by paying no attention to him and by not answering him. Thus, by doing so, people will be your supporters, because the person who answers the fool as the like one who has placed himself in the fire".

Summary

The trait of forbearance is the opposite of anger and it is through patience, humility and humbleness that a person is able to gain forbearance.

The traits of humility and humbleness can not be achieved except through realizing the truth of Monotheism and cognizance of the greatness, magnitude and power of Allah, the High. Since the person recognizes Allah (SwT) the all-Powerful as the only cause (of all effects in the Universe) and all-Encompassing and the Sole Assistant and True Ruler over all creations, then naturally he would keep the traits of pride, self-conceit and arrogance far from himself and would seek to show his servitude, humility, humbleness, obedience, lowness, submission, leaving everything up to Allah's will, with complete contentment and patience.

This is what is meant in the noble traditions about the status of knowledge coupled with forbearance - meaning that level and form of knowledge with is coupled with humility and humbleness and which keeps the traits of pride, self-conceit and arrogance far away from a .person

Notes:

[1] Surat al-Qiyamat (75), verse 15

[2] Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 71, pg. 394

[3] al-Kafi, vol. 2, pg. 188

[4] Jami al-Akhbar, pg. 107

[5] al-Ithna al-Ashariyyah, pg. 20

[6] Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 19, pg. 110

[7] al-Kafı, vol. 2, pg. 301