

Fast 24: Qualities for leadership — 4. Leaders to be gentle and lenient

- The Holy Prophet Muhammad is informed by Allah in the Quran:

“Thus it is by Allah’s mercy that **you are gentle to them**. And if you had been rough, hard-hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you. So pardon them and ask (Allah’s) protection for them, and consult them in (important) matters.”
(3:159)

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ ۚ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا
عَلَيْظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ ۚ فَاعْفُ
عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ

This verse was revealed after the battle of Uhud. During this battle some Muslims, in order to chase after war booty, had contravened the Holy Prophet’s strict instructions not to abandon a certain position under any circumstances. Their action proved disastrous for the Muslim army. Yet, after the battle, the Holy Prophet did not even reprimand those who disobeyed his orders. He was always “gentle” to his followers. This was why they were so fiercely loyal to him, and during the same battle they shielded him from the enemy attack with their own bodies.

Also, before this battle, when a consultation was held as to whether Muslims should go out to meet the enemy’s army or stay in Madinah and defend it, the majority gave the opinion that Muslims must march out to fight the enemy. The Holy Prophet accepted this opinion, even though he sided with those who wanted Muslims to remain within Madinah. That decision brought about the entire trouble. But the Holy Prophet is here told by Allah to pardon that majority, ask God’s forgiveness for them, and continue to consult them in future. All these are the principles of good leadership.

- The Quran tells people the following about the Holy Prophet:

“Certainly a Messenger has come to you from among yourselves; very painful for him is your falling into distress, **most concerned (he is) for you**, to the believers **(he is) compassionate, merciful**.” (9:128)

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ
مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ
رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

As Maulana Muhammad Ali comments: This is the true picture of the heart which grieved, not for his followers alone, not for one nation or country, but for all humanity. He grieves for the burdens of all, and he is most concerned for the welfare of all. The whole of humanity is meant here because the concluding words refer

additionally to the believers. There is a special relation he bears to those who follow him; to them he is, in addition, compassionate and merciful.

- The Quran also commands the Holy Prophet as follows about his followers:

“and make yourself **gentle** to the believers.” (15:88)

وَ اخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨٨﴾

“and be **gentle** to the believers who follow you.” (26:215)

وَ اخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢١٥﴾

“Take charity out of their property — you would cleanse them and purify them thereby — **and pray for them. Surely your prayer is a relief to them.** And Allah is Hearing, Knowing.” (9:103)

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ صَلَاتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠٣﴾

- Even when his followers inconvenienced the Holy Prophet, he was reluctant to mention it to them himself directly:

“O you who believe, do not enter the houses of the Prophet unless permission is given to you for a meal, not waiting for its cooking to be finished — but when you are invited, enter, and when you have taken food, disperse — not seeking to listen to talk. **Surely this gives the Prophet trouble, but he forbears from you,** and Allah does not forbear from the truth.” (33:53)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ إِلَى طَعَامٍ غَيْرَ نَبْرِينَ إِنَّهُ وَلَكِنْ إِذَا دُعِيتُمْ فَادْخُلُوا فَإِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوا وَلَا مَسْتَأْنِسِينَ لِحَدِيثٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذَى النَّبِيَّ فَيَسْتَحْيِي مِنْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ ﴿٥٣﴾

- When the Holy Prophet sent two of his Companions to govern over different parts of Yemen, he gave them the following instructions:

“Be gentle (to the people) and be not hard (on them), and make them happy and do not alienate them.” (Bukhari, h. 4341)

يَسِّرًا وَلَا تَعْسِرًا، وَبَشِيرًا وَلَا تَنْفِرًا