

Home > Prophet Muhammad [s] – A Brief Biography > Glimpses of the Prophet's Conduct > A Perfect Family–Man

Glimpses of the Prophet's Conduct

Prophet Muhammad (S) is the finest example of a perfect man in every sense of the term. He was a paragon of virtue and is the best exemplar for the human race. The Almighty distinguished him from all and sundry by instilling in his sublime personality such fine qualities as modesty, truthfulness, kindness, patience, loyalty, honesty, courage, bravery, generosity, magnanimity, wisdom and the like. By studying his lofty character and the amazingly simple life he led with his household, companions, wives and others, we are apt to learn valuable lessons from his conduct and accordingly mould our own lifestyle.

Our society could never be an Islamic one unless we sincerely tread the footsteps of Allah's final Messenger to mankind, heed his sayings, observe his glorious actions and attitudes, and most important of all follow them, as the faithful among his companions did.

In short, Allah the most Glorious enjoins upon us to take the Prophet's behaviour as an example, because he guides us to virtue and righteousness:

“Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the latter day and remembers Allah much.”Holy Qur'an (33:21)

Now, we shall study some aspects of his admirable character:

Contemplation and Wisdom

Prophet Muhammad (S) always used to contemplate the Greatness and Majesty of Allah, the Glorious and the welfare of the human race. He closely followed the affairs of his people and the spreading of the light of Islam. He talked only when necessary and when he did, his speech was devoid of any rhetoric and unnecessary words. It was precise, to the point and full of great meanings.

Punctuality and Daily Schedule

He was punctual, active and energetic, and led an orderly life in the strict sense of the word. His day was

divided into four periods:

1. A time for worship.
2. A time for his household (Ahlul-Bayt) and wives, during which he behaved like any ordinary family-man giving the finest example of social behaviour.
3. A time for rest and contemplation.
4. A time for public affairs such as receiving Muslims, looking into their needs and requirements, answering their questions, teaching them the tenets of Islam and expounding to them the glorious verses of the Holy Qur'an.

Following are some of his wise sayings on the importance of time:

Blessed be my people for their early rising up.

Too much sleep does away with both religion and the world.

O People, you have certain (special) characteristics, so get to (emphasise) them and you have an end, so get to (be prepared for) it..., a servant of Allah should take (make provisions) for himself from his self: from his world (life) for his hereafter, during his youth before his old age, and in life before death. By the One in whose hand is Muhammad's soul, after death there will be no blaming and after this world there is nothing except Paradise or Hell. 1

Modesty and Simplicity

He was the finest embodiment of modesty, and deeply abhorred arrogance and haughtiness. Almost all of his companions in the early days were poor and oppressed people, as he was the champion of the downtrodden and the defender of the deprived masses.

His house was simple and modest, built of clay bricks, palm leaves and trunks. His food was simple like that of the poor, consisting mostly of barley bread. There were occasions when he might skip that meagre meal too. He socialised with his companions as one of them: talking, listening, smiling and displaying a sense of humour. Sometimes he might join in their laughter to cheer their spirits up. He would visit them when they fell sick or accept an invitation for a meal irrespective of whether the person concerned was poor, a slave or any other. In case a companion of his died, he used to participate in the funeral procession, walking alongside the bier.

Owing to his great modesty, he normally preferred riding a mule while moving around, using a saddle made of date-palm fibre. Sometimes he also rode his she-camel. If he was riding and somebody wished to accompany him on foot, he would ask him either to mount behind, and if the man declined out of respect, he would ask him to go ahead and await him at the fixed place, because he did not like the

sight of people following him on foot, while he himself was mounted.

So modest was he that he hated to see people rising to their feet when he entered an assembly. And on entering he used to sit at the nearest vacant spot, so that his companions might not think that he was sporting an air of superiority over them. His magnetic personality drew love and respect from all. He used to sit on the ground, even while eating, and slept on the ground with a simple mat serving as his bed. He greeted even small boys, as well as women. If some man shook hands with him, he would not unclasp his hand till the other did it first.

Once, a Christian chieftain named Adi bin Hatim al-Ta'i, came for an audience with the Prophet of Islam, who happened to be sitting on a cushion. On seeing the visitor he took the cushion from underneath and offered it to his Christian guest, himself preferring to sit on the ground. This admirable display of modesty by the great Prophet so deeply affected Adi bin Hatim al-Ta'i, that the Christian chief immediately embraced Islam.

This is how Prophet Muhammad (S) taught us best of morals and excellent manners. By living a simple and ordinary life and treating everybody alike with courtesy and respect, he was able to spread the light of Islam. His immaculate personality and lofty character, coupled with his honesty and wisdom, attracted multitudes of people towards truth and justice.

Kindness and Generosity

The Messenger's social ties with his companions portrays the most wonderful picture of Islamic brotherhood ever heard of. The following narratives give us a glimpse of his firm ties with the society in which he lived:

Anas bin Malik, who used to frequent the Prophet's assembly, says that whenever the Prophet missed any one of his companions for a period of three days, he used to inquire about that person, would pray for him and if he happened to be ill, would pay him a visit.

Another companion Jarir bin Abdullah, says that once the Prophet entered a house, and soon it was full of people. When Jarir went in, he found no vacant spot and therefore sat outside. The Prophet observing Jarir took a piece of his clothing, rolled it up and threw it, indicating him to spread it underneath him. Jarir says he caught hold of the clothing, put it on his face and kissed it.

The above actions of the Prophet provide us the finest example of a leader unaffected by power and position whereas when we look at the lives of despots and other petty potentates, we see them sporting arrogant airs, trying to humiliate people, and always keeping a distance from the oppressed and the downtrodden.

It will not be out of context here to cite another example from the Prophet's life. Once a man came to the Messenger of Allah but on entering his presence, started trembling with fear. Prophet Muhammad (S)

seeing the visitor terribly shaken and nervous, smiled and comforted him with utmost tenderness, saying: *“Be at ease. I am no king but the son of a Quraishite woman who used to eat dried meat”*

How wonderfully he comforts a frightened Arab nomad, who accustomed to the days of Jahiliyah was scared to death on entering the Prophet's presence. This is one of the many instances which prove that he is the Mercy for the human race and not one of those power–drunk despots who kill and terrorise Allah's creatures.

Such supreme examples of kindness and generosity helped build a strong and coherent society and spread love and affection among the believers. Therefore it is obligatory for Muslims to learn a lesson from these admirable manners and tread the brilliant path blazed by Prophet Muhammad (S). All Muslims should endeavour to acquire these lofty morals; especially those invested with power and authority, so that peace, love and harmony may prevail all around. If it is a real Islamic society, it will naturally be just and free, where everyone can defend their right and even advise those in authority if they happen to err.

Courage and Valour

Prophet Muhammad (S) was second to none in Allah's creation, beginning from Adam till eternity. He was an excellent exemplar of the noblest manners and merits including courage and bravery. His valour was a byword among his contemporaries, for he stood up gallantly against the heaviest odds, endured pain and injuries and victoriously fought, overcame and showed mercy to the stone–hearted infidels of ignorant Arabia. Magnanimity is the finest form of valour and the Prophet excelled in this particular field, forgiving enemies and freeing multitudes from injustice, oppression, servitude and ignorance.

Following are some of the glimpses of his many gallant deeds:

He endured pain and sufferings for thirteen long years in Makkah, inviting people to Islam, without once being over–awed by the sheer force and numbers of arrogant Jahiliyah. And all these single–handedly without any group or supporters except his few weak but devoted followers.

After migrating to Madina he organised an army to defend against the idolaters and he himself led the faithful in many a battle against overwhelming odds, always coming out victorious. The Battles of Badr, Khandaq, Uhud, Khaibar, Hunayn and the conquest of Makkah were some of the epoch–making events.

His faithful and equally brave cousin Imam Ali (a), who was the standard bearer in several decisive battles and who while defending Islam and the Prophet, sent many obstinate bullies of ignorant Arabia to the eternal fire, describes the Messenger's bravery as follows:

“You have beheld me on the day of Badr, all of us took refuge with the Prophet (S), and he was the nearest one to the enemy ranks. He was on that day, the bravest of us all.”

Anas bin Malik, a companion, describes the Prophet as the bravest and the most generous of all men. Anas citing an example says that one night Muslims heard loud noises coming from outside the town. Thinking it to be enemy forces they rushed out to the place from where the noises were coming but to their surprise found the Prophet of Islam at the spot well ahead of them. The incident indicates Prophet Muhammad's (S) valour and courage; how he sallied forth in the dark night alone to trace the source of those strange sounds, without once being scared of the enemy or whatever that lurked around.

A Perfect Family-Man

Prophet Muhammad (S) is the supreme example of a family man. He was a loving husband, an affectionate father and a doting grandfather. As long as the faithful Khadija was alive, he never took another wife. Even later on in life, when he had married several women, he used to cherish the loving memory of the faithful Khadija.

His marriages were not for pleasure, but were a humanitarian means to further the cause of Islam, as is evident from the women he married. In the case of Sawda, Umm Salama and Zainab bint Khuzaima, it was to take care of poor and helpless widows well in their middle-ages, while the marriage to Juwairiyah was to grant her freedom from captivity.

Still others such as those to Umm Habiba, Safiya, A'isha, Hafsa and Maimoona were meant for uniting some prominent Arab tribes, who were often at loggerheads with each other, and also to safeguard the internal political status of the new-found Islamic State. And the marriage to Zainab bint Jahsh was for the sake of enacting a new law, because she was the divorcee of his adopted son Zaid bin Hareth.

As the Holy Qur'an testifies, the Prophet married her in order to put an end to the then prevalent belief that adopted sons were like real sons and that wives or widows of adopted sons were like daughter-in-laws. In short, the philosophy behind his marriages was entirely revolutionary and ushered in positive changes in ignorant Arabia.

He was an affectionate father and his only surviving child, daughter Fatimah (a), was dearer to him than life. His famous Hadith: *"Fatimah is a part of me, and whoever annoys her (in fact) annoys me,"*² stands as a firm testimony to this fact. History is a witness that he used to stand up to greet his daughter. Many prominent and wealthy Arabs had approached him for Fatimah's hand, but he politely refused them, and according to divine commandment married her to his faithful cousin, Ali (a).

Hence Fatimah and Ali were the parents of his two grandsons Hasan and Husayn; through whom the continuity of the Prophet's noble progeny has been ensured. Hasan and Husain were the apple of his eyes and he affectionately doted on them. They used to play with him and accompany him to the mosque. Once when the two grandsons were seated on his shoulders, a companion remarked: *"What an excellent mount."* to which the Prophet retorted: *"What excellent riders too."*³

Thus, Prophet Muhammad's (S) behaviour with his illustrious Ahlul Bayt (household) is a lesson for us. It was not blind love of a doting father or grandfather as some may misinterpret but was something divinely ordained as is clear from several verses of the Holy Qur'an. Therefore, it is obligatory for all Muslims to love and respect his chosen family, and adhere to their radiant path, which is the only way to save the Ummah from pitfalls.

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

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1. Refer to our booklet 'Do not Waste Time', for the importance of time in Islam.
 2. Refer to: Sahih Bukhari: Fadha'il as-Sahaba; vol. 5. Sahih Muslim: Fadha'il as-Sahaba. Sunan Abu Daud: Kitab-an-Nikah.
 3. Refer to Mustadrak as-Sahihayn, Dhakha'ir al-Uqba etc.

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