

Flexibility

There is a distinct difference between being flexible and being a weathercock. A flatterer and weathercock type man has no aim in life. He does not follow any true principle. He puts on different masks on his face and appears before others on the stage of life. He destroys all principles for his personal benefits and to satisfy his passions.

But a flexible person behaves mildly unless there is a danger to his principles or aims. He makes agreements even with his enemies when essential. He lets go many of his personal advantages in order to safeguard his principles and if need be, gives preference to the wishes of others ignoring his own liking.

The changing circumstances of the world are mostly like the storms, which uproot many. A windstorm starts and attacks trees. Green trees show some flexibility and allow the storm to pass overhead and soon thereafter become upright after bowing for a while. But dry and hard trees try to remain standing in the face of stormy winds. The hardness and stiffness does not allow them to be flexible and consequently they are uprooted.

The head of a state who is in charge of all affairs, the managing director of an organization who has to deal with hundreds of people, a trader or businessman who faces all kinds of consumers and buyers are such people that if they sacrifice their principles for gaining passing and temporary benefits, they are weathercocks.

But the same people, if they show a little flexibility, become somewhat soft and give some positive response to the demands of relevant people, and win over their hearts by suffering a little material loss then, we can consider them as people having a desirable flexibility.

In this connection, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) says, “In the face of the storms of events the position of a believer is like a flexible plant. When a stormy wind hits, it shows softness and does not remain stiffly erect. But an unbeliever is like a hard dry tree, which does not bend and consequently gets uprooted.

If these people are harsh in ordinary matters in dealing with different types of people it can harm their

reputation. Such harshness creates hatred in the hearts of the masses and, therefore, such people cannot attain high status nor can they perform commendable deeds. Only one with some flexibility in temper can become popular in society.

If you see the Treaty of Hudaibiyah you will be surprised to observe the flexibility shown by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). The treaty he signed in the 8th year of the Hijri Era with the idolaters of Quresh was even criticized by some ignorant and unwise persons, but with the passage of time it was proved that flexibility was necessary for future success.

The biggest hurdle in the advance of Islam was the idolaters of Quresh. They had, through their continuous attacks taken away the freedom of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Had there not been this hindrance, the Holy Prophet's call was so effective and impressive that, by dispatching a few preachers and by propagating and spreading the message of the holy Quran, he could have brought the entire Arab Peninsula under the banner of Monotheism. However the idol-worshippers had deprived the Holy Prophet of this chance by direct and indirect attacks on him.

The high aim and noble intention of the Holy Prophet was to get secure freedom for propagating Islam. With this aim in view he signed the peace treaty with the Quresh and showed a high and uncommon measure of flexibility.

In order to explain our point we mention hereunder some points:

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had entrusted the writing of the treaty to Ali (a.s.) who wrote on the first page: "Bismillahirrahmaanirraheem" (In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful), but at once the delegate of the Quresh said, "We do not know the words Rahman and Rahim. According to Arabian customs, you should write 'Bismika Allahumma. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) accepted this proposition. Then Ali wrote, "This is an agreement, which has been entered into, by God's Messenger Muhammad with the representative of the Quresh." Immediately the Quresh said, "We do not recognize Muhammad as the messenger of God. Had we recognized him as the prophet of God, we would not have fought him." The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) asked Ali to erase the words "Messenger of God".

One of the conditions of this agreement was that if any polytheist flees Mecca and reaches the Islamic capital of Medina, it would be the responsibility of the Islamic state to return that man to the authorities of Quresh. But if any Muslim runs away from Medina and takes shelter in Mecca the Quresh will not be responsible for returning him to the Muslims.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) accepted this condition too so that he and his followers may get some relief from the Quresh, and a path may be opened for propagation of Islam. The advantages he obtained in connection with the propagation of Islam were more important than the allowances he gave to Quresh.

One of the defects of our way of working is that when we calculate our profit and loss, we forget to maintain a balance. If we cut off relations with some people, we do so forever continuously and never think that the relations can be restored under some special conditions. In other words we consider

flexibility as a sign of defeat and disgrace. But both wisdom and Shariat say that it is a principle of success to show flexibility to an extent, which does not harm our original aim.

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