

SUMMER IMMERSION

PROPHETIC LEADERSHIP



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SESSION 1

Introduction

- In various narrations, the Prophet (ﷺ) identified the widespread emergence of corrupt leaders as a sign of the Day of Judgment.
 - Narrated Abu Hurairah:

بَيْنَمَا النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي مَجْلِسٍ يُحَدِّثُ الْقَوْمَ جَاءَهُ أَعْرَابِيٌّ فَقَالَ مَتَى السَّاعَةُ فَمَضَى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يُحَدِّثُ، فَقَالَ بَعْضُ الْقَوْمِ سَمِعَ مَا قَالَ، فَكَّرَهُ مَا قَالَ، وَقَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَلْ لَمْ يَسْمَعْ، حَتَّى إِذَا قَضَى حَدِيثَهُ قَالَ "أَيْنَ - أَرَاهُ - السَّائِلُ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ". قَالَ هَا أَنَا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. قَالَ "فَإِذَا ضَيَّعَتِ الْأَمَانَةُ فَانْتَظِرِ السَّاعَةَ". قَالَ كَيْفَ إِصَاعَتُهَا قَالَ "إِذَا وَسَدَ الْأَمْرُ إِلَى غَيْرِ أَهْلِهِ فَانْتَظِرِ السَّاعَةَ".

While the Prophet (ﷺ) was saying something in a gathering, a Bedouin came and asked him, "When would the Hour (Doomsday) take place?" Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) continued his talk, so some people said that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) had heard the question, but did not like what that Bedouin had asked. Some of them said that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) had not heard it. When the Prophet (ﷺ) finished his speech, he said, "Where is the questioner, who inquired about the Hour (Doomsday)?" The Bedouin said, "I am here, O Allah's Apostle." Then the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "When honesty is lost, then wait for the Hour (Doomsday)." The Bedouin said, "How will that be lost?" The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "When the power or authority comes in the hands of unfit persons, then wait for the Hour (Doomsday)." (Sahih al-Bukhari)

- Everyone steps into a leadership role at some point. The Prophet (ﷺ) remains our greatest role model because he perfectly exemplifies how to lead others.

- To be a great leader, one must first be a good follower. The Sahabah were exemplary followers, guided by the Prophet's noble stewardship.
- The difference between authority and leadership:
 - Authority comes from position. It could be given and it often relies on power.
 - Leadership comes from influence. It must be earned and it often relies on trust.
- Forced leadership relies on authority, but true leadership is built on earned respect and voluntary acceptance.
- The Islamic perspective on obeying authority and following leadership:
 - One must listen to and obey their leader, regardless of their background.
 - Narrated Anas bin Malik: Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said,

"اسْمَعُوا وَأَطِيعُوا وَإِنِ اسْتُعْمِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَبْدٌ حَبَشِيٌّ كَانَ رَأْسُهُ زَبِيبَةً."

"You should listen to and obey, your ruler even if he was an Ethiopian (black) slave whose head looks like a raisin." (Sahih al-Bukhari)
 - If a leader commands a person to do something that is a sin or goes against the laws of Allah, that specific command must not be obeyed.
 - Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri reported: The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

"أَفْضَلُ الْجِهَادِ كَلِمَةُ عَدْلٍ عِنْدَ سُلْطَانٍ جَائِرٍ"

"The best type of Jihad (striving in the way of Allah) is speaking a true word in the presence of a tyrant ruler." (Jami` at-Tirmidhi)
- Adapting to changes in leadership:
 - After the Prophet's passing, the Sahabah navigated different leadership eras. This was prophesied by the Prophet (ﷺ).

- Sa'eed bin Jumhan narrated: "Safinah narrated to me, he said: 'The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

"الْخِلَافَةُ فِي أُمَّتِي ثَلَاثُونَ سَنَةً ثُمَّ مُلْكٌ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ "

"Al-Khilafah will be in my Ummah for thirty years, then there will be monarchy after that." (Jami` at-Tirmidhi)

- The early Rightly Guided Caliphs strove to maintain the prophetic path.
- Later leaderships, like the Umayyad Caliphate, introduced dynastic politics and governance shifts, which brought significant political disagreements and corruption concerns among certain factions.
- Effective leadership relies on checks and balances:
 - When Umar ibn al-Khattab became the second Caliph, he was celebrated for his humility and dedication to justice.
 - In one address, he declared, "If I deviate from the right path, correct me, so that we are not led astray." A man stood up and replied, "We will straighten you, just as we line up an arrow to hit its target."
- Leadership is a sacred trust (amanah):
 - It is not a privilege, a tool for self-promotion, or a status symbol but rather a duty of service and responsibility dedicated to guiding others toward righteousness.
 - It is a well-established principle in the Sunnah that positions of authority should not be sought out. The Prophet (ﷺ) discouraged assigning leadership to those who aggressively ask for it.

- It has been reported on the authority of 'Abd al-Rahman b. Samura who said: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said to me:

" يَا عَبْدَ الرَّحْمَنِ لَا تَسْأَلِ الْإِمَارَةَ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ أُعْطِيتَهَا عَنْ مَسْأَلَةٍ أُكِلَتْ إِلَيْهَا وَإِنْ أُعْطِيتَهَا عَنْ غَيْرِ مَسْأَلَةٍ أُعِنْتَ عَلَيْهَا " .

'Abd al-Rahman, do not ask for a position of authority, for if you are granted this position as a result of your asking for it, you will be left alone (without God's help to discharge the responsibilities attendant thereon), and if you are granted it without making any request for it, you will be helped (by God in the discharge of your duties). (Sahih Muslim)

- While Islam does not promote asking for leadership, it encourages stepping up to accept the responsibilities of becoming a leader.
- True leadership is never about chasing the position; it is defined by a willingness to serve. While a true leader serves the needs of the community and enables others to thrive.
- Seeking a position of authority is not a sin. Prophet Yusuf (AS) did this when he asked to manage the storehouses. In fact, when a society lacks capable individuals who fear Allah, qualifying individuals who refuse to lead may be deemed sinful for failing to fulfill a collective obligation.
- While Islam places value on humility, it does not condone neglecting one's responsibilities. Thus, every believer is expected to actively engage in the service of others and be prepared to take on responsibilities.
 - It has been narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Umar that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

لَ " أَلَا كُلكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ فَالْأَمِيرُ الَّذِي عَلَى النَّاسِ رَاعٍ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْهُمْ وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ عَلَى بَيْتِ بَعْلِهَا وَوَلَدِهِ وَهِيَ مَسْئُولَةٌ عَنْهُمْ وَالْعَبْدُ رَاعٍ عَلَى مَالِ سَيِّدِهِ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْهُ أَلَا فَكُلكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ " .

Beware. every one of you is a shepherd and every one is answerable with regard to his flock. The Caliph is a shepherd over the people and shall be questioned about his subjects (as to how he conducted their affairs). A man is a guardian over the members of his family and shall be questioned about them (as to how he looked after their physical and moral well-being). A woman is a guardian over the household of her husband and his children and shall be questioned about them (as to how she managed the household and brought up the children). A slave is a guardian over the property of his master and shall be questioned about it (as to how he safeguarded his trust). Beware, every one of you is a guardian and every one of you shall be questioned with regard to his trust. (Sahih Muslim)

- Leadership qualities exemplified by the Prophet (ﷺ):
 - Prioritizing the service of the ummah:
 - He signified true service in his leadership. He lived a simple life and actively participated in physical labor alongside his community, whether it was bricklaying during the construction of the first mosque in Madinah or digging the trench before the Battle of Khandaq.
 - Focusing on an akhirah-centered vision:
 - He was not only an exceptionally competent leader, but he also championed a worldview rooted in the akhirah (the Hereafter). He embodied a highly effective blend of worldly competence and akhirah-centric vision. Integrating these two mindsets is essential for modern leadership.
 - Placing taqwa and trust above all matters:
 - He sometimes appointed trusted and capable individuals to leadership positions despite them being recent converts to Islam, like Amr ibn al-As and Khalid ibn al-Walid. He prioritized their taqwa (God-consciousness) and competence over their seniority in the faith.
- The importance of just leadership:
 - A just ruler (Al-Imam Al-`Adil) is the first of the seven categories of people promised the shade of Allah's Throne on the Day of Judgment.

- This is because a just ruler creates an environment where goodness thrives. By establishing fairness, the ruler facilitates the other six categories of people (worshipping youth, mosque attendees, righteous friends, the chaste, secret givers, and the tearful rememberers) to practice their faith safely and openly without oppression.
 - Abu Hurairah reported: Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said,

سبعة يظلهم الله في ظله يوم لا ظل إلا ظله: إمام عادل، وشاب نشأ في عبادة الله، ورجل قلبه معلق في المساجد، ورجلان تحابا في الله، اجتمعا عليه، وتفرقا عليه، ورجل دعته امرأة ذات منصب وجمال، فقال: إني أخاف الله، ورجل تصدق بصدقة فأخفاها حتى لا تعلم شماله ما تنفق يمينه، ورجل ذكر الله خالياً ففاضت عيناه

"Seven people Allah will give them His Shade on the Day when there would be no shade but the Shade of His Throne (i.e., on the Day of Resurrection): And they are: a just ruler; a youth who grew up with the worship of Allah; a person whose heart is attached to the mosques, two men who love and meet each other and depart from each other for the sake of Allah; a man whom an extremely beautiful woman seduces (for illicit relation), but he (rejects this offer and) says: 'I fear Allah'; a man who gives in charity and conceals it (to such an extent) that the left hand does not know what the right has given; and a man who remembers Allah in solitude and his eyes become tearful". (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) as The Ultimate Leader

- Allah said:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا
There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.
 (33:21)

- In just 23 years, the Prophet's leadership transformed a persecuted, isolated group of followers in Makkah into a unified community in Makkah, Madinah and Hijaz.

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- Through strategic governance and social reform, the Prophet (ﷺ) united historically fragmented tribes and built a civilization-changing movement that reshaped history.
- The unprecedented scale and lasting impact of the Prophet's leadership have been explored and documented by researchers and historians alike.
 - Michael H. Hart, the author of 'The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History', published in 1978, explicitly placed the Prophet (ﷺ) at number one. He notes that he was supremely successful as both a religious and a political leader.
- The Prophet (ﷺ) practiced exemplary leadership by ensuring his own family acted upon Allah's commands before anyone else.
 - This was illustrated when he permitted Uthman ibn Affan and his daughter Ruqayyah to migrate to Abyssinia, declaring them the first household to migrate for Allah after Lut (AS). He subsequently sent his cousin, Ja'far ibn Abi Talib.
- The Prophet (ﷺ) was a divine leader. He is the ultimate spiritual, political, and social leader, divinely inspired to guide humanity.
 - The Conquest of Makkah was a masterclass in strategic leadership. While Muslims had divine assistance (i.e. the angels), the Prophet (ﷺ) executed a brilliant, multi-faceted campaign.
 - Over several years, he systematically disrupted Makkan trade networks by cutting off their economic dominance, forging political alliances, and securing key diplomatic treaties.