



# 40 Hadiths on Social Justice

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**Lecture Notes**

## Chapter 40: Gradualism and Priorities

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

'Abdullâh b. Mas'ood (rA) narrates: The Prophet (saws) said: "There is no Prophet whom Allah sent to any nation before me, but he had disciples and companions from among his nation who followed his path and obeyed his commands. Then after them came generations who said what they did not do and did what they were not commanded to do. Whoever strives against them with his hand is a believer; whoever strives against them with his tongue is a believer; whoever strives against them with his heart is a believer. Beyond that there is not even a mustard-seed's worth of faith."

[Sahih Muslim]

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ مَسْعُودٍ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: مَا مِنْ نَبِيٍّ بَعَثَهُ اللَّهُ فِي أُمَّةٍ قَبْلِي إِلَّا كَانَ لَهُ مِنْ أُمَّتِهِ حَوَارِيُّونَ وَأَصْحَابٌ يَأْخُذُونَ بِسُنَّتِهِ وَيَقْتَدُونَ بِأَمْرِهِ ثُمَّ إِنَّهَا تَخْلُفُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خُلُوفٌ يَقُولُونَ مَا لَا يَفْعَلُونَ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا لَا يُؤْمَرُونَ فَمَنْ جَاهَدَهُمْ بِيَدِهِ فَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ وَمَنْ جَاهَدَهُمْ بِلِسَانِهِ فَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ وَمَنْ جَاهَدَهُمْ بِقَلْبِهِ فَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ وَلَيْسَ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ مِنَ الْإِيمَانِ حَبَّةٌ خَرْدَلٍ

[صحيح مسلم]

### Introduction

- Last week we discussed the presence of justice being an essential requirement for peace. Today we will discuss at what point you disrupt justice for the sake of peace. How do you enact meaningful change and at what pace. What are our priorities in enacting change.
- By radical we do not mean violent. We mean rapid and transformative change.
- There is a difference between a goal and a process. Someone can act towards a 'radical agenda' but with meaningful steps toward that change.
  - Sometimes people view incremental reform as being escapist, passive, and a coward.
- Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri (rA) narrates: The Prophet (saws) said: "Whoever of you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand If he cannot, then with his tongue. If he cannot, then with his heart – and that would be the weakest of faith."

- Source: Sahih Muslim
- مَنْ رَأَى مِنْكُمْ مُنْكَرًا فَلْيُغَيِّرْهُ بِيَدِهِ ، فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَبِلِسَانِهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَبِقَلْبِهِ وَذَلِكَ أَضْعَفُ الْإِيمَانِ
- The prophet (saw) directly connected faith to how we respond to evil.
- Just because something seems overwhelming doesn't mean you don't do what is in your capacity.
- Each prophet is sent to correct the deviations of the people before him. They all came to establish a singular message.
- 124,000 prophets were sent. The essentials of their message and monotheism they preached was always the same. They had the same standards of morality, spirituality, etc. The differences were in smaller details of legislation and jurisprudence.
- For example, they all had fasting and its goal/theme was the same. However, the method varied from nation to nation.
- Why didn't Allah (swt) just send one prophet? If the prophets are so great then how did people keep going astray after they came?
  - Gradualism is a Sunnah of Allah. See below.
- The prophet (saw) was undoing the evil done by those who failed to stick to the principles of the prophets before him.
- The prophet said that he is like the last brick in a house.

#### Gradualism is a Sunnah of Allah.

- Allah (swt) could have created everything in an instant, but wished to establish the graduation of events as a tradition in His universe. Allah (swt) could have made conception and birth instantaneous, but wished for humans to understand the wisdom by which their lives must be governed. Allah (swt) could have sent the angels to eradicate the Prophet (saws)'s opponents before they resisted, but He wished his example to be human and replicable, with all that entails of prudence and perseverance.

#### Gradualism with the Personal Ibadat:

- Abu Hurayra (rA) narrates: The Prophet ﷺ said: "This religion is one of ease, and none will overburden himself with the religion except that it overwhelms him. So seek a middle path, and draw near the target [as best you can], and be hopeful [of Allah]. And seek help [in being consistent] through the morning hours, afternoon, and part of the late night."
- Source: al-Bukhari; Kitâb al-Eemân 39
- عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: «إِنَّ الدِّينَ يُسْرٌ، وَلَنْ يُشَادَّ الدِّينَ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا غَلَبَهُ، فَسَدِّدُوا وَقَارِبُوا، وَأَبْشِرُوا، وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالْغَدْوَةِ وَالرُّوحَةِ وَشَيْءٍ مِنَ الدُّلْجَةِ
- If you approach the religion wrong then it will be hard. You will get burned out.
- Part of overburdening yourself with Islam is undertaking what is not currently sustainable
- The Prophet (saws) said, "Undertake of actions what you can bear for Allah does not give up [rewarding you] until you give up [seeking it]."
- Source: Sunan Abu Dawud
- عن عائشة رضي الله عنها أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال اكفوا من العمل ما تطيقون فإن الله لا يمل حتى تملوا وإن أحب العمل إلى الله أدومه وإن قل وكان إذا عمل عملا أثبته

### Gradualism with Teaching the Religion

- Ali (ra): Do not give them things they are not ready for, do you want them to disbelieve in Allah?
- Ibn Taymiya says, "If the person being commanded or prohibited is currently incapable, whether due to his ignorance or his negligence, and removing that ignorance or negligence isn't possible, perhaps it would be better to abstain from commanding or prohibiting him. As some have said, silence is the best response to some issues, just as the Law-Giver (Allah) initially kept silent regarding certain commands and prohibitions until Islam grew and became dominant. Likewise, the scholar can defer the conveyance and explanation of certain matters until he is able, just as Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) deferred revealing some verses and explaining some

rulings until the Messenger of Allah ﷺ became empowered, in order to ensure its adequate understanding....

- The prophets were gradual in how they presented their message. Musa (as) didn't split the sea as soon as he presented the message. Rather, he started with words of gentleness to Firawn so that he might comprehend, just as Allah (swt) commanded him.
- It's known that the Messenger ﷺ would only convey what could be comprehended and practiced, and thus the Sharia didn't come all at once because, as the saying goes, 'If you wish to be obeyed, only instruct with that which is feasible.'
- Saying: a believer is guided by the light and an extremist is blinded by the light.
- When someone first becomes Muslim, there is gradualism for them. That's why the Prophet (s) allowed temporary concessions for certain tribes (in Salah for example).

### Political Gradualism

- When the treaty of Hudaibiya was being written, the Makkans demanded that the words "the messenger of Allah" be erased from the contract. Ali (ra) refused but the prophet (saw) insisted that it be erased for the sake of the treaty.
- When the Prophet (saw) saw war would break out at Hudaibiya, he accepted the unfair terms of the treaty which involved Abu Jandal being setback with his persecutors, in order to bring about the justice of Islam in the long run. Umar (ra) vehemently objected, saying we should not compromise since we are upon truth and they upon falsehood, and since our martyrs are in Paradise and their dead are in the fire. However, in grander scheme of things: Muslims were 3K after 18 years of da'wah, and tripled to 10K in <2 years by accepting "setback" terms. Thus, Allah (st) called it Fath al-Mubina.
- Wisdom of how the prophet (saw) dealt with the hypocrite Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Saloul. The prophet (saw) never held him accountable because of the Fitnah it would create. The prophet (saw) abstained for a greater community goal. Later the prophet (saw) said to Umar (ra): "O 'Umar, now the very same people that would have rose up

against us for killing him ('Abdullah b. Ubayy) would now willingly do it themselves." Meaning that they now realized the evils he did.

- Khabbab (ra) was frustrated with the torture he faced in Makkah and asked the prophet (saw) if he was going to do something about it. The prophet (saw) said that you are being hasty and there were people tested before you.
- Evil does not justify evil. Evil is not changed by evil. Rather evil is compounded and perpetuated by evil.
  - If you sacrifice your principles as a result of an impulse and partake in evil saying that the end justifies the means then you are becoming a product of what you despise.
  - Cannot use trust in god to shut down legitimate means of change. The prophets didn't just pray, they did more than that. They also didn't lose hope.

### Rebellion and Revolution

- You have to look at the greater benefits and greater harms.
- If you don't do your calculations right then you will do more harm than good, even if you have legitimate grievances and even if you don't cross any lines.
  - If you take on something you are unprepared for then you may do more harm than good.

### Wisdom of Omar Ibn AbdulAzeez vs. Passion of Abdulmalik Ibn Omar

- Umar ibn AbdulAzeez was a true reformer. He removed a lot of injustice and corruption. Two years after he was made caliphate he was poisoned and killed.
  - When 'Umar b. 'Abdil'Aziz received the caliphate, his pious son 'AbdulMalik would press him to accelerate the decisions of reform. He would say, "My father, why are you not executing matters? You are delaying things that I imagined you would have completed on the day of your inauguration before nightfall. By Allah, I wish you would do this, even if that meant that you and I would boil for it in the kettles."

- His father, 'Umar b. 'Abdil'Aziz, would say, "My son, alongside the great share Allah has portioned to you (i.e., righteousness), you still carry some of the qualities of the young. My son, do not be hasty, for Allah had dispraised wine twice in the Quran, then prohibited it on the third occasion. I fear committing them to the truth (justice) altogether, lest they reject it altogether. I cannot present them with any part of the religion except while offering some worldly benefit alongside it, in order to soften their hearts - out of fear that they would erupt against me in a way I cannot repel. Does it not please you that not a day passes by your father, except that he revives a Sunnah and destroys a bid'ah during it?"

- Lessons:

- The boldness and haste and fearlessness of young age are sometimes the greatest sabotagers of reform.
- Due to 'Umar not demanding change overnight, he - relatively - did change the world overnight! His entire caliphate was 2.5 years, and in them he reinstated the pure justice which was hallmark of this Ummah in its earliest years.
- Umar ibn Abdul Aziz was not radical enough for his son but was too radical for the others which is why he was poisoned anyway. The verdict of what type of change you are making will always be subjective.
- Never forget the gradualism in the prohibition of alcohol. Why? Because reforming a society is not like reforming an individual. Even with individuals, they vary, and so when some will not reform from a vice at once, we will accept baby steps in the light of repelling the greater evil with a lesser evil.
- 'Umar b. 'Abdil'Aziz did ruffle feathers, just as the Prophet's (saws) morality discomfited and in fact revolutionary, and that is fine and expected. The idea here is to not trigger a reaction you cannot currently handle. For instance, the Prophet (saws) spoke up against idolatry, female infanticide, and tribalism which had serious backlash. However, he did not allow his Companions to take up arms in self-defense just yet, nor did he allow them to curse the idol-gods - though he would later take up arms in defense of justice, and tear down those idols with his own hands at Fath Mecca.

## Conclusion

- Final Lesson: The standard should always be maintained and not ambiguous even as we take baby steps to the truth. People must always know what the truth is.
  - This is an important lesson for people that have a set of principles that they are bound by because they believe them to be divine.
  - We cannot be ambiguous about our principles but we can prioritize and be wise about how we carry out agendas to enact meaningful change. But the truth can never be ambiguous.
  - Even before the prophet (saw) was 40 years old, everyone knew that he didn't believe in idols. They just weren't threatened by it until he started preaching.
- For a holistic agenda of reform, hearts also need to be reformed. Moral rectification and justice go hand and hand.
  - People could trust the prophet (saw) regarding what was bad for this hereafter because he would also seek to protect them from what was bad in this life.
- Imam Al Ghazali wrote Ihya Ulum ad-Deen (monumental work on spirituality) during the crusades and attacks from the Mongols. The show went on. Quran was taught, while oppression was fought. It all works together
- Some people do not participate in any reform but when they see someone working towards a certain aspect of reform they criticize them for leaving out other aspects and try to paralyze the reform.
  - This is the same attitude that the hypocrites had at the time of the prophet (saw).
  - Not one individual is tasked with everything at one time.
- We specialize. We don't undermine and tear down each other.
  - Ayah: **وأمرهم شورى بينهم**.
  - Some people work on speaking to legitimate grievances that people have.
  - Other people deconstruct the illegitimate agendas that take advantage of those legitimate grievances.

- Gradualism cannot be an excuse for inaction, and foolishness often masquerades as courage