

Surah Al-Hujuraat

Para-26



It is the desire of every person to be successful in this world. And we have to admit that success is not an accidental thing which might happen just by chance. We need to have some basic qualities in order to be successful at any job, in any field. There have been many books written on the subject of personal development and success, but our knowledge is incomplete and Allah is the one who knows everything. So in order to discover the complete truth, we should turn to Him and see what guideline He has given us in the Quran, which we should follow, to become better individuals as well as to create an environment of mutual trust and brotherhood in the society. Surah Al-Hujuraat is all about character building. On one hand it teaches us manners worthy of true believers, and on the other hand it points out some of our harmful habits, which we take so lightly, without realizing what harm we are doing to our faith and our lives.

But before we go into the detail of our manners towards people, we must know how to behave towards Allah and His Messenger (s.a.w), because that is the foundation of our faith:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُقَدِّمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ {1}

O believers! Do not put yourselves ahead of Allah and His Rasool. Fear Allah; surely Allah hears all and knows all.

It is a clear warning for all of us, who claim to have belief in Allah and the Prophet (s.a.w), that we should never put our own ideas, our theories and our own intellect ahead of Allah's commands or the teachings of His Messenger (s.a.w). We should fear Allah and remember that this intellect of ours is also His own gift and He gave it to us so that we should use it to understand His words and His absolute authority over us. Not that we become arrogant and come up with self created theories so that we can distort the laws of Allah.

Sometimes it happens that we do have faith in Allah and in His commands, but our outward manners are not respectful. This is also wrong and so Allah is warning us here:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ
بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ أَن تَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ {2}

O believers! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak aloud when talking to him as you speak aloud to one another, lest your deeds should come to nothing while you do not even perceive it.

The companions of the Prophet (s.a.w) were being taught the proper manners that they should not even raise the volume of their voices in front of the Prophet (s.a.w) and the same rule applies to us when we hold a class of Hadith, in which we should be most respectful in the way we talk. Sometimes we see people engaged in hot arguments about a Hadith, or say that Hadith is just confusion or things like that.....how terrible it is that shaitan keeps us deceiving that such and such thing is so trivial and not a sin, but see how disrespect can cause someone to lose all his good deeds. So we have to be very careful.

The Bedouins living around Madinah, who were mostly illiterate, had embraced Islam but they did not realize that they had to learn and

mould themselves according to the etiquettes of true believers. So most of them remained in their places and did not seek to come to Madinah to learn from the Prophet (s.a.w) and His companions. On some occasions, however when they had to come to Madinah, they did not know any manners to talk to the Prophet and so they used to shout outside his door to come out to them and attend to their needs:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُنَادُونَكَ مِنَ وَرَاءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ {4}

Those who call out to you, O Muhammad, from outside the private apartments, most of them lack common sense.

This is a common attitude even today that people do not realize that the religious scholars are to be respected and given time and privacy to do the work which is beneficial to the whole community. Everyone wants them to be their private counsellors, whom they can call at any time of the day, or even night.....and they should attend to their call immediately.....It is all done due to ignorance but we should learn to be respectful if we are really Muslims.

Now another important thing is being highlighted in the next Ayat that mostly these illiterate Bedouins would come with their personal disputes and give exaggerated accounts of the injustices done by others. So the Muslims of all times are being cautioned that if someone comes with such complaints then they should not be hasty in decisions but should look at the other side of the picture too, before taking any action.....otherwise they might regret it later when they find out the complete truth:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصِبْحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ {6}

O believers, if an evildoer comes to you with some news, verify it (*investigate to ascertain the truth*), lest you should harm others unwittingly and then regret what you have done.

Everybody wants that his opinion should be given preference and so the Muslims in Madinah would insist that the Prophet (s.a.w) should follow their advice, which at times would have been disadvantageous to them if it had been followed. So it is a lesson for us too that when we read a Hadith and we don't understand its benefit then we should believe that the Messenger of Allah always taught us what was beneficial for us and our own intellect can be wrong or misguided but the Prophet (s.a.w) spoke from divine inspiration and wisdom. Therefore, instead of finding fault, we should be grateful for the favours of Allah on us:

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ فِيكُمْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَوْ يُطِيعُكُمْ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ لَعَنِتُّمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الرَّاشِدُونَ {7}

And know that Allah's Rasool is among you. If he were to follow you in most affairs, you would certainly be in trouble. Allah has endeared this faith to you and beautified it in your hearts, making unbelief, wrongdoing, and disobedience abhorrent to you. It is they who are rightly guided

Really if we think about it, isn't it the greatest favour on us that Allah has made the faith dear to us and has made it so beautiful in our hearts.....otherwise if something has to be done without love then what an awful burden it becomes, which has to be carried anyway. And the other great blessing Allah has bestowed upon us is that he put hatred in our hearts for disbelief, transgression and disobedience; otherwise how could we stop ourselves from these evils? So if, by the grace of Allah, we are on the straight path, then we should be thanking Allah day and night, and not be arrogant:

فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَنِعْمَةً وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ {8}

(it is) through Allah's grace and blessing. Allah is Knowledgeable, Wise.

Islam is a religion of brotherhood and unity. Muslims as a nation have a great responsibility from Allah that they have to spread the message of Allah to the whole world. This cannot be achieved if they keep fighting each other over every little disagreement. So the Muslims are being taught here, that if any two groups among the muslims start fighting then the rest of them should neither be indifferent to it nor just turn on the TV and watch the news for how many got killed today, but should play an active role in making peace between them:

وَإِن طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِن بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَى فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّى تَفِيءَ إِلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ فَإِن فَاءَتْ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسَطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ {9}

If two parties among the believers fall into mutual fighting, make peace between them. Then if one of them transgresses against the other, fight the one who has transgressed until he returns to the commands of Allah. Then, if he returns, make peace between them with justice and be fair; for Allah loves those who are fair and just.

But notice here that Allah is warning us not to exceed our roles of peacekeepers and start any favouritism or unfair use of resources. Because the real motive is not to win any war or get any favours but to be the agents of peace and unity among Muslims. Why is it so important? Allah says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ {10}

The believers are brothers to one another, therefore, make reconciliation between your brothers and fear Allah, so that you may be shown mercy.

We take these words lightly because for most of us, we have been hearing them since childhood, but seldom seen in practise. So unconsciously we think that these are mere quotations to be used in essays and speeches. But now we read the same things in the Quran and know that it is Allah Himself who is opening our eyes to the fact that we Muslims are all like brothers, like one big family.....irrespective of our status, or origin. The best demonstration of this brotherhood is on Hajj where Muslims from all over the world gather together as one people and bow down to one Allah. But for peace to prevail among these brothers it is important that every individual takes it as his own responsibility to strengthen the relationships between Muslims. This deed is better in reward than even prayers and fasting and charity:

A companion of the Messenger (s.a.w), Abu Dardaa (r.a) narrated that Allah's Messenger (s.a.w) said, "Shall I inform you of that which is better than fasting, praying and charity?"

They said, "Why not, O Messenger of Allah!"

He said, "To reconcile between yourselves (otherwise) the mischief between yourselves is something that shaves (eliminates religion)"

So ask yourself: do I really think of other Muslims like my brothers. Would I treat my own brother, like I treat others?

Next Allah highlights for us the basic evils which sour our relationships. These are some highly destructive habits which we have developed over time due to our ignorance and indifference to the importance of character building and nurturing mutual relationships. The first one is to humiliate people and making fun of them. So Allah is addressing all those who believe:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا
نِسَاءٌ مِّنْ نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا
بِالْألقَابِ بِئْسَ الإِسْمُ الفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الإِيمَانِ وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ
الظَّالِمُونَ {11}

O believers! Let no men laugh at other men who may perhaps be better than themselves; and let no woman laugh at another woman, who may perhaps be better than herself. Do not defame *through sarcastic remarks about one another*, nor call one another by *offensive nicknames*. It is an evil thing to be called by a bad name after being a believer, and those who do not repent are the ones who are the wrongdoers

The root cause for this behaviour is pride in one's own self. If we constantly look down on people and think them to be inferior to us then we will express that arrogance in our comments. But before we start humiliating anybody, in our thoughts or openly, we should think that maybe that person is much more superior in Allah's eyes than us. It is considered to be just a harmless way to have fun, to mock others and to call them names but notice that Allah calls it a sin for which we can only be forgiven if we do Taubah..... sincere repentance.

Then there is this other disease of being suspicious of everybody. How can we love our brothers if we have this negative feeling of mistrust? It will definitely lead you to being curious about others lives and activities, and finally talking against them to whoever is willing to listen. That is why the next Ayat deals with all three of these interlinked evils:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا
وَلَا يَغْتَبِ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا
فَكَرَهُتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ {12}

O believers! Avoid immoderate suspicion, for in some cases suspicion is a sin. Do not spy on one another, nor backbite one another (to say something about another behind ones back that if one hears it, dislikes it). Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Surely you would abhor it. Fear Allah; for Allah is the Acceptor of repentance, Merciful

We all know that it is Haram to eat pork and we will not touch it, but is the flesh of our own dead brother Halal? Aren't we constantly eating it in our daily conversation? Just like a disease has to be eradicated from its root, similarly we have to begin with opening up our minds to the fact that we are all equal in the sight of Allah. Being born into a rich family, or an educated family, or being an Arab or Indian, or whatever nationality, or the language we speak or the colour of our skin.....these are all things which we didn't choose for ourselves...it was just Allah's plan:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ
لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ {13}

O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you might get to know one another. Surely the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most righteous. Allah is All-Knowledgeable, All-Aware.

If we want honour then we should fear Allah and develop a strong bond with Him because that's the thing which is most valued by Allah. Most of us know these principles but then why don't we act accordingly? Why do we respect wealth and status more than Allah consciousness? The problem is that mostly we see everything from a worldly perspective and take our faith for granted. For a majority of

us so called Muslims, our faith is nothing except for a few words that we have uttered or a set of beliefs which we have inherited from our ancestors, or a few rituals that we might or might not perform.....But how many of us have really accepted Allah as our Lord and Islam as our religion at a conscious level?

The same thing was hindering the Bedouin Arabs from entering completely into the religion of Islam:

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِنْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ {14}

The Bedouin Arabs say: "We have believed." Tell them: "You have not believed; rather say 'We have become Muslims;' for faith has not yet found its way into your hearts. If you obey Allah and His Rasool, He will not deny you the reward of your deeds; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."

We call ourselves believers but have ever tried to find out what is the true definition of a believer?

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ {15}

The true believers are those who believe in Allah and His Rasool, then never doubt; and make Jihad (*exert their efforts*) with their wealth and their persons in the cause of Allah. Such are the ones who are truthful *in their claim to be the believers*.

Remember that the way to Jannat is not an easy one. It's easy enough to quote this definition but doing Jihad with the nafs and with one's wealth is not quite such a smooth ride. There are going to be rough spots along the way too. And when difficulties arise then what should be our attitude? That we go around showing our wounds to everyone? Making it look like we have done some favour on

others? The fact is that it is Allah's favour on us that He has given us this guidance and saved us from the darkness of ignorance.

يَمُنُونَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَسْلَمُوا قُلْ لَّا تَمُنُّوا عَلَيَّ إِسْلَامَكُم بَلِ اللَّهُ يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَدَاكُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ {17}

They think they have conferred upon you a favour by embracing Islam. Tell them: "You have conferred upon me no favour by accepting Islam. It was Allah Who has conferred a favour upon you in guiding you to the true faith; admit this, if you are men of truth.

Why is Allah reminding us about this favour on us? Because sometimes people start thinking themselves as superior due to being religious. They want that they should be given special attention and special favours due to it. But we should all remember that our true status in Allah's eyes has not been revealed to us in this world. No one can think of himself as free from the punishment of Akhirah. So we should keep striving towards Allah's obedience, always remembering the fact that none of our thoughts, words or deeds escapes Allah....He knows everything about us whether its apparent for all to see or we keep it hidden from the whole world:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ {18}

Surely Allah knows the secrets of the heavens and the earth; and Allah is watching all your actions."