

PEARLS OF WISDOM

A string of incidents in the history of Islam

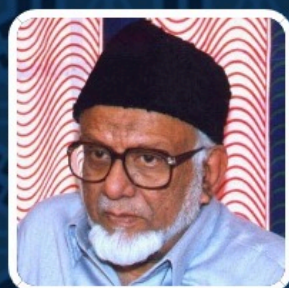


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Publisher(s):

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This text is a selection of sixty–two interesting stories from the history of Islam, to get an overview of the era just before and after the Prophet (S), and to provide key insight to the seeker of truth and moral teachings to apply in our daily life.

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The Legacy lives on.....

Jab tak mai' jiu', kihdmate qaum karta rahu' mai', Maut aa'e to ya rab, esi khidmat me maru' mai'.

Marhum Mulla Asghar has left an unforgettable mark on the entire Shii Community in this era. A multifaceted person of this caliber, with such an impact, only emerges but once in a lifetime. As a brilliant communicator, he eloquently presented the teachings of Ahlul Bait (A.S.) to the masses at large.

Acclaimed by his contemporary scholars, his deep insight into the subjects of Fiqh, theology, philosophy, theosophy as well as contemporary issues was legendary. As an educator par excellence, his ability to inform and educate his students on Islamic concepts was truly enlightening. Through his thought–provoking writings and inspiring speeches countless minds have been set thinking, and many lives have been changed. His impact on our society is nothing short of phenomenal and one that has been instrumental in shifting paradigms.

I hope that this Commemorative series of books, marking the 25th Anniversary of the World Federation, will continue to radiate the teachings of Ahlul Bait (A.S.) to the world at large through the words of this

great scholar. By supporting the *Mulla Asghar Memorial Fund*, which, amongst other educational projects, has made this series of publications possible, you will help ensure that his passion for disseminating the teachings of Ahlul Bait (A.S.) continues after him. Together, we can give reality to the many dreams he had and help the World Federation continue on the path of service that he blazed under his charismatic leadership. I ask you remember Marhum Mulla Saheb with a Sura e Fateha.

Hasnain Walji

President, The World Federation of KSI Muslim Communities

September 15, 2002

Foreword

History, when divested of the historians' bias and prejudice, is a beautiful string of incidents and events, which speak a thousand tongues. When we study history of early Islamic era, we are able to gain an insight into the society to which the message of Islam was preached, the circumstances, which then prevailed, and the reciprocal response of the leaders and the led.

It was with this in mind that Marhum Mulla Asgher selected a number of interesting stories from the history of Islam and published them under the title *Unto thee I grant* Given the popularity of the first book, he selected and translated several more stories and these were published under the title *A beautiful string of incidents...* The present collection *Pearls of Wisdom* is a combination of the above two titles with some more stories added.

These sixty-two interesting stories, when interwoven into a single fabric, form a colourful backdrop against which the era just before and after the Prophet (S) can be clearly visualised.

We hope the readers will be able to glean more than one message from each story; and for those who wish to prepare their analytic treatments of Islamic subjects, there will be relevance in more than one way.

Secretariat

The World Federation of KSI Muslim Communities

Pearls Of Wisdom

1. Too Late

Abu Basir A'asha was one of the great poets of the pre-Islamic era. One of his poems known as *Lamiyya* is classified among the ten great epics of Arabia. In his famous eulogy of the Holy Prophet (S) says:

“Whenever you halt to rest at the door of the son of Hashim, You feel relaxed, and are blessed with his magnanimity From him come charity you cannot miss, and the benefit. And what you gain today, is not refused tomorrow ...”

A'asha decided to come to Mecca and embrace Islam. On his way, he met his old friends from the tribe of Quraish. They asked him about his intentions, and when they learnt that A'asha, the great poet, wished to become a Muslim, they were disturbed:

One of them said: *“A'asha, do you know that Muhammad has forbidden fornication and adultery?”*

A'asha replied: *“That does not deter me, for I have never been a desolate person.”*

The other said: *“Yes, but he has also forbidden wine and all alcohol drinks.”*

A'asha paused, and then said: *“Ah! I am fond of drinking, and I don't think I am ready to renounce that habit. So, this year let me continue drinking to my content, and I shall go next year to become a Muslim.”*

A'asha returned, and died the same year.

2. Not Even For A Mountain Of Gold

When the early Muslims were subjected to ill treatment and persecution, 83 of them migrated to Ethiopia, led by Ja'far bin Abu Talib. The infidels of Mecca learnt that the Muslims were having a comfortable refuge in Ethiopia. They sent a delegation comprising of Amir bin Al-Aas and Abdullah bin Rabia to Negus, the King of Ethiopia, loaded with invaluable gifts for the king and his ministers, and with a mission to seek repatriation of the Muslims.

After having presented the gifts, they approached the King. At his court, Negus was told by Amr bin Al-Aas that the Muslims believed in a Prophet who spoke derogatorily about Jesus. Turning to Ja'far bin Abu Talib, Negus enquired:

“What do you say about Jesus?”

Ja'far recited the verse from Surah An-Nisa:

“The Messiah, Jesus Son of Mary, was Allah’s apostle and His word, which He cast to Mary, and a spirit from Him. (4: 171)”.

Negus picked a piece of wood from the ground and said:

“By God, Jesus was not a bit higher than what you have said, not higher than even the measure of this piece.” And then he turned to Amr bin Al-Aas and said:

“I am not going to harm them, even if I were given a mountain of gold. Take away all the gifts you have brought, for God did not receive any bribe from me when He blessed me with this kingdom, nor did He pay any heed to what others said about me when He decided to raise me to this status.”

3. Allegiance Of Women

Abdur-Rahman bin Ka'b bin Malik used to lead his blind father to Jumu'a prayers regularly. Every time his father heard Adhan on Friday, he would say: *“May Allah bless As'ad bin Zurarah.”*

This continued for many years, till one day Abdur-Rahman asked: *“Father, why do you remember As'ad and pray for him at Jumu'a prayers?”*

His father said: *“My son, the first person to establish and lead us all in Jumu'a prayers in Madina was As'ad. At the time, the Prophet was still in Mecca, and forty of us used to assemble at the foot of the mountain and pray.”*

As'ad bin Zurarah was among those twelve who secretly accepted Islam one year before *Hijrah* at the mountain road to Mina, and pledged loyalty to the Prophet (S) on the following terms:

To worship no other god but Allah;

To commit neither theft nor adultery nor childmurder;

To utter no monstrous falsehoods;

To bring forth no illegitimate offspring;

And not to disobey in matters just or reasonable.

This allegiance is called the *Allegiance of Women*, because of two reasons. First, it does not include a pledge for *Jihad*, and secondly, the same pledge was taken from those ladies who embraced Islam. At the time when the secret pledge was made the Holy Prophet (S) was in Mecca, and *Jihad* had not yet been ordained.

4. The Idol That Could Not Fend For Itself

Amru bin Jamuh was a respectable elder of the tribe *Salimah*. While many young men from this tribe accepted Islam, the old man remained an idolater, his own wooden deity called *Manat*. The boys would stealthily enter his temple at night, pick up the idol and throw it into a dirty pit in their location.

Every morning, Amru would come out of the temple in a frantic search of his god, and reinstate it after washing it and sprinkling upon it sonic perfume. *"I do not know who does this to you"*, he would say. *"If I ever lay my hands on him, I will punish him severely."*

At last, Amru got fed up. One morning, after he had washed and imbued the idol with a sweet scent, he took his sword and hanged it around its neck. *"I have failed to find the culprits."* he said: *"You will be able to defend yourself now, I hope."*

Next day Amru found the idol tied to a dead dog in a nearby pit. A flash of awareness overcame him, and a flame of truth was lit in his bosom. *"How can I worship these baubles which cannot fend for themselves?"*, he murmured.

He accepted Islam the same day.

Amru bin Jamuh is one of the companions of the Prophet (S) martyred in a battle of Ohud. May peace be upon him.

5. Muslim And Martyr All In Less Than A Day!

Aswad was a humble slave of the Jews at *Khaiber*, tending their sheep. On one of the days when the forts of *Khaiber* were besieged by the army of Islam, he came to the Holy Prophet (S) and said: *"Muhammad, teach me Islam."*

The Holy Prophet (S) welcomed him and explained to him the fundamentals. Aswad accepted Islam immediately. Thereafter he said: *"I am employed by the Jews as a shepherd, and these sheep have been placed in my trust. What shall I do with them?"*

The Holy Prophet (S) said: *"Arrange the flock towards the fort, and they will lead themselves to their masters."*

Aswad picked up some sand and sprinkling it over the heads of the sheep, said: *"Go back to where you belong, for I am no more your companion."* And the sheep ran towards the fort as if someone directed them.

Then Aswad joined the army of Islam to fight the same Jews who had employed him. A heavy stone fell upon him and killed him. Thus, Aswad became a martyr before he had an opportunity to offer a single

prayer of the day.

6. Brave & Dedicated Women Of Islam

Hind, the daughter of Amru bin Haram, was steadily advancing from Ohud towards Madina. She walked by the side of the camel upon which lay dead bodies of her husband Amru bin Jamuh, her son and her brother.

On her way, she met some women who were going towards Ohud to find out the result of the battle.

One asked: *“O Hind, where are you going?”*

“To Madina to bury my husband, my brother and my son,” she said.

One of the wives of the Holy Prophet (S) who was among them asked: *“What news do you have from Ohud?”*

“Well, I know that the Holy Prophet (S) is safe and well. Whatever befalls us is immaterial as long as he, peace be upon him, is protected. Allah has blessed us with martyrdom, and the infidels will soon retreat in total disappointment.”

Such were the brave and dedicated women of Islam, Peace be upon them.

7. Father Or Unclean Idolater?

Seventeen months after the truce of *Hudaibiyya*, the Quraish of Mecca violated the terms and attacked the people of Khuza'ah, killing 23 men. A representative of Khuza'ah came to the Holy Prophet (S) to report the matter saying:

“They attacked us at Watir in the darkness of the night while we slept, and killed us while we bowed and prostrated in prayers.”

When Abu Sufyan came to know that a complaint had been lodged with the Holy Prophet (S), he feared reprisals. He wanted no further confrontation, so he, rushed to Madina on a lone mission to meet the Holy Prophet (S) and to request him to continue with the truce.

As he entered Madina, he thought it prudent to go to his daughter, Ummu Habibah, the wife of the Holy Prophet (S). Just as he tried to sit on the Holy Prophet's mattress, Ummu Habibah rose and folded it up, not allowing him to sit on it. Abu Sufyan said: *“I do not know whether the mattress is unfit for me or I am unfit for it?”*

With great calm and composure, Ummu Habibah replied: *“Father, this mattress belongs to the Messenger of Allah, and I would not like to see an unclean idolater profane it.”*

Abu Sufyan was shocked out of his wits. He said: *“You have indeed become a strange woman after having left my house.”*

8. Harm Not The Feelings Of Your Guest

Abu Jahl was an inveterate enemy of the Holy Prophet (S). At his hand, the Holy Prophet (S) suffered severe persecution and humiliation. In the Battle of *Badr*, there were 850 foot-soldiers and 100 horses in command of Abu Jahl.

After his death, his son Ikramah fled from Mecca to Yemen leaving his wife behind. His wife, Ummu Hakim converted to Islam, sought amnesty for her husband, and set out to Yemen. She brought him back to Mecca where Ikramah later accepted Islam.

But just as he was approaching Mecca, the Holy Prophet (S) instructed his companions: *“When Ikramah arrives, do not speak ill of his father. Do not harm his feelings, for he is our guest.”*

9. No Compromise

The people of *Banu Thaqeef* lived in *Taif*, and were known for their arrogance and opposition to Islam. However, when they saw Islam had gained a firm foothold, and that people from all over Mecca and Madina were steadily entering the fold of Islam, they decided to send a delegation to the Holy Prophet (S) for discussion.

Six men from Thaqeef came to Madina. The Holy Prophet (S) welcomed them and ordered for a special tent to be erected near the Mosque to ensure their comfortable accommodation. Khalid bin Saeed bin Aas was appointed to wait upon them. Meals came from the Holy Prophet's (S) house, but the delegation would not eat until Khalid ate first, to be sure that the food was not poisoned.

During the discussions, which lasted for several days, the representatives of Thaqeef said: *“O Muhammad, we have two proposals to make. After having embraced Islam, we should be allowed to maintain the temple of Lat, our idol, for three years. The other proposal is that we should be exempted from Salaat, the daily prayers.”*

The Holy Prophet (S) turned down both the proposals and said: *“The temple of the idol cannot be allowed to remain even for a day.”*

“Then do not force us to desecrate our temples by our own hands, and do not make Salaat obligatory upon us,” they made a last plea.

The Holy Prophet (S) said: *“You will not be forced to desecrate your temples or break your idols by your own hands. But there will be no exemption from Salaat. A religion without Salaat (daily prayers) has no good in it.”*

10. Pay Ransom Money Or Teach Ten

After the Battle of *Badr*, captives were taken to Madina. Amongst them were Abbas, son of Abdul Muttalib and Aqil bin Abu Talib.

The Holy Prophet (S) ordered that each captive be released against payment of ransom money. It ranged between 1000 to 4000 dirhams, according to the wealth of the captive.

Abbas said: *“O Muhammad, if I were to pay the ransom for myself and my nephew, I will be reduced to a beggar.”*

The Holy Prophet (S) answered: *“What about all the gold you confided to your wife, when you departed with the Meccan army?”*

No one knew about the transaction except Abbas, so he was surprised. He immediately accepted Islam.

Then the Holy Prophet (S) announced: *“I know there are some who are genuinely poor. For them there is another option. Any one who teaches 10 boys of Madina how to read and write shall be released.”*

Zaid bin Thabit was one of those who became an educated scribe under this arrangement.

11. The Guard In Prayer

Jabir bin Abdullah says that in the Battle of *Dhat-ur-Ruqa'* the Holy Prophet (S) asked his companions to rest for the night on a plain surrounded by the mountains.

“Who will volunteer to guard us tonight?” the Holy Prophet (S) asked.

Immediately, two companions, namely Ammar bin Yathir and Abbad bin Bishr came forward and volunteered to stand guard while the army of Islam slept.

As they stationed themselves at a strategic spot on the terrain, Abbad said: *“Let us divide the night, I shall keep the vigil in the first half, and you in the second.”*

So Ammar slept while Abbad remained vigilant, engaged in nightly prayers. In the middle of his prayers, an enemy soldier stealthily came near and shot an arrow, which hit Abbad. He pulled out the arrow and continued his prayers. Another arrow hit him causing a further injury. Abbad pulled it out again and remained steadfast. When the third arrow wounded him further, Abbad hastily bowed down in prostration to complete his prayers. He awakened Ammar and related to him what had transpired.

Ammar began to tend his wounds and wipe off blood from his body, then asked: *“Why did you not wake me when you were first hit?”*

Abbad said: *“I was in my prayers, and I did not feel like abandoning my communion with Allah. When I felt terribly weakened by the third blow, I bowed down to complete my prayers. Had it not been for the Holy Prophet’s (S) order to stand guard, I would not have disturbed your sleep.”*

12. Abu Dharr’s Thirst

In the expedition of *Tabuk*, some Muslims contrived excuses for not accompanying the Holy Prophet (S). Others who had joined in reluctantly, deserted after having gone with the expedition for some distance.

Abu Dharr Ghiffari was with the expedition, but the animal he rode could not stand the blazing sun of the desert. He trailed behind his animal plodding forward at a slow pace, till at last he had to abandon the animal and walk.

Someone said: *“O Prophet, Abu Dharr has deserted us.”*

The Holy Prophet (S) answered: *“Allah’s Will be done. If Abu Dharr wishes to be with us he will soon appear.”*

Abu Dharr set forth to reach the Holy Prophet (S) but the scorching heat of the desert worked against him. As he persisted, he came to an oasis. He tasted the water and found it cold and sweet.

“You cannot quench your thirst, while the Holy Prophet (S) might be thirsty”, he said to himself, and filled his water skin. At last, he drew near and companions not recognising him from far informed the Holy Prophet (S) that someone was approaching.

“Perhaps it is Abu Dharr,” the Holy Prophet (S) said.

Abu Dharr collapsed near the feet of the Holy Prophet (S) totally spent and tired by the heat and the thirst.

The Holy Prophet (S) ordered: *“Give him some water.”*

Abu Dharr said: *“I have water with me.”*

“Then why did you not drink?” the Holy Prophet (S) demanded.

Abu Dharr replied: *“Because I found it sweet and cold; and I thought that the Messenger of Allah should drink it first, before I do.”*

13. In The Company Of The Noblest Of Mankind

Among the slaves brought in from Syria by Hakim bin Hizam bin Khuwailid, there was a young boy of eight whose name was Zaid bin Haritha. Hakim gave him away to his aunt, Khadija binte Khuwailid, the

wife of the Holy Prophet (S).

The Holy Prophet (S), at the time was only 28 years old and married to Khadija for 3 years, saw the young boy and was moved by his plight.

“His parents must be driven mad at the disappearance of this young lad,” he thought. He requested Khadija to give Zaid away to him, and she acceded.

When Zaid became the Holy Prophet's (S) ward, he was freed from the bondage. The Holy Prophet (S) declared him free, but the young boy had no intention to return. So he remained as a son to the Holy Prophet (S), deeply attached to him.

Zaid's father came to Mecca, searching for his son. When he learnt that Zaid was with the Holy Prophet (S), he came to persuade him to return.

The Holy Prophet (S) said: *“He is a free man, and has a right to decide for himself.”*

Zaid opted to stay with the Holy Prophet (S) and requested his father to grant him permission.

“You are in the company of the noblest of mankind,” he said, and returned to Syria greatly pleased and satisfied.

14. As For The Ka'aba – It Has Its Own Master

Abraha, a Christian warrior from Ethiopia invaded Mecca, causing destruction and plundering hundreds of camels, which belonged to the Quraish. He had to come, he said, to demolish the Ka'aba.

Abdul Muttalib, the grandfather of the Holy Prophet (S), leaning on the door of Ka'aba prayed aloud: *“Defend, O Allah, Your own home, and suffer not the Cross to triumph over Ka'aba.”*

Then he came to the raiding army of Abraha, and sought to be admitted to his presence. Abraha knew that Abdul Muttalib was a man of honour and integrity, greatly respected in Mecca. He welcomed him and granted him a special audience.

Abdul Muttalib said: *“I have come to complain that your soldiers have plundered my camels. I want them returned to me.”* Upon hearing this, Abraha retorted: *“You have fallen in my estimation. I thought you had come to petition for the safety and protection of Ka'aba, you are simply interested in your possessions!”*

Abdul Muttalib said: *“I have come to ask for that which I own. As for Ka'aba, it has its own Master, Who will definitely protect it.”*

The words of Abdul Muttalib were prophetic. Holy Qur'an describes the ignominious defeat of Abraha

and his army:

“Have you not considered how your Sustainer dealt with the army of the Elephant?” (105:1).

“Did He not foil their stratagem” (105:2).

“And send against them flock of birds” (105:3).

“Which pelted them with clay-stones?” (105:4).

“So that they became like plants cropped by cattle” (105:5).

15. Allow Me To Weep!

After the stunning defeat in Badr there was a bitter pang of shame and despair everywhere in Mecca. Abu Sufyan gave the stern advice: *“Weep not for your slain, mourn not their loss, for if you do so, it will ease your wrath and diminish your enmity toward Muhammad and his fellows.”*

Then he took a solemn vow: *“As for me, I will touch no oil neither approach my wife until I shall have gone forth to fight Muhammad.”*

People chided Abu Sufyan’s wife Hind for not mourning over her father, uncle and brother who were all killed at Badr. She said: *“I will not weep till you wage another war against Muhammad. If tears would wipe the grief from my heart, I too would weep, but that is not the case with Hind.”* Then not to be outdone by her husband, she pledged that she would not use oil, nor approach her marital couch until an avenging army from Mecca was on the march.

One night, an aged father, by the name of Aswad bin Muttalib bin Asad bin Abdul Uzza, who had lost his 3 sons, heard the sound of weeping. He asked his servant to investigate if the Quraish had begun to wail for their dead. *“Grief is consuming me, and I would like to weep over my sons,”* he said.

The servant returned to inform him that it was only a woman who was mourning for her strayed camel. The man said: *“Is she allowed to weep for her camel and for it banish sleep from her eyes? Allow me to weep – over Badr, over my Aqueel and Harith, the brave soldiers of Quraish.”*

16. A Sharing Society

Few months after the Holy Prophet (S) had arrived in Madina, he asked the *Ansars* of Madina to take up the *Muhajirin* from Mecca as their brothers. *“Become brothers for the pleasure of Allah, and pair yourselves,”* he said.

Everyone of the 45 immigrants was connected into brotherly accord with 45 men of Madina: if an *Ansar* was a businessman he took an immigrant as equal partner in his trade, in case of his being a farmer,

half his land he gave to his brother from Mecca; till the system grew so common that when a man from Madina died, his immigrant brother was included among the heirs.

But the noble Meccans were loath to take undue advantage of their hosts. Abdur Rahman bin Auf, for example, became a brother to Sa'ad bin Rabi', and Sa'ad offered him half of what he owned. He declined the offer with thanks and only asked the way to the market place, where he soon started a small business independently.

Gibbon gives the account in the following words: *“To eradicate the seed of jealousy, Muhammad judiciously coupled his principal followers with rights and obligations of brethren, and when Ali found himself without a peer, the Prophet (S) tenderly declared that he would be the companion and brother of the noble youth. The expedient was crowned with success; the holy fraternity was respected in peace and war, and the two parties vied with each other in a generous emulation of courage and fidelity.”*

17. The First Constitution

The Jews in Madina had a decided voice in many matters. They would enter into alliance with the tribes of *Aus* and *Khazraj* and take sides in their inter-tribal wars. Though Arabs by descent, they formed a distant unit by reason of their adoption of Judaism. The two principle tribes of the Jews, *Banu Nadhir* and *Banu Quraidha*, sided with *Khazraj* and *Aus* respectively.

When the Holy Prophet (S) entered Madina, most of the *Aus* and *Khazraj* had already embraced Islam. He, therefore, contracted a pact with the Jews and formally laid a firm foundation of an Islamic state. It was an instrument, which could be termed the first Constitution of an Islamic state creating a political undertaking between the Muslim and non-Muslim. The terms were:

1. The Muslims and the Jews would live in peace as a single community;
2. The contracting parties could keep to their own faiths and enjoy freedom of worship;
3. In the event of war with a third party, each one was to help the other – provided always that the latter was the aggrieved and not the aggressor;
4. If the City of Madina was attacked, both parties had to defend it;
5. In giving the peace terms to the enemy, the other party would be consulted;
6. Madina was to be considered holy and sacred by both and all bloodshed within its boundaries was prohibited;
7. The Holy Prophet (S) would be the final arbitrator;
8. The signatories of the contract would treat each other with respect and goodwill.

The Jews set their seals gladly to the document.

18. Who Can Save You Now?

In the third year after Hijrah, a tribe of *Banu Tha'labah* and its allies were preparing to attack Madina. The Holy Prophet (S) set out to confront them, but as he entered the precincts of *Nukhail*, the enemies retreated to their hiding place behind the mountains.

Suddenly it began to pour. The Holy Prophet (S) removed his wet clothes and spread them over a tree for drying. Waiting for his clothes to dry, he took respite under a tree. An enemy by the name of Du'shoor, thought that this was an opportune time to attack the Holy Prophet (S) unawares, so he crept forward and leapt with an open sword. "*Muhammad, say who can save you from my sword now?*"

The Holy Prophet (S) without losing his calm, said with a firm, resounding voice: "*Allah!*"

And just as the words fell from the Holy Prophet's (S) lips, an unseen power seemed to overwhelm and seize the attacker. He trembled and the sword fell off his hands. The Holy Prophet (S) rose instantly, held the sword and turned to Du'shoor: "*Tell me now, who is there to deliver you from my sword?*"

Du'shoor said: "*None.*"

And suddenly he realised that this incident was revealing to him the great truth. Allah was the Creator, the Sustainer and to Him turned everything in human life. Life and death both are ordained by Allah. So he exclaimed: "*I testify that there is no god but Allah, and you, Muhammad, are indeed His Messenger.*"

Then he went back to his people to preach Islam and teach them the creed.

Qur'an describes this encounter in the following words:

"O believers! Remember the favour, which Allah bestowed upon you. Remember when a group sought to harm you, He restrained their hands; guard yourselves in fear of Allah. In Allah let the faithfuls put their Trust" (5: 11).

19. History Repeats Itself

Harith bin Malik says that before the advent of Islam, the Quraish used to worship a huge tree, which they called *Dhatu Anwat*. Every year, they would travel a long distance to visit that tree, submissively hang their weapons on its twigs, offer sacrifices and stay near that tree for one full day.

One day, when we were in the company of our Holy Prophet (S) advancing to Hunayn, we came across a huge, green lote tree, the memory of our past practice was still fresh in our minds, so we said: "*O Prophet! Let us have a tree, like the Quraish have, the same Dhatu Anwat to hang our weapons upon it and to offer our homage.*"

The Prophet (S) said: *“Allahu Akbar! By God, you have uttered the same words as uttered by the people of Moses when they saw idolaters zealously prostrating before their idols: ‘Make us a God like their gods’; and Moses replied: ‘You are indeed an ignorant people. The religion, which these idolaters follow, is doomed and all their works are vain’.”*

Then the Prophet (S) said: *“This was the way of the people in the past, and it seems that this story will repeat itself among you.”*

20. Abu Lahab Bitter And Humiliated

Abu Lahab, the uncle of the Prophet (S) was his inveterate enemy. In the early days of Islam, whenever the Prophet (S) came to the market place to proclaim Oneness of Allah and denounce idolatry, Abu Lahab would follow him and announce: *“O people! This young man is an impostor do not listen to him.”*

In the battle of *Badr*, he decided to stay behind while other veterans joined the army to fight the Prophet (S). He was anxious of the outcome of the battle and would ask anyone who would come from the vicinity of Madina if he had any news. At last, when Abu Sufyan returned, crest fallen and ashamed, Abu Lahab enquired: *“Tell me what happened, for no doubt you have the reliable news.”*

Abu Sufyan related how his army of Meccans suffered a shameful defeat, and how the great veterans of Quraish fell, one after the other. *“Believe me, it was an effortless surrender. We seemed to be at their command, submitting our necks for slaughter and our hands for being taken prisoners. And I do not blame the Quraish. By God! We saw white robed soldiers on black horses fill the place, and none of us could stand against their onslaught.”*

Abu Lahab was overtaken by grief; he began to cry and wail. Sitting next to him was a slave called Abu Rafe' who was known for his leaning towards Islam. In a fit of uncontrolled anger, Abu Lahab slapped him on the face; and then there was a commotion in which a lady, Ummul Fadhl, hit Abu Lahab on his head.

Abu Lahab entered his house, bitter and humiliated, and within 7 days thereafter, died a miserable death.

21. What Reward For My Good Deeds

Sa'sa' bin Najiya of Bani Tamim was a man of great virtue. His grandson Farazdaq was a renowned poet of Islam, and in one of his eulogies, describing heroic deeds of his grandfather he says:

“My grandfather is the one who prevented mothers burying their newborn girls, and he gave new life to the babies ”

Sa'sa' himself relates a beautiful story of his first encounter with the Prophet (S). He says: *“I came to the*

Prophet (S) and he immediately invited me to Islam. After listening to what he said, I accepted. Then he taught me certain verses from the Qur'an. I said: 'O Messenger of Allah! Will Allah accept and reward my good deeds performed in the past?' He asked: 'What are these good deeds?' I related to him an incident in which I saved a newborn girl from being buried alive. I had to offer a heavy price every time I saved an infant, and that way I was able to rescue more than three hundred. The Prophet smiled and expressed his delight. 'This is indeed a good deed: Allah has graciously rewarded you by blessing you with Islam'."

22. The Pillar Of Abu Lababah

In spite of the document of peace between the Muslims and Jews, the Jews of *Banu Quradhan* did not abandon their intrigues. In the 5th year of *Hijrah* they were still planning to render a final blow to Islam. When the army of Islam surrounded their fort and they had no alternative but to surrender, they asked the Prophet (S) to send Abu Lababah for negotiations.

When the Jews met Abu Lababah, they began to weep and wail over their plight. *"Will Muhammad spare us if we give ourselves up?"* they asked. Abu Lababah said: "Yes." But then he made a sign by placing his fingers over his neck, indicating that they would be killed.

As he returned, Abu Lababah felt guilty of having betrayed the Prophet (S). Instead of going to the Prophet (S) he went to the Mosque, and with deep remorse and repentance, tied himself to a pillar. "I shall not get out of here, till I know that Allah has forgiven my sin", he said to himself.

When the Prophet learnt of this, he said: *"Had he come to me seeking forgiveness, I would have forgiven. But he has chosen to seek forgiveness the way he wants, so I shall wait until Allah reveals His pleasure."* Abu Lababah stayed there the whole night.

And then the verse was revealed to the Prophet (S) indicating that Abu Lababah had been pardoned. Ummu Salmah, the wife of the Prophet (S) gave him the good news, but he refused to untie himself. *"I will wait till the I Prophet (S) will release me from here."*

With a smile on his lips, the Prophet (S) came near him and gently untied him .. The Holy Qur'an says:

"The others who have confessed their sins; their good works had been intermingled with evil. Perchance Allah will turn to them in mercy, He is Forgiving and Merciful" (9: 103).

The pillar of Abu Lababah is still today a famous place in the Mosque of the Prophet (S).

23. The Greedy And The Deserters Of Uhud

In the Battle of *Ohud*, the Prophet (S) ordered some archers to picket the rear defile of the mountain. *"Do not move from here in any circumstances for the enemy might strike from behind these narrow*

passages.”

However, when the archers saw that the enemy was retreating, they thought the battle was over. They deserted their places and busied themselves collecting the spoils of war. This eagerness turned the tide against the Muslims.

Khalid bin Walid, the commander of the infidel cavalry, effected a charge and killed the small guard of 10 men. He then furiously advanced from the rear, killing Mosaib bin Omair, and causing a great confusion among Muslims. A voice rang on the mountain of *Ohud* declaring that the Prophet (S) was dead, and this further demoralized them. Many companions like Omar bin Khattab, Osman bin Affan and Abu Obeidah took flight.

Anas bin Nadhr having seen those deserters said: *“What makes you run away?”*

They said: *“The Prophet is no more. He has been killed.”*

Anas said: *“What is the value of your lives if the Prophet (S) has died. Let us fight for his cause.”* Anas fought alone and was martyred.

The Prophet (S) had been wounded. The battle ended in confusion, with the infidels having returned to Mecca in a belief that the Muslims were routed.

At that time, he inquired about Sa’d bin Rabi’. *“Is he alive or dead? Go and find him”*; he ordered the handful of faithful who were by his side.

Sa’d bin Rabi’ had suffered multiple wounds, and had fallen. When they found him, he was breathing his last.

His last words were *“Peace be upon Muhammad for he fulfilled his duty. If he is alive, give him my Salaam. And if he is dead, Allah is ever Alive. Continue to fight for His cause.”*

24. Hilful Fudhul – The League Of Justice

Mecca was a busy commercial centre where caravans from far and wide came to sell their wares. But the influential and rich men of Mecca used to cheat the poor traders, sometimes committing frightful outrages.

Once a trader from *Banu Zubaid* sold his commodity to Aas bin Wail, and received no payment. When all persuasions failed, he went to several well-known traders seeking their help but none responded. So he climbed the heights of *Abu Qubais* and exclaimed: *“Help this oppressed poor trader who has been robbed in the city of Mecca.”* The famous couplet he recited was:

“O men, come to the aid of an oppressed who has been robbed of his property, right in the centre of

Mecca, away from his own people. Virtue is indeed for him whose dignity is complete, there is no dignity or virtue for him who wears two dresses of deceit and perfidy.”

The Prophet (S) was then a young man of 20, and his heart bled at the sight of this helpless man. Immediately a league was formed, binding its member by an oath to secure justice for the helpless. This was called *Hilful Fudhul*, a league that took oath to intervene for those who were subjected to oppression and injustice in any deal. Among the elders of Quraish, the Prophet (S) was the youngest member, chosen for his truthfulness and propriety.

Later, the Prophet (S) use to tell his companions: *“It was a league I loved to join, and Islam has lent it further strength.”*

25. The Neighbour

Seyyid Jawad Ameli, a great Mujtahid, was having his dinner when someone knocked at his door. A servant from his master, Ayatullah Seyyid Mahdi Bahrul Uloom appeared and said: *“Your master has sent for you immediately. He has just sat down for his dinner but refuses to eat till he sees you.”*

There was no time to lose. Seyyid Ameli left his dinner and rushed to Seyyid Bahrul Uloom’s residence. Just as he entered, the master looked disapprovingly at him and said: *“Seyyid Jawad! You have no fear of Allah! Don’t you feel ashamed of Allah?”*

This came as a thunderbolt, because he could not remember doing anything to incur the wrath of his master. Hesitantly he asked: *“My master may guide me where I have I failed.”*

“It is now a week that your neighbour and his family are without wheat or rice. They were buying some dates from a grocer on credit and today the grocer refused to grant him any further credit. He returned home empty-handed and the family is without a morsel of food,” Seyyid Mahdi said.

Seyyid Jawad was taken by surprise. *“By Allah,”* he said, *“I have no knowledge about this.”*

“This is why I am displeased all the more. How can you be unaware of your own neighbour? Seven days of difficulties have passed and you tell me that you do not know about it. Well, if you had known about it and ignored him despite your knowledge, then you would not even be a Muslim,” Seyyid Mahdi admonished.

And then Seyyid Mahdi Bahrul Uloom instructed him to take all the dishes of food before him to the neighbour. *“Sit with him to eat, so that he does not feel ashamed. And take this sum for his future ration. Place it under his pillow or carpet so that he is not humiliated. And inform me when this work is completed. Till then, I shall not eat.”*

26. Knowledge

The Mosque in Medina was not only a place of worship. The believers assembled here to learn. When the Prophet (S) was present, they heard his words of wisdom, his elucidation on the verses of the Qur'an and benefited by his counsel. And when he was not there, other faithful companions taught what they had heard from the Prophet of Allah.

Once the Prophet (S) entered the Mosque before the prayer time. He found two groups in the Mosque. One group was busy with its own acts of worship. Some were reading from the Qur'an while others were supplicating. The other group was in a corner busy learning. They learnt how to read and write and discussed the teachings of Islam and their application to their daily lives.

Looking at both, the Prophet (S) said: *"They are both engaged in useful Pursuits. But I am a teacher. I shall join the group assembled to learn."*

And so he sat with the group of students.

27. A Companion

Kufa was now the seat of Islamic rule. The entire Muslim world, with the exception of Damascus, looked towards Kufa for guidance. They traveled to Kufa very often.

Two men were in each other's company on the road to Kufa. One was a Muslim, the other a non-Muslim. As they progressed, the non-Muslim traveler asked his companion: *"I am going further than Kufa, to a small village where I live. Where are you going?"*

His Muslim companion said: *"I live in Kufa."*

They proceeded happily, discussing various things, helping each other, all in a spirit of cordiality. When they drew near to Kufa, the non-Muslim took a side-road towards his village. Just as he was about to bid farewell, he observed that his Muslim companion was coming with him.

"Didn't you tell me that you were going to Kufa where you lived?"

"Yes, Of Course," the Muslim replied. *"Then why are you coming this way? That is the only road leading to Kufa?"* *"I know,"* said the Muslim. *"But we have long been companions. Our Prophet (S) said that when two are companions to each other on a journey, they have obligations and duties towards each other. You gave me company and now it is my duty to follow you a few steps and then make a gentle departure."*

"No wonder that your Prophet (S) managed to spread his faith so quickly. His teachings were indeed great."

And then it so happened that once the same non-Muslim companion entered Kufa. There he found that his Muslim companion had been none other but the Khalifa of the time, Ali b. Abu Talib ('a). He soon became a Muslim and remained among the most faithful of friends and companions of the Imam.

28. A Poor Man At The Palace

Once a poor, unkempt man appeared at the gate of a king's palace. He was in rags and not at all suitably attired to be admitted into the presence of a monarch. So the guards stopped him.

"You cannot enter the palace in rags," they said.

The man insisted. He began to quarrel with the guards, raising his voice so loud that the king heard it. He sent for the man.

When he appeared before the king, the noblemen around raised their eyebrows. What was this pauper doing here?

"What is your problem?" the king enquired.

"Oh, I have many problems. But the immediate one is that your guards refused me entry into the palace. Am I not your subject?"

"Yes, you are indeed, you are. But you must dress properly and

suitably," the king said. The poor man looked up and said, *"O king, it is not wrong to enter a palace in rags and empty-handed. But to come out from a palace empty-handed and in rags is indeed a disgrace."*

29. The Unfixed Labour

Suleiman b. Ja'far accompanied Imam Ali b. Musa Al-Ridha' ('a) to work. It was late in the evening when they returned. Just as Suleiman wanted to part, Imam said: *"Why don't you be my guest tonight?"* Suleiman complied.

When they entered the house, a group of Imam's servants were busy in the garden. Imam looked at them and found a stranger among them working on a small patch.

"Who is he?" Imam queried.

"We have hired him to help us finish the work," the servants replied.

"Very well," Imam said, *"How much labour has been fixed for him?"*

The servants said that nothing has been fixed but they would pay him something at the end.

Immediately Imam (‘a) showed his displeasure. His voice rose with anger and the servants were terrified.

“How often have I told you that the labour must be fixed before hiring? If you exact labour from a worker without telling how much you would pay him, he would never be satisfied at the end. And I do not mind if you pay him more than what you promised him. But his wage must be fixed from the beginning. And remember, pay a worker before his sweat dries on his body.”

30. Guest Of A Judge

When he arrived in Kufa, he decided to be a guest of Imam Ali (‘a). For a number of days, he stayed with the Imam without divulging the purpose of his visit; nor did the Imam ask him about it. Finally the man said: *“I have a dispute with a particular party here and I have come to get it settled. Would you act as an arbitrator?”*

The Imam said: *“You are party to the dispute, aren’t you?”* “Yes,” the man replied.

“Then you cannot expect me to be your arbitrator. If you wanted me to decide your case, you should not have become my guest.” The Prophet (S) said: *“When a person has been appointed a judge or an arbitrator in a case, he has no right to play host to either of the two sides, except when they are both invited together.”*

31. Junaid And Bahlool

Bahlool simulated madness, though he was not mad. Junaid a scholar and Sufi of repute knew him very well. One day as they met, Junaid requested him to give him some counsel and admonition.

“You do not need any advice. You are a well-known Aalim,” Bahlool said.

But Junaid insisted. Bahlool gave in and said: *“Well, I shall ask you three questions. If you answer them correctly, you will be advised.”*

And then he proceeded to ask:

“Do you know how to talk?”

“Do you know how to eat?”

“Do you know how to sleep?”

Junaid found these simple. He said: *“I know how to talk. I talk with a low voice, politely and to the point, so that the listeners are not at all offended. I eat after having washed my hands, say Bismillah before I commence, and chew the food properly. When I finish, I thank Allah. Before I go to sleep, I do my Wudhu and retire to a clean, Pak, bed. Then I bear witness to my faith and sleep.”*

Bahloul stood up and started walking away. He said: *“I thought you were quite learned. You do not know the most elementary things of Islam.”* But Junaid would not let him go. *“Please guide me,”* he enjoined.

“Well,” Bahloul said, *“It is no use talking softly if it is a lie. It is all the worse. When talking, one must ensure that one speaks the truth. That is the cardinal point. And when eating, remembering Allah over a food, which is Haram, forbidden or usurped, has no meaning. You have to ensure that what you eat is Halal or that you are not misappropriating the funds of an orphan, a widow, a fellowmen.*

And what is the use of sleeping with Wudhu and all the recitations if your heart is full of malice, jealousy and enmity towards your Momin brother. He who sleeps with a clean heart sleeps a religious man. Do you understand? These are the principles. The rest are all secondary virtues.”

32. A Party Where Liquor Was Served

Mansoor Dawaneqee was an Abbasid ruler. During his reign, he summoned Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq ('a) from Medina to Iraq on several occasions. At times, he prevented the Imam from returning to Medina, detaining him for quite a long period.

On one such occasion, the Imam's visit coincided with a court event. An army commander had had his son circumcised and had host-ed an elaborate party, a *waleema*. All the notables were invited and among them was Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq ('a).

As they were eating, one of the guests asked for water. Instead of water, a glass full of liquor was handed to him. Immediately, the Imam rose and left the palace. The host and others tried to dissuade the Imam from going, but he declined to return. He said: *“The Prophet of God (peace be upon Him and His Progeny) has said: ‘Whoever sits at a party where liquor is served, the curse of Allah shall descend upon him’.”*

33. Amr Bil Ma'roof

An old man sat to do his wudhu. But his *wudhu* was not correct. Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn, then two young boys, watched him. They immediately realised that the old man was not doing *wudhu* correctly, but hesitated to tell him directly. Perhaps the old man would feel humiliated by two young boys, or he might even lose his interest in the act of worship.

Sitting next to him, they started to do the *wudhu* and during the *wudhu*, Imam Hasan said:

“My wudhu is correct and more perfect than yours, O Husayn.”

In reply, Imam Husayn insisted that his own *wudhu* was better than Imam Hasan's.

Finally they said:

“Let us refer to this gentleman. He is older than us and should be able to decide.”

The old man was listening patiently. The boys performed their *wudhu* under his supervision, one after the other. And when they had finished, he realised the *wudhu* done by the boys was methodical and correct. It was his own *wudhu*, which lacked. Turning to Imam Hasan and Husayn, he gently said:

“The wudhu done by you boys is correct. I am grateful that you chose to guide me in such a beautiful manner.”

34. Back From Hajj

A man had just returned from Hajj. He was relating his experience to Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq ('a). He said: *“There was one man with me in the caravan, who was exceptionally pious. I am proud that I was in his company. At all times he prayed. No sooner we came to a station, he would part from us, seek a corner, spread his prayer mat and pray.”*

Imam asked: *“Then who looked after his affairs? Who tended his animals if they fell sick?”*

And the man said: *“Oh, we proudly served him. He had nothing to worry about his affairs. We never let him worry.”*

Imam said: *“Then in the eyes of Allah, all of you were better than him.”*

35. Guidance From The Prophet

A simple unlettered man from the desert once arrived in Medina and came to the Prophet (S). He asked the Prophet (S) to give him a word of advice, which he said he would follow. The Prophet (S) said: *“Control your anger.”* And then the Prophet (S) remained silent.

When he returned to the interior of the desert where he lived, he found that the situation had become quite tense. Some audacious young man from his tribe had raided another tribe in the vicinity and stolen their wealth. In retaliation, the other tribe had also carried out some raids. Now they were at war. Immediately he prepared himself to defend his tribe and was angered by the outrageous conduct of the adversaries.

Just as he stood in line to fight, he suddenly recalled what the Prophet (S) had told him. *“Control your anger.”* He was soon engrossed in deep thought. Admonishing himself, he said: *“The anger has taken better of my reason. I have set out to fight without trying for an amicable settlement. What a shame!”*

He came forward and addressed the leaders of the opposite side: *“Brothers, what is this war for? If my people have raided your side and stolen your property, we could sit together and agree upon compensation. I am prepared to recompense from my personal wealth.”*

The leaders from the opposite side felt totally disarmed by this new approach. They soon realized that bloodshed was not at all worth anything. So with all magnanimity, their chief said: *“Well, You have agreed to recompense. But we are in no way inferior. We have agreed to forego our demand!”*

And both parties peacefully retreated to their places.

36. Jesus In Islam

Mamoon Al-Rashid ruled at the height of the Abassid Empire. He himself was a man of profound knowledge and liked to see learned scholars around him.

At times he would hold a dialogue between scholars of various religions and denominations and arrange polemics between Muslims and others.

Once he invited learned Christian, and Jews to the court and asked Imam Al-Ridha' ('a) to answer their arguments.

Discussing the person of Jesus, his son-ship of God and other Christian beliefs, the Christians argued that at least Jesus was one in whom Muslims also believed, while Muhammad (S) was exclusive to the Muslims alone.

To this, the Imam said: *“Yes, we do believe in Jesus, son of Mary. He was a Prophet of God. He was pious. But, there was a flaw in his conduct.”*

The Imam said: *“Well, he prayed less. His prostrations were few, his supplications scarce and occasional.”*

The Christians retorted: *“That indeed is preposterous. Jesus is known to be always worshipping. He always prostrated and prayed to his Lord.”*

Imam Al-Ridha' ('a) smiled and said: *“If that was so, to who did he pray and before whom did he prostrate and worship – if he himself was God, as you all profess?”*

37. A Letter To Abu Dharr

He knew how the Prophet (S) loved and respected Abu Dharr Ghifari. But as he was stationed far away, it was not possible to benefit from the presence of Abu Dharr. So he wrote a letter. In this letter he sought from Abu Dharr a counsel and admonition, which would guide him in his behaviour.

Abu Dharr wrote back:

“Do not be an enemy of whom you love most.”

And as he went through the reply, he was disappointed. What did Abu Dharr mean? How would one ever act as an enemy to the most beloved? But on the other hand, he thought, Abu Dharr was no ordinary person. There must be a deeper meaning, so he wrote to him again seeking explanation.

“The meaning is quite simple” Abu Dharr wrote. *“To every living being the most beloved is its own self. To you, your self is the most, beloved and when I admonished you not to act as an enemy, I meant do not be your own enemy. Remember, when a man commits a sin and acts contrary to the behests of Allah, he harms himself.”*

38. Bahlool

Bahlool liked to visit the graveyards. *“People here are good friends,”* he used to say. *“They do not backbite.”*

Once, he sat in a corner of a graveyard and with a long heavy stick started probing some of the old skulls, which lay scattered about. Harun Rashid, the king, passed by and saw him. Then he asked, *“O Bahlool! What are you doing?”*

“Oh, nothing very important,” said Bahlool. *“I am just trying to find out whether the skulls belong to kings or paupers. They are all the same.”*

“And what is the stick for?” Harun asked.

“Well, I’m measuring the earth,” Bahlool replied.

“Measuring the earth? What are your findings?” Harun joked.

“It is equal and the same, O King,” Bahlool retorted. *“Three arm lengths for me, in spite of my poverty and three arm lengths for you, in spite of your pomp and wealth.”*

39. The End Of Friendship

No one thought that this friendship would ever end. They were always seen together. One of them was not even known personally to the people. They called him ‘the friend of’

Yes, he was a friend of Imam Ja’far Al-Sadiq (‘a). One day, they entered a shoe market together. They entered as friends, but by the time they were out of the market, their relations had been permanently severed.

It so happened that Imam’s friend was also accompanied by his servant. While Imam and he were advancing, the servant leisurely walked behind, looking at the shops and talking to his acquaintance. His master glanced behind to find him, but there was no trace of him in sight. And finally he appeared.

The master had been provoked and as the servant appeared, he blurted an abuse. He abused the servant's mother before inquiring where he had been for so long.

Just as those words came out of his mouth, Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq ('a) regarded his friend with anger and then loudly said:

"Glory be to Allah! You have abused his mother, attributing to her an ignoble act. I thought you were a man of piety and God fearing. It seems you have no semblance of any taqwa."

The friend said: *"O Son of the Prophet! This servant is from Sind and so is his mother. You know very well that she was not even a Muslim and therefore if I attributed something ignoble to her, it would be appropriate."*

Imam ('a) said: *"I know she was a non-Muslim. But every religion has its own laws and rules. If a non-Muslim marries according to the laws of his or her religion, no fornication is committed. Nor are the offspring illegitimate."*

And then the Imam said: *"This is the end of our friendship."* No one saw them together again.

40. The Candle

Those were the early days of Imam Ali's rule. A candle burnt by his side, as he sat down meticulously recording all the revenue and the expenses of treasury. Just then Talha and Zubair appeared.

They aspired to some positions of authority in Ali's rule and had come to strike a deal. If Ali ('a) gave them a place of distinction, they would in turn pledge their full support. Ali ('a) knew of this.

Just as they sat down, Ali ('a) put out the candle and lit another one.

Talha and Zubair exchanged a glance of surprise and then one of them said:

"O Ali, we have come on some important business. But why did you extinguish the first candle?"

Imam Ali ('a) replied: *"That was a candle bought out of Treasury funds. As long as I worked for the Treasury, I used it. Now you have come for some personal work, so I use the candle bought out of my personal fund."*

Talha and Zubair left him without saying another word.

41. Before The Qadhi

Once during the rule of the second Khalifa Omar bin El-Khattab, an Arab entered his complaint in the court. The court summoned the plaintiff and the defendant to appear. In this case, the defendant was Amirul Mo'mineen, Ali b. Abi Talib, peace be upon him.

Omar acted as a judge. As was customary in the Islamic courts, both the parties ought to station themselves, sitting or standing, next to each other. Accordingly, Omar called out the plaintiff's name and beckoned him to a particular place in the court. Then he turned to Imam Ali ('a) and said:

"O Abul Hasan, place yourself next to the plaintiff please."

42. I Do Not Know

Buzer Jemehri is a well-known sage of ancient Iran. The King of those days sought his counsel and frequently called him to the court for advice. Gradually, an official appointment was conferred upon him, for which he was handsomely paid.

Once, as he was walking in the street, an old woman stopped him and asked a simple question. Buzer Jemehri did not know the answer, so unabashedly he said: *"Mother, I do not know."* The old Woman was furious.

She said: *"The king pays you to answer all the important questions related to the affairs of state. And here, you are unable to answer one simple question from this poor old woman. Why are you being paid?"*

"Mother," Buzer Jemehri said, *"the King pays me for the answers I know. Were he to pay me for the answers I do not know, his treasure would not suffice."*

43. For The Sake Of Allah

No answer satisfied the teacher who had asked a question. There were so many answers given, but none could win the tutor's approval. The question the Prophet (S) asked was: *"Which is the most fundamental and basic tenet of faith?"*

One said: *"Salat"* (namaz)

The Prophet (S) said: *"No!"*

Another: *"Zakat"* (almsgiving)

The Prophet (S) said: *"No!"*

Third: *"Fasting"*

The Prophet (S) said: *"No!"*

Yet another: *"Haj and Umrah"*

The Prophet (S) said: *"No!"*

The last one: “*Jihad*” (holy war)

The Prophet (S) said: “*Not even that.*”

At last the Prophet (S) said:

“All those tenets mentioned by you are beautiful acts of worship and obedience. But they do not measure up with what I have in mind. Remember, the basic and fundamental tenet is: ‘To love for the sake of Allah and to hate for the sake of Allah. All your likes and dislikes must conform with His pleasure.’”

44. The Guests

A father and a son were once guests of Imam Ali (‘a). As they arrived, Imam received them warmly and arranged for their comfortable accommodation. In a room where they were seated, Imam sat opposite them, engaging them in a friendly conversation. And then it was time for the meal. After food had been served and eaten, Qambar, Imam’s servant, brought a basin and a pitcher full of water for washing the guests’ hands. Imam took the pitcher himself and asked the father to extend his hands so that he would pour the water.

“How is it possible that my Imam serves me? It should be otherwise,” the guest said.

Imam Ali said: *“Here is your brother in faith, eager to serve his brother and to earn the pleasure of Allah. Why do you prevent him?”*

But the guest hesitated. Finally Imam said: *“As your Imam, I request that you allow me the honour of this service.”*

And when the guest complied, Imam said: *“Let your hands be washed thoroughly, Do not hasten, thinking that I should be relieved of this duty early.”*

When it was the son’s turn, Imam instructed his own son Muhammad b. Hanafiyyah, to hold the pitcher and wash the guest’s hands. Looking at his son, Imam said:

“I washed your father’s hands. My son washed your hands. If your father had not been my guest today, I would have washed your hands myself. But Allah loves to see that when a father and a son are present in a place, the father enjoys a privilege and a priority.”

45. The Prophet’S Gift

Whenever they reaped their first harvest, they brought early, fresh fruits to the Prophet (S). Then he would distribute them among those who sat around him. This morning, a poor man brought one fruit from his small farm and gave it to the Prophet (S).

He accepted the gift, tasted it and then went on eating it alone while the companions watched. One of those present meekly said:

“O Prophet of Allah, you have overlooked the right of those who watch while you eat?”

The Prophet (S) smiled and waited till the man who had bought the fruit had gone. Then he said:

“I tasted the fruit and it was not yet ripe. Had I allowed you to have some of it, someone would have definitely shown his distaste, thus disappointing the poor man who brought this gift. Rather than make him feel bitter, my palate accepted the bitterness.”

46. Contentment

Salman Farsi was a Persian companion of the Prophet (S). He was a man of staid habits. His clothes were simple, his food minimum.

Once he invited Abu Dharr Ghifari to lunch and Abu Dharr obliged. When they sat on the floor to eat, Abu Dharr observed that there were some dried bits of loaves and a few dates.

He said: *“Salman, the Prophet (S) has said that we must begin and end our meals with salt. I do not see any salt here.”*

Now Salman had no salt in the house, nor did he possess any money to buy it. But he immediately rose up and said: *“Oh, I am indeed sorry. Would you wait while I bring it?”*

Salman took his cloak and kept it as a security at the neighbouring shop and brought some salt. When they had finished eating, Abu Dharr said: *“Al Hamdu Lillah”* to express his thanks and gratitude to Allah.

Politely, Salman said: *“Do not lie, Abu Dharr. For if you were truly thankful, Salman would not have had to mortgage his cloak for that pinch of salt.”*

47. The Foundation

The Prophet (S) was preparing for an expedition to Tabuk. A group of hypocrites, headed by Abu ‘Amir ar-Rahib, was actively plotting against Islam. They knew that the Prophet would advance by the way of Quba mosque, so they built another mosque in its vicinity. This, they thought, would be a convenient meeting place where they could hatch their plots without being noticed.

In order to give recognition to this mosque, they asked the Prophet (S) to enter and honour it by his presence. The Prophet (S) postponed it till his return from Tabuk.

As he returned, the following verse was revealed to him:

“And those who built a masjid to cause harm and for unbelief and to cause disunion among the believers and a hiding place for him who made war against Allah and His Apostle before; (though) they will

certainly swear: We did not desire but good: (but) Allah bears witness that they are most surely liars.”

Then Allah commanded:

“Never stand in it, certainly a masjid founded on piety from the very first day is more deserving that you should stand in it” (9: 108).

The Prophet ordered the mosque demolished. It was the *Masjid ad-Dirar* – the mosque of harm founded on impiety. Taqwa, fear of God, was not there.

48. The Fly

It was an Abbasid court, with all its splendour. Mansoor was the King. Just as Mansoor was attending to the business of state, a small fly sat on his nose. With a wave of his hand, he whisked it off. But the fly sat on his nose again. This continued till at last Mansoor felt greatly disturbed.

Turning to Imam Ja’far Al-Sadiq (‘a) who was present that day, he said: *“O Son of the Prophet, can you tell me why Allah created these lousy flies?”*

“Yes”, the Imam said, “so that the mighty and proud are rendered humble and helpless!”

49. Not The Personalities

It was the famous or rather infamous battle of *Jamal*, where armies of Muslims arranged themselves against each other. On one side were Talha and Zubair, the companions of the Prophet (S) and at the head was Aisha, the Prophet’s wife. On the other side was an army led by Amirul Mo’mineen, Imam Ali (‘a).

Imam tried his best to avert the war, but the opposition remained adamant. They said they were out to avenge the blood of Uthman.

As the battle raged on, a companion who had been watching in detachment slowly advanced to Imam Ali (‘a) and said: *“O Ali, is it possible to believe that men like Talha and Zubair and a lady like Aisha, the mother of the Faithful, have all joined hands on the wrong side?”*

Imam Ali (‘a) said: *“You have entangled yourself in a misleading argument. Truth and untruth are not judged by the personalities. Discern the truth first and then know its followers. Recognise the untruth and then identify its adherents.”*

50. The Daily Prayers

Ahu Dharr Ghifari was now old. He had been rusticated to Rabzah, away from Medina, because the

ruler of the day, Uthman, found him outspoken and forthright. Some of the companions of the Prophet (S) visited him at regular intervals.

Abul Aswad Dua'li says that his father once went to Rabzah and visited Abu Dharr. As usual, he remembered his days with the Prophet (S) and related the following Hadith:

He said: *“Once I entered the Mosque of the Prophet (S) before noon and found the Prophet (S) sitting there alone with Ali (‘a). Thinking that this was the best time for gaining one more word of counsel and wisdom, I sat with them and said: ‘O Prophet of Allah, may I be blessed with some advice and admonition so that Allah may enlighten me further?’ The Prophet said: ‘Yes, Abu Dharr, I will tell you something which is the essence of all virtues: Worship Allah as if you were seeing Him. O Abu Dharr, you cannot see Him. But at least be conscious of a fact when you pray that though you do not see Him, He sees you.’”*

51. The Rumour Mongers

A man who claimed to be, a friend and sympathiser of Imam Zainul Abedeen (‘a) came to him and said: *“My master, so and so has been speaking ill of you.”*

Imam said: *“It never reached me and perhaps would not have reached me if you had not mentioned it. He shot an arrow, which did not hit the target. But you lifted the fallen arrow and hit me with it. God does not like the habit of spreading scandals and defamation, or transmitting the words of one to another with an intention of spreading discord.”*

And in the days of Hazrat Musa, once there was a severe drought. For months on end, no sign of rain was seen. People prayed and prayed, but there was no downpour. When Hazrat, Musa prayed on the Mount of *Tur* (Sinai) for rainfall, Allah revealed to him that there was a scandalmonger among the people due to whom He had withheld the rain.

“O Allah, give me his name and I will reprimand him for his bad habit.”

“Musa, how can I do a thing which I forbid for others?” Allah said.

52. Death The Leveller

Sulaiman b. Dawood was a Prophet and a King. In the Bible, he is named Solomon. The Holy Qur’an says that the kingdom given to Prophet Sulaiman had no equal in the history of mankind. He ruled over the wind and waves. All men, jinn and animals were made subservient to his rule. In the Surah of Saba, verse 12, Allah says:

“And (we made) the wind subservient to Sulaiman which made a month’s journey in the morning and a month’s journey in the evening and we made a fountain of molten copper to flow out for

him and of the Jinn there were those who worked before him by the command of his Master” (34: 12).

Once, Sulaiman decided to survey his rule. He ordered a representative section of his subjects to arrange themselves in a manner that would enable him to view them. He went to his palace and there from the loft he stood alone to inspect. None was permitted to come nearby. Right then, a person appeared.

“Who are you? Don’t you know that none is supposed to enter here?” Sulaiman said.

“I need no permission for entry. It is your Lord’s command that your time on earth is fulfilled,” answered the angel.

So Sulaiman was dead. But his subjects did not know. They thought Sulaiman was still making an appraisal. Then Allah sent some worms who ate through the staff against which Sulaiman was reclining. The staff broke and Sulaiman’s corpse fell to the ground.

The Holy Qur’an says:

“But when We decreed death for him, none showed them his death but a creature of earth that ate away his staff; and when it fell down, the Jinn came to know plainly that if they had known the unseen, they would not have tarried in abasing torment” (34: 14).

Thus died an absolute monarch of all he surveyed.

“Sceptre and crown

Must tumble down,

And in the dust be equal made, With poor scythe and spade.”

53. Neighbours First

The child had made it a habit to rise regularly in the small hours of the night and join his mother in her nightly prayers called *Tahajjud*.

He observed that his mother prayed for all Muslim men and women. She remembered them by name and prayed for their prosperity and well-being. *“O Allah, pardon them their sins and let Your Grace embrace them in all their dealings.”* But never did she mention anyone of the household in her prayers. Nor did she pray for herself.

On this particular morning, he decided to ask. When the prayers were over, he asked: *“Mother, you pray for all everyday. Not a word for yourself, or anyone in the family?”*

Bibi Fatimah (‘a) said: *“O Hasan, remember one thing. Neighbours first and then the house.”*

54. Through The Stomach

It was the rule of Mahdi b. Mansoor, an Abbasid Caliph. He wanted Sharik b. Abdillah to accept an appointment as a judge because he was among the most learned and pious men. But Sharik had declined the offer because he thought it unwise to associate with an unjust rule. Then one day the Caliph proposed to him to take up tutorship for his own sons. Again Sharik refused the proposal, trying to maintain his independence in spite of poverty and meager means.

Resorting to his usual tactic of intimidation, Mahdi once summoned Sharik to the court and said: *“I have three proposals, one of which you must accept. You either accept the judgeship, or tutorship of my children, or accept my invitation to lunch with me today.”*

Sharik found the third option the easiest and he accepted the invitation. The Caliph arranged for the most sumptuous meal to be prepared and when the lunch was laid, Sharik found himself partaking of the most palatable food he had ever tasted. He ate wholeheartedly and to his fill.

Just as he finished, a butler whispered in the ear of the Caliph: *“You have travelled to his head through his stomach.”*

Within a few days, it was seen that Sharik had assumed both the judgeship as well as the tutorship of the King’s sons. An appreciable sum was allocated to him from the Treasury.

Once when his stipend was delayed, he came to the manager, implor-ing for the payment.

The manager was insolent. He said: *“Why do you implore and insist? Have you sold any wheat to me?”*

Sharik replied: *“I have sold something more valuable than that. I have sold my faith.”*

55. Self Reliance

It was a long journey. At one place, they all decided to rest. The Prophet (S) and his companions alighted from their horses and loosened their luggage. Then they decided to slaughter an animal and prepare a meal.

One companion said: *“I will slaughter the animal.”*

Another said: *“And I will skin it.”*

The third one volunteered to cook the meat. And so everyone volunteered to help in one way or the other.

The Prophet (S) said: *“I will go to find the fuel.”*

Immediately the companions rose to say: *“No, O Prophet of Allah, let it be our pride to serve you while you rest. We are here to do the work for you.”*

The Prophet (S) said: *“I know that you could all do that. But Allah hates a person who enjoys such a privilege among his friends and companions. He hates a man who arrogates himself any preferential position.”*

Then he went toward the woods and brought back with him twigs and thorns, which he had gleaned.

56. The Poor Man Said

It was a usual meeting. The Prophet (S) was in his place and his companions gathered around him to hear the words of wisdom and guidance. Suddenly a poor man in rags appeared, saluted the assembly: *“Salamun Alaikum”* and finding a vacant place, comfortably sat down.

The Prophet (S) had taught them that all Muslims were brothers and in an assembly one should sit wherever one finds a place, regardless of any status. Now, it so happened that this poor man sat next to a very rich man. The rich man felt disturbed and tried to collect the edges of his dress around himself, so that the poor man did not touch them. The Prophet (S) observed this and addressing the rich man he said:

“Perhaps you were afraid that his poverty would effect you?” *“No, O Messenger of Allah,”* he said

“Then perhaps you were apprehensive about some of your wealth flying away to him?”

“No, O Messenger of Allah.”

“Or you feared that your clothes would become dirty if he touched them?”

“No, O Messenger of Allah.”

“Then why did you draw yourself and your clothes away from him?”

The rich man said: *“I admit that was the most undesirable thing to do. It was an error and I confess my guilt. Now to make amends for it, I will give away half of my wealth to this Muslim brother so that I may be forgiven.”*

Just as he said this, the poor man rose and said:

“O Prophet of Allah, I do not accept his offer.”

People present were all taken by surprise. They thought the poor man was a fool. But he explained:

“O Prophet of Allah, I refuse to accept his offer because I fear that I might then become arrogant and ill-treat my Muslim brothers the way he did to me.”

57. Iftaar

Anas b. Malik had served the Prophet (S) for a number of years. In fact Anas attended upon him till his passing away. He therefore knew the Prophet's habits very well.

When the Prophet observed a fast, he usually broke it with milk and some pieces of loaf. And in small hours of the night, he took similar simple food for his Sahar.

One day, Anas knew that the Prophet was fasting; so he arranged for his Iftaar. He kept milk with bits of loaf ready. But the Prophet (S) did not appear for breaking the fast. Anas thought that the Prophet might have accepted an invitation and broken his fast elsewhere. He ate the food himself and retired.

When the Prophet (S) entered the house with a companion, Anas inquired from him whether the Prophet (S) had already eaten. The Prophet (S) had been attending to some urgent work and was delayed. He had not eaten.

Anas felt very much ashamed. There was nothing he would be able to offer if the Prophet (S) asked for food. Still he waited expectantly, ready to offer an excuse. But the Prophet (S) immediately sensed that Anas was hesitant, so he remained silent and retired to bed hungry.

Anas used to say: *“The Messenger of God never mentioned this incident during his lifetime.”*

58. The Old Man

He was an old Christian. During his prime, he had worked hard, earned his bread by the sweat of his brow. Now he was old, infirm and blind. He stood in a street corner, begging. People passed by. Some ignored him, while others took money and dropped coins in his hand.

Till one day, Amirul Mo'mineen, Hazrat Ali ('a) saw him there. And he wondered: *“What an ill fate has befallen this old man? Has he no son to look after him in his declining years? Isn't there any way this wretched soul could be saved from indignity?”*

He inquired from the old man's friends and acquaintances. They all testified that the old Christian had been a hard worker in his good days but had no savings. He had none to look after him, so he had started begging.

“What a shame!” Ali ('a) said. *“As long as he was strong and able, he worked and served the society. All of us benefited from his labour, directly or indirectly. How can we forsake him now?”*

And with these words, Ali ('a) ordered the Treasury of Muslims to pay the old man his full sustenance as

long as he lived.

59. Listening To The Qur'an

Ibn Masood was one of the scribes who wrote down the Holy Qur'an just as it was revealed and then dictated by the Prophet (S). The Prophet (S) trusted him for his honesty and probity.

One day, the Prophet (S) said: *"O Ibn Masood, recite for me some verses of the Qur'an so that I may have the pleasure of listening to it."* Ibn Masood opened his copy and started from the Sura of An-Nisa. The Prophet (S) listened attentively, until Ibn Masood reached the following verse:

"(O Prophet) How will it be, then, when We bring from every people a witness and bring you as a witness against these?" (4:41).

Just as he recited the verse, the Prophet (S) wept and then said:

"Indeed, that is enough for today."

60. The Last Will

Umm Hamidah, the mother of Imam Musa Kadhim ('a) saw Abu Baseer enter the house. She knew him as one of the most pious and trusted companions of her husband, Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq ('a).

Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq ('a) had passed away, after being poisoned; but at that time, Abu Baseer had not been in town. So he had come now to offer his condolences. He wept bitterly as he remembered the Imam ('a).

Umm Hamidah said:

"Abu Baseer, you were not here when the Imam was breathing his last. A strange thing happened."

Abu Baseer inquired: *"What happened?"*

Umm Hamidah said:

"Just as the Imam was breathing his last, he seemed to suddenly recover. Raising his eyes, he asked us to call all the members of the family to his bedside. Everyone of the family was there, waiting to hear what the Imam had to say. And then, addressing us all, the Imam said: 'Our Shafa'at (intercession on the Day of Judgement) shall not reach those who belittle the importance of salaah (namaz).' With these final words, he departed."

61. Ghazali And The Robbers

Ghazali, the renowned Muslim scholar, was born in Tus, a small village near Mashhad. He lived in the fifth century *hijrah*.

In those days, students wishing to acquire higher knowledge of Islam travelled to Nishapur, which boasted several centres of learning and many teachers of repute. Ghazali, after completing his preliminary education at home, arrived in Nishapur to pursue further studies. He was brilliant and was soon acclaimed by his tutors as the most studious and painstaking student. In order not to forget any finer points of erudition, he formed the habit of noting down all that he heard and learnt from his teachers. And then he meticulously rewrote them under various headings and chapters. He treasured these notes as dearly as his life, or perhaps more.

Years later, he decided to return to his village. He tied all his prepared notes into a neat bundle and set forth in the company of a caravan. On the way, they were held up by the gang of highway thieves, who robbed each traveller of all his valuables. And then it was Ghazali's turn. They searched him thoroughly, snatching away all that they wanted, and then laid hands on the tied bundle of notes.

"Take all that you want, but please do not touch this bundle," Ghazali pleaded. And the waylayers thought that there must be something very precious hidden in the bundle, which Ghazali was trying to save. So they untied the bundle and ransacked the pages. What did they find? Nothing, but a few written papers.

They asked: *"What are these? Of what use are they?"*

"Well, they may be of no use to you, but they are of great use to me" Ghazali answered.

"But of what use are they?" the robbers insisted.

"These are the fruits of my labour. If you destroy them, I am also

ruinously destroyed. All the years of my attainment go down the drain," Ghazali replied.

"So whatever you know is in here, isn't it?" one of them said.

"Yes," Ghazali replied.

"Well, knowledge confined in a few papers, vulnerable to theft, is no knowledge at all. Go and think about it and about yourself."

This casual but pungent remark by a commoner shook Ghazali to the core. He realised that he had studied as a parrot, jotted down all that he learnt and crammed it into his mind. He found that he knew more, but he thought less. If he wanted to be a true student and a good scholar, he had to assimilate

knowledge, think, ponder, deduce and then form his judgment.

He set out seriously to learn the way he should, and became one of the greatest ulema in Islam. But in his advanced age, when he summarized his achievements, he said:

“The best counsel and admonition which changed my thinking, came to me from a highway robber.”

62. The Prophet’s Visit To Taif

Abu Talib and Khadija were the main supporters of the Prophet (S). It was so destined that they passed away within a few days of each other, leaving the Prophet (S) to lament the bereavement. He had lost a caring uncle and a loving wife.

The enemies were now relieved, because Abu Talib was no longer there to protect. A few days after Abu Talib’s death, when the Prophet was once passing through a lane, a woman emptied her garbage from a window upon his head. He returned home with his head soiled. His young daughter Fatimah sat beside him, consoling and washing off the dirt.

As things became intolerable in Mecca, the Prophet (S) decided to move to Taif where he thought he would convey the message of Allah to the tribe of *Thaqeef*. Taif was known for its pleasant climate and beautiful scenery.

The Prophet (S) knew very well that people at Taif were no different from Meccans. They also worshiped idols and were in constant contact with the people of Mecca. But he did not despair. As he entered Taif, and proclaimed his Prophethood, people jeered at him. One said: *“God did not find anyone else for His message except you?”* Another said: *“I must be naive or a thief if I believed you to be a Prophet.”* And so it went on.

Then in order to prevent him from preaching Islam, people of Taif set a group of children and vagabonds behind him. They pestered him and threw stones at him.

Tired, forsaken and wounded, he sought refuge in a nearby garden. It belonged to Atabah and Shaibah, two wealthy chiefs of Quraish. They were both there when the Prophet entered and sat under a distant tree. He was alone. Then he raised his face towards heaven and prayed.

“O Allah, I raise unto you my complaint for my weakness, my helplessness, and for the ridicule to which I have been subjected. O Merciful of all the Mercifuls! You are the Master of all oppressed people, You are my God! So to whom would You consign me? To the strangers who would ill-treat me, or to the enemies who have an upper hand over me? If whatever has befallen me is not because of Your wrath, then I fear not. No doubt, the field of Your security and care is wide enough for me. I seek refuge in Your light which illuminates darkness and straightens the affairs of this world and hereafter, that Your displeasure and wrath may not descend upon me. For the sake of Your pleasure, I remain pleased and

resigned to my fate. No change in this world occurs without Your Will.”

Atabah and Shaibah were watching. They sent for their servant named Adaas and gave him a plate full of grapes. *“Take this to that man under the tree,”* they ordered.

Adaas was a Christian. He brought the grapes to the Prophet (S) and bid him to eat. As the Prophet (S) picked a bunch he said: *“Bismillahir Rahmanirrahim, In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate.”*

Adaas had never heard this before. He was impressed by them because the man was invoking mercy and compassion of Allah in spite of his desolate state.

“Who are You?” he asked.

“I am the Prophet of God. Where do you come from?”

The servant said: *“I am Adaas, a Christian. I come from Nainava.”*

“Nainava? You come from a place where my brother Yunus b. Mati lived,” the Prophet said.

Adaas was surprised to hear the name.

“What do you know of Yunus? Here no one seems to know him. Even in Nainava there were hardly ten people who knew his father’s name.”

The Prophet said: *“Yes, I know him because just like me, he was a Prophet of God.”*

Adaas fell on his knees before the Prophet, kissed his hands and embraced Islam. Atabah and Shaibah were uncomfortably watching this and with great distress said:

“Look, he managed to corrupt the poor soul.”

“I don’t pray for His acceptance of my amaal as much as I pray for the opportunity to serve. And the day He grants me a new opportunity to serve, I believe the previous ones have been accepted. And I hope till my last breath the opportunities are there and when the Almighty calls me back, I will be able to tell my Lord, Thank You for giving me life, Thank You for giving me life.”

History, when divested of the historians’ bias and prejudice, is a beautiful string of incidents and events. The history of early Islamic era can provide insight into the society to which the message of Islam was preached.

It was with this in mind that Marhum Mulla Asgher selected a number of interesting stories from the history of Islam.

This collection of sixty-two interesting stories, when interwoven into a single fabric, form a colorful

backdrop against which the era just before and after the Prophet (S) can be clearly visualized.

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