

Competition in Goodness and Nation Service

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Allah Almighty has created human beings, honored and favored them over all other creatures and equipped them with significant qualities and faculties to lead a stable prosperous life. For example, Allah created in humans the intellect whereby they can think and recognize what is good and what is evil. Humans are created with senses in order to figure out their surroundings. They have emotions in order to better communicate with others. Human being is born with all these qualities in order to enjoy and lead a balanced life. Allah Almighty has privileged humans with such qualities and capabilities and has put them on this earth to populate it. With this in mind, life has become a big field for humans to compete with one another according to the rules that Allah has established.

A thorough look into our world reveals that people are of different interests and consequently have different conditions of life. Some people only search for money and, therefore, they are fully preoccupied with accumulating wealth. Others are fond of discovering and inventing new things; they hopefully maintain the world with discoveries and inventions. Others are so keen on gratifying their desires whatsoever and take so much as they can from worldly pleasures. Each one of those people uses their talents and God-given qualities in achieving what they aspire for. Some other people are gifted in physical strength and body building, and they consequently invest their physical strength wherever it fits. This difference in interests does not apply only to individuals but it extends to communities and nations at large as well.

But what about the Muslim Person? Where should the ambitions of Muslims fit in?

The Muslim is of a good character; therefore, he always seeks all that is good. Allah Almighty explains that He set a direction for every nation to follow. However, He extremely urges Muslims to hasten to do all that is good (Quran ٢: ١٤٨). In the same context, Allah explains that the return of all humans will be unto Him and then He will judge people according to how much good they have accomplished (Quran ٥: ٤٨). Somewhere else in the Quran, Allah also calls upon all of us to seek His forgiveness and work hard to attain Paradise by doing all that is good (Quran ٣: ١٣٣).

Islam is the religion of goodness and happiness. Islam aims at populating the earth with righteous individuals and communities. Islam recognizes the virtue of competition and encourages humans to utilize their talents in attaining all that is good for themselves and their communities. One goal that Muslims are commanded to achieve is to attain happiness in the life of this world and the hereafter. Allah the Almighty teaches that we should seek the hereafter through whatever we do; yet we may enjoy the life of this world provided we do not go against the religion (Quran ٢٨: ٧٧). The Muslim believes that the life of this world is just a bridge to the life hereafter.

Competition in doing good deeds is highly recommended in Islam, whereby competitors spare no efforts in serving their communities. Muslims are motivated to take part in such competition since the reward will be Paradise and eternal bliss.

In this regard, the Prophet (PBUH) encourages Muslims to get involved and take the lead.

Narrated Abu Hurayrah (RA):

A group of poor people came to the Prophet (PBUH) and complained: "O Prophet! The wealthy people get away with all the rewards." The Prophet (PBUH) said: "And what is that?" /They explained: "The wealthy people pray as we pray and they

fast as we fast. However, they have money to give in charity but we do not." The Prophet (PBUH) said to them: "Shall I teach you a deed whereby you will attain the rank of those who excelled you in the religion, and you will excel others in the religion, and none will be like you in this regard unless they do like what you do?" They said: "Yes Prophet!" The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Say Glory be to Allah, Praise be to Allah, and Allah is the Greatest thirty three times after each prayer."

According to this narration, the Prophet (PBUH) teaches the poor people to fix their inability to give charities by confessing glory and praise to Allah, which is one of the best deeds ever in Allah's sight.

Looking into the following Prophetic narration we can easily notice how the Prophet (PBUH) extremely encourages Muslims to keep up with acts of worship on top of which ritual prayer sits.

Abu Hurayrah (RA) narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said: *"If the people knew what the reward of calling the Adhan (the call to prayer) and for attending in the first row in congregational prayers, they would draw lots for who would do it. And if the people knew (the reward of) praying dhuhur (noon) prayer on time, they would race for it. And if the people knew the reward of attending 'Isha (evening) and Fajr (dawn) prayers on time and in congregation, they would come to them even if they had to crawl."*

Actually the spirit of competition inspired the companions of the Prophet (PBUH). Abu Bakr would always race for all that is good.

Once, the Prophet (PBUH) asked the companions to give in charity. 'Umar (RA) said: "At that time I had some money. I said to myself: 'Today I shall excel Abu Bakr, if I were ever to excel him one time.'" `Umar took half of his wealth to the Prophet (PBUH). The Prophet (PBUH) asked him: "What have

you left for your family `Umar?" `Umar said: "This is the half of my wealth and I left for my family the second half." Then, Abu Bakr (RA) came in with all his wealth. The Prophet (PBUH) said to him: "What have you left for your family Abu Bakr?" He said, "I have left Allah and His Messenger for them." Thereupon, `Umar said: "It seems like I will never be able to beat Abu Bakr."

Here is another example that clearly shows how the companions compete in doing good.

Narrated Abdullah Ibn Mas`ood:

Allah the Almighty revealed: "Who is he that will lend to Allah a goodly loan so that He may multiply it for him many times? And it is Allah that decreases or increases (your provisions), and unto Him you shall return." (Quran ٢: ٢٤٥)

When this verse was revealed, Abu Ad-Dahdah was a companion of the Prophet who said to the Prophet: "O Prophet! Does Allah need a loan from us?" The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Yes! O Abu Ad-Dahdah!" Abu Ad-Dahdah said: "O Prophet! Stretch your hand." The Prophet stretched his hand and Abu Ad-Dahdah took the Prophet's hand and said: "O Prophet! I have given my garden as a loan to my Lord." Abu Ad-Dahdah had a garden with six hundred date trees and his wife and children were living in that garden too. Abu Ad-Dahdah went back to his wife and called her: "`Umm Ad-Dahdah!" She said: "Yes!" He said: "Let us get out of the garden, because I have given it as a loan to my Lord, the Exalted and Most Honored." She said: "That must be a successful transaction Abu Ad-Dahdah!" She then collected her things, took the children, and left." The Prophet (PBUH) was so pleased with what Abu Ad-Dahdah did and said: "Abu Ad-Dahdah! You have plentiful sweet date clusters in Paradise!"

Narrated Anas (RA):

Abu Talha was the richest man in Medina; the best property he owned was a garden called Bayruhaa and it was located in front of the Mosque of the Prophet. The Prophet used to visit this garden and drink from its nice water.

Allah has revealed his saying: "By no means shall you attain righteousness unless you spend (in charity) of that which you love." (Quran ٣.٩٢) Hearing this verse, Abu Talha went to the Prophet (PBUH) and said: "O Prophet! Allah says: "By no means shall you attain righteousness, unless you spend (in charity) of that which you love." As you know Bayruhaa garden is the most beloved of my wealth to me. So, I want to give it in charity for Allah's sake. I am looking for the reward of this from Allah. You could spend it where you see fit." The Prophet (PBUH) said: "That is great Abu Talha! That should be a successful deal. However, I think you better give it away to your relatives." Abu Talha said: "I will, Prophet!" Then, Abu Talha distributed the garden amongst his relatives. (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Those who came after the Prophet and his companions followed in the same path as they would compete in doing all that was good. Waheeb Ibn Al-Ward says: *"If you could excel everybody in the way to Allah, then do."*

The wise person is the one who takes the opportunity to do all that is good as long as he is able to. You never know: now you have the opportunity to do good deeds but maybe in the future you will not. Now you are young but soon you will become old. Now you have good health, maybe in the future you will fall sick. Therefore, we need to race against time and hasten to do as much of good as we can. You never know what is going to happen in the future.

In this regard, the Prophet (PBUH) says: *"Hasten to do good deeds before trials and tribulations come over. When they occur, such trials and tribulations will be as confusing as darkness is. A person will be a believer in the morning and a disbeliever in the evening and another person will be a disbeliever in the morning and a believer in the evening; they will sell out the religion for a worldly gain."*

There are multiple fields of goodness. The Muslim should actively enter all these fields before it becomes too late. Allah praises those who hasten to goodness as He says: *"Indeed, they who are apprehensive from fear of their Lord, and they who believe in the signs of their Lord, and they who do not associate anything with their Lord, and they who give what they give while their hearts are fearful because they will be returning to their Lord, it is those who hasten to good deeds, and they outstrip [others] therein."* (Quran ٢٣: ٥٧ – ٦١)

The Muslim is required to hasten to do that is good. Allah says: *"Race toward forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whose width is like the width of the heavens and earth."* (Quran ٥٧: ٢١)

The Prophet (PBUH) explains that Allah the Almighty has prepared for the righteous a Paradise which has pleasures and enjoyments that none may ever expect.

Competition in doing good deeds is characteristic of all Allah's prophets as Allah Almighty states (Quran ٢١: ٩٠). It is characteristic of the believers as well (Quran ٥٦: ١٠ – ١٢).

The Prophet (PBUH) says: *"The people of Paradise will see those who will live in levels above them as you see the stars all over the sky. The distance is big between them since they are different in their degrees of righteousness."* The companions asked the Prophet (PBUH): *"Do you mean that those who are above are higher in rank and they will be the prophets of Allah*

who none will attain their ranks?" The Prophet said: "No! Those who are above are normal people who believed in Allah and accepted the prophets."

All the companions of the Prophet (PBUH) took part in this competition; they all, individuals and communities, would compete in doing all that is good.

Narrated Abu Huryrah:

One day, the Prophet (PBUH) asked: "Who is fasting today?" Abu Bakr said: "I am." The Prophet again said: "Who has attended a funeral procession today?" Abu Bakr said: "I did." The Prophet again said: "Who offered food to the needy today?" Abu Bakr said: "I did." The Prophet again said: "Who visited a sick person today?" Abu Bakr said: "I did." Thereupon, the Prophet said: "Anyone who does these four deeds combined will certainly enter Paradise."

Ubay ibn Ka'b said that there was a man whose house was too far from the mosque. However, he never missed a congregational prayer at the mosque. It was said to this man: "You could buy a donkey and ride it to the mosque especially when it is too hot or dark at night to walk. The man said: "You know what. I do not wish my house to be close to the mosque. I would rather walk many steps to the mosque and even more back to my house so that all these steps back and forth are recorded as good deeds in my account. The Prophet (PBUH) said to this man: *"You have been already given what you sought."* [Muslims]

Competition is one way to develop strong determination and ignite enthusiasm. Competition reveals who is good and who is bad. Competition reveals points of weakness and strength in one's character. They will never be equal; those who hasten and those who are sluggish. Allah the Almighty Says: *"And why do you not spend in the cause of Allah while to Allah belongs the ownership of the heavens and the earth? Not equal among you are those*

who spent before the conquest of Mecca and fought and those who did so after. The former are greater in degree than those who spent afterwards and fought. But to all Allah has promised the best reward." (Quran ٥٧: ١٠)

In fact, competition contributes to the progressiveness of nations. A nation should advance if there is a competition among its individuals, parties and organizations in serving people and sparing no effort to protect the society. Let us walk the talk and translate our beliefs into actions.

The principle of competing for goodness should be highly featured through social work and community service that always aim to enhance people's life and improve the overall condition of society. Such is a mission and not a slogan to chant; it is a mission that practically stands for the protection of human interest. Let actions speak louder than words when it comes to national work. The Prophet (PBUH) deferred it to us to manage our worldly life affairs our own way and taught that we must balance the life of this world with the life hereafter. The Prophet (PBUH) says: *"Work on maintaining the life of this world as if you would live forever and work on maintaining the life hereafter as you would die tomorrow."*

The feeling of belonging to one's country must be present in our everyday life if we want to maintain our growth and stability. Let everyone strengthen the feeling of belonging to their country by positive participation in social work and community service. Let everybody defend the overall interest of their country and let everyone raise their heads and be proud of their belonging to their country.

To wrap it up, there are many ways to compete for the goodness of one's country. Some examples include hard work, religious commitment, and national love. Other examples include

defending religion and keeping it away from being a cause of civil strife and fragmentation.