

TOPIC 5: THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DUAAT

Before we engage in dawah, it is very important for us to understand that much of our dawah is about how we treat one another. If we are harsh, egocentric and insincere, we will not be able to plant the right seeds in people's hearts and minds. There are some essential qualities and characteristics the duaat must have.

Sincerity

Without sincerity, our deeds are deficient and hold no value; there will be no success in our dawah or in our hereafter. Sincerity is therefore the key for dawah, and for any act of worship that we perform towards Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Actions are judged by intentions and every man shall have only that which he intended." (Bukhari)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said, "The first of people against whom judgment will be pronounced on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who died a martyr. He will be brought and Allah will make known to him His favours and he will recognize them. [The Almighty] will say: And what did you do about them? He will say: I fought for you until I died a martyr. He will say: You have lied - you did but fight that it might be said [of you]: He is courageous. And so it was said. Then he will be ordered to be dragged along on his face until he is cast into Hell-fire.

[Another] will be a man who has studied [religious] knowledge and has taught it and who used to recite the Qur'an. He will be brought and Allah will make known to His favours and he will recognize them. [The Almighty] will say: And what did you do about them? He will say: I studied [religious] knowledge and I taught it and I recited the Qur'an for Your sake. He will say: You have lied - you did but study [religious] knowledge that it might be said [of you]: He is learned. And you recited the Qur'an that it might be said [of you]: He is a reciter. And so it was said. Then he will be ordered to be dragged along on his face until he is cast into Hell-fire.

[Another] will be a man whom Allah had made rich and to whom He had given all kinds of wealth. He will be brought and Allah will make known to His favours and he will recognize them. [The Almighty] will say: And what did you do about them? He will say: I left no path [untrodden] in which You like money to be spent without spending in it for Your sake. He will say: You have lied - you did but do so that it might be said [of you]: He is open-handed. And so it was said. Then he will be ordered to be dragged along on his face until he is cast into Hell-fire." (Muslim)

Sincerity is the foundation for our dawah. It begins here - the journey for self-development of the daee. If this fails, everything else fails (i.e. If we have sincerity, then the other key characteristics will follow. If we don't have sincerity, then it all may fail for us and we need to reevaluate ourselves!) This links to the self-development that Allah gave to the Prophet (peace be upon him).

The first few verses in surah Muzzamil – revealed to the Prophet after the encounter with Jibreel - Allah is telling the Prophet (peace be upon him): “O you wrapped in your clothes! Stand all night in prayer except a little— pray half the night, or a little less, or a little more—and recite the Quran properly in a measured way. (73:1-4). For what reason? For We will soon send upon you a weighty revelation.” (73:5) So right at the beginning of his Prophethood, Allah was training the Prophet (peace be upon him).

- **Be sincere to yourself:** When it comes to sincerity, we must firstly be sincere to ourselves! The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said “Shall I not inform you of what I fear most for you than al-maseeh ad- dajjal ?” They said, “Yes O Messenger of Allah!” He said, “Hidden shirk (riyaa). A man stands to pray, so he beautifies his prayer when he notices someone looking at him.” (Ibn Majah) If we reflect, it shows that if a person can change from a good intention to a bad intention, we can also change our bad intention to a good intention. So, we must continue to evaluate our intention and make it sincere towards Allah.
- **Be sincere to the dawah:** Not only should we be sincere to ourselves, but we should also be sincere to the dawah. Dawah is not a game. It’s not about how many shahadahs we can get or who gets the most shahadahs!
- **Be sincere to the one you are giving dawah to:** Lastly, if we are sincere to ourselves and to the dawah itself, it also requires us to be sincere to the one we are giving dawah to! We must realise that, when we are talking to a non-Muslim, if they continue their course, they could be a person destined for hellfire. We should not wish that upon anyone. Therefore, when we talk to non-Muslims, it should be genuine and from the heart – “What comes from the heart, goes to the heart”

Knowledge: Stick to what you know

An important characteristic of the da'wah is related to knowledge; more specifically, whatever we convey to non-Muslims, we should have knowledge concerning it or understand it properly. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said “Convey from me, even if it is one ayat” (Bukhari). This means, although we do not need vast amount of knowledge to give da'wah, the knowledge we do need is on whatever we convey.

Da'wah is not based on ignorance, emotion or unknowns. In light of this, we should stick to what we do know, and not delve into what you don't know. Allah tells us in the Qur'an: “When you received it with your tongues and said with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge and thought it was insignificant while it was, in the sight of God, tremendous.” (24:15). Allah also says: “And do not say, concerning that which your tongues falsely put forward, ‘This is lawful and this is forbidden,’ so as to invent lies against Allah. Indeed, those who invent lies against Allah will never prosper.” (16:116). In terms of the knowledge they should know, the focus should be on knowing Allah and why He deserves worship. Both the Quran and the Messenger point towards this.

Your Character

- **Being kind and gentle:** Allah commands His noble Prophets Musa and Harun (peace be upon them) to speak mildly to Pharaoh while giving dawah to him: *“And speak to him mildly, perhaps he may accept admonition”* (20:44). Imam al-Qurtubi said about this verse, *“If Musa was commanded to speak mildly to Pharaoh then it is even more appropriate for others to follow this command when speaking to others and when commanding the good and forbidding the evil.”* (Al-Jami’i Ahkam al-Qur’an)
- **Do not be harsh:** Allah commands the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to argue, discuss and engage with people using good words and manners: *“Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching and argue with them in a way that is better.”* (16:125). Commenting on this, the grammarian, al-Zamakhshari, said: *“Arguing with them in a way that is better means using the best method of argumentation which is the method of kindness and gentleness without gruffness and harshness.”* (Al-Kashshaf)
- **Soft heartedness:** The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was soft hearted, and so should we. People will break away from those who are severe and harsh hearted. People flocked towards the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) because he dealt with people gently, as Allah says: *“And by the Mercy of God you dealt with them gently. And had you been severe and harsh hearted, they would have broken away from you.”* (3:159). Imam Sufyaan ath-Tahwri said, *“No one should command the good and forbid the evil except he who has three qualities. He is kind when he commands the good and he is kind when forbids the evil. He is just when he commands the good and he is just when he forbids the evil. And he is knowledgeable about that which he commands to and he is knowledgeable about that which he forbids.”*
- **Good manners and polite tongue:** The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) told us, *“nothing will be heavier on the Day of Resurrection in the Scale of the believer than good manners. Allah hates one who utters foul or coarse language.”* (Tirmidhi). Using good words in the context of dialogue and discussion is one of the greatest virtues in the Islamic tradition. It was narrated that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) never used foul speech, nor did he like to listen to it. (Bukhari). The Qur’an presents a beautiful example of comparing a good word with a tree with perpetual fruit and firm roots, *“Have you not considered how God presents an example, [making] a good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches [high] in the sky? It produces its fruit all the time, by permission of its Lord. And God presents examples for the people that perhaps they will be reminded. And the example of a bad word is like a bad tree, uprooted from the surface of the Earth, not having any stability. God keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word, in worldly life and in the Hereafter. And God sends astray the wrongdoers. And God does what He wills.”* (14:24-27)

By internalising some of these timeless values and teachings, we can all repel evil with good, and realise there is no need to hate; thereby facilitating close friendship. Even if we disagree with people, Allah says: *“And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel evil by that deed which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity will become as though he was a devoted friend.”* (41:34)

