

THE ELEMENT OF MERCY AND COMPASSION IN THE LIVE'S OF THE SELECTED PROPHETS: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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Abstract:

Mercy and compassion stand as fundamental moral values in all revealed religions. The Prophets of Allah were not only conveyors of divine guidance but also living embodiments of these noble traits. This paper explores how the quality of mercy was practically demonstrated in the lives of the Prophets, with a special focus on the life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. It emphasizes how he treated both his followers and adversaries with gentleness, forgiveness, and kindness. Through the examination of Qur'anic verses, authentic Hadiths, and Seerah literature, this study highlights how the values of mercy and compassion are essential for social cohesion and spiritual development.

Key Words: *Prophetic Mercy, Compassion in Islam, Seerah of the Prophets, Divine Attributes, Social Harmony in Islam, Hadith and Morality.*

Introduction

In Islam, *rahmah* (mercy) is not only one of Allah's divine attributes but also a central moral principle manifested in the character of the Prophets. The Qur'an declares the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as "a mercy to the worlds" (Surah Al-Anbiya: 107), reflecting the compassionate nature of his mission. Prophets such as Moses (Musa), Jesus (Isa), Joseph (Yusuf), and Abraham (Ibrahim), peace be upon them all, consistently displayed mercy even in the face of injustice, defiance, and adversity. This paper seeks to analyze how this divine trait shaped their actions and how it continues to offer ethical solutions in today's morally challenged world.

Literature Review

A wide range of classical and modern scholars have elaborated on the prophetic model of mercy. Imam Al-Ghazali, in *Ihya Ulum al-Din*, describes the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as the perfect human reflection of divine attributes. Similarly, Quranic commentators like Ibn Kathir

and Al-Qurtubi provide numerous examples of prophetic compassion based on scriptural exegesis. Modern thinkers such as Muhammad Asad and Sayyid Qutb have also highlighted how mercy was central to Islamic reform and da'wah (spiritual outreach). These scholarly works serve as a strong foundation for understanding the spiritual and moral significance of mercy in the lives of the Prophets.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach through textual analysis of primary Islamic sources—primarily the Qur'an, Hadith collections (like Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim), and classical tafsir texts. Secondary sources, such as biographical accounts and scholarly interpretations, are used to contextualize and enrich the discussion on prophetic mercy and its moral framework.

Analysis and Discussion

1. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

The Embodiment of Divine Mercy

The Qur'an states:

*"And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds."*¹

This verse clearly expresses the Prophet's universal role as a bearer of divine compassion. His interactions with both his companions and enemies reveal a consistent pattern of forgiveness, humility, and kindness.

The Incident of Ta'if

When Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was rejected and violently attacked by the people of Ta'if, he had the chance to seek divine punishment for them. Yet he chose to respond with mercy and made a heartfelt prayer:

*"I hope that Allah will bring forth from their descendants people who will worship Him alone."*²

The Conquest of Makkah

At the peak of his power, when he entered Makkah as a victor, the Prophet ﷺ had every reason to avenge the years of oppression by the Quraysh. However, he forgave them unconditionally, saying:

*"No blame will be placed upon you today. You are free to go."*³

A Prophet of Universal Mercy

The life of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ exemplifies mercy not only towards Muslims but all of humanity. He came to guide people out of ignorance, hatred, and injustice, leading them toward a life rooted in wisdom, fairness, and compassion.

Kindness Towards Children

The Prophet ﷺ showed exceptional gentleness toward children. He would greet them warmly, pat their heads with affection, and lovingly carry his grandsons, Hasan and Husayn, on his shoulders.

Anas ibn Malik (RA), who served the Prophet ﷺ for ten years, said:

¹ Al-Anbiya: 107

² Al-Bukhari, Muhammad bin Ismail, Al-Sahih Al-Bukhari, Riyaz: Dar-us-Salam, 1997, Hadith 3231

³ Ibn Hisham, Abu Muhammad Abdul Malik bin Hisham, Sirah al-Nabawiyah, Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathir, 1998., Vol. 4

“I have never seen anyone more affectionate and kind to children than the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.”⁴

The Prophet ﷺ once said:

“Whoever loves Hasan and Husayn, loves me.”⁵

Compassion for Slaves and the Weak:

The Prophet ﷺ uplifted the oppressed, including slaves, orphans, women, and the poor, by treating them with dignity and kindness.

Anas (RA) said:

“I served the Prophet ﷺ for ten years, and not once did he say ‘Uff’ to me. He never asked me why I did something or why I didn’t.”⁶

Forgiveness Towards Enemies:

The Prophet ﷺ demonstrated extraordinary forgiveness even toward his enemies. At the conquest of Makkah, when the Prophet ﷺ had complete control over his former persecutors, he said:

“Go, for you are free.”⁷

This included those who had caused him immense pain, yet he forgave them with grace.

Kindness to Animals:

The Prophet’s mercy extended even to animals. Once, upon seeing an overburdened camel in distress, he advised:

“Fear Allah in these voiceless creatures.”⁸

Another narration mentions a woman entering Hell for imprisoning a cat, and another who entered Paradise for giving water to a thirsty dog.⁹

Mercy in Social Dealings:

The Prophet ﷺ was gentle and sincere with everyone—whether believer or non-believer, close or distant. His face always wore a smile, his words were soft, and his heart was full of concern for others.

The Qur’an says:

⁴ Muslim bin Hajjaj Al-Qusheri, Al-Sahih Al-Muslim, Lahore: Dar-us-Salam, 2007, Hadith: 2316

⁵ Ibn Maja, Muhammad bin Yazeed Alkazvaini, Al-Sunan, Cairo: Dar-e-Ahya Al-kutab Al-Arbia, 2001, Hadith no. 14

⁶ Ibn Maja, Muhammad bin Yazeed Alkazvaini, Al-Sunan, Cairo: Dar-e-Ahya Al-kutab Al-Arbia, 2001, Hadith: 6038

⁷ Ibn Hisham, Abu Muhammad Abdul Malik bin Hisham, Sirah al-Nabawiyah, Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathir, 1998., Vol. 4

⁸ Abu-Dawud, Suleman bin Ashas. Al-Sunan, Egypt: Cairo Publications, 1935, Hadith: 2548

⁹ Al-Bukhari, Muhammad bin Ismail, Al-Sahih Al-Bukhari, Riyaz: Dar-us-Salam, 1997, Hadith 2363;

"And it was by the mercy of Allah that you were gentle with them..."¹⁰

1. Prophet Moses (Musa):

Mercy in Leadership and Intercession

Moses dealt with a rebellious nation and a tyrannical Pharaoh, yet consistently showed mercy and prayed for his people's forgiveness:

"My Lord, forgive me and my brother and admit us into Your mercy. You are the most merciful of the merciful."¹¹

Even after the golden calf incident, he interceded on their behalf, demonstrating responsibility and empathy.

After the Israelites worshipped the golden calf, Moses interceded with ALLAH on their behalf, pleading for their forgiveness and appealing to ALLAH's mercy.¹²

Prophet Jesus (Isa):

Messenger of Love and Healing

Jesus (peace be upon him) is presented in the Quran as a Prophet of gentleness and blessing:

"And He has made me blessed wherever I am and has enjoined upon me prayer and charity as long as I live, and [has made me] dutiful to my mother."¹³

His healing of the sick and love for outcasts highlight his compassion-driven mission.

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."¹⁴

"If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also."¹⁵

Jesus showed immense mercy through healing the sick, forgiving the sinful (like the woman caught in adultery), and preaching kindness, especially toward the poor and oppressed.

2. Prophet Joseph (Yusuf):

Forgiveness Over Vengeance

Despite being betrayed by his brothers and wronged by others, Joseph responded with immense forgiveness:

"No blame will be upon you today. Allah will forgive you, and He is the most merciful of the merciful."¹⁶

This mirrors the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ words during the conquest of Makkah, showing a consistent Prophetic theme of pardon.

When Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, he says:

"You intended to harm me, but ALLAH intended it for good."¹⁷

Despite their betrayal, he shows them love, forgives them, and provides for them.

¹⁰ Aal-e-Imran: 159

¹¹ Al Arafa: 151

¹² The Holy Bible, Zondervan Publishing House, 2011, Exodus 32:11–14

¹³ Maryam: 31-32

¹⁴ The Holy Bible, Matthew 5:44

¹⁵ The Holy Bible, Luke 6:29

¹⁶ Yousaf :92

¹⁷ The Holy Bible, Genesis 45:1–15

3. Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim):

Hospitable and Soft-Hearted

Abraham's kindness extended to strangers and his adversaries. He even pleaded for the people of Sodom:

*"Indeed, Abraham was forbearing, grieving, and frequently returning [to Allah]."*¹⁸

His hospitality to unknown guests (angels in disguise) and advocacy for sinners reflects a heart full of mercy.

The story of hospitality:

*"Then he went to his family and brought a fat [roasted] calf."*¹⁹

This verse reflects his generosity, mercy, and hospitality when angels visited him in human form.

Intercession for the people of Lot:

*"Indeed, Abraham was forbearing, tender-hearted, and ever turning [to Allah]."*²⁰

Abraham pleads with ALLAH to spare the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah if even a small number of righteous people are found there. His dialogue with ALLAH shows deep concern and mercy for others, even for sinful people.²¹

Prophetic Mercy

Across all Prophets, several consistent themes of mercy emerge:

1. Forbearance in adversity
2. Forgiveness toward enemies
3. Care for the weak and marginalized
4. Concern for spiritual and material well-being
5. Desire for the guidance and salvation of others

These themes establish a universal framework for moral leadership based on empathy and justice.

Relevance for the Modern World

Today's global society, marked by division, conflict, and moral decay, can deeply benefit from Prophetic values. The mercy shown by Prophets serves as a counterbalance to extremism, injustice, and intolerance. Their examples inspire leaders, educators, and reformers to lead with patience, forgiveness, and sincere concern for humanity.

Conclusion

The Prophets of ALLAH, from Abraham to Muhammad (peace be upon them all), are shining beacons of mercy and compassion. Their lives illustrate that the essence of divine guidance lies in treating creation with care and dignity. Mercy was not just a sentiment for them—it was a mission. Emulating the Prophetic model means embracing forgiveness, justice, and unconditional compassion in our personal and collective lives.

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¹⁸ Hud: 75

¹⁹ The Holy Bible, Genesis 18:23-33

²⁰ Hud: 75

²¹ Adh-Dhariyat: 26

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