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HAVE WE FORGOTTEN...?

Rasūlullāh (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) was sent to a people deeply divided by tribe, language, colour, and lineage. For generations, Arabs fought endless wars among themselves. Tribal loyalty was everything. A man would support his tribe whether they were right or wrong. Entire communities remained trapped in cycles of hatred and revenge for decades.

The Arabs viewed themselves as superior to non-Arabs. Additionally, those with darker skin were frequently looked down upon by those with lighter complexions. These prejudices were deeply rooted in society.

Yet within just twenty-three years, Rasūlullah (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) shattered centuries of barriers. He transformed a fragmented people into a united Ummah. No longer were tribe, race, language, or nationality the bonds that held people together. Instead, the bond of Īmān became stronger than every other bond.

The Sahābah (radhiyallāhu ‘anhum) who came from distant lands were not treated as outsiders. They were welcomed, honoured, and made to feel that they truly belonged.

Hadhrat Bilāl (radhiyallāhu ‘anhu), who hailed from Africa, was appointed as the official Muazzin of Rasūlullah (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam). His voice would echo through Madīnah Munawwarah, calling the believers to Salāh. He remained close to Rasūlullah (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) and occupied a position of immense honour among the Sahabah (radhiyallāhu ‘anhum).

During the Battle of the Trench, Rasūlullah (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) distributed the duty of digging the trench between the Muhājirīn and the Ansār. Hadhrat Salmān al-Fārsi (radhiyallāhu ‘anhu), who had originally come from Persia, found himself at the centre of a discussion between the Muhājirīn and the Ansār. The Muhājirīn insisted that Salmān (radhiyallāhu ‘anhu) belonged to them. The Ansār disagreed and claimed him as one of their own. Each group desired the honour of having him among them.

When Rasūlullah (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) heard this discussion, he declared:

"Salmān is, in fact, one of us, the Ahlul Bayt (the Noble Household)!" (Haakim, 6684)

Imagine that...! A man born thousands of kilometres away, from a non-Arab background, was granted the ultimate distinction of being counted among the noble household of Rasūlullah (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam).

This was Islam.

There were two tribes in Madīnah Munawwarah, Aws and the Khazraj. For years, they had fought bitter wars against one another. Rasūlullah (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) united their hearts and transformed enemies into brothers. However, not everyone was pleased with this unity. Some Jews of Madīnah devised a plan to revive old tribal rivalries. A young man was sent to them. Once he had gained their confidence, he began to remind them of past battles and recite poetry that glorified their former conflicts. Slowly, old wounds reopened, tempers flared, and arguments erupted. The two tribes were on the verge of fighting once again.

When Rasūlullah (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) was informed, he exclaimed in anger:

"Do you raise the call of ignorance while I am still among you?"

It was on this occasion that Allāh Ta'ālā revealed the following verses:

"O believers! If you were to obey some of those who were given the Scripture, they would turn you back to disbelief after you believed. How can you disbelieve while Allah's verses are recited to you and His Messenger is among you?... And all of you hold firmly to the rope of Allah and do not become divided. Remember Allah's favour upon you when you were enemies to one another, and He united your hearts, and by His grace you became brothers." (Surah Āl-Imrān, 100) (See Tafsīr Qurtubi)

In these verses, Allāh Ta'ālā links tribalism, prejudice, and division to a path that leads towards disbelief and ingratitude.

Many of the conflicts, tensions, and social upheavals that plague societies are not accidental. They are often fuelled by those who exploit existing prejudices.

In another narration, Rasūlullah (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said regarding an argument that had erupted between the Muhājirīn and Ansār:

"Leave it, for it is foul and repulsive." (Ibn Hibbān, 2502)

The lesson is clear: A divided Ummah is easy to manipulate. An Ummah united upon Dīn is far more difficult to break.

During the Farewell Hajj, Rasūlullah (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) delivered one of the most profound messages ever spoken on human equality:

"O people! Your Rabb (sustainer) is One and your father (Ādam alayhis salām) is one! An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have superiority over an Arab. A white person has no superiority over a black person,

nor does a black person have superiority over a white person, except through Taqwa." (Ahmad, 23489)

The standard by which Allah judges us is not nationality, race, language, passport, tribe, wealth, or social status. The most honoured in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā is the one who possesses the most Taqwa.

Moulana Yusuf Kandhlawi (Rahimahullah) says that we will never achieve true progress until we sever the four shackles of prejudice that divide us:

- Nationality
- Race
- Language
- Tribe

Allāh Ta'ālā declares in the Qur'an:

"Indeed, the believers are but brothers." (Surah Hujurat, 10)

Rasulullah (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) left behind one Ummah united by Dīn.

Sadly, colonial borders and modern nationalism have succeeded in dividing us to such an extent that many now view their fellow brothers as not belonging, treating them as individuals worthy of being excluded, removed, or cast aside.

We cry when we hear of the suffering of Muslims overseas, yet we sometimes fail to recognise the Muslim standing beside us. We speak of the global Ummah, but often struggle to embrace the brother next door.

The reality is that when we turn a blind eye to the suffering of our brothers, we may well be faced with the same. History illustrates that division eventually consumes everyone. Today, it is someone else; tomorrow, it may be us.

In the face of unrest, instability, and growing hostility, our first response must be sincere repentance. We should also resort to actions that draw the mercy of Allāh Ta'ālā.

We need to stay alert, structured, and ready for any eventuality. We must never permit ourselves to be overwhelmed. Every community is entitled to safeguard itself, maintain its dignity, and defend what rightfully belongs to it.

Our greatest strength was never numbers, wealth, ethnicity, nationality, or political influence; rather, our greatest strength lies in our unity on truth.

May Allāh Ta'ālā protect and secure us. May He remove hatred, prejudice, and division from our hearts. May He unite us under the banner of Lā ilāha illallāh, strengthen the bonds of Islamic brotherhood, and make us worthy of being called the Ummah of Muhammad (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam). Āmīn.