**REPRESENTATION**

Representation and the tongue of conduct means an invitation to religion made by a person of ***tabligh*** through his/her behavior and good conduct; it is displaying a role model behavior by practicing what is preached. Representation is one of the best methods of explaining the truths of religion. One should practice what he attempts to explain to others, at a level which he has benefited from them. This is an important factor in ***tabligh***.

True da'wa can be better accomplished by representation. A person who has dedicated himself to explaining the truths of the Qur'an and faith cannot live a life that is contradictory to the realities he explains. Positive behavior and good conduct should be role modeled by those who promote them so that they could have an effect on others.

People who have undertaken the duty of **irshad** and **tabligh** must first practice what they preach. In this regard, the holy Quran cautions us with the following verse in  ***(Baqara 2:44).***:



Two other verses from as Saf 61:2-3:



 "***Why do you say what you do not practice (or will not practice)? Most repulsive it is in the sight of Allah that you say what you do not (and will not) practice.***"

In Tafsir books, the ulama of tafseer explain that the reason of the revelation of this whole Surah was because of the statement of some companions who had gathered together and wondered by saying: **We wish we had known the most noble good deed in the sight of Allah so that we would sacrifice everything we have to accomplish it**". (Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad bin Hanbel and Tirmidhi). The reason of the revelation of the second and the third verses (sebeb-ul nuzul) to be revelaed from the statements of Abdullah bin Salam who explained: This verse is to remind the true believers to keep their promise when they offered a vow (nezr). If it is something they would not be able to fulfill, then they should not offer. If they did, then they have to make effort to fulfill their promise. The word "**maqt**" in the verse means the highest level of disliking something.

In one hadith recorded in Ad Durrul Mansur by As Suyuti (1/158), Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) explains this issue with the following words: **"Those who command righteousness to others but forget themselves shall drag their intestines in the hellfire. When they are asked "Who are you?" They will reply "We are those who commanded righteousness to others but forgot ourselves."**

When we carefully analyze the life of Rasulullah, tamseel (representation) came always before tabligh in the life of Allah's Messenger Muhammad A.S. We will see that role modeling was always one step ahead of tabligh. He would role model the matters he explained so sensitively that those who observed him would believe in Allah without having a need for further proof. There were many cases in which people accepted his prophethood by just looking at him. Kadi Iyad recorded in his Ash Shifaa (1/249) about Abdullah ibn Rawaha saying, **"Even if he had not come with clear miracles, one look at him would have been enough to believe.**" What a wonderful way of explaining the truth!

The representation of Prophet Muhammad A.S. was so effective that Abdullah ibn Salaam, who was a scholar of Beni Israeel, embraced Islam with a glance upon his face. He said "**There is no lie on his face. Only a Messenger of Allah can possess such a face**" (reported in Al Masnu' of Aliyyul Qaari). This means that seeing Rasulullah was enough to accept him. Those who have dedicated their lives to explaining something to others will know the difficulty of such rapid acceptance. Most of these people work vigorously throughout their lives but cannot find a handful of followers or encourage people to accept their religion by entering their hearts. Can we name any person whose name is chanted out five times a day publicly with great excitement and a sound that echoes all over the world?

As he invited people to servanthood and obedience to Allah, he showed his servanthood in its purest form by praying throughout the night until his feet were swollen. One day, Aisha R. Anha reminded our prophet that his past and future was guided by Allah SWT and asked why he was placing so much burden upon himself after seeing him praying most part of the night, Prophet Muhammad A.S. replied **"Should I not be thankful servant?**" (Ibn Hibban reported in Sahih 2/386).

Companions (The sahaaba) who learned everything from the Noble Prophet were also people of representation (tamseel). In their lives, actions came before words.





**Dear Muslims!**

In Islam, action and manners are essential principles. The two elements that attract people the most are **behavior** and **attitude**. In conveying the truth and righteousness to people, the main tool for Muslims should be their **manners** rather than their words. Behind the guidance of people who run to faith, there is a thing which is more effective than mere words, and this is tamseel, representation, of Islam through actions and right attitude. When the disciples of Prophet Isa A.S. and the companions of Prophet Muhammad A.S. interacted with people of different nations to convey and explain the message of Islam, they did not know their language or knew some basics, did not know their customs. However, they entered the hearts of these people with their true Islamic manners and good conduct.

Our actions should confirm what we advise and preach so that we are not dubbed as a liar in the sight of Allah, and we do not lose our reputation amongst the people.

However, the verse, "**O you who believe!** ***Why do you say what you do not practice (or will not practice)? Most odious it is in the sight of Allah that you say what you do not (and will not) practice.***" Should not be misunderstood. When the verse asks "**Why**", it is not implying that you cannot advise people while you don't practice them. What it is actually saying is: Since you are saying it, then you be doing accordingly." So, saying something and not doing it, draws the punishment of Allah. This means that the verse is not suggesting that one shouldn't say the things he/she doesn't do, but it is indicating that one should be determined to practice what he/she preaches.

Some companions who had similar concerns about this issue asked the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Anas Ibn Malik explains: "We asked the Prophet of Allah: "O the Messenger of Allah! Should we not encourage people to do good and prevent them from doing evil, if we are not practicing everything perfectly?" Muhammad A.S. replied: "No! Even if you do not practice everything perfectly, you should stil invite others to good and if you are not able to protect yourself from all the unlawful things, you should still prevent others from doing evil." (Imam Gazali, Ihya 2/239).

Conveying the message and practicing the religious obligations are two different forms of worship. If you abandon both, you are committing two sins, but if you abandon one of the two, then you are committing one sin hence you are confining yourself to ineffectiveness because it will break the power of effectiveness. Furthermore, it will have a negative impact on your credibility and your words will have no influence thus they will be forgotten very quickly.

I will conclude my khutbah with another great example from Imam Abu Hanifa Rhm.Alayh. His neighbor was concerned because he had not seen him for a few days. He was not a Muslim but he respected and loved this unique scholar. He had never witnessed a bad treatment from him. Moreover, the Imam was there whenever he needed something.

The neighbor learned that Abu Hanifa was ill and decided to visit him. The Imam greeted him as he walked in his house. There was bad odor in the room but he did not mention it as he smiled and said "May God restore your health neighbor." The Imam thanked him.

The smell in the room had not gone away. He could not hide his curiosity any longer as he wondered where the smell was coming from. He knew that Muslims were extremely careful with their hygiene so there had to be another reason for this bad odor. Before he asked, he saw a wall which was covered with a sheet. Then he asked: "Can you smell the odor too?"

The Imam refrained from replying but he realized that his neighbor was waiting for an answer as he stared right into his eyes. Reluctantly, the Imam nodded his head indicating that he could smell it too. The neighbor wanted to find out the source of the awful smell, he lifted the sheet that covered the wall separating his room from the Imam's room. Imam Hanifa had no other option but to explain: "Dear neighbor! There was dirty water leaking from your room into mine. That is the source of bad smell."

His neighbor was shocked as he asked: "Why didn't you tell me about this before?" The Imam explained the rights of neighbors in the statements of Prophet Muhammad A.S. His non-muslim neighbor paused for a moment and thought how Islam gives a great value to human beings. Then he said: "I now understand that it is Islam that gives you this beauty. Now, I shall become a Muslim since your faith is so beautiful" And declared his shaadah and embraced Islam. A simple kindness was enough to guide him onto the right path. The Imam's representation of his religion had caused another human being to embrace Islam.

I ask Allah SWT to help us reflect upon the importance of representing Islam by our practice and implementation rather than mere words, and thus improve our position in delivering the message of Islam more effectively. May we all hold fast to the rope that Allah extends for us. May we all set a good example for others, a justly balanced community, ummatan wasatan, and a witness to the nations.