**THE IDEAL MUSLIM , THE IDEAL BELIEVER**



**33.35**. Surely all men and women who submit to God (whose submission is attested by their words and deeds), and all truly believing men and truly believing women, and all devoutly obedient men and devoutly obedient women, and all men and women honest and truthful in their speech (and true to their words in their actions), and all men and women who persevere (in obedience to God through all adversity), and all men and women humble (in mind and heart before God), and all men and women who give in alms (and in God's cause), and all men and women who fast (as an obligatory or commended act of devotion), and all men and women who guard their chastity (and avoid exposing their private parts), and all men and women who remember and mention God much – for them (all), God has prepared forgiveness (to bring unforeseen blessings) and a tremendous reward.(1)



**2.208.** O you who believe! Come in full submission to God, all of you, (without allowing any discord among you due to worldly reasons), and do not follow in the footsteps of Satan, for indeed he is a manifest enemy to you (seeking to seduce you to rebel against God, with glittering promises).(2)

**HADITH**

The Muslims are those from whose tongues and hands other Muslims are safe and sound. The emigrants are those who leave behind and abandon those things God has prohibited.(3)

They greet everyone with salaam, thereby placing love for themselves in everyone’s heart.(4)

**THE IDEAL MUSLIM , THE IDEAL BELIEVER**

Let us briefly analyze the above hadith. Notice the presence of the definite article (al in Arabic) before Muslim. What can be extrap­olated from this is that there are ideal believers who enter an atmosphere of safety and security, having so immersed themselves in that atmosphere that they harm no one with their hands or tongues. This refers only to the true and ideal Muslims who leave their mark on all minds, not those who appear or claim to be so, or to those whose iden­tity cards or passports have “Muslim” written on them. We understand this from the article used in the Arabic, which indicates something specif­ic, definite. This is derived from the grammatical rule of the Arabic lan­guage: “When something is described by a definite article, the item’s highest and most perfect condition is indicated.” So, when one hears “the believer,” the first thing that comes to mind is the most perfect meaning of “believer,” and that is what is meant in this hadith.

Moreover, one cannot learn such a fine grammatical point by oneself, for it is a topic that belongs to formal education. Hence, such an educa­tional experience was not possible for the Messenger of God; he was illit­erate. Thus, he was not speaking his own thoughts, but rather he was relaying what the Eternal Teacher taught him to say. For this reason, there are many subtle grammatical points found in the Prophet’s expressions and declarations, and there are no errors in usage.

Let us return to the above hadith: Real Muslims are people in whom one can feel confidence and trust, so much so that other Muslims can turn their backs on them without a second thought. One can entrust a family member to such people without fear; this person will suffer no injury from the hand or tongue of the Muslim. If one were to attend a gathering with a true Muslim, one could leave in full confidence that no one will gossip about one, nor would one have to listen to gossip about others. Such Muslims are as sensitive to the dignity and honor of other people as they are to their own. They do not eat; they feed others. They do not live for themselves; they live to enable others to live. They will even sacrifice their spiritual pleasure for others. I derive all these meanings from the fact that the definite article in Arabic also means hasr; a restraining, a devotion to a specific purpose.

**Security and Muslims**

Etymologically speaking, the word Muslim and the verb sa-li-ma both come from the root silm. This means that for Muslims, every matter takes place in line with silm (security), salamah (safety), and Muslim-ness. Muslims are seized by such a divine attraction that all of their actions take place around this powerful center.

They greet everyone with salaam, thereby placing love for themselves in everyone’s heart.2 They end their prayers with salaam. All people, jinn, angels, and conscious creatures receive their salaam. That is, they exchange greetings with invisible creatures as well. Until now, no other people have extended this circle of greeting to such a degree as have the Muslims. Islam consists of performing such principal duties as fasting, giving alms, performing the Hajj, and striving to profess the faith. This means that they set sail on the sea of safety and security by obeying the command: Enter safety (Islam) whole-heartedly (2:208). Those who throw themselves into that sea emanate safety and Islam in every condi­tion. No one sees anything but goodness in the actions and behavior of such people.

**Why the Tongue and Hand?**

As in every statement of our master, peace and blessings be upon him, every word in the hadith mentioned above was chosen carefully. Why did he choose the hand and the tongue to speak about? Of course there are many subtle points related to this choice. A person can harm someone in two ways: either directly or indirectly. The hand represents physical pres­ence (directly), and the tongue represents absence (indirectly). People either attack others directly, physically, or indirectly, through gossip and ridicule. Real Muslims never engage in such activities, because they are supposed to always act justly and generously, whether they are acting directly or indirectly.

The Prophet mentioned the tongue before the hand because in Islam one can retaliate for what has been done with the hand. However, the same is not always true for damage done indirectly through gossip or slander. Thus, such action can easily cause conflict between individuals, communities, and even nations. Dealing with this type of harm is relative­ly more difficult than dealing with the harm caused by the hand, and this is the reason why the Prophet mentioned the tongue before the hand. On the other hand, the value of Muslims before God has been indicated. Being a Muslim has such a great value before God that other Muslims must control their hands and tongues in their actions toward them.

Another important moral dimension of Islam is that Muslims must keep at bay things that will harm others, whether physically or spiritual­ly, and they must do their best not to harm others. Let alone not causing harm, every segment of Muslim society must also represent safety and security. Muslims can be real Muslims to the extent that they carry with­in themselves a feeling of safety and that their hearts beat with trust. Wherever they are or wherever they live this feeling that derives from al-salaam is revealed. They wish for safety upon departure, adorn their prayers with greetings, and send salaams to other believers when they end their prayers. In all probability, it is inconceivable that people who lead their whole lives in such an orbit of salaam would embark on a path that is contrary to the basic principles of safety, trust, soundness, and worldly and other-worldly security, thus causing harm to themselves or to others.

It would be useful to examine the very essence of these points: True Muslims are the most trustworthy representatives of universal peace. They travel everywhere with this sublime feeling, nourished deep in their spirits. Far from giving torment or suffering, they are remembered every­where as symbols of safety and security. In their eyes, there is no differ­ence between a physical (direct) or a verbal (indirect) violation of some­one’s rights. In fact, in some cases the latter is considered to be a greater crime than the former. (5)

**AN IDEAL MUSLIM AND THE EVIL OF THE TONGUE AND HAND**

“A true Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hands Muslims are safe. And a Muhajir (emigrant) is the one who abandons all that God has forbidden.”
(Bukhari, Iman, 4; Abu Dawud, Jihad, 2)
The use of the Arabic definite article at the beginning of the phrases “Muslim” and “Muslims” denotes a special meaning. They actually refer to ideal Muslims, the sincere devoted believers who abstain from evil actions, who have totally absorbed themselves in an atmosphere of security and salvation. These people are totally different to those who claim to be believers or Muslims just because they were born into Muslim families. Their entire way of life portrays the idealistic sincerity of a true believer. Their thoughts and actions are a conveyance of perfection; therefore, when one says “a sincere believer,” the first person who comes to mind is a Muslim of perfection. This is the description of the Muslim portrayed in this hadith.
Besides the main topic of the hadith, one thing to be noted here is the language use.
Under normal circumstances, only a learned person taught by an expert knows such fine points of language. It is known that there was no question of such education for the Prophet of God; he was blessed with the ability of speech and preached that which the Almighty Creator taught him. This is why the teachings and expressions of Prophet Muhammad were conveyed in a manner of speech that was free from any kind of defect.
Again, if we turn to the contents of the hadith, a true Muslim is a figure of reliance and trust. This is true to such an extent that other Muslims attain a sense of security and unlimited confidence, having no doubts in the sincerity of such people and completely seeing them as trustworthy. To such people they entrust their families, the dearest and most valuable existence of their lives, with total assurance that no harm will befall them. Following a meeting or conversation with these people you feel a sense of security; you know these believers would neither gossip about you nor disclose secrets to others; indeed, they would even prevent others from doing so. Such a person approaches others with the same sensitivity and respect for their dignity as if it were their own honor that is in question; they feed and provide for others before themselves and dedicate to working for the benefit of those around them. This is just a short explanation of the vast qualities that the sincere believers mentioned in this hadith have.
A believer gives greetings to both those they are acquainted with and to complete strangers; such behavior sows the seeds of friendship and love in the soul (Bukhari, Muslim). On completion of the prayer the true believer’s greetings are accepted by all of existence, from the angels to the spirits; they bestow good tidings on both the apparent and the unseen; this is behavior that Muslims of sincerity perform and it is one that has never been conveyed to such an extent by others throughout history.
A person enters Islam adhering to the prayer, fasting, performing the Hajj and witnessing the unification of the Creator as commanded in the Qur’an “O you who believe! Come in full submission to God, all of you…” (Baqara 2:208). This means opening the soul to the vast ocean of bliss and contentment; nothing but goodness is expected from a person in this state.
Every word in this hadith is chosen with great care, as in all other sayings of the Prophet. There are, of course, many reasons for focusing on hand and tongue. There are two ways of harming those around us. We can cause others harm either directly or behind their back. Direct damage to humans is through actions; indirect damage is caused to one who is not present via the tongue, or in other words, with speech. A human can either violate the rights of others by assaulting them or violate the rights of others in their absence by gossiping and undermining their reputation and dignity. Both are immoral acts never to be performed by a sincere Muslim; a sincere Muslim acts benevolently toward others, whether it is directly or in their absence.
The Prophet mentioned the tongue, or speech, before the hand (actions). It is quite possible that there is the potential of reaction or retaliation when a deed is physical, whereas in case of gossip or slander, the response often remains unchallenged. Therefore, there is an ever-present possibility that a person could vilify another person, their environment or even cause a conflict between nations.
Defending oneself against harms to be done by tongue is much more difficult than defense against direct physical abuse, and it is for this reason that Prophet Muhammad mentioned speech before physical actions. Also, this demonstrates the importance of the values we have been given by God; in fact, protecting the dignity and reputation of other Muslims is so important that a believer is commanded to control both their tongue and hands.
One of the important moral concepts of Islam, which came with a universal notion of security and well-being, is a Muslim individual’s refraining from harmful things, whereas Islam’s other aspect is to ensure that no harm will befall others. Thus, a Muslim as an individual should distance themselves from affairs that could cause harm to both him and others; this is of great importance as it is not only the means of refraining from harming others, but it actually provides assurance and instills confidence in every sector and layer of society.
A true believer has a feeling of security in his or her heart. Such people inspire a feeling of security everywhere they go. They greet other believers with wishes of peace for when they come and leave. During salat they wish peace for all the righteous servants and they finish by greeting the angels on both sides. It would be unthinkable that a human who continues to live within this constant circle of well wishing could wander from the path of truth, a path that ensures well being, spiritually and/or materially, for humans in this world and the Hereafter, or unthinkable will be for them to participate in anything that would result in harm to them as an individual or cause harm to others.
Following these initial remarks in relation to the hadith, we can continue to explore these aspects that have great spirituality:
a- A sincere Muslim is the most reliable representative of universal peace on the earth.
b- A Muslim conveys the intense emotions experienced deep in their soul wherever they go.
c- A Muslim is perceived as the symbol of security and kindness, who never causes harm or distress to others.
d- A Muslim considers verbal abuse to be equal to physical abuse; namely gossip, slander and insult. Indeed, in many cases these can be a greater sin than physical abuse.
e- According to our faith, even if a believer perpetrates any of these evil sins they remain a Muslim; this is not a topic that delineates between blasphemy and belief.
f- As in every matter, a believer should have a broad horizon in matters of faith and the practice of Islam; they should not be content as ordinary Muslims but intend for perfection in faith. The above mentioned ones and even further meanings are included within the pithy statement of the Messenger of God.(6)

**References**

**33:35/The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**2:208/The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**(3) Bukhari, Iman, 4.**

**(4) Bukhari, Iman, 20; Muslim, Iman, 63.**

**(5) M. Fethullah Gulen**

**(6) 40 Hadiths, Ali Budak , Tughrabooks.The Light inc**