

Muslim Perspective on Mercy
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Islam is described in the Qur'an as a message of Mercy for the world. This truth can be demonstrated thoroughly in its teachings whether through the Qur'an or the Sunnah (way and example of the Prophet). Any person who studies Islam profoundly comes to the conclusion that God's message is a **message of peace, mercy, security, prosperity, love, justice, and happiness for all of His creation**. All what a person needs for understanding Islam is humility, an open mind, sincere attention and an effort to learn about it from reliable sources and not from the media or extremist religious broadcasts and periodicals.

Islam stresses on the Universal values and can never contradict the human nature and common sense. By nature and with our natural disposition we understand what Mercy is all about. First and foremost, we are humans before any religious affiliation. Religion was only meant to remind us and teach us how we can be better human hence closer to God Almighty.

Muslim Perspective on Mercy:

1. One of the most important names of God: **The Most Merciful and the Most Compassionate**. Every Muslim who prays the daily Salat prayers calls Him by these two names more than 68 times.
2. God revealed to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) to teach people that the first thing humanity should know about Him is that He is the Most Forgiving and the Most Merciful:

[Tell My servants that I am indeed the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful;]

(15:49)

3. His Mercy is beyond comprehension and is limitless. God also says:

[My Mercy extends to all things...] (7:156)

4. Humans' mercy cannot be compared to the Divine Mercy. **[Say: "If ye had control of the Treasures of the Mercy of my Lord, behold, ye would keep them back, for fear of spending them: for man is (ever) ungenerous!"] (17:100)**

Prophet Muhammad (P.b.u.h) taught his followers that Islam is about mercy and being merciful. He explained and demonstrated that practically. Once He gave a parable to the mercy of God by pointing to a woman who was carrying her baby while breast-feeding him. He asked his companions, "Would you think this woman would throw her baby in the fire?" They replied, certainly not! She wouldn't allow herself to do that. He then said, **"Know that Allah is more Merciful to you than this woman to her baby."**

5. The entire divine message sent through Prophet Muhammad (P.b.u.h) is meant to focus primarily on Mercy and divine Grace:

[We sent thee not, but as a mercy for all creatures.] (21:107)

The Qur'an teaches that Allah sealed the revelation to mankind through His last Prophet and Messenger Muhammad (P.b.u.h) whom He sent to all humanity as a Mercy. We read in the Qur'an,

"We sent thee not, but as a mercy for all creatures" (21:107)

And He also says,

"Say: "O people! I am sent unto you all, as the Messenger of Allah, to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: there is no god but He (The

Most merciful): it is He that gives both life and death. So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, who believes in Allah and His Words: follow him that (so) you may be guided.” (7:158)

In many chapters of the Qur’an, Allah reminds people of the blessings and possessions they have because He is the one who gives and takes things away such as health, wealth, intellect and life. He uses in all these cases the word “Rahmah” which means Mercy, and He wants people to be merciful to one another as well as to all His creatures. The Prophet (P.b.u.h), who was the example and practical model of God’s teachings, urged people to be merciful and compassionate. He said,

“Be merciful to others, Allah will be Merciful to you, and forgive, Allah will forgive you” [Related by Ahmad]. And he also said when al-Aqra’ Bin Habiss, a Bedouin man, saw him kissing his grand son al-Hassan and said that he had ten children and he never kissed anyone of them:

“Whoever does not show mercy to others, Mercy won’t cover him” [Agreed upon]. Imam Ahmad added: **“and whoever does not forgive, Allah won’t forgive him”** He also said,

“The merciful ones deserve the Mercy of the Most Merciful. Be merciful to those on earth so that the One in Heaven – Allah – will cover you with His Mercy” Reported by Ahmad, Abu Daawud and at-Tirmidhi. The latter said it is good and authentic.

The idea here is that divine rewards come from the same things we do to our fellow humans and all the creation. If we want God’s blessings we have to be blessing to others, if we want to strength we have to help the weak and we want prosperity we have to help the poor. As one does to others it will be done to

him/her. Showing mercy to others will increase God's mercy to us.

A model of Mercy

In fact, there are hundreds of sayings that we can mention here in this context. All the teachings of the Prophet (P.b.u.h) were about how to be merciful and show others mercy. There are many stories recorded in the biographies of the Messenger of Allah (P.b.u.h) of people who embraced Islam not because they studied it in the classes or heard about it in lectures, but rather because they saw the behavior of the teacher and his disciples. That behaviour was one of the main reasons thousands of people embraced Islam and committed themselves to the faith.

The Prophet (P.b.u.h) with his pattern, character, and personality was and still is considered by the faithful as a gift from God, a divine act of mercy. He (P.b.u.h) used to call his companions and say,

“O people I am indeed a gift of mercy from Allah to you.”

Once some of his followers, while suffering from the persecution and the injustice of the Polytheists of Makkah, asked him to curse them, he replied:

“I was not sent by God to curse people, but rather as a Mercy to them.”

[Reported by Imam Muslim]

God describes Prophet Muhammad (P.b.u.h) in the Qur'an, emphasizing some of his qualities. He showed His messenger one of the main reasons why people followed him saying, **“It is part of the Mercy of Allah that you deal gently with them. Had you been severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you: so pass over (their faults), and ask for (Allah's) forgiveness for them; and consult them in affairs (of moment).**

Then, when you take a decision, put your trust in Allah. For Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him).” (3:159)

One of the companions named Malek ibn al-Huwayrith once came with a group of youth from a different part of Arabia to learn about Islam and to stay as guests and students at the Prophet’s place for many days. On the twentieth day, they told him that they missed their families and that they could not stay longer than what they had planned. The Prophet understood (P.b.u.h) understood their situation and gave them permission to leave instructing them briefly on what to do for prayers. Malek said: **“He was very considerate of our situation, and indeed very kind, very compassionate, and very merciful...”**

I relate this to show that if we Muslims are ordered by God to follow our Prophet (P.b.u.h) and to behave like him as much as we can then we should also be kind and merciful as he was. For those of us who love to follow his way, we are not a threat to anyone, but a mercy. Islam is crystal clear in that it does not allow its adherents to have double standards. We Muslims have one Book, one God, and one pattern to follow that is the pattern of the Prophets (Peace be upon all of them). Allah (The Almighty) says regarding following the last Messenger (P.b.u.h),

“You have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who engages much in the praise of Allah.” (33:21)

And He also says:

“Say: “This is my Way: I do invite unto Allah – on evidence clear as the seeing with one’s eyes – I and whoever follows me. Glory to Allah! And never will I join gods with Allah!” (12:108)

And He says regarding following all the Messengers (Peace be upon them), **“There was indeed in them an excellent example for you to follow, for those whose hope is in Allah and in the Last Day. But if any turn away, truly Allah is Free of all Wants, worthy of all Praise.”** (60:6)

Mercy to the Enemy:

[And they feed, for the love of Allah, the indigent, the orphan and the captive— (Saying) "We feed you for the sake of Allah alone: no reward do we desire from you, nor thanks.] (76:8-9)

And also when he reclaimed Makkah and rededicated it to Islam, the prophet's former enemies asked him about their destiny. He said what Joseph (Peace be upon him) said to his brethren: **“You may go free! No reproach this day shall be on you; may God forgive you.”**

Mercy to animals and all the creation:

The Prophet (P.b.u.h.) said: “A traveller who was thirsty came upon a well. He – in another narration she was a woman - descended the well and when he came out he saw a dog licking mud due to thirst. The man realised that the dog was as thirsty as him, so he went into the well again, filled his leather sock with water and carried it out holding it with his teeth. Thus, he quenched the thirst of the dog. Allah was pleased with this act of kindness and pardoned his sins.” The Companions asked: “O Messenger of Allah, is there recompense in the matter of beasts and wild animals also?” The Prophet (P.b.u.h.) replied: **“There is recompense in regard to every creature that has a living heart.”**

In another hadith, the Prophet said: “A woman was cast away to hell only because she had withheld food and water from her cat - put her under a bucket - and refused to set it free so that the cat might satisfy its hunger by eating from the earth.”

In conclusion, if the mission of every Messenger was (a) to bring people closer to God and (b) to bring people closer to one another then it is onus upon us as their followers to focus our work and efforts on these most noble acts. More than ever, we the people of faith should spread the message of love instead of hate, mercy instead of wrath and work tirelessly to build bridges not instead of hate, mercy instead of wrath; and work tirelessly to build bridges and not walls to lay the foundation of Peace in every part of the world. Mercy is the key to human hearts and the quality we are all in need of.