

## The ultimate fight

Sheikh Ibrahim Osi- Efa

Peace and blessings be upon you. In the Qur'an there is a beautiful verse where Allah says 'we made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other' meaning that one of the purposes of the diversity of the creation of humanity is that we may know one another, not go to war against one another. Therefore to know one another is one of the essential bases of our religion.

So I think that it would be appropriate from the very beginning if we just got to know each other, Inshallah, that ought to be why we are given names. One thing that is beautiful about the religion of Islam and being Muslim is that we have beautiful names, very beautiful names. Ahmad is a beautiful name; it is the second name of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings upon him, but also it is a heavenly name; you have a lot to live up to. Imdad, means the one who gives help and receives it from a higher source. Uneeb, the one who repents often and goes back to Allah. Hamza, is one of those names that is appropriate for this gathering. Sayf al Islam: the sword of Islam. Hamim, there are seven 'Hamims' in the Qur'an; the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, said whoever recites the Hamim seven times, has recited the entire Qur'an.

So we have beautiful names; every one of these names are beautiful and we should thank Allah who is beautiful for extending His beauty to us, often by the virtue of the names that He has given to us. Names have a reality: they tell us in Arabic that 'every named thing gets a portion of its name' meaning that part of our reality in life is that we turn towards the reality of our own names. So we turn towards the reality of Ahmad, or of Imdad or of Uneeb, and part of life is to fulfil that.

What I think would be appropriate for us to speak about is part of that, which is within the general theme we are looking at; that is the theme of 'futuwa' or Islamic chivalry. And there are aspects that we have to take into consideration. How do we become chivalrous? Especially when we live in a very, very un-chivalrous world. And I think part of the issues that each and every single one of us face, and not just yourselves as youth, because I think that all of us have come through that difficult period of youth, is the issue of living in a world that is not only un-chivalrous but is also a hostile world. The world you live in, is it a nice world or a difficult world?

When we look at the early generations, and ultimately who we look at in terms of our examples are the early generations who were in and around the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, because they would have been the best of human beings and they have become our guides for eternity. What we find is that within those who were around the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, were two things that are extremely important. The first thing is that they were youth; they were of similar ages to all of you here, those who initially surrounded the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him. You are not going to see old people, when I mean old, those who are beyond the age of forty. You are going to see people in their teens; that is the first thing that is striking. And the second thing that is striking about those teens is that they found the world to be very hostile. They showed some type of disdain; they hated the world in which they were in: the society of Mecca. And that is one of the reasons why the

Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, targeted those individuals, in order to bring those who ordinarily understand that this is not the world that Allah wanted. It's a different type of world. But also, one of the things that we see in those early people is that they were the only way to that beautiful world. I mean really beautiful, because it's not beautiful. And it's your prevention of extremism and violence and we could apply that to a lot of people who are not Muslim, who need to be prevented from extremism and violence and they have made the world a very, very hostile world, they have made people who are ultimately incapacitated become extreme and violent, whether or not they were in shackles or chains. So we have a wretched world. But the beauty of those early people who surrounded the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, was that they understood that beauty could only come about through them. So the one who has the name 'Ihsan' who is the one who brings about a state of beauty, he doesn't gaze left, right and centre, his problem is not the government. But his problem ultimately comes back to what Sheikh Ali is trying to allude to: himself, and that unless he becomes a beautiful being, unless he truly becomes 'Ahmed, Uneeb, Muhammad' unless he really becomes the beautiful name that Allah gave him, then the world will remain hostile and bad.

It's very important that we realise as youths, because one of the important things about being a youth is that we should be focussed. And what I mean by focussed is that we shouldn't be looking at the iPhone, we shouldn't be looking at the clock, we shouldn't be looking left, right and centre, but the nature of youth should be that we are focussed people. And that can be a good thing, but it can also be a bad thing in some instances, like maybe many of us are focussed on the world, we might be focussed on crime, or what we are going to do as soon as we leave this gathering, maybe that is where our focus lies. But that ultimately renders us as lower beings, in a sense, beings who maybe deserve to be shackled, because we can't rise to the higher calling. And in the nature of youth in each and every single generation of Islam, they're the ones who ultimately rise to the higher calling. If the generation of youth are not radically changed, then the 'Umma' (Muslim nation) cannot be radically changed.

That is why it's critical that this type of engagement, not only is one of engagement, but is continual. And it becomes critical that youths become the leaders of this engagement, i.e. you don't wait to be engaged, but you are the first one to engage. This is going to be very important, because when we look at the early people around the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, despite the fact that they were youth, or despite the fact that these people may have had some type of disdain towards society, they had many qualities that maybe some of you are familiar with. An example, is the quality of violence, which we saw when our brother Uthman was teaching you positive violence. But that type of positive violence can be misunderstood, and there are many a youth without proper guidance, who can misunderstand the nature of why we learn the arts of self-defence. And we can make mention of our own people who were brought up in Liverpool, people who studied many different types of martial arts inside our city, and we will find that the majority of those who studied martial arts became the killers and the thugs upon the streets of Liverpool. They took the arts and they made it into dark arts, not into these beautiful arts that are there in order to prevent violence and extremism, and not to be violent and extreme.

So when the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, is faced with a generation who are violent; that's the Arabs, the Arabs were violent people and they were the first ones around the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him. The Prophet initially stripped them of violence under the commandments of God. No violence, 'restrain the hands', Allah says. And some of the Sahaba (companions) had a problem with this; we give the example of Abdul Rahman ibn Outh, one of the great companions; this is our legacy and we have to know that name and the being who held that name.

Abdul Rahman ibn Outh is one of the ten that are guaranteed paradise. You see this world is not a paradise, it's a prison the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, says. Every single one of us will die, and maybe some of us know people who have died, and maybe some of us have seen people dead on the floor due to violence. That is something that I have witnessed; people dead on the ground due to extreme violence. For Abdul Rahman ibn Outh, that is a life that he knew, and when his hands are restrained, he tells the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, 'we were powerful people when we were idolaters, but know that we have become Muslim, our hands are going to be restrained.' Because now it is about the higher purpose, Abdul Rahman ibn Outh is a youth, and a lot of the time the youth don't understand the higher purpose, or they don't understand the outcome, and that it is about the outcome; how it is all going to play out. It is not about the here and now, a lot of the time we think it is about the here and now or the moment in which we are in. But it is about learning that things are going to play out, ultimately as Allah wants them to play out.

So then we become people of purpose and we ultimately attach a higher leadership, especially a more mature leadership that can take us through the difficult terrain of the difficult and hostile world in which each and every one of us live.

We can go through those early companions and take a youth like Ali ibn Abi Talib for example, and look what the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, does to Sayidna Ali. Ali by all definitions of the term is a killer: that is Ali, he's a killer and that is one of his innate dispositions. When he was sent to war, he would not take a horse or a camel, he would run to war. That is what he would do, and he said 'I love just to strike with swords.' And we cannot understand that type of individual who can only strike in order to ultimately prevent being struck and others being oppressed until we learn about the difficult terrain that Sayidna Ali ibn Abi Talib has to go through.

He is reared by the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, in the very house of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings upon him, yet we can't even imagine someone like Ali; you can't imagine an individual who can kill over 300 people in three engagements; three hundred by himself. In the Hadith of the companion, it said that "we saw Ali ibn Abi Talib coming back from Yemen." He was walking back from Yemen by himself in the difficult deserts of Arabia. Arabia was a very hostile world. Non-Muslim enemy tribes said "we saw Ali ibn Abi Talib, coming back from the Yemen," and they said "that's Ali ibn Abi Talib, let's apprehend him, and when we descended to take Ali ibn Abi Talib, he disappeared."

He's a ninja now Ali ibn Abi Talib! Then they said "Ali ibn Abi Talib appeared and killed one hundred of us." Then he disappeared again and they were scattered in the desert, and then he appeared once again and killed another hundred, disappeared, and then appeared once again and killed another hundred and then he captured a few, ties

them up and drags them back to Medina. That is Ali ibn Abi Talib; a very, very important individual, but its not about the end product with someone like him; we've got to understand what was the journey of Ali, and we look at what were the great engagements of Ali, when he is in arm to arm combat. In some ways, we could understand three hundred people being killed by somebody with a bomb, or somebody with a Kalashnikov, or a semi automatic, and taking out several lives in one instant. But here its not that, this is arm to arm combat where you smell that soul of an individual leave his body. People speak about being tough on the streets, then that's the level you have to speak about.

When you talk about the companions; one of the beautiful things that God did with those companions of the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, was that he brought the worst of people; those types of people. The ones who killed, the ones who abused women, the ones who take their own daughters and bury them alive in the sand. You see the ones who would abuse their parents, the ones who would kill others without thinking, the ones who would get drunk and use intoxicants. God took the worst of creation, and then what did he do with them? He made them people who, if they stepped on an ant would cry, people who if they saw a woman oppressed would go into a state of intense repentance back to God, that God forgives them on a day which is inevitable for every single one of us. That's transformation, we see Ali ibn Abi Talib in his later history, when he is going to attempt to take the life of an individual who is going to take his life; the art of self defence. When Sayidna Ali later on is in arm to arm combat, he over throws the individual. And the individual spits in his face, and when he does that, Ali ibn Abi Talib takes his sword and re-sheaths his sword, and he walks. And they said "how are you going to walk when the man was trying to kill you, and then he actually spat in your face?" And he says "in the beginning it was for God, but when he spat in my face it became personal, and I don't kill for personal motives." How do you understand that type of individual?

That is what Almighty God ordained for the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, in a situation in which we all live in, because we all live in a situation which is Meccan. What is Meccan? It is a situation where we are radically non-violent; we are radical in our non-violence, where we expel the great morals and the ethics of the religion. The religion is called 'Islam' not 'salaam'. 'Salaam' means 'peace' and Islam is to bring about a state of peace inside of society, by first and foremost, rendering your heart at peace.

Look at Allah when He speaks about the people of Jahiliya, that those are the ones that put 'rage inside of their hearts.' They are full of rage, they are angry people, like many of the youth; and that is a sign of the end of time. The Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, spoke about the rain becoming acidic, and children becoming angry. And the killer doesn't know why he has killed, as in the Hadith of the Bab al Fitra. I saw a documentary once of a killer who killed several people, and he was a youth of seventeen. And when he was asked why did he kill them, he said he didn't know, he had no reason to kill them, just that he had got angry, and then his natural instinct was just to start blasting. When the killer doesn't know why he kills, and the one killed doesn't know why he was killed; that is rage, uncontrollable rage. And Allah says, that was the way of the people of Jahiliya: ignorance. But really Jahiliya is the opposite of Islam. The world before Islam is called the world of Jahiliya; it is

uncontrolled rage. And if someone was 'Jahil' on you, it means he is wanton, he is in a state of rage.

As the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, told us that 'anger is from the devil.' As al Ghazzali said, 'it is from the fire of Allah, that has been lit inside of the heart of man.' And the nature of fire is that fire is chaos; there is no order to fire. And you can ask a fireman about the unpredictability of fire. For us novices, when we gaze at a fire, we don't see nice patterns, nice shapes, we see chaos. And that is the nature of anyone who has uncontrolled fire in his heart, and the first thing you take from Uthman and his beautiful brother, is how to control that rage.

Allah puts into the heart of the Prophet and the believers, tranquillity or peace, so that they can become the vehicles of bringing about peace on Earth. That is why one of the last poets says, 'blessed are those who struggle, oppression is worse than the grave, its better to die for a noble cause than to live and die a slave.' And here we have to be people of youth who struggle against the oppression of the world, in order to bring about a world that is truly beautiful and that is truly tranquil. And we can only be that if we become people of a higher calling, people who understand that this religion is not just for me, but the ethics of the religion is something that all of humanity is in dire need of. Everybody is in need of being in a state of peace; everybody is in need of being in a state where they can leave their doors open at night. Have you ever left your doors open at night? We have 50,000 doors and counting, and 50,000 alarms and counting. A neighbour with whom I grew up with used to have seven guns inside his house, that at any moment he is armed. What type of life is that to live in?

The companions of the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, who prayed for that day, had to sleep with swords because they lived in a similar type of environment, where people wanted to kill do-gooders. They wanted to kill people who only wanted to do good, and to bring about a state of goodness inside of society.

I lived in a society called Tarim, and Damascus where you could leave your doors open at night. I could go out to gatherings of Dhikr and I would leave the door open, and I would come back and have no fear whatsoever of a thief. In Tarim, the only fear you would have is that deadly snakes would enter into your house and do something damaging to you. But not human snakes or human reptilians.

So part of what we have got to become is people of that higher purpose, and one of the things that we want to overcome is the issue of rage or anger. A lot of us, as is the nature of the youth, as the Prophet said, peace and blessings upon him, are angry. Anger is part of who we are; Allah has created us in anger. But Allah wants us to become people who learn to control that anger, because God can be angry. We cannot imagine the anger of God, and when we are Muslim, and we speak about Islam, the first and most important focal point of our life is Allah. That is the way we focus, and if we think that we will all die and we will, and for some of us maybe it's the furthest thing from our imagination: the idea of death, the reality of death. But we will die, if you look at the human being, and there are many things that we could gather around on the same table and speak about, and argue about, as the human family. But there is one thing that nobody will argue about, is that we will all die. Lets see a hand if you object to that!

The big question is that when we die, then what? And the beauty is that we have been given an understanding or a reality about what will take place when we die. And when we die we are ultimately brought to a moral, ethical, religious court and God is the judge. And He will judge us for each and every single thing that we did in this fleeting world: this temporal world, that in reality is like a moment. We think its long, when we get to sixty, and we pray that you do get to a ripe old age of sixty like Doctor Fuad, although I think that you are a bit younger! But the reality is that when you get to a ripe old age; ask somebody of that age, how long has it been in the world, and they will say that it seems just like a moment. And that is what Allah tells in the Qur'an, it seems as if it were a day or part of a day.

But how did you spend that day, or how did you spend part of that day in the world. That's something that you all have to make critical decisions about. It's one thing if you had never had examples, but take examples from the companions of the Prophet. Take the example of Sayidna Musa ibn Umara, the great youth of the companions. Take the examples of the likes of Ali ibn Abi Talib; one of the greatest of youths that ever lived. Take the example of Hassan al Hussayn, who was the master of all youth in paradise. 'They are the masters of all the youth in paradise, and all the paradisaical beings are youths,' by the definition of the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him. And what is beautiful about the word 'sayid' which is a Lord, somebody that masters something. A 'sayid' in the Arabic language is somebody that masters rage, masters anger, learns to bring it under control.

So you have a lot of examples in history, in your history, the history of great people who have brought about great civilisations, that are still spoken about and are still in the bastions of intellectual endeavour in the face of the Earth today. That is your history, and one of the sad things that we see as youth is that we don't understand our history. And a person that does not know his history, his identity is incomplete. And then who are you?

So, inshallah this is just a prep talk for us to think about things, but we hope that this wasn't just a lot of fun and games, and that we run back to criminality, if we are in criminality. I say that because sometimes I sit in gatherings, and we know that that one is a fraudster. I've sat in a gathering in Liverpool, and we've known that that one is a hitman, that one is a killer, that one sells drugs, that one is a thief. The beauty of it is that they are in the gatherings. In the Hadith of Bukhari, when the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, spoke about a man, who killed ninety-nine people, and then goes to an 'abid', he goes from the children of Israel to what the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, called an 'abid', someone who is really devout in his worship. And he says that "I've killed ninety-nine people, but I want to repent for my deeds, will God accept my repentance?" To which this worshipper said "no"- ninety-nine people is a lot of people. In the Qur'an, it says to kill one person is as if you've killed the entire humanity, and to save the life of one person, is as if you've saved the lives of all of humanity. So what kind of mind can go and take the lives of ninety-nine people without any due cause?

So when he finds that there is no way he can repent, then what happens? He kills the one he is asking; that devout worshipper, and the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, says "now he has killed one hundred people." But still there is something inside of his heart, so he pursues what's called an 'aalim', a scholar. So he goes and speaks

to the scholar. What we want to stress is that he is in the gatherings of the righteous, even though he still has the propensity to kill. And some of the inward scholars, the ones who gaze with the eye of the heart, not this physical eye, said why the first one told him that there was no repentance. Why did he tell him that there is no repentance? Because he still had the potential to kill, and that became manifest. How is Allah going to accept the repentance when you still want to kill, when you still have the ability to take the life of an individual? So he said the door was closed, then he killed the hundredth person. But when he goes to the scholar, and he asks the scholar, "I've killed a hundred people, will God accept my repentance?" to which the scholar says, "yes God will accept your repentance, but repentance is not just an idol claim, it's not just that you *want* to be good, you have to *be* good and behave in a decent manner." So that it was the scholar tells him, that there is a place of godly people, good people, who worship God. "Go to their town and worship Allah alongside them, the land you have come from is an evil place, do not go back to that land." And one of the first or second lessons that we get from that which is the same theme, is that environment is very, very important.

We see the way in which the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, dealt with Umar ibn al Khataab, who was one of those killers in the 'Jahiliya'. Umar ibn al Khataab took his own daughter and buried her alive in the sand, and it was so wretched, that when he dug her grave, he had sand in his beard from her grave, and as he was burying his daughter alive, his daughter was wiping the dust off her father's beard. What type of mind is that? What type of mind is that of someone who can kill his own daughter by burying her alive in the sand, and in the last moment, she is trying to be good to him? And then what does the Prophet do with Umar ibn al Khataab? He has lines etched in his face because he used to cry so much out of fear of God, over his sins. He transformed, that is the nature of Islam; it transforms. Umar was a very focussed individual.

So one of the things that we see in the Hadith of Bukhari, is the importance of environment. You are going to be good if you are with good people, and you are going to be bad if you are with bad people, that is the nature of it. And if you do bad things, the first intelligent thing that you have to do is to change your friends; change your environment, because either we influence or we are influenced. And we have to learn, as those powerful youths, with their powerful hearts, that everyone including you Yahya. And I believe that you have a powerful heart, and I believe Allah wants the likes of you, and you in particular to become someone that guides humanity to the grace of God, and the mercy of God. Is that something that you want to do? Say yes I do! I want to be one of those people of 'himmah' (aspiration). If you have high aspiration, you can change the cosmos, but if you just settle for however the world goes, you just go with the flow, you can't beat them so you join them. Then one day you might be beaten by a Lord, who when he beats, then we have no frame of reference for it.

We pray that Allah gazes on each and every one of us, and we pray that each and every one of us take the good lessons that the blessed people have organised for this gathering, that we take the lessons that we were immersed in, and we pray that you become people of prayer, that you pray for everybody, even those who do you wrong, because the highest level of people who control their rage, is that they do good to those who do the wrong. And we see that example in the entire life of our blessed

Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, he only wanted to do good, and when people did him wrong, he only increased in doing good to them. That's the way you change hearts, because it's not about conquering the form, but it's about changing the hearts, especially of people who are somewhat ugly in their interior nature.