

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

Today in Mauritius is a public holiday in commemoration of the abolition of slavery on the island on 1st February 1835. As you are aware, the Dutch colonized Mauritius in the early 1640s and brought the first slaves. They brought about one hundred slaves from Madagascar. During their colonization, more slaves were brought. The latter were badly treated by the colonists. Those who tried to revolt were severely punished.

In the early 18th century, the Dutch abandoned Mauritius, and the island became a French colony and remained so for a century. The French brought even more slaves from Africa and Madagascar. It is estimated that a total of 160,000 slaves reached Mauritius and Réunion between 1670 and 1810, of which 87% came from various regions in Africa and 13% from India. In 1810, Mauritius was captured by the British and became a crown colony of the British Empire. At the time, 70% of the island's population were slaves.

The battle to abolish slavery started in the parliament in England and was led by William Wilberforce and his friends. Starting from around 1795, they made several attempts to pass a law to abolish slavery but they were beaten by a slight majority in the House or it was completely rejected by the House of Lords. After several attempts, the law was passed in 1807. The abolition of the slave trade was only the first act in the drama of liberation. In 1833, a Bill was introduced for the liberation of all slaves in the British colonies. It was finally voted by the House of Commons that all existing slaves were to be liberated in a year's time, and refusal by freed slaves to work was to be dealt with not by the masters but by specially appointed magistrates. A year later at midnight on July 31, 1834, 800,000 slaves were freed in the whole empire. In Mauritius, the abolition of slavery took place on February 1, 1835. The plantation owners received 2 million pounds sterling in compensation. The abolition of slavery greatly influenced the island's population, society, and economy. This event was so important for the country's history that its anniversary has been declared a public holiday. Up till now we are still dealing here and elsewhere with the consequences of that event.

Anyhow I have said a few words on this matter because it is an important part of our history and world history and it is good to know about this institution

of slavery and the havoc that it has brought in the life of millions of people around the world.

Now we will revert to the last part in the series of hadith about which we have been speaking in the last four sermons. As you might be aware, we are speaking about the advice that the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw) gave to his dear companion Hazrat Abu Dharr Al Ghifari. He said:

“Oh Abu Dharr! I forbid you from (being on bad terms with) your brother, and if you must do so, do not stay aloof from him for more than three full days. Whoever dies within these three days while they have abandoned their brother, the Hell-Fire will be worthy of him.”

Here we should understand that even if at times we happen to speak some harsh words between Muslim brothers or sisters, we should not harbour any kind of rancour and allow it to create distance between us. Muslims are brothers and sisters and they should live like brothers and sisters.

The Holy Prophet (saw) said:

“Oh Abu Dharr! Whoever likes for others to stand up for him when he enters, then let him take his place in Hell-Fire.

Oh Abu Dharr! Whoever dies and has in his heart an atom of arrogance, he will not smell the fragrance of Paradise unless he repents before that.

A man asked: Oh Messenger of Allah, I admire beauty such that I like for my dress and my shoes look good. Is that something for me to be concerned about? He (SA) answered: How do you find the state of your heart? The man answered: I find it knowing the truth and comfortable with it. So, the Messenger replied: That is not the same as arrogance; arrogance is to abandon the truth and exceed it to something else, and to look at the people and think that their family is not the same as yours and their blood is not the same as yours.”

“Oh Abu Dharr! The most who will enter Hell-Fire are the arrogant people. A man asked: And can anyone escape arrogance, Oh Messenger of Allah? He (SA) answered: Yes, whoever wears the wool and rides the donkey and milks the sheep and accompanies the needy.”

“Oh Abu Dharr! Whoever carries his own belongings will be free of arrogance, i.e. means whoever buys from the market.”

Oh Abu Dharr! Whoever drags his clothes with pride when walking, Allah (SWT) will not look at him on the Day of Judgment.

Oh Abu Dharr! The top shirt of a believer should be at the length of half of his leg, and there is no problem in keeping the below uncovered.

Oh Abu Dharr! Whoever raises his clothes from the ground fixed his slippers and rubs his face on the floor, he will be free from arrogance and pride.

Oh Abu Dharr! Whoever has two shirts, let him wear one and give the other one to his brother.

Oh Abu Dharr! There will be a group of people from my nation who will be born in luxury and would live continuously in it, their focus is the different colors of food and drink and they praise by words, and they are the worst of my nation.

Oh Abu Dharr! Whoever abandons the dress of beauty while he is capable of dressing so, out of humility to Allah (SWT), and he undignifies himself when he doesn't have to, and he spends what he earns in something that is not disobedience to Allah (SWT), and he has mercy on those who are less dignified, and he intermingles with those who have knowledge and wisdom, glad tidings to he who acts upon his knowledge and spends good from his wealth, and watches what he says.

Oh Abu Dharr! Wear the rough and the light clothes so that you don't find a place for pride in yourself.

Oh Abu Dharr! Shall I tell you who are the people of Paradise? I said: Yes, Oh Messenger of Allah. He (SA) said: Every person who has uncombed hair and dusty face, nobody cares for him, but he has a high status in the eyes of Allah (SWT) such that if he swears Allah (SWT) will fulfill his oath.

Abu Dharr said: One day I entered the presence of the Prophet (SA) while he was in the mosque sitting alone, so I took advantage of his loneliness and he (SA) said:

Oh Abu Dharr! A mosque has a greeting.

I said: And what is that greeting Oh Messenger of Allah?

He (SA) answered: Two-unit prayer which you perform.

Then I turned to him and said: Oh, Messenger of Allah, you ordered me to pray, so what exactly is prayer? He (SA) answered: Prayer (As-Salah) is the best position one can be in, whoever desires to do little can do so and whoever decides to do a lot can do so.

So I said: Oh Messenger of Allah, which deed is the best to Allah (SWT)? He (SA) answered: faith in God, then struggle in the way of Allah (SWT). I then said: Oh Messenger of Allah, which person among the believers has completed his faith? The Prophet (SA) answered: The best of them in manners. I asked: And which believer is best? The Prophet (SA) answered: The one whom people are safe from his tongue and hand. Then I asked: And which type of abandonment is best? He (SA) answered: He who abandons the bad. I asked: And which night is the best? He (SA) replied: The middle of a late night. I asked: And which prayer is best? He (SA) replied: Reciting a long *Qunoot* (supplication recited during prayer). I asked: Which fast is most recommended? He (SA) answered: An obligatory fast and Allah (SWT) has multiples of it. I asked: Which type of charity is best? He (SA) answered: The least of effort that is given to a poor person in secret. I asked: And which Zakat is most recommended? He (SA) said: That which is most high in price and that which is most needed or benefitted from its recipient.

I asked: And which Jihad (struggle) is most recommended? He (SA) answered: The one in which the horse is sacrificed and its bloodshed. I asked: And which verse revealed to you is the greatest? He (SA) answered: *Ayat Al Kursi*. I asked: Oh, Messenger of Allah, what about the Revelations of Prophet Ibraheem (AS)? He answered: They were all examples. “....., I didn’t send you so that the world divide against each other, rather I sent you to support the oppressed and hear their voices. For I do not reject the call of an oppressed person even if he is a nonbeliever or corrupt person.”. A sane person should dedicate his time except in three cases: increasing your deeds for the Day of Judgment, earning your living, or enjoying yourself in that which is legitimate. A sane person should have insight and understand the circumstances of your time, mind his own business, and watch his tongue. Whoever counts his speech to be from his deeds, he should decrease his talk except what concerns him.

I said: Oh Messenger of Allah, what about the Revelation of Prophet Musa (AS)? He replied: All of them were lessons. “Wonders at he who is certain of Hell-Fire yet he laughs, wonders at he who is certain of death and he feels happy, wonders at he who observes how the life of this world changes with its

people and situations, yet he feels secure in it. Wonders at he who is certain of the reckoning on the Day of Judgment, yet he does not present deeds.

I said: Oh Messenger of Allah: Does this life have anything which was in the revelations of Prophets Ibraheem and Musa (AS) which was also revealed to you? He (SA) answered: Oh Abu Dharr! Recite: He indeed shall be successful who purifies himself and magnifies the name of his Lord and prays. Nay! you prefer the life of this world, While the hereafter is better and more lasting. It means His remembrance of these four verses. Most surely this is in the earlier scriptures. The scriptures of Ibraheem and Musa. (Surat Al 'Aala)

I said: Oh Messenger of Allah: Give me advice. He (SA) said: Recite the Quran and remember Allah (SWT), for it is remembrance for you in the heavens and light in the earth. I said: Oh Messenger of Allah: Tell me more. He (SA) said: Perform Jihad (struggle in the way of Allah), for it is the ascetism of my nation.

I said: Oh Messenger of Allah, can you tell me more. He replied: Observe silence except that which there is good in it, for it repels the devil from you and helps you in the matters of your religion. I said: Oh Messenger of Allah, can you tell me more. The Prophet (SA) said: Beware of laughing a lot, for it kills the heart and removes the light from the face. I said: Oh Messenger of Allah, can you tell me more.

The Prophet (SA) said: Look at he who is below you and do not look at those who are above you, for it is better that you do so that you appreciate the bounty of Allah (SWT) better. I said: Oh Messenger of Allah, can you tell me more. The Prophet (SA) said: Keep contact with your close kin even if they cut relations with you. Love the needy people and accompany them a lot. I said: Oh Messenger of Allah, can you tell me more. The Prophet (SA) said: Tell the truth even if it is bitter. I then said: Oh Messenger of Allah, tell me more. He (SA) said: Do not fear anything when it is for the sake of Allah (SWT). I said: Oh Messenger of Allah, can you tell me more.

The Prophet (SA) said: Oh Abu Dharr! Let your shortcomings keep you busy from the shortcoming of others. It is enough of a deficiency in a man that knows the shortcomings of others but doesn't recognize his own shortcomings. (Then he struck his chest and said):

Oh Abu Dharr! There is no mind like contemplation, and no *Wara'* (extreme piety) like avoiding the forbidden, and no deed like good manners."

By Allah's Grace, we have tried to share with our brothers and sisters some of the words of wisdom of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (saw). They are lessons to help all of us improve our life. May Allah help each one amongst us to value these pieces of advice and may we all get the opportunity to live the life of a true Muslim who does his or her best to follow the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw).