



Qualities of a Teacher

AN ADDRESS TO
MADRASAH TEACHERS

HAZRAT MAULANA YUNUS PATEL SAHIB
(RAHMATULLAHI 'ALAYH)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَكَفَى وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا الْمُصْطَفَى

صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ وَبَارَكَ وَسَلَّمَ تَسْلِيمًا كَثِيرًا كَثِيرًا

أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَقَدْ قَالَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى

قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

خَيْرُكُمْ مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ وَعَلَّمَهُ

**“THE BEST OF YOU ARE THOSE WHO LEARN THE QUR’AAN AND
TEACH IT.”¹**

The Hadith Shareef which I presented to you is a very well-known Hadith, and if I am correct, it is the first Hadith in Fazaa’il-e-Qur’aan compiled by Shaykhul Hadith, Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Zakariyya (Rahmatullahi ‘alayh). The virtues and explanation are given there. This talk is not a detailed discussion on Qur’aan Shareef or of Ilm-e-Deen.

In half an hour, you cannot do justice to any subject. The teaching of Deen covers so many aspects and can be addressed from different angles. It can be discussed for days on end. So much has been compiled and presented

¹ Sahih Al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim

related to learning, teaching and imparting the knowledge of Deen. You, yourself, will be acquainted with these aspects.

Nevertheless, in these thirty minutes, I have decided to talk about something that we can easily relate to; something simple and 'light' – not something involving deep philosophy and thought.

Each and every one of us is a teacher but we are first students and are always students. ...No one can become a teacher before becoming a student. Since there is so much to learn all one's life, we remain students from the cradle to the grave. We are learning from the beginning to the end of life.

The baby learns from the mother, father and those who are around the baby. The baby picks up words and actions as it grows. Then, with age, there is more formal knowledge. However, there is no period in life where we stop learning. According to our capacity, we learn. ...Look at the advancement in technology. Someone or the other is coming up with new knowledge and we are learning through that knowledge. ...There are different kinds of knowledge. However, our focus and attention is on Deen.

In this Hadith, Rasulallah Sallallaahu ‘alayhi wasallam states: ‘*The best of you are those who learn the Qur’aan and teach it.*’

Rasulallah Sallallaahu ‘alayhi wasallam addressed his first audience, the Sahabah-e-Kiraam (Radhiyallahu ‘anhum). Among them was Hazrat Abu Bakr (Radhiyallahu ‘anhu), Hazrat Umar (Radhiyallahu ‘anhu), Hazrat Uthmaan (Radhiyallahu ‘anhu), Hazrat Ali (Radhiyallahu ‘anhu) and so many other companions. After them, the meaning is extended to everyone else. However, these are the companions and they are already the best. In the Hadith, they are described as ‘guiding stars’:

أَصْحَابِي كَالنُّجُومِ، بِأَيِّهِمْ اقْتَدَيْتُمْ اهْتَدَيْتُمْ

“My companions are like the stars, whichever of them you follow you will be rightly guided.”

Following anyone of them is guidance. Allah Ta’ala gave them the certificate of:

رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ

“Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him...”

They were told that the best among them were those who learn and teach the Qur’aan Shareef. ...How much virtue

and greatness there is in learning and teaching Qur'aan Shareef?! Again, that is another subject which requires time.

...When I was in Std 8 or 9, I wrote an essay and the teacher wrote a comment at the end: *'Your essay is a conglomeration of disjointed facts.'* ...It may be that this is how the talk today will be – disjointed. However, I make dua that Allah Ta'ala make it beneficial and that we can learn something.

On my way here, the word 'teacher' came to my mind. What is 'teacher'? ...Firstly, we are talking to teachers in the Maktab, Madrasah and Darul Uloom – teachers of religious institutes; not the teachers at the secular schools and tertiary institutes, who work in a different kind of system, with different curricula.

The first alphabet is 'T'

T | TAQWA

Taqwa is the essence and objective of the Qur'aan Shareef. It is the fulfilment of the Commandments of Allah Ta'ala and abstinence from all sins. ...If we have to condense the entire Qur'aan Shareef, then it is taqwa. If we expand on the meaning of taqwa, it is the entire

Qur'aan Shareef. This is a quality that every single Muslim needs to develop and nurture.

The quality of taqwa will benefit the teacher, invite blessings and the assistance of Allah Ta'ala, and will be a means of great impact on the hearts and lives of students. Along with the ilm they acquire, they will observe and absorb noble qualities which are the fruits of taqwa.

The quality of taqwa generates noor and this noor will be discernable in all actions, including one's teaching. Without taqwa there will just be imparting of knowledge without real benefit and no effect – neither for the teacher nor the student.

We can continue talking on taqwa but there is so much. The entire Qur'aan Shareef and Ahadith are all for the purpose of achieving taqwa.

As a teacher, there is a need to take stock of our lives. Before we enter the classroom, give a little thought to our own actions and conduct. Think: *These children are going to listen to me and look up to me as a teacher. I will be teaching and imparting Deeni knowledge. How much of that ilm is in my life? How much of taqwa is in my life? Have I given up my sins? What is the condition of my spiritual heart? What is my level of Imaan, yaqeen, tawakkul, zuhd, shukr, qana'at?*

On our sins and deficiencies, we should make sincere taubah, give up our sins and work towards improving ourselves. ...Presently, we have to contend with a major challenge and difficulty because many Madrasah teachers too are succumbing to nafs and shaytaan and becoming involved in sins, including major and public sins. Besides the great harm to oneself, the benefit of teaching is lost.

We may not be the Junaid Baghdadi or Rabia Basriah of the time. However, if we can go into the classroom with a concerned and repentant heart, conscious awareness and good intentions, there will be noor.

Furthermore, while the effort is teaching, the objective is to obey Allah Ta'ala and Rasulullah *Sallallaahu 'alayhi wasallam*. Therefore, as teachers, we need to constantly analyse and examine if we, ourselves, have the objective in our own lives, which is practical implementation of Deen. If we are just communicating and conveying knowledge but we are not practising upon the same, it is evident that we have no yaqeen in whatever we are sharing. How will the student gain yaqeen?

The next letter 'E'

E | EXAMPLE

A teacher has to lead by **example** and has to have **exemplary** conduct.

A Muslim teacher has to set a noble example, living the Sunnah, adopting the Islamic dress code and being a reflection of good character and upright conduct, wherever he/she may be.

If the teacher is standing and drinking water while teaching, and that too, drinking in one gulp – then what impression has been created? ...We are talking about Maktab and Madrasah, where Deeniyyaat is being taught. If ‘*Bismillah*’ was not read before drinking and ‘*Alhamdulillah*’ was not recited after, that makes us very poor examples for the students. Such a teacher is not setting the correct example.

Many are teaching Islamic studies, yet they teach without any implementation of Sunnah. At times, a male has a clean-shaven face, or his pants is below the ankle – which is at variance with the Sunnah. And at other times, the Mu’allim or Mu’allimah has no regard for the laws of hijab and segregation and freely integrates with the opposite gender.

Then, if we have to consider the dressing. Often, our dressing is not in accordance with the Sunnah and Shari'ah. If there is no hijab and niqab, or the Sunnah libaas (dressing) is forsaken because the teacher is out of school or on holiday, the example is now a bad example. We cannot naively think that no one will recognise us if we dress differently out of Madrasah.

A | ALLAH TA'ALA

When it comes to the Muslim, A is always for **Allah Ta'ala**. Allah Ta'ala is first. Allah Ta'ala's Commandments and His Pleasure take precedence. As a teacher, the effort must be to bring alive the Commandments of Allah Ta'ala into one's own life first and then in the pupil's life; to develop the ma'rifah and muhabbah of Allah Ta'ala and the quality of Ihsaan (being conscious of Allah Ta'ala).

Often, people brag about the A's that their children achieved... but the true achievement for a Muslim is the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala.

AKHLAAQ

'A' is also for **akhlaaq**. As teachers, we need to develop the beautiful character of Rasulullah *Sallallaahu 'alayhi wasallam* within ourselves and within the children. ...For

this, good company is very important, even for the teacher. We should avoid bad influences and company. ...Now, with the internet and technology, there is the influence of a different kind of company. This 'virtual' company easily manipulates the mindset and influences conduct.

Keep the company of the pious and see the improvement in one's character. Make dua for pious companions. This company is the easiest way to build up noble qualities.

AASHIQ

To become **Aashiq** of Allah Ta'ala and Rasulullah *Sallallaahu 'alayhi wasallam*. There is a need to bring into our teaching reminders of Allah Ta'ala's favours, bounties and gifts upon us ... 24/7. Allah Ta'ala's kindness and generosity upon us is evident in different ways and forms. This will be a means of building up love.

Similarly, we should talk about the Greatness and Power of Allah Ta'ala and teach His beautiful sifaat (qualities) so that the children increase in their love and ma'rifah of Allah Ta'ala.

ABDIYYAH AND AMAL

That is, to be a slave of Allah Ta'ala (*abd*) and worship and serve Him sincerely in the manner that He is pleased. Again, the effort is to bring into our hearts and the hearts of the pupils, true servitude and submission to Allah Ta'ala; to practise ourselves and encourage pupils to practise on the knowledge taught. Without these efforts and endeavours, we are failing; neither understanding nor achieving the objective. And the objective is not to earn a livelihood. It is to bring Deen into our lives.

Earning a livelihood

Mufti Zainul Aabideen (*Rahmatullahi 'alayh*) once conveyed an important point at a Darul Uloom Jalsa: *“Many of us have made teaching a means of livelihood....”*

We should not teach Deen with the intention to earn a living. This is, in fact, a sign of Qiyamah; that people will pursue the knowledge of Deen with the intention of earning dunya. Alhamdulillah, there are so many means and ways to earn a Halaal livelihood – but the khidmat of Deen should not be considered as one. A person can be a butcher, baker, candlestick-maker or even an undertaker ... to earn a livelihood. There is no problem in that but we should not make the khidmat of Deen a commercial

venture. ...Light-heartedly, if you 'overtake' on a solid, white line while driving, there is the danger that the undertaker will be required.

Livelihood can be earned through different sources. However, to reduce Deen and Sunnah to earning is not acceptable. Yes, some consideration is given to the time given for teaching and some salary is given in that regard ... but there is no price-tag to serving Deen.

Often, when it comes to Deen, there is a humble remuneration; a low pay. Thus, if we have to do comparisons with the salaries of professionals in other fields, then we have not appreciated the knowledge of Qur'aan Shareef and Sunnah.

On a light-hearted note, a king announced that whoever could make a certain elephant cry, would be given a very generous gift. Many tried and all failed until a Molvi Sahib went to the elephant and whispered in its ear. The elephant began to cry. Surprised, the king asked him what he had told the elephant. The Molvi Sahib said: *"I just told it what my wage is and it started to cry."*

In any case, whosoever did the khidmat of Deen with ikhlaas and did not make money the objective, Allah opened up doors for them. With respect, Allah Ta'ala

provides so much – without factory and shop, and without asking the creation or having any kind of ishraaf (expectation). Allah Ta’ala takes for Umrah and Hajj and provides from unknown and unexpected sources. ...Someone told Hazrat Mufti Mahmood Sahib (Rahmatullahi ‘alayh): “Hajj is now very costly.”

Hazrat (Rahmatullahi ‘alayh) used to go almost every year. He replied: ‘No, not at all.’

AMAANAH (TRUST)

From another angle, the teaching time is an **amaanah**. These days, it is common to find that teachers arrive in class late and leave early. Some are taking calls during their lessons and the phone-calls are mundane and unnecessary ... about someone’s nikah or walimah, the menu for the nikah or something else. How often the teacher leaves the class to have a chat with another teacher, unconcerned that the time is amanah. Sometimes, the teacher is absent for frivolous reasons – because there is some item on sale at the shops, etc. In this, the example is obviously very poor. The child will not learn amanah. ...If this is our manner as a teacher, we should ask ourselves: *As a parent, would I tolerate a teacher being lax and negligent in teaching my child?*

A Means of Da'wah

In the 1970s, I had the opportunity of teaching for four months at a school in Mooi River. Allah Ta'ala made that a means of me performing Hajj. Since I was teaching Class 1, the subject matter was very simple. After four months of teaching, before leaving, I gave R10 to the principal and requested that he put the money in the school fund. R10 was big money at that time. For R5 you could fill up your petrol tank and go to Johannesburg; that is how it was in those days.

Nevertheless, the principal was very surprised and asked: *"Why must I put this in the school fund?"*

Since he was a non-Muslim, I used that as an opportunity for Da'wah. I said: *"I could have used a pen or writing material belonging to the school for something other than school work."*

I further emphasised the teachings of Islam and the Muslim culture; that I am accountable on the Day of Judgement, time is a trust, etc. Alhamdulillah, he was very impressed with Islamic ethos and thereafter said: *"If the school teachers here could help it, they would put wheels on the school and roll the school away and think nothing of it. And you are worried about a pen and some writing material."*

Be that as it may, the point is that this teaching and time is aamaanah. If we don't set the proper example, we have a problem. Long term those children will become a problem for others because they have no concept and concern regarding aamaanah.

Whatever example we set will inevitably be followed by the pupils. Pupils emulate their teachers. They adopt their ways and manners. If we teach the wrong conduct, we are a poor example. The child will then not learn the right behaviour nor imbibe the correct qualities. Therefore, before we can succeed in the nurturing of our students, we need to work on our own Islaah (reformation) and Tazkiyah (purification) ... which will then make us worthy examples, Insha-Allah.

C | CHILDREN

Children are an aamaanah. They are a trust in our hands. We take so much care if we are entrusted with gold and silver. There is so much concern for material valuables. If lost, there is grief and suffering. Children are a far greater trust and we should use the opportunity to draw them to Deen and not distance them from Deen.

Children are like dough that needs to be moulded and shaped. We have a very important role in moulding them on the teachings of the Qur'aan Shareef and the Sunnah. We will be questioned regarding these children: *How did you educate them? What kind of compassion and mercy did you have in teaching them?*

Again, when we walk into the classroom, the entire time of teaching is amaanah. There is no question of wasting time. There is no barakah when there is khiyanat in amaanah. Many problems arise. ...If you have to take those asaatiza who had concern of time, Allah Ta'ala granted so much of barakah that they were able to do so much.

COMMITMENT

Teaching is a **commitment**. Let there be punctuality, dedication, enthusiasm, quality in our work. Let there be patience and perseverance over any struggles.

There should also be **care** and **concern**.

H | HOPE

Give the children **hope**. There must be hope in Allah Ta'ala's Mercy and Forgiveness. Don't give the 'H' for 'hell', where we teach only about 'azaab and frighten the children or cause them to become ill.

One mother wrote complaining that the teacher taught about azaab of qabr and Jahannum and her young child was experiencing nightmares. The mother was upset and said: "*Why do they teach about hell in Madrasah?*"

I replied: "*They will be teaching about Jannah and Jahannum. However, the teacher should use discretion.*"

The teacher should be tactful and considerate in how such knowledge is put across, even if it is in the notes and part of the syllabus. It doesn't mean that you now look for all the Ahadith where mention is made of great amount of punishment and then add that to the lesson. ...As an example: some people seem to enjoy reading the Hadith from the Fazaal of Salaah on the punishment of one haqb when Salaah is missed and how lengthy and severe the punishment is. Without explanation, a person will lose hope. The person may even think that it is then useless to make qadha of the Salaah that were missed and that punishment is the only option.

There is a time and place to discuss about Jahannum. Both Jannah and Jahannum are mentioned in the Qur'aan Shareef. We believe in both.

I explained to the mother: *“In every country, there are prisons. People are imprisoned for different crimes. On a daily basis, we hear, read and talk about crime and punishment. Allah Ta’ala’s prison is Jahannum...”*

Thereafter, I told the teacher: *“You have to look at the age of the children. In grades 1 / 2 / 3, you cannot only talk about azaab, azaab, azaab. You will frighten the children. Talk about the muhabbah of Allah Ta’ala, ni’mats of Jannah and Allah Ta’ala’s rewards and promises on being good and doing good deeds. Then you mention that if you don’t do good or do bad deeds, Allah Ta’ala gets angry and punishes. When he or she comes of age and understanding, more details can be given. That will be necessary.”*

Unfortunately, this has been my experience with many teachers in the makaatib. In the 1970s, we had about 70/80 makaatib and we used to go for inspections and take examinations. We had to hear the same type of complaint. The teacher will pick out one word like ‘hell’ and look up all the Ahadith on hell and frighten the child in grade 1. When addressed, the argument of the teacher

was: *If the child has a lot of fear, he won't do this. ...We have to consider the age and teach accordingly.*

Develop in the child, hope of Allah Ta'ala's Forgiveness, Mercy and Love. Allah Ta'ala guide us in conveying Deen correctly and drawing the children closer to Deen.

HUMILITY

'H' is also for **humility**. No matter what position we may have, we are servants and slaves of Allah Ta'ala. Being a teacher and being in charge should not become a factor where we forget our own reality and then ill-treat or harass any child.

We should not adopt a condescending approach towards the students and should never humiliate them. Show understanding and care.

E | EXPERIENCE

Learning at the Madrasah must be the best **experience** for the pupil. It should be better than school. At present, the child's experience of a Madrasah is not a good one. Many find it boring and don't want to attend. ...We should consider the majority and not the exceptions. Many don't show any interest in attending Madrasah.

At times, there are many pupils in the class and it becomes difficult for the teacher to manage and cover her content for the day. If there are 40 students, the entire time can easily go in taking sabaq. Then, there is no time for anything else. Methodology is thus very important.

If you ask students at the schools and colleges, they are keen to attend and finish their studies because they consider the end result: their qualifications and the money they will earn. To a greater extent, the Madrasah student must be eager to attend Madrasah with the focus on the end result – that is the pleasure of Allah Ta’ala and Jannah and how to earn it.

We need to look at ways and means to make the teaching interesting and pleasing for the pupils. Alhamdulillah, there are various methodologies of teaching to be found in the Sunnah. Devise ways and means to keep the whole class occupied. ...Let the classroom have interesting and beautiful charts, also charts reflecting Allah Ta’ala’s Greatness. Of course, the pictures must not be animate.

The child must look forward to going to Madrasah and doing good deeds and earning Jannah. Keep them

occupied in a positive, constructive way. Make Dua to Allah Ta'ala to guide towards the best way of teaching and reaching out to the children under our care.

Our approach must also not be harsh. This is not the Sunnah. Previously, teachers adopted a very severe approach. ...Beating the children is not permissible. Even if they learn, harshness and cruelty are not the ways to teach.

...On a light-hearted note, there is an incident of bygone days: A person was dragging a bull to the slaughterhouse, and the bull was making a lot of noise, trying to break loose and run. There was a lot of clamour as the person pulled and the bull struggled. One of the young children saw the bull being dragged and asked the father: *“Are they taking it to the Madrasah?”*

Give the child the best experience. Treat the child with mercy and compassion. Create the right environment.

ENCOURAGEMENT

A teacher offers **encouragement** and inspiration; support and assistance.

R | REACH

We should strive to **reach** our goal which is earning Allah Ta'ala's Pleasure. This is achieved when the intention is correct and sound, and when the above qualities and efforts are implemented. If not, we won't take off; we will remain on the ground.

READ AND RESEARCH

We should continue studying, seeking knowledge and increasing in knowledge and making an effort to bring alive that knowledge. ...I have mentioned previously that there should be no gap between our ilm and amal.

We are taught the Dua:

رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

O my Lord! Advance me in knowledge.

May Allah Ta'ala grant us the taufeeq of amal. May Allah Ta'ala inspire us in teaching, grant ikhlaas, accept and make our students a Sadaqah-e-Jaariyah for us.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

A FEW DUAS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْفَعْنِي بِمَا عَلَّمْتَنِي وَعَلِّمْنِي مَا يَنْفَعُنِي

O Allah! Let me derive benefit from the knowledge which You bestowed to me, and bestow such knowledge to me which would be beneficial to me.

اللَّهُمَّ أَعِنِّي بِالْعِلْمِ وَزَيِّنِي بِالْحِلْمِ وَآكْرِمْنِي بِالتَّقْوَى وَاجْمِلْنِي بِالْعَافِيَةِ

O Allah! Assist me with knowledge, embellish me with forbearance, dignify me with piety, and beautify me with peace.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ لَا يَنْفَعُ وَمِنْ قَلْبٍ لَا يَخْشَعُ،

وَمِنْ نَفْسٍ لَا تَشْبَعُ، وَمِنْ دَعْوَةٍ لَا يُسْتَجَابُ لَهَا

“O Allah, I seek refuge in You from knowledge which does not benefit, from a heart that does not entertain the fear (of Allah Ta’ala), from a soul that is not satisfied and the supplication that is not answered.”

اَللّٰهُمَّ اَرِنَا الْحَقَّ حَقًّا وَّ اَرِنَا الْبَاطِلَ بَاطِلًا

وَّ اَرِنَا اجْتِنَابَهُ

O Allah! Enable us to see the Truth as Truth and give us the ability to follow it. And show us the falsehood as false and give us the ability to refrain from it.

*“The ‘ruh’ of ilm is amal,
and the ‘ruh’ of amal is ikhlaas,
and the ‘ruh’ of ikhlaas is not to even think
that you are mukhlis”*

Hazrat Maulana Yunus Patel Sahib
(Rahmatullahi ‘alayh)

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