

Let us fall in love with them all over again !!

by

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How do you remember people whom you love? Well, Shah Jahan, the Mughal emperor, built the “Jewel of Muslim Art in India” – the Taj Mahal, to celebrate the memory of the flame of his life, his third wife - Mumtaz Mahal - in Agra. Grief stricken at her death, he started the building in 1643 and only completed it 22 years thereafter. The Egyptians weren't the only ones to build pyramids to celebrate their deified rulers whom they believed never really died. This tradition is found in China too. A massive greyish/greenish pyramid whose base is 375 m² was built to commemorate Qin Shi Huang in Shaanxi province. Huang was the first Chinese Emperor to unify the nation in 221 BC and his people will never allow his memory to fade. Here in our Rainbow Nation, we do things a little differently. We rename streets, hospitals and airports after those who fought for our freedom. HF Verwoerd Hospital was renamed after Steve Bhiko, Jan Smuts Airport was renamed after Oliver Tambo and DF Malan Drive was renamed after Beyers Naude.

We Muslims in South Africa have much to thank our forefathers for having left their buffalo carts and *paan dabbas* (betel leaf containers) in India and coming to this wonderful land of BMWs and boerewors. How do we thank them? We thank them by building on the legacy they left behind. If they left the importance of business in their family, today all their offspring would be millionaires; if they left a legacy of religion in their family, today all their offspring would be Huffaz and 'Ulema; and if they left a legacy of womanising, today all their offspring will be hopping around in the townships waiting for government grants!

My point is that no one forgets their legacy and no one divorces their past, especially if it was a golden past. Moreso when our ancestors were directly responsible for our present prosperity. Hundred years ago, if Baboo bhai didn't scratch in his socks for all his rupees or sell his wife's jewellery to buy a 3rd-class ticket for a ride over the rough sea to South Africa, today his grand-children would've been still wearing those same socks! For this, we will thank Baboo bhai for ever.

Two types of Legacies

As Muslims, we will always remember two types of people: those who were responsible for our material prosperity, and those who were responsible for our spiritual legacy. In fact, we are more indebted to the second category of people who are more important than our national heroes, our ancestors, or our adorable wives. These people were responsible for giving us the Muslim identity which we are so proud to practice today: they didn't only give us the material opportunities of life, they gave us true dignity of life and also another life that extends far beyond this world. They were responsible for putting us on the path to paradise. They fashioned our thoughts and chiselled our behaviour. They showed us how to play and how to pray, how to do dress and who to bless, and what to buy and how to die. They also showed us the light of truth and how to uphold it, as well as what is evil and how to challenge it.

And they didn't do this via the internet, comfortably clicking away with a cup of milkshake on the side; or in an air-conditioned auditorium presenting some Islamic topic to 100 delegates who paid R500- each for the course, or by writing flowery articles for glossy magazines. No, we have the convenience of doing this, not them. They had to do it the difficult way – propagating in dangerous alleys, whispering in the ears of villains, venturing out in the burning mid-day heat, learning in secret in the dark of the night, sitting on harsh soil and pebbles, having a meal once in three days, and fighting on faraway battlefields with very little armour nor any backup.

Who were they?

Who are these people? Well, they were human beings, just like me and you. But, they were hand-picked by the Almighty Himself – they were His elite forces in earth. They were ranked just an inch below the prophets, and for good reason too. Their purpose was to fulfil the commands of God, obey Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), and be the golden link between us and our noble Prophet. A spaza shop needs maybe 2 people to function, a corner shop maybe 5, a national corporation like Telkom maybe 200 000, a government the size of South Africa may need 2 million servant servants to run the civil and military administration, so how many people do you think is needed to plant the seeds and propagate a *UNIVERSAL* religion?

Could Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) achieve this alone? The answer is that he could've did it alone by the will of the Almighty, but then how many people would have felt part

of Islam? How many people would've been emotionally attached to it and prepared to die for Islam if they didn't have a stake in spreading it? Many of us have long-standing employees in our businesses and homes and many of us may be employees too. How many people really feel a part of the business in which they work? Wouldn't many walk straight out of the door the minute they found a better job? Well, Islam did not take root in this way. It took root with an unbreakable emotional, spiritual, intellectual and physical attachment to it, and who were responsible for doing so? We may have disloyal workers, but never disloyal Muslims.

These people were called the *Sahabah* (Companions), all 114 000 of them without exception. The Almighty peeked into the hearts of humanity, and only picked those most hardy and competent enough to perform this most difficult task on earth – to assist a Prophet in his mission. We, wrapped in thermal blankets on a winter day 1415 years down the line, were not picked for this difficult task. The reason is simple. If we can't survive for 2 minutes without a cup of hot chocolate on a cold night in an enclosed home when Eskom has load shedding, how will we survive two months on a campaign in the burning dessert with only a date to live on a day?

Without the *Sahabah*, there wouldn't have been any Qur'an. Since Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) could not read nor write, he relied on one of dozens of *Sahabah*

to transcribe the manuscript on his behalf. They are the only people whom we know are destined for paradise as the Almighty Himself had given them this certificate in this world already: “

The Lord is happy with them, and they are happy with their Lord

.”(100:8). The noble Master (peace be upon him) declared that none of them will enter hellfire simply because they seen him with the flame of faith in their hearts.

The task of the *Sahabah* was to show us how to practice Islam. The Qur'an was not designed to be given to us in a manuscript or in PDF format, and allow us to interpret it according to our own fanciful desires. No, it was meant to be practiced by the *Sahabah* and this

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interpretation faithfully adopted by the later generations from heart to heart, not mind to mind.

Remove the

Sahabah

, and we have no Qur'an, no

tafseer

(explanation) of the Qur'an and no

Sunnah

at all. Rather, we will make the

tafseer

of the Qur'an, but it will not be unified and in conformity with Islam. It will be rather a plate of salad for one, a glass of juice for another, and soccer ball for the third.

Lastly, let us follow the example of the Rainbow Nation in remembering our noble *Sahabah*. Let us name our sons Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali, Abu Hurairah, Mu'awiyah, Zubeir, Talha, Anas, Khubaib and Jabir. Our grandsons, in their turn, should be named Abu Bakr II and 'Uthman II. Let us not consider old-fashioned names such as Fatimah, Ruqayyah, Aisha, Umm Kulthum, Zainub, Habeebah, Asma and Hafsah. Let us name our Masjids after that great warrior Sayyadina Khalid ibnul Waleed; after the trustworthy one, Sayyadina Abu 'Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrah and after Sayyadina Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, the one whose voice was as melodious as Prophet Dawud. Let us name our bridges, streets, and buildings after the

Sahabah

. Housewives and shopkeepers, name cupboards, doors, windows and corners after the

Sahabah

. There is a choice of 114 000 names, so it will be exciting to choose.

Lastly, if it wasn't for the sacrifices of the *Sahabah*, we would have been still carving a wooden idol in the morning, offering a piece of bread to it in the afternoon which a stray dog would eat, allowing our children to play ring-a-ring-a-rosie with it in the evening, and burning it as firewood next day. So, let us all fall in love with them today all over again, never forget their kindness on us and never tolerate anyone to disrespect or speak ill of them in any way.