

The New Year

Having just completed the year 2024, the 'New Year' is seen and heard all around us. However, the question remains as to what should be a Muslim's take on these events. Upon the passing of a year, the common trend is to celebrate; people have birthday parties, wedding anniversaries etc. However, in certain spheres this is not the case; take the example of a businessman who at the end of the (financial) year will first take stock of the past year. He will meticulously go through the accounts of the past year taking into account every single penny. He will check to see if he made a profit, and if so then how can he make more in the coming year. He will check his expenses: where did he spend his money? Can he make further savings? All of this is done so that he can make the coming year more profitable than the one that has passed.

This should be the case at the end of the year in every Muslim's life for we too have been sent to this world as businessmen with the commodity of time; which is life. We will have to one day give account for every second in the Court of Allāh ta'ālā, when our books of deeds shall be presented.

'We will bring forth a book for him that he will find wide open, (and We will say to him) 'Read your book. Enough are you today to take your own account.' (17:13-14)

'Umar radhiyallāhu 'anhu, emphasising the same, says:

'Take stock of your own lives before Allāh ta'ālā reckons you. And assess yourself before you are assessed by Allāh. And prepare yourselves for the great summoning.'

It is our belief that on the Day of Judgement Allāh ta'ālā will reckon us for everything that we did in the world.

'On the day when everybody shall find present before him whatever good he did and whatever evil he did, he will wish there would have been a wide space between him and that (day).' (3:30)

No matter how minute or trivial an act we did, we will find that it is present in our book of deeds.

'So, whoever does any good act (even) to the weight of a particle will see it. And whoever does evil (even) to the weight of a particle will see it.' (99:7-8)

This will be to the extent that in awe people will say:

'Woe to us! What a book is this! It has missed nothing, minor or major, but has taken it into account.' Thus they will find whatever they did present before them, and your Lord will not wrong anyone.' (18:49)

We need to keep this reality in mind and spend our lives with regular reflection on our actions with Murāqabah and Muhasabah. Murāqabah means to supervise and oversee oneself to ensure that he/she stays away from disobediences of Allāh ta'ālā and spends every moment seeking the Pleasure of Allāh ta'ālā. Muhasabah means taking account of one's activities at the end of the day, week and year; and thanking Allāh ta'ālā for the ability to have performed any good actions and seeking forgiveness for any sins one may have committed. Insha'allāh, if this is adhered to, then we will see a great change in our lives. We will find ourselves spending every second of our lives with great care.

The end of a year is a time to reflect and say to yourself, "Another year from my precious life has passed. Who knows how many more years, if any, I have remaining?" Let us spend them in those avenues that bring the pleasure of Allāh ta'ālā and stay away from those things that bring His displeasure, so that we can meet Allāh ta'ālā in a state that He is pleased with us.

Hadhrat Mawlana Saleem Dhorat Hafidhahullah

Our Pious Predecessors

HADHRAT MAWLANA RASHID AHMAD GANGOHI

The famous muhaddith (expert in Hadith), faqeeh (jurist) and imaam of tasawwuf (self-rectification)- Hadhrat Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi rahmatullahi alayh was born in a village south west of Saharanpur known as Gangoh. This village was known for it's pious personalities such as Shah Abdul Qudoos Gangohi and Shah Abu Saeed Gangohi rahmatullahi alayhima.

Hadhrat Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi rahmatullahi alayh was born on Sunday 6th Dhul Qa'dah 1244AH (1829) at mid-morning.

His initial Islamic education commenced in his home village of Gangoh by a local teacher Qutub Bakhsh Gangohi rahmatullahi alayh. From an early age his intelligence and alertness was apparent to everyone. At the age of seven his father, who was also an alim (scholar) - Mawlana Ahmad Ali Sahib, left this world leading him to be brought up by his paternal grandfather and mother. From a young age Hadhrat Mawlana had inclination and love for Islam because of which he pursued seeking the knowledge of Deen. He studied some books of Farsi (Persian) under his maternal uncle Mawlana Muhammad Taqi in Karnaal and some under Mawlana Muhammad Gauth sahib rahmatullahi alayhima in Gangoh. He also studied his primary Arabic books under Mawlana Muhammad Bakhsh Rampuri Sahib rahmatullahi alayh.

In 1262 AH (1846) Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi rahmatullahi alayh travelled to Delhi at the age of 17 to pursue further Islamic education; this is where he came under the tutelage of Ustadhul Asaatizah (Teacher of teachers) Mawlana Mamluq Ali Nanotwi Sahib rahmatullahi alayh. He studied further sciences of Deen together with Mawlana Muhammad Qasim Nanotwi Sahib rahmatullahi alayh with whom he developed a deep, lifelong friendship. He completed his Dars e Nizaami in 1265 AH (1849) at the age of 21 studying under erudite ulama, most notably studying Hadeeth under Shah Abdul Ghani Muhaddith ad Dehlawi rahmatullahi alayh.

After completing the Dars e Nizaami he returned back to Gangoh where he taught many subjects till 1300 AH. From 1301 AH he taught all the books of Sihah Sittah (the six most authentic compilations of Hadeeth) all by himself! He would start in Shawwaal with the Sunan of Tirmidhi and teach all the books one by one by the end of Sha'baan. This is clear testimony of his in-depth knowledge of all the sciences of academia and deep insight into the science of Hadeeth.

In the path of Tasawwuf Hadhrat Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi rahmatullahi alayh pledged bay'ah on the hands of Sayyidut Taa'ifah Haji Imadadullah Muhajir Makki rahmatullahi alayh; the circumstances leading up to this bay'ah are a story in themselves.

Hadhrat mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi rahmatullahi alayh undertook a journey to Thanabhawan where another pious personality by the name of Hadhrat Mawlana Muhammad Thanwi rahmatullahi alayh resided. The reason for this journey was to debate with him on an academic issue. It so happened that he passed by Haji Imdadullah Sahib rahmatullahi alayh who he knew from his student days in Delhi as Haji Imdadullah rahmatullahi alayh would visit Delhi often. Haji Sahib enquired the reason for his visit to Thanabhawan, Hadhrat mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi rahmatullahi alayh replied that he was on his way to debate with Hadhrat Mawlana Muhammad Thanwi rahmatullahi alayh on an academic issue. Hearing this Haji Sahib rahmatullahi alayh remarked "oh oh, tawbah tawbah, we shouldn't intend to do that! He is from our seniors".

Hadhrat Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi rahmatullahi alayh understood and accepted this advice and upon invitation, instead came to the khanqah of Haji Sahib. After spending a few days in the khanqah he requested Haji Sahib rahmatullahi alayh to accept him at his hands for bay'ah, which Haji Sahib rahmatullahi alayh refused. However Hadhrat Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi rahmatullahi alayh stuck to his objective and did not slack in his resolve. Upon seeing this determination Haji Sahib rahmatullahi alayh accepted him and within a short period of time he excelled in the path of tasawwuf, eventually receiving khilafah from Haji Sahib rahmatullahi alayh.

Whilst giving khilafah Haji Sahib said to Hadhrat Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi rahmatullahi alayh, "Mia Rashid Ahmad! The bounty Allah ta'ala had bestowed upon me, I have given to you; now it is up to you to excel and increase in it."

When mentioning this statement to his students and mureeds (spiritual disciples) he was asked "Hadhrat, what happened after that"? He replied "I annihilated myself (in this cause)." Hadhrat annihilated himself in self-rectification to such a degree that the green handmade quilt his mother had given him to cover himself during cold nights had lost its colour due to excessive crying.

Hadhrat mawlana Rashid Ahmad gangohi rahmatullahi alayh was also a freedom fighter and fought against the British empire together with Haji imadadullah Sahib and Hadhrat Mawlana Muhammad Qasim Nanotwi rahmatullahi alyhim during their rule over India.

It was all done because of the love of Deen and concern for the imaan of the Muslims of India. It was with this worry and concern that Darul uloom Deoband came into existence of which Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi rahmatullahi alayh was a patron.

He continued teaching academic and spiritual knowledge till 1313 AH (1892), when due to loss of eyesight Hadhrat was unable to continue. From 1314 AH (1893) his focus was totally on the spiritual field, training his mureeds towards tazkiyatun nafs (inner spiritual rectification).

At the age of 78 this shining sun of Islam left this temporary abode on Friday 8th Jamaduth Thani 1323 AH (1902) whilst the jumu'ah adhaan was being called out. He passed away as a result of a snake biting him whilst he was performing tahajjud salaah. Such was Hadhrat's sheer devotion in salaah that he did realise he had been bitten until his khuddaam (attendants) noticed before the Fajr salaah that Hadhrat was bleeding profusely.

May Allah have mercy on Hadhrat's soul, grant him the best of rewards for his service to Deen and bless us with the love of his chosen servants. Aameen

The status of Parents

MAWLANA IBRAHIM MAQBOOL

Allah Subahnahu wa Ta'ala has granted us many blessings. We tend to value blessings according to how we received them. Those blessings which we have attained easily without any effort - such as food, water and health - are generally undervalued and unappreciated. On the contrary those blessings which we have acquired through some sort of effort - such as wealth and the things we buy - are usually appreciated and valued more. Sadly our parents are from the category of those blessings which we possess without any effort of ours due to which we don't value them as much as they deserve to be valued. Dearest readers! Our parents are a great blessing; let our eyes open to this reality before their eyes close. There is a famous saying in the Arabic language which says, a blessing is appreciated after its loss.

The status of parents is in the eyes of Allah ta'ala

1. Being good and obedient to them is regarded as worship whereas disobeying them is a sin. Rather, obedience to parents is one of the most beloved actions from the category of the 'greatest of worship' whereas displeasing them is from amongst the gravest of sins.

Once a companion asked our beloved Nabi as to which action is the Most beloved to Allah. He replied, "Salah at its prescribed time". The companion then asked, "thereafter which action is the Most beloved to Allah?" Rasoolullah replied obedience to parents (Bukhari). In another hadith Rasoolullah asked his companions, "Shall I not show you the gravest of the major sins?" He repeated this question thrice before saying "Ascribing partners with Allah, disobedience to parents and false oath" (Bukhari)

2. When parents are happy Allah is happy and when they are angry Allah is angry. Rasoolullah said "Allah's happiness lies in the happiness of the parent and the anger of Allah lies in the anger of the parent. (Tirmidhi)

3. The status of parents is so great in the eyes of Allah that in several places of the glorious Qur'aan He orders humankind to be obedient to parents twinned with the order of tawheed (oneness of Allah) and not to ascribing partners with Allah. Hereunder are a few examples:

Your Rabb has commanded that you worship only Him and that you treat your parents kindly (Banu Israil:23)

When We took the promise from the Bani Israa'eel (instructing them with the Words) "Worship Allaah only, be kind towards parents....(Al Baqarah:83)

Worship Allaah (and do good solely for His pleasure), ascribe none as partner to Him and show kindness to parents (Al-Nisaa:36)

4. Allah readily accepts their duas.

There are certain times and places where duas are readily accepted, for example after the adhaan and fardh salah. Similarly there are certain individuals whose duas are readily accepted.

Rasoolullah has said that three people's duas are readily accepted: One is the dua of the oppressed, second is the dua of the traveller and lastly the dua of a parent for their child (Ahmad). Children should behave in such a way that they take duas of their parents and beware of their curses.

We can never repay our parents

We can never repay our parents for what they have done for us. They go through countless and unimaginable hardships and struggles for our happiness and comfort ... our pain becomes theirs, our illness becomes theirs, our worry becomes theirs ... how can we repay them?

Once Ibn Umar Radhiyallahu Anhu saw a young man performing tawaf whilst carrying his mother on his back. When he finished he met Sayyidunā 'Abdullāh ibn Umar, and read a few couplets:

"I am an obedient camel for her (always ready to serve her day and night). If her other conveyances become tired and restless, I will not."

He compared his service to his mother to that of an obedient camel; an obedient camel will always oblige to the orders of its owner. Just like that this young man would be ready to serve his mother in every circumstance. Thereafter, he said,

"O Ibn 'Umar! Do you think I have repaid her?" Sayyidunā 'Abdullāh ibn Umar replied, "No, not even for a single pain she felt during labour."

Therefore dear reader, remember we can never repay for our parents' favours. We should therefore always be good and humble in front of them and value them. When they are young, be kind and obedient to them. When they are old and in need our service, we should be at their service. Our pious elders say that the service of one's parents when they are in need is better than performing tahajjud (night worship). Service to parents is a shortcut to Jannah. Don't scold them or answer back, rather respect them and speak lovingly. We should bring them gifts they like and express our love by kissing them on their foreheads and hands.

My Respected Shaykh, Shaykhul Hadith Mawlana Muhammad Saleem Dhorat hafidhahullah explains how he would treat his late mother. He would kiss her on her forehead and hands. He would never leave the house without informing her. He would never book any programme abroad without consulting his mother. In the latter stages of her life, Shaykh would stay awake the whole night in case his mother needed some assistance. Despite doing all of this, Shaykh would say that I did not value my mother. He goes as far as to say that the grief of not valuing my mother is more than the grief of her separation.

Those whose parents have passed, they can serve their parents by making excessive dua, sending rewards of good deeds and living a life of piety.

May Almighty Allah grant us all the true understanding of the status of our parents and grant us the ability to value them in the best possible manner,

Aameen!

Thumāmah Bin Uthāl radhiyallāhu 'anhu

In the sixth year of hijrah , a group of Sahābah radhiyAllāhu 'anhum were sent on a mission by our Beloved Nabī sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam to a place called Najd. The tribe of Banā Hanīfah lived in this area, their leader was Thumāmah Bin Uthāl. He was an idol worshipper and a great enemy of Islam. He was captured and brought before Nabī sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam in Madīnah. Nabī sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam ordered for him to be tied to a pillar in the masjid and instructed the sahābah radhiyallāhu 'anhum to show kind treatment towards him.

The next day when Nabī sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam passed Thumāmah he asked him, "O Thumāmah! What do you think of me?" Thumāmah replied: "I only think good of you. If you decide to take my life then I am deserving of it. And if you are kind towards me then I will be grateful. And if you desire wealth then ask for whatever you wish." On hearing this Nabī sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam remained silent and went away. The next day Nabī sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam passed by Thumāmah and asked him the same question. Thumāmah realised that Nabī sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam is very caring and kind. That's why he replied, "If you are kind towards me then I will be grateful." On hearing this, Nabī sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam once again remained silent and went away.

As days were passing, Thumāmah was getting an opportunity to spend time in the Masjid of Nabī sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam. He was also able to stay in the company of Nabī sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam and the Sahābah radhiyallāhu 'anhum. He would closely watch them pray salāh, hear the recitation of the Glorious Qur'ān, and see how Muslims worship Allah ta'ālā. The spiritual environment and kind treatment was having a good effect on Thumāmah. On the third day, when Nabī sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam asked the same question Thumāmah replied, "I have the same answer that I gave to you yesterday." Thumāmah had full belief in the excellent character of Nabī sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam and hoped to be freed. Nabī sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam then ordered for Thumāmah to be released and said, "O Thumāmah, I have forgiven you and set you free."

The three days spent in the masjid caused Thumāmah to like Islam and he was won over by the noble character of Nabī sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam and the Sahābah radhiyallāhu 'anhum. The moment he was set free, Thumāmah headed towards a garden of date-palm trees close to the masjid. He took a bath and returned to the Masjid. He then embraced Islam and said, "I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship but Allāh. And I bear witness that Muḥammad sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam is His messenger." He then turned towards Nabī sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam and said, "By Allāh, O Muḥammad! There was no face on the surface of the earth more disliked by me than yours, but now your face has become the most beloved face to me. By Allāh, there was no religion more disliked by me than yours, but now it is the most beloved religion to me. By Allāh, there was no town more disliked by me than your town, but now it is the most beloved town to me." Thumāmah radhiyallāhu 'anhu devoted the rest of his life for the sake of Islam and teachings of our beloved Nabī sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam.

Lessons:

1. A Muslim always shows good character to everyone, even towards those who have wronged him.
2. Staying in the company of the pious people will have a good effect on us and bring us closer to Allāh ta'ālā.