

The Prisoner Who Did Not Forget the Sunnah of Our Prophet Muhammad (sallallāhu alayhi wasallam)

There are certain blessed people by Allāh who had such love for our beloved Nabi (sallallāhu alayhi wasallam), that they would find a way to practice on his Sunnah no matter where they are. From amongst them is Shaykhul-Hind Mawlānā Mahmud Hasan (rahmatullāhi alayhi). He was a very wise, brave and deeply respected teacher from India who lived over a hundred years ago. People called him 'Shaykhul-Hind' because he was a master scholar of the region. He loved the Prophet Muhammad (sallallāhu alayhi wasallam) very much. To the Shaykh, practicing the Sunnah wasn't just a duty—it was like breathing. It was second nature to him!

Later in his life, when Shaykhul-Hind (rahmatullāhi alayhi) stood up for justice and freedom, he was locked away as a political prisoner on a lonely faraway island called Malta. The prison guards were very strict. They watched the Muslim prisoners constantly and banned them from practicing their religious duties openly.

Soon, the day of Eid-ul-Adhā arrived. Back home in India, the Shaykh loved this day of celebration. He would always sacrifice animals to feed the poor, with the intention of it being the sunnah of our Prophet Muhammad (sallallāhu alayhi wasallam). But in a heavily guarded prison cell, thousands of miles from home, it seemed impossible. In fact, according to Islāmic rules, a traveller or a prisoner doesn't even have to do the sacrifice. It would have been very easy for the Shaykh to just say, "I cannot do it this year because I'm in prison." But the love he had for Prophet Muhammad (sallallāhu alayhi wasallam) did not let him make excuses.

Shaykhul-Hind (rahmatullāhi alayhi) went straight to the prison warden. He politely but firmly protested, demanding that he be allowed to purchase an animal for Eid. The prison officials had never seen a man with such deep faith and determination. Moved by his passionate spirit, the guards actually went out and bought him a sacrificial animal for seven gold coins. The Shaykh happily paid for it with his own money.

On the morning of Eid, in a loud and brave voice, Shaykhul-Hind (rahmatullāhi alayhi) recited the Takbeer and carried out the sacrifice. It was likely the very first time that this sunnah had been practiced inside that prison.

(Adapted from: Fathers and Sons of Deoband: pg 26)

Moral

When you truly love a good habit or a noble tradition, you do not look for excuses to skip it when times get tough. If your heart is determined, you can practice kindness, faith and tradition anywhere – even behind closed doors. This incident of Shaykhul-Hind (rahimahullah) teaches us a wonderful lesson; where there is a will, there is a way. He showed us that we must always remember the promise of Allāh, "As for those who strive in our way, we will certainly take them onto our paths, and indeed Allāh is with those who do good deeds." (29:69)