

‘Ashara Mubaraka AH 1440
Majlis 2
English Reflections

Al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Aali Qadr Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS} continued his narration of al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin’s historic safr mubarak to Yemen in 1381 by recalling his visit to the city of Taiba, which was the topic of today’s *wa’az mubarak*. Taiba is the resting place of the first dai of Hind, 24th overall, al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Yusuf Najmuddin ^{RA}. Originally of Sidhpur, Syedna Najmuddin ^{RA} accompanied his father to Yemen to the *hadrat imamiyah* of the then dai, al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Mohammed Ezzuddin ^{RA}. During this trip, his noble father passed away, and Syedna Najmuddin ^{RA} stayed on in Yemen. While in Yemen, Syedna Najmuddin ^{RA} benefitted from Syedna Ezzuddin ^{RA} and his personal tutelage as he prepared him for the mantle of Dawat.

Taiba is a small town located in the mountains northwest of Sana’a. When Syedna Burhanuddin ^{RA} visited Taiba in 1381 it was not accessible by vehicles. Undeterred, Syedna al-Muqaddas hiked much of the mountainous terrain. Upon reaching Taiba, he pinpointed the location of the *qabr mubarak* of Syedna Yusuf Najmuddin ^{RA}. In his subsequent trips to Yemen, Syedna al-Muqaddas ^{RA} repeatedly visited Taiba and sought *barakat* with the *ziyarat* of his predecessor Syedna Najmuddin ^{RA} and *namaz* at Syedi Hasan b. Nuh al-Bharouchi’s ^{QR} masjid, also in Taiba just across from the mausoleum. Between the masjid and *qubba mubaraka* lies a small reservoir built by Syedna Najmuddin ^{RA} along the lines of a similar reservoir which he had also built in his hometown of Sidhpur. The reservoir, referred to as the *wao*, collects rainwater and is made accessible by steps all around. These steps, as Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS} explained in today’s *wa’az mubarak* while linking Taiba within the overall discourse, allude to the degrees and ranks by which one ascends spiritually through knowledge and action.

What does it mean to elevate one’s own self? How does one go about doing it? What exactly is it that we are elevating ourselves towards? Syedna began by explaining that the loftiest status one can achieve is proximity to Awliya’ Allah ^{AS}, a proximity attained in this life through one’s adherence to their decrees. This adherence, and subsequent proximity, is not achieved through acts of show that are bereft of sincerity but through the dedicated following of all of Maula’s ^{TUS} stipulations, privately and publicly.

This proximity takes us closer to what it means to be human – to the realisation of humanity for, at the very heart of Ashara, the heart of the teachings of the Awliya’ Allah ^{AS}, the heart of the lessons taught in Karbala lies the very essence of ‘humanity’. Awliya’ Allah ^{AS} are the apogee of humanity; they epitomise and personify what it is. They and their humanity are looked up to by all of mankind and is what all people should aspire to. This epitomisation is for all of mankind at large, for Muslimeen more specifically and especially for their adherents, Mumineen. Regardless of the perspective from which they view it, all who observe Awliya Allah ^{AS} will testify to their humanity.

From the steps of the Taiba and Sidhpur reservoirs and the concept of progressing by degrees in elevation we come swiftly to a core theme of the *wa’az mubarak* – competition and the competitive spirit. Humans compete for all kinds of things in this world but too often the competitiveness becomes so consuming that the combatants seek the annihilation of their opponent. Although Maula’s ^{TUS} comments were without any specific examples we can see its profound presence in the world around us: the business world, in politics and in the very toxic way in which cultural clashes are erupting into violence, suspicion and hatred.

The purest form of competitive spirit, Mufaddal Maula ^{TUS} explained, is that in which you seek to better yourself: we become our own opponent. The highest ideals for which to compete are those that bring one closer to Awliya’ Allah ^{AS} and result in their happiness which Syedna al-Dai al-Ajal ^{TUS}

declared was *raheeq e makhtum*: the divine wine that neither intoxicates nor leaves a foul aftertaste in the mouth.

It is related in Surah al-Mutaffifeen:

- يسقون من رحيق مختوم • ختامه مسك و في ذلك فليتنافس المتنافسون
- They will be slaked with pure wine, sealed. The seal of which is musk, and for this then let the competitors compete.

Competitive sports when pursued with the intent of enhancing mind, body and spirit are commendable pursuits. When competitive sports, however, become about ego, triumph, humiliation of the opponent and gloating in such victories — then they become spurious. This highest ideal can be found in a narrative which was placed in a whole new light for us in this *wa'az mubarak* – the competition between Imams Hasan and Husain ^{AS}. They came to Rasul Allah ^{SAW} having engaged in a bout of wrestling which had not produced a victor. Indeed, as Maula ^{TUS} later revealed, they had not wrestled with the intent of overcoming one another.

Rasul Allah ^{SAW} counselled them that this was not the way to establish who is the stronger but instead, he asked them to determine whose handwriting is the finer. When they brought their written sentences to him, Rasul Allah ^{SAW} sent them to Amirul Mumineen ^{AS} for appraisal and he in turn to Maulatuna Fatema ^{AS}. She chose to have their pearls of handwriting be judged by seeing who would take the most from the seven pearls of her necklace and as they quickly gathered them up one remained. Yet even now, the true competitive spirit in them made each desire that the other take it and in this spirit it happened that Jibraeel ^{AS} brought down his wing to make two pearls out of the one and leave the contest even.

What lessons are there for us in this new perspective of this story, and indeed of the entire concept of competitiveness portrayed in this *wa'az mubarak*? That competitiveness, whether in sport or in life, should not be gladiatorial. It is not necessary to win by vanquishing the opponent. True victory brings with it the 'seal of musk' – the sweet aftertaste of humility and thus, in defeat, the opponent is not left with the bitter taste that worldly losses can often leave behind. Winning needs to be together and the truest contests are those that bring out the best in each other and those that bring out the best in ourselves.

Syedna al-Dai al-Ajal ^{TUS} told of the young man and his mother who had the honour of accompanying Maulana al-Imam al-Husain ^{AS} to Karbala. The young man's father had given his life in a previous battle and he and his mother had only each other left. On the Day of 'Ashura, the mother called her son and instructed him to sacrifice his life for Imam Husain ^{AS}. Like the other martyrs of Karbala, the young man approached Imam Husain ^{AS} seeking his *razā mubāarak* to take to the battlefield. Imam Husain ^{SA} reminded him that his father had already been martyred, and that he was the only son; his mother would not approve. With utmost respect, the young man softly replied that it was *his* mother herself who had sent him to Imam Husain ^{AS}. The young man returned to his mother informing her of Imam Husain's ^{AS} consent and, as he proceeded into battle, she was greatly pleased. The young man fought valiantly but was ultimately felled by the foes.

Giving an insight into the mind of the young man's mother which only Maula can provide, Syedna al-Dai al-Ajal ^{TUS} explained that she had two options before her, both of which in a way, were competing for her selection. On the one hand, she had wished that her young son be married to begin a life of his own and on the other, she had desired that he sacrifice his life for Imam Husain ^{AS}. Ultimately, her desire for her son's shahādat prevailed and she and her son were rewarded with everlasting taste of 'raheeq e makhtoom' – that of Imam Husain's ^{AS} happiness.

May Allah Ta'ala grant us the *tawfeeq* and strength to always seek the *raheeq e makhtoom* of Maula's ^{TUS} happiness and may He grant Maula a life of health and happiness that knows no end.