Be like the bee

By **Nauman Ali Khan**

**O my Lord! expand me my breast; Ease my task for me; And remove the impediment from my speech, So they may understand what I say**
[20:25-28]

The way Muslims thinks is different from everybody else and the reason of that is the book of ALLAH. It shakes the way that we think. As a matter of fact what I want to start with is the aayah of surah mulk, where people are entering into hell fire. And the crime for which they are entering is being asked from them as they enter. And so they respond like,



"If only we had been listening or reasoning, we would not be among the companions of the Blaze."

Now, here let’s stop there for a second, listening to what, listening to revelation , listening to the message, listening to the reminder, listening to the advice; that part everybody knows. But it doesn’t say “wa naqilo” in the aaya it says “aou naqilo” which means, and the word “aou” in the Arabic means “or”. So it becomes “have we listened “or” have we thought” and the application here is, have we listened or “at least” have we thought. The purpose of putting things in this way is very powerful. On the one hand the Muslim will learn something when he or she listens, we listen to a khutba , we listen to a reminder, we listen to a lecture , you read something even and you learn and you take advice from that, and may be change yourself for the better at least you should, because listening the good advice and not changing is one of the reasons these people end up where they end up. They just refuse to listen, actually listening has two dimensions, on the one hand it’s just something going in your ear and on the other is actually applying, listening actually complying with it. This is true for the Arabic language and also true in English. When you say I tried to tell him, I tried to give him advice but he didn’t listen to me, which doesn’t mean that he did not hear me it means he did not obey what I was saying, he didn’t comply with me. So listening has this duality. But the letter that I am about to high light is “or” and outside of that the Muslim is supposed to be constantly thinking and he has plenty of reason to think, even he is not sitting and listening to a sheikh teaching him something. We are constantly people of thought, and what makes us think are aayat. The purpose of the aayat:

* La allakum yatafakaroon
* Li qoumin yaqiloon
* La allakum taqiloon
* Li yaddabaru aayati

So they can think deeply about the aayat, they can reflect on the aayat, and the aayat not just of the Quran but the aayat of the creation all around us. When you look outside at sky you are supposed to think about something, when you look at a tree outside, you and I are supposed to think, that’s what a Muslim does. We think differently about the same thing everybody else sees. They all see it too and we see it too, but when we see it we see something else. We see an opportunity to think to reflect.

So today’s khutba is actually about one thing that gets overlooked, that Allah SWT wants us to think about that he wants us to really reflect on, and this is difference between when we read the Quran just as the surface level we just read the Quran and we just move on, or we stop to think about what actually Allah subhana wa taala is saying. He says in this remarkable aaya ,

“wa aoha rabbuka ilal nahl, “

Allah revealed, your master revealed.

When you say “aoha rabbuka” it’s kalaam to Rasool Allah SAW , by master revealed he is thinking that he revealed Quran, he revealed revelation at him, isn’t it. But Allah Azoujal in this particular aaya says I am not talking about you, I am talking about the bee , the honey bee. Your master, the same master who revealed Quran to you is the one who revealed something to the honey bee. Think about that for a second. A honey bee is something insignificant to most of us . you don’t see it every day, even if you do you get scared of it, you shush it away, you live in a city which means more than usual dis connected from nature anyway we are more concrete and grind that there is the natural creation of Allah Azoujal. Right? Even the one creation you cannot escape is sky , which is always there, and you know most people that live in a busy city they don’t have time to look up. They just look around, and doing the tour and take the bus; they don’t even look up at the sky . so what are we going to reflect on, right. We don’t get time to think even for ourselves or what Allah wants us to think about.

So in this particular khutba I wanted to teach something that we would over look entirely a bee and highlight first of all that Allah Azoujal told his messenger SAW that there is a kind of wahi that I didn’t give to you , that I gave to the bee. So, I want you to think about the bee. SubhanALLAH. We are going to have to think about the bee because Allah is telling us, and whatever Allah tells us in the Quran is for our guidance. So now I, as a believer , as a Muslim , I have new respect for this small creature because Allah described it as something that receives Allah’s wahi. He didn’t say that about a cow, He didn’t say that about a camel, He didn’t say that about a bird. He mentions those animals in Quran, he mentions lots of animals in the Quran. But the wahi thing, it really captures you like there is something special about this creature that Allah wants me to pay attention to. And this is a matter of thought. As a matter of act I will tell you and this is not going to be the subject of today’s khutba but I will tell you personally, when I study this aaya few months ago I watched may be 5 or 6 documentaries on bees. Just because Allah wants us to appreciate this creature. Allah has given it advice so everything it does has to do with wahi, its inspired by wahi, and it has lessons to learn. I didn’t know enough about bees, so I wanted to study bee and I considered that studying Islam. That is study of Quran, by watching the documentary and taking notes of what a bee does, that for me is studying Allah’s Deen. Because that is Allah wants us to think about. We have to have the broad perspective to see how Allah wants us to approach knowledge and wisdom. When he revealed to us this grand book.

In any case in this aaya Allah Azoujal says, “ attakhizi minal jibaal e buyutan” he revealed to the bee that it should make home , “attakhizi” which means direct command . you see in Arabic the expected language from here is “intattakhiza minal jibal e buyutan” that it should take homes, it should make homes in the mountains. “wa minash shajarah” and it should make a home in the tree and it can also make up a home in what people build for it, people make bee farms, don’t they? There is bee farming. So what people build, it can make a home in there too.

Now we are learning this aaya that first of all Allah made the point to mention that he directly commands the bee. He speaks to it directly. Allah directly communicates to the bee of where it should build its home. And one of the other incredible benefits of this is that is you have any byproduct of honey , which is a massive industry in world, as a matter of fact it’s not just honey. Most of the farming , for example California has the biggest and oldest farms in the world , it supplies 90% of the world’s supply, and all of it comes from honey bees that actually extract the pollen from certain kind of plants. So they farm them in there. And Allah Azoujal revealed to it that you can make your home in the mountains , and you can make your home in the tree. But if Allah did not mention, “wa mimma yarishoon” you will only find honey bees working in trees and mountains, we will never be able to farm them. But he said it “wa mimma yarishoon”.

So you and I enjoy the supply of the honey bees because of Allah giving it permission. Just think about that. It makes you reflect on the fact that all of what we enjoy from Allah creation is because Allah explicitly commanded creation, in this particular case , the bee to be at our service. Allah subhana wa taala tells bees that when people build for you take it as a home, you use that as a home.

But what I really wanted to talk about is some guidance from this small creature. Not just that an appreciation for this creature but some guidance. And I found something so incredible that I am still baffled by it. I found a hadith of our messenger SAW,

**Wallazi bi nafsi hilazi**

“I swear by the one who has my life in his hand”

Allah’s messenger could have said anything while swearing, but he swears by Allah first, because what he is about to say must be really incredible, and he says :

**Inna mahalal mumin ka masalil na’ala**

“The example of the believer is just like the example of the bee”

SubhanAllah, first Allah told us that he reveals to the bee, and now Rasul Allah SAW said that if you want to be a mu’min , you should just be like the bee.

How am I gonna be like the bee?? What a bee can teach me about my emaan?? About how I am going to live as a believer?? And this is so serious that prophet SAW swore by Allah first and then he said that. It must be something really serious. So he told us somthings that we should pay attention to and there are many more. Look at what the Rasul (peace be upon him) said. He says **“aqarat tayyiban”** which means “it eats well” it eats good and pure. When a bee goes to a flower, it doesn’t take the flower that is immature, it doesn’t take the flower that is fallen or gone bad, it doesn’t go to the flower that it can smell somebody else is already gone. It goes to a fresh, clean, pure flower. It only goes to that.

The first aspect that is highlighting my emaan is, the rizq we pursue, not just the food we eat, but the rizq we pursue, the job we are going to do, the business we are gonna go start, the money you are gonna make and the food you are gonna eat; look for the pure thing, look for the best. And you know he bee doesn’t settle for less. It keeps looking until it find the very best so, you know what, you are supposed to be high achievers. It’s the part of the attitude of a mu’min “everyone among you, when you do something, you should perfect it”, you should do your best. That’s what the bee does, it goes for the best.

Then he says, **“wa waza at tayyiban**” which means “it sits well”. It not only eats well, but the way it sits down on a flower is really nice, it’s very pure. when you study about the bee you find out that when they take food from flower they give it pollen, which is flower’s seed. They will not go to the flower until they give the flower a lot more than they take from it. A lot more than they will take. They will give it life, they will give it pollen. All of us have relationships just like bee has a relationship with the flower, every one of us has relationships, and in every single one of my relationships and every single one of your relationships you get something and you give something. In your marriage you give something and you get something, with your parents you give something and you get something, with your teachers you give something and you get something, with your employer or your employees you give something and you get something; **But the bee gives a lot more than it takes.** And what it gives makes the life of the recipient better. And what it takes doesn’t harm the recipient, what it takes doesn’t harm the flower. By the way it has to sit right on the most delicate part of the flower, and the bees are actually a heavy creature, relatively speaking to a flower. So if it puts its entire weight on the flower, the part where it extracts the nectar from, it can actually break. So it doesn’t put its entire weight on it. Its wings keep fluttering so it doesn’t put the entire weight on it.

What are we learning, you have a relationship but you keep demanding and demanding until the people who love you, your friends, your employees, your staffs they break. You want something, sure, but don’t take too much. Take it easy. Don’t put so much pressure that they break. And if you want something, give more, bring something first and then demand. And when you demand, demand very little, just enough. Okay it sits well, it finds good place to sit on, it eats well, the other benefit of that is when another bee from a different hive is passing by and it sees the bee eating from the flower it doesn’t even say lemme just go mess everything, because you know if two different hives if go the same flower , the flower gets messed up. It cannot pollenate. The flower is going to die. So the bee realizes that this flower has already got a relationship with that hive, I shouldn’t come to it. It comes close to it, it smells it and it goes to another flower that hasn’t been touched yet.

So you know what we do right, somebody opens up a shop, good business, we think I should open up the same shop right across the street from there and take all of his customers. As soon as customers walk in there, we say , wait lemme show you something. Allah’s rizq is vast. I don’t have to take the food out of his plate and put it on my plate. That’s is what we do, right? There are people, who are so stingy, I don’t know how Muslim professionals, they are making good money, I know doctors, they make good money and they have a med student, somebody who is looking for internship in the hospital and they don’t recommend them because may be five more years down the line they will make more money than me. Or may be ten years down the line, I don’t want that, we don’t want to help each other.

The attitude of the believer is, look this one is earning his rizq, I should find my rizq somewhere else, I should not just cut in his rizq. It’s not a cut throat like incorporate societies. You are not there to take someone else’s money and make it your money. Like, I have got money that’s all I care about.

The prophet of Allah SAW further says about bee, **“wa waqa’at falam taksir”** which means “it sits but it doesn’t break”, it put demands, it takes but it doesn’t break. What a great way to eat, what a great way to live and this is not just about the money it’s also about the relationships that I was trying to say before. In every one of our relationships, what are we learning there in the light of the believer, if we truly understand the lesson of the bee that the Rasool SAW is making so much efforts for us to understand that we have to learn, am I putting too much pressure on my children?? Am I demanding too much from my parents?? Am I asking too much from my husband?? Am I asking too much from my wife?? Am I asking too much from my friends?? Am I too hard on my employees?? Am I too hard on my teachers?? You have to ask those questions. Because we want to be like the bee.

And then he says at the end, **“falan tufsid”** which means “it doesn’t cause corruption”. You know one of the most remarkable thing about the bee is that the flowers they go too are very far from they themselves are. There are hives of flowers and the flowers are much further away. So they will go to the distance sometimes of many miles and they come back to their hive. Their hive is not such as their own home, they have a big neighborhood everybody lives in that hive. So Allah’s taught them a particular dance, they hover in the air in certain way which actually tells the rest of the bees the coordinates of the other flowers. Look I just made some rizq for myself but you guys will benefit from this, this, this flower. I will point you to it. And it actually gives the navigation it’s called the bee dance. It does it before the other bees, so they call all get their rizq too. They can all go eat too and they can build their community together, they can build the hive together.

So it recognizes that when you benefit someone else is not competition , when you benefit someone else, we are all getting beneficial. We are all benefiting. I can’t build a hive by myself to be recognized all of us have to do well. What happens in the Muslim community when we don’t have emaan, when someone is doing well we get jealous. And if you are doing well you make sure you don’t tell anybody else how you got there. If someone asks “where did you get your supplies”, you are like, “I don’t know, I just forgot”. If someone asks “Where did you apply for the job, what is your resume” you are like “I don’t know, I lost the file”. You don’t want to help anybody out because you want to have competition. Why would you let them know these things, No we can’t have that, everybody will look out for themselves and then Rasool of Allah SAW recognizes the enormous wisdom that will come by learning from this bee because Allah himself told him that look at the wahee that comes to the bee. “Wa aoha rabbuka ilal nahl”

Down to the path it takes, Allah calls it “subula rabbik” the if you see a bee pass around and go about in circles and you can’t tell a clear flight path and Allah says every turn it takes is the path way of its master, it’s the path way that Allah made it take. And Allah calls it “dululan” , in the heart of the aaya uses dululan. Which suggests that it moves with humility, Allah is describing that the bee is moving with humility. It has got a job , it has got an important function, it is on a mission but to be on a mission doesn’t mean that it is arrogant.

You know when people busy, they become arrogant. They say things like, “I am too busy”, “I don’t have time for you”, “don’t call me later”. Some of you have a good job and you don’t have the time to call your mother back. This is “dululan”. So, Even if it’s going to do work it moves with humility, SubhanALLAH.

There are many things to talk about bees, but one last thing Allah Azoujal made this creature incredible and he made it do this work, this earning its livelihood, we can think of these lessons as this bee has relationships, it’s benefiting itself and it’s benefiting the community and environment around it but above and beyond it, they create a hive and in that hive they make honey, and that honey benefits way beyond these bees, its shifaun lin naas, “there is cure for humanity” from that little effort. SubhanALLAH.

What are we learning from that, if you and I learn to become a believing community, if we learn to benefit each other, and we learn to live alongside with each other, and take our rizq in moderation and not put too much pressure in our relationships, when what we become doesn’t just benefit us. Humanity needs healing. When a community of needs can heal the world, so many ailments are healed through honey. And honey doesn’t kept until a community of bees learn to live with each other and learn to work with each other.

This ummah, if it is supposed to be like the bees, if we learn to work with each other and live with each other and create a community, then we just don’t benefit each other, we become a healing for mankind. Because mankind has gone greedy. Everybody wants something for itself, looking out for number one , that’s they call it. One of the great tragedies in this world is as fitnah increases the honey bees are disappearing. One of the great aayat of Allah Azoujal is disappearing. And Allah says at the end walam tufsid, “the way it eats, it produces more life”. When the bee eats, it produces more life. The way manufacturing work today, the way businesses work today, the way you and I consume today, we don’t produce more life on the earth. What we manufacture by the expediential amount is more death. We create more pollution on the earth, we create more intoxicants on the earth, we make social waste and economic waste and not just physical waste on the earth, we create fasaad(fitnah). He says learn to consume like the bee, so don’t create fasaad. You can make the world better, you can have yours, but doesn’t mean that we have to cost the world something. It doesn’t mean to cost the next generation something, SubhanALLAH.

May Allah Azoujal help us appreciate, make us the people of thought. It is a profound religion that is been given to us, if you think about it, it’s something else and if you have been following this religion and you have never given it any thought that is something entirely. May Allah make us the people of thought, and people of reflection and people that can truly reflect on the aayat of the Quran and the profound words of His messenger SAW.

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