

Sūrat al-Naml Verse 33

قَالُوا نَحْنُ أَوْلُو قُوَّةٍ وَأَوْلُو بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ وَالْأَمْرُ إِلَيْكِ فَانظُرِي مَاذَا تَأْمُرِينَ

27:33 - They said, 'We are possessors of strength and of great military skill, but the command is yours, so see what you will command'.

Questions for Reflection

- 1) Is there a difference between 'strength' and 'military might' as mentioned by the ministers?
- 2) Why did the ministers not give their opinion when the queen asked them?
- 3) Are there subtle ways of saying what you think? What would be the reason behind that?

Commentary

The answer of the ministers to the queen of Sheba displays their wisdom and tact. They start by saying that they have two points in their favor. One is *quwwa* – the strength to achieve whatever goal one has. In this verse it means the military strength to defend their land and be victorious against enemies. The other is *b'as* which means skill and firmness in using the strength. Here it refers to their bravery and heroism.

It is not enough to have the means for success. It is also necessary to have the competency and skill to use them in the right way. Intelligence, education, strength, talent . . . are all means of achieving goals. But for successful achievement there must be wisdom and planning. Channeling the means in the right and appropriate way is crucial for success. Many people have been unsuccessful despite having the means for success.

There is a lot to learn from this answer of the ministers. They start by explaining their strengths. This is to reassure the queen, so she should not feel apprehensive of what Prophet Sulayman (a) might do. It would calm her to know that she too has a strong force. This shows the concern of the ministers for their queen. It is not to boast of their strength, but to show her they have what it takes to defend her and their land.

The second part of their answer shows their respect for the authority of the queen. Although they hinted at their preference in the first part – they had strength, so they could fight – they didn't say it outright. They let the queen make the final decision as she was the ultimate authority. In all matters, when a group makes a decision everyone can present their views. But the leader makes the final decision as responsibility lies with the leader.

The tactfulness of the ministers shows their nobility. Tactfulness in speech is necessary to maintain harmony with others. It is not just an act of fake politeness. Authentic tactfulness comes from being careful about the feelings of the other side. An emotionally intelligent person will be naturally tactful in their speech. Some definitions of tact include:

- 1) Relating to someone a potentially embarrassing detail of their appearance or demeanor without causing them distress.
- 2) The ability to induce change or communicate hurtful information without offending through the use of consideration, compassion, kindness, and reason.

3) A tactful person can tell you something you don't want to hear, and you will be thankful for the information when they are finished.

Lessons

- 1) Tactfulness is a virtue that must be cultivated.
- 2) A group with a common goal works together.
- 3) A leader must be allowed to make the final decision of any matter.

Connecting verses

- 1) Working as a group - 42:38

Connecting topics

- 1) Tactfulness

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/how-do-life/201405/my-attempt-learn-how-be-tactful>

<https://understandquran.com/22427-cc/> (Please note this is not a Shia site)