



"Granny, I have been reading our 48th Imam, Mowlana Sultan Mohamed Shah (alayhi salam)'s holy farmans and very often, I have come across the word **himmat**. According to the Imam, it is vital for a true mom'in to have **himmat**. So one must have **courage** if one wants to be counted as a true mom'in. I have thought about this a lot but have not quite been able to exactly work out the inferences contained within this one simple sentence in the Imam's holy farmans. Please help me out by sharing with me your thoughts about this."

"Consider these words carefully. They have been preached, in one form or the other, by very many wise men and gurus:

*Do what is right,
without thinking of the consequences –
what will happen if you do what is right.*

*Not keeping quiet, speaking up or taking action if you come across something wrong happening requires great **courage**. This is the singularly most difficult challenge for the ordinary human being. It is very, very easy to just ignore it or keep quiet about it due to various [mostly selfish] fears.*

David was a brilliant engineer and it was no surprise that having graduated at the top of his class in university, he was the first choice for the country's most prestigious and market-leading aeronautics engineering company. He worked hard with utmost loyalty. It was no surprise therefore that barely a year later, he was promoted to head the design team, thus becoming the youngest engineer in the history of the company to achieve such a respected and coveted position.

The years went by happily. He got married to a lovely English girl and was blessed with two adorable children who thought the world of him, a feeling that was entirely mutual. At work, things could not have been better. The company had received great media exposure over its new Supersonic jet, which his team was proud to have designed. The prototype was excellent and the maiden flight, scheduled for the following week from New York to London and back, was completely sold out. The world's focus was trained on this maiden voyage. The company expected to receive huge orders upon the success of the flight and earn billions of dollars as well as fame and accolades from the scientific world. Indeed, life was great and he looked forward to soon accepting board membership, thus making history yet again.

But then, on a Monday morning, he noticed an anomaly in the final test reports of the prototype. It seemed that there could be a small chance of the engines being unable to withstand the highest speed of the jet. He checked the results over and over and over again. But there it was – a minute flaw but nevertheless a flaw. He was shattered to say the least. His first instinct was to immediately inform his boss so that the maiden flight could be cancelled. But then the consequences of doing so flashed through his mind: He would never have a place on the board. In fact, he would surely be fired on the spot and never work in the industry again in any part of the world. His children would have to leave private school. Even worse, they too would be teased and humiliated by their friends, because of their dad's failure. But above all, the company would be ruined forever. The press would have a field day and it would never be able to recover from such public humiliation. 'No, no, no. I cannot do this, I just can't.'

He paced up and down in his office for hours and hours. Finally, he reached the conclusion that it was best to remain quiet and ignore the whole issue. After all, a 0.01% chance of a problem was not

likely to manifest itself. The design was solid and had been approved by many, many experts, none of whom had raised any objections. Perhaps he was over-thinking the issue, given his perfectionist nature. With that, he locked up the reports, putting them out of sight and out of mind.



The maiden flight took off from JFK Airport amidst great pomp and fanfare, all passengers bubbly and excited. Like a proud father, he watched (on his monitor) the jet eat up the miles and when it landed at Heathrow merely three hours after departing from New York, he popped the cork on the champagne bottle, his heart jumping with joy. Two hours later, the jet departed Heathrow with equally excited passengers, looking forward to landing in New York in the

shortest time ever.

Meanwhile, back in New York, at the company headquarters, the mood was very festive. The wine flowed freely and all company employees and executives were in top spirits. David held court in the centre of the room, graciously bowing his head at the numerous kudos and congratulations he was receiving from all directions. He was on Cloud Nine and beamed every time he thought of the great things that lay ahead for him. Suddenly, the clamour in the room died down as all eyes turned towards the enormous television screen in the corner of the room. The words "BREAKING NEWS: SUPERJET CRASHES" flashed across the bottom of the screen. Someone immediately turned the volume up and the whole room collectively gasped in horror as the news anchor, in a sombre voice, informed the world that the Supersonic Jet had crashed into the Atlantic barely an hour before it was due to land at JFK. It seemed there were no survivors.

David wished he was dead. The anchor's voice and disastrous words reverberated like thunderbolts in his head and he thought his heart would come crashing out of his chest at any minute. There was an eerie silence in the room except for the muffled sobs of the secretaries. David slumped to the floor, tears flowing unchecked down his cheeks. 'Why did I not stop the flight when I had the chance to?' This thought made his whole body go numb. He, himself, was responsible for all those deaths!!!

But worse was yet to come. David's cellphone started ringing. Still in a trance, he switched it on and heard his father-in-law's voice, shaky and steeped in grief, relaying the devastating news. His two sons, holidaying in England with their grandparents, had decided to cut their trip short in order to give David a huge surprise. They managed to obtain last-minute seats on the Supersonic Jet, only because they were David's sons! His father-in-law started sobbing openly now and in the background, David could hear the agonised screams of his mother-in-law. Switching off the phone, he started wailing like a banshee. His anguished screams echoing throughout the building. The stricken, accusing eyes of his wife was the last image he saw before everything dissolved into black oblivion..."

"Oh my God!" I cried. "How terribly awful!"

"Indeed," Grandmother agreed. "David received a heavy punishment but he had only himself to blame. He forgot that his promotion, his job, his family and the company were not more important than the hundreds of innocent people whose lives he put at risk by keeping quiet. His fear of the

consequences of doing the right thing resulted in the destruction of his happiness forever.”

“But what if he had informed his boss and the boss refused to listen and cancel the flight? What if he was forced to keep quiet or else face immediate termination?” I asked hotly.

*“Then he should have resigned immediately and informed the authorities and the media of his findings as well as his boss’ refusal to listen to him and cancel the flight. Perhaps the media would have pressurised the company to cancel the flight, in which case no lives would have been lost. His boss would have been the universal villain and David a hero earning the respect of one and all. Above all, he would have a guilt-free conscience and his own family would have been safe. Who knows? All that I am convinced of is that David would triumph because doing the right thing makes God happy and proud and therefore cannot go unrewarded. In our everyday lives, the stakes may not be as high as they were for David and thus easier to ignore but a wrong is a wrong. And must be **courageously** opposed. That is the duty of a true mo’min. Believe me, every human being, at one time or the other, WILL come across such a situation and will have to decide whether to be **courageous** or cowardly and selfish.*

Your earlier question, Alysha, was actually very apt because it touched on the second aspect that I wish to discuss today. Most people fail to do the right thing because of pressure put on them by people in authority, more powerful and influential people than themselves, whom they are unable to oppose or question.

General Jesop, mandated with the command of the US Marine Camp in Cuba, always considered himself to be a real man: tough, brave, fearless and a born leader. He ran his camp with an iron fist, preferring to instil fear in his marines. He needed every one of his men to unequivocally obey his commands. This could only be achieved, or so he thought, if they feared him. The camp was in dangerous territory and not following orders could result in heavy loss of lives in the event of an enemy attack.



General Jesop hated Private Willy Nelson from the minute he arrived and wanted him off his camp. He thought Willy was a frail, namby-pamby geek, unworthy of being a marine, and especially his marine. However, all of the General’s attempts at making Willy give up and demand a transfer failed. No matter how punishing the routine, Willy doggedly carried on. After all, he needed to make his family proud. His great-grandfather, grandfather and father were all decorated war veterans and Willy did not wish to let them down.

The General then enlisted two of his best Privates, Joel and Harry, to bully, harass and hound Willy in the barracks at night. This would surely succeed in getting rid of him. Joel and Harry actually liked Willy and admired his determination but they could not go against the General. They feared him too much and so they had to comply.

The pranks were often cruel and humiliating, making Willy's life a living hell. Unfortunately, one such prank went horribly wrong. As Joel and Harry dipped Willy's head repetitively into the toilet bowl, they failed to notice that Willy was having trouble breathing and only when his body went slack did they let up, to find that Willy was unconscious. In a state of panic, they tried their best to revive him but, tragically, Willy died.

*Of course, it was Joel and Harry who were held responsible and they would soon face a grim court martial. Their pleas for leniency, claiming it was only meant to be a prank, fell on deaf ears and it was widely rumoured that both men would surely face execution. However, their defence attorney convinced them to confess the truth and inform the court of the General's role in the tragedy. Their fear of the General had made them hold their tongues for a long time but finally, faced with a guilty verdict and death, they spoke up. The General was arrested and sentenced to death. As for Joel and Harry, they were shocked to learn that they had been **dishonourably discharged** from the US Marines.*

"But we were only following orders. Is that not what a US Marine has been trained to do?" they protested.

"Not if the order is unjust, unfair or immoral. Even if it was the General giving the said order," came the reply.

Both Joel and Harry led a life of disgrace thereafter. Society could not forgive them. Nobody wanted to employ such disreputable soldiers. Nobody wanted to socialise with them also. Or even live near them. It was soon heard that Joel hanged himself. As for Harry, nobody quite knows what became of him...

For most human beings, it is impossible to oppose people in authority. Haven't we often heard about bosses telling their secretaries to say on the phone that they are not in, the mistress of the house telling her maid to get rid of the unwelcome neighbour at the front door by making an excuse that the mistress is sleeping or she is not well or she is having a bath etc and the employees meekly comply?"

"Uh oh," I interjected, chagrined.

*"Such instances are countless in number and are a daily occurrence. It is only with great **courage** that one can stand up to one's boss or to one's employer or to a higher person and refuse to do anything wrong. Am I not right? And yet, truth and right are higher than everything else."*

"Surely what you are saying makes sense but it all seems to be like a Herculean task. How does one develop such courage? We are not angels or celestial beings. We are merely mortal humans, after all."

"What you say is true but the trick is NOT TO FORGET THAT NOTHING MATTERS MORE THAN THE TRUTH AND THE RIGHT. In the words of Varas Ismail Gangji's mother: 'Have no misgivings as to how you will find your livelihood now. One who walks the path of righteousness never comes to grief.

Truth befriends the righteous man. Treading the path of righteousness, you will always be happy.'

*Always remember this when faced with the dilemma of doing the right thing. Automatically, you will gain **courage**.*

*Secondly, God has filled the world with exemplary human beings of exceptional **courage**. At such times, remember them and you will feel braver. Mahatma Gandhi, frail, weak but highly courageous and convicted to his principles; remember the blood-soaked face of the late Nobel Laureate Wangari Mathai as forest officers beat her mercilessly with their truncheons, she never backed down. In her eyes, it was wrong to cut trees and harm the environment and she stood up for this right to the very end. There are many others: Nelson Mandela and the latest additions, Anna Hazare and Baba Ram Dev.*

*Remember their **courage**.*



But above all else, keep in your heart and in your mind the words of the Imam: 'The true mo' min is like a fearless lion. The true mo' min fears only God and nothing and no one else.'

*At times when you need the **courage** to do the right thing, nothing works better than a silent prayer to the Almighty, telling Him that you wish to do the right thing but that you are weak and fearful, and you need the **courage** to stand up for the truth. Doubtlessly, He will be happy and proud to fill your heart with **courage** immediately."*

I have to stop now because my mind is reeling with just how much depth is contained in one sentence, nay, one word of Holy Farman bestowed by our Imams. I will try and put the rest of my grandmother's points in Part 2 soon.

Alysha Javer is a teacher. After completing her studies in the field of Education and Psychology in the UK, she taught English Language and Literature for a few years before joining the Writers' Bureau, UK. Currently, she lives part of the year in the UK and part of the year in Kenya (with her grandmother Zeenatara Allakrakhya) and she's working on writing her first novel. In her own words: "I'm very interested in learning more and going deeper into the subject of faith and ethics, and my grandmother is a great source of inspiration and knowledge in this vast subject."

Alysha Javer's other works:

Selfless Giving: <http://wp.me/p1Z38-ev0>

The Best Cure: <http://wp.me/p1Z38-eCS>

Karmic Catastrophe: <http://wp.me/p1Z38-eJ5>