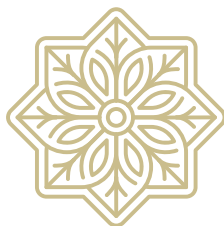


THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY

ISLAM'S ETHICAL AND
SPIRITUAL OUTLOOK



MAULANA
WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

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WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

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CHAPTER ONE

FREEDOM OF THOUGHT

The Scope of Free Thought
and Reflection in Islam

FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION

Islam provides for complete intellectual freedom for human beings. In fact, it was Islam that, for the first time in human history, brought about a revolution in this regard, ensuring that every person should have the freedom of thought. Prior to Islam, a system of coercion prevailed throughout much of the world. People were deprived of intellectual freedom. Freedom of thought and expression—or intellectual freedom—is far from a trivial matter. In fact, the foundation of all human progress lies in this very freedom.

The first and foremost benefit of intellectual freedom is that it allows a person to attain that highest form of moral excellence which the Quran refers to as “fear of the unseen God” (5:94). This means recognizing God and living in reverence of Him by one’s own conscious choice, without any external pressure or compulsion. Such a profound spiritual experience—fearing God in the unseen—is only possible in an atmosphere of complete freedom. Without it, this deeply personal and elevated act cannot be truly realized, nor can an individual be credited with such a noble moral achievement.

Freedom of thought is what safeguards a person from hypocrisy. Human beings are, by nature, reflective and reasoning creatures—their minds inevitably think, question, and form opinions. When freedom of expression is suppressed, thinking does not cease; rather, it is forced to

remain unspoken and unwritten. Any institution, society, or state that curtails the freedom to express ideas will eventually become filled with hypocrisy. In such a stifling environment, genuine and sincere individuals cannot be nurtured or developed.

Intellectual freedom has a direct relationship with creativity. Creative individuals will emerge in a society that ensures intellectual freedom. In contrast, societies where curbs are placed on intellectual freedom will soon fall prey to intellectual stagnation. As a result, the emergence and flourishing of creative minds will cease.

The proper approach to the issue of handling intellectual disagreements and differences of opinion and engaging in intellectual dissent and critique is that people should put aside their unnecessary sensitivities and be willing to listen to alternative views, rather than try to ban criticism and disagreement. This is the stance that Islam advocates and that Nature also demands.

In a hadith, a key quality of a true believer is described as: “Those who, when the truth is presented to them, accept it” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 24379). Here, “truth” refers to a just or rightful matter. In other words, a true believer is someone who possesses a complete willingness to acknowledge the truth. Whenever a truth is brought to their attention, or a mistake of theirs is pointed out, no personal feeling should become a barrier in the way of accepting what is right.

The highest expression of this quality is when a person actively welcomes correction—eagerly hoping that someone will point out their flaws so they can embrace the truth with openness and gratitude. Such a person becomes deeply committed to self-improvement and views personal correction as a valuable gift. This noble mindset was perfectly captured by Umar Farooq, the 2nd caliph of Islam, who once said: “May God have mercy on the one who presents me with my faults as a gift” (*Musnad al-Darimi*, Hadith No. 675).

Acknowledgment of truth is actually a form of worship. In fact, it is the highest form of worship. It is this action for which man has to make the biggest sacrifice. Being the greatest of all sacrifices, it stands as the highest form of worship. This is the sacrifice of one’s prestige—the surrender of a false sense of superiority. It is the humbling act of making oneself ‘worthless,’ as it were, in the pursuit of Truth. It is that rare opportunity to pay the price for Paradise, thereby gaining the eligibility for eternal entry into it.

When does a person receive the opportunity for this great act of worship and this remarkable good fortune? This opportunity arises only when people enjoy complete freedom of expression—when one person can critique another without any hindrance, and when society fosters an atmosphere where the speaker can express themselves freely and the listener can openly receive what is said.

Just as a mosque is the place for offering congregational prayer, freedom of expression is the environment in which

the great virtues of speaking the truth and accepting the truth are born. It is in such a setting that situations arise where one person is credited for proclaiming the truth, and another is rewarded for accepting it.

GOD'S CREATION PLAN

There is a guidance system at work in this world. It is based on the principle of belief in the unseen (Quran, 2:3). This means that the world has been designed in such a way that its deeper truths and realities are not immediately visible to the human eye. Now, it is man's task to activate his intellectual faculties, uncover these hidden truths, and live in accordance with them.

A human being is expected to acknowledge God as the greatest, even though His greatness is not visible to the eye. A human being is expected to fear God's punishment, even though His power to punish cannot be seen anywhere in the world. In the same way, a human being is expected to support the callers to truth, even though they always appear in the form of ordinary people. Recognizing them is only possible for someone who can look beyond outward appearances and see with deeper insight.

The same is true of ordinary worldly matters. The world held countless material possibilities, but all of them were hidden within the earth. Discovering these material resources and shaping them into an advanced civilization

was the responsibility of human beings—something that has been accomplished on a large scale in the present age.

In this sense, it would be correct to say that the method of nature is exactly what is referred to in educational theory as the discovery method. To make this method workable, human beings were given a highly developed mind, inherently filled with all the necessary potential abilities. The human mind was capable of reflecting and understanding the reality of things—able, on the one hand, to recognize its Creator, and on the other, to discover the material resources hidden within the world and use them in building a meaningful life.

In this process, the Prophet holds the position of an authoritative guide. The Prophet of Islam provides the fundamental principles through which a person begins their journey of discovery and reaches the point of success. The truth that emerges in this way becomes a personal discovery. It influences the whole personality of the individual and becomes a lasting source of fulfillment.

However, when we look at history, we find that not long after the beginning of human life on earth, a system of oppression emerged in the form of monarchy. All inhabited regions of the world came under the control of a few rulers. These rulers, in order to strengthen their power, established complete authoritarian rule. As a result, freedom of thought and freedom of expression disappeared across the world. What we now call *freedom of speech* simply did not exist in the ancient world.

It was this very system of oppression that, in earlier times, prevented the message of the prophets from taking root. This same system also stood as a constant barrier to scientific discoveries and progress, because every idea needs the space of free thinking and open discussion to grow. In the old oppressive system, where freedom of expression was not available, such open reflection was not possible.

The Prophet of Islam was assigned, in addition to his general mission of prophethood, the specific task of breaking the oppressive system that had been established in the world. For this purpose, he was granted all necessary support. As a result, within less than a hundred years, he and his companions either broke the institutions of royal oppression or weakened them so thoroughly that they collapsed on their own in due time. The struggle undertaken by the Prophet and his companions was, in essence, a kind of divine operation intended to dismantle the artificial system of oppression and to establish the natural system of intellectual freedom—so that the path to both religious and worldly progress could be opened for humankind.

This same oppressive system is referred to in the Quran as *fitnah*, and the command was given to fight against those who upheld it until *fitnah* no longer remained and religion belonged entirely to God (Quran, 8:39). In this verse, religion does not refer to religious law (*shar‘i deen*), but rather to the natural way of life (*fitri deen*). The meaning of the verse is: ‘fight against those wrongdoers who disrupt God’s creative order, so that the unnatural system of

intellectual suppression they have imposed is abolished, and the system of intellectual freedom intended by God can be established in the world.' The artificial state would then be removed, and the original natural state restored on earth. This has now been fully achieved across the world and has opened the doors to every form of human progress.

THE SPIRIT OF MUTUAL GUIDANCE

The Quran states that in this world, only those people are safe from loss who engage in urging one another to uphold truth (*tawasi bil-haqq*) and urging one another to stay patient (*tawasi bil-sabr*) (Quran, 103:3). Similarly, the Quran describes the special quality of the best community as the presence of a system of enjoining what is right (*amr bil-ma'ruf*) and forbidding what is wrong (*nahi 'anil-munkar*) among them (Quran, 3:110).

What does urging one another to uphold truth or enjoining what is right mean? In the words of a hadith, it means that when a person sees something wrong, they should try to correct it—if they have the strength, then with their hand; if not, then with their tongue. Urging one another to uphold truth is the initial level of this practice, and enjoining what is right is the next stage.

The first condition for carrying out this required religious practice in any society is the complete freedom of

expression. Every person should be able to speak openly about something they see as wrong, without facing any obstruction.

It is clear that the actual standard for truth and falsehood is the Quran and the Sunnah, not personal opinion. Therefore, whenever someone feels something is wrong, their first step would be to express it—through speech or writing—so that discussion can begin. Through such discussion and debate, it will become clear what is correct and what is incorrect. Once this is established, it becomes the responsibility of influential individuals to implement it to the extent possible. In this way, the teaching of urging one another to uphold truth and enjoining what is right requires that the freedom of expression must be continuously present in a Muslim society. Without this kind of freedom, this religious duty cannot be carried out in its proper form.

Islam wants every person to have the freedom to express their views about others without restriction. If this action is genuinely driven by a good intention, it will be worthy of reward. And if it is done with a bad intention, then it will be blameworthy in the eyes of God.

The Quran quotes Prophet Jesus as saying: “He made me blessed wherever I may be” (Quran, 19:31). Mujahid (d. 104 AH), one of the most trustworthy in Quran commentary, explained this in his commentary as: Mu‘alliman lil-khayr (*Kitab al-’Ilm* by Abi Khaythamah: 30), meaning, “God made me a teacher of goodness.” The Prophet of Islam said: “A believer is a mirror to another believer” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*,

Hadith No. 4918). Just as when a person stands before a mirror and it reflects their true face without distortion, in the same way, a believer continues to make their fellow believer aware of their flaws—without feeling superior or putting the other down.

This is expressed in another hadith as well: “Blessed is a person whom God has made a key to goodness and a lock against evil” (*Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 238). This means that a sincere believer is highly sensitive about right and wrong. This sensitivity compels them to express their views whenever they see something that contradicts the truth.

However, this is not a one-sided matter. Just as God-consciousness inspires a person to speak the truth, it also produces in them a deep readiness to accept the truth. The same person who offers criticism of others is always prepared to accept the truth themselves when it is presented to them.

The reality is that the right to criticize others belongs only to the one who applies the same standard of accountability to themselves. Giving advice to others is appropriate only for the person who remains fully ready—both in heart and mind—to accept the truth whenever it is presented, and for whom neither ego nor pride becomes a barrier to accepting what is right. Such a person accepts the truth openly and without hesitation.

MERCY IN DISAGREEMENT

In Al-Jami' al-Saghir, a compilation of prophetic sayings, there is a report that states: "The differences among my followers are a mercy" (Hadith No. 1243). Some scholars have expressed doubts about the authenticity of this narration. Nevertheless, it remains an undeniable fact that the entire body of Quranic and Hadith literature available today is filled with scholarly disagreements. The commentaries on the Quran contain a wide range of interpretations, and the same applies to the explanations of hadith. It is rare to find a single hadith that has not been interpreted in multiple ways.

The question is: why do these differences exist? And were these differences a form of mercy or a source of hardship? The Quran could have been revealed in a mathematically precise language, leaving no possibility for differing interpretations. Similarly, the Prophet of Islam could have chosen words in his sayings that were as clear as two plus two equals four, making it impossible for anyone to draw differing conclusions in their explanation.

The truth is that disagreement is not something undesirable—in fact, it is exactly what was intended. It is through these differences that people have been able to reflect more deeply on the Quran and Hadith. This is what allowed Islam to become not something fixed and rigid, but a reality that each person could discover for themselves. This is what made it possible for intellectual engagement

to continue and, ultimately, to turn every believer into a person capable of original and independent thought.

Blame and fault-finding are wrong. In fact, they reflect a kind of pettiness that is without doubt among the worst of moral traits. But intellectual disagreement, which arises from sincere thought and reflection, is a blessing—and a necessary condition for the progress of humanity. To the extent that it would be accurate to say that a society without disagreement is also a society without progress.

The human mind is like a locked treasure. What unlocks this treasure is precisely this: *difference of opinion*. Through disagreement, the mind develops—until an ordinary person can grow into an exceptional one.

Today, the question is not whether we should disagree or not—because disagreement already exists at all times, at every level, and in every matter of religion. The real question is how to explain the presence of the many disagreements that have existed in religion from the very beginning until now. In other words, the issue is how to understand the existence of disagreement—not whether it should continue or not.

For instance, if one begins studying the Quran using a reliable commentary—such as the 13th-century renowned Andalusian Islamic scholar, Abu ‘Abd Allah Al-Qurtubi’s *Al-Jami‘ li Ahkam al-Qur’an*—one encounters a remarkable example right at the outset. As the commentary on *Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim* begins, Al-Qurtubi (d. 1273 CE) notes: “There are twenty-seven issues discussed in this verse.” In other

words, just this four-word phrase gives rise to over two dozen scholarly debates. Similarly, Surah Al-Fatiha, though comprising only a few lines, contains such a wealth of content that its discussion spans a full 43 pages in the commentary. As you progress through this 20-volume tafsir, you'll find that scarcely a single page is free from scholarly debates and divergent viewpoints. Even when you reach the concluding chapters of the Quran—*Al-Mu'awwidhatayn* (Chapter Al-Falaq and Chapter Al-Nas)—you encounter profound disagreements. Among them is a particularly serious view attributed to Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, a companion of the Prophet, who held that these two chapters were supplications for seeking protection and not part of the Quran itself. (*Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, Vol. 20, p. 251)

The same applies—more extensively—to hadith. Take any commentary on hadith; for example, *Fath al-Bari*, a classical multi-volume commentary on *Sahih al-Bukhari*. When you open it, the first hadith you will find is: “Actions are based on intentions.” This hadith is widely transmitted and highly authentic. Yet, in the nearly nine-page explanation of this single hadith, words such as *ikhtalafu* and *ikhtulifa*—indicating scholarly disagreement—appear six times. The entire thirteen-volume *Fath al-Bari* is similarly filled with interpretive differences.

After that, if you look into books on jurisprudence and theology, it will appear as though they represent an endless forest of disagreements. You will likely not find a single issue

that is free from differing opinions. These disagreements are not a negative thing; rather, they are an intellectual stimulus. They prompt people to think. They activate the mind and guide it toward intellectual development.

WELL-WISHING, PERSONAL REMARKS

In the Quran, the terms *naseeha* (advice) and *nasih* (the advisor) are used for those who call others to the truth (Quran, 7:68, 11:34). This indicates that the words of a caller to God should be words of advice, meaning that the motivation behind their speaking or writing should be solely for the purpose of reform and goodwill. There should be no other underlying motive when speaking about others or writing about them.

The words of an advisor come from a sense of responsibility. They think before speaking and research before writing. Their motivation is that if they remain silent, they may be held accountable before God. They do not speak for fame, self-expression, or worldly gain; they speak because they believe it is their duty. When they speak about others, they are also praying for them with sincerity in their hearts.

In contrast, the other form of speaking or writing is personal remarks or criticism. The Quran says: “And those who disbelieve say, ‘Do not listen to this Quran, and make noise in it so that you may overcome.’” (41:26). Abdullah ibn Abbas explained *walghaw feehee* as: ‘*Ayyiboohu*—meaning,

“They criticized it, made it seem bad in the eyes of others, so that people would turn away in anger.” (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 4, p. 98)

While advice comes from a spirit of goodwill, personal remarks come from a spirit of malice. Personal remarks and accusations are driven by negative emotions such as hatred, jealousy, and ego. The aim is not to reform, but to bring others down and discredit them.

Advice is not only permissible but also a virtuous act. In contrast, personal remarks and criticism are clearly prohibited, as they only add to a person’s wrongdoing. Advice is a sign of a healthy society, while personal remarks are a characteristic of a corrupt society.

In a society where there is an atmosphere of advice, people will regard each other as their own. There will be a sense of trust, and people’s hearts will be filled with respect and love for one another. No one will regard others as strangers or look at them with suspicion. No one will attempt to exploit another.

Moreover, in such an environment, if one person makes a critical remark about another, the listener will not take it personally. Instead, they will hear it as a simple comment. This will allow for open dialogue between them, where both individuals set aside their egos and strive to reach the pure truth. Afterward, they will accept what is correct.

In contrast, personal remarks only lead to harm. If the person being criticized reacts angrily to the critic’s words,

a fight will start, which is one of the most serious evils. Even if the listener is calm and remains silent after hearing criticism, they are still not free from harm. First, the critic has wasted their time, which could have been used for something productive. Second, they have established the harmful practice of making baseless accusations against others in society.

In this context, the teachings of Islam are reflected in the hadith: “Whoever believes in God and the Last Day should speak good, or remain silent.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 47). “Good speech” here refers to words based on established facts, aimed at constructive benefit, and motivated by a sincere desire to express the truth. It should be for the sake of God, not for any human benefit.

A person who is sincere and God-conscious thinks before they speak. If they feel their words are truly valuable, they will speak them; otherwise, they will remain silent.

CONFLICT OF IDEAS

The Quran says that when God settled Adam on Earth, He informed him beforehand that human beings would be enemies to each other (Quran, 2:36). This was, as it were, an announcement of God’s Creation Plan. The meaning of this is that when a creature like man would be settled on Earth, his being put here would be no ordinary matter. Here, situations of disagreement and controversy between

people would arise, which, on some occasions, turning extreme, would go to the extent of enmity.

This reveals the development path that the Creator has designed for human beings. It is through the clash of ideas among individuals that the human mind awakens. Such interaction fosters creativity and leads to new discoveries. The collision of thoughts acts as a catalyst for awakening dormant abilities.

Seen from this aspect, freedom of expression is indispensable. This is because if people are not free to express their minds there will be no conflict of ideas, and when there is no clash of views, mental stagnation will set in. Consequently, man will be unable to arrive at new realities, at new truths.

For instance, in the early period of Islam, because of disagreements in recitation, people began reciting the Quran in different styles. This led to discussions and debates among the people about which recitation was right and which was not. People began to write down the Quran along with vowels to specify the pronunciations of various words and phrases mentioned in the Book of God. As a result of this, the art of writing progressed.

Then it happened that people began differing on the meaning of the Quran. This too set off a debate, which led to the emergence of experts of the Arabic language and to the compilation of Arabic dictionaries that did not exist before. Similarly, people began differing on diverse issues related to the Shariah. It was because of this that in the Islamic tradition, disciplines such as Tafsir (Quranic commentary),

Hadith, Fiqh, Aqa'id, and others developed in an organized form. Had these differences not emerged in the early Muslim period, there would not have been that intellectual awakening that these differences kindled, and nor would have the above-mentioned Islamic disciplines evolved.

This process did not stop there. By the time of the Abbasid Caliphate, Muslims had spread across the entire region of Asia and Africa, and even entered Europe. This led to a clash of ideas, as Muslims encountered the philosophies and thoughts of Egypt, Iran, Greece, and other regions. As a natural consequence, intellectual debates began among Muslims. This intellectual confrontation eventually culminated in the development of a powerful system of theology (*Ilm al-Kalam*). Much of this work took place during the reign of the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun. Al-Ma'mun was very open-minded. He granted full freedom of expression to the scholars of his time, allowing them to engage in discussions and debates: "He gave complete freedom of speech to the scholars, debaters, and philosophers" (*Al-A'lam* by al-Zirikli, Vol. 4, p. 142).

But the flood did not stop there, too. Progressing further, this process of knowledge and research extended to other intellectual disciplines. Muslims now began to make great contributions in a range of fields, including philosophy, medicine, mathematics, naval sciences, astronomy, and geography. They acquired the position of leaders in all the then, prevalent secular disciplines.

Much of this progress was made possible because Muslims had come into contact with other people, who held other views. The exchange of views between the two helped produce this great intellectual advancement among Muslims. Later, the disciplines that Muslims had played such an important role in developing reached lands such as Italy, Spain, and France. As a result of this, new sciences emerged in Europe that finally culminated in the modern industrial revolution. The emergence of modern science and the industrial revolution in the West, are a direct result of the European contact with the Muslim awakening in the early Muslim period.

As long as they remained closed within the confines of their land, the Arabs could not produce any great intellectual feats. But when they came out of their land and came face to face with other peoples at the intellectual level, those very same Arabs made such progress that soon, they became leaders in various fields of thought and science. This miraculous event came about as a result of free intellectual exchange.

Intellectual critique or expression of intellectual disagreement is, actually, another name for intellectual exchange or exchange of views. In any society, the greater the intellectual freedom the more the intellectual exchange that will take place. And, during this intellectual exchange, critique and expression of intellectual disagreement and difference of opinion will also emerge. This must be accepted as inevitable, for it is a course established by nature—both for individuals as well as for communities as a whole.

THE SYSTEM OF NATURE

Before Islam, human history spans nearly 25,000 years, yet during this long period, humanity made no significant intellectual progress. All intellectual and scientific advancements began only after Islam dismantled the ancient systems of monarchical oppression and introduced an era of intellectual freedom.

The reason for this is that intellectual development always takes place through exchanging ideas. In systems characterised by oppression or blind imitation, this exchange is entirely disrupted. This concern is reflected in a statement often attributed to the American writer Walter Lippmann (1889–1974): “When all think alike, no one thinks very much.”

The truth is that the world of facts is limitless, but an individual mind can only think within a limited scope. Therefore, in an environment of oppression and imitation, everyone will only possess limited understanding. In contrast, when people are free to think and speak, the exchange of ideas begins. Now, each person starts learning from others, and collectively, people gain much more knowledge. In a society where everyone thinks within their own limited view, however, the overall awareness of the people will remain restricted.

When people are granted the freedom to think and speak openly, differences of opinion are inevitable. People will critique each other's perspectives. This critical process is an

essential part of intellectual growth. The end of criticism does not merely mean the absence of critique; it means the end of intellectual progress. In reality, our choice is not between criticism and no criticism, but between criticism and intellectual stagnation. If you shut down criticism, what remains is not just a lack of critique, but intellectual stagnation. Intellectual freedom is in harmony with the natural order, while intellectual restrictions disrupt it.

IN THE DIVINE COURT

The Quran (2: 30-33), relating the story of the creation of the first man, Adam, says:

“When your Lord said to the angels, ‘I am putting a successor on earth,’ they said, ‘Will You place someone there who will cause corruption on it and shed blood, while we glorify You with Your praise and extol Your holiness?’ [God] answered, ‘Surely, I know that which you do not know.’ He taught Adam all the names, then He set them before the angels and said, ‘Tell Me the names of these, if what you say be true.’ They said, ‘Glory be to You; we have no knowledge except whatever You have taught us. You are the All Knowing, the All Wise.’ Then He said, ‘O Adam, tell them their names.’ When Adam had told them the names, God said to the angels, ‘Did I not say to you: I know the secrets of the heavens and of the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you conceal?’”

These words of the angels were apparently meant as an objection to God. However, God did not rebuke or reprimand them for it. Instead, He explained the details of the actual plan. As a result, their objection naturally resolved itself, and doubt was replaced with certainty.

In this way, at the beginning of human history, God established a model from His own perfect being, man: that if someone raises an objection or expresses doubt about a matter, they should not be blamed merely for raising it. Rather, the matter should be clarified so that the complete picture becomes clear. It is as if the event that was going to occur in human history later was enacted between God and the angels to practically demonstrate the attitude that human beings should adopt in such situations.

This incident also sets an example that once the matter is clarified, the objector should accept it sincerely and wholeheartedly. In this event, if on the one side, there is a model of objection, on the other side there is also a high example of acceptance.

AN EXAMPLE FROM THE PROPHET

The Battle of Badr was the first major battle in Islamic history (624 CE), near a place called Badr, southwest of Madinah in present-day Saudi Arabia. It marked a pivotal turning point for the early Muslim community. Among the early events of the battle, one incident is recorded by

Ibn Ishaq: the Prophet of Islam advanced swiftly during the journey and camped near a spring close to Badr.

At that point, Al-Hubab ibn Al-Mundhir ibn Al-Jamuh said, “O Prophet of Islam, is this a place where God has commanded you to stop so that we are not allowed to move forward or go back? Or is it a personal opinion and a matter of war strategy?” The Prophet replied, “Rather, it is opinion, and strategy, and planning for war.”

He said, “O Prophet of Islam, then this is not a suitable place to stop. Please move ahead. Let us camp at the spring that is closer to the Quraysh. Then we can render the remaining wells behind us unusable and construct a reservoir to fill with water. Then we will drink, and they will not.”

On hearing this, the Prophet said, “You have given excellent advice.”

After that, the Prophet and all his companions got up and moved ahead until they reached the spring closest to the Quraysh. They camped there. Then the Prophet gave orders regarding the other springs, and they were rendered unusable. A reservoir was built at the spring where they camped, and it was filled with water. (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 1, p. 620)

This incident demonstrates that the Prophet of Islam fostered an open environment for expressing opinions. When someone presented a different view from his own, it was not received negatively, nor was there any anger. Instead, he simply inquired why the person held a different opinion. When the reasoning was clarified, it became

evident that the suggestion was correct; the Prophet commended the opinion and accepted it immediately. This illustrates that allowing people to express differing views, listening to them, and learning from them is also among the practices of the Prophet of Islam.

AN EXAMPLE FROM ABU BAKR

On the day of Hunayn, the Prophet of Islam distributed a large quantity of camels and wealth to many people. Among them were Al-Aqra ibn Habis al-Tamimi and Uyaynah ibn Hisn al-Fazari—each of whom was given one hundred camels as a gesture of goodwill. (*Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, Vol. 7, p. 141)

On this basis, the two men—Al-Aqra ibn Habis and Uyaynah ibn Hisn—again approached Abu Bakr during his caliphate, as reported by Ibn Hammam. They requested a piece of land. In accordance with the practice of the Prophet of Islam, the first Caliph granted their request and, at their insistence, issued a written document assigning the land to them. The two men departed with the written order. Along the way, they encountered Umar, informed him of the grant, and showed him the document. Umar took the paper and tore it to pieces (*fa mazzaqahu Umar*), saying, “This was a temporary measure, not something permanent.”

Both men returned to Abu Bakr and recounted what had happened. They asked, “Are you the Caliph, or is it Umar?”

Abu Bakr replied, “Rather, it is he, if it is anything at all.” In this matter, Abu Bakr agreed with Umar’s judgment, and none of the companions objected to the decision. (*Tarikh Dimashq* by Ibn Asakir, Vol. 9, pp. 195–196)

This incident involved not only a criticism of the first Caliph but also, on the surface, a form of disrespect. However, when Abu Bakr and the other companions learned of it, they gave no importance to those outward aspects. They only considered whether, in principle, Umar’s view was correct or not. And when it became clear that his stance was indeed correct, everyone accepted it.

AN EXAMPLE FROM UMAR IBN AL-KHATTAB

When Umar ibn al-Khattab was the Caliph, he would often say, “I am just like you, and one among you. Therefore, you are free to speak openly about anything you feel against me. There is no restriction on you in this matter.”

On one occasion, while standing on the pulpit in the mosque of Madinah and addressing the people, Umar said, “If you see any crookedness in me, what will you do at that time?” For a moment, there was silence. Then one man stood up and said, “If you deviate, we will straighten you—just as an arrow is straightened with a straightener.” The narrator reports that upon hearing this, Umar was pleased and said, “All praise is due to God, who has placed me among a

people who will straighten me if I deviate. (*Al-Zuhd wa al-Raqaiq* by Ibn al-Mubarak: 512)

This example of the second Caliph of Islam shows that criticism and disagreement are not disliked things; rather, they are deeply valued. Even if an ordinary person speaks against the ruler of the time in an impolite tone, it should still be welcomed.

Islam teaches that at the time of criticism, one should not look at the critic, but at oneself. If the critic is pointing out a mistake, then he is doing a service to your betterment. Such a good act cannot be dismissed merely because it was expressed in an improper manner.

This incident from the life of the second Caliph also shows that those who are in leadership positions in society should encourage open expression of views—so much so that they should willingly present themselves for open criticism. And this presentation should be genuine, not superficial.

AN EXAMPLE FROM UTHMAN IBN AFFAN

One day, Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah had a discussion with Uthman ibn Affan. He said, “There are three things in which I am superior to you.” Uthman asked, “What are those things?” Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah replied:

“First, I was present at the Pledge of Ridwan (Hudaybiyyah), and you were absent at that time.

Second, I participated in the Battle of Badr, and you did not. Third, at the Battle of Uhud, I was among those who remained firm, while you did not remain firm.”

The narrator says that Uthman did not get angry upon hearing this. Instead, he said, “You have spoken the truth.” (*fa lam yaghdab Uthman wa lakinahu qala lahu: sadaqt*)

Then, while presenting his side of the story, Uthman said, “As for the Pledge of Ridwan, the Prophet of Islam had sent me to Makkah on an important mission. Regarding the Battle of Badr, what happened was that the Prophet of Islam appointed me to stay behind in Madinah in his place. And as for my withdrawal at the Battle of Uhud, God has forgiven me for that shortcoming.” (*Al-‘Abqariyyat al-Islamiyyah*, p. 571)

In this incident, Uthman was directly confronted. All three points mentioned seemed, on the surface, to seriously damage and cast doubt on his character. Yet, even after hearing such strong criticism, Uthman did not become angry. He calmly said that, as a matter of fact, what was said was true. After acknowledging this, he explained his own perspective regarding all three events.

From this incident in the life of the third Caliph of Islam, it becomes clear that the Islamic approach is to listen to even harsh criticism with a calm mind. One should avoid reacting with anger and simply clarify the facts in a straightforward manner.

AN EXAMPLE FROM ALI IBN ABI TALIB

In 35 AH, a group of rebellious Muslims entered Madinah and killed the third Caliph, Uthman. After this, such chaos erupted that Madinah remained without a Caliph for five days. Then, allegiance was pledged to Ali ibn Abi Talib. However, a large group of Muslims did not agree to this pledge. Their demand was that the killers of Uthman be punished first, and only then would they accept the fourth Caliph's authority. In contrast, Ali argued that the matter of the caliphate should first be stabilized, and only after that could necessary action be taken against the killers.

Thus, two groups formed among the Muslims—one of Ali's supporters and the other of his opponents. There was serious disagreement between them, and the conflict continued to escalate until it led to war between the two sides.

Ali left Madinah with his supporters and headed toward Basrah. People asked him where he was going. He replied that his aim was to calm people's anger and bring unity to the community. One person asked, "What will you do if the people of Basrah do not accept what you say?" Ali said, "We will leave them alone as long as they leave us alone."

The person then asked, "If they do not leave you alone and insist on war, what will you do?" Ali replied, "Then we will fight in self-defense." Abu Salam al-Dalani asked, "What will be the fate of us and them if we end up clashing tomorrow?" Ali responded, "I hope that whoever among us or them is killed with a heart pure for the sake of God, God will surely

admit him to Paradise.” (*Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah* by Ibn Kathir, Vol. 7, p. 238)

This incident from the life of the fourth Caliph shows that even if a disagreement escalates to the point of war, a believer still maintains a positive opinion about the other side. A difference of opinion, under no circumstances, becomes a reason for bitterness or corruption of the heart.

AN INCIDENT

In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, there is a narration from Anas ibn Malik describing an incident in Madinah in which he was personally present. The beginning of the narration is as follows:

“We were sitting in the mosque with the Prophet of Islam when a man entered, riding a camel. He made the camel kneel in the mosque and then tied it. After that, he asked the people, ‘Who among you is Muhammad?’

At that moment, the Prophet was sitting among us, reclining. We said, ‘This white man who is reclining.’

The man said, ‘O son of ‘Abdul-Muttalib!’

The Prophet replied, ‘I have heard you.’

The man said, ‘I will ask you something, and I will be harsh in questioning. Do not take it to heart.’

The Prophet said, ‘Ask whatever you wish.’

He said, ‘I ask you by your Lord and the Lord of those who came before you: has God sent you to all of humanity?’

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, ‘By God, yes.’” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 63)

This incident involving the Prophet of Islam demonstrates that in an Islamic society, everyone has the right to ask any question, even to the greatest of individuals. One is also free to speak in a stern tone. The person being questioned should not become angry but should answer calmly to every question.

UNRESTRICTED FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

There is a verse in the Quran (5: 107) which discusses the matter of inheritance:

If it turns out that both prove dishonest, two others should take their place from amongst those whose rights have been usurped and let them swear by God, saying, “Our testimony is indeed truer than the testimony of these two. And we have not been guilty of any misstatement for then indeed we would be transgressors.”

There is a difference in the recitation of the word *al-awliyan* in this verse. Hasan read it as *al-awwalan* (the two first ones), while Ibn Sirin read it as *al-awwalan* (the first ones in general). (*Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, Vol. 6, p. 359)

On one occasion, Ubayy ibn Ka’b recited this verse according to his own recitation, which differed from that of the second Caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab. When Umar

heard it, he said, “You have lied”. Ubayy responded, “You are an even greater liar”. Upon hearing this, someone said to Ubayy, “Are you calling the Commander of the Faithful a liar?” He replied, “I have greater respect for the rights of the Commander of the Faithful than you do. But I have denied him in the matter of affirming the Book of God. I did not affirm the Caliph in a matter that amounts to denying God’s Book.” Umar ibn al-Khattab then said, “He has spoken rightly.” (*Tarikh al-Madinah* by Ibn Shabbah, Vol. 2, p. 709)

This conversation took place between two senior companions. The objecting companion did not soften his tone when he heard a different recitation, saying something like, “O respected teacher, pardon me, perhaps you made a mistake in recitation.” Rather, he expressed his reaction straightforwardly, saying, “You have lied.”

From this incident, an important principle is derived: that freedom of expression should exist without condition. Imposing conditions leads to situations where people feel one thing in their hearts but express something else with their words. This style of communication gradually fosters pretence in people, and pretence eventually takes the form of hypocrisy.

When a person considers something to be true, they naturally wish to express it without dilution. If artificial restrictions are imposed, it results in far greater harm—it creates a dual personality within individuals.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

During the caliphate of Ali ibn Abi Talib, a group of Muslims rebelled against him. They created intense unrest. Two battles took place in which nearly forty thousand Muslims were killed. Eventually, Ali himself was assassinated. During this period of unrest, a member of the opposing group met him and asked some critical questions. He asked, “Why is it that during your caliphate, such widespread conflict and division have occurred among Muslims, whereas when Abu Bakr and Umar were Caliphs, no such turmoil took place?”

Ali replied: “Because Abu Bakr and Umar ruled over people like me, and I am ruling over people like you.” (*Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun*, p. 211)

This exchange brings to light an important truth: what is the most essential condition for the establishment of a proper Islamic government? The answer is that society must already have favourable conditions that support it. In Ali’s words, it would be accurate to say that the condition for establishing a righteous political system is this: on the one side, the head of state should be someone like Abu Bakr or Umar, and on the other side, society should be made up of people like the Companions of the Prophet. In other words, the caliphate should be in the hands of someone like Umar, and the society should consist of people like Ali.

This incident shows what kind of atmosphere existed during the early period of Islam—an ordinary person could directly question the Caliph of the time with criticism,

and the Caliph would respond in a calm and balanced manner. It also demonstrates how, in a society where open questioning is allowed, confused minds can be cleared, and major doubts can be addressed and resolved directly by the relevant figures themselves.

STAYING WITHIN THE LIMITS

Tariq ibn Shihab reports that there was a disagreement between Khalid ibn al-Walid and Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas. They would often debate over a particular issue, but their disagreement remained unresolved for quite some time.

During this period, a person came to Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas and began speaking negatively about Khalid ibn al-Walid—such as pointing out that he had accepted Islam late and had been a commander in the army of the polytheists during the Battle of Uhud. After listening to him, Sa'd said, “Stop. What lies between us and Khalid does not affect our religion.” (*Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah*, Hadith No. 27187)

This incident shows that even two highly respected scholars or leaders can have serious disagreements. Yet, even in the middle of such disagreements, they firmly maintain their limits. Under no circumstances do they overstep these boundaries.

These boundaries exist in two ways. First, when both sides engage in discussion, their speech remains strictly focused

on the actual point of disagreement—it does not deviate from the issue at hand.

Second, both parties fully ensure that the disagreement remains intellectual in nature; it does not turn into personal hostility or bitterness in their hearts.

The statement, “It does not affect our religion,” means that this disagreement does not give rise to doubts about each other’s intentions. It does not lead them to make moral accusations or attack one another’s character. Their entire discussion is based on reason and argument—not on blame, backbiting, or fault-finding.

DESPITE DIFFERENCES

Uthman ibn Affan was the third Caliph of Islam. In the final period of his life, more than a thousand people from Egypt came to Madinah based on false reports. Upon reaching the city, they created a great commotion and eventually surrounded the house of Uthman. Although the accusations against him were completely baseless, these Muslims were so angry with him that they prevented him from leaving his house or even receiving water. Eventually, on the 18th of Dhu al-Hijjah in the year 35 AH, they attacked and killed him. At the time of his death, he was 82 years old.

The siege of Uthman lasted for around forty days. When the rebels had surrounded him and barred him from leaving his home, it became impossible for him to go to the mosque. As

Caliph, he had been leading the prayers. In his absence, the rebel leader Al-Ghafiqi ibn Harb al-‘Akki assumed the role of *imam* (the one who leads the prayer) and began leading the prayers in the mosque of Madinah.

This was a difficult test for the Muslims of Madinah. On the one hand, they considered it essential to pray in congregation at the mosque; on the other hand, they saw that the man leading the prayer was clearly a troublemaker and wrongdoer. In this delicate situation, one person went to Uthman and asked what they should do. Uthman gave the instruction that they should pray behind him. He said:

“When people do good, join them in their goodness; and when they do wrong, avoid their wrongdoing.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 695)

In this incident from the life of the third Caliph of Islam, there is a powerful example. It shows that no matter how strong our grievance with someone may be, we must always uphold justice in how we speak about them. We must keep our disagreements within limits, and not allow them to carry us beyond the bounds of fairness.

HEALTHY RESULT

Sa‘id ibn Abi ‘Arubah (d. 157 AH), a well-known Tabi‘i scholar, the disciples of the Companions of the Prophet once defined a true scholar, saying: “Do not consider someone a

scholar who has not listened to differing opinions.” (*Jami‘ Bayan al-‘Ilm* by Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, Report No. 1521)

Here, “differing opinions” does not refer to false criticism or baseless accusations. It refers to academic disagreement. Serious scholarly disagreement is such a valuable thing that any genuine scholar would eagerly welcome it, rather than take offense or attempt to shut it down.

Knowledge is such an expansive treasure that no single mind can contain it all. That is why every sincere scholar is deeply eager—almost to the point of urgency—to meet someone who will disagree with them, so that new dimensions of knowledge may open up, and so that they can enrich their own understanding through the knowledge of others.

Furthermore, the value of such disagreement and dialogue extends beyond what one can learn from others. It also enables scholars to refine their own thinking. Through these exchanges, they can clarify and structure their thoughts more precisely and comprehensively.

The truth is that a genuine academic debate—even one with strong disagreements—is one of the most fulfilling experiences for a person dedicated to knowledge and the pursuit of truth. Such a moment is like plunging into the ocean of knowledge together—an experience that is both intensely joyful and deeply enriching.

In today’s world, because false critics have become so widespread, many people have started to view even genuine criticism negatively. But the difference between the two is

like night and day. If false criticism is a stench, then true criticism is a fragrance. If false criticism is a thorn, then true criticism is a beautiful flower.

False criticism is a form of destruction. In contrast, true criticism is a constructive process—one that deserves to be continuously upheld in all circumstances.

FREEDOM OF THOUGHT

In Madinah, there lived a Muslim man and a Muslim woman from the slave class. The man's name was Mugeeth, and the woman's name was Bareerah. After some time, Bareerah was set free. As per Islamic law, once she became free, she was given the choice to either remain with her former husband or to separate from him. Bareerah chose to separate.

However, Mugeeth was deeply attached to her and hoped she would change her decision and agree to live with him again.

This is a long story. Many details about it are found in hadith collections, and some scholars have even written full-length works on the story of Bareerah and Mugeeth. In summary, the matter was eventually brought before the Prophet of Islam. At the time, Bareerah was walking ahead, while Mugeeth—who was dark-skinned—was following behind her in a state of sorrow, with tears soaking his beard.

According to one narration: The Prophet said, "It would be good if you took him back." Bareerah asked, "Are you

ordering me to do so?" He replied, "No, I am only making a suggestion." Bareerah responded, "I have no need for him." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 5283)

This is an outstanding and ultimate example of how much freedom Islam gives to both women and men. Such freedom is not a sign of defiance but a recognition of human nature. A person's intellectual and emotional growth can only take place in an environment where they are free to make their own choices. Just as a tree grows best in open air, the human mind and personality develop fully only when allowed the space for independent thought.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF TRUTH

During the caliphate of Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second Caliph, Iraq came under Muslim rule in 16 AH. A question soon arose about how to manage the fertile lands of the Tigris and Euphrates region that had come under Muslim control. According to existing custom, the military commanders believed that the greater part of these lands should be distributed among the soldiers. Umar disagreed. His view was that the land should remain under the control of the public treasury so that future generations could also benefit from it.

This issue led to a strong disagreement, and the debate continued for several days. In particular, Khalid ibn al-Walid, Abdur Rahman ibn Awf, and Bilal ibn Rabah strongly

argued against Umar's view. The disagreement became so intense that Umar eventually said, "O God, relieve me of Bilal! (*Allahumma akfini Bilalan*)."

Later, a consultative council was formed to help resolve the matter. It included notable figures such as Uthman, Ali, and Talhah. Even then, no consensus could be reached.

After several days of discussion, Umar remembered a verse from the Quran:

"It is for the poor refugees who were driven from their homes and possessions, desiring the favour and the pleasure of God and supporting God and His Messenger. Such people are the truthful. Those who were already settled in the city [Madinah] and firmly rooted in faith, love those who migrated to them for refuge, and harbour no desire in their hearts for what has been given to the [latter]. They give them preference over themselves, even if they too are needy: those who are saved from their own souls' greed are truly successful. Those who came [into the faith] after them say, 'Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in the faith and leave no malice in our hearts towards those who believe. Lord, You are indeed compassionate and merciful.'" (59: 8-10)

Umar recited this verse to the people and explained: "This verse, in discussing war gains and public wealth, includes the phrase 'and those who come after them'. This clearly proves

that the wealth acquired through conquest is not meant solely for the current generation—it is also the right of future generations. If I distribute these lands among today’s soldiers, there will be nothing left for the generations to come. This would contradict the intent of the Quran.”

Everyone accepted Umar’s reasoning, and with one voice they said, “Your opinion is correct.” (*Al-Kharaj* by Abu Yusuf, p. 37)

Following this, a principle was established that lands acquired through conquests would be considered the property of the Islamic state, not personal property to be divided among individuals.

This does not mean that the verse from Surah al-Hashr silenced everyone or left no room for further discussion. The real reason the discussion ended was that the people involved had a sincere desire to accept the truth. Their disagreement was not due to stubbornness but simply because they had not yet understood the issue fully. Once the Quranic verse clarified the matter, it became easy for them to accept it.

In this world, the opportunity to speak is so open that a person can always find words to counter any argument. Those who are not serious often respond to any reasoning with a string of counterwords just for the sake of argument. But those who are sincere and consider themselves accountable before God may oppose a view at first simply because they haven’t understood it clearly. However, when

that view is clarified with sound evidence, they accept it without hesitation.

This incident also shows the proper etiquette and principles of free expression. Even an ordinary person has the right to disagree with the Caliph. At the same time, one must also be someone who can recognize a valid argument and be willing to drop their objection once the truth becomes clear.

THE SUPREMACY OF TRUTH

There is an incident involving a scholar who disagreed with his spiritual teacher on a particular issue and offered a different opinion. Someone said to him, “You are differing with your teacher.” He replied, “The teacher is dear to us, but the truth is dearer than the teacher.”

This incident highlights the correct perspective on disagreement and criticism. That is: every individual deserves respect according to their status. Everyone’s human and moral rights must be fully upheld. But when the matter of truth arises, it must be given precedence over everything else.

When the comparison is between two individuals, the person may be important. But when the comparison is between an individual and the truth, it is the truth that holds greater value. The importance of truth is absolute; the importance of any individual is conditional.

Our interactions with others are guided by ethics. However, when truth is at risk, even ethics must conform to truth—because in this world, nothing holds greater significance than the truth. The value of truth lies in its representation of God's presence in the world. The emergence of truth, in essence, signifies the emergence of God. And when God is made manifest, what else could possibly take priority?

This does not mean that a person, by invoking the name of truth, gains unlimited authority over others. The merit lies in the truth itself—not in the one who claims to speak in its name. In reality, the person who stands for truth must be judged by the same standard with which they judge others. Whichever side fails to meet the standard of truth is deserving of blame. And the greatest honour for such a person is to accept, with sincerity, the verdict of truth—even if it is against themselves.

The presence of truth is the presence of God. Blessed is the one in whose company the truth becomes evident, and who promptly recognises it and submits to it.

INCREASE IN FAITH

Faith in God is neither fixed nor static, nor is it simply the repetition of certain words. Such words are just an outward sign of faith—they do not constitute faith itself. All higher truths are valued for their deeper meaning, not just their outward appearance. How then can the highest of all

truths—faith—be confined to spoken words alone? Faith is the discovery of a higher reality. It marks the beginning of a deeper understanding. Faith means entering the vast ocean of meaning. It is a journey of expanding one's limitations towards the infinite. Faith is the act of rising from the lowlands of the material world towards the heights of spiritual existence. It is a journey in which each moment brings a new experience. This kind of conscious evolution has no end. The Quran presents faith as a continuously developing reality—a state of the heart that keeps increasing (48:4). Faith is a form of elevated knowledge that grows constantly with God's guidance.

How does this increase in faith happen? The first way is through reflection and contemplation. A person reads God's words and reflects on His creation (Quran, 3:191). Through this, new aspects of truth and meaning are revealed. They then engage in discussions with like-minded individuals. As Umar ibn al-Khattab once said, "Come, let us strengthen our faith for an hour—come, let us remember our Lord together." In this way, intellectual exchange helps everyone enhance their understanding and deepen their insight.

To keep this process of intellectual growth alive, it is essential that Muslim society provide an open environment for the exchange of ideas. People must be free to speak their minds and to listen respectfully to the thoughts of others. The speaker should have the freedom to express themselves honestly, and the listener should have the willingness to hear with an open mind. In this atmosphere

of shared thought, the evolving journey of faith continues. The growth of faith does not occur in a vacuum—it happens amidst the storms of ideas.

The Quran teaches us to constantly pray, “My Lord, increase me in knowledge” (20:114). According to one interpretation, this prayer means “My Lord, increase my understanding”. (*Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, Vol. 11, p. 250).

This shows that religious knowledge and understanding are not static—they are constantly expanding. This growth happens both in terms of information and in terms of insight and awareness.

This increase, without doubt, happens with God’s help. But in this world of tests, the principle is that everything is attained through circumstances and effort. The same applies to the knowledge and understanding of faith.

One of these means is the importance of keeping the mind’s windows open. A person must remain deeply eager to expand their understanding, staying engaged in reading, observing, and exchanging ideas. They must always be ready to learn from others. Whenever they encounter a person of knowledge or depth, they should set aside their ego, listen attentively, and rise above personal pride to gain from them.

The increase in knowledge is directly tied to the increase in one’s desire to learn. Only a person with genuine hunger for learning will grow in knowledge and understanding. And the sign of that hunger is the willingness to accept knowledge from any source—whether it agrees with their views or challenges them.

All knowledge increases through exchange, and divine knowledge is no different. It too grows through dialogue—through discussion, the sharing of insights, the expression of personal discoveries, and receiving thoughtful feedback from people of depth. These are the means through which understanding of faith increases. And all of this is only possible in an environment where ideas and experiences can be freely exchanged.

The prayer for an increase in knowledge is, in essence, an expression of an inner longing—not just a repetition of specific phrases. It reflects a sincere yearning from within the individual.

NO EXTREMISM

In the Quran, God addresses the Prophet with these words: “It is hoped that your Lord will raise you to a praised station” (17:79).

In Baghdad in the year 317 AH, this verse became the subject of dispute between two Muslim groups. On the one side were followers of Abu Bakr al-Marwadhī of the Hanbali school, and on the other, a section of the general public. The Hanbalis interpreted the verse to mean that on the Day of Judgment, God would seat the Prophet above the Throne. The other group argued that it referred to the “great intercession”. The disagreement escalated so severely

that it led to open fighting between the groups, resulting in many deaths. (*Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, Vol. 11, p. 162)

Such incidents have occurred repeatedly in the past and continue to happen even today. Observing these events, some have concluded that disagreement and debate are inherently wrong, and that people should simply follow blindly, avoiding all forms of controversy. But this advice adds one mistake on top of another. Instead of demanding the end of disagreement, people should be taught how to engage in it properly.

The unfortunate incident mentioned above happened because the distinction between scholarly disagreement and violent confrontation was not understood. In a military conflict, weapons like swords and guns become unavoidable because war is resolved through force. But intellectual disagreement is entirely different. Resorting to weapons in such a case is a form of irrationality because intellectual disputes should be handled solely through reasoning, not violence.

If someone does not accept your argument, present another. If they are not convinced by that either, offer a third, or a fourth. In academic debate, all that is required is the presentation of arguments—regardless of whether they are accepted or rejected.

What should be rejected in such incidents is not critique or disagreement itself, but excess and extremism. Excess, in any matter, is harmful.

The idea that “we must eliminate criticism and disagreement to achieve unity” may sound good in theory, but it is completely unrealistic in practice. That’s because criticism and disagreement are natural aspects of human life—they can never be fully eliminated. The more accurate and achievable approach is this: tolerate criticism and accept differences of opinion—only then can genuine unity be achieved. Unity in any community is always based on this second principle, and so it must be in the Muslim community as well. There is no other viable path to unity.

There were disagreements among the companions and their followers. Similarly, hadith scholars, jurists, theologians, and mystics often differed with one another. The Quran itself shows that even two prophets present in the same era may sometimes differ. To expect absolute consensus before achieving unity is not only unnatural, it is also contrary to the spirit of religious tradition.

Criticism and disagreement are not inherently negative. In fact, they often lead to intellectual progress. For example, during the Battle of Badr, a Companion disagreed with the Prophet’s choice of setting camp. As a result, a better strategic position was chosen.

The real distinction lies in the type of person:

- One type is the self-seeker (*talib-i-khwesh*)—someone whose focus is on promoting themselves, seeking admiration, and wanting to be regarded as important. Such a person is easily angered by criticism because they perceive it as an attack on their personal status.

- The other is the truth-seeker (*talib-i-haqq*), who is concerned only with what is right. They do not take criticism as a personal offense. For them, the only question is: is it true or not? If the criticism is unfounded, they ignore it. But if it is valid, they accept it immediately—because in that criticism, they find exactly what they were seeking all along.

NO AGGRESSION

God has created human beings free. That's why, by nature, every person wants to think freely and express themselves freely. This aspect of human nature is so intrinsic that it cannot be separated from a person in any way.

At the same time, it is also a fact that every human being is a unique individual. Everyone has their own way of thinking, distinct from others. This means it is impossible for all people to think alike. In other words, disagreement is a natural part of human life, and eliminating it is not possible. The only practical and realistic approach is for people to show tolerance toward one another. In this world, the more tolerant a person is, the more successful they are likely to be.

Historians of Islam agree that, in practical terms, Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan was a highly successful ruler. The reason for his success was not that he eliminated all dissent in his domain, but rather something else—what one historian

described as political forbearance (*al-hilm al-siyasi*). He had the ability to listen patiently even to the harshest criticisms. Ibn Qutaybah recounts an incident in these words:

“A man spoke harshly to Muawiyah, but Muawiyah remained patient. Someone said to him, ‘Are you going to let a man like that get away so easily?’ He replied, ‘I do not stand between people and their tongues, as long as they do not stand between us and our authority.’”
(*Uyun al-Akhbar* by Ibn Qutaybah al-Dinawari, Volume 1, Page 397)

This kind of patience does not only apply to political authority; it is relevant in all areas of life. Every individual has their own personal world, whether in political matters or otherwise. One should not invade someone’s personal space. Instead, any disagreement should be strictly limited to presenting arguments. If approached this way, social harmony will remain undisturbed. Problems arise when disagreement becomes personal and confrontational.

The correct and natural principle of disagreement is this: Keep it within the limits of respectful exchange; never allow it to escalate into conflict or aggression.

For a person in power, practical aggression occurs when someone goes beyond intellectual disagreement and begins to challenge their authority directly—not by addressing their ideas, but by trying to bring down their political standing.

For an ordinary person, practical aggression occurs when someone does not just engage in respectful disagreement but goes further to insult the individual personally, defame

them, humiliate them, and initiate campaigns to damage their reputation. This can include attempts to sever the person's social connections, isolate them, and undermine their standing in the community.

What qualifies as aggression in practice will depend on the specific circumstances. But as a general rule, it means moving from addressing someone's ideas to attacking their personal existence—from thoughtful critique to personal takedown.

Freedom is a natural right of every individual, but the responsible use of that freedom comes with a necessary condition: it must not cross the line into aggression or violence.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

In the introduction to his book, Ibn Majah quotes a narration:

“Blessed is the one whom God has made a key to goodness and a lock against evil.” (*Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 238)

This narration highlights the mindset with which individuals live in a truly ethical society. In such a society, every individual sees it as their responsibility not to remain neutral in matters concerning the well-being of the community. Whenever they see an opportunity to promote goodness, they step forward. And when they see signs of harm emerging, they immediately take action to prevent it. Opening the doors to good and closing the doors to evil is a core demand of a conscientious life.

This kind of reformatory effort can only take place in a society where criticism is not viewed negatively—where speech is not judged by whether it supports or opposes a certain individual, and raises or lowers someone's status. Even the tone—whether soft or harsh—should not be the basis for judgment. Without such an open environment, it becomes impossible for anyone to carry out this morally driven work.

A society imbued with this spirit reflects the fact that its members do not only think about themselves but also about others. They possess deep human and ethical sensitivity. They take their environment seriously and are unwilling to compromise on principles. They harbour goodwill for all and seek the benefit of society at large, not just for themselves or their immediate circles. However, this kind of goodness is only possible for those who are not only willing to speak the truth but also possess the capacity to accept it.

Opening the door to good and closing the door to harm is not a one-sided responsibility. It is not as if a certain group or individual has been given a divine license to hold others accountable while being exempt themselves. Rather, this is a mutual responsibility, shared by all members of society toward one another.

This is why the Quran and Hadith use language that implies reciprocal participation. For instance, the Quran says: "And enjoin one another to the truth" (103:3). It also says: "They did not stop one another from doing what was wrong" (5:79). Similarly, a hadith says: "Enjoin one another to what

is right and stop one another from what is wrong” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 4341).

Many examples of this mutual accountability can be found in the life of the second caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab. There were several instances where he issued an order, and someone presented a reasoned objection based on scripture or principle. He would immediately retract his decision and say, “Had it not been for so-and-so, Umar would have been ruined.” (*Al-Sunan al-Kubra* by Al-Bayhaqi: 15558)

On another occasion, Umar went out at night to check on the city. He saw a man talking to a woman outside. He struck the man with a whip. The man asked why he had been hit. Umar replied that he was speaking to a strange woman at night. The man explained that the woman was his wife and that they had just arrived in the city, discussing where to stay. Umar immediately handed the whip over to the man and said, “Now you strike me, for the fault in this case was mine.”

This has always been the way of those with moral integrity. The truth is: Anyone unwilling to hear criticism should not be allowed to criticize others. In a just and principled society, the right to question and critique is shared—it does not belong exclusively to one group or individual.

LIMITS OF FREEDOM

Intellectual freedom is undoubtedly a great blessing for any human being. However, everything in this world has its limits, and the same applies to freedom. Freedom, within its limits, is a complete blessing. But beyond its limits, it only leads to disorder.

The limit of intellectual freedom is that it should function within the scope of known and proven facts. One should not form opinions based on assumptions or guesses, nor build ideological frameworks on such baseless grounds. In the Quran, believers are instructed, thus:

“Do not follow what you do not know; for the ear and the eye and the heart shall all be called to account.” (17:36)

This means that a person should avoid making irresponsible statements. One should speak only after fully using their faculties of hearing, sight, and understanding to investigate the matter. If someone fails to do this, they will be guilty of expressing opinions without making use of the necessary abilities given by God.

If someone wishes to discuss a person or an issue, they must conduct a proper investigation. Before sharing an opinion, they should examine the matter thoroughly and speak only when they have a solid basis for their words. Otherwise, it is their duty to remain silent.

Speaking is permissible only for someone who has prepared themselves before speaking. They should make themselves

deserving of speaking. Giving opinions based on hearsay is so objectionable that it has been described as falsehood in a hadith. Similarly, discussing matters related to intention is a grave error, because knowledge of intentions belongs to God. Just as freedom of expression is a right, it is also a responsibility—and that responsibility is to never express an opinion without full awareness and understanding.

Qatadah says that the Prophet of Islam, along with Abu Bakr and Umar, used to shorten the prayer and offer two units while in Makkah and Mina. Uthman also followed this practice during the early years of his caliphate. Later, however, Uthman stopped shortening the prayer and began offering four units. When Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud learned of this, he recited *Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji’un* and declared it incorrect. Then he stood up and offered four units of prayer. Someone said to him, ‘You said *Inna lillahi...* about the four-unit prayer, and then you also offered four units following the caliph.’ He replied, ‘Opposing the group is even worse (*al-khilaf sharr*).’” (*Al-Athar* by Abu Yusuf, Report No. 147)

This example of Abdullah ibn Masud illustrates an important point. That is, in matters of disagreement, it is essential to observe a distinction. The distinction is that when speaking about a matter of difference, one should refer to the core principle. But when it comes to action, practical considerations must be taken into account.

Freedom is a right of every individual. But with every right come certain responsibilities. One of the responsibilities

tied to the right of freedom is that, before exercising this right, a person should seriously consider what the result of their speech will be—whether it will lead to something constructive or to something destructive.

Another responsibility is to follow collective decisions within a social system. A person who does not hold authority over collective matters may express their disagreement verbally, but in practice, they should act in accordance with the group. If they fail to do so, social unity will break down. And the breakdown of social unity is the greatest of all evils.

A hadith says: So stay with the majority (*Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 3950; *Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 18450). This hadith carries the same message: that in times of discord, when you do not have control over the situation, you may declare the truth in a wise and thoughtful manner. But in action, you must remain with the majority of the community, because in such situations, practical disunity can cause even greater harm.

EXPLANATION OF DISAGREEMENTS

The Quran says: “Do they not ponder on the Quran? If it had been from anyone other than God, they would have found much inconsistency in it.” (4:82)

This makes it clear that the religion of Islam, as sent by God, is a religion in which there is no contradiction. The same idea is expressed in a hadith in the following words:

“I have left you on a clear path; its nights are as bright as its days.” (*Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 5)

However, when a person reads the commentaries on the Quran and the explanations of Hadith, when they look into books of jurisprudence and belief, they encounter what appears to be the exact opposite. They find so many differences that it may seem as though there is hardly a single teaching in Islam on which scholars do not have multiple opinions. Islam, in such a situation, begins to appear to be a religion full of differences.

A hadith teacher from a seminary said that the lessons on hadith begin in the month of Shawwal and end in Rajab. During these ten months, not a single day passes without the need to say at least twenty times: “In this issue, such-and-such Muslim scholars have one view, and such-and-such Muslim scholars have another view.” This was the view of one companion; among the successors there are further differences”—and also to say: *Our opinion is correct, and the opinion of others is wrong* (*Ra’yuna sawab wa ra’y ghayrina khata’*).

Why did a religion without differences turn into one filled with differences? And what is the satisfactory explanation for this? Much has been written and said about this issue over the past thousand years. Even today, numerous articles and books continue to be published on the subject.

This question existed in a basic form even during the time of the companions. However, it became more structured during the period of the successors and their followers.

When the hadiths were collected, it became evident that there were many differences among them. At that point, people began asking: Which narration should be followed, and which should not?

At the time, the initial view was that these different narrations had come from the companions themselves. And since all companions were considered worthy of being followed, how could one say: accept this companion's narration and reject that one?

Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sairafi reports that he asked Ahmad ibn Hanbal, "If the Companions of the Prophet of Islam differed on an issue, is it permissible for us to reflect and decide which of their views is correct?" He replied, "It is not permissible to deliberate between the companions of the Prophet of Islam." Al-Sairafi then asked, "Then whose opinion should be followed?" Ahmad ibn Hanbal said, "You may follow whichever of them you wish." (*Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm wa Fadlihi* by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr: 1705)

This statement by Ahmad ibn Hanbal is, in itself, quite sound—because we cannot declare one Companion correct and another incorrect. For us, every Companion is worthy of being followed. However, this response does not provide a scholarly explanation for why this approach is valid.

After that, there is another view held by a number of jurists. For instance, Malik bin Anas was asked what should be done when there are differences among the Companions. He replied, "Some are incorrect and some are correct, so

examine them and choose accordingly.” (*Jami‘ Bayan al-‘Ilm wa Fadlihi*: 1694)

Abu Hanifah, the renowned Muslim scholar, expressed the same point in even clearer terms. He said, “One of the two opinions is wrong, and the sin for that error is forgiven.” (*Jami‘ Bayan al-‘Ilm wa Fadlihi* by Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr: 1706)

This answer is undoubtedly incorrect. Because if each of the differing views is attributed to a Companion, then we do not have the right to independently declare one view correct and the other wrong. In the case of differing opinions among the Companions, we are required to consider one view as correct—but drawing a distinction between them would mean going beyond our limits.

If we examine this matter more closely, we find that religion consists of two parts: one part concerns fundamentals, and the other concerns branches and details. All the differences mentioned above relate to branches and details. As for the fundamentals, there is no disagreement. For example, all Muslims agree on the five daily prayers and the number of units in each. However, there are many issues, such as saying Ameen aloud or quietly, in which differences exist.

If we look at this division in the light of the Quran, the matter becomes much easier to understand. The Quran states that all prophets were given the same *al-din* (42:13). *Al-din* refers to the core and essential teachings of religion. These fundamental teachings are eternal and were given equally to every prophet. There is no difference among them in this regard.

According to the Quran, the second part of religion is what is referred to as *shir'ah* and *minhaj* (5:48). This second part has varied among different prophets.

The same distinction is also found internally within Islam. In other words, the agreed-upon parts of the Quran—and likewise of the Hadith—represent al-din. The remaining elements, where differences are found, belong to that part of religion that the Quran refers to as *shir'ah* and *minhaj*.

From this, it becomes clear that according to the very scheme of the Lawgiver, one part of religion requires strict adherence, while another part allows for diversity and flexibility. This is entirely natural. It can be understood in this way: the foundational aspects of religion (such as sincerity to God) represent its spirit, while jurisprudential rulings represent its form. And it is a law of nature that the spirit always remains uniform, whereas form is never completely uniform—nor can it ever be.

For example, the essential function of a house is to provide shelter. In this sense, every house is the same. But in terms of form, no two houses can be exactly alike. Similarly, religion, in its spirit, remains the same at all times. But in terms of form, it contains variation—and this variation will never cease. This is the true explanation behind the differences among the companions.

But the matter does not end there. In fact, difference of opinion has a great positive value. That value is that when room for differing views exists, it stimulates intellectual activity—and through this process, human

thought continues to develop. If there were no scope for disagreement, intellectual effort would cease, and as a result, the progress of human thought would come to a halt. That would eventually lead to mental stagnation—and mental stagnation is no different from intellectual death in this world.

During this process, differences are bound to arise. One scholar may reach one opinion, another may arrive at a different one, and a third at yet another. But differing views are not in themselves a problem. What really matters is that this is the only way through which intellectual activity continues within a group. And through such intellectual activity, creativity is born and pathways of intellectual progress open up. In this context, disagreement is the natural course, while intellectual activity is the result—and the result is what truly matters, not the course itself.

Let us take an example of this. In one part of the Quran, there is the command: “So ignore them, and put your trust in God. God is sufficient as a trustee.” (4:81) In another place, the Quran says: “O Prophet, strive against those who deny the truth and the hypocrites.”(9:73)

These two verses appear to be different. One verse instructs avoidance of certain people, while the other commands confrontation with the same group. This difference caused people to reflect, and they began thinking deeply about it.

One interpretation was that the verse about fighting had abrogated the verse about avoidance: “Turn away from them”—meaning, do not punish them. It was said that

this was abrogated by the verse: “O Prophet, strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites” (*Tafsir al-Qurtubi* Vol. 5, p. 290).

But the intellectual process did not end there. This line of thinking further stimulated the minds of others. Upon deeper reflection, they concluded that the verse about avoidance had not been abrogated. As a result, they included it among the definitive verses (*muhkamat*) (*Tafsir al-Qurtubi* Vol. 10, p. 202).

Now if we reflect further, this second opinion appears to be more in line with the spirit of the Quran. The fact is that avoidance is a permanent instruction, and it relates to the general ethics of a believer. While giving a message, dealing with people, or traveling, it often happens that unpleasant experiences come from others. In all such situations, adopting the method of avoidance is a lasting instruction. By turning away from the ignorant, the believer demonstrates noble character, which serves as the foundation for all success in both this world and the hereafter.

As for *qital* (meaning physical combat), it is permitted for defensive purposes. When a group commits an act of aggression, then confrontation is allowed to repel that aggression. Combat is a temporary instruction, while avoidance is a permanent one.

This shows that there is no difference in *al-din*. The differences that exist are only in the *shari‘ah*. These differences are of two kinds: one that relates to acts of worship, and another that relates to social dealings.

The differences in worship are all related to its outward details. Such variation is entirely natural, because worship is an act that cannot always be carried out with the same internal state. Sometimes a person may have deeper feelings, and sometimes less. These internal differences create variation in the outward aspects of worship. So, while there is unity in the core elements of worship, there is diversity and flexibility in the outward practices. The differences found in narrations on worship are essentially a record of this variation.

This is also the case, in another sense, with social dealings. Although the basic rules in such matters are very clear, the circumstances in which those rules are applied are always changing. Because of this, adjustments often have to be made in the secondary and detailed applications of those rules. The differences found in hadith and jurisprudence on matters of social interaction are examples of this variation in application.

FROM DARKNESS TOWARDS LIGHT

The Quran states:

“God has sent down to you a Reminder and a messenger who conveys to you God’s clear messages, so that he might lead those, who believe and do good deeds, out of darkness into light. God will admit those who believe in Him

and do good deeds into Gardens with rivers flowing through them, where they will remain forever. God has indeed made excellent provision for them.” (65:10-11)

In this verse, the guidance of the Prophet has been described as bringing people from darkness into light. This means leading them from a state of incorrect thinking to a stage of sound understanding.

Human beings are naturally inclined to seek the truth. But the human mind is limited. Because of this limitation, no one is able to fully grasp the truth on their own, and so they remain in a constant state of uncertainty. The guidance of the Prophet takes a person out of this state. It leads them into a phase of complete certainty.

Every person wants their life to reach a good end. But when they begin to strive for it, they eventually discover—at the highest point of their effort—that what they truly want can never fully be attained in this world. At that point, the Prophet’s guidance appears as light in the midst of darkness. It shows the person the way to right thinking and right action.

In the present world, the most important thing is a correct way of thinking—about life before death and life after death. But this world is like a jungle of countless distractions. Innumerable voices echo all at once. In such a situation, it becomes extremely difficult for any individual to find the correct path of thought and hold to it with conviction.

Here, the guidance of the Prophet helps. It gives a person the correct starting point for reflection. And finding the correct starting point is the most reliable way to reach one's true destination in this world.

A WISE SAYING

Ali ibn Abi Talib is reported to have said: "The true scholar is the one who does not make people lose hope in God's mercy." (*Musnad al-Darimi*, Narration: 305). This is a deeply meaningful statement and has many dimensions.

One meaning of this statement is that in gatherings where people are advised and encouraged toward righteousness, the standard presented should not be so high that they feel religion is beyond their reach and begin to lose hope in God's mercy. Instead, the message should be presented in a way that highlights encouragement and inspiration, so that people feel motivated to act.

Another interpretation is that in daily matters, guidance given to people should avoid harshness. Harshness often stems from a lack of knowledge, but someone who has a deep understanding will have a broader outlook. Consequently, they will speak in a manner that includes consideration and ease, so that God's religion appears practical and achievable for all.

This saying also has a broader dimension that relates to wider circumstances. In this world of competition, when one

nation dominates another when one group advances ahead of another, and when new challenges emerge in collective life, a person with limited understanding may look only at the surface and begin to express frustration and protest. They may focus on injustice and create a sense of deprivation and victimhood among people. But a person with deeper knowledge will assess the situation more thoroughly. They will be able to see further and understand the realities at a deeper level. Such a person will find possibilities even in the midst of darkness. They will speak of ease within difficulty. They will point to opportunities hidden within problems. They will nurture hope and confidence in people by showing them how their disadvantages can be turned into strengths.

SECTARIANISM

According to a well-known narration, the Prophet of Islam said that the people of Israel were divided into seventy-two sects, and his own community would be divided into seventy-three sects. All of them will end up in the Fire except one. When asked who that one group would be, he replied, “The way that I and my companions are upon” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2641).

Islamic scholars have tried to identify the “72” misguided sects. For example, in *Ghuniyat al-Talibin*, Abdul Qadir al-Jilani discussed this issue in detail and listed them

by name—such as the Kharijites, Shi’a, Mu‘tazilites, Murji’ah, Mashiyah, Jahmiyyah, Dirariyyah, Kullabiyyah, and others. Then there are sub-groups under each of these sects. In this way, the total was brought to seventy-two or seventy-three. Although most of these sects now exist only in books and no longer in practice, their importance lies not in precise enumeration but in symbolism. That is, they symbolically show how deviation may enter the community and by what route.

A study of these sects reveals that all of them arose from unnecessary speculation in matters of belief. This was the root cause of their deviation. Thought and reflection are encouraged in Islam. In fact, the Quran describes the very purpose of its revelation as reflection. There is no doubt that correct reflection leads to an increase in one’s understanding of the truth. In contrast, misguided reflection leads to confusion and, ultimately, into the depths of error.

Beliefs are not based on direct observation; they pertain to matters of the unseen. Since human beings cannot obtain direct knowledge of the unseen, the correct approach is to remain content with what has been clearly conveyed. As a companion said, “Leave ambiguous what God has left ambiguous.” (*Al-Asl* by Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani, Vol. 10, p. 182) One should not indulge in speculation about what lies within the realm of the unknown. This was exactly the approach adopted by the companions of the Prophet in such matters.

The one who applies reflection within the limits of what is known is included in “the way that I and my companions

are upon,” and the one who speculates in the domain of the unknown or the prohibited steps outside the bounds of guidance.

The Quran states: “It is He who has sent down the Book to you. Some of its verses are clear and precise in meaning, they are the basis of the Book, while others are allegorical. Those with deviation in their hearts pursue the allegorical, so as to create dissension by seeking to explain it: but no one knows its meaning except God. Those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say, ‘We believe in it: it is all from our Lord.’ But only the wise take heed.” (3:7)

This verse explains what kind of reflection is misguided and what kind of reflection leads a person to guidance. In this verse, “allegorical” refers to metaphorical expressions—that is, figurative language. Matters related to the unseen are presented in the Quran in symbolic language. For example, the reference to God’s “hand” is metaphorical, not literal. Such things cannot be understood with absolute clarity. Therefore, the correct approach is to be content with a general understanding. Trying to go beyond that leads only to intellectual confusion—and the result of such confusion is misguidance.

In contrast, “clear” verses are those stated in direct language, and that lead to definite understanding. These fall within the realm of human comprehension. Serious reflection on them increases one’s knowledge and conviction. A person progresses further along the path of guidance.

For example, the issue of predestination and free will falls entirely under the category of allegorical. In this matter, being content with a general understanding is both a rational and a religious requirement. This is also the scientific point of view.

Another area is the natural world—the signs scattered throughout the earth and sky. Reflection in this area is fully encouraged. This kind of reflection increases certainty. It nourishes spiritual development. It shapes a person's character into one of higher awareness. It turns an individual into the kind of human being who, in everyday language, is called a seeker of truth, and in religious language, is called one who knows God.

DIFFERENCES OF OPINION

The prominent Indian Muslim scholar Maulana Mahmood Hasan Deobandi (1851–1920) was an enthusiastic supporter of the Khilafat Movement. In contrast, his student, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi (1863–1943)—a noted scholar in his own right—openly opposed and criticized the movement. However, the teacher never took this “insolence” from his student in a negative way. Their sincere relationship remained intact until the very end.

In one conversation, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi mentioned his teacher and guide, saying: “His heart was not burdened in the slightest by my disagreement. Once, during the

time of the Khilafat Movement, some people were sitting in his room saying negative things about me. Some of their words reached his ears. He came out, visibly upset, and said: ‘Be warned—never use such words again.’ He added, ‘Do I receive revelation that whatever I’m doing is definitely correct? I have one opinion, he has another.’ On one occasion he even said, ‘We take pride in the fact that a person who was not influenced by anyone across India, who cared for no one’s approval, still came from our own group.’” (*Malfoozat*, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi, Idarah Talifat-e-Ashrafiyah, Multan, p. 114)

This is an example that shows what the approach of scholars should be when it comes to disagreement. In such cases, the same spirit should be at work as was expressed by Shafi’i, the renowned Muslim scholar, in these words: “My opinion is correct, though it may be wrong; the other’s opinion is wrong, though it may be correct.”

Such disagreements are generally in matters of interpretation (*ijtihad*), and in these, there is always room for more than one view. Therefore, the soundest approach is that one should, despite disagreement, avoid developing hostility toward the other side. A person may present their opinion with confidence, but they should maintain the mindset that there is always a possibility of error in their own view and a possibility of correctness in the others’. In other words, the matter should be seen as open to different perspectives—not as a case of absolute right versus absolute wrong.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RELIGION OF
HUMANITY

The Moral and Human Values
Promoted by Islam

INTRODUCTION

Karen Armstrong, a writer based in London, has written more than a dozen books on religion. One of her nearly 300-page books is a biography of the Prophet of Islam:

Armstrong, Karen. 1992. *Muhammad: A Western Attempt to Understand Islam*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.

This book presents an attempt to study Islam in a fair and unbiased manner. In particular, it refutes the propaganda that Islam is a violent religion. The book concludes with the following words:

“Muhammad... founded a religion and a cultural tradition that was not based on the sword—despite the Western myth—and whose name ‘Islam’ signifies peace and reconciliation.” (p. 266)

Everyone who studies Islam fairly and academically shares the same view, as shown in the example above. It is possible for a Muslim individual or group to show deviation in practice, but as far as Islam itself is concerned, this is its true nature.

It is a fact that the teachings of Islam are entirely based on peace, reconciliation, and humanity. Islam, in its true essence, is a religion of peace and human values. In relation to the Creator, its core concept is oneness, and in relation to creation, its main principle is humanity.

GOD AND HUMAN BEINGS

Abu Mas‘ud Ansari was a Muslim from Madinah. One day, he became angry with his slave over something and started beating him with a stick. At that very moment, the Prophet of Islam happened to pass by. Upon seeing this, he said, “Abu Mas‘ud, know that God has more power over you than you have over this slave.” As soon as Abu Mas‘ud heard this, the stick fell from his hand, and he said, “From today, this slave is free.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 1659)

Initially, Abu Mas‘ud saw the situation as a matter between one human being and another. In that moment, he saw himself as the master and the other person as a slave. He viewed himself as being in a position of superiority and the slave as being beneath him. But after the Prophet of Islam’s words, he realized that the entire matter was one that concerned God. Now he saw himself standing on the same level as the slave—both equally powerless before God. That is why the raised stick slipped from his hand and fell.

The truth is that all the problems of social life arise because people view matters in relation to other human beings, not in relation to God. When someone acquires wealth, they begin to consider themselves superior to those who do not possess it. However, if they were to view the matter in relation to God, they would realize that they are just as poor as anyone else. When a person attains a high position, they start thinking that they are greater than everyone else. But if they were to view themselves in relation to God,

they would find that they are just as insignificant as others. When someone speaks harshly against another person, it is because they consider the other to be inferior. But if they were to see the situation in relation to God, they would run out of words—for before God, they are just as powerless as the other person.

Islam aims to create a person who does not see matters as transactions between individuals, but rather as things that will ultimately be presented before God. This perspective cuts at the root of all evils. After this, there remains no room for pride, jealousy, lust for power, or injustice. One's 'stick' then falls from their hand—rather than landing on another person's head.

DEVOTION TO GOD, SERVICE TO MAN

Islamic acts of worship are primarily intended for the remembrance and worship of God. However, their structure is such that they also serve as a means for the moral development of humanity. In performing these rituals, Muslims not only fulfill their duty to God but also cultivate the discipline needed to fulfill their responsibilities toward fellow human beings.

Take, for example, the prescribed act of worship known as *salat* (prayer). Along with remembrance of God and supplication to God, *salat* has also become a means of promoting equality

among people. In the congregational *salat*, performed five times a day, worshippers stand shoulder to shoulder to offer their prayers. Whether someone is rich or poor, powerful or powerless, educated or uneducated, all stand on the same floor in the same row. No distinction remains between them. In this way, *salat*, while being an act of worship, also becomes a powerful lesson in human equality.

Consider another prescribed act of worship—*sawm* (fasting) during the month of Ramadan. During this month, every individual refrains from food and drink from dawn to dusk. No matter how wealthy a person may be, they too must go without food just as everyone else does. In this way, fasting becomes both a form of devotion to God and a means of personally experiencing the needs of the less fortunate. Fasting not only turns a person into a devoted worshipper of God but also helps develop empathy for others.

The nature of *zakat* (almsgiving) remains fundamentally the same. In *zakat*, a person allocates a portion of their earnings and gives it, in the name of God, to the poor and the needy. In this manner, *zakat* functions both as an act of worship to God and as a form of service to others. By giving *zakat*, an individual recognises God as the true Giver and simultaneously reinforces their sense of responsibility towards fellow human beings.

Hajj, the pilgrimage to the Kaaba in Makkah, is another obligatory act of worship in Islam. During Hajj, pilgrims are instructed to avoid arguments and conflict. (Quran, 2:197) Throughout this journey, one encounters people of various

kinds, yet the pilgrim consciously avoids confrontation out of concern that it may compromise the validity of their pilgrimage. In this way, Hajj becomes not only a journey of devotion to God but also an annual exercise in peaceful coexistence with others.

HONOURING ONE'S PARENTS

In the Quran, God says: “We have enjoined man to show kindness to his parents.” (29:8) In several other places in the Quran, similar verses appear, strongly emphasizing that a person must treat their parents with the utmost kindness and fulfill all their rights. Even if parents speak harshly to their children, the children should not take their words negatively. Instead, they must not allow their love or service toward them to diminish in any way. They are required to uphold good conduct toward their parents—regardless of how the parents behave.

The significance of treating one's parents well is highlighted in a well-known hadith: “A man once came to the Prophet of Islam and asked, ‘Who among people is most deserving of my good companionship?’ The Prophet said, ‘Your mother.’ The man asked, ‘Then who?’ The Prophet said, ‘Your mother.’ The man asked again, ‘Then who?’ The Prophet said, ‘Your mother.’ The man asked a fourth time, ‘Then who?’ The Prophet said, ‘Your father.’” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2548)

There are many hadiths that emphasize the importance of serving one's parents. From these reports, it becomes clear that after God, parents hold the greatest rights over a person. One reason for this is that, among all human beings, an individual is most indebted to their parents. For this reason, it becomes a moral responsibility for every person, once they reach adulthood, to serve their parents in every possible way. In their old age, children should care for their parents just as their parents once cared for them in childhood.

Another important point is that by serving their parents, a person trains themselves to become someone capable of serving the broader human community. They learn to look at all human beings with compassion, to treat everyone with respect, and to become someone who fulfills the rights of others.

LIVING BY VIRTUE

The Quran repeatedly emphasizes the importance of leading a righteous life and performing good deeds. For example, it states:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.” (16:97)

The word *saleh* means proper, virtuous, and sound. In Arabic, the expression “هو صالح بكذا” (*huwa saleh bikaza*) is used to mean, “He is capable of doing such-and-such work properly.” The term *saleh* refers to actions that are correct, constructive, and well-executed. It is the opposite of *fasad*, which means corruption or disorder. Any flawed or harmful action is referred to as ‘*amal-e-fasid* (a corrupt deed), whereas any correct and upright action is called ‘*amal-e-saleh* (a virtuous deed).

Good conduct applies to every area of human life. According to Islamic teachings, a person is expected to live in such a way that all their actions reflect ethical behaviour. From personal life at home to interactions in the wider world, none of their actions should fall short of this standard. In this sense, Islam can be understood as a comprehensive guide to ethical living. Its principles are meant to clarify what kind of behaviour is appropriate in various situations and what is not.

For example:

- Speaking the truth is a virtuous statement, while lying is not.
- Acting justly is a virtuous action, while oppressing others is not.
- Love is a virtuous disposition, while hatred is not.
- Peace is a virtuous condition, while unrest is not.
- Wishing well for others is a virtuous feeling, while ill-will is not.

- Honesty is a virtuous trait, while dishonesty is not.
- Fulfilling others' rights is virtuous conduct, while denying those rights is not.

Only those deeds are favoured by God that are righteous. It is such people who are entitled to receive God's reward. Deeds that are not righteous are neither accepted by God nor approved by Him. In this world, only the righteous seed takes root and flourishes. Similarly, only a righteous person experiences true progress in life. For someone whose actions are not righteous, there is neither growth nor success in the world that God has created.

THE TEACHING OF PATIENCE

A Western commentator, William Paton, has written, "One of the fruits of Islam has been that stubborn, durable patience which comes of the submission to the absolute will of God." This observation is entirely accurate. In Islamic teachings, patience holds great importance. Many verses of the Quran, directly or indirectly, relate to patience. Patience is such a vital quality that without it, faith and Islam become unimaginable.

The present world is designed in such a way that people frequently encounter unpleasant experiences—both at home and in society. If a person responds to every such occasion by engaging in conflict with others, they cannot progress far in life. That is why Islamic teachings strongly emphasize

patience, so that one may overlook unpleasant situations and continue their journey toward a higher purpose.

The Quran repeatedly exhorts patience. For example, it says: “And be patient over what befalls you” (31:17); “And be patient. Indeed, God is with the patient” (8:46); and “Indeed, mankind is in loss, except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience” (103:2-3).

Similarly, patience is greatly emphasized in the Hadith literature. The Prophet of Islam is reported to have said: “Listen, obey, and be patient” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 8005). He also said: “God has commanded patience and forgiveness” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 3000). A Companion of the Prophet stated: “The Prophet and his Companions would always endure harm with patience” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 4566).

The truth is that patience forms the foundation of Islamic conduct. In this world of trials and tribulations, no one can uphold Islamic character without patience.

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

The true aim of Islam is spiritual growth. Islam aims to awaken human spirituality—the awakening of the divinity (*rabbaniyat*) hidden within each person. This is the genuine purpose of Islam. In the Quran, this idea is called *tathir* and *tazkiyah* (9:102), which means the purification of one’s soul.

The reality is that every human being is born with a sound and pure nature (*fitrat-e-sahih*). In this sense, every person is initially pure and uncorrupted. However, as one lives in the world, external layers of ‘dust’ begin to settle upon them. The process of cleansing oneself from this external dust and returning to one’s original natural state is what purification is about.

This process of *tazkiyah* is something that each individual must carry out for themselves. A baby is naturally pure and clean—but this state is not the result of any personal effort; it is simply a reflection of how nature has been created.

However, when a person grows up and undertakes spiritual purification, it becomes a conscious and personal act. It is the result of a deliberate journey toward inner growth, pursued with individual intention and effort. This self-acquired spiritual development is what Islam truly seeks. The Quran refers to it as attaining a “sound heart” (*qalb-e-saleem*) (26:89).

A hadith states that the Prophet of Islam once prayed, “O God, place light in my heart” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6316). In another instance, he prayed for someone else: “O God, forgive his sin and purify his heart” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 22211). Similarly, in *Muwatta of Malik*, a saying of Luqman is recorded: “God revives hearts with the light of wisdom, just as He revives dead earth with rain from the sky” (Narration No. 2117).

This is the meaning of spiritual progress—and it is this spiritual progress that constitutes the true aim of Islam.

Whoever is deprived of it is, without doubt, also deprived of the essence of Islam.

HIGH MORAL CHARACTER

The Prophet of Islam was taught a moral standard by God, which he fully adopted in his life. This has been described in the Quran in these words: “And indeed, you are of a great moral character” (68:4).

This means that the Prophet of Islam was not only a man of moral values—he was the embodiment of high moral character. If moral character refers to basic, everyday decency, then great moral character means that a person rises above how others treat him; his behaviour is not shaped by how people deal with him. His approach is not to repay evil with evil and good with good. Instead, he treats every person with goodness, even when others treat him unfairly.

The Prophet of Islam exemplified this elevated moral standard. He presented himself as a living example, practically showing people how to lead truly moral lives. Such character reflects that a person is guided by principle—a principled human being. His personality is not a product of external circumstances, but the result of his own high ideals. This kind of character is a sign that the person is authentic and firmly aligned with the path of Nature.

The teachings of the Hadith are filled with guidance on good character. According to one Hadith, the Prophet of Islam said: “I was sent only to perfect noble character” (*Musnad al-Shihab al-Quda’i*, Hadith No. 1165). He also said: “The most complete in faith among the believers is the one with the best character” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 4682). And he said: “The most weighty thing on the scale on the Day of Judgment will be good character” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 27496).

A believer is someone who lives at the level of divine awareness. That is why, in every situation, they maintain a high moral character. Their noble way of thinking remains constant, and no circumstance can lower the standard of their conduct.

HAVING A GOOD OPINION OF OTHERS

Once in Madinah, an incident occurred that involved mutual suspicion and mistrust. On that occasion, the Quran declared: “Why, when you heard it, did the believing men and believing women not think well of one another and say, ‘This is clearly a slander’?” (24:12)

From this, we learn that Islam encourages an atmosphere of positive thinking within society. When people hear something negative about someone, not only should they avoid repeating it, but they should also avoid believing it

in their hearts. Their minds should remain filled with good thoughts at all times.

Another verse of the Quran says: “Avoid much suspicion. Indeed, some suspicion is sin.” (49:12) The causes of division and conflict in society often begin with suspicion. If suspicion is addressed at the very beginning, mutual relationships will not deteriorate, and a peaceful, humane environment in society can be preserved. Avoiding suspicion is, in essence, like putting out discord at its source.

In a hadith, the Prophet of Islam said: “Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the most false of speech.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2563)

There are many other hadiths that clarify what Islam teaches on this matter. People should keep their hearts pure towards others. If something negative is heard about someone, it should never be accepted solely on the basis of having heard it. Either one should interpret it positively and dismiss it from their mind, or—if there is a reason to form an opinion—one should investigate the matter thoroughly. Without a complete investigation, no judgment should be formed, and no action should be taken based on it.

The kind of person Islam promotes is one who maintains a good opinion of others and whose heart is filled with positive assumptions about them.

HUMILITY

One of the key ethical teachings in Islam is humility. The Quran states:

“And do not turn your face away from people in arrogance, and do not walk on the earth with pride. Indeed, God does not like anyone who is arrogant and boastful.” (31:18-19)

A person's value lies not in being proud, but in being modest. Pride does not suit a human being; humility is what truly fits humanity. A person's strength is not in raising their voice, but in developing calmness and restraint in speech. Arrogant behaviour is often a sign of a lack of seriousness. Islamic teachings encourage a deep sense of seriousness and reflection. This is why, when someone sincerely follows the path of Islam, they naturally adopt an attitude of humility. Humility reflects the core of human values, and by extension, it also reflects the core values of Islamic teachings.

According to a hadith, the Prophet of Islam said: “Indeed, God has revealed to me that you must adopt humility, so that no one behaves arrogantly towards another, and no one takes pride over another.” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 4895)

The Islamic worldview asserts that only God holds true greatness. All human beings are equally subject to this higher authority. When this belief becomes firmly established in a person's mind, it naturally leads to the development of humility.

Humility is a vital human quality. In any society where people demonstrate humility, other positive values tend to emerge on their own. A humble person remains aligned with their natural disposition, while someone who lacks humility tends to stray from it. Humility encourages a realistic understanding of oneself and the world. A person without humility often lacks this realism. They may appear human outwardly, but they lose a core part of what it means to live responsibly and ethically.

THE ATTITUDE OF GENTLENESS

Adopting the teachings of Islam helps a person develop a temperament characterized by gentleness and kindness. These teachings instill the understanding that God is great (*Allahu Akbar*). This awareness leads a person to recognize that greatness belongs only to God, not to themselves. As a result, a natural sense of humility and modesty develops within them.

However, an essential condition for maintaining gentleness is the possession of exceptional patience. In the modern world, it is inevitable to encounter unpleasant behaviour from others time and again. Therefore, only those who can resist the urge to react to such negativity are able to preserve their gentleness. This is why the Quran describes those who are mindful of God as people who “restrain their anger and forgive others” (3:134).

There is a narration in both Bukhari and Muslim in which the Prophet of Islam said, “God is gentle, and He loves gentleness in all matters” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6927). Similarly, it is reported that he said, “God is gentle and loves gentleness. He gives through gentleness what He does not give through harshness or anything else” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2593). Another narration states, “Anyone who is deprived of gentleness is deprived of all goodness” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 4809).

If you approach others with arrogance, you will provoke their egos, which will only worsen the situation. If you were previously met with harsh words, you may now have to endure even more severe treatment, such as being insulted. In contrast, if you approach people with gentleness, your behaviour will awaken their conscience. The situation will reverse: someone who was once an opponent may forget their hostility and become a close friend.

Gentleness is a quality found in successful individuals, whereas arrogance is a characteristic of those who fail.

CONTENTMENT (QINAAT)

One important moral quality in a person is contentment. For the development of a better society, it is essential for individuals to possess the quality of contentment. In a society where people have a mindset of contentment, there will be an atmosphere of mutual respect and harmony. In

contrast, a society without this quality will inevitably lack cooperation and mutual goodwill.

The Prophet of Islam said: “Success belongs to the one who accepts Islam, is provided with just enough sustenance, and is content with what they have.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 1054)

In today’s world, the greatest fortune for a person is to live as a thankful individual. In reality, only someone with a mindset of contentment can truly be considered a thankful person. As the Prophet of Islam said: “Be content, and you will be among the most grateful of people.” (*Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 4217)

By adopting contentment, a person finds peace of mind. On the other hand, a lack of contentment leads to greed. A person driven by greed will never be satisfied, regardless of their circumstances. They will always find something lacking and feel dissatisfied.

Contentment brings mental peace, while greed creates unrest. Contentment leads a person toward intellectual growth, while greed pulls them toward intellectual decline. Contentment makes a person more empathetic and connected with others, while greed breeds animosity and selfishness. Contentment is a path to personal growth, whereas greed leads to spiritual emptiness.

A mindset of contentment allows a person to rise above trivial concerns and focus on deeper truths. It enables them to live simply while maintaining higher thoughts and values.

SELFLESSNESS

One of the key qualities described in the Quran for people of faith is the ability to sacrifice one's own interest for the sake of others. It means placing someone else's need above one's own—helping others even at personal cost, and giving preference to others despite having needs oneself. The Quranic term for this noble human trait is *Ithar* (selflessness).

After the migration (*hijrah*) of the Prophet from Makkah to Madinah, many people from Makkah arrived in Madinah. At first, these people appeared to be a burden on the locals, as the migrants (*Muhajirun*) had nothing, while the local inhabitants (*Ansar*) had homes, land, orchards, and resources. Despite this, the people of Madinah welcomed the newcomers with great generosity, even though they seemed to place a strain on their resources. Referring to this, the Quran says: “Those who were already settled in the city [Madinah] and firmly rooted in faith, love those who migrated to them for refuge, and harbour no desire in their hearts for what has been given to the [latter]. They give them preference over themselves, even if they too are needy: those who are saved from their own souls' greed are truly successful.” (59:9)

This selflessness is a high human quality. It is a principle that presents itself in daily life. Every day, moments arise where one may feel the need to step back and allow someone else to move forward. It means enduring difficulty to bring ease

to another, cutting down on one's own spending to support someone else, taking time from one's schedule to help another, holding back to let others speak, or giving space on the road so someone can pass.

This personal sacrifice—selflessness—is what the Quran refers to as *ithar*. It is among the highest human values. According to the Quran, true success belongs to those who possess this quality.

THE PRINCIPLE OF COMPASSION

The Quran describes God as *Al-Rahman* and *Al-Rahim*—meaning exceedingly kind and deeply merciful. Similarly, the Prophet of Islam is referred to as “a mercy to all the worlds” (21:107), signifying that he was sent as a source of compassion for all humanity. His most prominent quality was his embodiment of universal mercy.

The Quran instructs people to encourage one another in patience and compassion: “And advise one another to be steadfast, and advise one another to be compassionate” (Quran, 90:17). This means that every individual should deal with others with kindness, empathy, and care—even in situations of injustice or mistreatment. A person should maintain a compassionate attitude regardless of how others behave. Commenting on this verse, commentator al-Qurtubi explains that it means: “To show mercy to all of God's creation.” (*Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, Vol. 20, p. 71)

Many sayings of the Prophet of Islam emphasize this teaching. For example, he said: "The Merciful shows mercy to those who are merciful." (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 4941) In another narration: "Show mercy to those on earth, and the One in the heavens will show mercy to you." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 1924) Another hadith states: "God shows mercy to those among His servants who are merciful to others." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1284)

This message of compassion became so widespread that it became an essential part of Muslim thought and literature across cultures. Its echo can be heard in every language. A Muslim poet from the Indian subcontinent beautifully expressed it:

*"Karo mehrbani tum ahl-e-zameen par;
Khuda mehrban hoga arsh-e-bareen par."*

"Show kindness to the people of the earth; God on the Throne will be kind to you."

The importance of this principle in Islam is so great that it is treated as a deeply personal matter. In a hadith recorded in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, the Prophet of Islam said: "God does not show mercy to those who are not merciful to others." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 7376)

JUSTICE AND FAIRNESS

One of the most important requirements of humanity is that a person deals with others based on justice and fairness. Under no circumstances should one resort to oppression or injustice. Accordingly, Islam strongly emphasizes adopting a just attitude.

The Quran states: “Indeed, God commands justice and kindness” (16:90). In another verse, it says: “Say, My Lord has commanded to uphold justice” (7:29). The weighing scale serves as a material symbol of justice. Just as a scale measures precisely, so too should a person’s words and actions align with justice. Whenever a situation arises, one should handle it fairly. When speaking, their words should reflect the truth.

The Quran repeatedly instructs that matters be dealt with justly. For example, it says, “When you judge between people, judge with justice” (4:58). Similarly, it says: “If two factions among the believers fight, then reconcile between the two. But if one wrongs the other, fight the wrongdoer until it returns to the command of God. If it returns, then reconcile between them justly and act fairly. Indeed, God loves those who act justly” (49:9).

This is a general instruction. In both families and societies, disagreements often arise. In such situations, it is the responsibility of all involved to ensure that the issue is resolved justly. No one should favour one side over the other; decisions should be based on the facts of the case.

The Quran further advises: “O you who have believed, stand firm for God, witnesses for justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear God; indeed, God is aware of what you do” (5:8).

This makes it clear how important justice and fairness are—that even if the person involved is an enemy, one must not abandon justice. What is said should always be in accordance with what is fair and just. The entire order of the universe is built on the principle of justice. For human beings as well, the correct path is one rooted in justice and fairness. There is no rightful place in this world for unjust behaviour.

MODERATION AND BALANCE

The Prophet of Islam said: “How excellent is moderation (*qasd*) in wealth, how excellent is moderation in poverty, and how excellent is moderation in worship.” (*Musnad al-Bazzar*, Hadith No. 2946)

In another narration, he said: “Maintain moderation, maintain moderation—you will reach your goal.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6463)

The Quran mentions “a journey that is moderate” (9:42), referring to an easy journey. A companion described the Prophet by saying: “His prayer was balanced, and his sermon was balanced.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 866)

In the well-known Arabic dictionary *Lisan al-Arab*, the term *qasd* is defined as: “a moderate action—neither excessive nor deficient.” (*Lisan al-Arab*, Vol. 3, p. 354)

The method of a true believer is the method of *qasd*—in both individual and collective matters. A believer always adopts a balanced approach, whether the situation is favourable or adverse.

This world is a world of trials, and because of this, no individual’s or community’s condition remains the same. A person may experience good conditions at times and bad conditions at other times. They may find themselves in a peaceful environment one moment and in a hostile one the next. Sometimes, they may be in a position of strength, and at other times, in a position of weakness. A person may live among those they consider their own and, at times, among strangers. They may face friends at some moments and enemies at others.

However, faith makes a person calm and composed. A person of faith remains firm in moderation in all circumstances. They continuously keep themselves tied to the “rope of God.” Believers are people of balance. The fluctuations of circumstances do not disrupt their peace. Their direction in life is shaped by the principles they have committed to—not by the external issues stirred up by others.

BEING BENEFICIAL TO OTHERS

From the Quran (13:17), we learn that the Creator of the world has made it in such a way that stability and permanence are only granted to those who prove themselves beneficial to others. Everything in this world is designed with this principle in mind. In this world, anything remains established only as long as it is beneficial to others. When something loses its capacity to benefit, it loses its right to life as well. After this, the system of nature, deeming it undesirable, discards it.

God has favoured this very system of nature for mankind as well (Quran, 3:83). The person who is desired by God is the one who lives in this world as a beneficial being—someone who truly becomes a giver. This person provides others with what they need for their life and survival. It is such a person who rightfully deserves to be called a human being. Such a person is worthy of God's success and progress in this world.

The Prophet of Islam said: "Whoever among you can benefit their brother, they should do so." (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2199).

To become beneficial to others, it is not necessary to possess vast wealth or resources. Every person, within their capacity, can be beneficial to others. For example, offering a word of well-wishing to someone is a way of benefiting them. Similarly, giving someone good advice, carrying a burden for them, helping with their tasks, guiding a lost person,

offering financial assistance according to one's means, or removing obstacles from their path—all these actions contribute to benefiting others. Even if a person is unable to offer any physical assistance, praying for someone's well-being is also a form of helping and benefiting them.

TRUTH

In the Quran, the believers are described as men and women who speak the truth (*al-sadiqin wa al-sadiqat*) (Quran, 33:35). It is one of the highest human qualities in a man or a woman that they always speak the truth. They never let a word against truth come from their tongue. Such integrity is truly befitting of a dignified human being.

In this context, many hadiths stress the importance of truth. For instance, the Prophet of Islam said: “You must speak the truth, for truth leads to righteousness, and beware of lying, for lying leads to wickedness.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2607)

This hadith not only commands speaking the truth but also highlights the wisdom behind it. When a person consistently makes an effort to speak the truth, it begins to shape their character. Truthfulness influences their temperament and way of thinking, gradually instilling a mindset grounded in honesty. It nurtures a spirit that is free from psychological complications and inner conflicts. Over time, the habit of truthfulness transforms a person

into someone who is sincere, clear-minded, and genuinely upright in all aspects of life.

In contrast, a person who lies consistently develops an impure inner character. A pure soul cannot thrive within them, and they become more entangled in wrongdoings. That is why it is mentioned in a hadith: “The most beloved speech to me is that which is truthful.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3131)

Similarly, the Prophet of Islam said: “The truthful and trustworthy merchant will be with the prophets on the Day of Judgment.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 1209)

FULFILLMENT OF RIGHTS

After the migration of the Prophet of Islam from Makkah to Madinah (*Hijrah*), he established a bond of brotherhood between Salman and Abu al-Darda. This brotherhood among the Sahabah was a system set up between the *Muhajirun* (emigrants) and the *Ansar* (helpers) to address the economic hardship faced by the emigrants. When Salman and Abu al-Darda began living together, Salman noticed that Abu al-Darda fasted every day and spent most of his nights in prayer, leaving little time for his other responsibilities.

Salman advised Abu al-Darda against this. He told him that, alongside the rights of God, human beings also have rights over him, and that he must fulfill the rights of everyone who is entitled to them. When the Prophet of Islam heard about

this, he praised Salman, saying, “Salman has spoken rightly.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1968) In another narration, he said, “Salman is a man of deeper understanding.” (*Ilal al-Daraqutni*, Volume 8, Page 128) It is also reported: “Salman has been granted a share of knowledge.” (*Hilyat al-Awliya* by al-Asfahani, Volume 1, Page 188)

In Islam, the matter of giving rightful people their due is so serious that a hadith states: “If you do not give someone their rightful due in this world, you will be required to return it on the Day of Judgment.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2582) That is, in this world of trial, anyone who fails to fulfill the rights of others will, on the Day of Judgment, be compelled to repay what is due in the most serious manner.

The concept of fulfilling rights is not limited to a single area; it extends to all aspects of life. For example, the right of one’s home is to fulfill responsibilities toward one’s spouse and children; the right of one’s neighbour is not to cause them any harm; the right of the road is to avoid actions that inconvenience other travellers; the right of society is to treat others with kindness and goodwill; the right of the community is to take responsibility for its welfare and progress and never neglect it.

Fulfilling rights is a comprehensive principle, one that applies to all areas of life.

NO TO ANGER

The Quran describes the believers as those who, when they experience anger, forgive (42:37).

This means that when a believer faces behaviour from another person that triggers anger, they do not respond with anger. Instead, they respond with forgiveness. Rather than reacting, they choose the path of patience, forgiveness, or avoidance, addressing the situation calmly and nipping it in the bud. Instead of engaging with the other party, they focus on themselves.

“Once, a man came to the Messenger of God and said, ‘Messenger of God, teach me some words by which I can live. Do not make them too much for me, lest I forget.’ The Messenger of God said, ‘Do not be angry.’” (*Muwatta of Malik*, Hadith No. 1891).

Anger never arises in a vacuum. It always occurs when someone says or does something that provokes —when someone behaves badly toward you, or when you are hurt in a way that challenges your ego. Anger is a reaction, and it always comes when you face an unpleasant experience caused by someone else.

In such moments, one option is to react by doing to the other person what they have done to you. But this is not the teaching of Islam. Islam teaches that even when someone provokes you, you should not become angry. Even when someone tries to incite you, you should protect yourself from being provoked.

A believer is certain that if they endure the harm caused by others with patience, God will grant them a far better reward. This certainty creates within them a deep and unwavering calm that no hostile remark can disturb. Guided by the spirit of faith, they turn anger into forgiveness. They treat provocation as something to be ignored. And when faced with words that might provoke the ego, they respond instead by drawing nourishment from humility and human compassion.

TRUSTEESHIP AND PROMISES

In the Quran, one of the defining qualities of the people of truth is that they are careful about fulfilling their trusts and promises. As stated in the Quran: “Those who are faithful to their trusts and their promises” (Quran, 23:8). Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani (1887–1949), a prominent Muslim scholar of the Indian subcontinent, offers a clear explanation of this verse in his commentary on the Quran. He writes: “They safeguard their trusts and commitments. They do not engage in betrayal or breach of promise—neither in matters relating to God nor in their dealings with people.” (p. 443)

Everything a person possesses is, in essence, a trust—either a trust given by God or by others. Similarly, every person is bound by agreements and commitments. Some of these agreements are explicitly stated, while others are implicitly

understood and become binding without being spoken. A person must fulfill all these agreements. Failure to do so means failing to meet the standard of human integrity and proving oneself guilty before God.

A person's body, heart, and mind are all trusts from God. It is essential for a person to use these faculties only within the limits God has set. Their hands and feet should act in ways that promote justice, not oppression. Their mind should be used for thinking well of others, not wishing harm. Similarly, any trusts—whether written or not—that are placed in a person's care must be fulfilled. They should never treat someone else's possessions as their own.

Every individual is bound by two types of agreements: one related to God and the other to His creation. The first is a natural agreement with God, in which every human being is inherently included. The second is a faith-related agreement, which binds those who believe in God. Additionally, there are agreements related to fellow human beings. Some of these are written contracts, while others arise naturally due to one's membership in a family, society, or nation. Fulfilling all these agreements and responsibilities is both a natural duty and a religious obligation.

PURITY AND CLEANLINESS

Cleanliness and purity are highly valued in Islam. The Quran states: "God loves those who turn to Him in penitence, and He loves those who keep themselves clean." (2:222)

Repentance occurs when a person feels remorse after a mistake and returns to a path of truth. This act of repentance purifies the person's inner being. Similarly, water serves as a means of cleaning external dirt. Through repentance, a person cleanses their soul, and with water, they cleanse their body. Both of these practices are greatly emphasized in Islam.

A well-known saying from the Prophet of Islam goes: "Purity is half of faith." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 3519) Similarly, the Prophet of Islam said: "God is pure and He loves purity." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2799) In Ibn Majah's Book of Purification, there is an entire chapter titled "The Chapter on the Reward of Purity" (*Bab thawab al-tahur*).

Humans, as beings, are naturally inclined toward cleanliness. This instinct for cleanliness is a part of their nature. Because Islam aligns with human nature, it stresses the importance of always remaining clean—whether it's one's body, clothing, home, or possessions.

Due to the great importance given to cleanliness and hygiene, it was common among the Companions of the Prophet to bathe daily—even though water was scarce in Arabia. Most books of Hadith contain a separate chapter dedicated to purity and cleanliness. In *Muwatta* of Malik (Book of Purification), it is narrated from the son of Abdullah ibn Umar that his father would bathe before every ablution. In this way, he would bathe five times a day.

Maintaining cleanliness in both the body and soul is an essential principle in Islam.

FULFILLING OTHERS' RIGHTS

There is a narration in which God says: “On the Day of Judgment, I will be the claimant against three people. One of them will be the person who hired someone for work, benefited from the work, but did not pay him his wages.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2227)

Ibn Majah reports from Abdullah ibn Umar that the Prophet of Islam said: “Pay the worker his wages before his sweat dries.” (*Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 2443).

In this world, it often happens that one person hires another for work. In every such case, Islam commands that full wages be paid—and that they be paid immediately upon completion of the work. To tell a worker, after the task is done, “Come back tomorrow for your payment” is an extremely inhumane act. Islam strictly forbids such a degrading practice.

If the one hiring someone needs the work to be completed, then the one doing the work needs to receive timely compensation for their effort. This is a mutual obligation. Once the worker has completed the task, it becomes incumbent upon the employer to ensure that the agreed-upon payment is made without delay and without giving any cause for complaint.

Where no fixed wage has been agreed upon, Islam still requires that the person be compensated in some meaningful way. If material compensation is not possible, then they should at least be thanked sincerely. Their effort should be

acknowledged with an open heart, their work appreciated in front of others with kind words, and good prayers made for them to God.

Paying workers promptly builds mutual trust within society. But when this principle is ignored, it leads to widespread mistrust and suspicion across the community.

MAKING THINGS EASY

There is an incident from the Prophet of Islam's life during his time in Madinah. One day, while he was sitting in the mosque with some of his companions, a Bedouin entered and began urinating inside the mosque. The people rushed to stop him, but the Prophet of Islam instructed them to leave him alone. Once he had finished, the Prophet said, "Bring a bucket of water and pour it over the area to clean it." Explaining his reasoning, the Prophet said: "You have been sent to make things easier, not to make them difficult" (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6128).

From this, we learn an important principle of Islam: In social life, when an unpleasant event occurs, the focus of the believers should be on solving the problem, not on punishing the person who caused it. In such situations, the spirit of reform should be encouraged, not the desire for revenge. The approach taken should aim to minimize the problem, not to worsen it. Just as, when there is a fire, nature demands that it be extinguished immediately, rather than trying to make it bigger.

In every conflict, there are two possible approaches: one that brings ease and another that brings hardship. By choosing one approach, the problem is reduced, and by choosing the other, the problem becomes more intense. The first approach is *taiseer* (ease), and the second is *taaseer* (hardship). Islam always prefers the path of *taiseer*. The path of *taaseer* is never favoured in Islam.

This is a fundamental principle of Islam. It applies to both personal and collective life. It must be upheld in matters inside the home as well as outside. It is a comprehensive principle and a complete way of life.

EVEN WITH A CRIMINAL

It is narrated from Abu Hurairah that a man was brought before the Messenger of God for committing a punishable offense. The legal process was carried out, and it was decided that he would be punished. During this time, one of the people present remarked about the man, "May God disgrace you." The Prophet replied, "Do not say that, and do not assist Satan against your brother." (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 6128)

In Islam, punishment is not administered out of hatred, but solely for the purpose of fulfilling the limits set by God. If the one delivering the punishment develops a sense of superiority over the offender, that too is considered a moral failing. The right to punish belongs only to the person who

can rise above emotions of hatred and carry out justice with fairness and humility.

After the prescribed punishment has been carried out, insulting or cursing the criminal adds human punishment to divine punishment, and this is a right no one has. The Prophet's statement above shows that even when imposing the prescribed punishment, he still had great compassion for the criminal. He did not want the criminal to be affected by the insults of others, which could lead him away from repentance and reform, and instead cause him to turn toward arrogance and rebellion.

This makes it clear who are those individuals who are granted permission by God to stand as overseers over others and to implement the punishments ordained by Him. They are the ones whose love for humanity is so profound that it extends even to wrongdoers. Even in the face of wrongdoing, they do not develop hatred toward the individual. They remain interested in the well-being of every human being—even the offender—out of a spirit of sincere goodwill.

TWO PATHS, TWO OUTCOMES

Once, a Bedouin came to Madinah. He entered the Prophet's mosque, where the Prophet of Islam was present along with his companions. Standing inside the mosque, he began urinating. People wanted to stop him, but the Prophet forbade them. He said, "Leave him alone, and pour a bucket

of water over that spot. For you have been sent to make things easy, not difficult.” The people did so accordingly. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 220, *Sunan al-Nasai*, Hadith No. 56, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 147, and *Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 380)

The Bedouin, upon realizing the mistake he had made, was deeply moved by the Prophet’s gentle behavior. When he returned to his tribe, he narrated the entire incident to them. He said, “I urinated in the place of worship, but by God, Muhammad came to me—and by God, he neither cursed me, nor scolded me, nor struck me.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 10533) Hearing this, his people were deeply moved and became his followers.

Consider a real event that took place in India during the festival of Holi. A group of Hindu youngsters was joyfully walking down a road, celebrating the festival with traditional colours and enthusiasm. On their path stood a mosque. In a moment of excitement, one of the youngsters playfully sprayed coloured water, some of which unintentionally splashed onto the mosque’s outer wall.

Seeing the colour on the mosque’s wall, the local Muslims became enraged. They began fighting with the Hindu youngsters. News of the incident spread quickly throughout the city, and riots erupted. The Muslims could not tolerate the colour on the wall, and as a result, the streets of the city were stained with their blood, and their houses and shops were set on fire.

Why is there such a difference between these two incidents? The reason is that the Prophet of Islam followed the divine religion, whereas present-day Muslims follow a communal religion. Those who follow the divine religion receive the assistance of angels. For them, the closed doors of hearts are opened. On the other hand, those who follow the communal religion have only their ego as their companion. Their actions fuel the fires of stubbornness and pride. They give others the “gift” of hatred, and in return, others give them the “gift” of hatred and revenge.

CULTURE OF WELL-WISHING

Islamic culture is, at its core, a culture of well-wishing. However, in the modern era, under the influence of certain so-called Islamist ideologues, some Muslims have wrongly associated Islam with a “gun culture.” This is undoubtedly a serious deviation. God intended for Muslims to be a source of mercy in the world, but instead, some have become a source of harm. No matter how often such actions are carried out in the name of Islam, they are false and completely contrary to the divine purpose.

What is this world? It is a place of selection for the righteous. Before the Day of Judgment, people are tested and chosen, and after the Day of Judgment, those found worthy will be settled in eternal abodes of peace. This truth is clearly outlined in the Quran for those who reflect sincerely.

The Quran teaches that the heavens and the earth were created so that people of understanding may observe and recognize the signs of God (3:190-191). Human beings were placed in trials to see who is fit for the refined environment of Paradise (67:2). The Prophets were sent to show the path that leads to this eternal destination (14:4).

The vast universe, overflowing with beauty, order, and meaning, invites humans to sense the boundless majesty of God—to tremble in awe of His greatness. The colours, fragrances, and comforts of the world reflect God's grace, drawing the soul to become a seeker of His mercy. God's signs were established so that, by recognizing them, people may grow in humility and God-consciousness (*taqwa*). The culture that grows from this mindset is a culture of well-wishing—not a culture of the gun.

A PRAYER

This world is one of constant change. It is not possible for conditions to remain the same. According to the laws of nature and the system of creation, circumstances frequently change. One often faces loss. This loss may come in the form of fear, hunger, or a decrease in wealth, life, or well-being, as mentioned in the Quran (2:155).

In such situations, some people begin to wail and lament. They fall into a mindset of complaint and protest, eventually becoming overwhelmed by despair. But this is not the way of

true human beings. This is the path of those who have strayed from the right course. At such moments, there is only one right and truthful approach for a person—to entrust the entire matter to the Lord of the universe. They should treat the hardship as a test of patience, not of impatience, as a temporary phase, not a permanent condition.

Those who possess a godly character and have found the path of truth, when faced with a calamity, naturally say: “We belong to God, and to Him we shall return.” They pray, “O God, reward us in our hardship, and bring forth what is best for us after it.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 918)

Anyone who says these words in the face of personal or communal hardship will quickly find renewed strength. After the shock, they will rise again. After experiencing despair, they will soon find hope again.

Such individuals, by letting go of the past, are able to move forward and find new opportunities. Even in times of deprivation, they discover new sources of strength and success. Where it may seem like the story ends, they find a new chapter through which they can begin again.

EARNINGS FROM HARD WORK

The Quran says that God said to His Messengers: “Messengers, eat what is wholesome.” (23:51) Pure sustenance leads to a pure soul. This is why Islam places great emphasis on earning and consuming lawful and pure provisions.

According to a narration, the Prophet of Islam said: “No one has ever eaten food better than that which he earned through the work of his own hands.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2072).

Similarly, in another narration from Musnad Ahmad, it is reported that someone asked the Prophet: “O Messenger of God, what is the purest form of earning?” He replied: “The work a person does with his own hands.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 17265).

Earnings from hard work are the true earnings. Anything obtained without effort is simply loot. What a person acquires through his own effort is his legitimate right. What is gained through wrong methods is actually someone else’s share, which a person has taken illegitimately without any right.

The word “hands” used in these narrations is symbolic. It refers to both physical and mental effort. In social activities, both types of effort are necessary, and both are legitimate forms of work. Whether a person earns through physical labour or intellectual effort, both types are applicable to these narrations. However, the work must genuinely involve effort.

Earning through hard work helps develop a pure and virtuous character in a person and creates a righteous environment in society. In this way, hard-earned income improves both individual and collective life.

In a society where people earn through their efforts, a just and fair environment will prevail. In contrast, in a society

where people seek to gain without working, a criminal and corrupt atmosphere will arise.

THE SOCIAL VALUE OF FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION

In the race of life, it often happens that some move ahead while others are left behind; some receive more wealth than necessary, while others get less. In such situations, Islam teaches that people should financially help one another. In accordance with human needs, they should be supportive of each other.

Several references in the Quran address this. For example, it says, “let the man of means spend in accordance with his means” (65:7), and “The righteous and virtuous are those who allocate a portion of their wealth for the petitioner and the deprived” (51:19).

This shows that the person favoured by God is one who, when granted financial abundance, spends from his wealth for the benefit of others. He does not consider his earnings to be only for those who ask out of necessity, but also acknowledges the right of those who are deprived for any reason—those who do not ask or are unable to ask. He takes it upon himself to identify such individuals and personally reaches out to support them.

There are numerous narrations in the books of Hadith encouraging the act of spending from one’s wealth for those

in need. For example, the Prophet of Islam mentioned that among those promised Paradise is the one who, when given wealth by God, spends it to help others (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 16966).

Spending one's earnings to meet the needs of others is among the highest human virtues, and Islam places strong emphasis on this value. Any wealth a person acquires is, in reality, a gift from God. Without the necessary means provided by Him, no one would be able to earn anything. Therefore, when someone is blessed with wealth, it becomes their responsibility to show gratitude to God by setting aside a portion of it and using it to support their fellow human beings.

HUMANITY IN GENERAL

According to Islamic teachings, all of humanity is God's family. There is a narration in Baihaqi where the Prophet of Islam said that all human beings are like God's family, and the most beloved person to God is the one who treats His family (the people) in the best way (*Musnad Al-Bazzar*, Hadith No. 6947). Altaf Husain Hali (1837-1914), a renowned Urdu poet and writer, beautifully conveys this concept in a verse:

*Yeh pehla sabaq tha kitab-e-huda ka
Ki hai sari makhluq kunba khuda ka*

This was the first lesson in the Book of Guidance
That all creatures are members of God's family.

In the *Sunan an-Nasai*, there is a report narrated by Zayd ibn Arqam, in which he says that when the Prophet of Islam would wake up in the last part of the night and finish the Tahajjud prayer, he would engage in remembrance and supplication. During this time, he would say the following words: “O God, I bear witness that all your servants are brothers to each other.” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 1508)

The command for the Tahajjud prayer was revealed in Makkah, so this practice began during the Makkah period. Hadiths tell us that after the Tahajjud prayer, the Prophet of Islam would recite various supplications. However, this specific supplication, in which the Prophet testifies to human brotherhood, particularly belongs to the Makkan period.

As is known, during this time, the people of Quresh were causing great harm to the Prophet and his Companions. Even so, in the solitude of the night, the Prophet would remember them with feelings of brotherhood.

This shows that the ideal human being that Islam envisions is one whose heart continues to overflow with feelings of brotherhood for others—even if people become his enemies, even if they seek to destroy him. Even in such a situation, he harbours no ill-will toward them. Instead, in his solitude, he calls upon God as his witness and declares his enduring goodwill.

Islam instills a spirit of compassion within a person. Whoever truly begins to practice Islam becomes gentle and merciful toward all human beings.

UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

The Quran teaches that God created all human beings from one and the same pair. All humans are actually descendants of the same set of primal parents and have spread out all over the earth (4:1). This means that all human beings, despite their external differences, are, in terms of birth, one. In other words, all of them are blood brothers and blood sisters.

This brotherhood is a universal brotherhood. And so, in one place, the Quran says, “The believers are but brothers” (49:10). On the other hand, non-Muslims are also termed as Muslims’ brothers. If believers are our brothers in religious terms, then non-Muslims, in biological terms, hold the status of brothers and sisters to all Muslims.

In the context of the prophets whose names are mentioned in the Quran, their people who had gone astray are referred to as their brothers. For example: “And to the Thamud We sent their brother Salih” (7:73); “To Midian We sent their brother Shu’ayb.” (7:85); “When their brother Noah said to them” (26:106); “Their brother Hud said to them” (26:124); “When their brother Lot said to them” (26:161). In such verses, the people addressed by the prophets are referred to as the brothers of those prophets.

In many Hadith teachings, people are encouraged to treat each other as brothers and sisters. This principle is stated both in general terms and with specific references to *momin* and *muslim*. However, the message is universal. The

difference lies in that for general human beings, it is a piece of advice, while for believers, it is seen as a responsibility and command.

According to Islam, all of God's servants are brothers to one another. The entire human race is regarded as one extended family. Just as two brothers within a home share a bond of brotherhood, a similar spirit of brotherhood is expected among all human beings on a broader level. When the hadith says "a Muslim is the brother of another Muslim (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2442), it should not be interpreted in a narrow, group-based sense, but in a universal, principled way. It means that true human beings always live together like brothers.

A UNIVERSAL ETHIC OF COMPASSION

A chapter in *Sahih al-Bukhari* titled "Bab Rahmat al-Nas wa al-Bahaim" translates to "The Chapter of Mercy Towards Human Beings and Animals." In its explanation, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, a classic Islamic scholar, wrote that it refers to the display of mercy from a person towards others. The mercy and compassion that Islam instills in an individual are far-reaching—they extend not only to fellow human beings but also to animals and plants. Such a compassionate believer becomes gentle and merciful not only toward fellow human beings but also toward animals and plants.

The Prophet of Islam said that a man was once walking along a path when he felt extremely thirsty. He came across a well and drew water from it to quench his thirst. As he came out, he saw a dog panting and in distress from thirst. The man thought to himself, “This dog is suffering from thirst just as I was.” So he went back to the well, filled his shoe with water, and gave it to the dog to drink. After this, he thanked God—and God forgave him. People asked, “O Messenger of God, is there a reward for us even in caring for animals?” He replied, “There is a reward for kindness shown to every living being.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2363)

This indicates that one should treat all living beings with kindness and mercy, and for every such act, God will reward them.

Similarly, trees hold significant importance in Islam. The Quran mentions that a person who believes in God is like a tree, benefiting others, just as a tree benefits those around it (14:24). The Prophet of Islam said: “When a Muslim plants a tree, and it grows, and a person or an animal eats from it, it is considered an act of charity for the one who planted it.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2320)

The first Caliph, Abu Bakr Siddiq, when sending an army in defence, instructed them: “Do not cut down any tree.” (*Tarikh Dimashq* by Ibn Asakir, Vol. 2, p. 50) This highlights the immense value Islam places on trees—so much so that even if a tree belongs to the enemy, it should not be harmed.

Islam presents a broader concept of humanity—one that extends beyond just humans, encompassing all of creation.

RESPECT FOR ALL

Jabir ibn Abdullah, a Companion of the Prophet of Islam, narrates that once, a funeral procession passed through a street in Madinah. Upon seeing it, the Prophet of Islam stood up, and we all stood up with him. Then, we said, “O Messenger of God, this is the funeral of a Jew.” The Prophet replied, “When you see a funeral, stand up” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1311).

In another narration, Sahal ibn Hunaif and Qays ibn Sa'd were sitting in Qadisiyyah when a funeral passed by them. Both stood up, and when they were told that this was the funeral of a non-Muslim, they replied, “When a funeral passed in front of the Prophet of Islam, he stood up. We asked, ‘O Messenger of God, this is the funeral of a Jew,’ and you replied, ‘Is he not a human being?’” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1312).

This highlights an important principle of Islam: that every person, in every circumstance, is worthy of respect, even if they are a non-Muslim or belong to an enemy group. Regardless of other aspects, they should be seen as human beings and treated with respect and honour at all times.

Human beings are a distinguished creation of God. In the words of the Quran, they were created in “the best of

stature.” In terms of their design, humans are the masterpiece of creation. Whether a person is a friend or a stranger, in every circumstance, they remain a creation of God. In every condition, they are a reflection of the Creator’s perfection. Therefore, despite any differences with a person, they are still worthy of respect. Even if someone is a stranger, their human essence makes them deserving of honour.

The believer sees God’s signs in everything. They perceive the Creator’s miraculous power in every creature. This belief compels the believer to treat every human being with dignity and respect. For every individual, there is a deep feeling of appreciation for their inherent value.

THE UNIVERSAL HUMAN BEING

The Quran is a universal book. All of its teachings are rooted in universality. The concept of God presented in the Quran is that of the Lord of all worlds (1:2). The Prophet mentioned in the Quran is described as a mercy for all mankind (21:107). The religion conveyed through the Quran is a cosmic and universal faith (3:83).

The message of the Quran is intended for all of humanity, not for any particular group. The Quran aims to revive universal human values.

In a hadith, the Prophet of Islam said: “You cannot truly believe until you are merciful.” The people responded, “O Messenger of God, each of us is merciful.” The Prophet

replied: “I do not mean being merciful only to your companions, but being merciful to all people—mercy for all of humanity.” (*Musnad Abi Ya’la*, Hadith No. 4258)

When a person comes to believe in God—the Lord of all the Worlds—their faith instills in them a universal mindset. They begin to feel a deep connection with nature, which itself reflects universality. They come to realize that they are part of a vast human fraternity, as all people are creations of the same God.

This universal mindset gives rise to a universal love. They begin to see all human beings as their own. A deep wellspring of compassion for humanity is awakened in their heart. They start to view others as part of themselves, and themselves as part of others.

A person formed through the teachings of Islam naturally develops a temperament of goodwill toward all human beings. They become someone who loves all people, and a deep urge to serve humanity arises within them. In every respect, they become a universal human being.

RESPECT FOR HUMANKIND

The Quran states: “We have honoured the children of Adam, and have borne them on the land and the sea, given them for sustenance things which are good and pure; and exalted them above many of Our creatures.” (17:70)

This means that by birth, man is deserving of respect and honour. This honour is inherent to every person, regardless of the social group they belong to.

According to a hadith, the Prophet of Islam said: “He is not one of us who does not show mercy to the young among us and does not show respect to the elders among us.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 1919)

In another hadith, the Prophet of Islam said: “Whoever believes in God and the Last Day should honour their neighbor, and whoever believes in God and the Last Day should honour their guest.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6019)

There are numerous such commandments in the Quran and Hadith that emphasise that a person who believes in God’s religion must respect human beings. The reason for this is that the real test of a person’s devotion to God is shown in their treatment of these very people. The expression of one’s connection with God in this world is reflected in how one connects with others. Those who love God naturally begin, in line with their inner feelings, to love God’s servants.

Respecting humanity is a fundamental teaching of Islam. Whether a person belongs to one’s own religion or another, from one’s own community or a different one, whether they are from one’s own country or another, or whether they belong to a friendly group or an enemy group, they are all deserving of respect. It is an Islamic teaching that despite differences of opinion, one should respect other human beings. Even if another person’s behaviour is oppositional, one must maintain a respectful attitude towards them while

overlooking their actions. According to Islamic teachings, every person is a human being, and every human being is worthy of respect.

SALAM: A COMMITMENT TO PEACE AND WELL-WISHING

Among the etiquettes for life taught by Islam, one is that when two people meet, they should greet each other with peace or *salam*. That is, one person says *Assalam Alaykum* (Peace be upon you!), and the other replies by saying *Walaykum Assalam* (And upon you be peace!).

These words are a form of prayer or supplication to God. When a person truly believes in God, this belief nurtures within them a genuine sense of goodwill toward others. This feeling expresses itself in many ways—one of the most evident being the practice of greeting others with words of peace, or *salam*. The best interpretation of *salam* is attributed to Sufyan ibn ‘Uyaynah (d. 198 AH), who said: “Do you know what the *salam* is? It means: ‘You are safe from me.’” (*Bir al-Walidain* by al-Bukhari, Hadith No. 45)

This interpretation of *salam* is very meaningful. It means: In every way, I am a well-wisher of yours. You have no threat from me. I will not create any problems for you. If we converse, I will never speak badly to you. If we have dealings, I will not cheat you or act dishonestly. Rather, I will fulfill your rights over me fully, with justice and honesty. If I

have a complaint against you, I will not stray from the path of Truth and become your enemy, seeking to harm you. If I have disagreements with you, I will keep them within the limits of legitimate critique. I will not extend them to fault-finding, blaming, or character assassination.

Assalam Alaykum is not merely a ritualistic phrase. It is, in fact, a commitment to living a principled life. By saying *Assalam Alaykum*, a person is, in essence, declaring how they will behave in daily life—with peace, security, and well-wishing toward others, rather than conflict or ill-wishing.

THE VALUE OF SERVING OTHERS

Among the noble human qualities highlighted in the Quran is one that is reflected in these words: “those who give a due share of their wealth, to those who ask [for help] and to the destitute.” (70:24-25).

It is human nature to be of service to others and to help those in need. Islam fosters this instinct to its highest degree. A person who lives with faith and devotion to God begins to realize that their wealth and possessions are not solely theirs. Others, too, have a right to them. They assist not only those who directly ask for help but also those who are in need, even if they do not ask for assistance for various reasons.

Malik bin Anas, the renowned Muslim scholar, explains the term “the deprived” in the Quranic verse as referring to those who are deprived of sustenance (*rizq*).

Once, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz saw an animal that was hungry, with no apparent means of getting food. He said that this animal, too, was one of those referred to as “the deprived” in the Quran (*Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, Vol. 17, p. 39). The famous Quranic commentator Al-Razi further expands on this idea, explaining that “the deprived” also includes trees. If a tree is drying up due to lack of water, it too is considered “deprived,” and it becomes the responsibility of believers to provide it with water.

When faith in God takes root in a person’s heart, it creates a deep attachment to the Creator, which in turn awakens a profound sense of service to His creation. Such a person does not see fulfilling the needs of others as a mere responsibility—they begin to feel that every deprived being has a rightful claim upon them, whether it be a human, an animal, or even a tree.

Islam instills in a person a deep sense of seriousness and sensitivity toward all of creation. Such a person starts to view all people as part of their own extended family. They come to recognize that their wealth is a gift from God, and this awareness compels them to spend it generously in God’s cause, in service to His creation.

MERCY AND SWORD

In the Quran, the Prophet of Islam is referred to as a mercy to the worlds (21:107). A hadith also mentions that

the Prophet said, “I am Muhammad... and the Prophet of Compassion.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2355)

On the one hand, there are clear statements regarding the Prophet’s status. On the other hand, there is a hadith in which the Prophet is reported to have said, “My provision has been placed under the shade of my spear.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2913) In another narration, he said: “I have been sent with the sword, just before the Hour.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 5115)

At first glance, these two statements may seem contradictory, but there is no conflict between them. They actually reflect two different aspects: one speaks of mercy, and the other of the sword.

The reality is that the Prophet of Islam was not the only prophet of mercy. All of God’s prophets were messengers of mercy, and each brought the message of mercy. For example, in the Quran, the book of Prophet Musa (Moses) is described as a mercy (11:17). However, the key difference lies in the fact that earlier prophets were unable to establish a strong and supportive community that could uphold and defend their teachings for future generations. As a result, their missions were obstructed by opposition and failed to advance. When those prophets passed away, their movements faded with them.

In the time of earlier prophets, God’s religion remained limited to an intellectual call. It never developed into a broad-based ideological revolution capable of transforming society or overturning the stagnant and traditional order of history.

In contrast, the Prophet of Islam, with God's help, was granted a powerful group of supporters. When his opponents tried to suppress his peaceful teaching with aggression, the Prophet, with the assistance of his companions, was in a position to effectively respond to their attacks and thwart their malicious plans.

The references to the spear and the sword in these hadiths are meant to highlight the defensive power available to the Prophet, not to describe his true prophetic role.

THE COMMAND TO FIGHT

“And fight in God's cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression—for surely, God does not love aggressors. (Quran, 2:190). The meaning of “transgress” (*i'tida*) is to exceed or go beyond. In this context, it refers to aggression. Al-Raghib al-Asfahani explains this as the beginning of aggression, meaning an unprovoked attack (*Al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Quran*, p. 327).

A hadith mentions that the Prophet of Islam said: “O people, do not wish for a confrontation with the enemy, and ask God for peace.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2966)

This indicates that Islam is fundamentally a religion of peace. Peace is the general rule in Islam, and war is only permitted as an exception. This exception applies in situations where others initiate aggression. In such cases, war may be fought in defense. However, Islam does not allow initiating war.

This defense, however, is conditional. From studying the practices of the Prophet, it becomes clear that, even when the opposing side creates conditions for war, the initial effort is always to prevent the conflict from escalating into war. But if all attempts to avoid war fail and the opposing side initiates the war, then, as a last resort, war is permitted in defense.

Islam is not a religion of political conquest or domination—it seeks to embed its teachings in human hearts. At its core, Islam is a path of intellectual and spiritual growth. Such a mission inherently values peace, for war disrupts the very environment essential for intellectual and moral development. Peace creates the conditions necessary for an atmosphere of *tazkiyah* (purification of the soul), while war obstructs it.

INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES

During the final years of the Prophet of Islam, two individuals in Arabia falsely claimed prophethood. One was Musaylimah ibn Habib from Yamamah, and the other was Aswad ibn Khaff from Sana'a. In the 10th year of the Hijra, Musaylimah sent a letter to the Prophet of Islam. The contents of the letter were as follows:

“From the Messenger of God, Musaylimah, to the Messenger of God Muhammad. Peace be upon you. To proceed, I have been made a partner with you in the matter

of prophethood. Therefore, half the land is for us and half the land is for the Quraysh.”

Musaylimah sent two messengers to deliver the letter to Madinah. Their names were Ibn al-Nawaha and Ibn Usal. The narration continues:

“I heard the Prophet of Islam say when the messengers of the liar Musaylimah arrived with his letter: ‘Do you both say what he says?’ They replied, ‘Yes.’ The Prophet said, ‘By God, if it were not for the fact that messengers should not be killed, I would have had both of you executed.’” The narrator, Abdullah ibn Mas’ud, says: “Thus, the Sunnah was established that messengers should not be killed.”
(*Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, Vol. 5, pp. 51-52)

This prophetic tradition reveals an important principle of Islam. It suggests that in international matters, international customs will be followed. Every era has its own norms for international relations, and in the current era, the United Nations has organized these practices.

All such customs will be regarded with the same respect in Muslim countries as they are in non-Muslim countries. However, if any aspect of these practices clearly involves something prohibited, then that particular part will not be followed. For example, if alcohol is included in hospitality arrangements at international meetings, a Muslim has the right to refrain from participating in that aspect.

THE ROLE OF PATIENCE IN RESOLVING CONFLICT

Abu Hurayrah reports that once, a man insulted Abu Bakr, and he remained silent. At that time, the Prophet of Islam was sitting nearby. He appeared surprised and smiled. When the man intensified his insults, Abu Bakr responded to some of his words. At that moment, the Prophet of Islam became upset, stood up, and left.

Abu Bakr followed him and said, “O Messenger of God, the man was insulting me while you were sitting there and smiling. But when I responded to him, you became displeased and left.” The Prophet of Islam replied: “When you remained silent, an angel was replying on your behalf. But when you spoke, the angel departed, and Satan took his place.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 9624)

If a person insults you, and you respond with an insult in return, the situation escalates. The person who initially said one harsh word will begin using abusive language and may eventually try to harm you physically, even resorting to throwing stones. However, your silence will stop the situation at the early stage, while your response will escalate it to a destructive level.

Instead, if you remain silent when someone insults or abuses you, and do not react to their provoking words, you will see that their tone gradually softens. The “air” from their “balloon” will begin to escape, and over time, they will become silent on their own. Responding with

anger encourages them to speak more, but your silence will eventually force them to remain silent as well.

Why is there a difference between these two scenarios? The reason is that when evil is met with evil, a psychological reaction is triggered in the wrongdoer. Satan finds an opportunity to stir their ego. By inflaming their anger, Satan leads them toward the final destructive level. The evil that was dormant inside them is awakened and stands against you.

In contrast, when you respond by simply distancing yourself from the evil, a self-reflective psychology is triggered in the other person. An Angel now has an opportunity to awaken their innate goodness, activate their conscience, instill a sense of shame, and encourage them to reform.

In the first scenario, the person falls under the influence of Satan, whereas in the second, they are influenced by an Angel. In the first case, the desire for revenge emerges as the other person is labeled a wrongdoer, while in the second case, they reflect on themselves and develop a desire for self-reform.

Every person has two hidden powers within them: one is favourable to you, represented by their conscience, and the other is against you, represented by their ego. It is up to you which power you awaken. Through your words and actions, the power you choose to awaken will shape the outcome.

If you awaken the ego, the other person becomes your enemy. However, if you awaken the conscience, the person will undergo an inner transformation and become favourable to you.

In the earlier incident, the Prophet of Islam did not get angry with the person who insulted Abu Bakr. But when Abu Bakr spoke harshly, the Prophet became angry. The Shariah establishes the principle of avoidance for animals (like donkeys), and for humans, the principle of enjoining what is good.

Generally, people consider responding to be self-defense. If someone causes harm, they immediately confront the person, thinking they are defending themselves. However, a greater defense is remaining silent in response to aggression. Instead of confronting the aggressor, you adopt the principle of avoidance.

Silence is not inactivity; in fact, it is the greatest action. When a person engages in retaliation, they rely only on their own strength. But when they remain silent after being wronged, they align themselves with the entire system of Nature to respond. Personal defense is a weak defense, while the defense of Nature is much stronger.

God has established a system in His world where, whenever something impure appears, countless bacteria gather and begin to decompose the substance to eliminate it. Similarly, when a person wrongs another, the entire system of Nature is activated to bring about their reform.

In this sense, silence is a form of waiting. When a person remains silent in the face of aggression, they are, in effect, putting themselves in a state of waiting. By giving the global conscience a chance to work, they wait for its outcome.

Therefore, a person should not act independently and disrupt the process of Nature. Instead, they should adopt a policy of waiting and co-operate with the process taking place in Nature.

SHIFTING FROM TAKERS TO GIVERS

The Quran says: “Many a small group, by God’s command, has prevailed against a large group.” (2:249). This is a principle for the world. It means that honour and success are not reserved only for those with more resources or greater numbers. Even a smaller group, with fewer resources, can achieve success and recognition, as long as it acts in accordance with this principle.

So, what is this principle or law? According to the Quran, it is that whatever benefits others remains stable on Earth: whatever is of use to man remains behind.” (13:17) This is echoed in saying of the Prophet: “The upper hand is better than the lower hand” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No.1427), meaning that the hand that gives is better than the hand that takes.

In simple terms, society is made up of two types of groups: giver groups and taker groups. It is a universal truth that a taker group will eventually find itself in a position of weakness and subjugation by others, while a giver group will attain a position of respect and leadership.

Many movements led by contemporary Muslim leaders, aimed at revitalizing the Muslim community, have not fully embraced this understanding. These leaders have failed to recognize that the key to success lies in fostering a creative and proactive group, rather than a separatist one. Instead, they have sought to elevate Muslims as a distinct and separate group. In India, for instance, before 1947, this separation was evident in the form of geographical partition, and after 1947, it has continued under the guise of protecting Muslim identity.

The path to progress lies not in separation but in inclusiveness. The focus should be on becoming a creative group, not a stagnant one. Distinction should not be based on external symbols, but on meaningful contributions. The goal should be to stand firm on the foundation of benefiting others, rather than merely seeking rights.

DUA AS ACTION: A LESSON IN POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Ibn Ishaq, one of the earliest Muslim historians and hagiographers, narrates that during the time the Prophet was in Makkah, a man from the Daws tribe named Tufayl ibn Amr ad-Dawsi came to meet him. He listened to the Quran and accepted its message, becoming one of the Prophet's followers. With the Prophet's permission, he

then returned to his tribe to convey the message of the One God. However, his people refused to accept it.

Tufayl ibn Amr later returned to the Prophet and said, “The people of my tribe are rejecting the truth.” He asked the Prophet to invoke a curse upon them. But instead of cursing, the Prophet raised his hands and made a heartfelt supplication, saying: “O God, show the tribe of Daws Your way. O God, enlighten the tribe of Daws with Your way.” He then advised Tufayl to go back to his people and continue his efforts—but this time with kindness and gentleness. (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 1, p. 382–384)

This supplication and advice were not ordinary responses. In truth, the Prophet was helping Tufayl ibn Amr shift from a negative mindset to a positive one. Where Tufayl had developed frustration and hopelessness, the Prophet instilled goodwill and hope. He helped him move beyond present disappointment and instead focus on future possibilities.

Supplication is, on the surface, a request to God—but at a deeper level, it serves as a way to refine one’s inner self. It strengthens the soul and nurtures spiritual resilience. Tufayl returned to his people with this renewed mindset, and it was as though he had become a new person. With this transformed approach, he was now able to present the message of truth far more effectively. As a result, the entire tribe eventually embraced Islam.

In any society, when people genuinely care for one another to the extent that they pray for each other’s guidance

and well-being, the atmosphere becomes infused with positive energy. And, without a doubt, this spirit of positive psychology is one of the most essential foundations for building a better society.

CHAPTER THREE

CULTURE OF COMPASSION

Religion of Peace and Love

CULTURE OF COMPASSION

Islamic culture is a culture of mercy. In Islam, the aspect of mercy is so deeply emphasized that it entirely shapes the lives of those who fully adopt the principles of Islam.

Islam teaches that when one person meets another, they should say: *As-salamu alaykum wa rahmatullah* (Peace and mercy of God be upon you). When a person sneezes, they should say: *Alhamdulillah* (Praise be to God), and the one who hears it should respond: *Yarhamuk Allah* (May God have mercy on you). When entering the mosque for prayer, one should say: *Allahumma iftah li abwaba rahmatik* (O God, open for me the doors of Your mercy). Similarly, when worshippers complete their prayer, they turn their faces to the right and then to the left and say: *As-salamu alaykum wa rahmatullah* (Peace and mercy of God be upon you all).

In this way, words of peace and mercy are spoken on every occasion and at every stage. Thinking with mercy and speaking with mercy become distinguishing qualities of people of faith. Their entire lives become shaped by the values of mercy and affection.

Many sayings of the Prophet of Islam begin with expressions such as:

- “May God show compassion to a person...”
(*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 430)
- “May God be compassionate toward a man...”
(*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2076)

- “May divine mercy embrace you.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 1057)
- “May God have compassion on a woman...” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 1308)
- “May God have compassion on the women of the emigrants.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 4758)
- “May God’s mercy envelop you.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6226)

And many others.

From this, one can understand the kind of temperament Islam aims to cultivate in its followers. It is a temperament of mercy and compassion. Islam requires that on every occasion, a person should feel sentiments of mercy for others. On every occasion, a person should offer the gift of mercy and affection to others. Even when expressing disagreement, the words that come from a believer’s mouth are such as: May God have mercy on you—why did you say that?

God is merciful, and He wants His servants to live in this world with the same merciful spirit.

UNIVERSALITY, NOT NARROWNESS

In the Quran, God is described as the “Lord of the Worlds” (1:2)—not the “Lord of a specific people.” This means that Islam promotes universality, not limitation. In the Quran,

the Prophet of Islam is described as a “Mercy to all the worlds” (21:107)—not as a source of hardship. This shows that Islam is a religion of love, not a religion of hatred. In the Quran, it is stated: “Reconciliation is best” (4:128); it does not say “War is best” (*al-harb khayr*). This means Islam aims to create an atmosphere of peace, not one of conflict or confrontation.

In the Quran, the command is to “Read” (96:1)—not to “Shoot.” This means that Islam promotes a culture of knowledge, not a culture of guns. The Quran emphasizes patience (39:10); it does not teach impatience. This means Islam encourages people to respond to harm with self-restraint, not with retaliation or aggression. The Quran praises high moral character (68:4), not equal retaliation in behaviour. This means that, according to Islam, the right approach is to overlook how others treat you and respond with superior character.

These few examples help us understand what Islam truly is—and what Islamic culture actually means. Islam is the manifestation of God’s lordship over all creation. It is a religion for the entire universe. Islam represents a broader vision of humanity. Therefore, only that interpretation of Islam is valid which aligns with these universal principles. Any interpretation that contradicts these noble ideals is not a correct understanding of Islam.

True Islam is that which instills the fear of God in people. It turns people’s minds toward the Hereafter instead of worldly obsession. It awakens love for humanity in

people's hearts. It teaches goodwill toward all—without distinguishing between one's own group and others. The result is that a person becomes more conscious of their responsibilities than their rights.

When Islam enters a person's heart, it turns them into an embodiment of compassion and peace. Islam and hatred or hostility cannot coexist.

THE TRUE NATURE OF ISLAM

The literal meaning of *jihad* is “struggle” or “effort.” In Islam, it refers to purposeful striving—not dying in combat. Islam gives a person a constructive mission, and fulfilling this mission requires the meaningful use of one's God-given abilities—not engaging in futile violence or sacrificing one's life without benefit.

In Makkah, the Prophet of Islam did not die fighting his enemies. Instead, he migrated from Makkah to Madinah so that he could continue his divine mission without obstruction.

Nowhere in the Quran is it stated, in absolute terms, that one must die fighting for God. On the contrary, the Quran says: “Be patient for the sake of your Lord” (92:7). The Prophet of Islam is referred to in the Quran as a “Mercy to all the worlds” (21:107). Nowhere is he described as the “Sword of God over mankind.”

The Quran declares: “Reconciliation is best” (4:128), but it contains no verse saying, “War is best.” The Quran says:

“Indeed, those who are patient will be given their reward without measure” (39:10), but nowhere does it say: “Indeed, the fighters will be rewarded without measure.”

A hadith (saying of the Prophet) states: “Do not wish to encounter the enemy in battle; rather, ask God for well-being.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2966) There is no narration where the Prophet said: “You must desire to confront the enemy and pray to God for war.”

During the campaign of Makkah, when a Muslim remarked, “Today is a day of fierce fighting,” the Prophet responded: “No, today is a day of compassion.” (*Tarikh Dimashq* by Ibn Asakir, Volume 23, p. 454)

The reality is that Islamic culture is a culture of mercy—it is not a culture of violence. Islam seeks to establish moderate and peaceful relations among people under all circumstances, even if that requires making peace on seemingly one-sided terms, as was done during the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah.

The duty of believers is neither to behead others nor to get beheaded. The duty of believers is to live in the world as humble servants of God. They are to respond to bad treatment with good behaviour. Through high moral character, they open the doors of truth and understanding in people’s hearts. They strive to become spiritually enlightened individuals themselves and dedicate all their energy to helping others become the same.

THE METHOD OF THE PROPHET

In the fifth year after migration, the Prophet of Islam was on a journey with his companions, including both the Emigrants (*Muhajirun*) and the Helpers (*Ansar*). On the return journey, the Prophet camped near the spring of Muraysi'. There, a dispute arose between two men over water—one from the Emigrants and the other from the Helpers. The man from the Ansar called out, "O group of the Ansar!" and the man from the *Muhajirun* called out, "O group of the *Muhajirun*!"

This was an attempt to turn a personal disagreement between two individuals into a group-based, communal conflict. Such a reaction is referred to as tribal prejudice from the Age of Ignorance (*asabiyyah jahiliyyah*)—a mindset that has no place in Islam.

Abdullah ibn Ubayy of Madinah, who already harboured resentment against the Emigrants, took advantage of the situation. He said, "Look at how bold these Emigrants have become. They came to our city from Makkah, and now they want to dominate us. It is like feeding your dog until it turns on you. By God, when we return to Madinah, the powerful among us will drive out the weak."

By stirring nationalist and tribal sentiment, Abdullah ibn Ubayy attempted to incite the people of Madinah against the people of Makkah.

At this, 'Umar said to the Prophet of Islam, "Give us permission to send someone to kill Abdullah ibn Ubayy." Then, Usayd ibn Hudayr came to the Prophet and said, "O

Messenger of God, deal with Abdullah ibn Ubayy gently. He used to be a leader in Madinah. Since your arrival, he has lost his position. He thinks you have taken away his authority.”

The Prophet was presented with two approaches: one of force and the other of patience and forgiveness. He rejected the path of violence and chose the path of forbearance. Without taking any action against Abdullah ibn Ubayy, the Prophet immediately ordered the departure from *Muraysi*’ and did not stop until they had returned to Madinah. (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 3, pp. 334–335)

PATIENCE AND TRUST IN GOD

“As for those who, after persecution, migrated from their homes for the cause of God, We will provide them with a goodly abode in this life: but truly the reward of the Hereafter will be greater, if they only knew it. They are the ones who are steadfast and put their trust in their Lord.” (Quran, 16:41–42)

This verse of the Quran highlights the deep connection between patience (*sabr*) and trust in God (*tawakkul*). Patience is a great moral and spiritual virtue. But only those can remain committed to the path of patience who have immense trust in God, the Lord of all worlds.

The believers mentioned in this verse were people who had suffered injustice at the hands of their opponents. However, they did not respond with anger or revenge. They did not

develop the urge to teach their oppressors a lesson or take vengeance. Instead, they quietly left the place where they were being wronged. Rather than confront people, they turned their attention toward God.

Their act of migration is referred to in the Quran as *sabr* (patience). It is then stated that these are the people who place their trust in God. The mention of trust in God (*tawakkul*) alongside patience is extremely significant. The truth is that no one can remain firm on the path of patience unless they possess the quality of reliance on God.

Someone who becomes aggressive in the face of adversity proves by their behaviour that they only believed in their own self. They had no awareness of the greater power of God. Had they truly understood God's authority and His promises, they would have chosen patience—because they would be confident that by being patient, they are bringing a greater force to stand against their oppressor. That force belongs to the Master of the universe, from whose grasp no one can escape.

GOOD CHARACTER

There is a narration in which the Prophet of Islam said: "I have been sent to perfect good character." (*Muwatta of Malik*, Hadith No. 1885)

It is reported that when the captured men and women of the Tayy tribe—those who had fought against Madinah or

supported its enemies—were brought before the Prophet, one woman stood up and said, “O Muhammad, if you think it appropriate, please release me and do not let the Arab tribes mock me. I am the daughter of my tribe’s chief. My father used to help the needy, free the oppressed, feed the hungry, and generously host others. He promoted peace and never turned away anyone in need.

After hearing this, the Prophet of Islam said, “Indeed, these are the qualities of true believers as well.” He then ordered the release of Hatim al-Tai’s daughter, as her father had cherished noble character. Hearing this, Abu Burdah stood up and asked, “O Messenger of God, does God love noble character?” The Prophet replied, “By the One in whose hand is my soul, only those who possess good character will enter Paradise.” (*Dala’il al-Nubuwwah* by al-Bayhaqi, Vol. 5, p. 341)

Why is good character so important for entering Paradise? The reason is that good character is what truly makes a person worthy of living in Paradise. Paradise is an exceptionally refined place where everything will exist in its most perfect form. Therefore, only those will be considered deserving of it who, during their worldly life, demonstrated noble thinking and elevated human conduct. Although Paradise belongs to the world after death, selection for it takes place in this world before death. According to a hadith, the standard for this selection is good character. Good character is the certificate for entry into Paradise—provided the person is a believer.

THE ISLAMIC APPROACH

One of the domestic issues mentioned in the Quran is *nushuz*. The literal meaning of *nushuz* includes “to rise up,” “misbehaviour,” or “aversion.” It can occur on the part of either the husband or the wife. If it arises from the wife, it refers to disobedience to the husband. If it arises from the husband, it means he is failing to fulfill his wife’s rights.

When *nushuz* occurs, the relationship between husband and wife begins to deteriorate. In such a situation, what should be done? The Quran provides guidance: the first step is that both should try to resolve the matter through direct communication and mutual understanding (4:128).

If the relationship cannot be repaired through mutual discussion, then in the second stage, each party should appoint one representative from their respective families. These individuals should act with sincerity and try to resolve the matter privately and internally (Quran, 4:35). If this second attempt also fails, then in the third stage, the matter should be referred to an external judicial authority (*qada*).

This teaching directly addresses disputes between spouses, but it also reflects the broader spirit of Islamic law. It illustrates the appropriate approach to take when a conflict arises between two individuals or two groups.

The core principle of this approach is to keep the matter within a limited circle and try to resolve it quietly. The first effort should be to confine the issue to those directly

involved and to resolve it within that small group by all possible means.

If, despite all efforts, this initial attempt fails, the matter should still not be made public. At that stage, only a few close and relevant individuals should be involved to help resolve it. If their efforts also fail, then—and only then—is it permissible to refer the matter to a court or another external authority.

THE EXAMPLE OF THE PROPHET

In pre-Islamic Arabia, Ka‘b ibn Zuhayr was a well-known poet. When the Prophet of Islam started his mission, Ka‘b became one of his opponents. He composed poetry against the Prophet and widely spread those verses among the people. His poems contained harsh criticism and offensive satire directed at the Prophet.

When Makkah was conquered, Ka‘b ibn Zuhayr felt that there was no place left for him. His brother Bujayr said to him, “Go to Madinah and meet the Prophet of Islam. That is what is best for you now, because he does not kill anyone who comes to him in repentance.”

So Ka‘b ibn Zuhayr came to Madinah. Early the next morning, he reached the Prophet’s Mosque. As the Prophet concluded the prayer, Ka‘b stepped forward and held his hand. At that moment, the Prophet did not recognize him. Ka‘b said, “I am Ka‘b ibn Zuhayr. I have

come in repentance and seek your protection. Will you accept me and grant me safety?"

Upon hearing this, a Muslim from Madinah rose from the congregation, approached Ka'b, and said, "O Messenger of God, hand over this enemy of God to me so I may strike off his head with my sword."

The Prophet of Islam said, "Leave him, for he has come in repentance and has turned away from what he used to do." (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 2, pp. 501-503) This is an example of the Prophet of Islam. It reveals Islam's approach to dealing with its opponents. No matter how destructive a person may have been in the past, if they abandon their rebellious actions and sincerely repent, they must not be treated as an enemy. Their past hostility should not be held against them; instead, they should be treated with well-wishing, because their repentance itself becomes a substitute for punishment.

A LIFE OF PEACE

When Hatim al-Asamm, one of the prominent Muslim scholars of the 3rd century AH, met Ahmad ibn Hanbal—a renowned jurist and hadith scholar whose teachings form the basis of the Hanbali school of Islamic jurisprudence—Ahmad asked him, "Tell me, how can one remain safe from people?" Hatim al-Asamm replied, "Through three things: give them from your wealth but do not take from theirs; fulfill their

rights but do not demand your own rights from them; and be patient with their harm, but do not harm them.” (*Siyar A‘lam al-Nubala’* by al-Dhahabi, Vol. 11, p. 487)

The essence of these three principles is this: let others feel completely safe from you—and as a result, you will be safe from them. This sense of safety can be established through three practical steps:

First, make yourself independent of what others possess. However, from what you have, continue to give people their due share, as much as you are able. Instead of being someone who takes from others, be someone who gives.

Second, fulfill the rights others have over you without negligence. But as for your own rights over others, never actively pursue them or make any effort to collect them.

Third, in social life, it is inevitable that you will face harm or annoyance from others. In such situations, adopt a one-sided policy of patience and endurance. Do not merely refrain from harming others—in fact, go a step further: be patient when harmed by others, and forgive them without seeking revenge.

This is the only sure path to a life of peace in this world. Any other method will fail to bring true safety and comfort.

UNINFLUENCED BY FALSEHOOD

In chapter 48 of the Quran, the qualities of the Prophet Muhammad's companions are described. At a primary level, these refer to the companions themselves. However, these are also traits that are expected of all Muslims after them.

One of these qualities is: firm against disbelievers and compassionate among themselves (*ashiddā'u 'ala-l-kuffār, ruḥamā'u baynahum*). This does not mean that Muslims should treat one another kindly but become harsh when dealing with people of other faiths. It does not imply that they should adopt a hostile or aggressive attitude toward others.

In this verse, *ashiddā'u 'ala-l-kuffār* carries the same meaning as *‘izzah 'ala-l-kāfirīn* (Quran, 5:54). In Arabic, the phrase *huwa ‘azīz ‘alayya* means: “he is so firm that I cannot overpower him.” The word *shadīd* (strong) conveys a similar idea. According to *Lisan al-‘Arab* by Ibn Manzur (Vol. 3, pp. 232-235), the root meaning of *shiddah* is firmness or hardness. A rocky land that does not absorb water is called *ṣalb* (solid). In the same way, in this verse, *shadīd* conveys the idea of being inwardly unaffected.

In his renowned dictionary, *Lisan al-‘Arab* (Vol. 3, p. 235), Ibn Manzur, under the entry for *shadīd*, cites a line from a pre-Islamic poet who says: “I do not yield to harsh words, even if they are harder than iron.”

From this explanation, it becomes clear that *ashiddā'* in this verse refers to inner resilience, not external severity. It highlights a deep inner trait of the believers: due to

their firm conviction, they are not easily influenced by external pressures. Even if waves of irreligious ideologies or materialistic cultures sweep over them, they remain like stone or iron—unaffected by such influences.

They are deeply receptive to truth, but strongly resistant to falsehood.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PATIENCE

The Quran states that those who are patient will be rewarded by God without measure (39:10). Patience is the path followed by the steadfast Messengers (46:35). According to a hadith, the Prophet of Islam said: “No one has been given a gift better and more expansive than patience.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1469; *Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 1053)

The Quran makes it clear that both worldly and eternal success are built upon the foundation of patience. The following are just a few examples from the Quran:

- Paradise is promised for patience (76:12)
- Salvation and success come through patience (23:111)
- Victory is achieved through patience (8:65)
- Leadership (*imamat*) is granted through patience (32:24)
- Divine protection is ensured through patience – (3:120)

Why is patience given such great importance? Because patience is the foundation upon which all noble human traits develop. It is through patience that moral character is cultivated—and moral character is the only true ladder to all forms of human excellence. Without patience, there can be no ethics; and without ethics, there can be no success.

Human beings naturally appreciate good character. However, two forces often pull them away from the path of ethics: internal desires and external provocation. Sometimes a person is misled by their inner self; at other times, an external situation provokes them into abandoning good behaviour. Patience acts as a safeguard against both. The quality of patience and forbearance keeps a person within ethical limits and prevents them from crossing those boundaries.

Patience is the completion of human character. It is what makes a person whole. Whoever possesses patience, possesses all virtues. But whoever lacks patience will, in the end, be deprived of all noble qualities.

PAUSE, BEFORE YOU ACT

In chapter 65 of the Quran, while outlining the laws related to marriage and divorce, a fundamental principle is mentioned: “God makes things easy for those who are mindful of Him.” (65:4)

The renowned Quranic commentator al-Dahhak (d. 105 AH) explained this verse by saying: “If a person is mindful

of God while issuing a divorce according to the prescribed method, God will make it easier for him to reconcile.” (*Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, Vol. 18, p. 165)

Often, in a moment of anger and without considering the future, a man may impulsively divorce his wife. If he ignores the lawful method and issues three divorces in one sitting, he creates serious complications for himself. On the other hand, if he is mindful of God, he will refrain from such impulsive action. Instead, he will issue a single divorce according to the lawful process. Then, by the following month—after his anger has subsided and he has had time to reflect—he may realize that the divorce was a mistake. In that case, the door to reconciliation remains open under the law, and the marriage can be resumed.

This principle extends to all areas of life. When life is lived in accordance with the natural and prescribed path, it remains balanced and stable. Disruption only arises when one deviates from this path.

God-consciousness (*taqwa*) helps a person stay on the natural course. It instills caution and mindfulness. A cautious and thoughtful person does not act on impulse or in response to negative emotions. He pauses and reflects before making decisions. Instead of being driven by emotion, he acts on sound reasoning. As a result, he avoids unnecessary hardship and finds the smoother path—one that leads all the way to the destination.

MISUNDERSTANDING

A narration states: ‘Aisha said that one night she could not find the Prophet of Islam at home. She assumed that he had gone to the house of one of his other wives. She began searching and eventually found him in the mosque, either bowing or prostrating in prayer, saying: “Glory and praise be to You, O God. There is no deity but You.” Then she said to him: “May my parents be sacrificed for you. I am concerned with one matter, and you are absorbed in another.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 25178; *Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 485; *Sunan al-Nasa’i*, Hadith No. 1131)

‘Aisha assumed, upon not finding the Prophet at home, that he had gone to visit one of his other wives. But in fact, he had gone to the mosque to worship. She thought he was missing someone; in reality, he was remembering God, the Lord of Majesty.

This illustrates how a person, based on outward circumstances, can form an assumption about someone else. From initial impressions, one might feel justified in their thinking. But upon closer investigation, it becomes clear that the thought was based purely on personal assumption, with no connection to the actual reality.

Misunderstanding is something even a person of high rank, like a Companion of the Prophet, can experience. For ordinary people, the likelihood is even greater. Therefore, it is necessary for everyone that if a misunderstanding arises

regarding someone, they must investigate the matter. One must never rely solely on the assumption.

Whoever fails to verify a matter is undoubtedly blameworthy. In the sight of God, no excuse will be accepted for forming a negative opinion about someone without full knowledge. The person will be held accountable and asked—When you did not have a full understanding of the situation, how could you presume something negative about another person?

PURPOSEFUL ACTION

A Companion, Ka‘b ibn ‘Ujrah, narrated: A man once passed by the Prophet of Islam, and the companions noticed his strength and energy. They said, “O Messenger of God, if only this effort were in the path of God.” The Prophet replied: “If he is striving to support his young children, then he is in the path of God. If he is striving for his elderly parents, then he is in the path of God. If he is striving to earn a dignified livelihood, even that is in the path of God. But if his effort is to show off or boast, then his action is in the path of Satan.” (*Al-Mu‘jam al-Awsat* by al-Tabarani, Hadith No. 6835)

This narration shows that “action in the path of God” is not defined by a particular form of activity—it depends on one’s intention and inner motivation. Whoever acts with a God-conscious intention, their action is in God’s path. But if someone acts with another motive, then their action belongs to the path they intended.

For example, a man has small children. If he considers them a trust from God and works to provide for them, and nurture them to become good individuals and responsible citizens, then he is acting in God's path. Another person has elderly parents. If he views serving them as a divine responsibility and fulfills their needs out of that understanding, he too is acting in God's path. If someone is addressing their natural needs within the limits set by divine law, and doing so consciously and morally, that effort too is in the path of God.

RESPONSIBLE SPEECH

Abu Hurairah, the Companion who narrated the most sayings of the Prophet, reported that the Prophet of Islam said: "Whoever believes in God and the Last Day should speak good or remain silent." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6018; *Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 47)

A person who truly believes in God, with full awareness of His greatness and majesty—and who is convinced that every word will be accounted for on the Day of Judgment—will be extremely cautious about their speech. They will think before they speak. Before God reviews their words, they will review them themselves.

Such a mindset makes a person their own supervisor. Their tongue becomes guarded, and they speak only when necessary. When there is no real need to speak, they prefer silence.

A person who develops this kind of psychological discipline will only speak for good. Their tongue will naturally avoid vain or harmful speech, as if they no longer have the words for it.

“Good speech” refers to words that convey divine wisdom, support the oppressed, aim to promote human welfare, or are motivated by well-wishing and a constructive purpose.

On the other hand, “bad speech” includes words meant to promote one’s own image, to support injustice, to spread hatred or harm, or to stir up conflict and create disorder in society.

True belief in God and the Hereafter makes a person serious and responsible. And someone who has become truly serious and responsible will speak only in the manner described in the above saying of the Prophet.

EXCELLENCE IN CHARACTER

The Prophet of Islam stands as a moral example for everyone. His character represents the highest standard for the community to follow. The Quran describes his character in these words: “You are truly of a sublime character.” (68:4)

Similarly, a prophetic tradition states, “Do not be like those who say: ‘If people treat us well, we will do the same, and if they wrong us, we will wrong them in return.’ Instead, train yourselves to say: ‘If people treat us well, we will respond with kindness, and if they mistreat us, we will still not commit injustice.’” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2007)

To treat good with good and bad with bad is transactional behaviour. This kind of morality holds no value in the sight of God. A person who takes the return for his actions in this world has already settled his account here. What value would such an action hold in the Hereafter?

True character is that which is principled, not driven by benefit or convenience. Superior character means rising above how others treat you and acting on principle. It is not about repaying wrong with wrong or kindness with kindness, but about treating morality as a constant standard. Such a person determines their behaviour based on their own values, not the actions of others. They treat everyone well, even if others treat them poorly.

This is the standard of character that God has approved for the believers. It reflects that a person is guided by principle. Circumstances do not shape such character, but it is shaped by a deliberate and thoughtful commitment to moral values.

QURANIC PRINCIPLE: CHOOSE HARMONY OVER IDEALISM

In the Quran, while addressing matters of marital life, the following instruction is given: “Live with them in accordance with what is fair and kind; if you dislike them, it may be that you dislike something which God might make a source of abundant good.” (4:19)

This teaching is not limited to the relationship between husband and wife; it applies to all human relationships. The key to a successful social life in this world is for both men and women to consciously remember that if they find something displeasing in another person, that same person may also have a quality that is good and beneficial.

Therefore, one should overlook what is disliked in someone and accept them on the basis of what is good in them.

The truth is that no one in this world is perfect. Every person is born with some shortcoming. What usually happens is that when we experience someone directly, we become aware of their faults. However, the people we haven't interacted with seem better simply because we don't know their weaknesses. As a result, we subconsciously think that everyone else is good—except this one individual. But when we engage with others, we realize they have the same flaws as the first person.

So the idea of abandoning one person in search of someone better is flawed. The better approach is to develop a mindset of mutual understanding and coexistence. Searching for perfection leads nowhere, but learning to adjust enables a person to live peacefully with anyone and build a successful life together.

THE VALUE OF RESTRAINT: ENDLESS RETURN

“Say: O My servants who have believed, be mindful of your Lord. Those who do good in this world will receive a good reward. And the earth of God is vast. Indeed, those who are patient will be given their reward without measure.” (Quran, 39:10)

This is an extraordinary statement—promising a limitless reward for a specific kind of action. In the entire Quran, such a promise is made only for one act: patience.

The root meaning of *ṣabr* (patience) is restraint. In Arabic, phrases like *ṣabartu ‘an kadhā* mean “I restrained myself from something,” or *ṣabartu ‘ammā uḥibb* means “I held myself back from something I liked.”

There are two kinds of actions: one is to act within limits, and the other is to go beyond those limits. For example, if someone treats you well and you respond with kindness, this is normal behaviour. It does not involve the stage of patience and restraint. Or, if you follow a religion under circumstances where everything in your life remains comfortable and undisturbed, then this too is practicing religion within safe limits.

The second type of action is when a person remains committed to the required religious conduct under all circumstances—whether the situation is favourable or unfavourable. This is the act of true patience.

It means treating someone well even if they treat you poorly; responding calmly even when provoked; standing firm on truth and justice even if it seems to harm your interests; maintaining principles even when abandoning them appears profitable.

These are the people who will be given a limitless reward in the Hereafter, because they chose religious integrity at the cost of personal comfort—through patience.

SPIRITUAL PARTICIPATION

Once, during the period of the Prophet (9 AH), there was a long and difficult journey to Tabuk. During this expedition, some individuals were unable to join due to valid reasons. The Quran says: “But no blame shall attach to the weak, the sick, and those who have no means to spend, provided they are sincere to God and His Messenger. There is no reason to reproach those who do good deeds; God is most forgiving and merciful.” (9:91)

According to Ibn Ishaq, these were seven men from the *Ansar* (Helpers). A narration in *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* records that the Prophet of Islam said: “You left behind in Madinah people who shared in every reward you earned—whether it was spending, crossing valleys, or gaining victories over the enemy.” His companions asked, “Even though they remained in Madinah?” He replied, “Yes. They were held back by a valid excuse.” (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 4, p. 336)

This shows that a person can be rewarded like the doers, even if they were unable to act—because of their intentions. Outwardly, they may not have achieved anything, yet they are counted among those who did.

How is this possible?

It happens when someone participates through their intention and spirit, even if they cannot join practically. For instance:

- If someone achieves more than you, don't feel envious. Instead, acknowledge their merit.
- If someone has more wealth than you, sincerely wish that God enables them to be thankful and fulfill their obligations.
- If someone is speaking on stage while you are only in the audience, pray for them: "O God, guide their words so they speak truthfully and protect their tongue from falsehood."

TRUST AND RELIANCE ON GOD

The Quran states: "when you have decided upon a course of action, place your trust in God." (3:159)

This means that making a strong, committed decision is the responsibility of the individual—while the outcome should be entrusted to God. A narration reports that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab said: "I heard the Prophet of Islam say: If you

rely on God as you truly should, He will surely provide for you just as He provides for the bird. It leaves its nest in the morning with an empty stomach and returns in the evening full.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2344)

The bird leaves its nest in search of food—that action is its own effort. The sustenance it receives after that is provided by God. Seeking provision is the bird’s responsibility; the result of that search is in God’s hands.

In *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* (*Kitab al-Qiyamah*), another narration describes a man asking the Prophet:

“O Messenger of God, should I tie my camel and then rely on God, or leave it untied and rely on God?”

The Prophet replied: “Tie it, and then rely on God.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2517)

This means that tying the camel is your responsibility; whether it remains tied or escapes after that is left to God’s management. This principle can be summarized as: “The effort is mine; the result is from God.”

Every task has two parts: effort and its result. Trust in God (*tawakkul*) relates not to the effort itself but to its outcome. A true believer undertakes a task with full resolve and gives their best effort. However, when it comes to the result, they leave it to God. If someone avoids personal effort and relies only on God, it can lead to laziness and inaction. But if they do not trust in God regarding the outcome, they may fall into despair and disappointment.

THE SUPERIOR APPROACH

Nearly 200 verses in the Quran directly relate to patience (*sabr*), and many others refer to it indirectly. In essence, the Quran's teachings are rooted in the spirit of patience. It is entirely accurate to say that the Quran is a book of patience.

Direct commands regarding patience are clear, such as:

- “Seek help through patience and prayer.” (Quran, 2:45)
- “Endure patiently whatever may befall you.” (Quran, 31:17)
- “Exhort one another to steadfastness.” (Quran, 103:3)
- “Ignore their hurtful talk.” (Quran, 33:48)

These are verses where patience is explicitly mentioned. But many other verses are deeply connected to the idea of patience. For example, the Quran opens with:

“All praise is due to God, the Lord of the Universe.” (1:2)

This verse shows that God desires His creation—human beings—to express gratitude and praise Him.

Yet in the real world, no human being is free from unpleasant experiences. According to the Quran, human life is created in hardship (90:4). Under such conditions, living a life of constant ease and joy is not possible.

So how can someone truly become grateful in the face of trials?

The answer lies in patience. When a person shows patience during adversity, only then can they sincerely express words

of gratitude. That is why the Quran often links gratitude with patience (31:31).

Patience enables a person to discover superior, empowering solutions to problems. If someone becomes agitated and confrontational when facing opposition, they lose the ability to think clearly and respond wisely. But if they remain calm and composed, they become capable of thinking strategically and taking well-planned actions instead of reacting impulsively.

And history has shown again and again that impulsive reactions lead to failure, while thoughtful responses bring success.

Patience is the superior solution to every kind of problem.

THE PATH OF MODERATION

The Prophet of Islam said: “The best of actions are those in moderation.” (*Shu’ab al-Iman* by al-Bayhaqi, Hadith No. 6229)

A statement attributed to ‘Ali, the fourth caliph of Islam, also says: “Follow the middle path.” (*Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, Vol. 2, p. 154)

By “moderate action” is meant a balanced and well-measured approach. One example of this in the Quran is the verse: “Be neither miserly, nor so open-handed that you suffer reproach and become destitute.” (17:29)

Elsewhere, the Quran states: “They are those who are neither extravagant nor niggardly, but keep a balance between the two.” (25:67)

According to this verse, moderation in spending involves avoiding both excess and miserliness, and instead managing one's expenditures within their means in a balanced manner. The same principle applies to voluntary fasting, prayer, and other religious practices—one should adopt a pace they can maintain over time.

This balanced approach applies to all areas of life. In every matter, one should avoid extremes. The right way is to adopt a middle ground between excess and deficiency. This approach aligns with the spirit of religious values and leads to success.

In other words, the moderate path is a non-emotional path. When someone reacts impulsively in any situation, they are no longer balanced. They swing toward one extreme or another. But when a person controls their emotions, they are able to act with reflection—and thoughtful action is always moderate action.

An imbalanced person will exceed limits in both friendship and hostility. At times, they will become overly optimistic, and at other times, overly pessimistic. They will judge someone as extremely good without reason, or as extremely bad without fairness. But in the system of life, as designed by God, it is always the moderate person who succeeds, while the one who lacks moderation ends up in failure.

A BETTER HUMAN BEING

Abu Hurairah reported: The Prophet of Islam once approached a group of people and said:

“Shall I tell you who among you is the best and the worst?”

The people remained silent. He repeated the question three times. Then one man replied, “Yes, O Messenger of God, please tell us.”

The Prophet said: “The best among you is the one whose goodness people expect, and from whose harm they feel safe.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi* Hadith No. 2263)

This hadith clearly defines who is a good person and who is not. A good person is someone others can expect benefit from. When others interact with him, their experience is of kind words and good actions. Nothing makes him abandon this standard to act harmfully.

Of course, such a person also experiences inner anger, annoyance, and frustration—just like anyone else. He, too, dislikes being mistreated, and he, too, may feel the sting of provocation. But despite all that, he remains principled.

He absorbs emotional shocks internally. He swallows his own bitterness to offer others kindness. He places the pain of mistreatment into God’s hands—so that his inner peace is not disturbed. This allows him to continue pursuing his higher purpose with complete focus.

THE ETHICS OF RESPONSE

In the Quran, believers are commanded: “Do not let the enmity of those who barred you from the Sacred Mosque lead you into sin. Help one another in goodness and in piety. Do not help one another in sin and transgression. Fear God! God is severe in punishment.” (5:2)

In 6 AH, the people of Makkah prevented the Prophet of Islam and his Companions from entering Makkah to perform ‘Umrah. On that occasion, they behaved in a highly provocative and unjust manner. As a result, the Muslims felt great anger toward the Makkan opponents and wanted to retaliate by blocking their trade caravans and taking revenge.

However, this verse of the Quran restrained them from doing so. They were instructed not to lose control in enmity and to uphold a path of peace and moderation under all circumstances.

Further, the verse commands: “Help one another in goodness and in piety. Do not help one another in sin and transgression.” (5:2)

Explaining this, Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, a renowned Muslim scholar of the Indian subcontinent, writes in his commentary:

“If someone, driven by the heat of revenge, ends up committing excess, the way to stop this is that the Muslim community should not support his aggression. Rather, the community should collectively exhibit righteousness and

self-restraint, and take steps to prevent such injustice and extremism.” (*Tafsir Usmani*, p. 137)

Not everyone in a group is equally composed—some are more emotional and may react to provocation from the opposing side. At such moments, the rest of the group has to restrain those who are acting emotionally—to speak out against them rather than remain silent, and to condemn their actions rather than support them. If they fail to do so, then—according to the Quran—they too are guilty of “helping one another in sin and transgression.”

DESPITE THE COMPLAINT

Makkah came under Muslim rule in Ramadan, 8 AH. Soon afterward, the Battle of Hunayn occurred in Shawwal, 8 AH. Shortly before these events, Khalid ibn al-Walid had embraced Islam and come to Madinah. Despite his recent conversion, the Prophet of Islam appointed him as the commander of the Muslim army in both campaigns.

This decision was difficult for the Ansar (the Helpers of Madinah), as they had believed in and sacrificed for the Prophet long before Khalid had become a Muslim. In modern terms, it felt like a junior being given preference over seniors. However, despite this grievance, the Ansar remained loyal to the Prophet and obeyed every one of his commands.

After the war, in keeping with Arab tradition, poets composed verses about the event. One of the poets, Abbas ibn Mirdas al-Sulami, also composed some lines. In his poetry, reflecting the sentiment of the Ansar, he mentioned the complaint that Khalid had been given leadership over them:

“If you appointed Khalid as commander over the people...”
(*fa in tak qad ammarata fi al-qawmi Khalidan*)

Yet in the same poem, he said: “And the Prophet of the believers said: ‘Step forward,’ so it became beloved to us that we step forward to fight.” (*wa qala nabiyyu al-mu’minin taqaddamu fa-hubba ilayna an nakuna al-muqaddama*) *Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 4, p. 111.

Though the Ansar had reason to be upset based on appearances, they did not allow their grievance to affect their actions. Despite their complaint, they remained fully committed to God’s cause. Despite their inner discomfort, they stood united for the religion they had recognized as divine guidance.

In today’s world, it is unrealistic to expect that no differences or grievances will arise. For one reason or another—justified or not—people will inevitably have complaints, even with the Prophet or his Companions. But a believer rises above personal grievances. They act beyond complaints and do what is right. That is why, within the community of believers, complaints and disagreements never destroy their unity.

WORSHIP AND MORALITY

Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet of Islam said: “Whoever does not thank people cannot truly thank God.” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 4811)

This shows that in Islam, theological belief and human conduct are deeply connected. Acts of worship are not isolated from moral behaviour—they are inherently linked.

The Quran says that the prayer of a person becomes a burden if they are so stingy that they cannot even give others small, everyday items (107: 4-7).

A hadith states that a person’s fast is not truly accepted if they do not give up lying in word and action—even if they appear to be fasting (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1903).

The Quran describes a believer as one who gives charity without expecting thanks or reward in return (76:9).

Regarding Hajj, the Quran instructs that there should be no indecent talk, no wrongdoing, and no quarrels during the pilgrimage (2:197).

This connection between worship and morality is a natural requirement. All human actions arise from a person’s inner psychology—and that psychology is indivisible. When a person develops the inner spirit of worship, moral sensitivity also inevitably arises. A true connection with God leads naturally to compassion and responsibility toward fellow human beings.

Worship is not merely a formal or temporary ritual. It is a deep, spiritual process. When someone internalizes the spirit of worship, it transforms their character—they develop humility, caution, goodwill, and avoidance of trivial matters. And these very qualities form the foundation of ethics. When these refined inner qualities appear in one's social behaviour, that is what we call morality.

Thus, a true worshipper is necessarily someone who serves humanity. Their habits, behaviour, and speech reflect dignity and a spirit of human concern.

In short, if someone is truly devoted to God, they are also inevitably a sincere well-wisher of people. These two qualities—God-consciousness and human kindness—can never be separated.

THE RISE OF ETHICAL AWARENESS

In pre-Islamic Arabia, the prevailing moral code was one of equal retaliation—repaying good with good, and bad with bad. A common principle was: “We deal with people just as they dealt with us.” One tribal poet boasted about his tribe's revenge on rivals:

“We left no type of hostility undone—we gave them exactly what they gave us.” (*falam yabqa min al-‘udwan dunnahum kama danu*)

But when the Prophet of Islam arrived, he transformed this moral outlook. Instead of advocating equal retaliation, he taught a higher ethic. He said:

“Treat well the one who mistreats you.”

(*Mu’jam Ibn al-Arabi*, Hadith No. 1507)

Another hadith expresses this principle more fully: “Do not be one who says: ‘If people treat us well, we will do the same; and if they wrong us, we will retaliate.’ Rather, prepare yourselves to treat others well if they are good to you, and even if they are not—do not act unjustly.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2007)

One of the Prophet’s enduring traditions was to elevate people’s awareness—to raise their sense of ethics and uplift their behaviour in all aspects of life.

To elevate the human standard—intellectually, morally, and spiritually—is one of the most important missions. It benefits both the individual and the society as a whole. This work of raising moral and human awareness is a prophetic tradition—and reviving it is an act of reviving the legacy of the Prophet.

SEVERING TIES

In Islam, cutting off relationships and ceasing communication is considered forbidden. Numerous hadiths on this subject are recorded in the major collections. Both *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* include the following narration:

“It is not permissible for a person to sever ties with his brother for more than three days. When they meet, one turns away and the other does the same. The better of the two is the one who initiates the greeting of peace.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6077)

Another narration mentions that the gates of Paradise are opened every Monday and Thursday, and every servant who has not associated anything with God is forgiven—except for those who are in conflict with one another. It is said: “Postpone their matter until they reconcile.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2565)

In another narration, a Companion reported: “I heard the Prophet of Islam say: Whoever cuts ties with his brother for a full year, it is as if he has shed his blood.” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 4915)

Another narration in *Sunan Abi Dawud* states: “It is not lawful for a Muslim to cut off ties with his brother for more than three days. Whoever does so and dies in that state will enter the Fire.” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 4914)

It is common practice in society for people to cut ties and refuse to speak to one another when they become angry. This behaviour is found among both men and women. However, Islam considers it a serious wrongdoing. In fact, it is often the first step toward a breakdown of peace. The matter is so grave that if a person dies without reconciling, there is a real risk of divine accountability—even if they had observed prayer and fasting.

THE VALUE OF SILENCE

Abdullah ibn Amr reported that the Prophet of Islam said: “Whoever remains silent will be saved.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2501)

In another narration, he said: “Silence is wisdom, though few embrace it.” (*Musnad al-Shihab al-Qudai*, Hadith No. 240)

Silence is not passivity—it is a noble form of action. One of the finest human qualities is thoughtfulness, and silence reflects that trait. It shows a person’s ability to reflect and remain inwardly aware.

Silence is an act of thinking. When a person remains quiet, they are not simply withholding words—they are engaging in serious reflection. And reflection is among the most valuable forms of action. If speech is the movement of the tongue, silence is the movement of the mind. If speech is half an act, silence completes it.

To stay silent is to show seriousness. A silent person is one who tries to grasp meaning more deeply. They consider their words carefully—what to say and what to withhold. They turn inward before addressing others. Rather than acting impulsively, they engage in thoughtful planning.

Speaking tends toward impatience, while silence reflects patience. Speaking may be careless; silence shows caution. Speech can be irresponsible, while silence reflects responsibility. Speaking has limits—once someone speaks,

they reveal their boundaries. But silence has no limit. A silent person is deep—someone whose depth has not yet been reached. Those who speak often react quickly, while those who remain silent speak only after others have exhausted their words.

Islam cultivates a mindset of self-awareness and reflection. It develops individuals who think deeply—those who prefer silence over speech and contemplation over reaction.

THE NECESSITY OF PATIENCE

In ancient Egypt, there was a man named Korah from among the Children of Israel. He was a contemporary and relative of the Prophet Moses. Korah amassed immense wealth through materialism and opportunism. The Quran mentions that one day he appeared before his people, fully displaying his riches and luxury. Some among the Children of Israel were impressed and said: “If only we had the like of Korah’s fortune! He really is a very fortunate man.” (28:79)

The Quran then states that those who had knowledge among the Israelites responded: “Woe to you, God’s reward is better for those who believe and do good deeds: and it is awarded only to those who are steadfast.” (28:80)

Regarding the phrase “only those who are steadfast receive it,” Quranic commentators have explained it in the following way:

- This grace is granted to those who are patient. (*Tafseer al-Baghawi*, Vol. 3, p. 454)
- Good deeds can be consistently performed only by those who are patient. (*Tafseer al-Khazin*, Vol. 3, p. 371)
- Paradise is ultimately attained only by those who are patient. (*Tafseer al-Qurtubi*, Vol. 13, p. 317)

Why is patience so closely tied to faith, good deeds, and Paradise? Because this world is a place of constant testing. People regularly face challenges. At times, someone provokes you and makes you angry. At other times, someone's behaviour wounds your ego. Occasionally, situations arise where your honour feels at stake. In all such moments, remaining on the right path requires the strength of patience. Without patience, there is no real faith. Without patience, good deeds cannot be sustained. Without patience, Paradise cannot be earned.

Patience is the key to all success—in both this world and the next.

SOCIAL ETIQUETTE

The Quran outlines principles of etiquette in gatherings:

“Believers, if you are told to make room for one another in your assemblies, then do so, and God will make room for you. And if you are told to rise up, do so: God will raise in rank those of you who believe and those who have been given knowledge. He is fully aware of all that you do.” (58:11)

In a gathering, one is not alone—others are present as well. If everyone thinks only of themselves, it creates discomfort for others. That is why this verse instructs believers to be thoughtful and considerate.

For example:

- If space is limited, make room for others or share your seat.
- If someone of importance enters, offer them a place.
- When asked to leave, do so promptly—don't make excuses to stay longer.

While the immediate context of the verse refers to manners in assemblies, its guidance applies to all areas of social life.

For society to function smoothly, two qualities are essential:

1. Flexibility
2. The ability to let things go without turning small matters into issues of ego or prestige

Just as a gathering runs well when people accommodate each other, society functions best when there is a spirit of generosity and willingness to step aside when needed.

Sometimes, in a meeting, one person may need to give up their seat for someone else. In broader life, this spirit is also necessary—at times, responsibility must be handed over to someone more capable, and others should step back gracefully.

If someone in an organization makes a decision for the common good, others should accept it. They should not

turn it into a personal matter or disrupt unity by creating internal conflict.

THE SECRET OF THE PROPHET'S SUCCESS

Numerous hadiths describe the character of the Prophet of Islam, as narrated by his Companions. Among them is a report from Aisha, recorded in *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Al-Bukhari includes this narration—with slight variations—in four different chapters: Aisha said: “Aisha said: Whenever the Prophet of Islam was presented with two options, he would adopt the easier one—as long as it was not sinful. But if it were sinful, he would avoid it completely.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6126)

This hadith also appears in *Sahih Muslim* (Hadith No. 2327) and in *al-Mu'jam al-Awsat* by Tabarani (Hadith No. 2918). In those versions, the phrase is: “He would choose the easier of the two options” (*ikhtara aysarahuma*), indicating that the Prophet’s way was to opt for ease, not hardship.

Aisha’s account offers a profound insight into the method of prophethood. It reflects a foundational principle of Islam: starting with what is possible.

Here, “easy” and “difficult” do not simply refer to comfort or hardship. Rather, the Prophet chose the open path—one that avoided confrontation or resistance—unless confrontation was absolutely necessary for progress.

This approach gives immediate momentum to action. Every step leads forward. A person's energy is then spent in constructive efforts rather than in destructive conflict.

POWER OF FORGIVENESS

Ibn Kathir, in his *Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah*, relates the story of Ghawrath ibn al-Harith under the heading *Qissat Ghawrath ibn al-Harith*. The summary is as follows:

Upon returning from a journey in 4 AH, the Prophet of Islam and his companions camped at a resting place. The Prophet lay down under a tree, and his sword was hanging from one of its branches.

At that moment, a man from a hostile tribe—Ghawrath—approached and seized the sword. Standing over the Prophet, he said: “Who will save you from me, O Muhammad?” The Prophet replied calmly: “God.” Ghawrath repeated the question, and the Prophet gave the same reply: “God.”

Hearing this, Ghawrath was overwhelmed and dropped the sword. The Prophet then picked up the sword and asked him: “Now who will save you from me?” Ghawrath replied: “Be the better one to take revenge.”

Instead of rebuking him or taking revenge, the Prophet forgave him and let him go. He did not say, “You threatened my life, and now you ask for mercy?”—he simply released him.

If the Prophet had punished him, Ghawrath may have responded with hostility. But by sparing him without

scolding, his conscience was awakened. He returned to his tribe saying: “I have come from the presence of the best of all people.” (*Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah* Vol. 4, pp. 270-271)

This incident shows that revenge escalates conflict, while forgiveness resolves it completely. More than that, forgiveness becomes a strong moral example—one that can turn an enemy into a loyal supporter.

A BURNING PIECE OF FIRE

Narrated by Umm Salamah, the Prophet of Islam said: “I am only a human being, and you bring your disputes to me. It may be that one of you presents their case more persuasively than the other, and I issue a ruling in their favour based on what I hear. But if I give someone what rightfully belongs to their brother, then I have actually given them a piece of fire.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 7169; *Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 1713)

Through this statement, the Prophet of Islam makes it clear that wrongful ownership leads to eternal consequences. Property rightfully belongs only to its true owner—even if, due to human limitations, a judgment is mistakenly passed in favour of someone who is not entitled to it. Even if the Prophet of Islam were to issue a ruling based on the arguments presented before him, that property would still not become lawfully theirs. In the Hereafter, it would amount to nothing more than a burning piece of fire.

In today's world, illegal occupation and land grabbing have become widespread. A corrupt system allows people to achieve their goals through bribery and manipulation. As a result, in almost every town and village, there are people who have seized others' land or property through dishonest means.

This hadith is a severe warning for such people. If even the decision of the Prophet does not transfer ownership from the rightful owner to the false claimant, then how can it ever be justified for someone to use forged documents or fake registries to take over another person's property?

People might feel satisfied when they unlawfully occupy someone's house in this world. But what will happen in the Hereafter, when that same house becomes a structure of fire—and they are locked inside it?

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS

According to a hadith, the Prophet of Islam said, 'Every child is born in a state of natural purity (*fitrah*), then his parents shape him according to the environment and values they provide'. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 7181)

This does not only refer to changing a child's religion in a formal sense—that is merely the final stage. What the hadith truly highlights is any form of distortion or moral corruption introduced into a child's character by their

parents. In other narrations, the wording is even more general. For example:

Jabir ibn Abdullah reported that the Prophet of Islam said:

“Every child is born upon *fitrah*, until he begins to speak. Once he starts speaking, he either becomes grateful or ungrateful.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 14805)

Children are not born speaking; they begin to speak only after some time. Until then, they remain connected to their original, natural state. Once they begin to speak, they become products of their immediate environment. Whether a child grows up with a sense of gratitude toward God—or believes that blessings come from elsewhere—this foundational belief is shaped first and foremost by the parents.

When a child sees someone weaker and learns to look down on them, or sees someone more successful and begins to envy them—these early attitudes are almost always learned from the parents. In this way, parents either nurture a child into a righteous person or contribute to their moral decline.

The home is a child’s first school, and the parents are the child’s first teachers.

THE QURANIC APPROACH

In this world, every person is undergoing a test. Because this is a test, human beings have also been granted freedom.

Some use this freedom rightly, while others misuse it. The misuse of freedom leads to corruption in society, mutual rivalries, rising hostility, and moments of bitterness and complaint in collective life. All of this unfolds according to the law of nature. Anything that occurs under the plan of nature cannot be removed or eliminated by anyone.

So, what is the solution? The Quran clearly offers the solution: people should not react impulsively, but rather manage situations with patience, wisdom, and strategic thinking. For example:

- In the face of ignorance, respond with avoidance
— (Quran, 7:199)
- In the face of wrongdoing, respond with goodness
— (Quran, 41:34)
- In the face of harm, respond with patience
— (Quran, 14:12)
- In the face of arrogant pride, respond with calmness
— (Quran, 48:26)

These Quranic instructions show that when someone misuses their freedom and causes harm to others, the one affected should not retaliate. Instead, they must remain composed. Even if provoked, they should not lose control. In response to hatred, they should offer kindness. If they do this, the laws of nature will be activated, and a higher system will bring about a better resolution.

Patience and avoidance are not just human virtues—they are a divine commands. It is God's own will that people

remain patient because patience is a fundamental part of the plan of testing. Without patience, a person cannot fulfill God's plan for the test. That is why the reward for patience is immense—even greater than that of other actions. The Quran explicitly promises that those who are patient for the sake of God will be rewarded beyond all measure.

THE WISDOM OF SILENCE

The Quran states that a person will be questioned about their hearing, sight, and heart. (17:36)

A hadith says: “The one among you who is most bold in giving legal opinions (*fatwas*) is the most bold in approaching the Fire.” (*Musnad Al-Darmi*, Hadith No. 159)

Because of this, the companions of the Prophet of Islam were extremely cautious about issuing fatwas (religious or legal rulings). A hadith mentions ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud, stating that He is heavier on the scales than Mount Uhud. (*Al-Adab al-Mufrad* by al-Bukhari, Hadith no. 237) However, his attitude was characterised by restraint. He was once in Kufa when someone asked him about a jurisprudential issue concerning marriage. They kept returning to him for a month, but he did not give an answer. Eventually, they said to him: ‘Whom shall we ask if not you—when you are one of the prominent Companions of the Prophet in this town, and we find no one else but you?’ So, he answered the question with great caution. (*Sunan al-Nasai*, Hadith No. 3358)

Similarly, ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar would avoid giving fatwas. When pressured, he would say: “Don’t make our backs a bridge to the Fire.” (*Al-Ma‘rifah wa-t-Tarikh* by Al-Fusawi, Vol. 1, p. 493)

These reports about fatwas do not refer to a limited set of rulings. Rather, they apply to all matters where Muslims seek guidance from scholars and leaders. In such situations, scholars and decision-makers must think more than they speak. They should only issue a statement after thoroughly fulfilling all conditions of consultation, study, and reflection.

In these matters, remaining silent is better than speaking irresponsibly.

Offering opinions on public issues is a delicate responsibility. If the opinion turns out to be wrong, it may cause harm for an unknown period of time. Therefore, if someone wants to speak, they must first fulfill all its requirements, and only then give their view.

ACCOUNTABILITY ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet of Islam once asked, “Do you know who is truly bankrupt?” The people replied, “Among us, the bankrupt is the one who has neither wealth nor possessions.” The Prophet said, “Indeed, the one who is truly bankrupt from my community is the person who will come on the Day of Judgment with prayers, fasting,

and charity, but also having abused others, slandered some, wrongfully consumed someone's wealth, shed blood, or struck someone. Justice will be served by taking from their good deeds and giving them to those they wronged. If their good deeds run out before their debts are repaid, the sins of the wronged will be transferred to them—and they will be thrown into the Fire.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2581)

This hadith should strike fear into the hearts of those who take what rightfully belongs to others. It shows that those who became wealthy through injustice will be utterly bankrupt on the Day of Judgment. Those who unlawfully occupied someone else's home in this world will, in the afterlife, be left homeless—without even a tree's shade for shelter.

At the same time, this hadith brings hope to those whose rights were violated. The harm they suffered in the form of insults, slander, exploitation, or violence in this life will be compensated on the Day of Judgment in the form of priceless deeds—the currency of the Hereafter. Those who appeared poor in this world will emerge as the truly wealthy in the next life.

CONTENTMENT

Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As reported that the Prophet of Islam said: “Successful is the one who submits to God, is given enough to meet his needs, and remains content with what God has given him.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 1054)

Contentment does not mean giving up on effort. It is not the opposite of action—it is the opposite of greed. A person should lead a fully active and productive life, but at the same time, they should protect themselves from the endless desire for more. A greedy person can never be truly satisfied in this world. Contentment relates not to the act of working, but to the results of that work. A living person will inevitably act. But outcomes often depend on many external factors beyond one's control. Therefore, a person should put in their full effort, without falling short, and remain satisfied with whatever result comes.

This world is designed in such a way that while effort is in our control, results are not. Thus, the only realistic and sustainable mindset in this world is what we call contentment. However, this means contentment with results, not with effort. Being content with outcomes is wise; being content with low effort is like surrendering to failure. There is a simple rule to balance this: continue working without disturbing your inner peace. Use your skills and opportunities to the fullest. Seek results only to the extent that your peace of mind remains intact. Once desire starts to disturb your calm, it is a sign that you have stepped out of contentment and into greed. And greed, no matter how it is justified, is something to be let go of.

For a content person, money is a necessity, not an obsession. Once their basic needs are met, they are satisfied. But a discontent person is never satisfied, because their desire

has no limits. The hunger for wealth in such a person keeps growing, no matter how much they acquire.

Contentment is not limited to wealth and possessions; it applies to every area of life. A person may be serving others, another may hold a leadership position, and someone else may have reached a government post. In any field, there are always two choices: to be content with what one has or to chase after what one has not yet attained.

A content person accepts the level where circumstances have placed them and commits to fulfilling their duty. If further advancement comes through normal means, they welcome it. But if it does not, they accept their current position with peace of mind.

Thirst is a natural human need. However, there is a difference between healthy thirst and diseased thirst (a condition known as '*ataash*' in Arabic, which modern medical science refers to as *polydipsia*). A healthy person drinks only as much water as the body requires and feels satisfied. In contrast, a person with diseased thirst continues to crave water, yet no amount can truly quench their thirst.

A content person in this world is like the healthy thirsty one. A greedy person is like the one suffering from diseased thirst.

UNITY DESPITE DIFFERENCES

During the time when a war was ongoing between Ali and Mu'awiyah, the Byzantine Emperor, based in

Constantinople, considered launching an attack on the Muslim world. He thought, “The Muslims are currently engaged in internal conflict. If I strike now, I may be able to reclaim Syria, Egypt, and other regions.”

When Mu‘awiyah learned of this plan, he immediately sent a letter to the Byzantine Emperor, which included the following declaration:

“By God, if you do not stop and return to your land, my cousin and I will unite against you. We will drive you out of all your territories and tighten the earth upon you as far as it stretches.”
(*Al-Bidaya wa’l-Nihaya*, Vol. 11, p. 400)

History records that after receiving this letter, the Byzantine Emperor lost his nerve. He stopped preparing his troops and realized that declaring war on the Muslims would only bring greater destruction upon himself.

This is the way of those who are truly alive in spirit. They may have internal disagreements, but when it comes to larger shared interests, they put aside their differences and unite. Their disagreements have limits, and once those limits are reached, the division disappears.

A person of integrity does not support injustice, even if it involves a close friend. Nor do they stoop to dishonourable behaviour, even toward an enemy. Even amid personal disputes, they remain united on collective matters. Personal bitterness never clouds their sense of Islamic or human brotherhood. Such individuals, though they may have disputes, still acknowledge the qualities of others.

Even when hurt, they honour their obligations. A person of conscience never acts dishonourably—they may oppose, but never resort to baseless accusations. A person of integrity can be an opponent, but never petty.

PRAYER AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

One notable event in Islamic history is known as *Mu'akhaat* (brotherhood). When Muslims from Makkah migrated to Madinah, the Prophet of Islam instructed them: “Pair up in the way of God, two by two, as brothers.” (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 2, p. 109)

Following this guidance, each *Ansari* (native of Madinah) took a *Muhajir* (migrant from Makkah) as his brother. The Ansar generously shared their belongings—half for themselves and half for their newly arrived brothers. The details of this extraordinary gesture are well documented in the books of *Seerah* (biographies of the Prophet). This example of selfless giving has no equal in known human history.

The *Muhajirun* were deeply moved by the generosity of the Ansar. As narrated by Anas, a Companion of the Prophet: “The Muhajirun said, ‘O Messenger of God, we have never seen a people more generous in small things, or more selfless with great things, than those we have come to. They have relieved us of burdens and made us partners in their wealth. We are afraid that they will earn all the reward!’ The Prophet replied, ‘No, as long as you continue

to praise them and pray to God for them.’” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 13075)

This hadith teaches an important principle: If someone receives something from another but has no material way to return the favour, what should they do? In such cases, they should sincerely acknowledge the kindness and let their heart overflow with prayers for the giver. If the one who gives has wealth to offer, the one without wealth still has something to give—their gratitude and prayers. The value of such prayer and acknowledgement is no less than any material gift.

THE STRENGTH OF PATIENCE IN LIFE’S CHALLENGES

Abdullah ibn Abbas, the cousin of the Prophet of Islam, once rode behind the Prophet on a camel as a young boy. During the ride, the Prophet gave him meaningful advice, part of which is: “Know that there is much good in bearing what you dislike with patience. Help comes with patience, relief comes with distress, and ease comes with hardship.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 2803)

These prophetic words reveal the key to success in life—both personal and collective. If you manage a home, shop, or office, you will face challenges you dislike. Reacting with anger or impatience will prevent success. But enduring

temporary difficulties with patience and making decisions based on reason will guide your future toward success.

This applies equally to national and community life. In public affairs, people often encounter unpleasant actions or provocative words. In such situations, patience remains the only path to success. If one group fails to overlook another's offensive behaviour and responds with confrontation, they are bound to fail. According to the Prophet's advice, true success lies in controlling negative emotions. Instead of rising against others, control yourself. This patient approach will turn hardship into ease and difficulty into opportunity.

PATIENCE AS WORSHIP

When the time for prayer arrives and the call to prayer (*adhan*) is heard from the mosque, a believer feels joy that the time has come to perform prayer and earn its reward. Similarly, when the crescent moon of Ramadan is sighted, Muslims rejoice, recognizing that the month has arrived to fast and attain its blessings.

In the same way, there is another great form of worship, referred to in religious teachings as patience (*sabr*). The Quran says that those who practice patience will receive a reward beyond measure (39:10). A hadith says, "No one has been given a better or vaster gift than patience." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6470) Patience is a form of worship—indeed, it is among the greatest of all acts of devotion.

The reward for the afternoon ('Asr) prayer is immense, but it cannot be performed at noon. The extraordinary reward of fasting in Ramadan cannot be gained by fasting in the month of Muharram. Likewise, the worship of patience can only be performed in situations that demand it—it is not possible to offer this form of worship in times of ease and comfort.

So, when does the opportunity for patience arise? It comes when you are provoked, mistreated, or when someone says something that wounds your ego. The opportunity to practice patience arises only in adversity, not in ease.

Most people, when faced with such situations, lose their temper. They fall into negative thinking. But if they were to realize that this is actually a moment for worship, they would greet it the same way they welcome the time for prayer or fasting.

A moment of patience is a moment of spiritual elevation. When such a moment comes, one should believe with certainty that this is the time to demonstrate a great act of devotion—and thereby become deserving of a great reward.

THE ETHICS OF JUDGING OTHERS

There is a verse in the Quran: "Believers, avoid much suspicion. Indeed, some suspicion is a sin." (49:12) Suspicion is broadly divided into two categories: positive assumption (*husn al-zann*), which is permissible, and negative assumption (*su' al-zann*), which is forbidden. (*Tafsir al-Mazhari*, Vol. 9, p. 54)

While commenting on the verse “Indeed, some suspicion is sin,” the exegete al-Tabari writes that God has forbidden believers from harbouring ill assumptions about others. (*Tafsir al-Tabari*, Vol. 22, p. 304)

There is a clear difference between forming an opinion based on direct observation or clear evidence and forming an opinion based on inference or speculation. Islam strictly forbids forming a negative opinion about someone, whether it is based on observation or assumption.

The Prophet of Islam instructed: If a bad thought about someone comes to mind, do not investigate it. (*Amali al-Muhamili*, Hadith No. 343) In other words, remove it from your thoughts instead.

A report recounts someone mentioning a person to Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud, a renowned Companion of the Prophet, saying that the man’s beard smelled of wine. Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud responded, “We have been prohibited from spying. However, if something becomes openly apparent to us, then we will act on it.” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 4890)

Umar ibn al-Khattab, the Second Caliph of Islam, said, “If your believing brother says something, never interpret it negatively when it can be understood positively.” (*Rawdat al-Uqala* by Ibn Hibban, p. 90)

RESPONDING WITH WHAT IS BETTER

“Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend” (41:34)

If someone behaves with hostility towards you and you respond by flaring up and condemning them, it will only provoke them further. Their enmity will intensify. Your reaction would be like pouring oil on fire. A situation that began as unpleasant might turn into something far worse—with bitter consequences for you.

On the contrary, if you show restraint or respond with gentleness and good conduct, it will be like pouring water on fire. Your approach will psychologically defeat your adversary. Their conscience will awaken, and they will begin to feel inward shame. Instead of continuing their hostility, they may start thinking about how to make amends.

Reacting with anger to provocation or showing a negative response might provide temporary emotional release, but it yields no real benefit. It is the behaviour of an unwise person to explode at every unpleasant situation. The wise person is one who thinks about the consequences before acting—someone who makes decisions based on long-term outcomes, not fleeting emotions.

Every human being is, by nature, a reflection of the same human essence. Even someone who seems to be your enemy is still a human being like you. Look beyond their faults and

treat them kindly. Then you will see that the very person you considered your enemy becomes your close friend.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PATIENCE

The Quran describes patience (*sabr*) as an exceptionally great virtue. It is mentioned as the way of the resolute Prophets (46:35). The highest forms of success are promised to those who observe patience (7:137). Patience is a stepping stone to global leadership (32:24). It is a guaranteed means of protection (12:90). And it is even the quality that makes one deserving of reward without measure (39:10).

According to a hadith, the Prophet of Islam said: “No one has been granted a gift better or more comprehensive than patience.” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 1644)

Umar ibn al-Khattab, the Second Caliph of Islam, said: “We found the best part of our lives through patience.” (*Al-Zuhd wa al-Raqa’iq* by Ibn al-Mubarak, No. 997) While explaining the hadith on patience, Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani wrote: “Patience is the comprehensive quality that includes all good character traits.” (*Fath al-Bari*, Vol. 11, pp. 309-311)

Patience is neither cowardice nor inaction. It is a positive value. Patience is the highest form of mental discipline. It is one of the greatest actions a person can perform. It represents the completion of one’s humanity.

Imagine standing by the roadside, and a group of people pass by shouting provocative slogans against you. You now

have two ways to respond. One is to flare up and get into a confrontation—this is the path of impatience. The other is to hear their words but remain calm and composed. You hold your emotions in check and think rationally about what should be done in such a situation. This is the path of patience.

Both impatience and patience are forms of action—neither is inaction. The difference is that an impatient person acts on immediate emotion, regardless of the outcome. In contrast, a patient person reflects, consults, and then decides on a thoughtful course of action.

The way of impatience leads to destruction, while the way of patience leads to success.

GLORIFICATION AND HUMILITY

In relation to God, the attitude required is one of glorification (*takbir*), and in relation to human beings, the attitude required is humility (*tawadu*). These two concepts—*takbir* and *tawadu*—form the core of the entire essence of religion.

The Quran instructs: “And glorify Him with great glorification.” (17:111) Elsewhere it says: “And proclaim the greatness of your Lord.” (74:3)

Upon recognizing God, the strongest emotion that arises in a person’s heart is this: all greatness belongs to God alone. This leads one to bow down in humility before Him. Recognizing God as the Greatest fills a person with the awareness that all humans, including themselves, are small

in comparison. This awareness expresses itself through worship, God-consciousness (*taqwa*), humility, supplication, and turning to God (*inabah*).

In Sahih Muslim, there is a narration from Iyad ibn Himar in which the Prophet of Islam said: “God has revealed to me that you must adopt humility, so that no one boasts over another, and no one oppresses another.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2865)

This hadith clearly describes how a person should behave toward others. One must be humble before fellow human beings. Those who have more should not boast over those who have less. The strong should not oppress the weak.

The awareness and inner state created by faith naturally lead one to recognize God as the Greatest and oneself as small in comparison. This same awareness cultivates a mindset of humility and respect toward all people, not arrogance or disdain.

A HOME IN PARADISE

The Prophet of Islam said: “I guarantee a house on the outskirts of Paradise for the one who gives up argument, even when they are right; a house in the middle of Paradise for the one who gives up lying, even when joking; and a house in the highest part of Paradise for the one who has good character.” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 4800)

When two people are in conflict, one way to assess the situation is by determining who is right and who is wrong. But there is another dimension: if both sides continue to insist on their stance, the conflict intensifies. This can lead to the destruction of life and property. Therefore, a person who is mindful of God should step back unilaterally from the dispute. Doing so requires suppressing one's ego, which is why such an act carries great reward in the eyes of God.

In moments of humour, people often lose their seriousness and see no harm in telling a lie. But the person who is truly worthy of Paradise is one who is so committed to truthfulness and honesty that even in casual moments, falsehood does not pass their lips.

Good character is, in reality, the outcome of deep faith. When a person's faith makes them aware of God, it also makes them highly cautious in their dealings with others. Their tongue does not speak to humiliate others. Their hands do not rise to harm anyone. Their feet do not walk toward anything harmful. This is what defines good character—and the one who possesses it is surely granted the highest place in Paradise.

Just as a good seed yields a fruitful tree, noble character leads one to the highest ranks of Paradise.

THE SECRET OF INNER PEACE

Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet of Islam said: “Look at those who are below you, and do not look at those who are above you. This will help you avoid undervaluing the blessings God has given you.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2963)

This is a profound principle of life. In the world, as it stands, nature’s system itself ensures that some people will have more and others will have less. This difference is never going to disappear. In such a world, the only path to peace is to avoid making unwise comparisons between oneself and others.

If someone keeps looking at those above them in wealth or status, it results in envy and a loss of inner peace. In contrast, those who focus on people with less will develop a sense of gratitude—and with that gratitude comes deep inner calm. Their days pass in contentment, and they sleep peacefully at night.

This is a deeply meaningful statement, often attributed to the famous English playwright Shakespeare (1565–1616): “It is by comparison that you suffer.”

Differences in people’s abilities, opportunities, and possessions are part of the natural order. There is deep wisdom in this arrangement. It creates an ongoing sense of challenge among people, and this spirit of challenge is the foundation of all progress. If this challenge were to disappear, the motivation for growth and development in human society would fade away.

A person should express gratitude when they see someone who has less. And when they see someone who has more, they should strive to move forward with a spirit of healthy competition.

GOD WILLING (IN SHA ALLAH)

One of the teachings of Islam is that when expressing an intention about doing something in the future, a person should say “In sha Allah”—meaning “if God wills.”

For example, if someone is planning to travel from Delhi to Mumbai, they should not simply say, “I will go to Mumbai tomorrow.” Instead, they should say, “In sha Allah, I will go to Mumbai tomorrow.”

This phrase reflects a recognition of a deeper truth—that one’s personal will can only come to fruition if it aligns with the will of God. It means joining one’s own intention with God’s intention, merging human planning with divine will.

The reality is that while a person can make a decision and put in effort, the success of any effort is only possible when God’s approval is also present. In Arabic, this is expressed as: “The effort is mine, but the completion comes from God.” (*al-sa‘y minni wa-l-itmam min Allah*)

In this sense, the relationship between God and human beings can be likened to interlocking cogwheels. One cog belongs to God, and the other belongs to the human being.

Only when both gears are connected can the machinery of life begin to move.

If a person tries to turn their own wheel while disconnected from God's, the wheel may appear to move, but it will be ineffective—because the entire machine depends on both gears being in sync.

The phrase “In sha Allah” is, in essence, a prayer. It is a way of asking God to align His will with our effort so that the machinery of life runs smoothly and reaches its desired goal.

Saying “In sha Allah” is like inviting the Creator of the universe to journey with you. And when the Master of the universe becomes your Companion, what power in the world can stop you from reaching your destination?

THE MINDSET OF POSSIBILITY

In 8 AH, Makkah came under the control of the Prophet of Islam. After this, he travelled from Makkah to Taif along with his companions. One of the incidents that occurred during this journey is recorded as follows:

Ibn Ishaq narrates: “he followed a route that was known as *al-Dayyiqah* (the narrow path). When the Prophet of Islam turned towards it, he asked, ‘What is the name of this path?’ It was said, ‘It is called the narrow path.’ He said, ‘No, it is al-Yusra (the easy path).’” (*Seerah Ibn Hishab*, Vol. 2, p. 482)

This statement by the Prophet of Islam meant that although the path appeared narrow, it was not blocked. Outwardly, it may have seemed tight and difficult, but with courage and caution, it was certainly possible to pass through. And if the path, despite being narrow, was not an obstacle, then why call it “narrow”? Why not call it “easy”? Because the real goal is to get through—and that goal was still within reach.

This incident reflects the mindset a true believer adopts when facing challenges. They do not judge situations solely by their outward appearance but focus on the potential within. Rather than being discouraged by the darker side, they concentrate on what is possible. They do not dwell on what is; rather, they look forward to what could be. They give little attention to what is unfavourable and stay focused on what is favourable.

Such a mindset is free from negative thinking and grounded in positivity. In psychological terms, a believer is a positive thinker—someone who consistently maintains a constructive approach.

This outlook gives them extraordinary strength. Even obstacles become stepping stones. Even a narrow path opens up wide.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LIFE OF A BELIEVER

Anecdotes About Faith and Islam

THE CHARACTER OF A BELIEVER

One of the qualities of a true believer described in the Quran is *tawassum* (15:75). *Tawassum* means the ability to understand deeper realities by reflecting on outward signs. Al-Qurtubi defines it as “*istidlal bil-alaqat*”—drawing conclusions through observable indicators (*Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, Vol. 10, p. 43).

In Arabic, people may say: “*Tawassamtu fihi al-khayr*,” meaning: “I noticed signs of goodness in someone’s appearance and actions, so I concluded that goodness lies within them.”

A related hadith of the Prophet of Islam states: “Be aware of the insight (*firasah*) of the believer, for he sees with the light of God.” Then he recited this Quranic verse (15:75): “There are certainly signs in that for those who can learn a lesson.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 3127)

There are two kinds of people in the world. The first are those who judge everything based only on appearances. They cannot go beyond the surface and often form opinions without deeper understanding. Such people tend to act out of ignorance and make choices that lead to harm and loss.

The second kind are those who look beyond the surface and try to understand the reality behind what they see. They think ahead, consider consequences, and act with deeper awareness. This type of person is called a *mutawassim*—someone who observes with insight.

A *mutawassim* has such clarity that they are rarely misled. A true believer is such a person—someone who sees the essence of things, not just the form. This ability to see beyond appearances is what it means to “see with the light of God,” because God’s knowledge covers both the visible and the unseen.

And who can challenge someone who sees with that kind of clarity?

POSITIVE APPROACH

The Quran emphasizes that positive and negative actions cannot be placed on the same level: “Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better.” (41:34)

This principle is repeated in different ways throughout the Quran. It means that believers must always respond positively. In every situation, they should avoid reacting negatively. Their conduct should be good even under normal conditions—and if someone treats them badly, it is still their responsibility, as God-conscious individuals, not to fall into a reactionary mindset. Even then, they must stay principled and respond with dignity.

Explaining this verse, Abdullah ibn Abbas said: “God has commanded the believers to be patient when angry, to be calm when confronted with ignorance, and to forgive when treated unjustly.” (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 7, p. 181)

This Islamic conduct can be summed up in one phrase: positive behaviour—dealing with everyone justly and respectfully, regardless of how they behave. No matter how others act, a believer must consistently maintain the highest standards of human conduct.

A true believer is someone who begins to live in higher realities—whose level of thinking rises above that of ordinary people. Such a person develops a remarkable sense of patience. They experience such deep inner peace that no external event can disturb it. Where others get angry, they feel compassion for people. Where others flare up, they remain calm like a still ocean.

THE SOUND WORD (QAWL SADEED)

The Quran commands: “Believers, be mindful of God, and say the right word. He will bless your works for you and forgive you your sins. Whoever obeys God and His Messenger has indeed achieved a great success.” (33:70–71)

This verse instructs believers to speak a *qawl sadeed*—a word that is right, honest, and constructive. In Arabic, *qawl sadeed* refers to speech that is accurate, well-aimed, and aligned with truth—just as an arrow should hit its mark. It means saying what is just, relevant, and free from distortion.

It is mentioned in a hadith that the Prophet of Islam, while making supplication, said: “O God, guide my heart and

make my speech sound and upright.” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 1510; *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 3551; *Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 1997)

This supplication highlights the great importance that Islam places on truthful and upright speech (*qawl sadeed*). In fact, *qawl sadeed* clearly reflects how firm a person is in their faith.

Human speech generally falls into two categories: One is unsound speech—vague, misleading, or emotionally driven. The other is sound, thoughtful, and responsible speech—*qawl sadeed*.

Qawl sadeed is speech that is based on fact, supported by evidence, and aimed at positive outcomes. It is focused, truthful, and purposeful. It avoids exaggeration, assumptions, and personal bias. It neither flatters nor wounds needlessly.

In contrast, unsound speech is rooted in speculation or emotion. It is shaped more by personal opinion than by objective reality. It lacks the clarity and moral direction of sound speech.

The former—*qawl sadeed*—is speech that God values. The latter is discouraged, as it leads to misunderstanding and division.

To speak with *qawl sadeed* is to uphold one of the key markers of ethical conduct. It is a sign of maturity and integrity—a reflection of character. Speaking truthfully is not just about avoiding lies; it is about respecting the responsibility that comes with every word.

A PREDICTABLE CHARACTER

Who is the best person? In Islam, the best person is one who has a predictable character—someone others can trust in advance to create a positive experience in every interaction. In all dealings, such a person is known for being truthful and reliable.

According to a hadith, the Prophet of Islam once stood near a gathering of people and said: “Shall I not tell you who among you is the best and who is the worst?” The people remained silent. The Prophet repeated the question three times. Then someone replied, “Certainly, O Messenger of God, do tell us who among us is the best and who is the worst.” The Prophet said: “The best among you is the one from whom good is expected and from whose harm people feel safe.” (*Sunan Al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2263)

According to this hadith, the best person is one who speaks kindly, benefits others, brings comfort to those around them, acts with justice, and remains principled and upright in all situations.

This quality of predictability must remain intact even when they are wronged or treated unfairly. Even under pressure or in difficult circumstances, such a person stays composed and fair. Others should be able to expect that, despite facing mistreatment, they will still respond with kindness and act according to their values. Their character should consistently reflect the highest human standards.

BEARER OF GOODNESS

Zayd ibn Muhalhil was born in Najd before the advent of Islam. He was a poet and also earned fame as a swordsman and skilled horseman. Because of this, he came to be known as *Zayd al-Khayl*—“Zayd of the Horses.” In Arabic, *khayl* refers to horses and horsemen.

Before he met with the Prophet, he composed a stirring poem that praised horsemanship and swordsmanship. About his tribe, he wrote:

“My people are the leaders of men, and the
leader is the one
who steps forward when war is ignited by
blazing hands.”

(*Wa qawmī ru'ūs al-nāsi wa al-ra'su qā'idu / idhā
al-ḥarbu shabbath-hā al-akuffu al-musā'iru*)

After the Prophet migrated to Madinah, Zayd came to meet him and, inspired by his message, chose to join his company. The Prophet, however, did not prefer the name *Zayd al-Khayl*—*al-khayl* at the time, connoting pride and warfare — so he renamed him *Zayd al-Khayr*, meaning “Zayd of Goodness.” Zayd passed away in Madinah in the year 9 AH.

This incident reflects the ethos of Islam. The purpose of Islam is not to nurture “Zayd, the Horseman” but to nurture “Zayd, the Man of Goodness”. In pre-Islamic Arab society, valour in horse-riding and swordsmanship was seen as the essence of heroism. The Prophet of Islam rechannelled this

spirit, giving people a new aspiration: to become bearers of goodness, to achieve greatness through virtue, and to offer life to others—not the threat of death.

In contemporary terms, one might say that the central aim of Islam is to cultivate creative human beings. Faith in God awakens a person's creative faculties. Such a person becomes renewed—their thinking rises above the ordinary, their character surpasses conventional standards, and they walk the earth as a soul touched by the divine.

The believer's mission is not to become "*Zayd of the Horses*", but "*Zayd of Goodness*". This is the essence of a true believing personality.

THE GOOD MUSLIM

Abu Dharr al-Ghifari was a renowned Companion of the Prophet. He passed away in 32 AH in Rabdhah, near Madinah. A long hadith is narrated from him, of which the following is a part:

"I entered the mosque and saw that the Prophet of Islam was sitting alone. I sat beside him and asked, 'O Prophet of Islam, who among the believers is the best?' He replied, 'The one with the best character.'

Then I asked, 'O Prophet of Islam, who among the Muslims is the best?' He said, 'The one from whose tongue and hand people are safe.'

I then asked, ‘O Prophet of Islam, what is the best form of migration (*hijrah*)?’ He replied, ‘The migration of the one who abandons all evil.’” (*Sahih Ibn Hibban*, Hadith No. 807)

This hadith clearly shows the type of human being Islam aims to cultivate—a person who demonstrates the highest level of moral character in dealings with others. A person who is so aware of their responsibilities that they never hurt anyone with their words, nor cause harm with their hands. A person who willingly abandons any habit or behaviour that carries the slightest trace of wrongdoing.

In reality, a good Muslim is simply a good human being. Islam is, at its heart, a religion of human refinement. Its purpose is the purification of thoughts and the correction of behaviour. One who truly embodies Islam in their life naturally becomes a good human being.

A life empty of goodness is, in fact, a life empty of Islam.

A UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLE

The most straightforward principle of religion and humanity is this:

Treat others in the same way that you would like to be treated.

The Prophet of Islam said: “None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 13)

In another narration, the Prophet swore by God, saying: “By the One in whose hand is my soul, a person cannot be a true believer until he loves for his neighbour (or his brother) what he loves for himself.” (*Musnad Abi Y’ala*, Hadith No. 2967)

Whether a person is educated or uneducated, belongs to one class or another, or is disabled or not—in every case, they certainly know what things they like and what things they do not like. Now, if each person simply makes this principle for themselves—that whatever they like for themselves, they should do the same for others, and whatever they do not like for themselves, they should avoid doing that too—then all forms of wrongdoing in society would come to an end.

This is a universal key—it applies equally to men and women, individuals and communities, citizens and foreigners. If people adopted this principle, family life would improve, social life would flourish, national life would become harmonious, and even international relations would become smoother.

It is a master key for human ethics—a single key capable of unlocking every lock.

A person who does not discriminate between self and others is a principled person. Such a person nurtures an inner consistency—and this consistency is what makes a person truly complete.

A TROUBLE-FREE PERSONALITY

A true believer is someone who lives without causing problems for others—a person who can be described as “Mr. No Problem” in every situation and environment. The believer is so deeply sensitive to others’ comfort that even the smallest inconvenience caused to someone becomes unacceptable to them. It is reported that the companions of the Prophet of Islam were so careful in this regard that if a person riding a horse dropped his whip, he would dismount and pick it up himself rather than trouble someone else. (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 1642)

The Prophet said: “The best Muslim is the one from whose harm others are safe.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2263) In another narration: “The believer is one who fears God and keeps others safe from his harm.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2786)

In *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Kitab al-Adab), the Prophet of Islam said: “Every Muslim must give charity.” He was asked, “What if a person has nothing to give?” He replied, “Then let him work and earn something, and give from that.” He was asked, “And if he is unable to do that?” He said, “Then let him say a kind word.” He was asked, “And if he can’t even do that?” The Prophet responded: “Then let him refrain from harming others— that, too, is charity.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 5676)

In another hadith, the Prophet said: “The most complete in faith is the one who strives in the path of God with his life

and wealth. Next to him is the one who worships God in a mountain pass, and people are safe from his harm.” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 2485)

The essence of all these teachings is that the highest standard of Islamic character is to benefit others. But at the very least, a Muslim must be completely harmless—someone who never causes the smallest problem for anyone, in any way. This ethical trait is, in fact, the truest sign of a person’s faith and submission to God.

WITH THE NEIGHBOUR

The Quran instructs believers: “Be kind to your close neighbour, your distant neighbour, your companion by your side, and the traveller.” (Quran, 4:36)

This detailed mention of different types of neighbours shows that good conduct is obligatory toward all neighbours—whether they live nearby or far, whether the relationship is temporary or permanent, whether the neighbour is next door or someone you travel with or study or work alongside. Whenever and wherever a person comes into contact with another, it is necessary to uphold their human rights and avoid giving any reason for complaint. A Muslim must be a good neighbour on an individual level and, on a broader level, must also prove to be a good neighbour as a member of society or nation.

The Prophet of Islam said: “By the One in whose hand is my soul, a person cannot be a true believer until he loves for his neighbour—or his brother—what he loves for himself.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 45)

In another narration: “He will not enter Paradise whose neighbour is not safe from his harm.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 46)

In a separate hadith, it is reported: “The best companion in the sight of God is the one who is best to his companion, and the best neighbour in the sight of God is the one who is best to his neighbour.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 1944)

The Prophet also said: “Whoever believes in God should not harm his neighbour.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6018)

And again: “Whoever believes in God should honour his neighbour.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6019)

THE BROADER WISDOM OF HADITH

Asma, the daughter of the first caliph of Islam, Abu Bakr, said: My (foster) mother came to visit me in Madinah. At that time, she was still a non-Muslim and was allied with the Quraysh. I asked, “O Prophet of Islam, my non-Muslim mother has come to me and she wants something from me. Should I give her something as an act of maintaining family ties?” The Prophet replied, “Yes, give to her.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3183; *Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 1003)

This hadith, at first glance, relates to maintaining good relations with one's parents, even if they are non-believers. In hadith compilations, it is typically placed under chapters concerning kindness to parents. However, to fully understand any hadith, it is not enough to rely on the chapter heading alone; one must also reflect deeply on the content of the hadith. Only then can its complete meaning be understood.

This hadith conveys more than just the importance of fulfilling parental rights. It also offers insight into the historical context—it took place during the period of peace established between the Quraysh and the Muslims, known in Islamic history as the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah. As a result of this treaty, non-Muslims from Makkah began to visit Madinah, and Muslims from Madinah began to visit Makkah.

It is common sense that such interactions involved more than just family visits. They also led to discussions resembling interfaith dialogue, which helped clear many misunderstandings between them and made the reality evident to all parties.

In this way, the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah marked a turning point—shifting the landscape from confrontation to conversation. Regions once defined by conflict now resonated with reason and dialogue. And when such a shift occurs, the spread of an idea becomes as inevitable as sunlight breaking through the darkness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT (I'TIRĀF)

The greatest human quality is acknowledgement. It is a foundational trait—a root from which all other virtues grow. A person who possesses the spirit of acknowledgement will naturally embody other moral qualities. One who lacks this spirit will be devoid of all virtue.

It is the quality of acknowledgement that leads a person toward faith—the very foundation of religion. What Islamic law refers to as *iman* (faith) is, in the language of human nature, *i'tirāf*—the acknowledgement of truth. When this natural tendency to acknowledge becomes faith, the journey of religious life truly begins. The practical expression of this acknowledgement is what we call the worship of God.

It is this same spirit of acknowledgement that compels a person to recognize the Prophet as a true messenger. It makes them accept the reality that the Prophet is a model to be followed and that they must align their life with his guidance.

Accepting the Quran as God's book, and the Hadith as the Prophet's teachings, also stems from this very spirit of acknowledgement. The drive to accept reality as it is—the force of *i'tirāf*—compels a person to recognize the Quran and Hadith for what they truly are.

The fulfillment of human rights also springs from this spirit. It is *i'tirāf* that tells a person: “Whatever rights others have over you, you must fulfill them fully.”

Respect, compassion, trustworthiness, patience, dignity, keeping promises, and goodwill toward others—all such noble human traits originate from acknowledgement.

Similarly, all negative traits are linked to a lack of acknowledgement. Rejection of faith stems from denial. Jealousy arises because a person refuses to acknowledge another's excellence. A person commits dishonesty because they do not accept that what they possess actually belongs to someone else.

DO NOT BE UNGRATEFUL

Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet of Islam said: “Look at those who are below you (in worldly matters), and do not look at those who are above you. This will help you avoid belittling the blessings that God has granted you.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2963)

Worldly resources are not distributed equally. Some people have more, while others have less. One person may be given one type of blessing, and another may receive something different. This natural difference in distribution creates disparities between people in worldly terms.

In this situation, if a person compares themselves with someone who appears to have less, it will awaken a sense of gratitude within them. But if they compare themselves with someone who seems to have more, it will lead to feelings of discontent and ingratitude.

To avoid this psychological trap, the Prophet offered a simple and practical solution: Each person should look at those who are less fortunate than themselves—not at those who are more fortunate.

The Persian sage Shaykh Saadi once wrote:

“I had no shoes and felt distressed seeing others wearing them. But then I saw a man who had no feet. That sight made me thankful to God, who had blessed me with two healthy feet—far greater than a pair of shoes.”

God desires gratitude from everyone. But in today’s world, only those who consciously train themselves to think this way—those who become their own guardians against ingratitude—are able to remain truly grateful.

AT THE EDGE OF PARADISE

Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet of Islam said, “When you pass by the gardens of Paradise, then graze in them.” He was asked, “O Prophet of Islam, what are the gardens of Paradise?” He replied, “The mosques and the gatherings of God’s remembrance.” He was then asked, “O Prophet of Islam, what does it mean to graze in them?” The Prophet said, “To say: *Subhanallah* (Glory be to God), *al-hamdu lillah* (Praise be to God), *la ilaha illa Allah* (There is no god but God), and *Allahu Akbar* (God is the Greatest).” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 3509)

As a person moves about in the world, moments arise that awaken their awareness of God. At times, a mosque draws their attention to the worship of the Almighty. At other times, gatherings of remembrance remind them of God's attributes. Sometimes, signs in nature reflect God's majesty and greatness.

These moments bring a person to the edge of the gardens of Paradise. They stir the inner feelings that can lead one toward entry into Paradise. It is essential that a person benefits from such opportunities—to draw spiritual nourishment from them and prepare themselves for eternal life in Paradise.

In such moments, a person should feel so deeply moved that their soul connects with the divine reality. Their overflowing emotions should find expression in words like: "Glory be to You, O God. All praise belongs to You. You alone are worthy of worship—there is no god besides You. All greatness is Yours alone—no one else possesses true greatness." This is because all the beauty and excellence of this world were created by God so that, through them, a person may come to recognize God and His Paradise. One must live in this world with such spiritual awareness that they begin to see glimpses of Paradise in the everyday scenes around them. Only then can they truly partake in the experience of "grazing" in the gardens of Paradise.

REMEMBRANCE AND REFLECTION

Abu Sulayman al-Darani (d. 215 AH), a notable Sufi scholar of the 3rd century AH, once said: “When I leave my house, there is nothing my eyes fall upon except that I see in it a blessing from God upon me, and a lesson for reflection.” (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 2, p. 184)

Hasan al-Basri (21–110 AH), an influential early Islamic scholar, jurist, and hadith expert from the generation following the companions, said: “Reflecting for one moment is better than standing in prayer for the entire night.” (*Hilyat al-Awliya* by Abu Nu‘aym, Vol. 6, p. 271)

Sufyan ibn Uyaynah (107–198 AH), a prominent hadith scholar and jurist, said:

“Reflection is a light that enters the heart.” He would often recite this verse:

“When a person possesses the habit of reflection, then in everything there is a lesson for him.” (*Hilyat al-Awliya* by Abu Nu‘aym, Vol. 7, p. 306)

It is reported in one narration that Prophet Jesus, son of Mary, said: “Blessed is the one whose speech is remembrance of God, whose silence is reflection, and whose gaze is a source of insight.” (*Tarikh Dimashq* by Ibn ‘Asakir, Vol. 68, p. 43)

The true essence of religion lies in contemplation and reflection. These are not merely outward rituals or routine acts; they are living, conscious processes that arise from a

deep awareness of God. This is the practice through which a person develops modesty and comes to appreciate looking upon others with well-wishing.

When the reality of God is unveiled to someone—with all its majesty and perfection—a new light dawns in their mind. Their soul is awakened by divine radiance. Such a person is transformed—inwardly and outwardly. Whether they speak or remain silent, look or listen, walk or pause—everything becomes filled with divine light. For them, the whole world becomes a banquet of spiritual sustenance spread out by the Lord.

This is the kind of person who truly deserves to be called a believer in God. They are the ones whose inner life is rich with remembrance and whose outer life is shaped by reflection. They live with presence, humility, and constant awareness of the higher reality.

AN EXAMPLE OF HUMAN CHARACTER

In the Quran (7:175–176), an example is given of a certain type of human being:

“Recite to them the tale of the man to whom
We gave Our signs, but who then cast them
to one side and Satan overtook him. And he
became one of those who went astray, if it had
been Our will, We could have used these signs

to exalt him, but instead he clung to the earth and followed his own desires.”

This verse describes the condition of a person to whom God provides favourable circumstances to live a life of faith and righteousness and attain reward in the Hereafter. But rather than being content with such a life, he chooses to abandon it in pursuit of material pleasures—a life that may offer worldly shine but results in spiritual and eternal loss.

About such people, the Quran says: “They are the ones who are truly lost.”(7:178)

If God grants a person the opportunity to live a life with faith in God, content with having only what is necessary for sustenance, but the person chooses instead to abandon this and pursue worldly pleasures for luxury, then this behaviour exemplifies the Quranic verse mentioned above.

Similarly, if someone is given the chance to serve God’s cause in a humble role but instead pursues leadership and fame, or if someone has the ability to promote divine teachings through writing or speech but abandons it in hope of gaining political power—or if someone has opportunities to contribute anonymously to His cause but forsakes them for recognition and public acclaim—such people are like the man described in the verse: God offered them elevation, but they chose to fall.

Only by abandoning greed for worldly things can a person truly gain the opportunity to serve God’s cause.

A DIFFERENCE IN PERSPECTIVE

The Quran recounts an event from the early history of the Israelites. About 300 years after Prophet Moses' death and before Prophet David's era, there was a prophet named Samuel, who lived in Ramah, a city in Syria. At that time, the Israelites were surrounded by enemies and sought their prophet's guidance, asking him to appoint a king to lead them in battle. Samuel, now an elderly man, replied that God had chosen Talut (Saul) as their king (2:247).

The Quran then records their objection: "How can he be king over us when we are worthier of kingship than he and he has not even been granted an abundance of wealth?" He (Samuel) said, "God has chosen him over you, and has given him great knowledge and physique. God grants kingship to whoever He pleases: God is magnanimous and all knowing."

Talut was not from a prestigious family, nor was he wealthy. From this perspective, the Israelites of that time saw him as inferior and questioned how such a man could be made their leader. However, they overlooked his other qualities—his strong physique, intelligence, and leadership skills—all essential for effective leadership.

This was a matter of perspective. From one angle, Talut seemed unworthy; from another, he was clearly the most qualified. The difference lay in how he was viewed.

This is a key part of the human test in this world. The person who sees things from the correct perspective finds

guidance. But the one who sees things from a narrow or superficial angle is likely to go astray.

THE LAW OF DIVINE SUPPORT

The Quran teaches trust in God (*tawakkul*); one such verse says: “Put your trust in God.” (33:3) However, in another verse, it says: “Take your precautions.” (4:71)

If we were to understand the first verse in an absolute and literal sense, it would imply that whoever has faith in God should rely entirely on God and make no efforts of their own—for if everything ultimately happens by God’s will, then personal planning might seem unnecessary or even a sign of weak faith.

On the other hand, if we understand the second verse strictly by its literal wording, it might imply that a believer should make preparations and strategies relying entirely on human effort alone.

At first glance, it may seem as if these two verses contradict one another. If we fully act on the first, the second becomes irrelevant. If we follow the second entirely, the first seems disconnected.

But in truth, there is no contradiction. These verses represent two sides of the same reality. The command to trust in God relates to God’s role in the matter, while the instruction to take precautions pertains to the human role.

The principle is this: God's help always comes through natural means and visible causes. According to the law of nature, divine support never arrives openly, without a medium. That is why one who has faith in God must do their utmost and use all available means. If they do not, it is as if they have failed to create the conditions for divine support to descend.

Holding both beliefs together gives a believer extraordinary inner strength. On the one side, they don't fall short in effort, because they know that God's help will come through those very efforts. On the other, they are fully confident of success, because they trust that once they have fulfilled the condition of effort, God's promised help is bound to arrive.

Thus, those who have faith in God strive diligently in their efforts but trust fully in God for the outcome.

NOT ACCEPTING NEGATIVE INFLUENCE

Ibn Mas'ud said: "Interact with people, but do not let it affect your faith. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. 8, p. 30)

Islam does not teach isolation from society. On the contrary, Islam encourages interaction with all kinds of people. This is especially important because a person's character cannot develop until someone knowledgeable imparts the right guidance to them.

Moreover, interacting with others is essential for a person's moral development. When you engage with people, you frequently encounter situations that require ethical responses:

- Someone may speak harshly—and you must choose to respond with what is better.
- You may make a promise—and then need to keep it.
- Someone may entrust you with something—and you must return it faithfully.

It is during such interactions that you receive training and develop noble character.

However, socializing should not mean that you start absorbing the wrong influences of others. For example, a woman befriended another lady. The woman used to live a simple lifestyle, but she was engaged in a very important act of public service. Her new friend, however, had a flair for fashion. The friend repeatedly said things like, “Why do you dress so plainly, like a widow?” Through such repeated remarks, the friend slowly drew her toward outward glamour. Gradually, everything about her began to change under this influence—until she came to fully prefer living for appearances and began spending hours each day focused on her looks, rather than serving and guiding others.

Islam expects its followers to become spreaders of goodness. They must always protect their integrity and positive values. Rather than being influenced by others, they should aim to influence others through their character. They should live

among people as a source of goodness—not as followers of wrongdoing.

SINCERITY AND DOUBLE STANDARDS

A true human being is one who lives by principles—someone whose words align with their actions, and whose actions reflect their words. There is no contradiction between what they say and what they do.

Morally, people can be divided into two categories: the sincere (*mukhlis*) and the person with double standards (*munafiq*).

The sincere person finds success both in this world and in the Hereafter. The person with double standards, on the other hand, faces disgrace in both realms.

A sincere person is serious and thoughtful. They recognize the truth when they see it. They follow a clear and well-considered principle and base all their decisions on it. Every part of their life reflects their inner values. You can predict how such a person will act in any situation because they remain consistent in following their principles.

A sincere person may say “no,” but they will never deceive. They may be firm, but they will not lie. They may oppose but never resort to meanness. They may hesitate to make promises, but if they do, they will certainly fulfill them. They may be cautious in committing, but once committed, they will never go back on their word.

The person with double standards is the complete opposite. Their behaviour is inconsistent and unreliable. They say one thing and do another. They make promises they never intend to keep. Their speech may be polished and impressive, but their character is hollow.

Such a person does not live by principles—they are driven by convenience and self-interest. They say only what pleases others. At every step, they calculate their personal gain. They act only where there is something in it for them and remain passive where there is none.

The sincere person is truly human; the person with double standards, in essence, has abandoned their humanity.

PURE CONDUCT

In the Quran, while describing the people of Paradise, it is stated: “Indeed, God will admit those who believed and did righteous deeds into gardens beneath which rivers flow. They will be adorned with bracelets of gold and pearls, and their garments there will be of silk. They were guided to good and pure speech, and they were guided to the path of the One worthy of all praise.” (22:23–24)

From this verse, we learn that two things lead a person to Paradise: first, acknowledgment of the truth, and second, adherence to righteousness.

When a message of righteousness arises within a society, people respond in different ways. Some react negatively—

with denial or resistance. According to the Quran, this is considered impure speech (*qawl ghayr tayyib*). Due to their ego or rigid mindset, they treat the message as a threat to their status or pride. They begin to think: “If I accept this, I will lose my position or influence.” This reaction is rooted in arrogance. And those who reject moral clarity in such a spirit of defiance deprive themselves of the very path that leads to Paradise.

In contrast, there are those who receive the message of righteousness with open hearts. They welcome it through *qawl tayyib*—with sincerity and acknowledgement. When their inner conscience affirms the truth of what they are hearing, nothing else stands in their way. They accept it openly and become part of that righteousness.

These two responses lead to two very different outcomes. Those who reject the invitation to righteousness through impure speech set their lives on a misguided course. Their actions become disconnected from sincerity, and the spirit of truth gradually fades from their conduct.

But those who welcome the message through pure and thoughtful speech—through sincere recognition—find their lives transformed by righteousness. They begin to live in harmony with their conscience. Their choices reflect fairness, honesty, and principle. Truth and justice become the foundation of their way of life.

THE WAY OF THE BELIEVER

Sahih al-Bukhari contains numerous narrations related to the Quran under *Kitab al-Tafsir* (The Book of Quranic Commentary). In the commentary on chapter 49, one incident is reported through two separate chains of transmission.

Ibn Abi Mulaykah (d. 117 AH), a Tabi‘i and a judge in al-Ta‘if, narrated: Two noble companions were nearly destroyed—meaning Abu Bakr and Umar. They raised their voices in the presence of the Prophet of Islam. This happened when a delegation from the tribe of Banu Tamim came to Madinah.

Abu Bakr suggested that al-Qa‘qa‘ ibn Ma‘bad be appointed as their leader. Umar suggested al-Aqra‘ ibn Habis.

Abu Bakr said to Umar, “You only said that to oppose me.”

Umar replied, “I didn’t intend to oppose you.”

Then they began arguing, and their voices became raised—at which point the following verse was revealed:

“Believers, do not push yourselves forward in the presence of God and His Messenger. Fear God—God hears all and knows all. Believers, do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, and do not speak as loudly when speaking to him as you do when speaking to one another, lest your actions come to nothing without your realizing it.” (49:1-2)

Abdullah bin al-Zubayr, grandson of Abu Bakr, reported that after this verse was revealed, Umar’s way of speaking changed completely. When he spoke in the presence of the Prophet of

Islam, his voice became so soft that he could barely be heard, and the Prophet would ask him to repeat what he had said. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 4845 and 7302)

This is the way of those who are truly faithful. A true believer may make a mistake unknowingly, but the moment it is pointed out, they immediately correct themselves.

This is not something limited to the time of the Prophet of Islam. Even today, the same is expected from those who believe. The only difference is that in the past, people were corrected directly by the Prophet. Today, someone else may inform them by referring to the Quran, Hadith, or sound reasoning. Even now, when a person is made aware of their mistake through the guidance of the Quran and Hadith, they should respond as the early believers did—by correcting themselves without delay.

A MATTER OF RECOGNITION

Toward the end of the Makkan period, one of the events that occurred was this: The leaders of Quraysh gathered inside the Kaaba and agreed to present a list of demands to the Prophet of Islam. They planned to say, “If he fulfills these demands, we will believe in him. If not, we will have a reason to reject his claim.”

One of their demands was: “Ask your Lord to bring back our forefathers from the dead—and among them must be Qusayy ibn Kilab, for he was an elder and a truthful man.

We will then ask him whether what you say is true or false.” (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 1, p. 296)

This raises a question: The Prophet of Islam was far greater in truth and nobility than any ancestor, including Qusayy. So why was it that the people of Makkah recognized Qusayy’s greatness but failed to recognize the Prophet’s?

The answer lies in the difference between historical and contemporary recognition. Qusayy was a figure of the past. Over time, his status had become firmly established in public memory. By contrast, the Prophet of Islam was a living, present figure. His greatness and truthfulness—though unmatched—still existed within him, not yet confirmed by history.

Those who rejected the Prophet of Islam were people who could only recognize greatness after it had been validated by history. They were unable to see the essence of truth in the present.

In contrast, the Prophet of Islam was accepted by those who saw the inner reality. They recognized his nobility and truth without needing external validation. They saw with insight—not just with their eyes.

True vision belongs to those who can recognize a person based on their inherent worth, not on external status or historical confirmation. Whoever waits for validation from time and history remains unaware of what truly matters.

A REVOLUTION OF THOUGHT

Muhammad ibn Jubayr ibn Mut'im narrated from his father: "I heard the Prophet reciting Surah al-Tur during the Maghrib prayer. When he reached the verse: 'Were they created out of nothing, or are they their own creators? Did they create the heavens and the earth? No! They have no faith. Do they own the treasures of your Lord, or have they been given charge of them?' (52:35–37)—when I heard this, it felt as if my heart was about to fly." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 4854)

At the time of the Battle of Badr, Jubayr ibn Mutsim did not believe in the Quran. After the battle, he came to Madinah to negotiate the release of prisoners. Though he had no faith in the Quran, he happened to hear it being recited by the Prophet of Islam. These verses struck his heart so powerfully that he felt deeply shaken—as if his heart might leap from his chest.

Although he was still a non-believer, his mind had already begun to turn toward the message. He started questioning himself and reflecting on the signs of God. In time, the truth became clear to him, and he became a committed follower of Islam.

The companions of the Prophet were all people of this kind. They joined the Prophet of Islam through a conscious, intellectual transformation. In later generations, there came those who became Muslim simply by the accident of birth. But it is clear that such an accident cannot produce the same

depth of character as a discovery born of deep reflection and understanding.

THE MEN WHO WORE PALM-FIBER SANDALS

What is now known as Afghanistan was, in ancient times, referred to as Sijistan. Its capital was Kabul. At that time, a Turkic king ruled the region. He followed Buddhism, and his hereditary title was *Rutbil* (also known as Zandpil). This region became part of the Umayyad Caliphate during the rule of Amir Mu'awiyah. Initially, Rutbil resisted the advancing Muslim armies, but later he entered into a treaty and secured protection for himself. For a time, Rutbil maintained peaceful relations with the Umayyad state under this agreement. Eventually, however, he broke the treaty.

One account from this period is particularly notable. During the caliphate of Yazid ibn Abd al-Malik (d. 105 AH), representatives of the Damascus-based Umayyad government visited Rutbil for negotiations. Addressing them, Rutbil said: "Where are those men who used to come before? Their stomachs were sunken like those of the hungry. They had dark marks on their foreheads. They wore sandals made from palm fiber."

According to the narrator, after saying this, Rutbil refused to renew the treaty and remained independent of Umayyad authority for nearly a quarter of a century.

To Rutbil, the simple and humble individuals of the earlier generation—those from the time of the Prophet's companions—appeared far more powerful than the grand and outwardly impressive figures of the Umayyad era. Why was that so? Because the source of a person's true strength is not found in visible signs of luxury or status, but in inner capability. That inner strength was abundant in the earlier people, even though they appeared outwardly modest and ordinary.

The truly strong person is one whose needs are few, whose desires are limited, who does not chase after luxury or power, and who finds satisfaction in humility rather than in elevating the self. Such a person is free from inner psychological burdens. Nothing obstructs their ability to make sound decisions. They are never held back by calculations of convenience or compromise. For the sake of their mission, they are willing to go to the extent of sacrifice without hesitation.

In contrast, those who are surrounded by artificial comforts often remain deprived of a true understanding of life. Unnecessary luxuries become chains that bind them, preventing them from seeing reality as it is or from fully engaging with it. They live more for themselves and less for their purpose.

HOW TRUE HONOUR IS EARNED

In 16 AH, under the leadership of Abu Ubaydah, a Companion of the Prophet, the Muslim forces reached Palestine. The Christians had taken refuge inside the fortified city of Jerusalem. At that time, the Christians proposed a peace agreement, but with one specific condition—that the Caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab, should come in person to finalize the treaty.

Abu Ubaydah informed the second Caliph of this request. Umar consulted his companions and then departed from Madinah and set out for Palestine.

During the journey, he had only one camel and one servant. Upon reaching the outskirts of Madinah, Umar said to his servant: “We are two people with one ride. If I sit and you walk, that would be unjust to you. If you sit and I walk, that would be unfair to me. And if we both ride, it would be too much for the animal. So, let us take turns.” Thus, throughout the journey, they took turns—one walked while the other rode, and at times both walked and let the camel rest.

According to al-Hakim, when Umar reached the Muslim camp, the soldiers were surprised to see him wearing only a simple waist wrap and carrying no material provisions. Abu Ubaydah, the commander, said, “O Leader of the Believers, you are about to meet Christian generals and religious dignitaries—and you are dressed like this?”

Umar replied: “O Abu Ubaydah, I wish someone other than you had said that. We were the lowest of people, but

God gave us honour through Islam. If we ever seek honour through anything other than what God has honoured us with, He will surely humiliate us.” (*Mustadrak al-Hakim*, Hadith No. 207)

To believe that honour and humiliation come from God alone is a powerful conviction. It arms a person without the need for weapons. It builds true self-confidence—one that depends not on external validation, but on inner strength, grounded in the highest degree of humility and a deep commitment to truth. Others can never take away this inner treasure, and honour built on such spiritual conviction can never be defeated.

A PRAYER

‘Amr ibn Bahr ibn Mahbub al-Kinani (163–255 AH), better known as al-Jahiz, was born and died in Basra. He was one of the greatest scholars of Arabic literature. His passion for reading was so intense that when he died, a book lay open on his chest. Among his most famous works is *al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin*. In the introduction to this book, he wrote the following profound prayer:

“O God, we seek refuge in You from the trial of speech, just as we seek refuge in You from the trial of action. We seek refuge in You from taking on what we are not capable of, just as we seek refuge in You from pride in what we are capable of. We seek refuge in You from excessive speech and

vain talk, just as we seek refuge in You from inarticulateness and inability to express ourselves.” (*al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin*, Vol. 1, p. 27)

This world is a place of trial. Every aspect of it carries some form of test. That is why a person who fears God’s reckoning must seek His protection and help in every matter—not just in major actions, but even in speech and silence.

The real test of life is not what a person gains or loses—rather, it lies in how they respond in times of gain or loss. One must be just as cautious in speech as in action. One should place both their achievements and their shortcomings on the same moral scale. Power, too, must reflect servitude to God, just as weakness does.

In this world, success is a test, and failure is also a test. Action is a moment of examination, and inaction is a moment of examination.

SILENT STRATEGY

Altaf Husain Hali (1837–1914) preferred reformist poetry. When he critically examined traditional Urdu poetry through this lens, he found that much of it lacked meaning. He saw it as filled with exaggeration, tales of beauty and romance, and fanciful imagination. Hali sharply criticized this style of poetry and advocated for purposeful, socially aware writing.

His criticism angered those who took pride in classical Urdu poetry. They could not tolerate someone undermining what they considered a cultural treasure. In response, they turned against Hali and began publishing mocking and hostile articles attacking him.

Hali, however, chose silence in the face of this baseless opposition. Taking advantage of his silence, *Oudh Punch*—a satirical publication based in Lucknow—published a mocking poem. One of its couplets boasted:

“Hali lies crushed by our attacks,
Like the plains of Panipat after the battle.”

This opposition was entirely one-sided and lacked substance—and thus, it could not last. After some time, the critics fell silent. Someone once asked Hali how it happened—how those who had seemed so loud had suddenly gone quiet. Hali responded with a couplet:

“Why ask how the critics fell silent?
They said all they could—and I said
nothing at all.”

When a criticism is serious and thoughtful, it deserves to be considered. If it is valid, it should be accepted. If it is flawed, it should be met with reasoned argument.

But when opposition is driven by prejudice or insult, lacking seriousness or substance, the best response is silence. Answering such voices is like offering wise counsel to a braying donkey—as the Quran says: “Lower your voice, for the ugliest of all voices is the braying of the ass.” (31:19)

THE POWER OF SPEECH

Al-Mutanabbi (303–345 AH) was a well-known Arab poet. He was born in Kufa and died in Baghdad. One of his verses says:

“You may not have a horse or riches to gift your
beloved—Let your speech come to your aid if
your condition does not.”

Speech (*nutq*) is a remarkable gift from God—a power greater than wealth or weapons, if used wisely. Through it, the defeated can humble the victor, and the weak can overcome the strong.

Hafiz Hamid Hasan Alawi (1872–1959) was a brilliant scholar known for his commanding presence and exceptional eloquence. He once admitted that only once in his life had he found himself completely speechless—not before a scholar or a statesman, but before a poor woman.

He was engaged in a respectful discussion when a beggar woman approached and said, “Baba, please give me something.” When ignored, she repeated her request. Irritated by the interruption, Hafiz Sahib replied somewhat sternly: “You’re a very foolish woman.”

She calmly answered: “Yes, Baba — the poor always are.” And she walked away.

The remark left him speechless. Later, he admitted, “No one has ever left me speechless—but that poor woman did.”

Even if you have nothing else, you still possess one great power—the power of speech, a gift from God. Use it wisely and constructively. Even with nothing else, the strength of your words can help you gain everything.

QUICK-WITTEDNESS

Maulana Saeed Ahmad Khan Sultanpuri served as an organizer of the Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind. He was affectionately known as “Dada.” He passed away on 20 January 1989 in his hometown of Sultanpur. At the time of his passing, he was approximately 70 years old.

He was known for his remarkable presence of mind. On one occasion, he was sitting in a gathering at Masjid Abdun Nabi—the headquarters of Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind in New Delhi—when a tall, well-dressed man approached him and said sharply: “Your office staff are extremely rude. They do not show any respect to people like us.”

What followed was a memorable exchange:

- Maulana Saeed Ahmad: “And who are you, sir?”
- Visitor: “You don’t know me? I’m from Punjab.”
- Maulana Saeed Ahmad: “Exactly—I asked because I don’t know you.”
- Visitor: “I am a prophet of this era...”
- Maulana Saeed Ahmad: “If you’re a prophet, then I am your God. And I order you to leave this place immediately.”

This was a brilliant and timely response. While reasoned argument and calm logic are often the best approach, there are moments when sharp wit proves far more effective—and this was one such moment.

This ability is commonly called quick-wittedness or spontaneous presence of mind. It is a refined human trait. However, it can be used in two very different ways. One is to confront falsehood with sharp clarity—as seen in the incident above. The other is to mock others for amusement, which is undesirable.

The first use is commendable. The second, undoubtedly, is not.

AN EXAMPLE OF NOBLE CHARACTER

In Muslim times, Eastern Bengal was under the control of the central Sultanate in Delhi. Occasionally, its governors rebelled and declared themselves independent rulers. One such figure was Sultan Ghiyath al-Din (Reign: 1390–1411), one of the most prominent medieval Bengali sultans, who broke ties with the Delhi Sultanate and established an autonomous government in Eastern Bengal. At that time, the city of Dhaka had not yet developed; the capital was Sonargaon.

A British historian, F.B. Bradley-Birt, records an incident in his book, *Dacca: The Romance of an Eastern Capital* (London, 1914):

“One day, while practising with the bow, Ghyasuddin accidentally wounded a boy, the only son of his mother, who was a widow. The woman, ignorant of the king’s identity, went and complained to the Kazi, demanding justice. The Kazi, perceiving who it was who had wounded her son, was torn between his desire to do justice and his fear of the king. But, fearing God more than the king, he finally sent a messenger to summon Ghyasuddin to his court. The latter, on receiving the summons, immediately arose and, concealing a short sword beneath his cloak, repaired to the court of the Kazi. There, showing him no special respect, the Kazi ordered him to compensate the woman for the injury done to her. The king complied, and, giving her a large sum of money, sent her away content. Then, the case being disposed of, the Kazi descended from his seat and prostrated himself at the king’s feet. But Ghyasuddin, raising him up, showed him the sword which he carried beneath his cloak, and said: ‘Kazi, in obedience to your commands as the expounder of the sacred law, I came instantly at your summons to your tribunal, but if I had found that you deviated in the smallest degree from its ordinances, I swear that with this sword I would have taken off your head.’ The king, pleased to find justice

so impartially administered in his kingdom, handsomely rewarded the Kazi, and raised him to great honour.” (pp. 55–56)

The tomb of this justice-loving king reportedly still stood in Sonargaon at the time the book was published (as cited in the Urdu Magazine, *Sidq-E-Jadeed*, Lucknow, 2 May 1980).

The secret of a nation’s rise lies in the presence of such principled and courageous individuals. A society thrives when living souls like these are among them—and it declines when they are absent. A “living person” is one who places principle above convenience, who accepts his mistakes without offering excuses, who can forgive personal offense, and who respects others even when they have ruled against him.

SEEKING SPIRIT

Al-Asma‘i, ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Qurayb, a renowned linguistic scholar of Arabic of the 2nd century AH, once set out to understand the precise meaning of the Arabic word *damdama*—a word also found in the Quran: “So their Lord destroyed them for their crime and razed (*damdama*) their city to the ground.” (91:14)

He was not content with a dictionary definition; he sought to discover the exact context in which Arabs naturally used this word. He could have simply asked a Bedouin, “In what situations do you use the word *damdama*?” But

he knew the answer would be superficial—something he already understood.

What he truly wanted was to witness the word being used in its natural setting—to hear it spoken spontaneously by a Bedouin in real life, revealing its true essence. And such understanding does not come from asking questions. It can only be gained through direct observation of life as it unfolds.

With this goal in mind, Al-Asma‘i joined a nomadic Arab family. Wherever they travelled, he followed. He stayed close to them day and night, patiently waiting for the moment when a Bedouin might use the word naturally and unprompted. For nearly six months, he wandered with them, and still, he did not hear it.

Then one day, the family set up camp. Inside the tent, a pot of stew was cooking over the fire. The man was inside, the woman working outside. As the pot neared boiling, it began to bubble and overflow. At that moment, the Bedouin man shouted loudly to his wife: “*Damdamat!*” (meaning: It’s boiling over!)

Al-Asma‘i leapt up in excitement and exclaimed: “By God, I’ve found it! By God, I’ve found it!”

This incident reflects the kind of passion and perseverance that inspired early Muslim scholars and thinkers to achieve remarkable things. Their efforts were not motivated by fame or reward, but purely by truth and purpose.

Today, while countless activities are carried out, most are fruitless—because modern efforts are often driven by self-

interest or the desire for popularity, rather than by a deeper commitment. The spirit of selfless dedication—for the sake of knowledge or a higher cause—has become rare.

Nations can only progress when their people are filled with this kind of determination and sincerity. It was this very spirit of dedication that once made Muslims a powerful and influential force in the world. But today, superficial thinking and self-interest prevail to such an extent that few are willing to “waste time” on what appears to be a “pointless” effort.

This moral decline is, in fact, one of the greatest reasons for the downfall of Muslims in the present age.

Most people today are driven by fear or personal gain—but those who make history are the ones driven by purpose and courage.

A VICTORIOUS ENCOUNTER

Maulana Sanaullah Amritsari (1868–1948) was a renowned Muslim debater (*munāẓir*) of his time. On one occasion, he was in Delhi to participate in a public debate with a scholar from another religion. Around that time, one of Maulana Sanaullah’s critics had circulated a flyer accusing him of holding beliefs that cast doubt on his very adherence to Islam.

This flyer reached the opposing debater, who was well-versed in Arabic and Persian and familiar with the internal theological differences among Muslim scholars. He

decided to use the flyer to undermine Maulana Sanaullah during the debate.

When the debate began, the opponent rose from his seat, holding the flyer, and addressed the audience:

“I came here to debate a scholar who represents Islam. But Maulana Sanaullah Amritsari cannot be considered a true Muslim. I say this with respect to him as a person. But according to this flyer—written by a member of his own community—even Muslims question his faith. So how can I accept him as a representative of Islam, let alone engage him in a debate on its principles?”

Maulana Sanaullah responded not with anger or defensiveness. Smiling calmly, he stood up and said:

“My friend is right. But all of you know that to enter Islam, all that is required is to recite the testimony of faith (*shahada*). So I now declare before all of you—as witnesses—that I testify:

Ashhadu an lā ilāha illa Allāh, waḥdahu lā sharīka lahu, wa ashhadu anna Muḥammadan ‘abduhu wa rasūluh.

I bear witness that there is no god but God, alone without partner, and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.

Now there can be no doubt about my being a Muslim. Let us proceed with the debate.”

Although I do not favour the method of debates (*munāẓara*), the way Maulana Sanaullah chose to handle the situation was full of wisdom. Had he tried to justify his beliefs or argue against the content of the flyer, it could have led to a prolonged and fruitless dispute. The opposing debater might have succeeded in diverting attention from the real subject. But with a single wise and composed move, Maulana Sanaullah resolved the matter in less than a minute.

A POSITIVE TURNING POINT

The famous Arabic grammarian Sibawayh (d. 177 AH) was born in Iran and raised in Basra. As a young man, he was initially a student of hadith and Islamic jurisprudence. One day, while attending a lecture by Hammad ibn Salamah (d. 167 AH), a renowned scholar of hadith, he heard him dictate a hadith. During the dictation, Sibawayh made a grammatical error. Hammad remarked, “You are mistaken.” Realizing his mistake, Sibawayh reflected that his knowledge of grammar was lacking and decided to master it. He began studying under the great grammarians of Basra and Kufa, such as Khalil, Yunus ibn Habib (d. after 183 AH), and Isa ibn Umar ath-Thaqafi (d. 149 AH) (*Tabaqaat an-Nahwiyyeen wal-Lughawiyyeen* by Abu Bakr Az-Zubaydi, p. 66).

Through intense effort and dedication, Sibawayh eventually became the foremost authority in Arabic grammar. He authored a legendary book known simply as *Al-Kitab* (The Book), which scholars continue to regard as unmatched in the field of Arabic grammar.

This was a young man whose understanding of grammar was once weak—but he went on to become the greatest grammarian in history.

Every person experiences moments in life where they feel hurt, humiliated, or dismissed—as though they have no place among their peers.

There are two ways a person can respond:

1. One may become disheartened, lose self-confidence, and retreat into helplessness—essentially defeating oneself.
2. Or one may allow such experiences to ignite determination—using failure as fuel for growth and transformation.

Such a person rises again—with renewed effort—and the one who was once dismissed becomes a remarkable success.

A positive response leads to progress and achievement, while a negative response leads only to stagnation and ruin.

THE POWER OF WORDS

Hasan al-Basri (d. 110 AH), a renowned early Muslim scholar, and Hajjaj ibn Yusuf (d. 95 AH), the most prominent

yet harsh governor of the Umayyad Caliphate, lived in the same era. Hasan al-Basri's fearless truth-speaking deeply disturbed Hajjaj, who once resolved to have him killed. He summoned Hasan al-Basri to his court, having already decided that he would not leave alive.

Maymun ibn Mehran narrates that when Hasan al-Basri entered the court and stood before Hajjaj, the following conversation took place:

“O Hajjaj, how many generations lie between you and Adam?”

Hajjaj replied, “Many.”

Hasan asked, “And where are they now?”

Hajjaj answered, “They are all dead.”

With just a few words, Hasan al-Basri reminded Hajjaj of his own mortality—that he too was swiftly approaching the same fate he wished to inflict upon Hasan. Though a tyrant, Hajjaj was so struck by these words that he lowered his head in silence. Hasan al-Basri walked out of the court unharmed. (*Hilyat al-Awliya'* by Abu Nu'aym al-Asfahani, Vol. 4, p. 88)

This Bridge or the Next

Malik Shah Seljuk, the third ruler of the Seljuk Empire from 1072 to 1092, was once crossing a bridge with his royal entourage when an elderly woman stopped him and called out, “O King, tell me—will justice between you and me be done on this bridge, or on that bridge?” (She was referring to the Bridge over Hell on Judgment Day.)

The king was shaken by her words. He dismounted and said, “Mother, who can withstand judgment on that bridge? It’s better that we settle things right here.”

The woman explained that the king’s soldiers had taken and slaughtered her cow. Malik Shah remained there, investigated the matter, and upon confirming her complaint, punished the guilty on the spot. He then personally apologized to the woman and compensated her generously—far more than the cow’s worth.

Worse Than a Dog

After the Mongols overran the Abbasid Empire in Baghdad, many of them developed a sense of superiority over Muslims. One day, a Mongol prince was out hunting with his dog when he came across a Muslim elder. Mockingly, he called the man over and asked, “Tell me—are you better, or my dog?”

The Muslim replied calmly, “If I die with faith, then I am better. But if not, then your dog is better than me.”

The words struck the prince deeply. He was so moved that he began inquiring about this faith—the kind that could make a person better or worse than a dog. That journey of inquiry eventually led him to follow the same religion.

Sorrow Deepens a Soul

In another gathering, well-dressed and respected individuals were seated on fine carpets when a shabbily dressed man entered and sat down without invitation. Someone told him

to leave. When he didn't, they grabbed him and said, "Go on, mind your business."

As he walked away, he quietly muttered, "We came through the same path, and we'll leave through the same path."

That one sentence cut through the room like a blade. The gathering fell silent. One by one, the people got up and quietly dispersed.

Sometimes, a sentence is not just a string of words. It becomes a blade that pierces straight into the heart. It strikes more deeply than arrows or swords. But such piercing words only come from those who themselves have been pierced first—those who have felt life's deepest wounds.

LISTENING TO CRITICISM

Once, the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid (r. 170–193 AH) said to his minister, "Take me to a righteous man." The minister took him to al-Fudayl ibn Iyad (105–187 AH), a well-known ascetic. A detailed account of their meeting is preserved in historical sources.

When the Caliph entered with several courtiers, they all shook hands with al-Fudayl—including the Caliph himself. As the Caliph placed his hand in al-Fudayl's, al-Fudayl remarked:

"What a soft hand this is—if it manages to escape God's punishment tomorrow."

The Caliph then asked al-Fudayl to advise him. Al-Fudayl gave direct and admonishing words. The Caliph asked for more, and al-Fudayl continued in the same serious and cautionary tone. Harun al-Rashid listened silently—and eventually, he began to weep.

At the end, the Caliph turned to his minister and said: “Whenever you take me to someone, take me to someone like this. He is the true leader of the Muslims.” (*Hilyat al-Awliya’* by Abu Nu‘aym al-Asfahani, Vol. 8, p. 106)

If a person has the right mindset, they will take sincere advice to heart—even if it is delivered in a harsh or critical tone. They will judge it by its meaning, not by its delivery, and treat it as a matter of principle, not personal insult.

If even a king can have this mindset, he can listen to criticism without losing his composure. But a common man, if he lacks this mindset, may respond poorly to the same. How someone handles criticism is one of the clearest tests of character. A person who stays emotionally balanced in the face of criticism is a person of depth. But one who becomes defensive or angry cannot be said to embody higher human qualities.

Criticism reveals the depth of a person’s humanity—and their awareness of God.

TURNING POINT

Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, a member of the Umayyad family and a widely respected Caliph, is unanimously regarded by scholars as one of the greatest figures in Islamic history. Among those who came after the companions of the Prophet, he is considered to hold the highest status in the Muslim community.

In his early life, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz was known as a cheerful and well-dressed man who lived a life of luxury and comfort. But in his later years, he underwent a complete transformation. The moment that marked the beginning of this change is recorded in the following incident:

Abdullah ibn Kathir once asked him, “What sparked your turn toward repentance?” Umar replied:

“I once intended to strike one of my servants. But he said to me, ‘Remember the night whose morning is the Day of Judgment.’” (*Tarikh Dimashq*, Vol. 45, p. 151)

When a person is spiritually alive, even a single sentence can lead to transformation. But when the soul has become lifeless—when one’s inner awareness is gone—no amount of truth or reasoning can make an impact. Such a person will not accept what is right, no matter how clearly it is presented.

Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz was about to punish someone who had wronged him. Yet he was moved by the very words of that same servant. This speaks to his profound humility. It

takes a deeply refined character to accept meaningful advice from someone who has caused you frustration or hurt.

To a spiritually dead person, a complaint holds little to no significance. But for someone spiritually alive, it can become the beginning of a transformation.

CUTTING OFF TIES

A hadith on this subject is found in various collections. Al-Bukhari records it in *Kitab al-Adab*, and Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj includes it in *Kitab al-Birr wa al-Silah*, under the chapter titled: *The Prohibition of Severing Ties for More than Three Days Without a Valid Reason*. The hadith states:

Abu Ayyub al-Ansari reported that the Prophet of Islam said: “It is not lawful for a Muslim to shun his brother for more than three nights. When they meet, one turns away and the other also turns away. The better of the two is the one who greets the other first.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6077)

Al-Nawawi, (*Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi*, 1233–1277 CE), a renowned Islamic scholar, jurist, and hadith expert explains that, according to scholarly consensus, it is impermissible for Muslims to sever ties for more than three days—though doing so for up to three is excused. He states: “It is forbidden for people to cut off ties for more than three nights, and it is permissible during the first three.” (*Sharh Sahih Muslim*, Vol. 16, p. 117)

When someone breaks ties, it is usually due to a grievance. Therefore, this hadith clearly implies that even if one has a legitimate complaint against another, it is still not permitted to sever ties or stop speaking to them indefinitely.

Given the emotional pressure of such moments, a person may naturally feel anger. That is why the shari‘ah grants a concession for up to three days. Beyond that, cutting off ties becomes impermissible.

If someone has a grievance that remains unresolved, there are only two acceptable paths:

- Either resolve it through sincere communication,
- Or entrust the matter to God.

But as for severing ties completely—it is not permitted for a believer under any circumstance.

TYPES OF WRONGDOING

Abu Umamah, a Companion of the Prophet, reported that the Prophet of Islam said: “A believer can have all traits, except for betrayal and lying.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 22170)

There are generally two causes behind human error: desire and vileness. An error driven by desire is one that a person commits while overwhelmed by a psychological impulse. An error rooted in vileness, on the other hand, stems from a base or corrupt character trait.

The reason behind what is mentioned in the Hadith lies in this very distinction. When a person commits another moral lapse—such as reacting with harshness in anger—it often comes from the weakness of the self (*nafs*). At certain moments, the ego temporarily overpowers a person, and during that brief influence, they commit a wrongful act. But once that influence wanes, the individual feels a deep sense of regret. They begin to reproach themselves, saying, “Why did I do that? I shouldn’t have acted that way.”

But betrayal and lying are different cases. These are types of wrongdoing that come from vileness—stemming from a corrupt and low character. Such actions are carried out by someone whose soul has become tainted. Their motivation is not a moment of weakness but a deeply ingrained tendency towards wrongdoing. These acts are committed by a person whose inner nature has become twisted. That is why, even after committing sins like betrayal and lying, such a person remains at ease. They feel no discomfort, no restlessness—and no sense of repentance or remorse develops within them.

Wrongdoing that stems from weakness still holds the hope of forgiveness from God. But sins like lying and betrayal, rooted in a corrupted soul, carry no such excuse. They represent not a lapse in judgment, but a persistent pattern of moral failure.

PATIENCE AND COMPASSION

In chapter 90 of the Quran, it is described who the truly fortunate are—those who will receive great reward from God. It says:

“And he is of those who believe and who urge one another to patience and compassion. They are the people of the right hand.” (90:17-18)

Faith in God is the foundation of all virtues. When a person believes in God, they fulfill not only the requirements of servitude to their Creator and Sustainer, but also begin to develop the noble character necessary to live among others in a way that is pleasing to God.

What is expected of a believer in relation to others can be summed up in a single word: compassion—to be kind, caring, and a sincere well-wisher to all. In speech, one must use only respectful words. In conduct, one must strive for the highest standard of behaviour. In every transaction, the intention must be rooted in goodwill. All interactions with fellow human beings should be based on mercy and kindness.

But in this world, it is not possible to embody compassion without also practicing patience and self-restraint. By the nature of life, people will inevitably wrong each other—whether intentionally or unintentionally. Disagreements will occur. Harsh words may be spoken. Actions may wound the ego.

This is why, to walk the path of compassion, one must be firmly grounded in patience. If you wish to treat others with kindness as commanded in the Quran, you must be willing to bear both perceived and real wrongs—unilaterally. You must train yourself to abandon the habit of taking constant offense. This is the essence of patience.

And without this patience, one cannot truly be counted among the fortunate.

TRUE WISDOM

Abdullah ibn Umar reported that the Prophet of Islam was in the mosque of Madinah, with a group of his companions seated around him. Just then, a young man from the Ansar arrived and asked him a few questions. The Prophet answered them. Their exchange went as follows:

The young man asked, “O Messenger of God, who is the best among the believers?” The Prophet replied, “The one with the best character.” He then asked, “And who is the wisest among the believers?” The Prophet replied, “The one who remembers death the most and prepares for it the most before it comes. They are the wisest.” (*Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 4259)

A person’s character improves in direct proportion to the depth of their faith. When a person develops genuine consciousness of God, it reflects in their dealings with others—they become just, kind, and considerate. And that is the essence of good character.

To remember death is to understand that this worldly life is temporary, while the life to come is eternal. It means living with a sense of direction, not being absorbed in distractions, but focusing on what truly matters. And who could be wiser than the one who seriously reflects on eternal success and failure—and reshapes their life accordingly?

Such remembrance naturally leads to greater self-awareness and vigilance in one's actions. It strips away false pride, injustice, deceit, exploitation, and vanity. When these hollow emotions are removed from a person's heart, every step they take moves in the right direction. They gain a kind of strength that no external power can provide: they become truly powerful from within.

HIGH-MINDEDNESS

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (1863–1943), an Indian Muslim scholar, jurist, and thinker, narrated an incident about Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–1898), the renowned Muslim reformer and educationist of nineteenth-century India. The incident is recorded in *Al-Ifadat al-Yawmiyyah* (Vol. 1):

An English-educated man, struggling to find employment, once approached a senior British officer and falsely claimed to be the son-in-law of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. The officer received him with great courtesy and said, “Please wait here.” He then secretly sent a telegram to Sir Syed to verify the claim.

Sir Syed replied, “Yes, it is absolutely true. Please do assist him in getting a job. I will be grateful.” As a result, the man was offered employment.

Sometime later, the officer casually mentioned to the man that he had verified his claim with Sir Syed. The man was overcome with embarrassment. Eventually, he travelled to Aligarh, met Sir Syed in person, and admitted, “I am the one who falsely claimed to be your son-in-law to get a job. I was desperate. Please forgive me.”

Sir Syed replied, “Yes, what you did was wrong. But we can still make it right. A son-in-law is someone who marries one’s daughter. One way would have been if my daughter had married you—but that is no longer possible. The other way is for me to accept your wife as my daughter. So I do. From now on, she is my daughter, and I am her father.”

This was not merely a symbolic gesture. Sir Syed treated them as family for the rest of his life—visiting them, inviting them, and interacting with them as one would with a daughter and son-in-law. (*Tahzib al-Akhlaq*, Aligarh)

It is very easy to be a well-wisher of the whole world. But to take the matter of a troubled individual—especially someone who has caused you hurt—as your own is extremely difficult. Only a true well-wisher of humanity, and someone with a truly generous heart, can do that.

THE WAY OF A BELIEVER

Towards the end of his life, Maulana Shibli Nomani (1857-1914), an Indian Islamic scholar, poet, and historian, during the British Raj, suffered a serious accident: a loaded gun in the house went off and severely injured one of his legs. Eventually, doctors had to amputate it. Poets responded with a variety of tributes. One wrote, “He planted his foot of courage firmly on the earth,” while another remarked, “The biographer of the Prophet has already sent his foot ahead to greet the houris.”

But Maulana Shibli’s own feelings were quite different. Reflecting on the incident, he composed this couplet:

“Shibli’s black deeds demanded only this—
They took his foot, but a voice cried: It’s the
head we need.”

This is the way of a true believer. A believer is never deceived by the praise of others. Even at the moment when people are admiring him, his inner conscience reminds him of his own shortcomings. When honoured publicly, he becomes inwardly immersed in self-accountability.

To measure one’s worth by the praise of others is a sign of superficiality—and a believer distances himself from such shallowness. A true believer evaluates himself in relation to God, not in relation to people. And one who judges himself by divine standards can never be misled by flattery.

Praise only increases a believer’s humility. By contrast, praise inflates the ego of one who lacks true faith. To

consider oneself deserving of praise is to claim a status that belongs to God alone—and this is among the gravest spiritual errors a human being can make.

A believer remembers God at all times—whether in moments of criticism or admiration. When someone praises him, his thoughts turn immediately to the One who is greater than all greatness. The awareness of God’s majesty removes any illusion of self-importance. In this way, praise becomes a means of deepening humility, not feeding pride.

A SMALL INCIDENT, A BIG LESSON

Maulana Sayyid Amir Ali (1858–1921) was born in Malihabad and passed away in Lucknow. Due to poverty, his education ended after middle school. Pressed by financial need, he sought employment and eventually secured a position as a substitute postmaster in a small town called Bahraich. Out of necessity, he learned a little English and began working.

Raised in a religious environment, he was regular in prayer. One Friday, he went to the mosque for Jumu’ah. At that very moment, a postal inspector arrived for a surprise inspection. Not finding the postmaster at his desk, the inspector became furious. Word reached Sayyid Amir Ali while he was making ablution. Unfazed, he calmly completed his prayer and returned to the office.

When questioned by the inspector, he offered neither an explanation nor an apology. Instead, he quietly took a sheet of paper, wrote his resignation, handed it in, and left.

At that time, Sayyid Amir Ali knew only Urdu and a little English. He was unfamiliar with Arabic and Persian. But after resigning, a thought struck him: “I gave up my job for the sake of this religion, yet I don’t even know it properly. If someone asked me a question about my faith, I wouldn’t know how to respond. I pray, but I don’t understand the meaning of what I recite. I have no direct access to the Quran or Hadith.”

This reflection sparked a powerful inner resolve. He committed himself to learning Arabic and Persian. Eventually, he mastered both to such an extent that he came to be regarded among the top scholars of his time. He became Shaykh al-Hadith at Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama, later served as head teacher at the Madrasa Aliyah in Calcutta, and translated major Arabic works into Urdu at the Munshi Nawal Kishore Press—including *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Fatawa Alamgiri*, and others. (Daily Urdu Newspaper, *Qaumi Awaz*, February 4, 1990)

When a person is truly alive inside, even a small incident can awaken them and propel them toward greatness. Such a person becomes capable of achieving remarkable things. But one whose soul is dead—no matter how great the event—remains unmoved, as if they have neither learned nor felt anything at all.

TWO TYPES OF PEOPLE

There is an incident about a pious elder. One day, he got into a discussion with someone, and during the conversation, some harsh words slipped from his tongue. Afterward, they went their separate ways. That night, after offering the 'Isha prayer, the elder lay down to rest—but he felt deeply restless. His conscience began to reproach him: You spoke harshly to a servant of God. You belittled him. Pride still lingers in your heart. What if, in God's sight, that very person is elevated while you are worthless—what will you do then? You had the right to disagree with your brother's opinion, but you had no right to insult him with harsh words.

These thoughts disturbed him so much that he couldn't sleep. He spent the entire night tossing and turning. At one point, he got up, performed ablution, and stood in prayer. But it felt as though God was rejecting him. This deepened his anguish even more.

At daybreak, after offering the Fajr prayer, he went straight to the man's house. When he saw him, he tearfully pleaded, "For God's sake, please forgive me."

This is the state of one who truly fears God.

Now contrast this with another kind of person: if he quarrels with someone in the evening, by morning he is already planning his revenge. If he insulted someone yesterday, today he's urging others to join him in humiliating that same person. If he once takes offense, he clings to that resentment for years, doing all he can to bring the other down.

A person whose heart is filled with the fear of God finds that fear becomes a guardian over him. He corrects by morning the wrong he committed the evening before. But a person devoid of God's fear is led only by his ego. He walks the path of pride and stubbornness—until it leads him to Hell.

TWO WITNESSES

Haji Imdadullah (1817–1899) was one of the revered spiritual elders of Deoband and a distinguished Indian Muslim figure of the Chishti Sufi order. He had a unique approach whenever someone brought a complaint about another person. He would immediately say, “Bring two witnesses.” If they failed to do so, he would drop the matter, saying, “If you cannot produce two witnesses for your claim, then your word has no credibility.”

This is exactly the Islamic method. Islam has established the principle of *shahadah* (witness testimony) as the foundation for verifying claims. If someone makes an accusation, they must support it with reliable evidence. In the case of serious allegations like adultery, four witnesses are required; for other matters, two are sufficient.

This is based on the legal principle: *al-bayyinatu ‘ala al-mudda‘i*—the burden of proof lies on the one who makes the claim. If the claimant fails to provide such proof, the accusation is to be dismissed as baseless.

But in our times, this principle has almost vanished, largely due to the moral decline in social behaviour. Especially when someone has a grievance against another, there's no longer any expectation of evidence. Any slanderous remark about the disliked individual is accepted without question. No one asks for proof. No one demands two witnesses.

This ethical collapse has become so widespread that not only the general public, but even prominent individuals are caught up in it. Even senior religious figures are not immune. In my entire life, I have not seen a single instance where someone is accused in front of another, and the listener responds, "Bring two witnesses, or your claim will not be accepted."

In earlier times, being a respected spiritual figure meant maintaining this very standard—as shown in the incident above. However, today, the concept of piety has changed significantly. Now, even if someone accepts and spreads a false accusation without evidence, their spiritual reputation remains intact. Their followers continue to view them as 'sacred'—as if nothing is wrong.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

When Maulana Muhammad Ilyas (1885–1944), the founder of the Tablighi Jamaat—a Muslim religious reformist movement established in 1926—sent a group out on a

journey of faith, he would offer them this simple piece of advice before their departure:

“Lower your gaze, keep concern in your heart, remembrance on your tongue. If you walk in unison, the journey will become easier.”

In essence, this means: seriousness, a sense of responsibility, awareness of God’s greatness, and unity. Wherever these qualities are nurtured in people, they are bound to succeed.

This is a profoundly important point. In truth, awakening this consciousness in every member of a society and instilling this spirit in each individual is the real task. It is this that guarantees success in the Hereafter—and well-being in this world as well.

A nation or system has no independent existence of its own. What truly exists is the individual. A nation is simply a collection of individuals, and what we call a “system” is nothing more than the combined actions of those individuals. To reform individuals is to reform society. To build individuals is to build a nation.

With this understanding, the only real and meaningful work is that which targets the individual. Any effort that targets systems or governments alone is mere noise—not true reform. Whatever you hope to see on a societal scale must first be achieved at the level of the individual. To raise slogans of social reform or political revolution without individual reform is either opportunistic leadership or pure fantasy. There is no third possibility.

Instill such deep faith in individuals that humility lowers their gaze, that a sense of accountability in the Hereafter stirs in their hearts, that God's greatness envelopes them so completely that they live in constant remembrance of Him. Let their selflessness bind them together in unity. Once these qualities take root in individuals, everything else will follow—just as a fruit grows naturally on a living tree.

A TRAVELER'S LIFE

Abdullah ibn Umar narrates that the Prophet of Islam once placed his hand on his shoulder and said:

“Live in this world as though you are a stranger
or a traveller passing through.”

Following this, Abdullah ibn Umar used to say: “When evening comes, do not expect the morning; and when morning comes, do not expect the evening. Take advantage of your health before illness strikes, and your life before death.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6416)

In this saying of the Prophet and the explanation by his Companion, the true philosophy of life is revealed. When a person is at home, they feel settled, as if they are in a permanent place. This mindset shapes how they live. But someone traveling in a foreign land sees themselves as temporarily placed—and that outlook shifts their entire perspective.

A believer lives in this world like that traveller. They consider this life temporary. This awareness keeps their heart from becoming overly attached to worldly things. Outwardly, they live in the world, but inwardly, they dwell in remembrance of the Hereafter. This mindset instills deep patience. They can endure hardship, knowing it is short-lived. They can bear even great losses, recognizing that gains and losses here are fleeting.

Even the fire of vengeance cools within them, for they know that both the one who forgives and the one who retaliates will ultimately be overtaken by death.

This way of thinking also makes them highly conscious of time. They never assume they will live to see the next day, and so they strive to make the most of the present. They are unwilling to waste even a single moment of their life.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPPLICATION

Across cultures and traditions, the act of supplication—earnestly asking for help or expressing a need—has been seen not merely as a ritual, but as a powerful expression of human consciousness. In Islamic tradition, several sayings of the Prophet highlight this central role of supplication in a person's life and moral development. A few of these sayings include:

“Indeed, supplication is worship.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 18386)

“Supplication is the essence of worship.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 3371)

“Whoever does not ask God, He becomes displeased with him.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 3373)

“Nothing averts destiny except supplication.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2276)

“No one offers a supplication without God granting it—either by fulfilling the request or by averting an equivalent harm—so long as the supplication is not for something sinful or for severing family ties.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 3381)

“There is nothing more honourable in the sight of God than supplication.” (*Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 3829)

“Ask God for His bounty, for He loves to be asked.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 3571)

“Supplication benefits against what has already descended and what has not yet descended. So, O servants of God, be constant in supplication.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 3548)

“Let each of you ask his Lord for all his needs—even if it is only a broken sandal strap.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 3604)

The one who prays places themselves in the position of absolute helplessness, and places God in the position

of absolute power. Supplication is, on the one hand, an admission of one's true condition—and on the other, a recognition of God's true majesty. This is the highest form of realism. And realism, without a doubt, is the most meaningful act in this world. In a world created as a test, there is no deed greater than the acknowledgment of reality.

YOU ARE MEMBERS, ONE OF ANOTHER

The Quran tells us that men and women who reflect deeply on the signs of the heavens and the earth ultimately come to recognize the existence of the Creator through the order and harmony of creation. They declare that this world has not been made without purpose. This realization leads them to acknowledge the true messenger. They accept him and commit themselves to his mission, hoping that in the Hereafter they will be among the saved.

Regarding such people, the Quran declares:

“Their Lord accepted their prayer, saying, ‘I will deny no man or woman among you the reward of their labours. You are members, one of another. I will certainly forgive the sins of those who emigrated and were expelled from their homes, who suffered persecution in My cause, who fought (in defense) and were killed. I will certainly admit them to gardens through which rivers flow—as a reward from God: and with God is the best reward.’” (Quran, 3:195)

The phrase “*You are members, one of another*” refers to both men and women. It means that they are essential to each other—integral halves of the same whole.

In other words, woman is the other half of man, and man is the other half of woman. According to the Quran, they are companions, equal partners, and sharers of the same human dignity. There is no distinction in their inherent worth or rank before God.

There are two kinds of differences among human beings: physical and human. Physical differences exist not only between men and women but also among individuals of the same gender. However, just as physical differences between two men or two women do not imply any difference in their human worth, the physical differences between men and women do not imply any inequality in dignity. In terms of roles, there may be a natural division. But in terms of value, there is complete equality.

As the Quran makes clear, just as men and women are equal in this world, they are equal in the Hereafter. Both will be judged by the same criteria. Their words and actions will be measured by the same standard. What brings salvation to one will bring salvation to the other. What leads to success for a man will lead to success for a woman as well.

What is this shared standard? The verse cited above outlines it: deep reflection on the universe that leads to spiritual awareness, recognition of the Creator, belief in the Prophet of Islam, longing for the Hereafter, migration in the way

of God, striving for His cause, God-consciousness (*taqwa*), humility, and patience.

The universe is a treasure house of signs and meanings. When men and women reflect upon it sincerely, it nourishes their inner world. They come to see the manifestations of truth and light. Through this reflection, they come to recognize the Creator of all things.

This awareness—that the universe has a purpose, and that life is a trust—leads to a deeper understanding: that no man or woman can live in this world without accountability. Everyone will be judged for their words and actions and rewarded accordingly. Belief in God naturally leads to belief in His Prophet, because it is through the Prophet's guidance that one learns how to know, worship, and obey God.

In this context, *Hijrah* (migration) does not simply mean leaving one's homeland; it means that a man or woman gives up, for the sake of God, those things that He has forbidden.

Abandoning what is undesirable and adopting what is desirable is a continuous process that lasts throughout the life of every believing person. In this way, their life becomes one of constant striving.

Along the way, they repeatedly experience states of piety and humility. They learn to be patient for the sake of God.

CHAPTER FIVE

WOMEN OF PARADISE

The Position of Women in Islam

WOMAN AND MAN

According to Islam, women and men are equally deserving of respect and dignity. In the Quran, it is stated: “I will deny no man or woman among you the reward of their labours. You are members one of another.” (3:195)

In a hadith, it is reported that the Prophet of Islam was once asked a question about ritual purity concerning men. After he explained the matter, a woman asked: “If the same happens to a woman, is she also required to bathe?” He replied: “Yes, women are the counterparts of men.” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 236)

The Arabic word used in the hadith to express the equality of women and men is “shaqa’iq”—the plural of *shaqiq* or *shaqiqah*—which means one of two equal halves split from a whole. That is why, in Arabic, a brother is called *shaqiq* and a sister is *shaqiqah*. The most accurate understanding of this hadith is that women are the other half of men. In other words, a woman is man’s essential companion in life, and likewise, a man is the life companion of a woman. Both are equal partners in their shared humanity.

No single individual can possess all the desired qualities, so God has distributed human attributes between two beings. He placed nurturing and gentle qualities in women so they could be a source of comfort for men (Quran, 30:21), and placed strength and leadership qualities in men so that women could find security and trust in them (Quran, 4:34).

The result of this difference in qualities is that, in most circumstances, the spheres of responsibility for both often become distinct. This distinction further benefits them in that both become ideal advisers to one another. From the perspective of their respective roles, one is often deeply immersed in certain experiences while the other remains somewhat detached and is thus able to think more objectively. This creates a situation where, if one of them is thinking under the influence of emotional involvement, the other can guide them from a place of unaffected reasoning.

WOMEN OF PARADISE

The Quran describes all the essential qualities that a woman of Paradise must possess. These traits make a woman deserving of forgiveness and great reward. They guarantee her salvation from punishment in the Hereafter. According to the Quran (33:35 and 66:5), these qualities are as follows: Faith, Islam, Devotion, Truthfulness, Patience, Humility, Charity, Fasting, Guarding Chastity, Remembrance of God, Repentance, Worship, and Spiritual Discipline.

1. **Faith** means the conscious recognition of the Creator and Master. That is, to discover one's Lord in such a way that He becomes central to one's thoughts, takes hold of the heart, and one's entire personality becomes illuminated with divine light.

2. **Islam** means submission. It refers to making oneself obedient to God—living one's life in accordance with God's will. Every spoken or practical expression of your will should be exactly in line with what God has commanded.
3. **Devotion (Qunoot)** refers to sincere obedience. It means adopting the path shown by God and His Prophet with complete mental focus and wholehearted willingness. When obedience is accompanied by inner humility and inclination, it is called *qunoot*.
4. **Truthfulness** means alignment of word and deed. That is, to say only what you intend to do and to do only what you have said. Live among people as a woman of integrity and upright character.
5. **Patience** is a courageous trait. It means to remain firm in fulfilling the commands of religion even if it causes hardship. To persist in religious duties despite the temptations of the ego and Satan. To stay steadfast on God's path despite opposing influences.
6. **Humility (Khushu')** refers to modesty and submissiveness. It is the inner state that arises from recognizing the greatness and full authority of God. It causes the believer's heart to tremble before Him, and their body to shiver in awe.
7. **Charity** means giving from one's wealth to those in need. Just as your own needs compel you to spend on yourself, you should not remain indifferent to the needs of others.

8. **Sawm (fasting)** means to observe a fast for the sake of Allah. It is a form of training in gratitude. Fasting is, in essence, a way of putting oneself in a state where one becomes deeply aware of their dependence on God. Through this experience, a sense of thankfulness is awakened within the heart for the sustenance that God, from His treasury of mercy, has bestowed upon us.
9. **Guarding Chastity (*Hifz al-Furu*)** literally means protecting one's modesty. It refers to living a life of virtue and moral integrity, avoiding indecent acts, and fully respecting the natural veil of modesty that God has placed.
10. **Remembrance of God (*Dhikr Allah*)** means to recall God abundantly. Constant remembrance of God is a natural result of true awareness of Him. Whoever genuinely finds God begins to remember Him in every moment. Their soul becomes so filled with the thought of God that His remembrance continues repeatedly.
11. **Repentance (*Tawbah*)** literally means to return. That is, after committing a mistake, to turn back to the right path. This is a special quality of a believing woman. In this world of trials, everyone errs again and again. In such situations, a believing woman, after a moment of weakness, should feel the fear of divine accountability and immediately turn back to seek God's forgiveness.
12. **Worship (*Ibadah*)** means acts of reverent submission. That is, devotional actions performed in recognition of God's greatness and majesty. Such worship is

permissible only for God. A woman of Paradise is one who has become a devotee of the One God alone.

13. **Spiritual Discipline (*Siyahah*)** refers to ascetic acts like fasting. Its essence is detachment from worldly things (*zuhd*). When the concern for the Hereafter becomes so dominant in a believing woman that she loses desire for worldly things and no longer finds delight in them, her life becomes one of spiritual discipline. This is what is referred to here as *siyahah*.

THE NATURAL ORDER

The Quran states that God has created everything in this world in pairs:

“We created pairs of all things so that you might reflect.” (51:49)

According to this natural principle, human beings too have been created in two parts: one part is man and the other is woman. This is a creative design of the Creator Himself. Every man and woman must accept this design. It is not possible for anyone to reject it and construct an alternative life plan. Accepting this natural plan is success; rejecting it is failure.

This division into pairs demands that each side understands its position and role. A man must know what his rights and responsibilities are. Similarly, a woman must understand

her scope of responsibilities and the status she has been granted in the framework of life as ordained by the Creator.

In simple terms, the man is responsible for managing external affairs, and the woman is the leader of the household. According to this principled division, the man's duty is to handle matters outside the home, and the woman's duty is to organize and manage affairs within the home.

However, to ensure this division of roles works harmoniously, it is necessary that both recognize each other's sensitivities and cooperate fully with one another.

For example, if the man earns a fixed monthly income, and the woman plans household expenses beyond that limit, the smooth running of the household becomes impossible. Similarly, if the woman develops rivalry with the man's close relatives, or considers those as enemies whom the man wishes to treat well, or seeks to sever ties that the man wishes to maintain for social reasons, then these actions amount to disrupting the natural order.

Whenever a woman behaves in this manner, she is not just opposing a man—she is, in effect, opposing the very system of nature.

It is necessary for a woman to be guided not merely by her emotions, but to keep the Creator's design in view. She must acknowledge that she is one half of humanity—not its entirety. She must assess her personal feelings against the order of nature and, where there is conflict, must willingly suppress her emotions and embrace the natural order with acceptance.

The universe itself runs on the principle of mutual harmony. Every element in creation performs its function in coordination with others, fully obedient to this order. The same is expected within the family system. Here too, the woman is required to shape her life in harmony with the household's overall framework. Within this harmony lies the secret to all success and well-being.

To maintain the smooth functioning of the home, a woman must also consider the feelings of others along with her own. She must be aware not only of her rights but also her responsibilities. She must honour not just her blood relations but also her in-laws and extended family. And she must do all this with the understanding that she is not bowing to any man or woman, but rather, to the will of the Creator of nature—because this is what the Creator wants.

The principle of pairs initially implies that the man is paired with the woman, and the woman with the man. But in broader terms, it encompasses all of life. In its wider application, it means that every man and woman in this world is connected with one another. Life is a system of collective human cooperation. Each man or woman is merely one link in this universal chain. If even one link breaks, the entire chain collapses.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of every individual link to maintain its integrity to the highest degree—so that the life system established by nature may not fall into disorder.

DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

According to a narration in Ibn Majah, the Prophet of Islam said:

“Among the things of the world, there is nothing better than a righteous wife.” (*Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 1855)

A righteous woman has many qualities. One such quality is that, by virtue of her unique role, she becomes the best companion and most reliable advisor to her husband. To understand this aspect better, two examples are presented below:

1. The first revelation was sent to the Prophet of Islam while he was in the Cave of Hira near Makkah. This was a completely unexpected experience for him. When he emerged from the cave and returned home, he was trembling, as reported in the narrations. He said, “Cover me with a blanket.” Khadijah covered him. After some time, when his fear subsided, he described the entire incident to her that had taken place in the solitude of the cave. He said the experience was so intense that he feared for his life.

To comfort him, Khadijah said: “Never! By God, God will never disgrace you. You maintain ties of kinship, you bear the burden of others, you support the poor, you are hospitable to guests, and you help those afflicted by calamities.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3)

The words spoken by Khadijah were, without a doubt, the most fitting and reassuring words for that moment. But

the question arises: how was she able to speak with such confidence at such a delicate moment?

The key reason was that she herself was not directly affected by the overwhelming experience. In life, we frequently encounter intense situations in which the person at the center of the issue is unable to form an objective opinion. At such times, it is essential to have an advisor who is not personally involved in the matter so they can offer insight with an unaffected mind. Lady Khadijah's response is a prime example of this.

Islam established a principle of division of responsibilities between men and women. One of the many benefits of this division is precisely this: the woman is engaged in her domain and the man in his. As a result, both remain relatively uninvolved in the other's domain, allowing each to view the other's matters with a detached and unbiased perspective—and thus, provide trustworthy advice.

Through this division of roles, both man and woman gain a companion who can also serve as their most sincere and effective counselor.

2. When the Prophet concluded the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah with the Quraysh of Makkah, it caused deep unrest among the Companions. On the surface, the treaty seemed like a compromise, and several of its clauses clearly appeared to favour the opposition. The grief and frustration among the Companions was so intense that after the treaty was finalized, when the Prophet instructed them to sacrifice the

animals they had brought and to shave their heads, not a single person stood up.

He repeated the instruction three times, yet all remained silent.

Distressed, the Prophet returned to his tent, where his wife Umm Salamah was present. Seeing him grieved, she asked what had happened. He replied, “Today something happened that has never happened before. I gave the Muslims a command, and none of them complied.”

Umm Salamah said, “O Messenger of God, if your decision is final, then go out to the field, and without saying a word to anyone, sacrifice your animal and shave your head.”

The Prophet followed her advice. He left the tent, said nothing to anyone, slaughtered his sacrifice, and called the barber to shave his head. When the Companions saw this, they all stood and followed suit, sacrificing their animals and shaving their heads—realizing that there was no other option. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 18910)

Similar to Khadijah, Umm Salamah was able to suggest a valuable course of action at a critical moment—precisely because she was not directly involved in the issue. This distance allowed her to form an opinion with a calm and objective mind. Had she been emotionally involved, such clarity might not have been possible.

THE BEST TREASURE

The Quran states: “Believers, many religious scholars, and monks wrongfully appropriate people’s possessions and turn people away from God’s path! Tell those who hoard gold and silver instead of giving in God’s cause that they will have a painful punishment: on the Day their treasure is heated up in the fire of hell, their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded with it, and they will be told, ‘This is what you hoarded up for yourselves. Taste then what you were hoarding.’” (9:34–35)

When this verse was revealed, the Prophet of Islam said, “Woe to gold, and woe to silver.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 23101) This deeply disturbed the Companions. They said among themselves, “Then what kind of wealth should we keep?” Umar ibn al-Khattab said, “Shall I go and ask the Prophet about this?” They replied, “Yes, certainly.” So Umar went to the Prophet of Islam and said, “This statement has weighed heavily on your Companions—they are asking what kind of wealth they should accumulate.”

The Prophet said: “Yes, then let one of you acquire a tongue that remembers God, a heart that is grateful, and a wife who helps him in his faith.” (*Tafsir al-Tabari*, Vol. 14, p. 223)

In another narration, the Prophet said: “Shall I tell you the best treasure a man can store up for himself? It is a righteous wife: when he looks at her, she pleases him; when he commands her, she obeys; and when he is absent, she

safeguards his honour and his wealth.” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 1664)

In this hadith, a woman is described as the best treasure a man can possess—and rightly so. Gold, silver, or material wealth may fulfill physical needs, but a righteous woman turns a household into a haven of joy, peace, and comfort.

A righteous woman spreads sweetness in the home through her gentle speech. Her good character creates an atmosphere of dignity and warmth. Her refined behaviour becomes a source of moral inspiration for others. Her innate gentleness moulds her into a soft-natured person, and this softness flows through the entire household.

By her natural disposition and circumstances, a woman is the primary caretaker of the home. In the domestic sphere, she holds the central role. Thus, the well-being or breakdown of a home largely depends on her. A home thrives with the right woman—and declines with the wrong one. That is why a woman is called the best treasure.

The measure of a woman’s success lies in her ability to turn the home into a garden of happiness. Her husband and other family members should receive joy from her presence. Her existence should be a source of benefit and blessing for everyone. There should be trust that, whether she is present or not, she will always speak well of her family, and her treatment of them will always be in their best interest—both in this life and the next.

A woman is the treasure of the home—indeed, the finest treasure. She is the flower of the family garden—indeed, the

most beautiful flower. She is the light of the household—indeed, the brightest light. But a woman can fulfill this natural role only when she is thoughtful and aware—when she understands not only her own emotions but also those of others. And when she is firmly committed to fulfilling the human role entrusted to her by the Creator, even if it demands sacrifice, patience, and endurance.

ABUNDANT GOOD

In the Quran, there is a passage in which men are warned not to exploit a woman's weakness, and to treat her unjustly. After outlining the relevant guidelines, the Quran presents a fundamental and comprehensive teaching: "Live with them in accordance with what is fair and kind; if you dislike them, it may be that you dislike something which God might make a source of abundant good." (4:19)

While the immediate address is to men, in broader application, this guidance is equally relevant to both men and women. Just as it is necessary for men to maintain the marital relationship with grace, it is equally necessary for women.

If a man feels that his wife has a physical or temperamental shortcoming, he should not become disheartened by it. Rather, he should exercise patience and give her the opportunity to bring forth the other qualities God has given her—qualities that can contribute positively to the

well-being of the household. He should rise above his initial dislike and make an effort to nurture the relationship.

The same applies to women. A woman may realize after marriage that her husband has a particular weakness, and she may feel that she made an unfortunate choice. But this view is not correct. One must recognize that in this world, it is not possible for a woman to find a man who is perfect in every respect from her perspective. Therefore, women too should adopt the principle of compromise. When she does, she will discover that while her husband may lack in one area, he possesses strengths in others that can more than make up for it.

Responding in this way is not simply about adjusting to another person; it is about aligning oneself with the natural order. When the issue is not just about dealing with an individual but about harmonizing with nature itself, then there really is no alternative.

In truth, the development and stability of any family—or even society—rests on the ability of its members to overlook each other's shortcomings and allow their strengths to flourish. Those who show this patience in the present world for the sake of God are the ones who will be granted entry into the gardens of the Hereafter.

Although this principle appears in the context of marital relationships in this chapter of the Quran, it carries a broader message. It is a common feature of the Quran to present universal guidance within the framework of specific instructions.

In worldly life, it is essential for human beings to live together. No man or woman can live in complete isolation from others. And since everyone has different capabilities and temperaments, living together will inevitably lead to differences and grievances. In such a scenario, the only practical approach is to overlook complaints and adopt the principle of graceful cooperation.

Often, a single flaw in a partner becomes visible and immediately discourages the other, leading them to withdraw from the relationship altogether. But if they reflect deeply, they will find that every seemingly unfavourable situation contains one or more favourable aspects.

For example, if a man or woman lacks outward charm, they may possess exceptional practical abilities. If their temperament is slightly unpleasant, they may also have significant intellectual potential. If someone starts out with limited financial means, they might have the capability to achieve great success through hard work in the future.

This is the system of nature—and the system of nature does not change.

WOMEN'S ETHICS

Morality refers to the way a person behaves socially in their interactions and dealings with others. In Islam, it is a clear command that at every such moment, people must act with

good moral character. This command applies to women just as it applies to men.

It is obligatory upon you that whenever you speak, it should not be for the sake of falsehood, but for truth. Always speak with fairness. Do not accuse others without reason. Speak only in ways that reflect goodwill towards others. Your words should be used to express truth, not to conceal it. When the truth is presented to you, acknowledge it immediately. Never let lowly speech pass from your lips; your words should always reflect dignity and high human values. Your speech should be filled with humility, decency, gratitude, goodwill, and a readiness to accept the truth.

The Quran says: “To whoever does good deeds, man or woman, and is a believer, We shall assuredly give a good life.” (16:97)

From this we learn that righteous deeds and good character do not only benefit others—the first and foremost benefit of such actions returns to the individual who performs them.

When you speak the truth, you experience a unique kind of spiritual peace. Your personality becomes internally consistent and integrated. When a member of your family hurts you and you forgive them for the sake of God, and instead pray for their well-being, a fountain of compassion begins to flow within you, and its coolness reaches your heart and mind. When your son gets into a quarrel with another child and, in that moment, you take the side of truth rather than showing partiality for your own child,

the sense of inner peace you experience is something no amount of money can buy.

The “good life” mentioned in the above verse is the very source of inner contentment and peace of mind in this world. And it is this same *hayat tayyibah* (good life) that makes a person worthy of the eternal gardens of Paradise in the Hereafter.

Who will enter Paradise? The woman or man who, in this life, achieved that good life—whose mind was illuminated by the light of God, whose heart overflowed with divine inspiration, whose chest became familiar with the storm of remembrance of God, whose eyes refused to see anything but the divine reality, whose hands rose only for the sake of God, whose steps moved only in pursuit of God’s will, and whose tongue, when it spoke, conveyed words of divine love and human compassion.

The Prophet of Islam said: “Treat others the way you would like to be treated yourself.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 13)

This principle applies equally to believing women and believing men. It is a very simple test by which any woman or man can immediately judge what is appropriate or inappropriate in their behaviour toward others.

Everyone knows that they dislike being spoken to harshly, so they should also not speak harshly to others. Instead, they should always greet people with kind words. Similarly, everyone knows that being treated with sincerity and goodwill feels good—therefore, they should treat others with that same goodwill, and never act with ill intent toward anyone.

Everyone knows that when someone benefits them, it brings them joy—so they too should strive to be beneficial to others, never causing harm. Everyone knows that if someone obstructs their path, it feels unpleasant—so they must be careful not to become an obstacle in anyone else's life.

Bad character generally stems from two sources: greed and anger.

Greed means wanting more than one's rightful share. When either a man or a woman becomes consumed by greed, they inevitably begin to harm others. Anger, on the other hand, is the inability to tolerate things that go against one's desires. This is a highly destructive mindset. The price for such behaviour is great—it leads to being deprived of God's mercy.

EVERYDAY LIFE

How should a woman spend her life from morning to evening and evening to morning? The complete framework for this has been laid out in Islamic teachings. A concise summary is presented here.

The very first task is to wake up early in the morning. Women who do not rise early lose at least two of the most productive hours of their day. This lost time may seem like just two hours per day, but over a span of 10 years, it adds up to more than 7,000 wasted hours. And this is just for one member of the household. If we calculate the wasted

hours of all family members, the number becomes even more significant.

When the woman of the house wakes up early, others will also rise early. Then everyone will make ablution and perform the dawn (Fajr) prayer. In this way, rising early becomes a means of purifying both the body and the soul. It also ensures that all tasks throughout the day are completed on time, because when the beginning is in order, the rest usually follows suit.

Waking up early helps keep all the day's activities on schedule. Children get ready and reach school on time. The men of the household get ready and engage in their work at the proper time. Cleaning the house is done early. Everything from kitchen chores to market errands is carried out efficiently. The entire environment of the home reflects alertness, discipline, and a sense of responsibility. The five daily prayers, which are obligatory for every believing man and woman, are also performed on time.

Moreover, it is important to understand that household management and prayer are not two separate matters; rather, they are deeply interwoven. The Quran commands:

“Say your prayers in My remembrance.” (20:14)

This tells us that the five daily prayers are actually reminders of continual remembrance. What is this continual remembrance? It is the constant awareness of God. You are expected to remember God throughout all your daily activities.

When you wake up in the morning, do so with the awareness that sleep is a remarkable blessing. It removed your fatigue from the previous day and refreshed you to begin a new one. This awareness should naturally lead you to words of gratitude.

Likewise, all the tasks you perform throughout the day should remind you of God. For example, when you are helping your child get ready for school and you find yourself thinking, “What an incredible miracle this human child is! How merciful and magnificent is the One who created such a wondrous being!” If your child stirs these reflections within you, then that moment becomes more valuable than piles of gold or silver.

In the kitchen, when preparing bread or curry, you might be struck by the thought: “How amazing are wheat, rice, and vegetables—true wonders of nature.” Over millions of years, God enriched the surface layer of the earth to make it fertile. He combined atoms of hydrogen and oxygen to create water—a miracle in itself. Only after setting such a vast system in place did it become possible for a seed to grow into a plant or tree, yielding food for human nourishment. When you think this way, your kitchen—and indeed your entire home—becomes a place of worship. Your prayer extends beyond the five prescribed times and becomes a continuous state of remembrance, day and night.

As the day progresses, the time for the Dhuhr prayer arrives, and all family members perform it. Then you offer Asr, Maghrib, and Isha at their appointed times. After dinner,

you express thanks to God for providing you with food and water through His cosmic arrangement.

After Isha prayer and completing the necessary household chores, the time comes for you to sleep. Recite the last two chapters of the Quran (*Mu'awwidhatayn*) and lie down to rest. Having spent your day with such purity of thought, you will fall into a deep, peaceful sleep. Waking up the next morning will feel like being gifted a new, fresh life all over again.

GOOD SOCIAL CONDUCT

In the Quran, a comprehensive directive is given to believing men and women. Its translation is as follows:

“Surely all believers are brothers. So make peace between your brothers, and fear God, so that mercy may be shown to you. Believers, let not some men among you ridicule others: it may be that the latter are better than the former; nor should some women laugh at others: it may be that the latter are better than the former. Do not defame or be sarcastic to one another, or call each other by [offensive] nicknames. How bad it is to earn an evil reputation after accepting the faith! Those who do not repent are evil-doers. Believers, avoid much suspicion. Indeed, some suspicion is a sin. And do not spy on one another and do not backbite. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother?

No, you would hate it. Fear God—God is ever forgiving and most merciful.” (49:10-12)

These verses address both believing men and women. The path to well-being for both is the one described here.

How should believing men and women live with one another? The answer can be given in a single phrase: as brothers and sisters live with one another. Biological brothers and sisters live together with affection due to their blood ties. Similarly, spiritual brothers and sisters should live together with affection and goodwill.

Why does a person mock another? It is often because they do not want to acknowledge the other’s virtues. Every person has an innate desire to be seen as superior. That is why, when someone finds a weak spot in another, they highlight it—to make the other seem smaller and satisfy their own desire for superiority.

Such individuals mock others, find faults in them, and use offensive labels—all in order to affirm their own sense of being greater than others.

However, the true measure of what is good or bad, or who is high or low in status, is not what any person arbitrarily decides. Good is what is considered good in the sight of God, and bad is what is seen as bad in His eyes.

If a person—man or woman—truly internalizes this understanding, then their desire to feel superior will fade. Mocking others, ridiculing them, pointing out their flaws, calling them by hurtful names—all of these will appear

meaningless. For they will know that the real judgment of rank and status belongs to God. In such a case, if I consider someone inferior, but they are honoured in the eternal world of the Hereafter, then how meaningless my perception will have been.

When a man or woman harbours ill thoughts about someone, everything about that person starts to seem wrong. Their mind turns negative toward them. They begin to focus more on their flaws than their strengths. They may even find pleasure in speaking about their faults to diminish their honour. This behaviour runs entirely against faith and moral consciousness.

In truth, many social problems stem from suspicion and ill assumptions. That is why every person must stay alert and avoid letting suspicion enter their mind under any circumstance.

If you hear something negative about someone, verify it first. If you find yourself having doubts about someone, speak to them directly about it. It is deeply unethical and contrary to Islamic values to speak ill of someone behind their back, especially when they are not present to defend themselves.

Occasionally, a person—whether man or woman—may fall into this kind of mistake. But if they are truly God-conscious, their sense of moral accountability will immediately alert them. They will not persist in their wrongdoing but will seek forgiveness and abandon such behaviour.

At first glance, this command may appear to be directed specifically at Muslims. However, it is not limited to the Muslim community. This high standard of moral conduct is to be upheld in dealings with all people, regardless of their background. The Prophet of Islam said: "Behave with people with good character." (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 21354)

And the Quran declares: "He does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with anyone who has not fought you on account of your faith or driven you out of your homes: God loves the just." (60:8)

A BELIEVER'S HOME

In the Quran, while addressing the noble wives of the Prophet of Islam, it is said:

"Stay in your homes and do not flaunt your charms as in the former times of ignorance. Attend to your prayers, pay the zakat and obey God and His Messenger. Women of the [Prophet's] Household, God seeks only to remove all impurity from you, and to make you completely pure. Bear in mind all that is recited in your homes of the revelations of God and of wisdom. God is all-pervading and all-aware."
(33:33-34)

At its most immediate level, these verses instruct the wives of the Prophet on how they should live in their homes.

They are advised to give up the habit of public display that was common in the age of ignorance and to live with dignity and composure. Their homes should be centers of remembrance, prayer, zakat, and charity. Their lives should be marked by obedience to God and the Prophet of Islam. Their homes should echo with discussions rooted in divine knowledge and wisdom. The overall environment should reflect noble human character.

Just as the life of the Prophet of Islam was a model for all Muslims, his household also serves as a model for every home. Until the end of time, all Muslim men and women are obligated to shape their homes according to the example the Prophet established during his lifetime.

1. A Muslim woman should make her home the center of her efforts. The home is the basic unit of social life, and it is the woman's responsibility to strengthen this unit. When individual homes are set right, the society as a whole begins to improve.
2. The atmosphere of a Muslim woman's home should be simple and modest, not extravagant or showy. A lavish home nurtures a materialistic mindset, while a simple home encourages spiritual awareness. A flashy home draws attention to worldly life, while a modest home reminds one of the Hereafter. A material environment cultivates worldly desires, while a simple one supports a life of purpose and mission. Showiness fosters superficial character, while simplicity develops depth and dignity.

3. A believing woman's home is a place of worship—where the five daily prayers are observed, fasting is practiced, charity is given, and the names of God and the Prophet of Islam are frequently mentioned. Rather than being absorbed in distractions, her focus remains on spiritual and religious development.
4. A believer's home is centered on obedience to God and the Prophet of Islam. In every matter, large or small, the guiding question is: What has God commanded? What is the example of the Prophet? What guidance is found in the lives of the Companions? By seeking direction from these sources, the home becomes a place of genuine faith and submission.
5. A believer's home is a place of purity. Just as a bathroom cleanses the body, a believer's home becomes the space for purification of the soul. Its environment is marked by dignity, compassion, sincerity, principle, and acknowledgement of truth. Those who live in such a home continue to grow and refine their character, so that when they go out into the world, they reflect the traits of someone shaped by divine guidance.

People often build their homes to impress others. A believing man or woman, however, builds a home that is pleasing to God—so that angels may bring blessings into it, and from it emerge individuals of high moral character. Such a home becomes a source of peace and success in both this world and the next.

In these verses, while the direct address is to the Prophet's wives, the guidance extends to all Muslim women. It outlines how they should live in their homes and what model they should adopt. In ordinary circumstances, a Muslim woman should remain within her household domain. She should not adopt the public displays common among worldly women. Her focus should be on worshiping God, spending her resources in His cause, and promptly following divine guidance in all aspects of life. She should dedicate her time to listening to and understanding the teachings of God and the Prophet of Islam.

This way of life purifies the soul—and only purified souls are beloved to God.

UPBRINGING OF CHILDREN

The Prophet of Islam said: “A father cannot give his child a better gift than good manners.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 1952; *Shu'ab al-Iman* by al-Bayhaqi, Hadith No. 1554)

Although the wording of the hadith specifically mentions the father, by implication it includes both parents. The word *adab* (good manners) in this context broadly refers to all aspects of education and training—whether religious or worldly.

It is natural for both men and women to feel deep affection for their children. This hadith clarifies how that love can best be put to use: by teaching their children the values

and conduct necessary for a meaningful life. Parents should strive to raise their children to be upright individuals, capable of facing the challenges of the world.

It has often been observed that parents express their love primarily by fulfilling every desire of their children. They believe that whatever the child wants should be provided immediately. However, this is not a form of true well-wishing.

A small child only understands their immediate desires. Their thoughts centre on instant gratification. However, this is immature thinking. What truly matters is that the child will eventually mature and enter the real world. To thrive in that stage of life, a child needs to be equipped with good manners and discipline necessary for living well.

Therefore, a child's training should begin right from early childhood so that these values become part of their nature. There are three essential aspects of this training: religion, character, and discipline.

For example, from an Islamic perspective, a child's upbringing begins immediately after birth, when the call to prayer (*adhan*) is recited into the child's ear. This act serves as a symbolic reminder that the process of nurturing the child should begin from the very start of life. This responsibility rests with both the mother and the father.

Moral training means instructing the child at every opportunity. If the child makes a mistake, it should be pointed out. If necessary, the child should be gently corrected. If siblings quarrel, they should be taught to reconcile. If

the child lies, uses foul language, or takes something that does not belong to them, these incidents must be taken seriously—starting from a young age—so that moral behaviour becomes a lasting part of their character.

The same approach applies to teaching discipline. The child should be taught time management, and the habit of putting things in their proper place. Meals should be taken at fixed times. If the child throws a wrapper or piece of paper on the street, they should be made to pick it up. They should be discouraged from making noise or doing anything that causes inconvenience to others.

For proper upbringing, the parents themselves must model the same behaviour. If you tell your child not to lie, but then have them answer the door with “Tell them I’m not home,” it makes your advice meaningless. If you smoke but then lecture them about the harms of smoking, it will have no impact. If you routinely break promises but tell your child, “Always keep your word,” they are unlikely to take that lesson to heart.

Children see their parents as role models. Likewise, older children serve as examples for younger siblings. If the parents and the eldest child set the right example, the rest of the children are likely to follow it naturally.

RECONCILIATION IS BETTER

Conflicts often arise between men and women, sometimes to the extent that it seems the dispute may never be resolved. The Quran offers various types of guidance for such situations. In one place, it provides a principle that applies to all such cases: “If a woman fears ill-treatment or indifference on the part of her husband, it shall be no offence for her to seek a reconciliation, for reconciliation is best. But people are prone to selfish greed. If you do good and fear Him, surely God is aware of what you do.” (4:128)

Conflicts regularly arise in domestic life and within family relationships. Sometimes the dispute is purely emotional, while at other times it is over a real matter. At times, the woman believes the man is at fault; at other times, the man thinks the woman is in the wrong.

In such moments, there are generally two approaches: one, which the Quran describes as *shuhh* (selfish greed), and the other, (*sulh*) reconciliation. The psychological basis of each is entirely different—one is self-centered, and the other considers both sides.

When a man or woman is driven by selfish greed, they view the issue only from their own perspective. Their focus remains on defending their own emotions, preserving their interests, restoring their sense of dignity, or insisting on their demands. Such a mindset becomes narrowly self-focused and disconnected from the other party’s point of

view. This attitude always escalates a conflict rather than resolving it.

The other approach is that of reconciliation—resolving matters while considering both sides, giving up something and gaining something, and seeking to reach a fair middle ground. This approach is rooted in sincerity and fairness. If the first approach stems from self-centeredness, the second is an expression of human empathy.

In this world, reconciliation is the only truly successful approach. If disputes can be resolved, they are resolved through reconciliation. On the other hand, selfishness only fuels further discord. It turns a manageable conflict into a full-blown crisis, often leading the selfish person to lose even the benefits they might have otherwise secured.

This contrast between selfishness and reconciliation is not limited to spousal matters. It applies to all types of disputes—whether they occur within a household or in broader social settings. The consistent historical experience is that no matter has ever been successfully resolved through selfishness. Resolution is always achieved through a spirit of compromise.

There is a psychological reality here: when you focus only on your own desires and insist solely on your own rights, the same attitude is likely to be mirrored by the other party. Your stubbornness breeds counter-stubbornness, further complicating the situation. But if you take a mutual approach and say, “I want peace and reconciliation. Let us both set aside our egos and resolve this together,” this

conciliatory tone will awaken the conscience of the other party. They too will become willing to compromise, even if earlier they were insisting on their own demands.

Whether it's a matter at home or in the wider society, whenever people—men and women—live together, disputes are bound to arise. In such moments, you should follow the Quran's guidance by choosing a path of kindness and God-consciousness and bringing the matter to a close as swiftly as possible.

Selfishness pollutes the human soul. Reconciliation, on the other hand, lifts a person above meaningless conflict and allows them to live for higher values. Selfishness leads to ruin in both this world and the next. Reconciliation leads to success—here and in the Hereafter.

LET TIME WORK FOR YOU

Chapter 65 of the Quran discusses divorce and the issues that arise from it. In this context, a vital piece of guidance is given: settle mutual matters with compassion and generosity. When two people separate, each tends to gather as much as they can for themselves. They believe that whatever is in their possession is theirs, and what has gone to the other side no longer belongs to them. This mindset often leads them to act narrowly, prioritizing self-interest over fairness.

In such matters, both parties are advised: “discuss things among yourselves in all decency” (Quran, 65:6). This approach may seem disadvantageous at first, but the Quran reassures: “God will soon bring about ease after hardship” (65:7).

This guidance applies not only to divorce but to all conflicts in life. Whenever a dispute arises between a man and a woman over possessions or rights, both should be willing to give as well as take. Even if this seems like a loss, it should be seen as temporary and accepted with faith that God will compensate it, possibly in greater measure, in the future.

This teaches us that waiting is a legitimate strategy in this world. The system God has established ensures that every evening is followed by a new morning, and that even evil, when it spreads, gives rise to some good. Even loss is eventually followed by gain as time passes and new opportunities arise.

Waiting, therefore, is not simply passive. It is like anticipating dawn after nightfall. It is a sign of hoping from the divine system for what one cannot yet achieve through personal effort. Waiting is not inaction—it is a mental act, a decision grounded in faith and foresight.

No one can drag the morning into being—it comes in its own time, and only to those who wait. The harvest a farmer reaps is also a result of waiting. He merely plants the seed; after that, it is nature that performs countless unseen tasks, leading to the eventual fruit. The farmer waits as the soil and sky carry out their processes and finally present him with the harvest.

The Quran's statement that "God will soon bring ease after hardship" (65:7) affirms a universal law of nature—one that is always at work and never changes.

If a person truly believes in this divine system, restlessness and despair will vanish from within. They will begin to live with hope and unshakable confidence.

When you are certain of this truth, letting go of your own benefit in the face of someone else's stubbornness no longer feels like a loss, because you believe that God will soon compensate you for it with something better. Sacrificing your pride does not feel like a sacrifice, because you believe its reward will come in abundance. Enduring someone's provocation is not hard because you know that divine support is already on its way.

Waiting is not inaction; in God's world, it is a positive and purposeful strategy. Waiting is not a sign of weakness—it is proof of strength, showing that you have risen above temporary emotions and have the vision to look ahead. Waiting is not surrendering to the other party; it is stepping aside and allowing God to take your place.

PROPHETIC ADVICE

It is narrated from Abu Huraira that the Prophet of Islam said: A believer should not harbour hatred against a believing woman. If he dislikes one of her qualities, he should be pleased with another. (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 1469)

Although this hadith speaks about a woman, it applies equally to men. It reflects a natural principle relevant to both. A man should treat a woman according to this guidance, and similarly, a woman should treat her husband by the same rule. Likewise, while the advice is directed at a believing individual, it is a piece of wisdom that can benefit anyone.

It is part of the natural order that no man or woman possesses every quality. In this world, no one is completely lacking in ability, and no one is entirely perfect. If someone has one strength, they are likely missing another. In such a case, if a person longs for something that does not exist in the natural order, that longing becomes meaningless—because they are seeking what is simply not attainable in this world.

If a man finds his wife lacking in outward attractiveness, he should not resent her, for she may possess strong practical qualities. If a woman tends to become angry quickly, that should not be a reason for alarm. Often, those with short tempers are also people of principle, sincerity, and honesty.

Rather than becoming disheartened, one should look at their spouse with appreciation. You may discover that your partner possesses traits more valuable than those you initially wished for. You might have been seeking superficial qualities, while God has granted you deeper, more meaningful ones—ones that contribute to building a meaningful life and a stable home.

For example, a man may wish his wife were more outwardly charming, but instead, God gave him a wife with inward beauty—and the latter is unquestionably more important.

The same applies in reverse. A woman may have wished for a wealthy husband, but if fate did not provide her with one, she need not be disappointed. A man without great wealth may instead possess seriousness, humility, compassion, and a strong work ethic. These qualities are often more valuable than wealth itself.

Similarly, if a woman's husband does not come from a prestigious lineage, though she had hoped for that, it would be a mistake to think less of him. Often, those with distinguished lineage can carry a sense of superiority that results in poor character, while someone who lacks such pride tends to be more grounded, conscientious, and respectful.

In this world, no good thing is without flaws, and no ordinary thing is without some merit. Therefore, men and women alike should learn to appreciate the value in what they already have, rather than turning away from it in search of something else.

This advice from the Prophet of Islam shows that one should never fall into despair, for in every seemingly discouraging event, God has hidden a glimpse of hope.

DESERVING PARADISE

This world is a place of constant challenges. Both men and women face situations that test their character and resilience. Whatever a person experiences in life—whether gain or loss—is part of these challenges. One of the greatest tests for any individual is to continue living with kindness and harmony among others, even when they may cause hurt or discomfort.

For a woman, one of the most significant tests is her experience in her in-laws' home. While she is in her parental home, she is surrounded by blood relations—her mother, father, brothers, and sisters. She sees them as her own, and so when unpleasant situations arise, they do not leave a deep mark.

Even in the parental home, there are frequent instances of discomfort or friction. Complaints and grievances are part of communal life; they occur everywhere. But in her parental home, such experiences are usually temporary. The bond of blood relations soon overrides any bitterness.

However, once a woman marries and moves to her in-laws' home, the atmosphere changes completely. There, all relationships are non-biological. So, when she experiences friction or unpleasantness—even if it happens naturally, as it would anywhere—the absence of blood ties means these situations feel much heavier. What would have been forgotten quickly in her parental home becomes a lingering memory in her in-laws' home. As a result, the same woman

who lived peacefully in her own home may now feel overwhelmed in her new home.

This is the real test of a woman's character: that she maintains the same spirit in her in-laws' home as she did in her parental home. Just as she kept good relations with her family despite occasional grievances, she should do the same with her new family. The woman who, through her good character, turns her husband's home into a model of peace and love is the one truly deserving of Paradise in the Hereafter.

Often, when a person—man or woman—fails their test in life, it is because they become entangled in psychological complexities with those closest to them. At times, these inner struggles overpower them to such an extent that they cannot rise above them. Success lies in being aware of this emotional vulnerability and maintaining one's sense of duty despite it.

A woman has to interact with many people in her environment—both men and women. In this process, she may sometimes become angry at someone's words, feel insulted by someone's remarks, or feel jealousy and resentment toward another's success. She may begin to suspect that certain individuals are hindering her progress. At times, excessive attachment and partiality toward her own children can push her toward irrational decisions.

These emotional patterns can be damaging to both personal well-being and one's ability to lead a balanced, fulfilling life. It is important to rise above such feelings and move

forward. Failing to do so may prevent a person from living up to the positive role life has made possible for them.

History offers many examples of women who made lasting contributions—both within their families and in the wider world. These were individuals of strong character who succeeded in overcoming emotional and psychological barriers.

This principle is not limited to women. It applies equally to men. Men, too, should treat their partners the way they would like to be treated. This idea is echoed in a well-known saying: “None of you truly believes until he wishes for others what he wishes for himself.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 13875)

Becoming caught up in grievances only hinders your path to growth. But ignoring complaints and treating others well leads to the highest ranks of success.

MISUNDERSTANDING

In *Sahih Muslim*, the second most authentic collection of hadith compiled by Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj (d. 875), a significant incident is narrated. Ibn Abi Mulaykah reports that Aisha, the wife of the Prophet of Islam, once said: “One night I could not find the Prophet by my side. I assumed he had gone to one of his other wives, so I went looking for him. When I returned, I found him in bowing or prostration, saying: ‘Glory be to You, O God, and all praise is

Yours. There is no deity except You.’ Seeing this, I said, ‘I was thinking one thing while you were engaged in something entirely different.’” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 485)

This incident demonstrates how dangerous a misunderstanding can be. Aisha, despite being one of the most virtuous women and the Prophet of Islam being the greatest of all prophets, still fell into a misconception that had no basis in reality.

When Aisha did not find the Prophet in her room late at night, she assumed he had gone to another wife. In truth, he was at the mosque, deeply engaged in prayer and remembrance of God. It was simply a moment of assumption driven by absence, in a context that seemed familiar—but it led to an entirely incorrect conclusion.

Misunderstandings often arise due to superficial similarities. Yet, this incident clearly illustrates how baseless such assumptions can be, even when they seem plausible.

In family life, many conflicts and breakdowns—including those that eventually damage the entire family structure—are rooted in misunderstandings. If people would sincerely investigate the matter at the first sign of confusion, they would often find the issue entirely unfounded, and the problem could be resolved early on. However, most people do not take the time to verify. As a result, a baseless suspicion snowballs into serious discord.

This event should serve as a powerful lesson for every man and woman. If a noble and revered woman like Aisha could fall into misunderstanding, then ordinary

people are even more susceptible. Therefore, whenever a negative assumption enters one's mind, it should never be held onto. It must be examined thoroughly, and whatever truth emerges should be accepted without resistance. This attitude will protect the home from disorder and conflict.

The danger of misunderstanding is not limited to the disruption of family life—it is also a serious moral failing. To assume something about someone without clear evidence is highly disliked in the sight of God. In fact, such behaviour may even put all of one's good deeds at risk.

Moreover, the habit of accepting suspicion without verification damages a person's character. A woman or man who easily falls into suspicion and never clears their mind of it will gradually become shallow, lacking goodwill toward others, and disconnected from reality. Such individuals cannot expect to achieve lasting success in this world.

Misunderstanding is a silent killer in human relationships. It creates enmity, divides communities, and can lead to devastating outcomes. Fortunately, the remedy for this dangerous ailment is simple: investigation. Whenever you feel suspicious about someone, do not act on it immediately. Instead, seek clarification through direct and reliable means. Once you do, it is very likely that the misunderstanding will disappear—protecting you both from sin and from taking a wrong step.

BACKBITING IS FORBIDDEN

The Quran offers believers certain moral instructions that, if followed, can purify a society of harmful traits at the individual level. Among these is the following guidance:

“Believers, avoid much suspicion. Indeed, some suspicion is a sin. And do not spy on one another, nor backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? No, you would hate it. So fear God. God is ever forgiving and most merciful.” (Quran, 49:12)

Backbiting means speaking ill of someone in their absence. In the verse above, backbiting is likened to eating the flesh of a dead person—a graphic metaphor that shows how detestable this act is in the sight of God.

There is a narration in which a man asked the Prophet of Islam, “What is backbiting?” The Prophet replied, “It is to say something about your brother that he would dislike if he heard it.” The man then asked, “Even if what I say is true?” The Prophet responded, “If what you say is false, then that is slander.” (*Muwatta of Malik*, Hadith No. 2083)

Today, backbiting has become one of the most widespread social ills, particularly within households. It is often observed that when groups—especially women—gather, conversations quickly turn to complaints about others. These discussions fall squarely under the definition of backbiting: speaking negatively about someone behind their back when that person is not present to respond. This habit

is now so common that very few people, especially women, can be found who are entirely free from it.

Commenting on this verse, Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani writes:

“What fuels division and conflict most are these very behaviours. One group becomes so suspicious of another that it leaves no room for positive assumptions. Even if someone’s words allow for countless interpretations of goodwill and only one that implies wrongdoing, a suspicious mind will always assume the worst. That assumption is then treated as fact, and accusations and blame follow. Not only that—people begin actively searching for others’ faults, just to expose and ridicule them. Backbiting becomes the centerpiece of their gatherings. The Quran forbids all of this. If Muslims were to follow this guidance, conflicts would not escalate beyond control and would soon get resolved. In fact, such issues would disappear within days.” (*Tafsir Usmani*, p. 671)

This verse from Surah Al-Hujurat addresses both men and women. It instructs us not to form negative opinions about others based solely on suspicion. If one chooses to assume the best, no harm is done to the family or community. But forming bad opinions without evidence can cause serious damage.

The harm caused by backbiting and constant complaining is immense. In any home or community where people frequently speak ill of others, unity is lost and goodwill fades. Even for one's own moral and personal development, it is essential to guard the tongue against backbiting, gossip, and slander. Just as eating rotting flesh would harm the body, habitual backbiting corrupts the soul. A person who regularly indulges in such behaviour fosters a toxic personality, eventually losing all inner beauty and dignity.

HAJAR: THE MOTHER OF ISHMAEL

In the structure of life, a woman may outwardly appear to represent only half of the whole. Yet, in practical terms, she holds a central and indispensable role. As Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869), the French author, poet, and statesman, rightly said: “There is a woman at the beginning of all great things.”

A shining example from ancient history is the remarkable woman known as Hajar (Hagar), who lived around the 20th century BCE. Through her extraordinary sacrifice, a noble lineage emerged in the Arabian desert. This lineage would later lead to the mission of the Prophet of Islam and ultimately drive one of the greatest revolutions in human history.

One of the rituals of Hajj is known as *Sa'i*, performed between the hills of Safa and Marwah, which are approximately 395 meters apart. In addition to those performing Hajj, Muslims from around the world who come for Umrah also perform this ritual after *Tawaf* (the circumambulation of the Kaaba). Thus, the practice of *Sa'i* continues throughout the year.

What is this *Sa'i* that Muslims, young and old, faithfully perform? It is a reenactment of the steps taken by Hajar. When Prophet Abraham left Hajar and her infant son in the desert near Makkah, they had only a small pouch of water. When it ran dry, she ran back and forth between the two hills seven times in search of water. This running became part of her great sacrifice. God valued her act so highly that He made it an essential rite of Hajj—obligatory for all Muslims to follow her footsteps during both Hajj and Umrah.

Through Hajar's sacrifice, a new chapter in history began. She laid the foundation for what would become one of the greatest transformations in human civilization. In that sense, she holds the status of a founder of revolution in human history. It was through this sacrifice that all people were commanded to follow her example.

After the time of Adam—the first human being and the first prophet—people continued to follow the path of monotheism for a long period. Over time, however, awareness of the concept of monotheism began to fade. As a result, polytheism gradually spread and became part of the cultural landscape.

In ancient times, polytheism had become so deeply embedded in human society that it was considered part of civilization itself. Entire cultures were shaped by polytheistic thinking. As a result, those who believed in monotheism were constantly subjected to religious persecution. Thousands of prophets were sent, one after another, to call people toward monotheism. But due to long-standing cultural conditioning, people resisted change. The message of monotheism remained confined to intellectual circles—it could not spark a true revolution, because a committed team of believers had not yet been formed.

Following divine revelation, Prophet Abraham developed a new strategy: to establish a new generation in an uninhabited land, far removed from the cultural pressures of existing civilization, where this generation could grow in a natural environment and preserve its moral and spiritual purity. This generation would then receive the message of monotheism and produce individuals capable of launching a global movement.

Accordingly, four thousand years ago, Hajar was settled in the Arabian desert with her infant son Ishmael. As Ishmael grew, he married, and through his descendants, a new community emerged. Over generations, this lineage developed into what became known as the *Banu Isma'il* (Children of Ishmael). Eventually, from among them, Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Abdul Muttalib was born. He gathered a committed team from within this community and, through unwavering struggle, elevated the call to

monotheism from an intellectual belief to a transformative global revolution.

The beginning of this vast historical plan lies in the sacrifice of a believing woman. Hajar settled in the desert of Makkah with her child and became the starting point of a divine mission. It is in honour of her role that Muslims around the world perform *Sa'i* between Safa and Marwah, retracing her steps during Hajj and Umrah.

This episode reveals the profound role a woman can play when she is resolute. Her determination and sacrifice can become the foundation for meaningful and lasting change.

KHADIJAH: THE PROPHET'S FIRST COMPANION

The Prophet of Islam married a total of eleven women during his lifetime. These women are honoured with the title *Mothers of the Believers*. His first wife was Khadijah bint Khuwaylid. She was not only his first wife but also the first person to embrace Islam.

Khadijah was a wealthy woman who lived in Makkah as a widow. During this period, she entrusted the Prophet of Islam with her trade goods and sent him on a business trip to Syria. This arrangement, following the customs of the time, was based on a financial agreement. Upon his return, the Prophet reported profits greater than what others had earned. Khadijah, being noble and appreciative,

rewarded him with double the usual payment—two camels instead of one.

Impressed by his honesty and conduct, she grew inclined toward him. Through an elderly woman of Makkah, she sent him a proposal of marriage. At that time, the Prophet was under the guardianship of his uncle, Abu Talib. After consulting him, the Prophet accepted the proposal. Abu Talib officiated the marriage in the presence of family members. At the time, Khadijah was 40 years old, and the Prophet was 25.

When the Prophet turned 40, the angel Gabriel came to him in the Cave of Hira and delivered the first revelation, informing him that God had appointed him as His Messenger. Upon returning home, the Prophet shared this extraordinary experience first with Khadijah. Being intelligent and upright, she had no hesitation in affirming the truth of his experience.

Afterward, Khadijah wrapped herself in a cloak and went to her cousin Waraqah ibn Nawfal, who had embraced Christianity and studied the Torah and the Gospel. When she told him what the Prophet had experienced in the cave, Waraqah replied, “O Khadijah, if what you say is true, then this is the same noble angel (Namus Akbar) who came to Moses. Indeed, Muhammad is the prophet of this nation.” (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 1, p. 238)

Until then, Khadijah had only been his wife. From that point on, she became his partner in the prophetic mission. She supported him in every possible way, handed over

all her wealth to him, and endured every hardship by his side. She even spent three extremely difficult years with him in the valley of Abu Talib. Yet not once did she utter a word of complaint.

According to *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*, Abu Hurairah reported that one day in Makkah, the angel Gabriel came to the Prophet and said:

“O Messenger of God, Khadijah is coming to you with a dish of food. When she arrives, convey to her greetings of peace from her Lord and from me. And give her the glad tidings of a palace in Paradise made of pearls, where there will be no noise and no fatigue.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3820; *Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2433)

This glad tidings came at a time when the Quraysh were severely harassing the Prophet, and Khadijah suffered alongside him. They would create disturbances near their home, place thorns in the Prophet’s path, and subject them both to various forms of harm. Khadijah’s previously peaceful and comfortable life had been upended. Her marriage to the Prophet was not simply a union—it was a conscious decision to share a life of struggle and hardship.

It was during this difficult period that she received this divine assurance. Through it, God directly comforted her, letting her know that although people were troubling her in this world, she had no reason to worry. In the eternal life of the Hereafter, a peaceful and luxurious palace made of pearls awaited her—free from all noise and distress.

Khadijah received this reward because she lived a life of unwavering loyalty to the Prophet of Islam. She never once expressed dissatisfaction or doubt. When he declared his prophethood, she immediately believed him without hesitation. She remained his steadfast companion in his mission until the very end.

AISHA: A LEGACY OF KNOWLEDGE AND SIMPLICITY

Aisha was the daughter of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq. She was born in Makkah eight years before the migration (*Hijrah*) and passed away in the year 58 AH at the age of 66.

After the passing of Khadijah, Khawla bint Hakim approached Abu Bakr on behalf of the Prophet of Islam with a marriage proposal for Aisha. Abu Bakr replied that Mut'im ibn 'Adi had previously proposed a marriage between his son Jubayr and Aisha, and he had accepted it. He added, "By God, Abu Bakr has never gone back on a promise."

Later, Abu Bakr went to Mut'im to discuss the matter. Mut'im asked his wife for her opinion. She said, addressing Abu Bakr, "If my son marries your daughter, I fear he may abandon our ancestral faith and adopt yours (Islam)." Abu Bakr then turned to Mut'im, who replied, "You heard what my wife said."

In this way, both Mut'im and his wife declined the proposal. Abu Bakr then understood that he was no longer bound

by the earlier promise. He said to Khawlah, “I accept your proposal.” (*Dala’il al-Nubuwwah* by al-Bayhaqi, Vol. 2, pp. 411–412). Later, at the appointed time, the Prophet of Islam went to Abu Bakr’s house, where his marriage to Aisha took place. The dowry (mahr) was set at four hundred dirhams. (*Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra* by Ibn Sa’d, Vol. 8, p. 63)

This event offers a valuable lesson: if a social arrangement falls through, one should not lose heart—it may be a doorway to something greater. Aisha’s proposed marriage to a well-known young man of Makkah did not materialize, but she was later honoured with becoming the wife of the Prophet of Islam.

Aisha was much younger than the Prophet, which is why she lived for nearly fifty years after his passing. This age difference served a great purpose. Aisha possessed a sharp intellect and a unique ability to absorb knowledge. Through this marriage, her natural talents became a lasting source of benefit to the entire Muslim community.

Aisha lived with the Prophet for about ten years. During this time, she observed him day and night, listened carefully to his words, and closely followed his actions. A vast amount of knowledge and wisdom was preserved in her memory. After the Prophet’s passing, she shared this knowledge with others. For nearly half a century, she served as a living source of prophetic traditions and Islamic guidance.

The scholar Ibn Hajar (1372–1449 CE), a classic Islamic scholar, writes that Aisha was born about eight years before the Hijrah. She was around eighteen at the time of the

Prophet's death and lived for another fifty years. Many people acquired knowledge from her, and a large portion of Islamic teachings and etiquettes were transmitted through her. It is even said that about one-fourth of Islamic jurisprudence was narrated by her. She passed away in 58 AH, during the rule of Amir Muawiya. (*Fath al-Bari*, Vol. 7, p. 134)

Aisha is known not only for narrating a significant number of prophetic sayings, but also for the remarkable attentiveness with which she observed and reflected on the Prophet's words and actions. She listened with great care, observed with full focus, and used her God-given intellect to reflect on their deeper meanings. Her statements are rich in insight and wisdom. For example, she once said: "Whenever the Prophet had to choose between two options, he always chose the easier one." (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 24549) This brief observation carries profound meaning.

Aisha used her intelligence to connect human beings with their Creator. She lived a life that could truly be described as one of simple living and high thinking. In later years, large sums of wealth would sometimes reach her, yet she would give it all away in charity and continue to live simply. Once, Abdullah ibn Zubayr—Aisha's nephew and the son of her sister Asma—sent her 180,000 dirhams. By evening, she had given all of it away in charity. That day, she was fasting, and there was nothing in the house except bread and olive oil. Her maid remarked, "It would have been better if you had saved a few dirhams to buy something for the iftar meal."

Aisha replied, “Had you reminded me earlier, I would have done so.” (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa’d*, Vol. 10, p. 66)

Not becoming too attached to this world is the doorway to true wisdom. Anyone who seeks divine insight and Islamic understanding must live a life free from excessive attachment to material things.

THE POWER OF FAITH

Sheikh Hameeduddin Abu Hakim Quraishi (570–737 AH) was born into a family that ruled over the regions of Kech and Makran. After the death of his father, Sultan Bahauddin, he ascended the throne and ruled with grandeur for 21 years. According to *Zikr-e-Karam*, a minor incident in his life completely changed its course—transforming him from a sultan into a spiritual guide.

During his reign, Sheikh Hameeduddin would often rest at midday in one of his gardens. A palace stood within the garden, and a Muslim maid named Noonit was responsible for its upkeep. Her duty was to prepare the bed every day before the Sheikh arrived for his rest.

It is said that one day, before the Sheikh arrived, Noonit laid out the bed as usual. Finding it particularly comfortable, she decided to lie down for a moment—and accidentally fell asleep. When Sheikh Hameeduddin arrived and found the maid asleep on his bed, he became furious. He immediately

ordered that she be punished with a hundred lashes for her perceived disrespect.

The punishment was carried out at once. But this was no ordinary maid—she was a woman of deep faith and conviction. To Sheikh Hameeduddin’s surprise, rather than scream or plead, she laughed at every lash. Shocked, he stopped the punishment and asked her why she was laughing.

With calm dignity, the maid replied: “I thought to myself—if sleeping unintentionally on a soft bed brings such punishment, what will be the fate of those who sleep on such comfort every day and by choice?”

Her words struck the Sheikh with such force that his entire outlook changed. He renounced his royal position and chose the path of spiritual devotion. Leaving behind worldly luxury, he travelled to Lahore and entered the service of his maternal grandfather, Sayyid Ahmad Tokhta. There, he pledged allegiance to the Shattari Sufi order. After a period of spiritual training, he was granted spiritual succession.

Sheikh Hameeduddin lived to the age of 167. He spent his final years in the region between Uch and Sukkur, dedicating himself to guiding people toward God. (*Tazkira Sufiya Punjab*, by Ijazul Haq Quddusi, pp. 240-242)

This incident reveals a timeless truth: when a woman is rooted in faith and submission to God, her strength can surpass that of kings. Even as a servant, her words can shake a ruler’s conscience. Islamic history is filled with such women whose words, born from deep conviction, changed the course of lives—and even empires.

In the final era of the Abbasid Caliphate, the Mongols devastated the Muslim world. One historian wrote that no event in Islamic history compares to the horror and destruction of the Mongol invasion. Like a boulder crashing down from a mountain onto a village, the Mongol armies swept through the cultural and spiritual centers of Islam, leaving behind deserts and ruins.

And yet, this tragedy reversed itself in a remarkable way. The same Mongols who had once destroyed Islamic civilization eventually became its defenders. Women of faith played a pivotal role in this transformation. After the conquest, the Mongols killed Muslim men and enslaved the women. These women, brought into Mongol households, often lived in quiet accordance with Islamic values—sometimes even without conscious intent. Their character and way of life deeply impressed their captors. Over time, this subtle influence led many Mongols to embrace Islam. (*The Preaching of Islam*, pp. 226–234)

The first Mongol ruler to accept Islam was Berke Khan, who ruled from 1256 to 1267. His mother was a Muslim who had raised him in an Islamic environment from childhood. As a result, he embraced Islam as an adult. Similarly, Oljeitu, the brother of Ghazan Khan, also became Muslim—under the influence of his wife.

From Hajar to the present day, the history of Muslim women is filled with examples where their spiritual strength and noble conduct helped guide many people to the right path.

A TESTIMONY

During one of my travels in the United States, I met an American Muslim woman now living in Utah named Jeanine Aisha Mirza. She is married to a Pakistani Muslim, Naseer Ahmed Mirza. In an interview I came across, she made a striking observation: while many Americans believe that Muslim wives are oppressed, her personal experience paints a very different picture. As she put it: “While most Americans are under the impression that Muslim wives are oppressed,” Ms. Mirza said, “I haven’t found that to be true. It’s just a different division. Outside the home, my husband’s the boss. But in my house, I’m the boss.”

I have encountered many similar testimonies. In the United States, many women are hesitant to marry white American men because of a constant fear of divorce. As a result, many serious-minded women prefer to marry Muslim men—especially those who have come to the U.S. for higher education.

Jeanine Aisha Mirza, through her experience, highlighted an essential principle of Islam. Islam does not assign a lesser status to women compared to men. Instead, it establishes a balanced system of division of responsibilities based on equality and mutual support. Islam divides life into two broad spheres: the external and the internal. The external sphere—public and financial affairs—is primarily the man’s responsibility, while the internal sphere—home and family life—is the woman’s domain.

This division is not based on superiority or inferiority, but on harmony and practicality. It allows both men and women to focus their efforts where they are naturally best suited. The man is free to dedicate himself to his external responsibilities, while the woman can fully manage the internal affairs of life.

This division can be understood in two ways. First, it can be seen as a model of mutual independence. Second, it can be likened to a cogwheel system—a mechanical structure in which each gear has a distinct shape and role, yet all are interdependent. Each gear functions only in cooperation with the others. If one stops, the entire system comes to a halt.

A woman must live with the understanding that she is one of two essential gears in this system. If she moves in harmony, the entire wheel of life turns smoothly. But if she resists her role, the balance of the entire system collapses.

This principle of responsibility division is not limited to gender roles—it reflects a broader law of nature. Consider a business organization: some employees work in offices, others in the field. This division is necessary for the organization to function effectively. If employees reject their assigned roles, the business will ultimately fail.

The same applies to the business of life. God has entrusted men and women with the joint responsibility of managing the world. He has assigned each a specific domain of responsibility and provided them with the natural abilities required for it.

Both reason and revelation support this division. For life to function smoothly, each gender must be content within their respective role and fulfill it with full dedication. Men should not try to become women, and women should not attempt to imitate men. Those who accept this natural and divine arrangement will find success in this life—and in the Hereafter as well.

THREE STAGES

A woman goes through three major stages in her life. First, she lives with her parents as a daughter. Then, after marriage, she becomes a wife and joins her husband's home. Finally, when she becomes a mother, she takes on the role of a parent.

These three stages are part of almost every woman's life. Each comes with its own set of responsibilities, and a woman must fulfill them according to their demands in order to grow and ultimately achieve real success. These stages can be broadly categorized under three headings: Education, Household Management, and Raising the Next Generation.

In the first stage, when a woman is a girl, her most important responsibility is to acquire an education. This is the most formative period of life. As it has been said: "Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim man and woman." (*Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 224)

Education is the foundation of life. It is through education that a person becomes truly human. It sharpens the mind, helping one to understand both oneself and others. It enables a person to grasp the realities of this world and the Hereafter. A well-educated individual enters each stage of life with awareness and confidence, ready to fulfill responsibilities wisely.

A girl is like unshaped material when she is born. She possesses natural potential, but it is in raw form. Education activates and refines this potential—it is like turning iron into steel. Education transforms natural ability into meaningful achievement.

Education completes a woman's personality. The more educated she is, the more capable she becomes in fulfilling her roles in life.

There are two essential aspects of education: secular education and religious education. Both are important for women, though their nature differs. Secular education equips a woman to handle the challenges of daily life. Religious education gives her a clear understanding of life's ultimate purpose.

Secular education provides awareness of the world. It teaches how to think critically, form opinions, understand human psychology, recognize social needs, and engage with both national and global realities. This knowledge is crucial for a woman to fulfill her responsibilities effectively.

Religious education, on the other hand, provides meaning and direction in life. Every woman should have a

foundational understanding of the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet of Islam. She should be familiar with the lives of the Prophet's Companions—both men and women—and understand the core principles of Islamic history and its contributions.

Additionally, if she is able to learn Arabic, that would be excellent. Otherwise, she should regularly read and reflect on a translation of the Quran in her native language. The Quran is the foundation of faith, and without understanding it, one cannot truly grasp the essence of religion.

Following the Quran, she should study the Hadith (sayings of the Prophet) and his biography (Seerah). Again, if Arabic is not accessible, trustworthy books in her language can serve this purpose. These should be read with attention and consistency.

The biographies of the Prophet's Companions and other notable figures in Islamic history are also available in various languages. A woman should read those that best suit her context, helping her develop deeper spiritual insight and intellectual awareness.

The second stage of a woman's life begins with marriage. She becomes a wife and joins a new household. Her main responsibility in this phase can be summed up in one phrase: building a home. She is no longer just an individual—she becomes part of the foundation of society. Both she and society are incomplete without each other.

The key to a stable household lies in what the Quran calls kind treatment. Addressing men, the Quran states: "Live

with them in accordance with what is fair and kind; if you dislike them, it may be that you dislike something which God might make a source of abundant good.” (Quran, 4:19)

Although this verse is directed at men, the spirit of the guidance applies equally to women. In household matters, personal likes and dislikes must take a back seat to mutual harmony and shared purpose. What may seem unpleasant at times could, in the larger context, hold great benefit. This attitude allows one to handle challenges with grace and maintain peace in the home.

The third stage begins when a woman becomes a mother. A new set of responsibilities unfolds—the task of raising the next generation. Every home is a small unit of the larger human society. A healthy society depends on the strength of its families. Therefore, a woman must dedicate herself to strengthening her home, which in turn contributes to the well-being of society.

A mother must provide her children with the best possible education and instill in them high moral values. She must prepare them to become honest, responsible members of society—individuals who fulfill the rights of others and seek the approval of God.

An Arabic proverb says: “Teaching in childhood is like carving on stone.” (*Fath al-Bari* by Ibn Hajar, Vol. 8, p. 702)

This shaping of a child’s character is the work of the mother. If a woman fully commits to this task, the child she raises becomes a valuable asset to humanity—not a burden.

The complete woman is the one who fulfills all three of these responsibilities with excellence.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Social progress starts at home and takes root when a man and a woman unite in marriage. In the view of Islam, marriage is a serious and meaningful commitment—not to be taken lightly.

Before Marriage

It is narrated from Jabir ibn Abdullah that the Prophet of Islam said: “When one of you proposes to a woman, if he is able to look at her to see what might incline him toward marrying her, he should do so.” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 2082)

Mughira ibn Shu‘bah reports: “I proposed to a woman. The Prophet of Islam said to me, ‘Did you look at her?’ I said, ‘No.’ He said, ‘Then look at her, for this is more likely to create harmony between you.’” (*Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah*, Hadith No. 17388)

After Marriage

Abdullah ibn Umar narrates that the Prophet of Islam said: “The most disliked permissible act in the sight of God is divorce.” (*Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 2018)

Mu'adh ibn Jabal says that the Prophet of Islam once said to him: "O Mu'adh, the most beloved thing that God has created on earth is freeing a slave, and the most disliked thing that God has created on earth is divorce." (*Sunan al-Daraqutni*, Hadith No. 3984)

These narrations reveal the Islamic perspective on marriage and divorce. In Islam, it is encouraged that one thinks carefully before entering marriage. However, after marriage, the emphasis is on making the relationship work. Generally, it is not permissible to intentionally look at a non-related woman, but an exception is made in the case of a prospective spouse. On the other hand, divorce has been described as "the most disliked of the permissible acts."

In essence, Islam permits approaching what is normally prohibited (such as looking) for the purpose of investigation before marriage, but after marriage, even taking steps toward what is legally allowed (such as divorce) is discouraged.

CHAPTER SIX

MERCY TO THE WORLDS

A Study of the Life of the Prophet of Islam

STUDYING THE PROPHET'S BIOGRAPHY

The Prophet of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad, is a remarkable figure in history. He is the only person whose life embodies all the finest qualities of humanity in their fullest form. Studying his life essentially entails a study of perfect humanity. The Quran refers to this in the verse: "Indeed, you are of a great moral character." (68:4)

The Prophet of Islam is a remarkable figure in history. He is the only person whose life embodies all the finest qualities of humanity in their fullest form. Studying his life essentially entails a study of perfect humanity.

The life of the Prophet is like a comprehensive human Encyclopedia. It encompasses not only the various dimensions of human life but also displays an extraordinary relevance to all eras.

However, studying the Prophet's life cannot be done in the simplistic style of looking up words in a dictionary. When using a dictionary, we simply search for the desired word in alphabetical order and find its meaning. The study of the Prophet's life, however, cannot be done merely by opening books of Hadith and Seerah and browsing the relevant chapters. Such an approach does not amount to a complete understanding of the Prophet's life.

The Quran states: "Indeed, in the Messenger of God there is an excellent example for you—for the one who hopes in God and the Last Day and remembers God often." (33:21)

There is no doubt that the life of the Prophet serves as one of the best models to follow. However, to truly grasp the depth of this model, a person must be sincere and a genuine seeker of truth—someone so deeply acquainted with the reality of life that everything apart from the truth appears empty. Their spiritual perception must reach a point where the remembrance of God becomes their foremost intellectual concern.

When a person reaches a higher level of spirituality or intellectual development, they become profoundly aware of reality. Only a genuine seeker of truth can understand the life of the Prophet in all its depth. The degree of a person's insight into reality determines how deeply they are able to comprehend the subtle meanings and hidden wisdom in the Prophet's life.

Studying the life of the Prophet is like diving into an ocean of spiritual knowledge. This deep exploration will continue until the end of the existing world. According to their own capacity and determination, people will go on drawing new pearls of wisdom from this ocean. In every era, individuals will continue to enrich themselves with the treasures of the Prophet's legacy—a legacy that can never be exhausted.

EVIDENCE OF PROPHETHOOD

In the Quran, regarding the Prophet of Islam, God states: “God knows best whom to appoint as His Messenger.”

(6:124). This verse implies that God is fully aware of the right person, time, and place for His prophethood, and accordingly, He appointed His Prophet.

When Prophet Abraham prayed during the construction of the Kaaba, he asked God to raise a prophet from among the descendants of Ishmael (2:129). Approximately 2,500 years later, Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Abdul Muttalib was born in Makkah. A thorough study reveals that this appointment of prophethood occurred at an exceptionally suitable historical moment. From the entire lineage of Ishmael, the individual most fitting for this role was chosen. He was born in the land most appropriate for this mission, and his emergence coincided with a time when all favourable conditions remarkably converged.

The monumental achievement accomplished by the Prophet of Islam is indeed astonishing. However, even more remarkable is the convergence of various favourable factors that aligned precisely during his lifetime. This extraordinary historical alignment serves as both evidence of monotheism and proof of prophethood. It demonstrates that behind this world exists a supreme intellect and a willful entity. Moreover, it indicates that this very entity appointed Muhammad of Arabia as a prophet at the most suitable historical time and geographical location. Only a supreme and exalted God could orchestrate such an event.

To achieve any significant accomplishment or instigate a revolutionary change, three elements are absolutely crucial: a visionary leader, a suitable environment, and

favourable historical circumstances. In the case of the Islamic revolution, all three factors were present in their most optimal forms. Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, possessed the highest qualities of leadership. Arabia was the most appropriate location for the intended revolution, a fact acknowledged by many historians. Additionally, the timing of his prophethood was the most appropriate, as all necessary historical conditions were met.

Achieving a revolutionary change requires the alignment of historical circumstances. Without favourable historical factors, no significant revolution can occur in this world. Regarding the Prophet of Islam, it is universally accepted that he brought about the greatest revolution. This was possible because, astonishingly, all three critical historical elements aligned in his favour.

1. The Prophet of Islam was born in 570 CE. In the same year, the event of the People of the Elephant occurred. The ruler of Yemen, Abraha, marched towards Makkah with an invincible army of elephants to destroy the Kaaba. However, miraculously, they were pelted with stones from the sky, turning the entire army into chaff.

This was an extraordinarily significant event that, in the eyes of the Arabs, reestablished the greatness of one God and the concept of divine oneness. This is the very point alluded to in chapters 105 and 106 of the Quran. It was during this grand demonstration of monotheism that the Prophet of Islam was born. He was sent into the world to put an end to the religious persecution that supported polytheism and to

open the way for monotheism. The fact that the Prophet of Monotheism was born precisely in the Year of the Elephant is a remarkable example of divine planning.

2. The Prophet of Islam was given the opportunity to begin sharing his spiritual teachings—centered on awareness of the divine and the principle of human brotherhood—with the people of Makkah. Makkah had become the center of Arab leadership as a result of centuries of historical development. It was a hub of international trade and political relations. As a result, individuals of intellectual and leadership stature resided there, such as Abu Bakr ibn Abi Quhafa and Umar ibn al-Khattab. Securing the support of such prominent figures was essential for religious freedom to take root and for the Godly movement to advance. Indeed, most of the key historical figures of the early Islamic community were from Makkah. This reality is reflected in the Prophet’s prayer: “O God, strengthen Islam through Abu al-Hakam ibn Hisham or Umar ibn al-Khattab” (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 1, p. 296).

However, for the people of Makkah, the existing religious tradition was closely tied to economic interest. In order to attract all Arab tribes, the Quraysh had placed 360 idols—each representing different tribes—inside the Kaaba, which had originally been built by the Prophet Abraham as a center of monotheism. These tribes visited Makkah throughout the year, boosting its trade.

The visits of these tribes had an economic function similar to that of tourists visiting a modern country. Just as tourism

is now considered an industry, for the people of Makkah, the tribal religion had become a kind of industry. Therefore, the Godly message did not gain widespread acceptance in Makkah. As the Quran records, the people of Makkah said: “If we were to follow your guidance, we would be uprooted from our land.” (28:57)

3. Once the task of gathering individuals—referred to in the Quran as “that He might cut off a portion” (3:127), implying the selection of the most responsive people—was completed in Makkah, and the increasingly hostile environment made it difficult for them to remain there, the Prophet decided to migrate. This migration was not an act of escape but a strategic step to take advantage of the more favourable opportunities available in Madinah, where conducive conditions had already been prepared.

For example, three Jewish tribes—Banu Nadir, Banu Qurayza, and Banu Qaynuqa—lived in the region of Madinah. In 70 CE, the Roman Emperor Titus conquered Palestine and destroyed Jerusalem. As a result, many Jews were exiled and settled in different lands, including Madinah. Over time, their population in Madinah grew to over four thousand. Through contact with these Jews, the people of Madinah developed the idea of a coming saviour who would appear suddenly and resolve all their problems. This background is reflected in the Prophet’s biography. During the pilgrimage season, when the Prophet of Islam met with Arab tribes to convey his message, he encountered some men from the Khazraj tribe of Madinah. He presented

the message of Islam and recited verses from the Quran. After hearing him, they said to one another: “O people, understand—by God, this is surely the same Prophet the Jews used to speak to you about. Make sure they don’t reach him before you do.” They accepted the message the Prophet had invited them to. (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 2, p. 38)

A similar development occurred among the Arabs of Madinah in another way. A few years before the migration, in 618 CE, a violent conflict broke out between the Aws and Khazraj tribes. As a result, they began to feel a deep need for a leader who could unite them. This is what Aisha referred to when she said: “The Day of Bu’ath was a day prepared by God in advance for His Messenger. The Prophet arrived in Madinah when their leading figures had been dispersed, and their prominent men were killed or injured. God made this a prelude for the Prophet’s mission, aiding the people of Madinah in accepting Islam.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3777)

This analysis is echoed in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which notes that a tribal war in Madinah around 618 CE had resulted in much bloodshed, and peace had not been fully restored since. It suggested that many Arabs in Madinah likely invited Muhammad in the hope that he would act as a mediator among the rival groups. Their contact with the Jews may also have prepared them to accept a religious figure who could serve as a deliverer and establish justice: “Much blood had been shed in a battle at about 618, and peace was not fully restored. In inviting Muhammad to

Madinah, many of the Arabs there probably hoped that he would act as an arbiter among the opposing parties, and their contact with the Jews may have prepared them for a messianic religious leader, who would deliver them from oppression and establish a kingdom in which justice prevailed.” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 12, p. 607)

4. One part of the Prophet’s mission was to bring an end to the era that the French historian Henri Pirenne described as “absolute imperialism.” This political system had long blocked human progress. For this reason, the Prophet was born in the Arabian Peninsula, located between the two great empires of that time: the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires.

His mission was destined to engage with the dominant powers of the time. Historically, his emergence occurred at a remarkably opportune moment—during the prolonged war between the Byzantine and Persian empires (603–628 CE). These two powers, the strongest of their era, had been significantly weakened by continuous conflict. The Quran refers to this context in the following words: “The Romans have been defeated in a nearby land, but they will soon be victorious again.” (30:2–3)

After the Prophet’s birth, Persia launched an attack against the Byzantine Empire in 603 CE. In the years that followed, the Byzantines suffered defeat, and by 616 CE, much of their eastern territory—including Jerusalem—had come under Persian control.

Later, the Byzantine emperor regained strength and launched a counteroffensive in 623 CE. By 624 CE, he

achieved a decisive victory, and in 627 CE, he recovered his lost territories. However, both empires were left significantly weakened.

It was during this very period that the Prophet of Islam emerged. He and, later, his Companions confronted and dismantled both empires, ushering in a new era of freedom in world history.

The Encyclopedia Britannica (1984 edition) contains a 26-page article titled “Byzantine Empire,” written by Professor Donald Mac Gillivray Nicol, a specialist in Byzantine history. Regarding the Muslim era, he notes:

“After the Prophet died in 632 CE, the caliphs redirected the strength of the Arab Bedouins toward a purposeful and organized campaign of conquest—specifically aimed at ending religious oppression in the world. The Byzantine and Persian empires, both deeply entrenched in political and religious authoritarianism, were the main agents of this oppression. The outcome was remarkable. In 636 CE, the Byzantine army was defeated in a battle on the banks of the Yarmouk River. This opened the gates of Palestine and Syria to the Arabs. Alexandria surrendered in 642 CE, and from that point onward, the province of Egypt permanently slipped from Byzantine control. Around the same time, the Arabs advanced into the region of Mesopotamia and soon defeated the Persian army, capturing

their capital. Thus, the long reign of the Persian monarchy came to an end.

At least three aspects of the contemporary situation of Byzantium and Persia account for the phenomenal ease with which the Arabs overcame their enemies: first, both empires, exhausted by wars, had demobilized before 632; second, both had ceased to support those client states on the frontiers of the Arabian Peninsula that had restrained the Bedouin of the desert for a century past; third, and particularly in reference to Byzantium, religious controversy had weakened the loyalties that Syrians and Egyptians rendered to Constantinople.”
(*Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 3, p. 557)

5. The change of seasons is based on the Earth’s orbit around the sun, which forms the basis of the solar calendar. As a result, each season consistently occurs in the same months—for example, December always brings winter, and June always brings summer. However, the lunar calendar, which is eleven days shorter than the solar year, does not align with fixed seasons. This means that months like Ramadan can occur in winter or summer, depending on the year.

When the Prophets Abraham and Ishmael built the Kaaba on God’s command and established the pilgrimage (Hajj) system, they based it on the lunar calendar, meaning the pilgrimage would take place in the month of Dhu al-

Hijjah. In ancient times, the Quraysh tribe of Makkah were custodians of the Kaaba. Their main economic resource was the pilgrimage. Every year, all Arab tribes visited Makkah for pilgrimage and paid offerings. Additionally, these visits boosted trade in Makkah, similar to how modern tourism promotes trade in countries where large numbers of visitors arrive.

The Quraysh noticed that when the month of Dhu al-Hijjah fell during pleasant weather, larger groups of pilgrims visited Makkah. Conversely, when Dhu al-Hijjah occurred during harsh weather, the number of visitors declined significantly. Based on this observation, the Quraysh changed the pilgrimage system. They shifted from a lunar calendar to a solar calendar, ensuring that pilgrimage always took place in favourable, moderate weather, thus securing uninterrupted economic benefits.

Part of the mission of the Prophet of Islam was to restore the pilgrimage system to Prophet Abraham's original method. He could have announced this change during the conquest of Makkah (8 AH), but he chose not to. The reason was his consistent principle in matters of social reform: implementing changes without disrupting established traditions. Had he declared this reform at the time of the conquest, it would have inevitably disrupted traditions.

The lunar calendar is approximately eleven days shorter than the solar year, so both calendars align after a 33-year cycle. For instance, if Ramadan falls in February this year, it will again occur in February after 33 years. Two months

before the Prophet's death, this 33-year cycle was nearing completion, and the pilgrimage season was about to align again with the month of Dhu al-Hijjah.

Following the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet neither announced any immediate changes to the pilgrimage system nor participated in the pilgrimage immediately afterward. He performed his first and only pilgrimage in 10 AH, commonly known as the Farewell Pilgrimage. That year, due to the natural cycle, the pilgrimage coincidentally fell in the lunar month of Dhu al-Hijjah. Thus, about two months before his death, the Prophet travelled to Makkah and performed the pilgrimage. During his sermon on that pilgrimage, he declared: "O people, time has completed its cycle and returned to the original form on which God created the heavens and the earth." (For more details, see the author's book, *The Spirit of Hajj*, pp. 28–32)

This meant that after completing the 33-year cycle, the pilgrimage season once again fell in the month of Dhu al-Hijjah. The Prophet affirmed that this system was in accordance with divine planning and brought an end to the practice introduced by the Quraysh. From that point on, the pilgrimage would permanently take place according to the lunar calendar, in the month of Dhu al-Hijjah.

The method of the Prophet of Islam was to introduce reforms without disrupting established traditions. For this reason, he successfully adjusted the pilgrimage dates without breaking the continuity of practices. It is truly remarkable that both

his birth and death occurred at precisely suitable moments. On the one hand, the 33-year cycle was completing; on the other, his lifespan naturally brought him to a time and situation where he could implement this reform without causing social upheaval. Clearly, the timing of his birth and death reflects the workings of a higher Creator who governs the system of creation. Had this synchronization between his life and external circumstances not occurred, he could not have fulfilled his mission with such precision. This event exemplifies the Quranic principle: “God knows best where to place His message” (6:124).

Part of the mission of the Prophet of Islam was to reform the annual pilgrimage by restoring it from the solar calendar back to the lunar calendar, all without disrupting established traditions. Such a task was beyond the capacity of any ordinary human with a limited lifespan. To achieve this kind of revolutionary change, it was necessary for the reformer to be born at a time when the broader cosmic system would align perfectly with his lifetime. Only God, the Lord of the universe, could arrange such timing. The alignment of these cosmic conditions with the Prophet’s life proves that he was indeed sent by God.

6. From a purely ideological standpoint, all revolutions in history have ultimately failed. None have succeeded in establishing a system that fully reflected their ideological ideals. In reality, most revolutions have only resulted in changing the individuals or groups in power. Though they often begin by promoting appealing ideals, once power is

gained, the result is typically just the replacement of one ruling class with another. The Islamic revolution is unique in that it succeeded in creating a society and social structure that genuinely reflected its founding ideology.

The primary reason for this difference lies in the timeline of realization. Other revolutions took multiple generations to mature, whereas the Islamic revolution reached its fulfillment in its very first generation. The first generation of any ideological movement sees the ideology as a personal discovery. They embrace it with deep conviction and wholehearted sincerity. By the second or third generation, however, the ideology often becomes just a formal belief, losing its motivational force in everyday life.

For example, the idea of democracy was introduced by European thinkers in the seventeenth century, but it was not practically implemented until the late eighteenth century—in America in 1776 and in France in 1789. Democracy remained a theoretical ideal during its first generation and only took institutional form in its third generation, long after its original advocates had passed away. Consequently, democratic revolutions have not fully embodied the ideology's founding principles.

A similar pattern is seen with communism. Though its concepts emerged in the nineteenth century, communism was only implemented in practice during the twentieth century, by the second and third generations of communists. The first generation never saw it realized. As a result,

communist revolutions only changed those in power but never fulfilled the ideological vision in its entirety.

In contrast, Islam achieved full ideological realization within its first generation—the era of the Prophet of Islam, Abu Bakr, and Umar. Had the Arab conquests occurred during the Umayyad caliphate, or if the expansion into Iran and Rome had happened under the Abbasids, Islamic history could not have produced the remarkable model of human society seen in its earliest phase. That early model remains an enduring example for all of humanity. By the time the next generation arrived, the original spirit of Islam had already begun to weaken.

What allowed the Islamic revolution to reach completion in its first generation, while other ideologies required several generations? One key reason is the availability of highly committed individuals. Most other ideologies lacked sufficient dedicated followers in their formative stages. In contrast, the Islamic ideology from the very beginning had a strong core group of capable and devoted individuals. Through their extraordinary effort and sacrifice, they brought the ideology to full realization within their own lifetimes.

The Quranic verse, “God knows best where to place His message” (6:124), contains another layer of meaning. It suggests that the place of the Prophet’s birth and the center of his activity were chosen with exceptional care to ensure the presence of such capable individuals from the outset. From the outside, the Arabian Peninsula may have seemed the least likely place for such a mission. The historical

view of Arabs at the time is reflected in the Persian poet Ferdowsi, who lamented in his *Shahnameh*: “O sky, shame upon you, the camel-milk drinkers and lizard-eaters—the Arabs—now aspire to the Iranian throne!”

At that time, only God knew the hidden potential within this seemingly insignificant tribal society to rise and become a great nation. Later, scholars such as Margoliouth would describe the Arabs as “a nation of heroes,” but such recognition came only after their achievements had been witnessed. Before these events, only God saw their latent capability.

One of the remarkable qualities of these Arabs was their freedom from prejudice. They had an inherent openness that allowed them to quickly recognize and accept the truth. Because of this trait, more than a hundred thousand individuals embraced Islam during the Prophet’s lifetime, becoming his devoted companions.

Sending the Prophet of Islam to Arabia was not a random choice. It was part of a meticulously planned divine scheme. The planner had to identify the ideal location on Earth where the Prophet could successfully begin his mission.

The history of prophets—and of all those who introduced new ideas—shows that very few people from their own societies truly understood or supported their message. But the Prophet of Islam was sent to a community capable of recognizing the truth and fully supporting it. Because of this, he was able to gather a large number of devoted followers during his lifetime—people who had the strength

and determination to carry out the required struggle and fulfill the mission.

This remarkable event was so exceptional that it was even foretold in the Bible. In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses gave a final blessing to the Israelites, stating: “The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints.” (Deuteronomy 33:2)

In this verse, the one from Sinai refers to Moses, the one from Seir to Jesus, and the one from Paran to the Prophet of Islam. He was the only one who entered Makkah, just twenty years after the start of his mission, accompanied by ten thousand followers: “He received his prophetic call around 610, and in January 630, he entered Makkah with 10,000 men.” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 7, p. 84)

GUIDANCE FROM THE PROPHET’S LIFE

Dr. Michael Hart (born 1932), an American astrophysicist and author, ranked the Prophet of Islam as the most influential person in history in his book *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*. However, his true role was not that of a hero, but that of a social and spiritual leader. In this sense, it would be accurate to say that through his life, he revealed to people of all times the secret to true success. While he was undoubtedly the most successful

individual, his life also stands as the highest example of how success can be achieved. This article briefly presents his biography from that perspective.

Starting with the Possible

When the Prophet of Islam began his divine mission, Arabia was facing various challenges. The Kaaba, which was originally a center of monotheism, had been turned into a center of tribal religions based on non-monotheistic practices. The Roman Empire and the Sassanian Empire had established political influence in the region. In society, crimes such as usury, moral corruption, and alcohol consumption were widespread.

Yet, the first command revealed to him in the Quran was not “Purify the Kaaba of idols,” nor “Fight the Romans and Persians,” nor even “Enforce God’s law on wrongdoers.” Instead, the very first instruction focused on reading and education: “Read! In the name of your Lord, who created: created man from a clot [of blood]. Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One, who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know.” (Quran, 96:1–5)

This, the very first revelation in Islam, shows that the Islamic approach is to begin with what is possible. Given the circumstances at the beginning of his mission, goals such as cleansing the sacred site, securing political independence, and enforcing laws may have seemed appealing, but they were not practically achievable. However, beginning with education and spreading the message was entirely within

reach. Guided by God, the Prophet set aside what was impossible and began Islamic work by focusing on what was possible. There is a well-known saying in English: “Politics is the art of the possible.” I would say that the Islamic approach to action is to begin with what is non-confrontational: “The prophetic way of beginning is to begin from the possible.”

Ease Within Hardship

When the Prophet of Islam and his early companions initiated a revival of Prophet Abraham’s mission in Makkah, they encountered intense opposition from the people of Makkah—who were themselves descendants of Abraham. It seemed as though Makkah had become a place of constant hardship for Islam. At that time, the law of nature established by God in this world was conveyed to them through the Quran: “So, surely with every hardship there is ease; surely, with every hardship there is ease.” (Quran, 94:5–6)

This highlights a crucial aspect of the Prophet’s method for achieving success. It shows that God’s law of nature in this world is such that it is never solely a place of hardship. Alongside every difficulty, there is always ease. In other words, even where there appears to be a disadvantage, opportunities are also present.

One example of this “ease within hardship” is that although there were opponents like Abu Jahl in Makkah, there were also individuals like Umar (the 2nd Caliph) who accepted the truth. If changing the external conditions of the Kaaba was difficult at that time, it was still possible to bring

about inner change in people's hearts. Similarly, the early challenges faced by Muslims in Arabia became a source of awakening for their inner potential—so much so that, in the words of Margoliouth, each one of them became a hero. This lesson from the Prophet's life teaches Muslims that when they are faced with difficulties, they must firmly believe that within those very circumstances, opportunities exist. Instead of focusing on their problems, they should identify these opportunities and use them to move their history forward.

Hijrah: Changing the Place of Action

The situation for the Prophet of Islam in Makkah became increasingly severe, eventually reaching the point where his opponents decided to assassinate him. At that moment, instead of adopting a confrontational response, he left Makkah for Madinah—an event known as the Hijrah.

This migration was not merely a departure from one's homeland; rather, it was a deliberate and strategic decision. It can best be described as changing the place of action. When the Prophet found Makkah to be an unworkable environment, he chose Madinah as a new base from which to continue his mission.

This establishes a principle: when people in one place oppose the mission with extreme resistance, it is unwise for Muslims to remain there and risk being destroyed in conflict. Instead, they should look for a more favourable setting where they can carry on their Islamic efforts. This

approach not only ensures the survival of the mission but also carries the potential that, after achieving stability in a “Madinah,” they may eventually influence even a “Makkah.”

Trusting Human Nature

The Prophet of Islam and his companions repeatedly faced harsh treatment from people, including provocative insults, stone-throwing, and deliberate obstacles placed in their path. At that point, the Quran instructed them to respond to evil with good. The verse stated: “Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend.” (Quran, 41:34)

This guidance reveals an important truth: no matter how strongly someone appears to be an opponent or enemy, the nature created by God still exists within them. Human nature is inherently inclined toward truth. In other words, every apparent enemy holds a hidden friend within. If you are advocating truth, you must firmly believe that a counterpart to your message already exists in the heart of the other person.

The most reliable way to uncover this hidden friend is to respond to negative behaviour with positive conduct. Your kindness softens their hostility, revealing the friend beneath the surface. It is historically recorded that in the early period of Islam, thousands of people followed Islam because of this very principle.

For example, a Bedouin once approached the Prophet with the intention to harm him while he was alone and raised his sword to kill. However, the Prophet overpowered him

and forgave him. This act had such a profound impact on the Bedouin that he immediately became an ardent follower of the Prophet. (*Al-Mu‘jam Al-Awsat* by Al-Tabarani, Hadith No. 9112) Many such incidents occurred during that time and are well-documented in historical records.

Turning Opposition into Opportunity

When the Prophet of Islam left his homeland and migrated to Madinah to avoid confrontation, the people of Makkah became even more enraged. Determined to eliminate his mission entirely, they launched an attack at Badr—a location about 130 kilometers (81 miles) from Makkah and around 310 kilometers (193 miles) northwest of Madinah. However, the Quraysh were defeated, and seventy of their men were taken captive.

Many of these captives were educated individuals. The Prophet of Islam declared that any prisoner who taught ten children in Madinah to read and write would earn his freedom as ransom and be released. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 2216) This marked the establishment of the first school in Islamic history—unique in that it had Muslim students but was staffed entirely by teachers from the former opposing group.

The Power of Peace

An essential lesson from the life of the Prophet of Islam is that the power of peace is greater than the power of violence. Throughout his life, the Prophet consistently

relied on this peaceful force more than any other means. For example, when Makkah was conquered, those very individuals who had persecuted him, forced him into exile, waged wars against him, and caused him great harm were brought before him.

These individuals could rightly be considered war criminals. The common practice at that time was for victors to execute such offenders. However, the Prophet did not even utter a word of rebuke. Instead, he simply announced, “Go, you are all free.” (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 2, p. 412)

This was a deliberate use of the power of peace instead of violence. It meant winning people over by appealing to their conscience and hearts rather than through force. The result of this highly moral approach, as one narrator describes, was that when these individuals emerged from the Sacred Mosque, it was as if they had risen from their graves. Soon afterward, they became true followers of the Prophet of Islam, willingly. (*Al-Sunan al-Kubra* by al-Bayhaqi, Hadith No. 18275)

The Principle of the Third Option

During the later period of the Prophet of Islam, a battle took place between the Muslims and the Romans in present-day Jordan, known as the Battle of Mu’tah. Within a few days of fighting, twelve Companions of the Prophet lost their lives. During the battle, Khalid ibn al-Walid—a well-known Companion—was chosen by the Muslim forces as their commander. Assessing the situation, Khalid realized that

the Muslim army, just three thousand strong, was facing a Roman force of two hundred thousand. In view of this overwhelming imbalance, he decided to withdraw from the battlefield rather than engage in direct confrontation.

When Khalid and his troops returned to Madinah, some people greeted them by calling them “runaways.” At that moment, the Prophet of Islam clarified: “They are not those who fled; rather, they are those who will return to engage again.” (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 2, p. 382)

Those who criticized Khalid’s decision viewed the situation in black and white. In their minds, there were only two options: either to fight bravely or to retreat in disgrace. Since retreat was seen negatively, they believed the Muslims should have remained on the battlefield, even if it meant dying to the last man.

At this critical juncture, the Prophet introduced a third option: withdrawing not out of fear, but to prepare more effectively for the future. Khalid ibn al-Walid’s return from Mu’tah was not an act of cowardice, but a strategic decision aligned with this third approach. History later confirmed the wisdom of this move when, just three years later, Muslims under the leadership of Usama ibn Zayd advanced again toward the Roman border with better preparation—and achieved remarkable success.

Changing the Field of Action

After the Prophet of Islam migrated from Makkah to Madinah, the leaders of Makkah did not cease their

hostilities. They launched an organized campaign against him, leading to several military encounters. However, a decisive victory through warfare did not materialize.

Subsequently, the Prophet entered into an agreement with the people of Makkah, famously known as the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah—a ten-year peace treaty between the two parties. Through this treaty, the Prophet effectively changed the battlefield. Previously, both sides had engaged in armed conflict; now, their contest shifted to the ideological arena. Following the treaty, extensive interaction began between the two sides. During these interactions, the ideological superiority of Islam naturally became evident. Consequently, large numbers of people began following Islam willingly. The number of Muslims steadily increased, while their opponents steadily diminished, leading to a peaceful victory through public support rather than further warfare.

The lesson from this example of the Prophet is clear: if a contest in one domain proves unproductive, it should be redirected strategically to a more conducive arena—one where Muslims can channel their energies more effectively and constructively.

The Principle of Gradualism

In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Aisha narrates that when the Quran was initially revealed, the first verses mentioned Paradise and Hell. It was only later—about fifteen years after hearts had softened—that commands forbidding adultery and alcohol were revealed. Aisha remarked that if these prohibitions

had come at the very start, the Arabs would have responded defiantly: “We will never abandon adultery; we will never abandon alcohol.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 4993)

This narration clearly illustrates that the implementation of Islamic teachings follows the principle of acceptance and gradualism. Hearts must first be prepared, creating willingness and readiness among people. Only afterward can practical implementation follow. Implementing religious laws through force and coercion—by means of whips or guns—can never succeed. If someone tries to enforce religious law on an unprepared society solely through power and coercion, they would be acting against the method of the Prophet of Islam. History clearly shows that no true success is possible by violating the Prophet’s approach.

Pragmatism Instead of Idealism

One important principle from the life of the Prophet of Islam was that, regarding one’s personal conduct, one should strive for idealism; but when dealing with others, one should be willing to accept pragmatic solutions. This was a key aspect of the Prophet’s practice, consistently demonstrated throughout his life.

When the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah was being drawn up between the Prophet and the Quraysh, he dictated these words: “This is the agreement upon which Muhammad, the Messenger of God, has agreed.” The representative of the Quraysh objected, saying, “We do not accept you as the Messenger of God. Therefore, instead of writing ‘Messenger

of God,’ write ‘Muhammad son of Abdullah.’” The Prophet realized that if he insisted on keeping the phrase “Messenger of God,” the peace agreement would not be possible. Thus, he erased the words “Messenger of God” from the document and instead wrote got written: “Muhammad son of Abdullah.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 3187)

This pragmatic approach was crucial in achieving the remarkable success the Prophet attained in Arabia. We live in a world filled with diverse people, each with the freedom to choose their own path. In such a reality, achieving substantial success is impossible without adopting pragmatic approaches in practical matters.

Accepting pragmatic solutions is not a compromise of ideals; rather, it is a reflection of realism—and realism is the key to achieving success in this world.

The Need for Insight

The Quran states, “You have indeed in the Prophet of God a good example.” (33:21) On the surface, this seems straightforward; however, truly following the Prophet’s example requires profound insight. Without such insight, a person might outwardly invoke the Quran or the Prophet’s example, but in reality, their actions would have no genuine connection to either.

The reason for this is that the Prophet’s example is not singular or simplistic; rather, it encompasses multiple dimensions. For instance, biographies show that during the thirteen years the Prophet lived in Makkah, he never

attempted to remove the idols placed in the Kaaba. Yet, we read about the same Prophet ordering the removal and destruction of these idols immediately after the conquest of Makkah. Similarly, we observe that when opponents surrounded his house in Makkah, armed with swords, he chose to quietly migrate to Madinah. Conversely, we find him facing these very opponents in battle at Uhud, fighting alongside his companions.

These diverse examples from the Prophet's life clearly show that to correctly follow his example, one must have the wisdom and insight to understand which action suits which circumstance. Without this discernment, a person might claim to follow the Prophet's example, but in reality, they would be far removed from his true practice.

Someone who lacks insight into the prophetic example will mistakenly quote verses about combat when patience is required, will talk about armed struggle when peaceful preaching is necessary, and will advocate war when circumstances call for reconciliation.

Undoubtedly, the life of the Prophet of Islam offers a powerful and comprehensive example. However, this model truly benefits only those who approach it with the utmost sincerity — not those who seek to bend it to fit their personal desires. Instead, they align their choices with the broader principles reflected in his life, consciously adapting themselves to that standard and consistently turning to it for guidance in their actions.

THE HUDAYBIYYAH APPROACH

The well-known book *The 100* by Dr. Michael Hart was likely introduced to the Muslim world for the first time in *Al-Risala* (October 1978). In this book, the American author selected the hundred most influential individuals in history and wrote essays about them. At the top of his list, he placed the Prophet of Islam, whom he described as the most supremely successful man in history. After this article appeared in *Al-Risala*, we received numerous letters from Muslim readers asking where they could find the book and whether it had been translated into Urdu. However, it became clear from these letters that readers were interested only in the claim that the Prophet of Islam was a supremely successful individual; none showed a desire to explore the deeper question—what was the secret of that supreme success?

This reflects a widespread mindset among contemporary Muslims, rooted in the psychology of hero-worship. Modern Muslims have come to see the Prophet of Islam and his companions more as heroic figures than as practical models to follow. This mindset is often found in communities that have failed to achieve anything significant themselves. For such people, recounting the greatness of historical personalities becomes a source of comfort. As someone rightly said, history is often the refuge of those who have not done much themselves to celebrate. When the Muslim community is in a state of awakening, its Prophet serves as a model of conduct. But when the

Muslim community is in a state of decline, it begins to treat its Prophet as merely a symbol of pride. Muslims of the present age are caught in this second state. Contemporary Muslims have made the Prophet of Islam a symbol of pride for themselves. And the desire for pride is satisfied by referring to him as “supremely successful.” In the Quran, however, the Prophet of Islam is presented as a model to follow, not as a symbol of pride. The Quran states: “Indeed, in the Messenger of God you have an excellent example.” (33:21) But present-day Muslims, in effect, have rewritten this verse in their interpretation as: “Indeed, in the Messenger of God you have a noble source of pride.”

According to the Quran’s message, the most important task is to understand the secret of the Prophet’s supreme success. Only by uncovering that secret can we hope to restore Islam to its former heights. When we reflect on the Quran with this question in mind, the first chapter that comes to the forefront is chapter 48. In this chapter, a historical event is described in these words: “Indeed, We have given you a clear victory.” (48:1) What Dr. Michael Hart described as “supreme success,” the Quran refers to as “clear victory.”

How did the Prophet of Islam attain this “clear victory” or supreme success? According to the verse, it came through the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah and what followed. This verse was revealed specifically in the context of that event, making it clear that the method used at Hudaibiyyah was the secret to that success. We may refer to this method as the Hudaibiyyah approach.

At the time of the treaty, it appeared that the Prophet of Islam was returning without achieving his goal. On the return journey to Madinah, when chapter 48 was revealed, someone remarked, “This was no victory—they stopped us from entering the Sacred Mosque.” To this, the Prophet of Islam replied, “Rather, it is the greatest of all victories.” (See: *Al-Jami’ li Ahkam al-Quran*, Vol. 16, p. 260) The Companion Al-Bara ibn Azib later told people that while they considered the conquest of Makkah to be a victory, the Prophet’s companions saw Hdaybiyyah as the true victory. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 4150) Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri (58–124 AH), one of the foundational figures in Islamic scholarship after the companions—especially in Hadith and early Islamic history—stated that in Islam, the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah holds the status of the greatest victory. (*Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah* by Ibn Kathir, Vol. 3, p. 324)

All of this makes it clear that the remarkable success of the Prophet of Islam and his companions was rooted in the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah. Islam’s journey to its greatest success passed through this event. Therefore, it is correct to say that for Muslims today to reach a similar level of success, they must adopt the Hdaybiyyah approach.

So, what is the Hdaybiyyah approach? It is, in essence, the greatest form of sacrifice. The proof lies in the fact that even a group as dedicated as the Prophet’s companions initially hesitated in accepting it. These were the same companions who had no hesitation in sacrificing their lives at Badr and Uhud. But at Hdaybiyyah, when the Prophet of Islam

agreed to return without performing Umrah and signed a peace treaty, all the companions—except for Abu Bakr—expressed dissatisfaction. It was only after strong insistence from the Prophet of Islam that they accepted it.

Why was it that these same people willingly sacrificed their lives at Badr and Uhud, but found it so difficult to accept Hdaybiyyah? The reason is that at Badr and Uhud, the sacrifice was one of life, whereas at Hdaybiyyah, it was a sacrifice of dignity. History shows that while many people have sacrificed their lives, very few have been willing to sacrifice their pride and dignity. Giving one's life often earns one the status of a hero, while sacrificing dignity can make one appear defeated.

In giving up one's life, one sees themselves moving toward glory. In giving up one's dignity, one feels as though they have chosen defeat. The former is publicly respected; the latter is often misunderstood. That's why sacrificing dignity is harder—and greater. And the greater the sacrifice, the greater the success. Supreme success is reserved for those willing to make the supreme sacrifice. The Prophet and his companions reached that level because they were willing to give up not just their lives, but their pride and dignity as well.

So what was the unique power in the Hdaybiyyah approach that opened the doors to such success? At the time of the treaty in 6 AH, the Prophet had fewer than 1,500 followers. Less than two years later, in 8 AH, he marched on Makkah with 10,000. On the first journey, he was forced to turn

back; on the second, his presence was so commanding that the Quraysh surrendered without resistance. This shows that Hudaybiyyah was a model of winning hearts, not bodies. Whereas war aims to destroy enemies physically, the Hudaybiyyah approach aims to transform them into allies. War puts your hand on their necks; Hudaybiyyah puts your hand on their hearts. War relies on domination; Hudaybiyyah achieves success through inclusion and reconciliation. War spreads hatred; Hudaybiyyah spreads love.

The Treaty of Hudaybiyyah took place nearly 20 years after the Prophet's mission began. Why did it take that long for this method to be used? The answer lies in chapter 48. The wisdom behind this was that, at that time in Makkah, there were many men and women whose hearts were inclined toward Islam. But since they had not yet openly declared their faith, you did not know who they were. In other words, they were potentially Muslims. If war had broken out between the two sides, these individuals would have been killed in the fighting. In your unawareness, you would have crushed both the people of denial and those who had actually affirmed faith. And without doubt, that would have been a great loss. (48:22-25)

Then it is said: "God knew what you did not know." (48:27) Based on this knowledge, the instruction was given at the time of Hudaybiyyah that even if the conditions seemed one-sided, they should be accepted in order to make peace with the leaders of Makkah. This would give those

inclined towards Islam the opportunity to become true devotees of God.

The background to this situation is that the Arabs (the descendants of Ishmael) were generally simple-minded people who remained close to their natural disposition. Their deviation was superficial; it had not deeply taken root within them. This is why, in the early period of Islam, we find many cases where a person would come to the Prophet of Islam, ask simple questions, and then either acknowledge his truthfulness or recite the declaration of faith and embrace Islam on the spot.

For instance, Amr ibn Abasah once visited the Prophet and asked, “Teach me something of what God has taught you.” The Prophet shared teachings about monotheism, kindness, and good character. Amr immediately responded, “How excellent are the things with which God has sent you.” (*Al-Tabqat al-Kubra* by Ibn Sa’d, Vol. 4, p. 204)

Such examples are found throughout the Prophet’s life. They show that while the Arabs’ behaviour had deteriorated, their inner nature remained intact. With just a small push, they were ready to embrace the truth. It was due to the simplicity of the early Arabs that—apart from a few tribal leaders—their denial of the Prophet of Islam was, for the most part, the result of misunderstanding rather than deliberate rebellion. Because of this same disposition, they had the confidence to make a prayer before the Battle of Badr as mentioned below, for which they received an answer as mentioned in chapter 8, verse 19.

History tells us that when the people of Makkah, numbering about a thousand, set out toward Badr to fight the Prophet of Islam and his companions, they first went to the Kaaba. Holding on to its coverings, they offered a prayer. In that prayer, they said: “O God, whichever of the two groups is more rightly guided, and whichever of the two religions is superior, grant it Your help and victory.” (*Dalail al-Nubuwwah* by al-Bayhaqi, Vol. 3, p. 75)

After this, when the two sides met in battle, the believers were granted victory, and the polytheists were defeated. Accordingly, the Quran addressed the people of Makkah: “If you were seeking a decision, the decision has now come to you. And if you desist, that will be better for you.” (8:19)

It was due to this special feature of the Battle of Badr that it was referred to as the Day of Distinction (8:41). After the clear outcome of Badr, the Arabs—aside from a few tribal leaders—were deeply shaken. They came to believe that the truth was not on their side, but with Muhammad and his followers. As a result, the majority of Arabs became inclined towards the religion of monotheism. However, out of fear of certain oppressive and defiant leaders, each person kept their faith hidden.

In reality, the early Arabs (the descendants of Ishmael), due to their simplicity and natural disposition, were, from the very beginning, believers in potential. Then, at the time of Badr, when their prayer for divine judgment resulted in the opposite of what they expected, their initial leaning turned into a stronger inclination.

At that point, only one obstacle remained: the leaders of Quraysh. In order to preserve their leadership and dominance, they had waged war against the Prophet of Islam. Outwardly, they were not prepared to end their hostilities unless they could put an end to both him and his monotheistic mission. It was the fear of these opposing leaders that made the people of Makkah and its surrounding areas hesitant to become followers of the Prophet.

It was as though a dam had blocked the flow of water. On one side was a reservoir of faith; on the other, people ready to receive it. All that was needed was to remove the barrier. Once the dam was lifted, the water would flow freely. The Treaty of Hudaibiyyah was that removal of the barrier. Continuing the conflict would have required the sacrifice of blood. Ending it required the sacrifice of pride. Peace cannot be achieved through mutual stubbornness. It requires one side to bend. At Hudaibiyyah, the Muslims did just that. The Hudaibiyyah model is this: when the other party does not remove the barrier to peace, the one calling to truth should take the initiative and remove the barrier themselves.

In that moment, the Muslims were overwhelmed with grief and righteous anger. They had been exiled from their homeland, stripped of their homes and wealth, and torn from their families. Every circumstance seemed to call for retribution. Yet the Prophet (peace be upon him) urged them to restrain their pain for the sake of a higher mission. Through this profound act of discipline, they cultivated an atmosphere of peace—one in which Islam could truly flourish. Many

who had long been drawn to its truth now found both the courage and the freedom to live by its teachings.

Armed struggle involves the sacrifice of life and blood in defence of the faith. Hudaybiyyah, by contrast, is the sacrifice of honour and pride to pave the way for God's message to reach His creation. This stark contrast alone proves that the latter sacrifice exceeds the former in significance; the second is greater than the first.

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet of Islam said, "I long to see our brothers." The companions asked, "Are we not your brothers, O Messenger of God?" He replied, "You are my companions. Our brothers are those who have not yet come." (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 249)

Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah said to the Prophet of Islam, "O Messenger of God, is there anyone in the community better than us? We believed in you and did jihad alongside you." The Prophet replied, "Yes—people who will come after you, who will believe in me without having seen me." (*Al-Mu'jam al-Kabir* by al-Tabarani, Hadith No. 3538)

The phrase "without having seen me" in this hadith cannot be understood in a purely literal sense. For a Prophet who would later become the most prominent figure in history—whose greatness would be universally recognized—believing in him alone would not constitute a unique distinction. Therefore, this statement must be understood in a deeper and more meaningful way.

This means that the will of the Prophet—which the companions of the early period understood directly by

seeing and hearing him—must now be discovered by the Prophet’s later “brothers” without having seen or heard him, through personal reflection and understanding. This matter can be clearly illustrated with an example.

The companions of the Prophet faced religious persecution and were compelled to fight in battles like Badr and Uhud in self-defense. These were situations that demanded the sacrifice of life. The companions of the Prophet, without hesitation, offered that sacrifice.

Those very same companions were later faced with another trial, known in prophetic biography as the Expedition of Hdaybiyyah. This too was a test of sacrifice—but of a different kind. In this second test, all the companions—except Abu Bakr—fell into confusion. The same people who had shown firm belief in the earlier battles now experienced deep hesitation. It was only through the Prophet’s personal insistence that they finally accepted it.

Today, this same history has returned for Muslims. Across the world, some souls genuinely seek to find God. Their nature is restless in its search for God’s religion. However, in the present age, Muslims—acting in the name of God and His religion—have created an atmosphere of conflict and confrontation across the world. This climate of hostility has destroyed the peaceful environment in which such sincere individuals could approach God’s religion with an open mind and embrace it.

Now, once again, Muslims must offer the same kind of sacrifice that the companions of the Prophet made at the

time of the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah. They had to set aside their personal grievances. Today as well, the situation demands that Muslims let go of their personal and communal grievances so that God may be found among those who are sincerely seeking Him.

The Companions, having seen the Prophet and received his direct, personal guidance, embraced the sacrifice of patience. Today, Muslims must embody that same patience—guided not by his presence, but by the enduring light of his life and example. If they can do this, then, according to the earlier hadith, they will be counted among the Prophet's brothers. And without a doubt, for any Muslim, there can be no greater honour than to be welcomed on the Day of Judgment as one of the Prophet's brothers.

NO PLEDGE FOR WAR

Peace holds intrinsic, positive value, whereas war does not. War is entirely a negative phenomenon. In other words, peace is a permanent necessity for human society, while war is only a temporary, conditional response—and that too only when all avenues for preserving peace have failed and confrontation in defense becomes the only remaining option.

This distinction between peace and war is so fundamental that it has been universally recognized across all religions—without exception. Islam, being a preserved and unaltered religion, affirms this understanding. The Quran declares,

“Reconciliation is better” (Quran, 4:128), but no verse states, “War is better.” Similarly, a hadith states: “Do not wish to meet the enemy; instead, ask God for well-being.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2966) Nowhere does Islamic teaching encourage the desire for war or the pursuit of battle.

This principle is consistently upheld in both the Quran and Hadith. Yet in modern times, there exists a segment among Muslims who claim to follow Islam but, in reality, seem to admire war. They frequently glorify conflict in their speeches and writings. Their intellectual hero is Iqbal, who poetically wrote: “The sword is sharpened by the strength of selfhood—‘There is no god but God.’”

However, these individuals are peace-loving when it comes to their own lives. Their approach is: do not engage in war—but talk about it endlessly. They have no intention of risking personal harm, yet they glorify martyrdom and bloodshed. As a result of this double standard, they remain safe, while impressionable Muslims—swayed by their rhetoric—end up paying the price.

In Islamic history, the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah is one of the clearest examples of Islam’s deep commitment to peace. Yet war-inclined thinkers have even tried to derive a pro-war message from this event by referencing the Pledge of Ridwan (*Bay’at al-Ridwan*). They argue that this pledge proves that war was central to Hudaibiyyah. But this interpretation is both unfounded and misleading.

Historical and hadith sources make it clear that the Pledge of Ridwan was not a pledge for war—it was a pledge

against retreat. This event occurred during the Prophet's journey to Hudaibiyyah. When he departed from Madinah, he explicitly declared that the purpose of the journey was to perform Umrah, not to wage war. Even after reaching Hudaibiyyah, he repeatedly clarified that the objective was to perform the peaceful pilgrimage.

Under such circumstances, the idea of taking a pledge for war simply does not arise. To understand the true nature of Bay'at al-Ridwan, a brief historical context is necessary.

Bay'at al-Ridwan (6 AH) is a well-documented event in Islamic history that took place during the Prophet's journey to Hudaibiyyah. The purpose of this journey was solely to perform Umrah. However, when the Prophet reached Hudaibiyyah, the Quraysh of Makkah blocked his entry, and negotiations began. To convey the Muslims' peaceful intentions, the Prophet sent Uthman ibn Affan, who later became the third Caliph of Islam, as his envoy to Makkah.

The Quraysh detained Uthman. When his return was delayed, a rumour spread that he had been killed. This led the Prophet to gather his 1,400 companions and take a pledge of solidarity—this was Bay'at al-Ridwan.

What was this pledge about? Some accounts suggest that the Prophet took a pledge of death. However, Jabir ibn Abdullah, who personally took part in the pledge, refuted this and clarified:

“The Messenger of God did not take a pledge from us to die. He took a pledge that we would not flee.” (*Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, Vol. 4, p. 380)

Leading Islamic scholars support this interpretation. For example, Ibn Qayyim—an eminent medieval Islamic jurisconsult, theologian, and spiritual writer—states: “They pledged not to flee.” (*Zad al-Ma‘ad*, Vol. 3, p. 259)

Later, the Quraysh sent Suhayl ibn Amr as a negotiator. Suhayl was known for his calm temperament. When the Prophet saw him approaching, he said: “When the Quraysh send someone like Suhayl, it means they desire peace.” (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 2, p. 316)

Throughout the Hudaibiyyah journey, the Prophet remained firmly committed to peace. Despite provocation, he never responded with aggression. At every turn, he chose to de-escalate. For instance, when he learned that 200 Quraysh cavalymen were approaching, he did not order his companions to prepare for battle. Instead, he changed his route to avoid confrontation.

He even selected the most soft-natured person in the group—Uthman—to serve as his envoy, symbolizing his peaceful intent. And even when the rumour of Uthman’s death reached him, the Prophet did not retaliate. Instead, he stayed in place and took a pledge from his companions—to stand firm, not to attack. If the Quraysh initiated war, they would defend themselves. But if peace was possible—even on unequal terms—they would accept it. And that is exactly what happened.

The fact that a treaty was signed after Bay’at al-Ridwan is clear proof that the pledge was not about launching war. Had it been a war pledge, the signing of a peace treaty—

especially on seemingly one-sided terms—would never have followed.

When Uthman was sent to Makkah, he went as the Prophet's official envoy. According to international norms, killing an envoy is an act of war. So when the Muslims heard the rumour of his death, they naturally believed the Quraysh had rejected all peaceful options and chosen war. At that moment, the situation appeared to have changed.

Initially, the Prophet's choice had been between war and peace—and he chose peace. But when Uthman was believed to have been killed, the choice seemed to shift between retreat and war. The Quraysh appeared ready to fight, making war seem inevitable. In response, the Prophet took a pledge of non-retreat and defensive readiness. But when the news of Uthman's death turned out to be false, the Prophet once again returned to his original position—and opted for peace, even if it meant accepting unfavourable terms.

The message of Bay'at al-Ridwan is this: when your choice is between retreat and resistance, choose resistance. But when your choice is between war and peace, choose peace—even if it means accepting the conditions of the other side. Moreover, even the pledge to resist rather than retreat was conditional, not absolute. At Hudaibiyyah (6 AH), the Prophet chose resistance over retreat. But earlier, in Makkah (1 AH), when faced with a similar situation, he chose to migrate.

The Importance of Patience

Hudaybiyyah, in essence, is another name for the policy of non-confrontation. This same approach is referred to in Islam as *sabr* (patience). In Islam, patience holds immense significance. The Prophet of Islam said: “No one has been given a better and more generous gift than patience.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1481)

Many similar sayings of the Prophet emphasizing the importance and superiority of patience can be found in the books of hadith. For example, in *Musnad Ahmad*, the Prophet is reported to have said: “I do not find any provision more abundant for you than patience.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 11091)

In these hadiths, patience is described as a form of provision and a gift. This indicates that patience is not a negative trait; rather, it is a deeply positive force. Patience is not deprivation—it is a form of attainment. It is not passivity—it is one of the highest forms of action. In fact, patience forms the very foundation of prophetic activism, or Islamic activism. The Prophet’s entire method of action was based on the principle of patience.

The Quran revealed to the Prophet is, in its entirety, a book of patience. The verses that explicitly command patience are obviously so. But on closer reflection, even the remaining verses are, indirectly, verses of patience. For example, “Read in the name of your Lord who created” (Quran, 96:1) is essentially a verse about patience, because engaging in the act of reading in a hostile environment is only possible

through patience. Likewise, “Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds” (Quran, 1:2) does not contain the word *sabr*, but it is inherently a verse of patience, because true expressions of praise in the face of loss and deprivation can only come from a person grounded in patience. The verse “Speak to him gently” (Quran, 20:44) is also a verse of patience, because speaking gently to an arrogant opponent requires the ability to endure hurtful speech without reacting harshly.

In this world, the only secret to success is to begin with what is possible. And the single greatest cause of failure is to waste one’s strength and energy in the pursuit of what is impossible.

In other words, one could say that a violent course of action leads a person toward destruction, whereas a peaceful course of action leads toward success. Violent methods are always the result of impatience. In contrast, peaceful methods are adopted by those who can demonstrate patience and restraint in situations of conflict. In this world, peace is the greatest force—and patience is what enables a person to successfully harness the power of peace.

COMPLETION OF RELIGION

The finality of prophethood (*khatm-e-nubuwwat*) and the completion of religion (*takmeel-e-deen*) are two aspects of the same reality. According to God’s creative plan, it was necessary that divine guidance remain available to humankind at all times. In earlier times, this guidance

was provided through prophets. This process began with the very first human being, Adam, and continued without interruption through the ages. The Quran refers to this in these words: “Then We sent Our messengers in succession.” (Quran, 23:44)

Regarding Muhammad, the Quran declares in verse 40 of the same chapter that he is the last of the messengers. No prophet will come after him. This declaration was not merely an announcement that the list of prophets had come to an end. It also meant that although the institution of prophethood would no longer exist, something would take its place and fulfill its role.

The completion of religion—meaning the establishment and stabilization of religion—is in fact the manifestation of this divine decision. After the finality of prophethood, God made His religion itself the successor to prophethood. In earlier times, religion often remained unstable. Therefore, it could not serve as a substitute for prophethood. But after the last Prophet, through divine support, the religion of Islam was firmly established. As a result, after the end of prophethood, religion itself became its replacement. This state will continue until the end of time. Therefore, the prophethood of Muhammad remains effective until the Day of Judgment. There is no longer any need for a new prophet.

This concept is referred to in the Quran as the perfection or completion of religion. That is, the religion was made so firmly established that no danger now remains to it until the end of time. The Quran declares in Surah 5:

“Today, those who deny the truth have despaired of your religion. So do not fear them—fear Me. Today, I have completed your religion for you, and completed My favor upon you, and chosen Islam as your religion.” (Quran, 5:3)

In this verse, the phrase completed your religion means made your religion stable (*Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. 11, p. 598; *Tafsir al-Nasafi*, p. 1, p. 270). In previous times, religion was repeatedly subject to alteration and distortion. Opposing forces were often successful in erasing the message of the prophets from history. But through the Prophet of Islam and his companions, such a profound revolution was brought about that the problem of religious instability was resolved forever.

According to the Commentator Dahhak, this verse was revealed after the conquest of Makkah in 8 AH—approximately fourteen centuries ago according to the Hijri calendar. At the time, this verse represented a bold prophecy about the future. It declared in advance that history had now entered a new phase. The fear of human opposition to God’s religion had ended forever. The religion of God had become so firmly rooted that no opposing force would ever again be able to overcome it.

1. The present world is a place of trial. Here, all events unfold according to the natural law of cause and effect. When this context is taken into account, the interpretation of the aforementioned Quranic verse becomes clearer: it signifies that in the times to come, the course of history will move in a direction aligned with the religion of God. Future

events will unfold in ways that affirm the truth of God's religion, not in ways that negate it.

This prophecy has been consistently fulfilled across all historical periods. On a purely intellectual and historical level, this affirms that the Quran is indeed the revealed word of God. For, no one other than God has the power to make such a definitive pronouncement about the course of history—and in fact, no one in history has ever dared to make such a bold and decisive statement about it.

In this brief discussion, I will mention three major events in world history. These are events that initially appeared to be revolutions opposing religion. But in terms of their long-term outcomes, they turned out to be revolutions that ultimately supported it. These three revolutions are: freedom, science, and secularism.

1. The present age is an age of freedom, whereas all previous eras were marked by restrictions on expression. In every human community, whether large or small, in every part of the world, and at every point in history, some form of control over speech and writing has always existed. Some form of censorship has appeared in all communities, small and large, in all parts of the world, at all stages of history (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 3, p. 1083).

This general restriction on freedom of expression meant that religious scriptures were never subjected to open criticism. Due to this prohibition on critical examination, the differences between one religious scripture and another never became clear on purely scholarly grounds. The only

way to determine the status of a religious book was through the belief of its followers. Each group described its holy book as a divine revelation, and based on this, people began to assume that every religious scripture was equally divine. In reality, however, the Quran was the preserved divine scripture, while all the others were unpreserved. The Quran remained completely unaltered, whereas the other scriptures had undergone distortions.

In the present age, with the advent of open intellectual freedom, everything came under unrestricted scrutiny—even sacred religious texts. This process has continued for nearly the past three hundred years among scholars and has become an independent academic field known by terms like higher criticism, historical criticism, and textual criticism.

This open examination brought a great benefit: the difference between the Quran and other religious scriptures became clear on purely scholarly and historical grounds. These critics examined the Quran with the same severity as they did the other religious texts. But in the end, it was proven that the Quran is a preserved book, and all others are unpreserved. The Quran is unaltered, and the others are altered. The Quran is a historically reliable book, while the others lack historical reliability.

For example, modern scholars collected different copies of the Quran from various countries. They gathered handwritten and printed versions of the Quran from different historical periods. When these thousands of manuscripts were compared with each other, not even the

slightest difference could be found. Some differences were noted in pronunciation (*qira'at*) in a few words of certain verses. But as far as the written text was concerned, not a single partial or complete variation was found among them.

The situation with the other scriptures was entirely different. Their various versions displayed thousands of clear differences. For example, in some versions of the Torah, the number of a group was stated as ten thousand, while in others, the same group was referred to as thousands. In one version of the Gospel, Jesus was referred to as the son of God, while in another version, he was described as the son of David.

The present era of freedom appeared as a challenge to the Quran and Islam. But in terms of the final outcome, it turned out to be beneficial to Islam. It provided a new historical argument in favour of the Quran. The distinction between the Quran and other religious scriptures, which until now was based only on Muslims' personal belief, has now become an established fact in academic scholarship. This storm of freedom seemed at first to be a difficulty for Muslims, but in the end, it proved to be equivalent to ease.

2. The second intellectual revolution was the modern scientific revolution. In particular, during the nineteenth century, a method for discovering things was developed, which came to be known as the scientific method. This method involves evaluating things in the light of observable or experimentally verifiable phenomena. With the spread of this method, human beings became aware of many new

realities—for instance, detailed knowledge of the solar system or precise information about the layers of the Earth. Following these material discoveries, a distinct philosophy emerged, commonly known as positivism. Under this philosophy, it came to be believed that the sole criterion for attaining real knowledge is direct experience or observation that is verifiable.

When viewed from this perspective, religious beliefs did not meet this standard of knowledge, as they were entirely based on indirect reasoning or inference. For example, the existence of God was unobservable. The argument presented in support of it was generally that since there is design in the universe, there must necessarily be a designer. Such inferential reasoning was considered invalid according to modern standards of knowledge. Therefore, these arguments were dismissed as pseudo-explanations.

For nearly a hundred years, a major intellectual debate continued in the realm of knowledge. However, this viewpoint carried weight only as long as human knowledge remained confined to the macro-world. At the beginning of the twentieth century, when human inquiry reached into the micro-world, the entire situation underwent a complete transformation.

It then became clear that the domain of direct reasoning was extremely limited. The new realities emerging in human knowledge were so subtle that only inference—or indirect reasoning—was practically applicable. For example, in 1895, the German scientist Wilhelm Conrad

Röntgen observed during an experiment that certain effects appeared on a glass plate in front of him, even though no known connection existed between the experiment and the glass. He concluded that there must be an invisible radiation traveling at the speed of 186,000 miles per second. Due to its unknown nature, Röntgen named it X-rays. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 19, p. 1058)

In the twentieth century, many such phenomena emerged that could not be observed directly. However, based on their indirect effects, their existence could not be denied either. As a result, modern scholars were compelled to accept inferential reasoning as a valid standard of logic, alongside direct reasoning—because without it, X-rays could not be explained, the scientific structure of the atom could not be accepted, and the existence of black holes or dark matter could not be acknowledged, and so on.

With this expansion in the standards of reasoning, arguments in support of religious beliefs became just as valid as arguments supporting scientific theories. The same inferential logic used to establish modern scientific theories was also applicable to establishing religious belief.

Thus, the proclamation made by the Quran 1,400 years ago was reaffirmed in history: that no change in human thought would be able to reject the truth of Islam. Every revolution to come would only serve to confirm divine religion. None would ever succeed in denying it.

3. The third intellectual revolution that Islam encountered in later history was secularism. This thought process

emerged during the European Renaissance. Secularism was a movement that prioritized this worldly, material life over the life of the Hereafter:

“...a movement in society directed away from other-worldliness to this-worldliness.”

(*Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 10, p. 19)

The theory of secularism came to dominate modern society as a powerful social and political ideology. In theory, it meant that the collective policy of a nation should be based on non-interference in religious matters. But in practice, it turned into a strong anti-religious force. It began to appear that the wave of secularism would first push religion to the margins of life, and then eventually eliminate it completely as an obsolete belief system.

But once again, the Quran’s prophecy proved decisive. It became evident that divine religion is rooted in the eternal nature of human beings. The awareness of religion in a person is just as unchangeable as the sensation of thirst. Even the largest institutions and most powerful governments founded on secular principles could not succeed in making human beings abandon divine religion in favour of secularism.

A particularly instructive example of this can be found in Turkey. After gaining political power, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk officially abolished the Islamic Caliphate in 1924. He declared an aggressive secularism as the state policy of Turkey. Using state authority, he abruptly shut down all religious schools and institutions. Through new legislation, he restructured the entire Turkish system on the basis of

secularism. Even traditional Turkish dress was forcibly replaced with European attire. Every form of opposition was suppressed with force.

After Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's death in 1938, his associate Mustafa İsmet İnönü (d. 1973) was appointed President of Turkey. He continued Atatürk's aggressive secular policies with full commitment. Yet, despite nearly fifty years of an anti-Islam government campaign, Islam survived in Turkey. Atatürk's policy to eliminate Islam completely failed. Even İsmet İnönü had to admit this near the end of his life. While suffering from his final illness, he reportedly expressed the following impression (as cited in *Al-Wa'y Al-Islāmi*, Dhū al-Qa'dah 1408 AH):

“It is hard for me to believe what I am seeing. We tried everything we could to uproot Islam from the hearts of the Turks and to implant the principles of Western civilization in its place. But to our amazement, the result turned out to be completely the opposite of what we expected. We sowed the seed of secularism, but the fruit that emerged was Islam.”

Another failed example in this regard is the Soviet Union. There, an effort was made first intellectually and then, from 1917 onward, through a powerful government, to eliminate Islam. This campaign continued for nearly a hundred years. But in 1991, the Communist Empire itself collapsed—and astonishingly, from its ruins, Islam reemerged in a living form.

The American magazine Time (March 12, 1990) published a report about the Soviet region. The primary aim of this report was to assess the status of religion in the new Russia. It included a review of the 55 million Soviet Muslims and revealed that Islam had been revived there with new strength. The headline of this illustrated report was meaningfully titled:

“Karl Marx Makes Room for Muhammad.”

Every challenge that history has presented against God’s religion has only served to affirm that it is an eternally established faith—one that cannot be overcome.

Final Word

Here, we have briefly discussed only a few modern revolutions. Similar adverse events have occurred repeatedly over the past 1,400 years. Each of these events initially appeared to be a challenge to Islam, yet in the end, they became a source of strength for it. A well-known example is the Mongol domination in the 13th century CE and their eventual submission to the intellectual force of Islam.

This recurring historical experience offers immense encouragement. It confirms that intellectual ascendancy in favour of Islam is divinely destined. Believers should never lose hope when faced with turmoil. Instead, they should advance with the message of Islam, strengthened by firm conviction. The Quran states that if you overlook the excesses of your opponents and respond with goodness,

even those who once appeared as enemies may become close friends. (Quran, 41:34)

Now, as we face new challenges and difficulties, if we establish the Quran, history will once again bear witness. Just as the sword of the Mongols in the seventh century AH ultimately became a servant and protector of God's religion, the same outcome will unfold once more.

THE CONDUCT OF THE PROPHET OF ISLAM

During the time of the Prophet of Islam, there was a man named Musaylimah ibn Habib from Yamamah who falsely claimed to be a prophet. In the 10th year of Hijrah, he sent a letter to the Prophet of Islam through two of his men. The contents of the letter were as follows:

“From Musaylimah, the Messenger of God, to Muhammad, the Messenger of God. Peace be upon you. After this: I have been made a partner with you in prophethood. Half of the land (i.e., Arabia) is ours, and half belongs to Quraysh. But the Quraysh are a people who transgress. (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 2, p. 600)

When Musaylimah's envoys arrived and his letter was read aloud before the Prophet of Islam, he asked them, “What do you yourselves say?” They replied, “We say what he says.” The Prophet of Islam responded:

“By God, were it not that messengers are not killed, I would have had both your necks struck.” Following this, the Prophet of Islam dictated a letter to be written to Musaylimah:

“In the name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate. From the Messenger of God to Musaylimah the Liar. Peace be upon those who follow guidance. After this: The earth belongs to God. He grants inheritance of it to whomever He wills among His servants. And the final outcome is for the God-conscious.”

(*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 2, pp. 600–601)

In this incident, we find a clear contrast between a true prophet and a false claimant to prophethood. Musaylimah’s letter reflects the tone and claims of a false prophet, while the Prophet of Islam’s reply reflects the clarity, truth, and character of a genuine messenger.

Another important lesson from this example is that the envoy of another nation—even if he is a serious wrongdoer—is not to be killed. Rather, he must be allowed to return safely to his homeland. In such matters, Islam is firmly rooted in international norms.

THE WAY OF THE PROPHET

One of the significant incidents recorded in the books of the Prophet’s biography is the *Hilf al-Fudul* (Alliance of the Virtuous). This took place before the Prophet of Islam

received revelation. In Makkah, a group of individuals gathered at the house of Abdullah ibn Judan and pledged to stand for justice, support the oppressed, and ensure that rightful claims were fulfilled.

The Prophet of Islam was one of those who participated in this gathering. According to the narration of Ibn Ishaq, after the advent of prophethood, when this alliance was mentioned, the Prophet said: “I participated in that pact. And if I were called to it today, even after Islam, I would respond to it.” (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 1, p. 124)

This statement refers specifically to the spirit of *Hilf al-Fudul*. On the other hand, regarding the call to monotheism, the Prophet declared: “This is my way; on the basis of sure knowledge, I call on you to have faith in God—I and those who follow me.” (Quran, 12:108)

Reflecting on both these points comparatively makes it clear that in the case of *Hilf al-Fudul*, the Prophet considered himself merely a respondent to an external invitation. In contrast, when it came to spreading the light of truth, he took on the role of an active caller. This indicates that in an environment where truth is absent, the foremost positive responsibility of believers is to propagate the message of truth. With regard to social welfare and public good, believers may take part in such efforts when invited by sincere and well-meaning individuals.

This is because the root cause of human corruption is always forgetfulness of God, the supreme reality. Prophets—and

in their path, true believers—always work at the root of the problem, not its surface.

PROPHETIC APPROACH

One striking feature that emerges from the lives of the prophets is this: in the early part of their lives, each prophet was loved by the people. But as soon as he began his prophetic mission, he became the most disliked person among those very same people. They turned into his enemies. This was exactly what happened with the Prophet of Islam. Initially, his people called him *al-Amin* (the Trustworthy). But when he began conveying the message of truth, they sought his destruction.

It is a well-established fact that every prophet, in terms of character and conduct, stands at the highest moral level. He is a well-wisher to the people, serves them, lives among them without causing harm, and never asks anything from them in return. His character is so noble that he even responds to wrongdoing with kindness. He was a model of integrity and inner clarity. Yet, when he begins delivering the divine message, people start to hate him.

This opposition to prophets is not limited to disbelievers alone. The same experience occurred even among people who considered themselves believers. For example, Jesus was sent among a community who, in the context of their time, were the equivalent of Muslims. Yet they treated Jesus

in the worst possible way. They humiliated him, spat on him, dragged him into a pagan court, and even plotted to kill him.

A study of the prophets' lives reveals that the primary cause behind people's anger and hostility was one thing: critique—what is known today as criticism. Ibn Ishaq narrates that initially, the Prophet of Islam was not alienated from his people. But when he began speaking critically of their deities, they took grave offense and became hostile. (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 1, p. 238)

What Ibn Ishaq referred to as “fault-finding” and what the polytheists of Makkah labeled as “insult” would, in today's language, be called criticism. Every prophet, while calling people to what is right, also criticized what was wrong. It was precisely this critical method that turned people against them.

THE MODEL OF EXCELLENCE

When the Prophet of Islam began his mission in ancient Makkah, the people—particularly the leaders—became his staunch opponents. They inflicted severe hardships on him and his followers. Yet, he was instructed not to retaliate in any way but to unilaterally ignore their aggressions. (Quran, 33:48)

Thus, for thirteen years, the Prophet exercised immense patience. Eventually, the situation escalated to the point that

they planned to kill him. Armed men surrounded his house. Even then, he did not confront them but quietly left Makkah and migrated to Madinah, following God's command.

Still, the people of Makkah did not relent. They threatened to attack Madinah and wipe out Islam and its followers. In response, during the early days of the migration, the Prophet sent small groups of emigrants toward the routes of Makkah to gather intelligence and stay informed of any aggressive plans by the Quraysh.

In Ramadan of the 2nd year of Hijrah, the incident involving Abu Sufyan's trade caravan took place. To protect this caravan, nearly all the chiefs of Quraysh set out with a powerful army. Their real intent was to first rescue the caravan and then attack Madinah. At that time, the Prophet of Islam, under direct instruction from God, marched out from Madinah. God provided special help to the believers through angels. In the ensuing battle at Badr, the people of Makkah suffered a major defeat.

Even after this, the people of Makkah did not remain passive. They repeatedly engaged in acts of aggression, yet the Prophet of Islam consistently avoided confrontation. However, at the battles of Uhud and Hunayn, the Quraysh launched unilateral attacks against the Muslims, which led to open conflict.

The Prophet's objective was not to eliminate his opponents, but to transform hearts and win over minds. This is why, at the time of Hudaibiyyah, he agreed to a non-aggression pact with the Quraysh—on one-sided terms—establishing

a ten-year truce. His aim was to create a stable and balanced environment in which truth-seekers could freely explore and embrace what is right, without the pressure of warfare or hostility.

The Treaty of Hudaibiyyah proved to be a turning point. It opened the door for sincere individuals to examine the message of Islam without fear. As a result, within just two years, history witnessed an unprecedented number of people embraced the faith. Without further warfare, and solely through the moral and numerical strength of the growing Muslim community, the Prophet of Islam ultimately prevailed over the Arabian Peninsula.

THE MIGRATION OF THE PROPHET

In the thirteenth year of his prophethood, the Prophet of Islam left Makkah and moved to Madinah. Some non-Muslim historians refer to this as a “flight,” but in Islamic history, it is called *Hijrah* (migration). This is not merely a matter of religious sentiment—it reflects the actual nature of the event. In most cases, such incidents would be described as flight, but it was the unique distinction of the Prophet of Islam that he transformed what would typically be considered an escape into a purposeful migration.

Usually, people who are forced to flee their homeland under difficult conditions are those who have led political movements against the ruling government, aiming to

overthrow it and gain power. But the case of the Prophet of Islam was entirely different. He never sought to seize power. In fact, even when the people of Makkah offered him authority, he refused. He had come to give, not to take.

When the people of Makkah forced him to leave the city, he did not behave as others typically do. He did not launch a propaganda campaign against the people of Makkah from Madinah, nor did he plot political schemes against them. Even after settling in Madinah, he remained a well-wisher of the people of Makkah. He prayed for them and yearned that they would abandon the path leading to Hell and walk the path to Paradise. His concern was not for their land or wealth, but for their guidance and salvation. Even when the people of Makkah waged war against him, he made a peace treaty with them on one-sided terms.

The Prophet's departure from Makkah to Madinah was, in fact, a sacrifice he made for the people of Makkah. Even while residing in Madinah, he continued to offer sacrifices for their sake. He turned an atmosphere of hostility into one of goodwill. He responded to enmity with benevolence. Where others might have reacted destructively, he created a constructive environment instead. It is this remarkable approach that makes his departure a migration rather than a flight.

A LEADER OF UNITY

Before his prophethood, when the Prophet of Islam was thirty-five years old, a significant event took place in Makkah. The matter was the reconstruction of the Kaaba. The structure built by Prophet Abraham and Prophet Ishmael had weakened over time. The Quraysh decided to rebuild it.

The first issue was dismantling the old walls. Everyone was hesitant, fearing that if they struck this sacred structure with a tool, some calamity might befall them. Finally, Walid ibn al-Mughīrah stepped forward with a pickaxe in hand in front of the Kaaba and declared: “O God, we have not deviated. O God, we desire nothing but good.” (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 1, p. 180)

After that, everyone joined in to take down the walls—keeping the original foundation intact. Ibn Ishaq narrates that during the excavation they found a stone with the following words inscribed: “Whoever sows goodness will reap admiration. And whoever sows evil will reap regret. Do you expect to do wrong and be rewarded with good? Just as grapes cannot be harvested from a thorn bush.” (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 1, p. 182)

Each clan of the Quraysh collected stones for the rebuilding, and construction resumed. When they reached the stage of placing the Black Stone (Ḥajr al-Aswad), a dispute arose. Since placing the stone was considered a great honour, each clan wanted the privilege for itself. Tensions escalated to the point where they were ready to fight. One tribe, the

Banu ‘Abd al-Dar, even brought a bowl filled with blood and dipped their fingers in it, vowing to fight to the death.

Four or five days passed in this deadlock. Eventually, the people came to their senses. They all gathered in the mosque, discussed the matter, and agreed to resolve the issue fairly. (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 1, p. 182)

At the time, Abu Umayyah ibn al-Mughīrah was the eldest among the Quraysh. He suggested: “Let the first person who enters through the gate of the mosque tomorrow morning decide the matter.” Everyone agreed.

The next morning, the first person to enter the mosque was Muhammad. When they saw him, they said, “This is al-Amin (the Trustworthy). We are satisfied. This is Muhammad.”

They presented the matter to him. The Prophet said, “Bring me a cloth.” A cloth was brought, and he laid it on the ground. He placed the Black Stone in the center of the cloth and said, “Let each tribe hold one corner of the cloth. Then lift it together.” They did as he instructed. When they reached the designated place, the Prophet himself picked up the stone and placed it in the wall of the Kaaba. The construction was completed, and the issue was resolved peacefully. (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 1, p. 197)

This incident highlights two principles of unity:

1. The leader who serves as a unifying figure must be someone trusted and respected by the people in terms of character. People should view him as honest and trustworthy—someone they see as above personal

interest. Without such a person, unity among people cannot be achieved.

2. The leader must be considerate of others. He should ensure that all parties feel included and that the benefits of unity are shared. A successful leader lives among the people as one of them, treating everyone with humility and fairness. His heart should be filled with goodwill for all. Though he leads, he considers himself equal to others. This is what defines a true leader.

SERIOUSNESS IS THE KEY

The Quran states. “You have indeed in the Prophet of God a good example for those of you who look to God and the Last Day, and remember God always. (33:21)

In this verse, the Prophet of Islam is described as the best example for people. At first glance, this example appears to be available in written form—in the Quran, Hadith, and biographies of the Prophet. But the verse does not say that anyone who reads these books will automatically find in them a model to follow. Rather, it says that this example—which is the best in every respect—will be discovered only by the one who fears God, is concerned about the Afterlife, and remembers God abundantly.

Why is that so? Because the Prophet’s example as recorded in books is not a formula of mathematical certainty. For instance, if a book states that two plus two equals four,

anyone reading it will understand the same thing—there is no room for error or confusion. But the life of the Prophet is a different matter. It is something that always allows for multiple interpretations. That is why, to grasp it correctly, one must be deeply serious. This seriousness is generated when a person's mind is filled with awareness of God and fear of the Day of Judgment. Only such a person becomes truly capable of understanding and applying the Prophet's example correctly.

As we know, the model of the Prophet is documented in the Quran, Hadith, and biographies. But it is not like a fixed equation—it is related to life itself. And life is something constantly in motion. It passes through different situations—sometimes one kind, sometimes another.

This is why, within the Prophet's traditions, we find diverse examples. At times, he is seen patiently enduring the hostility of his enemies; at other times, he confronts them. Sometimes he is offered leadership but declines it; at other times, he establishes governance himself. Sometimes he speaks only of faith and ethics; other times, he addresses matters related to politics and public law. Sometimes he emphasizes the Afterlife as though it is everything; other times, he highlights the importance of worldly planning and strategy.

This variety and difference in the Prophet's life makes his example something that must be interpreted. To derive guidance from it, a person must be able to distinguish between one type of situation and another. They must be

able to recognize which example is appropriate when, and what wisdom lies behind each response.

This is what is known as sound interpretation. And the ability to interpret correctly arises only when a person has been made deeply serious by fear of God and concern for the Hereafter. A person lacking seriousness may take something from one context and apply it in another where it does not fit. This is the intellectual error described as placing something where it does not belong. Such a person resembles the saying: “A brick from here, a stone from there—Bhanmati built a tribe.”

Someone who lacks this deep seriousness and intense caution will remain lost in the valleys of interpretive errors. They will never be able to truly derive a model from the Prophet’s example for their own life.

Such a person may:

- Cite verses about revenge when the situation demands self-accountability.
- Talk about jihad when the situation calls for patience.
- Refer to hadiths of armed defense when the context demands the example of Hudaibiyyah.
- Call for battles like Badr and Hunayn when the task is to invite non-Muslims peacefully.
- Enthusiastically present the Prophet’s political leadership when the need is to develop one’s personal religious character.

- They open chapters on fighting when what is truly required is to spread the message of spiritual awareness and the higher purpose of life.

A TESTIMONY

In the 1984 edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, an article on the Prophet of Islam concludes with the following statement by the author:

“Few great men have been so maligned as Muhammad. Christian scholars of medieval Europe painted him as an impostor, a lecher, and a man of blood. A corruption of his name, ‘Mahound,’ even came to signify the devil. This picture of Muhammad and his religion still retains some influence. The English author Thomas Carlyle in 1840 was the first notable European to insist publicly that Muhammad must have been sincere, because it was ridiculous to suppose an impostor would have been the founder of a great religion.” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 12, p. 609)

The argument presented here by Thomas Carlyle to challenge Western propaganda is, in fact, the most valid and reliable way to judge any individual. Just as a tree is known by its fruit, a person is known by their character. It is a simple truth: anyone who reads the words of the Prophet of Islam, observes how he spent his days and nights, and

reflects on the kind of movement that emerged under his influence, cannot reasonably believe that such a mission could have come from a deceptive individual.

A person whose message is focused on the upliftment of humanity, whose words are filled with compassion and sincerity, and whose mission brings about a moral and constructive transformation in society—such a person cannot possibly be a fraud. A deceiver may initiate a scheme, but never a mission grounded in truth and aimed at lasting human betterment.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A RELIGION OF PEACE

Islam: A Religion of Peace and Compassion

ISLAM: A RELIGION OF PEACE

During a journey to Europe, I met a young Muslim man. He was from an Arab country and told me that he was searching for employment. In this pursuit, he went for an interview at a non-Muslim organization. During the conversation, the interviewer asked him, “Are you a Muslim?” When the young man replied, “Yes,” the interviewer immediately responded: “Then you are a terrorist.”

In today’s world, due to the extremism and militant actions of a section of Muslims, a widespread perception has developed that Islam is a religion of terrorism—that Islam seeks to achieve its objectives through violence and warfare. But this idea is completely false.

Islam is not defined by the behaviour of Muslims. Islam is a principled system; it is not the national behaviour of any ethnic group. The actions of Muslims should be judged in the light of Islam, but Islam itself should not be judged by the actions of Muslims. If some Muslims engage in acts of terrorism, the responsibility lies with them—not with Islam. Just because they raise Islamic slogans does not make their actions Islamic.

Islam is the name of the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet of Islam and the example of his life. And the Prophet of Islam was a messenger of peace, not a messenger of war. That is why the Quran calls him “a mercy to all the worlds”:

“We have not sent you but as a mercy to all mankind.”
(Quran, 21:107)

Ali ibn Abi Talib, the son-in-law of the Prophet of Islam, had his first child and named him Harb (meaning “war”). The Arabs were a warrior people and preferred names with martial significance. But when the Prophet learned about the name, he did not approve of it. He said, “Instead, name him Hasan (meaning good, beautiful).” (*Al-Mu’jam al-Kabir* by al-Tabarani, Hadith No. 2777)

This reveals the personality of the Prophet of Islam—he was, in every sense, a peace-loving individual. His inclination toward peace was so strong that he disliked even hearing the word *harb* (war). He believed not in violence, but in noble character.

The Prophet of Islam brought about a great revolution—but it was accomplished through the power of peace, not through warfare. And whenever he did take part in battle, it was under compulsion in defense, not by his own preference or choice.

Peace was a fundamental principle of his life; war was a mere accidental exception. In his entire 23-year prophetic mission, he participated in only three battles—Badr, Uhud, and Hunayn. All three were defensive in nature, and altogether they lasted no more than a day and a half.

Zayd ibn Muhallhil was born in Najd before the advent of Islam. He was a poet and also gained fame for his swordsmanship and horsemanship. As a result, he became known as Zayd al-Khayl (Zayd of the Horses), as the word *khayl* in Arabic refers to horses or horsemen. However, when Zayd came to meet the Prophet of Islam, the Prophet did not approve of the name Zayd al-Khayl and changed it to Zayd al-Khayr (Zayd of Goodness).

This incident reveals the true spirit of Islam. It shows the core message behind its teachings. The goal is not to make someone known for physical prowess or martial skills, but to develop them as a person of good character and positive action. In ancient Arabia, skill in horsemanship and swordsmanship were highly valued as a mark of heroism. The Prophet introduced a new perspective—urging people to become champions of virtue, achieving greatness through ethical conduct and kindness. The focus shifted from causing harm to promoting life and well-being.

In contemporary terms, it would be fair to say that the aim is to cultivate creative and thoughtful individuals. A deep commitment to higher principles awakens a person's potential for innovation and moral growth. Their thinking moves beyond the ordinary, and their character stands out positively. Though living in the material world, they connect with deeper values and realities beyond mere appearances.

If other people are self-centered, he seeks the good. If others exploit, he benefits others. If others have rebellious temperaments, he is humble. If others are warlike, he is peace-loving. If others take pleasure in killing, he finds happiness in giving life. If others carry hatred toward people, he alone carries love, even if others hate him.

In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, there is a narration from Aisha that shows the approach of the Prophet of Islam in worldly collective affairs. Al-Bukhari recorded this hadith under four chapters. The narration states: “The Messenger of God never had to choose between two matters except that he took the easier one.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3560)

This is a Sunnah of the Prophet of Islam. It shows that in matters presented before him among people, he always chose the easier path. When one way was peaceful and the other confrontational, when one was conflict and the other agreement, when one was the path of war and the other of peace, in all such cases, he chose the relatively easier and simpler option. This principle is evident throughout his entire life.

This Sunnah is well-known and established. However, generally, it is applied only in small matters. For example, when the Prophet was leading the prayer and a child’s crying was heard behind him—brought by its mother—he would shorten the prayer. Instead of reciting a long chapter, he would recite a short one and finish quickly so the mother

would not face difficulty. But this Sunnah is rarely mentioned or applied in major affairs.

When the Prophet of Islam began his mission in Makkah, the Kaaba had become a center of manifestations opposed to God. If he had begun his campaign by purifying the Kaaba itself, it would have been a highly challenging step. Therefore, he chose to begin by purifying hearts. Accordingly, the first verse revealed in the Quran was: "Read in the name of your Lord who created." (Quran, 96:1)

It is as though, rather than being instructed to purify the Kaaba of manifestations opposed to God, he was instructed to purify hearts of inner evils.

Towards the end of his life in Makkah, his opponents became determined to kill him. At that time, one option was to unite all Muslims under a defensive mindset and adopt the path of war. Instead, he chose to quietly leave Makkah and migrate to Madinah, advising other Muslims to do the same. This was an act of withdrawal rather than confrontation.

During the event of Hudaibiyyah, he faced a choice between war and returning. Here too, he abandoned the method of war and chose to withdraw.

Those who have performed Hajj or Umrah have seen a place adjoining the Kaaba called Hatim. According to the construction of Prophet Abraham, this place was originally part of the Kaaba. Later, during reconstruction, the

polytheists separated it. After the conquest of Makkah, he had the opportunity to rebuild the Kaaba and include Hatim in it. However, given the circumstances at the time, this would have been a source of conflict. Therefore, to avoid dispute, he left the Kaaba as it was, just as the polytheists had left it.

If one reflects on this, the entire life of the Prophet of Islam appears to exemplify this principle of choosing the easier path. He always avoided the difficult way and chose the easier way in every matter. This principle is called the peaceful method in the present time.

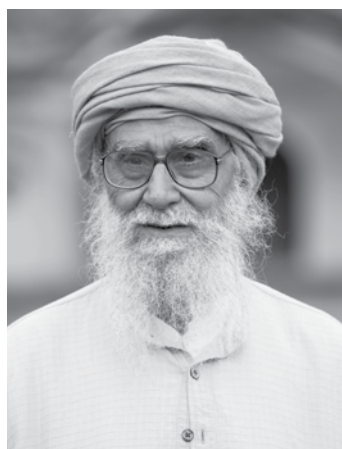
The method of war and violence is not beneficial for Islam. A person inclined to war tries to achieve his goals through violence. Such an approach is entirely foreign to Islam because Islam's purpose is to change hearts and minds toward good human beings. Changing hearts and minds is not possible through violence. It is achieved through persuasion, not by force.

The purpose of Islam is for people to realize God. It is for people to live with a constant awareness of His plan of creation. Within people, the highest spiritual qualities should develop—qualities described by words such as fear of God, purification of the soul, repentance, humility, honesty, compassion, patience, gratitude, responsibility, forgiveness, generosity, and more. People should become those who recognize the truth and acknowledge it. Within

people, a godly character should be nurtured—one worthy of dwelling in Paradise.

This is the true aim of Islam, and it cannot be achieved through war or violence. There is only one means to attain this, and that is through intellectual discussion and dialogue. The method of Islam can be summed up in one phrase: peaceful discussion, not militancy.

The purpose of Islam is to change people's minds and win their hearts. Such serious work can only be accomplished in a peaceful manner. Violence is an obstacle in the path of Islam, not a help.



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021), an Islamic scholar, spiritual leader, and peace activist, was internationally recognized for his seminal contributions to world peace. The Government of India posthumously honored him with the Padma Vibhushan Award in 2021 for his contributions to spirituality. Maulana authored over 200 books that delve into Islam's spiritual wisdom, the Prophet's non-violent approach, its relationship with modernity, and other contemporary issues. His English translation of the Quran and Quran Commentary are widely appreciated for their simplicity, clarity, and ease of understanding. In 2001, he founded the Centre for Peace and Spirituality International to promote a culture of peace and convey the spiritual message of Islam at a global level. CPS International Network is taking the legacy forward.

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Islam is a religion of peace in the true sense of the word. The Prophet of Islam was, in every respect, a peace-loving person. The purpose of Islam is to transform people's minds and win their hearts. Such important work can only be achieved peacefully.

Violence hinders, rather than helps, the cause of Islam. Islam is a religion for all mankind. Throughout history, God has sent guidance through His prophets. The preserved form of that divine guidance is what we now recognise as Islam. This book offers an intellectual study of Islam from that very perspective.

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