

THE HEART
OF A
Muslim



Osman Nûri TOPBAŞ

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Ali عليه السلام said:

*“Sustain your heart
with advice, and enlighten
it with wisdom.”*

*“Rest your spirit with
wise words and action, for
just like bodies, spirits also
become tired and weak.”*

*“Caution people with
wise and thoughtful words
so their hearts find peace.”*

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INTRODUCTION

A believer's greatest concern is to breathe his final breath as a Muslim. To die as a Muslim is to give the last breath with the heart. The heart of a Muslim is one that is shaped by Islam. It is a heart that is pure, untainted and transparent, as if to say, "Look mankind! There is nothing in here that can harm you!" This kind of a heart is the most beautiful gift one can possibly take to Allah the Almighty, simply because it is "...a polished mirror which reflects the beautiful names of Allah." In today's age of 'modern ignorance', enabling the heart to attain a condition that neither hurts nor is hurt, and which expects nothing from anyone in return for its good deeds, is as difficult as grasping a scorching ember.

A heart's true condition is recognised by the state it is in when hearing the verses of the Allah. Maintaining that purity is possible by keeping the heart spiritually clean. To remain clean is to live in a climate of fear. As the heart naturally swings from one mood to another, fear is the way to keep it on the desired path. A heart without fear becomes shrouded in gloom. Once gloom takes hold, the heart loses its pure condition, and worse still, it rushes headlong towards becoming hardened like a stone.

The heart of a Muslim is known by its effort to take a journey from the pits of gloom to the lofty skies of fear through the mercy of the Qur'an. For the heart, nothing is more urgent than to protect this balance, as the journey of this life could end at any given moment with the divine command, "Return to your Lord". Since we can never know when this command will come, we must focus on finding this purity of heart and work towards protecting it. This purity is a process of fine-tuning that depends partly on the social climate and surroundings. As the heart is an organ known for swinging from one state to another, it is important to focus on who and what can affect it.

Just as certain conditions are needed to protect the food depending on whether it is served hot or cold, the heart also requires a texture to feel the sounds of the truth and earn the rank of purity. This texture needs a climate where it can sustain its vivacity. This climate is the surroundings of truthful and righteous people. For indeed, each heart also demands a special kind of attention, focusing on the unique characteristics in which it warms, boils or softens. Which environment or companions exert a positive influence on the texture of the heart? Which conditions enable it to acquire the desired state of purity? What kind of a perspective must the heart of a Muslim possess?

‘The Heart of a Muslim’, which is our Altinoluk magazine’s gift to its readers this year, sets out with the intent of answering these questions. The book, distilled from the heart of the honourable Osman Nuri Topbas and which draws from observations based on contemplation and the Islamic tradition of wisdom that can be referred to as “the Muslims’ treasure chest”, comprises measures pertaining to the desired state of a Muslim’s heart. Much like a digital archive that opens up to hundreds of sub-folders, each of these measures contain meanings that could well become books in their own right. Just a few examples of these sentences perhaps suffice to prove this statement:

“Becoming intimately acquainted with our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ, and following him with love and respect, is the most important education we can possibly receive in this school of life. A person deprived of this training, who, in other words, has not come to know the **Prophet** ﷺ, remains ignorant, even if he has read thousands of books and stocked up on countless bits of information.”

“The Sufi path is nothing but the effort to practice Islam with a pure, lucid and illuminated heart.”

“Sufism is not to ‘strut’ in different guises seeking worldly gain. Much rather, it is to move away from the base desires of the self, remove the love of the world from the heart; and with humility and self-negation, ‘present’ the self to Allah the Almighty, whilst seeing oneself as just a ‘helpless slave.’”

“The rose finds its maturity and beauty by befriending the thorns. It is simply by this that the rose acquires a fine appearance and wonderful scent. The same goes for the human being. He only blossoms to the extent that he patiently befriends troubles and tribulations.”

We hope that ‘The Heart of a Muslim’, prepared with the Erkam rigour, gives all of us, and first and foremost our dear readers, a spiritual energy to provide strength on our path towards acquiring a pure heart. We thank our honourable Shaykh for sharing this valuable work with us, and pray that he is blessed with an enhanced life and more prosperous services to come.

ALTINOLUK

FOREWORD

Eternal thanks and gratitude to the High and Almighty Allah who created us, His helpless slaves, from nothing, promoted us amongst all creation to the level of human beings crafted in the best of form, then honoured us as believers, and further, made us part of the nation of the **Blessed Prophet Muhammad ﷺ**.

Endless greetings and blessings to our **Blessed Prophet ﷺ**, the first of creation with his light, and the last to appear as messenger, who has been sent as a mercy to all the worlds and a divine masterpiece who graced humankind with a peerless and exemplary character; and also, to his pure family and distinguished companions.

Since the universe is a silent Qur'an, and the Qur'an a vocal universe, a believer is a focal point of wisdom and a shrine of manifestations standing right on the crossroads of both. Created as an example of unattainable finesse and boundless depths, the human being can only protect his high value by living according to the teachings and guidance of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Islam's greatest blessings is its power to develop the human heart. For this, a servant of Allah ﷻ must gain deeply contemplate the words of the Qur'an and the natural verses of the book of the universe. This is because Allah the Almighty invites His servants to a love, affinity and friendship that are entwined within these objective and subjective twists.

The righteous and wise servants who have accepted this invitation have discovered with certainty that:

-The skies adorned with clusters of starry chandeliers,

-The Earth embellished with a sundry of gems,

-And this magnificent cosmos embroidered with countless divine patterns and gifted to the human being as a full-length mirror, do not, in any way, present an arrangement that is coincidental and without purpose. Much rather, in their silent language, they tell mindful people that they possess many a secret and wisdom.

Most certainly, from its flora, fauna, human beings and inanimate entities to the smallest cells and particles, all the way to the mysterious electrons and protons inside the atom, the cosmos is decked out as delicately as a bridal chamber, showcasing a

glimpse of divine power and glory way beyond the most imaginative mind. The work stands witness to its Cause, and the artwork is a testimony to its Artist.

Hearts that see, hear and feel observe nothing in the universe but manifestations of divine power and glory. They become versed in the language of roses, hyacinths and nightingales, which are part of the natural verses of this universe. They gaze at the appearances of the divine names “Al-Bari” (The Maker) and “Al-Musawwir” (The Shaper) in every being, and hear the soundless expressions of winds, rivers and mountains. These believers focus on the divine will that lies hidden behind every experience, bitter or sweet, and read those divine messages with the eye of the heart.

Those who have reached this horizon of the heart are blessed with various manifestations of friendship with the Truth. The Almighty has turned some of them into benevolent seas of spiritual power and wisdom like **Shah Naqshiband**, made some wander the deserts like Majnun, while others in the valleys of awe. Again, the Almighty has rendered some of them mute in the face of divine majesty, and transformed others like **Yunus Emre** into nightingales of love, while turning those such as **Rumi** into spiritual oceans that sprinkle pearls of wisdom from their hearts.

Since they are submerged in unique manifestations of divine love, believers who have made progress towards marifah (direct knowledge of Allah) therefore look upon everything with an eye of wisdom. They focus on the wisdom behind every being and every event.

For this reason, they are free of the ignorance of looking at the wonders of the universe with a blank stare. While an average person may admire the paintings an artist has made by simply imitating nature, he does not feel the same emotions when gazing at the cosmos and its Creator. He regards all wonders as mundane. The hearts of saints, on the other hand, beat with an awe and exhilaration for the Real Artist and His works. They relish the fine art which Divine Power has stamped upon countless wonders throughout nature, and lend an ear to the mysterious dialect, silent yet audible, spoken by the entire creation, such as:

-The vibrant tones dyed upon plants and flowers that rise forth from the same earth, and the trees that bear fruits of unique colour, smell and taste,

-The spectacular patterns impressed upon the wings of a butterfly, even though it has a mere lifespan of two weeks,

-And with the endless divine wonders it has been given, from eyes that see to a mind that understands, the marvel that is the creation of the human being.

For such people, the universe is an open book, there to be studied.

Allah the Almighty wants a believer to truly grasp this divine glory, and the secrets and wisdoms that underlie this grand order. This is a path of wholeheartedly obeying the Almighty's commands, and making a genuine effort to live Islam with profound love.

Our great religion Islam regulates all aspects of life. It weaves divine teachings into each moment of life. A believer can embody an exemplary character only by abiding by these standards of mercy that pertain to belief, worship, morals, social interaction and justice.

A Muslim therefore gains maturity only insofar as he is able to grasp the revitalising standards of Islam in his inner and outer world, within his harmony of the heart and body, and his totality of spirit and form. For this progress to take place, it is necessary that a believer applies his heart and mind to the standards of the Qur'an and Sunna and acquires depth in the contemplation of divine truths and wisdom, and lives upon the straight path until his final breath. He must also fastidiously refrain from all negative actions that take him away from Allah ﷻ.

As **Imam Shafi** has said:

“If you do not occupy yourself with the truth, you will be invaded by the falsehood.”

Similarly, as the great **Rumi** ﷺ said:

“If your thoughts are a rose, then you are in a rose garden. If your thoughts are thorns, then you are a log bound for the fire.”

In other words, contemplating divine matters refines the heart, increases focus in worship, saves a person from slavery to the ego's desires, and acquaints the heart with wisdom. On the contrary, base and devilish thoughts drag a person to ignorance, and make him a slave of his own ego.

Today, we are -unfortunately- witnessing a modern age of ignorance where useless activities and wrongdoing have captivated people's minds and hearts and take them away from the very purpose of their existence. Through the negative conditioning of the television, internet, other mediums of communication along with the secular education system, humankind have been dragged into spiritual and material disasters.

People who have not properly benefitted from the truth are intoxicated by these contemporary evils and swept away, much like driftwood in a flood without realizing it. All kinds of things that are forbidden by Allah and are cause for great punishment in the hereafter, appeal to egos like fine music.

As Muslims, we need to protect ourselves and our new generations from these moral erosions. Perhaps stronger than ever before, we are obliged to fully take hold of and seize the sublime and exalted values that make us who we are.

It goes without saying that these values are first and foremost the two treasures the **Blessed Prophet ﷺ** has left for us, namely the Noble Qur'an and the his Sunnah; and then the drops of wisdom that have trickled from the hearts of saints, righteous scholars and people of wisdom, whose exemplary lives have served as living interpretations of them.

In this book, we have merely aimed to act as typewriters for the inspirational teachings and guidance provided by Prophets, companions and saints. All the beauties inside this book belong to that spiritual realm, from which we have benefitted. The errors and shortcomings are from ourselves.

A hadith states that "A believer is like a bee."¹ A bee flies, not over rotten dumps, but pristine gardens. To fill the honeycomb, the bee extracts the essence of countless flowers, carries their pollen and turns it into honey.

We had previously prepared a book titled 'Pearls of Wisdom from the Heart', a collection of the daily messages we had posted on the internet, which themselves were gathered from a selection of passages from the articles and books we have published up until now. Years later, we have prepared this compilation of short messages to serve as a sequel.

We tried to present this book to our dear readers by adorning our humble words with the flowers of wisdom gathered from the hearts of scholars and the wise.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Mehmet Akif Gunay and Ibrahim Hakki Uzun for their efforts in helping prepare this book, and pray to the Allah that their services become an endless bounty of rewards for them. The same prayer goes to Suleyman Derin, Erdinc Atasever and Umar Wills for their translation and editing.

May Allah the Almighty set our hearts unwaveringly upon the truth, the good and wisdom.

May He always reconcile our emotions and ideas, as well as our states and conduct, with His pleasure.

May He protect us and our new generations to come from searching for joy in the markets of misery.

Through His generosity and grace, may He include us, His weak servants, among the fortunate souls blessed with His eternal mercy, forgiveness, pleasure and love.

Amin!...

Osman Nûri TOPBAŞ
Uskudar 1442/2021

1. See, Ahmad, II, 199; Hakim, I, 147; Bayhaqi, *Shuab*, V, 58; Suyuti, *al-Jami*, no: 8147.

Reading the Secrets and Wisdom of the Universe with THE EYE OF THE HEART

The currents of power flowing within the universe are virtually divine poems, silent and wordless. Reading these poems is possible only to the extent of the depth of the heart's receptivity.



Roaming around in this school of the universe with a dim and sullen expression, and being unable to understand the tongues of roses, nightingales, winds, rivers and mountains, is nothing but to turn the heart into a dark wreck.

The world is a school of divine wisdom. Its students are the entirety of mankind, while its teachers are the noble Prophets. Prophets have taught the Book and wisdom to mankind, and have cleansed and trained them.

This school has two kinds of books:

1. The verbal book, the Qur'an.
2. The physical book, the universe.



The Qur'an and the universe are two separate manifestations of divine revelation that elucidate one another. Allah the Almighty explains and interprets the verses displayed throughout the universe with the Qur'an, and in turn, throws light upon the verses expressed in the Qur'an with the universe.

Just as the Almighty warns and teaches us with the expressive verses of the Qur'an, He also does the same, time and again, through the physical verses of the book that is the universe.

Thus, remaining indifferent to the book of universe and responding to it with a blank stare is just as disastrous as being unconcerned with the verses of the Qur'an.



On 137 occasions, Allah the Almighty invites us to contemplate the patterns of divine power and manifestations of His glory exhibited throughout the universe.

The Qur'an is a universe wrapped in words, which talks and gives advice...

The human being is a pillar of wisdom and monument of divine manifestations standing right at the juncture of the Qur'an and the universe...

And the universe is a book of mysteries and wisdom filled with miraculous verses and manifestations of the divine names. And in this regard, it is a silent Qur'an.



The hearts of people who look at the universe with an eye for wisdom reach such a insight that the skies above them assume a depth, which offers a glimpse into the divine mysteries, much like a splendid chandelier....

The earth, with every tree and leaf, opens its hands in prayer to Allah ﷻ with a joyful shiver....

The grass becomes a prayer mat for the Muhammadan community, while the flowers blissfully surge among them like a joyous nation....

The cries spilling from the tiniest hearts of small birds, echo in the hearts of those devoted to the Truth as the most poignant hymns...

Mountains, the majestic signposts, appear as standing on their feet in the divine presence....

The clouds become an ocean roaming the skies as sources of inspiration and abundance...

Lighting turns into the sparks of fear and hope...Thunder and thunderbolts become the edicts of "Al-Qahhar" (The Prevailer), and aerial bombings that warn against ignorance...

Days become little specks of the divine light, while nights appear as moments to plunge deep into divine mysteries and wisdom...

In a nutshell, the most important education for a Muslim is to progress his heart by adhering, at every moment, to the divine command, **"Read in the name of your Lord who created!"** (Al-Alaq, 96:1)



The path to attaining the Allah's pleasure and nearness is to not turn to the art but to the Artist; not to the effect but to the Cause, and not to the provision but to the Provider.



The entire universe is an exhibit of Allah the Almighty's divine power and glory. The Almighty has organised these according to human understanding, given, of course, that the human being can observe them with love in his heart, with an eye to draw lessons, and through reflection.



The currents of power flowing within the universe are virtually divine poems, silent and wordless. Reading these poems is possible only to the extent of the depth of the heart's receptivity.

The job of the heart is to read the manifestations of divine glory and the tremendous flows of divine power and patterns, in the name of the Lord who created...



The impeccable ecological balance within the universe which makes life possible, openly declares that such a delicate order can in no way be the result of coincidence. It is for this reason that the Almighty's first command in the Qur'an is:

“Read in the name of your Lord who created!” (Al-Alaq, 96:1) In other words:

- Read the Qur'an with the eye of the heart.
- Read, reflectively, your own creation from a drop of water!
- Read, in awe, how you were crafted from an insignificant state to the best of forms!
- Read, with tremor, the transience of your own life!
- Call yourself to account with a reflective eye starting from now, and begin to browse your book of deeds which you shall one day be handed and ordered to 'Read!'.



When every atom in the universe, every letter of the Qur'an and every cell in the human body testifies, in their own language, that nothing has been created in vain, how sad a deception it is for man to yield to ignorance by assuming he was created without purpose, and lead an irresponsible life estranged to divine wisdom and truths.



Given that the entire universe continues to be sustained by a delicate balance, how can the human being, the pinnacle of creation, become overwhelmed by his ego and behave with reckless abandon?

The Qur'an states:

“Did you imagine We created you without purpose and that you would not be brought back to Us?” (Al-Muminun, 23:115)

“Does man think he will be left to wander without aim?” (Al-Qiyamah, 75:36)



Human being!

Do not gaze at life and the universe with blank eyes! Nothing is created in vain.

Allah the Mighty and Exalted has presented everything in the skies and the Earth, the inner and the outer, and in man and the universe as indications to the oneness and power of Allah, and has offered them to the human understanding as materials for contemplation.



Allah the Almighty and the Wise has created everything with a perfect measure. Upon gazing at the universe, our eyes are struck with a divine order and perfection from the tiniest particles to the heavenly bodies.

Is there a single person who says, “Tomorrow, there may be a change in the air’s delicate makeup of 21% oxygen and 77% nitrogen, so I best walk around with an oxygen tank”? Even an atheist is able to live in comfort thanks to an implicit trust in the divine order. Yet, the blindness of his heart prevents him from belief.



How tremendous it is that divine power allows us to peacefully yet vigilantly live between two oceans of fire, namely the magma bubbling beneath the earth and the Sun blazing in the sky!

Similarly, despite the existence of an array of bacteria inside our bodies our Allah grants us health. How great a folly and blindness of the heart it is to look upon all these blessings as mere coincidence.



The universe is a school of contemplation, a laboratory of belief. To remain here without belief, the mind would require a stamp of cancellation, and the heart would have to be blind.



A human being who can truly reflect on the endless wisdoms and truths contained within the marvel of divine art that is the universe, does not take long to grasp how all creatures on earth depend on a major source of knowledge and power just to stay alive. In effect, he understands that he lives in a miraculous wonderland thanks to suitable conditions which he could not, in any way, have the power to realise himself. No mind, reasoning or conscience able to understand this, could be brazen enough to rebel against Allah the Almighty.



Man must ask himself:

Where have we come from, and where are we going? Why are there these comings and goings taking place? On whose property do we live? Who has given us all the opportunities we are entrusted with? From where have these blessings come and what purpose do they have? Have they come to be by themselves? Does anything really happen by itself?

By posing these questions, he should realise just how much the human being needs his Creator!



A quick look at the universe shows that nothing lacks purpose. The Sun, Moon, the stars, the skies, Earth and all creatures fulfil their duties determined by a fixed divine appointment to the letter. They turn, work and move without stop. The same goes for the micro universe. The protons, neutrons, electrons and quarks inside an atom spin at a dizzying speed around the nucleus - whirling round in an endless state of motion.

How great a neglect it is for the human being to remain oblivious to this divine order!



The universe is an annotation of the human being; and everything within, is active at any given moment. From the macrocosm to the microcosm, every being is putting in a constant effort.

-Billions of galaxies are in a continuous state of rotation and movement. The sun, the moon and the stars do not take any time off, even if it be for just one day a week.

-Our hearts do not appeal to us for annual leave.

-The protons, neutrons and electrons within the nucleus of an atom, which is considered the smallest particle of matter, are in constant rotation at an incredible speed. The electron inside the atom of a hydrogen spins around the nucleus at a speed of 2,000 km per second.

All this offers a blueprint for our life of worship, precisely in how we need to exert an effort that is moderate yet constant.

In fact, the Companions are the models of perseverance and effort who defied the difficult conditions of the time to go to the four corners of the Earth. And while reading out loud the **Prophet's** ﷺ letters in the presence of hangmen, they never once flinched, nor felt tired and lazy. The pleasure of being a servant of Allah and a disciple of the **Prophet** ﷺ gave them an incredible energy.

A long-term rest for a Muslim only begins after a peaceful death at the end of a life serving the Almighty; and it continues into the grave and onto eternity.



Nothing in the universe is created without wisdom. The universe is a book of contemplation where divine secrets and wisdoms are to be read with the eye of the heart. The ability to read these depends on how clearly the heart can see.

Such is a person who draws a lesson from springtime when observing the blooming flowers, the fertile soil and the exuberantly flowing creeks and rivers, and thinks, "I should commit myself with similar exuberance and energy to my purpose of existence, which is to worship and strive in the path of the Almighty..."

Upon seeing autumn, he, again, reaps another personal lesson. The falling yellow leaves remind him that the days of his life are fast running out. The cypresses shaking coyishly appear as though they are waving at him from the world beyond, while the sun slowly fading out of sight into the horizon gives him the impression of a harbinger signalling a looming end. With full awareness of these divine messages, he seeks to raise his effort and worship before it is too late.



Millions of ants would not suffice to fill the insides of an elephant. Yet, the organs that allow the elephant to live are also found in ants, and in creatures even smaller. How tremendous is the Allah's knowledge and power in both the micro and the macro!

Through the knowledge, wisdom and power displayed in His creation, Allah reminds both of the glory of His Essence, and the sheer weakness and nothingness of the human being before the divine splendour.

For example, a sheep created by Allah ﷻ eats grass, drinks water and produces milk. Yet, even if man was to set up a high-tech factory and feed it with grass and water from one end, he would still be unable to produce a drop of milk.



Since the Earth was created, no food of any creature has been neglected. Countless dinners have been set up for each, and it will continue to be that way until the end of time.

Just to think that three quarters of the earth is covered in water. And most of the one quarter of land is barren deserts and rocky terrain. Only a small remainder of it is soil. Yet, how tremendous a power does Allah ﷻ possess that He has made this soil the source of all food to feed the creation since the day He created earth.



How does a seed produce a massive tree? How does that tree yield tonnes of fruit? How does the entire plan and programme of existence possibly fit into that small seed?

How does a creature emerge out of an egg? How about the human being? How does he come to exist from a particle? Which power envelops all his limbs within that tiny particle?

With its extraordinary secrets of creation, every being bears the stamp of divine power and glory for eyes that see.



Billions of biochemical actions take place within the tiny sections of the countless factories inside our bodies; and they function in a magnificent order without even our knowledge. Who knows how many errors we would make, if we were given the command over our bodily functions just for one hour? This alone suffices to make us realise how much we need our Creator, and how necessary it is for us to obey and submit to Him.

In the Qur'an, the Almighty asks:

“O Man! What has deluded you in respect to your Noble Lord?

He who created you and formed you and proportioned you and assembled you in whatever way He willed?” (Al-Infitar, 82:6-8)



On one hand, the Almighty makes it possible for a ten-year-old child to drag an elephant, while on the other, He knocks out the strongest of men with a virus so small that it is hardly visible even under a microscope!

This means that man must never ascribe the strength and power given to him by the Almighty, to anything else. He must never boast or brag, and instead always remember the true source of all the blessings he has. He must be in a constant state of gratitude, and seek refuge in the Real, knowing that he is not even a speck of dust before divine glory.



Shaykh Sadi Shirazi said:

“Allah the Almighty has created colours, scents, flowers and food out of earth so that your eyes, nose, mind and mouth can take pleasure.

He has produced a date tree from a seed, a date from the tree and honey from the bee.

For you, He has supplied a rose from among thorns, musk from the belly of a gazelle, gold from soil, and fresh leaves from a dry branch.

He has drawn your eyes and brows with His own hand of might.

He is the Powerful. And so, He feeds His servants such a wealth of blessings.

So, in response to all this, should you not constantly thank Him not just with your tongue but with all your organs and from the bottom of your heart?”



Allah the Almighty wants us to gain depth in contemplating this divine glory. He desires us to understand the silent language of existence, and read the divine messages contained within these physical verses with the eye of the heart.

The earth, for example, talks to us about transience. Once we bear in mind that the earth under our feet has been there for thousands of years, we realise that we are virtually walking on the stacked-up shadows of billions of people who have come and gone before our time. Also, the clothes of skin for all future generations will come from the same earth. In other words, our bodies mark a tremendous flow out of earth and back into it.



Is it possible to contemplate the divine power flowing within the universe and not feel admiration? For a moment, let us reflect on the glass of water we drink.

Water consists of two hydrogens and one oxygen. One is flammable and the other is not. Allah gives life to all creation through that liquid.

Who knows how many times a glass of water has gone back and forth between the skies and Earth since Earth was created? It descended on Earth, passed through the bodies of humans and animals, became blood and urine, and got muddied and sullied. It then evaporated with the heat of the sun, and the winds carried it around in the skies from one clime to another. That way, it got sifted through a filter, became purified to form a clean and lucid cloud. At times, it became a rain drop, while at others a snow flake, and made its way back down to Earth. And once more, it passes through many creatures, the soil, vegetables and fruits.

Who knows how many times just a single glass of water has made this cyclical journey between Earth and the skies since the day life was created? Even determining such a fact transcends human capacity. If the adventures of a single glass of water were to be recorded, it alone would comprise volumes upon volumes of books.



Rumi ﷺ uses this metaphor to encourage us to draw a lesson from water:

“Water feeds the needy and orphans of Earth, and gives life to those parched dry. But once it loses its purity, it becomes restless like us who have been tarnished on Earth, and is left astounded. It starts to silently wail. It says, ‘Oh Lord! Whatever You

have given me, I have handed out and given it all away. Now, I have fallen destitute. I poured out all my capital, everything in my hands, into both the clean and the dirty. My Lord, who gives out capital... bless me with more.'

Upon hearing this prayer, Allah the Almighty commands the sun to, 'Quickly raise it to the skies with your heat!' And He commands the wind, 'To take it to a pleasant place without roughing it up!'

He then puts the water on a path of sorts. After cleaning it in the skies, He makes it pour back on Earth, sometimes as rain, sometimes as snow and even hail. And in the end, He makes it reach the endless ocean that has no shore."

By highlighting this epic adventure of water, **Rumi** ﷺ advises the human being to:

"Get closer to the Lord and cleanse yourself from all dirt of the ego, just as water purifies itself in the skies. That way, become just like the water, and pour back down with blessings and mercy!"



Water is just one of innumerable blessings we have. The water we drink, the air we breathe, the food we eat, and every blessing we have, whether we are aware of it or not, is an incredible favour for which we are simply unable to properly thank Allah.

A believer must always remember Allah the Almighty who provides these, and remark, 'Oh Lord!'. With this mindset, he should strive to become a thankful servant.



Snow falls in winter. Along with thousands of other underlying wisdoms, it adorns the Earth in pure white like a bridal chamber. What if the snow fell from the skies in terrible blood red or in black? How great a gloom would that have brought! How depressing would that have been for people!

Beneath that chilly, cold snow, thousands of species remain protected in the bosom of the Earth without freezing to death, as if they were cradled in a cot. When spring arrives and the snow melts, a variety of creatures emerge.

Once observed through the lens of wisdom, each creature on its own bears witness to divine glory.



How about the flower? How does it emerge from the dark soil? How many colour experts or decorators work on it? To whom does Allah the Almighty give this? Why do not such displays exist in other planets or stars uninhabited by human beings?

Every being is a physical verse of Allah the Almighty. Of course, this is apparent only for the wise and a society that is willing to think.



A small child is enough to steer an entire flock of camels once Allah puts them in the service of man. But if the Almighty wills otherwise, then a tiny virus can bring the downfall of whole empires. These are divine lessons from the book of the universe for those who know how to absorb them.



Shaykh Sadi expresses our need to observe events with the eye of wisdom:

“Take a lesson from the disasters that befall you, so that others do not draw lessons from you.”



Rumi رحمته الله also emphasises the importance of lending an ear to the lessons taught by disasters:

“Have you not heard what the wind did to the people of Aad? Or what the water did during the Deluge?

How the Red Sea destroyed Pharaoh, or how the ground swallowed up Korah?

What the birds did to Abraha’s army, or how a small fly ate away the head of Nimrod who claimed to be god?

How stones rained down on **Lot’s** رحمته الله depraved people, and how they were buried beneath a dark and repulsive lake?

If I was to explain in detail how beings thought to be lifeless have helped their Prophets just like mindful humans, the Mathnawi would become so lengthy and voluminous that forty camels would be unable to carry it!

If your eye was commanded to cause you trouble, it would take a thousand revenges off you. If your tooth was ordered to punish you, it would make you writhe in pain.

Open the book of medicine and read the chapter on diseases. Read it so you see what the soldiers inside your body are capable of doing.

If the source of life within every living thing is Allah, then fear rebelling against Him! Obey His commands!”



The Majestic Qur’an provides examples of nations lashed with the whip of divine punishment for ignoring the warnings they received. These are not historical events

reserved only to the past. They rather serve to caution the whole of mankind until the final hour against the ignorance in which those nations fell.

Unfortunately, however, people who commit the same tyrannies and injustices as those miserable nations, who turn weak and helpless humans into modern slaves and exploit the people they see as nothing more than cogs in the wheel; and who also portray a deviancy such as homosexuality as a human right and criminalise even the slightest voice against it, are dominant today, strutting about on the world stage.

In the Qur'an, the Almighty states:

“If Allah were to take mankind to task for what they have earned, He would not leave a single creature crawling on it...” (Al-Fatir, 35:45). In other words, compliant with the ethos of this life as a stage of divine trial, Allah ﷻ mostly delays the punishment of tyrants to the afterlife.

In the past, Allah the Almighty destroyed Nimrod, who claimed to be god, with a fly; and had flocks of birds turn Abrahah into chewed-up straw after he had set out from Yemen with an army of elephants to destroy the Kaaba. At times, Allah ﷻ has also made people experience certain manifestations of wrath, to put those intoxicated with conceit and arrogance in their place, and caution mankind to correct their ways.

In fact, the contagious disease of coronavirus which, during 2020 and 2021, spread rapidly across the whole world, ought to be taken as a lesson. A virus rendered the whole of mankind anxious and weak. It reminded people just how helpless science, technology, money and power really are.



Today, humanity asks, “Who sent this virus?” The answer is the same one who sent the flocks of birds upon Abrahah.

The world today has gone off the rails. The caste system where the strong oppresses the weak has returned. Global powers have signed off on heinous tyrannies and massacres just to exploit the weaker regions of earth. They have driven millions of persecuted and weak Muslims from their homes, and turned them into refugees. They have erased mercy from many countries, and scraped away any vestige of conscience.

Yet, how striking it is that the pandemic that struck Western countries with a tremendous force, was seen less in persecuted and ill-treated regions. As the so-called global superpowers seemingly writhed in agony, it was as if the persecuted people, gripped by a lack of material means, were protected behind a divine shield.

The virus did not spread much in camps flooded by Syrian refugees, despite it being extremely difficult to maintain hygiene and a sanitised environment in such places. It just shows that the virus well knows where to go.

So, what is the remedy? To turn to Allah the Ever-Forgiving, make plenty of repentance, and pray for those victims right before the break of dawn.

The more we open our hearts to the oppressed, empathise with their needs and run to their aid, the more Allah will protect us under His divine mercy, forgiveness and grace.



A believer must know how to analyse the universe and the events, not through the narrow and shallow perspectives of secular and materialist people, but from the vast horizon of a heart which is imbued with trust in Allah.

Much like an earthquake, flood, wildfire or a similar disaster, the pandemic that has spread across earth is laden with a range of meanings, depending on the spiritual states of those affected:

- For some, it is a reason of martyrdom.
- For some, it is compensation for sins.
- For some, it is an elevation of rank.
- For some, it is a warning.
- And while for others, it is a punishment.

Just as there is need to take physical precautions, people are also obliged to take the necessary spiritual measures in line with their own personal situations.

Incidents like these will be followed -Allah-willing- by joy and salvation, only if they make us, as individuals and a community, face up to our mistakes and awaken us from our neglect and remind us of our responsibilities towards the Creator.



A believer must assess every incident he encounters with the consciousness of his belief. Especially when faced with a trouble, he must immediately recall that it is foremost a test. Along with the physical precautions he must take under such circumstances, a believer must also search for spiritual precautions within the vitalising standards of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

The Qur'an declares:

“We sent Messengers to the nations before you, and afflicted those nations with hardships and distress so that hopefully they would humble themselves.

If only they had humbled themselves when Our violent force came upon them! However, their hearts were hard and the devil made what they were doing seem attractive to them.” (Al-An'am, 6:42-43)

This means that remorsefully repenting and pleading to Allah is the first precaution to take against troubles and tribulations. This, however, depends on being mindful of one's weakness and nothingness before divine power and splendour, knowing personal limits and leading a life of service with a refined and sensitive heart. Those who can, listen to advice and protect themselves from trouble by learning a lesson. Hard hearts lacking this quality are also devoid of the opportunity to take a lesson and seek refuge in Allah when faced with any kind of trouble.

How telling is the below warning by **Shaykh Sadi**:

“If your ears are blocked to advice, you will one day see shackles on your feet.”



It is common to judge an event by its external reason. Yet, any given event always also has an internal hidden reason.

Allah the Almighty has tied the general functioning of the universe to a schedule. Nobody is ever concerned that the sun and moon may fail to rise or set, or the amount of oxygen and nitrogen in the air may vary. These always follow the same system and measure. We, therefore, take them for granted.

However, in line with the wisdom of a ‘divine warning’, Allah the Almighty makes certain things happen outside of this schedule. Through these, He both reminds us of the power and glory of His Essence, and also of man’s nothingness and vulnerability. And in so doing, He invites His servants to draw a lesson, contemplate, repent and seek forgiveness.

We need to give this some thought:

When not even a leaf falls outside the Almighty’s knowledge and will, do these sudden floods, ravaging wildfires, earthquakes, tsunamis and contagious diseases really happen through sheer coincidence? Did the virus which, in a short time, enslaved the entire globe, really appear uninvited?



The Prophet ﷺ said:

“When fornication appears and is practiced openly, a nation will most certainly suffer a plague and illnesses never before seen in any other nation.” (Ibn Majah, Fitan, 22; Hakim, IV, 583/8623; Bayhaqi, Shuab, III, 197)

Some time ago, the HIV virus appeared, and around 30 million people have since died from the AIDS disease it caused and this illness almost never appeared among communities who guarded their chastity.

And as medical science is still busy researching a cure and developing treatments for it, other viruses have come to appear.

How striking it is that a tiny virus invisible to the naked eye is able to knock out a burly body. It even spreads such fear and concern that it threatens nations and economies that boast how 'nothing can beat them'. It instils anxiety in every sector from transportation and health to education and all avenues of life, and forces people to take strict precautions.



We are driven to so much panic by illnesses which we do not even know we will ever contract or how deadly they are but how anxious do we feel about our death which is certain? How occupied are our minds with our impending lives in the grave and the real life that awaits in the hereafter? What measures are we taking today to avoid falling into a position of regret tomorrow? How much effort do we make to protect ourselves and families from the real evils of this time?

Let us not forget that the physical bacteria belong only to this world. However, not taking the necessary precautions against the viruses of disbelief and immorality which destroy are souls may -Allah forbid- convert an eternal life into painful torment.



Many comments can certainly be made in pinpointing the material and spiritual causes that have triggered earthquakes, droughts, floods, plagues of locust and especially the viral diseases that have recently become common:

-Mankind has entered a race to consume and pollute the soil, water, air and even space.

-For the sake of material ambition, the natural, wholesome and halal foods granted by Allah the Almighty have been abandoned for an artificial food diet.

-Global powers have turned innocent regions into pools of blood, all because of a clash of interests.

-Wealthy countries play deaf to the cries of millions of human beings driven from their homes and homelands.

-Countries that are the so-called defenders of human rights are pitiless enough to shut their borders on innocent people fleeing lands that have become scenes of catastrophe battered under constant bombardment. And not only would they rather see a handful of people drown than take them in as guests, they even go to the trouble of sinking their boats, and turning seas like the Mediterranean into a refugee graveyard.

-The world is showing a poverty of mercy and compassion by turning a blind eye on the corpses of babies washed up on the shores of the Mediterranean, and others in Africa dying of hunger.

-In the ongoing tragedies in places like East Turkestan, Arakan, Syria, Yemen, Gaza, Jerusalem and elsewhere, the tyrant and the powerful have a louder voice than the victims.

-Man has stepped into a new age in selfishness, vulgarity and brazenness where he practically idolises his own ego. And as a consequence, he has transmuted the times into a modern age of ignorance.

Without doubt, such tyrannies, atrocities and injustices are a manifestation divine of wrath.

The core of all these causes, however, is the “forgetting of the Allah and hereafter”. Once the glory and power of Allah the Almighty, as well as His vengeance from the wrongdoers, is forgotten along with the looming account and punishment of the hereafter, mankind becomes more oppressive and even wilder than hyenas.



Time and again, the Earth undergoes great disasters. It goes without saying that we need to take the necessary precautions to survive these disasters with the least damage possible.

The greatest disaster, however, is the inability to read the messages delivered by these events, to ignore the divine signs and warnings they carry, and to misjudge them with a positivist and secular viewpoint. The Qur'an states:

“Corruption has appeared in both land and sea because of what people’s own hands have brought about so that they may taste something of what they have done so that hopefully they will turn back.” (Al-Rum, 30:41)

This divine warning reminds us of our responsibilities during the tribulations we experience.

Remaining ignorant of the causes that trigger natural disasters is an even greater disaster than the natural disasters themselves. The real disaster is to fail to take a lesson from those tribulations, and to point the finger at others, instead of facing up to personal mistakes and working to make amends.

The greatest disaster is to rely on our material means, strength, vigour, health, youth and especially relying so much on the advances we have made in science, technology and medicine. Then we become forgetful of the reality of death by distancing ourselves from our need for Allah the Almighty, duties of servanthood and the awareness of our nothingness before Him.

Allah the Almighty warns:

“Do they feel secure against Allah’s devising? No one feels secure against Allah’s devising except those who are lost.” (Al-Araf, 7:99)

The real disaster is, therefore, to be ignorant of Allah.

The real disaster is to forget death, the grave and the hereafter, and lay waste to life through rebellion.



The Qur’an states:

“When they embark on ships, they call on Allah, making their deen (religion) sincerely His, but then when He delivers them safely to land, they associate others with Him.” (Al-Ankabut, 29:65)

We can apply this example of the ship to many events. For example, when an airplane encounters turbulence, all the passengers seek refuge in Allah ﷻ, repent and begin to plea and beg. But once the trouble is over and the plane safely lands, they forget Allah completely.

Similarly, it would be a great deceit to turn to Allah the Almighty for deliverance from this contagious illness we endure as we speak, and then return to our negligent ways as soon as the danger passes. Such negligence itself invites other troubles.

It is, therefore, essential to increase our closeness to our Lord and protect our servanthood in both good times and bad.



Nothing in the universe is without wisdom or in vain. Every being and every incident carry divine messages and teach lessons of wisdom. Of course, they do so only for eyes that see, ears that hear, minds that reflect and hearts that understand. For the ignorant who have bid farewell to conscience, reasoning and impartiality, and the fools whose inner sensitivities have become blunt, even the clearest warnings are nothing more than coincidental natural events!

As a wise man once said:

“The cosmos is a gallery of beauty for the wise, while for the fool, a place to eat and lust with prying eyes!”



Earth is a grand school filled with divine secrets. The wise take many lessons of wisdom and reach the pinnacle of marifatullah (direct knowledge of Allah). The ignorant, on the other hand, assume that the school of life is merely place of pointless pursuits and pleasures. Yet, Allah says:

“We did not create the heavens and the earth, and everything between them as a game.” (Al-Dukhan, 44:38)



The wise read the divine wisdoms and truths imprinted upon the book of the universe with the eye of their hearts. On the other hand, fools whose hearts are blunted by their egoism are like living corpses.

As **Shaykh Sadi** has said:

“For the intelligent, each leaf of a green tree is a book of divine knowledge. But for the fool, all the trees on earth are not worth a leaf.”

“A wise person even draws a lesson from a joke or a tale. But if you were to read one hundred chapters of wisdom to a fool, he will look upon it as a tale, and nothing more.”



Imagine how petrified a person who is blind from birth would be, if he was to suddenly see. With a simple gaze around, he would be overwhelmed by the seas, trees and birds, as he would have never seen them before. He would exclaim, “How beautifully has my Lord created all this!”, and stand in admiration and amazement.

The human being stumbles upon thousands of these beautiful scenes every day. Yet, he often unmindfully passes by without any contemplation. This is no different to a hard rock that is unable to absorb a single drop of the fertile April rain bouncing off its surface.



Roaming around in this school of the universe with a dim and sullen expression, without being able to understand the tongues of the roses, hyacinths, nightingales, winds, rivers and mountains and remaining apathetic to the manifestations of the divine names “Al-Bari” (The Maker) and “Al-Musawwir” (The Shaper) exhibited in creation, is nothing but to turn the heart into a dark wreck.

Hearts blinded to the countless manifestations of divine glory are no different to a person who dies of starvation despite sitting on a treasure.



What a shame it is that raw souls are incapable of solving the mysteries of life and the universe for no other reason than their inability to experience the love and zest of faith; and that they pass by the silent and wordless expressions of the beings around them in uninspired state. **Rumi** ﷺ said:

“An ox suddenly arrived in Baghdad, and roamed the city from one end to the other. But its eyes only saw melon and watermelon peels!

Oxen and donkeys are hooked on the hay scattered across the roads, the grass trampled upon by feet or the melon and watermelon peels tossed out in a corner!”



Just as the eyes can see nothing without light, the eye of the heart can see no truth without the light of faith, and the inspiration of the Qur’an and Sunnah. The light of the heart shines through contemplation. People of wisdom have, in fact, said:

“Whoever looks upon the world without taking a lesson, grows a blindness in his heart the size of that ignorance.” (Ibn Kathir, I, 448)



People roaming Earth with a dim and sullen expression ignorantly play the game of ‘blindman’s bluff’. Yet, this will reduce their afterlife into an eternal blindness. The Qur’an, in fact, states:

“But if anyone turns away from My reminder, his life will be a dark and narrow one and on the Day of Rising we will gather him blind.

He will say, My Lord why have You gathered me blind when before I was able to see?”

He will say, ‘Just as Our signs came to you and you forgot them, in the same way you too are forgotten today.’ (Ta-Ha, 20:124-126)



Uthman  said:

“A person ought to fear being raised up by Allah blind, even though he had seeing eyes in this life! A meaningful word suffices for a person who understands wisdom. But the spiritually deaf cannot hear the truth.”



Key to faith is contemplation. A person able to see the truth cannot possibly fail to detect the divine signature, unique patterns and the endless flows of divine power in the world around him. Even if the eyes on his head are blind, he would still be able to see clearly with his eyes of prudence. **As Rumi**  said:

“Even a blind person can tell from its heat that the sun has risen.”



Our Allah !

-Give our eyes a light to see the truth.

-Give our ears a light to hear the sound of the truth and the good.

-Give our hearts a light so that, wherever we may look, we are reminded of Your glorious Essence, and experience the peace of Your nearness.

Our Allah ﷻ!

Revive our hearts, expand our chests and cure our spiritual and physical illnesses!

Our Allah ﷻ!

With Your grace and generosity, grant the eyes of our hearts the ability to read the verbal and physical messages You have imprinted upon the books of the Qur'an and the universe, and the gift of returning to Your presence with a clean heart and face!

Amin!



BEING WITH ALLAH

Whoever is with Allah, never feels lonely.



The happiest people on earth are the righteous Muslims who can find their Lord within their hearts at any given moment.



“Oh Allah! What has a person lost after having found You? And what has a person gained after having lost You?” (Shaykh Ahmad Ibn Ata’illah al-Iskandari,)

Whoever is with the Almighty Allah, never feels lonely.



The late **Necip Fazil** has said:

“He who possess the peace of heart of being together with Allah – of what is he deprived? And he who is deprived of Allah – what does he possess?”

No absence can damage a heart that is together with Allah the Almighty. Yet, if the heart is deprived of Allah ﷻ, then no being can fill that void.



The worldly palaces of fools who lead lives remote from Allah ﷻ are like the family cemeteries of living corpses. A heart distant from Allah ﷻ is a dark wreckage.



Shaykh Ibn Ata’illah al-Iskandari ﷺ says it wonderfully:

“Oh Lord! What has a person lost after having found You? And what has a person gained after having lost You?”



My late father **Musa Efendi** ﷺ would say:

“If a person has reunited with Allah the Almighty in total devotion, it means he has gained everything. But if he has resisted devotion and, as a result, deprived himself of reunion, he is in waste. Even if his fame is so great that the whole world applauds him, it has no value!”



If the entire Earth was given to us, what would it mean if, in the end, we are deprived of Allah’s ﷻ pleasure? When all is said and done, Earth is doomed to annihilation and the joy brought by acquiring the pleasure, love and friendship of Allah ﷻ, however, is eternal.



A man in neglect is at a loss, even if he is as wealthy as **Prophet Sulayman** ﷻ and as handsome as **Prophet Yusuf** ﷻ. Salvation is through absolutely nothing other than faith and good deeds.



People do have an innate tendency to believe in Allah ﷻ. Every child is born with the predisposition to believe and the human spirit is naturally aware of Allah ﷻ. This awareness, however, is in the subconscious. Faith is to raise this belief from to consciousness through the education and training. If it is unable to rise to the full consciousness, then belief in Allah ﷻ remains hidden in the subconscious, just like forgotten dreams. Yet, a soul that is unable to reach belief in Allah ﷻ remains restless like a bird in a cage; with the looming fear of death and the anxiety of ‘What will happen to me after I die?’ For such a person, the pleasures of the flesh offer a fleeting consolation and distraction.

Only through faith and righteous deeds can one gain lasting and eternal peace. To obtain a peaceful heart and a fully satisfied conscience, a person must first acquire the consciousness and awareness of the presence of Allah ﷻ. The Qur’an informs us that only in this manner can the human heart reach peace and tranquillity:

“Only in the remembrance of Allah can the heart find peace.” (Al-Rad, 13:28)



Shah Naqshiband ﷻ says:

“The essence of this path is the revival of the heart. In other words, it is to turn the heart to Allah and enable it to frequently remember Him.”



The happiest people on earth are not those who can find what they desire at the click of a finger. Rather, they are those who can find the Almighty inside their hearts.



Hasan Al-Basri رضي الله عنه said:

“Who are you afraid of when Allah is with you? If Allah is not with you, then in whom will you trust and seek refuge?”



The greatest bliss is to be with Allah in the heart, and to embroider this unity onto the heart permanently.



The most confused travellers on this journey of life are those who forget Allah ﷻ and lose him inside their hearts, when Allah ﷻ Himself says He is closer to His servants than their jugular veins.

A heart that remembers Allah the Almighty and feels His closeness in good times, both spiritual and material, will also find Allah the Almighty in hard times.



The world is a land of trial. In order to not become proud when things go well and despairing when they don't and to maintain the heart's equilibrium, we really need to constantly remember Allah.



Paradise is first lived here, and it then transpires in the hereafter. Paradise here can be experienced with total peace in the heart, knowing that one is always in the presence of Allah ﷻ.



Let us not forget the more we remember Allah in this life, the closer our divine reunion will be in the hereafter.



Whether the journey of life ends in the peace of paradise or the punishment of hell, depends on how much the heart has been connected to its Lord.



The degree to which the heart remembers Allah ﷻ and is connected to Him is the diploma of its success in this world of trial.



Wasting our numbered breaths in anything that takes us from divine remembrance is a grave loss. **The Prophet** ﷺ in fact says:

“The people of paradise will long for and regret nothing except the times on Earth they spent without remembering Allah.” (Haythami, X, 73-74)



As voiced in the sentiment, “A waste is an hour that has passed without You”, wise servants look upon the hours they spend with their Lord and Master as the most

abundant of all times. They also consider the times they spend in neglect of Allah ﷻ as the greatest loss and waste.



We must try to protect our tongues from idle talk and always speak well and adorn our expressions with the remembrance of Allah ﷻ. Believers who are able to reflect this attitude in their lives, in fact:

- ✓ Begin any work or food in Allah's ﷻ name, and thank Him at the end.
- ✓ Upon seeing each other, they first greet one another, and offer a mutual prayer, hoping for Allah's ﷻ mercy and abundance.
- ✓ And when they part from each other, they say, "I entrust you in Allah."
- ✓ Before setting out on a trip, they say, "May Allah protect you, and may He be your friend."
- ✓ When retiring to rest, they seek refuge in Allah ﷻ and pray to Him; and then thank Him the moment they wake.
- ✓ To those getting married, they say, "May Allah give you joy, and put smiles on your faces."
- ✓ In business, after making their first sale of the day, they say, "The purchase is from you but abundance is from Allah."
- ✓ In sickness, they pray, "May our Allah grant you a cure and may the troubles you suffer purify your wrong actions, and elevate your spiritual rank."
- ✓ For new-borns, they say, "May Allah make him one of His righteous servants! May Allah turn him into a beneficial servant of Him, a beneficial member of His Prophet's nation, and a beneficial child for the parents. May Allah grant him a long and fruitful life."
- ✓ In death, they say, "May Allah grant mercy, and may his abode be paradise! And may Allah give beautiful patience to those left behind."

Blissful are those able to adorn each moment of their lives with the remembrance of Allah ﷻ.



The tongue of a Muslim must be in divine remembrance, his thought in contemplation and his actions.



The Qur'an declares:

“We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.” (Qaf, 50:16)

On the day of reckoning, Allah Glory be to Him will ask:

“I was with you, my servant. Who were you with?”



A believer must constantly ask himself:

Who am I with?

With whom are my heart, emotions, morals, actions, preferences and my every state? Who do they resemble?

What portion of my life is devoted to those whom Allah ﷻ loves?

Besides the times I am inside the mosque or on the prayer mat, who am I with at work or behind my desk? Who am I with while watching television or on the internet?

Remember that Allah ﷻ is with you at every moment. How much are you with Him?



Allah the Almighty, the All-Wise says:

“If my slaves ask you about Me, I am near. I answer the call of the caller when he calls on Me. They should therefore respond to Me and believe in Me so that hopefully they will be rightly guided.” (Al Baqarah, 2:186)



How does our conduct fare compared to the noble companions, who are presented to us as the exemplary generation?

How much do we feel our togetherness with Allah ﷻ?

Are we able to revive our hearts through divine remembrance?

How much are we able to live out the following verse?

“Their sides eschew in their beds as they call on their Lord in fear and ardent hope. And they give of what We have provided for them.” (Al-Sajdah, 32:16)



Allah ﷻ commands “أَحْسِنُوا”. That is to say, everything a Muslim does must be of the “most beautiful” quality.

A Muslim must be a Muhsin (a person of excellence) and always give and always be engaged in acts of kindness.

A Muslim has to live with a consciousness of Ihsan (excellence). He must live with awareness that he is constantly under the watch of divine cameras, as the Qur'an says:

“He is with you wherever you are.” (Al-Hadid, 57:4)

There is the roadmap for a Muslim's eternal salvation.



A hadith states:

“The highest rank of faith is for you to know that Allah is with you wherever you are.” (Haythami, I, 60)

Gaining spiritual alertness, as well as insight through prudence and foresight is possible only to the extent that the heart is with Allah ﷻ.



Shah Naqshiband ﷺ said:

“The essence of this path is for you to be constantly aware that you are in the presence of Allah.”



The eyes have a limited capacity to see, and the ears to hear; so much so that that they are incapable of sensing light and sound outside these boundaries. The same applies for human understanding, such that:

“Allah the Almighty is so apparent that the intensity of His appearance veils us from Him.”



Shah Naqshiband ﷺ said:

“A traveller on the path must look upon even the most desolate places as packed out. Whatever he does out in the open, in front of the people's eyes, he must also carry on doing in private, even if he may assume no one is watching.”



A person can hide the thoughts passing in his mind and the emotions running through his heart from everyone but Allah ﷻ. For the Almighty, they are all evident. As the Qur'an states:

“Know that Allah intervenes between a man and his heart.” (Al-Anfal, 8:24)

“He knows the eyes' deceit and what people's breasts conceal.” (Al-Mumin, 40:19)



Remaining steadfast even during moments no mortal can see, and abstaining from forbidden acts even in the remotest spot away from prying eyes, is possible only by engraving upon the heart the awareness that:

“Allah sees me at all times and in all places, and the divine cameras capture my every moment!”



A Muslim who loves Allah ﷻ and is busy with His remembrance must never reach out his hand for the haram or become lost in egoistic ambitions. No person should ever trip up another after saying the basmala or stick a thorn in his brother’s heart.



If only our every moment passed in remembering, thanking and reflecting on Allah ﷻ, then we would never make mistakes as they are committed only when Allah ﷻ is forgotten.



There is no worse creature and none wilder than a human being who forgets Allah. Also, no creature is more honourable and noble than a human being who remembers Allah.



All spiritual losses and damages are consequences of forgetting Allah ﷻ. The Qur’an states:

“Do not be like those who forgot Allah, and so He made them forget themselves. Such people are deviators.” (Al-Hashr, 59:19)

It is true that all deviations emerge out of forgetting Allah ﷻ. While saying ‘Allah’ and being aware of the reality of the hereafter, a person pays special attention to his worship and conduct, and takes extra care to act rightly and not to harm anyone.



Worship is offered at certain, specified times. Yet, faith demands that the heart is attached to Allah ﷻ all the time. Servanthood is not confined by any specific time. We must never forget our Lord.



The Almighty asks:

“O man! what has deluded you in respect of your Noble Lord?

He who created you and formed you and proportioned you and assembled you in whatever way He willed.” (Al-Infitar, 82:6-8)

True servanthood is achieved through permanent loyalty to Allah ﷻ.



How sad it is for a heart to be wooed by a wasteful ego and become filled with lust for passing interests! This is no different to packing a top-quality jewellery box with junk.

Just as it is so piteous for a diamond to be thrown in the bin or a possession to fall into undeserved hands, it is also to lose the heart in the garbage tip of base desires, when it ought to be devoted to Allah alone.



The human being is created with the capacity to befriend Allah. While the exceptional opportunity to claim the unimaginable benefits of befriending Allah ﷻ awaits, it would be unbecoming for a Muslim to sell his soul cheaply in pursuit of desires of the ego. The most profitable trade on Earth are faith and righteous deeds which earn the Almighty's eternal pleasure.



The etiquette of servanthood demands the removal of fleeting passions and egoistic inclinations from the heart, and dedicating the palace of the heart to the One Creator who deserves it the most. As **Imam Shafi** رحمته الله said:

“A heart unoccupied with the truth is invaded by the false.”

Much like a country invaded by the enemy, peace can never be found in a heart enslaved by base desires.



How miserable it is to crawl after base desires, when this life holds a magnificent treasure of happiness!



Our generous Lord has equipped us with qualities that enable us to attain His knowledge and love. He has made us honourable. He has created us in the best of forms. He has graced us many times over. He has sent us the Book and the Prophet. Moreover, He has donated all these things to us for free without requiring any fees.

Allah has also prepared paradise for us. Yet, paradise does come with a fee. It requires us to make it back to His presence with a pure and refined heart.



The great **Prophet Ibrahim** عليه السلام demolished every fleeting throne in his heart that belonged to this world. To protect his tawhid (understanding of Allah's oneness), he was prepared to burn in flames. In return for a moment of pleasure he derived from divine remembrance, he donated all his livestock in the way of Allah ﷻ. His love for

his Lord even overcame his love for his son, his own flesh and blood Ismail عليه السلام. In so doing, he built thrones of divine love and friendship inside his heart. As a result of this exceptional trust, submission and love, Allah the Almighty declared **Ibrahim** عليه السلام His **Khalil** (intimate friend).



Rumi عليه السلام said:

“Wayfarer on the path of truth! Before that day comes knocking and judgment day comes roaring, establish a friendship with the Sultan of Truth so that He holds hour hand on that catastrophic day. For on that day, you will have no one to hold your hand except through His permission. That day, a person will flee from his brother, mother, father, family and children. So, understand well what it precisely means to become friends with Him!”



Friendship with Allah ﷻ depends on vanquishing the ambitions of the ego. Those who are friends with their own desires miss out on friendship with Allah ﷻ.



Knowing Allah ﷻ is to never forget Him. Yet, while trying to put food on the table or chasing property, most of us forget the true Provider and the real proprietor of wealth.



Neglect is the foolishness of turning eternal happiness into disaster by pursuing momentary pleasures, and mistaking the passing life of this world to the everlasting paradise.

Neglect is to lose sight of the sun in midday. A negligent person is like a ship drifting in the middle of the ocean with a broken rudder. It is anyone’s guess as to which swirl will eventually sink it to the bottom.



Neglect is for the heart to be veiled to the truth. Neglect is to run recklessly through a minefield or to absentmindedly stroll around the edges of a cliff. It is to dive headfirst in to the haram, the undesired and the doubtful. In the words of **Rumi** عليه السلام, it is “...for the lamb to become smitten with the wolf.”



Bahauddin Naqshiband عليه السلام has said:

“Remembering Allah is to wipe out neglect. Once neglect is removed, you are regarded as being in a state of remembrance even when silent.”



In search of some kind of spiritual experience, many people in our time turn to yoga and meditation which are prevalent in Far Eastern religions and philosophies. Yet, these have no real substantive peace to offer to the spirit. They only relieve stress for a short while.

For a Muslim, the greatest source of peace and joy in this life is worship, remembrance and contemplation that allow for the heart to be in the presence of Allah.

Let us not forget that Islam is the only true religion and the perfect has no need for a prosthesis from what is deficient and faulty.



The greatest cause for the divine wrath is for the human being, created for serving Him alone, to turn away from Him by giving his heart to mortal beings. There is no greater ingratitude than for man to forget his Creator, the true Owner and Provider, and expect help from the wrong doors!

The Almighty Allah says:

“Remember Me - I will remember you. Give thanks to Me and do not be ungrateful.” (Al-Baqarah, 2:152)



In response to the countless divine blessings he is given, man must always be in a state of gratitude and remembrance. The choice belongs to man: he either chooses paradise or opts for hell! Regardless, man has no power to endure the fire for even a second. The only refuge and support, therefore, is Allah the Creator and Sustainer.

Allah ﷻ says:

فَفِرُّوا إِلَى اللَّهِ

“So, flee to Allah” (Adh-Dhariyat, 51:50) That is to say, seek Allah’s ﷻ protection in all phases of your lives, pray for His help and pursue His refuge.



In interpreting the verse, **“You who believe! remember Allah much”** (Al-Ahzab, 33:41), **Ibn Abbas** رضي الله عنه comments:

“Allah the Almighty has placed a limit on every act of worship such as prayer, fasting which He has decreed for his servants. Even with these, He has pardoned those who have legitimate excuses. Yet, dhikr (remembrance) is an exception. He has not indicated a limit of dhikr and apart from those who have lost their sanity, He does not expect any excuses for abandoning dhikr. Allah has commanded all human beings to

be in a constant state of dhikr under all circumstances.” (Tabari, Jami’l-Bayan an Ta’wili Ayi-l’Qur’an, XXII, 22; Qurtubi, XIV, 197)



Bayazid Bistami رحمته الله said:

“Lots of dhikr does not mean a great quantity. It means dhikr free of neglect with a presence of heart.”



Rumi رحمته الله has said:

“True dhikr activates the thought. Turn dhikr into a sun for your frozen ideas.”



Dhikr is not a monotonous activity of mere repetition. Much to the contrary, dhikr allows a person to reflect on the Almighty’s glory so his heart is moved by the flows of His power. It also cleanses the heart from every distraction, thereby enabling it to be together with Allah ﷻ.

The Qur’an states:

“Remember the name of your Lord, and devote yourself to Him completely.”

(Al-Muzzammil, 73:8)



In the broadest sense, dhikr is to reinforce the repetition of the tongue with a heart that is reminded of Allah ﷻ in everything it sees. Every time one looks at the soil, it is to ponder the manifestations of divine power displayed thereon. Every time one gazes at his children and surroundings, it is to gaze at the divine patterns embroidered upon them with a peering eye.

Every time one glances at the sun and the moon, it is to more profoundly grasp the divine knowledge, power and art that has allowed these two celestial calendars to follow one another so punctually for millions of years without a second of delay. It is to meditate on the delicate balance in the atmosphere that makes life possible for human beings, and the Al-Khaliq (The Creator), al-Bari (The Maker) and Al-Musawwir (The Shaper) who has brought them into existence.

A heart attains true dhikr when it remembers Allah in this manner, and gains depth in reflecting on the divine flows of power exhibited across the Qur’an, the universe and the human being.

In other words, contemplation must expand with each dhikr of the tongue, and the servant must live with a heart that beats with the name of Allah at every moment.



As Rumi ﷺ said:

“A dhikr done with the mouth and tongue, without awareness and thought, is a deficient repetition. Yet, a dhikr made with awe from the bottom of the heart transcends letters and words. You who have never found him but thinks His name is sufficient! How can you free yourself of the desires of your ego without drinking from the goblet of He?”



Esrefoglu Rumi ﷺ divides dhikr into three levels:

“The first is when the tongue remembers but the heart is absent. This is the dhikr of the masses.

The second is to remember with both the tongue and the heart; and this is the dhikr of the spiritual elite.

The third is to remember not just with the tongue and heart, but every limb in the body; and this is the dhikr of the elite of the elite.”



The light of dhikr glows only as bright as the person’s state. First the person must abandon the impermissible and the doubtful, and rid the heart of all worldly preoccupations and ambitions that take him away from Allah ﷻ. Likewise, a dhikr must not remain solely on the tongue. The heart must also gain depth in reflecting on the dhikr.



It is said that the word ‘insan’, the Arabic term for human, and ‘nisyan’ which means forgetfulness, come from the same root. Hence, a proverb, “The human mind is afflicted with forgetfulness.” Humans therefore always need pointers and reminders.

Wrong acts are only committed when Allah ﷻ is forgotten. Neglect is caused by forgetting Allah ﷻ. It is therefore essential to remember Him in much. The Qur’an, in fact, states:

“Remember your Lord when you forget.” (Al-Kahf, 18:24)



Wise Muslims seek refuge in the Almighty throughout all phases of life, whether bitter or sweet. Staying away from dua (supplication) is a sign that the servant is distant from Allah ﷻ. **Hasan Al-Basri** ﷺ said:

“I do not fear that your prayers will be unaccepted. I fear that you will lose the ability to pray.”



Jafar Sadiq ﷺ was asked:

“What is wrong with us that we supplicate but they are never accepted?” He replied:

“It is because you pray to One you do not know!”

In other words, you are far removed from the required servanthood, and are therefore unable to become righteous. You ignore the command to remember Him much or get to properly know Him due to your wayward states and lifestyles, and are consequently incapable of reaching Marifa (direct experiential knowledge of Allah). And your pleas are unaccepted because they come from an empty heart.



Allah is with us in every place and every moment so we must be constantly aware of this and be with Him. While the smallest of deeds offered with this awareness can grow in size like a mountain, very little weight may be attributed to good actions performed whilst neglectful of Allah ﷻ. A ritual prayer offered by such a negligent heart lacks spirit, its pleas lack response, while its repentance itself stands in need of acceptance.



Allah the Almighty transcends space and time. He is present and watching at every moment and place.

With His infinite power, Allah the Almighty is right beside every creature He has created, and is closer to them than they are to themselves.

Allah ﷻ transcends cognition, He sees and hears all His servants at every moment, and knows their every state.

The spirit and essence of faith is the consciousness of being in divine presence at all times. It is impossible for us to see Him in this fleeting world. Yet, every righteous action we take, knowing full well that He not only sees us but is closer to us than we are to ourselves, regenerates the branches of sincerity and the flowers of piety and ripens the fruits of our focus.



The lack of effort shown by the negligent to reach the ocean of Marifa stems from the fact they are entirely unaware of spiritual tastes and pleasures. Their situation would be a lot different if only they knew what they were missing.

Ibrahim Ibn Adham ﷺ, who abandoned his worldly throne to dive into the ocean of divine love, said:

“If our ecstasy, pleasure and rapture within divine love was a tangible thing, kings would sacrifice not just their treasures but their entire kingdoms to seize it.”



A new-born is only given milk, and gradually comes to taste different flavours as he grows. In a similar way people think worldly pleasures are the real pleasures. Yet, if the heart takes strides on the path of divine knowledge, it begins to experience new tastes and sensations that were previously off the menu. Then all the worldly pleasures fade into insignificance because the greatest pleasure is to reach Allah through the heart.



A slave to the Almighty is freed from slavery to His creatures, and finds true freedom. Otherwise, man cannot possibly free himself from slavery to tyrants, wealth or the desires of the ego. The only ransom one can offer in return for freedom from all these kinds of slaveries, is to devote oneself to Allah completely and submit to His commands.



Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه said:

“Allah has no family lineage with anyone of His creatures. Closeness to Allah is only through obeying Him and His commands.”

As the Qur’an declares:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىكُمْ

“The Noblest of you in Allah’s sight is the one with the most Taqwa (fearful awareness of Allah).” (Al-Hujurat, 49:13)



Rumi رحمه الله said:

“Prayer and worship are to be with Allah. For a person who is with Allah, death is sweet, and so is life. But even the fountain of life is fire to a person who cannot find Allah in his heart.”



The most terrible kind of death is to be negligent of Allah, and lose His mercy. In the harvest of life that will one day be dispersed by the wind of death, neither will the world cry over the negligent, nor will the impending afterlife welcome him with a smile.

THE HOLY QUR'AN

Just as the skies, with its stars, will remain a manifestation of divine power and glory until the final hour, the Noble Qur'an will continue to shine with its 'verses' as the sky of mankind's success and future...



Rumi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ said:

“Before reading the verses of the Noble Qur'an and words of the Blessed Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, correct yourself! It is no fault of the rose garden if you cannot smell the scents. Search for the fault in your heart and nose!”

The Holy Qur'an is the most durable rope. It is held on one side in the Almighty's hand of power, and extended, on the other, to us. The path to closeness with Allah runs through seizing it as tightly as possible.



The Holy Qur'an is the final letter and last celestial invitation to intelligent, cognisant and conscious human beings.



The most inspirational way to hear the sounds of the divine, feel its breath in the spirit and to converse with Allah ﷻ in this world, here and now, is to recite the Holy Qur'an.



Abu'l-Hasan Kharraqani رحمۃ اللہ علیہ has said:

“Out of all the ways a servant uses to reach his Lord, the Holy Qur'an is the most beautiful. You should therefore search for Allah in the path of the Qur'an.” (Al-Hadaiqu'l-Wardiyya, p. 458)



The Holy Qur'an is the foundation of true faith and religious culture. Without a strong foundation, any building is doomed to collapse.



The Almighty declares:

“The All-Merciful. Taught the Qur'an. He created man and taught him clear expression.” (Al-Rahman, 55:1-4)

Only in living by the Qur'an can man find joy. Only by leading a way of life in light of the Qur'an can man decipher the secret of being created 'in the best form' and realise the quality of being the 'most honourable of all creation', which is what the honour and dignity of being a human is all about. It is in this way that divine truths, secrets, wisdoms and lessons reveal themselves. Only to the extent of his connection to the Book of Allah can man become a 'perfect human being'.



Just as the sky, with its stars, will remain a glorious manifestation of divine power and glory until the final hour, the Holy Qur'an will continue to shine with its 'verses' as the sky of mankind's success and future...



The only book that elucidates the unknowns of life, answers all its questions, throws light on its dark corners and contains convincing proofs, is the Holy Qur'an.



Rumi ﷺ said:

“It is possible to write out the Holy Qur'an's letters with a bowl of ink. But if shoreless oceans were to become ink, and every tree a pen, it still would not suffice to express its entire secrets.”



Real contemplation begins at the point where reason, inspired by revelation, meets the heart.

If it were not for the Qur'an's endless inspirations and sublime teachings, our contemplation and emotions would have been like arid seeds deprived of fertile soil.



Man's inner nature contains two opposite poles: one commands the good and the other encourages to evil and rebellion. For an entire lifetime, each person shapes his self and maps out a way, flanked by the conflict of these polar opposites.

Rumi ﷺ said:

“Wayfarer towards the Truth! Both Musa and the Pharaoh exist in your own being. You must search for these two rivals within you.”

“Become enlightened under the light of revelation, so that the Musa within you overcomes the Pharaoh within you!”



The Majestic Qur’an immerses both worlds in light. It spiritually repairs both worlds. All worldly culture and information belong to the earth. These are but crumbs of the knowledge Allah has given man. To devote a whole life just to seek that information, in other words, to get swept away in that knowledge at the expense of forgetting the Almighty and the eternal truth, is to turn one’s afterlife into a wreckage. How sad is the outcome of such negligence!



Rumi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ said:

“If earth was to seek hostility with the sky, everything will parch and die.”

Man must recognise who he really needs, and seek help from there. If he reads and lends a good ear to divine messages, and applies his mind to the content of revelation, he will achieve a most skilful and beautiful kind of contemplation.



Like many blessings, the mind is a double-edged sword. It can be used for both good and evil. The devil, in fact, incurred eternal wrath as a consequence of using his mind egotistically in response to the Almighty’s command. For it to act as a guide that directs a person to the true and the good, the mind must therefore be trained under revelation.



Since the mind alone is not enough to understand, Allah has sent Messengers with divinely revealed books. All philosophers using reason have come to refute one another, while the Prophets have confirmed each other. This is because Prophets have communicated the same truth through revelation. A mind and philosophy bereft of revelation has never really brought happiness to humanity.



The first to attempt at arguing with Allah, was Shaytan (the devil). Today, there are many people who object to the divine orders in the Qur’an. Under the mask of being rational, there are those who want to retire some of the rulings of the Qur’an, and replace them with their own wishes and desires with the nonsensical argument that some of the commands are ‘local and historical’. They get these poisonous ideas from orientalists, namely foreign philosophers who are enemies to Islam. ‘Historicism’ is

nothing but a confusion and idiocy akin to the behaviour the devil displayed in trying to argue with Allah ﷻ.



Refusing to submit to Allah ﷻ and His Messenger, and attempting to sift the Qur'an and Sunnah through the narrow sieve of the mind by picking and choosing which parts to believe in, is utterly incompatible with the nature of a true believer. The Almighty warns against falling into such disrepute with the words:

“You who believe! obey Allah and obey the Messenger. Do not make your actions of no worth.” (Muhammed, 47:33)



Those who only know life on the surface, and are deprived of the truths and wisdoms of the inner spiritual realm, lust after the pleasures of the world, but remain ignorant of the wisdom behind the world's existence.

They gluttonously devour from this feast of earth. Yet, they fail to recognise the true Provider and patron of the feast.

They bury their loved-ones in the grave, yet live without the faintest idea of the great adventure taking place beneath the ground. They are unversed in the unlettered and wordless language of the cemetery trees.

Even when they receive a slap of warning through earthquakes, storms and other disasters, they turn their backs on the truth and look for any rock to hide under, falsely consoling themselves that these are merely 'natural disasters.'

How strange it is that they live on divine property, but are hostile to its true owner.



A life remote from the Qur'an is eternal suicide.



The Qur'an is sacred, noble; and bestows value, abundance and honour to everything it touches. Based on this, a wise man once said:

“The Noble Qur'an was delivered by Jibril ﷺ, who was the most virtuous of all the angels.

The Noble Qur'an was delivered to Prophet Muhammed ﷺ, who was the master of all mankind, past and present.

The Noble Qur'an was then given to the Nation of Muslims, who are the best of all nations.

The Noble Qur'an was revealed in the month of Ramadan, which is the sultan of the other eleven months.

The Noble Qur'an was revealed on the Night of Qadr, which is better than a thousand months.

If the Noble Qur'an descends on your heart and upon your life, you will be among the best of all human beings!"



No honour and bliss are greater than being close to Allah ﷻ. The strongest way to achieve this is to become one of the people of the Qur'an.



Our **Prophet** ﷺ once said:

"Truly, there are people close to Allah!"

The companions asked, "Who are they, Messenger of Allah?"

The Prophet ﷺ replied, "They are the people of the Qur'an, the people of Allah and His true servants." (Ibn Majah, Muqaddimah, 16)



Being among the people of the Qur'an requires our hearts to be completely immersed in the Qur'an. We also need to strive to become living interpretations of the Qur'an through our conduct; and also teach, communicate and represent the Qur'an with this spiritual mindset.



A hadith reads:

"Only two people merit envy: One whom Allah has given the Qur'an and who is preoccupied with it day and night, and another whom Allah has given wealth, and who spends it day and night in His way." (Bukhari, Ilm 15)



The best people on earth are those who live under the shade of the Qur'an, who are enlightened by its reviving light, and who lose themselves in it. They are those who are able to become living embodiments of the Qur'an. Becoming a living Qur'an starts with learning and practicing the Qur'an in the most beautiful way possible.



Our **Prophet** ﷺ said:

"The best of you is he who learns the Qur'an and teaches it." (Bukhari, Fadailu'l-Qur'an, 21)



We must always assess our lives through the standards of the Qur'an; and we must not make do with just reading it but must also become occupied with its practice.



Abdullah Ibn Masud رضي الله عنه makes a striking observation:

“The Qur'an was revealed to be acted on. But people have made a practice of reading it!” (See, Sarakhsi, Mabsut, I, 200, Beirut, 1331)



Glancing across the roadmap of happiness offered by the Qur'an is not enough on its own to make a person reach the truth and the good. What is essential is to actively apply the spiritual transformation of the verses being read, with the aim of making our lives in line with its content.



Just as the mind memorises the Qur'an, it is also necessary for the heart to do the same. And this shows in conduct.



Studying the Qur'an, which is essential for every Muslim, can be completed only in three stages:

- 1) Letters: To recite the Qur'an by observing the correct pronunciation of each letter and the rules of recitation known as tajwid. Reciting the Qur'an is like conversing with the Lord of all the worlds, in His presence. If excused, one can perform ritual prayer whilst sitting, but there can be no ritual prayer without reciting the Qur'an.
- 2) Laws: To physically practice the divine commands and prohibitions.
- 3) Morals: To embody the morals and character of the Qur'an.



It is vital to frequently recite the Holy Qur'an by observing its tajwid, becoming familiar with its meanings, gaining depths in its contemplation and showing effort for its practice. In the words of **Imam Al Ghazali** رضي الله عنه:

“The tongue should recite, the mind should translate and contemplate using its foresight while the heart should absorb and learn.” (See, Ihya, I, 816)



The Qur'an states:

“As for those who honour Allah's sacred rites, that comes from the taqwa in their hearts.” (Al-Hajj, 22:32)

Accordingly, sacred legacies such as the Quran, the adhan, mosques, as well as places such as the Kaaba, the **Prophet's** ﷺ tomb and Al-Aqsa are all sacred. We must never waver in our duties towards these; and with great humility and always show respect.



Reciting the Holy Qur'an with focus, holding its divine messages in esteem, not touching it without being in a state of Wudu (ritual purity obtained by ritual washing required for the daily prayers) holding it above the waist, refraining from stretching one's feet towards it, putting another item on top of it or not entering the toilet with it, are all expressions of respect we must embody. We must, furthermore, pass these sensitivities on to our children. Respecting the sacred things of Allah ﷻ stems from the taqwa in the heart.



To be properly inspired by the Holy Qur'an, its cover must be turned with respect and reverence, and it must be recited with the awareness that it is the All-Merciful Himself who taught it to mankind. The Qur'an itself states:

“The All-Merciful. Taught the Qur'an.” (Al-Rahman, 55:1-2)

“When the Qur'an is recited listen to it and be quiet so that hopefully you will gain mercy.” (Al-A'raf, 7:204)



To receive divine mercy, one must approach the Qur'an with respect, listen to it with full focus and rigorously put it into practice. Whilst touching it, the purity of the heart is as important as the purity of the body.



It is really with the heart that the Qur'an is recited. The eyes virtually act as glasses for the heart.



Uthman ﷺ said:

“If your hearts were pure, you would never get enough of Allah's speech.” (Ali al-Muttaqi, II, 287/4022)



When making Wudu, a believer rinses his mouth and gives it a cleanliness which reciting the words of Allah ﷻ, deserves. Similarly, he must put his heart through a spiritual cleaning by washing the dirt of lying, backbiting and slandering through repentance and tears of remorse. This is because the Qur'an is really recited with the

heart. No real inspiration and spirituality can be reaped when the Qur'an is recited with an unclean heart.



Rumi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ said:

“Before reading the verses of the Qur'an and words of the **Prophet** صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, correct yourself! It is no fault of the rose garden if you cannot smell the scent. Look for the fault in your heart and nose!”



In benefitting from the Qur'an Allah, the Almighty explains the condition of man as:

“Then we made Our chosen slaves inherit the Book. But some of them wrong themselves; some are ambivalent; and some outdo each other in good by Allah’s permission. That is the great favour.” (Al-Fatir, 35:32)

That is to say, some people recite the Qur'an; yet it does not pass their throats to find a way into their hearts. They imprison the Qur'an between two covers on dusty shelves. In so doing, they simply wrong themselves by frittering away the greatest of all blessings.

Some people are ambivalent. They practice the Qur'an at times, while neglecting it at others. In other words, they waver in the ebbs and flows of the reproachful self (nafsu'l-lawwamah).

Then there are others devoted to the truth thanks to the inspiration of the Qur'an, and who thereby cover a lot of ground in struggling to establish the truth in themselves and in their societies. These are the blissful servants who live their numbered days selflessly, and who will receive the most immense reward in the hereafter.



Anybody can sit behind a desk and read the Qur'an. But every person reaps a different share depending on his purity of heart. This is because the meanings of the Qur'an open up according to a person's closeness with his Lord. This is just like how those looking at the sea from the shore can only see the surface, while adept divers can behold a different scenery at each depth. Similarly, the Holy Qur'an reveals its truths and wisdoms, and acts as a guide to the truth and the good, only in line with the person's level.



Allah the Almighty states:

“We send down the Qur'an that which is a healing and mercy to the believers, but it only increases the wrongdoers in loss.” (Al-Isra, 17:82)



In benefitting from the Qur'an, **Rumi** ﷺ illustrates the human state with the following analogy:

“The sun is close to both the dry branch and the moist branch. But when the time comes, how can you even compare the moist branch with its ripened tasty fruit, to the dry one?”

What does the dry branch gain from being close to the sun except to dry out more?”



A hadith reads:

“The worst of people are the sinners and the brazen who recite the Book of Allah but gain nothing.” (Ahmad, III, 41)



The Noble Qur'an is like an old soil which reveals a greater treasure the more it is dug. This is only if our hearts gain depth in its contemplation.



Ali ﷺ said:

“No spirituality can be gained in worship without knowledge or in reciting the Qur'an without contemplation.”



Giving oneself direction in light of divine truth is the reward only of those who carry a gem within them, and are able to expand the realms of their heart. Unless one has a dignity of heart, it would mean nothing, even if the clouds were to rain down the fountain of youth, just as a hard rock is unable to absorb the raindrops smashing against it.



Rumi ﷺ said:

“The Qur'an is the states and qualities of Prophets. If you read and practice it, count yourself as having met Prophets and saints! What good could this meeting bring if you do not obey and practice the commands of the Qur'an? Those who best understand the Qur'an are those who live it.”



Since the Qur'an voices divine will, the people who understand it best are those close to Allah ﷻ.

The level in which we regulate our lives in line with the Qur'an determines the depth we acquire in understanding it.



At what level is our effort to benefit from the Qur'an compared to that of the companions who virtually saw it as a feast from the heavens?

Abdullah Ibn Masud  said:

“When a companion arrived home at night, he would first ask his wife two questions:

‘How many verses of the Qur'an were revealed today?’

‘How many of the Prophet's hadith have you memorised today?’” (Abd al-Hamid Kishk, *Fi Rihabi't-Tafsir*, I, 26)



We must ask ourselves:

✓ At what state is our closeness to the Qur'an?

✓ What kind of horizons do the divine truths open up for us? With how much depth of emotion are we able to read it?

✓ Is our curiosity and interest in the Holy Qur'an, the letter of guidance sent to us by our Creator who fashioned the universe out of nothing, higher than that we have for the mails sent by mortals?

✓ How determined are we to read and attain its wisdom? Do we inquire from people in the know about what we do not understand?

Only when we provide sufficient answers for these questions will we start to properly benefit from the healing and mercy of the Qur'an.



Wealthy believers must mobilise their means in the way of those seeking knowledge and morals, and especially those serving the Qur'an. They must also take care of the needy and the poor by helping forlorn and troubled Muslims.



Allah declares:

“It is for the poor who are held back in the way of Allah, unable to travel in the land. The ignorant consider them rich because of their reticence. You will know them by their mark. They do not ask from people insistently. Whatever good you give away, Allah knows it.” (Al-Baqarah, 2:273)



To heal the wounds of our society, we must consider the Qur'an schools as treasures. We must lend these schools a helping hand to the best of our means, and

support them with a genuine heart. We must help our children studying there grow up to become ‘those whose hearts are tied to mosques.’

Today, the people of the world use flashy advertisements and glittery fashions to invite our youth from all sides to fleeting and base pleasures. As people of faith, we must respond to these by mobilising all our means to make others fall in love with the way of Allah ﷺ.



Even during the toughest of times, our **Prophet** ﷺ founded the Daru’l Arqam in Mecca, which was a Qur’an school and when he later moved to Medina, he again set up another, known as the Suffa.

In line with the hadith, “A person is with those he loves” (Bukhari, Adab, 96), we must also feel our **Prophet’s** ﷺ sensitivity for the study of the Qur’an to the best of our abilities, and ensure that the practice continues. Protecting, supporting and becoming devoted to this legacy of the **Prophet** ﷺ is one of the greatest means to ensure that we are together with him in the hereafter.



Unless the love for the Qur’an pours down on arid hearts like lush April rains, a green Muhammadan season will never arrive.



No error darkens spiritual life more than neglecting the Noble Qur’an.



The number one means of salvation out of every period of decline consists in the effort shown for the Qur’an.



Preventing social anarchy is possible only through faith and the training of the Qur’an.



Protecting our future from divine wrath and ensuring that it is honoured with manifestations of mercy will depend on the respect and service we and our young generations offer for the Qur’an. Let us not forget that divine help arrives according to how determined we are to live and sustain the Qur’an.



Only if we ensure our children benefit from the climate of the Qur’an will the joy of this life and the next become possible.



In our times when foreign languages are taught in all schools and courses from kindergarten to university, how acquainted are we with the style of speech the Holy Qur'an demands of us? How much importance do we attach to human languages compared with the speech taught by the Qur'an?



We must show greater care for our children's Qur'an education than we do for their worldly studies, as this reflects our love of Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. We need to be attentive for them to learn the language of the Qur'an more than a foreign language, as this is the mark of our servanthood.



Our **Prophet** ﷺ said:

“Recite the Qur'an! For on the day of judgment, it will intercede for those who were intimate with it.” (Muslim, Musafirin, 252)

This means that if we want the intercession of the Qur'an in the hereafter, we must frequently recite it by taking note of its correct pronunciation, become familiar with its meaning and regulate all aspects of our lives in line with its commands and prohibitions. We must especially send our children to Qur'an schools, and help them absorb a serious learning of the Qur'an and its morals.

Otherwise, while anticipating the intercession of the Qur'an on that terrible day, it is quite possible that we may -Allah forbid- become subject to its backlash.



A joyful death is the award of a life inspired by faith and lived under the light of Qur'anic guidance. For those who recite it with focus and presence of the heart, and apply it to their lives, the Qur'an is a light in the grave, a mediator at the divine court, a heavy reward that tips the scale of judgment and a rescuer on the bridge of the Sirat.



Blissful are those who are able to adorn their hearts with the ecstasy of faith, fill their chests with the inspiration of the Qur'an, immerse their spirits in the delight of serving the religion, shine their consciences with the purity of fine morals and live an entire life enjoying spiritual pleasure.

Blissful are the fortunate servants who are given amnesty at the divine court for their toils for the great blessing that is the Qur'an, by providing an honourable service for their children and generations to come.



May Allah include us among His righteous servants who carry the words of the Qur'an, practice its teachings and perfectly embody its morals. Amin...

OUR BLESSED PROPHET ﷺ

Allah the Almighty made His Prophet both as the 'envelope' and the 'letter'. Our Blessed Prophet ﷺ is like the envelope of a letter that contains the truths which deliver servants to divine wisdom. Those able to open the envelope and read the letter, can reap shares of divine secrets, wisdoms and truth.

Again, according what has been said by the wise, the reason for the existence of all beings, is the divine love for the Muhammadan Light, which is the spiritual reality of the Prophet ﷺ. The entire universe has been created in honour of the Muhammadan Light and as its 'letter'.

A fine jewel is first placed on cotton, then preserved inside a precious box. The entire value of the box comes from the jewel it holds. And that is precisely how our Blessed Prophet ﷺ is the 'letter' of the 'envelope' that is the universe.

The reason for existence of all beings is the love of Muhammad. The entire universe has been dedicated to our **Prophet ﷺ**, the Light of Being.



Rumi ﷺ said:

“Both worlds were created for one heart. Think carefully of the meaning of the expression, ‘If it were not for you, I would not have created the universe’!

“Come, o heart! The real festival is reunion with Prophet Muhammad. The light of the universe comes from the beauty of that sacred being.”



Yunus Emre ﷺ said:

The pride of the universe, the leader of Prophets,
Greet him with love and your sins shall melt

God praised, created him; loved and called him Friend,
Every flower on earth is Muhammad's sweat



Allah the Almighty has displayed the model of 'the perfect human' which He desires through Islam, in the person of our **Prophet** ﷺ. He is a mercy to all the worlds, and a modal for all Muslims.



Allah the Almighty sent His **Beloved Prophet** ﷺ to mankind as an 'uswatul-hasana', the best example.

It is for that reason that the Almighty made the **Prophet** ﷺ begin his life at the most vulnerable level of society as an 'orphan', and then progressed him through all stages of life and ultimately carried him to the highest echelon of 'Prophet' and then the leader of a huge area.

It is so that regardless of which position he may occupy in society, every person can take an example from the conduct of the **Prophet** ﷺ that relates to him, and realise these in accordance with his predispositions and capabilities.



Our Prophet's ﷺ sole teacher was Allah the Almighty. He never took any lessons from a human. Yet, he represents the peak of every single science today, from psychology and pedagogy to social anthropology and others that are concerned with the human being and analyse the soul. No psychological illnesses nor economic or social crises ever existed in the blissful society he raised.



The skill of every artist shows in their work. Hence, the greatest pedagogue mankind has ever seen is the **Prophet Muhammad** ﷺ, who managed to raise a generation of enlightened companions from a society of ignorance.

Across his twenty-three-year Prophethood, he nurtured the society of the 'Age of Bliss', which will set an example for entire humanity until the day of judgment.

The spiritual training that enabled the companions to build a civilisation of virtues, is the inevitable outcome of natural Prophetic education. Which pedagogue or psychologist could possibly achieve that today?



The **Prophet Muhammad** ﷺ lit up the darkness of tyranny like a Prophetic sun. He, once again, reminded humans of their humanity. He healed consciences that had forgotten mercy. He softened rock-hard hearts that, amid the cries of their mothers, callously carried away daughters to be buried alive. He brought to life hearts that had

turned into barren deserts, and rejuvenated them with the winds of mercy. Those who wanted to kill him, revived through him. Those who fostered enmity against him and Islam, found life in him.



Just as an adept gardener, in time, transforms many weeds and bushes into flower gardens through sheer effort, the arrival of our **Prophet Muhammad** ﷺ transformed deserts that had become pools of blood into a tranquil oasis. His smile revived many an arid heart, and adorned it with flowers of mercy. Hearts that had turned to coal in the pits of disbelief and denial, became shiny diamonds through his teachings and guidance. Many exemplary people sprung forth who will continue to show mankind the way until the final hour, much like the stars in the sky.



Many non-Muslim philosophers, historians and statesmen have had to confess the magnificence of the justice and peace that the **Prophet Muhammad** ﷺ brought to the world. One of them, French historian Lamartine says:

“If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Prophet Muhammad?

The most famous men created arms, laws and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers, which often crumbled away before their eyes.

This man moved not only armies, legislation, empires, peoples and dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then-inhabited world.”



British writer Thomas Carlyle said:

“No emperor wearing a crown has received as much love and respect as Prophet Muhammad who wore a mantle he had patched himself.”



Philosopher Lafayette, who was among the ideological architects of the bloody 1789 French Revolution, studied all the legal systems before the publication of the famous Human Rights Declaration. But upon seeing the superiority of Islamic law, he could not help but say:

“Muhammad! No one has never again reached the level you reached in realising justice!”



German intellectual and poet Goethe (who many believe did actually become a Muslim) dedicated the following lines to our **Noble Prophet** ﷺ:

“You are a majestic mountain spring!
From whom everyone imbibes
You take your brothers under your wings
Away from the sands of scorching desert,
And take them beyond the hills to the eternal seas”

Thus, even fair and honest non-Muslims have acknowledged the Prophet’s virtue and eminence deep in their hearts.



Just as the **Prophet Muhammad** ﷺ served as a means to reform an unruly society of ignorance in the past and transformed it into a society of bliss, it is again his breath of mercy that will save and bring peace to humanity today. His rejuvenating standards are the prescription not just for his age, but for all ages and generations to come until the day of judgment.



Until our **Prophet** ﷺ dawns upon the spirit of humankind like a sun, no light can be thrown on the darkness into which the modern age of ignorance had descended with a tyranny and injustice that only grows by the day.

Until hearts are cleansed with the fountain of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, it is impossible to wash away the soot of the hellfire raging through disbelief and immorality, and escape its spiritual crises.



The Noble Qur’an states:

“Allah showed great kindness to the believers when He sent a Messenger to them from among themselves to recite His signs to them and purify them and teach them the Book and the Wisdom.” (Al-i Imran, 3:164)



Our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ is our greatest treasure. Even if we had all the wealth of the world, what good would it be if we did not know Allah’s Messenger? Both the earth and our lives on it are bound to end. On the other hand, the peace and happiness of knowing the him and following him genuinely with our hearts is eternal.



At every moment of our lives, we must cherish the privilege of being part of the nation of our **Prophet** ﷺ, whose heart was filled with mercy and compassion for us. We must not get drowned in the seeming importance of passing worries and concerns.

We must think:

Can there ever be a greater gift, a more lavish wealth and more glorious kingdom than being part of the Prophet's nation? Can there possibly be a greater honour and privilege for a heart than to be attached to him?



Being a part of the nation of the **Noble Messenger** ﷺ from around 124,000 other Prophets, is a tremendous gift we have received free of charge. How aware are we of this blessing? At what level is our effort to show our gratitude for this enormous gift?

To show proper gratitude, it is vital that we obey him throughout our entire lives, and strive to become worthy members of his nation.



In referring to him, we must use honorary and loving titles such as 'the Messenger of Allah', 'the Prophet', 'Allah's Beloved', 'the Pride of the Universe' and 'the Nobel Prophet'. And every time we hear his name, we must ask Allah to bless him and grant him peace.



Our **Prophet** ﷺ said:

"Whoever forgets to ask for blessing me will lose his way to paradise." (Ibn Majah, Iqamah, 25)

"A miser is he who when my name is mentioned right beside him, does not ask for blessing and peace to be upon me." (Tirmidhi, Dawaat, 100)



Our **Prophet** ﷺ said:

"A person who does not ask for blessing and peace on me despite hearing my name mentioned, is not of me. Allah! Maintain relations with he who maintains relations with me. And break off relations with he, who breaks off relations with me." (Daylami, al-Firdaws, III, 634)



Umar رضي الله عنه said:

"A prayer is suspended between the heavens and Earth, and is not raised until the prayer on the prophet is made." (Tirmidhi, Witr, 21)



Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه said:

“Asking for peace and blessings on the Prophet destroys sins quicker than water puts out fire. Sending him greetings with love and sincerity is more virtuous than freeing many slaves. Loving the Messenger of Allah is better than abstinence, self-struggle, and even swinging a sword in the way of Allah.” (Baghdadi, Tarikhu Baghdad, VII, 161)

Of course, this is only on the condition that the **Prophet** ﷺ is taken as an example and followed in every aspect of life from faith and worship to social interactions and morals. Only hearts that achieve this can reach the splendid rewards of loving the **Prophet** ﷺ, and of sending him greetings and salutations.



Greeting any other person annuls ritual prayer. Yet, far from annulling it, greeting the **Prophet** ﷺ whilst sitting during the prayer perfects it.



Regardless of who they may be, those who do not show due respect to the **Prophet** ﷺ are ignorant and foolish. (See, Al-Hujurat, 49:4)



A believer must always accept the Qur’an and Sunnah as the standard, and take the following verse as a principle of life to avoid falling into the ignorance and effrontery of giving precedence to personal views and opinions ahead of the Qur’an and Sunnah:

“You who believe! do not put yourselves forward in front of Allah and His Messenger; and have taqwa of Allah. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.” (Al-Hujurat, 49:1)



The rules of etiquette which the Qur’an cites such as “not putting oneself forward in front of Allah and the Messenger” and “not raising one’s voice above the Prophet’s”, also teach us precisely how to follow our **Prophet** ﷺ. When there is a Prophetic ruling on a given matter, a Muslim must never prefer his own personal opinion. Even if may be at odds to his own personal desires or interests, he must still follow the command of Allah and His Messenger, knowing full well that they always contain a mercy, wisdom and abundance.



For a life that attracts the pleasure of Allah ﷻ, we must refrain from interpreting our religion according to our whims, accepting what suits us and abandoning what does not. We must avoid distorting our understanding of Islam from our own illusions and desires.



Islam is not something we can pick and choose from according to what our selves desire. Islam is a whole. No one can be a believer unless he accepts and affirms it in its entirety. Faith is indivisible; it cannot be split up into parts. It functions only as a whole. In terms of the outcome awaiting a person, there is no difference between rejecting the entire Qur'an and denying just a single part of it. Both nullify a person's faith.



Allah states:

“You who believe! Respond to Allah and to His Messenger when he calls you to what will bring you to life.” (Al-Anfal, 8:24)

“Whatever the Messenger gives you should accept and whatever he forbids you should forgo.” (Al-Hashr, 59:7)

“You who believe! obey Allah and obey the Messenger. Do not make your actions of no worth.” (Muhammed, 47:33)



The **Prophet** ﷺ never spoke out of desire. He was only the translator of divine revelation.



Without ever feeling the need to question the Prophet's commands within the narrow confines of reason, the companions would immediately put them into effect, regardless of whether they knew their underlying wisdom or not. After all, the **Prophet** ﷺ was receiving instructions from his Lord, the creator of reason. From this perspective, following the Messenger the most reasonable of all humans, is the most rational way for man whose own mind is afflicted with many delusions and fantasies.

As **Yusuf Khas Hajib** said:

“The words of a smart man are eyes for the mindless.”



When man acts with the assumptions and guesswork of his own deficient mind, he can be dragged into errors thinking he is doing the right thing. It is therefore essential never to put oneself before Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ; in other words, never say “I think” when the rulings of the Qur'an and Sunnah are clear.



The late **Necip Fazil** beautifully delivers the kind of loving submission we must all show to Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ:

Never say I have an eye, reason and opinion; kill them all
What appears as desert to you is a lake, if he says so



Reason has value only within the content of the Qur'an and Sunnah. On the importance of casting all the doubts and questions of the mind aside, and binding the heart to Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, **Rumi** ﷺ said:

“While successful in our worldly affairs, reason, by its nature, proves deficient in reaching wisdom and divine secrets, in other words, Marifa. This sublime journey needs a vehicle. And that vehicle is the heart; it is ecstasy, passion and rapture. So, sacrifice reason to ‘the Chosen’.”



The companions and saints have obeyed our Prophet's every word and command with loving submission. We also need to follow their example in avoiding one of the biggest illnesses of our time, which is ‘neglecting Sunnah’.



Approaching the ‘Muhammadan Truth’ is not the work of reason. It is a matter of the heart and submission. Our mental grasp of the ‘Muhammadan Truth’ is no different to a child trying to grasp metaphysical events.



The daughter of Seljuk sultan, wife of the vizier and disciple of **Rumi** ﷺ, Gurju Khatun once commissioned the famous palace painter and muralist Aynu'd-Dawlah, who originally was Greek, to paint a portrait of **Rumi** ﷺ. The painter appeared before Rumi and explained the request. **Rumi** ﷺ looked at him with a smile and said:

“Go ahead, if you can do it, that is!”

The painter began to draw his portrait. But every time, he realised that the face in front of him assumed a different expression that had nothing to do with what he was painting, which forced him to start anew. While trying to draw a portrait of Rumi, he ended up going through twenty leaves. In the end, he was forced to admit his incapacity, and abort the project. He then put the pen and paper aside, and grabbed hold of Rumi's hand, as the talented painter's art had just disappeared within the lines of the Shaykh's face.

According to tradition, the experience awakened the painter's heart and sent him into deep thoughts on a journey towards the spiritual worlds. Eventually, he began to envisage the image of the **Prophet** ﷺ through the window that had opened up in his heart, and his tongue spilled the words:

“If such is the saint of this religion, imagine how its Prophet is?”



To people asking him to describe the **Messenger of Allah ﷺ**, **Khalid Ibn Walid** would say:

“The person sent reflects the majesty of the sender!”

In other words, since the sender is the Lord of all the worlds, just imagine the status of the Messenger He has sent!



Each person’s understanding is determined by the makeup of their heart. The vision of the eyes also depends on the heart. It is really the heart that sees. The eyes are like the glasses.

For example, when **Abu Bakr**  looked at the **Prophet** , upon that shiny mirror, he saw a monument of virtue in the form of a man. He gazed at the love, honesty and character of his own inner realm. He became such a great lover of the **Prophet**  that he exclaimed, “May my own life, wealth and everything I have be sacrificed in your way, Messenger of Allah!” He missed him even when by his side, and he could never get enough of gazing at his beautiful face.

In contrast, the heart of Abu Jahl had become tarred with disbelief and ignorance. Hence, when he looked at the Messenger he could not see beyond his own inner grudge, darkness and gloom. He got dragged into a terrible hatred, and became a sworn enemy. But in the end, like so many examples in our times, he managed to do no more than turn his own fate into an endless episode of torment.



The **Blessed Prophet**  said:

“Except for the rebellious among the jinn and mankind, everything between the heavens and Earth knows that I am the Messenger of Allah.” (Ahmad, III, 310)

Unless they are blind, eyes can most certainly see him. Unless they are jaded, they can find no fault in him. In other words, those who try to ascribe faults to him really do nothing more than expose their own faults.

Far from besmirching him, mankind ought to think of how to properly thank the **Prophet** . A heart that is not filled with gratitude towards him, knowing how much he struggled from his birth to his death for the salvation and guidance of humanity, is not much of a heart at all.



The **Prophet**  is the only person in history whose entire life has been documented to the smallest detail. All books of the Islamic tradition have been written with the aim

of explaining one book and one person. That book is the word of Allah ﷻ, the Quran, while the person is His **Beloved Prophet** ﷺ.



One wonders just how much all the biographies of the **Prophet** ﷺ combined, can really explain the sublime reality of the last Messenger with mere ink and paper. We cannot fully grasp his lofty and unique rank with our limited minds. In fact, it is due to the insufficiency of human understanding on this matter that Allah the Almighty personally presents and honours him.



Getting to know the **Prophet** ﷺ is not simply a chronological reading activity. People who know him the most are those whose lives most closely resemble his. Likewise, people who most intimately know the **Prophet** ﷺ are those able to practice his Sunnah with a righteous sensitivity, and who, with hearts bursting with love and longing, act as a moon to his sun of mercy.



People who have the best understanding of the Prophet life are those whose lives most resemble it. People who know the **Messenger of Allah** ﷺ the best are those who meticulously live out his Sunnah.



A true study of the **Prophet's** ﷺ biography allows for the love of Allah and His Messenger to make its way into our hearts and activates our aspiration to follow the Sunnah, just like the companions.



We get to know our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ not so much by reading him on written lines but reading him through the heart. The most beautiful study of the Prophet's biography takes place in the inspired hearts of righteous scholars and masters who embody the Prophetic morals.



While it is important to know the **Prophet** ﷺ through his words, actions and conduct, it is also vital to become familiar with his sensitivities of the heart. This means becoming familiar with:

- ✓ His unwavering preference for the afterlife,
- ✓ His abstinence and asceticism,
- ✓ His sincerity and piety,

✓ His perfection in action, and consciousness of being under the Almighty's watch,

✓ His state of focus during worship,

✓ His awe, self-denial and deep contemplation in the face of the manifestations of divine power and glory,

✓ His exceptional politeness, elegance, etiquette and modesty in social interactions,

✓ His vast mercy and compassion for all creatures,

✓ His matchless generosity, sacrifice and selflessness, and every other one of his exemplary qualities.

It is impossible to get to know our **Prophet** ﷺ by restricting ourselves to the narrow confines of written lines. We may only know him by leading lives in the direction of his Sunnah.



Allah the Almighty states:

“A Messenger has come to you from among yourselves. Your suffering is distressing to him; he is deeply concerned for you; he is gentle and merciful to the believers.” (Al-Tawbah, 9:128)



From among all Prophets, it was in the **Messenger** ﷺ that the Almighty manifested the pinnacle of mercy and compassion and that Prophet of Mercy himself said:

“Beware! I am means for your security whilst I am alive. And when I die, I shall exclaim in my grave, ‘O Lord! My nation, my nation...’ until the first horn is blown for judgment.” (Ali al-Muttaqi, Kanzu'l-Ummal, v. 14, p. 414)

It appears that our **Prophet** ﷺ is still with us, his nation. But who are we with?



Our **Prophet's** ﷺ greatest worry was the peace and eternal salvation of his nation. It is a duty of loyalty for every believer, honoured to be part of his nation, to return the love our **Prophet** ﷺ had in his heart, not just during his lifetime but also now in the eternal realm.



Even during his final breaths, the **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ had forgotten about his own pain, and was instead anxious for the eternal salvation of his nation. At his moment of passage, he kept advising, “Be careful about the prayer! Be careful about the rights

of those you protect! And fear Allah regarding them!” until he lost his voice. And in doing so, he instilled in us the need to sustain our efforts in a way that increases all the way until our very last breath.



The **Prophet** ﷺ is utterly merciful and compassionate towards his nation. But how much do we love him, and exhibit his mercy and compassion?

When our Prophet’s heart pounded for his nation, how sensitive are we for deprived and persecuted Muslims?

In homage of his beautiful conduct, how much are we able to represent the smile, politeness and elegance of Islam?

How much are we really striving to convey Islam with our hearts and souls to people awaiting guidance?



The **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ said:

“My life is beneficial for you: You undergo certain experiences for which you receive divine revelation and rulings. My death is also beneficial for you: Your deeds are presented to me. When I see a good deed, I thank Allah; and when I see a bad deed, I repent to Allah on your behalf.” (Haythami, IX, 24)



Our deeds are presented to the **Prophet** ﷺ. Do our deeds cast worry into his heart or expressions of gratitude? Tomorrow, at the plain of resurrection, our deeds will once more be presented to him and he will be relentlessly prostrating for our forgiveness. During that turmoil, will we be among those invited under the Prophet’s banner or among others banished with the cries of, “You deserted his Sunnah! So, begone! Begone!”



The feeling we have of loyalty to our guiding light, the **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ is an inexhaustible treasure in our hearts that we benefit from throughout our entire lifetime.

That **Prophet of Mercy** ﷺ had a deeper compassion for his nation than parents have for their children. But he also expects loyalty from us. During his Farewell Sermon, he said:

“Know that I will go before you, and wait for you by the pool of Kawthar in paradise! I will rejoice with your numbers compared to other nations. Don’t embarrass me!” (See, Muslim, Hajj, 147; Abu Dawud, Manasiq, 56)



Our Prophet's concern was for his nation. Likewise, ours should be too. Our greatest desire and aim should be to put a smile on his face. The more we feel concern for Muslims, the happier our he will be with us. On the other hand, getting drowned in a tide of selfishness and egoism, and wasting the capital of our lives in self-interest and greed, will make him sad and unhappy on our behalf.



The **Prophet ﷺ** is the only fountain of mercy and passion that can take a servant to the ocean of divine love. As the Qur'an states:

“Say, ‘If you love Allah, then follow me and Allah will love you and forgive you for your wrong actions.’” (Al-i Imran, 3:31)



We may only reach the love of Allah the Almighty through obedience to and love of his beloved. The gates of divine love are shut for anyone who has neglect, hesitation or doubt on this path. The Qur'an confirms that to love the Prophet is to love Allah ﷻ; to obey him is to obey Allah ﷻ, while rebelling against him is rebellion to Allah ﷻ.



Hasan Al-Basri رضي الله عنه narrates:

“The companions once asked:

‘Messenger of Allah! We love Allah so much but we would also like to know the sign of truly loving Him.’

Thereupon, the Allah revealed the verse, ‘Say, ‘If you love Allah then follow me and Allah will love you and forgive you for your wrong actions.’ (Al-i Imran, 3:31)” (See, Tabari, Jamiu'l-Bayan, 6845, 6846)



No love in the hearts of the companions surpassed their love for Allah and His Messenger; neither wealth, nor children, nor their own lives. It is because the love of all these is bound to remain on Earth, whereas the love for Allah and His Messenger are the heart's capital for an eternal joy.



A true lover derives pleasure from showing sacrifice for the beloved. It was with this kind of love and enthusiasm that the companions would proclaim:

“May my parents, wealth and everything I have be sacrificed for you, O Messenger of Allah!” With a rapturous faith, they took the Prophet's letters of invitation to Islam to lands far and beyond, from China and Samarkand to Africa and Istanbul. By doing so, they proved the sincerity of their love of Allah and His Messenger.



The noble companions were able to find the peace of heart by melting all their spiritual convulsions and egotistic questions in the crucible of submission to Allah and His Messenger. After all, they had got to know the Prophet up close and personal and came to greatly admire him. Hence, finding a place inside his heart, however small, appealed to them more than any worldly gain conceivable, and they took pleasure in immediately making any sacrifice they could to that end.

How near are we to that selfless outlook?



The higher our hearts reach in loving our Prophet, the greater will be the peace we obtain in this world and the rank we gain in the next.



Being a member of his nation is a tremendous gift. We need to love him more than ourselves to be able to drink from his Kawthar pool in the hereafter, gather under banner of Praise (Hamd), and receive his good testimony and intercession.



He has described the degree of love we should feel for him:

“By Allah who holds my life in His hand of might, none of you have Iman until I am dearer to you than your mother, father, children and all mankind.” (Bukhari, Iman, 8)



People who do not experience the love of the **Prophet** ﷺ in their hearts can never taste true Iman (faith/belief). The seeds of true Iman only blossom in the soil of loving him because he is the focal point where divine love manifests. It is this divine love which develops and perfects the passing passions inherent within our creation. He is the source of the heart’s abundance and inspiration. His soil of love has turned many a rock-hard heart into a pure a gem.



Rumi ﷺ said:

“O Ignorant one! Take a look at the miracles of Musa and Muhammad. How did that staff become a snake, or the date trunk acquire wisdom and begin to weep?”

“The **Blessed Muhammad** ﷺ ended up caressing the date trunk that wept from his separation. You are no less valuable than a tree. So, become that date trunk, and weep over your separation from the Prophet!”



Suleyman Celebi writes:

“An extraordinary light whose moth is the sun”, whereby he metaphorically refers to the sun as a moth that lovingly spins around the Prophet. The only way to bring hearts from the darkness to the light is become a satellite around that guiding sun.



The **Messenger of Allah** ﷺ said:

“Some of the people among my nation who will love me the most will hail from the generations after me. Just to see me, they will be willing to lose all their wealth, even their families.” (Muslim, Jannah, 12; Hakim, IV, 95)



Our **Prophet** ﷺ said:

“Whoever visits me after my death, it will be like he has visited me in life!” (Daraqutni, Sunan, II, 278)



Bezm-i Alem Valide Sultan said:

Out of love was Muhammad born,
What is love if of Muhammad it's forlorn?

In other words, unless we follow his path, love those he loves and prove our love with righteous deeds, the words of affection we utter will have absolutely no meaning.



The feeling of ‘loyalty to the Messenger of Allah’ inside the heart of a true believer is a rose that never withers. Loyalty knows no autumn. Believers who water their hearts from the spring of loyalty turn their hearts into a rose garden through the breezes of mercy blowing from Prophetic morals. Such a rose garden this is that it contains buds of dhikr, nightingales of glorification, fountains of righteous deeds, and flowers of faith, wisdom and divine mercy.



The beauty and fragrant perfection of the rose is a metaphor of the **Prophet** ﷺ. Blissful are those able to become dew on its leaf.



FOLLOWING THE SUNNAH WITH LOVE

In every moment of our lives, we must strive to live in the way of our Blessed Prophet ﷺ as loyal as a shadow; such that our conduct should speak louder than our words in demonstrating we are members of the nation of the Prophet of Mercy.



Imam Malik رحمته الله said:

“The Prophet’s Sunnah is like the ship of Nuh عليه السلام. Whoever boards it will be saved. Whoever disembarks will drown.”

The purpose of life is to live and die as a good servant of Allah. The ultimate aim is to gain an illuminating drop from the ocean of the one whom Allah ﷻ has bestowed as a gift to mankind.



The life of our **Prophet** ﷺ is like a pure and lucid mirror. In this mirror, every person can gaze at their inner and outer worlds, states and conduct, as well as morals and behaviour, and weigh up his own personal situation. It is every believer’s duty to reform himself according to what he sees in this mirror.



Allah the Almighty has exhibited the most perfect and acceptable kind of servanthood in the **Prophet** ﷺ. Therefore, the level of our affinity, closeness and similarity to our **Prophet** ﷺ is, at the same time, an indication of our value in the sight of Allah ﷻ.



Unless a believer applies himself to the Prophet’s Sunnah, he will never attain the level of perfection or ‘insanu’l-kamil’.



In every moment of our lives, we must strive to live in the way shown to us by our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ as loyal shadows; such that our conduct should speak louder

than our mouths in demonstrating that we are members of the nation of the Prophet of Mercy.



The love we feel for the **Prophet** ﷺ transpires as focus during worship, as courtesy in social interactions and as righteousness in morals. It also yields a purity of heart, a light on our faces, spirituality in our conversations and depth in our gazes. The most inspirational source to learn all these beautiful traits is the **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ, who is our exemplar beyond compare.



Each Prophet has an exemplary moral quality. The pinnacle of all these qualities is to be found in the **Blessed Prophet Muhammad** ﷺ. Without knowing him, it is hence impossible to properly know Islam.



Allah the Almighty states:

“The Faithful Ruh brought it down to your heart so you might be one of the warners in a clear Arabic tongue.” (Al-Shuara, 26:192-195)

This means that without becoming intimate with the character and conduct of the **Prophet** ﷺ, it is impossible to know Islam in the truest sense. The Holy Qur’an was interpreted across his 23-year Prophethood. Unless one knows the Prophet’s Sunnah, he cannot understand the Qur’an or properly practice Islam. The Almighty has, in fact, declared:

“Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah.” (Al-Nisa, 4:80)

We must therefore always bear in mind that the criticisms today intentionally levelled at the Prophet’s Sunnah, are really barbs aimed at the Holy Qur’an, Islam and ultimately at Allah the Almighty.



Knowing and grasping our **Prophet** ﷺ is the most important step in servanthood to the Allah. Without familiarising ourselves with him, following his trail, neither will our faith, nor our understanding of the Qur’an and nor, for that matter, our servanthood be complete.



In history, the distortion of Judaism and Christianity began with the abandoning of the Prophets’ practices. These were the first to be deserted; and once this armour was removed, then came the distortion of beliefs and worship. Ultimately, ritual prayer was forsaken and replaced with liturgy, fasting was replaced by dieting, and the

covering of women was reserved only for nuns which, today, is also gradually being lost.



In our times, movements seeking to weaken and ultimately destroy Islam first began by saying, “What need is there for these legal schools (madhhab)?” Then came uninformed critiques of Muslim jurists and saints. Later, they remarked, “The Qur’an alone is enough for us!”, as they began an onslaught on the Prophet’s Sunnah, even going as far as rejecting sound and authentic hadith. Finally, they tried to effectively retire some of the Qur’an’s legal verses, declaring them to be “...rulings pertaining to the times when they were revealed” in what is known as historicism.

All these are deceptive steps to empty out and corrupt Islam just like Christianity. Being alert to these perverse movements and not leaving the arena to the distorters of Islam is, today, an important responsibility.



Abdullah Ibn Daylami رضي الله عنه details the importance of establishing a loving bond with the Sunnah as follows:

“As far as I have been taught, the demise of Islam will begin with the abandoning of the Sunnah. Once people begin to discard the Sunnah, the religion will be lost piece by piece, just as a rope comes undone thread by thread until it ultimately snaps.”

(Darimi, Muqaddimah, 16/98)



A hadith reads:

“There will come a time when nothing will be more important than these three things:

- A clean income.
- A friend who is like a genuine brother.

A Sunnah to practice.” (Haythami, I, 172)



Corrupters seeking to warp Allah’s ﷻ religion and muddy hearts have existed in every period. In these situations, the foresight to separate the truth from false and right from wrong becomes more vital for Muslims than ever. And for this, we, along with our youth, need to frustrate the plans of corrupters by seizing onto the Qur’an and Sunnah even stronger than before.



The conduct of our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ is a living interpretation of the Holy Qur'an. His Sunnah is the Qur'an's most accurate explanation and clarification. Those who ostracise the Sunnah in the name of a so-called 'Qur'anic Islam', are corrupters of religion who are essentially saying, "Let us, not Messenger, of Allah and those who followed him, interpret the Qur'an and identify the content of Islam". In these times, we must be extremely vigilant against corrupters disguised as scholars, and be careful not to accommodate these ploys against our religion.



The **Prophet** ﷺ issued the following warning to one of his most beloved companions **Abdullah Ibn Umar** رضي الله عنه:

"Son of Umar! Hold tight to your religion, for it is both your flesh and blood! Pay attention to who you learn the religion from! Learn your religion from scholars with direction, not from those who waver here and there!" (Khatib al-Baghdadi, al-Kifaya fi Ilmi'r-Riwayah, p. 121)



Some corrupters of the religion hide behind the innocuous slogan 'the Qur'an is enough', and openly oppose the Sunnah which is really the Qur'an's explanation, interpretation and application in everyday life, we must never forget the Prophet's below caution:

"Beware, I have been given a Book and something like it. The time is near when a man will recline on his chair on a full stomach and remark, 'You should just follow the Qur'an. Take what you find permissible in it as permissible; and what you find prohibited in it as prohibited. Beware! What the Messenger has prohibited is the same as what Allah has prohibited.'" (Abu Dawud, Sunnah, 6; Ibn Majah, Muqaddimah, Tirmidhi, Ilm, 10; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, 6/8)



The Prophet's life is primary commentary of the Qur'an. The Qur'an's mysteries and wisdoms are unravelled by taking on the Prophet's example. Without his Sunnah, the Book of Allah ﷻ cannot be interpreted.



The Qur'an does not explain how many divine rulings are to be carried out. Yet, we find out about these through the Prophet's practices.

For example, the Qur'an prohibits the consumption of carrion. Yet, we learn from Sunnah that fish that die after being caught are excluded from this rule, and are permissible.

Similarly, the Qur'an commands ritual prayer. Yet, the exact manner in which we ought to pray, ranging from the number of units (rakats) and the recitations all the way to their proper measure, are all learned from Sunnah.



In his Farewell Sermon, the **Prophet ﷺ** said:

“I leave you two trusts. You will never lose your way as long as you hold tight onto them. These are the Book of Allah, and my Sunnah.” (Hakim, I, 171/318; Muwattaa, Qadar, 3)

In other words, he does not just say, “I leave you the Qur'an, and that should be enough”. This is because the Qur'an itself is explained and elucidated by the Sunnah. Therefore, without the Sunnah, Islam cannot be practiced.



Our **Prophet ﷺ** said:

“My nation will split up into 73 groups. All of them will go to the Fire except one which will go to the Janna.”

The companions then asked, “Which group will that be, O Messenger of Allah?”

The **Prophet ﷺ** replied, “The one which are on what I and my companions are on” (Tirmidhi, Iman, 18; Ibn Majah, Fitna, 17)

At a time when efforts are made to deviate Muslims from the path of ‘Ahlu Sunnah wa'l-Jamaah’, it is therefore necessary to seize tightly onto the Prophet Sunnah.



Imam Malik رحمته الله has said:

“The Prophet's Sunnah is like the ship of **Prophet Nuh** عليه السلام. Whoever boards it will be saved. Whoever disembarks will drown.”



Our aim should be to embody the way of the **Messenger of Allah ﷺ**. All other roads are dead-ends.



Saints say:

“The roads that lead to Allah ﷻ are closed off to everyone apart from those who follow the Prophet's lead step by step.”



The Qur'an states:

“Allah will not punish them while you (Muhammad) are among them. Nor will He punish them while they pray for forgiveness.” (Al-Anfal, 8:33)

Spiritually, this means that the more a believer’s heart is filled with love for **Prophet ﷺ**, the further away he will be from divine punishment. This is a promise from Allah.



The **Blessed Prophet ﷺ** is a candle that forever illumines mankind. Allah sent that Light of Being as a mercy to the worlds. As a show of thanks for this immense divine blessing, we need to constantly strive to become one with him in our states of mind, actions, feelings and thoughts.



A hadith reads:

“A person is with the one he loves.” (Bukhari, Adab, 96)

To love our **Prophet ﷺ** is to endeavour to be with him in the heart, the tongue and in action.



If love is true, the qualities of the beloved reflect onto the lover. If we really love Allah ﷻ and His Messenger, then our lives should be geared in the way of the Qur’an and Sunnah. We must love those they love, and hate those they hate.



Hasan Al-Basri رضي الله عنه said:

“People! Do not misunderstand the hadith, ‘A person is with the one he loves.’ Unless you perform righteous deeds to the best of your ability, you will not become righteous yourselves. Both Jews and Christians love their Prophets, but they are ‘not with them.’” (Ihya, v. II, p. 402)



It should also be remembered that, according to the intensity of the love, a lover imitates and always talks about the beloved. The most tangible sign of such a bond with the **Prophet ﷺ** is to expand his Sunnah to every aspect of one’s life.



It is not enough to say, “I love Allah and His Messenger”. This love must reflect on our homes, work, the way we educate our children, our choices in society, deeds of worship, social interactions, morals, struggles in Allah’s ﷻ way, and in short, every detail of our lives.



True love stems from common qualities between the lover and the beloved. The lover naturally has the same inclinations as the beloved, and strives to achieve the same mindset. The lover wishes to be coloured in the beloved's dye, and become wrapped in that harmony.

As for our bond with the **Beloved Prophet** ﷺ who we love so much and whose intercession we hope for in the hereafter; and who we long to visit in this life and be with, in the next:

- How much of his mercy, compassion, altruism and generosity do we really share?
- How much do we spend on others compared to what we spend on ourselves?



If we truly love the **Messenger of Allah** ﷺ, we must prove it by tirelessly persevering on his path. Let us ask ourselves:

-What have we sacrificed for the love of our **Beloved Prophet** ﷺ of whose nation we are honoured to be part?

-The companions sacrificed their eyes. Have we been able to quit looking at haram?

-The companions sacrificed their lives. Are we able to endure even small thorn in the way of Allah ﷻ?

-The companions handed out their wealth. Are we truly able to offer alms, donations and charities?

-How will we answer if we are asked for the proof of our love?



In what condition is our allegiance to the **Prophet** ﷺ?

Can we promise to mobilise all our means to serve the religion he brought?

In this chaos of the modern age of ignorance, are we able make in any effort to enlighten Muslims awaiting guidance?



Every age remote from Allah ﷻ and His Messenger is essentially an age of ignorance. The atrocities of each age unreformed by Prophetic teaching are equal to one another.

A change in place, time, living conditions and the general décor does not change human nature. What difference is there between the modern man of ignorance bent on living a fast life of pleasure and a Bedouin man of ignorance from 14 centuries ago, apart from their wardrobes?



Every era detached from our Prophet, sent as a mercy to all the worlds, is an age of ignorance.

Every heart that does not beat with him is tyrannical.

Every conscience unappreciative of him is blind and in darkness.

At every age, we desperately need his teachings and during this tumult of the end times, we need them more with each passing day.



Our **Prophet** ﷺ said:

“My nation is like the rain. No one can tell whether its start is the better or its end!” (Tirmidhi, Adab, 81/2869; Ahmad, III, 130)

The first of the Muslim nation were the companions who, with the Prophet, cast aside the then age of ignorance. And the last of the Muslim nation will be the righteous people of faith who will eradicate the modern age of ignorance.

If we, today, can embody the Prophet’s Sunnah with righteous actions and become a drop of this abundant rain, -Allah-willing- we will join the best of the Prophet’s nation whom he awaits by the pool of Kawthar.



Regardless of the time that has passed, proximity to the Prophet has and always will depend purely on taqwa of Allah. The Prophet in fact, said:

“The people closest to me are those with taqwa who are righteous towards Allah, whoever they are and wherever they may be.” (Ahmad, V, 235; Haythami, IX, 22)



Our **Prophet** ﷺ once turned towards Yemen and said:

“I can feel the divine breath coming from Yemen.” (Tabarani, Kabir, VII, 52/6358)

Let us not forget that it is the taqwa in the heart that makes feeling a breeze of the divine breath possible.



Just as the companions were students trained personally by the Prophet we are also his final batch of students in the last hour, subject to the same Qur’anic verses and hadith.



In his Gulistan, Shaykh Sadi tells a story to wonderfully explain how all believers owe their inner beauties to the Prophet, and obtain all their wealth of heart from his uplifting spirituality:

“A person goes to a bathhouse. Inside, a friend hands him some fine-smelling clay so he can give himself a scrub. The clay gives off this wonderful, soul-soothing scent. So, the man asks the clay:

‘Sacred one! Are you of musk or amber? I am entranced by your appealing fragrance that pulls the heart...’

The clay replies, ‘I am neither musk nor amber. I am just an ordinary soil. But I was underneath a rose shoot, and was covered with the dews gliding off its buds. The soul-soothing scent that you smell, belongs to those roses.’”



Our Prophet’s character is like a garden of paradise adorned with elegant flowers and fine-scented roses from which everyone can find the best examples of conduct he can imitate. As for us:

-How much do we profit from the spiritual breezes blowing from that garden of paradise?

-How much do our family lives resemble that of the Prophet’s?

-How open are our dinner tables to guests and the hungry servants of Allah ﷺ?

-How close is our trading, shopping and earnings to what he encouraged?

-How much of the way we dress, celebrate, interact with others and our social lives fall within the standards he inspired?



In the final verse of Chapter Al-Fath, the Almighty describes the qualities of those by the Prophet’s side:

“Muhammed is the Messenger of Allah. Those who are with him are fierce to the unbelievers, merciful to one another. You see them bowing and prostrating, seeking Allah’s good favour and His pleasure. Their mark is on their faces, the traces of prostration.” (Al-Fath, 48:29)

This means that we need take ourselves to account in how close and intimate we are to the **Messenger of Allah** ﷺ.

- ✓ To what extent are we able to protect our faith against the people of disbelief and denial?
- ✓ How much do we compromisingly practice our religion without taking any notice of those who disapprove of us for doing this?
- ✓ How great is our compassion towards our brothers and sisters in Islam?

✓ How much deep focus do we have in our prayers and other acts of worship?

✓ How much do we beg Allah for His forgiveness?



An indication of our love for our Prophet is the ardour in which we protect his trusts.

-Are our lives led upon the direction of the Qur'an and Sunnah?

-Are we able to raise our children with the Qur'an and Sunnah?

-Do we feel responsible for the direction society is heading?



A Muslim's relationship with him does not merely consist of ceremonies reserved to certain times. Hence, the most beautiful way to commemorate the Mawlid, the Prophet's birth, which we mark every year, is to:

-Be together with the him in our hearts throughout our entire lives, embody his state of mind, and follow him consistently.

-Until our very last breath, carry in our hearts the sentiment, "If Allah's Messenger was with us right now, would he smile at what we are doing or frown?"

-Foster a heart that prioritises the approval of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger in every major decision and step we take in our lives



Let us not forget that across our magnificent history, our glorious nation was blessed with the honour of bearing the flag of Prophet's love, and of following his trail. Reverently placing the hand on the heart and sending salutations every time the Prophet's blessed name is mentioned, and calling its soldiers Mehmetcik to instil in every one of them the ideal to become 'little Muhammads', are reflections of this respect. And thanks to Allah ﷻ, the Turkish army today still carries the name Mehmetcik. Still, we must strive to be deserving of the spiritual meanings implicit in that name.



While we still have the opportunity, it is crucial that we make a consummate effort to follow Allah and His Messenger and not be like those who when the afterlife arrives, weep and wail after tasting the punishment of hell and saying,

"Oh! If only we had obeyed Allah, and obeyed the Messenger" (Al-Ahzab 33:66)

Real Wealth: CHARITY

Our real wealth is only what we can donate. Everything we give away for Allah ﷻ is ours. The charities we hand out are ours. The poor, forlorn and lonely people we take into our hearts are ours. For it is through their means that -Allah-willing- we will gain the Almighty's pleasure. Therefore, we must look upon them as divine gifts.



Winning a heart is the most precious treasure on Earth. And the beautiful prayers that rise from relieved hearts all the way to the Divine Throne as a means of mercy, are their most prized wealth.

Allah is bountiful and beneficent; the most generous of the generous.

He desires believers, who He wants to serve as witnesses to his High Essence and act as His regents on earth, to be endowed with His beautiful qualities, and also become compassionate, affectionate and generous.



In a hadith qudsi, the Almighty declares:

“This is a religion I have chosen and consented for my Self. Only generosity and good morals are befitting of it. As long as you live as Muslims, raise the religion with these two traits.” (Haythami, VIII, 20; Ali al-Muttaqi, Kanz, VI, 393)

It should also be known that the most defining quality of good morals is generosity.



To eradicate enmity and jealousy between the rich and the poor, and maintain balance and love among society, Islam has commanded the taking of zakat, which is an obligatory charity.

To promote brotherhood at a higher level and afford every believer a ‘generous heart’, Islam has encouraged general charity (sadaqah) as a moral imperative.

It has, moreover, elevated charity with altruism (isar), which is the virtue of choosing a brother of religion over one's own, even when in need.



Muhammed Hakim ﷺ was asked:

“What is charity?” He replied:

“Charity is to find joy in making others happy.”



A hadith reads:

“When Allah wishes for the good of any servant, He mobilises him to take care of people's needs.” (Suyuti, II, 4/3924)

“The best of mankind are those who most benefit mankind.” (Bayhaqi, Shuab, VI, 117)

“Acting as a means to a good is like doing it.” (Tirmidhi, Ilm, 14)



Ali ﷺ said:

“There are two particular blessings; and I do not know which one makes me happier:

The first is when a man comes to me in hope that I might sort out his need, and genuinely asks for my help.

The second is for Allah the Almighty to take care of that person's need through me, or make it easier for him.

I would rather take care of a Muslim's need than have all the world's gold and silver.” (Ali al-Muttaqi, Kanzu'l-Ummal, VI, 598/17049)



One of the beautiful names of Allah the Almighty is “Al-Wahhab” (The Bestower). He abundantly and continuously bestows blessings at every time and every place without expecting anything in return. For this reason, He has created beings with the nature to give.

A bee, for instance, makes honey multiple times more than it needs, and puts it all inside a package with great rigour and precision. But it only eats a tiny portion of it, while most of it is consumed by human beings and animals.

Trees also provide a lot of fruit to sustain their species. Even if a single fruit out of thousands ends up becoming a seed to grow into a tree, it is enough. All the other fruits, on the other hand, are presented to the benefit of people and other creatures.

Livestock feed themselves to stay alive and after a while, present their meat for the consumption of humans.

Even though it is trampled underfoot, the soil cleanses the animals that roam on it, and grows all kinds of plants to unremittingly donate to every kind of creature.

All these examples essentially suggest that a person has to be generous and giving; and that after sparing some of the money he earns or the means he possesses for himself, he should donate the rest. In the physical verses displayed across the book of the universe, the Almighty presents man with thousands of such examples, so that he may become a selfless and charitable servant.



Shaykh Sadi Shirazi says:

“A generous person is like a tree that bears fruit. A miserly person is like a log on a mountain.”



A hadith reads:

“A generous person is close to Allah, and to paradise and otherpeople, and is remote from the hellfire. A miser is remote from Allah, and from paradise and people, and close to the hellfire! An ignorant generous person is more pleasing to Allah than a miserly worshipper.” (Tirmidhi, Birr, 40/191)



Shaykh Sadi says:

“A magnanimous person who eats and feeds others is better than a worshipper who does voluntary fasts but feeds no one.”



Donating wealth from one’s means for the pleasure of Allah ﷻ is to feel the zest of true richness. Miserly and hypocritical people are deprived of this joy. A person must recognise giving sincere charity for the blessing and bliss that it is.



The Qur’an says:

“Do good to others as Allah has done to you.” (Al-Qasas, 28:77)

A believer must wish for his brothers what he wishes for himself. He must look upon taking care of the needs of another as a blessing and joy to cherish forever.

Far from feeling the slightest gripe, he must share the means he has with pleasure and joy. What he is able to share, he must consider as profit, and look upon what he gives as his true revenue.



Our Prophet's family had once sacrificed a sheep. After donating its meat to many people our mother Aisha رضي الله عنها said:

“All we have is the shoulder.” The **Prophet** ﷺ thereupon said:

“We have everything except the shoulder!” (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 33)

Whatever we give away for Allah ﷻ is ours. The charities we hand out are ours. The poor, forlorn and lonely people we take into our hearts are ours. For it is through their means that -Allah-willing- we will gain the Almighty's pleasure.



The Almighty declares:

“**You will not attain true goodness until you give out of what you love.**” (Al-i Imran, 3:92)

In line with this verse, we must test our efforts and generosity in the way of Allah ﷻ, and review our levels in this regard. When donating, we should check our hearts to see:

“Are we really happy when we give? Or are we grappling with worldly concerns and hesitations?”



Allah ﷻ states:

“**You who believe! give away some of the good things you have earned and some of what We have provided for you from the earth. Do not have recourse to bad things when you give, things you would only give with your eyes tight shut! Know that Allah is Rich Beyond Need, Praiseworthy.**” (Al-Baqarah, 2:267)



One day, Aisha رضي الله عنها intended to donate a meat whose smell had slightly changed. Our **Noble Prophet** ﷺ cautioned:

“Will you give away some meat, Aisha, that you would not eat yourself?” (Haythami, III, 113)



It is said in a hadith qudsi:

“Son of Adam! Donate so you are donated to!” (Bukhari, Tafsir, 11/2, Nafaqat 1)

Every good attribute contains this nuance:

- Forgive so you are forgiven.
- Pardon so you are pardoned.
- Show mercy so that you are shown mercy.
- Conceal faults so that your faults are concealed.
- Heal pain so that your pain is healed.
- Take care of a brother's need so your needs are taken care of...



Shaykh Sadi رحمته الله said:

“If you want goodness from Allah, do good to His servants.”



If a person makes another happy for Allah's ﷻ sake, Allah ﷻ will also make him happy.



Our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ says:

“Allah has said, ‘Donate, I will donate to you.’

The treasures of Allah are boundless. All the provisions He gives to the entire creation does not diminish them in the slightest. He donates endlessly, day and night. Think of the things Allah has donated since the day He created the heavens and Earth! None of these have reduced His dominion even one bit!” (Bukhari, Tafsir 11/2, Tawhid 22)



If planted properly and at the right time, the smallest seed in the depo returns with a greater abundance and even fills up the depo itself. Likewise, far from decreasing it, spending the wealth Allah ﷻ has given, in His way, increases it.



Rumi رحمته الله said:

“Wealth and the body melt like snow. But if they are spent in Allah's way, then Allah becomes their purchaser. The Qur'an has said, ‘Allah has bought the believers their lives and wealth in return for paradise...’”²

Anything Allah ﷻ buys is saved from perishing; and gains an honour and value to become eternal.



2. Al-Tawbah, 9:111.

Shaykh Sadi رحمته الله said:

“Give alms out of your wealth. Remember that a vine yields more grapes when pruned.”



The **Prophet** صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

“I can make an oath over three things. Keep these in mind:

- (1) Charity does not decrease wealth.
- (2) Allah increases the honour of a person who is patient after a personal injustice.
- (3) If a person opens the gates of begging, Allah will open up for him the gates of poverty.” (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 17)



The truth is that donating does not diminish wealth. Much to the contrary, it proliferates the wealth according to the degree of sincerity. No person who has ever earned a clean living has fallen into poverty by donating purely for the sake of Allah ﷻ.



The Qur'an states:

“The metaphor of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is that of a grain which produces seven ears; in every ear there are a hundred grains. Allah gives such multiplied increase to whomever He wills. Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing.” (Al-Baqarah, 2:161)

“But anything you expend will be replaced by Him. He is the Best of Providers.”
(Saba, 34:39)



Our late father **Musa Efendi** رحمته الله used to become deeply saddened when people would shoo away the poor asking for charity, with the remark, “May God give you some”. He would say:

“Who gives us the wealth? And why does Allah give it to us? Just to spend it on ourselves? We need to remember that we also frequently ask Allah for things. Wealth belongs to Allah alone. The servant is only a trustee!”



Shaykh Sadi رحمته الله said:

“Do not ever send away a poor person, who comes to your door, empty-handed. God-forbid, there may come a day when you will be going door to door!”



At a time when our world has become tainted by selfish ambitions and consumerism has reached tipping point, we need to more seriously reflect on the responsibility brought by our means, and their impending account in the hereafter.

We must never forget that the poor and the needy have a divinely designated share in wealth; and that the wealth may easily slip out of our hands through disaster and misfortune, unless we genuinely give out in charity.



Shaykh Sadi ﷺ writes:

“Brave one! Do not bank on your power and strength to send away the weak empty-handed! Do not wound the hearts of the fragile! For you may one day find yourself helpless under the power and tyranny of one who is stronger!”



Unless we wish for the Almighty to turn us away empty-handed from His high presence, we must never turn anyone away from our doors broken-hearted.



Our lives, wealth and the other means we are entrusted with, will not remain with us forever. Inevitably, we will one day suddenly bid farewell to them all, and everything will return to its origin.

Therefore, in this opportunity of life which we are given only once, let us spend and donate these divine trusts in a way that pleases Allah the Almighty, so that we throw away their weight of responsibility, and also ensure that we are not deprived of the Almighty’s exceptional blessings and grace.



What is proper for a Muslim is to turn the provisions of this passing life, which he will one day leave behind anyway, into real and enduring wealth by using them in the way of Allah’s ﷻ pleasure.

A believer’s true wealth is what he amasses for his eternal life through charity and donations.



For piece of mind in this life and happiness in the next, the money that is earned needs to be spent on those who are closest, and then on the poor, underprivileged and the outcasts of society. If this becomes the true intention of earning money, the hardness, gloom and stress brought upon by worldly concerns is then replaced by the sweet state of serenity and peace.



Our Prophet ﷺ has said:

“If you want your heart to soften, feed the poor and caress the head of an orphan.”

(Ahmad ibn Hanbal, II, 263)



Another hadith states:

“hasten to give charity, as charity can never be overtaken by misfortune.” (Haythami,

Majmau'z-Zawaid, III, 110)



Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal rahimahullah said:

“Seek to do good deeds before an obstacle comes in between.”



Similar to how the virtue of ritual prayer lies in performing it at its earliest time, the virtue of charity lies in giving it without delay.



The Qur'an declares:

“Give from what We have provided for you before death comes to one of you and he says, ‘My Lord, if only you would give me a little more time so that I can give sadaqa and be one of the righteous!’” (Al-Munafiqun, 63:10)



Some things to be mindful of when giving charity are:

1. One must be sincere and avoid donating to showing off or expecting worldly gain. (See, al-Baqarah, 2:264)

Just as a single drop of filth sullies the purity of water, all deeds of worship entangled in worldly intentions lose their acceptability.

2. Except for situations where one is trying to set an example or encourage others, one must always give charity secretly to the point where ‘the left hand is unaware of what the right hand gives.’

It is narrated that people who donate this way will be under the shade of Allah's Throne on the day of judgment.

3. Charities must not be annulled by rubbing people's noses in it and hurting them in the process. (See, Al-Baqarah, 2:262-264; Al-Insan, 76:8-11)

4. A person must not donate anything of basic and low-quality, which he would not comfortably accept himself. (See, Al-Baqarah, 2:267)

5. The giver, in particular, must feel gratitude towards the receiver. After all, he is being unburdened of the responsibility and is gaining rewards in the process.



To avoid becoming beggars on the day of judgment and bankrupt in the hereafter, we must consider it a fortune to donate to the needy with soft words and a smile, seeking only the pleasure of Allah ﷻ and without expecting anything worldly in return.



Whenever our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ received anything worldly, he never felt at peace until he gave it away. And when he was left with nothing to give, he would look the other way in embarrassment. It was then that the following verse was revealed:

“But if you do turn away from them, seeking the mercy you hope for from your Lord, then speak to them with words that bring them ease.” (قَوْلًا مَّيْسُورًا) (Al-Isra, 17:28)

This means that there is no room for rejecting the needy, and sending them down a dead-end. Even if a Muslim has nothing to give, he should at least seek to console the person with a few kind words.



Any time our **Prophet** ﷺ saw someone in distress, his face would go pale from sorrow. And if he was able to put a smile on the person’s face by taking care of his needs, his face would shine with joy. He would become even happier than the person he had just helped.

An Arab poet, in fact, gives voice to this sublime quality of the **Prophet** ﷺ with the words:

One would err to compare your generosity to the clouds,
For the clouds give and cry, whereas you give and smile



Shaykh Sadi رضى الله عنه said:

“Saints buy more from shops no one visits.”

In other words, they recognise the poor, who are too embarrassed to express their needs, from their faces. They become the friends of the lonely. They hear their muffled cries; and like the sun, cast light on even the darkest alleys.



Real virtue is to grab, just for the sake of Allah ﷻ, the hand of a person or a task that no one goes near.



Allah is with the broken-hearted. Special care is therefore needed when dealing with those who are wronged. No balm can heal a wound slashed inside a heart by harsh and insensitive words. No matter how many times the pieces are reglued, once a glass is broken, it is never the same. It carries the marks for a lifetime.

Allah ﷻ commands:

“And as for beggars, do not berate them!” (Al-Duha, 93:9-10)



Shaykh Sadi said:

“Do not cut down the rose in autumn, lest you be deprived of its sight in spring.”

“When you do someone a favour, never be arrogant, thinking, ‘I am superior; he needs me.’”

“Do not look down on him, saying, ‘He is struck by the sword of time’. The sword has not yet entered the scabbard, and it may yet come to strike you down!”



Rumi ﷺ said:

“A poor person is the mirror of generosity. Do not ever fog up that mirror by breathing harsh words into it!”



Ali ﷺ has said:

“It is better to remain in need than to become indebted.”



To thank for everything we are blessed with, we must consider it an honour to share our means with the less fortunate. More so, we must donate gratefully, in a way that enables the giver to feel gratitude, rather than making the receiver feel indebted.

The noble companions who are our exemplary predecessors, would tell the people to whom they donated to:

“We do not want any repayment from you or any thanks. Truly we fear from our Lord a glowering, calamitous Day.” (Al-Insan, 76:9-10)



Abu'l-Layth As-Samarqandi ﷺ said:

“While donating, the donor must feel gratitude towards the beneficiary. By receiving, the beneficiary takes care of a worldly need. The donor, on the other hand,

gets everlasting rewards and the Almighty's pleasure. So, the donor is really in a more profitable position. For that reason, he must thank the receiver."



When donating something to the needy, our honourable father **Musa Efendi** رحمته الله was always extremely polite and meticulous, knowing that the donation would reach the Almighty's Hand of Might before it ever made to the hand of the poor. He would place the amount in an envelope, and write graceful words like, "Dear so-and-so. We sincerely thank you for accepting out gift".



Rumi رحمته الله said:

"Generosity and kindness need the poor just as much as the poor need generosity and kindness."



In this life, the poor need the rich. In the afterlife, however, the rich stand in even greater need of the prayer of the poor. The poor are, therefore, an invaluable blessing for the rich, as it is through the poor that they are given the chance to gain the Almighty's pleasure.



Winning a heart is the most precious treasure one can ever amass on earth. And the beautiful prayers that come from healed hearts, are their most prized wealth.



The **Prophet** صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

"Love the poor, and bring them close to you so that Allah brings you close to Him on the day of judgment." (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 37)



A saint had once prepared a sumptuous feast for a blind guest. The people around him remarked:

"Sir, your guest is blind. Why have gone to all this trouble? He will not even be able to see how elegant a feast this is!"

The wise man replied:

"The blind man cannot but the blind man's Lord can!"



Zakat is one of the obligatory pillars of Islam and is commanded upon the wealthy, and marks the minimum of what should be donated for Allah رحمته الله. Giving Zakat is not so much a display of virtue besides other duties of servanthood, but rather

more like a debt. After all, Zakat is the share of the poor from the wealth of the rich. By withholding this share, a person usurps the rights of another.

Our late father Musa Efendi would say:

“The worst theft is when the wealthy steal from the poor by not paying their Zakat.”



Another financial obligation that is almost forgotten today is tithes (ushr), which is the alms of agricultural harvest. Much like alms, those who neglect giving their tithes are usurpers and guilty in the sight of Allah ﷻ. They are embezzling the rights of the poor, the needy and those striving in Allah’s ﷻ way.

It is reported that a man from Yemen had a large farm near Sanaa. At harvest time, he would put aside the tithes for the poor and the needy. But when he died, his children yielded to greed, and pledged:

“We have a large family, but we have little to feed them. Let us not give anything to the poor, and instead collect the harvest before they come knocking”. In response to their bad intentions, Allah burnt down their farm and turned it into ash. The once-lush farm became unrecognisable.

In short, giving the tithes and receiving the prayers of the poor, is both a cause for material increase, and also a kind of insurance against misfortune.



While the Qur’an mentions Zakat 32 times, it cites charity (infaq) with all its derivatives on 72 occasions. This is a sign that a believer should never just make do with Zakat, which is the minimum measure of sacrifice from wealth, and instead assemble all his means to donate as much as he can.



Zakat is a command only upon people Islam deems wealthy, whereas charity is a divine command that binds all believers, rich and poor.

Regardless of the circumstances, generosity must become a natural instinct of all Muslims.



Whether rich or poor, our **Prophet** ﷺ wanted every member of his nation to be generous. He also taught his companions that generosity has more to do with the heart’s selflessness than it does with material wealth.

When the verses of the Qur'an about charity were revealed, even the people of the Suffa, who did not possess even a penny, explored ways to donate, instead of regarding themselves exempt or hiding behind excuses such as:

“What can we donate when we have nothing?” They chopped wood from mountains, and carried it to the town to sell. They worked as porters, dragged water from wells, watered gardens, and brought their earnings to the **Prophet** ﷺ as charity.



Our **Prophet** ﷺ regarded all believers as spiritually rich, and wished for even the poorest among them to donate. **Abu Dharr** ؓ was quite a poor companion. Still, the **Prophet** ﷺ advised him:

“When you make soup, add a lot of water, then look around for your neighbours, and kindly offer some of it to those you think may need it.” (Muslim, Birr, 143)

We understand from the hadith that:

1. Neighbours have rights over one another.
2. Neighbours need to give each other presents and offer things in kindness to strengthen their bond.
3. Looking out for the poor is not just the responsibility of the wealthy. Every Muslim must help those who are doing it much tougher, as best they can.



In the Holy Qur'an, the Almighty refers to:

“Those who give in both times of ease and hardship.” (Al-i Imran, 3:134)

It is for this reason that the **Prophet** ﷺ even urged companions who had nothing but a date, to give half of it as charity. This means that when the time comes, even a person receiving Zakat must donate to the best of his means.



What is important in the sight of Allah ﷻ is not the amount, but the purity of the heart of the one who gives.

The **Prophet** ﷺ, in fact, once said:

“One dirham has surpassed 100,000 dirhams.”

The companions wondered, “How can that be, o Messenger of Allah?” He then replied:

“A man had two dirhams. He gave away the best of it in charity. Another man was quite wealthy; and he pulled out 100,000 dirhams and donated it.” (Nasai, Zakat, 49)



For a person with Ikhlas (pure sincerity) in his heart, the Almighty makes the less more. A small charity given with a genuinely sincere intention is more precious than a half-hearted donation even if it be the size of a mountain.



The value of a victory is judged by the hardships a person has overcome in getting there. Remaining generous and selfless even in the toughest of times is therefore a great way to get close to Allah.

The sacrifices made during times of hardship and scarcity prior to the conquest of Mecca, have thus been regarded many times more valuable than those made during the later times of comfort.



During the Battle of Yarmouk, just one small bottle of water passed on among the three parched and soon-to-be martyred soldiers, who each wished for their brothers to drink before they did, has perhaps incalculably surpassed far bigger donations many others have made during times of ease.



The pinnacle of generosity is altruism. Generosity is to donate the unneeded surplus of wealth. Altruism, on the other hand, is for a person to donate something he needs by silencing the objections of his ego and, in a sense, ripping it out of himself.



Even though they may be the same quantity, there is an enormous difference in value between water offered by the side of a fountain and water offered under the scorching sun in the middle of a desert. One quenches thirst, while the other saves a life.



Shaykh Sadi said:

“Allah has not shut the door of goodness on anyone. Also, bear in mind that each person does good according to his capacity. A bullion of gold a rich man donates from his treasure does not compete with a carat of gold a poor man gives from the sweat of his brow. As light as it may be, the leg of a grasshopper is still a burden on the ant.”



While generosity is the hallmark of righteous believers, it does not only mean donating material wealth. A smile, a kind word, helping a person get up, listening to someone's problems and giving someone time, effort, knowledge, wisdom and a responsive heart, are all forms of generosity.

In Islam, poverty is therefore no excuse to neglect charity. Islam commands even the poorest believer to be empathetic, selfless and generous.



A hadith says:

“Every legitimate and beautiful action is a charity.” (Bukhari, Adab, 33)



It is easy to donate when wealthy. This does not burden the ego. Yet, it is hard to be generous when poor. During wealthier times, the self usually finds it hard to give out of the things it loves.



Ali  says:

“Know how to give when wealth turns towards you, as wealth does not expire by giving. Also know how to give when wealth turns away from you, as wealth never stays forever!”

“Donate when you fall on hard times, so that Allah gives you abundantly, just as if He has just made a trade with you.”



The Qur’an states:

“They ask you what they should donate. Say, ‘the surplus’”. (Al-Baqarah, 2:219)

A believer must therefore work and earn money, make do with what he needs and donate the unneeded surplus. He also needs to act with discretion to determine the amount he really needs.



The **Prophet**  established a civilisation of virtues through the noble companions he raised.

Jabir  recalls:

“I do not know of a single companion with means who did not establish a charitable trust.” (Ibn Qudamah, al-Mughni, V, 593)

A trust (waqf) is an institutionalised charity and it is the most beautiful expression of Islam’s outlook on the human being and creation.



The Ottomans who, after the Prophet’s  ‘Age of Bliss’, marked the most splendid era in the history of Islam, had established a glorious civilisation of trusts. (awqaf)

Instead of leaving behind precious stones and jewellery, the sultans and their mothers bequeathed mosques, schools and complexes as an ever-flowing wealth of charity and endless source of rewards.

They spun society in a web of charitable trusts which turned mercy and compassion into ongoing institutions of service to the people.

Each neighbourhood became a guarantor for widows, orphans and the poor. Hearts were converted into lodges of mercy.



A society that takes forlorn, lonely and abandoned people under its wings through merciful institutions of charity achieves a brotherly climate no politician, sociologist or psychologist can ever accomplish. Hearts spill over with compassion for one another, and become a refuge and pillar for the helpless.



To this day, we still make use of the trusts founded by our ancestors.

But how deserving are we really of their legacies?

What legacies will we leave behind for our grandchildren? Will we leave them, like our ancestors did, trusts that are pillars of mercy, compassion and altruism or instead ruins of waste and greed?



Good deeds and charities in this life are like seeds sown for harvest in the next.



We are travellers toward the hereafter whose entire mortal existences will one day be taken away. Before death forcibly snatches it out of our hands, let us willingly give away all the charity right now, so we do not travel to the eternal realm empty-handed.



The best wealth is that which is donated whilst alive and sent to eternity from beforehand. The Qur'an states:

“That Day, Hell is produced, that Day man will remember; but how will his remembrance help him? He will say, ‘Oh! If only I had prepared for this life of mine!’” (Al-Fajr, 89:23-24)



Shaykh Sadi said:

“The intelligent take their possessions and money with them to the afterlife. Only the stingy leave their wealth behind.”



Muhammed Esad Erbili ﷺ said:

“When moving houses, tenants take all their belongings with them and never leave anything they love behind. With this being the case, it is truly startling that people fail to take even a bit of their belongings to the house of the grave where they will need anything and everything they can get.” (Mektubat, p. 16, no:5)



Our real wealth is what we donate. The possessions that will benefit us in the truest sense are those we can sacrifice in Allah’s ﷻ way.

Our **Prophet** ﷺ expresses this wonderfully:

“Son of Adam keeps saying, ‘My wealth, my wealth’. Son of Adam! Do you really own anything apart from the clothes you wear out or the charity you send from beforehand to gain rewards?” (Muslim, Zuhd, 3-4)



The Qur’an states:

“You who believe! give away some of what We have provided for you before a Day comes on which there is no trading, no close friendship and no intercession. It is the unbelievers who are the wrongdoers.” (Al-Baqarah, 2:254)



Our Blessed **Prophet** ﷺ has said:

“The wealthy in this world are short on rewards in the hereafter; except for those who give right, left and behind, in such and such manner. But how few they are!” (Bukhari, Istiqraz 3, Riqaq 14)



Regardless of whether a person departs this world as a slave or a king, the only wealth he has in the hereafter is what he has sent ahead.



Loyal children are those we raise on the path of Allah ﷻ and who will become an everlasting source of rewards for us long after we are gone.

Loyal friends are those we love for the sake of Allah ﷻ, and with whom we become brothers in hard times.

Loyal wealth is that which we send ahead to the afterlife.



Our times demand an urgent need for charity and altruism within the means we have. We must never forget that we at any time be walking in the shoes of the needy.

Being generous, charitable and altruistic towards the sick and the poor is therefore our duty of thanks to Allah.



Let us willingly share the blessings we have with those in need, so that the hearts we satisfy and please enrich our spirits in this life, become our rescuers in the hereafter and source of joy in paradise.



AVOIDING EXTRAVAGANCE, STINGINESS AND GREED

Wise people have said:

“Once man dies, he encounters two tribulations regarding his wealth like nothing he has seen before:

Firstly, his entire possessions are ripped out of his hands. Secondly, after losing everything he had, he is called to task for how he earned his wealth, and where he spent it.”

According to manmade systems, property belongs to either society or individuals. In reality, however, everything belongs to Allah ﷻ alone. (الْمُلْكُ لِلَّهِ)

The two biggest mistakes when it comes to the use of wealth and property are extravagance and stinginess.

Extravagance is to spend money excessively on personal desires.

Stinginess, meanwhile, is to hoard money for personal use. Both are ugly qualities whose roots lie in hell.



Extravagance is one of the biggest afflictions of our times. It is the disease of showing off material wealth normally related to an obsession with fame and fixation with brands. To buy the same product at an exorbitant price just because it carries a brand name, and flaunting it to others, is utterly stupid. These brands are very often produced by anti-Islamic Zionist global enterprises.



The Qur'an states:

“Squanderers are the brothers to the shaytans.” (Al-Isra, 17:27)



Sadly, the consumerism craze stirred by today's materialist and capitalist world as well as an obsession with vanity and showing off power, pushes people into a mad rush to earn more so they can spend more, like racehorses whipped into a frenzy. The

value of almost everything is judged by money; and this poisons the spirit and clouds the mind. They make a person forget about the afterlife and blind to the eternal realm. They dry up rivers of gratitude, contentment and modesty.

No material thing can offer inner peace like a simple life of contentment and modesty.



Wealth is a means of divine trial. While spending it in a way that pleases Allah the Almighty serves as capital for endless bliss, laying waste to it with extravagance and stinginess, on the other hand, is cause for eternal dismay.



Since wealth is given as a test, every person will be called into account for how he earned and spent his money. In this school of life, knowing how to use wealth and property in the correct way is therefore a fine art. Spending wealth on the self alone is wasteful, while hoarding it is stinginess.



Wise people have said:

“Once man dies, he encounters two tribulations regarding his wealth like nothing he has seen before:

Firstly, his entire possessions are ripped out of his hands. Secondly, despite losing everything he once owned, he is still called to task over how he earned his wealth, and on where he spent it.”



Shaykh Sadi said:

“A miser goes through all the trouble to save up money and stingily stash it away, only to in the end leave it all behind.”

“Gold is mined through digging, while the wealth of a miser is mined with death.”

“Two people have worked for nothing. First, is the learned who never practiced. The second is the wealthy who never gave.”



Ali عليه السلام said:

“Misers are bizarre. They live like the poor, yet they will be judged as the wealthy in the afterlife.”



Shaykh Sadi explains:

“A wise man was asked:

‘Who is happy and who is miserable?’

He replied:

‘Happy is he who spends and cultivates. Miserable is he who hoards and leaves it all behind.’



The Qur’an declares:

“Shaytan promises you poverty and commands you to avarice.” (Al-Baqarah, 2:268)

The Almighty Allah does not wish for His servants to be miserly. Stinginess and the fear of poverty is a flaw in faith caused by a lack of trust in Allah ﷻ. It is for a person to seek refuge in his fleeting wealth instead of his Creator and idolise wealth, when it is the Almighty who provides the wealth.

A believer must always rely on Allah ﷻ; and with the courage of faith, defeat the stinginess of his ego and the fear of poverty, which is nothing but a whispering of shaytan.



The soul of the negligent is miserly by nature. He holds on to his wealth, thinking it will make him live forever. Instead of trusting the divine guarantee that charity increases wealth, he lends an ear to the devil who frightens him about becoming poor.

Being tight-fisted with wealth, however, cannot stop what has been decreed. If Allah the Almighty has willed for that wealth to be taken away, no amount of stinginess can prevent it.



Shaykh Sadi said:

“I once heard a spiritual master tell one of his disciples:

‘If people were as attached to Allah, the provider of provisions, as they are to the provision, they would have become higher than angels.’”



Wealth is a trust from Allah ﷻ. Exactly when it is given or taken away, are unknown. Thinking they will remain in one’s hand forever, and relying on the trust instead of the one who has bestowed the trust is therefore illogical and nonsensical.



Yunus Emre ﷺ calls out to people who stare at blessings without the ability to see their true provider, and spend their days believing in the lies that reflect from the mirror:

Owner of riches and wealth
Where have their first owners gone?
Riches are lies, so is wealth
Fiddle awhile till your time is done



How bizarre it is that people live on the Almighty's property and yet are estranged from Him under the shackles of their own desires. They stare at the divine traces of power with dim faces and blank stares, which ultimately drags them into eternal dismay.

Necip Fazil gives an evocative description of the negligence of being wooed into overlooking divine truths by passing daydreams:

While my heart wants to fly high above
My feet trip over the shadows on the ground



Rumi ﷺ offers a wonderful metaphor about loving this fleeting world:

“A person in love with the world is like a hunter pursuing shadows. How can anyone hunt the shadow down? A silly hunter once tried to shoot a bird's shadow, thinking it was the bird. Even the bird perched on the branch laughed at his stupidity.”



A believer is a trustee of Allah ﷻ, who is the true owner of wealth. He is like a cashier obliged to spend the money and means in front of him in line with divine orders.



We live in a world of trial where we are obliged to present the Almighty's gifts back to Him. Besides, who owns life and wealth? Who takes them away? Who do we really deprive by being stingy?



We have not come to this world to own it, but rather to act as witnesses. We were not born to pile up worldly possessions but to earn our afterlives by being witnesses to Allah ﷻ on earth and representing Islam. Therefore, we must also make our worldly means bear witness to our faith. And for this, we must first look upon wealth as a 'trust'.



These days, some types of accommodation come with an arrangement known as ‘timeshare’. Insofar as faith is concerned, however, all the world’s fleeting property is really ‘timeshare’.



To assume that we ‘own’ the ‘timeshare’ property -from which death will part us-without sparing any of it for charity, can only be a sign of ignorance. We are not sent to this world to squander our lives chasing fleeting toys.



Imam Shafi رحمته الله says:

“You who think he has found honour through the world and its glitter! Death comes to both the building and the builder. Whoever’s honour lies in this world and its glitter, should know that his honour is truly little and bound to perish. The world’s treasures may be of gold. But you worry about amassing the treasures of righteous deeds and charity!”



Bygone civilisations erected pillars of arrogance and egotism. They built arenas to feed their slaves to lions, and buildings in which to senselessly frolic about with reckless abandon. Under all kinds of tyranny, they constructed pyramids to symbolise their fame, fortune and might. They raised their tyranny and conceit even higher, enticed by the fake compliments of sycophants, gratified by their hypocritical applause.

Still, the day ultimately came when they were struck by the wrath of destiny. Neither the skies nor the earth mourned in their wake. The ruins of their monuments of oppression are now occupied by stray dogs and owls. Sodom and Gomorrah, Pompeii, and the like



We must not be fooled to emulate the worldly glamour and comfort of the deceitful, and the agents of perversion and corruption. There was a time when people envied the wealth and grandeur of Korah, only to end up regretting their actions after witnessing his woeful end.



Ali رحمته الله said:

“Allah’s friends are those who look beyond appearances into the world’s inner reality.”



As the real owner of wealth, Allah رحمته الله does not like a bad trustee who has a change of heart and begins to believe he is the owner. He will punish him. Sooner or

later, He will teach him the truth. Those who do not understand this whilst alive, do so in the grave, where they realise that they really did not own even a needle. There are cemeteries all around. Many billionaires lie empty-handed and all alone. From Earth, they have only managed to take a shroud; and even that has rotten away. They possess nothing of what they once claimed to own.

Only with our good and bad deeds will we one day be buried. We must never forget that.



A wise man once said:

“Strange! People on earth are fighting each other for things the people in the grave now regret!”

Grave dwellers have long understood that the things they so desperately wanted and pursued on Earth, were illusions. But alas!



A believer must always picture this scene:

From the time the corpse is lowered into the grave to when maggots begin to infest it, the families and relatives of the deceased have almost concluded exchanging condolences. And as the inheritors scuttle to slice up his assets, the soil begins to decompose the body. Both activities, in a way, proceed and end simultaneously. As the corpse decays, the wealth is allotted. And the spirit will watch all this unfold with the remorse of having account for all the wealth amassed and not properly used. But by now, he has neither a hand left nor knees. All he has are deeds. The righteous deeds amassed on Earth are the only capital for the eternal life.



This life we live is a journey riddled with many hurdles which we must pass as part of the divine trial.

Travellers distracted by the decorations of this world and who lose sight of their true destination, are held back from properly preparing for the eternal journey. They will dive into various pursuits without much regard for their consequences, which will put them in a tight spot inside the grave and during the stern judgment that awaits them.



The passing goods in this worldly market that entice hearts and deplete lives are always left on earth. Man takes from earth a mere shroud to enter the grave.

The Almighty Allah refers to people who have wasted their lives pursuing worldly ambitions and consequently gone to the afterlife empty-handed as having, “**Labouring, toiling endlessly.**” (عَامِلَةٌ نَاصِبَةٌ) (Al-Ghashiyah, 88:3)



Hafiz Shirazi says:

“Man is a few drops of blood, and a thousand concerns.”

Physically speaking, the human being is just flesh and bones. But inside, he is a pot of worries, agitated by concerns for food, for health, for the future, never-ending dreams, plans, ambitions and the like.

Once death strikes, however, it instantly cuts through all these worries like a knife, and turns them into disappearing shadows.

Man must therefore:

- Neither rejoice over the wealth he has found in this dream life,
- Nor fret over falling into poverty,
- Nor turn his eternal life into despair over passing passions.
- He must instead gaze at this fleeting life from the horizon of eternity.
- And guard his heart from becoming a prison for mortal concerns, and reach the peace of trusting and submitting to Allah ﷻ.



Ali ﷺ said:

- “Do not let three people into your counsel: The miser, the coward and the greedy.
- The miser will try to turn you away from charitable action by scaring you with poverty and hardship.
- The coward will sap your determination in all affairs.
- The greedy will sway you into tyranny and glorify greed.”



Both the ego and shaytan (the devil) come up with many excuses to steer a person away from charitable action. For example, a person wishing to donate may think:

“Is not begging a sin? If I give this money to a beggar, would not I be encouraging him to beg more?”

Although these types of words may appear to be true, they are really just excuses for being stingy. Even with beggars possibly out to exploit people's emotions, our late father Musa Efendi would say:

“We still give, however little, to avoid being defeated by the miserliness of the ego.”



Many European countries measly in sharing their wealth with refugees ended up having to spend a lot more following the outbreak of the contagious illness.

In this context, how meaningful are the below words of Shaykh Sadi:

“Win the hearts of the poor and the needy in good times. Winning their hearts repels tribulations.

If a needy person opens up to you and asks for something, give it. If you do not, a tyrant will come and forcibly take it off your hands.”



Generosity is the first and essential condition of being close to Allah ﷻ. Stinginess, on the other hand, is the foremost cause of becoming deprived of spiritual blessings.

Rumi ﷺ said:

“My Lord! The stingy and the negligent cannot use the ladder you have placed for your slaves to climb to the heavens!

You only extend the ladder to the trustworthy, righteous and generous, so their caravan of spirits can scale it and rise to Your heavens.” (Divan-i Kebir)



Ali ﷺ said:

“Undonated wealth is raw material for the desires of the self. And those desires are only keys to trouble.”



Shaykh Sadi said:

“Man first needs a mind and a heart. Wealth and possessions only come after, as a negligent person may use wealth and power as a weapon of war against Allah.”



Any blessing a person turns into capital for his ego, is not a blessing but rather a spiritual disaster that will transform his afterlife into an episode of torment.



Umar ﷺ said:

“Reduce your desires of the world so you can live free! Reduce your sins so that death becomes lighter!”



Rumi ﷺ wrote:

“Do not embrace wealth and possessions so you can easily part ways with them when the time comes - not just to leave them all behind with ease, but also to also use them to win rewards. Embrace He who seizes you firmly, for He is the first and last. If you want to find Him, you need to reach the secure shore by throwing away all the weights of the ego that sink the ship of your heart.”



Imam Shafi ﷺ said:

“A person is lying if he claims he can merge the love of Allah and the love of the world inside one heart.”



Our Blessed **Prophet** ﷺ has said:

“Once my nation begins to overvalue the world, they will be removed of the grandeur and majesty of Islam. Once they abandon commanding good and forbidding evil, they will be deprived of the fortunes of revelation which is understanding the Holy Qur’an.” (Suyuti, Al-Jamiu’s-Saghir, no: 1610; Ali al-Muttaqi, Kanz, III, 183/6070)



Our **Prophet** ﷺ received a fifth of the spoils of war. He could have easily led a lavish life if he wanted to. Yet, he preferred a poor and ascetic life, and made do with barely what he needed, while giving away the rest. In so doing, he set an example for the ‘thankful rich’ (aghniya-i shakirin).

At times when he had nothing at home to give but water, he still remained content and grateful to offer a tangible standard and a living example for the ‘patient poor’ (fuqara-i sabirin).



Since a negligent person is blinded to the fact that real life is the afterlife, he tries to seize with both hands the fleeting objects inside this world where he is but a temporary guest. He thinks mortal means such as wealth and possessions will guard him in life. Yet, the most distinctive quality of this world is its treachery.



Rumi ﷺ said:

“The world is like a magnet. It pulls all the hay to itself, while only the wheat escapes its attraction.”



Does not man ponder how the mill of time relentlessly grinds away at his youth and vigour? What a terrible deceit it is to live oblivious to the hereafter and get carried away by fleeting toys that entice the desires, compared to the great and eternal future that awaits!



For immature souls, the world is a reverie that appears as water. It is like an apple candy coveted by children. Despite its outer array of colours, it is often sour and even rotten on the inside.



To enslave the heart to the glitter of worldly pleasures and become duped by the deceptive lies of its fake cosmetics, is to confuse ‘bliss’ with ‘misery’.



The most distinctive quality of this world is that it is disloyal. Whatever it gives, it one day takes back. It quickly sells out those committed to it. It elevates a person one day, only to throw him into a pit the next. It is like a shadow. It flees the more you try to catch it. But if you flee, it never gives up its chase.



Rumi ﷺ said:

“What is meant by the world is to become neglectful of Allah. Otherwise, it is not owning money, fabrics or having a family and children. Whatever amuses you and detains you from the Lord, is your world.”

The heart is the precinct of the divine gaze. It must not be turned into a moneybox for worldly material.



Allah has given man a heart so it could become occupied with remembrance, reflection and thanks; and become the focal point of the divine gaze. Worldly affairs can bring no harm to a servant who reserves his heart to Allah ﷻ, attaches it to the **Prophet** ﷺ and turns it into a space for faith and ihsan. Yet, if his heart is overcome with neglect and swept away by the passing passions of the world, then his deeds of worship will lack substance and weight.



It is not wrong to search for one's share in the world. What is wrong is to give one's heart to it to the point that you neglect religious obligations, and become enslaved to this world through extravagance or stinginess.

It should always be remembered that money belongs in a wallet, not in the heart.



Being righteous is not to shun the world altogether. Much like **Prophet Sulayman** عليه السلام, it is to keep the love of the world out of the heart.



It is narrated that upon seeing Sulayman's army of humans, jinn and birds, an ant called out to the other ants:

“Prophet Sulayman's reign is a grand reign. Return to your nests. You will get crushed!”

Upon hearing these words, **Prophet Sulayman** عليه السلام said:

“No, my reign is fleeting! So is my life on Earth. But the joy brought by just one kalima-i tawhid is eternal.”



Even if a person was given the entire world and led a life of pleasure like a king for a thousand years, he will still one day die and leave everything behind. But using the fleeting provisions to thank Allah ﷻ and acquire His pleasure becomes the means for an eternal joy in the hereafter.



If used correctly, the blessings of earth are means for never-ending bliss. It is when they stop being means and become ends when we lose our way.



Let us ask ourselves:

Were we sent to this world to feed our personal ambitions by obtaining good diplomas, high ranks and positions or to hoard possessions and wealth? Or could it just be that we have been swept away by the ignorance of turning these means into ends?



Shaykh Sadi reminds us:

“Money and possessions exist for comfort and living an easier life. Otherwise, life is not about stockpiling money and wealth.”



The relation of a righteous and wise Muslim with commodities should be akin to that between the ship and the sea. The sea upholds the ship. But if it seeps inside the ship, it will sink it, and swallow it up like a morsel. If, however, the ship manages to keep the water out, it will safely sail and reach its desired destination.

It turns out that the sea is a test that can become both a blessing and a disaster. People of understanding use it as a blessing. Those remote from this type of understanding end up drowning.



As a warning to us, our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ has expressed a concern that made his noble heart tremble:

“By Allah, I do not fear of poverty for you. But I do fear that the wealth of this world will be laid out in front of you, just as it was for those before you; and you will race for it just like them, and it will destroy you just like it destroyed them.” (Bukhari, Riqaq, 7; Muslim, Zuhd, 6)



We are accountable for what Allah the Almighty has given us. Allah ﷻ does not command us to “Get rich!”. But He does order us, numerous times, to “Earn a clean living and donate!”

Hence, a number of hadith warn us against the greed of trying to make money in excess:

“Little yet sufficient provisions are better than a heap of provisions that lead one astray.” (Ahmad, V, 197)

“Little wealth for which you can offer thanks is better than a lot of wealth for which you cannot.” (Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, II, 388)



Rumi رومي warns:

“While swimming safe and secure under the sea, many a fish has been hooked to the end of a rod due to nothing but its greed.”



Shaykh Sadi said:

“Ten men can eat from the same table in peace. But greedy people are like two dogs snarling over a carcass. Even if he is given the entire world, a greedy person can never eat enough. Yet, for a person who is content, a dry piece of bread is plenty.”



A raw soul is insatiable. In contrast, not only is a true believer content with little but he also looks to share it.



Fariduddin Attar رحمته الله has stated:

“How can this world make someone rich if he is poor in contentment?”



The **Prophet** ﷺ had mentioned:

“The best wealth is the wealth of heart.” (Ibn Asakir, Mu’jam, I, 566)

True wealth, in other words, lies not in a sum of possessions but in a satisfied heart. Contentment is the most inexorable of all wealth.



Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal رحمته الله said:

“A little money is enough for a believer. But for the greedy, even great treasures will not suffice.”

Since a believer donates out of his possessions, he witnesses the abundance pour down first-hand. But the greedy is always in tension and stress wrought by his stinginess or extravagance, and is never able to find peace.



A greedy person is like a pitcher; his mouth is always open even when full. Even if you were to pour an ocean into a pitcher, could it ever hold any more than its capacity?



It must be borne in mind that not only does worldly ambition do nothing to increase provisions, it moreover decreases inner peace, harms spirituality and wipes out the blessings of wealth. However greedy a person may be, he will still only get hold of what has been predestined to reach him.



If we turn our hearts to the hereafter, the world will follow us. But if our hearts covet the world, neither will the world be ours, nor the hereafter.



Our **Prophet** ﷺ says:

“Whoever desires the afterlife, Allah will plant wealth into his heart and organise his affairs. This world will succumb to him and follow him. Whoever desires the world, Allah will stamp poverty between his two eyes, and leave his affairs in disarray. And

in the end, he will not obtain anything of the world, except that which is predestined.”
(Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 30/2465)



Shaykh Sadi says:

“Two things are mentally impossible: One is to earn more than what has been ordained in pre-eternity, and the other is to die before the set time.”



Even if the negligent was given the entire world, he would still wonder, “Is there any real estate on the Moon?” The greed of the ego knows no end. The peace of the heart lies in contentment, satisfaction and gratitude.



Greed is the cancer of the spirit. Our **Prophet ﷺ** says:

“If the son of Adam was to own a valley full of gold, he would want another one. Nothing can fill his eyes except for soil.” (Bukhari, Riqaq, 10)



No bird has ever strived to build more nests than its neighbour. No fox has felt sad for having only one hole to hide. No squirrel has died from the anxiety of not having collected enough nuts to last two winters. No dog has spent a sleepless night worried about not having saved up enough bones for old age. Even when animals are filled with such trust in the Almighty and nonchalance, why, o man, do you have such greed?



Imam Shafi رحمته الله warns us:

“Hanging around worldly people makes a healthy man sick.”



Ali رضي الله عنه has said:

“Worldly desires and hopes turn even the prudent blind.”



Abu Hazim, who was among the early generation of scholars, writes:

“Any blessing that does not take one closer to Allah is a calamity.”



We must constantly interrogate ourselves:

-How much are we striving to earn Allah’s ﷻ pleasure with the means He has given?

- How properly are we thanking Allah ﷻ for the blessings He has given?
- Are we using the means we have to get closer to Allah ﷻ?
- Or are we turning them into barriers between us and Allah ﷻ?



Rumi ﷺ said:

“Wealth is Allah’s trap in this life of trial. It deceives and intoxicates us. That is why the hearts of those in love with this world, are blind. They drink the foul and salty water from the mud.”



Shaykh Muhyiddin Ibn Al-Arabi ﷺ said:

“For those inclined to material things, life is like drinking seawater. The more they drink, the thirstier they get; and the thirstier they are, the more they drink.”



Shaykh Sadi ﷺ has said:

“Once man leans towards the world, he becomes like a fly that has fallen into honey.”



People who forget about the afterlife and lend their hearts to the world are like ships with broken rudders in the middle of the ocean. It is only a matter of time before they are sunken in a swell.



Imam Shafi ﷺ said:

“The ego’s ambitions and worldly whims destroy a person, much like a mirage that deceives the eyes and leaves people who trust it high and dry.”



Ziya Pasha puts it wonderfully:

All the jewels the world wear gold and silver,
Man lets go of it all on the journey to forever

“The gold, silver and other gems of this passing world offer no real joy, as during the last breath, man leaves it all behind and sets out to eternity alone!”

The greatest art in this fleeting world is knowing how to mobilise the self and spend the wealth on path of the Truth.

TASAWWUF-SHARIAH-DIRECTION

These words of Rumi رumi are, in effect, his definition of Sufism:

“As long as I live, I am a slave to the Qur’an, and the dust on the path of Muhammad the Chosen one ﷺ.”



Seizing tightly onto the Qur’an and Sunnah and being upright as commanded; in other words, to lead a life of direction, is the greatest wonder (karamah) of our time.

Sufism is:

- For the heart to be cleansed through taqwa.
- The way of overthrowing the authority of the ego.
- Another name for a lofty horizon such as ihsan, which is to quench the heart from fountain of submission to the Truth.
- The art of remaining a friend to Allah ﷻ by being content with His will at all times and places. Against the ebbs and flows of life, its changing circumstances and surprises, it is the skill of maintaining a balance and casting aside complaints and grumbles to become a beautiful servant at every moment.



Sufism is:

- The art of knowing Almighty Allah in the heart.
- A discipline of purification. It is the path of obtaining taqwa by avoiding anything that distracts from Allah ﷻ.
- A school of constant development that is attended with spiritual joy.
- A spiritual war without peace against the ego’s desires, insofar as the ego is a mysterious force that can only be subdued by a major battle.



Abu'l-Hasan Kharraqani رحمته الله has said:

“Peace is with the public, while war is with the ego.”

In other words, Sufism is to get along with everyone, while waging a battle against the yourself.



Sufism is the effort to become the best servant you can, based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, with ihsan.



Sufism is nothing other than to remove the barriers that thwart servanthood, and to acquire the means to become a good servant.



Sufism aspires to construct a believer with character; one who is honest in both word and heart. It aims to establish a harmony between the heart and the body, words and action. In the words of Rumi رحمته الله, it is to “either appear as you are or be as you appear.”



To not give importance to Sufism, is therefore to not give importance to taqwa, wisdom, self-purification, and ihsan.



An Islamic life from Sufism, which is essentially spiritual training, will never deliver the consciousness of ihsan, which is the quality of servanthood “to worship Allah رحمته الله as if you see Him and though you may not see Him, know that He sees you.”



Sufism is the path of guidance. It is to turn the heart into a lodge. Whether a rebel or a sinner, every repentant has a place inside this lodge. This lodge is the warmest space of guidance for all, as it is a lodge of salvation, rehabilitation and maturity. The heart of every believer bursting with compassion is a lodge of this kind. It is a heart that is moulded to look upon the entire creation with the Creator's gaze of compassion.



No knife can sharpen its own handle. No judge can pass a verdict on himself; he needs another judge. A believer must therefore never overestimate his own state and assume, in his own mind, that he is on the right track. He always needs to assess himself with the mirror of istiqamah (uprightness) and try to rectify his mistakes. This mirror is our **Blessed Prophet** رحمته الله, who is the living embodiment of the Qur'an, and spiritual masters (murshid-i kamil) who were meticulous not to deviate from his path even in the slightest amount.



Sufism is the way to train the inward states and practice the shariah, that is to say, Allah's ﷻ commands and prohibitions, in the most perfect way. A person cannot become reach his goal simply by reading books on Sufism. He gets there only by rectifying himself and refining his heart. Sufism, hence, consists of the endeavour to practice the shariah with a pure and clean heart.



Raising the heart's rank is possible only by embodying the Prophet's morals, and reaping a share of the Qur'an's inspiration and spirituality. It is impossible to make progress without submitting to the wisdom and truth conveyed in the Qur'an.



Sufism is the training of the heart that is necessary to practice the rulings of the shariah in the best possible way.

It is futile for a person to expect progress on the Sufi path without observing the shariah in his daily life, whether it be in his worship or his social interaction.



The standards of the Qur'an and Sunnah are the foundations of Islam. Regardless of how tall it may be, a building that lacks a solid foundation will crumble in the slightest earthquake. A strong building cannot be raised upon a weak foundation. It is much the same for spiritual progress. It demands that we live our lives according to the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah.



Together, the Qur'an and Sunnah are the greatest mirror at which a Muslim must always look to correct his mistakes and find direction.

It is necessary to expand the Qur'an and Sunnah to all aspects of life in order to live the Islam with love and ecstasy.

Just as a spiritless body loses all its beauty, a life remote from the Qur'an and Sunnah loses all meaning and value.



It is a Muslim's essential duty to strive for a life in which he abides by the Qur'an and Sunnah. There is no other path to success in this world and the next. All other roads are dead-ends and dark alleyways that lead to the wrong address.



At its essence, Sufi training is the effort to become one with all the Prophet's inner and outer states and to embody his morals.



True Sufism is the Qur'an and Sunnah applied to daily life in their highest forms of taqwa and ihsan.

The below words of **Rumi** ﷺ are, in effect, his definition of Sufism:

“As long as I live, I am a slave to the Qur'an, and dust on the Chosen Muhammed's path.”



To become a proper servant to Allah ﷻ, it is essential that Islam reflects in all aspects of life and is practiced in an inspired manner. It is not enough to say, “I am Muslim!”. The Qur'an prompts us to personify “taqwa” in various forms on 258 occasions.



A Muslim can find salvation only by waging a war on his ego, not just in specific matters, but on all fronts. It is imperative to hold to the obligatory and recommended acts of worship and the noble morals in social interactions and etiquette.



Whenever a person would arrive to seek out spiritual lessons, our late father **Musa Efendi** ﷺ would pose the following questions to gauge his closeness to Allah ﷻ:

-What are your physical and spiritual circumstances?

-How do you make your living? Are your earnings clean? Do you deal with interest? Are you involved in any prohibited or doubtful dealings?

-If you are a government employee, do you do your job properly? Are you punctual in your shifts? Are you able to guard yourself against blemishes such as negligence, favouritism and bribery?

-If you are a trader, how is your business? Are there any faults in your trade? Are you scrupulous in avoiding harams such as lying, cheating, overcharging and black marketing?

-Are the goods you buy and sell halal or are they among things Allah ﷻ has banned?

-If you have rental property, for what purposes have you leased it out? Does anything haram or doubtful smear your earnings?

-If you are an employer, do you observe people's rights? Do you pay your employees on time, before the sweat on their brows dries?

-If you have the financial means, how is your generosity?

-Who are you close with? Do you keep company with the righteous and the truthful, and avoid the wrongdoers?

-How is your family life? Are you able to teach the divine instructions to your family members? Do you also set a good example for them?

-How are your parents? Do you observe their rights?

-What are you doing about the education of your children whom Allah ﷻ has entrusted in you? Do you attach greater importance to their worldly future or to their eternity?

In short, for people seeking spiritual lessons, **Musa Efendi** ﷺ would first lay out the standards of the Qur'an and Sunnah in regards to being just and righteous in all the dealings with others in the world. He would not begin to teach them unless their circumstances were sound. He never deemed it proper just to hand out lesson notes, no different to offering sweets to a guest.

After all, the goal of the Sufi is to practice the divinely revealed shariah of Islam.



Islam is a whole. To practice a part of Islam while abandoning another part is a symptom of the weakness of faith in the heart. To become a beautiful servant to Allah ﷻ, one must never keep Islam out mind in any aspect of life; especially in areas we are tested the most such as our work, family lives and social interactions. Islam is not a ceremony reserved to certain times or places but a set of divine orders that cover every aspect of life.



Just as our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ so meticulously performed his outer duties of servanthood to his very last breath even though he stood at the peak of spiritual excellence, every believer who takes him as example is obliged to actually take on his example in the duties of shariah regardless of his spiritual rank, position, temperament, sect or order to which he is subscribed,



Once Islam's profound spiritual side, which is the Sufi aspect of marifah and taqwa, is neglected, what is left is a dry compendium of rules. With that said, some so called Sufis claim a kind of esoteric enlightenment without authority from a real Sufi teacher and end up belittling shariah and therefore also making a mockery of Sufism as well.

The perception of such people opens the door to egoistic compromises such as, "Little deeds are fine, so long as your heart is clean". This has nothing to do whatsoever with true Sufism, which is a service and support to the shariah.



Let us not forget that Islam is a prescription. It is the prescription of eternal bliss. Even if we accept and obtain the prescription, unless we follow the treatments and the diet it lays out, we have no right to complain that “We have been unable be cured and regain our health.”

The Qur’an and Sunnah are nothing but a cure for mankind until the final hour. But it is effective only if implemented.



Every detail of a Muslim’s life must be congruent with the Qur’an and Sunnah. Allah ﷻ removes mercy from places where Islam is overlooked. That is when peace departs, abundance is destroyed, and both spiritual and material troubles come to the fore.



Seizing hold tightly onto the Qur’an and Sunnah and being as upright as commanded; in other words, living a life of direction, is the greatest spiritual wonder (karamah) of our times.



Yusuf Hamadani ﷺ said:

“A person who does not walk the line of the religion and shariah has followed shaytan, even if he displays a thousand wonders a day!”

“A person who believes what is contrary to the Sunnah is a head of evil, even if he has memorised all the knowledge of the world!”



Abu’l-Hasan Kharraqani ﷺ has said:

“Even the devil cannot manage the chaos caused by two people:

A scholar swayed by greed, and a raw puritan deprived of religious knowledge!”



The most decisive yardstick in identifying people who slyly damage the religion and religious people is, again, the Qur’an and Sunnah. On this matter, **Junayd Baghdadi** ﷺ says:

“Even if you see someone flying in the sky, if his lifestyle does not align with the Qur’an and Sunnah, it is fake (istidraj).”



A believer must first learn about the nature of the truth and the right from the Qur’an and Sunnah. He must then identify his guide on this path, and continue to

strive in the direction of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Unless he follows these, even a true spiritual master can be of no help.



The right target cannot be reached through the wrong means. One can therefore never obey and submit to those who, in the guise of serving a higher cause, legalise what Allah ﷻ has banned. Far from obedience, this would be rebellion.

Our **Prophet** ﷺ has said:

“Whether he likes it or not, a Muslim must always listen to and obey his guardian except when commanded with something that entails rebelling against Allah. Obeying is out of the question if ordered to do something in that Allah has forbidden.” (Muslim, Ijarah, 38)



A Muslim must embrace the Qur'an and Sunnah as the sole standard of truth in all his affairs. This includes the commands, teachings and advice given by those he follows. Whatever the consequences, he must always abide by the truth and abstain from the false. He must remember that obeying the false is to rebel against the truth. Regardless of who it may come from, following an order contrary to the Qur'an and Sunnah goes against Islam. What is essential is not the people but Allah's boundaries.



There is no such thing as obeying the created to rebel against the Creator. Slavery is only to Allah.

For instance, it is necessary to obey parents but obviously parents cannot be obeyed if they order their daughter to uncover her head. By ignoring their request, the child does not incur a sin. On the contrary, she will gain rewards for obeying Allah ﷻ.



In his Farewell Sermon, our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ told us, his nation, that he left two things that will protect us from deviation: the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Blindly following people or institutions who oppose or spurn these two fundamentals, is not loyalty but treachery!



Rejecting any given thing wholesale by highlighting its bad examples, without the discretion to separate the good from the bad, is to partake in the sins of its perpetrators. For example, the field of medicine cannot be rejected outright just because some doctors abuse the practice. Law cannot be abandoned just because some lawyers

misuse their powers. Similarly, one cannot implicate all communities and Sufi orders based on a few false Sufis who seek to turn the whole thing into theatre.



Shaykh Sadi recalls:

“I saw a Bedouin. He was telling his son:

‘My child! On the day of judgment, they will ask you, ‘What have you earned?’ They will not ask, ‘Which family are you from?’ They will inquire about your deeds, not your father.’”



Today, some ignorant people are sadly of the belief that they “will be saved in the afterlife” just because they “have seized the hand of such-and-such person.” There is not even a guarantee that the person, whose hand is seized, will himself breathe his final breath in faith. One must never forget Bal’am Ibn Baura who, despite becoming so spiritually adept that he could even read off the Preserved Tablet (Lawh-i Mahfuz), ended up becoming defeated by his ego and meeting an eternal doom. Hence, regardless of his spiritual rank, a person is helpless from determining his own end, and stands in constant need of the Almighty’s grace.

Relying on mortals for eternal salvation instead of striving to fulfil servantly duties, is therefore a grave deception.



Some heedless people go so far in their love for their guides that they make ignorant comments such as, “My leader can never do wrong!”. This is completely mistaken.

Abu Bakr As-Sidiq ﷺ who, according to many narrations, is the best of all people after Prophets, offered this magnificent standard for all Muslim leaders during his first sermon as khalif. He said:

“People! I have been elected as your khalif despite not being the best among you. Help me if I fulfil my duty properly. Show me the right way if I go wrong...”

Obey me so long as I obey Allah and His Messenger! If I do not, then none of you should you obey me!”

If the best among the Muslim nation makes this remark, then how humble and self-negating should others be when they are supposed to take his example?



Sufism is not to ‘strut’ in different guises seeking worldly gain. Much rather, it is to move away from the base desires of the self, remove the love of the world from the

heart; and with real humility and self-negation, and to present the self to the Allah, whilst looking upon oneself as just a 'helpless slave'.



A believer must always assess his state regarding his duties towards the Almighty. He must avoid living a slack life and cutting corners in the manner of some ignorant people who say, "I have pledged allegiance to so-and-so, he will save me". This is a fantasy that holds a person back from action.

Instead of striving on the path of Allah ﷻ, some people, in fact, await a "Mahdi" as saviour. Yet, it is not the appearance of **Al-Imam Al-Mahdi** ﷺ or otherwise that will save us in the hereafter. What will save us are sincere actions performed purely for the sake of Allah ﷻ.

In any case, if the prophesised Mahdi ﷺ should appear in our time, we would still need do urgently start to take on right actions. As long as we have this effort, then not making it to the time of the Mahdi will be of no harm.



Rumi ﷺ warns the ignorant who assume that their closeness to righteous people will save them, even though they show no effort to replicate their deeds, to strive on the Almighty's path and endure troubles:

"You, for example, can hold the staff of Musa in your hand. But do you have Musa's power to turn it into a giant snake and then tame it?"

"Let us assume you possess the breath of **Isa Ibnu-Maryam** ﷺ that revives the dead, and know the prayer in your mind. Buy do you have Isa's sinless mouth to revive dead hearts, and revive them through the zest of love?"

"Say, you inherited Ali's two-thronged sword. But do you have the muscles of Ali, to wield it?"

In short:

"Man has nothing but what he strives for". (Al-Najm 53:39)



Rumi ﷺ offers all of us a lesson when he says:

"Allah's path may even require entering the fire. But before you are thrown into the fire, look at yourself to see if you possess the qualities of Ibrahim. The fire recognises only the Ibrahims, and refuses to burn them!"



The below incident offers many lessons of caution for the negligent who place importance on the words of spiritual life and not its essence:

A disciple once asked **Bayezid Bistami** عليه السلام:

“Sir, if only you could give me a part of your cloak so I could carry it with me as a blessing!”

To which the shaykh replied:

“Son, unless you become a human, you will find no benefit in skinning Bayezid and entering his body, let alone carrying his cloak!”



It is not simply by reading books or attending circles that a person covers distances on the spiritual path. It is rather by extracting personal prescriptions from what one reads or hears, and living a life consistent with these to serve in the way of Allah ﷻ.

The Sufi journey (sair suluk) is not about words but states. It is to reap share of the spiritual gifts. People hung up on words and who assume it is all about articulation and eloquence, have missed the point entirely.



Great Sufis say:

“Sufism is a state. Only the ones who have tasted it, know.”



In his simple yet unmatched style, **Yunus Emre** عليه السلام beautifully expresses how Sufism is far from being an activity based appearances, but rather matters of the heart:

Being a dervish is not a cloak and crown

A heart that is a dervish needs no crown

...

If a cloak and crown was what being a dervish meant

I would even have bought it for thirty or forty pence!



Shaykh Sadi says:

“True ascetics buy bread so they find the energy to retreat to a corner and offer worship, they do not retreat to a corner and offer worship to eat bread.”



It is not enough to accurately assess a person just by looking at his praying and fasting. Just as true prayer withholds a person from evil, and a proper fast refines the spirit and lets flourish the mercy and compassion within, a true Sufi life is a matter of the heart, not of appearances.

Unless a person lives up to righteous deeds, beautiful morals; and acquires a depth of wisdom, and the righteous sincerity which Sufism demands, simply carrying the form, labels or symbols of Sufism neither makes a person wise or righteous, nor a dervish, a disciple or a master.



Sufism is to live Islam in its entirety of “shariah, tariqah, haqiqah and marifah”, where one keeps his words, eyes, tongue, and every thought and action in check. If this spiritual maturity is lacking, a shallow imitation of outer mannerisms or symbols, does not suffice to make one a Sufi.



Being a dervish does not consist of partaking in a set of ceremonies. To become a dervish is to repair the heart.

As the **Prophet** ﷺ says:

“Allah certainly does not look at your bodies or appearances, but only at your hearts.” (Muslim, Birr, 33)



In all stages of life, a believer needs the vast prudence and foresight of divine light. Otherwise, he will be unable to move away from the crust to the core, from appearances to the truth.



The Sufi life is not to be in hot pursuit of spiritual unveilings (kashf) and doing wonders (karamah), but to cover distances in the purification of the heart by righteously practicing divine commands.



Abu Bakr Al-Kattani says:

“Sufism is morals. A person morally superior to you, is also above you in spiritual purity.”



If we want to gauge our levels on the spiritual path, we need to analyse our states and conduct.



The measure of progress in Sufism is not just to advance in spiritual lessons and the prescribed prayers. Our spiritual sensitivities and morals must also progress alongside the intensity in which divine names transpire in the heart.

A disciple advancing through spiritual lessons must also gain greater finesse, elegance, softness of heart, compassion, mercy; and an appetite for altruism to help others. He must also become more understanding and forbearing, with stronger patience and contentment. He must have a refined and selfless spirit where he truly wants for his brother what he wants for his self.

In short, one's state and conduct are the greatest gages of spiritual progress.



Whenever Umar heard someone praising another, he would ask three things:

“Were you ever his neighbour, friend on a journey or did you ever do business with him?”

If the person replied ‘no’ to all three, he would say:

“I gather you must have only seen him shake his head whilst reciting Qur’an inside the mosque!”

And if the person said, ‘Yes, Umar, that is what I saw’, Umar would then say:

“Then desist from heaping praise, for sincerity is not inscribed on a person’s neck!”



It is pointless to expect spiritual progress if one’s worship, social interactions, morals and lifestyle lack sensitivity in abiding by the commands of Allah and His Messenger. In this regard, one must always remember the following standards offered by **Umar** رضي الله عنه:

“Do not ever look at one’s prayers and fasts:

-Does he say the truth when he speaks?

-Does he honour the trust?

-Does he observe the halal and haram in his worldly dealings? You should look at these.



CLEANSING THE SOUL, PURIFYING THE HEART

Just as precious jewellery is stored, not in dirty and stained boxes, but in crystal-clean and exquisite ones, the heart must also be kept clean, so that divine mercy can manifest upon it.



The best gift to take to Allah the Almighty is an enlightened, polished and shiny heart that reflects His beautiful Names.

People unaware of the wisdom behind the creation of the naffs (self), the reason why it was given to the human being, along with its tricks and ploys, cannot properly grasp the gist of their servanthood to Allah ﷻ.

It is hence said that, “to know yourself, is to know your Lord”.



A person cannot obtain eternal pleasures unless he moves away from fleeting pleasures. This is similar to how toddlers never get to enjoy the better tastes and flavours of life until they stop being breastfed.

Hence, the first step in the journey of Sufi training, is to become disentangled from the obsessions of the ego which are stumbling blocks in the way of spiritual progress.



The ego is like a tree. People are enslaved to their egos as tightly as raw fruit is bound to the tree. Just as ripened fruits leave the tree behind, only mature believers slip away from the ego and become ripened travellers on the Sufi path.



Man is instilled with both fujur (animal instinct) and taqwa (angelic instinct). His trial is to fully engage and develop his angelic side and make it have power over his animal side. This is the path of getting close to the Almighty.



A rot in the root of a tree shows on the leaves and in the fruit. The negligence and murk in the heart shows in a person's state and conduct.



If a fruit has an unpleasant taste, we know that there is an illness in the root of the tree which needs to be addressed. In a similar way, if the heart has become caged by whims and desires, it must undergo spiritual training. Otherwise, the deeds offered will not be accepted.



Sufism is to cleanse the ego in order to purify the heart.

Say, we have a dirty cup. Even if we were to pour the cleanest spring water into it, would we be able to drink from it? Would we not first need to clean the cup?

The heart must also first be cleansed of spiritual dirt, so it could benefit from the Qur'an, hadith and the currents of divine power and majesty flowing across the universe.

The heart must be cleansed, so it can receive the manifestations of the Almighty's beautiful attributes.

The heart must be cleansed, so it can intimately get to know Allah's Messenger.

The heart must be cleansed, so it can embody the morals of Islam.

The heart must be cleansed, so it can be inspired by righteous deeds.

Sufism aims to give the inner world this purity.



Mahmud Sami Ramazanoglu ﷺ said:

“Before treating a wound, you first clean out the pus. You cannot apply balm on the wound before the pus is removed. If you did, it would be of no benefit.”

Abstaining from evil therefore takes precedence over doing good.



As stated by precept in the famous law book called Majallah:

“Expelling evil is better than attracting good.” That is to say, removing what can cause harm, comes before trying to obtain things of benefit.

Hence, spirituality first demands refining the inner world by cleaning the soul and purifying the heart.



Just as precious jewellery is stored, not in dirty or stained boxes, but in crystal-clean and exquisite ones, the heart must also be kept spiritually clean, so that divine mercy can manifest upon it.



Like every mortal born into this world, we are travellers heading towards the afterlife. We must be prepared for this journey. And for this, we must, without delay, begin to strive in becoming close to Allah ﷻ by getting rid of the greed of our egos and developing our spiritual capabilities.



Allah the Almighty invites us to His Garden of paradise, the 'Land of Peace'. But every invitation comes with a condition. The invitation to paradise requires a pure, repentant heart and a tranquil soul. Only then does the Almighty take the servant in, saying:

“Enter among My slaves, enter my Garden.” (Al-Fajr, 89:29-30)



The best gift to take to Allah The Almighty is an enlightened, polished and graceful heart that reflects His beautiful names.



Allah the Almighty states:

“Have you seen him who has taken his whims and desires to be his god?” (Al-Furqan, 25:43)

Unless the idols in the heart, that is to say, carnal desires, are cleaned out, all efforts will be in vain. In the words of the Qur'an, such people are:

عَامِلَةٌ نَاصِبَةٌ

“Labouring, toiling endlessly.” (Al-Ghashiyah, 88:3)



The false god which man most often turns to is the ego. It is his arbitrary decisions that prevent him from practicing Allah's ﷻ commands. It is the 'I think' and 'I believe' that fall at odds with the rulings of Islam. It is him performing deeds of worship, not because they are commanded by Allah ﷻ, but to endear himself to other mortals in pursuit of worldly gains.



The **Prophet** ﷺ said:

“The false gods worshipped on Earth which Allah hates the most are whims and desires.” (Haythami, I, 188)



Abdullah Dahlawi ﷺ said:

“How can a person, enslaved by the desires of his soul, be a servant to Allah?”



Just as the concentrated rays from a lens placed under the sun burn all the twigs beneath, every believer must concentrate his heart upon the kalima tawhid to burn away all the egoistic desires within.



Once the Sakarya River flows into the Black Sea, nothing of it can be found in the Black Sea any longer; it becomes lost in the sea. In like manner, a believer must cast out the desires of this ego, submit his entire will to the will of Allah ﷻ, and become annihilated in Him. Only in this way can he obtain a share of tawhid.

A saint once said:

Once you step out of the way,

Only your Creator is left



People of wisdom have said:

“The clouds in the sky or the waters of the seas have no colour of their own. What puts them through one colour to another is the Sun in the sky. And marifah (which is to know Allah in the heart) to obtain a colourless form by vanquishing the whims and desires of the soul, and become painted in the ‘colour’ of Allah.”³



A string is made by the unity of many threads. For them to pass through the eye of a needle, the threads must retain their unity. If each thread was to stick out on its own, the end of the string would fork, its unity would be destroyed, and in the end, it would be unable fit through the eye of the needle.

Likewise, it is the strength in which a believer devotes his will to the will of Allah ﷻ that determines the share he obtains from the truth of tawhid.



Kalima-i tawhid begins by throwing away all the idols from heart and casting aside the desires of the soul with the words ‘La ilaha’ (There is no god).

3. See, Al-Baqarah 2:138.

It then finds perfection by saying ‘ill-Allah’ (except Allah), and then adorning the heart with Allah’s attributes and aligning the conduct with the Almighty’s pleasure.



Under Islamic law, it suffices to realise faith by rejecting the false gods of unbelievers or pagans, and publicly affirming the oneness of Allah ﷻ. Yet, compared to acquiring the truth of tawhid, this is the easier part. The harder and more important part is to topple the idols inside the heart; that is to say quash the whims and desires of the ego, and submit only to Allah ﷻ.



What are the idols in the heart that need to be toppled?

-At times, they are the ego’s desires which appear more important than executing Allah’s ﷻ commands.

-At times, they are mortal interests that cannot be abandoned for Allah’s ﷻ sake and which put the afterlife out of the mind.

-At times, they are career ranks and positions that take one away from Allah ﷻ.

-At times, they are fame and fortune that make a person forget Allah ﷻ.

-And at other times, they are the lust felt for the opposite gender.



Our late father Musa Efendi would explain the necessity of spiritual training with the following words:

“Spiritual progress is only through the Sufi journey (sayr suluk). During this journey, man gets to know the self. Once he knows the self, he begins to know Allah the Almighty. Only those who know their own selves, can know Allah the Almighty.

Irrespective of how much he worships or knows, a person unaware of his self will fail to reach maturity.”



Yusuf Khas Hajib says:

“Knowledgeable one! Do not be a slave to your nafs. If the nafs enslaves you, it will ask for your religion as ransom.”



For knowledge to turn into wisdom, the soul needs to be purified. Even if a person has knowledge as vast as the ocean, there is still a chance for that ocean to become polluted. We, in fact, see this pollution in Korah and Bal’am Ibn Baura. Both

were righteous people who became polluted by the desires of their naffs. Every believer must therefore be on guard against the evils of his own ego.



Neither have we been brought into this world of trial without purpose, nor have we been left to wander without direction. The world is not a place to satisfy the desires of nafs. A man enslaved by these desires will become a tyrant without even realising. And in so doing, he will lay waste to his eternity.



The biggest tyrant is your own ego! The worst a tyrant in the outside world can do, is end your tempory life. But the tyrant within, can ruin your eternal life!



Shah Naqshiband ﷺ states:

“Lord! People fear you, while I fear my naffs, as I have seen nothing but good from You, while my naffs has always been bad to me.”



Regardless of how much it has been trained, one can never be sure of the evils of the ego. It is like a cunning enemy waiting for the slightest trip-up in the person’s willpower. Hence, we always need to remain alert. Even our Blessed **Prophet** ﷺ prayed:

“Lord! Do not leave me to my self, even if it be for the blink of an eye.” (See, Jamiu’s-Saghir, I, 58)



Wahb Ibn Munabbih ﷺ said:

“How strange are people! They mourn over dead corpses but not dead hearts, when the death of the heart is the real disaster!”



If a cat was given a delicious kabab, it would immediately begin to eat it. Yet, if a mouse was to then suddenly dart past it, it would leave the kabab and chase the mouse.

Such is the case of an untrained, raw soul. It leaves bliss to chase misery.



Rumi ﷺ said:

“A mouse knows many roads but they are all underground. It has gouged out the entire soil, and riddled it with holes. The ego which is very much like the mouse. It only pursues the worldly and gnaws on empty delusions. A mouse is given only enough intellect to take care of its needs on earth.”



Due to Allah's wisdom He has put into every forbidden thing something we find attractive and appealing in order to test us. Much like poisonous honey, wrong actions are traps that give pleasure at the start but bring disaster in the end.

An uncleansed soul is always ready to fall into these traps. Wrong and deviant deeds appeal all the more to those ignorant souls who are yet to acquire the taqwa. It is therefore necessary to cleanse the soul, and bring it under permanent control. By stating:

“Whoever purifies it (the naffs) has succeeded” (Al-Shams, 91:9) the Almighty in fact, ties eternal salvation to this kind of spiritual purification.



A spiritually immature soul is a magnet for evil actions. Since it has a tendency for the haram by nature, sins are attracted to it. This is why the human being has a hunger for the haram. Cleansing the soul is hence necessary for all human beings. It is imperative to make the spirit triumph over the ego.



Dhun-Nun Al-Misri  said:

“A person needs to be a friend of Allah and an enemy to the naffs, not the other way around!”



Shaykh Abdulqadir Al-Jilani  said:

“Let your rebellion be against your own nafs, and your obedience be to your Lord.”



To be ready for jihad against the outer enemy, a believer must first be victorious in his jihad against the enemy within. Without donning the armour of righteousness and winning the spiritual jihad against the ego and the devil, it is pointless to anticipate any real victory against the outer enemy.



Servanthood to Allah  demands a relentless battle against the ego, devil, evil people, sins and falsehood until the very last breath. It is for this reason that one of many definitions of Sufism is that it is “a battle without peace against the self.”

A believer is a person who, for a lifetime, tries to resist the onslaught of the ego and shaytan (the devil) with the strength of faith.



Ripening the heart requires abandoning things the nafs/ego enjoys whilst being trained by the troubles it dislikes.



Just as waves splashing against the rocks give them a smooth and glossy texture, we need to mend our inner errors and mistakes with waves from the sea of spirituality.



People of wisdom have said, “Die before you die.”

What is meant by ‘die’ is to wilfully quit the desires and endless greed of the self before death arrives and we will be forced to.



Ridding the soul of these desires requires passing through many stages. Raw iron cannot be shaped unless it is dipped into fire.



Prior to spiritual training, the heart is like cold iron. In order to become supple, it first needs to be tempered in fire, removed of its rust and dirt. Only after these phases does iron become fit to be cast in the desired shape.

Similarly, the heart cannot become mature before it is cleansed of all that takes it away from Allah ﷻ.



Raw fruit needs the heat of the sun to ripen. What ripens the heart and makes it mature, is for it to go through some certain troubles.



Rumi ﷺ said:

“If you want to radiate light like the day, you must burn the night of your ego’s desires!”



The secret to peace and happiness lies not in trying to satisfy the ego which is insatiable by nature, but to rescue it from selfishness and put it through rigorous training.



While eating less mellows the heart and gives it light, eating a lot makes the heart weighty and darkens it. And while eating less weakens the impulses of the ego and makes it easier to turn toward the good, excess eating blunts spiritual sensitivities and blocks the channels in which consciousness and understanding receive wisdom.



The heart gains depth in contemplation and wisdom a lot easier during times of hunger and sorrow, when the realisation of helplessness sets in. A full stomach practically numbs contemplation, and dampens the heart's sensitivity and finesse.

Rumi رحمته الله said:

“A servant begins remember the Almighty, saying, ‘My Lord, my Lord!’ and pleads ‘Save me!’ when he loses something out of his hands or encounters a trial or tribulation.”



Bayezid Bistami رحمته الله explains:

“Hunger is like a cloud. Once a person sticks to eating less, rains of wisdom begin to pour upon his heart.”



A wise man has made the following observation:

“Keep your stomach hollow like the reed flute, so you moan and cry! Empty out your insides like a reed pen, so you speak and write wisdom!”



Our late father **Musa Efendi** رحمته الله would describe the inspiration in the heart gained by spiritual training as:

“Once a believer gets to know his self, everything changes meaning. And since his perspective has shifted, everything he does becomes worship.

For instance, if this servant who has begun to know Allah desires to earn money, the purpose changes. When previously, he would be mired in egotistic thoughts such as, ‘Let me make some money, so I eat and drink to my desire, own a house and receive praise from people’, as he makes spiritual progress, he will begin to say, ‘With the clean earnings Allah provides, I will both feed my family and also serve Islam and Muslims!’ And since the meaning of the intention has transformed, his worldly labour also becomes worship. All is worship when the heart is with is Allah, even mundane everyday things such as eating, sleeping, family relations, and so on.”



REPENTANCE, ATONEMENT

Genuine tears that cleanse the dirt of sin and purify the heart are fountains of repentance for those who have entered the divine gardens. They are the Almighty's lodge of hope. Blissful are those who are able to cry at the threshold of this lodge when all hope seems lost.



At times, a sin needs a thousand tears to be forgiven. But sometimes, a single teardrop bursting from the heart is enough to atone for a thousand sins.

The feeling of remorse after a wrong action and asking for forgiveness from the Almighty, is an absolutely essential duty.



Allah ﷻ wants a repentance that is not just a lip service, but one that burns the heart's candle with remorse and whose sincerity is verified in action. While repenting, one must seek divine mercy with warm tears, followed by a resolute determination to abandon all flaws and wrong doing.



While worship needs a harmony between the heart and the body, repentance is more an action of the heart. A hadith, simply states:

“Remorse is repentance.” (Ibn Hanbal, I, 423)



Yahya Ibn Muadh ﷺ said:

“Asking Allah for mercy and forgiveness before quitting the sin, is the repentance of liars.”



Umar رضي الله عنه said:

“It is easier to abandon sin than to be busy with repentance.”



Abdulkhaliq Gujduwani رحمته الله said:

“Know that the journey begins with repentance. And repentance is to stay away from all talk and action that displeases Allah.”



A repentance whose sincerity is unproven will need another repentance. If, as the tongue says, “My Lord, I repent, forgive me!”, no harmony exists between these words and mindset and actions, and if the person continues to commit the same sins and errors, in the words of Rumi رحمته الله, this is nothing but to become a ‘clown of words’.



A person intent on repenting must remember our father, Prophet **Adam** عليه السلام and our mother, Hawa, they acknowledged Allah as their sole refuge and sought forgiveness for forty years. This is the mindset we must carry over to our own repentance. A sincere repentance demands the anxious desperation of a person left all alone in the middle of a boundless ocean or one who has lost his way in a pitch-dark forest, who frantically pleads, “My Lord, save me!”



As with all deeds, sincerity is essential for the repentance to be accepted. And its biggest signs are remorse and tears of regret.



A true repentance must begin in deep remorse and the dirt left by whatever wrong action it was, must be washed away with earnest tears.

Genuine tears that cleanse the dirt of sin and purify the heart are fountains of repentance for those who have entered the divine gardens. They are the Almighty’s lodge of hope. Blissful are those who are able to cry at the threshold of this lodge when all hope had seemed lost.



At times, a sin needs a thousand tears to be forgiven. But sometimes, a single teardrop bursting from the heart is enough to wash away a thousand sins.



The tears Muslims shed in fear of Allah ﷻ are light in the grave, and the dews of the gardens of paradise.



Rumi ﷺ says it beautifully:

“Allah takes a few teardrops from you in this life, but in return, grants you the fountains of paradise. He takes from you the wailing moans of love and pain, yet for every wail and moan, He gives you hundreds of sublime spiritual ranks of unreachable heights.”



Genuine tears are a language whose meanings words cannot carry. It is through them that a person will have asked the Almighty for things he could not even imagine.



Our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ said:

“There are two sets of eyes which the hellfire will not touch:

-Eyes that cry for the sake of Allah,

-And eyes that stay awake until morning to keep watch in the path of Allah.”

(Tirmidhi, Fadailu'l-Jihad, 12/1639)



Repentance is to seek refuge in the Almighty by admitting one’s helplessness and nothingness. Such a purity of heart is needed to obtain the Almighty’s mercy. Even when going to pray for rain, people take orphans, innocent children and by means of them, they seek refuge in Allah ﷻ wearing old clothes to express their feelings of humility and weakness.



Repentance and atonement are to put aside the self and ego and say, “My Lord! I am weak and You are mighty, and merciful! I am a worthless servant in need of your mercy and forgiveness. Manifest Your mercy upon me, through Your infinite generosity and grace.” Yet, he must not simply pay lip service, but also authenticate them with righteous deeds.



Allah is infinitely merciful, and loves to forgive. But a repentance that will attract clemency requires:

-A burning remorse,

-Seizing hold to uprightness and going straight,

-And redemption with righteous deeds.



Shaykh Abdulqadir Al-Jilani ﷺ says:

“The task does not end with repentance alone. The main thing is to persevere in repentance. Likewise, planting a tree is not the main thing. It is rather to grow the tree until it bears fruits, and ensure that it bears good fruits all the time.”



Repentance and atonement act not only as means for the pardoning of sins, just like charity, they also repel troubles, open up opportunities and attract divine mercy.



Jafar As-Sadiq عليه السلام has said:

“Whoever has trouble making ends meet, should immediately increase his repentance.”



Allah saves those who repentant from all kinds of troubles, and affords them many great blessings. Once, four people had come to Hasan Al-Basri عليه السلام to seek spiritual help. One of them complained about the drought, the other of poverty, the other of his infertile land, and the other of how he could not have children. The great saint advised each of them to repent to Allah. People next him remarked:

“Sir, you have advised each of them to do the same thing, whereas their problems are all different.” Hasan Al-Basri عليه السلام responded by reciting the following verse:

“I said, ‘Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Truly He is Endlessly Forgiving. He will send heaven down on you in abundant rain and reinforce you with more wealth and sons, and grant you gardens and grant you waterways.’” (Nuh, 71:10-12) (Ibn Hajar, Fathu'l-Bari. XI. 98; Ayni, Umdatul-Qari, Beirut, XXII, 277-278)

Asking forgiveness /istighfar always secures some benefit. In line with Allah's عليه السلام will, some may see this benefit instantly, some in the long run, while others as rewards in the hereafter. After all, Allah عليه السلام knows what is in the person's best interests.



When faced with trouble and hardship, we must first assume that it may stem from our own flaws, and immediately repent and ask forgiveness. This is a vigilance that is among the etiquette of saints. Fudayl Ibn Iyad عليه السلام, in fact, mentioned:

“I can tell I have made a mistake in obeying Allah by a change in attitude from my servant or donkey.”



Upon encountering a problem, instead of complaining, a believer must think, “All flaws are from my own self, so I wonder which of my flaws have put me in this problem?”. He must then appraise his spiritual state, and look to reform and make amends for his mistakes.



Saints divide repentance into three:

1. Repentance of the common: These repent for their wrong actions.
2. Repentance of the elite: These repent for any thought or action that they carried out in a state of forgetfulness of Allah ﷻ.
3. Repentance of the elite of the elite: These repent for moments of being from Allah in order to get closer to Allah ﷻ.



Since a genuine repentance, by nature, involves a deep remorse, an admission of weakness and a plead for Allah’s ﷻ refuge, it is also a most potent means to become a servant close to Allah ﷻ. Not only does repentance purify the heart, it also raises the curtain of neglect from between the servant and the Almighty, and hence, attracts His pleasure and love. The Qur’an, in fact, states:

“Allah loves those who turn back from wrongdoing, and He loves those who purify themselves.” (Al-Baqarah, 2:222)



Although it is impossible, even if we had committed no sin, we would still need to repent for our inability to properly thank Allah ﷻ for all the things He has given. Even Prophets lived in a constant state of asking forgiveness/istighfar as they understood and acknowledged their helplessness.



Even though Allah had forgiven all his past and future wrong actions, and his minor slip-ups, our **Prophet** ﷺ said:

“I ask Allah for forgiveness more than seventy times a day (a hundred, according to another narration).” (See, Abu Dawud, Witr, 26; Ahmad, II, 450)

With that being the case, we must fill our error-laden tongues and hearts with repentance at every moment, especially before dawn.



Even if a believer is as sinless as the day he was born, he should still repent to Allah much, as he is utterly incapable of properly thanking his Lord for all the blessings He has granted him. And this inability itself is reason to repent.



The Almighty Allah states:

فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ

“Then Glorify your Lord’s praise, and seek His forgiveness.” (Al-Nasr, 110:3) In other words, He wants us to remember him with praise and glorification for all the blessings He has given us. But, in alluding to how even this is insufficient, He also commands us to repent and seek His pardon for our inability to properly thank Him.



Repentance and asking forgiveness are not just done in response to sin. They have an indispensable place in the etiquette of servanthood. Besides the many personal flaws of which we are aware, we also have many others of which we are unaware. And for these, we need to turn to Allah ﷻ in an unwavering state of repentance and atonement.



We must consider how Allah ﷻ does not withhold anything from us, despite our glaring neglect and shortcomings. Even though we are unworthy, He presents us many gifts and blessings. While praising and thanking the Almighty for the things He has given, we must therefore also repent for our errors and defects.



Prophets and people of heart lived in a perpetual state of prayer. Despite the clear instructions, commands and prohibitions Allah ﷻ has laid down, the heedless, on the other hand, console themselves by saying, “Our hearts are clean”. They ignore worshipping, praying and actively seeking refuge in Allah ﷻ, as if they have already been guaranteed paradise. Yet, in time, those who abandon the prayer become ungrateful and deviate into tyranny and transgression. And this -may Allah protect us- is the cause for eternal loss and disaster.



The biggest delusion is to fool oneself by taking shelter in Allah’s ﷻ qualities of ‘Merciful’, ‘Compassionate’ and ‘Forgiving’, while at the same time not making any effort on His path.



The ego and the devil try to trick man by suggesting:

“In any case, Allah is Merciful, Forgiving and Compassionate. He is the Kindest of the kind. Even if you sin, He will forgive.

You are still young. Satisfy your desires now; you will become a good servant when you grow old...”

Allah warns us against falling for such false hope:

“Do not let the Deluder delude you concerning Allah!” (Luqman, 31:33)



It is never proper for a Muslim to ignore the divine commands and become uncaring for the terrible consequences of sin by trusting Allah's ﷻ infinite mercy, compassion, grace and generosity, assuming, "All will be forgiven, anyway". It is a grave form of neglect to remember that Allah ﷻ is Al-Ghaffar (The Forgiving) and Al-Rahim (The Compassionate) and conveniently forget that He is Al-Qahhar (The Overwhelmer) and As-Shadidu'l-Iqab (the severe in punishment).



People of wisdom say:

"A neglectful person has five traits:

1. Forgetting past sins when they are documented in the Almighty's records.
2. Remembering past virtues when it is unknown whether they have been accepted by Allah.
3. Comparing himself to people in better worldly positions and being ungrateful.
4. Comparing himself to people less religious and becoming slack.
5. Being fooled by the devil to dive into sin assuming that Allah will forgive.



People who avoid repenting and insist on tyranny and injustice, are increasing the divine wrath and punishment that awaits with each passing day. The Qur'an declares:

"Do not consider Allah to be unaware of what the wrongdoers perpetrate. He is merely deferring them to a Day on which their sight will be transfixed, rushing headlong – heads back, eyes vacant, hearts hollow." (Ibrahim, 14:42)



A true repentance is to voluntarily turn to Allah ﷻ before death arrives, and willingly submit to His commands with the one's entire being.



Paradise is the land of elegance. One cannot enter it burdened with the density of sins and rebellion. A person seeking the sublime realm has no other choice than to cleanse himself from all the physical and spiritual dirt that belong to the world and the ego.



A sound heart which the Almighty requests from His servants, is a heart that is refined and purified to the point it becomes immaculate.

So, how is this gained? Of course:

-By protecting the heart from the dirt of sin and the weight of egotistic ambition.

-By washing oneself in tears of repentance and atonement to cleanse the dirt of sins which, being the human, we cannot avoid.

-And by striving to acquire the level of obedience that will allow us to make it to the divine presence.



REVIVING THE TIME BEFORE DAWN (sahar times)

For a believer to squander a spiritual fortune like the pre-dawn in sleep with the stillness of a statue, is no different than a fool who starves to death unaware that he is sitting on a treasure chest.



If a believer can utilise the pre-dawn time purposefully in line with the advice of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, his nights will become brighter than his days.

The Qur'an states:

“Prostrate to Him during the night and glorify Him throughout the long night. These people love this fleeting world and have put the thought of a Momentous Day behind their backs.” (Al-Insan, 76:27)

“Their sides eschew their beds as they call on their Lord in fear hope and ardent hope. And they give of what We have provided for them.” (Al-Sajdah. 32:16)

“The part of the night they spend asleep was small and they would seek forgiveness before dawn.” (Al-Dhariyat, 51:17)



Pre-dawn is the best time to seek refuge from divine punishment. Allah invites us to repent at this time. Just as the Sun bursts forth shortly afterwards and scatters away the dark, repenting just before dawn is the most unique means to escape the darkness of sin and neglect, and proceed into the light of divine forgiveness and mercy.



Even during arduous campaigns such as Tabuk, our Blessed **Prophet** ﷺ never abandoned tahajjud the prayer at predawn. And he also advised us not to deprive ourselves from the spiritual inspiration right before dawn:

“Pay special care to worshipping in the night, for it is the custom of the righteous before you. Waking up to worship at night, is undoubtedly means to get closer to

Allah. It keeps one away from sin, atones for errors and rids the body of trouble.”
(Tirmidhi, Daawaat, 101)

“The most honourable Muslims are the people of the Qur’an and those who routinely wake up for the night prayer.” (Munawi, I, 522)



Prior to dawn, the Almighty offers separate alerts to hearts that hear and feel. At a time when the air freshens up like a zephyr, flowers bloom with fine scents and roosters begin to crow like an alarm clock, the Almighty provides His servants an exquisite spiritual opportunity by inviting them to repent.



Reviving the time before the dawn is to accept our Creator’s special invitation.

The night prayer and its invocations allow a meeting and an intimate conversation with the Great Beloved.

Waking up and entering the divine climate of mercy before dawn while everyone else is asleep, is to be among select servants in an inner circle of love and wisdom.



It is the intensity of divine love felt in the heart that makes reviving the time before dawn with worship possible. It is not for the fainthearted. It is a time to interrupt sleep and wrench oneself away from the magnet-like pull of the bed, just to have the heart enter divine presence. It is hence a clear expression of the genuine love a person has for Allah ﷻ. It is inconceivable for a believer who truly loves Allah ﷻ to sleep until sunbreak in a deep, heedless slumber.



Rumi ﷻ gives voice to the love and elation he felt before dawn as:

Fill the cup with divine love, waiter
Quit any talk of bread to the lover
Let hearts drink the Kawthar they long for,
What else but water could a fish ask for?

Pour that drink, pour again, serve once more
Stop the night, friend, stop it, I implore
Enchain my sleep, let not the moments lapse
Sleepers know not the night, no clue perhaps!⁴



4. *From Divan-i Kabir.*

If one had to get up in the middle of the night to take care of a personal chore, he would do whatever it would oblige him to interrupt his sleep or not. In this particular case, it is Allah the Almighty inviting us for an encounter with Him.

The biggest sign of love is sacrifice. The time before dawn when the gates of divine forgiveness and mercy open, is a unique moment of grace that tests our love for the Almighty.



Pre-dawns that are brought to life with the night prayer, divine remembrance and repentance are the most inspiring moments of opportunity to get closer to Allah ﷻ. The sun of bliss of the afterlife are hidden in the twilights.



If a believer can utilise pre-dawn purposefully in line with the advice of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, his nights will become brighter than his days.



Saints have always make the most of the inspiration available at pre-dawn and have emphasised the importance of spending that valuable time in worship. Bayazid Bistami رحمته الله has said:

“No mystery ever revealed itself to me until my nights became days.”



In the eyes of those who love of Allah ﷻ, the times before dawn spent without dhikr and contemplation mark the saddest episodes of longing.



Sulayman’s رحمته الله mother gave him the following advice:

“My dear! Do not sleep in excess at night, as excess sleep leaves a person in poverty in the hereafter!”



Yahya Ibn Muadh رحمته الله says:

“Nights are long. Do not shorten them with sleep!”



Luqman رحمته الله has said:

“Son! Do not let the rooster outsmart you! It wakes up every morning for dhikr, while you are fast asleep!”



For a believer to squander a spiritual fortune like pre-dawn in sleep with the stillness of a statue, is no different to a fool who starves to death unaware that he is sitting on a treasure chest.



People who imprison their pre-dawns in sleep deprive themselves of an exceptional divine inspiration, much like rain that fritters away after landing on a desert, sea or rocky terrain.



Pre-dawns are times to awaken the heart. A person who spends this time in spiritual darkness, cannot enjoy a bright day. It is unthinkable to expect any benefit from a day whose night is left uncherished. More often than not, the day of a person who imprisons his entire night to sleep, will similarly be devoid of inspiration and spirituality. We must therefore avoid making our hearts lazy by spending the entire night as prisoners of sleep.



The times before dawn are the most fruitful hours of the day. We must treasure offering our prayers, repentance and tears at that interval. A servant needs to revive the pre-dawn with worship and obtain the spiritual foods he needs from that spiritual feast, so that he could begin the day inspired and in high spirits; and so that these protect him, throughout the day, from sin, neglect and masiwallah (other than Allah). It is also to spike the heart's interest in the good and fortify its resistance against evil.



A person once asked Ibrahim Ibn Adham عليه السلام:

“I cannot wake up for the night prayer. Teach me a solution”. He was told:

“Do not rebel against Allah during the day and Allah will make you stand in His presence at night. Being in His presence at night is a high honour. Wrongdoers are unworthy of it!”



If we are unable to wake up at pre-dawn except, of course, during sickness, this means we need to reassess our days:

- Have our eyes gazed at anything wrong?
- Have our tongues said anything wrong?
- Have our ears listened to any wrong words?
- Have our stomachs digested anything wrong?

Just as preventive doctors are essential to bodily health, the same applies to spiritual health.

A LIFE OF WORSHIP

Deeds of worship are like vitamins injected into the spirit. They are means of spiritual resistance against the bacteria of evil that take a servant away from Allah ﷻ.



Do not rely on your deeds! Just like our supplications, all our worship, action and services also stand in need of acceptance...

Faith is like a source of light. The winds of the ego and the devil blow for a lifetime, hoping to snuff this light out. Worship is the lantern that protects faith against these damaging winds.

The more sincere our intentions are in worship and the stronger will the light of faith shine in our hearts.



Allah states:

“Do people imagine that they will be left to say, ‘We believe’ and will not be tested?” (Al-Ankabut, 29:2)



Allah tests our faith at every moment. Protecting faith requires not making any concessions in being a servant to Allah ﷻ. Making unjustifiable concessions can lead to cracks in the foundation of faith.

A negligent person who tries to justify his deliberate wrong doing by saying, “I am a Muslim, and Allah is Forgiving and Compassionate”, may slip up during his final breath, and lose his faith altogether. It is therefore necessary to lead a righteous life of worship until the very last breath.



With the intake of food, we give our bodies vitamins, and sustain our lives. We also need to feed our spirit with vitamins for our spirituality to grow.

Good deeds are like vitamins given to the spirit. They are a means of spiritual resistance against the bacteria of forbidden things poison the person with the illusion of distance from Allah ﷻ.



Whoever happily abandons the obligatory prayer is a tyrant who has no mercy on himself, insofar as he is really starving his spirit.



A believer must worry more about starving his spirit than his body. The body is only the clothing of the spirit and will ultimately return to its origin, the earth. The spirit, on the other hand, will rise higher and higher on the wings of its spiritual capacity.



If a person brought us highly valuable gifts but offered them unwillingly with a sullen face, we would not feel like accepting them. But we would accept even the most modest gift given sincerely and politely from the bottom of the heart, and feel appreciation for the benefactor.

Such are the prayers, servanthood and worship a person offers to the Allah. The greater the love, enthusiasm and sincerity, the higher their value in the sight of Allah ﷻ.



Shah Naqshiband ﷺ says:

“Nothing of worth and blessing is found in any action taken with anger, neglect, reluctance or under compulsion.”



A man once asked:

“Teach me something that will be enough to save me!” Bayezid Bistami ﷺ then replied:

“Keep these two things on your mind; and these are enough for you to know:

1. Allah is closer to you than your jugular vein. He knows and sees everything.
2. Allah does not need your worship.



High spirits always live with prayer and service. Their hearts constantly tremor to the caution offered by the following verse on the importance of embracing prayer:

“Say: ‘What has my Lord to do with you if you do not call on Him?’” (Al-Furqan, 25:77)



If the entirety of mankind denied Allah the Almighty, it would not lessen His divine glory a single bit. In contrast, if the entirety of mankind were to be honoured with belief in Allah’s unity and existence, it would not increase His divine glory even a tiny fraction. Allah the Almighty stands in no need of our servanthood. Whether in faith or denial, man can only do good or harm to himself, not Allah ﷻ.



To raise his profits, any businessman of right mind manufactures his goods in a way that appeals to his customers.

This world is a marketplace to purchase paradise. A believer must therefore also look to prepare all his worship and good deeds in a way that appeals to Allah ﷻ and attracts His pleasure.



People of wisdom have said:

“With worship a person reaches paradise. With etiquette and reverence in worship, a person reaches Allah.”



It is said in the Qur’an:

“He created death and life to test which of you is best in action.” (Al-Mulk, 67:2)



On a closer look at the above verse, Allah does not say “أَكْثَرُ عَمَلًا” the most action, but rather “أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا” which means the best action. So He places importance on the quality of our actions not the quantity.



Anas Ibn Malik رضي الله عنه says:

“Manners in worship are a sign of its acceptance.”



Enthusiasm and affection for worship is a manifestation of the love of Allah ﷻ in the heart. A person who loves Allah ﷻ lovingly fulfils His commands. We must therefore attempt to perform the deeds Allah ﷻ loves with peace, love and elation, so that Allah ﷻ also loves us back. Once Allah ﷻ loves us, He also grants us the love of the deeds that He loves, and bestows the opportunity to perform them with inexplicable intimacy with Him.



Love has such a powerful secret that it turns hardships into mercy. A heart imbued with faith finds no trouble offering a twenty-rakat tarawih prayer, and even a night prayer during the sweetest hour of sleep. A loveless heart, in contrast, finds it arduous to even offer a four-rakat prayer before sunrise.



Our Prophet ﷺ would regularly make the following prayer, and advise believers to do the same:

اللَّهُمَّ اعْنِي عَلَى ذِكْرِكَ وَشُكْرِكَ وَحُسْنِ عِبَادَتِكَ

“Allah! Help me in remembering You, thanking You and worshipping You beautifully.” (See, Abu Dawud, Witr, 26)



Improved morals are the greatest sign that our worship is accepted.



The quality of our worship is a mirror on which we can see our spiritual faces. We must always inspect ourselves in this mirror, strive to amend our errors and enhance our good qualities wherever possible.



People were once backbiting the sultan on a day Abdullah Dahlawi رضى الله عنه happened to be fasting.

“Oh no! My fast is broken!” he said.

A student remarked:

“But, sir, you were not the one backbiting!”

“I was not”, he said. “But I listened. When it comes to backbiting, the listener is as culpable as the speaker.”



A person will gain good morals if he offers ritual prayer with focus, and fasts with a righteous sensitivity. It is much the same if he speaks only the truth, honours a trust, watches out for halal and haram and observes the rights of others. If he meticulously protects these qualities, his prayers will also be accepted. Simpler put, each of the two sides verifies the level of the other. Morals reflect in appearance, while the appearance exposes the morals.



Rumi رضى الله عنه says:

“The mark of acceptance of worship is for the person to scuttle into another deed of worship right after completing one, and then again run to other good deeds without stopping.”



A good deed quickly followed by another good deed is a sign that it has been accepted. A good deed followed by a bad deed is a sign that it is unaccepted. Even worse is when the bad deed that follows wipes out the good deed entirely.



However great our deeds may be, unless they are offered with real sincerity in the heart, they may crumble in a tremor, like a rickety building.



Reforming action reforms the heart; while reforming action is made possible by reforming intentions.



Dark intentions never lead to bright roads.



A heart is like a radio, it cannot transmit a clear sound unless it is set at the right frequency. Bad thoughts, ill intentions, emotions and ideas that are not set at the frequency of the truth, thrust a person into neglect, and eventually, bad behaviour.



The **Prophet** ﷺ says:

“Allah only accepts deeds sincerely offered for Him, and seeking His pleasure.”

(Nasai, Jihad, 24/3138)



Allah will throw the deeds offered for other than Him back in the person’s face like a rag. In a hadith qudsi, He in fact declares:

“Should any of you ascribe another as partner to Me in any deed performed, I will reject both him and the partner.” (Muslim, Zuhd, 46)



Our worship, charities and good deeds are like food we store up during our lives for the hereafter. However, if Allah ﷻ does not accept them, and especially if we have laid waste to their rewards with the egoistic evils of hypocrisy, self-love, conceit and jealousy, we will be no different to those folks carrying wheat to the mill in sacks riddled with holes.

While offering good deeds, it is crucial that we avoid the flaws that will scatter their rewards.



Yahya Ibn Muadh رضي الله عنه warns:

“Take care of your capital of faith, my friend. Do not let the rats of hypocrisy and bad traits chew away at it.”



If there is sincere intent in the heart, Allah will turn the small into great, and give rewards as lofty as mountains for even the smallest deed.

Straying into hypocrisy and insincerity in worship and good deeds, on the other hand, annihilate the rewards of deeds, even if they appear to be size of mountains.



If the devil, man’s clearest enemy, fails to trick a believer into wandering off from the true path then he changes tactics and appears as he is speaking from the truth. The following verse, in fact, quotes the devil during his conversation with the Almighty:

“I will lie in ambush for them on your straight path.” (Al-Araf, 7:16)

Thus, the devil or shaytan executes his craft of deception, not just on rough and false roads, but also on the true path.

If, for example, he has failed to turn a person away from building a mosque or a charitable institution, he then persuades him to give the building his name in order to make him proud and show off to people, and therefore spoil his reward with Allah.

A believer must therefore avoid giving his own name to any charitable institutions he funds like mosques and Qur’an schools. No harm is done, however, if his loved ones decide to give his name to a building after his death. It may even perhaps allow him to be remembered with love.



Hasan Al-Basri رضي الله عنه declares:

“A person who speaks ill of himself publicly is essentially praising himself. And this is a sign of showing-off.”



Going overboard in humility is a trick of the ego as it amounts to an indirect way of self-praise. To appease their egos, some people assume a modest pose so that others can say, “What a humble person”. This is an insincere and hypocritical attitude, which is essentially nothing but self-praise in the guise of humility. Lines such as:

-I can only manage to recite the entire Qur'an once a week.

-I have only been able to do pilgrimage five times.

-This poor soul has managed to build only one mosque, and help just a handful of poor people.

These are nothing but showing off to others hiding behind the veil of modesty. They aim to sell off the deeds to public applaud, when they ought to be presented to Allah ﷻ alone, and remain strictly confidential between Allah ﷻ and the servant.



Allah ﷻ demands we remain sincere all the time with pure intention. He wants us to offer our servanthood purely to His pleasure without any vested interests or malice. Tawhid has no room for partnership.



A Muslim with understanding of tawhid rejects the false idols of the outer world and acknowledges Allah alone as the only God. And during his worship, which is an intimate conversation with his Lord, he also abides by the spirit of tawhid and ensures no mortal or egoistic thought comes between him and the Creator.



It is Allah ﷻ who has given us both life and material. On top of it all, He promises us paradise if we use these blessings for His sake. Who, but Allah ﷻ, can offer such a tremendous reward? Which mortal has that power?

In that case, no stupidity can in fact be greater than associating mortal beings with Allah, by flaunting and showing off to people in deeds of worship, when they should be offered for the sake of Allah ﷻ alone.



We must never forget that on the day of judgment, only Allah has the power to reward our worship and good deeds!



Our **Prophet** ﷺ once said:

“What I fear for you most is minor idolatry (shirk).”

Those around him asked:

“What is minor idolatry, Messenger of Allah?”

The **Prophet** ﷺ explained:

“It is to show off (riya). On judgment day, as people receive their dues, Allah will call out those who were showing off, saying:

‘Go to the people who you showed your deeds off to on Earth! See if they have anything to give you!’” (Ahmad, V, 428, 429)



Carrying any other purpose than Allah’s ﷻ pleasure during worship is to fall into hidden idolatry. To make mortals partners in good deeds, is to risk losing all the reward of the deed.



At every moment of our lives, the skies of our hearts must echo with the plea, “Allah! My purpose is only You, and my request is only Your pleasure!”



Necip Fazil Kisakurek depicts the sensitivity of saints in the below poem:

They serially reimburse worship
In which the ego seeps
And for a second’s wrong gaze,
A lifetime of tears they weep



Every time he stands to pray, a believer receives training in being in the presence of Allah ﷻ who has insight into the most secret deepest of things that transpire in the heart. With this mindset, a believer strives to rid his heart of every bad feeling and thought unfit to be presented to the divine court. A measured and focused prayer, in this sense, is spiritual training.



Ritual prayer is a worship that earns us the level of ihsan, which is the consciousness of knowing Allah sees us. A servant who experiences this ascension of the heart in the presence of Allah ﷻ, also gains the sensitivity to avoid all kinds of situations and behaviour that displease Allah ﷻ once the prayer ends. In other words, prayer is to train the willpower to increase its resistance against sin.



The Qur’an states:

“The Prayer precludes indecency and wrongdoing.” (Al-Ankabut, 29:45)

Looking at how much we are able to avoid wrongdoing suffices to see whether our prayers are accepted.



Ritual prayer, in a sense, is a believer's moral report. Without matured morals, worship also lacks inspiration. For example, no focus can be found in the prayer of a person who cheats people and violates their rights.



A properly offered and accepted prayer is the prayer of a person who steers clear from evil and indecency. If a person prays but continues to violate people's rights and commit sins that anger Allah ﷻ, this means he is not really praying in the truest sense. Such a person must assess the ablutions he takes and the prayers he performs to identify what he is doing wrong, and seek to make amends.



A person prays but does not avoid usury (riba), fasts but does not refrain from backbiting, pays Zakat but violates the rights of others, and acts like a Muslim at the mosque but not at home or at work... This conflicting behaviour is a sign of the reproachful self (nafs al-lawwamah). Islam is a whole, and cannot be cast aside in any phase of life.



Whilst praying, protect your heart from masiwallah. Pray knowing you are in Allah's ﷻ presence. Only then will the prayer train a servant and protect from going astray.



People whose bodies are in prayer while their hearts are preoccupied with worldly thoughts, suffer from great neglect. About them, the Almighty says, **“Woe to those who pray and are forgetful of their prayer.”** (Al-Maun, 107:4-5)



An immaculate prayer Allah expects from His servants is a prayer offered with “humility”, as expressed in the verses, **“It is the believers who are successful: those who are humble in their prayer.”** (Al-Muminun, 23:1-2)



Rumi ﷺ says:

“Come to your senses and look to benefit from prayer not just outwardly, but also inwardly. Do not just peck your head at the ground like a bird collecting crumbs without being aware of Allah's glory! Lend an ear to the Prophet's words when he says, “The worst thieves are those who steal from their prayers!”⁵



5. Hakim, *Mustadrak*, I, 353.

Rumi ﷺ also calls out to those who try to serve Allah ﷻ without an inspired heart:

“Fool! If only you could turn your face sincerely to Allah whilst prostrating, so that you could properly understand the meaning of, ‘My Lord, the Highest of the high, is free of any deficiency’! If only you could prostrate, not just in appearance, but also with your heart.”



By saying, **“Prostrate and draw near”** (Al-Alaq, 96:19) the Almighty Allah invites His servant to His nearness.

The more our hearts join our foreheads in prostration during prayer, the closer we will get to Allah.



Allah wants us to pray with high etiquette and reverence. Just as we tidy ourselves up when visiting a person of high rank, we must also take extreme care during prayer, which is to enter the divine presence.

The Qur’an, in fact, states:

“Children of Adam! wear fine clothing in every mosque.” (Al-Araf, 7:31)

The **Prophet** ﷺ advises us to brush our teeth with a miswaq (a twig from a tree with antibacterial properties), wear nice scents and shower before the Friday prayer, as every act of hygiene and preparation shows our respect for the Almighty.

Our elders were so meticulous in this regard that they would even tidy up the tassels of prayer mats before standing to pray.



During prayer, we need to be aware that we are in the presence of the Lord of all the worlds, cut off all interests other than Him, and try to enter into a state of humility and focus by realising our own nothingness as we seek His refuge. We must bow and prostrate with feelings of admission, knowing we are weak and helpless servants; and that everything we have, is granted by Allah ﷻ. And as we prostrate, we must seek to annihilate ourselves in the Truth, by squashing our egos to the ground.



Worldly activities cannot harm a heart that is with Allah ﷻ. Yet, worshipping with a heart left heedless by worldly affairs can do harm in more ways than one.



On his way to pilgrimage, the great saint Muhammed Parisa ﷺ stopped by Baghdad, where he met a young jeweller. Seeing the young man dealing non-stop with

a flurry of customers and assuming he was spending too much time in worldly affairs, he felt sad and said to himself:

“What a shame! He is caught up in the world at a perfect age for worship!” But after a moment of self-inspection, he astonishingly witnessed that the heart of the young man, who bought and sold gold for a living, was, in fact, with Allah ﷻ. He then praised the man with the words:

“Praise be to Allah! The hands may be on profit, but the heart is with the Beloved.”



Allah ﷻ wants us to strike a harmony of the body and the heart. This means that just as the body’s direction during prayer is the Kaaba, the heart’s direction must become the Lord.



While roaming the desert with Layla’s love, Majnun unsuspectingly happened to stroll in front of a man praying. Not long after, the man concluded the prayer and angrily called out to Majnun:

“You fool! You do not walk in front of a person praying. Have you no idea?”

Majnun turned around and said:

“My love for Layla blinded me from even seeing you. But how did your love of Allah, in whose presence you just stood to pray, allow you to see me?”



Shah Naqshiband ﷺ says:

“Only four things enable focus during prayer:

1. Always eating halal, and having an alert heart while doing so.
2. Avoiding neglect while taking ablution.
3. Awareness of entering divine presence with the first takbir.
4. Not forgetting Allah outside of prayer.



Whilst praying, we need to be mindful that even though we cannot see Him, Allah ﷻ sees us at every moment, so that our prayers become our ascension (miraj) into heaven.



Prayer is a believer’s ascension, and spiritual meeting with Allah.

But what kind of a prayer?

-A prayer in which the heart turns to the Almighty with sincerity, focus and submission.

-A prayer offered as if it is the final opportunity to plea, with the desperation of a person appealing to the Almighty just before bidding farewell to Earth.



Muadh Ibn Jabal رضي الله عنه advised his son:

“Son, when you stand to pray, think of it as the last prayer you will ever do! Do not assume you will live to see another prayer!”



When he says:

“Pray like a person bidding farewell to life!”⁶, our **Prophet** ﷺ alludes to the capacity of prayer in training a person to reflect on death. Prayer, in other words, is a spiritual journey from the fleeting life on Earth to the real life that awaits in the hereafter. It is to express obedience, submission, loyalty and servanthood to Allah five times a day. It is a spiritual discipline that allows a person to catch a glimpse of divine reunion whilst still on earth.



Prayer is a miraj (ascension) from this life and the next. A believer who prays with focus and poise and then returns to his daily affairs, must lead his life as if he has just been reawakened from death and sent back to life. He must observe everything he sees from the window of the afterlife. Could people with such spiritual maturity ever become companions of the devil on the journey of life? Could they be enslaved by the desires of their egos? Would they allow worldly greed to snatch away their hearts?



Islam forbids individualism, egoism, selfishness and all lifestyles that withdraw a person to his shell away from society. In contrast, it enjoins selflessness, bonding with and helping the fellow community of Muslims, and socialising with them. Undoubtedly, one of the best ways to facilitate this is the communal prayers offered in mosques, which are a proof of the unity and togetherness of the Muslims, as well as tawhid.



Offering the five daily prayers in congregation -and not just the Friday, tarawih or Eid prayers- is a vital part of our duties of servanthood. The following incident offers a striking lesson:

6. Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 15.

Abdullah Ibn Umm Maktum رضي الله عنه, who was blind, one day came to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and asked:

“Messenger of Allah! My home is far from the Mosque, and I have no one to take me by the hand. The roads are also riddled with pests. Could I pray at home? Will you give me permission?”

After a few moments of thought, the Prophet ﷺ asked:

“Do you hear the adhan?”

“Yes, Allah’s Messenger”, he replied.

The Prophet ﷺ thereupon said:

“In that case, keep coming to the mosque!” (Nasai, Imamah, 50)

These are the instructions given to a blind person on a treacherous path to the mosque, then what about us?



Our Prophet ﷺ says:

“If you see a person who has made a habit of going to mosques, bear witness that he is Muslim.” (Ibn Majah, Masajid, 19)

It is with this mindset that our ancestors built large mosques in city-centres and smaller ones in neighbourhoods within short distances, so that they would never be deprived of the blessing of communal prayers.

We need to take stock of this and make attending mosques for communal prayers part of our nature.



The Qur’an declares:

“The mosques of Allah should only be frequented those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish the prayer and pay zakat, and who fear no one but Allah.” (Al-Tawbah, 9:18)

“Frequenting mosques”, which is a sign of belief in Allah ﷻ, and it also means to revive mosques with a congregation. Although the entire surface of the Earth has been rendered a ‘mosque’ for Muslims, the point is to fill the mosques of brick and mortar. A mosque without a congregation quickly becomes a sad rubble. Breathing life back into it, then becomes the duty of every Muslim.



We descend from an ‘army nation’ who, over the centuries, sprinkled domes upon lands they conquered with the bravery of faith. If we desert these mosques today, how will we look at our ancestors’ faces tomorrow on judgment day? What will become of us, if on the field of resurrection, we flock to Allah’s Messenger ﷺ to intercede on our behalf, only to be met with his reproach and reprimand for neglecting this vital sunnah?



Umar رضي الله عنه once wrote to his governors:

“As far as I am concerned, your most important duty is the prayer. Whoever guards it and observes its times, has guarded his religion. Whoever forsakes it will soon forsake his religion.” (Muwattaa, Wuqutu’s-Salat, 6)



Once the adhan was called, life would virtually stop for our **Prophet** ﷺ as he was about to enter divine presence. He would offer the prayer at its earliest time, and get on with his daily tasks within that spirituality.

If we, like the **Prophet** ﷺ, can organise our daily activities, plans and schedules according to the prayer, and leave everything to run to Allah’s ﷻ presence once the adhan is heard, we will -Allah willing- gain His pleasure. And the care we show for prayer will reflect in our lives separately as inspiration and mercy.



The five prayers are a believer’s foremost obligation. Praying as soon as the adhan is called gives a totally different kind of peace. Allah ﷻ makes the affairs easy of those who prioritise the prayer. But if prayer is delayed without excuse, its inspiration lessens and activities that cause the delay also lose their blessings.



A person who parks his car as soon as he hears the adhan or gets off from a bus or train to join the first congregation, will have most certainly cleared the way for a better and more peaceful trip. A Muslim who takes a break to pray, will tackle the rest of his work with greater ease.

A student will observe first-hand how clearer his mind and livelier his heart become once he reopens his books, after having momentarily closed them to pray.



We need to remember that the prayer holds a person back from evil and indecency, from things both religion and the mind regard as ugly and vile. The prayer never holds a believer back from good and legitimate activity. On the contrary, the day

of a believer who takes a break from work to pray with poise and focus, becomes better and more fruitful.



The Almighty sternly warns those who hide behind egotistic excuses such as, “I am so busy, I cannot find the time from all the running around with the kids and work” to neglect prayer, mosques, congregation and showing effort for Allah ﷻ for the sake of worldly gain:

“You who believe! do not let your wealth or your children divert you from remembrance of Allah! Whoever does that is lost.” (Al-Munafiqun, 63:9)



The Qur’an states:

“Not distracted by trade or commerce from the remembrance of Allah and the establishment of the payer and the payment of zakat; fearing a day when all hearts and eyes will be in turmoil.” (Al-Nur, 24:37)



Allah promises tremendous rewards for praying in congregation. This also has a greater chance of being accepted. It is hoped that, for the sake of His righteous servants in the congregation, the Almighty will also accept the prayers of the rest.



Imam Malik رحمته الله says:

“A person who enters the mosque with a sign of hypocrisy in his heart is like a sparrow inside a cage. As soon as the cage opens, he flies out and escapes.”

If this is the case for some who enter the mosque, we should also pause to think about what this entails for those who abandon the congregation altogether without excuse.



Prayer, fasting, alms and pilgrimage... These are obligatory deeds. But what shows the acceptance of our deeds, are our states and morals.



To become a servant who Allah loves, embodying a consciousness of ihsan at all times and places is a must. So are:

- Worshipping with focus as though we see Allah.
- An elegant and resolute self-struggle to convey and serve Islam as if we see Allah.

-An honest, forgiving, generous and patient conduct adorned with beautiful morals, as if we see Allah.

-Sincere donations as if we see Allah.



The Qur'an states:

“You who believe! do not nullify your sadaqa by demands for gratitude or insulting words, like him who spends his wealth, showing off to people and not believing in Allah and the Last Day.” (Al-Baqarah, 2:264)



If prayers do not hold one back from evil, it means they are not properly performed. So, too, are fasts that do not suppress your lust and boost compassion.



A hadith states:

“Allah does not value the fast of a person who deals in lies.” (Bukhari, Sawm, 8)



When we fast, we must pay attention to every word that comes out of our mouths, just as we take care to not let anything in.



The **Prophet** ﷺ says:

“None of you, especially on days when you are fasting, should say bad words or argue with another. Should someone say something bad or goad you, you should just say, ‘I am fasting.’” (Bukhari, Sawm, 9)



The quality of our deeds of worship is also like a spiritual graph of our hearts by which we must regularly assess ourselves. For example:

-How much do our prayers guide us towards focus and fearing Allah ﷻ? How much do they prevent us from evil acts? How much do we really grasp the magnitude and value of the prayer? How much do we thank the Almighty for having the opportunity to prostrate?

-How much do our fasts direct us to righteousness? Do they increase our mercy and compassion? Do they develop our gratitude for the Almighty? Do they shun us from gossip, vain talk and nonsense?

-Do we feel happy when giving zakat, donations and charity? Or do we feel aggrieved, thinking “My wealth has become less.” Are we able to consider that Allah

has given us wealth and property as a test, and for Him to increase or decrease it is also part of this test?

-Does pilgrimage guard us from obscenity, sin and quarrel and take us to the climate of the burial shroud? How much are we able to stone the devil with good deeds knowing that he is pursuing us for as long as we live? How much are we able to seek refuge in our Lord from our egos and the devil with righteous action?

All these are mirrors that show the level of our affinity and love for Allah.



Rumi ؒ says:

“Let pilgrims look for the Lord of the Kaaba. Once they find Him, they can find the Kaaba anywhere.”



Muhammed Iqbal asks the pilgrims returning from Medina:

“So, you have visited the luminant Medina. With what kinds of presents have you filled your hearts from Medina’s sublime bazaar?”

The material gifts you have brought, the caps, beads and the prayer mats, will soon wear out and wither away. Have you brought back Medina’s spiritual gifts that revive hearts and never wilt?

Among your gifts, is there Abu Bakr’s ؓ honesty and submission, Umar’s ؓ justice, Uthman’s ؓ modesty and generosity, and Ali’s ؓ wisdom and struggle?

To the Muslim world today, writhing from pain of a thousand kinds, will you be able to spare an enthusiasm of the Age of Bliss?”



We must remember that ‘stoning the devil’ is not exclusive to pilgrimage. We need to stone the devil in all stages of our lives. Adorning our lives with worship and righteous deeds is to stone the devil, who wants to keep us away from them. If we show neglect or disregard in this matter, then the devil will start to stone us.



Ali ؓ says:

“Nothing good lies in a prayer without focus, a fast without regard for the curses of the tongue and meaningless action, a recital of the Qur’an without contemplation, knowledge unembroidered upon the heart, wealth without charity, brotherhood without being there in tough times, a blessing without thanks, and a plea without sincerity that does not come from the heart.”



When people would ask, “Why are our prayers and supplications not answered?”, **Ibrahim Ibn Adham** رضي الله عنه would reply:

- You know Allah but do not follow his commands.
- You know the Prophet but do not practice his sunnah.
- You read the Qur’an but do not put it into action.
- You help yourselves to the Almighty’s blessings but do not show thanks.
- You know of paradise but not how to ask for it.
- You say there is hell but do not avoid it.
- You say there is death but do not prepare for it.

So, how could your wishes be accepted with so many errors?”



The better servants we are to Allah ﷻ, the more His help will reach us.



In the Qur’an, it says:

“You who believe! Seek help through patience and prayer!” (Al-Baqarah, 2:153)

Back in old times, people would seek the safety of castles during enemy attacks. And prayer is our refuge in the Almighty’s protection from the assault of sin and the onslaught of the ego and the devil.



We seek refuge in the Almighty with the verse in chapter Al-Fatiha, which we recite in every unit of prayer:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

“You alone we worship, and from You alone we ask for help.” (Al-Fatiha, 1:5)

However, the verse draws attention to our servanthood, not as individuals, but as part of a congregation. In other words, it implies that whatever our level is, as a community, in obeying the Almighty’s commands, also determines the level in which we are eligible for divine help.

During times when public crises and troubles become widespread, it is therefore essential to assess ourselves and seek to rectify our errors collectively. To stave off greater disasters, we must repent all together and atone for our mistakes, and become more fastidious in observing Allah’s ﷻ orders. Giving lots of charity, and putting

smiles on the faces of outcasts, orphans and the lonely, is a must. Allah's ﷻ help and mercy are tied to these.



Every visible, outward event is triggered by unseen, inward causes. With today's viral diseases, disasters and the general discord, unrest and distress that dictate human relations, we need to look at their backgrounds. Allah's ﷻ help, mercy and blessings arrive only when society leads a righteous life of servanthood. Undoubtedly, once servanthood is forgotten, this help will be severed.

The fact that Allah ﷻ and the afterlife is forgotten, and immoral lifestyles, usury and bribery have become a natural part of life, are the inward causes of the many troubles today.



The more we become servants to Allah ﷻ, the more His help will manifest. A case in point is the victory at Badr, which exhibited a gradual rise in divine help. As a result of the Muslims' sincerity and patience, divine help arrived in the form of a thousand angels, which then increased to three thousand and ultimately, five thousand.⁷



The Prophet's time had many companions, poor and weak, who were subjected to the torture of the tyrant pagans. But none of them suffered from stress or depression. This is because, regardless of whatever trouble, they would seek refuge in their Creator and His protection, saying, "I am not alone. I have Allah ﷻ who has power over all things!" In any kind of distress, they drew their strength from Allah.



A society that establishes the prayer, that is to say, offers it properly, becomes healthy both in spirit and form. In fact, a doctor had arrived in Medina during the Prophet's time, but failed to find any work. Our **Prophet** ﷺ eventually advised him to return to his family.

Likewise, books do not mention anything of psychological illnesses or social unrest during the Age of Bliss. In a sense, the prayers the companions offered with love and devotion rehabilitated their tired hearts. Also, consciences flourished through fasting, Zakat and charity, while the Islamic brotherhood assured a peaceful social life.



Without Allah's ﷻ mercy, no person can be saved in the hereafter through worship and righteous deeds. People who find salvation there will be those who, in life, had spent all their energy seeking Allah's ﷻ mercy.



7. See Al-Anfal, 8:9-10; Al-i Imran, 3:123-125.

Regardless of how many righteous deeds we have, we must always seek Allah's ﷻ mercy. Just like our wishes, our righteous deeds also stand in need of acceptance.



Despite leading lives of piety and showing the most beautiful effort in the way of Allah ﷻ, saints still look upon themselves as having achieved nothing.

Even after making effort to fulfil our duties in the best possible way, we must look upon our deeds as 'nothing' compared to Allah's ﷻ innumerable blessings. We need to seek refuge in the Almighty's mercy, fully conscious of the fact that we are but helpless servants.



Despite passing the heaviest of trials with his life, children, wealth and entire existence, and earning the title *Khalilullah*, Allah's ﷻ intimate friend, **Prophet Ibrahim** ﷺ still pleaded:

"Do not disgrace me (my Lord) on the day people are resurrected!" (Al-Shuara, 26:87). In so doing so, he suggested that if Allah's ﷻ mercy would not transpire, all his altruistic actions would still mean 'nothing'.



The closer a believer gets to the Almighty, the greater the horizons expand in his heart; so much so, that the awareness of his own flaws in relation to his thanks, supplication, knowledge and certainty in the face of divine glory, also increases. Hence, the wise people who know Allah ﷻ are those who have completely understood that He cannot be properly known. Worshippers who are the best servants to Allah ﷻ are those who understand that He can never be worshiped according to how He deserves to be worshiped.



While the wise see even their great deeds as 'nothing' the heedless become lax, presuming their deeds are enough to save them. As opposed to the wise who gauge their deeds on a jeweller's scale, the negligent weigh them on the scale of a lumberjack.



Ibrahim Desuqi ﷺ said:

"Brother! Do not ever think you have achieved anything on your own! Know that, if you are righteous, it is Allah who made you righteous; and if you have obtained anything material or spiritual, it is Allah who has blessed you.

Even if you have deeds as great as the deeds of all mankind and jinn combined, avoid saying 'I'. Allah abandons those who claim 'I' into throes of helplessness. If you claim 'I', your material and spiritual rank will plummet. Do not ever forget that!"



We should never forget that regardless of how many good deeds we have, they are nothing but a bucket of water splashed into the ocean. We need to see our actions as little compared to the Almighty's blessings. We should gauge our qualities of servanthood, not against that of the community, but the lives of the companions and saints; for Allah ﷻ presents us the *Ansar* and *Muhajir* as examples.



A believer must always live between fear and hope. The heart must carry the fear of suffering Allah's ﷻ punishment and the hope of attaining His mercy. In the words of **Umar** رضي الله عنه, if it is said, "Only one person shall enter paradise", a person should wonder, "Could it be me?". And likewise, if it is said, "Only one person will end up in hell?", a person should shiver, thinking, "That could be me".



The heart of a believer should always be awake with the fear of divine wrath, and peaceful with the hope of receiving divine mercy.



In this life of trial, we have no way of knowing what we will encounter. As the famous saying goes, "The nights are pregnant." (الليالئ حُبلى); yet, with what surprises, we do not know.

Therefore, we must never slip into the laziness of looking at our present situations and thinking, "Look what I have become". We must rather be alert with the worry, "What will become of me?"



NOTHINGNESS, HUMILITY

Human being!

-Do not forget that you are “nothing” before Allah ﷻ who made you the most honourable of all creation at no cost!

-Never keep out of your mind that you came into existence with Allah’s ﷻ command ‘be’, and you will one day go out of it again with His command ‘die’.

-Take stock from how the smallest virus can knock out cold so-called invincible men, when Allah ﷻ commands it to do so.

Nothing can ever harm the one who feels his nothingness.



Rumi ﷺ said:

“The sword slices the neck, but it cannot harm the shadow floored on the ground.”

That is to say, if a believer quits all claims of existence and the ‘I’, and instead attain the nothingness of a shadow, he will be safe from many troubles and disasters.



Human being!

-Do not forget that you are “**nothing**” before Allah ﷻ who made you the most honourable of all creation at no cost!

-Never keep out of your mind that you exist due to Allah’s ﷻ command ‘**be**’, and you will one day expire with His command ‘**die**’.

-Take stock from how the smallest virus knocks out cold so-called invincible men when Allah ﷻ commands it to.



We must never forget that we came into this world not having to pay any fees and with zero capital. Allah creates man from an extremely insignificant material

substance, like a drop of dirt, and sends him into the world in a vulnerable state. It is so that man understands his frailty and nothingness, and refrains from rebelling against his Creator who made him from nothing, and becomes a servant with wisdom.



Why was man not created from a precious material but a worthless drop of fluid that is considered unclean? Why does he return to the earth to rot after death? Here, lies a divine message. Man has no right to become arrogant, when he is a drop of fluid at the start and will become a decaying corpse in the end.



Hence, whatever rank of position he may possess, man must never forget that he is but a weak servant of Allah ﷻ.



Abu Bakr ﷺ said:

“Do not boast! What good can boasting do for a man who is created from dust, and will return to dust to become fodder for maggots?”



Ali ﷺ said:

“What right does the son of Adam have to boast? His begins as fluid and ends up as cadaver. Neither can he create his own provision, nor protect himself from ruin!”



In old times, many walls of sufi lodges were decorated with beautiful calligraphic writings that contained spiritual messages. One of them was “**هَيْج: nothing.**”

The term “**nothing**” represents the slipping away of the ego. Gaining insight into divine mysteries begin when personal desires are left behind. Thus, the starting point of spiritual perfection is to attain the state of “nothingness”. And the aim of Sufism is for man to grasp his frailty and nothingness before His Lord.



In the face of the divine majesty on display across the universe and beyond, the human being is a “nothing”. Compared to the smallest pleasure of paradise, all the pomp in the world is “nothing”. And compared to a moment of punishment in hell, all of the world’s troubles are “nothing”.



For man, everything begins the moment he realises his nothingness. To a heart that has grasped its nothingness, secrets and wisdom become unveiled, one by one. It is in fact said:

مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ فَقَدْ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ

That is to say, to know one's self is to know one's Lord. So, if a person understands how he was created from nothing and brought into the world with zero input, he also acquires a profound understanding of his Creator. Such a servant would neither be left with any energy to rebel, nor would he stake a claim for his own independent existence. People bereft of sensing the humility of nothingness are only those who are yet to come to terms with Allah's ﷻ power and majesty.



The first step in becoming a mature human being is for a person to realise his “**nothingness**”. It is to know that the only force that could deliver him to good and guard him from evil, is his Lord. It is for this reason that the Sufis struggle to carve out and throw away any sense of conceit and arrogance from their inner world.



Finding a way to Allah's lodge of excellence requires one to be liberated from selfish whims and desires in spiritual training, and to thereby lift the veil of the ego that stands in the way.

The mirror of the heart cannot be enlightened without quashing conceit and arrogance. Those who rescue their hearts from the density of egotistic desires and look with the light of the Truth, always find Allah the Almighty in their hearts.

Wise people have expressed this as:

“Once you get out of the way, only your Creator is left.”



The vision, thoughts and expressions of believers who overcome the veil of the ego and become devoted to Allah the Almighty in full submission, are always aligned to divine will. Like lucid mirrors, their hearts are precincts for the manifestation of the Almighty's attributes. They look at everything with a divine gaze.

A hadith *qudsi* talks about these these believers who, in the expression of Sufism, have become annihilated in Allah ﷻ (*fana fillah*) and achieved His friendship:

“My servant gets closest to Me by fulfilling the obligatory deeds I have commanded. And then he draws closer by performing supererogatory acts, until I love him. When I love a him, I become his ear through which he hears, the eyes through which he sees, the hands through which he grasps and feet through which he walks. Whatever he asks Me, I will certainly grant it. And if he seeks My refuge, I will most certainly grant him refuge.”

(Bukhari, Riqaq, 38)



Pride, arrogance and egocentricity are the cancers of spirituality. Sufism aims to stamp out all of these by instilling the notion that every blessing is from Allah ﷻ.



Saints say:

“If a person is left with even a letter from the ego, he cannot become a friend of Allah.”



A man once visited a saint and asked:

“Sir, I am a grave sinner. Could you pray for me?”

So, the saint prayed:

“Allah! One sinner is asking for prayer from another sinner. Please forgive them both!”



Every spiritual master has reached the maturity to guide hearts only by humbly and sincerely serving others and after getting rid of pride and arrogance. They received crowns of honour only after turning their nafs into doormats beneath feet.



The uninformed scoff at the “**threshold**”, and consider it worthless. According to them, a threshold is the doorstep, where maids sit. People dizzy with pride wish to take the seat of honour instead of sitting at the threshold. For the wise, however, the threshold has a very special place.

Yunus Emre, who was out to win his master’s heart, in fact placed his head on the threshold. That is because the threshold is really an exalted school that trains a person to humble himself before creation on the path of acquiring the pleasure of the Creator.



The most important issue in Sufism is to break the pride and arrogance of the self, and quash egocentricity. **Aziz Mahmud Hudayi** was made to sell liver wearing his lavish cloak at the bazaar of the city of Bursa, where he was once the high judge. **Yunus Emre** was trained on the threshold upon which he rested his head. Great scholars such as **Khalid Baghdadi** were made to clean toilets. And through many similar methods, they were asked to do things to shatter the idol of pride; everything begins once a person realises that he is “nothing”.



We must understand that we have not been sent to this world to ‘strut’. In other words, we are not here to become spoilt with the blessings we are given, or to take

pride in them and transgress. Much rather, with an understanding of our frailty and nothingness, we are here to ‘present’ ourselves to the divine presence by placing our foreheads on its threshold. We are here on this school of Earth to receive this education of the heart. Giving the heart this training is the most important kind of education.



The prayer of **Aziz Mahmud Hudayi** رحمته الله wonderfully encapsulates his realisation of his own nothingness:

*It is You who gives, You who takes and You who makes,
All we have is Yours. What else do we have?*



Sufism is to live with the consciousness of being an “*abd-i ajiz*”, a powerless slave, regardless of our social ranks and positions. It is to be able to rid the heart of any claims to existence or the ‘I’, and say, at every blessing and success, “This is your grace, Allah! You are the powerful, whereas I am just a helpless servant.”



If man attributes the wealth, knowledge, ranks and positions to himself, he will fall into the vortex of illusion. And as long as he forgets his frailty, he will remain at a loss. He fends off the threat of the ego the moment he quits saying ‘I’ and instead exclaims, “This is Your blessing and grace, Allah”, and realises it deep within his heart.



Rumi رحمته الله said:

“Whoever has something beautiful should know that it is only borrowed.”



An important part of the etiquette of servanthood is to attribute errors and mistakes to the self, and successes to Allah رحمته الله. Let us not forget that Allah رحمته الله loathes a boastful servant who says, “I succeeded, I earned, I acquired all this through my own power, knowledge and ability”, all the way until that blessing is taken away from him.

So, when we are given success or a blessing, we must never credit it to ourselves. On the contrary, we must show thanks to Allah رحمته الله.



The Battle of Badr, in which the Muslims were triumphant, is laden with many lessons. After the battle, the Almighty Allah revealed the following verse, warning Muslims against getting carried away with pride and arrogance:

“You did not kill them; it was Allah who killed them; and you did not throw, when you threw; it was Allah who threw: so He might test the believers with this excellent trail from Him. Allah is All-Hearing, All-knowing.” (Al-Anfal, 8:17)

In reality, the only force and power lies with Allah the Almighty. Only He is the absolute doer. Using the power which Allah the Almighty has bestowed upon humans, again, depends on His permission. Hence, in every action, we must seek refuge in the Almighty with the words:

لَا حَوْلَ وَ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ

“There is no power nor strength except by Allah, the High, the Almighty.” We must never forget that we are but helpless servants. We must recognise every victory and success as blessings and tests from our Lord.



Upon receiving a blessing, a believer must always offer thanks and attribute it to its true Owner, and say, **“This is from the grace and generosity of my Lord”**.⁸ He must refrain from saying impertinent things like:

“I earned this with my own capacity, knowledge and skills”, and avoid falling into a selfish vulgarity.



A vital etiquette of servanthood is to know that everything good thing comes from Allah, while recognising every error from the ego and looking to make amends.

A believer focused on his own mistakes has no energy left to become occupied with the mistakes of others. This alone is enough worry for one heart.



A spark that throws light upon the heart is for a believer to constantly assess himself, and see his own mistakes before the mistakes of others. A poet says it beautifully:

*No scale is more precise than the eye of conscience,
And no wisdom grander than knowing thy errors!*



A believer must worry about his own flaws and errors, not those of his brothers. He must know that becoming angry with or criticising others will not exonerate him. Accusing others while ignoring personal errors is a folly similar to stabbing others with nails, but not even daring to poke oneself with a needle.



8. See, Al-Naml, 27:40

Our Prophet ﷺ has said:

“Whoever condemns a brother over a sin will not die until he commits the same sin himself.” (Tirmizi, Qiyamah, 53/2505)



Umar رضي الله عنه said:

“A person who abandons meddling in the faults of others is given the ability to rectify the faults of his own.”



Shaykh Sadi said:

“All of you are porters of your own sins. So, do not judge others for their faults and mistakes.”



A believer must act as a guard at the gates of his own heart, and try to prevent even a crumb of pride and arrogance from passing through. Through profound contemplation and self-inspection, he must constantly rummage his heart and get busy with correcting his own faults.



A person who aggrandises himself has, in reality, debased himself in the sight of Allah ﷻ. Whosoever overlooks his faults and fails to understand that he is “nothing” before the infinite power of Allah, will have deluded himself to suppose he possesses a value and strength in himself. And this is essentially to stake a claim of partnership on the Almighty’s attribute of *Al-Kibriya* (The Grand). Yet, *tawhid* has no room for partnership.



Rumi رحمته الله said:

“Be like the soil in humility.”

“Does a rock bloom in spring? Be modest like the soil so you can blossom with gleaming roses and flowers!”

Creatures that roam upon the soil, in fact, trample it with their feet and spill their waste on it. The soil, on the other hand, ever so quiet and compliant, puts up with it, breathes it all into its heart and absorbs it, transforming it to lush-green plants, pristine flowers and delicious fruits to feed every creature walking on it.

The heart of a believer should be like fertile soil. Irrespective of how others treat him, he must always display a goodness and beauty.



The soil is elegant and mature. It responds to malice with kindness. It embraces the corpses of dead creatures in its bosom like a holy relic, and keeps them safe until resurrection like an intimate friend. Man, who is created from soil, must likewise be humble, generous, loyal and selfless.



Prophet Isa ﷺ once asked those around him:

“Where does the seed grow?”

“In soil”, they replied.

Isa ﷺ thereupon said:

“And likewise, wisdom only grows in hearts as humble as the soil.”



The **Prophet** ﷺ has said:

“Allah raises those who show humility for His sake.”



Divine manifestations of mercy shower upon a servant who prostrates in the divine presence with humility. Allah loves humble servants whose faces are on the ground, and grants them unique blessings. This is just like how rainwater pools up, not on high hills, but in hollows down beneath.



Salman Al-Farsi ؓ says:

“Be humble! Whoever is humble on earth for Allah’s sake, has raised his standing on the day of judgment.”



Shah Naqshiband ؒ says:

“On this path, it is an enormous profit to shroud yourself in nothingness, abandon existence for absence and be humble. These are clues to attaining a great dominion.”



The below words beautifully reflect the mindset of looking upon oneself as being on the ‘threshold’. And they are all the more evocative, especially coming from a sultan of wisdom of the calibre of **Shah Naqshiband** ؒ:

*The universe is wheat, while I am just hay,
All is beautiful, while I am astray*



Fudayl Ibn Iyad  has said:

“Whether it comes from an ignorant person or a child, humility is to meekly accept the truth the moment you hear it.”



Humility is a unique virtue which matures a servant and affords him many beautiful traits. In fact:

✓ A humble believer is generous, simply because does not consider himself as owning anything. He does not attribute his wealth to himself. Rather, he sees himself as a mere trustee. A humble servant is never troubled by spending what comes from Allah , again, on His way. On the contrary, it gives him immense joy.

✓ A humble believer is forgiving. And by forgiving more and more, he strives to become worthy of divine mercy.

✓ A humble believer responds to evil with goodness.

✓ A humble believer is patient during troubles. He regards them as means to gain rewards and a purification.

✓ A humble believer is a man of service. With a great sense of responsibility, he regards serving others his duty, and looks upon needy Muslims as his dependents.

✓ A humble believer is altruistic, elegant and a person of fine spirit.



A believer must be a person of balance. Peace is found only when a balance is struck where one is dignified without being arrogant, sincere without being rakish and humble without being base. Tipping this sensitive balance makes dismay unavoidable.



Shaykh Sadi said:

“Excessive anger breeds fear. Being gentle at the wrong place and time, on the other hand, effaces respect.

Firmness and softness must remain together. In fact, a surgeon both cleaves open a wound and applies the balm.

An intelligent person must never always be firm. Neither is he always soft to the point that he loses his dignity.

Again, an intelligent man is never arrogant, nor does he despise himself enough to fall into disrepute.”

AVOIDING PRIDE, CONCEIT

We can never know who is what in the divine court, for the windows of the heart open up only to Allah ﷻ. We must, therefore, refrain from looking down on anyone. Many a person, hurt and scoffed, is in fact among the righteous servants of Allah ﷻ. It is hence said, “Consider each night as the night of Qadr, and everyone you meet as Khidr.”



All evil begins with conceit. A conceited person becomes stupid and dim; and stares at everything with a blank expression.

The Qur’an states:

“Do not strut arrogantly about the earth. You will certainly never split the earth apart nor will you ever rival the mountains in height.” (Al-Isra, 17:37)

“Do not avert your face from people out of haughtiness and do not strut about arrogantly on the earth. Allah does not love anyone who is vain or boastful.”
(Luqman, 31:18)

“Do not gloat. Allah does not love people who gloat!” (Al-Qasas, 28:76)



The Prophet ﷺ said:

“It suffices as sin to look down on a Muslim brother.” (Muslim, Birr, 32)



One of the biggest sins is to look down on Allah’s ﷻ servants. Man must ask himself, “Are you certain about your last breath that you scorn other people?”



Shaykh Sadi said:

“Do not needlessly and excessively get angry with a slave doing your chores and under your command. Know your limits and refrain from excess! What a great ignominy

it would be if, on the day of resurrection, the slave is set free and you, his master, is shackled up in chains.”



Ali عليه السلام has said:

“A person’s high rank is no excuse to exaggerate his small favour; nor is his low rank an excuse to undervalue his great favour.”



Our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ abolished the “**caste system**”, which is the division of society into classes. **Bilal Habashi** رضي الله عنه was a former slave. He became “a prophet’s *muadhdhin*”, calling everyone to prayer from on top of the Kaaba. Again, based on his abilities, our **Prophet** ﷺ appointed **Usama** رضي الله عنه, the son of his freed slave **Zayd** رضي الله عنه, as the commander of the army, even though he was only twenty years old.

In Islam, the only measure of superiority is “**taqwa**”.



Often, an employer rebukes an employee. And, even if he is right, the employee cannot remonstrate, for he knows he will be sacked. A believer must always consider that having power or a superior rank does not give him the right to see himself higher than a fellow Muslim brother. As is stated in the Qur’an:

“The best of you in the sight of Allah is the one with the most righteous taqwa.”

(Al-Hujurat, 49:13)



A believer can never be condescending towards a brother. “**Taqwa**” is the only measure of supremacy in the sight of Allah ﷻ; and this is a secret enclosed in hearts which is accessible only to Him. How a person will die, that is to say, whether he will give his final breath as a Muslim, is unknown to us all, except for prophets and those they have informed. Hence, being full of oneself and scorning Allah’s ﷻ servants, is among of the greatest sins.



Only Allah knows whose heart has higher levels of taqwa and who, therefore, is better. It is for this reason He commands:

“You who believe! people should not ridicule others who may be better than themselves.” (Al-Hujurat, 49:11)

In other words, people we happen to deride may possess better versions of the qualities we assume have. Thus, looking down on people is essentially an attitude that lowers us.



We can never know who is who in the divine sight, for the windows of the heart open up only to Allah ﷻ. We must, therefore, refrain from hurting or looking down on anyone. Many a person, hurt and scoffed, is in fact among the righteous servants of Allah ﷻ. It is hence said, “Consider each night as the night of *Qadr*, and everyone you meet as *Khidr*.”



A backbiter sees himself superior, while looking at the brother whose faults he is digging up, as inferior. Backbiting is a person’s conceit reflecting on to the tongue. Allah sternly warns people against mocking people with hand and eye gestures or with harsh words, either to their faces or behind their backs.

“Woe to every faultfinding backbiter!” (Al-Humazah, 104:1)



Few disasters destroys man more and take him to divine wrath swifter than conceit and looking down on others.



Divine wrath is inescapable for a person carried away in pride and conceit and who therefore stakes a claim to his Lord’s attribute of *Al-Kibriya*.



Tyrants who attribute the strength and power given by the Almighty to themselves, try to compete with Allah’s ﷻ glory and grandeur, and who say ‘I’ in the face of the Real;

Bygone nations like the Aad and Thamud who exclaimed, **“Who is mightier than us?”**;

And the Korahs swayed by a brazen pride and conceit who said, **“I earned this wealth through my knowledge and skill!”** have all long since been destroyed by divine wrath.

The sun that once rose above their magnificent palaces, now dawns upon their ruins.



Rumi ﷺ says:

“Intelligent people who hear about what happened to the nations of Aad and the Pharaoh will abandon pride and conceit. If they do not, then they themselves will meet a wrath that will turn them into lessons of ignominy for those to come.”



Throughout the history of mankind, by forgetting their Creator and relying on their worldly successes and powers, fools have assumed themselves to be invincible and immortal; and idolising their own egos. History abounds in such examples.

In 1912, for example, the **Titanic** built to cross the oceans was dubbed “the unsinkable”. On its first voyage, however, the ship crashed into a huge iceberg and sunk into the depths of the ocean.

Similarly, in 1986, the fatefully named **Challenger** space shuttle, built to travel into space, exploded in the skies 73 seconds after its launch.

Nimrod banked on his strength in claiming to be a god; but as if to mock him, he was destroyed by a fly.

Allah annihilated the brazenly rebellious **Pharaoh** in the depths of the Red Sea.

The proud **Abraham**, hell bent on demolishing the Kaaba, had complete confidence in his army reinforced by elephants, which were the tanks of the time, to the degree that he believed no force could stop him. Yet, when he reached Mecca Allah turned them into chewed grass not through lions, tigers or wild beasts, but as if to ridicule them, through pebbles dropped by the smallest of birds.

Allah who is ‘*Al-Mutakabbir*’ (The Dominant) has no room for partners.



Our **Prophet** ﷺ said:

“A person who has an atoms weight of pride in his heart cannot enter paradise.”
(Muslim, Iman, 147-149)



Spiritual peaks cannot be climbed with dull hearts. And one cannot step into the peaceful and tranquil climes of paradise with the weight of bad traits such as pride, conceit and selfishness whose roots lie in hell.



Esad Erbili ﷺ said:

“The first sin in the sight of Allah that deprives a person, is to attribute independent existence to the self.”



No matter how much we may know, we must never forget that knowledge has its limits. It is a grave mistake to say, “I know everything!”. Regardless of who they are, each person is a teacher only of what he knows, and a student of what he lacks.



Abu'l-Hasan Kharraqani رحمته الله has said:

“Every person boasts of what he knows until realising he knows nothing. At that point, he begins to feel shame over what he thinks he knows; and that is when marifah (true knowledge, wisdom and closeness to the Truth) finds perfection. True knowledge is knowing that you know nothing.”



It is easy to correct a person who is aware of his ignorance. What is difficult is to correct stubborn fools and proud pedants who think they are scholars.



Ahmad Ibn Hanbal رحمته الله says:

“The fools among men are those who enjoy being praised.”



Imam Shafi رحمته الله has said:

“The biggest tyrant is he who, after rising in rank, becomes rude to his relatives, does not recognise his friends and acts proud towards people of virtue.”



Abu Ali Rudbari رحمته الله says:

“Even if it be just the once, a person who looks at himself with more value than it merits, loses the ability to gaze wisely at any being in the universe.”



All evil begins with conceit. A conceited person becomes stupid and dim; and stares at everything with a blank expression.

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal رحمته الله has said:

“No intelligence can be found inside a conceited head.”



Rebelling against Allah ﷻ, who endowed man with a mind, instead of obeying Him, is to become a member of the nation of Iblis, the devil.

Iblis became lost in conceit by looking down on **Adam** عليه السلام. For the sake of his conceit, he even rebelled against Allah. The first quarrel and the first rational objection ensued after Iblis fell into conceit. And once conceit veiled his reason, he became deaf to Allah’s ﷻ command.

Using the mind is not about being ungrateful to Allah ﷻ who gave it. It is rather to submit to Him and become thankful. It is to use the mind under the guidance of revelation.

Unable to grasp this, the devil objected to Allah the Almighty using the mind He gave. Due to his conceit, he could not repent either, as he became spiritually ruined on a path of no return.

Such is the terrible end for those who idolise their flawed reason above divine truths.



By eating the forbidden fruit, **Adam** ﷺ violated the divine order; yet, he instantly repented. Despite knowing his mistake, the **devil**, on the other hand, felt it beneath him to repent, and remained rebellious.

Remorsefully owning up to a mistake and asking for forgiveness without insisting on the error, is therefore the most crucial thing.



Rumi ﷺ said:

“Iblis was banished from the divine gates for the nerve he showed in the shameless way he spoke to the Almighty...”

Should you wish to crush the devil’s head, open your eyes and see that what destroyed the devil was a lack of manners!

A person without manners has really bid farewell to humanity; for manners is what separates man from animals.”



The hardest vice for man to quit is selfishness. Because of his feeling of ‘self’, man always becomes enslaved to his ego; and much like the devil, sees himself in the right. A person with a feeling of self is worried about making concessions for himself by exposing the faults of others. For that reason, he enjoys backbiting and spying on people. Much like Iblis, he displays conceit. He sees himself immune to mistakes and flaws. He virtually feels exempt from divine warnings. The thought that he is also subjected to these commands, does not even cross his mind.

Hence, the greatest and foremost task of Sufism is to eradicate pride from the heart.



One of the early sufis, **Abu Hashim As-Sufi** ﷺ has said:

“Carving out an entrenched pride from the heart is harder than burrowing a mountain with a needle.”



My late father **Musa Efendi** ﷺ would explain the scope of a heart gained by salvation from pride, conceit and egocentricity, as:

“It all depends on a person abandoning selfish pride. Once man casts aside his ego, that is when he begins to cover distances on the path of perfection. This seems so easy on the outside; yet, walking out on the ego is so difficult.

Once the ego is left behind, everything offers peace and everyone becomes a friend! A person of this ilk begins to feel love and only the best of sentiments towards everyone, especially Muslims.”



FORGIVING, TOLERANCE, DEFEATING ANGER

Allah the Almighty asks:

“Would you not want Allah to forgive you?” (Al-Nur, 24:22)

Since we need Allah’s ﷺ forgiveness, we must forgive others.



Instead of getting angry with people insulting him, Imam Shafi would say:

“If what you say is true, may Allah forgive me! If it is not, then may Allah forgive you!”

Allah’s Messenger ﷺ would never get angry for himself. Only when the right of another person was violated or the truth was infringed on, would he speak up. For the sake of Allah ﷻ, he would forgive the mistakes and rude behaviour directed at him personally.

As members of our Blessed Prophet’s nation, we must also embody his conduct:

-Instead of remembering to forgive, reconcile and become brothers just during Ramadan or Eid, we must become warm-hearted **“people of mercy”** all the time.

-Instead of taking personal injustices to heart and turning them into matters of pride, we must, for the sake of Allah ﷻ, overcome flaws such as feeling aggrieved, becoming offended or severing ties.

-We must look on bearing grudges and pursuing vengeance as a shallowness of understanding.

-We must acknowledge forgiving mistakes directed to us personally, as means to cleanse ourselves and atone for our sins.



Rumi ﷺ said:

“If you have suffered one act of treachery from your brother, remember that you also enjoyed from him a thousand instances of loyalty! Goodness is like an intercessor against sin.”



Shaykh Sadi has said:

“If you are hurt, be patient; as forgiving will cleanse you from sin.”



Rumi رحمته has said:

“You get mad at every hardship. You bear a grudge against every insolent one. But how will you become a mirror without being polished?”



The possessor of forgiveness and mercy is none but Allah. Hence, believers are forgiving and merciful to the extent of their love for Allah ﷻ.

How can foolish hearts, who do not endeavour to forgive Allah’s ﷻ servants today, ask for forgiveness in the divine presence tomorrow?



Our Lord ﷻ is **At-Tawwab**, the Ever-Returning and if we wish to gain a share of this quality of His, we must also accept the apologies of people who seek to make amends.



We receive the mercy of the Compassionate Allah by showing mercy to His servants. We stand in need of our Lord’s grace and compassion.

We plead, *“Our Lord! Please forgive us and accept our worship!”*. But we must also become generous and graceful to His needy servants and all His creation, so that we have the cheek to ask for personal forgiveness.



Umar رضي الله عنه has said:

“Mercy cannot be shown to the merciless, forgiveness to the unforgiving and pardon to the unpardoning.” (Bukhari, *Al-Adabu'l-Mufrad*, p. 415, no: 371)



Allah asks:

“Would you not want Allah to forgive you?” (Al-Nur, 24:22)

Since we need Allah’s ﷻ forgiveness, we must forgive others.



Wise believers prefer to respond to the wrongs committed against them, not with justice, but with forgiveness and mercy. This is because when their deeds are weighed, they would also not want Allah to treat them with justice but instead with mercy and forgiveness.

Besides, is not our entire aim to be treated with Allah's grace and favour? This is why righteous believers do not try to even the score when inflicted with cruelty and torment. For the love of Allah ﷻ, they hold fast to patience and the path of forgiveness and tolerance.



Our **Prophet** ﷺ says:

“A person with no share of gentleness has been deprived of the good.” (Tirmidhi, Birr, 67/2013)



The plaque **“Hoş gör yâ Hû”** (“Tolerate for God's sake”) that adorns the walls of Sufi lodges is a caution laden with immense wisdom.

“Hoş gör yâ Hû” is an instruction to neither hurt others, nor be hurt by others.

In another sense, it instils the notion, “Do not be blinded by secondary causes, and instead pay attention to the real cause of everything, which is Allah, and be content with divine providence!”



When wronged, a true believer shows tolerance for the sake of Allah ﷻ. No matter what hardship he is tested with, he steers clear of rebelling and instead remains patient and content, saying:

“This is a trial from my Lord. I am pleased with His will, so long as He is pleased with me.”

In so doing, not only is he saved from the spiritual losses of being hung up with secondary causes, he also receives the rewards of turning to Allah ﷻ under all circumstances. Simpler put, he is a winner, in good times and bad.



Ali ؑ says:

*“A person without proper courtesy towards Allah, His Messenger and saints has no share of wisdom in his heart. **Courtesy towards Allah** is to hide secrets. Towards **His Messenger** is to handle oneself among men with good character traits. And towards **the saint's** is to put up with the people's torment.”*



Our **Prophet** ﷺ wants every single member of his nation to join alongside him in paradise. For this reason, he spoke to each person according to his capacity. He once told **Anas Ibn Malik** رضي الله عنه:

“Son! If you can make it to the morning and night without carrying an ounce of deceit towards anyone, then do it! This is my sunnah, son. Whoever revives a sunnah of mine, has loved me. And whoever has loved me, will be alongside me in paradise.”
(Tirmidhi, Ilm, 16/2678)



Imam Shafi رضي الله عنه has said:

“The most restless person on Earth is he who bears grudges and jealousy in his heart.”



Ali رضي الله عنه says:

“Harbour good will towards the servants of Allah. It will save you from a lot of fatigue.”



Shaykh Sadi says:

“A wise and tactful person must not feel hurt and upset if insulted by the tactless. A bad stone may break a golden bowl. But it would neither increase the worth of the stone, nor decrease the value of the gold.”



Instead of getting angry with people insulting him, **Imam Shafi** would say:

“If what you say is true, may Allah forgive me! If it is not, then may Allah forgive you!”



Hearts spiritually ripened through divine tests acquire an exceptional resilience. They no longer break or get broken. They neither hurt others nor become hurt themselves. In fact, the first lesson of Sufi training is **not hurting**, while the last is **not being hurt**.



To an extent, **not hurting** is in a person’s hands. Yet, **not getting hurt** is hard, as the heart has no will. Silencing the complaints of the heart against personal injustices is therefore a prowess only of high spirits.



Shaykh Sadi says:

“A vast sea does not become murky with a single stone. A hurt person is like shallow water.”



Mercy and forgiveness are vast realities only of hearts that have made spiritual progress. To forgive people's faults for Allah's ﷻ sake, is a mindset that belongs exclusively to mature believers.



The Almighty Allah states:

“The believers are brothers. So, make peace between your brothers.” (Al-Hujurat, 49:10)

“Put things right between you. Obey Allah and His Messenger if you are believers.” (Al-Anfal, 8:1)



The Qur'an explicitly commands believers to patch up relations with each another if they are not on speaking terms. In other words, the brotherhood of Islam requires one to give up the, **“I am right, you are wrong”**, and forget past hostilities for Allah's ﷻ sake. Often, it compels one to adopt the virtue of forgiving a fellow Muslim brother by sacrificing from one's ego. Remaining aloof to a fellow Muslim, is to disobey Allah's ﷻ command.



Yusuf ﷻ responded to the cruelty of his brothers with a relentless flow of kindness and generosity. And in the end, they confessed, **“By Allah, Allah has favoured you above us. Clearly we were in the wrong.”** (Yusuf, 12:91)

Yusuf ﷻ yet displayed another virtue, when he said:

“No blame will fall on you. Today you have forgiveness from Allah. He is the Most Merciful of the merciful.” (Yusuf, 12:92) Not only did he forgive his brothers, he wanted Allah to forgive them, too.



In our time, when the matter-spirit balance has tipped in favour of matter, the love of faith is fast melting away and deep cracks have begun to appear in spirits, worldly interests have divided and placed coldness among many believers, as ignorance, selfishness and lack of concern for each other weakens Muslim brotherhood.

Yet, the **Prophet** ﷺ who is our greatest example and guide, wishes for believers to prefer each other over themselves, and live in a genuine environment of love.

This love, however, is not just an empty claim. Without burdening and sharing a brother's pain, and showing sacrifice and forgiveness, true love remains just a mere word.



Allah's Messenger ﷺ one day asked:

"Should I tell you of a deed more virtuous than fasting, praying and giving alms?"

"Yes, Messenger of Allah", replied the companions. He then said:

"It is to reconcile people by resolving their disputes. Sowing discord among people, on the other hand, scrapes off faith from its root." (Abu Dawud, Adab, 50/4919)



Jafar Sadiq ؑ said:

"A person who draws the sword of rebellion from its scabbard, slices himself. A person who digs a hole for his brother will himself fall into that hole."



It is crucial to avoid behaviour that will cause regret in the grave, such as engaging in arguments and breaking hearts over fleeting and passing interests. One must build indestructible bridges of love between hearts, and look to spread the peace and tranquillity of Islam in society. This unity is a means to attract many a good, and repel many an evil.

Rumi ؑ said:

"Become friends with people. The more crowded the caravan, the more it will break the backs of bandits."



Ali ؑ has said:

"The most unfortunate of all people are those who cannot make friends. Even more unfortunate are those who lose their friends."



Our **Prophet** ﷺ says:

"I advise you to be one and together, and avoid separation. The devil is with the lonely, while he is further away from two. Whosoever wants to be right in the middle of paradise, should stick with the community!" (Tirmidhi, Fitan, 7/2165; Ahmad, I, 26, V, 370-371)



Our **Prophet** ﷺ also says:

“Every Monday and Thursday, deeds are presented to Allah. Apart from he who has enmity with a brother, every sin of a person who does not ascribe partners to Allah, is forgiven. It is said to the angels, ‘Delay these two until they make peace.’” (Muslim, Birr, 36; Abu Dawud, Adab, 47)



Again, our **Prophet** ﷺ said:

“It is impermissible for a believer to shun his brother for more than three days. If three days have passed, he should greet him again. If the person responds to his greeting, then both will share the rewards. But should he ignore the greeting, then that person will have sinned. As for the greeter, he will have made peace.” (Abu Dawud, Adab, 47/4912)



The **Prophet** ﷺ said:

“Spread greetings, feed the poor and the needy and become brothers the way you are commanded to by Allah the Mighty and Majestic.”

“The most blessed person in the sight of Allah, and the closest to Him, is he who greets first.” (Tirmidhi, Istizan, 6)



The Almighty Allah states:

“Obey Allah and His Messenger and do not quarrel among yourselves lest you lose heart and your momentum disappear.” (Al-Anfal, 8:46)



Unless Muslims retain their unity and community, not only will they become deprived of Allah’s ﷻ love, they will also lose their strength and vigour. Hence, a *hadith* says:

“There is mercy in togetherness and punishment in separation.” (Ahmad, IV, 278, 375; Haythami, V, 217)



Abu Bakr ﷺ said:

“Do not bicker with your neighbour. When everyone leaves, he will remain!”



The Allah declares:

“You who believer! enter Islam totally. Do not follow in the footsteps of shaytan.” (Al-Baqarah, 2:208)



Muslims are brothers who believe in the one god, Allah ﷻ, are members of the same Prophet’s nation and stand shoulder to shoulder to pray in mosques. They also look upon each other as trustees and dependants. The brotherhood of faith is superior to the brotherhood of blood, of being from the same parents. Besides, kinship and biological relations have no value if there is no closeness of heart.

Kinship and biological relations, in fact, proved to be of no avail for **Canaan**, the fourth son of **Prophet Nuh** ﷺ. Like the rest of the disbelievers, he ended up drowning in the flood.

The Almighty issued the following warning to **Prophet Nuh** ﷺ:

“He said, ‘Nuh, he is definitely not of your family!’ (Hud, 11:46)



All Muslims are brothers. Racism, on the other hand, which first began with shaytan claiming supremacy over Adam on grounds that he was created from fire when Adan was created from soil, is strictly forbidden in Islam. The Prophet’s Farewell Sermon is consummate proof.

During times when religious sentiments weaken and ignorance casts its cloud, ethnic solidarity can unfortunately surpass religious solidarity. Islam is the only force that can stop racism. Islam has pronounced all believers as brothers, regardless of their race. Besides, true brotherhood is the brotherhood of faith, of the heart. Without it, biological brotherhood has no value, anyway.

Prophet Adam’s ﷺ two sons, Habil and Qabil were biological brothers but their hearts were completely different. Qabil became riddled with egotistic ambitions and jealousy to end up becoming a murderer. In contrast, Habil became a hero of virtue by preferring to become an innocent murder victim over killing someone for no reason.



The Qur’an states:

“Hold fast to the rope of Allah all together, and do not separate. Remember Allah’s blessing to you when you were enemies and Allah joined your hearts together so that you became brothers by His blessing.” (Al-i Imran, 3:103)



Since Islam literally means submitting to Allah ﷻ and living in peace, what is essential in Islam is acquiring peace, harmony and tranquillity. And the duty of Muslims is to reform themselves and society to enable a general state of peace and harmony. This is possibly through a mutual love and help between fellow brothers and sisters living together in unity and solidarity.



Luqman the Wise ﷺ says:

“Son! Three things make themselves known in three things. Gentleness is known during anger, bravery on the battle field and brotherhood during need.”



The **Prophet** ﷺ says:

“The brave person is not someone who outwrestles another. The brave is he who defeats his anger.” (Bukhari, Adab, 76)



Anger is a momentary state of delirium during which reason is cancelled out. The best precaution to rein in anger is to possess virtues such as tolerance and gentleness. The Almighty praises the virtuous believers able to display this tenacity and strength of will as:

“Race each other to the forgiveness of your Lord and a Garden as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the godfearing: those who give in both times of ease and hardship, those who control their rage and pardon other people - Allah loves the good-doers.” (Al-i Imran, 3:133-134)



A man with anger issues came to the **Prophet** ﷺ for advice. He was told:

“لَا تُغْضَبْ: Do not get angry!”

And although the man repeated the request a number of times, he got the same response each time. (See, Bukhari, Adab, 76)



Becoming angry over personal offences and looking for vengeance, is an act of self-gratification that stems from the lower self. On the other hand, it is a unique nobility that attracts divine mercy when a believer forgives, despite having the opportunity to take revenge.



Ahnaf Ibn Qays ﷺ says:

“Brotherhood is a fine and elegant gem. It wilts unless you protect it. Guard it by always defeating your anger, so that your oppressor comes to you to apologise. Make do with what you have. Neither look for more for yourself, nor dwell on your brother’s fault.” (Ihya, II, 466)



Amr Ibn Al-As ﷺ had a successful stint as governor in Egypt. When asked for the secret behind his success, he explained:

“I always think as though there is a rope between me and the people around me. When the rope becomes too tight to the point of snapping, I loosen it a little. And when I feel the rope has become too loose, I quickly tighten in. In so doing, I maintain a balance in my relations with people.”



Umar ﷺ has said:

“Be strong without resorting to violence, and gentle without showing weakness.”



Being overly firm breeds hatred. Being overly tolerant, on the other hand, weakens authority. Success lies in striking a balance between the two.



The **Prophet** ﷺ says:

“Love your friend moderately, as a day may come when he becomes your enemy. Hate your enemy moderately, as a day may come when he becomes your friend.” (Tirmidhi, Birr, 60)



Ali ﷺ has said:

“If you want to be friends with someone, first keep a certain distance. If he acts normally towards you during this time, then become friends. If not, turn back.”



Our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ, who the Allah gifted to us as the exemplar beyond compare, was the gentlest of all mankind. Hence, in social interactions, he would always prefer ease, and never give way to difficulty nor give in to anger. Unless there was an infringement of justice, he would never get angry, and would effortlessly forgive all errors directed to him personally. He would always uphold courtesy however rude a behaviour, and respond to evil with good.



The Qur'an declares:

“A good action and a bad action are not the same. Repel the bad with something better and, if there is enmity between you and someone else, he will be like a bosom friend.” (Fussilat, 41:34)



The Prophet ﷺ says:

“None of you should be like the spineless who say, ‘I am with people, and if they do good to me, I will do good back. Yet, if they do bad to me, so will I.’ Rather, train yourselves to respond to good with good, and keep away from committing injustice when treated badly.” (Tirmidhi, Birr, 63/2007)



Responding to evil with kindness is a virtue that conquers hearts. The worldly aspect of this virtue is bitter, but its eternal side is sweet. This conduct is an art of the heart and victory of the spirit. And the honour of this victory is as great as the hardships faced to get there.



Our Prophet ﷺ was often subjected to rude behaviour. His heart, however, was a vast ocean of mercy, and instead of getting irritated, he would become sad due the fact that the people were wronging themselves. So long as his Creator was pleased with him, he brushed aside the assaults and torments of mortals.



Not only did the Prophet ﷺ forgive all the personal injustices directed at him, he also responded to evil with good. When the people of Taif stoned him, he prayed not for their destruction but for their guidance. After the conquest of Mecca, instead of seeking reprisal against the pagans who, for years, had inflicted all kinds of torment and torture, he declared an amnesty, and thereby paved the way for the most ingrained enemies to turn into genuine friends.



The virtue of every good action is measured by its hardships. For example, it is extremely difficult to wish the best for a person when one has just been exposed to his evil. Hence, it is said, “Responding to good with good is a habit, while responding to evil with good, is an art.”



Hallaj Mansur has a special place inside the hearts of the wise. While getting stoned by a public unaware of the spiritual states manifesting him, he exclaimed:

“My Lord! They do not know. So, forgive the people stoning me, before you forgive me!”



Islamic morals contain three steps in responding to any evil directed at one personally:

- 1) Suppressing anger.
- 2) Forgiving.
- 3) Being good and charitable.



When asked about morality, **Sahl Tustari** رضي الله عنه replied:

“The smallest degree of morality is to endure torment and refrain from seeking revenge, and to feel sorry and pray for even the tyrant.” (Ihya, III, 163)



Our Prophet ﷺ says:

“Do not become swayed by bad habits such as jealousy towards one another. Do not try to take your anger and hatred out on each other. Do not pry into each other’s faults. Do not eavesdrop on one another’s conversations. Servants of Allah! be brothers!”
(Muslim, Birr, 30)



If we want the Almighty to conceal our faults on the day of resurrection, we must conceal the faults of His servants.



Brotherhood in Islam is like two hands that wash each other; no different to the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar*.



The first condition of striking a friendship with a brother is to become ‘a helper and not a hindrance’. In other words, we must not burden friends unnecessarily, but rather try to help carry their own burden.



The bond and love of a friend who causes no trouble lasts forever.



GIVING THANKS

No one is created because he deserves it. To be created out of nothing and having nothing to offer in return, then to be crafted, not as a snake, lizard, wolf, bird or any other species in a vast array of possibilities, but as the noblest all beings, the 'human being'; and then to be given faith among all human beings, and further, to be made part of the community of Final Prophet Muhammad ﷺ out of 124,000 prophets, are all enormous blessings for which we are utterly incapable of truly showing thanks.

Even if we were to prostrate in thanks for just these and not raise our heads for an entire lifetime, it would still be insufficient.

No person is created because they deserve it. To be created out of nothing despite having no capital to offer in return, then to be crafted as the noblest all beings, the 'human being'; and then to be given faith among all human beings, and further, to be made part of the community of the Final Prophet Muhammad ﷺ out of 124,000 prophets, are all enormous blessings for which we are utterly incapable of truly showing thanks.

Even if we were to prostrate in thanks for just these and not raise our heads for an entire lifetime, it would still be insufficient.



We must always remember that we have been born into this world as humans, as believers, as members of the Muhammedan nation and as addressees of the Holy Qur'an without paying any fees, purely through the gift of our Lord. All these are blessings for which we can never properly show thanks.



Thanking Allah ﷻ is itself a blessing that requires gratitude. In other words, over and beyond the innumerable blessings he is given, a servant must also thank for the fact he is able to thank. He must thank for the ability to remember Allah ﷻ, to be able to prostrate to Him and be His servant.



Whether we are aware of them or not, we must thank the Almighty for all the blessings we have. A proper reflection immediately reveals that we are constantly showered with uncountable blessings. Even a single breath demands two thanks; one for inhaling and the other for exhaling.



Observing any creatures of Allah ﷻ, a believer must think, “*I could have been in its place, and it, in mine*”; and intensify his gratitude for the Almighty with a deeper appreciation of His blessings, gifts and grace. Instead of boasting, he should be thankful. He must escape the ignorance of attributing blessings and successes to his own ego, and instead thank Allah, the provider.



Shaykh Ash-Shibli رحمته الله says:

“To thank is to see, not the blessing, but the provider.”



We would feel we owe a thanks to a person who brings us a bunch of flowers. So, how thankful should we be towards the One who created those flowers?

We also feel morally indebted to a person who offers us a glass of water. But what about the Almighty who created that water, and sifted it through the magnificent filters of the atmosphere to present it to us in a pure, sweet and crystal-clean form?



A believer who knows that both blessings and hardships are in the hands of Allah the Almighty, does not get hung up on mortal beings, who are their vehicles. He thanks the person acting as means for the delivery of those blessings but glorifies and expresses gratitude to Allah the Almighty. Provision do not blind him to the Provider.



True gratitude is to acknowledge the real owner of blessings, and become a servant to Him through words and deeds.



We have come into this world without paying a fee. But we need to proceed to the hereafter with an effort to pay all the dues which all these blessings demand.



The Qur’an states:

“Then you will be asked that Day about the pleasures you enjoyed.” (Al-Takathur, 102:8)

When this verse was revealed, a needy man who owned nothing, stood and asked:

“Do I have anything of the blessings for which we will be summoned?”

The **Prophet** ﷺ replied:

“A shadow, a pair of sandals and cold water” to indicate that even he will not be exempt from questioning. (See, Suyuti, VIII, 619)



Allah states that **“He subjected whatever is in the heavens and earth to our command.”**⁹ We must respond to all these favours through praise, gratitude and remembrance of Allah ﷻ.



Muhammed Esad Erbili ﷻ defined thankfulness as:

“Being thankful does not simply consist of saying, verbally, ‘Lord! Thanks be to You!’ Much rather, being thankful is to use each divine blessing in line with its purpose of creation.”



Thanking comes in two forms:

Thanking with the heart which is to anchor in the heart, the reality that Allah ﷻ is the true owner of all blessings.

Thanking with action, on the other hand, is to avoid using those blessings in deeds that displease Allah ﷻ, and to rather turn them into means of gaining divine pleasure by using them in ways that please Him.



Every day during prayer, we say at least forty times:

“All praise is due to Allah, Lord of all the worlds” (Al-Fatiha, 1:2) and thereby honour and thank the Almighty with our tongues. Yet, this must not remain on the tongue alone. As **Junayd Baghdadi** ﷻ has said:

“Thankfulness is to not rebel against Allah using the blessing He has given.”



Whether they be physical or spiritual, known or unknown, we are fed with the countless blessings of the Almighty. To appreciate their value and show thanks, we must constantly reflect on them. For instance, let us think about the blessing of the **“eye”**:

If we had been blind from birth and, years down the line, we were given the ability to see, who knows how elated we would become! Who knows how enthralled

9. See, Al-Jathiyah, 45:13.

we would be in the face of the sublime beauty and perfection that is vision! We would be in thrall of our Lord's power and become filled with immense feelings of gratitude.

If we really were seeing, for the first time, the myriad of shades that beam from colours and light, the magnificent scenery the sun paints over the horizon as it sets, the stars, the moonlight, the night, the day, the vast oceans and much more, who knows how captivated we would be! We would become entranced by the incredible pleasure and inexplicable joy of the blessing of vision alone. We would not look upon the things we saw at that moment superficially as we do now, but wisely with contemplation and admiration as if staring into the depths of a bottomless ocean.

Essentially, if we can use all these specifics regarding sight as a template for all the other blessings that transpire in us such as hearing, walking, reasoning and so forth, we may better appreciate the enormity of our debt of gratitude.



The Qur'an states:

“Say: ‘It is He who brought you into being and gave you hearing, sight and hearts. How little thanks you show!’” (Al-Mulk, 67:23)



Every limb Allah ﷻ has given us demands its own separate thanks. And each blessing has a thanks of its kind.

Thanking for sight is to protect it from staring at forbidden things. It demands a thoughtful gaze through spiritual windows that remind of divine power, art and majesty.

Thanking for hearing is to protect the ears from listening to useless speech and backbiting, and lending them instead to the blessed sounds of the Qur'an, spiritual discourses, good advice and the call of the *adhan*.

Thanking for the mouth is to either say good words or remain silent.

Thanking for the body is to use the God-given strength and power in service to people and worship to God as He is pleased with.

Thanking for the heart is to have it constantly reflect on blessings and, by doing so, ensure that it never forgets Allah.



Shaykh Sadi Shirazi says the following to invite us to reflect on our limbs:

“The tongue is there to thank. One who knows the truth never uses it for gossip.

The ears are there to listen to the Qur'an and advice; not for false and vain speech.

The eyes are there to gaze at Allah's power and art; not to pick out the faults of others."



No sane person would accept an offer such as, "You can have the whole of Istanbul, but you have to give me your sight!" Who would possibly say 'yes', if someone was to say, "Take the entire world, in return for health"? Anybody would know that this amounts to an imprisonment filled with discomfort and torment.

It is for this reason that **Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent** said:

*People deem the state as the best of wealth
But no state is better than a breath of health*

A proper reflection on the countless blessings that transpire in us would entail such an immense gratitude that we would begin to think we have come into this world just to offer thanks for all these.



A wise man offers the following advice for a peaceful life free of heedlessness and full of gratitude and contentment:

*"Now and then, go to **hospitals** and visit the sick! Unlike those poor people, think of how you are free of illnesses and give thanks for the blessing of health you have!*

*Now and then, go to **prisons** to reflect on the inmates' painful lives of incarceration! Think about how it only takes a split-second of anger to commit murder, that prisons are also home to the innocent, and, one day, it could also be you! Thank Allah for protecting you from falling into that state, and pray for the freedom of those inside!*

*Then, go to **cemeteries** and listen to the silent cries coming from the gravestones! Think about how remorse is of no use once the blessing of life is over! Know the value of time! Pray and repent for those lying in the grave! And try to make the most of your remaining days with more praise, thanks and remembrance!"*



Allah states:

"If you are grateful, I will certainly give you increase, but if you are ungrateful, My punishment is severe." (Ibrahim, 14:7)

Gratitude is means to amplify a blessing. Being unappreciative and unthankful, on the other hand, leads to losing the blessing.



Every believer who wishes for his blessings to continue and proliferate must embrace both verbal and physical gratitude. He must regard sharing these blessings

wholeheartedly with the less fortunate as a duty. He must remember that a blessing without thanks will slip out of his hands.



Ali  says:

“Even when you are poor, give charity to the best of your capacity and enter into trade with Allah. Offer plenty of thanks when you lay your hands on a blessing! Do not ever let it slip away through little gratitude.”



When given a blessing, whoever says:

“This is a gift from my Lord; all thanks is due to Him for granting it to me”, the Almighty will keep amplifying his provisions in both this life and the next.



The Almighty states:

“Remember Me – I remember you. Give thanks to Me and do not be ungrateful!” (Al-Baqarah, 2:152)



Ingratitude, the opposite of gratitude, is to ignore the glaring truth that all blessings are from Allah , and to flatter the ego with thoughts like, “It was I who obtained this through my own strength.”



The Qur’an states:

“We guided him on the way – whether he is grateful or ungrateful.” (Al-Insan, 76:3)

Whether man chooses gratitude or ingratitude, he can neither benefit nor harm Allah in the slightest. Man, on the other hand, will reap the outcome of his choice not only in this life, but also in the grave, the day of resurrection and the eternal life to follow.



The Qur’an states:

“He has given you everything you have asked Him for. If you tried to count Allah’s blessings, you could never count them.” (Ibrahim, 7:14)

How appalling an ingratitude it is to be dragged into sin and rebellion instead of thanking Allah  for His countless blessings and working to earn His pleasure!



If a friend kept gifting things to us without end, we would feel ashamed to offend him in the slightest. We would meticulously avoid any action that could hurt him. We would instead act in a way that pleases him, and look to express our gratitude at every moment.

On this fleeting world in which we live, Allah inundates us with countless blessings. Through these blessings, He puts us to a test to see who is grateful and who is not. He reveals that the grateful will attain divine mercy, while the ungrateful will meet divine wrath.



Rumi ﷺ asks:

“Man! Disloyalty is a blemish even in dogs. In that case, how, as a human being, can you be disloyal and ungrateful?”



Shaykh Sadi said:

“From the outside, the most honourable of all creation is man, while the most disgraceful is a dog.

But a loyal, appreciative dog is much better than an ungrateful man who is in denial of blessings.

Even if you were to stone a dog 100 times, it would never forget a single morsel it was fed by its owner. As for a sordid and spineless man, even if you were to caress him for an entire life, he would begin to fight you over the most trivial matter.”



PATIENCE and CONTENMENT

When faced with the bitter-sweet surprises of life, wise people say, “By He, this, too, will pass!” (Bu da geçer yâ Hû!) This means:

“Man! The worries and grief you experience is merely a guest in the house of your heart, as is the joy and the bliss. Do not ever think they will be there forever! Do not anguish over troubles, for they are bound to leave. And do not get carried away by fleeting joys and thrills, for they are not immortal.”

The Qur’an declares:

“Do people imagine that they will be left to say, ‘We believe’ and will not be tested?” (Al-Ankabut, 29:2)



Bitter or sweet, every trial the Almighty puts His servants through is nothing but a test of sincerity and trust.



Man shows his true face when tested with hardships and personal interests, especially with things that hit a nerve.



The Qur’an states:

“We will test you with a certain amount of fear and hunger, loss in wealth and life and fruits. But give good news to the patient!” (Al-Baqarah, 2:155)

What else is this world in its entirety but a place of divine trial?



Shaykh Sadi says:

“Do not get hurt if people harm you, as people have no power to cause distress or comfort. Know the enmity of your enemy and the friendship of your friend is coming

from Allah, as the heart of both lies in His hand. Even though the arrow is shot by the bow, an intelligent person does not credit the bow but the hands holding it.”



A believer must consider that even if the whole of mankind came together, they would be unable to distance him from a good decreed by Allah ﷻ. Neither would they be able to repel an evil Allah ﷻ has ordained.

The Qur'an declares:

“If Allah inflicts you with harm, no one can remove it except Him. If He desires good for you, no one can avert His favour. He bestows it on whichever of His slaves He wills. He is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Yunus 10:107)



Whatever the circumstance, whether bitter or sweet, good or bad, a believer must acknowledge every experience as a divine test and look to pass these with optimal spiritual profits. For this reason, he must focus on the divine will, which is the real cause behind every happening. Wise people have therefore said:

*Neither is wrath from the enemy nor grace from the friend
Refer your affairs to Allah, for all is from Him in the end*



Patience is essential under all circumstances.

-**Patience** for consistency in worship and struggling for the good.

-**Patience** in resisting the allure of sin, and the desires of the ego.

-**Patience** in guarding serenity in troubles and hardships, and protecting inner peace.

-**Patience** in keeping the feet from slipping when having the means to lean towards egotistic desires.

-**Patience** in keeping faith from rattling and steering clear of the paths that lead to sin when poverty verges on disbelief.



Escaping rawness comes from the art of confronting troubles and pain with patience. No food is cooked without effort and expertise. Mercy does not transpire without enduring turmoil.



Just as a dish is inedible unless cooked, the heart becomes ripe by being cooked in the fire of troubles.



Rumi ﷺ said:

“The Moon earns its brightness by enduring the pitch-dark night. The patience that the rose shows for the thorns is what gives it its beautiful scent.”



The rose finds its maturity and beauty by practically the thorn and getting along with it. It is simply by putting up with the thorns that the rose acquires a fine appearance and wonderful scent. The same goes for the human being. He becomes cleansed and gains a spiritual level only to the extent that he is able to patiently endure troubles and tribulations.



Patience is required for every manifestation of divine will. In Anatolian wisdom, there is a phrase called, “**rock of patience**”. Our rocks of patience must never crack; they must rather blossom with flowers. On the path of reaching Allah’s ﷻ pleasure, every trouble must be endured, and every sacrifice shown.



It is impossible for a river to flow directly across a mountain. Only by detouring around the mountain will it reach its destination. Yet, this itself requires **patience**.



To obtain just a gram of gold, the dirt and grime of tonnes of soil must be sifted through the sieve of **patience**.



A servant must have **patience** in order to discard the weight of the worldly trials he faces. Patience is unneeded in paradise. It is needed here.



The most precious moment of patience is right at the moment the trouble strikes. Patience shown at that instant is the pinnacle. Our **Prophet** ﷺ said:

“True patience is one that is shown at the first instant of trouble.” (Bukhari, Janaiz, 32)



Shaykh Sadi describes the mercy hidden in troubles as:

“The sandalwood does not smell nice on its own. It begins to smell like amber only when placed on top of a fire.”



A believer must look upon troubles and hardships as wonderful opportunities for his spiritual progress and purification.

A person who knows no trouble and gets everything he wants, becomes wild like an untamed stallion. He never stops to think that a virus, invisible to the naked eye, can knock out many formidable and supposedly invincible men. And the more his ignorance makes him perceive himself as grand and powerful, the more removed he becomes from Allah's ﷻ mercy.

In contrast, the ego of a person writhing under trouble better understands that the self is as fragile as a wet piece of paper. Once he sees the ego in this light, he gains a deeper understanding of the Almighty's majesty.



Let us not forget that the potion of eternal life that will save us forever is hidden mostly in hard times and troublesome places.



The Almighty states:

“You who believer! seek help in patience and prayer. Allah is with the patient.”

(Al-Baqarah, 2:153)



Patience through hardships is followed by great rewards, as patience and perseverance bring a servant closer to Allah ﷻ. This is how divine mercy transpires. As the Holy Qur'an says:

“For truly with hardship comes ease; truly with hardship comes ease.”

(Al-Inshirah, 94:5-6)



Shaykh Sadi says:

“An unripe grape may taste sour, but it becomes sweet after a few days of patience.”



Peace and joy in life depend on us understanding that divine allotments are in our best interests. Many events that appear as wrath are in fact mercy, just like poverty that results in paradise. Also, many circumstances that appear as mercy, end up in disaster, like wealth bereft of charity and spent exclusively on the self, which only dooms a person to a tough interrogation in the afterlife.



Shaykh Sadi says:

“Sorrow that ends in joy is better than joy that leads to sorrow.”

“The impatient has no understanding of wisdom.”

“A thing obtained in haste seldom lasts. Results are achieved through patience. The hasty ends up tumbling down.”



Without enduring the austere winter, the soil cannot reach the abundance of spring. Without being patient for nine months, a mother cannot experience the joy of a child.



Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه says:

“Patience and perseverance have no loss, while sorrow and hastiness have no profit.”



Junayd Baghdadi رضي الله عنه says:

“Patience is to swallow the spice without making a wry face.”



Allah has put His most beloved servants through the crucible of trouble, simply because the troubles endured in this life are means to develop the spirit. Thus, the heaviest of trials have involved prophets, then the friends of Allah and then righteous believers according to their closeness to Allah ﷻ.

Nevertheless, it is they who were happiest, so much so that they forgot about their own troubles to help others. And with hearts turned into convents of compassion for all victims, they became sources of consolation for sufferers. The peace of being together with Allah ﷻ made them forget about all their worldly troubles, as they derived the greatest pleasure and joy from showing mercy to creation for the sake of the Creator.



Our **Prophet** ﷺ, the most beloved of all of Allah's ﷻ servants, had lost his father before he was born, and later his mother. Out of seven of his children, he buried six of them with his own hands. During his prophetic mission, he suffered many assaults from the pagans. At Uhud, he lost 70 exceptional companions, foremost the much-loved **Musab Ibn Umayr** رضي الله عنه and his beloved uncle **Hamza** رضي الله عنه.

Yet, this did not alter his contentment Allah. Even while getting stoned by the wretched folk of Taif, he pleaded:

“Lord! If you are not angry with me, then I do not care what befalls me!” (See, Ibn Hisham, II, 29-30; Haythami, VI, 35)



Our **Prophet** ﷺ has said:

“I suffered torments on the path of Allah like none other.” (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 34/2472)

Yet, none of these torments disrupted the Prophet’s ﷺ inner peace. On the contrary, he met them with great maturity and contentment. He never complained about his situation. Even though his heart was cauterised with many kinds of pain, a smile was never absent from his beautiful face. No one ever saw him with a grumpy look, a frown or a blank expression. With the peace of being with Allah, he always radiated a smile, and in doing so, mirrored the smile of Islam under all circumstances.



When observing the companions’ lives bursting with love and effort, we come to see that if hearts have reached the peace of being intimate with Allah ﷻ, then all excuses evaporate, problems find solutions, impassable distances shorten, and the scorching heat becomes coolness. This is because no pain in their heart could ever be greater than the pain of being away from the **Prophet** ﷺ. As long as they were with him, and so long as he kept smiling, all pain and anguish lost its significance.



Contentment (*ridha*) is to maintain the heart’s balance in the face of bitter circumstances, and maintain the way of servanthood whatever the situation may be. Being content with illness, poverty, disasters and troubles purely for the sake of Allah ﷻ, attracts the mercy of Allah ﷻ, who is simply uses these to test His servants. In these situations, a believer must always recall the heavy trials prophets endured, and regain his composure to enliven his own perseverance and effort.



Would a man with trillions of dollars even look back if he happened to drop 10 dollars while walking on the street? What could 10 dollars possibly mean compared to trillions? So, whenever we are faced with worldly distress, we must hold on to patience and remember that the most magnificent wealth, the greatest joy and bliss is to be a servant of Allah ﷻ and the **Prophet** ﷺ. With this consciousness, we must cast aside worldly worries with the joy of being part of our Prophet’s ﷺ nation, which is an exceptional gift from the Almighty. We must forget about complaining, and wasting ourselves away for fleeting concerns and losses. We need to avoid saying, “Why me?”.



True faith demands that we drop complaints when experiencing distress as part of divine trial, and instead always seek refuge in the Almighty. When met with trouble, a mature believer instantly recognises that it is a test, and does not let himself go in the whirlpool of depression and despair. Much rather, regardless of the magnitude of the test, he still knows how to protect his inner balance, and say:

حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ

“Allah is enough for us and the best Guardian.”



A gain or success must not spoil us. We are to never forget our servanthood and vulnerability. We must never be swayed by pride, arrogance and egocentricity. We must never exceed our limits or transgress divine boundaries.

Instead of falling into sorrow and despair when tested with troubles and hardship, we must remember that these are simply means for self-purification and spiritual promotion, and golden opportunities to atone from sins and increase our ranks in the sight of Allah ﷻ.



The scale of true love is sacrifice. Troubles and hardship test the sincerity of love.

True love is that which does not dissolve in hardship, but becomes stronger. A servant truly in love with Allah is therefore one who can remain appreciative, thankful and content in both good times and bad.



Loyalty does not just consist of remaining true to a promise. True loyalty is to retain the trust, submission and obedience to Allah at all costs, and to keep the direction of servanthood intact, not just for a season but an entire lifetime.



A heart that responds to the bitter-sweet surprises of life, not with contentment, but with complaints has lost its awareness of being together with the Almighty.

Even if the circumstances of life change, glorifying, thanking and supplicating to Allah never do.



When asked, “When does Allah become pleased with a servant”, **Rabia Al-Adawiyya** ﷺ replied:

“When he is thankful during times of distress and hardship, as if he has been blessed.”



The **Prophet** ﷺ said:

“A believer is like pure gold. Gold is thrown in a fire and melted, yet still comes out pure and complete.” (Ahmad, II, 199)



Whether in richness or poverty, joy or sorrow, Allah ﷻ wants from us a heart that says, “Glory and thanks be to You under all circumstances.”



Since true love transforms troubles into mercy, it allows a person to welcome the troubles that come from the beloved as if they are blessings. To understand how true and deep one's love is, it suffices to look at how much he can endure the troubles of the beloved.



Shaykh Sadi says:

“Son of Adam! At times, you are proud and negligent in wealth, while sad and despondent in poverty. This is who you are in good times and bad. But when will you become a proper servant to your Lord (with gratitude and contentment)?”



Much like a moth spinning around the light, a mature believer loses his willpower in divine love. Being a grateful and obedient servant under all circumstances is the best fruit of servanthood.



A believer must not become beguiled by the deceptive glitter of this fleeting life and long for what he is unable to attain. He must always protect his heart by seeing the comfort hidden in hardship, and the blessings in adversity.



Even when sad, a believer must always smile. Upon achieving success, he must be thankful, knowing it is from Allah ﷻ. When faced with trouble, he must remember it is a divine test and remain patient. At all times, he must be pleased with Allah ﷻ so that Allah ﷻ can be pleased with him.



When faced with the bitter surprises of life, wise people say, “By He, this, too, will pass!” (*Bu da geçer yâ Hû!*) This means:

“Man! The worries and grief you experience are merely guests in the house of your heart, as is the joys and the bliss. Do not ever think they will be there forever! Do not anguish over troubles, for they are bound to leave. And do not get carried away by the fleeting joys and thrills, for they are not immortal.”



Junayd Baghdadi ﷺ says:

“Patience with troubles and hardship is the candle of the wise, and the lesson of the dervish. But the ignorant may never understand.”



The Prophet ﷺ has said:

“A believer’s condition truly merits envy, for every circumstance is to his advantage. And this is a quality that only belongs to believers: When happy, he is thankful; and this is to his benefit. When undergoing hardship, he is patient; and this, too, is to his benefit.”
(Muslim, Zuhd, 64)

A believer is a person who comes out a winner from all of life’s tests, whether bitter or sweet. In the eyes of wise believers, even the trials that appear to the worldly folk as loss and disaster, are means for eternal gain through patience, contentment and even gratitude.



Rumi رumi says:

“Birth pangs are severe for a pregnant woman, but for the child in her womb, it is freedom from jail.”

It is the art of wise believers to look upon the hardships faced in the way of Allah ﷻ from the perspective of the eternal blessings they carry.



While it is wrong to drown in despair when faced with troubles to the point of ruining oneself, exulting excessively when experiencing joy and happiness is also harmful of a believer’s honour, character and dignity.



In this life, Allah tests man with both wealth and poverty. It is a great betrayal and ingratitude for a servant to plead to Allah ﷻ in tough times, but entirely forget about his servanthood when things are going well.



The Prophet ﷺ said:

“A person wishing for his pleas to be accepted in hard times, should also plead in lots during times of ease.” (Tirmidhi, Daawat, 9)



When faced with hardship, a Muslim has absolutely no right to hopelessly moan and make rebellious remarks that border on disbelief such as, “Why is Allah not by my side in this time of distress?” In this life of trial, it is Allah ﷻ who tests his servant in a multitude of ways, not the other way around.



Ali  said:

“Life consists of two days. One is for you, while the other is against you. When the day turns to your favour, do not become spoilt. And when it turns against you, do not moan and cry.”



A hadith *qudsi* reads:

“Only wealth holds some of my believing servants, firm. If I was to make them poor, they would become corrupted.

Only poverty holds others among my believing servants, firm. If I was to make them rich, they would become corrupted.

Some of my believing servants want a certain rank in servanthood. But I deny their request, so they do not fall into self-love and become corrupted.

Only health holds the faith of some of my other servants, firm. If I was to make them sick, they would become corrupted.

I regulate the affairs of my servants according to My knowledge of their hearts. I know everything, and am aware of it all.” (Bayhaqi, *al-Asma wa's-Sifat*, p. 122)



Many people believe lack and deprivation are absolute evils. Yet, it is these privations that hold many in good stead.



A servant must first stop assuming that wealth is an absolute means for good. Like a double-edged sword, he must always remember that wealth is a means for both good and evil. He must rejoice only over the wealth for which he is able to offer thanks. He must also remember that being deprived of wealth that would corrupt him is a divine blessing itself, and thank Allah  for that deprivation.



Today, feeling content with personal circumstances is of utmost importance. Unfortunately, we are in times when worldliness is constantly pushing people to ‘strut about and flaunt’. They are urging them into wealth, fame and lust. People rarely ever think that these may in fact be bad for them.

A believer should never aim for wealth or ranks, but to become a righteous, loyal and beautiful servant.



A believer given only a little wealth must be thankful, thinking that any more of it could possibly drag him into transgression. Any less could perhaps also pit him to rebel, for which he must also be grateful. He must be content with the decree and protect his heart, knowing that both wrath and mercy are essentially tests.

It should be borne in mind that the previously righteous **Korah** suddenly became spoilt after assuming that the wealth Allah ﷻ had granted him was all of his own doing; and was consequently destroyed by being smothered underground along with his all his wealth.



In this exceptionally short life we must respond to every circumstance Allah ﷻ has decreed, with gratitude and contentment. We must also avoid craving the lifestyles of the negligent who are lost in the dazzle of an egotistic life. Against this, the Almighty warns:

“Do not be deceived by the fact that those who disbelieve move freely about the earth. A brief enjoyment; then their shelter will be hell. What an evil resting-place!” (Al Imran, 3:196-197)



Shaykh Sadi says:

“The struggles that good people endure will bring relief and the happiness evil people enjoy will come to a quick end.”



Every believer must work to make an honest living. But he must also learn to live within his means and be satisfied with what he has. He must be content with the provision decreed by Allah ﷻ, so that Allah ﷻ is content with him.



Human ambition know no bounds. The first condition of escaping this ambition is to entrench within the heart the belief that the provision decreed in pre-eternity neither increase nor decrease. After working and putting in every effort he can, a person must be content with what he makes. Whatever the amount may be, he must say, “This is what Allah ﷻ has given and it is what’s best for me.” Afterwards, he must avoid being wasteful and look to enrich the spirit through contentment.



The Almighty declares:

“There is nothing that does not have its stores with Us and We only send it down in a known measure.” (Al-Hijr, 15:21) This explains that allotments in life are

handed out according to divine will; and once understood, it will serve to shut the doors on ambition and greed.



The **Prophet** ﷺ said:

“Little wealth for which you are thankful is better than great wealth for which you are not.” (Tabari, Jamiu'l-Bayan, XIV, 370)



True blessings that benefit a person are only those for who one can give thanks. Blessings that are taken for granted and used in either waste or miserliness, are nothing but trouble. An ignorant person rejoices over these, supposing they are blessings. If deprived of them, he becomes depressed. This is the bewilderment of taking misery for joy, and joy for misery.



Being pleased with only good things, while becoming annoyed by experiences that bring distress, is irreconcilable with the etiquette of servanthood. Yet, man cannot easily escape this human flaw, unless he trains his soul.

However, once he reaches the spiritual state of contentment (*radhiyah*), he becomes unconditionally content with every judgment of divine will regardless of whether it is considered good or bad, and brushes all complaints aside. Only Allah ﷻ knows it.

The Qur'an states:

“It may be that you hate something when it is good for you and it may be that you love something when it is bad for you. Allah knows and you do not know.” (Al-Baqarah, 2:216)



The eyes can see and the ears can hear only up to a certain distance. It is impossible to either see or hear what lies beyond. Such is case of the divinely decreed destiny; it is beyond the human grasp. We merely try to make sense of these through their causes and seeming outcomes. But more often than not, we cannot grasp their underlying wisdom.



Peace and happiness lie in constantly submitting to Allah ﷻ without overlooking the graces hidden in wrath.



From the vantage of faith and wisdom, whichever state it is that takes us closer to Allah ﷻ, whether it be wealth or poverty, is the state we must look upon as being in our better interest.



Abu Bakr ﷺ says:

“For me, giving thanks to Allah during welfare is better than patience during trial.”



Imam Ghazali ﷺ says:

“True righteousness lies in living abstemiously even in health and prosperity, and knowing how to be patient.”



Shaykh Sadi Shirazi says:

“Allah is never pleased with a servant who is not pleased with his share.”



Life is filled with ebbs and flows, abounding in manifestations of joy and sorrow. All of these are part of the divine trial.

We need to be pleased with what the Almighty has decreed for us, so that the Almighty is pleased with us.



Umar Ibn Abdulaziz ﷺ was asked:

“Sir, what do you like most?” He said:

“My happiness is solely to meet my destiny. I love every decree Allah has passed on my behalf.”

A believer cannot reach the true state of contentment unless he see what the Almighty has decreed and allotted for him as superior to his own desire.



Ahmad Ibn Hanbal ﷺ says:

“Everything has its generosity. The generosity of the heart is for it to be pleased with the Creator; in other words, with destiny.”



True servanthood is:

-The art of being pleased with the Almighty’s decree.

-The ability to remain a friend to the Almighty in all times and places.

-The skill of forgetting about complaints and gripes to keep a balance during the ebbs and flows of life, its surprises and changing circumstances.



Prophet Sulayman ﷺ was graced with a kingdom given to no man ever. Yet, neither did he forget about the Almighty, the true owner of all blessings, nor turn his heart into a coffer for worldly material. And the Almighty praised him with the words, **نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ: What an excellent slave!**” (See, Sad, 38:30)

In contrast, despite being tested with severe pain, illness and poverty, **Prophet Ayyub** ﷺ, never ceased being patient and content. And the Almighty acclaimed him in the exact same way: **نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ: What an excellent slave!**” (See, Sad, 38:44)

Hence, insofar as earning Allah’s ﷻ pleasure and love are concerned, **the thankful rich and the patient poor** stand on the exact same peak of virtue.



Ali ﷺ says:

“How beautiful is it for the rich to be humble in anticipation of rewards from Allah. But what is even more beautiful is for the poor to trust Allah and act with dignity towards the rich.”

“Decency is the decoration of poverty, as is gratitude the decoration of wealth.”



In Islam, both the arrogant and miserly rich as well as the rebellious and impatient poor, are condemned. It is for this reason that our **Prophet** ﷺ pleaded:

“My Lord! I seek refuge in Yoy from the tribulation of poverty and wealth.” (Muslim, Dhikr, 49)



Istighna, which is to act with dignity and abstinence, is a quality that belongs to the hearts of righteous and truthful people who have been liberated from base desires. It is a richness of the heart to make do with what is at hand and desist from coveting for more. As per the *hadith*, *“Contentment is an inexhaustable treasure”*¹⁰, it is for the heart to find spiritual wealth and, through it, peace.



10. Daylami, III, 236/4699.

Shaykh Sadi says:

“Vinegar and peppergrass earned by the sweat of the brow are better than the overlord’s fresh bread and lamb.”

“Stop coveting what is in the hands of others and instead enjoy your reign. A person who quits coveting grows in honour.”



DIRECTING LOVE, CHANNELLING HATE

Love is the affection felt by one soul for another. Affection between one body and another is not love, but lust.



Just as we pay attention not to let a haram morsel pass into our stomachs, we must be equally vigilant not to let the love of the unworthy sneak into our hearts.

The Qur'an states:

“Those who believe have greater love for Allah.” (Al-Baqarah, 2:165)



The peak of love is the love of Allah, who is *Al-Wadud* (The Loving), and His beloved **Prophet** ﷺ.

A life enslaved to fleeting desires, and void of the love of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, is a life wasted in neglect.



A magnifying glass directs all the rays of the Sun to one point, and burns every twig and grass beneath it to ash. Much in the same vein, once the heart absorbs the love of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger, it burns every other love to crisp. In the eyes of those burning with this love, the world becomes small. The honour of accompanying the **Prophet** ﷺ in the hereafter and gazing at the face of Allah, becomes the greatest aim.



True loyalty is found in leading a life of love, respect and appreciation firstly for the **Blessed Messenger** ﷺ and the entire chain of prophets, his family and companions, and then for all righteous Muslims who have played a part in ensuring that the blessing of Islam has reached us in tact; and also, the spiritual masters who have guided our hearts, as well as our parents, relatives and fellow brothers and sisters in Islam.



Unless we elevate the love of Allah ﷻ above the love of all other things, we may not find true faith. We can experience the pleasure of divine love and friendship only to the extent we are able to overcome our worldly greed and attachments.



Blissful are the believers to who hold to the love of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger above all else, and are not deceived by the flowers of fake gardens.



A believer who loves Allah ﷻ will have his sincerity tested on many fronts, just as gold is tested against the touchstone to separate the real from the fake.



Life is an array of trials where the love for Allah ﷻ within the heart is tested. Believers get close to Allah ﷻ, and even become His friend, to the extent of their success in this trial, and thereafter enjoy the exceptional blessings this friendship brings.



Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام underwent severe trials on the path of friendship with Allah ﷻ. Allah granted him, his property and progeny with unique blessings. He made fire cool and safe for him. He granted him wealth an enormous prosperity; such that when Muslims wish prosperity for one another, they pray, “May Allah grant you the abundance of Ibrahim!”

We must think: What could a mortal possibly give to another mortal? Each being can only offer something proportionate to his honour. As for the Lord of the worlds, Allah the Almighty, He grants gifts and blessings beyond imagination to His friends who manage to abandon fleeting, worldly and personal interests just for His pleasure.



In life, love demands the greatest price, as **the scale of true love is sacrifice**. And the most important mark of love of Allah ﷻ is the amount of risk a person can take for Him when needed, and how much he can sacrifice of the things he loves.



Faith is the greatest love. Love, however, needs to be proven. The signs of genuine love are the sacrifices made for the sake of the beloved. A person who cannot forsake the things he loves for his beloved, is not a true lover.



Every blessing comes at a cost. Claiming ownership of anything, be it spiritual or material, without paying the price is nonsense. And our greatest gift in this life for which we must pay a price, is our **faith**.



After **faith**, Allah asks for **righteous deeds**. Faith cannot remain a mere word. It must be proven in action.

Rumi ﷺ warns the ingenuine people who claim they love but are remote from its truth, with the words:

“Do not become clowns of your false claims!”



Man becomes a devotee and admirer of whoever he loves. Love comes with sacrifice. With sacrifice, worship becomes pleasurable, and deeds bring peace.



Rumi ﷺ explains the manifestations of love as follows:

“Love makes the sour sweet.

Love turns copper into gold.

Love heals the incurable.

Love brings the dead to life.

Love makes sadness into joy.

Love transforms wrath into mercy.

Without love, even a candle becomes as hard as iron.”



Natural sciences are learned through teachers, schools, books, pens, and so forth. But the inner science is learned mostly through ‘**love**’.



Many a wisdom and truth unattainable to the mind and natural sciences are within reach to a mature heart, whose most important capital is a pure and sincere love.

In Sufism, love is the most precious means of achieving spiritual progress. And its outcome is highly elevated spiritual courtesy (*adab*), which is to observe the manners of servanthood in every phase of life.



We need to remember that the deliriums of the mind afflicted with flawed philosophies will not save a person during the last breath, inside the grave, on the plain of resurrection, before the divine scale or on the *Sirat* bridge suspended above hell. A deep love, sincere submission and genuine obedience to Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, on the other hand, will become the heart’s sole capital for eternal joy.



An inscription on ice melts in the sun. But however difficult it may be, a writing etched on granite is lasting. We need to inscribe on our hearts the love of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, as if we are engraving it on granite. Whether it is really etched in our hearts, will show in our states and action.



One cannot talk about the sincerity of a love that is unproven through sacrifice. To the extent of the depth of his love, a lover considers it a duty to show sacrifice for the beloved. And one of the most beautiful manifestations of loving Allah ﷻ is to spend for His creation.



Rumi ﷻ says it wonderfully in his *Divan-i Kabir*:

“What is life, what is gold, pearls or diamond if not spent for love and sacrificed for a Beauty?”



Our **Prophet** ﷺ one day said:

“I have not benefitted from anyone’s wealth more than I have from Abu Bakr’s”.

Yet, upon hearing this, **Abu Bakr as-Siddiq** ﷺ, who had already become annihilated and revived in the love of the **Prophet** ﷺ, suddenly felt as though he was seen as “another”. This sparked a fire of separation deep within his heart; and with teary eyes, he asked:

“Do not I, my wealth and everything I have, belong to you, anyway, Allah’s Messenger?” (See, Ibn Majah, *Muqaddimah*, 11; Ahmad, II, 253)



Even if he were to die for the beloved, a true and genuine lover still would not feel as though he has made a proper sacrifice. He would freely and comfortably splurge all his existence, as if he were paying off a debt. Such are the services, efforts and sacrifices true believers make in the way of Allah ﷻ.



If a person has no proper share of divine love, it means he is still living with an ego that has not entered the path of maturity. The heart of a person who knows nothing of this love is like raw soil. The skill lies in knowing how to love, since ‘love’ is the reason of existence.



Majnun’s victory in rising above metaphorical love to true love, lies in disregarding Layla as the final destination on a journey that runs to the Almighty.

At times, **Layla** can be the opposite gender. At times, it may be wealth, rank or status.

How sad it is for the means to become ends!



Mortal love has value only insofar as it serves as a steppingstone to divine love.

In truth, love is the affection of one spirit for another. Affection between one body and another is not love, but lust.



Rumi رحمته الله says:

“Be fair; how beautiful a thing is love! What harms love are your bad habits. You call lust, love. If only you knew how great a distance lies between both!

Divine love keeps a believer alert. Worldly crushes and lusts make man stupid and dazed.”



While each limb has its own will, the heart does not. Most of the time, the heart is inclined to follow the lead of its surroundings. Therefore, the heart often assumes the colour, shape and harmony of its environment.

A heart is swayed by external influences through love, while it repels these through hate. Therefore, channelling love and hate correctly is vital in man’s spiritual progress or regress.

Directing love and hate to where they are due, hence, serves to revive a person. In contrast, **directing love and hate to where they are not due**, destroys.



Shaykh Sadi says:

“Even skill and wisdom appear as blemishes if one looks with a hostile eye. The Sun that lights up the earth appears ugly to the eye of the bat.

If a person dislikes another and looks at him with hatred, he appears ugly to his eye, even if the person may be as handsome as Yusuf عليه السلام. But through the eye of love, even the devil appears as an angel.”



Just as we pay attention not to let a *haram* morsel pass into our stomachs, we must be equally vigilant not to let the love of the unworthy sneak into our hearts.



Much like how nature abhors a vacuum, so do hearts. As **Imam Shafi** رحمته الله has said:

“A heart unoccupied with the truth is invaded by the false.”



Love and inclinations are a human being’s mirrors. A person dreams of what he desires, and pursues what he dreams. In the words of **Rumi** رحمۃ اللہ علیہ:

“Man receives value according to what he pursues.”

Beware, then: What are we pursuing? Does the course of our dreams run along the lines of our egos or spirits? Let us remember that it is an enormous folly to pursue happiness in the bazaars of misery!



Ali رضی اللہ عنہ said:

“A person’s value is as much as the value of his desires.”



Imam Shafi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ said:

“The worth of a person who only desires what will pass into his stomach, is only as great as what passes out of it!”



Rumi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ mentions:

“Brother! As flesh and bones, your body is the same as animals. You must instead look for revival through contemplation. If contemplation is a rose, you are in a rose garden. If you think like a thorn, you are nothing but a log to burn!”

Just as fingerprints form physical identity, contemplation forms a person’s spiritual identity.



A proper contemplation is not one that is poisoned by the swamp of the ego, but inspired by the climes of spirituality.

Hearts are programmed for peace only through the guidance of revelation. Thus, just as filling a tank with water instead of petrol destroys a car, filling a heart with false ideas and vain impulses lead to its spiritual destruction. One cannot expect delicious food to come out of a pot filled with stale and mouldy ingredients.



“Heart and mind” are the hub of emotions and thoughts inside the body. They are like a pool; and in the words of the late **Necip Fazil**, the drains that fill the pool are double – one flows with light, the other with dirt. If the oblivion of lower desires constantly flows through these drains, then our inner worlds will turn into a landfill.

Yet, if these drains become fountains for the springs of inspiration from the Qur'an and Sunnah, then hearts will become oceans of wisdom.

We therefore need to pay close attention to whether we fill our hearts with springs of healing or mercy or with the sewage of gloom and neglect.



Everything within this universe subsists with its opposite. Since the opposite of “love” is “hate”, hating those whom Allah ﷻ hates, also stems from the love of Allah ﷻ.



Turning the heart away from those the Almighty dislikes is as much a condition of faith as loving those He loves. Failure to hate and oppose evil while claiming to love goodness is a symptom of a weak faith.



Faith demands directing love and hate to their proper outlets. That is to say, it is a condition of faith that a believer:

- Hates **Nimrod** as much as he loves **Ibrahim** ﷺ.
- Hates the **Pharaoh** as much as he loves **Musa** ﷺ.
- Hates **Abu Jahl** as much as he loves the **Prophet Muhammad** ﷺ.

The chapter of Al-Masad, in fact, tells us to hate **Abu Lahab**, who was a hardened pagan despite being our **Prophet's** ﷺ uncle.



It is narrated that **Prophet Isa** ﷺ said:

“Be a friend to Allah by becoming the enemy of rebels! Be close to Allah by keeping away from rebels, and seek Allah’s pleasure by hating them.”



Once the heart loses the sense of hating for Allah ﷻ, the differences slowly wane, as a person begins to gradually imitate the lifestyle of non-Muslims. If faith is a rope, the weakening of opposing for Allah’s ﷻ sake, slowly pulls the threads of the rope apart. And what is left in the name of religion is merely a title that has lost its meaning, much like a spiritless corpse.



Just as untimely anger causes tribulation, withholding anger at times when justice is being trampled on and tyranny is applauded is also a flaw of faith and morals which leads to the same outcome.



Anger that puts the mind on hold and drags a person into error is a transgression that comes from the ego and which therefore must be restrained. But restraining anger does not mean remaining indifferent when there is an assault on our religion and values. This, on the contrary, is deeply wrong and cowardice.

In seeking divine pleasure, anger for Allah's ﷻ sake is as vital a duty of servanthood as restraining anger when it is not for Allah's sake.



Anger that comes from the ego is a disaster; it is a kind of insanity and an ugly state. Anger from the self suspends the intellect and turns man into a toy for the shaytan. However, if the anger comes from faith and is for Allah's ﷻ sake, it then turns into a grand virtue that throws the shaytan aside into.

A wisdom-laden example is how during one battle, **Ali** ﷻ forgave an enemy who spat on his face despite being just moments away from killing him. Unable to get his head around the whole incident, the befuddled enemy forgot about the battle and asked with astonishment:

“Ali! Why did you stop when you were just about to kill me? What made you switch from brutal anger to a baffling silence? You were striking like lightning, yet turned to calm weather in an instant. Why? This is a mystery to me.”

Ali ﷻ replied:

“I only fight in the way of Allah. And I never get my own ego mixed up in all this. But you wished to insult me personally by spitting in my face. If I were to become angry at that moment, I would have killed you for my ego. Yet, I only fight for the sake of Allah, not to appease my ego.”

The enemy responded by becoming a Muslim and a dear friend.



The **Prophet** ﷺ says:

“Whosoever loves for the sake of Allah, hates for the sake of Allah, gives for the sake of Allah and withholds for the sake of Allah has perfected his faith.” (Tirmidhi, Sifatu'l-Qiyamah, 60)



Abdullah Ibn Abbas ﷺ says:

“Love for the sake of Allah! Quit for the sake of Allah! Know that this is the way to win Allah's pleasure.”

Today, people have sadly become worldly. Their love and hate are strictly for worldly interests.”



When we visit a friend, we wish to bring a present that he likes. The primary measure of love is to love those our beloved loves, and condemn those the beloved condemns.

If we were to reflect in light of this standard:

We are all travellers on journey to the Almighty’s presence. He wants a pure heart from us. Yet, what kind of hearts are we taking Him?



ACCOMPANYING THE RIGHTEOUS, AVOIDING THE SINNER

A zephyr blowing through a garden adorned with exquisite flowers such as roses, hyacinths and cloves, takes with it scents that enrapture hearts everywhere it goes. In contrast, a wind wafting through putrid tips and carcasses spreads the stench all around, blocking breaths and gripping souls.

No different is the spiritual peace and refreshment that comes from the truthful and the righteous, in contrast to the dimness and gloom that reflect from the heedless and the rebellious.

The Prophet ﷺ has said:

“A person is upon the religion of his intimate friend. So, keep an eye out on who you take as an intimate friend.” (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 45)

A Muslim must therefore always look at who his friends are and whose side he is on from the perspective of Islam.



Often, it is the people he loves that takes man to the right or wrong path. Simpler put, if you accompany the righteous, you will reach spiritual peace. But if you keep company with the sinner, you will meet destruction.



If a person keeps company with righteous and honest believers, through them, he will incline to the truth and the good. By keeping company with the wicked, he will lean towards the false and evil.

“*Insan*”, the Arabic word for human, comes from the root “*uns*” and is also related to “*unsiyah*” which means intimacy. In other words, it is part of human nature to incline to becoming intimate with the people around and become exposed to their influences. It is therefore essential that we pay close attention to who we take as our close friends, and remain conscious of their positive and negative impacts.



A zephyr blowing through a garden adorned with exquisite flowers such as roses, hyacinths and cloves, takes with it scents that enrapture hearts everywhere it goes. In contrast, a wind wafting through putrid tips and carcasses spreads the stench all around, blocking breaths and gripping souls.

No different is the spiritual peace and refreshment that comes from the truthful and the righteous, in contrast to the dimness and gloom that reflect from the heedless and the rebellious.



Our **Prophet** ﷺ has said:

“Solitude is better than a bad friend. A good friend, on the other hand, is better than solitude.” (Hakim, III, 343)



The best friend is a righteous person who says, “Come, my brother! While we still have the opportunity, let’s do one more good deeds for Allah’s sake. Let’s stop being lazy and step up our efforts.”

The worst friend is a corrupt person who calls to ignorance and self-indulgence by saying, “Come, my friend! While we still have the opportunity, let’s take more pleasure from the world and make the most of these days with more fun.”



A person who smiles to our faces with compliments to mislead us, and who invites us to things our egos find pleasurable, is not a friend but, in fact, an enemy.

A person who cautions us, even if it may be through words that prick our egos, is a real friend who hopes for our true happiness, that is to say, our eternal salvation.



Our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ beautifully expresses the importance of accompanying righteous people and avoiding mixing with wrongdoers:

“A good friend and a bad friend are like a perfume seller and a blacksmith. The perfume seller will either offer you some scent or you will buy some off him.

As for the blacksmith, he will either burn your clothes or drench you in soot.”
(Bukhari, Buyu, 48)



A person is spiritually revived by loving the righteous and keeping a distance from wrongdoers. In contrast, showing affection to the undeserving while fostering enmity towards righteous believers destroys the soul. One must, hence, pay close attention to whom he loves and whom he detests.



Just as each bird flies with its own kind, every temperament finds peace with its own kindred spirit. From this vantage, an affinity and togetherness of heart with the people one chooses to befriend, is much more important than material and outward similarities.



Being together with Allah’s ﷺ honest and righteous servants is a precious spiritual treasure. In contrast, being together with non-Muslims imprisoned by the false and whom Allah ﷻ dislikes, as well as the ignorant who are enslaved to their egos, is a disaster that douses the spirit in poison.



The Qur’an states:

“Help each other to goodness and taqwa. Do not help each other to wrongdoing and enmity!” (Al-Maidah, 5:2)

This means that as good as it is to become a charitable ‘community’ by assisting one another in goodness and taqwa, it is repulsive to become a ‘faction’ that spreads evil by uniting for hostility and wrongdoing.



To protect his or her faith and morals, a believer must pay close attention to his or her surroundings. This is especially vital during education, marriage and choice of profession which are the turning points in life. When choosing the best school for one’s children, a person must foremost consider the spiritual states of their teachers and friends.



When buying a house, two points need to be considered:

“Is it close to a mosque? Are the neighbours righteous?”

As in life, the principle is the same after death:

“Bury your dead among the righteous. The dead are aggrieved by bad neighbours, just as the alive are.” (Abu Nuaym, Hilyah, VI, 354)

The surrounding graves of **Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari** ﷺ in Istanbul, as well as other saints across vast lands, have been transformed into city-cemeteries by people wishing to be buried nearby.



Spiritual states have a quality of being transmissible. Just as the universe is resplendent with rays such as alpha, beta, gamma and ultraviolet which we cannot see with the naked eye, the heart also transmits rays that are invisible, yet whose effects

are clear. Of these, we call the positive rays, “**inspiration**” and “**spirituality**”, and the negatives “**neglect**” and “**gloom**”.

Honest and righteous believers always emit inspiration, spirituality and positive energy. It is for this reason that the Almighty commands:

“You who believe! have taqwa of Allah and be with the truly sincere.” (Al-Tawbah, 9:119)

On the contrary, being with the enemies of religion and sinners brings destruction. Hence, the Qur’an states:

“Once you remember, do not stay sitting with the wrongdoers!” (Al-Anam, 6:68)



Man is inclined to imitate. This may be both positive or negative. A person will choose the person to imitate according to his own spiritual level. For instance, a base person imitates those on the lowest level of baseness. He will dress like them, copy their appearance and mannerisms.

A righteous believer, on the other hand, takes prophets, saints and people of taqwa and wisdom as his example. Whatever their mindsets, mannerisms, speech and decorum are, that is what he seeks to emulate.



Ahmad Ibn Hanbal  said:

“In reforming the heart, rectifying it and leading it to peace and tranquillity, a person can do nothing better than to spend time with the righteous. In contrast, nothing is more harmful than to hang out with wrongdoers and gaze at their affairs.”



When an atom is split, it releases a massive energy and spreads a radiation that is invisible yet felt. Likewise, accompanying the righteous unleashes an invisible yet positive energy into the heart that enhances sincerity and taqwa.



Love and affection bring hearts closer together. In time, this closeness turns into sameness.

The first step to take on the path of becoming righteous is to feel an affection for the righteous, and become part of their circles of talks, friendship and affinity. Becoming righteous itself is a natural consequence of this. It is impossible not to absorb the scent of roses after walking around inside a rose garden.



A true friend is a person who saves you from the dangers of your ego; one who holds the peace of your spiritual and eternal life above your material and passing interests. A person who warns you to set you on the right path, even if it be with words your ego finds unpleasant, is your true friend.

Umar رضي الله عنه has in fact said:

“The person most beloved to me is the one who tells me my faults.”

Of course, this friendly caution must be made in private and with an appropriate tone, so that it can serve to repair a heart rather than shatter it.



Bilal Ibn Saad رضي الله عنه of the *tabiun* generation has said:

“A friend who increases you in the deen (religion) is better than a friend who puts a handful of gold in your palm every time he sees you.”



If a person has a friend who loves for the sake of Allah ﷻ, warns for the sake of Allah ﷻ, protects for the sake of Allah ﷻ and lends a helping hand in hard times for the sake of Allah ﷻ, he possesses the world’s greatest treasure.



Ahmad Ibn Hanbal رضي الله عنه said:

“It is a great shame for a person to be deprived of a truthful friend.”



Rumi رحمه الله said:

“Become friends with (righteous) people. The more crowded the caravan, the more it will break the backs of bandits.”

“Visit your friends regularly. An untreaded road becomes infested with thorns and scrubs.”



Jafar As-Sadiq رضي الله عنه advises:

“Consult your affairs with righteous people!”



It is an enormous blessing to see enthusiastic believers, to reap a share of their excitement of faith and righteous sensitivities and to thereby awaken from the slumber of neglect. Much like recharging a flat battery, this is means for spiritual inspiration and revival.

Thus, the spiritual training of Sufism assigns an exceptional importance to periodically attending spiritual circles or *sohbahs* -which means to come together once in a while-, as a bare minimum of accompanying the righteous.



Just as the body needs food, so does the spirit. Every deed of worship is like a vitamin given to the spirit. *Sohbahs*, which are one of the pillars of the Sufi path, are spiritual feasts that reinforce the inspiration of the heart.



Every talk filled with spirituality and inspiration is really a breeze that blows from the circles of our **Prophet** ﷺ, carrying the joy of those times to those in attendance. It is much like how one candle sets others alight. The flame is all one and the same. Even if a believer is receiving light from the last candle, he is, in effect, benefitting from the first.



Our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ raised his companions in his circles. It could even be said that it was the Prophet's ﷺ *sohbah* that made the companions who they were and helped them attain perfection. In fact, the terms *sohbah* and *sahabah* (companion) come from the same root. Attending the spiritual circles passed on from the Prophet's ﷺ time to us as a means for inspiration and spirituality, is therefore a strong sunnah.



Alongside the words spilling from the Prophet's ﷺ mouth, the companions also found perfection by absorbing his spiritual states. Love establishes a line of electricity between the hearts. Many transactions of the heart, as well as visions, epiphanies and inspirations, occur upon this line of love.

This is, in fact, the whole purpose of spiritual circles. They are platforms to transfer states. A person can stay home and read books but he would be unable to acquire the inspiration and spirituality that is accessible by attending a gathering. Spiritual circles possess an energy that flows from one heart to another. The entire aim to join that current.



During the Prophet's talks, the noble companions would listen to him with adulation and attentively with all ears, as if they had birds perched atop their heads that would fly away at the slightest move. And in so doing, they would take in his lofty spiritual states.

A real *sohbah* therefore does not consist of reading books, offering or listening to religious advice in the confines of four walls. True benefit from spiritual talks emanates

not from the lines of books but from the states that are transferred from one heart to another face to face in the company of the friends of Allah.



A *sohbah* circle is a centre for spiritual rehabilitation and transaction. As **Yunus Emre** رحمته الله says, “A wise man’s *sohbah* increases *marifah*”. Thus, a *sohbah* is therefore not an activity where knowledge is passed on between minds. Much rather, it is a transmission of mindsets that intensifies the light of sincerity, taqwa, love and wisdom in the heart. The Naqshi masters therefore said, “*Our path is the path of sohbah.*”



Luqman the Wise عليه السلام offered his son the following advice:

“*Son! Accompany the scholars and the wise, and try not to fall distant from their circles! For Allah revives hearts with the light of wisdom, just as he revives the soil with rain.*” (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Kitabu’z-Zuhd*, no: 553)



Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه says:

“*Be a slave to the wise who recognise the Truth!*”



Yusuf Khas Hajib has said:

“*Respect the elders and do not slack in their esteem. This way, you will also rise, and their joy will reflect onto you.*”



Rumi رحمته الله says:

“*How could a knife sharpen itself without another knife? Show your wounds to a surgeon of the heart. You cannot heal them on your own.*”

“*Learn the health of your worldly emotions and thoughts from a doctor, and the health of the divine states that elevate a person to infinity from the spiritual master!*”



In line with the hadith, “*The believer is the mirror to the believer*”¹¹, spiritually mature people serve as clean and lucid mirrors upon which spirits gaze at their own essence and true nature. People deprived of these mirrors are not only unable see their own faults, they also cannot awaken from the slumber of mistaking their misery for joy.



11. Bukhari, *Al-Adabu’l-Mufrad*, n. 238; Abu Dawud, *Adab*, 49/4918.

Rumi ﷺ says:

“Know how pathetic a human unfilled with divine love is; he is perhaps lower than animals. Even the dog of the Companions of the Cave searched and found love, and obtained spiritual bliss...”



Guarding the heart from *masiwallah* – other than Allah ﷻ- and exposing it constantly to the good demands the company of honest and righteous people from whose spiritual states one can draw inspiration.

We need to show affinity, friendship and closeness to righteous scholars and people of wisdom, so that they can pull us towards that perfection. Otherwise, it is highly possible that we are exposed to deviance instead of guidance.



Allah does not look with mercy upon places of sin. **Sami Efendi** ﷺ would advise against even passing the streets where *harams* are committed.

In contrast, the Kaaba, the Prophet’s Mosque, the Al-Aqsa Mosque and other blessed places of worship, as well as places frequented by truthful and righteous believers, are precincts of manifestations for divine mercy. It is therefore necessary to try to make the most of the inspiration and spirituality these places provide.



Allah commands us to be with the truthful and the righteous, and avoid the company of sinners and disbelievers. This is because states of mind are transmissible. This even reflects onto places.

The **Messenger of Allah** ﷺ once passed by the place where the tribe of Thamud were destroyed and his companions drew water from the well and used it to make dough. The **Prophet** ﷺ then ordered them to pour out the water, feed the dough to the camels; and only draw water from the well that the camel of **Prophet Salih** ﷺ had drunk. (See, Bukhari, Anbiya, 17; Muslim, Zuhd, 40)

How evocative it is that despite the centuries that have passed since, even passers-by today avoid taking ablution from the water in the area, as it is a place upon which divine wrath once manifested.

This means we must also keep a distance from places of evil as they attract divine wrath.



In this world of trial, each commodity has a separate market. A person looking for joy must avoid roaming the streets of misery and peeking into the shopfronts of the devil.



A believer must emphatically refrain from befriending evil people and hanging around all kinds of places where he knows divine boundaries are being transgressed. Even if he does not become mixed up in their dirt, just being around those places may, in the very least, attract **blame**.



Imam Rabbani رحمته الله gives the following example to explain how befriending sinners harms a person's spirituality:

"A person hanging around gamblers may not gamble himself. And in so doing, he may presume he has kept himself clean. But, so long as he is with gamblers, he will be under their bad influence and, in time, will become fond of gambling. And this is spiritual destruction."



The Almighty commands:

"Do not go near to fornication!" Since a person will lose his sense of integrity by going near it, he will become likelier to fall into it.

It is clear that people who walk dangerously close to a cliff edge will sooner or later fall off the edge. Among the biggest reasons that cause the feet slip on the straight path is affinity and affection for wrongdoers.



Jafar As-Sadiq رحمته الله says:

"My father trained me with three things. He told me:

✓ *Son! Those who befriend the ignorant and the sinner never find peace.*

✓ *A person who visits places of sin comes under blame.*

✓ *One who does not hold his tongue ends up in regret!"*



Musa Efendi رحمته الله would advise:

"A wise person must protect both himself and his family from immoral people. He must keep a distance from them as best he can, as a person is easily effected by the mindset and morals of his friends."



Imam Shafi رحمته الله says:

“However upright a person may appear, he is still a partner in immorality if he knowingly keeps deviants as friends.”



Abdulkhaliq Gujduwani رحمته الله has said:

“Flee conversing with the heedless as you would flee from a lion!”



Just as we need to defeat the traps of the ego to prevent our servantly efforts from going to waste, we also need to scrupulously avoid following the egotistic lifestyles of the enemies of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, so that we do not turn our afterlives into a disappointment.



Showing affinity towards and supporting the enemies of Islam to gain worldly reputation, smashes a person’s reputation in the sight of Allah ﷻ. The Qur’an states:

“But all might belongs to Allah and to His Messenger and the believers. But the hypocrites do not know this.” (Al-Munafiqun, 63:8)



Compromising divine commands for the sake of gaining the affection of mortals is irreconcilable with the consciousness of faith.

The Qur’an declares:

“If anyone wants power, all power belongs to Allah.” (Al-Fatir, 35:10)



Shaykh Sadi says:

“By grovelling to the vile, you may be able to fill your wallet but you will lose your soul.”



Wise Muslims have avoided even receiving favours from tyrants, sinners and disbelievers, let alone fancy their lifestyles. This is because **man is psychologically a slave to those who make favours to him**. A feeling of closeness and attraction blossoms in the heart towards people who have done a favour.

A believer must therefore seek the help of the righteous in times when he must voice his needs. He should seek refuge from Allah ﷻ from relying on the favours of the sinners.



Islam encourages socialising, not individualism. It advises us to get along with people. Yet, this comes with certain rules. A Muslim cannot violate the law of the Almighty just for the sake of getting along with people. A believer knows that **no mortal is to obeyed if it means disobeying the Creator!**



Imam Shafi رحمته الله says:

“You cannot make everyone happy. Seek to repair your relationship with Allah! Once this happens, ignore what the ignorant says!”



It is necessary, especially today, to get away from the illness of “following the masses”. As Muslims, we must remember that our standards are not the accepted practices and habits of society, but the commands of Allah ﷻ.

Of course, one may follow society in legitimate customs. But following society in practices contrary to Islam and consenting to situations that displease Allah ﷻ by unwittingly remarking, “What is the big deal? Everyone does it!”, will drag one away from the true path.



The heart must be protected from sympathising with and admiring the enemies of Allah and His Messenger, and even throwing them the slightest glimpse of affection. Such habits draw the Almighty’s wrath, insofar as they increase those people’s reputations.



The **Prophet** ﷺ says:

“Do not call a hypocrite, ‘Sir’. If you accept him as a sir, you will draw the wrath of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic!” (Abu Dawud, Adab, 83; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, V, 346)



Saying “Oh, how beautiful!” to even a wall woven by an enemy of Islam puts the heart under a negative influence. Since admiring his action or work will increase his reputation, it will also attract the Almighty’s wrath.



At all times and places, a Muslim is responsible for representing the dignity of Islam. In the last verse of the Chapter Al-Fatihah, which is recited in every unit of prayer, we say:

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ

غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

“The path of those You have blessed, not of those with anger on them, nor of the misguided.” (Al-Fatihah, 1:7) and seek refuge in Allah from following the road of non-Muslims and trying to be like them.

Allah wants us to keep away from those who are astray and misguided. He demands that we represent the character and personality of Islam by refraining from imitating their customs, fashion and lifestyle. Another sign of faith is to not resemble non-Muslims.



After becoming Muslim, the former secretary of the French Communist Party, Roger Garaudy visited Istanbul and gave a conference at the Yildiz Palace. His observations below are still very much valid:

“It is the West that is sick. You are really healthy because you are on the truth. But, because you are unaware of this, you sadly imitate the West.

Again, sadly, you are not properly aware of a world-class jurist of the calibre of Imam Abu Hanifa. How unfortunate it is that someone like me has to explain his genius to non-Muslims, when I myself entered Islam only recently.”



Despite its material welfare, today’s Western world has been unable to stop itself from being dragged into a spiritual crisis. A clear indication of this misery are the levels of prostitution, alcohol consumption and drug epidemics, as well as suicide rates that have never been seen before in the history of humankind. In spite of every physical satisfaction available, a spiritual sickness weakens morality and decimates all human values, as the materialistic world slips further away into a terrible end, much like a scorpion that stings itself.

Thus, it is extremely dangerous for the faithful Muslim youth to be deceived by the material welfare of the West and hanker after its shallow and superficial lifestyles. This is no different to a healthy person yearning for and imitating the bedridden.



The deputy governor of the American state of Texas has argued that people over the age of seventy, who are at high-risk of contracting the recent virus, should fend for themselves, for no other reason than to protect the country’s economy.

In France, the desperation of the elderly ill people turned away from hospitals on the pretext there were no vacant beds in emergency wards, has made the headlines.

In Spain, elderly people abandoned in retirement villages were found dead in their beds.

How can anyone toss out the parents who raised them, once they turn old? What kind of humanity or civilisation can this possibly be?

Such is the sad state of the West that hides behind glittery masks and draws its power from weapons, exploitation and brute force, as soon as it is confronted with a human crisis! It is a ruinous civilisation that has rotten away the buds of mercy and compassion!



True **civilisation** is that of Islam. The civilisation of Islam is, above all, a civilisation of mercy.

Islam considers rebelling against parents a major sin. When they grow old, it strictly commands us to look after them in the kindest manner. Muslims are instructed to avoid remonstrating against parents even if it is to merely say ‘uff’ out of annoyance. Since the true measure of civilisation is to value all creation, foremost the human being, for the sake of the Creator, this is real civilisation and humanity.

It is in fact really evocative that during the pandemic, Turkey donated medical equipment to countries that are economically stronger. This means that:

- True civilisation is not a wealth of the wallet but a wealth of conscience.
- True civilisation is not to amass weapons that would turn the earth to ash, but to uphold noble values that turn thorns into roses, evil people to virtuous ones.
- True civilisation is not the cruelty of valuing a drop of petrol more than a drop of blood, but the virtue of looking upon saving one life as precious as saving the whole of mankind.



Before Ramadan fasting became compulsory, it was strongly advised (*wajib*) to fast on the 10th of Muharram (the Day of Ashura when many glorious miracles occurred to many prophets). Afterwards, it became a sunnah; and it still remains the most recommended time to fast after Ramadan. Yet, Jews also observed this fast. So, the **Prophet** ﷺ said:

“Fast on the Day of Ashura, but oppose the Jews by fasting also a day before or a day after!” (Ahmad, I, 241; Bezzar, no: 1052; Haythami, III, 188)

This is because not resembling non-Muslims is among the most important conditions of protecting the honour and dignity of Islam. Our **Prophet** ﷺ has therefore banned it, even in worship.



Islam is the only true and perfect religion. And the perfect one never stands in need of the inferior. In other words, Islam needs no merger with any human system, nor any reinforcement from corrupted religions. In this regard, leaning towards dialogue between the true religion Islam with false religions is a symptom of weak faith in the heart.

Every Muslim is obliged to guard the character and dignity of Islam in all walks of life and keep away from the practices of non-Muslims.



The **Prophet** ﷺ says:

“Whoever strives to be like a people is one of them.” (Abu Dawud, Libas, 4/4301)

It is contrary to the character of Islam to celebrate the New Year with a Christmas tree and a Christmas feast. A Christmas tree is the main symbol of Christmas which is a sacred time for Christians and if Muslims take part in this even if it is only at new year time, then they are clearly imitating another religion. Islam is perfect; and the perfect has nothing to take whatsoever from a religion that is now obsolete and distorted.



Be it the Lunar or the Gregorian calendar, what a Muslim must do on the New Year is to reassess the year that has passed, repent to make up for past sins and mistakes, and boost his religious effort to ensure that the remaining days of his life are spent in a better way than before.

We must remember that our Lord who creates day and night and renews the months and years, will call us into a heavy interrogation in the hereafter over the blessing that is life. To have an easier trial on that difficult day, it is imperative that we frequently assess ourselves and direct our lives towards faith and righteous deeds.

It is improper for any Muslim to waste such a time ideal for revival through self-inspection by imitating the customs of non-Muslims. If we do have negligent brothers who lean towards these kinds of behaviour, it is an obligation to caution them in a soft-spoken and polite manner.



It is extremely sad that millions of lottery tickets are sold in a Muslim country in the name of ‘New Year’s celebrations’. Lotteries and similar games of fortune are blatant gambling, and rather an utter ‘misfortune’ that scatter poison on spiritual life. Gambling is a practice forbidden by Allah ﷻ. It is a calamity that never brings peace and joy, and where the winner is also always the loser.

The Qur’an states:

“You who believe! wine and gambling, stone alters and divining arrows are filth from the handiwork of Shaytan. Avoid them completely so that hopefully you will be successful.” (Al-Maidah, 5:90)



True faith demands love for the worthy and hate for the unworthy. In fact, while mentioning the qualities of believers by the **Prophet’s** ﷺ side, the final verse of Chapter Al-Fath also says, **“...those who are with him are fierce to the unbelievers, merciful to one another.”** (Al-Fath, 48:29)

This means that the false practices on non-Muslims are not to be imitated in the slightest. The heart is to be kept clean from even a glimpse of fancy or sympathy for their faith and customs.



It is a great deception to be fooled by the worldly welfare and comfort of disbelievers and aspire to become like them by imitating their customs, lifestyles and fashions at the expense of abandoning one’s own identity; that is to say, by making concessions from the character and personality of Islam.

Neither an Islam enmeshed in a non-Muslim lifestyle, nor a non-Muslim lifestyle enmeshed in Islam can bring humanity any happiness. What benefits man in the sight of Allah ﷻ is an Islam as it was during the time of the **Prophet** ﷺ.



The sickness of resembling non-Muslims, and imitating them is among the perils that jeopardise Islamic faith. Often, the foundation of faith begins to unravel, and the degeneracy of ideas and morals begin to seep in through these kinds of imitations. Imitation, in time, turns into a habit and trait. Later, formal affinity turns into an affinity of thought which, in time, becomes an affinity of heart. And this leads man to spiritual disaster.



Alija Izetbegovic has a wonderful saying:

“A war is lost not on the battlefield but when one resembles the enemy.”

Unfortunately, the Muslim world today is paying a heavy price for becoming alienated from its own deep tradition by imitating non-Muslims in many aspects of life.



If were to pause and think, who do we and our generations resemble?

-Do the relations with our relatives, neighbours and friends take after our honourable ancestors or their sworn enemies?

-Do our streets, cities and markets look like the work of our Muslim forebearers or their direct opposites?



Let us not forget that the basic principles of today's life were founded by people who have no care for the principles of Islam. As Muslims, we must rebuild everything like Muslims do, based on the solid foundations of Islam.



AVOIDING SIN

Each morsel carries the spiritual records of its past. Was it earned cleanly or illicitly? Is it inflicted with the cravings of the poor and needy or burdened with the rights of another through inheritance or alms, or any such spiritual illness? How was the heart of the person who prepared the food? All the positive and negative impact of these records pass onto the eater. If positive, it enters the heart as inspiration and spirituality; and if negative, it reflects as heedlessness and gloom.

To sin is to be ungrateful for the provisions given by the Almighty.

Ibrahim Ibn Adham رضي الله عنه says:

“If you are going to sin, then at least do not feed on the Almighty’s provisions! How can you possibly rebel against Him while eating the food He has given?”



Sins are veils that come between the servant and Allah ﷻ.

The biggest thing that holds a person back on the path of reunion with the Almighty is the weight of sin. A spirit crushed under its burden cannot take any stride forward.



Two factors affect the human character the most:

First are the spiritual states of the people one befriends.

Second is whether the earnings made and the food consumed are *halal*.



We need to take care not to mix our earnings in *haram* and to consume only what is *halal*. If a morsel is *haram* or from a doubtful source, it will scatter poison onto our hearts. It will cast the heart in neglect, while making the person lazy and lethargic for worship and serving in the way of Allah ﷻ.

In contrast, *halal* food enhances the inspiration of the heart, while reinforcing spirituality, increasing the enthusiasm for worship and reinvigorating the body, heart and the spirit.



The *halal* is from Allah, while the *haram* is from shaytan. The *halal* contains an inspiration and abundance from Allah ﷻ, whereas the *haram* carries harm.



Rumi ﷺ says:

“The food that increases the light and maturity of the heart, is that which is made in a clean, halal way.”



Enjoying worship is a mark of the righteous. And this is a quality achieved only by bodies fed with the *halal* and protected from the *haram*, and hearts turned not to the world but towards eternity.



Shah Naqshiband ﷺ has said:

“Righteous deeds are possible with halal morsels. But even a halal morsel must not be consumed with neglect.”



Once the *haram* enters the body, it first removes the pleasure and peace of worship.



The inability to derive pleasure from worship and the loss of absorption (*khushu*) are a result of earnings and food enmeshed in the *haram* or the doubtful, as well as worldly ambitions inside the heart. Unless a person casts these negativities aside and liberates himself from them, it is impossible for him to worship with the spiritual zest of the righteous.



A student of **Bahauddin Naqshiband** ﷺ once complained of losing his spiritual states. The Shaykh told him:

“Carefully look into whether the food you eat is halal.”

After some investigation, the student immediately repented after finding out that beneath the stove on which he cooked his meals was a burning log that came from a doubtful source.



Baki Billah رحمته الله says:

“A person must not just make do with little food. He must ensure that the wood, water and the pots he uses to cook the food are also halal.

Furthermore, the person cooking the meal must also be free of neglect, and prepare the food while being conscious of the fact that he is in the divine presence.

The smoke that rises from food cooked without any regard to these will be so dense that it will block the arteries of inspiration.”



Khidr عليه السلام one day drops in on **Abdulkhaliq Gujduwani** رحمته الله. The Shaykh brings the guest two loaves of barley bread. But Khidr عليه السلام desists. The Shaykh urges:

“Please, sir. Have some. These are *halal!*” Khidr عليه السلام thereupon says:

“Yes, they indeed are. But the person who prepared the dough did so without ablution. And we should therefore keep away.”¹²



It is certain that even the mindset whilst cooking and consuming the food reflects on what is eaten; and this, in turn, affects the spirituality of the consumer either positively or negatively. With this being the case, we must carefully ponder the spiritual damage *haram* or doubtful foods can wreak inside the body.



Rumi رحمته الله says:

“Inspiration left me at dawn. I realised that a few doubtful morsels had entered my body. Both knowledge and wisdom come from halal food, so do love and compassion. If a morsel casts neglect, know that it is either haram or doubtful.”



Sufyan Ath-Thawri رحمته الله has said:

“A person is righteous only inasmuch as his food is halal.”



The negligent look for partners in their sins. As an excuse, they say:

“Oh, come on! What harm can there be? Is there such a thing as clean earnings in this day and age? Everyone deals in interest; everyone lies and gossips...”

Yet, our standard is the society of the noble companions. The Almighty states:

12. *Rashahat*, p. 92-93.

“The forerunners - the first of the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar* - and those who have followed them in doing good. Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him.” (Al-Tawbah, 9:100)



The Prophet ﷺ says:

“A time will come when there will be no one left who does not consume usury (riba). Even if he does not do so directly, he will still gather its dust.” (Abu Dawud, Buyu, 3/3331)

We are certainly at a time when everyone, directly or indirectly, is involved in usury (riba), just because of the very nature of the modern economic system. Finding and making do with the *halal* today is more difficult than it was yesterday. Yet, remaining clean in tough times is ever more precious in the sight of Allah ﷻ.



The Prophet ﷺ says:

“The real emigrant is he who abandons what Allah has forbidden.” (Bukhari, Iman 4-5, Riqaq 26; Muslim, Iman, 64-65)

Just as the companions abandoned all their wealth and properties and emigrated just to be able to live their religion, every believer today must abandon the things Allah ﷻ has prohibited, and if need be, forsake his worldly benefits in life to make the *Hijra* from evil to good, from the false to the truth and ultimately from this world to the hereafter.



The most important *Hijra* is to migrate to the pleasure, love and friendship of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ. The real *Hijra* is to leave wrong action and relocate to righteous deeds.

Every age remote from Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ is essentially an age of ignorance. The cruelties of each age unreformed by divine and prophetic teachings are one and the same.

Refraining from the neglect of today’s modern age of ignorance and taking the righteous lives of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and his noble companions as standard is therefore the greatest *Hijra* of our times.



Abdullah Ibn Masud رضي الله عنه has said:

“As a companion was about to leave home in the morning, his wife would say:

“Fear Allah and do not earn what is *haram*! We can endure hunger on earth, but not the punishment of hell.” (Abdulhamid Kashk, *Fi Rihabi't-Tafsir*, I, 26)



The **Prophet** ﷺ says:

“Allah the Almighty enjoys seeing a servant tired from chasing the *halal*.” (Suyuti, *Jamiu's-Saghir*, I, 65)

“No one has ever eaten anything better than what he has earned with his own hands.” (Bukhari, *Buyu*, 15)



As we approach the final hour, one of the major causes of the restlessness suffered in these times is the evaporation of the sensitivity for the *halal* and *haram*. Our **Prophet** ﷺ, in fact, alludes to this when he says:

“A time will come when a person will have little care for whether his wealth comes from *halal* or *haram*.” (Bukhari, *Buyu*, 7, 23)



Whether the earnings are *halal*, doubtful or outright *haram* are factors that even determine the acceptance of worship. A *hadith* in fact speaks about a person doing pilgrimage with *haram* earnings. When he says:

“Here I am, oh Allah (*Labbayk, Allahumma labbayk*)” a voice will echo from the skies, saying:

“No, you are not; and neither is there any joy for you! For your earnings are *haram*, your food for the road is *haram*, and so is your steed. Return home a sinner without any rewards! And become sad over encountering things you never expected!” (See, Haythami, III, 209-210)



Our **Noble Prophet** ﷺ says:

“A person goes on long journeys on the path of Allah. With unkempt hair and dusty clothes, he raises his hands to the skies, and prays, ‘Oh Lord! Oh Lord!’. But what he eats and drinks is *haram*. How can the prayer of such person be accepted?” (Muslim, *Zakat*, 65; also see, Tirmidhi, *Tafsiru'l-Qur'an*, 3)



Rumi رumi has said:

“Even a dog does not eat a bone or bread without first smelling it.”

This means that unconsciously pursuing personal and worldly interests without making a distinction between *halal* and *haram* or truth and falsehood, is a deep neglect that makes a person dim and drops him to a level below animals.



A negligent person just wants to lay hands on is a profit, regardless of whether it is *halal* or *haram*. Yet, for a believer, a single cent earned in a clean way is immeasurably more precious than millions of dollars in dirty money.



The best wealth for a believer is that which he can easily account for in the hereafter. Wealth that he cannot justify and which will doom him to punishment is nothing but trouble.



In observing *halal*, one must especially pay attention to the following:

If a clerk or a worker does not properly do his job or observe his shift times, he has partially mixed *haram* into his salary.

If an imam does not take enough interest in the congregation or issue them the necessary teachings and cautions; or if a teacher does not show sufficient care for the students, they have mixed *haram* into their earnings with their own hands.



It is an observable fact that those who receive an inheritance of *haram* wealth mostly struggle to stay on the straight path. This is because money contains a secret, in that it goes the way it comes. While clean money is spent on the good, dirty money, once again, becomes capital for evil. Wealth made illicitly drags down its inheritors with it, as it steers once more into the wrong roads.



Today, a believer must pay attention to two factors regarding inheritance:

First, he needs to earn *halal*, consume *halal* and leave behind only *halal*.

Second, he needs to raise his children with the understanding of what is *halal*, and leave behind as an inheritance that knowledge and understanding.



Everyone thinks they spend money in line their own will. Yet, the destiny of money interferes in the person's own destiny. In other words, according to the spiritual cleanliness in the way it was earned, money flows to its deserved place, and realigns with the will of its owner towards that destination. If earned cleanly, the money takes its owner to the *halal*. But if earned dirtily, it directs it owner to the *haram*.



One day a student came to **Abu Abbas Nihawandi** and asked to whom he should give his alms. He replies:

“Give it to whoever your heart sets on!”

After leaving the Shaykh’s presence, the student saw a blind man begging by the side of the road. His heart warmed to the beggar and he took out his alms, which was a pouch of gold, and handed it over.

The next day, the student passed by the same road and noticed the same man talking to another blind man, and heard him say:

“Yesterday, a gentleman gave me a pouch full of gold. So, I went to the tavern and drunk myself silly.”

The student was saddened to hear these words. He immediately returned to Abu Abbas عليه السلام; but just as he was about to explain the incident, the Shaykh interrupted him and asked the young man to donate one silver coin he had just made selling a headpiece. He instructed the student to give the coin to the first person he saw.

As instructed, the student handed the coin to the first person he encountered. But with a gnawing curiosity, he began to follow the man. Soon, the man entered an abandoned ruin. From inside his cloak, he removed a dead bird and left it there. Just as he was about to leave, the student cut him off and asked:

“For the love of Allah, tell me the truth! What is the story with this dead bird you just left here?”

Suddenly seeing the man who had just given him a coin, the man began to stutter from anxiety, and said:

“For the past seven days, I have not been able to find anything to feed my family. My wife and I were hanging on, but my children could not endure it anymore. Still, begging was something I could never do. As I writhed in this pain, I happened to stumble upon this decaying dead bird, which you just saw. We were in duress, so I was going to take it home to feed the children. But deep down, I was pleading, ‘Lord! Help me!’. Right then, you came across me and gave me that coin. And thanking Allah, I came here to these ruins to leave the bird. I was just about to go to the market with that coin to buy something to eat.”

Astounded, the student immediately returned to his Shaykh. And before he could begin to explain, the master explained:

“Son! It turns out that you did not pay enough attention to whether anything *haram* or doubtful seeped into your earnings. Hence, even though you paid close attention to the receiver, your alms ended up being spent on wine. Earnings exit the

same way they are made. The reason why my single silver coin, compared to your sack of gold, ended up in righteous hands, is because it is *halal*.



The degree in which the earnings are *halal* can be understood by looking at how it is spent. If the money is made in dark and murky avenues, it will not end up in a bright and lucid place. Allah forbid, if there is waste and stinginess in our lives, these are harbingers of spiritual problems that afflict our earnings.



Each morsel carries the spiritual records of its past. Was it earned cleanly or illicitly? Is it inflicted with the cravings of the poor and needy or burdened with the rights of another through inheritance or alms or with any such spiritual illness? How was the heart of the person who prepared the morsel? All the positive and negative impact of these records pass onto the eater. If positive, it enters the heart as inspiration and spirituality; and if negative, it reflects as neglect and gloom.



Today, especially in big cities, kitchens sadly no longer exist. Streets and roads are now kitchens.

In place of the food once cooked at homes with ablution, in the name of Allah ﷻ and with salutations sent to His Messenger ﷺ; with a spirituality that radiated from divine remembrance, today's fast and hedonistic life has made it fashionable to have food delivered to homes where a person neither knows what ingredients they contain nor the mindset in which they were prepared. Such a consumer neither knows the spiritual nature of what he eats, nor spiritual states of those who prepare it.

Let alone asking or considering it, people seldom care if those who slaughter the meat are faithful believers, whether the chefs have ablution or if they maintain their prayers and invoke the name of Allah ﷻ whilst preparing the dish.

It is here that one must search for the reasons behind the spiritual diseases in today's society, of people's unanswered prayers and the rise in physical and spiritual anguish, as well as apathy, selfishness, laziness, stress and also depression.



Today, many people complain about financial losses, primarily inflation, the cost of living, and others. Yet, they mostly dwell on their external reasons, when their internal reasons also merit close attention.

No different to the destroyed nations of bygone times, a segment of society has sadly forgotten about the afterlife and has all but lost its sense for the *halal-haram*

and standards of modesty. Trickery, gambling, bribery, interests and racketeering are widespread.

Such sins and alike are the main reasons why Allah ﷻ cuts off help and lifts prosperity from society. And without a doubt, making amends for these mistakes runs through quitting them collectively, and in repentantly reforming ourselves.



Psychological and psychiatric disorders which were almost non-existent in our past, are now increasing by the day. People suffering from dearth in wealth, as well as stress and depression despite their lavish lives, are writhing in the pain of spiritual poverty.

This is because our times fuel a never-ending greed to make money. The most delicious foods are rudely displayed in shopfront windows as if to mock the needy without the slightest care for their craving gazes.

Even if the restaurateur sells the food in a *halal* way, and the buyer purchases it with *halal* money, both the food and the earnings stung by the cravings of sad and helpless eyes, are spiritually damaged and damaging for others.

Today, what is left of an elegant civilisation that once considered the ‘right of a craving eye’ on par with ‘personal right’?



A craving gaze left on a morsel taints its purity. For this reason, in our time-honoured civilisation:

-Food was never exhibited in eateries, and was rather hidden behind a veil so as not to tease the poor.

-Pastries and similar foods taken to bakeries to be prepared were also covered, and some of it was always offered to the baker to satisfy his ‘right of the eye’.

-If there was meat cooked at home, some of it was taken to the neighbour, with an understanding that, “If they can smell it, they are entitled to some of it.” Care was taken to fulfil the rights of neighbours and what was known as ‘the right of the eye’. Yesterday’s people were so civilised and compassionate. What about our level of civilisation today?



If there is a stark difference between the peace and focus felt whilst praying inside the historical mosques our ancestors have left behind and the mosques built in recent times, one reason is the nature of the money spent in their construction; in other words, the degree of blessings in the money.

There is a historical example.

When the Suleymaniye Mosque was completed, **Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent**, once again, personally made sure that the architects, builders and entire fleet of labourers received their dues and had not been wronged in any way. He also considered the rights of the animals used in the construction, and had the edict written up below:

“Tired animals must be rested and never left hungry...”

It is these kinds of sensitivities that are mixed into the foundations of the soul-soothing Suleymaniye Mosque in both its architectural and spiritual grandeur.



Today, many violations of personal rights go unnoticed. Yet, each of these will appear before the culprit on the day of judgment.

Employers, for example, must take special care not to infringe on the rights of their workers. They must show them mercy and compassion, as when they act harshly, many workers do not raise a complaint, fearing they may lose their jobs. They may hence feel obliged to silently put up with the injustice.

In circumstances like these, the employer may not take the matter seriously because he has not faced any objections. But without even realising it, he will have put himself under the guilt of a heavy burden deferred for judgment day.



Let us not forget the instructions of our **Blessed Prophet ﷺ** during his final breaths:

“Fear Allah regarding prayer! Fear Allah regarding the people under your command !” (See, Bayhaqi, *Shuab*, VII, 477)



Our **Prophet ﷺ** sets for us a beautiful standard when he offers an example from himself personally, to teach us how to properly observe and restore the rights of others:

“I, too, am human. I may have infringed on the rights of some of you. Whoever’s back I may have struck, here is my back; come and strike it. Whoever’s property I may have unknowingly taken, here is my property; come and take it.” (Ahmad, III, 400)

Such is the level of sensitivity our civilisation nurtures for the rights of others.



If one has violated the rights of another, he must seek forgiveness from the victim. In this regard, he must also overcome the anxiety of feeling embarrassed. The **Prophet** ﷺ has said:

“People! Whoever has usurped the right of another should immediately restore it. He must not fear being ashamed in this life. The shame of this life is much lighter than the shame of the next.” (Ibn Sad, II, 255; Tabari, *Tarikh*, III, 191)



Another *hadith* explains precisely how the rights of others will be paid for in the afterlife:

“Whoever carries an injustice committed against his brother regarding his chastity, honour or property, should seek forgiveness before the day comes when gold or silver will be of no help. Otherwise, some of the rewards of his righteous deeds, if he has any, will be taken away to compensate for the injustice. If he has no rewards, then he will burden the sins of the victim.” (Bukhari, *Mazalim*, 10, *Riqaq*, 48)

The most precious possessions of a believer on the day of resurrection will be his rewards. And how tremendous a bankruptcy it would be to not only lose them for the injustices he committed in life, but to also end up burdening the sins of others!



Allah keeps the pardoning of the violation of others’ rights outside his divine mercy. We must therefore be meticulous not to wrong anyone. Our **Prophet** ﷺ has in fact said:

“Allah forgives the entire sins of a martyr, except for those he incurred by infringing on others’ rights.” (Muslim, *Imarah*, 119)

If this is the case for even martyrs who, after the prophets, will be granted the highest ranks in the hereafter, we must pause to think about what will become of others!



Man will be shocked in the afterlife once he sees the minute detail in which all his deeds have been recorded. The Qur’an informs of this, when it says:

“The book will be set in place and you will see the evildoers fearful of what is in it. They will say, ‘Alas for us! What is this book which does not pass over any action, small or great, without recording it? They will find there everything they did and your Lord will not wrong anyone at all.’” (Al-Kahf, 18:49)

Given how sensitive and delicate an issue this is, we are obliged to be more careful. If there is anyone whose rights we may have violated, we must seek their forgiveness.

But if that opportunity no longer exists, that is to say if the person is now deceased or has gone missing, we must seek to give charity on their behalf and continue pleading Allah to be forgiven.

Especially for the errors we may have forgotten or of which we are unaware, we must persist in the supplication:

رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِنْ نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا

‘Our Lord! Do not take us to task if we forget or make a mistake!’ (Al-Baqarah, 2:286)



The Qur’an declares:

“Whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it. Whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.” (Al-Zilzal, 99:7-8)

Even atoms will be called into account. We must therefore refrain from even the smallest error, as scrupulously as possible.



Qasim Ibn Muhammed رضي الله عنه has said:

“One of the biggest sins is for a person to underestimate a sin.”



Luqman the Wise عليه السلام says:

“Do not take small deeds lightly! For the small sins might one day grow large.”



Abdullah Ibn Masud رضي الله عنه has said:

“A believer sees his sin as a mountain suspended above him, and which could crush him at any time. He constantly fears whether the mountain will fall on him. A sinner, on the other hand, sees it as a fly whizzing past his nose.” (Bukhari, Daawat, 4)



Sometimes even an atom can weigh heavier on one side of the scale depending on its worth. We must therefore never take any deed lightly, whether it be good or bad.

The following warning by **Bilal Ibn Sad** رضي الله عنه of the *tabiun* generation vividly depicts the sensitivity for *taqwa* felt by righteous believers:

“Do not look at how small the sin is! Look at who you are rebelling and committing the sin against!”



Just as the slightest wrong step taken at the edge of a cliff can tumble one down into destruction, we must carefully avoid even the smallest actions that could potentially displease our Lord. Many wrong actions that are taken lightly can cause divine wrath and cancel out every good deed.

As stated in a *hadith*, a reprobate woman was forgiven only for the compassion she showed in offering water to a parched dog. In contrast, another woman became doomed for hell for ignoring her hungry cat and causing its starvation.



Both divine mercy and wrath can manifest in small, medium or big ways. A small act of kindest, often ignored or assumed trivial, may attract the Almighty's mercy so much that it could open the doors of grand blessings and grace. Therefore, one must never hold back from doing good, even if it be a tiny and seemingly insignificant deed.

On the other hand, a sin considered simple and trifling may anger the Allah so much that it would suffice to convert a person's afterlife into an eternal episode of dismay.



The famous scholar **Fakhruddin Ar-Razi** has said:

'Allah the Almighty has hidden the deed in which His pleasure lies, so that people show interest in all deeds or worship.

He has hidden the sin in which His wrath lies, so that people avoid all sins.

He has hidden His friends among humans, so that all humans are given respect.

He has hidden the plea that is accepted, so that all pleas are honoured.

He has hidden His Grand Name among all the others, so that all His names are glorified."



Unfortunately, many mistakes are committed in everyday life without any awareness that they amount to heavy violations of the rights of others.

- It is also a violation of rights to illegally overtake another vehicle in traffic.
- It is also a violation of rights to shake off dusts from a rug or carpet from the window in a way that stains the neighbour's windows or balcony.
- It is also a violation of rights to disturb neighbours with fireworks or loud speakers.
- It is also a violation of rights to backbite, gossip or spy on others.

• It is also a serious violation of rights to engage in reckless, impulsive and vile behaviour that jeopardises the physical and spiritual health of others.

A believer must never forget that he will be confronted with all these violations on the plain of resurrection. Observing the rights of people and becoming a servant with a righteous sensitivity should therefore be the defining quality of every believer.



In articulating the importance of embodying beautiful morals, observing the *halal-haram* boundaries and the rights of others, my late father **Musa Efendi** رحمته الله would say:

*“Many people assume that spiritual progress is made only through a lot of worship. No! **Real progress is made after one becomes aware that he is in the presence of Allah, and does whatever needs to be done upon the direction of the Prophet’s** ﷺ **Sunnah.**”*

*There are many people who offer lots of voluntary worship. Yet, they have little regard for the *halal* and *haram*, and show no effort to embody the morals of Islam. They spend all their time in backbiting and gossip. Whatever money they make, they spend on their personal desires. If only they scaled back on their voluntary worship, and instead dedicated some effort to improve their morals and became astute in observing the rights of others!”*



Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه was asked:

“One man makes an effort to offer righteous deeds but, at the same time, commits certain sins. Another man shows little effort to offer righteous deeds but does not sin. Which one is superior?”

He replied:

“To me, avoiding sin is more beautiful.” (Abu Dawud, *Zuhd*, p. 356)



In this day and age, we must especially show particular care to protect ourselves from the blights of the television, internet and advertisements that incite the ego. **“Repelling evil is better than attracting good”**; in other words, fending off what is harmful has priority over and is more necessary than trying to obtain what is favourable. Before applying balm on a wound, one first needs to clean the infection.

We must therefore first seek protection from the *harams* and things that drag hearts into neglect, so that the spirituality and inspiration in our worship intensify, and we are able realise our servanthood.



The Qur'an states:

“Shun all sin, open or secret.” (Al-Anam, 6:120)

Much like how we avoid drinking, usury and gambling, we must also keep away from jealousy, hypocrisy, lying, extravagance and stinginess. Just as we do not seek relations outside of marriage, we must also shut all the gates on all immorality, secret or open, that threaten the eyes, ears and words.



Islam cannot be practiced in some aspects of life and forgotten in the others. Islam cannot be imprisoned inside mosques. It is not a religion that simply consists of performing outward rituals of worship and avoiding outward sins.

The inner and the outer are parts complete each other. Thus, any neglect or flaw in practising one side of the religion will infect the other. A bird with a broken wing cannot fly. likewise, a believer who disregards any of the inner and outer wings cannot cover any distance.



Today, we sadly see that while care is taken to avoid the outer *harams* in religious life, the same care is often not shown to steer clear of the inner *harams*. For example, a Muslim never touches pork in his entire life. It disgusts him. Yet, the same person does not protect his tongue from lying, gossiping and backbiting, when these inner *harams* are at least as disgusting and revolting as eating pork.



The Qur'an states:

“Do not spy on and do not backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat his brother's dead flesh? No, you would hate it.” (Al-Hujurat, 49:12)

Just as a deceased person is no longer in a state where can hear or defend himself against words that attack his honour and dignity, a person who is backbitten is also unable to answer any allegations made in his absence.

For this reason, the Qur'an characterises backbiting as an utterly revolting activity that is akin to **“eating a brother's dead flesh”**.



Aisha  says:

“How strange it is that man washes his mouth after eating food but not for badmouthing his brother!”



Fudayl Ibn Iyad رضي الله عنه has said:

“Brotherhood leaves from the very spot where backbiting enters.”



For our eternal salvation, we have to enshroud ourselves in the “**clothes of taqwa**” to protect against the evils of the self, shaytan and the wrongdoers until the final breath. We must wear the clothes of *taqwa* by knowing we are under relentless divine surveillance and avoiding any kind of state, action or behaviour that would breach the Almighty’s pleasure. Even if it be for a moment, we simply cannot afford to be unmindful of the self. As a life standard, we must adopt the **Prophet’s** ﷺ plea:

“Lord! Do not leave me to myself even for a blink of an eye!”



Umar رضي الله عنه says:

“The most secret witness to an evil act is our conscience.”



The Qur’an declares:

“Say, ‘Act for Allah will see your actions, and so will His Messenger and the believers. You will be returned to the Knower of the Unseen and the Visible and He will inform you regarding what you did.’” (Al-Tawbah, 9:105)

So, we need to be aware that the Almighty sees what we do, and that these will also be presented to our **Prophet** ﷺ. And keeping this in mind, we need to feel ashamed to make any mistake in private which we would not dare make in public. Avoiding mistakes today will save a person from ignominy on the day of judgment.



Our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ has said:

“Know that I will go before you and wait for you! Be careful: our meeting place in the hereafter is the head of the Kawthar pool. If you want to meet me tomorrow, remove your hands and tongues from sin!” (Bukhari, Salat, 80; Ibn Sad, II, 227)

“My life is good for you. You undergo certain experiences, and thereupon receive divine revelation and judgment. My death is also good for you. Your deeds are presented to me. When I see a good deed, I thank Allah. And when I see a bad deed, I ask forgiveness to Allah on your behalf.” (Haythami, IX, 24)

“Don’t you embarrass me by sinning.” (See, Muslim, Hajj, 147; Abu Dawud, Manasiq, 56)



In a poem, **Hajji Muhammed Lutfi** (Alvarli Efe) رضي الله عنه offers beautiful advice below:

*Desist! Break no heart, cause no hurt
Hurt no man enslaved and exiled on earth
Hurt no one helpless and separated on love's road
Patience with all trouble, hurt not God's home
Hurt no one, if you walk as a man among men
Do not hurt the Blessed Prophet by committing a sin*



To become a proper servant, journeying from “*iman*” to “*ihsan*” is essential. *Ihsan* is to acquire the consciousness that Allah, who transcends space and time, is present and watching at every moment and all places. It is to thereby never become unmindful of the Almighty, even for a second, and gain a willpower and resolution that would hold one back from committing any sin in private which he would not dare attempt in public.



Rumi ﷺ says:

“A castle guard at a distant corner of the land, on the border, still defends the castle and keeps an eye over it even though he is far away from the sultan and the capital. Even if he is offered lavish bribes, he still does not sell the castle out to the enemy. Although he is stationed far and away on the border, he remains loyal as if the sultan is right by his side. And in the eye of the sultan, that guard is dearer than the bodyguards right beside him who risk their lives to protect him.”



Imam Shafi ﷺ says:

“Three actions are the hardest:

1. Being generous even when having little means.
2. Speaking the truth at all times.
3. Having **taqwa** even when alone.”



Taqwa is to eliminate the desires of the ego, develop the capabilities of the spirit and to affix inside the heart the consciousness of always being watched by divine cameras.

Taqwa is to desist from the illicit and the disliked -for fear they may lead to losing the Almighty's pleasure and love- and to even scrupulously avoid the doubtful.



A *hadith* reads:

“A person may never reach the level of **taqwa** unless he avoids even some harmless actions out of fear it may drag him into sin.” (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 19/2451)



Uthman رضي الله عنه says:

“**Taqwa** comes with five attributes:

1. Accompanying righteous and truthful people.
2. Reforming the soul and controlling the tongue.
3. The skill to discard the harmful from any worldly gain that appeals to the ego, and to regard even the smallest gain from religion as treasure.
4. Never to completely fill the stomach even with *halal* food, out fear it may contain some *haram*.
5. Believing all humans are saved, except for oneself.



Umar رضي الله عنه once asked **Ubay Ibn Kab** رضي الله عنه about the nature of **taqwa**. **Ubay** رضي الله عنه inquired:

“Have you ever walked on a thorny road?” **Umar** رضي الله عنه replied:

“Yes, I have.”

“So, what did you do?” **Ubay** رضي الله عنه asked.

“I gathered my clothes and focused entirely on the road to avoid getting spiked,” replied **Umar** رضي الله عنه.

Ubay رضي الله عنه thereupon said:

“That precisely is **taqwa**.” (Ibn Kathir, *Tafsiru'l-Qur'ani'l-Azim*, Beirut 1988, I, 42)



In the valley of life which consists of a journey from the cradle to the grave, **taqwa** is an effort to protect the clothes of Islam from getting pierced, damaged and even ripped apart by the thorns of sin, neglect and compromise.



Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه says:

“A wise person chases after **taqwa**, while the fool likes oppression.”



A person who usurps the right of another does not only oppress the victim. Since he has done something that warrants punishment in the hereafter, he has essentially oppressed himself.



The greatest oppression is one that is self-inflicted by becoming lost in wrong action and rebellion. The most an oppressive act from another person can do is end one's life and his mortal existence. But an oppressive act a person commits against himself can ruin his eternal life.



As believers, what we must fear and worry about in life are not the fleeting troubles and disasters but the rebellions, ingratitude, sin, neglect and selfish ambitions that transform the eternal life into torment.



Time and again, we become fearful when disasters occur. An earthquake strikes, we become afraid. Floods sweep, we get scared. Yes; it is only natural that we, as human beings, fear these. But what we must essentially fear most are our own transgressions.

- We must fear diving into heedlessness and getting swept away by sin.
- We must fear the wrong words that spill out from our tongues.
- We must fear letting our eyes watch the wrong screens.
- We must fear reaching out our hands to what is not rightfully ours.
- We must fear becoming poor in mercy and compassion.
- We must fear that the buds of mercy and compassion in our hearts may wither.
- We must fear failing to properly embody the character and personality of Islam, and performing our duty to promote the good and discourage from evil.
- We must fear being unable to display the smile of Islam.

We need to fear all of these so that, in our final breaths, we are among the fortunate servants whom the angels declare **“free of fear and worry.”**



Righteous elders have avoided even the shades of buildings where illicit actions occur. This is because there is a danger that such places may radiate a gloom upon the heart. It is an imperative of *taqwa* to show this kind of sensitivity to all places where sins are committed.



Just as “**preventive medicine**” demands that we avoid places with bacteria, maintain our hygiene and reinforce the immune system against viruses to protect the body against disease, a Muslim must likewise be equally cautious against wrong actions and the people of wrong actions, and especially the negative effects of television, the internet and fashion which are the most rampant plagues of our times. In short, he must have *taqwa*.



The extraordinary measures we are faced with today due to the **contagious corona virus** must inspire us to self-inspect on many fronts. We must ask:

✓ While we keep a distance from each other to protect ourselves against the virus, are we able to keep a distance from *harams*, the windowfronts of the devil, the screens of the ego and the people with whom Allah ﷻ is angry?

✓ While we sanitise our hands and houses, do we also sanitise our hearts from the dirt of sin and neglect with tears of repentance?

✓ When thinking about the quarantine measures we take to protect ourselves and families from the illness, are we able to guard against the spiritual pandemics of society, that is to say, from false beliefs and the lack of morals and modesty?

✓ While watching what we eat and taking dietary supplements to strengthen our immune systems, do we show the same care to tightly seize onto the measures of *taqwa* for the health and wellbeing of our spirits?



Similar to how it is necessary to adopt some physical measures, starting from hygiene, against the global disaster that is the pandemic, it is also essential until the very last breath to hold onto the measure of *taqwa* against the spiritual plagues that obliterate the spirit.

It is vital to keep the hands, tongue, eyes, ears, the mind and the heart clean from the grime of wrongdoing.



Abu'l-Hasan Kharraqani رحمته الله has said:

“Allah ﷻ has brought you into this world clean. So, do not return to His presence dirty!”



Despite coming from a murky source, a new-born baby smells beautiful, enlightens the eyes and soothes the heart. This is a result of his innocence and purity.

Likewise, the Almighty Allah wants us to remain as pure as the day we were born, live a clean life and return to Him with a clean slate. The Qur'an states:

“The Day when neither wealth nor sons will be of any use - except for those who come to Allah with sound and flawless hearts.” (Al-Shuara, 26:88-89)



Abu'l-Hasan Kharaqani رحمته الله said:

“Stamp your tongue in such a way that it is unable to say things Allah is displeased with!

Stamp your heart in such a way that it inclines to none but Allah!

Put such a lock on your mouth that it lets nothing pass through it but halal!

And stamp your limbs in such a way that they do not offer any deeds except for ones that are sincere!”



Once the heart is invaded by the dirt of wrong action, it becomes sunken in the darkness of neglect and gloom. Just as stains on a mirror, in time, dim the quality of vision, the dirt of sin blinds the eye of the heart, and makes a person too weak to discern the beautiful from the vile and the right from wrong. And in time, the light of belief fizzles out.

Such a chest is no longer any different to a grave ditch that contains a corpse. As **Mehmed Akif** says:

Faith is a gem, but oh Lord, how immense

A faithless, rusty heart is a burden on the chest



Let us liken the heart to a glass and assume we fill it with beautiful qualities such as faith, love and mercy. Now, if a drop of filth was to fall into this glass, would there be anything of its beauty left? Never.

Thus, bad traits such as malice, jealousy, pride, ambition and ingratitude and their physical expressions, namely backbiting, lying, slander and extravagance, are drops of filth that poison us.



By His name **As-Sattar** (The Veiler), Allah has concealed our many faults but has nonetheless left them as black spots on our hearts. Essentially, this is also from His infinite compassion. If the sins left black spots on foreheads instead, nobody would look each other in the eye.



An ideal kind of servanthood that will not cause us embarrassment in the divine presence lies in scrupulously avoiding all kinds of *haram*. Especially in our times when many sins, big or small, are instilled into society as natural behaviour, and when a reckless worldview without any divine rules or care for the hereafter is injected into the hearts, we must take extra care both for ourselves and our children.



In this day and age, we must be particularly vigilant about the things we watch. The scenes of certain boulevards, wrong webpages or damaging shows on television scatter poison onto spirits. It may be the eyes that see; yet, it is the heart that has to suffer the effects of such images imprinted onto it.



A *hadith* says:

“Looking at haram is one of the many venomous arrows of the devil. Whosoever abandons it out of fear of Allah, will be given a zest of faith which he will feel deep inside his heart.” (Hakim, IV, 349/7875; Haythami, VIII, 63)



Our **Prophet** ﷺ once told **Ali** ؑ:

“Ali! If you suddenly see something haram, do not look back for a second gaze! Your first look is forgiven, while the second is to your detriment.” (Abu Dawud, Nikah, 42-43/2149; Tirmidhi, Adab, 28/2777; Haythami, VIII, 63)

In other words, if we unwillingly catch a glimpse of a *haram* sight, this is considered unavoidable. It is, however, *haram* to prolong that gaze.

To cite another example, every car has a number plate. Yet, upon seeing a car, no one zooms in to read its number plate. Similarly, we must avoid prying when we encounter obscenities in public.



Upon encountering anything the ego finds pleasant; a believer must first pause to reflect. He must weigh every action against divine standards, and sieve it through the sift of *taqwa* to determine whether it is good or bad for him in this world or the next. He must never ignore the fact that many things that appear pleasant are, in fact, causes for eternal disaster.

Our **Prophet** ﷺ has, in fact, said:

“Paradise is surrounded by hated things, while hell is surrounded by appetites.” (Bukhari, Riqaq, 28; Muslim, Jannah, 1)



Shaykh Abdulqadir Al-Jilani رحمته الله says:

*“Son! When acquiring worldly things, do not ever be like the man who collects wood at night without knowing what it is that he is collecting. Therefore, take care to see whether it is haram or halal, licit or illicit. Let the sun of **taqwa** light up your every affair.”*



A believer must never forget that the world is a place of trial, while the true life lies in the afterlife. He must therefore never engage in any activity without care for the *haram* and *halal*. **Luqman the Wise** عليه السلام was asked:

“From who did you learn wisdom?”

“From the blind”, he replied. “For they never take a step without inspecting the area with their sticks.”



The hearts of people who try to earn money in *haram* ways are blind.

Umar Ibn Abdulaziz رحمته الله says:

“Harams are a fire. Only dead hearts reach out their hands for them. If they were alive, they would have certainly felt the pain.”



Heedlessness is for the heart to be veiled from truth. It is to recklessly run across a minefield or to carelessly roam along the edges of a cliff.



Umar رحمته الله says:

“He who does not know evil ends up falling into its trap.”



Yahya Ibn Muadh رحمته الله offers the below analogy to depict the states of those who forget the afterlife:

“Bizarre is he who goes on a diet and avoids even halal food from fear of getting sick, but does not go on a diet to avoid the haram from fear of hell.”



Bishr-i Khafi رحمته الله says:

“If humans were to properly reflect on Allah’s majesty, they would become incapable of rebelling against Him.” (Ibn Kathir, I, 448)



Qasim Ibn Muhammed ﷺ once heard another person described as being:

“Daring against Allah!” He warned the person speaking that no creature has the power to do so:

“No son of Adam can ever afford to be daring against Allah! It is better if you said, ‘How little does he know Allah!’” (Ibn Asakir, *Tarikh Dimashq*, v. 49, p. 180)



Mahmud Sami Ramazanoglu ﷺ says:

“A son who rebels against a compassionate father is called crazy. But there are no words to describe a person who rebels against the commands of the most compassionate Allah”



Shaykh Sadi has said:

“My father gave me the following advice shortly before passing away:

‘Son! Every pleasure of your ego that takes you further away from Allah, is a terrible fire; so, beware! Do not kindle the fire of hell for yourself! If you have no strength to endure the fire, strive to pour water upon it with patience, starting from today!’”



A HAPPY FAMILY HOME

The happiest home on earth was the blissful home of the Prophet ﷺ. The most consummate father and head of the family was, again, the Prophet ﷺ. The most exemplary wives were our mothers Khadijah ؓ, Fatima ؓ, Aisha ؓ, among others. Children who come of age by learning about and practicing the guidelines they have left behind, effectively reap a share of the hearts of Hasan ؓ and Husain ؓ. Only when this happens will our own children -Allah willing- become our own means of gratitude, beneficial successors in our wake and sources of endless rewards.

Marriage (nikah) is the path of prophets, the *sunnah* of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, the spring of generations, the honour and modesty of man and woman, the fortress of chastity and purity, and the privilege -and superiority- of mankind over animals.



The Qur'an states:

“Among His Signs is that He created spouses for you of your own kind so that you might find tranquillity in them. And He has placed affection and compassion between you. There are certainly Signs in that for people who reflect.” (Al-Rum, 30:21)

There really are mind-blowing lessons and wisdoms in marriage, in precisely how two strangers are able to bond with each other and form a strong and loving family. It is indeed a sublime manifestation of wisdom that two young people leave their parental homes and become bound to one another through the affection and compassion given by Allah ﷻ, and live in an intimate companionship that even leaves their former families in the shadow.



Regarding the virtue of encouraging marriage and helping newlyweds, **Shaykh Muhyiddin Ibn Al-Arabi** ؒ says:

“The greatest kind of ongoing charity (sadaqah jariyah) is to facilitate a marriage. For every good deed performed by the couple’s progeny, a reward will also be given to the person who has served as a means to make their marriage possible.”



The Almighty Allah wants His servants to live in decency and peace. Decency is best ensured through marriage. Thus, just as it is necessary for people to marry given they have the means to do so, it is also a divine responsibility entrusted upon the Muslims to help those who cannot. The Qur’an, in fact, states:

“Marry off those among you who are unmarried and those of your slavegirls who are righteous. If they are poor, Allah will enrich them from His bounty. Allah is All-Encompassing and All-knowing.” (Al-Nur, 24:32)

Our ancestors, the Ottomans set up special foundations for this charitable act. This is because social order and morality depends on its individuals living decent and peaceful family lives.



Let us not forget that the most basic element that upholds a nation, is its religious and moral structure. And the most effective way to form and protect this moral structure is marriage. For this reason, the **Prophet ﷺ** warned against making the process difficult by saying:

“The best marriage is one that is hassle-free.” (Abu Dawud, Nikah, 32)

Customs such as extortionate dowries, bride fees that turn marriage into an overly expensive affair and make it more difficult than it should be, are therefore false practices, and relics from the age of ignorance.



Holding extravagant and pompous weddings that serve to undermine and even tear families apart are acts Islam can never accept. This is because our glorious religion commands us to be frugal. It tells us not to waste water even when taking ablution from the side of a fast-flowing river.

Thus, even if both sides are rich, they should still opt to take the middle way by considering those in society who are less privileged. Turning weddings into shows of luxury and power is an indication of an extravagant craze, which itself stems from an inability to properly understand Islam.



Today, *taqwa* is compromised the most during the un-Islamic conduct displayed at weddings.

Such occasions where our youth take a step into a new life should be commemorated with recitals of the Qur'an, prayers, spiritual talks and feasts to which the poor are also invited.

Today, it has sadly become common to hold weddings with little regard for modesty where mostly the rich are invited to the exclusion of the poor, and which turn into extravagant shows of force that are more reminiscent of a fashion parade.

Starting off on the wrong step on such a sacred path such as marriage is a grave misfortune.

We need to remember that Islam is a whole. It cannot be practiced in some stages of life while abandoned in the rest. For Allah's ﷻ mercy to transpire, we need to regulate every phase of our lives in line with the standards of Islam.



Allah has willed for human beings to come into the world in a peaceful and happy family established on a contract of marriage in His name. In a sacred family home, husbands and wives, as well as parents and children are entrusted upon one another with certain rights and duties.

A *hadith*, in fact, says:

“All of you are shepherds and are responsible over your flock.

Man is a shepherd of his family and is responsible for his flock.

A woman is a shepherd inside her husband's home, and she, too, is responsible for her flock.” (Bukhari, Ahkam, 1; Muslim, Ijarah, 20)



The father is a sun in the skies of the family's happiness. **The mother** is a moon that has turned the sparkles of the heart and the veils of chastity into a silver halo, while **the children** are the pearl-like stars of those virtuous skies.

A righteous father who has devoted his energy, knowledge and experience for the peace, training and development of his family, most certainly merit obedience and love. It is never proper to disobey and act ungratefully towards him or say bad words to him. This can only be a sign of personal misery.

Our **Prophet** ﷺ has, in fact, said:

“Allah's pleasure is hidden in the father's pleasure, and His wrath in the father's anger.” (Tirmidhi, Birr, 3)



Much like his exemplary character, the Prophet's blissful home was also the most supreme model for a happy family.

This home was the happiest in the world; so much so that despite not having anything to eat for days and not burning the stove for months, it would still radiate scents of joy all around. Moreover, the rooms of the wives in that sacred home were very modest. Yet, that home offered the highest examples of love, contentment, subsistence, patience, trust and gratitude.



The **Prophet's** ﷺ outstanding elegance and politeness towards his family members bound their hearts to him with endless affection and love. Such that:

- No wife can ever love her husband more than his wives loved the **Prophet** ﷺ.
- Likewise, no husband can ever love his wife more than the **Prophet** ﷺ loved his wives.
- No child can ever love her father more than **Fatimah** ﷺ loved the **Prophet** ﷺ.
- And no father can ever love his child more than **Prophet** ﷺ loved **Fatimah** ﷺ.



The best spouses are those who encourage each other to gain Allah's ﷻ pleasure. A *hadith* says:

"If a husband wakes up his wife in the night, and they offer a two-rakat prayer either individually or together, Allah will mark them down as men and women who remember Him much." (Abu Dawud, Tatawwu 18, Witr 13)

"May Allah have mercy on a man who gets up at night for prayer, wakes up his wife and splashes water on her face to awaken her if she does not. May Allah also have mercy on a woman who gets up at night for prayer, wakes up her husband and splashes water on his face, if he does not awaken, to interrupt his sleep!" (Abu Dawud, Tatawwu 18, Witr 13)



My venerable father **Musa Efendi** ﷺ would offer the following advice to newlyweds:

"Spouses need to be compassionate towards each other. Your true mercy and compassion show in your support for one another on the path of Allah. You waking each other up before daybreak and for the dawn prayer, is considered a mark of true compassion."



When the companions returned home in the evening, their wives would ask:

“What verses of the Qur’an were revealed today? What have you learnt today from **the Messenger of Allah ﷺ**?” and insist that their children also continued attending the Prophet’s circle.



Muslim households that have properly digested the morals of Islam are peaceful homes. In contrast, the worldly homes of those defeated by their egos, who are neglectful are practically family graveyards of living corpses.



We need to reassess how we look upon our family homes. These sacred homes are neither hotel rooms or deserted places. They are gardens of the heart where we collect the fruits of love, affection, sharing and serving one another upon the direction of Allah’s ﷻ pleasure. The roses, hyacinths and nightingales of this garden need to flourish in the air of spirituality of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, so that our eternal lives are filled with the peace and beauty of a calm spring.



The strength of a family depends on the spiritual maturity of the spouses and their ability to get along. **Rumi** ﷻ says:

“The rose earned its fine scent by getting along with the thorn. Listen to the story from the rose. Listen to what it says:

‘Why should I despair for being with the thorn and throw myself into grief? It is by putting up with the thorn’s company that I have learnt how to smile. It is through the thorn that I have gained the ability to release a beauty and fine aroma into the world.’”



As the family is the cornerstone of society, the **Prophet** ﷺ gives the following advice to settle unrest between spouses:

“No husband should foster enmity towards his wife! Even if she has a habit he dislikes, there will be another habit of hers that he likes.” (Muslim, Rada’, 61)



A man once went to the home of Caliph **Umar** ﷻ to complain about certain habits of his wife. He sat by the door, waiting for the Caliph to come out. Then he began hearing noises from inside the house. The wife had begun shouting at **Umar** ﷻ. But the Caliph did not respond to her with even a word.

Having unwittingly eavesdropped on the situation, the man felt embarrassed and thought:

“If this is what the leader of Muslims faces despite all his glory, then how can he find a solution to my own problem?” But just as he got up to turn back, **Umar** ﷺ stepped out the door and asked:

“Is everything okay?”

The man said:

“Caliph! I had come here to complain about my wife’s bad habits and her lack of respect towards me. But I wanted to turn back after hearing that your wife also says inappropriate things to you.”

Umar ﷺ thereupon said:

“Brother, I do not get angry with my wife because of the rights she has over me. She is my cook, my baker, my launderer and also the breast-feeder of my children. Yet, she does not have to do any of these. She does all these voluntarily. Moreover, she is what prevents my heart from leaning towards the *haram*. So, I do not mind what she says.”

When the man replied, “My wife is exactly the same, Caliph”, **Umar** ﷺ consoled:

“Then, my brother, treat your wife with kindness! In any case, life passes by in the blink of an eye!” (Dhahabi, *Al-Kabair*, p. 179)



Today, the weakening of family relations, the rise in divorces, the breakup of homes and a surge in disputes and spiritual depressions, despite an increase in financial means, are all tragic consequences of moving away from spirituality and diving into egoistic lifestyles.

With people’s inner worlds turned upside down by television shows that arouse the ego, websites that disseminate immorality and the lies of fashion and advertisements that stir up ambitions, the spirituality of many people is practically reminiscent of a field hospital in a warzone.

To a certain extent, the damage caused by natural earthquakes can be repaired. But, unless precautions are taken, societies can never withstand being dragged into destruction wrought by spiritual earthquakes.



Today, the tribulations of the end of times are fast approaching. These are the days when the devil stakes claim to property and children. Searching for and finding the *halal* today is a lot harder than it was yesterday. But taking care to do so, is more important and precious today than ever.



Islam completely rejects rotten and base relations that practically assassinate the family, the core of society. It therefore outright bans **zina** (fornication), which is the most disgraceful of all relations outside of marriage, as a heavy *haram*. It is because this vile act is a direct attack on marriage itself.

No stupidity and ignorance can be greater than swapping the peaceful and joyous world of marriage with the illegitimacy and darkness of *zina*.



In the Holy Qur'an, Allah informs us about some of the nations destroyed for their denial, immorality and trickery in business, such as Aad, Thamud, the people of **Prophet Shuayb** ﷺ and others,

The worst of the worst among these, however, is Sodom and Gomorrah. Sadly, today's modern age of ignorance promotes their **homosexuality**, which is a most appalling and terrible act of immorality, as a "human right". A disgrace even animals do not to go near to is scattering poison on the spirituality of the individual, family and society.

An even worse form of this immorality is the attempt to portray an ignominy that seamlessly fits with Allah's words, "**They are like beasts, and even more astray**"¹³ as an innocent and perfectly normal exercise of "freedom" and "human right".



Family means marriage. It means decency (*iffah*). A family established through marriage protects the honour and dignity of both men and women.

Decency is a quality exclusive to humans. Indecency, on the other hand, is to move away from human dignity, and to lead an irresponsible, base and shabby life like animals. All things considered, animals have not been given qualities such as reason, conscience and spiritual awareness. Hence, they incur no blame for the way they live. But what about humans?



Malik Ibn Dinar ﷺ says:

'Allah has never punished a heart more than by depriving it of shame.'



The companions report that our Blessed **Prophet** ﷺ was more decent and modest than a maid hiding behind her veil. (See, Bukhari, Adab, 77)



13. See, Al-Araf, 7:179; Al-Furqan, 25:44.

On 34 occasions in the Qur'an Allah the Almighty mentions Mary. He refers to her as "**Mary, who guarded her chastity**".¹⁴ A woman's highest honour and dignity lies in striving to become an example of decency like her.



Uthman رضي الله عنه says:

"What a wonderful veil against lust it is to protect the eye from haram."



Rumi رحمه الله says:

"A fire such as lust does not fizzle out the longer it burns. It fizzles out by not giving it what it wants. Could a fire ever die out if it was fed with more wood?"



Today, indecency and immorality are being imposed especially upon our youth via destructive publications, devilish screens, fashions and advertisements. The veil of shame is being torn asunder with excuses such as "Everyone dresses like this. This is what everyone does."

Abiding scrupulously by modesty and morals is necessary to protect against physical and spiritual disasters. Just as our father **Adam** عليه السلام and our mother **Hawa** shrouded themselves in modesty as a first sign of their repentance and tried to cover up despite there being no other humans apart from themselves in paradise, in this end of times, a similar attitude is needed for any believer who hopes to be protected from divine wrath.



Precious things are always protected. An exquisite diamond is never displayed out in the open. The *hijab* is likewise an expression of the value Islam ascribes to women.

Through the *hijab*, Islam commands and advises women to put a password on their adornments. The *hijab* enables women to decipher the code of their beauty only for their husbands, and keep it locked away from others to safeguard her honour and dignity.



A major problem today is that the sensitivity for the *hijab* has begun to evaporate. Wearing a *hijab* does not just consist of covering the head. But sadly, many Muslim women today wear tight fitting clothes that do not comply at all with the spirit of the *hijab*.

14. See, Al-Anbiya, 21:91.

Allah states:

“O Prophet! Tell your wives and daughters and the women of the believers to draw their outer garments closely around themselves. This makes it more likely that they will be recognised and not be harmed.” (Al-Ahzab, 33:59)

The term *jilbab* mentioned in the verse is an outer garment worn on top of normal clothes, which serves to conceal the body lines and protect women from lustful gazes. This means that simply covering the head is not enough.



Once, upon seeing Aisha’s ﷺ sister Asma wearing a thin dress, the **Prophet** ﷺ turned his head away and said:

“Asma! After coming of age, it is not right for women to show any part of their bodies apart from here and here (pointing to the face and hands).”



Our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ has referred to women who wear clothes only for attention and opt for more appealing and eye-catching attire when going outside to reveal their physiques, as **“the naked clothed”**.

Women must cover their entire bodies apart from their hands, faces and feet; and men between their kneecaps and bellybuttons. They must not wear tight clothes that expose parts of their bodies that are forbidden for others to see. Apart from this, every man and woman is free to wear anything in line with personal or traditional tastes, cultural norms or circumstances, given they are properly covered.



Whichever fashion trends appear, today’s unmindful youth get swept away by them like driftwood in a flood. Men wearing earrings or scanty shorts, dressing shabbily with haircuts that resemble women and vice-versa, can readily -and sadly- find a place even in Muslim societies, simply in the name of “fashion”.

Yet, Islam wants both men and women to live in line with what is proper to their character and qualities. Our **Prophet** ﷺ has strongly condemned men who try resemble women, and women who try to resemble men.



Our modern age of ignorance has initiated a false and deceptive idea of “equality” between men and women. It is an idea that contradicts the qualities embedded in creation; and has undermined the duties of women as mothers and wives, sapped out peace from families and shaken the order of social life.

Men and women do not share an equality in their physical, spiritual and natural characteristics that would otherwise justify a practical and legal equality. What matters is not equality in all areas, but justice and balance in the allotment of right and duties.



Islam does not force women to engage in worldly activities to earn money against their desires.

It is the very epitome of justice that Islam entrusts man and woman with separate rights and responsibilities, which stems from their difference in nature.

The contrary, which is to force man and woman into an equality by overlooking their differences in nature, is really an injustice and perversion.

Research, in fact, shows that women in schools or workplaces in the West are discriminated against and forced to work the same jobs as men for less money.



An approach that sends women to the outside world with the slogans, 'equality, competition, career, freedom', has emaciated the family institution. The family in the West is now at the point of collapse.

To supposedly grant 'rights and freedom' to women left stranded by family tragedies, divested of their status as mothers and exposed to the physical and spiritual torment of callous men, can only be a contradiction.



As a result of patting the egos of women to force them into jobs that contravene their nature, the order of humanity has been left broken. The population in Europe is now on the wane, and families are becoming weaker by the day.

How could whipping women into a frenzied race against men in their hostile world and forcing them to let go of their womanhood, possibly amount to giving women their rights?

Is shattering the crystals and filling the streets with broken glass another name for a 'society that respects women?'

Is there really any privilege in forcing a woman to divest her right to motherhood and cram her into shifts where she is forced to use her beauty in the workplace?



During times when journeys were undertaken on camels, people would sing rhythmic songs to spur the camels on. On one of these journeys, a servant by the name of **Anjashah** sped up the camels by chanting a song. But the speed proved a little too dangerous for the women inside the canopies on camelback. So, the **Prophet** ﷺ said:

“Beware, Anjashah, not to break the glasses!” (Buhari, Adab, 95; Ahmad, III, 117)

The **Prophet** ﷺ described women as crystals who deserve care not to be broken. Such was his elegance and finesse.

Men can be as hard and resilient as iron. But women are like crystals.



Our **Prophet** ﷺ is delicate and compassionate enough to consider that it would be wrong to force women into travel conditions suitable for men.

How about now? Is it fair to treat a crystal and iron the same in the name of gender equality?



By becoming dragged into a race for equality with men, women have unfortunately been pushed to the streets, factories and the shopwindows. It was only recently that women in the West were not considered human, and associated with the devil and sin. Now, they are regarded as property, as marketing bait.

Women have been forced to abandon their highest status as mothers and the ladies of their families, to compete with men in social life. As a result, they have been torn away from the family and become enemies to motherhood.



In the age of **ignorance**, girls were buried alive.

In this **modern age of ignorance**, motherhood is ridiculed, while bringing a child into the world is seen as damaging to physical beauty, and having a child is regarded a great burden.

As a result of this outlook, many babies are murdered in the womb through **abortion**. This murder is moreover defended as a supposed exercise of a woman’s right and freedom.

Unless there are medical, life-threatening reasons for the mother or child, abortion is murder, and can never be regarded as an innocent act.



According to a narration from *tabiun* scholar **Qatadah**, the reason why Arab tribes in the age of ignorance buried their daughters alive, was the fear that:

“They may grow up to become captured in battle and dishonoured; and that raising them may also push the family into poverty.”

It is reported that to avoid such scenarios, they killed their daughters while they were still children, even though many of them kept and cared for dogs at home as pets. (See, Tabari, Tafsir, VIII, 68 [Al-Anam, 6:140])



To steer clear from a supposed shame, the person of the age of ignorance fell into an even graver ignominy by committing such an inhumane cruelty as murdering his own daughter by burying her alive. Allah reminds of the scene that awaits them in the divine court, with the words:

“When a baby girl buried alive is asked, ‘For what crime was she killed.’” (Al-Takwir, 81:8-9)

Today, those who reject and surrender their children to the butchers of abortion without any legitimate reason, and only out of a worldly and egotistic desire to retain their personal comfort and physique or avoid financial hardship, are committing a similar atrocity.

These people deprived of conscience ought to be asked:

What right do you have to take a life given by Allah ﷻ? In any case, have you any knowledge of the unseen? Do you know what the future may bring? The child you are killing may end up becoming your refuge and support. He or she may look after you and protect you when you are left with no one around and in need of close care.



Married couples who resist having any children without a valid excuse or those who resort to various methods to end the life of a child in the womb, are causing the destruction of generations. When even plants and animals exhibit an array of lessons just to keep their generations going, what logic or conscience can justify the attempts of mankind, the most supreme of all creation, to sabotage its own progeny?

A snake lays its eggs in a secluded area and protects them from harm. While animals desperately flutter to protect their generations, how sad it is that the human being, the most honoured creature in the universe, is deprived of such emotions of mercy and compassion!



Within the family, the woman is like a crystal chandelier that brightens society. When looking through the pages of history, we see that it is through women that societies flourished or were destroyed. If, for their happiness, women are shown the streets, the paths of life will be filled with broken glass.



Societies that neglect the spiritual education of women never blossom with the spring of humanity. Women lose their true value and end up on the streets. This is like a pearl thrown into a garbage bin.



The greatest joy for women lies in them becoming the ladies of their own homes. Families dry up when women turn away from their essential duty. The integration of women into the outside world is possible only provided there are good reasons, and also professions that suit their nature. And these reasons must be evaluated correctly. They must be determined in line with the needs of society, and care must be shown not to transgress rational and legitimate boundaries. By trampling on boundaries with vain whims and excuses, we only fool ourselves; and each time, these always lead to us misery.

Many of our daughters have become lost in the whirlwind of these foolish trends. Many eyes deceived by the disgrace hiding behind a sheet of glitter, have become blinded to divine truth and, in so doing, have culled their own chance at happiness.



Throughout the history of mankind, women have found the respect they merit only in submission to their Creator. Despite claiming otherwise, all systems outside of Islam have valued women only as shopfront displays, and regarded them as economic commodities of flesh.



Women, previously despised and belittled and given no right to speak on any matter, acquired the honour and dignity they deserved through Islam, which allowed them to defend their rights. Under the command of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, a system of laws was established exclusive to women.



Islam has rejected the inferior and miserable role cut out for women by the ages of ignorance, past and present, as well as the distorted form of today's Judaism and Christianity; and has raised women to the honourable rank they deserve.

That the Qur'an has a chapter named 'Women' (*An-Nisa*) which guarantees their rights in marriage, inheritance and during divorce as well as payments of child support. This suffices to show just how sensitive Islam is on the issue.



During the age of ignorance, women had no share in inheritance. They themselves were like an inherited asset, handed down.

In today's modern age of ignorance, some regions cite customs as an excuse to usurp a women's share in inheritance, and banish them from even speaking out for their rights.

Some Europeanised areas, in contrast, use equality as an excuse to tread on the standards of the Qur'an and usurp the share of men.

Yet, in Chapter An-Nisa, after detailing the laws of inheritance, the Almighty heralds those who abide by it with eternal joy and peace, while warning others who overstep the limits laid down with a humiliating punishment. (See, Al-Nisa, 13-14)



In his Farewell Speech, our **Prophet** ﷺ said the following about women's rights:

"Mankind! Observe the rights of women! Treat them with mercy and love! I advise you to fear Allah regarding them. You have taken women as trusts from Allah; and taken their chastity and decency under your wings in Allah's name!" (Bukhari, Hajj 132, Maghazi, 78; Muslim, Hajj, 147; Abu Dawud, Manasiq, 56, 61; Tirmidhi, Tafsiro'l-Qur'an, 10)



In another hadith, the **Prophet** ﷺ says:

"After taqwa of Allah, a believer benefits most from a righteous wife. If he tells her to do something, she listens. When he looks at her, he feels joy. If he swears not to do a certain thing, his wife complies and saves him of culpability. If he goes far away, the woman protects both her own decency and his property." (Ibn Majah, Nikah, 5/1857)

"The world consists of a fleeting benefit. And its most beneficial being is a righteous woman." (Muslim, Rada, 64)



Thawban رضي الله عنه narrates:

We were on a military campaign with the Messenger of Allah when the verse, **"Give those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend them in the way of Allah, news of a painful punishment."** (Al-Tawbah, 9:34) was revealed. Some companions said:

"Everything concerning gold and silver has been revealed. But if only we knew what was better so we could save up on that!"

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ thereupon said:

"The most precious of all possessions is a tongue that remembers, a heart that gives thanks and a righteous wife who helps with her husband's faith." (Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 9/9)



Customs and traditions in some regions promote a mistaken practice where sons are held in higher regard. Our **Prophet** ﷺ has banned this, saying:

“Give to your children equally. If I were to hold one of them superior, I would choose the daughters.” (Haythami, IV, 153; Ibn Hajar, *Al-Matalibu'l-Aliya*, IV, 69)



Daughters are the chastity and mercy of a family. They will end up becoming sultans of their own families, ladies who keep their homes together and are the shepherds of the children will raise and direct to the truth and the good.

A child receives his most crucial education from the mother. This is expressed in the famous saying of the Prophet, **الْأُمُّ مَدْرَسَةٌ**: **“The mother is the school”**.



Since she spends more time with the children at home, by setting them a good example, the mother is to leave a lasting mark on their spirits to become their **“first and greatest teacher.”**

Every word that comes out of the mother’s mouth is like a brick that goes into the construction of the child’s character. The mother is the real school where the child receives education. Mothers are the greatest source of compassion. It becomes harder to educate children deprived of their mother’s care. People with high characters are mostly children who come from righteous mothers.



Our civilisation has always held mothers in the highest regard. A mother is especially a gem who merits great care. A person once came to the **Prophet** ﷺ and asked:

“Who deserves the most care?” The **Prophet** ﷺ replied:

“Your mother, then your mother, then your mother, and only then your father and then your closest relative.” (Muslim, Birr, 2)



As is stated in a *hadith*:

“Paradise lies beneath the feet of the mother!” (Ahmad, III, 429)

Islam gives the highest honour not to fathers, but to mothers. No other created being can be considered their equal in love and respect. Righteous mothers who uphold their families with love and sacrifice, merit a lifetime of prayers and gratitude.



Is there any way to measure the limits of the vast love a mother nurtures for a child inside her heart? She has carried the child for nine months in her womb, fostered him for two years with her milk, fed and clothed him, and put him to bed, enduring many a sleepless night. Is it ever possible to repay the debts to our parents who have devoted their entire lifespans to guard us against gathering dust in the storms of life?



Imam Abu Hanifah رحمته الله rejected the offer to become the high-judge of Baghdad out of concern he would become an instrument for tyranny. **Caliph Abu Mansur** retaliated by having him imprisoned and sentenced to whipping. And with each passing day, the number of whips increased. But far from worried about the pain he suffered under the lashes, Imam Abu Hanifah was more concerned about how his mother would react if she heard. So, he sent a message to his friends, saying:

“Please, do not let my mother know about this. She would be distraught to hear that I am in pain. And I cannot endure the thought of her being distraught!”



Mulla Abdurahman Jami رحمته الله says:

“How can I not love my mother when she carried me a while in her body, a further while in her arms and for an entire lifetime in her heart?”



Rumi رحمته الله says:

“Be careful of the rights of the mother! Make her the crown upon your head! If mothers had not endured the pain of birth, children would have found no way to come into the world.”



In his will, **Bahauddin Naqshiband** رحمته الله expressed the vast respect, loyalty and love for his mother when he said:

“People who come to visit my grave should first visit the grave of my mother.”



Righteous mothers are the invisible heroes who give societies direction. People can regurgitate the nonsense that Islam oppresses women all it wants. The most magnificent response to these deliriums is the faithful mothers who raise their children with the love of religion, faith, the motherland, the flag and all things sacred, and send them to the army as if they are sending them off to their weddings.



Today, the prime *jihad* of wives is to make an effort to keep guard over their families in the way commanded by Allah ﷻ, and raise a generation of believers. Their second *jihad* is to display the smiling face of Islam with unremitting politeness and elegance. Such righteous wives are the true architects of society.



Unlike how it is today, our civilisation never reserved showing love and respect to women and elders to specific days of the year. Every day was “Mother’s Day”. Every opportunity was taken to kiss their hands, take good care of them, seek their prayers and ask their forgiveness for any shortcomings.

Similarly, in our civilisation, “Father’s Day” was not just one day of the year but every day. Family elders were given consummate respect.

Neither was a wedding anniversary merely once a year. Every day was a day show love and respect to wives. And the love was shown not through expensive gifts and jewellery but through compliments, courtesy and beautiful conduct that came from the heart.



In our day when the quakes of faithlessness, immorality and neglect have brought families worldwide to the brink of collapse, may Allah the Almighty grant us all the ability to build and sustain our families with an unshakable bond! May our homes become dwellings of love, peace and joy! And may the final door of these dwellings lead to the infinite dwelling of paradise where we are reunited with our merciful Lord.

Amin!



CONCERN FOR GENERATIONS

Regarding his children, a believer must frequently ask himself:

-What am I doing about the education of my children who are entrusted to me by the Almighty?

-What am I teaching them, and which culture do I give them?

-Am I placing more importance on their eternal future or their worldly future?

-Am I showing due care for them to learn the Qur'an?

-Am I familiarising them, from an early age, with praying, attending the mosque and congregation, generosity and giving charity?

Children are divine trusts. They are precious buds from our own flesh. For sensible hearts, the first chants of joy inside a home begin with the soothing sound of children.

In the words of the **Prophet** ﷺ, children are “the flowers of paradise”, “the fruits of the heart” and “divine blessings and provisions”.



At times, even though couples may seek out treatment and keep trust in the Almighty with prayer, Allah may still not grant them any children. This contains many wisdoms. No one knows the unseen except Allah ﷻ. He knows better what is good for us, and what is not. His decision on our behalf is always better than what we may personally wish.

Allah withholds certain things from His servants, so they can raise their eternal ranks by showing patience in His divine will, and also attain rewards in the afterlife, which are a lot better and everlasting. We must therefore always be patient with the divine decree, and remain in a state of gratitude, contentment and submission.



Just because Allah the Almighty refuses certain things to some of His servants, it does not mean He does not love them. In fact, our **Prophet's** ﷺ wife **Aisha** ؓ did not have any children either. But with her knowledge, wisdom and morals, she become the mother of an entire nation of believers.

Our **Prophet** ﷺ trained her as a master of jurisprudence, to the point where he advised:

“Learn a third of your religion from Aisha’s home!” (Daylami, II, 165/2828)

Aisha ؓ was, in fact, considered one of seven grand scholars (*mujtahid*). And through her nephews, she gave lessons to Muslims, where she ended up with close to 300 students. In the words of **Ibn Abbas** ؓ, there is no single jurist who has not benefitted from Aisha’s rulings.



If we want to raise impeccable children, we must first seek to become impeccable parents.



Ali ؓ says:

“A land cultivated with the seeds of thorns cannot bring forth bunches of flowers.”



The seeds we sow in our children, will reflect back at us when we are old and depend on their care. If we have inspired them to have fear of Allah ﷻ, compassion and right action, we will be met with loyalty and gratitude. But if we have raised them away from spirituality, we ourselves will become the victims of our own disregard. If we have instilled in them worldly ambitions, opportunism and lack of compassion, then we will be met with negligence and disrespect.



Today, many parents complain that they are ‘losing their children’. They need to be asked:

What have you given your children that you expect back in return? Did you feed them *halal* food? Did you teach them the Qur’an? Did you show any diligence in choosing schools for them to gain a religious education?



Today, especially religious parents, must put their heads in their hands and think:

- Are our children really growing up our own values?
- Which environments are shaping their personalities and characters?

-Which role models dominate their hearts, ideals and ambitions?

-Are we and our kids using the internet, computers and smartphones or are these devices using our us?



Let us think about the states of the children who staring at their screens, watching shows produced by disbelievers that douse spirits in poison, and are exposed, day and night, to their rebellious, obscene and immoral content.

If we abandon our efforts to educate our children and properly teach them Islam, they will become the children of others.



The Qur'an tells us how the devil will “...become a partner in wealth and children.” (Al-Isra, 17:64)

Today, being biological parents alone is not enough. If the child's teacher became the devil and its mind fed by non-Islamic ideas, he then becomes their child. As a result, the hearts and minds of young generations will be alienated from their own identities, and estranged from their own religion and civilisation.

Once this point is passed, biological relations mean nothing, and neither do the cries of parents.



One of the most essential duties of a mother is to feed her child with her own milk. But no mother can continue breastfeeding if there is a fire raging nearby. Saving both herself and baby from the flames then becomes a matter of life-and-death.

The scene unfolding today is clear to see:

Spiritual fires threaten children from all sides, and negative influences surround them from all fronts.

As these flames rage, the duty and responsibility of parents cannot merely consist of taking care of the child's biological needs.



No parent likes to fall asleep if their child has contracted a fever. They would take the child from one doctor to another. And today, a poverty of spirituality has sadly taken hold. Even religious families are caught up in the negligence of attaching greater importance to their children's worldly futures than their eternities.

We see parents follow their children to university entry exams, and wait for hours at the door. “We are at least as nervous as our children”, they say. “We wonder if he can pass and gain entry into university”, they wonder.

Yet, how much effort are you making for your child's spirituality? As you nervously fret over your child's worldly future, do you feel the same anxiety for his afterlife?



Showing true mercy and compassion to children is not about feeding them, buying them nice clothes, making sure they are comfortable and entertained, as if life consists of this world alone.

Much rather, true mercy and compassion is to implant in their personalities the spiritual values that will save them in the next world, and turn them into everlasting springs of joy before it is too late. Above all, it is to feed their spirits.



When faced with a choice between their children's worldly and eternal happiness, compassionate parents who believe in Allah ﷻ and the afterlife would reject the world with the back of their hands and choose the hereafter without hesitation. They would not fall into the idiocy of foregoing the ocean for a drop. They could not possibly say, "Our child may well choke on poison in the hereafter for all we care, as long as he gorges himself in this world." They could not think, "As long as he has a bright future in this life, he can well be among those with darkened faces in the next."



Without doubt, any mother would put a blanket on a child who feels cold. She would want to see her in the finest clothes. But a mother who believes in the hereafter is ultimately more preoccupied with whether her child will end up wearing the silk and satin caftans of paradise or be engulfed by the rising flames of hell.



The most compassionate parents are those who place more importance on their children's afterlives than this world.

It is never proper for a Muslim to think, "Let my child have a bright future in this life with a good job. In any case, he will save his afterlife one way or another!"



Guarding our children against the tribulations of the end of times and preparing them in the best way for the trials of life are our biggest tests and spiritual responsibilities. The Qur'an states:

"You who believe! Protect yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is people and stones!" (Al-Tahrim, 66:6)

This verse is explained in a *hadith* as:

“You distance them from what Allah has banned, and encourage them to what He has commanded. This is to protect them from hell.” (Alusi, XXVIII, 156)



As they grow up, children depend on their parents. Yet, in the latter stages of their lives, parents need their children. Even after they die, they still depend on their children’s prayers, and for them to become an ongoing source of reward (*sadaqah jariyah*) on their behalf.

Neglecting the spiritual education of children, however, will leave parents in their graves without visitors and alone.

More so:

-Children left to themselves by parents who think, “They are still very young; they will get better in time”, will berate their parents on the day of judgment, saying, “My parents did not teach me Islam, and neglected my spiritual education.”



We often violate the rights of others without being aware. But each of these infringements will confront us on judgment day. Parents should never forget that neglecting the spiritual education of children placed in their care as divine trusts, amounts to a major violation of personal rights.



Today, many unmindful parents say:

“Let my child have fun while he is young. Let him leave no desire unfulfilled, as he will grow out of these urges, anyway”. But in so doing, they turn their kids into addicts of their lower desires and later, they are unable to quit. This is just like some fools who put a cigarette in their child’s mouth and say:

“Let him enjoy it now, see its harms and not do it again”, and sacrifice their own flesh and blood to ignorance.

We must remember that, much like engravings etched upon marble, things learnt as a child last for a lifetime. To underline the need to give direction to children at an early age, our ancestors have even coined the idiom, “A tree is bent when young.”



Shaykh Sadi says:

“A person who has not been taught during childhood can no longer be taught as an adult, and may never be set right. You can bend a wet stick as much as you wish. But to set a dry stick straight, you need to hold it to fire.”



The first advice parents need to take on board is to be compassionate towards their children. They need to be told:

“How much compassion do you have for your children? Imagine how distraught you would be if you were to witness your children die. So, if you want to be with them tomorrow, you must first mend your ways, and strive to raise your children with the culture and morals of Islam.”



Parents and children, as well as friends, families, relatives and neighbours are all together in this life. On the day of judgment, however, there will come a *“yawmu’l-fasl”*, a Day of Separation. Allah informs us in the Noble Qur’an about that impending fork in the road. To the dwellers of paradise, He will say:

“Peace – a word from a merciful Lord.” (Ya-Sin, 36:58) With enormous compliments and impending gifts, Allah ﷻ will invite the servants He is pleased with to His paradise. Yet, to the sinners of the same society, perhaps even the same family, He will say:

“But the guilty ones! Separate on this day”. (Ya-Sin, 36:59) Worldly relationships will thereby come to an end. They will be shown the direction to hell.

Perhaps, many husbands and wives will be split from one another. Many children and parents will proceed on their separate ways. Some relatives who lived together on earth will go one way, while others the other way.

Thus, to prevent misery on that day, we must not only pay attention to our own direction, but also recognise the fact that our children, who are our own flesh and blood, are trusts from Allah ﷻ, and that we must become engaged with their spiritual education from a young age.



Every parent awaits an unknown future for their children in the hereafter. Who knows how our children will escape the terrible events on the day of judgment and resurrection? How much have we prepared our children for that tough day that will cast dark frowns upon faces?

If we manage to raise our children within the scope of the Qur’an and Sunnah, we will not only experience the peace and joy of seeing them upon the right path in this life, they will also become an ever-flowing source of reward for us after we are placed in our graves. We will also experience the joy of being by their sides inside the magnificent abode of paradise.



Righteous children are fountains of ever-flowing rewards for their parents. Simpler put, they are their means to gain rewards even after they die.

Yet, if the children are not raised righteously, and if neglect is shown in this regard, they will become trouble both in this life and the next.

Corrupt children are ever-flowing sources of sin for parents who have neglected their education. Even after the parents are dead, they ensure that their book of deeds is still recorded with sin.

Hence, it is necessary to see children as divine trusts and show due care for their education.



The most compassionate parents are those who prepare each other and their children to become good servants of Allah ﷻ.

Children are born with a purity that is worthy of paradise. But if the parents neglect their spiritual education, they will make those birds of paradise take flight towards the wrong direction.



Necip Fazil Kisakurek succinctly encapsulates the responsibility of parents, when he says:

“A tree unworried about bearing fruits, is just a wood for the fire”.

Children grow to become righteous and honest adults, provided their parents have raised them within the culture of Islam. But if parents leave their children to be swept away by the flood of social ignorance, thinking, “What will be, will be”, they will suffer deep remorse both in this life and the hereafter.



The mother **Maryam** ﷺ mother was worried about her, whilst still pregnant. Expecting a boy, she had dedicated **Maryam** ﷺ to the service of the Bayt Al-Maqdis in Jerusalem. This, essentially, was an expression of enormous *taqwa*. It is a mark of immense faith to:

- ✓ Genuinely want a child to grow up to become a righteous servant,
- ✓ Wish for him or her to become a source of ever-flowing rewards and a good successor,
- ✓ And rip him or her out of one’s heart and onto the path of Allah ﷻ.



The Noble Qur'an recounts that, to reinforce their faith, the Sleepers of the Cave would tell each other:

“If they (disbelievers) get a hold of you, they will either stone you to death or turn you back to their religion. And in that case, you will be forever doomed.” (Al-Kahf, 18:20)

Parents today must carry a similar concern in guarding their children's faith and religion.

They must strive to build them a proper future by thinking, “If my child hangs out with heedless people and keeps physical and mental company with them in places seething with disbelievers, will he manage to hold on to his faith and morals?”



It is nothing but stupidity to leave a gazelle in a pack of wolves and jackals. For parents to abandon their own flesh and blood to receive education from the wrong places, that is to say, to deprive them of spiritual training, is no different to dousing their spirits in poison.



Raising our children with the consciousness and morals of Islam is not a task that is as simple as sending them to a busy mosque during summer holidays. Assuming we have fulfilled our responsibility just by doing this, we effectively relegate religious education to a lesser importance. Moreover, to look upon religious education as being this simple gives away the weakness and insufficiency of an Islamic consciousness in our own hearts.

Let us remember that it took twenty-three years of teaching and practice for our **Blessed Prophet ﷺ** to complete the Islamic education of his companions.



Summer holidays, in particular, must be put to good use for kids to learn the Qur'an. However, we must not make do with merely sending our children to Qur'an courses or mosques. As parents, we must closely follow their progress. We must also regularly check their level of knowledge of the Qur'an and encourage them through the interest we show.



These days, no stone is left unturned to have children learn a foreign language and no expenses are withheld, as parents stringently compare the quality of colleges. But in contrast, how sad it is to overlook Qur'an courses -even belittle them- and to consequently deprive our children of the Divine Word and its spirituality.



Every parent feels concern for the future of their children. They want to give them a quality education and prepare for them a good future. But, at the same time, one must always bear in mind that both the real future and true life await in the afterlife.



The kindest parents are those who not only worry about securing their children's worldly futures, but also their eternities.



A believer must frequently ask himself:

-What am I doing about the education of my children who are entrusted to me by the Almighty?

-What am I teaching them, and which culture do I give them?

-Am I placing more importance on their eternal future or their worldly future?

-Am I showing due care for them to learn the Qur'an?

-Am I familiarising them, from an early age, with praying, attending the mosque and congregation, and with being generous and giving charity?



While we still have time, unless we raise our children within the spirituality and inspiration of the Qur'an, it is inevitable that tomorrow, we will be faced with a deep remorse all alone inside a secluded grave.

While the time is ripe, we must spend quality time with our children, and inject in their pure hearts the love of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, and the culture of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Since learning follows where praise goes, we must encourage our children with gifts and prizes so that all these spiritual beauties find ground to flourish.

Imam Malik ﷺ has said:

“Every time I memorised a hadith, my father would give me a gift. A time came when even if he gave me no gifts, memorising hadith became a personal pleasure.”



Parents must spend their time at home purposefully, and maximise every opportunity to teach their children.

They must protect their kids from the evils of television and the internet. For this, they must frequently chat with them, with an aim to instil good morals in their hearts and increase the depth of their understanding of Islam. They must encourage their children to make a habit of worshipping, and strengthen their bond with the Qur'an.



Our Prophet ﷺ has said, “*Prayer has been made the light of my eye.*”¹⁵ The Qur’an also teaches us to wish that prayer also becomes the “**light**” of our children’s “**eyes**”.

We must therefore teach our children the importance of the prayer and impart upon them an enthusiasm for worship, so that they themselves become the lights of our own eyes, our sources of honour and ever-flowing means of charity.



One the biggest worries that preoccupied the heart of **Ibrahim** ؑ, the intimate friend of Allah (*Khalil*), was the concern he felt for his progeny. Wanting his own generation to also inherit the spiritual values he was blessed with, he would plead:

“My Lord! Make me and my descendants people who establish the prayer.”

(Ibrahim, 14:40)

The upbringing **Prophet Ibrahim** ؑ gave to **Prophet Ismail** ؑ is a magnificent example of a father’s sacrifice in educating his son.

As part of divine will, **Ibrahim** ؑ left his wife **Hajar** and son **Ismail** in the middle of a desert, on land too barren for agriculture. **Prophet Ibrahim** ؑ explains that the reason for this was so “**...that they may establish prayer**”.¹⁶ In other words, under divine command and in as remote a part of the world as the Hijaz, he was simply engaged in an effort to raise a faithful generation.



Our children must grow up knowing that the true owner of everything is Allah ﷻ. While we are responsible for familiarising them with the daily prayers from a young age, we are also obliged to pass on to them an excitement to donate, and acquaint them with the peace of mind that comes with making a distressed person happy.



We should never forget that the greatest gift we can ever give our children is a good upbringing, while the biggest inheritance we can leave them is the legacy of the afterlife; in other words, the character of Islam. Parents able to bequeath this inheritance deserve a lifetime of thanks.



There are two types of inheritance:

1) **Outer inheritance:** The transfer of property to the inheritors in line with boundaries and standards set by Allah.

15. Nasai, *Ishratu’-n-Nisa*, 10; Ahmad, III, 128, 199.

16. See, Ibrahim 14:37

2) **Inner inheritance:** A legacy of Islam's character, as well as its faith and morals which a person leaves behind for his children.

If children receive a strong inner inheritance, then they will also use the outer inheritance properly, in ways that become an ever-flowing source of rewards for the parents. But one can never guess how inheritors devoid of a spiritual upbringing will use the outer inheritance. They may well spend it on the wrong paths and turn it into an ever-flowing source of regret for the parents.



Umar Ibn Abdulaziz رضي الله عنه who, after the four rightly guided caliphs, is regarded the fifth greatest caliph in Islamic history, was told by his vizier:

“Sir, it is clear that the salary you receive from the treasury is not enough. You may want to consider raising it a little more and saving it up, so your children and grandchildren may spend it on their essential needs after you die.”

Umar Ibn Abdulaziz رضي الله عنه responded to the offer with a splendid answer:

“If the children I leave behind are righteous, then I will not fear should they fall into distress. For the Qur'an says:

'He takes care of the righteous.' (Al-Araf, 7:196) So long as Allah the Almighty is their guardian and protector, I will have absolutely no qualms for whatever they may encounter in the future.

On the other hand, if they are not righteous but fools, the Qur'an, again, says:

'Do not entrust your property to fools.' (Al-Nisa, 4:5) So, when this command is all too clear, should I hoard my wealth for children who may well end up being fools?"¹⁷



Instead of complaining of the toughness of the circumstances, our most important duty in eliminating today's modern age of ignorance is to raise a **generation** that demonstrates the superior character of the Muslims to the world. A youth that is:

- Faithful, conscientious, sensitive, selfless and humble;
- Of a strong willpower that can curb its own ego,
- Intelligent and prudent enough to see, right from the start, where every road will lead to in the hereafter.

For this, an education and training in the style of the **Prophet** ﷺ is a must. Institutions like the *Daru'l-Arkam* and *Suffah* that can raise exceptional characters are also essential.



17. Ebu'l-Ula Mardin, *Huzur Dersleri*, Istanbul 1966, II-III, 769-770.

Musa Topbas ﷺ says:

“Protecting the religion, land, flag and the ummah all depend on raising selfless youth.”



An intellectual has said:

“Only a gram of difference exists between nations that are captors and nations that a captive; and that is a handful of well-trained people.”

Hence, we must strive to raise those handful of people. Youth of high quality and personality, who are dignified and righteous...



At times, labouring to raise just one quality person makes up for thousands of people. Even if you were to lay every means possible under the feet of a single person with potential, it still would not be a waste.



Lands, cities and buildings cannot raise a quality person. But a quality person not only revives the land but also constructs a civilisation.



Pakistan’s spiritual architect **Muhammed Iqbal** says:

“Prudent one! The real capital of a nation is not money, silver, fabrics or gold. Its real capital are its faithful, patriotic, healthy, vigorous, intelligent, hardworking, active and agile children.”



Imam Rabbani ﷺ says:

“A war is won with the coalition of two armies: The fighting army and the praying army.”

Securing real victories depends on raising a righteous generation whose chest is filled with faith and whose lips move with prayer.



TRUE KNOWLEDGE, REAL EDUCATION

Societies cannot reach peace through the hollow dreams and ill ideas of philosophy books consigned to the dusty shelves of libraries.

What will deliver societies to true joy and peace are only the spirits of prophets, and then saints, kneaded in the culture of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and who have acquired maturity through Sufi wisdom. It is their spring of guidance and mercy, from which they have drunk to their hearts content, that will save societies.

Allah states:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“I have not created jinn and men except to glorify Me.” (Al-Dhariyat, 51:56)

The greatest lesson for those born into the school of life is “لِيَعْبُدُونِ”, servanthood to Allah. To express it in terms of Qur'an's exegesis, it is “لِيَعْرِفُونِ”, knowing Allah in the heart. (See, Ibn Kathir, IV, 255)



For wise believers, there is no greater purpose or rank in this school of life than being a servant of Allah.



We are all students in this school of life, which is an arena for divine trial. Our education will end with our deaths, and we will be buried with our deeds. We have all come to this world to obtain the **pure heart** Allah ﷻ wants from us.



-The most important education in life is *marifah* or wisdom.

-The most beautiful art is to live like a Muslim.

-And the greatest skill is to die as a Muslim.



The reason why Allah has endowed man with “knowledge” is so he can acquire *marifah* (direct experiential knowledge of Allah). In other words, it is for man to learn how to become a good servant to Allah ﷻ by realising his “insignificance” and “weakness” before divine glory and majesty.

Beneficial knowledge is foremost that which teaches man about himself, informs him of his reason for existence, and whose door opens to *marifah*.



Yunus Emre ﷺ articulates the purpose of knowledge beautifully:

*Knowledge is to have full grasp
 Knowledge is to know yourself
 If yourself you do not know
 What a waste of toil to undergo
 What purpose is there to read?
 It's so that the Truth you comprehend
 If you read but don't take lessons
 It is hard work with no gain*



An education that does not lead to *marifah* is a hard toil with no gain. In the words of the Qur'an, people chasing such vain ambitions have:

عَامِلَةٌ نَاصِبَةٌ

“**Labouring, toiling, endlessly!**” (Al-Ghashiyah, 88:3)



Due to His infinite compassion, Allah provides avenues for guidance at every opportunity, and invites His servants to paradise. For this, He sends prophets as well as books; and lays out the universe, abounding in manifestations of divine power and glory from the micro to the macro, as an exhibit of lessons and wisdom for all eyes to see. It is so that wherever man may look, he can acknowledge the signs of the power of the Almighty. It is so that he can behold the inimitable divine art in every object he sees, whether it be the makeup of earth, the atmosphere or himself.

True knowledge and wisdom, therefore, is to see the Almighty's infinite grace and innumerable blessings, and lead a life of worship immersed in gratitude.



For hearts that are alive, every science is a means that takes a person from the effect to the Cause, the outcome to the Origin and the artwork to the Artist.

Hence, ignorance is not about lacking worldly knowledge. Real ignorance is to lack knowledge of Allah. It is the failure to recognise the Great Power through which we and everything else exist.



The path to knowing the self lies in finding the answer to these questions:

- Why have I been created?
- Why have I come into this world?
- On whose property do I live?
- Where am I headed on this journey?
- What will be my end?
- Am I ready to account for my actions on Judgment Day?
- What have I prepared for the next life to come?



If a person was to obtain multiple university degrees, read countless books or establish numerous factories yet remain estranged to his essence and unable to recognise his duty of servanthood, he should not be considered a successful person as he has no idea why he is here.



Our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ would plead:

“Allah! I seek refuge in You from knowledge that is useless, from a heart that does not shiver, an ego that is never sated and a plea that is not accepted.” (Muslim, Dhikr, 73)



When the mortal ship of the body starts to rattle in the storm of death, futile knowledge that does not answer the burning questions or fails to lead the person to action and *marifah*, will be understood very clearly as of no use.



Shaykh Sadi says:

“Regardless of how much you may read, you are still ignorant if your actions put your knowledge to shame.”



Knowledge has value only if it is learnt to be practiced. Otherwise, it is useless labour, no different to how a donkey gains no benefit from carrying volumes of books on its back. Allah does in fact liken the Israelite scholars, who did not practice what they knew, to “**donkeys laden with books**”.¹⁸



A true ignorant person is not simply someone who has never held a pen or book. A true ignorant person is rather someone who has not come to acknowledge that he is a mere “nothing” before the Almighty’s glory, even if he may carry a bundle of diplomas in his briefcase. It is he whose eye of the heart has become blinded by the conceit and arrogance.



Shaykh Sadi says:

“An ignorant person who has lost his way is still better than a knowledgeable person who does not abstain from sin. The ignorant has strayed for being blind, whereas the one who knows has fallen into a pit despite having two eyes that see.”



A person is raised not by storing the knowledge written in books inside his mind. Many an educated person has wound up committing worse mistakes than the ignorant person, for falling weak to his ego despite knowing all too well that what he is doing is wrong.

Thus, what raises man to become a “wise believer” is developing his inner world without neglecting the outer, and endowing it with spirituality and inspiration.



Allah wants us all to have *marifah*. This, however, is impossible through conceptual knowledge alone, insofar as theory yields no benefit on its own. It can even bring harm.

For example, the Israelite scholars who sold the verses of Allah ﷻ in return for “*ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا*”, “a small worldly fee”, possessed only this kind of dry knowledge.



A religious education remote from right action sets the ground for the emergence of “**corrupters**” who, in the guise of “**scholars**”, assess even divine truths from the vantage of egoistic concerns. Coveting selfish ambitions like wealth and fame; these kinds of people cast aside “**following the Qur’an and Sunnah**” in their rulings, and instead pass judgments that “**suit their own agendas**”. Thus, a scholar who has **knowledge** and does not act on it may wind up in misery.



18. See, Al-Jumuah, 62:5.

Even it be of Islamic law, theoretical knowledge alone is not enough.

It is for this reason that looking back on his own life, **Rumi** ﷺ says he was ‘raw’ when having only mastered outer sciences. He says he then became ‘cooked’ once he matured spiritually. And finally, he was ‘burnt’ after disintergrating in divine love.



Rumi ﷺ says:

“There are many scholars without any share of wisdom. They have become masters of sciences but have been unable to become beloved friends of Allah.”



If the knowledge we have accumulated from the first day we started to read and learn is too weak to direct us to righteous action and hold us back from forbidden things, this means it has simply been crammed inside our minds and fallen short of becoming “**illumination**” (*irfan*) inside our hearts.



Allah states:

“Only those among His slaves with knowledge have fear of Allah.” (Al-Fatir, 35:28) In other words, “**taqwa / fear of Allah**” is the first thing a true knower must possess. Allah ﷻ only refers to these kinds of people as scholars; not the heedless who, without fearing Allah ﷻ or feeling ashamed before His Messenger ﷺ, take their deficient intellects as the standard of truth and then sift Islam through them, keeping what suits their interests and discarding what falls at odds.



Minds have no value if they are merely archives of information, as the information stored does not, on its own, hold back a person from evil. On the contrary, such dry bits of information are the cause of the greatest tyrannies committed on earth. Hence, knowledge gains value and becomes beneficial only when it serves as a steppingstone to gain divine pleasure.



Any person who specialises in a given field spends many years to learn the information reserved to that particular domain. Yet, the world does not consist of just that. These are only crumbs. The ignorant one and the tyrant also possess these crumbs. More so, tyrants often mobilise their knowledge which, like a double-edged sword can be used for both good and bad, to commit even greater atrocities, and lay waste to their eternal lives.



Just as a legal practitioner must first inject in his heart a love of justice and fairness, irrespective of the branch a person may be studying, he must first embroider on his heart the fear and love of Allah ﷻ, a deep concern for the rights of others, as well as mercy and compassion, which are the first fruits of *iman*.



Rumi ﷺ has said:

“Teaching knowledge to the immoral is like handing a sword to a bandit.”



Imam Shafi ﷺ says:

“It is to violate knowledge to teach a person who does not know himself. It is to oppress knowledge to withhold it from one who is worthy.”



Today, the idea of knowledge does not go beyond discovering and identifying the physical laws Allah ﷻ has set up in the universe. Its most essential phase *marifatullah*, which means to know Allah directly, is disregarded. Neither are these manifestations of divine art explained to people nor are their hearts trained to proceed from these to Allah ﷻ, their Artist. As a consequence, a quasi and deficient understanding of knowledge has taken hold.

Yet, any education that is one-sided and devoid of spirituality is flawed. Education must strike a balance between matter and spirit. Otherwise, just like a bird trying to take flight with one wing, man will fall prey to a hungry cat.



Rumi ﷺ says:

“Knowledge has two wings, while doubt has one. A bird with one wing quickly tumbles down.”

Likewise, an education devoid of spirituality lays waste to the afterlives of entire generations.



Today, the advance of technology is mistaken for civilisation. Civilisation is to be found in humane values. Technological advances have done nothing to develop human qualities. They have instead transformed the nature of man who they have enslaved, no different to genetically modified fruits and vegetables.



The problem today stems from the fact that, while becoming mechanised in every domain, humanity has become spiritually isolated and weakened, and has bid farewell to values.

The peace humanity is searching for today is to be found in neither mechanisation nor material advances, as these have neither mercy nor love nor any conscience.



At a time when science and technology have peaked and humanity searches for life beyond earth while forgetting about its weakness and idolising its own ego, a virus that has spread across the entire globe has shattered the human pride and arrogance. Giant economies have crumbled, health systems have collapsed while entire countries have been pushed to the brink of bankruptcy.

This means that:

- Becoming tied up in effects, while forgetting the Cause, Allah the Almighty,
- Becoming hung up on provisions, while neglecting our Lord, the Provider,
- And being too preoccupied with events while disregarding the Absolute Doer, Allah the Almighty, is the greatest kind of ignorance.



These days, using the slogan, “**science or religion?**”, atheists and deists strive to sow a seed of doubt in the hearts and minds of our youth. The answer to this is quite simple:

First of all, science and religion are not alternatives to one another. What we call science is nothing more than the study of the laws Allah the Almighty has set up in the universe.

Had Allah ﷻ not established these laws and not given man the cognitive ability to discover them, how could humans have come up with a thing called “science” to begin with? In fact, Allah has not given other creations, who He has not obliged with the responsibility of servanthood, the ability to engage in knowledge. Only humans are given this quality. He says, “**You have only been given a little knowledge.**” (Al-Isra, 17:85)

Idolising science based on these mere crumbs of information against the Allah who possesses absolute and infinite knowledge, therefore only goes to show how deep a pit of ignorance atheists and deists are in.

It is the same Allah who has granted humans both religion and science. These two are not separate from one another. Across history, Islam has encouraged the learning of science; and as the Western world grappled in the darkness of ignorance

and superstitions, the Islamic world reached glittering heights in both knowledge and civilisation. This is because the Qur'an sheds light on science. Far from contradicting any verse of the Qur'an, every scientific discovery has served to confirm it.



Islam, the only true religion, has no problem with science. On the contrary, the Qur'an leads the path, while science follows and confirms it every step of the way.

The facts informed by the Qur'an fourteen centuries ago about the creation of man, the mother's milk, dactyloscopy, dermatology, genetics, preventive medicine, botanical sciences, astronomy, geology, physics, geography, history and other sciences alike, have only recently been discovered by scientific circles. This has repeatedly shown that the Qur'an is the one and only true book.

Since Christianity is corrupted, it has, in contrast, fallen at odds with scientific discoveries, while the church, which controlled society and regimes, sought to cover this up by hampering science. Defending religion against science is an attitude made famous in the West and which, from there, has spread to the rest of the world. The Islamic world, on the other hand, has little ground upon which this approach can flourish.

Therefore, the question, "science or religion?" is one of many venoms spewed by evil corners wishing to sow the seeds of doubt and denial onto the clean minds of the faithful youth. It is the responsibility of every Muslim to be extremely alert and cautious against these kinds of viruses.



Alongside the defects in today's world caused by a lack of Islamic education, there has also emerged the problem of "**deism**". People swayed by this fad say that they believe in Allah but claim that just as sheep, flowers, rocks and soil are created without being obliged with the duty of servanthood, so is the human being, idle and irresponsible.

To reject the Creator, one needs to be stupid. Deists adrift in the lunacy of reason supposedly do not deny the Creator, yet reject Him as the Lord, the order He has commanded, as well as His book, prophet and laws. In that case, what difference is left between humans and other creatures?

In warning against falling into this fallacy, Allah states:

"Do people think they will be left to say, 'We believe' without being tested?"

(Al-Ankabut, 29:2)

"Does man reckon he will be left to go unchecked?" (Al-Qiyamah, 75:36)

“We did not create the heavens and the earth and everything between them as a game.” (See, Al-Dukhan, 44:38; Al-Anbiya, 21:16)



We come across many educated and cultured young people with university degrees and postgraduate studies under their belts. But sadly, they are out of touch with teachings of the Qur’an and Sunnah. They moreover assume that the studies they have completed is the very kind of knowledge praised in the Qur’an and Sunnah.

Knowledge that fails to take the mind and the heart to Allah ﷻ and to an understanding of His power and glory, may perhaps afford its possessor a label and reputation in this life, but it will be unable to stop him from falling into eternal misery.



In his talks, **Sami Efendi** ﷺ would say that true knowledge consists of awareness of the power and glory of Allah the Almighty in the heart, and he would take every opportunity to remind people of the honour of having this kind of knowledge. One day, a person came to visit him, to both ask for his well-wishes and also introduce him to his nephews.

“Sir”, he said. “These young men have studied in the United States to become engineers. We kindly ask you to pray for them.”

With a meaningful smile, Sami Efendi replied:

“This poor man is also a graduate of the Daru’l-Funun University. But true education is the study of Islamic sciences and *marifah*.”

In other words, regardless of what we may have studied, the main kind of education which we need at every moment, is *marifah*, which is to gain the skill “to recognise Allah the Almighty with the heart.”



When **Umar** ﷺ passed away, **Abdullah Ibn Masud** ﷺ commented:

“Nine tenths of knowledge is gone.”

“But we still have scholars among us”, the companions said.

Ibn Masud ﷺ replied:

“I was talking about *marifah*”.



The Qur’an states:

“Only those of His slaves with knowledge have fear of Allah.” (Al-Fatir, 35:28)

As understood from this divine declaration, knowledge that does not awaken in the heart fear of Allah ﷻ, is not knowledge. With this being the case, it is moreover a tremendous deception to neglect learning this knowledge by hiding behind excuses, making compromises in Allah's ﷻ commands and prohibitions and opening the gates to certain spiritual flaws by looking upon them as innocent and legitimate.



Reaching spiritual maturity demands two types of knowledge:

First, is the outer knowledge, which one can learn from books.

Second, is the inner knowledge. It is a science we study in our inner worlds. A person cannot learn this from books. Only by making his heart progress through certain stages can he achieve this. And this progress is made as a result of “**sincerity**” (*ikhlas*) and “**fear of Allah**” (*taqwa*).



People often ask:

“Where should I make a career?” I tell them:

“First, make a career in *taqwa*. You may then complete your masters or phd in any field you wish.”



Have we been sent into this world to get good diplomas, climb up corporate ladders or hoard wealth and properties? Or could it be that we are swayed by the ignorance of turning these means in this flow of life, into ends?



The money made via worldly education will ultimately remain in the world, while the study of *marifah* will become a means for eternal joy. Thus, every science must be studied in the name of Allah ﷻ, with an eye for wisdom and from the depths of faith, so that it opens a door to *marifah* in the heart.



We are inside two schools. One is the school of the world, while the other is the school of the afterlife. A believer's duty is to incorporate the school of the world inside that of the afterlife. In other words, every impression we get from the world must carry us from the effects to the Cause, the artefact to the Maker and the art to the Artist. This way, the schools of the world form the resources for the school of the afterlife. One must live by coalescing both. Otherwise, as the wise have said:

“Whoever increases his knowledge but does not equally raise his level of abstinence and taqwa has only drawn out his distance to Allah.” (Suyuti, Jamiu's-Saghir, 169)



Life is full of ebbs and flows. So, how are we to live during the varying phases of youth and old age, sickness and health, poverty and wealth, peace and war, and many others, and obtain the pleasure of Allah ﷻ along the way? It was essentially these that the **Prophet** ﷺ taught for twenty-three years. And in so doing, he formed the Islamic culture and civilisation of the Age of Bliss.

We need this culture today and forevermore. We need this education that is lived out and applied to life.



Becoming intimately acquainted with our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ, and following him with love and respect, is the most important education we can possibly receive in this school of life. A person deprived of this training, who, in other words, has not come to know the **Prophet** ﷺ, remains ignorant, even if he has read thousands of books and stocked up on countless pieces of information.



We are inescapably obliged to teach our youth today who dedicate their years to grinding away at school behind books and folders, the secret that transforms knowledge into something useful; precisely the gist of following Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ with a loving bond. Otherwise, as is evident today, while striving on the humane path of seeking morals and good behaviour, we will only be left with bitter exhaustion. Instead of leaving behind a civilisation of virtues, we will do no more than to hand down a society of ruin.



Neglecting religious education also comes with materialism, the blight of being enslaved to the world, which itself is one of the causes and cornerstones of irreligiosity. Materialism is not a philosophy; it is a poverty of reason. It is not wisdom but a curse.



Societies cannot reach peace through the hollow dreams and ill ideas of know-all slumping over black-bound philosophy books consigned to the dusty shelves of libraries.

What will deliver societies true joy and peace are only the spirits of prophets, and then saints, kneaded in wisdom of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and who have acquired maturity through Sufism. It is their pure spring of guidance and mercy, from which they have drunk that will save society.



A worldly education can only give humanity and our children happiness if it is alongside a well carried out spiritual education. Otherwise, it becomes a means to estrange our children from their own values and tradition. It enslaves them to the

lowest sensory attractions. It turns them into robots of certain systems that are far removed from bringing humanity real inner peace.



Since the *Tanzimat* period in Turkey, Westernised education reforms have failed to deliver the desired outcome. At the start, the aim was to catch up with the West in science and technology. This has not happened. But even worse is that, in this destructive process, we have also lost many fine qualities that were superior to the West. Westernisation has simply showed itself to be an attempt to copy non-Muslims.

Yet, as an intellectual has said:

“Real defeat is to resemble the enemy.”



The late **Necip Fazil** issues a warning to the youth:

“A branch that looks down on its root, and a fruit that scorns its branch, will rot before it gets a chance to ripen!”



Time and again, whenever there is a discussion on education, people make various proposals. They talk about the principles of education in such-and-such a European country, the pedagogic methods of a certain philosopher or the success of a specific Western school.

Yet, not every tree accepts a graft from another branch. Often a civilisation suffers more harm than good from the “contributions” of spiritually foreign cultures.

Ours is the Islamic civilisation the **Prophet** ﷺ has constructed upon the foundations of the Qur’an and Sunnah. The first and most important culture to be studied is that of Islam; of the Qur’an and Sunnah.



Every civilisation raises its own type of human being, harmonious with the qualities and characteristics of the civilisation to which he belongs.

The Islamic civilisation is the highest peak humanity has ever scaled. This is because it adorns the innate qualities of man with divine knowledge and wisdom. It casts aside all personal worries, and fuses hearts with true knowledge and wisdom.



Today, opportunities for religious education are a lot more compared to the past. A high number of Imam Hatip colleges and Islamic Studies faculties have since been established.

However, if these schools try to teach only outer knowledge and leave the building of character, morals and etiquette to the mercy of the streets, the television and internet, then unfortunately they will fail to deliver any of the desired outcomes.

Yet, if they convey to the young generations the spirituality, modesty, etiquette, moral qualities, generosity and bravery of the Anatolian dervishes, these lands will once again blossom with great friends of Allah like that of **Yunus Emre** and **Shaykh Aziz Mahmud Hudayi**. Both the inner and outer worlds will, once more, enjoy many triumphs.



The education system today is an extension of the materialist, secular approach that the West has imposed since the beginning of the *Tanzimat*. This system looks upon religious learning as something like carpentry or iron-smithing. It says, “Read this book, pass this test and you are set.”

This is not the way to provide religious education. Yes, outer sciences are necessary. But the heart must later absorb that information and embroider it upon the character. If we manage to be like that, so will our students. We must transfer not just information to our students, but also a state-of-mind. It is our state-of-mind that students must also embody.

Hence, religious education is neither carpentry nor iron-smithing nor construction. Besides knowledge, the profession of teaching the Almighty’s religion also demands wisdom, a spiritual comportment, love and respect. Religion cannot be taught mechanically. It will otherwise melt away under the Sun like writing carved upon ice.

Being religious does not mean knowing everything pertaining to religion. It is to show an effort to live and sustain what is learnt with an inspired heart.



For example, learning the Prophet’s life is not just about acquiring biographical or chronological information. In other words, a study that merely consists of outer facts such as where and when our **Prophet** ﷺ was born, to where and when he migrated, which battles he waged, at what age and where he passed away, is far removed from giving lives the desired direction.

Hence, learning the Prophet’s life is about wisely reading, understanding and practicing the exemplary conduct he displayed from the cradle to the grave, as well as his morals, his love of teaching and how he conveyed the Qur’an with his passion for the religion. It is to show an effort to grasp his emotions, thoughts, direction and blend of heart.



Academic knowledge is like a seed. A seed never becomes anything more, if kept inside a storeroom without being planted. The same goes for academic knowledge that is left merely on the lines of books or on shelves.

On the other hand, seeds planted into soil flourish according to their capacities. Some even grow to become giant plane trees.

Likewise, seeds of knowledge and wisdom planted inside the inner soil virtually turn hearts into spiritual gardens. It is only then that secrets and mysteries, which are the real fruits of knowledge and wisdom, are reaped.



Among all creation, human beings are the hardest to train. The Almighty has sent each of His most beloved servants, the prophets, as “human educators”. It could therefore be said that **“Teaching is the profession of prophets.”**



An intellectual says:

“If you wish to become a good teacher on Earth, become a student of the heavens.”

In other words, as a lifetime student of the Qur’an and Sunnah, you are to both live and convey them. Only then will you reap the sweetest fruits of studentship and become a true teacher.



Becoming a teacher requires a serious education; and teachers themselves are students in the school of the Qur’an and Sunnah. Every person on Earth is a student who will be taken to divine presence with their final breath to receive their diplomas.



We must know that spending life idly is cause for great misery. It is a waste to neglect the divine trusts we have at hand. And it is the greatest kind of waste to especially squander the human being, by not guiding him to the path of becoming the most honourable of creation.



Mehmed Akif describes the ideal educator as:

*A person who says he is a teacher must first have faith
Then manners, competence and conscience in swathes*

In other words, a teacher must first and foremost have **“faith”** in Allah ﷻ, and exude mercy from the heart.

He must have **“manners”**; display a model character and personality.

He must be “**competent**”; develop himself proficiently with an awareness his responsibility, and do justice to his duty.

He must be “**conscientious**”; confirm his humane qualities through virtues such as mercy, compassion and altruism.



Education is not so much about transferring knowledge than it is about injecting a mindset and character. It is personality and character that human beings admire.



A physical and spiritual toil is essential to raise a human being:

- Being a teacher who loves and is loved,
- Selfless efforts,
- Patience and endurance,
- Protecting and embracing,
- Caring and gentleness,
- Hoping and praying...

We must not forget that just as precious plants sprout slowly, raising a human being is never easy.



Teaching is a profession of sincere sacrifice. A teacher has an impact only to the extent he enters the classroom with an enthusiasm of worship.

Thus, valuable teachers devoted to the religion, their land and people, who have left a legacy of “educated humans” in their wake and who have regarded every corner of the country as a school no matter how remote, deserve a lifetime of thanks.



TABLIGH AND ITS METHOD

“Winning a heart” does not simply mean making a person happy in the material or worldly sense. “Winning a heart” is to bring a heart together with Allah ﷻ. It is to introduce a heart to faith, the Qur’an and the Prophet ﷺ. And in so doing, it is to build and revive its eternal future.



Goodness and kindness are the most beautiful ways of conveying Islam. By nature, humans drop their guard to kindness. While lands may be conquered with weapons, it is goodness and kindness that conquer hearts.

If at any given time or place, religious life is weakened and people are seen to slip into sinful conduct, then *tabligh* or conveying Islam becomes the most important action, second only to faith. In such circumstances, failing to communicate the truth and the good would even undermine the legitimacy of actions that are otherwise permissible.



It is the primary duty of every believer to make *tabligh* at a time when societies are swept into disbelief and immorality like driftwoods in a flood.



Every blessing comes at a cost. We have been blessed with Islam for free, without paying any fees, purely out of divine grace. To pay our dues and show gratitude for this eternal divine grace, we are therefore compelled to represent and convey the beauties of Islamic morals in the way we live.



In this day and age, we must consider it a debt of **faith** and **conscience** to hold people swirled in the vortex of contemporary evils by the hand, rescue the society entrusted with us from that chaos and explain what eternal and true happiness really means.



Although slavery does not seemingly exist in our times, we have many brothers shackled by invisible chains, wailing in silent screams. It is our debt of conscience to reach out to them, and release them from the chains of the world, the ego and the devil.

The Almighty states:

“On that day, you will surely be called to account for the blessings you had.”

(Al-Takathur, 102:8) To pay our dues for “faith”, which is the greatest blessing we are given, we have an enormous responsibility to lend a helping hand to those who are deprived of it.



Today, spiritual poverty has far surpassed material poverty. Since it is presented under a fake mask of pleasure and deceptive cosmetics, the true extent of the disaster it has wrought is not properly understood. Hence, our most important duty is to strive to not only eliminate material poverty, but also poverty of the spiritual kind.



Even if man possessed the entire world and rose to the peak of material comfort, he would still be unable to fill the gaping spiritual void left by a lack of true faith and wisdom.

Rumi ﷺ says:

“The trouble brought by a shortage of faith merits pity, as it has no other cure.”



Since they have no idea what true happiness is, many heedless people today misidentify their misery for joy. The fallen do not even know they have fallen, nor do those who have collapsed. How can eyes identify the Sun when they have never seen light?



Chests deprived of the sun of faith are spiritual wrecks. Hearts illumined by the sun of faith, on the other hand, are the springtime of an eternal joy.

The spirit of a true believer can never be at peace simply through its own, personal faith, when there are people around desperate for guidance.



The greatest service is to conquer hearts, inject spirits with faith and throw a lifebuoy to people who are all but spiritually drowned.

In seeking eternal salvation, mature spirits always look around them to find other beings to save.



Hearts are now in desperate need of Islam's compassion. Some hearts have lost their opportunities, while others their faith. Today, compassion cannot merely consist of material help alone. Comforting words, a sweet advice or a *tabligh* made with just a stance can, at times, become the most charming manifestation of compassion.



Charity and generosity do not only consist of sharing material means. A person must donate out of everything the Almighty has given. And the most beautiful form of charity is to convey Islam through the way we live.



“Winning a heart” does not simply mean making a person happy in the material or worldly sense. “Winning a heart” is to bring a heart together with Allah ﷻ. It is to introduce a heart to faith, the Qur’an and the **Prophet** ﷺ. And in so doing, it is to build and revive its eternal future.



The greatest service a person can ever provide another is to help him win his eternal future. And this lies in directing him to an upright servanthood.



Today, services lent in the way of Allah ﷻ are extremely important. For example, it is a beautiful act of charity to stand in front of a fount and offer water to passers-by. But if you were to take that glass of water to a person parched and about to die in the middle of a desert, you will have saved a life. It will be like rescuing a person from a fire.

Likewise, the duty of a Muslim today is to rescue people from the eternal flames. Not only is he is obliged to save them, he is, moreover, bound! This is because a believer is selfless enough to know that the path to his own personal salvation runs through saving others.



A heart kneaded in faith to become a lodge of mercy begins to beat with compassion. It genuinely runs to offer service and altruistic deeds. A sincere faith and the beauty of Islamic morals begin to spill out of spirits who have acquired this blend, and conquer the hearts around them, turning them lush green. Their concern is not to gather followers, but to save humans from hellfire. Their aim is to liberate hearts enslaved by the ego, the devil and evil, and which are gradually being dragged to hell.



The Qur’an states:

“Whoever saves a life, it is as though he has saved the whole of mankind.” (Al-Maidah, 5:32)

If saving the mortal and worldly life of a person is this valuable, who knows just how precious saving his spiritual and eternal life is in the sight of Allah ﷻ!



A *hadith* says:

“For Allah to guide a person through your hands is more valuable to you than everything upon which the Sun shines.” (Hakim, *Mustadrak*, III, 690)



Islam promotes socialising, not distancing.

Socialising is to come together for the sake of Allah ﷻ, helping each other in goodness and right action, to become keys to good and locks against evil and to collectively attend the Almighty’s invitation.

The Qur’an declares:

“You are the best nation ever to be produced before mankind. You enjoin the right, forbid the wrong and believe in Allah.” (Al-i Imran, 3:110)



Every believer is responsible to keep an eye out for his own direction but his responsibilities expand out. As a parent, for instance, he is responsible for his family; and as a teacher, for his students. Likewise, as an employer, he is responsible for his workers, and for the entire society if he is a ruler. This responsibility consists of setting a fine example in manners, words and action.



In every era, there has been a need for exemplary Muslims to lead societies to the good. Today, this need is at its peak. But we cannot wait for these exemplary people to come down from the skies. As Muslims, we must first seek to become model people ourselves. We must then consider it a duty to make every sacrifice possible to raise model Muslims of this calibre.



Today, the modern attitude of ignorance coming especially from the West, corrodes all aspects of life. A Muslim, however, must never despair or feel hopeless. The hope lies in striving to follow in the footsteps of our **Prophet** ﷺ and his companions, and mobilise every means we have for this purpose.



Allah and our Blessed **Prophet** ﷺ have rights over us. The Almighty declares believers as “brothers”, and entrusts them to one another. Therefore, our brothers and sisters in the religion have rights over us.

On the other hand, there are people awaiting Islam’s light; and these are our fellow human beings. Showing them the truth of Islam is our most vital duty.



Let us not forget about the frantic struggle our **Prophet** ﷺ waged all by himself just to extend the invitation of eternal salvation to humanity, at a time when the world was buried in ignorance.

And let us frequently assess how much we, as Muslims, are able to revive this *sunnah*, and how deserving we really are of the title of being “witnesses to Allah on earth.”



To repay their debt of thanks for the blessing of guidance and to also fulfil their obligation to call to the truth, the noble companions went to the four corners of the world, in spite of the tough conditions of the time. They abandoned their comfort, and made sacrifices with their wealth and their lives.

This must send us into deep thought. What percentage of our duties and responsibilities do we really fulfil when it comes to communicating Islam and enlightening others?



While it is an error to speak when one should keep silent, it is as great a mistake to remain silent when one must speak up. After all, the false rises where the truth is silenced.

Abu Ali Ad-Daqqaq رضي الله عنه said:

“A person who keeps silent despite being in a position to speak the truth, is like a mute devil.”



People who have given their hearts to the Almighty draw strength from His power. With the honour of relying on Him, they always stand by the side of the truth and against the oppressor.

It is for this reason that **Hasan Al-Basri** رضي الله عنه never kept silent in the face of the infamous **Hajjaj**, known as the ‘tyrant’. Whatever the cost, he conveyed the truth.

Not wishing to become a tool for the unjust actions of Caliph **Jafar Mansur**, **Imam Abu Hanifah** ﷺ rejected the offer to become the high judge of Baghdad, at the cost of being imprisoned inside a cell and receiving lashes.

The true word is the voice of faith; speaking and promoting the truth is one of the signs of the believer.

The roads leading to injustice will be blocked, as long as there are people who voice the truth and serve it.



It is normal to encounter reaction when explaining the truth. One must endure these patiently. People who have awoken the sleepers have always incurred blame. Wise believers take these accusations as means to purify their souls and elevate their spiritual ranks. They take no notice of the complaints of the accusers, and persevere to fulfil Allah's ﷻ command.



Being silent in the face of a tyrant is to idolise him. What incited **Pharaoh** to say, "I am not your lord most high" were the evil men around him, such as **Haman** and others, disguised as humans. But for buttressing the tyrannies of the Pharaoh, they met the same eternal doom.

Groveling to tyranny for worldly interests is cause for eternal shame and misery. Consenting to tyranny is also tyranny.



Our **Prophet** ﷺ has said:

"When you see two brothers fighting, help both the oppressed and the oppressor."

The companions asked:

"Allah's Messenger! We understand helping the oppressed but how do we help the oppressor?"

The **Prophet** ﷺ replied:

"By preventing his oppression." (Bukhari, Ikrah, 7; Muslim, Birr, 62)



Among the most important duties of a Muslim is to enjoin the good and forbid the wrong. Remaining unemotional and oblivious to sins and immoralities rampant in society decimates the spirit.

Zaynab bint Jahsh ﷺ explains:

I once asked, “Allah’s Messenger! Could we be destroyed even if we have righteous people among us?”

He replied:

“*When sinners and sin prevail, yes!*” (Bukhari, Anbiya, 7)



The **Prophet** ﷺ has said:

“*Allah does not punish the innocent for sins of the masses, except when they see the sins being committed and do nothing to stop them despite having the power.*” (Ahmad, V, 92)



Our **Prophet’s** ﷺ following warning is vital:

“*I promise by Allah who has given me life that you either enjoin the good and prevent evil, or else Allah will send down upon you a punishment from His rank. You will then pray but to no avail.*” (Tirmidhi, Fitān, 9)



Keeping mankind away from evil, and inviting them to the good and the truth, is a cornerstone of belief in Allah ﷻ, as evocatively expressed in the *hadith* below:

“*If you see something wrong, you should correct with your hand. If you have no power to do that, then with your tongue. And if you have no power to that either, then condemn it in your heart; and this is the weakest of faith.*” (Muslim, Iman, 78)



In emphasising our duty to encourage the good and discourage from evil, our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ has also said:

“*A ship sails with passengers on the lower and upper decks. Passengers on the lower deck say, ‘We keep having to go to the upper deck to get water, and disturb the people there. Better if we get our water by putting a hole in the ship’s keel.’*

If the passengers on the upper deck do not prevent them, they will altogether drown. But if they explain to them how damaging it is to put a hole in the ship, they will save both themselves and others.” (Bukhari, Shahadah, 30; Tirmidhi, Fitān, 12)



-A believer must never regard his own condition as enough for his eternal salvation.

-He must consider himself responsible for the condition the times, and look upon the people around him as trusts placed in his care.

- He must use his strength and voice to try to correct the injustice he encounters.
- He must always keep in mind that calling to the truth as much as the circumstances allow, is a duty.



Our **Prophet ﷺ** explains:

“Upon seeing someone commit evil, the Israelites would caution them, saying: ‘Look, friend! Fear Allah and stop what you are doing! It is not right!’

The next day, they would see the same man doing the same thing. But, this time, they would not warn him, just so they could eat, drink and hang out with him. It was then that the Almighty Allah made their hearts as one.” (Abu Dawud, Malahim, 17/4336)



One of the greatest afflictions of our times is that enjoining the good and forbidding evil, has been all but abandoned.

We must not forget that a group during the time of **Prophet Dawud ﷺ** was destroyed along with the wrongdoers they did not warn, simply for neglecting to call them to the truth even though they were practicing the religion. (See, Al-Araf, 7:163-166)



Whether to his face or behind his back, a believer must avoid saying things to a brother which he will dislike. When it comes to encouraging to the good and discouraging from evil, however, silence is not permitted.

Once the need arises, it is necessary to caution a brother in private with kind words. In such circumstances, one must not worry about whether he will like it or not. After all, these words may be hard to take but they are essentially only to his benefit.



Imam Shafi ﷺ says:

“If you advise a brother privately with sincere intent and a soft tone, you will have given him advice in the truest sense. If you berate him carelessly in front of people, you will offend him or make him more brazen.”



Sufyan Ath-Thawri ﷺ has said:

“If a person makes a mistake and the person claiming to be his brother fails to politely warn him, know that his love is not for Allah. If it was, he would have warned the person rebelling against Allah in a tone he would understand.”



We must remember that, on the day of resurrection, there is every possibility that many a person will grab us by the scruffs of our necks and exclaim:

“You were honoured with Islam purely due to the sincere efforts of people before you. You knew what Islam and Iman was. Why did you not explain these to me? Why did you refuse to save me from the fire?”



Retiring to a corner, thinking, “My state, deeds, knowledge and wisdom are not good enough”, does not save a believer from the duty of inviting to Islam. This is no different to the absurdity of saying, “One cannot sin after becoming a pilgrim”, and thereby delaying pilgrimage to an old age which may, in fact, never arrive. The fact is that, regardless of whether he is a pilgrim, avoiding sin is the duty of every Muslim. Likewise, a primary responsibility of every believer is to strive to acquire a character that is worthy of inviting people to the truth.



People in a position of conveying Islam must first be honest and truthful themselves, and have the integrity of their characters and personalities confirmed. In a sense, they must virtually receive a certificate of good standing from the community.

Even his enemies could not deny the fact that our **Prophet** ﷺ was trustworthy (*amin*) and loyal (*sadiq*). Without these qualities, no one can be a spokesperson for the truth.



Raised under the Prophet’s spiritual training, the noble companions became companions not just in word but in essence. Their states and conduct always confirmed their words. By applying the laws and morals of Islam directly to their everyday lives, they conveyed Islam through their deportment, along with word of mouth. They simply practiced what they preached, and preached what they practiced. They demonstrated how to carry out the duty of preventing evil precisely in the way they lived.



We cannot expect our words to have any positive impact unless they are in harmony with our states and conduct.

We must know that only genuine words that come from the bottom of the heart can find a way into another heart. Words uttered by the tongue while the heart is in neglect, only enter from one ear and exit from the other, without ever seeping into the heart.



Allah has a stern warning to people whose words and essence are in conflict, and whose talks are belied by their actions:

“You who believe! why do you say what you do not do? It is deeply abhorrent to Allah that you should say what you do not do!” (Al-Saff, 61:2-3)



Abu Bakr  says:

“Allah is never pleased with words without action.”



Rumi  has said:

“Wise words that are left unpractised are like dazzling clothes that are merely borrowed.”



A person cannot wake others up if he is fast asleep.

We must hence first awaken our minds and hearts to the truth, and clean up our own states and actions, so that our inviting others and the advice we give to others can yield fruits.



Just as nothing can be offered in an empty glass, advice given by people whose words and lives are in contradiction and who are deprived of the inspiration of the heart, cannot have any impact on others. Words have impact only to the extent of the speaker’s sincerity and uprightness, and depending on how much he himself practices the truth that he has spoken.



Qualities such as mercy, compassion, selflessness, generosity, altruism, politeness and elegance are among the most precious of Islam’s spiritual fabric. If the form and outer appearance of Islam is a vase, then the *akhlaq-i hamidah*, that is to say these commendable and beautiful traits, are like the flowers inside it. A religious life devoid of these qualities is no different to an empty vase. And an invitation to Islam given by people lacking these traits is similar to handing someone an empty plate or a blank envelope.



It is futile to expect a return without giving anything. Just as it is pointless to anticipate any yields from soil before cultivating and watering it, one cannot win a heart without first giving one. One who does not love, cannot be loved. For the sake

of the Creator, we must therefore open our hearts to all people and even to the entire creation, offer them mercy, compassion and generosity in spades.



The most blissful of all human beings are those who are able to turn their hearts into spiritual convents inhabited by the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Man's real value and integrity lies in reviving his heart through the spirituality and inspiration of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and conveying Islam to others. Trying to do so while the heart is riddled with spiritual thorns, is a futile exhaustion and even blameworthy, considering its negative effects on people.



Umar رضي الله عنه says:

"To reform people, we must first reform ourselves."



A person who does not acquire knowledge and wisdom despite having the means, and overlooks the importance of his moral and spiritual development, cannot offer a worthy service as he is not properly cut out for the task. **Musa Efendi** رحمته الله has, in fact, said:

"A hundred half-men do not make one complete man."



Invitation to Islam is an vital duty in the life of a Muslim. Yet, attempting to perform this duty with incompetence, inattention and artificially in a flippant manner will mean, as the saying goes, that 'the cure is worse than the disease', and may end up causing irrevocable damage. And this, in turn, will incur a heavy burden.



It is not enough to express religious truths in words alone. It is necessary, especially for people dedicated to the study of religious sciences, to represent Islam also in the way they live and set a fine example throughout. The worst examples in this sense are scholars dizzied by worldly ambitions, who are therefore unable to live by the words of wisdom they frequently utter.

Also on the same boat are worshippers devoid of knowledge. The worship, dealings, social interactions and morals of a person lacking knowledge will bear many flaws and faults. Thus, the ignorant one never becomes an example for Muslims. By directing people to the wrong outlets unawares, they can, in fact, be damaging.



The personality of a Muslim has no room for any conduct that is irreconcilable with Islamic morals. A believer must become a “**person of mercy**” with whom others feel safe, and from whose actions and words they benefit. Otherwise, he must remember that his flawed states and actions will harm not only himself, but also the reputation of Islam in the sight of others; and this, in turn, will place him under an enormous blame on judgment day.



While “**winning a heart**” is a tremendous virtue, its contrast, “**breaking a heart**”, is spiritual catastrophe. But it would be mistaken to assume that breaking a heart only consists of offending someone or hurting their feelings.

Hearts are the precincts of faith. Hence, breaking a heart, in the truest sense, is through any action or behaviour that takes a heart away from Islam, the Qur’an, Sunnah and, in effect, eternal happiness. People who turn hearts cold towards Islam through their states and conduct are the truly miserable, and the real heartbreakers.



Every believer must aspire to become a fine representative of Islamic morals within his own community. He must never forget that every good act he does serves as an advert that makes hearts grow fond of Islam. In contrast, he must also remember that people may blame Islam for his personal mistakes, and end up turning away from the true religion.



Becoming a good example to others in charitable deeds, religious effort and right action is a means for eternal bliss. On the other hand, setting an example in evil, falsehood and neglect is a terrible bankruptcy of eternity.



Human beings admire good character. Most of the people who embraced Islam during the time of the **Prophet** ﷺ did not know how to read or write. Even those who did, realised that Islam is the true religion and embraced guidance not so much by reading the Qur’an but by seeing first-hand the finesse of the Qur’an’s morals exhibited in the personalities of the **Prophet** ﷺ and the companions. Mirroring the personality and character of Islam in our states and conduct is therefore the most effective form of invitation.



Human thought finds it hard to grasp abstract truths. Yet, it easily grasps them, once it sees the same truths exhibited within living examples. Thus, conveying divine truths by applying them onto our everyday lives has a far greater impact than simply explaining them in words.



Rumi ﷺ says:

“A person who advises through his character is better than he who advises with words.”



We need to remember that we were not born to possess the world, but to rather become witnesses on it. We remain in this guesthouse to prove that we are witnesses to Allah ﷻ through our worship, servantly duties and fine conduct.



Umar ﷺ once said:

“Be inviters through silence, too.”

“Caliph!”, they asked. “How can a person invite without speaking?”

He said:

“Through his state and conduct.”

Our ancestors, the Ottomans applied Umar’s ﷺ advice to *“invite through conduct”* across vast stretches of land.

After **Sultan Murad I** conquered Kosovo, and **Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror** took Bosnia, they settled in these lands the pristine, goodwilled people of Anatolia. After coming to admire their pure lifestyle, ninety percent of Albanians and the entirety of Bosnians entered Islam.



The outer aspect of religion is learnt through the mind, while its inner aspect with the heart. The most fruitful result in encouraging people to do good and discouraging them from evil is reaped through mercy and love. Mercy and love melt many a person resistant to brute force.

In our times, it is essential that we become adorned with mercy and its tangible displays such as charity, helping others, holding the needy by the hand and remaining by their side.



Just as iron is softened and given shape only after being placed in fire, hearts cannot become receptive unless they are first warmed in the fire of love. Words that come from a heart lacking in love cannot have any positive impact on another heart.



Islam is best communicated through goodness and charity. As the saying goes, man is a victim of favours. Swords conquer lands, while goodness and charity conquer hearts.

An enemy on the receiving end of a charitable act becomes less hostile. If he is neither a friend nor an enemy, he draws closer to becoming a friend. And if he is already a friend, he becomes a beloved.



A person guiding others to Islam must think of himself as a skilled repairer. Only broken devices are taken for repair; and without these, a repairer would not have a job. A repairer therefore looks upon any malfunctioning appliance as a blessing.

Similarly, instead of getting angry at those unable to guard themselves against errors, believers engaged with conveying and teaching Islam must consider reviving these people in their loving hearts as a spiritual blessing.



The invitation of **Rumi**  and alike, “بَارَا، بَارَا” “Come, come, return; come back again, whoever you may be!” which benevolently encompasses entire humankind, is a manifestation of mercy. This invite is:

-A cry rising from the heart to cure those seeking guidance with mercy and compassion, and introduce them to the glory of Islam.

-An expression of the virtue of not looking down on any of the servants of Allah , and instead seeing them through a compassionate gaze.

-Such is the heart of a believer. It must become a lodge to spiritually rehabilitate every sufferer.



Mankind has been guided not so much through reason and logic but through the guidance of the wise, who spoke directly to hearts and consciences through their states and actions. The fact remains that throughout history, the success Sufis have achieved in their services and efforts to revive spirituality, guide the public, convey Islam and ensure that it survived for later generations, is plain to see.

This is, in fact, expressed by one of the most prominent scholars of the previous century, **Muhammed Hamidullah**:

“I was raised as a rational person. My legal research and investigations made me reject anything that could not be adequately described and proven. I most certainly, performed my Islamic duties such as prayer and fasting for reasons not so much spiritual, but legal. I would say to myself:

‘Allah is my Lord, my owner. He has commanded me to do these things; so, I must. Apart from this, all rights and duties are interconnected. Allah has ordered me with these for my benefit. I am, therefore, obliged to thank Him.’

Much to my surprise, ever since I started living among Western society, and in a milieu like Paris, I have come to realise that what rouses Christians to embrace Islam is not the views of jurists and theologians, but of Sufis such as **Shaykh Ibn Al-Arabi** and **Rumi**. I have witnessed this on a personal level. Someone would ask me to explain an Islamic matter; but my answer, based on rational proofs, would not appease him. Yet, a Sufi explanation never took long to yield fruits. And I gradually began losing my impact. I now believe that, just as it was in the time of Gazan Khan following the destructive invasions of Hulagu, what will serve Islam today, at least in Europe and Africa, is neither the sword nor reason but rather the heart, in other words, Sufism.”



As **Rumi** ﷺ is giving a talk in his lodge, a drunk man enters out of nowhere. The dervishes insult him, wanting to shove him out. **Rumi** ﷺ remarks to the scornful dervishes:

“He may have sipped the wine but it is you who are drunk.”



The Sufi way requires one to feel mercy for the sinner, not anger. People deprived of the blessing of faith or drawn in by the weak spots of their egos need to be approached, not with the cold and venomous tongue of a snake, but with a language of mercy that first captures their hearts.



The brotherhood of Islam is superior to the brotherhood of blood. Just as it is impermissible to cut off ties with a close relative carried away in sin, it is equally wrong to completely reject a brother in religion due to his errors. What is right is to lift the fallen by the hand.

Hence, in regards to relatives, Allah commanded our **Prophet** ﷺ:

“If they rebel against you, then say ‘I am distant from your actions.’” (Al-Shuara, 26:216)

If looked at, Allah orders him to say, **“I am distant from your actions”** and not **“I am distant from you.”**

In other words, it is incorrect to extend the hatred from sin to the sinner. The sinner must rather be seen as someone needing compassionate care, much like a wounded bird and after all, we are all sinners.



As the saying goes, “*He who searches for a faultless friend will be left friendless.*” So, the duty of a Muslim is not to banish his brothers who are unable to fend off their sins and errors, but rather to reach out to them in a tolerant manner, and help them make their way back to the straight path.



No result can be expected without effort. Without teaching them or making *tabligh*, we have no right to get angry or scold anyone. If we are to get angry, we should get angry with ourselves.



Ali عليه السلام says:

“*The ignorant will not be asked, ‘Why did you not learn?’ before the scholars are asked, ‘Why did you not teach?’*”



Mutarrif Ibn Abdullah رضي الله عنه, a scholar of hadith and jurisprudence from the *tabiun* generation, says:

“*A person who feels no compassion for sinners should at least pray for their repentance and atonement. Praying for the forgiveness of those on earth is a conduct of the angels.*”



Much like the Black Stone in the Kaaba, man has come from paradise. No matter how low he falls, his inner value remains intact. For this reason, hatred for sin must not spill over to the sinner. But, at the same time, tolerance for the sinner must not spill over onto the sin.



It is narrated that **Ibrahim Ibn Adham** رضي الله عنه once washed the reeking mouth of a drunkard who had passed out after having a few too many. To those who asked why, he explained:

“*The tongue and mouth have been created to invoke the Almighty’s name. If I was to leave them dirty, I would have then disrespected *dhikr*.*”

When the drunkard came to his senses, he was told:

“*The sufi of Khorasan, Ibrahim Ibn Adham just washed your mouth.*” As the man felt embarrassed, his heart also awakened, and said:

“*Then I, too, repent.*”

Later that night, Ibrahim Ibn Adham heard a voice in his dream say:

“You washed his mouth for Us! And so, we washed his heart for you.”



The heart is the focal point of the divine gaze. Rescuing it from the darkness of denial, idolatry, hypocrisy, sin and neglect, and striving to help it reach a purity that draws the loving look of the Almighty, is therefore the greatest service one can offer to another human being.



MANNERS AND COURTESY

History stands witness to how the arrogant Pharaoh, Nimrod, Attila, Hulagu and others, detained by the narrow confines of their own minds, became enemies to entire humankind through their tyranny. The sun that once dawned on their magnificent palaces now rises above their ruins.

In contrast, saints like Rumi, Shah Naqshiband and Shaykh Abdulqadir Al-Jilani who reached the divine fountain of friendship and love, and converted their hearts into lodges of mercy, became means for the peace and happiness of humanity. And they will remain friends to mankind until the final hour.

No one can be a real Muslim while being rude, quarrelsome and impolite. If the essence is tawhid (the understanding of Allah's absolute oneness), then **manners** and **courtesy** are tawhid in action.



By gaining depth through the wisdom offered by roses, hyacinths and other colourful plants, a believer must become as elegant and polite like a flower, and as generous like a fruit-bearing tree.



Good Manners are like the scent of a rose that refreshes the spirit. That scent should deeply permeate the cells of our heart and be felt in every stage of our lives.

Wealth of gold and silver will one day depart. But the wealth afforded by good manners will stay forever.



How wise a warning is the sign "**Edeb ya Hu**" (Courtesy! O Allah!) that adorns the walls of Sufi lodges.

As much being a caution that calls on people to have excellent courtesy, the expression "**Edeb ya Hu**" is also a plea, in the sense of "Allah! Please grant me courtesy!"

As **Rumi** ﷺ has said:

“Whoever has no share of courtesy, is not human, as it is courtesy that set humans apart from animals. Open your eyes and look carefully at Allah’s book, the Noble Qur’an! You will see that, verse by verse, it is comprised of good manners.”



The most virtuous of all courtesy and manners is for a person to know his limits. People of wisdom have, in fact, said:

“Control your tongue next to scholars, your heart next to saints, your hands at the dining table and your eyes when you are a guest at the home of another!”



Abu Bakr Warraq ﷺ says:

“Manners is to protect the tongue whilst speaking, the heart when alone, the eyes when outside, the hands when they reach, the feet as they walk and the time in all affairs. Whoever fails to protect his limbs and squanders his time, is taken to destruction by his very own limbs.”



Muhammed Masum ﷺ has said:

“No ill-mannered person has ever been able to reach Allah.”



Our religion does not accept any believer to be rude, offensive and arrogant. Islam does not want believers to be selfish but selfless, not miserly but generous, and not rude but courteous.



Yunus Emre ﷺ says:

*The heart is the Lord’s throne
The heart is where His gaze shone
Bankrupt of both abodes
Is he who shatters a heart*



We always need to put ourselves in the other person’s shoes:

- We are to treat him the way we would like to be treated, if we were in his place.
- We are to value the other person, if we also want to be valued.
- Our courtesy for other people must not be any less than we expect of them.



Immersed in the morals of Islam, our ancestors had reached such a level of courtesy that they addressed the mentally ill as the **“honourable but helpless patients”**. They called them “honourable” to protect their human dignity, and “helpless patients” out of the compassion they had for the entire creation.

In contrast, the Christendom of the time burnt psychiatric patients at the stake, believing they were “possessed”.

Such is the difference of humanity and courtesy between the two civilisations!



During the Ottoman times, social etiquette had developed to such an extent that a special flower placed on a windowsill sufficed to notify passers-by that someone inside the house was ill. From that point on, street sellers would quietly walk by, and while children outside would not make any noise in front of the house.

So, is true civilisation more akin to the courtesy and elegance of the yesteryear or the selfish carelessness of today?



History stands witness to how the arrogant Pharaoh, Nimrod, Attila, Hulagu and others, detained by the narrow confines of their own minds, became enemies to the entire mankind through their tyranny. The sun that once dawned on their magnificent palaces now rises above their ruins.

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Imam Abu Hanifah رضي الله عنه has said:

“Know that if you do not get on well with people, they will become your enemy; and they will dislike you, even if they are your own parents.

But if you get on well with people, they will virtually become your parents, even if they have no relation to you.”



Shaykh Sadi says:

“Be polite when faced with stubbornness, injustice and hostility, for a sharp sword cannot cut soft silk. But by being pleasant, one can even drag away an elephant.”



Rumi رضي الله عنه has said:

“If you do not wish evil from anyone, do not speak evil, teach evil or think evil.”



A poet says it wonderfully:

*Manners is a crown from the Lord's light
Wear the crown and be safe from all blight*



Shaykh Sadi said:

“Manners, decency and a good temper are crowns from the light of Allah. Wear them on your head, and go wherever you wish. You will be respected everywhere.”



The key is to be equipped with the nature of a rose, so that even while standing on top of thorns, you spread beauty around and heal wounded hearts.



A *hadith* states:

“Make things easy for people, not difficult. Relieve people, do not repel.” (Bukhari, IIm, 11, Adab, 80)



A person's eyes, face and general appearance are like a display. Apart from the spoken languages, every being also has an unspoken language and a body language. Even when a person is silent, he is constantly expressing things through his nonverbal signals. The face carries a sign from the state of his heart. For eyes that see, every face is a translation of a person's inner world. In this sense, a luminous smile is the most beautiful manifestation of a peaceful heart.



The Prophet ﷺ says:

“Do not disdain any good deed, even if it be greeting your brother with a smile.”
(Muslim, Birr, 144)



Ali ؑ has said:

“A believer wears his smile on his face, and his sorrow in his heart.”



Laughter is excessive, while frowning is scant. The moderate and most acceptable way of going about it is a smile.



Rumi رحمته الله says:

“I understand a person’s manners from how he laughs, and the level of his intelligence from what makes him laugh.”



A true Muslim actively displays the smile and heart of Islam through his personality. Alongside his tongue, a Muslim makes his greatest *tabligh* with his comportment, morals, manners and courtesy; so much so that people admire his personality and think, “What a beautiful human being!”



Our **Prophet** صلى الله عليه وسلم always offered advice in line with the needs of the person in question. **Abu Hani** رحمته الله recounts one instance as follows:

“I once asked the Messenger of Allah:

‘Can you please advise me with something that will take me to paradise?’ He replied:

‘Seize onto speaking beautiful words, and offering people plenty of food.’ (Bukhari, *Khalqu Afali'l-Ibad*, Riyadh, Daru'l-Maarif, p. 68)



Speak to a person in such a way that his heart finds peace in your one, single word. Much like a nightingale, the voice of a believer must uplift a heart.



In the Qur’an, Allah teaches us a manner of speech.

He commands us to be honest, just and virtuous under all circumstances, and orders us with “*قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا*”, “true words”. (See, Al-Nisa, 4:8; Al-Ahzab, 33:70)

He prohibits us from even saying ‘uff’ to our parents, and commands us to address them with “*قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا*”, “respectful words.” (See, Al-Isra, 17:23)

Even if we may have nothing to give to the poor, Allah forbids us from turning our faces away from them, and commands us instead to offer them “*قَوْلًا مَيِّسُورًا*”, “comforting words.” (See, Al-Isra, 17:28)

He says “*قَوْلٌ مَعْرُوفٌ*”, “kind words”, are way better than a donation that is rubbed into a person’s nose and whose rewards, therefore, go to waste. (See, Al-Baqarah, 2:263)

He commands us with “*قَوْلًا لَيِّنًا*”, “soft words” when speaking to tyrants to mellow their hearts. (See, Ta-Ha, 20:44)

And when making *tabligh*, Allah ﷻ orders us with “قَوْلًا بَلِيغًا”, “wise, effective and clear words that will penetrate hearts.” (Al-Nisa, 4:63)



Through a number of verses in the Noble Qur’an, Allah advises believers to be pleasant and genial in speech, and use crystal-clear words that uplift hearts like a lucid stream of water.

In contrast, He informs us that crude and harsh remarks lead to negative outcomes.

He infuses into us how vulgar and rude language is never befitting of a believer.

And in reminding us the need to set our tone of voice in line with the situation, the Almighty gives us an example from the natural verses of the book of universe:

“Be moderate in your walk and lower your voice. Remember that the ugliest of all voices is the braying of donkeys.” (Luqman, 31:19)



These days when foreign languages are taught in all schools from kindergarten to university, how familiar are we with the elegant language the Qur’an demands of us? Compared to human languages, how much importance do we attach to the etiquette of speech as taught by the Qur’an?



It is extremely important to control the heart, which is the seat of belief and intention, as well as the tongue which, in effect, is the translator. We must carefully weigh up the meanings of the words we utter, and diligently refrain from saying the wrong things. Our **Prophet** ﷺ has said:

“A servant says something without thinking much of it, but because of it, he winds up in a remote corner of hell, even greater than the distance between east and west.” (Bukhari, Riqaq, 23)



“He beat the illness” is an expression that has no place in Islamic manners and the language of our civilisation. Islamic etiquette always teaches us the humility of ascribing every good experience and success to Allah ﷻ. The correct thing to say after recovering from an illness is, “Allah has granted a cure.”



It is one thing to crudely tell an attendant:

“Quick, fetch me a glass of water!” while it is another thing to politely request:

“If it is not too much trouble, can you please bring me a glass of water?”

In both cases, you just want a glass of water. But one is rude and demeaning, while the other is elegant and values the other person.

In fact, that glass of water will impact its drinker, depending on the mindset of the person who brought it. A water demanded in a rude manner will not benefit the drinker, as it has been brought begrudgingly. Yet, a water requested politely will heal, simply because it has been brought with love.



If a person’s state and conduct are adorned with virtues such as courtesy, elegance, etiquette and modesty, it means his heart is virtually a garden of roses. But if the mouth is engaged in rude and vile words such as lies, backbiting, slander, teasing, insults and swearing, this means that the heart is covered in egotistical thorns and cactuses.



Words that come out of the mouth are like a mirror that shows precisely the type of heart that the person has. A believer must therefore always adorn his tongue with divine remembrance, and get in the habit of speaking beautifully and wisely. This is an indication of the peace and spirituality in the heart. At the same time, a believer must protect his tongue from talking in vain, engaging in nonsense or making vulgar and obscene remarks, as these are diseases of the tongue, and the reflection of sinister and vile feelings inside the heart.



Bad words that prick hearts and vulgar sounds that claw ears, only come out of hearts that have become spiritually sick.



A believer is a person who is dependable. In the words of the **Prophet ﷺ**, he is one “...from whose hands and tongue all Muslims feel safe”,¹⁹ and one who is reliable in every sense imaginable. Therefore, vile acts that hurt people such as lying, slandering, gossiping and backbiting have no place in a Muslim’s speech.



Salman Al-Farsi رضي الله عنه said:

“People with the most sins on the day of judgment will be those who have engaged in talk prohibited by Allah, the most.”



We must not forget that man is responsible for every word he says.

19. Bukhari, Iman, 4, 5; Riqaq 26; Muslim, Iman 64,65.

The Qur'an states:

“Man utters no word without a watchful angel ready to write it down.” (Qaf, 50:18)

“Know that you are certainly observed by watchful, honourable angels, recording everything. They know what you do.” (Al-Infitar, 82:10-12)

Therefore, a believer must always remember that, as much as his actions, the words he says are also constantly registered in divine records.



Ali ﷺ says:

“A person who knows that words are counted as actions, speaks little and says only things that concern him.”



Shaykh Sadi says:

“An intelligent person speaks only when he realises that being silent will bring harm, and eats only when he realises that his health will otherwise decline. The words of such a man are most certainly of wisdom, while what he eats is healing.”



Ali ﷺ says:

“A man with a complete mind is a man of few words.”



Allah ﷻ has given humans two ears and one mouth therefore, after listening well and understanding, a person must speak little and to the point.



What takes man to either peace or destruction are the words that come out of the mouth. As vigilant as we must be in seeing whether the food entering our mouths is *halal* or *haram*, we must also weigh up whether our words will be helpful or cause harm before we speak. Otherwise, we must opt for silence.

A *hadith* in fact says:

“Whoever believes in Allah and the last day should either speak well or be silent.”
(Bukhari, Adab 31, 85, Riqaq 23)



It is said, “If words are silver, silence is gold.” Man must keep silent unless he is to say something good; and if he must speak, then he must ensure that his words are better than silence.



The Prophet ﷺ says:

“A good word is better than silence, while silence is better than a bad word.” (Hakim, III, 343)



Shaykh Sadi said:

“Silence is the best thing for an ignorant person. Yet, he would not have been ignorant if he had known this.”



Ali Ibn Abi Talib ؑ said:

“Keeping silent until being asked to talk is better than talking until silenced.”



In his *Kutadgu Bilig*, **Yusuf Khas Hajib** writes:

“A useless word is like a fire. If you let it out of your mouth, it will burn you.”



Umar Ibn Al-Khattab ؑ has said:

“One who talks a lot, errs a lot. And one who errs a lot begins to lose his shame. As a person loses his shame, his care to avoid doubtful deeds from fear of sinning, also disappears. And when one loses this care, his heart also dies.”



Shaykh Sadi Shirazi put it wonderfully:

“Two things indicate a frivolous mind: Keeping silent when one must speak, and speaking when one must keep silent.”



Imam Awzai ؑ said:

“If Allah wishes ill upon a people, He opens the door for them to engage in pointless debates and holds them back from righteous deeds.”



Ali Ibn Abi Talib ؑ said:

“Do not ever try to respond to a callous insult, for the person making that insult has many more vile words in store! He will once again retort with base words. And do not ever joke with an ignorant! As his tongue is venomous, he will wound your heart.”



The Qur'an states:

“The slaves of the All-Merciful are those who walk lightly on the earth and, who, when the ignorant speak to them , say, ‘Peace’.” (Al-Furqan, 25:63)



Rumi ﷺ said:

“Be as silent as a book with the dogged ignorant.”



Shaykh Sadi said:

“A person who ignores advice is asking to be berated with trouble.”



Ziya Pasha writes:

*A warning is called for he who is deaf to advice
And if that fails, a whack is well within his rights*



Shaykh Sadi says:

“The best response to a person you cannot silence with the Qur’an and hadith, is to give no response at all.”



A heedless person never considers that his words to be as important as his actions. Yet, nothing can cut a wound as deep as words. Hence, hiding behind the excuse that “the tongue has no bones” and allowing the mouth to shoot arrow-like words with no return, comes with a heavy penalty in the hereafter.



Zayd Ibn Thabit ﷺ said:

“Gentleness is never found in a person whose heart has no control over his tongue.”



Many of the problems encountered today in human interactions are caused by using the tongue in the wrong way. The tongue is a double-edged sword. When used rightly, it opens the door to good; yet, wrongly, it becomes the key for evil.



Saying a word is like grabbing a stone and throwing it. One must carefully calculate where that stone will hit.

The **Prophet** ﷺ alludes to the need to think twice before speaking, when he says:

“Do not ever say anything that will require an apology!” (Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 15)



We must be careful not to turn our tongues into thorns that stab people's hearts. Our ancestors have, in fact, said, "A sword wound heals but a tongue wound does not." One may well piece together a broken glass, but it will carry the scars for a lifetime.



Luqman the Wise عليه السلام, who was a doctor of the ill as well as hearts, was once asked:

"What should we feed our patients? What do you advise?"

He gave the following succinct response:

"Feed them whatever you like, except for bitter words."



Our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ, sent to "*perfect noble qualities of character*", would caution people in an exceptionally elegant and polite tone, without hurting them. Moreover, to make them realize that their mistakes were unbefitting of their characters, he would even ascribe a false vision to himself, and say:

"What is happening to me that I see you do this?" (Bukhari, Manaqib 25, Ayman 3; Muslim, Salat, 119)



Abu Bakr As-Sidiq رضي الله عنه says:

"Think well about what you say, when you say it and to who you say it to."



-Do not say the first thing that comes to your mind before choosing more beautiful words.

-Erase wrong words from your memory, and weed them out of your vocabulary.

-Say words that are proper for the moment, place, circumstance and the mindset of the listeners. In the words of **Rumi** رحمته الله, "*Do not sell mirrors in the market of the blind or read poems in the market of the deaf!*"

-And most importantly, do not ever be so ignorant as to say a raw word that breaks a heart or a bad word that crushes it.



A HUMAN OF MERCY

Allah's mercy is such a vast ocean that just a drop of it is enough to fill our hearts with compassion. And the instant it drops into the heart and gives it a taste of the ocean, is the very moment the heart is reunited with the ocean itself.

Such hearts have now gained the sensibility to hear the silent cries of victims who, through their body language, scream, 'Have mercy on us' and the heedless who are oblivious to their reason of creation, as well as those aching for guidance. These hearts remain close to sites of mourning, and find peace in the spiritual pleasure they gain by healing pain.

The first fruit of faith is **mercy**. And the best indication of having mercy is to share with the less privileged, and seek to complete what they lack.



The ability to feel and have mercy is a mercy of Allah ﷻ. A person cannot even speak of having a heart or conscience and being considerate unless he has mercy.

A merciful believer is generous, humble, helpful and fair. A heart without mercy and compassion also lacks spirituality and inspiration.



It is unthinkable for a heart that says 'Allah' to be without any share of mercy, compassion, generosity and forgiveness.



Mercy is an inextinguishable fire inside a believer's heart. Mercy is mankind's most precious gem in this universe, as it aligns us with the Almighty's love, pleasure, closeness and reunion.



A believer must be merciful like a gentle wind, generous like the pouring rain, and spread comfort around, seeking the Almighty's pleasure.



Rumi رحمہ اللہ says:

“Be like the Sun in compassion and mercy!”

Just how the Sun beams light and heat to all creatures on Earth and serves as a means for food by reaching even the most isolated crevices, the heart of a believer must also be vast when showing mercy and compassion. He must remember that the more he shines a light on those around, the brighter his own light becomes.



In the tremendous Qur’an, the Almighty introduces his High Essence most with the attributes *Ar-Rahman* (The All-Merciful) and *Ar-Rahim* (The Most Merciful). Our **Prophet** صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, sent as a mercy to the all the worlds, is also *Ar-Rauf* and *Ar-Rahim*, gentle and compassionate.

Therefore, a believer who is a servant of Allah ﷻ, a devotee of our **Prophet** صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, and who has embodied his morals, must become a **“human of mercy”**, radiating compassion from his hands, tongue and heart.



Allah’s mercy is such a vast ocean that just a drop of it is enough to fill our hearts with compassion. And the instant it drops into the heart and gives it a taste of the ocean, is the very moment the heart is reunited with the ocean itself.

Such hearts have now gained the sensibility to hear the silent cries of victims who, through their body language, scream, ‘Have mercy on us’ and the heedless who are oblivious to their reason of creation, as well as those aching for guidance. These hearts remain close to sites of mourning, and find peace in the spiritual pleasure they gain by healing pain.



If we desire the mercy of Allah ﷻ, then mercy must spill out of our hearts. A *hadith* says:

“The Merciful Allah has mercy on those who have mercy. Show mercy and compassion to those on Earth, so that those in the heavens have mercy on you.” (Tirmidhi, Birr, 16/1924)



Mercy is the peace of conscience on Earth and a harbinger of eternal joy in the hereafter.

A believer knows that, *“No mercy is shown to the merciless.”* (Bukhari, Adab, 18) A person who selfishly and stingily turns his back on those in need despite having the means to help, will have backs turned on him during his most desperate hour.

Undoubtedly, the one time when a servant will appreciate any help he can possibly get, is the day of resurrection. To be graced with divine mercy and pardon on that day, we must maximise every opportunity today to show mercy and compassion to Allah’s ﷺ servants.



Rumi ﷺ says:

“Where there is a stream, there is greenery. Tears always attract mercy and compassion. Scatter tears from your eyes like a water wheel, so greenery covers your heart. If you want tears, then have pity on the tearful. If you wish to be pitied and seek mercy, then show mercy to the weak and the pitiful.”



A human of mercy:

- ✓ Puts his brother first and his brother’s happiness to his own.
- ✓ Becomes a generous, selfless person who loves to serve.
- ✓ Becomes animated with the concern of reviving barren hearts like the rain.
- ✓ Considers himself responsible for all believers.
- ✓ Shows care to turn his heart into a lodge of benevolence and compassion where all creatures find comfort.



The clearest sign that indicates a believer’s spiritual level is to be found in whether people benefit from his hands, tongue, state and morals. If they do, this is a major source of joy. This is the most defining feature of saints. Allah graces such righteous servants with the good news that:

“Yes, the friends of Allah will feel no fear and know no sorrow.” (Yunus, 10:62)



As a person’s faith matures, his heart begins to expand to the point it envelops the entire creation. A friend of Allah ﷺ is also a friend of creation. Just as model personalities such as **Rumi, Yunus Emre, Shaykh Abdulqadir Al-Jilani, Shah Naqshiband** and **Aziz Mahmud Hudayi**, who looked upon creation through the Creator’s gaze of mercy, continue to live inside hearts, there is a need for “believers of heart” to follow their trail and serve as a means for the eternal happiness of mankind, and peace and security of all creation.



In our times, when psychological disorders have spiked and many people have fallen into a void, there is a need like never before for scholars and people of wisdom, who:

-Enlighten hearts buried in the darkness of false beliefs and ideas with the light of faith,

-Awaken the love of Allah inside hearts,

-And instil the vision of looking upon creatures with an eye of mercy and compassion.

Friends of Allah ﷺ have many words to say for people looking to be rescued from the tightness of their own chests. All of mankind desperately needs the conscience and the spiritual values that turned Yunus into the great **Yunus Emre**.



The discord, quarrels, unrest and a dangerous rise in divorces that have become so common today, are caused by a gradual loss of selfless people of heart from society.

A lack in spiritual training is turning egos wild, making people egotistic without pity and directing them to self-absorbed lifestyles. And this is the greatest enemy to fraternity, friendship and unity, which are the cements that hold society together.



Let us not forget we are only as rich as the generosity and compassion in our hearts. And however miserly and pitiless our hearts are, that is really how poor we are.



Although the forlorn, the lonely and the victims of this world deserve mercy, the people who warrant mercy the most are the pitiless tyrants. Looking out from the window of the hereafter, it is clear that the truly pitiful are the tyrants on earth who oppress without sympathy.

In that regard:

-The wild capitalist who has bid farewell to kindness, conscience and empathy,

-The materialist devoid of spirituality,

-The self-centred one who knows nothing of mercy and tears,

-The despotic boss who violates the rights of his workers and people under his command, and

-The dim and blank faces that act deaf to the cries of "Help us!" deserve more pity, considering the sad end that awaits them.



A person who knows nothing of kindness and compassion has lost the key that unlocks eternal bliss. For this reason, the merciless tyrants merit the greatest pity.



The most miserable person is he who has squandered his compassion. Compassion is the greatest witness to humanity on earth. Not much is left of humanity, once compassion departs.



Hard-hearted people oblivious to divine truth and the first fruit of faith, namely compassion, use humanity only as a personal mask. If these people were to become ideas, they would kill the truth. If they became poets, they would rot spirits; and if they were to defend morals, they would only destroy them.

Rumi ﷺ says:

“If such people were to grab a rose, it would become a thorn for others. If they were to go to a friend, they would bite him like a snake.”

Simply, these people are the killers of hearts.



Wherever it may be on earth:

-If you see the wealthy run to the help of the poor and the strong take the weak under their wings,

-And if you witness people with means answer the call of the distressed, and the rich look out for orphans and feed widows, know without a shadow of doubt that all these virtues have been passed on by prophets, the translators of divine revelation, and the humans of mercy who have followed their path.



Mehmed Akif depicts the ferocity of the age of ignorance as:

*Humanity had become worse predators than hyenas
If toothless, man was devoured by his own brothers*

In the wake of that dark age ruled by tyranny and injustice, the “human” reached the true value he deserved through the “civilisation of virtues” whose foundations were laid with Islam.

While returning victorious to Medina from the Battle of Badr, Muslims took turns to ride their mounts with the very pagans they had captured. They showed compassion and said, “Even though these people have not yet believed, there are our equals in being human”. And many of those captives responded by embracing Islam.

Such is the value that the Islamic civilisation affords the human being.



In the eyes of Islam, the religion of mercy, the “**human**” is a noble being whose rights must be observed. Even talking about the sins of a sinner behind his back is considered “backbiting” and regarded a major sin. Islam advises people to avoid provoking the ill-wishes of a victim, even if he may be a disbeliever.



Regardless of their religion or race, Islam is always by the side of victims and the mistreated. Among the countless examples are the Jews of Spain who, after suffering brutalities and massacres at the hands of Christians once Muslims lost control of the peninsula, were rescued by the Ottomans and shipped to Istanbul. And Istanbul’s Muslim residents shared their means and treated them to donations, thinking:

“These people suffered grave tyranny; and even though they are non-Muslim, they are human beings.” In so doing, they displayed the magnificence of Islamic morals. And in the end, they acted as a means of guidance for those willing to do so. Ultimately, the human being is always defeated by kindness.



Today, we have millions of brothers and sisters driven out of their lands, battling for survival inside refugee camps. Seeing or hearing about their plight makes us sad. Yet, how potent are we in becoming an *Ansar* to those *Muhajir*? Compassion does not just consist of feeling sad or sensing a tweak in conscience. True compassion is to generously share the means one has with those who do not.



Thanks to their traits of justice, kindness and compassion, the Ottomans established a state in which non-Muslims also preferred to live.

People fleeing the horrendous tyranny of the Inquisition in Europe sought refuge with the Ottomans; as for the Ottomans, non-Muslims were considered “*wadiatullah*”, trusts from Allah ﷻ to the state.

A common proverb in Poland, in fact, said:

“This land will not be free until Ottoman horses drink from the Vistula River.”

Reformist Martin Luther who rebelled against a derailed Christianity, its irrationalities and fallacies by founding the Protestant sect, also said:

“Oh Lord! Place us under the rule of the Grand Turks, so through them, we can avail ourselves of your divine justice.”



Islam is the revival of man. All feelings born out of Islam's sublime core, are truly the most elegant and humane.

Despite this being the case, some enemies of Islam associate the same religion with one the calamities of our time, "terrorism". Terrorism is founded upon anarchy and heartlessness, and never has any need for sublime sensibilities such as beautiful morals. Contrary to all the slander, since the day it was born, Islam has stood against all kinds of terrorism, anarchy, tyranny and injustice, and focused on preserving human values.

The twenty-three-year mission of our **Prophet** ﷺ, sent as a mercy to all the worlds, was equally spent in a struggle against terrorism committed against humans, animals and nature.



Islam disallows violence against any creature, let alone human beings. It does not condone the mistreatment even of animals. More still, it even forbids giving a tree a rough shake. Islam is a religion of mercy, compassion, elegance and courtesy. Becoming an enemy to violence and an enthusiast of mercy and compassion is in fact a condition of gaining spiritual nobility.



Among the rights we must also observe are the rights of animals, as the Almighty has created them for us. They are manifestations of His names *Al-Bari* (The Maker) and *Al-Musawwir* (The Shaper). Every variety of species that adorns the book of universe is entrusted to us. The cat at our door, the dog, the bird with a broken wing... We must show each of them compassion, and look at all creatures with the gaze of mercy.



Each civilisation raises its own type of human being. The human being raised by the civilisation of Islam must convert his heart into a place of mercy that compassionately embraces all creatures, insofar as the moral qualities Islam instils in believers the most, are "**mercy and compassion**".

Our **Prophet's** ﷺ mercy and compassion were also universal and embraced all creatures. He one day said:

"I promise by Allah, who holds my soul in His Hand of Might, that you will never enter paradise until you have mercy on each other."

The companions replied:

"We all have mercy, Messenger of Allah."

He then added:

“What I meant is not the mercy you understand, the one you feel only for each other. Rather, a mercy inclusive of all creation, a mercy inclusive of all creation.” (Hakim, IV, 185/7310)



True mercy, compassion and generosity do not simply consist of what a person shows to his family and close friends. As said by our gracious **Prophet** ﷺ, they rather begin with the closest beings and proceed to encompass the entire creation. It is a mercy and compassion felt for the entire creation for the sake of the Creator.



Besides showing an unrivalled mercy and courtesy to people, our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ was equally sensitive towards animals and plants. His numerous warnings against scaring dogs breastfeeding their pups, disturbing birds in their nests or plucking out green branches for no reason, and so forth, just showed how he looked at creatures through the Creator’s gaze of mercy.



Our **Prophet** ﷺ once saw an ant nest that had been burnt down. It made his heart shiver. And with immense sadness, he said:

“Who did this? Punishing with fire is exclusive only to the Lord of the fire.” (See, Abu Dawud, Jihad, 112/2675)



Our **Prophet** ﷺ had set off from Medina in his *ihram* to make pilgrimage to Mecca. When he reached Usayah, he saw a gazelle curled up and sleeping under a shade. He then assigned a companion to stand guard over the gazelle until everyone passed, and ordered everyone not to disturb the animal. (See, *Muwattaa*, Hajj, 79; Nasai, Hajj, 78)



While Allah has put all creatures in the service of man, He has also made the observance of their rights part of a divine test.

The **Prophet** ﷺ informs us that upon seeing a parched dog in desert licking the sand from thirst, a prostitute drew out some water from a well with her shoes, as she did not have any other medium. And just for this instance of compassion, she was forgiven and placed in paradise.

In contrast, for ignoring her hungry cat and leaving it to starve to death, another woman booked her seat in the fire of hell.²⁰

20. See, Bukhari, Anbiya 54; Muslim, Salam, 151-152.

We need to remember that both the Almighty's pleasure and wrath lie hidden in deeds that are sometimes big, sometimes medium and, at other times, small. Hence, we must never hold back from doing even the slightest good or underestimate the smallest sin.



One of our most important duties is to treat Allah's ﷻ creatures with kindness and ensure they are not neglected. Besides always helping people in their hardest of times, we should also keep in mind the cats, dogs, birds and other animals on our streets, as much as we can. We should remember to leave out some food and a bowl of water for them outside our doors.

Our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ, sent as a mercy to all the worlds, would look upon animals as his own personal trusts, and command others to diligently observe their rights. Whilst marching with the army of Islam onto the conquest of Mecca, the **Prophet** ﷺ saw a dog breastfeeding its pups. He then assigned **Suraqa** ﷺ to keep an eye on the animals, while ordering the army to march from the other side without disturbing them.

The life of our **Prophet** ﷺ is filled with such instances of mercy and compassion; and these serve as perfect examples for us, his followers.



Let us not forget that all creatures are entrusted in our care. We are responsible for the cats and dogs outside our doors. They are creatures of Allah ﷻ, and so are we. They could have been created like us, and we like them.



To show appreciation for being created as the noblest of all creatures, the "human being" must treat every one of the Almighty's creatures with mercy, compassion, kindness and care.

A slave during the Prophet's ﷺ time shared three pieces bread he earned a day with a hungry dog. And in so doing, he was effectively saying:

"It is the same Allah who created us both and since He created me as a human being, this means He has placed the dog in my care."



Fudayl Ibn Iyad ﷺ said:

"If a servant was to offer every righteous deed possible but neglected a chicken in his care, he would not be registered as good."



A truly compassionate heart can neither kill an ant for no reason nor pluck out a flower.



In his *Shahnameh*, **Ferdowsi** says:

“Do not even hurt an ant hauling a seed, for it, too, has a life. And life is sweet and beautiful.”



One day on a journey, the sultan of the wise, **Bayazid Bistami** ﷺ took a break beneath a tree and moved on after having something to eat. After covering a fair distance, he suddenly noticed an ant crawling in his bag, and sighed:

“I have separated this creature of Allah from his homeland”. He then went all the way back to that same spot to drop off the ant.²¹



On the day of judgment, all creatures will be resurrected alongside human beings and claim compensation for their violated rights on earth. Thus, let alone human beings, Islam has banned mistreating animals, overtiring them and even ripping out a green branch for no reason.



The Ottomans extended their compassion to birds and built bird houses in the walls of mosques and set up foundations for injured migratory birds.



For our predecessors, the Ottomans, the conquest with swords went hand-in-hand with the conquest of hearts, and material development with spiritual development. Their kind hands gave birth to a civilisation of charities that shone mercy on humans, animals and even plants. Society enjoyed an exceptional bond of fraternity. Hearts became reconciled through love. There was no unbridgeable gap between rich and poor, between the noblemen and villager. For orphans and widows, the very neighbourhood where they lived was their guarantor.

A society where hearts are full of compassion naturally experiences no dramas or meltdowns, witnesses no depression or hears of any suicides.



Across the history of mankind, people motivated the empty fighting over the the material world have left destruction in their wake, whereas others concerned only with conquering hearts, have always revived and restored. They comforted sad

21. See, Qushayri, *Risalah*, p. 229; Sadi, *Bustan*, p. 78.

and aggrieved hearts. Alongside poorhouses feeding the hungry, they also built sufi lodges to feed famished hearts. Alongside bathhouses to clean skins off dirt, they also constructed mosques, lodges and convents to purify hearts from the grime of worldly concerns. They left sparkly domes in their wake, and a wonderful echo in the skies.



Psychological disorders were, of course, rare in a civilisation of virtues and society of piety where sultans were servants to the righteous, soldiers were dervishes enlisted in guilds, and so were the tradesmen who were pillars of honesty; while the rich were generous and humble, the poor abstinent and noble, the scholars sincere and virtuous, judges fair and unbiased, men loving and loyal, and women courteous and elegant. How could anyone fall into depression in a society weaved like a web by charity foundations built upon mercy and compassion?



One charity foundation established by **Bezm-i Alem Valide Sultan** is particularly striking. This foundation compensated for the goods damaged or broken by servants at the places they worked. This not only ensured that the workers were not berated too harshly and their feelings hurt, it also kept employers from insulting them and consequently infringing on their personal rights.

Can today's materialist and self-absorbed human being even envisage such a profound level of courtesy as this?



Today, we still make use of the charity foundations which serve as tangible proofs of the virtue and compassion of our ancestors. What legacy will we leave behind for our grandchildren to benefit? Will we leave them desolate dumps and ruins of entertainment, pride and greed? Or, just like our ancestors, will we bequeath charity foundations that stand as monuments of mercy, compassion and service?



Let us not forget that we are the current representatives of the civilisation of virtues and the society of mercy built by our predecessors. And just like them, we have a duty to become "humans of mercy" from whose hands, tongues and states all creation can benefit.



The Sublime Step to Spiritual Peaks: SERVICE

Service and efforts in the way of Allah ﷻ are mirrors that best reflect how mature a person is. They are the business cards of one's own conscience.



All saints have felt responsible for society, and shared the grief of the needy and the oppressed. For instance, during the first seven years of his spiritual journey, the sultan of saints Shah Naqshiband رضى الله عنه helped ill patients, treated wounded animals and cleaned the streets. He later spoke of how it was thanks to these deeds that he received spiritual promotion.

Mercy is the first fruit of faith. Mercy itself manifests in **service** to humanity, and the ability to generously share all personal means. Offering service and making an effort in the way of Allah ﷻ are social duties of servanthood with which the Almighty has made us responsible.



Services and efforts in the way of Allah ﷻ are mirrors that best reflect how mature a conscience is. They are the business cards of one's own conscience.



Shaykh Sadi says:

“The virtue in serving lies in your ability to haul the weight of the poor as a show of thanks, at a time when you see yourself strong, fit and healthy.”



To serve is to seek the pleasure of Allah ﷻ by breaking free from the selfishness of the ego and turning towards creation with a compassionate heart.

Every sincere service remote from personal interests and offered purely for the pleasure of Allah ﷻ, is really an expression of the enthusiasm for divine reunion.



Rumi ﷺ said:

“Let the pilgrims search for the Lord of the Kaaba. Once they find Him, they will see the Kaaba everywhere.”

In other words, what is important is to seek the pleasure of Allah ﷻ at all times and in all places. For a heart of this kind, every place becomes a precinct of divine inspirations, just like the Kaaba.



The roads that lead to the Almighty are as many as the breaths of all creatures. What is important is to become aware of these means that bring us closer to Him, and acquire an alert heart that is fit to make the most of these opportunities. The Qur'an, in fact, states:

“You who believe! have taqwa of Allah and seek the means of drawing near to Him!” (Al-Maidah, 5:35)



My late father **Musa Efendi** ﷺ would say:

“Many people are content, assuming that by praying and fasting alone they have completely fulfilled their religious duties. Yet, this is not enough. Besides obeying and honouring the commands of Allah ﷻ, one also has to be kind to His creatures. And this is acquired only through sacrifice and genuine service.

After fulfilling the compulsory deeds and steering away from haram, any Muslim with a right mind must take care to serve and become useful to Muslims, society and the entire creation. These things mentioned, in fact, complete the compulsory deeds, and are part of the Noble Prophet's ﷺ way.”



When he was caliph, **Umar** ﷺ would patrol the streets of Medina at night. His wish recounted below, in fact, manifests his high sense of duty and desire to serve:

“If I am still alive by then, I will -Allah willing- travel amongst the people for a year. I well know that people have needs that they have not been able to tell me. Neither their governors deliver their wishes nor do they have the means to see me in person.

I shall go to Damascus and stay there for two months.

I shall then go to Northern Mesopotamia and stay for another two months.

I shall then go to Egypt and stay for two months.

I shall then go to Bahrain and stay for two months.

I shall then go to Kufa and stay there for two months.

I shall then go to Basra and stay there for two months.

And what a wonderful year that will be!" (Tabari, *Tarikh*, IV, 201-202)



People devoted to serving others are responsible for the wellbeing of every place their hearts reach.

Even during his final illness, **Musa Efendi** ﷺ was enthused enough to say, "If only I had the strength to travel city by city, town by town, and try to offer a cure for the spiritual and material troubles of my brothers."

He had spread his wings of mercy and compassion above every wounded heart he could reach.

When the gates to Central Asia first opened, he ran there with a vigour, energy and excitement unexpected of his old age.

He also went to South Africa and Europe, striving to carry the spiritual and social qualities of the heart to those distant lands.

In short, he lived his entire life in an effort to become the kind of "**beautiful servant**" praised in the Noble Qur'an. And in so doing, he left a pleasant echo within the dome of these mortal skies.



Smiling at and greeting a fellow brother, removing an obstacle from the road, giving directions to a stranger, helping another carry his bag, teaching someone, making a clean living to support the family, consoling the downtrodden, giving donations, setting an example to others by taking sincere steps towards the mosque and all other similar acts, are treasured deeds of worship.



To ensure that his *ummah* did not waste their time unmindful of efforts in the way of Allah ﷻ, our **Prophet** ﷺ would, at times, say:

"My ummah!

- *Have you caressed an orphan's head today?*
- *Have you fed someone hungry today?*
- *Have you visited someone ill today?*
- *Have you taken part in a burial today?* (See, Muslim, *Fadailu's-Sahabah*, 12)

In so doing, he would encourage Muslims to become socially responsible by sharing their brothers' grief and to become sources of comfort for them.



The Almighty's pleasure lies hidden in deeds sometimes big, sometimes medium and sometimes small. A time comes when the smallest act of kindness that puts a smile on the face of a troubled person, attracts divine pleasure. There is no way of knowing whose prayers will save a person.



In light of the dictum, “Consider each night as the night of power (*Laylatul Qadr*) and everyone you meet as *Khidr*”, we should never think we can know whose prayers will deliver us to our wishes. We must therefore never overlook the possibility that many a person seemingly unimportant may, in fact, have a high rank in the sight of Allah ﷻ. We must especially seek out such servants and try to benefit from their genuine prayers.



A believer seeking Allah's ﷻ pleasure must spend time around places of mourning and run to the help of the needy. **Musa** ﷺ once asked:

“Where should I look for you, my Lord?”

The Almighty answered:

“Look for Me near broken hearts!” (Abu Nuaym, *Hilyah*, II, 364)



The road to getting close to Allah ﷻ lies in reviving and rebuilding broken hearts.



Conquering a heart is the most magnificent of all conquests. Blissful are those who are able to turn their hearts into convents of mercy and mend broken hearts.



The great master **Amir Kulal** ﷺ gave his student **Shah Naqshiband** ﷺ the following advice:

“Look to win a heart, and serve the weak! Protect the feeble and heartbroken! They are such people that they do not receive any wages from the public. Yet, most of them live fully content, modestly, but with a fractured heart. Find these people and serve them!”



Just as the Kaaba is at the centre of universe, the centre of the human body is the heart, the “focal point of the divine gaze”. Winning a heart, finding a way inside a heart, consoling a sad heart, putting a smile on sad faces, and most importantly, awakening the heart from neglect and reviving it with the light of faith, are the shortest ways to get closer to Allah the Almighty.



Shaykh Sadi said:

“There is nothing special in winning the entire world. What is special is winning over a heart.”



It must be borne in mind that one can only win over a heart by solving that person’s problems.



Shaykh Sadi said:

“Son, do good! Wild animals are ensnared in traps, while hearts are captured through kindness.”



Rumi رحمته الله said:

“If you desire us and our blessings, know that this solely depends on winning a heart! Sacrifice all you have to mend a heart! Mend it, so that heart can shine a light in your darkest hour inside the grave!”



Receiving the prayers of victims, the oppressed, the forlorn and the poor is to seize hold of a magnificent treasure of paradise.



Our mortal lives continue beyond death, to the extent of our sacrifice and services.



Shaykh Sadi said:

“If you remain just flesh and bones, then with death, your name will perish just like your body. If you become a generous man serving others, then your life will persist beyond your body, to the extent of your sacrifice and the depth in which you have entered hearts.”



Ahmad Kasani رحمته الله said:

“The world is a place of service, while the hereafter is the place of nearness to Allah. And a person’s nearness will be determined by his service.”



To be able to smile tomorrow in the hereafter, we must shed lots of sweat and tears today. It is futile to expect rewards without the required toil.

We must seek and find the people whose days are clouded in darkness, and run to those in need of help and guidance, so that these efforts shine a light onto the darkness of our graves.



A *hadith* says:

“Allah the Almighty has created certain people to secure the needs of others; so much so that people run to them for what they need. It is these who are secure from Allah’s punishment.” (Haythami, VIII, 192)



Becoming a believer fully aware of being under the divine surveillance, who worships Allah ﷻ as if he sees Him, shivers before His glory and power, and who sheds tears over the weight of the responsibility He has given...

Becoming a believer who feels the weight of the trust he has been burdened with and feels the material and spiritual needs of the sufferers entrusted in his care, and makes an effort to serve them with his sweat and tears.

These are the qualities of the believer that hellfire will never touch...



The Qur’an states:

“Allah has bought from the believers their selves and their wealth in return for the Garden.” (Al-Tawbah, 9:111)

This world is a marketplace, where one has the opportunity to trade his wealth and his own self in exchange for paradise.

Allah the Almighty wants us to wake up on earth before we are in the grave, and become aware of this marketplace where paradise is bought.



Why have prophets, companions and saints trembled before divine truths?

Why did they abandon all their comfort with an immense effort for Allah?

And how do we expect to be with them in the afterlife without making any serious sacrifices of our own?



There is no gain without pain. No blessing can be acquired without effort. Once a disciple asked help from his master: “Master, ‘pray for me’ and the master answered back: ‘O disciple work hard’.” That is to say, spiritual favours are given only to those

who exert themselves. Expecting help without effort is as foolish as waiting for crops without sowing the seed.



A person must live Islam with taqwa and make a genuine effort in the way of Allah ﷻ, so that he can become blessed with divine mercy, pardon and help. It is vain to expect spiritual gifts without working for them.

Our **Prophet** ﷺ, in fact, cautioned his beloved daughter **Fatimah** ﷺ that unless she did righteous deeds, she would not be spared from the Almighty's punishment.



Time and again, people with confused hearts and minds say things like, "My grandfather was an Imam, and my father a pilgrim". Yet, as stated in the *hadith*:

"A person's lineage will not save him if he is lacking in his deeds." (Muslim, Dhikr, 38; Ibn Majah, Muqaddimah, 17)

Just as no one can get full by the meals his parents eat, every person is obliged to make a serious personal effort for his own eternal salvation.



The Almighty declares:

"Man will have nothing but what he strives for." (Al-Najm, 53:39)



We must make every effort within our power in the way of Allah ﷻ. The peace of obtaining Allah's ﷻ pleasure should make us forget about all our worldly exhaustion and concerns. Only after showing this kind of effort, can we expect to receive divine mercy and openings. Otherwise, we will only be fooling ourselves with false hope.



Abdullah Dahlawi ﷺ said:

"The elders of yesteryear would task their students with service, as serving others is a means for rewards and paves the way for the heart to progress."



In spiritual training, service has an enormous role in dispersing the desires of the ego and developing the capabilities of the spirit. A person receives spiritual favours only by offering genuine services.

It was after his humble and self-effacing service that the judge of Bursa, Mahmud became **Shaykh Aziz Mahmud Hudayi** ﷺ. Under the guidance of **Shaykh Uftadah**

ﷺ, he worked as a cleaner at the lodge and sold liver in the local bazaars wearing his official kaftan so as to break his ego.



All saints have felt responsible for society, and shared the grief of the needy and the oppressed. For instance, during the first seven years of his spiritual journey, the sultan of saints **Shah Naqshiband** ﷺ helped ill patients, treated wounded animals and cleaned the streets. He later spoke of how it was thanks to these deeds that he received spiritual elevation.



On one hand, service provides a means to help others, on the other, it also elevates those who serve in line with the degree of their effort and sincerity. For this reason, those who serve actually obtain a far greater benefit than the people they serve.



Rumi ﷺ said:

“By worshipping, giving charity and serving the public, the eye of your heart will see colours other than the normal colours you see. Instead of basic stones, you will behold pearls and gems. What is a pearl anyway? You will become a sea, and even a sun that roams and gazes from the skies.”



Serving in the way of Allah ﷻ is a unique and sublime steppingstone that delivers the heart to spiritual peaks. Every believer with a spirit and consciousness to serve, knows how to find the means and opportunity to do so under all circumstances.



Just as the Sun waits for no one to plead and beg to begin radiating its warmth and light, prudent believers must also do what is expected of them before being asked.



It is compulsory to rush to serve others for Allah’s ﷻ sake with every means He has given. A believer must not look for excuses. On the contrary, he must stake out every opportunity to serve, and recognise any chance to do so as a blessing. Under all circumstances, he must be on the lookout to offer any kind of service, and ask:

“What means has Allah given me and how can I put these to use in His way?”



Despite the tough conditions of fourteen centuries ago, the noble companions crossed deserts to make *tabligh* in the courts of kings, while feeling the breaths of hangmen on their necks standing ready to execute them. And in so doing, they took the biggest leap in a conquest that spanned the Atlantic Ocean to China.

Let us think:

How would the noble companions have spread their already vast wings to serve, if they had access to the transportation, communication and the material means we have today?



Out of the 120,000 companions present at the Farewell Pilgrimage, only around 20,000 are buried in their hometowns. The vast majority of them passed away in the regions they migrated to under those difficult conditions to invite people to Islam and wage a *jihad* (struggle) to revive the hearts. Consequently, they ended up giving life to those regions by shedding their own.

Today, we face neither perilous oceans nor impenetrable mountains nor impassable walls. We really have no bigger obstacle than our own egos to extend a helping hand to oppressed and defenceless Muslims and make *tabligh* to people deprived of guidance.



Allah the Almighty presents the noble companions as an example, so that we realign our states according to theirs. It is so that we compare our attempts with the sacrifices made by the companions, and try to rouse our enthusiasm.



The companion **Anas Ibn Malik** رضي الله عنه said:

“You engage in certain things without the least care whereas during the time of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, we looked upon them as grave errors that led to destruction.”
(Bukhari, Riqaq, 32)

In other words, a believer must avoid the error of regarding his own level of faith as sufficient by comparing himself spiritually to the rest of society. He must always keep in mind that his unwavering standards are the **Prophet** ﷺ and his companions.



We are members of **the Prophet’s** ﷺ nation who have come around 1400 years after him. We no longer have the opportunity to become “companions”. Yet, the opportunity to “**follow the Muhajirun and Ansar in good conduct**” is open for all members of the Prophet’s ﷺ *ummah* until the day of judgment.

If we follow the noble **Muhajirun**, and migrate from the false to the truth, from evil to good, from sin to reward and from selfishness to selflessness...

...and, like the honoured **Ansar**, mobilise all our power to serve Allah’s ﷻ religion and generously share our every means with our brothers of faith;

...then, Allah willing, we will also be among the righteous believers who follow the noble companions.



The **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ has said:

“My nation is like the rain. No one can tell whether the first of it or the last of it is best.” (Tirmidhi, Adab, 81)

This means that the opportunity to become a drop of mercy of this abundant rain, is a gate of joy and salvation that will remain open for all of us until the day of judgment.



In the companions, who the Almighty presents as examples:

- Wealth and life had become means.
- The zest of faith had been fully acquired.
- Compassion had become vast.
- Serving and sacrifice had become a lifestyle.
- Islam’s character was always on display.
- Their greatest ambition was to embody the character of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.
- Extravagance, miserliness, luxury and gluttony were behaviours unknown to them, simply because they lived conscious of the fact their selves were ultimately bound for the grave.



The companions’ sole concern revolved around these questions:

“Is Allah ﷻ pleased with me? Will Allah’s Messenger ﷺ complain about me on the day of resurrection? Will I be able to be by his side on the day of judgment?”

In light of this, we also need to assess our own states:

When we donate for the sake of Allah ﷻ, do we think, “Oh no, my savings have decreased?” or do we feel the joy of charity the more we give, and feel like giving more and more? Do our efforts in the way of Allah ﷻ make us feel tired and depleted or do we fervently and passionately serve to the last ounce of our energy?



The noble companions displayed unrivalled feats of sacrifice.

- They raced for martyrdom at Badr, as they had eagerly pledged an oath to sacrifice their lives in way of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ.
- They showed inimitable sacrifice at the Battle of the Ditch, despite being engulfed by hunger and apprehension.
- The brave commanders at Mutah rushed into battle knowing full well they would be martyred.
- They dispersed to the four corners of the world to spread Islam. They rushed selflessly without thinking, “How am I meant to cross the deserts? How much will I get paid? Who will protect me from the executioners?” And with this spirit, they scored an eternal victory.



Biographies of the **Prophet** ﷺ cite a number of **pledges**. The companions made a pledge to our **Prophet** ﷺ at **Aqabah**.

At **Badr**, they promised him that:

“Even if you go into the sea, we will follow you!”

Upon seeing our **Prophet** ﷺ in sorrow at the **Uhud**, they pledged to fight until they were martyred.

And at Hdaybiyyah, they showed utter submission, saying:

“We pledge by whatever is in your heart, Messenger of Allah!”

Just like the companions, we must also keep our pledges to the **Prophet** ﷺ firm. Through our deeds of worship, generosity and selflessness, we must raise our level of loyalty.



Bashir Ibn Hassasiya ﷺ explains:

“I had arrived to pledge an oath to the **Messenger of Allah** ﷺ. He stipulated that I testified that there is no god but Allah, and Muhammed is His messenger, and that I maintain the prayer, give alms, make pilgrimage according to the rites of Islam, fast in the month of Ramadan and make *jihad* in the way of Allah. I then said:

‘Messenger of Allah! I swear I have no power to do two of those things: *jihad* and charity.

People say that Allah is angered by a person who flees *jihad*. And I am worried that, once I reach the battlefield, I will be overcome by the fear of death and flee.

As for charity, I only have a small flock of sheep and ten camels. And they are my family's source of bread and means of transport.'

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ thereupon held my hand, shook it slightly and said:

'No jihad, no charity. Then how will you enter paradise?'

I then immediately said:

'Alright, Messenger of Allah. I pledge an oath', and proceeded promise by every condition he laid down." (Ahmad, V, 224)



The Mighty Qur'an calls every struggle against tyranny and injustice, "***jihad***".

Jihad has a much broader meaning than warfare. A clear proof is the fact that verses commanding *jihad* were revealed even during the Meccan period, during which Muslims were banned from fighting. Allah ﷻ states:

"So do not obey the unbelievers but use this to do battle (*jihad*) against them with all your might." (Al-Furqan, 25:52)

Believers during the Meccan period waged a great *jihad* against the terror of the man of ignorance with patience and perseverance, purely by actively exhibiting Islam's character; that is to say, by conveying the Qur'an, good morals, justice and true humanity, and also by making no compromises from *tawhid* at any cost.



What is meant by *jihad* is not just a battle of swords. A sword is a piece of iron used only under duress to eliminate tyranny and instate justice. The goal is to run to the help of the oppressed and conquer hearts that are awaiting guidance.



A true conquest is to capture hearts with the beauty of Islam. This is the reason why the conquests of Islam have been enduring. Unlike the brief sparks of the campaigns of Attila and Alexander, Islamic conquests have proven durable and tremendous.

Across history, many people in the lands conquered by Islam, in fact, rejoiced in the arrival of Muslims. The local population of Syria and Anatolia, and across the Balkans in Bosnia and elsewhere even aided the conquerors, so they could be saved from the tyrants ruling over them. It is indeed due to the superior way in which the Muslims conducted themselves that Islam has had a lasting presence in these lands.



The *jihad* demanded by the Qur'an:

- First, calls on a Muslim to revive his own heart with the inspiration and spirituality of the Qur'an and Sunnah.
- It demands a believer to make an effort with his life, wealth and every means in the way of Allah ﷻ for the truth and the good to triumph.
- It asks believers to build and maintain institutes like the *Daru'l-Arqam* and *Suffah* for the study of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and to raise proper Muslims who can represent and convey Islam.
- It rouses them to go to the four corners of the world and serve as means for guidance.
- It encourages the use of every speech, writing and medium of publication to enliven and sustain Islam.
- It asks for the removal of all barriers and injustices that stand between Islam and the people.



Today, Islam is attacked on all fronts. Since Islam is the only true religion with an absolutely uncorrupted theology and at the same time calls people to confront injustice, the agents of falsehood assault it at every opportunity. In response, believers are obliged to feel personally responsible for the future of Islam and mobilise their every means on this path.



If, today, we are honoured with the gift of Islam, it is through the noble companions who gallantly set out on the path with the excitement of becoming a guiding light, and our ancestors who followed their lead with goodness.

If they had held back from these efforts, we would have been deprived of this blessing.

So, we, too, must think of the people who may potentially be reformed and guided through our own efforts. We must consider the individuals and societies who will remain deprived if we choose to shy away from making a sacrifice.

When we are ultimately called to account on the day of judgment, we must also think of how we will carry the rewards of the people we helped guide and educate, while burdened with the guilt of those we deprived.



Today, we must seriously assess our efforts. At what level are our toils and sacrifices compared to those of the noble companions and our brave ancestors? How

do our deeds of worship, work and family lives fare in light of the standards of “*ikhlas*”, “*taqwa*” and “*ihsan*” which the Allah orders?



The gift of Islam has reached us across 1400 years of trouble and pain. The onus is now on us to deliver this trust with the same sensitivity to future generations. We live in times that demand a selfless effort to ensure that the good and the truth triumph. The toil of a person who pushes a car out of mud is incomparable to another who tries to nudge the same vehicle on a straight road.

Plus, at a desperate time when all is needed to push the car out of mud is the mere strength of a child’s wrist, that seemingly insignificant shove holds an even greater importance. But in contrast, the blame multiplies for a person who chooses to sit and watch on the side line, instead of lending a hand.

In our times, when the youth are being swept away by the detrimental shows blaring from the internet, television and social media, and most of humanity leads lives under the dictates of the ego with weakened faith, we must remember that a small effort will bring great rewards, while a slight neglect will incur an enormous blame.



Allah the Almighty personally rewards the service and efforts offered during tough times. Much like the extra payment employees get for working in dangerous places, the Almighty rewards these efforts in spades.

The Qur’an states:

“Those who gave before the Victory (conquest of Mecca) are not the same as those who gave and fought afterwards. They are higher in rank.” (Al-Hadid, 57:10)



People who make sacrifices for Islam during the tough hours of the end of times, will receive a share of the rewards of the companions, who lived and sustained Islam under the most difficult of all circumstances.

Islam was not born without pain and in this chaos of the final hour in which the small and even the medium signs of judgment day have surfaced, we must recall the sacrifices made by the companions, and just like them, raise our efforts in the way of Allah ﷻ. We must look upon the troubles and pains we may endure on this path as means to train and purify our souls.



In the face of the difficult conditions of travelling in the past, the companions went as far as China, Samarkand and Qayrawan. They took Islam to most of the

known world. Nowhere was too far, too dangerous or impossible. They did not yield or relent. They simply went.

Today, the world is suffering a modern age of ignorance. What is desired is a world remote from the worry of the afterlife. In the face of this era of ignorance, we have a heavy duty.

Our greatest responsibility is to:

-Go to all places and raise upright human beings upon the direction of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

-Raise righteous people who will become the witnesses of Allah ﷻ on earth and, representatives of Islam.

-Raise a loyal *ummah* who, on judgment day, will put a smile on the **Prophet's** ﷺ radiant face.

-Nurture hearts that will genuinely abide by the **Prophet's** ﷺ words during the Farewell Pilgrimage, when he said:

"Do not embarrass me be sinning!"



Our **Prophet** ﷺ was stoned in the way of Allah ﷻ. He was forced to migrate from his homeland, and there were times when he starved and had to tie a rock around his belly. Yet, he continued his mission without any despair. He never said, "Let me rest beneath this tree for three days, go on a holiday for a week and do not bother me until I get back." He did not take leave even for a day. He found rest and comfort in worship, remembering Allah ﷻ, guiding and teaching others.



To inform his nation about just how great a catastrophe laziness is, our **Prophet** ﷺ would pray:

"My Allah! I seek refuge in You from helplessness, laziness, cowardice, falling old and weak, and stinginess! I seek refuge in You from the tribulation of life and death."

(Muslim, Dhikr, 50)



The Almighty warns:

"Do not cast yourselves into destruction." (Al-Baqarah, 2:195) That is to say, "Do not fall into neglect by being swept away by the dazzle and glitter of the fleeting world due to fear of poverty or ambitions of the ego, when opportunities to gain My pleasure lie in front of you! Otherwise, you will endanger your afterlives!"



One of the Prophet's closest companions, **Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari** ﷺ twice took part in a campaign to conquer Istanbul when he was over the age of eighty, and ended up being martyred. He never said, "We have already served Allah's religion enough, so let us step aside and allow others to make *jihad*." Until his very last breath, he strived to convey the message of Allah's Messenger far and wide.

This is the way to turn the life of the **Prophet** ﷺ into an education of a lifetime, and to embody his morals. It runs through leading a life of the consciousness and excitement of being a loyal student of the **Prophet** ﷺ until the final breath.



Abu'l-Hasan Kharraqani ﷺ said:

"The greatest miracle (karamah) is to serve Allah's creation without feeling tired or exhausted."



Serving in the way of Allah ﷻ is not a passing passion. It is a noble duty that must be fulfilled with love and ecstasy until the last breath.



Serving humanity is a high virtue seized especially by prophets and saints; so much so that these great figures never abandoned this duty even when they were ill or on their deathbeds.



Eternal gains cannot be made without enduring worldly pains. The world is not a place to rest. For a mature believer, the real life begins with death.



Abu Hatim ﷺ said:

"Brother! If you delay four things to four places, you will enter paradise.

-Delay sleep to the grave,

-Boasting to the divine scale,

-having rest to the Sirat bridge,

-fulfilling Desires to paradise."



Today, we have fires all around us. Children, young and old people are perishing in those flames. We must run to their aid.

Can a Muslim ever say, "It is now time for me to rest" and step aside in the face of such a scene? Or do his conscience and faith demand him to make sacrifices to the best of his ability?

The companions were truly aware of this, as they rushed non-stop to the four corners of the world. What about us?



We have no set boundary where we can say, “I have offered so-and-so services for Allah, and that is enough!” We know the measure of (zakat) alms. A rich person fulfils this duty by donating a fortieth of his wealth. But how is he to repay his gratitude for all the other countless blessings from Allah? This has no measure. Hence, there is no other way than to serve Allah ﷻ for an entire lifetime with an ever-growing effort.



A companion once passed by a mountain road beside a spring. He took a liking to the place and thought:

“If only I could retreat from society and live here. But I can never do so without first seeking the permission of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.” He then disclosed his intentions to the **Prophet** ﷺ.

The **Prophet** ﷺ said:

“Do not ever do such a thing! Serving and striving in the way of Allah for just a single day is better than sitting at home and praying for seventy years. Would you not want Allah to forgive you and place you in paradise? Then, make jihad in Allah’s way. Whoever makes jihad for Allah, even if it is only as long as the time it takes to milk a camel, will enter paradise.” (Tirmidhi, Fadailu’l-Jihad, 17)



The Almighty does not hold us responsible for services and efforts that exceed our power. But this also means that we are responsible to do things that are within our power.²²



Every person is tested in line with the means and capabilities he is given. As the means and capabilities increase, so do the responsibilities.



Let us assess the level of our servanthood and religious effort:

- Are our deeds worthy of the Almighty’s pleasure?
- Is our taqwa enough to protect us from divine wrath?
- Will our sacrifices enable us to cross the bridge of *Sirat*?
- Will our good deeds make our faces glow when we stand before the divine scale?

22. See, Al-Baqarah, 2:286.

-Will our lifestyle make us worthy of paradise?

-When interrogated about the people burning to ashes in the flames of disbelief, will we be able to genuinely say:

“My Lord! I did all I could.”



The Almighty assures:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ

“**You who have iman! If you help Allah, He will help you and make your feet firm.**” (Muhammed, 47:7)

If we want to guard our faith in our last breath, we must therefore run to help Allah’s ﷻ religion as best we can.



The Almighty declares:

فَإِذَا فَرَغْتَ فَانصَبْ. وَإِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَارْغَبْ

“**So, when you have finished, work on, and make your Lord your goal!**” (Al-Inshirah, 94:8-7)



Abu Bakr ﷺ said:

“*If you miss out on doing something good, try to catch up to it. And once you do it, strive to do something better!*”



Muadh Ibn Jabal ﷺ would advise his son:

“*Son! A believer must die between two good deeds. Once a believer does something good, he should make the intention to another good deed, without slotting a bad deed in between.*”



No matter how hungry a person may get, he would become full with two or three bowls of food. Afterwards, even if he was offered the tastiest of all dishes, he would feel unable to eat. Such are the pleasures of the world. Yet, the pleasures of eternity have no bounds. A believer who has tasted the spiritual rewards of his efforts in the way of Allah ﷻ can never look upon his deeds as enough. As stated in the *hadith*:

“A believer never gets sick of doing good until he finds out that his final destination is paradise.” (Tirmidhi, Ilm, 19/2686)



Once a believer comes under divine love, his efforts in the way of Allah ﷻ peak. From that point onward, troubles become mercy and pains turns to pleasure.



For wise hearts, far from causing exhaustion, every service in Allah’s ﷻ way is a source of pleasure and peace.



The heart needs to sacrifices to acquire spiritual taste. Sacrifices never come easy for people drowning in worldly desires.

As preparations continued for the expedition of Tabuk, the hypocrites began making negative propaganda, saying: “Do not go to war in this heat!” Allah, however, warned them with the words: **“The Fire of Hell is a much hotter!”** (Al-Tawbah, 9:81)



Let us think about the expedition of Tabuk:

The praises received by those willing to shed their lives in the way of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ on the one hand...

And the divine warnings and punishment that befell the hypocrites on the other!

When this is clear to see, what will become of us if we keep away from efforts in Allah’s ﷻ way?

We must remember that each of us are on our own expedition of Tabuk. We need to look at every good deed we do as “nothing”, and strive until our very last breath.



Victory is from Allah ﷻ. It is only Allah ﷻ who can grant success.

Let us not forget that we are responsible, not for the struggles we have lost, but for the struggles we did not wage despite having the opportunity.



A believer’s duty is to seize the means at every opportunity, patiently strive and then defer the outcome to the Almighty. Even if he does not end up achieving the intended result, he must thank Allah ﷻ with a heart at peace, knowing he has done everything possible to fulfil his responsibility.



Do not ever despair in any good action. Do not ever say, “It is impossible”. How can anything be impossible, even in the most unexpected situations, if the Almighty

will otherwise? Do not the hardest rocks burst forth with waterfalls when He wills? If Allah ﷻ wills, He turns fire into a forest. And when He wills the seemingly impossible comes to pass.

A Muslim must hence never be glum and pessimistic. He must always be optimistic and upbeat.



Some teachers come up with excuses for their own neglect and laziness or simply give in to despair and say:

“What can I do? Students with talents are rare, the times are bad, no one is willing to step up!” And because of this, they stay away from serving and showing effort. Yet, the Almighty offers an example full of wisdom from the book of universe, in the form of a fig tree full of fruit growing out of a stone wall.

Rumi ﷻ said:

“No matter how intense and dim, striking a matchstick is all it takes to light up the dark.”



The value of a service is measured by the greatness of the sacrifice made to carry it out.



For people devoted to serving, their food should be patience, and their pillar of support is Allah the Almighty Himself. The most essential key to success in service is patience and perseverance.



Despite the blessings and opportunities they have, people who hide behind excuses and prioritise their personal comforts to desist from rushing to serve in the way of Allah ﷻ, are like trees that bear no fruit.



No person trapped in the selfishness of his ego can rush to serve. And those who keep away from serving cannot make spiritual progress.



The elders have said:

“Three people are distant from Allah ﷻ.

- Those who think of their comfort and flee from serving.

- Those who remain aloof from places of pain and misery with the excuse that they "...cannot bear to see it."

- Those who keep company with tyrants and the heedless.



Sincere services in the way of Allah ﷻ carry a great secret:

Allah the Almighty guarantees to take care of the personal problems of people who serve the religion and deal with the problems of others. As for selfish people preoccupied with their own personal interests and problems, the Almighty leaves them to deal with their issues on their own.



People unable to muster the courage to dive into the vast ocean of greater ideals and troubles for the sake of Allah ﷻ must remember that there may come a day when they drown in a small puddle.



A service that lacks love and compassion mostly amounts to breaking a heart.



A service devoid of courtesy, elegance and manners will only hurt a person. Hence, it ceases to be a virtue and turns into a flaw.



Abdullah Ibn Munazil ﷺ said:

"Manners in service are nobler than the service itself."



A service lacking an inspired heart is like a bucket of water splashed on a desert. A seed thrown into arid land is bound to become lost inside the guts of rats. Seeds of service sowed in hearts, on the other hand, are the plane trees of the future.



The Almighty grants abundance to our services only to the extent of our sincerity. Sincere service never go astray.



Being able to truly become a person of service is a massive gift from Allah ﷻ. A believer must appreciate the value of this great blessing and keep going with sincerity and gratitude. He must remember that this blessing can also be taken away at any moment.



Musa Efendi ﷺ said:

“A person devoted to serving others must also progress spiritually. He must duly present his heart to the Almighty, and strive to fulfil his duty of servanthood as best he can with sincerity, manners and modesty.

Otherwise, people who serve without observing spirituality and abiding by the right methods will be unable to make any spiritual progress; and more so, they will find that their service ruins their spirit. And since their intentions are weak, they will be deprived of the Almighty’s help.”



“Egotism” and “claiming spiritual perfection” are the cancers of service. For a person of service, these must make way for love and affection.



Musa Efendi ﷺ said:

“Our aim is to serve, but only as soldiers!”



A person in charge of a service must show greater effort and be more active than the people working under him, so that he can lead by example.



Instead of getting others to do the work, people who are in charge of a service must take ownership the work, and give it a personal push. Those who think they serve simply by blaring out orders without getting involved themselves, have not really understood.



One cannot serve with a remote control. People in charge must always show sacrifice and lead the way.



Our **Prophet** ﷺ said:

“The leader of a nation is the one who serves them.” (Daylami, Musnad, II, 324)

That is to say, it is by service that a person becomes the master of the people.



Our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ reserved all his twenty-four hours to worshipping the Almighty and serving his *ummah*. He was the teacher of the students of *Suffa* as well as other companions. Both physically and mentally, he was always generously offering

his time and effort. He carried stones during the construction of the Quba and Medina mosques. To those who said:

“Please, do not carry it. We will do it for you”, he replied:

“You stand in no greater need of Allah than I.” (See, Samhudi, I, 333)



When **Abu Bakr** رضي الله عنه became caliph, a few orphaned girls said:

“Abu Bakr is now caliph. He will no longer be able to milk our livestock. And we neither have the strength nor anyone else to do it.”

Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه did not neglect those orphans. He continued tending to their livestock.

This means that, for those who make a sincere effort, Allah opens up a time within a time.



Musa Efendi رحمته الله said:

“One cannot neglect the small things thinking, ‘I have bigger issues to deal with’, as the small piles up to become big...”

“A believer must consider no good act big or small, and seek to do all of them with a pure and genuine intention when given the opportunity. Many people engaged in bigger service sometimes overlook others that are deemed small. Yet, there is no way of knowing in which of these Allah’s pleasure lies.”



SHARING THE GRIEF OF MUSLIMS

While our noble religion tells the underprivileged to “Abstain, and do not ask anything from anyone apart from Allah”, it also orders people with means to, “Search and find the needy, and help them!”



It is easy to reach out to the poor who voice their needs. But we also have to find the needy whose high sense of modesty withholds them from speaking up and asking from people.

Just as it is impossible for the Sun to not radiate heat, it is equally impossible for high spirits not to feel compassion for humans and other living beings, to shun benevolence and sacrifice, to remain indifferent to torment and pain, and to not diffuse beauty to their surroundings.



No believer hoping for the Almighty’s mercy and help, can be hard-hearted and devoid of compassion. He cannot possibly remain deaf to the screams of creatures, first and foremost ‘humans, or hold back any goodness or favour he can offer.



A *hadith* says:

“In loving, having mercy and protecting each other, believers are like a single body. When one limb falls ill, all the other limbs lose sleep and contract a fever.” (Bukhari, Adab, 27; Muslim, Birr, 66)



A believer must feel personally responsible for the direction the times are heading. Over and beyond his own mortal existence, his heart should be more occupied with the life, health and safety of the *ummah* of which he is part. This concern is essential for faith to reach maturity.

The **Prophet** ﷺ has, in fact, said:

“A person who does not become distressed by the troubles of believers is not one of them.” (Hakim, IV, 352; Haythami, I, 87)



Upon seeing the needy and the stricken, a believer must self-inspect, thinking:

“I could have been in their place, and they in mine.”



In the face of any kind of disaster, we must think:

“It could have struck anyone of us.”

With this reflection, we must thank Allah ﷻ who has given us health; and as a physical show of gratitude, run to help people stricken by disaster.



A *hadith* states:

“None of you truly believe until you want for your brother what you want for yourself.” (Bukhari, Iman, 7)



We must not waive moderation in what we eat, drink or wear. While having food, we must think about those who cannot find those morsels to eat, and especially our helpless fellow Muslims suffering hunger and thirst under the tyranny of oppressors, and put the brakes on our egos from consuming in excess.



Thinking solely of one’s personal comfort and being unconcerned about the pain of other people with a ‘who cares’ attitude, can never become the outlook of a compassionate Muslim.



A true believer is altruistic. He is a person who knows that his own eternal salvation lies in serving and helping others. Allah the Almighty rejects the rude, selfish and mean people who only think of their own interests.



We cannot wish any distress upon a fellow Muslim which we would not like to face ourselves. Islam requires this kind of a sensitive conscience and an altruistic heart. It commands us to empathise with the vulnerable, the needy and the forlorn by putting ourselves in their shoes.



If a fire was to break out in the building across us with screams for help ringing from inside, could we possibly say:

“Let me just finish my coffee, and I will see to it once I am done”? Yet, we hear desperate screams from all parts of the world as we speak:

“Our land has turned into a site of mourning. We are left abandoned and alone; we are burning and about to perish!”

Which conscientious believer could remain silent in the face of these raging flames?



At a time when Egypt was in the grip of a severe drought, **Prophet Yusuf** ﷺ was asked:

“You are a governor in charge of the state’s treasury. Why do you endure hunger?” The noble prophet then replied:

“I am scared that if I was to eat, I would no longer be able to empathise with the hungry!”



Allah the Almighty has entrusted believers to each other’s care. To become a beloved servant of Allah ﷻ, it is necessary to run to the help of Muslims in times of need, share their pain, try to solve their problems, console them with comforting words. It is also essential that we prioritise fellow Muslims, and say “**other Muslims first**” instead of “**me first**”.



Showing mercy and compassion to creation for the sake of the Creator is a means of gaining the Almighty’s pleasure. In contrast, remaining carefree to the cries of the needy draws His wrath.



Shaykh Sadi said:

“Do not ever turn a needy person back from your door empty-handed. Allah forbid, perhaps you may fall in need one day and go knocking door to door!”

“Since you have no need to knock on any door today, show a little thanks by giving to the one who knocks on yours!”



The **Prophet** ﷺ said:

“The believers are to one another like firm buildings where each part supports the whole.” (Bukhari, Salat 88)



True friendship for the sake of Allah ﷻ is much like two people living inside one heart. The Almighty has entrusted believers to each other’s care, and wants them to become like two hands that wash one other.

-The weak are entrusted in the care of the strong,

-The poor in the care of the rich,

-The ill in the healthy,

-Those awaiting guidance in the care of believers who can guide.

-And every strong, wealthy and knowledgeable Muslim stands in need of the prayers of their poor brothers.



Our ancestors spread their wings over the needy in society by establishing trusts, especially for widows and orphans.

We need to remember that today’s orphans, widows, and oppressed are also entrusted in our care. Islam is entrusted in our care, and so are our homelands.

We are simply all placed in the care of each other!



Our **Prophet** ﷺ opened his eyes to the world as an orphan, and took personal care of the orphans among his *ummah*. His following statement shows just how unparalleled he was as an exemplar to mankind:

“I am closer to each believer than his own self. So, when any one of you dies and leaves behind assets, that belongs to his kin. But if he leaves a debt, it is mine to pay. And if he leaves behind orphans, they are mine to look after.” (Muslim, Juma, 43; Ibn Majah, Muqaddimah)



The youth on drugs left to the mercy of the streets, and the kids in orphanages are also our children.

These children are slowly but surely being pushed to the cesspools of society in front of our own eyes. They poison their lungs with the venom they inhale, and destroy their brains and the functions of their hearts. And with dulled nerves, they end up growing hostile to society, and become members of gangs.

How responsible do we really feel deep down in our consciences for not giving them a sense of religion, morals and virtue?



It is futile for the heedless to expect the Almighty's pleasure and grace without having any other worry than their personal comfort, and showing no care to advance Islam and help raise righteous generations; and simply shirking any kind of sacrifice in the way of Allah ﷻ. The words of the late **Necip Fazil**:

"A tree without concern for the fruit, is a log!" perfectly depicts the mindsets of such negligent people who squander their lives in this way.

What good could there be in a tree that has no care to grow fruit and to offer it out, other than being chopped down and thrown into the fire?



Shaykh Sadi said:

"The children of Adam are like the limbs of a single body. They are created from the same yeast, the same essence. If a limb was to one day suffer pain, the other limbs would also feel discomfort. If you do not share the pain and grief of others, you do not deserve to carry the name 'human.'"



After the *Hijra*, our **Prophet** ﷺ established a pact of brotherhood among the *Muhajirun* and *Ansar* never before seen in the history. Such that, the *Ansar*, in effect, made a financial disclosure and placed all their wealth out in the middle, willing to share equally with their *Muhajirun* brethren. In response, the *Muhajirun*, whose hearts were a treasure of contentment, responded to this virtue with an even greater one, where they had the maturity to say:

"May your wealth and possessions be blessed for you, brother. Just show me the way to the market, and that should do!" This, right there, is true brotherhood.



While our noble religion tells the underprivileged to "Abstain, and do not ask anything from anyone apart from Allah", it also orders people with means to, "Search and find the needy, and help them!"



It is easy to reach out to the poor who voice their needs. But we also have to find the needy whose high sense of modesty withholds them from speaking up and asking from people.



A believer must unravel the secret of the verse “**You will recognise them from their faces**” (Al-Baqarah, 2:273), and gain a foresight to also identify the poor who are too shy to voice their needs.

In a sense, a Muslim’s heart must become so sensitive that, just like a spiritual X-ray, it must see through the appearance of the needy and share his grief.



True lovers of our **Prophet** ﷺ are people of high spirit who cannot feel warm knowing that there are Muslims left out in the cold; and cannot sleep on a full stomach when their neighbours are hungry. Having converted their hearts into lodges of mercy, they writhe in the pain of their fellow brothers, as they look upon victims, sufferers, and orphans as entrusted in their care.



Rumi رumi said:

“Shams taught me one thing:

‘If there is someone who feels cold anywhere in the world, you Jalaladdin, have no right to keep warm.’ And knowing there are people feeling cold out there, I can no longer feel warm!”



Inside a true believer’s heart, the pleasure of feeding another surpasses the instinct of satisfying his own hunger. In other words, he cannot enjoy what he eats, knowing there is a hungry person nearby. He cannot find peace until he soothes the pain of the sufferer close at hand.



A believer is a person who lives to make the needy happy.



Rumi رumi said:

“Since you have lost your own sense of self, you no longer need to look for a balm for your own wound. You have instead become a balm for the wounds of others!” (Divan-i Kebir)



Without doubt, the peak example of this generosity is the **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ. Spoils and bounty would arrive at his house. But for days on end, there would neither be any food nor a burning stove inside. At times, for as long as three consecutive days, only bread was baked, but not nearly enough to feed anyone.

This is because, under all circumstances, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would say, “my *ummah* first”, and prefer needy Muslims over himself.



Wise people know that:

“The body is filled by eating, while the spirit by feeding others.”

Our **Prophet** ﷺ never thought about satisfying his own hunger before he fed the hungry. When companions tied a rock around their bellies from hunger, he tied two. And whenever he received anything worldly, -except for an outstanding debt- he never slept comfortably until he donated it all.

Being a remedy for troubled people effectively released him from his own troubles. Feeding the hungry gave him such spiritual joy that it made him forget about his own hunger.



Our **Prophet** ﷺ, sent as a mercy to the worlds, sought to conquer hearts. From a heart that was a lodge of mercy, he offered a cure and remedy for every trouble his nation faced.

And on this path, he endured severe hardships, being stoned, exposed to insults, he shed his own sweat and blood, and went nights on end without any sleep.



The Prophet’s heart of mercy always beat with:

✓ A desire to deliver people to eternal salvation; an enthusiasm to rescue one more person from eternal dismay.

✓ An effort to teach Muslims who had reached guidance but were yet to attain a depth of taqwa.

✓ A struggle to turn hostilities into friendships and construct indestructible bridges of love between hearts.

✓ A toil to prevent the tyrannies of oppressors, help victims and see justice firmly established.

✓ A perseverance to become a cure for every troubled person, and a responsibility to spread wings over the forlorn, ill and the poor among his *ummah*.

✓ A concern to become a source of help for the teary-eyed victims, unsheltered widows, unprotected orphans and those whose wings had been broken under the weight of trouble and pain.



How many of these qualities of our **Prophet** ﷺ, whose heart quivered with mercy and compassion for his nation's comfort and salvation, do we have? Are we able to rescue ourselves from selfishness to share the pain of the *ummah*?

After all, the clearest sign of our love for the **Prophet** ﷺ is the mercy and compassion we feel for the members of his nation.



Many Muslim countries today have become lands of sorrow and mourning. Thousands of Muslims are being killed, while hundreds of thousands of others are driven from their homelands, hungry and without help. This is a trial for both them and us. For them, it is a trial of patience and endurance, while for us, it is a test of loyalty towards our fellow Muslims.



Shaykh Sadi said:

"Friends are needed in hard times. That is when true friendship shows. Otherwise, even enemies appear as friends over dinner."



Muslims are entrusted to each other's care. Regarding his brother, no believer can possibly say, "What is it to me?" Every financial and spiritual trouble of his brother, is also his own. His brother's hunger is his hunger. His lack of taqwa is also his worry.

Allah informs that on judgment day, two believers who love one another for the sake of Allah, will be shielded under the shade of the Throne, at a time when there will be no other shade. (See, Bukhari, Adhan, 36)

Yet, this brotherhood must not be confused with the kind of friendship in good times over tea and coffee. This is the kind of brotherhood that dispels each other's financial and spiritual problems in times of distress.



Among the most precious of all righteous deeds is for believers to love one another without any worldly expectations, and to volunteer to share each other's grief in tough times as much as they share their joy in good times. This is especially vital today, when the Muslim world endures times of hardship.



Christian missionaries are expending all their energy in regions where Muslims are left weak and abandoned. They offer scholarships to university students, on the condition that they conduct missionary activities in Africa. In so doing, they try to tear our own people, our own brothers, away from us.

Today, many cries for help echo from various parts of the world. One of these we personally heard was:

“You are the grandchildren of the Ottoman Sultan, Mehmet the Conqueror and Abdulhamid II. What took you so long? Why did you not come until now? But thankfully, you did! Please, do not ever forget about us again!”



There are many places in mourning, both around us and in various regions of the Islamic world. Many Muslims are hungry, helpless, victimised and abandoned. If we really desire the Almighty’s pleasure, mercy and closeness, we must ask ourselves:

“How much are our hearts bothered by the problems of our fellow Muslim brothers and sisters? Out of all the means entrusted upon us, how much do we spend on ourselves, and how much on the poor, needy and deprived?”



The Almighty warns:

“Then you will be asked that Day about the pleasures you enjoyed.” (Al-Takathur, 102:8)

Living in a country such as Turkey or other peaceful countries is also a great blessing. Yet, this blessing also saddles us with many responsibilities. One of the duties demanded by this blessing is to heal the open wounds of our Muslim brothers suffering worldwide, share their pain and run to their sides with our financial and spiritual support.



Across our glorious history, our ancestors gave a wonderful expression to the Islamic manner of “looking upon creation with the merciful gaze of the Creator”.

Ottoman Admiral Hayreddin Pasha shipped the persecuted Jews of Spain to Istanbul. And the residents of Istanbul showed them care and help, thinking, “These people, after all, are victims of persecution.”

We must consider that we are the grandchildren of people who, under the principle of showing mercy to creation for the sake of the Creator, caringly opened their doors to Jews seeking refuge, and shared their bread with them.



With this in mind, protecting our Syrian brothers and sisters who have sought asylum in our homeland, is also both a duty of religion and debt of humanity.



We need to think that we, today, could have been in the place of our Syrian brothers and sisters arriving from the land of brutality and mass murder, while they could have been living in this comparatively heavenly country. If we were to seek refuge at their door, what kind of a reception would we expect, and what would we think of the treatment we saw?



Much like how the *Muhajirun* of Mecca were entrusted with the *Ansar* of Medina in the past, the *Muhajirun* of Syria today are assigned to the care of the *Ansar* of Anatolia. It is our duty to take care of their physical and spiritual needs, and more importantly, make them feel that they are not alone.



The Qur'an states:

“If someone kills a person – unless it is in retaliation for someone else or for causing corruption on the earth – it is as if he had murdered all mankind. And if anyone saves another person’s life, it is as if he had given life to all mankind.” (Al-Maidah, 5:32)

Someone who kills an innocent person takes away his right to live, violates the sanctity of blood and the purity of souls, and also emboldens others to do the same. He thereby commits a sin of the greatest kind. In this sense, a murderer of one is the murderer of all, and rightfully deserves Allah’s ﷻ wrath.

Whoever saves a person’s life and prolongs it by forgiving, preventing him from being killed for no reason or by rescuing him from a life-threatening situation, attracts the pleasure of Allah so much that he is regarded as having rescued the entire mankind. From this perspective, it is necessary to thoroughly appreciate the value of the financial and spiritual help given today to Syrian refugees.



Our Prophet ﷺ said:

“Jibril advised me to be good to the neighbour so many times that I almost thought neighbours would inherit.” (Bukhari, Adab, 28; Muslim, Birr, 140-141)

As result of an increase in the modes of transport and communication, the world has virtually shrunk, and the far has become near. Even if they are on the other side of the world, we have effectively become neighbours with every Muslim we can reach. It

is vital that we are aware of the opportunities and responsibilities that come with these new conditions.



Abdullah Ibn Mubarak ﷺ had completed his pilgrimage; and as he waited near the Kaaba in a state of spiritual awakening (*yaqazha*), two angels arrived. One said to the other:

“This year, 600,000 people made *haji*. Yet, all of their pilgrimage was accepted only for the sake of the righteous deed of a shoe repairer in Damascus by the name of **Ali Ibn Muwaffaq**, who could not make it to *haji* despite intending to do so.”

Curious, Abdullah Ibn Mubarak ﷺ caught the first caravan to Damascus. After seeking out and finding the man, he asked:

“What deed did you do despite not going to *haji*?”

Ali Ibn Muwaffaq explained:

“I have wanted to make pilgrimage for 30 years. I saved up 300 dirhams from repairing shoes. And then I made an intention. But my pregnant wife said:

“I can smell meat from our neighbour’s house. Can you please go and ask for a piece for me?” So, I went to my neighbour and explained the situation. But he began to cry and said:

“My children had not eaten anything for seven days. I found a dead animal on the side of the road. I cut off a piece of it, and I have now just boiled it to console the children. Unless I find something *halal*, I will have nothing else to feed them. I can give you some if you like; but the boiling meat is *halal* for my children since they have now come face-to-face with death. But since you have no such necessity, it is *haram* for you.”

Upon hearing this, I felt as though piece of me had just been torn out. I gave him the 300 dirhams I had saved up through so much trouble, and prayed:

“My Allah! Please accept my intention for *haji*!”



A *hadith* says:

“A *person is not a believer if he sleeps on a full stomach while his neighbour is hungry.*” (Hakim, II, 15)

We must frequently reassess our duties towards our neighbours, the Syrian refugees, in light of this warning by the **Prophet** ﷺ.

Beginning with those closest to us, we must feel the pain of our brothers suffering worldwide from Syria, Palestine and Africa to Myanmar and East Turkestan, deep inside our hearts.

As believers, we must profoundly assess how much we are able to think of others compared to ourselves!



Abu'l-Hasan Kharraqani  gives beautiful voice to the altruism he feels towards Muslims:

“From Turkestan to Damascus, a thorn that pricks someone’s finger has pricked mine; a stone that hit someone’s foot has hit mine. And if there is a heart in sorrow, that heart is mine.”



Stingy and heedless people remain deaf to the cries of:

“Have pity on us! Mercy, where are you?” that come from around them. And they console themselves with a number of excuses they manufacture in their thoughts, and say:

“Someone else is probably helping them anyway!”

Yet, people with a depth of faith hear the cries of a Muslim even if he is on the other side of the world. If he is cold, they cannot warm up; and they cannot rejoice, when he is sad.



Scholars of Islam unanimously agree that Muslims who hold back from helping their oppressed enslaved or subjugated brothers in any part of the world despite having the means, incur a sin.

The tragic states today of our brothers in Syria, Gaza, Myanmar, East Turkestan and elsewhere are scenes of a divine trial that should force us to reflect on our consciences.



A *hadith qudsi* says:

“On the day of judgment, the Mighty and Majestic Allah will proclaim:

‘Children of Adam! I fell ill but you did not visit Me!’

The servant will say:

‘Allah! How could I have visited You when You are the Lord of all the worlds?’

The Almighty will then say:

*‘My servant so-and-so fell ill, but you did not visit him. Did you not know that had you visited him, you would have found **Me by his side?**’* (Muslim, Birr, 43)

In light of this *hadith qudsi*, let us now share the grief of both those who have sought refuge in our country, as well as Muslims suffering worldwide. Let us make prayers for them. After all, being a brother of religion is both a divine trial and an eternal responsibility.



Being uncaring to the pain of a Muslim brother is a heavy sin. **Sari As-Saqati** ﷺ had, in fact, lapsed for a brief moment to experience this mistake. He later explained his deep remorse:

“One day, the Baghdad market burnt down. Someone came running to me and said:

‘Every single shop is destroyed except for yours. Congratulations!’

Without thinking of my fellow brothers whose shops had burnt to ashes, I replied, on behalf of myself:

‘*Alhamdulillah!*’

And for the last 30 years, I have been repenting for that moment’s lapse.” (Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Tarikh*, IX, 188; Dhahabi, *Siyar*, XII, 185, 186)

Repenting for an entire 30 years for failing to empathise with the pain of his stricken brothers just for a moment... What a magnificent example of brotherhood!



Today’s Muslim world resembles a scene of fire, as it undergoes a turbulent period reminiscent of those tough times. The Prophet’s ﷺ nation is encircled in a ring of fire without protection, much like the innocent monotheists who were thrown alive into ditches of flames by the people of *Ukhdu*.

Let us inspect our consciences:

-How much do we worry for the *ummah*, especially in response to the murders being committed in Syria?

-Are we lending our ears and hearts to the cries of our innocent brothers, whose sounds reach the Almighty’s Throne?

-How many prayers do we make for them?



Our **Prophet** ﷺ said:

“A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim. He neither oppresses him nor surrenders him to the enemy. He who takes care of a brother’s need will have his own need taken care of by Allah. He who removes one worry from a brother will have Allah remove one of his worries on the day of judgment.” (Bukhari, Mazalim, 3; Muslim, Birr, 58)



Our **Prophet** ﷺ also said:

“Allah helps out a servant, so long as the servant helps out his brother.” (Muslim, Dhikr, 37-38)



A disciple and assistant of **Shaykh Dawud At-Tai** رحمه الله one day said to him:

“I have cooked some meat. Please, have some!” His master kept silent, but he went ahead and brought the meat. But Dawud At-Tai رحمه الله just stared at the meat in front of him, and asked:

“Any news of the so-and-so orphans, son?”

“They are much the same, master”, replied the disciple.

“Then you should take the meat to them”, he said.

But wanting his master to have the food he had personally prepared, the disciple insisted:

“Sir, you have not had meat in a very long time...” Yet, Dawud At-Tai رحمه الله remained adamant, and said:

“Son, if I eat this meat, it will soon leave my body. But if those orphans eat it, it will rise to the Almighty’s Throne to remain there forever!”

Today, so many oppressed, poor, anguished and hungry people await across many regions of the world that the donations we send them may perhaps become our most beautiful and eternal presents raised to the Almighty’s Throne.



Starting with our Syrian refugee brothers, spreading our wings over the poor, needy and tormented people of our society, and shielding them with compassion and courtesy, will hopefully also deliver our country to Allah’s help, mercy and protection, through the abundance of their prayers.

The **Prophet** ﷺ has, in fact, said:

“Protect and keep an eye on the poor. Do not ever doubt that you are aided and nourished by Allah only for the sake of the weak amongst you.” (Abu Dawud, Jihad, 70/2594; Ahmad, V, 198)

“Allah helps this ummah from the prayers, worship and sincerity of the weak among it.” (Nasai, Jihad, 43)



A believer sees himself responsible for the calamities of his time, and shares the grief of Muslims. A believer therefore physically helps to the best of his ability, in hope of offering a cure for the troubles of Muslims. He simply rushes to help with his heart, soul and financial means. If he has no power to do these, he then tries to help them with his speech; that is to say, he encourages those who can, to help. If he is unable to do even this, he still seeks to be by the side of the troubled, by sending them prayers from the bottom of his heart.



A *hadith* states:

“No prayer is accepted more than a prayer a believer makes for another in his absence.” (Tirmidhi, Birr, 50)



Thinking about suffering Muslims and asking, “What can I do for them?” is a duty of conscience for us all. Even if we cannot do anything, mercy demands that we still plead for them at dawn, just as we plead for a solution to our own problems.



We must pray a lot for the salvation of the *ummah*. One *hadith*, in fact, states:

“In the sight of Allah, there is no sweeter prayer than:

اللَّهُمَّ ارْحَمْ أُمَّةَ مُحَمَّدٍ رَحْمَةً عَامَةً

‘My Allah! Grant the nation of Muhammed an all-inclusive mercy!’” (Ali al-Muttaqi, no: 3212, 3702)



Saint **Maruf Karkhi** رضي الله عنه said:

“If a person says these ten times a day:

اللَّهُمَّ أَصْلِحْ أُمَّةَ مُحَمَّدٍ

اللَّهُمَّ فَرِّجْ عَنْ أُمَّةِ مُحَمَّدٍ

اللَّهُمَّ ارْحَمْ أُمَّةَ مُحَمَّدٍ

'My Allah, improve the condition of the nation of Muhammed!

My Allah, relieve the distress of the nation of Muhammed!

My Allah, have mercy on the nation of Muhammed!, he will be registered among the friends of Allah." (Abu Nuaym, Hilyah, VIII, 366)



Abu Bakr  said:

"Four people are beloved servants of Allah:

- 1. One who rejoices upon seeing someone repent.*
- 2. One who pleads the Almighty for sinners to be forgiven.*
- 3. One who helps and serves someone needier than him.*
- 4. One who prays for his brother in his absence."*



While witnessing the scenes of sorrow on televisions, newspapers and social media, we perhaps feel sad and pray that "Allah help them". But how much do we flutter with a heartfelt concern and genuinely ask, "What can I possibly do to help alleviate the pain of my Muslim brother?" which really is the true manifestation of mercy.



Doing justice to Muslim brotherhood depends on the sacrifices made in tough times. The prayers, donations and sacrifices we make for the victims and sufferers among the nation of Muhammed  will -Allah willing- become the most beautiful expressions of our thanks and appreciation for the Almighty, and of our loyalty, love and devotion to our **Prophet** .



PREFERRING THE AFTERLIFE

We live in an age when worldly means have peaked. Yet, spirits have plummeted, and hearts are malnourished! And this spiritual malnourishment has sent mankind into a dark depression!

Yet, when we look at the Prophet's ﷺ time, we see no cases of depression, despite the lack of worldly means. This is simply because they had grasped the true meaning of peace and happiness, and had come to realise that the real life awaits in the next.

In stark contrast to the desire of the humanity at present to live longer and more comfortably, the greatest desire of the generation of companions was to progress to the hereafter with a pure heart and conscience.

In both success and deprivation, joy and sadness, our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ would always pray:

اللَّهُمَّ لَا عَيْشَ إِلَّا عَيْشُ الْآخِرَةِ

“O Allah! There is no true life but the afterlife.”²³

He would thereby caution his *ummah* against falling into despair and rebellion in hard times, and into neglect and complacency in times of ease. He would remind them that the both the pleasure and pain of the world are fleeting, and advise against being fooled by either.



The principle of preferring the hereafter over this life was always there in the **Prophet's** ﷺ awareness. Accordingly:

“The real worry is the concern of the afterlife.”

23. Bukhari, Riqaq, 1.

“The real joy is the salvation of the afterlife.”

His standards of sadness and joy had also become the sole measure for his companions. They had already experience losing the **Prophet** ﷺ in this life. And their greatest worry was to lose the pleasure of being with him in the hereafter.

What about our hearts: to what are they aligned? What makes us feel happy or sad? Are our joys and sorrows more for our eternal lives or mortal interests?



Under the guidance of the **Prophet** ﷺ, the exemplary generation of the companions acquired such a state of being that those worldly interests lost all significance. For this reason, they never complained about any trouble in this life.

Their entire concerns revolved around the afterlife, as they mulled over questions such as, “I wonder if Allah ﷻ is pleased with me; and if I will be able to by the Prophet’s ﷺ side in the life that awaits me.”



We live in an age when worldly means have peaked. Yet, spirits have plummeted, and hearts are malnourished. And this spiritual malnourishment has sent humankind into a dark depression. Yet, when we look at the Prophet’s ﷺ time, we see no cases of depression, despite the lack of worldly means. This is simply because they had grasped the true meaning of peace and happiness, and had come to realise that the real life awaits in the next.



In stark contrast to the desire of the humanity at present to live longer and more comfortably, the greatest desire of the generation of companions was to progress to the hereafter with a pure heart and conscience.



The distinguished companion **Abdullah Ibn Masud** ﷺ one day told his friends from the *tabiun* generation:

“You offer more extra fasts and prayers than the Prophet’s ﷺ companions, and make an effort to do righteous deeds. But they were better than you.”

When they asked, “How can that be?”, he replied:

“For they abstained from the world more than you, and were keener for the hereafter.” (Hakim, *Mustadrak*, 4/135)



The warning by **Abu’d-Darda** ﷺ is evocative:

“I fear that by becoming engrossed in the things that entertain people, you will give in to a secret lust. This lust emerges when you fill your stomachs to the brim, even though you are starved of knowledge and wisdom.

The best of you is he who advises his friend:

‘Come; let us fast before we die.’

And the worst of you is he who tells his friend:

‘Come; let us eat, drink and have fun before we die.’” (Abu Nuaym, *Hilya*, I, 218)



Our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ, the companions and the saints who followed their trail were conscious that the true life is the afterlife, and thereby reserved their entire energy to the path of Allah ﷻ, without throwing even a glimpse of interest at this fleeting world.

This being the case, instead of taking their example, how sad a deceit it is to live in a delusion of a life without an afterlife under the assumption that death will never arrive, and settling in this guesthouse of earth with the attitude of an immortal.



Even the greatest pleasures and tastes of this world are a mere “nothing”, compared to the smallest blessing of paradise.

Even the greatest troubles and hardships of this world are a mere “nothing”, compared to a moment’s punishment in hell.



Uthman رضي الله عنه said:

“Without doubt, the world is mortal, while the hereafter is eternal. Do not allow what is mortal to spoil you, cause you to transgress and detract you from what is eternal!”

“Prefer the immortal over the mortal. The world has an end, and the return is to Allah. So, fear Allah.”



A man of wisdom has said it wonderfully:

“Even if the world was made of gold yet was mortal, while the hereafter was made of mud and yet immortal, an intelligent person would still choose the immortal over the mortal.

But what if the opposite is the case: the world was of mud and mortal, while the hereafter of gold and was immortal. What should we do then?”



Umar رضي الله عنه said:

“What is the world compared to the afterlife, anyway? It is only like a rabbit that hops just once.”



How much of our days do we spend on securing our comforts in the guesthouse of earth? And in contrast, how many hours of our day are we able to spare to prepare for the afterlife where we will live forever?

We need to remember that in the hereafter, no one will worry about whether they lived long on earth or short. Everyone will be worried about whether their lifespans were filled with good or evil.



During the age of ignorance, the first pagan objection against Islam had to do with belief in the afterlife. They even said:

“Muhammad! Stop from telling us news of the hereafter! And keep your hands off our idols! Only then will we follow you...”

What unsettled the pagans the most was the news that they would be resurrected and taken to task for their actions.

A modern wave of ignorance dominates the world today. Some programmes, fashions and deceptive advertisements, especially on television and the internet, plague the hearts and minds and erase any thought of the hereafter.

As the biggest representatives of today’s age of ignorance, global powers dash from one tyranny to another, spurred on by a dream a life without an afterlife. Without any scruple for divine judgment, the powerful mercilessly crush the weak, leaving behind a most terrible scene of brutality in their wake. This is because the further man retreats from divine truths, the more he bids farewell to humanity. Moreover, when he turns his back on training under divine revelation, he turns into a “wild” and “ignorant” creature sapped of conscience, and begins to compete with hyenas in cruelty.



The duty of man is to never forget Allah ﷻ, the afterlife and his own mortality. Otherwise, his heart turns into a junkyard for the fleeting ambitions of his ego.



This mortal life drifts by like a summer cloud. And living it without any concern for the hereafter is as great a deception as assuming that this day will not be followed by night.



This fleeting world is a drop, while the hereafter is a shoreless ocean. Sacrificing a drop for an ocean, and fooling around on earth like permanent residents unmindful of the journey to eternity that lies ahead, is cause for terrible dismay.

The late **Necip Fazil** encapsulates a life wasted in neglect as:

*For thirty years, my watch ticked while I stopped,
It turns out I flew a kite without seeing the skies*



Forgetting about the eternal life and struggling with so much stress and greed just to bring a little more comfort to a life that will sooner or later end with the and instead of building an eternity upon this life, turning it into fodder for a painful punishment is indeed an epic failure.



Rumi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ said:

“You pitiable soul, who throws away his gem of faith for bread, and sells a treasure for a grain of barley! Do not forget that Nimrod did not give his heart to Ibrahim, but ended up surrendering his life to a mosquito...”



Umar رضی اللہ عنہ said:

“The most ignorant of all people is he who sells his afterlife for someone else’s world.”



A person who trades in the mortal for the immortal, is intelligent. A person lured by the world to sell his hereafter, is a fool.



Prophet Isa علیہ السلام was one day seen fleeing frenetically. When asked as to who he was fleeing, he said:

“From the fool!” He was then asked:

“Are you not the Messiah whose breath cures the blind and the deaf, and whose prayer revives the dead? Why do you flee when you can do anything you want?” Isa علیہ السلام then explained:

“I recited the *Ism-i Azam* prayer upon the deaf and the blind, and they were healed. I read it upon a corpse, and it reawakened. I read it to a poor person, and he became wealthy. But even though I recited that prayer to the heart of a fool a thousand times, it was to no avail. I then realised that stupidity is an illness from divine wrath!”



Wise people say:

“Three people can never become friends to Allah ﷻ: the conceited, the stingy and the fool.”

Conceit is the illness of showing oneself off. This drags a person to extravagance; and extravagance is merely an attempt to suppress an inferiority complex.

Stinginess is to hoard wealth exclusively for personal use. It is to become generous towards one’s own self, while being miserly towards others.

Stupidity is the cancer of spiritual life. It is for a person to block his eyes with his own two fingers, and turn blind to divine truths.



A stupid person witnesses countless funerals, and reads the gravestones of numerous people who died a lot younger than him. Yet, never for once does he consider that he will also die one day, that he is bound for the grave and the eternal hereafter. He wishes to live a life on earth without an afterlife. Because the eye of his heart is veiled, he confuses his misery for joy.



Rumi ﷺ said:

“The human gains value from what he seeks.”

“If a donkey was to become a customer, he would certainly purchase raw melon.”



The world is a bazaar where the hereafter is bought and this bazaar is a place of trial. It is adorned with an appeal that could make man forget about the reason why he is there. Therefore, a servant must never block out the thought that the real life is the afterlife, and overlook what he must seek in this market of earth.



Abu Bakr ﷺ said:

“The world is a believer’s market, the days and nights his capital, righteous deeds his commodities, the paradise his profit and hell his loss.”



We have come into this world to win the test of the afterlife. Ignoring this and losing our hearts to worldly ambitions to become drowned in the fleeting dazzles, and wasting our time in whimsical desires, is a sad deception.



Let us never forget that what will help us during our final breath, on judgment day, upon the bridge of Sirat and our eternal lives are not the whimsical desires, but the love to become servants to Allah ﷻ and strive on the path to His pleasure.



The human being is predisposed to rebel against mortality and long for immortality. And the pleasure of longing itself ultimately triumphs over the reunion.

In other words, once reunion is achieved, mortal longings lose their importance. This is because mortal pleasures fade away and do not continue. Material wealth, titles and insignias only give the soul passing joys and pleasures of the flesh. Yet, they do not provide lasting peace inside the heart and a comfort of conscience.

Everlasting joy, on the other hand, will find only those who pass to the next life with faith, at the eternal abode.



It is contrary to the spirit of faith to miss out on eternal opportunities while looking to seize fleeting profits.



At times, people become enslaved by the concern for their livelihood or even egotistic ambitions and desires such as wealth, lust and fame, and end up neglecting their servantly duties and forgetting the very reason they have been created.

The truth is that we are guests in this hostel of earth for a limited time. Mucking around in this guesthouse as if we are here to stay and doggedly pursuing the affairs of this world while distancing ourselves from dhikr, prayers and other duties and delaying repentance to a tomorrow that may never come, is the cause of a great loss.



As for the wrongdoers who are taken down by the winds of death, neither will the world left behind mourn for them, nor will the afterlife greet them with a smile.



Uthman ﷺ says:

“Concern for the world is darkness upon the heart. Concern for the hereafter, on the other hand, is light upon the heart.”



The inner struggle between our desire for the life of this world and leaning towards the hereafter will continue until the final breath. While seeking our shares in this life, we must turn our hearts to the afterlife, so that they are not dominated by a lust for the world.



The Qur'an declares:

“If anyone desires to cultivate the Next World, We will increase him in his cultivation. If anyone desires to cultivate this world, We will give him some of it but he will have no share in the Next World.” (Al-Shura, 42:20)



Luqman the Wise عليه السلام said:

“Sacrifice your world for the hereafter, and you will gain both. Sacrifice your hereafter for the world, and you will lose both.”



Yusuf Khas Hajib has said:

“The wealth of the world harbours an animosity towards religion. Many a person who has acquired wealth has neglected the religion. Beware not to become one of them!”



The elders have said:

“The lover of religion never gave up the world. But the lovers of the world enslaved by their egos have deserted the religion.”



The minds of people defeated by their egos are obsessed with salaries. This is a mind that is only capable of thinking about worldly interests.

The minds of people matured under spiritual training and who are therefore able to overcome the obstacles of the ego, are focused on “eternity”. This is a true mind that is profoundly conscious of the fact that the real life is the afterlife.

A hadith describes such people:

“An intelligent person curbs his ego, takes it to task and works for the life after death, while the fool expects grace from Allah, even though he has placed his soul in the service of his whims.” (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 25/2459)



Ali عليه السلام said:

“He who desires the afterlife rushes to do good. He who fears the fire abstains from lust. The pleasures of the flesh die for someone who believes in death. Troubles become visible to he who knows the world.”



There can be no greater deceit than squandering our true future, the afterlife with personal ambitions and worldly aspirations.

People too busy chasing the world to remember Allah ﷻ will be the ones forgotten in the afterlife when divine mercy is handed out.



Ali ﷺ said:

“A person does not perfect his faith unless he trusts what Allah has more than what he has in his own hands.”



The understanding of people deceived by this life and neglectful of the next is no different to that of a toddler who assumes the onion in his hand is the most delicious food in the world, as he is yet to be exposed to any other flavours.



Even if he has lived a lavish life full of pleasures, a person unable to transition into the eternal life with faith and good deeds is bankrupt and a pathetic beggar on the day of rising.

In contrast, even if a person owned nothing of the world and lived out his days like a slave but with a strong faith adorned by righteous deeds, it means he would still be among the sultans of the afterlife who, in reality, owns everything.



Deficits in life are only for a short period of time. On the other hand, a deficit in one's faith is cause for eternal deprivation; and this is the only real trouble that truly merits pity.

So, how much do we feel delight over a worldly blessing? And in comparison, how much do we rejoice over the blessing of faith that will deliver us to eternal bliss?



Rumi ﷺ said:

“Man! The world echoes two opposite sounds. Which one of these are your ears more prone to absorb?”

One of these sounds is the state of those who get closer to Allah, while the other one is of those deceived.

Once you accept one sound, you will not even be able to hear the other! A lover turns blind and deaf to anything that is at odds with his love.”



The duty of a believer is to avoid becoming tricked by the worldly appeals, and to use his life, wealth and every means to purchase the hereafter. He must desist selling his hereafter, even if he is given the entire world. A believer is prudent and far-sighted, and seeks, not momentary pleasures and desires, but eternity.



Ali  said:

“Paradise is the only true value and price for your lives. So, sell your lives only in return for paradise!”



We have not come into this life of trial just to earn things worldly, but to also secure our afterlives. When faced with a choice between this world and the next, the arrow of our hearts must therefore always point to the latter.



The first condition of happiness is to become a servant of Allah . The heedless who are remote from the Almighty, understand happiness as “living life to the full” without any religious limits, but for faithful hearts, this is poverty and a sad deception.



In the afterlife, we will all get the returns of our actions on earth. Whatever we sow in this life, we will reap in the next.

In this regard, the only way to turn this life into a garden of paradise in the next is to understand that the real life is the afterlife, and that the world is nothing but a cultivation for the hereafter.



Man is not created for this world, he is like a passenger on this fleeting earth; so, let us not settle here with the mindset of natives.



Uthman  said:

“A true believer is gripped by six kinds of fear:

1. A fear that his faith may be taken away by Allah.
2. A fear that angels may record the deeds that, on judgment day, will put him to shame.
3. A fear that his deeds may be annulled by his listening to the devil.
4. A fear that he may be caught by the Angel of Death suddenly, in a moment of neglect.

5. A fear that he may spend too much time with his family, and not sufficiently engage in remembering and worshipping Allah the Almighty.

6. A fear that he may be fooled by the world and neglect the afterlife.”



This life is but a short episode. In this short life our most important duty is to:

-Become brothers who love each other for the sake of Allah ﷻ,

-Become good-natured Muslims amicable towards others,

-Conquer hearts to receive their prayers,

-Be a burden on no one and a helper of everyone,

-And thereby be able to reach the divine presence having received a certificate of good-standing from believers who are witnesses to Allah ﷻ on earth.



Wise people say:

“-Work for the world as much as your limited time in it!

-Work for the afterlife as much as your stay in it!

-Obey Allah the Almighty as much as you need Him!

-Sin as much as you can endure hell!”



Our Lord, the most Merciful of the merciful!

Protect us from the ends of those who dive into this world and drown themselves in a glass of water! Adorn and honour our lives and deaths with the peace and salvation of Your reunion with which You favour your righteous servants!

Amin!



THE JOURNEY TO ETERNITY

The best answer to the question, "What is life?" is hidden in the musty stones of graveyards. Every gravestone enshrouded in the silence of death, is a fiery counsellor that speaks in the language of silence. Taking a lesson from the silent messages of the gravestones is a means of enormous bliss in a tomorrow that shall never end.



Are not all mortal transactions, passing pleasures and the seemingly never-ending whims and desires ultimately cancelled by the noblest piece of clothing in this market of life, the burial shroud?

The Sun and the Moon are two calendars circling the skies. Man regulates his entire life by these two calendars.

Yet, man also comes into this world with his own calendar. Our lives are a calendar of opportunities consisting of numbered days. Like a reel whose length is unspecified, we never know just when or where it will break. We must therefore always be prepared for the grave.



An invisible hand rips a page out of the calendars of our lives every day, and throws it into the wind of death. With every breath, we are taken further away from the world and one step closer to our graves.

We must therefore assess how the effort we show for this mortal world, which we will one day abandon, fares with the toil we make for our eternal lives.



In the afterlife, people who squander their life will ask for a second chance. Yet, life is a blessing given only once. This life has no repeat. If we were to fail worldly tests, we can always make amends. But the blessing of life neither comes with a repeat.

Moreover, each night, Allah the Almighty makes us taste sleep which is the brother of death. Each morning, He puts us through a rehearsal of resurrection as He makes us wake up. By turning over a brand-new page from our lives each morning, the Almighty also grants us yet another opportunity and more time.

This divine regulation should make us reflect on the terrible remorse people, who will want to return to earth, will feel in the hereafter, and motivate us to increase our efforts for eternity.



The mindset of **Hasan Al-Basri** رضي الله عنه recounted below, offers us a wonderful lesson in guidance:

Hasan Al-Basri رضي الله عنه attended a funeral and once the burial was complete, he asked the person next to him:

“Do you think that right now, this deceased person wants to return to the world to increase his right actions and dhikr, and repent more for his wrongs?”

The man replied:

“Of course, most certainly he does.” **Hasan Al-Basri** رضي الله عنه thereupon said:

“Then, why are we not doing the same?”



Every morning we wake up, we should start the day with this reflection:

“Allah has just turned over a new leaf for me from the calendar of life. There are many people who were alive just yesterday, but are no longer here today. And I have no way knowing whether I will make it to tomorrow.

What did the recording angels (kiraman katibin) record about me yesterday and post on my file for the hereafter? Will I be able to account for that specific page on the day of judgment? What actions must I make sure are recorded today on my book of deeds, which I will read on resurrection day?”



Here are a few pieces of advice from the wise as to how we should assess ourselves in everyday life:

- How did you open your book of life this morning?
- Did you thank Allah ﷻ for giving you another day?
- On this new day, did you renew your promise of servanthood to Allah ﷻ?

• Did you ever think that you could die today, be wrapped in a shroud and put inside the grave; and that your entire family and friends could place you there and leave you alone with just your faith and actions?



When man grabs hold of a precious commodity like gold, he stakes ownership over it to its last milligram. He does not waste even a speck of it. Both the buyer and the seller weigh it on the most delicate of all scales.

Time is an exceptionally precious blessing granted to man. Man appreciates its true value and has it recorded in his book of deeds as an eternal profit, only to the extent he makes use of it in line with Allah's ﷻ pleasure.



The most precious thing is time. You cannot loan out time, you cannot borrow it; nor can you turn it back, even if you were to offer an enormous sum. As the proverb says:

“Jades can be bought with time but time cannot be bought with jades.”



Are we really aware of the immense value held by each moment of our lives? The Almighty makes it clear:

“By the Late Afternoon, truly man is in loss – except for those who believe who do right actions and urge each other to the truth and urge each other to patience.”

(Al-Asr, 103:1-3)



Life is a timespan given only once. Once it leaves, it never returns. If man was to offer his entire wealth, he would still be unable to delay his predestined time of death even for one second. Wasting time is, therefore, the greatest waste!



The Qur'an states:

“On the Day they see it, it will be as if they had only lingered for the evening or the morning of a single day.” (Al-Naziat, 79:46)

We must think that even if the Almighty had granted us a lifespan of a thousand years, and we were born in the year 1000 CE and enjoyed a kingdom until 2000 CE, it still would have already been a few decades since we died.

So, however long we may live, compared to the true and eternal afterlife, this fleeting life on earth will always remain a snippet.



We must never keep mortality out of mind, and strive to be ready for death and beyond at any moment.

Even if we were to live as long as **Prophet Nuh** ﷺ, as wealthy as **Prophet Sulayman** ﷺ or as handsome as **Prophet Yusuf** ﷺ, we are at a loss unless we are conscious of our mortality.



Uthman ﷺ said:

“The biggest loss is that of a person who has wasted his life without preparing any provisions for the journey to the hereafter.”



The fact that the life in this world is a mere drop compared to the boundless ocean of the hereafter, contains a sublime truth that cannot be confined to the distance that runs from the cradle to the grave.

Death will inevitably find us all, and it will put an end to all passing pleasures, attractions and deceptive charms. After that point, it will be impossible to do anything for the eternal future, and regrets over the past will be futile.



The most valuable time is now, which stands between the past and the future. The files of the past have closed, while what the future holds is unknown.



Junayd Al-Baghdadi ﷺ said:

“A day in this life is better than a thousand days in the next. This is because a day on earth gives you the opportunity to earn divine pleasure through good deeds, unlike the afterlife, which no longer offers that chance. Over there, you only have judgment.”



Every moment of this life is so important in that it could become the seed of eternal joy or endless disaster. A believer must look upon his today as a treasure with which to prepare eternal provisions, and never delay any good deed to a tomorrow that may never come. The negligent, who delay doing good, have in fact been told, “Destroyed are those who say ‘I will do it tomorrow.’”



Death is not a rendezvous to which only elderly people are invited. Every creature that is born is a candidate for death. There is no set age to prepare for the afterlife.

A brief stroll in a cemetery and a gaze at the gravestones suffice to show that many people our age and even younger have offered their souls.

For that reason, delaying prayer, fasting and pilgrimage to pension age, and postponing repentance, good deeds and servanthood to an uncertain tomorrow, is stupidity. A day will ultimately come when there will be no tomorrow!



Uthman رضي الله عنه said:

“Do any good as soon as you can immediately before death comes crashing down on you.”



Umar رضي الله عنه has said:

“Do not delay today’s work to tomorrow! Once a work is delayed, it becomes hard to move forward.”



Today is the day, we have the opportunity to do both righteous deeds and reform ourselves through repentance. Let us remember that even if we are negligent of this chance, once the days of our lives expire, **Azrael** عليه السلام will not neglect his duty even for a second.



Uthman رضي الله عنه said:

“Son of Adam! Do not ever forget that the Angel of Death has been pursuing you since the day you were born. And meanwhile, he is skipping over your neck to seize that of another. This will be the case, so long as you are alive. But a day will come, when he will skip over the necks of others to grab yours. This may be at a time you least expect. So, always be ready for the final breath and try not be seized unawares, for the Angel of Death is never unaware of you...”

“Son of Adam! Know that if you are in neglect of your ego and fail to make any preparations for yourself, no one is going to prepare on your behalf. Never forget that one day, you will reach the presence of Allah; so, prepare your soul and provisions accordingly. Do not ever think of deferring this duty to anyone else!” (Ali al-Muttaqi, no: 42790)



With the last breath, the trial of servanthood will also end. Neither in the grave nor on the day of judgment nor on the plain of resurrection will we have any more opportunity to do good. And our lives there will depend on the report of eternity we receive in this school of life.

In the words of **Ali** رضي الله عنه:

“Today is the time to do good things, without facing judgment. As for tomorrow, there is judgment, without any opportunity to do good things.”



A hadith states:

“When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: an ongoing flowing charity (sadaqah jariyah), knowledge that benefits people, and a virtuous child who prays for him.” (Muslim, Wasiyyah, 14)



The Prophet ﷺ also said:

“Appreciate the value of five things before the arrival of five:

- Of youth before old age,
- Of health before sickness,
- Of wealth before poverty,
- Of free-time before the becoming busy,
- And of life before death!” (Bukhari, Riqaq, 3; Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 25)



It is narrated that **Elias** عليه السلام shuddered upon seeing **Azrael** عليه السلام, who then inquired:

“Prophet of Allah! Are you afraid of death?”

“No”, replied **Elias** عليه السلام. “I shudder not because I fear death, but because I am about to bid farewell to this life. I have spent my life in worship, righteous deeds and acting with good morals, trying to serve Allah the Almighty, promote good and hinder evil. These were my source of comfort, and filled my heart with joy and spiritual delight. I am now sad because once I die, I will be deprived of these pleasures and will be detained in the grave until judgment day!”



Amir Ibn Abd al-Qays رضي الله عنه of the tabiun generation had begun to cry as his death neared.

“Why do you cry?” he was asked. He replied:

“Neither over the fear of death nor over a desire for the world. I cry because, once I die, I will be deprived of fasting on hot days and waking up at night for worship.” (Dhahabi, Siyar, IV, 19)



Every believer must strive to reach a state that will please Allah the Almighty. Times spent in neglect without an intention, effort and enthusiasm for this purpose are leaves from the calendar of life thrown into the bin. All times spent without thought for Allah ﷻ are searing fires of remorse in the hereafter.



We must reflect:

-How much of our lives so far have we spent in ways that conform to Allah's ﷻ pleasure?

-Have we wasted time in front of the television or on the internet, in futile play and vain entertainment, in surplus shopping to feed our cravings for fashion and brands, and in extravagant, lavish ceremonies and activities that displease Allah ﷻ? If so, what are we doing to make amends?

-How much of our present moments are we able to convert to eternal profits by remembering Allah ﷻ; and by studying the Qur'an, offering good deeds and services, and making an effort in the Almighty's way?

-Among the countless worries that occupy our hearts, where do concerns for the final breath, the grave and the hereafter sit?



We must never forget that we have come into this world for the afterlife. We need to always think:

-To where are all these creatures headed in their journeys?

-With all these comings and goings, the births on the one hand, and deaths on the other. Why is there this constant flux?

-Why have we come into this world, on whose property do we live and where is our final destination?

-Are we ready for the questioning inside the grave and on the plain of resurrection? What have we prepared for our scales in the afterlife?



Every journey comes with certain hardships. A traveller, however, does enjoy some comfort along the way, provided he is prepared. Are we ready for the journey to eternity?

Remember that for a believer, an entire lifetime is merely a rehearsal to die as a Muslim.



This mortal life is preparation for an everlasting life. A believer must save up sincere worship, righteous deeds, selfless efforts, service and virtues that will intercede on his behalf, and which he will present to Allah the Almighty to help him cross the tough passages of the grave and the afterlife.



If we want the Almighty to come to our help during the most menacing passages of our journey to eternity, which are the final breaths, the grave, the divine scales and the Sirat bridge, we need to diligently abide by divine commandments starting from now, and try to become worthy of receiving the Almighty's aid.

We must especially remember Allah ﷻ in times of comfort, and fulfil our duties within the etiquette servanthood, so that Allah ﷻ does not deprive us from His help when we encounter trouble and hardship.



Death, the last bend on this road of life, is sharp. The ego and shaytan attack with greater vigour during the final breath to try to seduce a person away from the direction of servanthood. It is for this reason that the Almighty says:

“You who believe! have taqwa of Allah with a taqwa due to Him and do not die except as Muslims.” (Al-i Imran, 3:102)

Thus, being able to give our final breaths under the protection of faith should be our greatest wish from the Almighty.



When a person obtains a worldly diploma, it remains valid for the rest of his life. Yet, this is not the case in spirituality. Taqwa (fearful awareness of Allah) demands continuity. Without it -Allah forbid-, a person may die at an eternal loss. In other words, a spiritual state and rank always carries the risk of being lost at any given moment.

The Qur'an, in fact, informs us of the likes of Balam Ibn Baura and Korah who deviated from the straight path during their final moments.

It is therefore necessary to keep the heart awake until the last breath. The Almighty states:

“And worship your Lord until what is Certain (death) comes to you.” (Al-Hijr, 15:98)



For a believer, the most important diploma to be obtained in this fleeting life, is the diploma of faith during the final breath.



Sufyan Ath-Thawri ﷺ had become frail at a young age. To those who asked why, he would explain:

“I had a teacher from whom I acquired knowledge. As he was dying, try as I may, I could not get him to pronounce the kalima tawhid. Witnessing that made me frail.”



For an entire lifetime, we must prepare to give our final breaths in faith. It is a grave deception to assume that we will be saved merely by pronouncing the kalima tawhid without living the servantly life it demands. The Qur’an states:

“Do people imagine that they will be left to say, ‘We believe’ and will not be tested?” (Al-Ankabut, 29:2)

It is therefore imperative that we lead servantly lives adorned with worship and righteous deeds, as required by faith, until our last breath.



Our **Prophet** ﷺ would frequently make the below plea, and advise his ummah to do the same:

يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى دِينِكَ

“O turner of the hearts, fix my heart firmly upon your religion.” (Tirmidhi, Daawat, 89/3522; Ahmad, IV, 182, VI, 91)



Apart from prophets and the people they have informed, no person has any guarantee of giving his final breath in faith. Many people tend to forget this fact and ignorantly think, “On judgment day, I will seize the hand of so-and-so, and he will save me!” Yes, intercession is a fact. But only those whom Allah ﷻ wills can intercede. And who they are, is unknown.



When the ascetic companion **Uthman Ibn Ma’zun** ﷺ passed away, a woman exclaimed:

“Uthman! I bear witness that right now, Allah is treating you to gifts.”

Our **Blessed Prophet** ﷺ intervened and asked:

“How do you know that Allah is treating him?”

The woman replied, “I honestly do not”. The **Prophet** ﷺ then explained:

“Now, Uthman has died. I personally hope goodness from Allah on his behalf. But although I am a prophet, even I do not know how you or I will be treated.” (Bukhari, Tabir, 27)

What we need to do is send prayers for our dead and seek refuge in Allah’s ﷻ mercy.



Salman Al-Farsi ﷺ had become such an exemplary figure through his attitude and sacrifices in the way of Allah ﷻ that both the Ansar and Muhajirun claimed him as:

“One of our own!” They simply did not want to share him.

To both reconcile them and further praise **Salman** ﷺ, the **Prophet** ﷺ responded by saying:

“Salman is of us, from the Ahl al-Bayt.” (Hakim, III, 691/6541; Hayhtami, VI, 130)

But despite this enormous praise, the heart of that great companion still shuddered with the concern for the final breath and the hereafter, wavering between hope and fear.

Two people once greeted **Salman** ﷺ and asked:

“Are you a companion of the **Messenger of Allah** ﷺ?” to which he replied:

“I do not know.” The people then hesitated, thinking they had come to the wrong man. **Salman** ﷺ then added:

“I saw the **Messenger of Allah** ﷺ and attended his circle. But the true companion of the Messenger of Allah is he who can enter paradise with him.” (Haythami, VIII, 40-41; Dhahabi, Siyar, I, 549)



Ali ﷺ says:

“A person reaches the blessing in its entirety only by dying as a Muslim.”



We cannot show thanks enough as we have come into this world with the blessing of Islam through the manifestation of the divine name “Al-Hadi” (The Guider). But as to whether we will die with this blessing intact, there is no guarantee.

This fleeting life is the only capital we have to save our afterlives. One of the most important prayers we must therefore make is to wish to die a beautiful death.



We must always confess our weakness and seek refuge in Allah's ﷻ mercy with Yusuf's ﷺ prayer:

“Make me die a Muslim and join me with the righteous!” (Yusuf, 12:101)



Ubaydullah Ibn Ahrar ﷺ narrates that a noble man saw **Bahauddin Naqshiband** ﷺ in his dream, shortly after he passed away. He asked:

“What should we do for eternal salvation?” The Shaykh replied:

“Be busy with whatever you will need during your final breath!”



Every single breath we take on earth is a compass for our last breath. They are also interpreters of our conditions in the hereafter.

A hadith, in fact, states:

“A person dies on what he lives, and is raised up on what he died.” (Munawi, Fayd al-Qadir Sharh al-Jami al-Saghir, V, 663)



Life is like drops that fill a glass. The purity of the water depends on the purity of the drops. And the final breath is like the last drop that spills out of the glass.



Bahlul Dana ﷺ would reflect on his own end by gazing at the wall of a derelict building that was bent and on the verge of collapse. One day, while staring at it once again, the wall suddenly gave way. **Bahlul Dana** ﷺ was overcome with delight and ecstasy. Unable to make sense of it, the people around him asked why. He said:

“The wall collapsed in the direction it was tilted.”

“What is there to be happy about?” they asked. He then offered them these words of wisdom:

“Since everything in life collapses in the direction it tilts, and I tilt towards the way of the Truth, then I, too will reach the Truth when I die. So, people! Let us tilt more and more towards the Truth when we bow and prostrate, so we do not collapse in other directions!”



Saints gaze at the world from the window of the afterlife. Even if they were told, “You will die tomorrow”, they would feel no need to alter their daily programmes. They live a quality of life conscious of the final breath and in a way that allows them to say, “Welcome” to the Angel of Death.



People who shed tears in life out of concern for the hereafter, will be smiling during the final breath, inside the grave and on judgment day.

Necip Fazil depicts the last breaths of right acting servants:

At that moment, curtains are raised and curtains come down
And the skill lies in greeting Azrael with a welcome



A believer must gaze at the stamps of mortality embroidered upon every inch of life and the universe. He must live with the worry that the gift of life can be taken away at any moment. He must be ready. And in so doing, he must use taqwa to make his death beautiful.



Death will appear to each person according to the spiritual level of the life he lived. For a believer, it is a peaceful festival morning, whereas for a disbeliever, it is a journey to torment riddled with nightmares.



Abu Hazim رضي الله عنه said:

“The departure of an obedient servant to Allah is like that of a person who reunites with his separated family, waiting for him with excitement. The departure of a rebellious person to Allah, on the other hand, is like that of a runaway slave who is caught and returned to his master.”



Death is like a mirror through which each person will gaze at his eternal condition. We must therefore take care not to darken that mirror with the stains of sin and neglect, so that death comes to us, not as disaster, but with the joy of a reunion.



Abu Hazim رضي الله عنه also said:

“Identify and abandon your actions that cause you to frown upon death! Death will then never harm you, regardless of when it arrives.”



People of wisdom have said:

مُوتُوا قَبْلَ أَنْ تَمُوتُوا

“Die before you die.” In other words, quit the desires of your ego wilfully while you are healthy, before death comes and makes you quit them by force.



As part of divine will, when and where death will seize us remains unknown. It is therefore essential that hearts wake up to the reality of “dying before death” and become ever prepared to reunite with their Creator.

Otherwise, the final breath will be a moment of dismay, filled with screams of, “Where am I going?”

The Qur’an states:

“The throes of death come revealing the truth. That is what you were trying to evade!” (Qaf, 50:19)



Our **Prophet** ﷺ was asked:

“Which believer is more intelligent?” He replied:

“He who thinks about death a lot and is busy completing his preparations for it.” (Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 31)



The eternal sun of bliss dawns only from hearts that lead an upright life in light of divine teachings, and know how to proceed to the afterlife with a clear conscience, pure heart and glowing face.



Uthman رضي الله عنه says:

“The most intelligent person is he who calls his soul to account, manages his ego, offers deeds for beyond death and makes the most of Allah’s light for the darkness of the grave.”



In this fleeting world, no disaster is greater than wasting life in the swamps of faithlessness, the body in immorality and wealth in cruelty. On this journey of life, an intelligent person is he who can leave behind a trace of righteous deeds as reflections of faith, worship, morals and virtue, and also a legacy that benefits people long after he is gone, as well as beautiful memories.



A dark night of life spent in all kinds of revelry, debauchery, tyranny and injustice in an egotistic lifestyle devoid of the light of faith and inspiration of heart provided by worship, will certainly never lead to the morning of an eternal dawn.

The limitless enjoyment of this worldly life is the harbinger of a painful aftermath; and its carefree laughter, a sign of the crackles of hell.



Ali ﷺ said:

“You cannot pluck a bunch of roses from a field sowed with seeds of thorns.”



In expressing how a person meets the reward or punishment only for his own actions, **Rumi** ﷺ asks:

“Have you ever cultivated wheat yet reaped barley?”



Man is created from earth; and his heart is, likewise, like a fertile soil. Sow a rose, and that is what he will reap. Sow cactuses, and thorns are what will grow. Whatever we plant, especially during our youth which is the spring of our lives, is the harvest we will reap during our final breaths and in our afterlives.



Rumi ﷺ said:

“What do you have, and how did you get it? What kind of a pearl were you able to recover from the ocean bed? You will find out for sure on the day you die.”



Imam Rabbani ﷺ explains:

“Death is not a disaster. True disaster is not knowing what will be encountered after death.”



Death is a door. Behind it lies a birth into eternity. Reflect on how the Sun rises, just as you see it set.



Rumi ﷺ said:

“Can a seed be called ‘dead’ just because it is buried in the ground?”



Just like birth, we need to also look upon death as a natural occurrence, as it is merely a birth into the afterlife.

In the words of **Rumi** ﷺ:

“Know that death is the pain of the spirit being born into another world. It is called ‘death’ in this fleeting world; yet, in the enduring realm of eternity, it is called ‘birth’.”

“Is it not Allah who takes lives? Then know that, for real servants, death is as sweet as sugar.”

“Even if it comes like fire, for the friends of Allah, death is a garden of roses, a fountain of youth.”



Death is real. Every mortal will inevitably taste it once he uses up his limited breaths. Living this life heedless to the reality of the grave is as bizarre as considering a day without a night.



No one is ever known to have escaped death through fear. Just as fear is of no use against death, a manic angst that induces apathy instead of effort is of no avail either. Instead of fleeing death, a person must try to become ever-ready to meet it.



A person who forgets that the world is passing and that the true life awaits in the afterlife, as well as his responsibilities towards the Creator, prayer, repentance and servanthood, ends up growing dim, and begins to look for joy inside the markets of misery. And instead of preparing for death and beyond which is the inevitable future for all human beings, he makes it a priority to flee it.



Rumi رحمته الله narrates a story in his Mathnawi:

One day a man comes to **Prophet Sulayman** عليه السلام in fear and panic, and says:

“I met Azrael this morning, and he looked at me with anger. I knew that he was about to take my life. Mighty Prophet! Everything is under your command. Order the wind so it can take me all the way to India. It may just be that Azrael will not find me there!”

Prophet Sulayman عليه السلام felt pity for how gullible and desperate the man was, so he commanded the wind to:

“Drop this man off in India!” The wind took the man, and before long, it dropped him off on one of India’s remote islands.

Not long after, **Prophet Sulayman** عليه السلام sees Azrael, and asks him why he stared at the man with fury. Azrael explains:

“I did not look at him with fury, but with wonder. Allah had commanded me to take his life this evening in India. And I looked at him, thinking, ‘How could this be? The man cannot possibly be in India by this evening, even if he has a thousand wings!’”



True ignorance is to assume one is fleeing his destiny without realising that he is running to it all along. When death comes, it is never advanced or delayed; and likewise, there is no place to escape it.



We must remember that the world presents neither a place to escape death, nor the grave, nor the day of judgment. Every space is the property of Allah ﷻ, and every time has succumbed to divine will. Thus, the only remedy for eternal salvation is to:

فَفِرُّوا إِلَى اللَّهِ

“Flee to Allah!” (Al-Dhariyat, 51:50), The One who truly is our sole refuge and support.



A life unenlightened by the contemplation of death is no different to a dark night of trouble. Without focusing on the enigma of death, hearts cannot unravel the secret of that eternal land. Fleeing death amounts to becoming tired for no reason; while overlooking and trying to forget it, is the biggest stupidity.



All human beings will succumb and submit to divine will at the moment of death, whether they like it or not. At that instant, even the tyrant and the arrogant who spent a lifetime stubbornly rebelling against divine commands will have no power to object. As the countless veils of neglect hovering above his cognition are lifted, man will realise, at that point, that true dominion in all its glory belongs only to Allah ﷻ. But to what benefit!



We have not been sent into this world to flee death or console ourselves with dreams of a life without an ever-after. We are sent into this life to revive it through good deeds, and consciously prepare each of our breaths for that one final breath. Rather than prepare graves for ourselves, we need to prepare ourselves for the grave.



In the journey of life, man sometimes goes through difficult phases. He looks for a helping hand, a lifebuoy and a light of salvation. Yet, the most difficult moment in life is when he takes that final breath to bid farewell to the world. Those able to punctually prepare for that moment, experience the delight of reuniting with their Creator with the joy of a wedding night.

When death finally comes, those who carelessly squander their capital of life chasing their desires are, in contrast, devastated with unspeakable regret.



Our **Prophet** ﷺ once said:

“No one dies without regret.” And when asked about the reason of that remorse, he explained:

“The devout will regret not having raised his piety. The sinner will regret not having reformed himself.” (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 59/2403)



Even a righteous person will regret not having done better. As for the negligent, words will fail to express the gravity of his remorse.



It is said, “People are asleep – when they die they wake up!” (Kashfu'l-Khafa, II, 312)

Death is one’s personal judgment day. We must awaken before that day of judgment, to avoid being among those awoken to eternal disaster.



The final breath is the final curtain of this stage that is life. It is shiny mirror that reflects each person’s outcome. Every person watches his entire life on this mirror with clarity, in all its beauty and ugliness. At that moment, the eyes and ears are spared from any protest or veils of neglect. All veils are lifted; and confessions force the mind and conscience into a bout of remorse.

Let not the final breath be the first mirror upon which we reflectively gaze at our lives!



A hadith says:

“The worst apology is that which comes at the time of death.” (Qiwam al-Sunnah, At-Tarhib wa't-Tarhib, II, 106)



While we still have the time, we must take every opportunity to do righteous deeds for Allah ﷻ. Once the will of Allah ﷻ arrives and the days of our lives expire, exclaiming, “Oh no...if only” will be of no avail.



People who wasted their fleeting lives with the sole purpose of making money, will meet a terrible bankruptcy of eternity.

The late Turkish poet Necip Fazil warns against falling into this kind of misery, when he writes:

Stingy jeweller, stitch yourself another case

Save up the cash that has no currency in the grave!



After their final breath, every person will want to ruefully bang his hands on his knees, saying:

“If only I had not made that error, if only I had done that good action!” But alas, neither will he have any hands left nor a pair of knees!

Shame on those who realise this truth only on that day! Blissful are those who realise this today, and get busy with preparing for the hereafter!



A wise man once said:

“Time and again, visit cemeteries. Lend an ear to the silent cries rising from the gravestones. Appreciate the value of time, and think about how no amount of remorse can ever bring back life once it is lost.”



Ali  has said:

“Islam suffices as worldly wealth, worship as a profession and death as a lesson.”



Are not all mortal transactions, passing pleasures and the seemingly never-ending whims and desires ultimately cancelled by the noblest piece of clothing in this market of life, the burial shroud?



Our **Blessed Prophet**  says:

“Frequently reflect on death, which rips out all pleasures from their root.”
(Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 4/2307)



Despite having no known language, death gives such a vocal advice without sound or words that, for the wise, offers a perfect lesson more resounding than the most fluent of all tongues.



The clearest lesson of death lies hidden in the impenetrable silence clenched between the purple lips of the dead.

The only response the world can give to the eloquent style in which death offers advice, are merely warm tears.



The best answer to the question, “What is life?” is hidden in the musty stones of graveyards. Every gravestone enshrouded in the silence of death, is a fiery counsellor that speaks in an inaudible tone. Taking a lesson from the silent messages of the gravestone is a means for an enormous bliss in a tomorrow that shall never end.



Yunus Emre makes an impassionate plea from the surrounds of the gravestones:

Yunus says look at how fate works,
Their lashes now fallen, so have their brows
Stones of rhyme above their heads
They neither inform nor say a word



We need hearts that are always alert. Upon seeing a funeral, for example, we must think:

“I could have been in that coffin...”

And a traffic accident:

“I could have been involved in that...”

And when visiting a cemetery:

“One day, I, too, will be inside one of these graves, and I will encounter every single experience these dead people now undergo.”



When **Ali** ﷺ was asked:

“What is it with you that you have taken graves as neighbours?” he replied:

“I have found them to be loyal neighbours, for they do no harm and remind me of the afterlife!” (Ibn Abi Shaybah, Musannaf, VII, 102/34514)



Khatam Asam ﷺ was asked:

“How and when will we become people who look upon the world with eyes of wisdom?” He explained:

“When you see that everything in the world ends in ruin, and every person winds up inside the grave! No knowledge, wisdom or advice can ever help a person who fails to take a lesson despite seeing a corpse carried out of his own home or a house nearby.”



Contemplating death invigorates the heart. Once a believer is conscious of the fact that he will one day die:

- ✓ He avoids the folly of acting like a native in this guesthouse of the world.
- ✓ He knows that he will be called to account for every single action.
- ✓ He can no longer indulge in sin, trip a brother over, stick a thorn into a heart, break a green branch for no reason or hurt even an ant.
- ✓ He cannot knowingly violate the divine bounds or neglect his servantly duties.
- ✓ He appreciates the value of every breath and can no longer waste his capital of life in vain activities.



“Contemplating death” has a vital place in Sufi training. Remembering our own mortality by reflecting on how we came into this world wrapped in a bundle cloth to live out our numbered days, only to be farewelled atop a wooden cradle, is the most potent medicine against the desires of the ego.



Our ancestors placed graveyards inside the towns and by the side of mosques, to ensure they were reminded of death.

There, they reflected on their real future and realised their mortality to the core. They avoided the folly of trusting their youth and vigour to assume they would live forever. They hence turned their backs on useless actions, and instead reserved all their energies to acquiring the capital of eternal life as soon as they could. And in so doing, they lived during this life in a climate of eternity.

In stark contrast, today’s modern age of ignorance tries to make us forget about death, the grave and the hereafter, with the excuse that they spoil the pleasures of the ego. It assumes that peace and happiness lie in banishing them from everyday life. Consequently, joy is sought in the drunkenness of neglect, while happiness in the markets of misery.



Gazing from the window of the hereafter, every mortal concern is merely a passing shadow. The true and lasting life, is the afterlife.

Our real concern in this life should therefore be:

-How we will end up giving our final breaths, which in tern will offer a glimpse of our eternal address.

-How ready we are for the questioning inside the grave.

-And whether the realm of barzakh where we will wait until the day of judgment, will be, to quote the hadith, "...a garden of paradise" or -Allah forbid- "...a pit of hell."



We are all students in this school of life where the divine test is carried out. Our education will end with the diploma of death, and we will be buried in the bosom of the soil with our faith and actions.



Enduring the punishment of the grave and hellfire is impossible. Our **Prophet** ﷺ would, in fact, frequently make the following the prayer, and advise his ummah to do the same:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ وَمِنْ عَذَابِ النَّارِ
وَمِنْ فِتْنَةِ الْمَحْيَا وَالْمَمَاتِ وَمِنْ فِتْنَةِ الْمَسِيحِ الدَّجَالِ

"O Allah! Truly I seek refuge in You from the punishment of the grave and from the punishment of the Fire, and from the tribulations of life and death and from the tribulations of the Dajjal." (Bukhari, Janaiz, 88; Muslim, Masajid, 128-134)

It is therefore necessary to seek refuge in the Almighty's mercy from all ugly traits, egoistic and devilish desires, haram things as well as neglect and rebellion that draw divine wrath, and to avoid them like we avoid fire.



Judgment day is a day of such severity that it will turn even children old and grey. It is a day when the eyes of tyrants will fly out of their sockets, and when hearts and eyes will go topsy-turvy. It is a harsh and troublesome day when breastfeeding mothers will forget about their babies, pregnant women will suffer miscarriages; and people will feel drunk from dread.

Moreover, it is "يَوْمُ الْخُلُودِ"; an eternal day without end.

Unless the mercy of Allah ﷻ comes, it is a day of excruciating torment and troubles that will shatter spines.

Man must therefore channel all his fears and concerns to that day. He must shed tears, not for the fleeting worries of this world, but for actions that may possibly ruin his eternal life.



Imam Ghazzali ﷺ relays a story:

A man sees his brother laughing hysterically, and asks:

“What is the matter? Have you just received news that you will be saved from hellfire?”

“No”, he replies.

“Then how can you break out into such laughter?”



The world is not a place for laughter and entertainment or to waste life in neglect. Yet, most people fool themselves in this mortal guesthouse by settling in the manner of ignorant. They forget about the arduous checkpoints standing before them such as death, the grave, resurrection and judgment, and mostly ignore the worries with which they should really be concerned. In addressing this general neglect that afflicts mankind, Allah the Almighty issues the following warning in the Qur'an:

“Are you amazed at this discourse and laugh and do not cry, treating life as a game?” (Al-Najm, 53:60-61)



Exulting in worldly and passing events and laughing in excess makes a person forget about how he is a passenger on an eternal journey, and that he still has tough phases such as death, the grave, resurrection, judgment and the Sirat bridge ahead of him.



Muhammad Ibn Wasi  says:

“As strange it is for a person in heaven to cry, it is equally strange for a person on earth to laugh in excess, when he does not yet know whether he is bound for heaven or hell.”



The world is a venue of trial. It is a hostel that fills up from one door and empties out from the other. And once the last human being completes his test, the universe will cease to have a function, and the day of judgment will commence.

On judgment day, we will read the report of our test of this life. We will be made to rewatch the entire visions of our worldly trials to their minutest details. At that point, everything will be exposed and placed out in the open. We will feel deeply ashamed of our lack of servanthood, gratitude and effort before the countless blessings of Allah the Almighty.



The Prophet ﷺ says:

“No person will be able to take a step on the day of judgment before being asked where he spent his life, what he did with his knowledge, how he made his money and where he spent it, and where he wore out his body.” (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 1/2417)



Once we receive our book of deeds, we will stare at that divine screen and watch as many errors we committed unknowingly, as we did otherwise.

Perhaps we gossiped or looked upon a brother with scorn. Maybe we mocked another person with hand and eye gestures behind his back. Perhaps we dusted a rug from the window of our homes and disturbed our neighbour living below or passers-by on the street. Maybe we were unmoved by the hunger of cats and dogs outside our doors. Perhaps we swerved through traffic to cut in front of other vehicles and get to the front, we sped up over a puddle and soaked someone standing on the curb or we endangered the lives of others by violating traffic rules, and so forth.

We need to repent and atone as much as possible, so that we avoid facing a heavy bill. Even if we may not be aware of some our mistakes, they never escape the eyes of the recording angels. Even if we forget, our book of deeds does not.



For or against, the biggest witness of a person on the day of divine judgment will be himself. The Noble Qur'an, in fact, states:

“Read your book! Today your own self is reckoner enough against you.” (Al-Isra, 17:14)

“Today We seal up their mouths and their hands speak to us, and their feet bare witness to what they have earned.” (Ya-Sin, 36:65)

“When they reach it, their hearing, sight and skin will testify against them. They will ask their skin, ‘Why do you testify against us?’ and they will reply

‘Allah gave us speech as He has given speech to everything.’” (Fussilat, 41:20-21)



In this life, we have only one tongue, but on the day of judgment, every limb will speak up and testify. Even places will give evidence. The book we read that day will minutely show every moment of our lives to the last smallest detail.

Everything in this life is being recorded. As much as the recording Angels, places and the divine cameras are also rolling at every moment.



Even if sinners think they have concealed their crimes in this world through an array of trickery and cunning, that day, in the presence of the Judge of all judges, standing in that divine court, they will be unable to hide behind any excuses, lie their way out of their crimes or hide their true faces behind a mask.



Umar  has said:

“Take yourselves to account before you are taken to account. Adorn yourselves (with righteous deeds) before the grand. A person who calls himself to account in this life will surely have an easy hearing on the day of judgment.” (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 25/2459)



The Qur’an states:

“They will shout out in it, ‘Oh Lord! Take us out! We will act rightly, differently from the way we used to act.’

‘Did We not let you live long enough for anyone who was going to pay heed to pay heed? And did a warner not come to you? Taste it then!

There is no helper for the wrongdoers!’” (Al-Fatir, 35:37)

This is a verse we all really need to reflect on. The fact is that we have all been given a long enough time to understand, and we have also received a messenger to warn us. And to this day, countless books have also been written, explaining about the Prophet and the Book he brought. All the gates of excuse we could otherwise have taken, are therefore shut.

To avoid regret on that day, we must therefore become people of faith and taqwa and of the Qur’an.



A hadith reads:

“The worst regret is that which is felt on judgment day.” (Suyuti, Al-Jamiu’s-Saghir, no: 3164)



In the afterlife, the dwellers of paradise will ask, with astonishment, the dwellers of hell from afar:

“What caused you to enter hell? They will say, ‘We were not among those who prayed. And we did not feed the poor. We plunged with those who plunged and denied the Day of Judgement until the Certain came to us.’” (Al-Muddaththir, 74:42-47)



Rumi رحمته said:

“An intelligent person sees the outcome from the start, while the fool only at the end! But then, it is all too late...”

“Intelligent people cry from beforehand, while fools moan and wail at the end. See the end from the start so you do not regret it on judgment day!”



The Mighty Qur'an quotes the disbelievers lamenting on judgment day with the words “يَا لَيْتَ”, “if only”.

“If only we had obeyed Allah and obeyed the Messenger.” (Al-Ahzab, 33:66)

“If only I had gone the way of the Messenger.” (Al-Furqan, 25:27)

“If only I had prepared in advance for this life of mine!” (Al-Fajr, 89:24)

“If only I had not taken so-and-so as a friend.” (Al-Furqan, 25:28)

And one such “يَا لَيْتَ”, “if only”, is this:

On the day of resurrection, even animals will be revived to settle the injustices between them. Later, those treated unfairly will receive their dues from the perpetrators, and afterwards, they will all become dust. And once disbelievers witness this scene, to avoid divine punishment, they will wish to be in the place of those animals and bewail:

يَا لَيْتَنِي كُنْتُ تُرَابًا

“If only I were dust.” (Al-Naba, 78:40)

To avoid falling into such remorse in the afterlife, we must obey the Almighty's commands and meticulously observe the rights of every single one of His creatures.



Our Prophet ﷺ has stated:

“Your deeds will be presented to the deceased among your relatives and tribes. If your deeds are good, they will rejoice. If not, they will pray, ‘Allah, do not take their lives until You give them guidance, just like You guided us!’” (Ahmad, III, 164; Hakim, Mustadrak, IV, 342/7849)



Allah declares:

“You who believe! have taqwa of Allah, and let each self look to what it has sent forward for Tomorrow!” (Al-Hashr, 59:18)

In the above verse, the Almighty calls the afterlife “tomorrow”. In other words, Allah the Almighty, who transcends time and space, refers to the judgment day as “tomorrow” to indicate just how close it is.

So, let us not act too late to prepare for an eternal life which is as near as “tomorrow”.



The Almighty states:

“That Day some faces will be radiant, laughing, rejoicing. That Day some faces will be dust-covered, overcast with gloom. Those are the dissolute unbelievers.”

(Abasa, 80:38-42)

On judgment day, our faces will assume the appearance of our inner states. Our ways of life today will reflect on our faces. So, let us never forget that our appearances in the afterlife are shaped by the way we live today!



What will help us on our journey to eternity is not our physical strength or beauty, nor the wealth we have acquired in this life, but our faith and righteous deeds. So, let us think:

-What do we have in our bags for our journey to eternity?

-What sacrifices have we saved up?

-What have we prepared that would justify us praying, “Allah! Protect me from falling from the Sirat bridge into the fire, for I did so-and-so deed only for Your sake!”?

Or -Allah forbid-, are we merely taking negligence with us?



Every person who has transitioned to the eternal life takes both his bliss and misery from this world with his own hands. What he sowed in the field of his life is what he will harvest on the plain of resurrection. One who leaves his field uncultivated will be deprived tomorrow. And he who sows his field with the seeds of sin and rebellion, will reap nothing but the remorse of an agonising punishment.



The flames of hell ignite with man’s ill states and qualities. And the gardens of paradise bloom with his faith, good morals and virtues.



After a severe earthquake strikes or a gas cylinder explodes, we say that it was as though “judgment day broke loose.” Yet, the real judgment day, too enormous for

human cognition to grasp, is an explosion during which the stars will fall, the skies will be furled like a roll of paper and mountains will be smashed to smithereens.

It is a day when toddlers will turn old and grey with fear, the pregnant will suffer miscarriages, eyes will fling out of sockets and humans will become drunk from the dread.

Yet, on that harsh and troublesome day, the Almighty gives the good news to the blissful servants He will secure under His protection and keep safe from fear and sorrow, with the words:

“Yes, the friends of Allah will feel no fear and will know no sorrow: those who believe and are godfearing, there is good news for them in the life of this world and in the Next World. There is no changing the words of Allah. That is the great victory” (Yunus, 10:62-63-64)



The lives of flesh are but passing shadows. They are phantoms bound to perish. Yet, the names of high characters and personalities are never forgotten, even after their mortal lives come to an end. They continue to live on inside the hearts until the final hour.

Ali ﷺ said:

“Live such a perfect life that people miss you whilst you are alive, and long for you after you die...”



It is an enormous profit to pass on to the afterlife having received a unanimous testimony of good character from the believers. Shaykh Sadi says:

“Live such a virtuous life that when you die, people will say, ‘A sun has set, a star has fallen’, and remember you with love and yearning.”



Blissful are those who can to return to Allah ﷻ before they die!

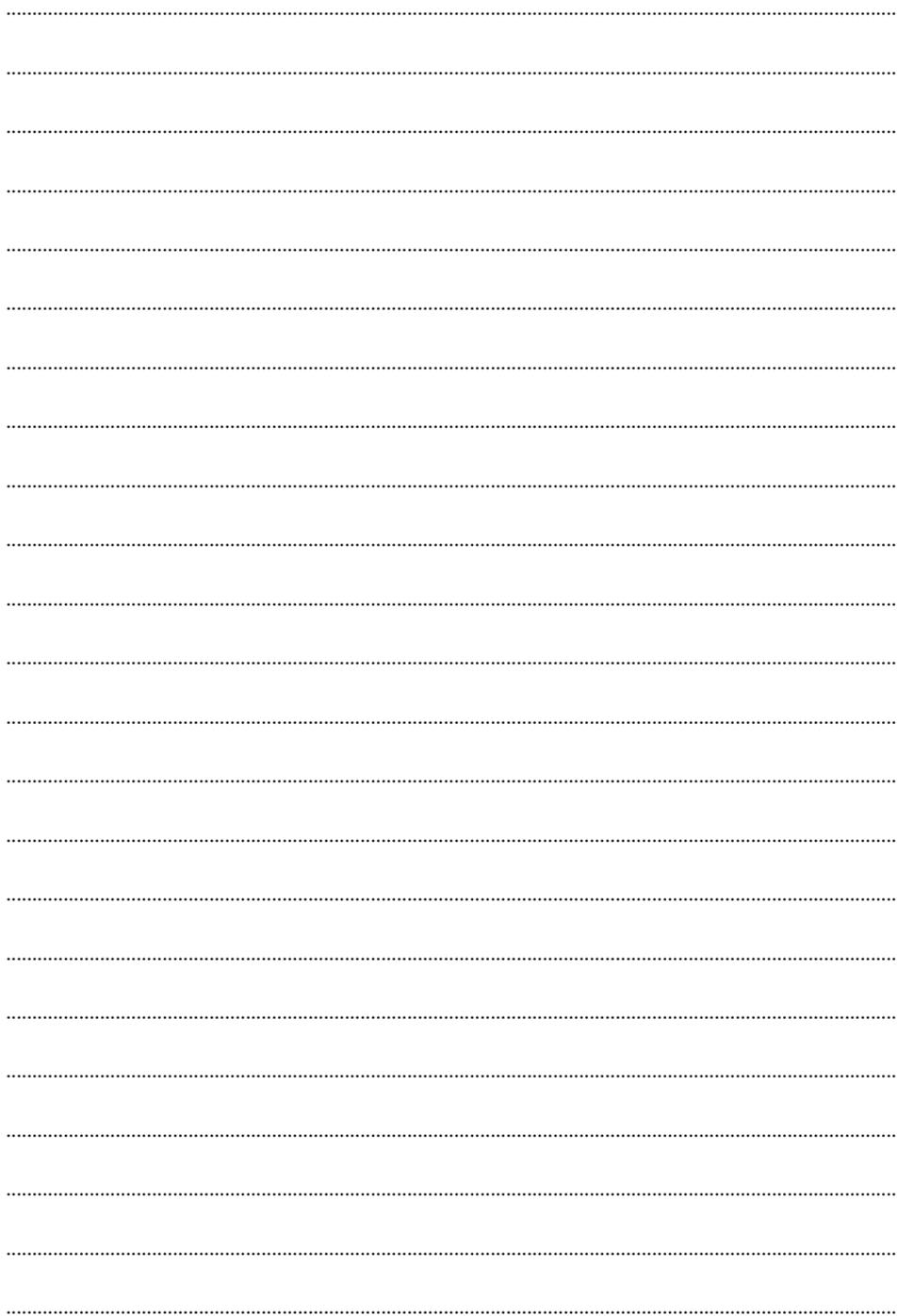
Blissful are those able to live a life of taqwa with the delight of an eternal joy, by embroidering the passion of faith in their hearts, the spirituality of the Qur’an on their chests.

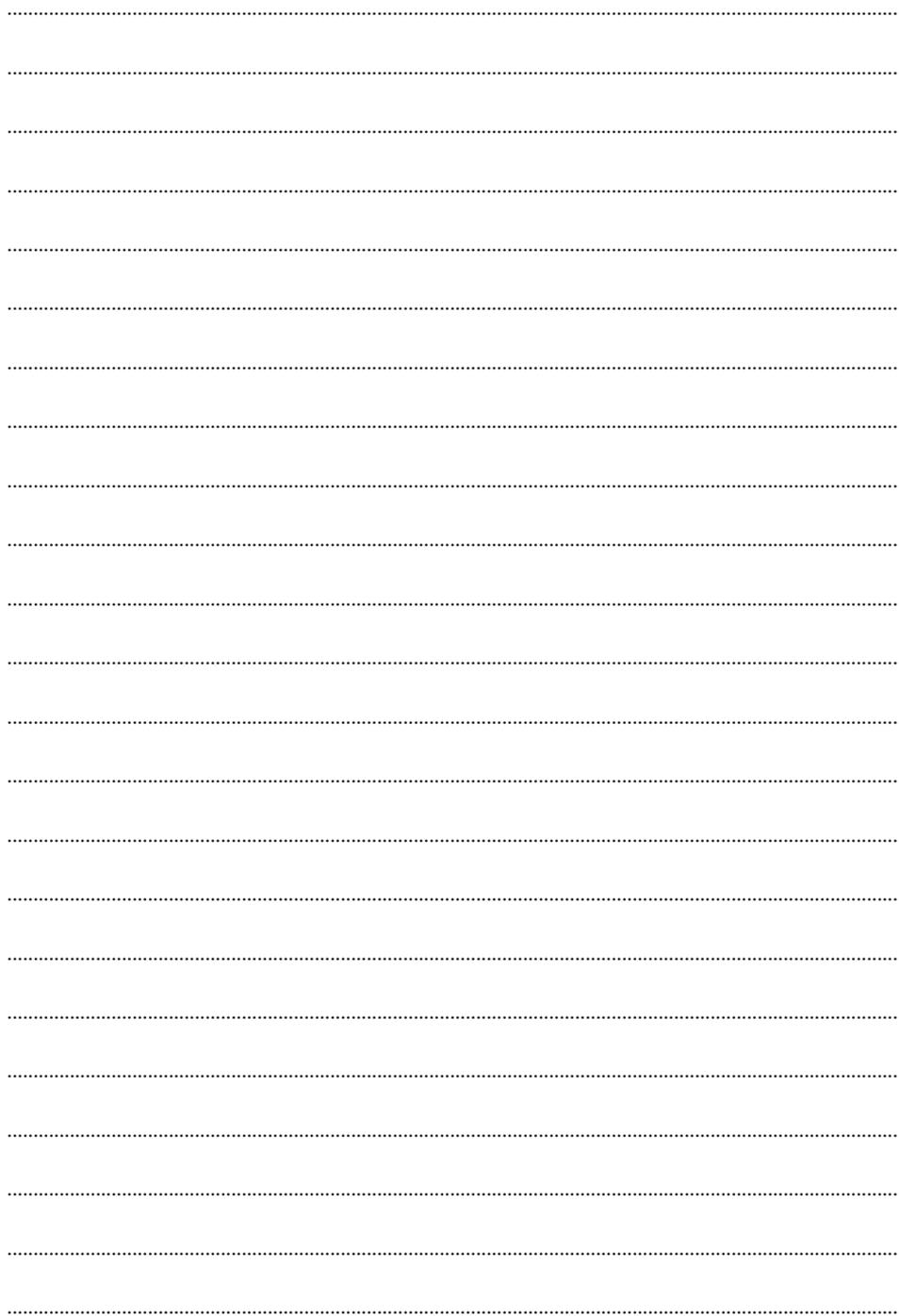
Blissful are the righteous servants who move on to eternity leaving behind a fine legacy that echoes in these fleeting skies.

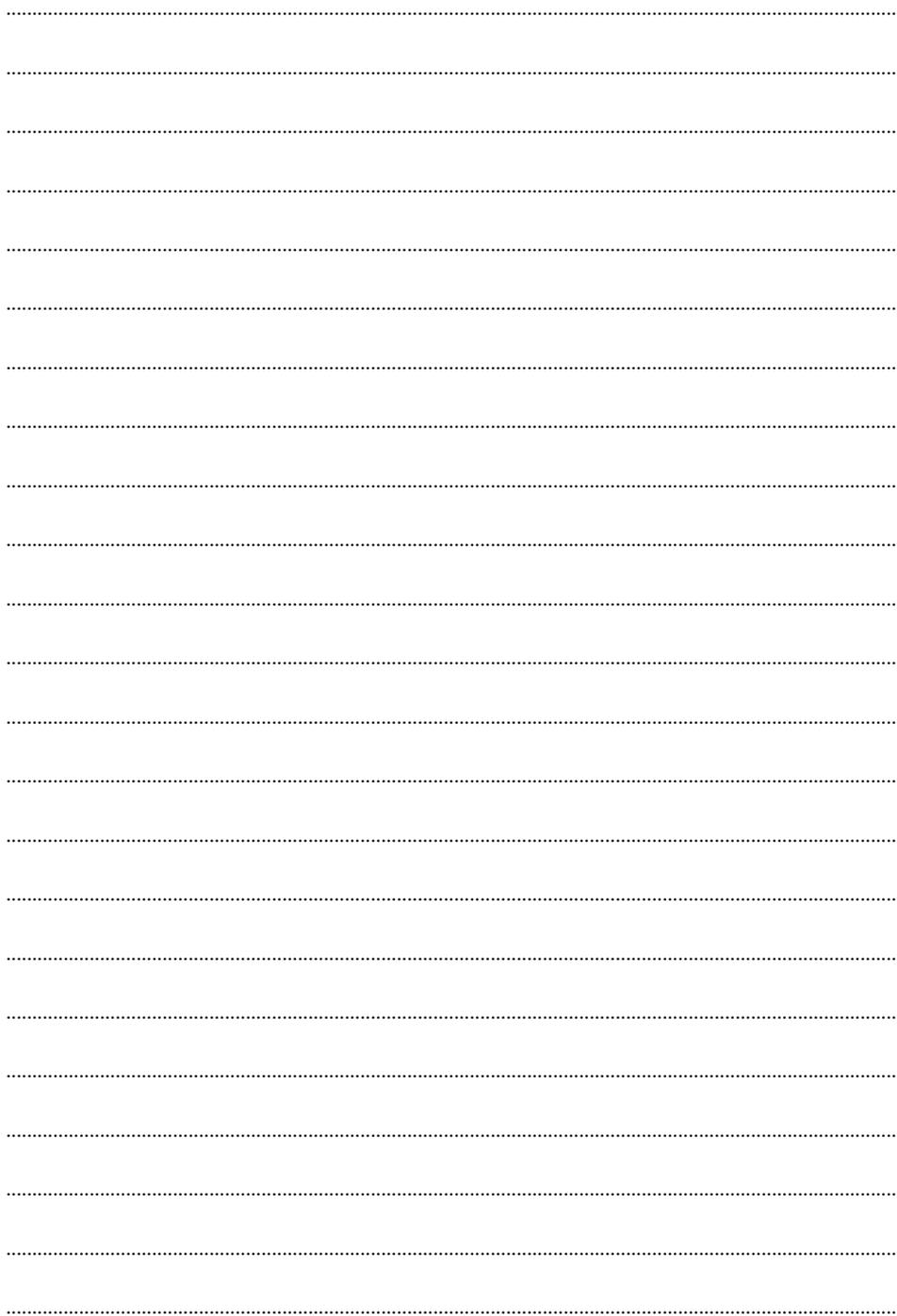
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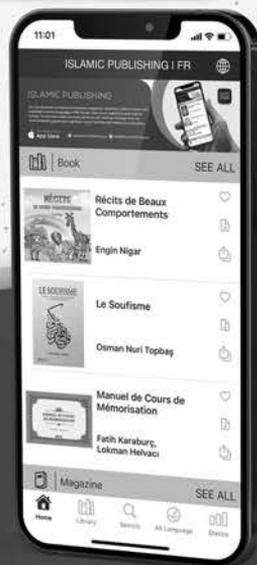


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