

100 PRINCIPLES FOR PURPOSEFUL LIVING

The Traditions of the Prophet

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



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FOREWORD

The Prophet of Islam once observed: Every Muslim, man and woman, is duty-bound to acquire knowledge. (*Sunan ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 224) This tradition of the Prophet shows the importance of gaining knowledge in Islam. This is necessary for the realization of God, *maarifah*. Being essential for religious and spiritual development, it is a duty for all. It increases one's consciousness. It develops deep thinking in a person. It enables one to understand the deeper realities and to elevate one's intellectual level.

An important source of gaining knowledge are the traditions of the Prophet of Islam. Prophet Muhammad once observed: "Wisdom is the lost property of a believer. Wherever he finds it, he should take it (for it belongs to him)." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2687) The Prophet's entire life was filled with

examples of wisdom. He adopted the way of wisdom on all occasions and at all stages while discharging his responsibilities.

Prophetic traditions and the Quran serve as gems of wisdom for mankind. In this book, I have selected certain traditions of and Quranic verses, followed by short messages extracting wisdom from them. These can serve as a beacon of light for those seeking to develop intellectually and live a purposeful life.

Wahiduddin Khan

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THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN ISLAM

Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, may peace be upon him, was born in 570 AD in Makkah, Arabia. At the age of 40, he received his first revelation, which lays great emphasis on knowledge. (*The Quran*, 96)

Without doubt, knowledge is the beginning of all human progress. God created man apparently in the form of an animal. But man has been endowed with a brain of unlimited potential.

Acquiring knowledge is essential for utilizing this potential. Learning helps the human brain reach a higher intellectual level.

It is through knowledge that man knows human history; he discovers the secrets of nature; he scans through the surface of things to learn the deeper facts. The importance of learning is as essential for one person as it is for another.

GAINING KNOWLEDGE

The Prophet of Islam once observed, “It is the duty of every Muslim, man or woman, to acquire knowledge.” (*Sunan ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 224) This tradition shows the importance of knowledge in Islam. Knowledge is necessary for the realization of God. That is why its acquisition has been made obligatory. Learning increases man’s awareness; it opens the windows of his mind; it broadens the scope of his thinking which enables him to understand deeper realities. Benefiting from the experiences of others raises his intellectual level.

Knowledge is essential for both religious and spiritual development. The mind reaches maturity through gaining knowledge. This process of intellectual development becomes a continuous process. Knowledge elevates a man from the animal level to the level of a human being.

PASSION FOR LEARNING

The second caliph of Islam, Umar bin al-Khattab, used to learn something from everyone he met. In other words, learning was a continuous process for him.

How does this happen? When a person meets someone with an open mind, they learn from each other. To fruitfully continue this learning process, a person must be free from pride and prejudiced thinking. They should refrain from displaying a mentality of just teaching others. His psyche should rather be: I will be ever-ready to take whatever comes my way. Whenever someone points out my mistake, I will immediately admit it and correct myself.

The learner's role is as important as that of the teacher in the learning process. The right temperament on the part of the learner is required to fully grasp the learning from others. The world abounds with knowledge and learning which helps in the realization of God. The only condition is that man must have the right mindset to internalize learning.

THE TREASURE OF KNOWLEDGE

The Prophet of Islam once said: “Wisdom is the lost property of a believer. Wherever he finds it, he should take it (as it belongs to him).” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2687) This tradition explains the universality of knowledge. This means that knowledge, whatever the source, belongs equally to all human beings. It is a common good, and not anyone’s monopoly. It is like the sun from which everyone has an equal right to receive light.

The concept of universality of knowledge is very important. Without this, the development of knowledge is not possible.

The treasure of knowledge is as vast as the ocean. No matter how much it is used, its reserves will never exhaust.

THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

The Prophet of Islam once observed, “Seek knowledge, even if you have to go as far as China.” (*Shuabul Iman*, Hadith No. 1543) This shows that there should not be any kind of prejudice or obstacle to acquiring knowledge. Traveling to China, in ancient times, was considered a very difficult journey. Therefore, the Prophet’s saying means enduring every difficulty towards this end. Nothing should be taken as an obstacle in this matter. Knowledge is what converts man’s state of ore to steel.

This tradition shows the importance of undertaking travel for knowledge. Travel enhances a person’s mental horizon. Travels help man to move from the limited local sphere to the unlimited global one.

THE GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE

The Prophet of Islam said: A father cannot give his children a better gift than a proper education. (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 1952) Any other gift

is always temporary but the gift of knowledge is lifelong. Every man's first school is his own home. The parents are its teachers. We learn two things from this hadith. First, parents should acquire education, for, without it, they will neither be able to understand its importance nor will they be able to play the requisite role in educating their children. Secondly, the home is not only the place of a child's upbringing but also the place of their education and training. Every home should be a cradle of education and training, otherwise, it would remain incomplete.

7

THE SUPERIORITY OF KNOWLEDGE

According to a tradition, the Prophet of Islam **A** once said, "The ink of a scholar's pen is superior to the blood of a martyr." (*Tarikh Baghdad by Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi*, Vol. 2, p. 190)

This tradition shows that knowledge is greater than all other things. Learning is like food for our minds. It expands our mental horizons. A higher level of

education is associated with better mental functioning, with better planning.

Any physical activity is finite. After a certain point, we reach our physical limitations. But the case of knowledge is different. Since there is no limit to knowledge, a person possessing the wealth of knowledge becomes limitless.

8

KEEPING A RECORD
OF KNOWLEDGE

The Prophet of Islam is reported to have said, “Preserve knowledge through writing.” (*Sunan Al-Darimi*, Hadith No. 514)

This means that knowledge should be preserved in writing. In this way, the knowledge which was stored in a person’s memory can be transferred onto paper to record and pass along to future generations. Thus, writing enables us to preserve the knowledge for posterity.

One way of using this knowledge is to transfer it in the form of books. Scholarly books should be written

on every subject to preserve knowledge and be made available in libraries.

Keeping a diary is another form of the preservation of knowledge. Keeping a diary is advisable for everyone. A personal diary may include a person's experiences, thoughts, and summaries of his daily studies.

Someone who keeps a diary is known as a diarist. A diary is a collection of notes, kept in chronological order. Through a diary, one can thus keep the record of one's daily intellectual journey. A diary can also serve as an effective means of self-introspection and accountability. By writing a diary, a person can continue to improve himself by knowing his successes and failures. Thus, a diary can become a source of one's intellectual development.

9

KNOWLEDGE FOR
THE SAKE OF KNOWLEDGE

The Prophet of Islam once observed: "Acquire knowledge from the cradle to the grave." (*Tarikh Irbal*, Vol. 1, p. 7) We learn from this saying that knowledge is not of a temporary benefit, but rather

it is a permanent process that continues from the beginning until the end of life. Therefore, knowledge is desirable in itself. The real purpose of knowledge is to build a human personality. This is not a temporary job; it is an ongoing process that continues in every situation and every place. There is no end to the development of the human personality, therefore, the process of one's education and training also goes on throughout a person's life. The mind should never become stagnant. Knowledge serves as food for the human personality. Just as the body shows signs of weakness without adequate food, the human personality without intellectual food will fall far short of perfection. Hence, such a weak personality cannot play a great role in this world.

10

NON-BENEFICIAL KNOWLEDGE

One of the supplications of the Prophet of Islam was: "O God, save me from such knowledge as is not beneficial (*Allahumma inni aauzu bika min ilmin la yanfa*).” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2722)

Real knowledge is beneficial to humanity. On the other hand, the knowledge that is not beneficial to humanity is not a desired piece of knowledge. Making efforts to gain such knowledge is completely a waste of time.

11

A DEVELOPED PERSONALITY

The Quran likens a true man to a plant. (*The Quran*, 14:24-25) Just as a plant grows into a tree, so does a person's personality grow like a lush tree, until it becomes a developed personality. Physically, man is born as an infant and then grows into a full man. If man's thought process continues healthily, the human mind would reach the stage of development in the same way as does its body.

This thought process naturally runs through every human being. All one has to do is protect oneself from the things that hinder his thought process. An unobstructed thought process continues to flow like a spring that sprouts fresh water.

ASK SOMEONE WHO KNOWS

The Quran states: If you do not know, then ask the one who knows. (16:43) That is, if you do not know something, then consult with those who do. People do not usually like to ask. They think that asking is like admitting one's intellectual inferiority. This is a deadly habit. The healthy habit is to think that asking is just like consulting dictionaries and encyclopedias. No man can have all the available knowledge on his own. He reads books to make up for this shortcoming. In the same way, it should be a habit to ask those who know to share their knowledge with others. One who knows is like a living book. Asking the knower is just like reading a book. Besides increasing knowledge, asking a knower also enhances relationships.

CONTEMPLATION ON GOD'S BLESSINGS

The Prophet of Islam once observed, "Pondering on the blessings of God is the greatest act of worship." (*Al-Azmat by Abu Shaikh al-Asbahani*, Hadith

No. 43) Being an intellectual activity, contemplation is not visible, but there is no greater deed than this in the sight of God.

There is an element of blessing in everything in the world. Through contemplation, we discover different aspects of blessings in everything. It is this which is called the best kind of worship in this tradition.

Discovering things as blessings is an act that brings man closer to God. For man, this is the greatest source of the realization of God.

14

THE PROCESS
OF REFLECTION

Abu Darda was a companion of the Prophet of Islam. After his death, a man asked his wife, Umm al-Darda, “What was the greatest act of Abu Darda?” Umm al-Darda replied, “*Thinking and learning lessons.*” (*Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra, ibn saad, vol 4, p. 353*) From this, we learn that the greatest act of a person is reflecting on the things around him and drawing lessons from them. It is a process of intellectual and

spiritual development, which sets in in man in the form of serious contemplation, and continues until the end of life.

15

HUMILITY IN LEARNING

Abdullah ibn Masud, one of the companions of the Prophet of Islam, said, “When you do not know anything, say that God knows best.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 4822) This principle can be called “humility in learning”, which is essential for intellectual progress.

There is a proverb in Arabic: (*la adri nisf ul ilm*), “I don’t know is half-knowledge.” To say, “*I don’t know*” is not a simple matter. It is to be aware of your ignorance. In such a person a spirit of inquiry awakens which eventually leads him to knowledge. When a man does not know something, he must admit this fact. The confession of not knowing is also as important as knowing. Without this attitude, no man can progress intellectually.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

A companion of the Prophet of Islam said that even if a bird was seen flying in the air, the Prophet would remind us of a piece of knowledge. (*Sahih ibn Hibban*, Hadith No. 65)

This tradition gives us an extended concept of education and training. This shows that the process of acquiring knowledge continues not only in the form of formal education but also outside of school premises. The fact is that there is some kind of knowledge hidden in every big and small event in the world of nature. If the teacher has an alert mind, he can make the world outside of the school a source of education and training for his students. In the same way, a leader can equip his followers with mental and spiritual training by applying these principles to natural events. Our whole world is a vast school. One who is a true seeker of knowledge will continue to increase his knowledge every moment. His scholarly journey will never come to an end.

KNOWLEDGE AND SERIOUSNESS

Abdullah ibn Abbas said, “He who fears God is a scholar.” (*Sunan al-Darimi*, No. 345) This saying of the senior companion of the Prophet shows that seriousness and caution are important aspects of acquiring knowledge. Knowledge is not just the name of possessing a piece of information. When a person acquires deep knowledge, its natural consequence is that he becomes cautious about God. This precaution creates seriousness in a person. Where there is knowledge without seriousness, it should be understood that there is no knowledge in the true sense.

True knowledge makes a man a new man. A person with true knowledge is aware of the facts of nature, and a person who is aware of this cannot afford to live in contradictions. He cannot speak carelessly. He cannot treat people lightly. True knowledge makes a man serious and responsible in every sense.

INCREASE IN KNOWLEDGE

The Quran describes prayer in these words: “*My Lord, increase my knowledge.*” (*The Quran*, 20:114)

This Quranic prayer shows the importance of acquiring knowledge in Islam. According to the teachings of Islam, every man and woman should constantly strive to increase their knowledge.

Prayer is a form of determination. The reality of prayer is that man is fully engaged in achieving his goal. He should do his best to pray to God to make his efforts successful. Thus, prayer becomes a part of man’s action.

There is no limit to knowledge. A man should constantly keep striving to acquire knowledge. Since there is no limit to knowledge, there is also no limit to the struggle for knowledge.

NO EXCUSE

The Prophet of Islam once observed that man is always deceived by two things—health and leisure. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6412) That is,

he keeps thinking that he will do something when he is healthy, or in his leisure time, but health and leisure always remain elusive. So, he continues to live in that deception and eventually he dies. A wise man makes no excuses. Whenever a task comes up, he does it right away. For, there is no better time to start than this very minute.

20

INTUITION SERVES AS A GUIDE

The Prophet of Islam said, “Ask the fatwa from your heart”. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 18006) This hadith refers to intuition.

Man faces problems over and over again. He does not have to ask any *mufti* (Islamic jurist) for a *fatwa* (ruling) every time. If a person keeps himself free from psychological complications, then his intuition can be the best guide for him. Intuition accompanies man at all times and in all places.

WISDOM

The companion of the Prophet, Umar ibn al-Khattab, said, “Kill falsehood by remaining silent about it.” (*Hilyatul Awliya*, Vol. 1, p. 55) This statement shows the power of silence.

There is a well-known saying that it takes two hands to clap. If you retaliate falsehood with falsehood, it will gain more support. On the contrary, if you adopt the method of silence, the falsehood will vanish on its own. If you refrain from retaliation, the forces of nature will mobilize in your support. They will accomplish your job better than you.

LIVING IN HOPE

Hasan al-Basri said that “courage is a part of faith.” (*Jami Bayan al-Ilm*, No. 622) This is because faith in God gives man the greatest trust, and this trust makes him courageous.

But in this world, man is often faced with unfavorable circumstances which lead him to despair. If a person believes in God, he will not lose hope until the end. Faith in God gives him confidence, whatever the odds.

23

SUSTAINABLE ACTION

The Prophet of Islam said: “The most pleasing deed in the sight of God is that which is durable.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6464) Any real success in this world always takes time, so the best course of action is that which is sustainable. Therefore, a result-oriented action in this world is sustainable. Such an action is in accordance with the law of nature. This is real action. The man should plan his actions before taking an initiative. He should review all related matters. He should make a thorough assessment of his abilities and available resources, as well as the prevailing circumstances. Only then should he start his work according to a well-thought-out plan. Once he starts working at it, he should never leave it in the middle. This is the way to achieve success in life.

BEING AWARE OF THE TIMES

A tradition of the Prophet guides us in this manner: ‘A wise man must be cognizant of his time.’ (*Sahih ibn Hibban*, Hadith No. 361) This saying of the Prophet of Islam, a part of a long tradition, explains the perfection of human knowledge. It is not sufficient for a person to be conversant with bookish knowledge and the traditions of the past. Rather he needs to be aware of his times, of the past as well as the present. The importance of knowing the times is both rational and practical. Without this he fails to understand things in the universal context, therefore, an in-depth analysis of reality is not possible. Thus, in practical terms, he is a flawed person. He fails to know how to apply the eternal truths to the conditions of the time. Such a person cannot successfully plan his actions.

PURPOSEFUL LIFE

The Prophet of Islam said that one of the hallmarks of a believer is that he gives up things that are of no avail. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 1737) This saying

of the Prophet of Islam tells us what a purposeful human life should be like.

The fact is that while there are many things to do in the world, a person's life is too short. In such a situation, he must adopt a selective approach in his engagements. He should only engage in things that are directly related to the purpose of life. He should abstain completely from things that do not serve this purpose. He should know how to differentiate between useless and beneficial work. One should engage primarily in beneficial work.

Useless work is that which is done just for the sake of fun or to pass time. The fact is that engaging in temporary entertainment is a luxury that no purposeful person can afford to indulge in.

26

THE PRINCIPLE
OF BENEFICENCE

The Quran states that the system of this world is based on the principle of profitability. (*The Quran*, 13:17) That is, the person who benefits others will receive benefit from others. According

to this principle, whenever a person experiences deprivation, he should admit that it has happened because he could not prove himself beneficial to others. He had deprived others, so others also deprived him. If he gives to others, he will surely get from others in return.

The principle of profitability is related to one's whole life. It relates to familial as well as societal matters. According to this principle, the method of complaint and protest has no meaning. Every complaint and protest in this world is practically against one's shortcomings. A man should not waste time complaining and protesting but rather he should try to rectify his shortcomings at the earliest opportunity. A man should make himself useful to others. That is the solution to his problem.

27

SUCCESS IN SILENCE

The Prophet of Islam said, "He who remains silent will be saved." (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 6481) This statement shows that just like speaking, silence can also be a worthwhile task. Just as taking action is a task, so is taking no action. Just as moving forward

is a task, retreating is also a task. Just as there is an advantage in the position of strength, so is the position of humility. Silence does not mean just keeping quiet. Rather silence is a superb strategy. It is another name for silent planning. Without a doubt, low-profile politics is more effective than noisy politics.

Silence brings with it many benefits. When a man is silent, he thinks, he learns from others. When a person keeps silent, he awakens his inner strength. It is necessary to speak, but at the same time, one must know the wisdom of silence. Sometimes, silence prevents things from getting worse. Silence is a sign of ignoring undesirable things, without doubt, ignoring certain things is a wise action.

28

TWO DIFFERENT ATTRIBUTES

The Quran states that every human being has two distinct attributes: One *Nafs Ammara*, the other *Nafs Lawwama*. (*The Quran*, 12:53; 75:2) Both of these attributes are inherent in every human being by birth. *Nafs Ammara* means one's ego, and *Nafs Lawwama* means one's conscience. Both of these

attributes initially remain in a dormant state. If they are not awakened, they will remain in the same state. If something provocative is said against a person, his ego will wake up and the result will be the same as waking up a sleeping snake.

On the contrary, if a person is treated gently, his conscience will be aroused. If earlier people had experienced “thorns” from him, now they would experience “flowers”. He will now become a model of mercy for others.

29

SUCCESS COMES
WITH PATIENCE

The Prophet of Islam said, “Know that success comes with patience.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 2803) Haste is the opposite of patience. Hasty action is without planning, but the patient action is planned action. Whereas the only action that succeeds is that which is done with careful planning. It takes planning and perseverance to succeed in this world.

REFRAINING FROM CONFRONTATION

The Prophet of Islam said that it is not right for a believer to humiliate himself. He was asked why would a person humiliate himself? He replied that it is when he is ready to face a calamity which he does not have the strength to deal with. (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2254) This hadith gives a wise principle of life. That is, man's actions must always be result-oriented. If he confronts such a force that he does not have the strength to deal with, he will suffer from humiliation and failure. It is by no means right to engage in an action that increases the destruction of oneself.

LOOK AT THE ONE BELOW YOU

The Prophet of Islam has enjoined his followers not to look to those above themselves but look to those below themselves in material matters. In this way, they will not degrade the blessings of God

upon them. (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2513) The system of this world is made by God in such a way that there are always ups and downs. Some are ahead, and some are behind. The advantage of this condition is that an environment of competition is always maintained. It is because of this challenge and competition that progress and development take place in life. On this basis, it happens that someone is ahead of someone and behind another. A man should always look at the one below him. The advantage of this comparison is that he will see more of what God has given him. He will continue to thank God for it. On the contrary, if he only looks at the one above him, he will develop a feeling of hatred and resentment.

Maintaining a positive temperament contributes to a person's mental and spiritual growth. And negative temperament hinders man's mental and spiritual growth. A man should not deprive himself of mental growth for the sake of others.

PASSING TIME

The Quran states that time has shown that man is at a loss. (103:1-2) According to this verse, it is as if human life is like ice. Just as the ice melts, so does the age of man. Little by little, the time comes when a man reaches the end of his life.

Man's countdown is constantly taking place. If a person is destined to live for sixty years after birth, it is as if his countdown began as soon as he was born. At the end of the first year, he is left with fifty-nine years. Then fifty-eight, then fifty-seven, and then fifty-six, then fifty-five, and so on. In this way, every man's countdown is taking place constantly. No one can stop this countdown. In such a situation, every man should value his every moment because the time lost is not going to come back. Just as the past does not come back, similarly the past moments of life do not come back to anyone either.

NO DESPAIR

The Quran says, "Say, [God says] 'O My servants, who have committed excesses against their own souls, do not despair of God's mercy, for God surely forgives all sins. He is truly the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.'" (39:53) Whenever a person is frustrated, it is because he sees only his possibilities. He will never be disappointed if his eyes are on God's possibilities.

There is a limit to human possibilities. But there is no limit to God's possibilities. If a man knows this fact, he will never be disappointed. At the very point where man feels he has reached his limit, he will find another possibility that has no limit and no obstacle to it. The fact is that faith in God gives a man such a treasure of hope that he never gives up. He never feels that there is nothing left for him to do. Faith in God and despair cannot go together.

HIGH MORALS

The Prophet of Islam, addressing some of his companions, asked, "Shall I tell you better morals?" To which his companions replied, "Yes."

Then the Prophet said, “Join with those who break away from you, give to those who deprive you and forgive those who wrong you.” (*Al-Mujam al-Awsat*, Hadith No. 5064) To put it briefly, this is not a high ethical standard. High ethics is that which is based on its principles, which is not in response to the actions of others but is governed by its principles.

High morality is that man should rise above the attitude of others and unilaterally adhere to good morals. He should save himself from the psychology of reaction, he should never give up a positive moral attitude. The greatest characteristic of high morality is that a person maintains a positive attitude despite negative attitudes from others.

35

SELFLESS MAN

In the Quran, ‘*soul at peace*’ is used to describe a noble personality. (27:30) The soul at peace, in other words, is a soul free from psychological complexities, someone who can think beyond all kinds of negative feelings and superficial emotions.

In this world, man lives in different situations. These situations create all kinds of negative emotions inside him, such as hatred, malice, envy, grudge, jealousy, revenge, prejudice, selfishness, arrogance, self-aggrandizement, ambition, non-acknowledgment, etc. The person who lifts himself above all these kinds of negative emotions can attain the state which is called '*the soul at peace.*' It is a conscious process. No one can reach this state automatically. To do this one has to become one's guardian and one has to constantly purify oneself. Only in this way can a person become the soul at peace.

36

ERADICATION OF EVIL

The Quran states that good deeds eradicate evil deeds. (11:114) This means that if you have done something evil, then do something good. This will remove the effect of evil. For example, if you have called someone evil, then do some good in return. If you have harmed someone, then do some good deed to compensate for it. If you have hurt someone,

apologize to him. If you have shown arrogance to someone, bow down to him. If you have dealt with someone immorally, then deal with him morally. If you despise someone, then give him a place of honour. Such an attitude on your part will put an end to evil.

37

WHAT IS SIN?

The Prophet of Islam said, “Sin is that which pinches your heart, and while doing it, you fear lest people become aware of it.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2553) This tradition explains that this sign of sin can easily be understood by anyone. Every man has a conscience. This conscience is so sensitive that it warns a person immediately in time of evil. If a person listens to the voice of his conscience, he will never transgress. In the same way, when someone does anything wrong, he does it in secret. He tries not to let anyone know. Whenever such thoughts come to him, he should understand that he is going to do something that he should not do.

THE RIGHTS OF NEIGHBOURS

The Prophet of Islam said, “By God, he is not a believer whose neighbour is not safe from his evils.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 46) Wherever a man is, he is always with someone. They are his neighbours. Neighbours have a right not to experience any harm from him. In other words, this teaching means that every human being in the world should remain a peaceful person. He must be very careful that he does not cause any harm to the people around him. The benefit of being a peaceful man is that others do not get a chance to complain. If people around you complain about something, it means that you are hurting others; then you should stop doing such things as are hurtful to them.

COMPASSION FOR THE YOUNG AND RESPECT FOR THE ELDERLY

The Prophet of Islam said that one who does not show compassion to the younger ones and respect for the elders is not one of us. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith

No. 7073) This hadith explains what noble morals are and how they should be established in a society.

In every society, some are junior and others are senior in terms of age as well as in many other respects. For example, in school and college, a teacher's status is higher than those of the students. How do we live in moderation in such a society? The simple principle is that the elders treat the younger ones with kindness and compassion, and the younger ones treat their elders with respect and dignity. In a society where people observe these two principles, everyone will be happy and have a good opinion about one another.

40

FULFILLING THE CONTRACT

The Quran enjoins the believers to fulfil a covenant one has made. (2:40) We will be questioned before God about the covenant. This shows that the covenant is not just a matter between two people. God is also involved in this matter as a third party.

The importance of fulfilling a covenant (agreement) is so great that man either should not make a covenant

with anyone or if he makes one, he must fulfil it. Not making a covenant is not a crime. But not fulfilling it is a serious crime. Breaking even one covenant is such a great crime that it is tantamount to breaking all human covenants. Why is every breach of contract or covenant a breach of all human covenants? This is because the whole system of social justice is based on respecting covenants. If respect for covenants is lost, the atmosphere of justice in society will come to an end.

41

RECOMPENSE FOR GOODNESS

The Prophet of Islam said, “When a person does good to you, try to recompense him. And if you cannot recompense him, then pray to God for him.” (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, Hadith No. 5109)

It is gentlemanly behavior that when another person does a good deed to you, you should do good to him in return. If you aren't able to do so, then you should make the best prayers to God for him.

NOT REJOICING OVER ANOTHER'S SUFFERING

The Prophet of Islam said: “Do not rejoice over the suffering of your brother. It is possible that God may have mercy on him and put you in trouble.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2506)

This tradition deters people from committing such moral evils as this may result in their destruction. We must feel empathy for those who experience suffering and challenges.

One should, if he can, help him or at least pray for him. On the contrary, rejoicing in the suffering of others is akin to debasing oneself. Without a doubt, that is the worst form of moral perversion.

Exulting over others' suffering is extremely displeasing to God. God is so enraged at such an inhuman response that He relieves the suffering of that person and makes that misfortune fall on the one who exulted at others' suffering. This is, without doubt, the worst form of anyone's misfortune.

HAVING A GOOD OPINION

The Prophet of Islam said that having a good opinion of someone is also a form of worship. It is such a great act that it is equal to worship. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 7956)

Forming the good opinions of others is a difficult task. When one lives with others, such situations arise which are likely to create misgivings. Owing to this a negative image of another person is formed in our minds. Remaining positive in such situations is not easy.

Only that person can think positively without negative assumptions and remains positive despite negative situations. One who has a high moral capacity would not develop misunderstanding even when he hears bad news about someone.

ON ACKNOWLEDGING FAVOR

The Prophet of Islam said that one who is not thankful to man would not be thankful to God either. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 7504) Giving

thanks means acknowledging a favor. If one has this quality, it will manifest itself in the affairs regarding both men as well as God. A person can't be grateful to one while being ungrateful to another.

Acknowledging a favor is a noble human quality. This is called thanksgiving. God has bestowed upon man the greatest favors. Therefore, every human being should give thanks to God the most. The sign of this gratitude is shown in man's acknowledgement of the favors of the people in his daily life. If this acknowledgment is lacking in a person, then it is a sign that he is not thankful even in the matter of God's blessings. Gratitude in the case of God and ingratitude in the case of man cannot coexist in the heart of a person. There will be either gratitude for both God and human beings or no gratitude for either of them.

REGRETTING A MISTAKE

The Prophet of Islam said that every human being is a sinner and the best sinner is the one who regrets his mistake. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 13049) This shows that what is wrong is not making a mistake

rather the refusal to admit it is a bigger mistake. Admitting one's mistakes is not a sign of weakness but a sign of maturity. The present world is designed for the purpose of the test. Here man has to live in such situations as he is likely to make mistakes over and over again. Therefore, the identity of a true person is not that he never makes a mistake, but instead, it is that he does not persist in repeating it. Immediately after making a mistake, his conscience awakens and he becomes deeply ashamed of it. Making mistakes should be a means of awakening the spirit of accountability in a person.

46

THE VOICE OF THE CONSCIENCE

Once one of the companions of the Prophet of Islam asked him about good and evil. The Prophet replied that one should seek the fatwa (opinion) from one's own heart. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 18006) This means that one should ask oneself if one wants to know the answer. Good is that which comforts your heart, and evil is that which disturbs your heart. There

is an innate quality in man—his conscience. One's conscience is like a Court of truth. Our conscience immediately tells us what is right and what is wrong; in other words, which attitude is right and which attitude is wrong. If a man only listens to the voice of his conscience, it will suffice to guide him.

Our conscience always does its job; it tells us on every occasion what is right and what is wrong. If a person is not negligent, his conscience is well-equipped to keep him on the path of truth.

47

RETURN THE TRUST

The Quran urges, “O people, pay the trust to the trustees.” (4:58) This Quranic command relates to the whole of life.

One form of trust is that if one has another's property as a trust, it is obligatory for them to deliver it to its owner. In the same way, a teacher of a school is also a trustee, and the students are in his trust. The teacher must understand his responsibility and should not neglect the rights of the students entrusted to him. In

the same way, when a person becomes the ruler of a country, that country has come under his trust and he has become its trustee. In such a case, the ruler must fulfill the expectations of the people.

48

PEACE CULTURE

One of the teachings of Islam is that when a person meets someone, both should greet each other. (*Sunan an-Nasai*, Hadith No. 10078) That is, they should say “peace be upon you” to each other. Islam is a culture of peace, and saying “peace be upon you” is a symbol of this culture.

The teaching of Islam is that there should be feelings of mercy and compassion for the other in the heart of every person. Every person should desire a peaceful life for another. Every person should strive to make society a symbol of peace and security. This is the basic teaching of Islam. The fact is that all the teachings of Islam are directly or indirectly based on the principle of peace because, without it, no constructive work can be done. Where there is no peace, there will

be no development. Peace is as important to the development of society as water is to the fertility of the land.

49

PACIFISM

The Prophet of Islam, in one of his admonitions, said, “Do not desire confrontation with the enemy but seek forgiveness from God.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2966) This tradition gives a basic principle of life, which is important both for the individual as well as the nation. When a person lives a community life, differences arise amongst one another. Differences sometimes lead to confrontations. But it is not right that if someone appears to be an enemy, one should start fighting. Instead, the right way is to live peacefully and avoid confrontation, whatever the cost.

The peaceful way is applicable in all situations. The only requirement is that a person should not suffer from a negative psyche even when faced with a hostile situation.

PEACEFUL CITIZEN

The Prophet of Islam said that a Muslim is one whose hand and tongue people are safe. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 8931) This means that the true servant of God is the one who lives as a non-violent person in society. He should not utter such words as may hurt others. That is, no one should experience harm from him. This is the minimum standard of humanity. The highest level of humanity is for men and women to live in a society in such a way as they may benefit each other. And if they cannot benefit others, then at least they should not become problem persons for others in the society.

When a man harms others with his words or his hand, he falls from the level of humanity to the level of an animal. The true standard of humanity is that man should be so sensitive that he cannot afford to be harmful to others.

A person who is sensitive in this matter will not find any happiness in harming others. If he ever harms anyone, he will think, "I have lowered myself below the level of humanity", and will try to make up for the

loss. He will not be content until he has apologized or made up for his inadequacy.

51

AVOID HARM

The Prophet of Islam said that in Islam there should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 2865) This tradition of the Prophet of Islam explains an important collective principle. This principle applies to both men and women, to individuals and the community, to national life, and international life.

In the present age, every human being has to live in different situations, both favorable and unfavorable. There is a comprehensive rule for how men and women should live in such situations. First, every individual should be harmless to others, and second, he should live so carefully that no one else gets a chance to harm him.

GREATER POWER

The Prophet of Islam said that God grants to gentleness what He does not grant to harshness. (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2593) A law of nature is stated in these words. That is, the Creator has made the world in such a way that it works with gentleness and non-violence, not with harshness and violence. Gentleness and non-violence yield useful results, while harshness and violence bear no fruit.

Adopting the attitude of harshness and violence may vent his anger, but it is not useful for any constructive purpose. Constructive work requires a mechanism that may continue once initiated. This attribute of sustainable action is found only in non-violent methods.

RECONCILIATION IS BETTER

The Quran addresses people that in a dispute reconciliation rather than confrontation is the best course of action. (4:128) It is common in life that

conflict arises between individuals. In such situations, there are two possible ways for people. One is to try to resolve it through confrontation and violence, and the other is to seek reconciliation through peaceful negotiations, thus putting an end to the conflict at an early stage.

It is a fact that the policy of reconciliation brings benefits to both sides. The method of conflict always produces the opposite result. It will only serve to deepen mutual hatred. And so far as the real problem is concerned, it can never be resolved. If people look at the results of disputes, they would not have taken the path of confrontation, because, it leads man to nothing but destruction.

SOCIAL SERVICE

The Quran states that the have-nots have a right to the wealth of the haves. (51:19) However, there are two kinds of poor, those who ask verbally, and those who do not express their need. Therefore, the latter must be paid special attention, their needs should be addressed.

The believers should not consider that they alone have the right to their earnings. They become the rightful owners only when they have given to the poor and the needy their share from it. This Islamic teaching makes every human being a servant of his society. He considers it his duty to give to the society from which he takes everything for himself.

A beggar is a person who lives by asking for money or food, while the deprived are especially the ones who have become disabled for some reason. According to Islam, serving people with disabilities is not just a social service; rather it entitles one to make themselves worthy of God's mercy.

55

ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE EQUAL

The Prophet of Islam said, "Listen, all people are descendants of Adam and Eve, and Adam was made of dust." (*Sunan Abu Dawood*, Hadith No. 5116) This tradition is a declaration that all human beings are equal. There may be some apparent differences, but in reality, there is no difference between one another.

This tradition explains an important principle of human relations, that is, equality. When all human beings are born of the same material, and all are the offspring of one man and one woman, then the distinction between them disappears on its own. According to this, all men are brothers to each other, and all women are sisters to each other. This principle destroys all the foundations of any distinction between human beings.

56

THE IMPORTANCE
OF CONSULTATION

The Quran emphasizes the importance of consultation in all matters. (3:159) We learn from traditions that the Prophet of Islam always consulted people in his dealings. What is a consultation? Consultation is to seek people's opinions on any issue that may arise. In this way, every man's knowledge and experience come to the fore, and it becomes possible to solve the issue in a better way with a more accurate plan. What is done without consultation is based on the thinking of one person, while what is

done after consultation includes the thinking of many people.

Consultation is another name for collective thinking. The difference that exists between the individual and collective thinking is the same as found in the work with consultation and the work without consultation. It happens for various reasons that one person's mind is not able to understand every aspect of the matter. Consultation compensates for this shortcoming. The consultation makes it possible to reach a more accurate opinion in matters, taking precautions to reduce avoidable mistakes in advance. Consultation is thus an important part of successful planning.

57

NOT PERMISSIBLE TO STOP TALKING FOR MORE THAN THREE DAYS

The Prophet of Islam said that it is not permissible for a man to stop talking to his brother for more than three days. (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2560) This means that if there is a quarrel with someone and it reaches the situation of cutting off talks, one

can be excused for a maximum of three days. It is not permissible to hold off talking to the person for more than three days. In this case, the three-day leave is given because the anger can last for a maximum of three days. Thereafter, it becomes a question of ego. One can be forgiven for anger, but one cannot be forgiven for egotism. Anger is a natural weakness that arises temporarily, but egotism is evil and a matter of rebellion. That is why anger is forgivable but not egotism and rebellion. A man may have an excuse for temporary anger, but egotism and disobedience are crimes for which no excuse is permissible by God.

58

VERIFYING BEFORE ACCEPTING

The Quran commands that when you find any news about someone, first investigate it. (49:6) This shows that accepting any news without investigation is an irresponsible act.

People usually tend to accept what they have heard or read. However, experience shows that often news presenters air the news without knowing the whole

story, while later research reveals that the news was incomplete and conclusions drawn from that were also incomplete.

Accepting any news without research often causes harm and creates misgivings. People form wrong opinions about each other so much so that the wrong news can sometimes become a cause of friction. In such a situation, it is our responsibility to thoroughly investigate the news before accepting it. No news should be considered authentic without carrying out proper research.

59

ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE BROTHERS

The Prophet of Islam said, “O God, I bear witness that all humans are brothers and sisters to each other.” (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, Hadith No. 1508) This tradition explains the basis of human relationships. According to this, people all over the world are like one family. Everyone should treat others the same way as they treat their brothers and sisters. This is the principle of a global community. This principle

eliminates the division between us and them. This principle binds the entire human race in a stronger relationship, and no other relationship is stronger than this.

60

THREE FORBIDDEN THINGS

The Prophet said that three things of one person are forbidden to another person: his blood, his property, and his honor. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1739) This principle sets the boundaries of freedom between one person and another. Every human being is free, but his freedom ends when he becomes a threat to others' life, property, and honor.

Man has been given freedom in this world because without freedom, there can be no progress. But this freedom is not unlimited. A man has freedom as long as he does not harm the life, property, and honor of another. His freedom will end when he becomes a threat to others in these three things. He will be deprived of his God-given right to freedom.

EVERYONE IS HELD RESPONSIBLE

The Prophet of Islam said, “Listen, every one of you is a shepherd. And every one of you will be asked about your flock.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 893) In this hadith, we are told about a fact of life with the example of a shepherd and a flock. Just like a shepherd has a flock, every human being has a flock according to his circumstances, and he should fulfil his responsibility in herding this flock.

For example, for the eldest member of a household, his family is his herd or flock. He must take care of his family. Similarly, a school or college teacher is responsible for his students. He must fulfil his academic responsibility to the best of his ability. Similarly, a leader is responsible for his followers. He must be their well-wisher in the full sense. Similarly, the president of an organization is responsible for the people belonging to his organization. He must fulfil his responsibilities towards the institution concerned.

HELP EVERYONE

The Prophet said, “Help your brother whether he is an oppressor or oppressed. People asked, ‘We know how to help the oppressed, but how can we help the oppressor?’ The Prophet said, ‘Stop the oppressor from his oppression.’” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2444) Islam wants to instill in every human being the spirit of well-wishing towards other human beings, helping people is its practical form. The help of the oppressed is to save him from oppression. Helping the oppressor is to prevent him from his act of oppression. Stopping oppression does not mean starting a confrontation with him. The real help of the oppressor is to pray for his correction. He should be kindly advised; to create conditions so that he may realize his mistake and agree to give up oppression. Helping the oppressor does not mean hating the person, rather it means doing good to him. Hatred increases oppression, and benevolence puts an end to it.

GENTLE DEMEANOR

The Prophet of Islam sent his companions on an expedition and advised them to be gentle with people, the reason being they were sent as facilitators, not as troublemakers. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3038) This hadith is related to all those who work in different fields. An officer must work with his subordinates on the same principle. A teacher has to follow this same principle dealing with his students. A manager has to deal with his company along the same lines, and so on.

Everyone should keep this advice in mind. A person has been sent by God wherever he finds himself. He should not intend to get people in trouble; he should find a way to make things easier for them.

FORMULA FOR MERCY

The Prophet of Islam said, “Have mercy on the people of the earth. The one in heaven will have mercy on you”. (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, Hadith No.

4941) It is a simple principle that instills in men and women a passion to perform good deeds that never end. Every human being needs God's help in different stages of life, it is impossible to be successful in this world without this. The easiest way to make a person deserving is to give to others what he wants God to give to himself. If he wants God to help him, he should also be a helper of others. If he wants God to be kind to him, he should be kind to others. If he wants God to forgive him for his shortcomings, he should also overlook the shortcomings of others.

Dealing with someone with kindness and compassion is like saying to God: "O God, I have dealt with your servants with kindness and compassion, so deal with me with kindness and compassion."

MUTUAL RESPECT

Addressing the Prophet of Islam, the Quran states: "O people, your religion is for you, and my religion is for me." (109:6) This verse explains how to create a harmonious environment in a society where people of diverse religious traditions coexist. The

simple formula which applies to such situations is ‘to follow one and respect all.’

This is the only valid principle of maintaining peace in a multi-religious society. In this world of differences, it is not possible to eliminate differences. In such a situation there is only one viable solution, and that is tolerance. That is, give everyone the right to choose the religion or culture of their choice. We can hold a peaceful dialogue with each other on the issue of differences, but trying to eliminate the differences will only create more differences.

66

RESPECTING ALL RELIGIONS

Some Jewish tribes lived in Madinah during the time of the Prophet of Islam. One day the Prophet saw a funeral procession passing by. He was seated at that time. Seeing the funeral, he stood up in deference. One of his companions asked, “O Messenger of God, this was the funeral of a Jew.” The Prophet replied: “Was he not a human being?” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1312)

This tradition shows that man must be respectable to everyone in all circumstances. Whether he is a Jew or of any other religion or culture, we cannot be disrespectful towards others whatever the reason. The fact is that every human being is created by the same God. Therefore, all human beings are equally respectable.

67

FRIEND IN FOE

The Quran says that if a person sees you as his enemy, do not retaliate against him, rather, treat him well. (41:34) This unilateral behavior will result in turning your enemy into your friend. This teaching of Islam shows that enmity is not permanent. The fact is that there is a potential friend in every enemy. Make this possibility a reality with your unilateral good behavior, and you will turn your enemy into your friend.

Responding with kindness awakens a man's conscience, and when this happens, he will leave enmity and become your friend.

LACK OF GENTLENESS

The Prophet of Islam said, “He who is deprived of gentleness is deprived of every good.” (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, Hadith No. 4809) This tradition explains a comprehensive moral principle: observing kindness in dealing with others.

One who adopts the way of gentleness will always be successful in every matter, for no one is an enemy of such a person. On the contrary, if a person does not show leniency in dealing with others, everything will go wrong because everyone will complain about him. He will have to live amongst enemies and adversaries. He will be involved in unnecessary problems both inside and outside the house.

THE IMPORTANCE
OF SIMPLICITY

The Prophet of Islam said that simplicity is a part of faith. Simplicity is the way of a purposeful person. (*Sunan Abu Dawood*, Hadith No. 4161) A purposeful

person cannot afford to devote a portion of his time and energy to pursuing a luxurious lifestyle. Simplicity means limiting your needs to the bare minimum while avoiding unnecessary engagements. Simplicity is a superior solution. Simplicity enables a person to lead a purposeful life. No part of his life should be wasted on anything other than achieving his goal.

The most important thing for one's intellectual development is that the process of thinking within him should continue uninterrupted. Simplicity is helpful in this mental process. Simplicity clears the human mind from distractions.

70

THE IMPORTANCE OF CLEANLINESS

The Prophet of Islam said that cleanliness is a branch of faith. (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 328) This tradition shows how important it is to be clean and to keep one's environment clean in Islam.

Islam, by its very nature, is to purify one's heart and soul. It is to give up one's evil thoughts and start living

in positive thoughts. Islam teaches us to purify one's inner being with good thoughts just like a person purifies his body by washing it with water.

When a man cleans his interior, he naturally wants his exterior to be clean as well. He should take care of his body and his clothes. He should try to keep his home and his environment clean. Cleanliness will then become an integral part of his nature.

71

THE MIDDLE PATH

The Prophet of Islam said that the middle path is the best. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith, No. 3560)

In today's world, man has to coexist with many people. In such a situation, the best method is the one in which one's path is not blocked by any obstacles, and without coming into collision with anyone. This is called the middle path, a moderate method that is always practical. In this way, one can move forward without putting oneself in great danger. In this path, nothing will shatter his whole plan, he will continue his journey to completion.

ELEVATION THROUGH HUMILITY

The Prophet of Islam said that God will exalt those who adopt the way of humility. (*Sunan ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 4176) It is a law ordained by God. Humility opens the door to progress for man, whereas the way of arrogance leads man to lowliness. Spirituality awakens noble human qualities in those who are humble. They begin to receive divine inspiration, which makes them appreciate nature more fully. They can see things as they are.

A humble approach awakens the conscience of his opponent. As a result, the latter is compelled to acknowledge his moral greatness.

Humility is just an attitude. Man does not have to spend anything on it. He gains everything without losing. If the attitude of arrogance is false, the attitude of humility is true humanity.

EXTRAVAGANCE

The Quran forbids extravagance, which is spending without real need. (7:31) The Prophet of Islam said that it is also an extravagance to eat whatever you feel like eating. (*Sunan ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 3352)

It is man's legitimate right to spend on real needs. But no one enjoys the right to spend out of desire and pleasure. God has given someone surplus wealth, not for spending it only on himself. Wealth is God's trust, and he should spend it only on the things God has ordained for him. The man who rejects such a lifestyle is as if he has not fulfilled God's trust.

COLLECTIVE BLESSING

The Prophet of Islam said that one person's food is enough for two people, and two people's food is enough for three people. (*Sunan ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 3255) This tradition explains the blessing of living together and acting together.

The example of food in this tradition is just a symbolic example. This tradition deals with all matters of life. If people work together and stay together, even a few people can achieve big goals. Many people will be able to benefit even with small investments, and with fewer resources. If each man did his work separately, he would receive a benefit only to a limited extent. But if these people collaborate, then everyone will benefit from each other.

75

THE DEMAND FOR JUSTICE

The Prophet of Islam once took a loan from a man in Madinah. Then one day, this man came and used harsh language while demanding the Prophet of Islam to pay off his debt. The companions of the Prophet of Islam wanted to punish him for his insolence. But the Prophet stopped them. He said that the rightful owner has the right to speak. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2306)

This is a lesson in dealing gently with others. If for some reason, the other person becomes angry or

speaks harshly, the listeners should deal with him patiently. If a man cannot tolerate harsh words, he should not even borrow from others. After taking a loan, however, he must give the lender the right to express his feelings as he wishes. In this case, the borrower should exercise restraint. He cannot, on the contrary, advise the lender to be patient.

76

TAKING MORE THAN YOUR RIGHT

The Prophet once said that if two men approach me with a land dispute, and the land is given to the one who cleverly puts forward a false case, then it is as if he has been given a piece of fire. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 26717)

This shows that when something doesn't belong to someone, and even if he gets a court order in his favor, it will not be his. No court decision can change reality and the truth.

The fact is that illegal possession of something is wrong, and no court decision can justify a wrong. If a

person's conscience says that he possesses something that is not his, then the right thing for him to do is to hand it over to the rightful owner and not expropriate another person's right. A person's conscience is the ultimate court. The biggest decision is that which is issued by the court of conscience.

77

THE SAME IN RETURN

A tradition of the Prophet of Islam reported in books of Hadith reads: "A believer chooses for others what he likes for himself." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 13) This is a very comprehensive principle of social ethics. Everyone knows what kind of behaviour they like and what kind of behaviour they don't like for themselves. This is what one should do with others. One should treat others as one would like to be treated and avoid treating others as one would not like for oneself.

This principle of social morality is so simple and natural that it is known to every man and woman. All that is needed is for everyone to be sensitive in

this matter. The sensitivity one shows towards oneself should be the same shown towards others. If people grasp this simple moral principle, society will become one of goodness and peace.

78

ECONOMIC STABILITY

Once the Prophet of Islam observed: “When God makes a source of sustenance for someone, he should not give it up on his own except if one has to because of the compulsion of one’s circumstances.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 20649) According to the teachings of Islam, sustenance belongs to God. Therefore, when a person finds a source of sustenance, he should give thanks to God and stick to it. If he leaves it without a real reason, he will lose God’s favor.

Perseverance is the secret to success in life. This tradition teaches us perseverance and stability. Success in economic life is always achieved through hard work. A man should look to the future instead of the present. This tradition tells us that we should not feel discouraged by looking at the present situation. Rather

we should make efforts to create a temperament of foresight in economic activities.

79

PROVISION FROM GOD

The Quran states that the sustenance of all living beings on earth is the responsibility of God. (11:6) The Prophet of Islam has also observed that no one could take away what God has destined for a man or a woman. No one can reduce it or increase it. (*Al-Mujam al-Kabir*, Hadith No. 7694) This declaration is a guarantee to every man and woman that no one is going to take their blessings away. A person with this conviction will receive two benefits. Firstly, he will have the confidence that whatever he has will not be taken away from him. Secondly, with this belief, he will work with the confidence that he will bear the fruits of his efforts and that no one is strong enough to stand between him and his provision. This sustenance is a right that the Lord of the worlds has decreed for man, and no one can have it canceled.

This belief removes the feeling of despair from inside a person. He can stand in the midst of issues and say,

“Someone can take away my job from me, but no one is strong enough to take away my destiny.”

80

CONTENTMENT

The Prophet of Islam once observed, “Successful is the one whom God has provided sustenance according to his needs, and he is satisfied with that provision.” (*Sunan ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 4138) It becomes clear from this observation that the secret of success lies in being content with what one has received instead of grieving over what one has not received. Whenever a person in the world tries to earn according to the right principles, he will earn enough to meet his needs. If he agrees to what he has earned, he will get the benefit in the form of peace of mind. But peace always comes from contentment, which means being satisfied with what one receives.

On the contrary, a person who underestimates what he has received and keeps running towards what he did not have will never be satisfied. For there is no limit to things in the world, no matter how many things a

person accumulates, there will still be something that he will be tempted to acquire. In that way, he will always be greedy for more and more. Consequently, he will live a life of restlessness until the day he dies.

81

DON'T ASK ANYONE

It is recorded in a tradition of the Prophet of Islam that one should not ask anything from anyone because the upper hand is better than the lower hand. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1429) This teaching pertains to a higher humanity. It is the essence of higher humanity that man should be self-reliant and not ask for anything from others.

Asking for things is not a simple matter; it is a sign of moral decay. The man who asks of others is as if he wants to live on easy sustenance. Such a man will have to pay the price for his habit of asking others for fulfilling his needs. And that is why he will not be able to develop his potential. His hidden powers will remain suppressed in him, and the spirit of hard work will cool down in him. He will suffer from a weakness

called ease. The right way to live is to trust oneself and be accustomed to hard work. One should try to stand on his own feet. One should be the giver, not a receiver.

82

TRADE IS A MAJOR SOURCE OF LIVELIHOOD

The Prophet of Islam once observed, “Ninety percent of provision lies in trade.” (*Kanzul Ummal*, Hadith No. 9342) A law of nature is stated here that according to God’s creation plan, the greatest share of sustenance has been placed in trade.

This tradition is a treasure of hope for every man. If a man is not able to find a job, or he does not get inheritance rights, or he does not expect to find anything from other sources, then he should start a business. He will get more funds through trade than he can from any other source.

LIVELIHOOD

The Prophet of Islam said that Allah loves His servant who earns his livelihood through hard work. (*Al-Maqasidul Hasanah*, Hadith No. 246) This tradition explains the importance of earning a living. Making a living by working hard is not a simple matter. The fact is that hard work is the source of all human virtues. The provision of labor is the most lawful. Earning a living from hard work makes a person grounded in reality. The provision of hard work creates a temperament of simplicity in a person. Hard work saves a person from ease. Hard work is an important means of developing one's personality. Even if there is no compulsion, man should adopt the method of hard work for his life. In all circumstances, he should refrain from seeking a life of ease.

CONTROL ON THE TONGUE

The Prophet of Islam said that it is enough for a man to be a liar to repeat everything he hears. (*Musnad al-Bazzar*, Hadith No. 8201) This tradition

explains an important principle of etiquette, which is that man should never speak without thinking.

In social life, we often hear a lot of negative things about others. We know from experience that when something heard is repeated, the narrative can be distorted so much that often the original version is completely lost. Therefore, man should never repeat things based on just listening. However, there is nothing wrong with repeating good news, but if it is bad news, it should not be repeated until the whole thing has been properly investigated.

85

ATONEMENT FOR BACKBITING

The Prophet of Islam said that one way of expiating for backbiting is to ask forgiveness from God for the one whom you have backbitten. (*Al-Maqasidul Hasanah*, Hadith No. 804) Backbiting means mentioning any bad quality in a person in his absence, something that the other person would dislike.

Backbiting is an act of malice. When a man makes the mistake of backbiting, he should engage himself in an

act of goodwill for the man whom he has backbitten. One form of goodwill is to pray for him. Such a gesture after backbiting will cleanse him of his sin.

86

A COMPREHENSIVE ADVICE

The Prophet of Islam asked one of his companions, “Shall I give you a compact piece of advice?” He said: “Yes, O Messenger of God”. The Prophet said, “Guard your tongue.” (*At-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2616)

Guarding the tongue means that a person should refrain from saying something offensive to others. He should protect himself, in all circumstances, from the evil that spreads in society. It is a fact that most social evils are spread through people losing control of their tongues. Controlling the tongue closes the door to all kinds of social evils. It is a sign of seriousness that a person should always use his language carefully. Misuse of language appears when a person harms others, speaks harshly to others, finds fault in others, and spreads rumors about others.

PATIENCE AND AVOIDANCE

Patience is one of the teachings of Islam. The Quran repeatedly emphasizes patience, and it further says, “And for the sake of your Lord, be patient.” (74:7) It also says, “Endure with patience; truly, your patience is possible only with the help of God.” (16:127) When a man is patient his patience is concerning other human beings, but in reality, it is synonymous with conforming to God’s creation plan. God has created the system of the world in such a way that everyone has been granted freedom. Everyone has an open environment of competition. Consequently, complaints are made against each other; one person experiences loss from the other. To endure an unpleasant experience in such a situation is to be content with God’s creation plan. Because of the importance of patience, God has described it thus: “And for the sake of your Lord, be patient.” (74:7) The Quran declares that the patient one will be rewarded beyond measure. (39:10)

UNILATERAL TOLERANCE

The Prophet of Islam said, “Forgive the one who wrongs you.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 17452)

This is a teaching of great wisdom. Oppression can end only with forgiveness. Retaliation and counter oppression can never bring oppression to an end.

This saying of the Prophet of Islam is a teaching based on result-oriented action. If a person commits an act of oppression, the oppressed should first think that his response should be to alleviate rather than increase his oppression. By thinking in this manner, the oppressed will find that forgiving the oppressor is the greatest form of revenge. Without doubt, forgetting the oppression of the oppressor is the easiest way to end oppression. Forgiving the oppressor is not an act of cowardice, rather it pertains to high moral principles. One should forgive an oppressor as a matter of principle and not out of helplessness.

THE METHOD OF AVOIDANCE

The Quran commands you to turn away from the ignorant and the foolish. (7:199) This is a very important principle for living a successful life in today's world. In the world of plants, there are thorns with flowers, while in the human world, there are many ignorant people among the enlightened. Just as in the world of plants, a man takes flowers without being entangled with thorns. Similarly, in the human world, one has to continue one's life's journey without becoming entangled with the ignorant.

One cannot succeed by involving oneself with the ignorant. Therefore, the best wisdom is to avoid an ignorant person and move on. No one can erase the existence of the ignorant from the world. However, it is always possible for everyone to continue to build their lives by keeping away from the ignorant. The avoidance of the ignorant puts out the fire, rather than kindle it.

SUCCESS IN PATIENCE

The Prophet of Islam said, “Know that success comes with patience.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 2803) This tradition explains the extraordinary importance of patience. Patience is a stepping stone to all kinds of progress. The patient can never fail in this world.

In today’s world, there are ups and downs with every human being. Every human being experiences undesirable situations again and again. It is often the case that a person becomes discouraged and can feel defeated. But this is not right: in today’s world, the chances of success are so great that they never exhaust. Failure is integral to success. The purpose of patience is to save yourself from despair and wait for the next opportunity. If a person shows patience after the first failure, he will soon find that the second success is waiting for him nearby. Therefore, we should not be afraid of failure, it is a part of the road to success.

AGREEING TO LESSER EVIL

Umayr ibn Habib ibn Khamashah, a companion of the Prophet of Islam, said that he who does not tolerate the lesser evil of the ignorant would have to endure the greater evil of the ignorant. (*Al-Mujam al-Awsat*, Hadith No. 2258)

Just as there are intelligent people in today's world, there are also ignorant people. Ignorant people hurt others because of their ignorance. This is a small problem in the beginning. Wisdom requires enduring this small suffering. The man who gets entangled with the ignorant over a small affliction (lesser evil) ultimately will suffer from greater harm (greater evil).

DEFENSE THROUGH TOLERANCE

The famous companion of the Prophet of Islam, Abdullah ibn Abbas, said, "Defend the ignorance of the ignorant through tolerance." (*Tafsir al-Qurtubi*,

Vol. 15, p. 361) According to this view of Abdullah ibn Abbas, one of the proper methods of defense is to refrain from retaliation.

It happens again and again in the world that man has to face the actions of the ignorant. The method of tolerance stops such action at the very first stage. On the contrary, if we opt for the way of reaction, their evil will continue until it gets out of control.

93

DO NOT BE ANGRY

Once a believer visited the Prophet of Islam and asked him, “O Messenger of God, give me a master advice by which I may be able to manage all the affairs of my life.” The Prophet replied, “Do not be angry.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6116) This is, of course, a very compact piece of advice. This is a principle which, if adopted by a person, will rectify all matters of his life.

Man always lives in society. He repeatedly undergoes unpleasant experiences that can provoke him and make him angry. When a man gets angry, the fire of hatred

and revenge ignites inside him. He takes revenge on that person, and then each revenge creates a cycle of retaliation. This leads to nothing but destruction.

To continue the journey of life successfully in such a situation, it is necessary to lift oneself above emotions like anger. One should also respond to negative situations positively.

94

SOLUTION TO ANGER

The Prophet of Islam said that if any person becomes angry and he is standing at that time, let him sit down. (*Sunan Abu Dawood*, Hadith No. 4782) If he is speaking, let him be quiet. (*Al-Musnad*, Vol. 1, p. 329) This means that a person should change the condition he is in. This change of mood will subside his anger.

Anger is a fire that burns inside a person as a result of some unpleasant experiences. Anger leads a man to adopt destructive methods, which always turns him into a loser. In such a situation, it is wise to take immediate action to calm down one's anger. With tact,

a person can overcome anger within minutes. But if anger is allowed to linger on, it can do irreparable damage to man.

It is natural to get angry. What is bad is failure to control anger. Lack of control over one's anger is self-defeating.

95

SEEKING REFUGE FROM THE DEVIL

The Prophet of Islam said, "Satan is your enemy. Whenever you feel that the devil is inciting you, say, 'O God, I seek refuge in You from the devil'." (*Kanzul Ummal*, Hadith No. 22073)

Satan is man's enemy. He wants to lead man astray. He tries to divert man from the truth by vicious whispers. Satan being invisible secretly attacks humans. Man is completely helpless against this evil attack. There is only one way to avoid it, which is by asking God for help. God promises that whenever a man seeks refuge in God from Satan, God will grant him refuge. That is the only solution to this problem.

WHO IS POWERFUL?

The Prophet of Islam said, “A wrestler is not one who beats people in a wrestling match. Rather, a wrestler is one who controls his anger.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6114) This is undoubtedly the highest quality of a person’s strength. Beating someone in a physical competition is not a great feat; even an animal can perform such a feat. The greatest sign of a person being powerful is that when he gets angry with someone, he has complete control over himself. Despite anger, he should not go beyond the realm of humanity. Anger should not prevail over him rather he should prevail over anger.

EASE IN DIFFICULTY

According to the Quran, the Law of Nature on which this world functions, ease is always present along with difficulty. (94:5-6) Along with problems and obstacles, there are always ways out of a difficult

situation. This is the eternal Law of Nature, and it will never change.

The fact is that in this world, possibilities always exceed difficulties. One should not give way to despair when faced with problems and challenges in life. Rather one should use his intellectual ability. He will then find that there are countless possibilities for him at the same time and place. After losing one chance, one will get another, which will help him to move forward once again. The best formula for life today is to ignore problems and seize opportunities. We must try to adapt to unfavorable situations and turn failure into success through better planning.

In this world of God, one can use his intellect and turn his negatives into positives. This possibility exists for anyone who does not give up and remains optimistic even in despairing situations.

CHOOSE THE EASY WAY

Aisha, the wife of the Prophet of Islam, provides a guiding principle. She said: Whenever the Prophet had to choose between two courses, he

would always opt for the easier one. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith, No. 3560) This means that whenever the Prophet had two options before him in any matter, he would always abandon the harder option in favor of the easier one.

Thus, whenever the Prophet had to choose between avoidance and confrontation, he always abandoned the method of confrontation and opted for the method of avoidance. Similarly, when he had the opportunity to choose between war and peace, he would always opt for peace.

This is wisdom. The advantage of this wisdom is that one can save oneself from further harm and can manage his affairs successfully. In every situation, both methods are always available. But wisdom lies in following the example we find in the life of the Prophet of Islam.

VIRTUE IN SOMETHING YOU DISAPPROVE OF

The Quran states, “You may think of something offensive but that is good for you, while you may like something but that may be bad for you.” (2:216)

This verse deals with all matters of life. People usually look at things in terms of appearances; they start liking something because of outward attractiveness and reject what is not attractive in terms of appearance. But in reality, this is not the right way of judging things. It often happens that something does not look good in appearance, but in reality, it is beneficial for man. On the contrary, something might appear to be good, but its result will not be good. A man should not judge things by superficial appearances, but he should look at things in terms of deeper realities and judge accordingly.

A PRAYER

A Prayer of the Prophet of Islam is as follows, “O God, show me the truth in the form of truth and help me to follow it, and show me the falsehood in the form of falsehood and help me to avoid it, and show me things as they are.” (*Sharh al-Muntaha al-Iradat*, Vol. 3, p. 497)

The most important thing in today’s world is to possess objective thinking. This is taught in this tradition in the form of a prayer. In today’s world, man lives in such a situation that he often sees the truth in the form of falsehood and falsehood in the form of truth. In this prayer, one is asking his Lord to save him from this error. In response to his prayer, God may bless him with the insight that allows him to see things as they are. Right thinking leads to the right action, and the right action always leads to success.

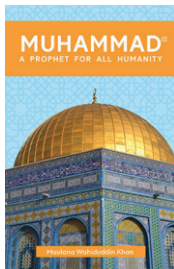
According to this prophetic prayer, human beings are not capable of seeing the truth in the form of truth and falsehood in the form of falsehood. This problem is caused by conditioning. Every human

being is brought up in a certain environment after birth. From childhood onwards, he continues to accept the effects of the environment due to his mental immaturity. This is called conditioning. After reaching the age of maturity, man has to activate his consciousness and engage in his mental deconditioning. Let him bring himself to the level of as-it-is-thinking. The greatest benefit of knowledge is that it makes a person conscious and prepares him for this self-deconditioning. This increases our conviction in the process of deconditioning. This helps us to see things as they are.

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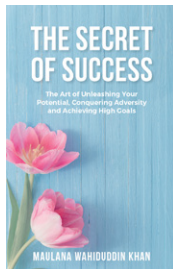
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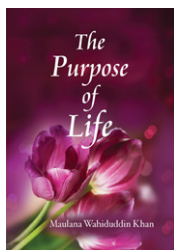


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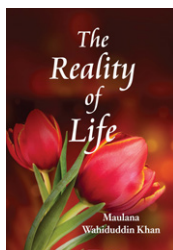
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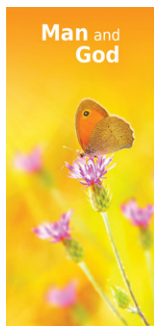


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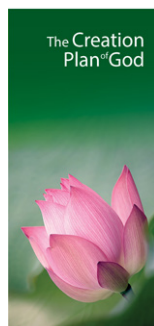
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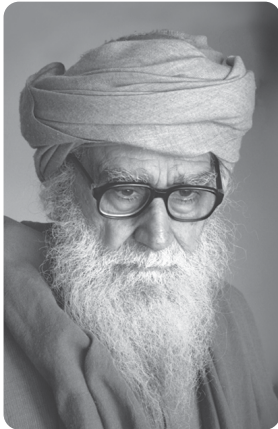
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The Prophet of Islam had a great vision that enabled him to adopt a wise approach in all his dealings. The Quran and the traditions of the Prophet of Islam serve as gems of wisdom for humanity. In his book, *100 Principles for Purposeful Living: The Traditions of the Prophet*, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan draws wisdom from the Quran and the rich prophetic traditions for the guidance of the people.

In the book, the author explains that everyone should acquire knowledge and wisdom as a priority in life. One's home should be made into a cradle of education and training for oneself and one's family. This means saving oneself from the psychology of reaction by maintaining a positive attitude, despite the negative attitudes displayed by others. In this way, the book provides wisdom for intellectual development and purposeful living.



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021) was an Islamic scholar, spiritual guide and an Ambassador of Peace. Having received international recognition for his work, the Maulana authored over 200 books and recorded thousands of lectures giving the rational interpretation of Islamic concepts, prophetic wisdom and the spiritual meaning of Quran and Islam in the contemporary style. His English translation of the Quran is widely appreciated as simple, clear and in contemporary style. He founded *Centre for Peace and Spirituality International* in 2001 to re-engineer the minds of people towards God-oriented living and present Islam in the modern idiom based as it is on peace, non-violence and spirituality.

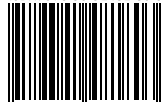
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