

# ***LIGHT UPON LIGHT***



## The Ultimate Character of a Muslim Youth

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*A Muslim Hands Uganda Limited Publication*

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Mindfulness	Wisdom, self-awareness, self-management self-actualization, observation, reflection, kindness, consciousness, compassion, gratitude, empathy, caring, growth, vision, insight, happiness, presence, authenticity, listening, sharing, interconnectedness, interdependence, oneness, acceptance, beauty, sensibility, patience, tranquillity, balance, spirituality, existentiality, social awareness, cross-cultural awareness, etc.
Courage	Bravery, determination, fortitude, confidence, risk taking, persistence, toughness, zest, optimism, inspiration, energy, vigour, zeal, cheerfulness, humour etc.
Resilience / Excellence	Perseverance, grit, tenacity, resourcefulness, spunk, self-discipline, effort, diligence, commitment, self-control, self-esteem, confidence, stability, adaptability, dealing with ambiguity, flexibility, feedback, etc.
Curiosity	Open-mindedness, exploration, passion, self-direction, motivation, initiative, innovation, enthusiasm, wonder, appreciation, spontaneity etc.
Ethics	Benevolence, humaneness, integrity, respect, justice, equity, fairness, kindness, altruism, inclusiveness, tolerance, acceptance, loyalty, honesty, truthfulness, authenticity, genuineness, trustworthiness, decency, consideration, forgiveness, virtue, love, helpfulness, generosity, charity, devotion, belonging, civic-mindedness, citizenship, equality, etc.
Leadership	Responsibility, accountability, dependability, reliability, conscientiousness, selflessness, humbleness, modesty, relationship skills, self-reflection, inspiration, organization, delegation, mentorship, commitment, heroism, charisma, followership, engagement, leading by example, goal-orientation, focus, results orientation, precision, execution, etc.

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## Prelude

### Our Hope for a Brighter Future

The youth are the strongest force in this century - in most countries, over 60% of the Muslim population is under the age of 25! In Uganda, over 75% of the population is under 35! So if you are a youth reading this, you are the future!

Contrary to what is most common in many societies, the youth are our strength, not a weakness, our foundation, not outliers or the stray, our hope, not our disappointment!

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*Prophet Muhammad S.A.W said, "I advise you to do good to young people as they have a tender heart that is keen to learn. God chose me as a prophet to make people aware of the divine mercy and to warn them of his chastisement. Young people accepted my words and pledged allegiance to me but the old refused to do so and rose to oppose me."*

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Allah chose YOU for this generation, and Allah knows best why - He blessed you with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. YOU have the potential, You have the capacity, the skills, fresh resourceful minds, a lot of courage, you are at the prime of your strength! Allah has equipped you, believe it or not, YOU are our solution, YOU are our hope, YOU are our change!

We believe in you, we need you, we are relying on you, we are betting on you, you are the future!

When you go out into the world, we pray that you do not see the world, we pray that you let the world see you.

## This Book

### Youth Challenges

The youth today are bombarded from all angles, from the left - with peer pressure pulling at you, the struggle to fit-in, social media, television, music, movies, celebrities, from the right - with the struggle to live up to expectations, trying to do what is right, from in front - worrying about what lies ahead of you, what you will do, who you will become, whether you will be successful, and from the behind - worrying about how to overcome who you have been, what have you done, not done, for some recovering from torture, abuse, bad/poor childhoods, upbringing, poverty, just to mention but a few. Then, there are the struggles from within, personal insecurities, anxiety, jealousy, the inner voices, from the right and from the left, what to do, what not to do, the voices that pull you down almost into depression, and the silent voice that lifts you up every once in a while ... not to mention the difficulty of finding good mentorship, role models, surrounded by people who criticize you and hardly ever praise, a society that uplifts immorality and puts down morality, surrounded by the promotion of self-destructive behaviours - inappropriate sexual acts, alcohol, drugs, and gangs.

**Today, life for the young quickly seizes to be a playground, and in no time turns into a battle field.**

Especially for the Muslim youth, in a world where you are looked down upon, terribly profiled, that you become so inferior to the extent that you can barely mention your first name, let alone try to practice your religion, if you know much about it.

This leads to the big questions - has the society failed it's youth? how do we, as a society prepare you, the youth to be confident enough in what you believe in, to stand up for yourselves, and for that which is right? To be tranquil and at peace from within and resist the external pressures? To aim for much higher goals and have a positive outlook to life? How do we give you a greater purpose? And the big question - Does Islam have all these answers for you?

### How To Get Best Out Of This Book

In writing of this book, the hope is not only to empower you but to create or strengthen your relationship with the Quran and Hadith.

Use this book to fall in love with the Quran - For all references in the Quran, we encourage the reader to go back to the referred verses, reads them in Arabic, reads the translation, as well as endeavours to understand through multiple interpretations & explanations, and ponders over them. In a world with a sea of apps, it's all at your fingertips - there is an app for everything.

All the good in this book is from Allah, all the wrong and mistakes made in this book, are from the writers' shortcomings and lack of information. We turn to Allah for mercy and kindly welcome your feedback should any errors come to your attention.

### **A few points to NOTE while reading**

God shall be commonly referred to as “Allah” as is the name that has been used by all prophets from time immemorial.

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W → May Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him / PBUH) will commonly be referred to as “the prophet”. All other prophets shall be mentioned by name.

# You are Valuable

## Youth in the Quran

The importance of youth is highlighted and emphasised in the Quran on multiple occasions in stories of prophets and other people ...

### The People of the Cave (aka The Seven Sleepers)

The story of the people of the cave is in the Quran, Surat *Al-Kahf*: Verses 9 - 26. In this story, Allah makes it a point to clearly mention that they were 'Youth'; this is how important they are!

Allah shows the significance of the act by these young men in His Timeless book, to be read, recited, and studied for centuries, in a *Surat* so significant that it's a *Sunnah* to read and ponder over it every Friday, a *Surat* that is to save us from the fitnah around us! What these young men did is unequivocal, this small act that would otherwise be taken lightly, is magnified by Allah - all they knew was that "God is One" and they held onto that and Allah boasts about them telling us that they were *YOUTH*, all the elders in their society did not have the spine and courage to stand up for the truth, but the youth did!

This should act as an alert to the youth, Allah, in this story, is telling you that, when you hold onto Him especially in times of greatest tribulation/temptation, like the youth of the cave did, He will come through for you with miracles you can hardly imagine and least expect, like He did for the people of the cave.

To survive through a storm or flood, taking you away, you have to hold onto something still/something that does not shift, similarly, to survive through fitnah (trials or a wave of massive social pressures), the only thing you can hold onto is the Quran; It is the only timeless permanent miracle that survived through the *Jahilia* period (Period of Ignorance) and will survive through our times, and times to come. It is the only thing that will keep us standing when we hold onto it. The people of the cave did not have a Quran, but they held onto Allah alone, how then can we not hold onto Allah when we do have the Quran! Yes, it will not be easy at all (you will have to repent continuously), but if you do not hold on, you will be washed away by social pressure. With the Quran, you achieve stability. Allah promises in the Quran;

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*As for those who strive for Us - We will guide them in our ways. God is with the doers of good. (29:69)*

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## Prophets

Most of the stories of the prophets exemplify what they did in their youthful years. Prophet Ibrahim stood up to his father's idol worshipping when he was in his youthful years, Prophet Moses fought against injustice while he was still a youth, Prophet Joseph went through his biggest trials and challenges - slavery, imprisonment, sexual harassment while he was still a youth.

## Seven under the Shade of Allah

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*Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "There are seven whom Allah will shade in His Shade on the Day when there is no shade except His shade: a just ruler; a youth who grew up in the worship of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic; a man whose heart is attached to the mosques; two men who love each other for Allah's sake, meeting for that and parting upon that; a man who is called by a woman of beauty and position (for illegal intercourse), but he says: 'I fear Allah', a man who gives in charity and hides it, such that his left hand does not know what his right hand gives in charity; and a man who remembered Allah in private and so his eyes shed tears."*

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A youth who grows up in the path of Allah is so important that the likelihood that they fall into all the remaining categories is very high. It is more likely that a youth who loves Allah will spend much time in the Mosque, and while there, they will meet and make friends at the Mosque where they spend most of their time, these friends met at the mosque will love each other for the sake of Allah. Furthermore, the youth attached to Allah, is more likely to stay away from *Zinna* (fornication or adultery), have modesty in charity, and cry in private when they remember Allah.

This hadith highlights the importance of the youthful years, Allah only places the best reward on the greatest acts, also on the most challenging acts, meaning it takes a lot of effort/courage for a youth, full of energy, in their most physically beautiful years, very courageous, without much to lose, surrounded by so much temptation; most of the worldly distractions such as games, music, clubs, drinks, fashion, et cetera, all specifically targeted to the youth, so, for the youth to focus on and hold on to Allah is impeccable.

Nevertheless, as a youth, you need to hold on - life/longevity is not a guarantee, even the young die! There is no time to waste away! Moreover, there is also greatness in a youth who might have lost his way in earlier years but later on received Allah's mercy and thus became guided back to the same path as taken by the later mentioned youth. Therefore, it is important to never look down on anyone as we never know what the future holds and who will be the ultimate winner.

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*The Prophet (PBUH) advised: 'Take benefit of five before five: your youth before your old age, your health before your sickness, your wealth before your poverty, your free time before you are preoccupied and your life before your death.' Sahih - Narrated by Ibn Abbaas & collected in al-Haakim & others.*

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Constantly read the Quran, you will find that there are many times where Allah specifically mentions 'youth' and talks about 'time', reflect on when, how, and why.

# MINDFULNESS

• IS A SUPERPOWER •



THAT  
EVERYONE  
CAN HAVE!

 teachstarter

## Mindfulness:

Awareness of Self, Surroundings,  
and Making Conscious Decisions.

## Self-Awareness: Who are YOU?

Any journey starts with oneself, change starts from within, when we want to see good in the world around us, we start by mining out the good within us. As commonly said, *A journey of a thousand miles starts with one step*, you have to harness the energy within you to make the lunge that takes you into motion. Without the faith within you, there can be no leap; when you know and understand who you are, you can develop what is within you to take that physical leap of faith.

## Creation /Understanding oneself and what's within YOU

### Your Soul/Spirit

For centuries, humankind has not come close to specifically defining the human soul/spirit, neither in psychology nor philosophy!

However, over 1400 years ago, Allah gave us the perfect definition and description of the soul/spirit in the Quran, Surat An Nur (24), Verses 35-36 saying,

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*Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knowing of all things.*

*In mosques which Allah has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned therein; exalting Him within them in the mornings and the evenings.*

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The verse has numerous interpretations, but one of them is an interpretation of who we are. You must be wondering how in the world this connects back to you, so did we! Let us take this journey together and try to unveil this parable ...

## Concept of Light

### *Physical Light*

The basic understanding of light is that which makes us see the way forward, vision itself is called 'Nur' (light), you cannot see anything in the darkness, without light, there is no beauty, no reality, no life. Light is essential to life, without light, there are no plants, nor greenery; without plants, animals cannot feed; without plants and animals, we cannot live!

Globally speaking, places without light have the highest suicide rates, people get depressed without the natural bright light. We get moody/low spirited just by waking up to a stormy day and feel cheered up when the sun finally comes out! People look forward to, and celebrate the summer times! The best vacation places in the world are embodied with sunlight for the most part of the year!

In addition to the outside light, one needs the light from within to see; even with the light outside, one cannot see with their eyes closed! Vision itself is called *Nur* - light is needed on the inside & outside.

Allah's physical/natural light is limitless, overwhelming & bright, nowhere comparable to the light created by man. We can only turn on the lamps, bulbs, chandeliers, in absence of Allah's light (sunlight/daylight); it either has to be night time, dark outside, or in a situation where the outside light is blocked from entering inside.

### *Spiritual Light*

Allah put in us a light, our *ruh*/soul/spirit, when we were in the womb - this is the light on the inside! And in the descriptive *ayah* above, Allah gave us an imagery of how it works. To light up, the soul is fuelled by Quran and Hadith which is the light from outside, like the oil of an olive tree, pure, with numerous advantages/purposes. The light on the inside (*Ruh/Soul*), needs the light on the outside (Quran) to survive. When fuelled it glows and lights up what is in its surrounding - a guided soul, guides and benefits those around them.

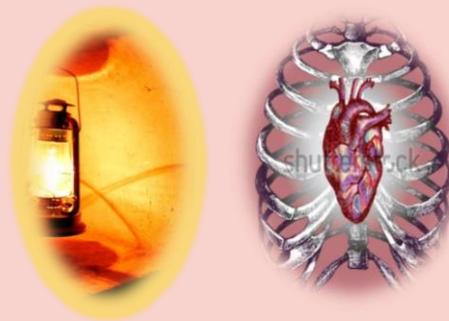
At the time of death, this spiritual light (soul) is taken away and returned back to where it came from, to Allah and on the day of judgement, the spiritual light that was lit and sustained by the light from Allah (Quran) will reunite with the ultimate source of light, Allah!

### *Parable Interpretation*

Relating this description to the human being; the human ribcage is like a niche, the lamp is in form of a heart, inside the heart is the *ruh*/spirit (wink), so pure, neither east nor west fully exposed to the sun just like the olive tree (the olive tree is popularly known in the middle east for its numerous benefits, very pure) fully exposed to the light of Allah from the beginning when all souls were in the presence of Allah.

**The Lamp → Heart:** Just like the lamp can get dirty, the heart gets dark with every sin (a black spot for every sin) but is cleaned with repentance.

**The Fuel → Ruh/Spirit:** The spirit, like fuel, is ready to catch fire, almost like fire itself. Lighting this *Ruh*/spirit is revelation, understanding Quran & Hadith. When you just start this journey, your spirit ignites beyond what you can expect and the closer you get to Allah, the more it ignites/lights up ... this is *Light Upon Light!*



### *Light Upon Light*

You already have light within you, no matter how dim it might be, it's there! And when you are ignited, first, you will light your path, see more clearly (see things for what they truly are), then you will share your light with everyone around you, especially during dark times.

You are inherently capable of greatness, but like a lamp, you need to be cleaned, lit up, and continuously fueled. Repentance cleans you up, accepting Islam (*Tawheed* - belief and dependence on the oneness of Allah) and practicing the teachings of the Quran and *Sunnah*, light and fuel you up. To keep that light shining and to increase it, you need a continuous relationship with the Quran, the more you connect with Allah's word, you slowly ignite within, you keep lighting up, giving and attracting more light!

On the day of judgement, this light will guide you across the *sirat* (narrow path across hellfire), all the way to paradise to the ultimate source of light, the creator of light, our creator, *Al-Noor*, Allah!

We are told that our beloved messenger (*Rasulullah S.A.W*) was like the sun, like the broad day light, when he was taken away, it became like the night. Without the sun, you need the lamps at night, you (Muslims) were left to light up the world. You, uniting with the Quran is *Light Upon Light*, so embrace your light, fuel it, ignite it, light up your world!

This is the root of self-awareness, the brighter your light shines, the greater your character becomes!

This is who you are .... You are not meant to follow or blend in with darkness, you were made to stand out, you were chosen by the mere fact that you are Muslim, you are the light in the midst of darkness, you are the source of change - you are a starter, you are supposed to lead, everyone else is supposed to look up and emulate you, you set the trends! You don't follow blindly because you have light with you!

You see reality when everyone else around you sees illusion, and the fact that you see reality makes you stand tall, with your head high in confidence, you have no FEAR (False Expectations Appearing Real) because fear only results from illusion. As such it doesn't matter what everyone else will say or think of you, you are stripped of illusion! You depend on Allah alone and only seek to please Him, you are only a slave of Allah, and not a slave to anybody or anything else!

Your worries fade when you deeply internalize the fact that God is in control, He is Al-Wakeel (the Disposer of all Affairs)

### **The Dimming Light**

Now that you know how to ignite and increase the light, what do you do to prevent it from dimming, what will darken your lamp? At the very least, how do you keep it constant? Anything that displeases Allah darkens your heart (lamp), anything that wastes away your time that is not beneficial dims your light. We are not paying enough attention to what is inside ourselves, we are deluded by the parties, movies, selfies, video games, shoes, social media, gadgets, hanging out, generally by time wasters / killing time.

We need to worry more about this light within us, develop a constant relationship with Allah, the Quran, the prayer places - recite anything you know from the Quran, no matter how small, it still has some light.

Without this light, the laws will not mean anything to you, obedience to the commands of Allah will not mean anything, you will not feel anything in your heart - it will be filled with darkness. Without addressing your spiritual needs, your perceived success in your life will not mean anything to you, it will not bring you the happiness you desire.

Address your spiritual needs and everything else in your life will have blessings in it; you will excel in your studies, your career, and your relationships with parents, teachers, and friends. First, soften your heart, light your soul, and obeying the commands of Allah will get easier and easier with time.

## Making Conscious Decisions - Internal Control System

Now that we know what is in the heart, it is easy to understand that it should guide us, a soft heart will react to good with peace, and shall be disturbed by evil.

It is reported in Forty Hadith of Nawawi - Hadith 27 - A good hadith transmitted from the Musnads of the two Imams, Ahmed bin Hanbal and Al-Darimi, with a good chain of authorities ...

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*On the authority of Wabisa bin Mabad, may Allah be pleased with him, who said: I came to the messenger of Allah and he said: You have come to ask about righteousness? I said: Yes. He said: Consult your heart. Righteousness is that about which the soul feels tranquil and the heart feels tranquil, and wrongdoing is that which wavers in the soul and moves to and from in the breast even though people again and again have given you their legal opinion (in its favour).*

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### The Pursuit

As humans, we only judge what we can see. We do not see effort, we see results, so by default, we judge results. However, our creator values effort, only He can see and judge effort, how much time and energy you put in, how much focus, how much you push yourself, how hard you work, that is what God rewards and that is what matters. **As Muslims, we are a people of pursuit.** Allah tells us in the Quran that we (as human beings) shall have nothing for ourselves in the hereafter except for the pursuit we made. Never underestimate your efforts, because no one can judge your efforts, only Allah will.

So what are you pursuing? What is your life going to mean? When you have pursuit, Allah will give you everything else that is mentioned below... from happiness, to money, to excellence and impact. Allah promises in the Quran, that your effort shall be seen. Stop being lazy, get up and do more, and more, and more.

All it takes from you is the quality of your efforts. The results will come from Allah, BUT on His own terms, His own schedule, not yours!

Now let us look at the different levels of pursuit (as explained by Ustadh Nouman Ali Khan), what we normally seek to get or the reason behind why we do what we do. Starting from the least to the highest, noting that the higher we go, the more effort or hard work required, the more sacrifices, the tougher it gets. Also, the higher we go up the ladder, the less people we find in these categories.

**8. The Pursuit of Happiness:** many seek happiness, it is easy to get happiness, it does not take much to be happy; anything in the short term can get you there, like watching a movie, hanging out with friends, sleeping in, etc. However, the mere fact that it is a short term goal means the feeling will not last, it will keep leaving you as much as you keep running after it. This is one of the reasons why Allah does not talk about the pursuit of happiness in the Quran. The

utmost goal in the Quran is contentment, being at peace. Allah tells us to be content and grateful with what we have, and in return He promises to give us more.

True Happiness: On the other hand, there is longer lasting happiness, the kind that puts you at peace. According to Jose Anderson, in his book about *Principles of Happiness*, he states that for one to achieve true happiness, they have 3 needs to be met - **Something to love, Something to do, and Something to look forward to**. In the Quran, Allah gave us the answer to these - **to ultimately LOVE Allah, to Worship Allah (something to do), and to work for the hereafter (something to look forward to)**.

**7. The Pursuit of Cool:** higher than the pursuit of happiness is the need to fit in, blend in, be like everybody else. This is when you would rather follow blindly than be questioned or stand out because your goal is the please people, so what you care for is what people think of you. This is certainly not the place to be for a Muslim, we do not follow blindly and we care more about what Allah thinks of us than what people think of us. Allah's expectations are greater.

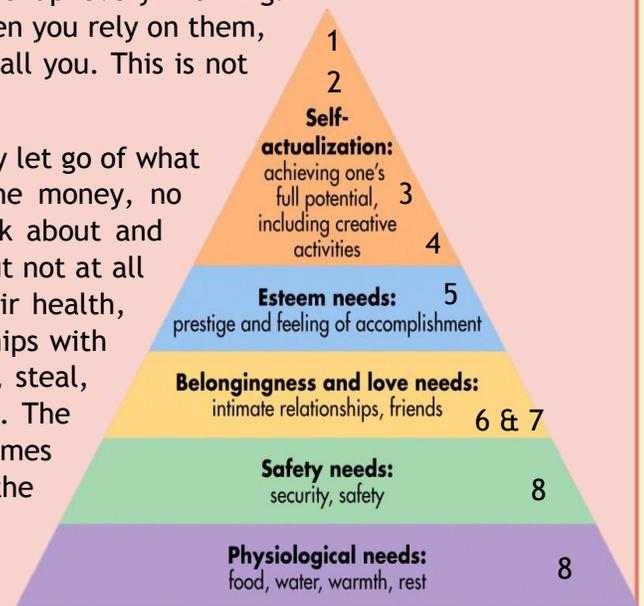
**6. Pursuit of Popularity:** better than seeking to blend in, is at least the need to be better than everyone else, to set the trends, be the coolest guy or girl in class, school or at work. It is the need to be the centre of attention, it is the need to have the most likes on Facebook, twitter, the most and best looking selfies. Unfortunately, this pursuit is still based on the need to please people, caring about what people think at all costs, it is the level where one wants to be the one laughing at those who seem to be below them or different from them.

**5. Pursuit of Prestige:** at this level, you do not just want to be the best among your peers, but you want to associate with the best, to have the best of everything, own the best valuables, have the best brand names in possessions, go to the most popular school, work for the best company, you have the need to show and prove that you are accomplished. You want to look like, dress like, act like the best celebrities of your time, or even more be associated with them, have a picture with them, try to get into their circles. In as much as there is no problem in having all this, it should not be the reason we wake up every morning.

Material things were created to be temporary, and when you rely on them, your life comes crumbling down when misfortunes befall you. This is not the place to stay, there is more to life than this!

**4. Pursuit of Money:** this is the stage where you finally let go of what people think of you. Your aim becomes all about the money, no matter who, what, where, or how. It is all you think about and sacrifice everything else at all odds. Money is good, but not at all costs, many spend sleepless nights at the cost of their health, work endless long hours at the cost of their relationships with family (spouse and children), even worse, some bribe, steal, cheat, embezzle, at the risk of serving time in prison. The result of running after money like this, is that one becomes a slave to money itself, they literally worship it, this is the most common form of minor *shirk* of our time.

**3. Pursuit of Excellence:** now, this is the ideal starting point, where you are not controlled by money nor do



you seek assurance or pleasure from anyone. Here, you are so confident in oneself that you only compete with your personal best and never settle for mediocrity. You seek perfection, you get high at being No.1, having the perfect score, wanting to be the best at whatever you do, not because you care about anyone else, but rather compete with your previous self, your previous best. You keep pushing yourself harder and harder, keep extending perceived limits, setting records, being better than the best you can be.

Excellence in simple terms is the doing of the 'more' /the 'extra' to the best of one's ability.

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*The prophet S.A.W said, "Allah prescribed for us to be excellent at everything we try to do".*

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Allah repeatedly tells us in the Quran that He loves the people of *Ihsan* (excellence).

When you choose to do something, anything, you give it your best, whole heartedly, no matter how big or small a task. You study hard, work hard, play hard, love with all your heart - Give whatever you do, your all, your everything!

**The Need:** Everyone successful has a reason, what will be your reason? What drives you? What inspires you?

Next, we master the basics and be consistent with them. You can learn a technic, but no one can teach you skill, speed, talent, that's on you. It is all about repetition, lots and lots of practice, and perseverance, keep at it, especially in the face of adversity.

Repetition, consistency, and perseverance require dedicated time, are you willing to pay the price of TIME to be the best you can be? In your education? job? business? sports? religion? The higher you want to go, the more time you have to put in, so you need to continuously evaluate how you spend your time, how much of it is productive, towards a specific goal? How much of it is wasted?

**2. Pursuit of Impact:** better than the pursuit of excellence, is the need to leave a legacy, having an impact on others, and humanity at large. Leaving the world a better place than we found it, changing lives. People who have reached this level are the ones who have made changes in this world, moved the world from one century to the next with significant modernization. If you fall in this category, or seek to get here, Excellence comes automatically or as a by-product for you. In the pursuit to positively impact the world, you have to start with oneself, changing that which is within in order to give away the fruits of that which we sow.

As Muslims, we must be thinking about and aiming for Impact - we believe in the unseen, so working for results which we shall never get to see is easy for us. When you work towards pleasing Allah, you automatically broaden your goal and aim higher than what you or anyone else can see or envision. When your end in mind is the hereafter, you will barely see the obstacles of this world; no obstacles shall phase you, as you will always have your focus beyond the horizons, everything else will become miniature to you. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> last *ayah* (verse) of *Surat Baqarah*, Allah tells us that he doesn't burden us with more than we can handle - meaning He has equipped us with the potential. Allah wants you to push yourself, and keep pushing yourself

for as long as you keep moving, even if you feel you are moving slowly, it is movement. Remember, you will not get to see 90% of the results in this world, your aim is far beyond.

**1. Pursuit of Truth:** This is the ultimate level reached by a chosen few. The prophets of God were all here, this was their legacy. They worked, laboured for Justice and Truth. They worked towards something, the results of which, they would never see in their lifetime! All their trust was in Allah, they did their best and left the rest to Allah. In as much as we cannot get to the level of prophets, we can try our best to pursue, for God sees and rewards the *Pursuit!*

In the end of it all, like we begun, we shall end - People will always judge *Quantity*, don't blame them, it is all they can see! Never dwell on what people see! It is all about *Quality*, that is what Allah judges, values, and rewards:

So at the beginning and at the end of the day, always stop to think ...

What is the *Quality* of your life?

What is the *Quality* of your studying? Your Education?

What time do you wake up? How much effort do you put forth?

What is the *Quality* of your work?

What is the *Quality* of your day? The week, the month, the year?

How did you spend your time?, Who did you talk to? Who did you help and how?

What is the *Quality* of your health? What kind of food did you eat?

*If you think and focus on the Quality and the highest Pursuits of Impact and Ultimate Truth, this generation, your generation will change how Muslims in this country are perceived, you will be the leaders, the revived generation of politicians, you will change the country, you will come up with cures yet to be discovered, you will change the world.*

## How you Spend TIME

Time is a commodity, if you do not spend it, you lose it! You lose! The illusion of spare time is that there is time to spare or, as commonly said, time to kill.

If you want to understand the importance of time, look at how the Quran talks about it. In *Juzz Amma (Juzz 30)*, Allah constantly swears by time and aspects of time - the day, the night, the morning, sunrise, dawn, sunset, etc. (in *Surahs*, 86, 89, 91, 92, 93, 103 and 113).

To further emphasize the importance of time, Allah dedicated a whole *Surat* about Time (*Surat Al-Asr/Time*) which says:

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*“By Time,  
Most surely man is at loss,  
Except for those who believe, and do good, and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin  
on each other patience.”*

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The value of time is also mentioned in Hadith ...

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*The Prophet (PBUH) said, “the two feet of the slave of God will not move on the day of resurrection until he is asked about 4 things - his life and how he spent it (time), his youth and how he utilized it, and his wealth and how he got it and spent it”*

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## Maximizing Time

### Why

Imagine time like a sword, if you do not cut it, or use it to cut something, it will cut you.

In this world we ought to think and act like strangers/travellers, travellers maximize their time, making sure it is productive, well knowing that they have limited time to do what they need to do and move on from where they are. The 40<sup>th</sup> *hadith* of *Nawawi* (reported by Bukhari) states;

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On authority of Abdullah bin Omar, who said: The messenger of Allah took me by the shoulder and said: Be in the world as though you were a stranger or a wayfarer (traveller).

The son of Omar used to say: At evening do not expect morning, and at morning do not expect evening. Take from your health for your illness and from your life for your death.

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## How

**Planning:** To manage the time you spend very well, you have to make conscious decisions for what you choose to do and how you do it, hence planning. As commonly said, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail! To succeed, you must plan and act systematically, prioritizing your time wisely, adding value to what you do.

**Early Rising:** Anything you do early in the morning has extra blessings (*baraqa*/abundance) in it: you get more done in less time, get more results, are more fruitful, etc.

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*The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Rise early to earn your living and do your affairs, for it brings about blessings and success"*

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For students, you will understand and recall more from what you read in the early morning than any other time of the day - it is best to sleep early and wake up at 3, 4, or 5am to study/read, than to stay up late reading!

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*The Prophet (PBUH) said, "After Isha, go to sleep" He discouraged socialising after the last prayer of the day and practised this himself.*

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All the successful people, the revolutionaries, you will meet or get to know about wake up very early, most before 5am.

**Don't Procrastinate:** this is one of the devil's tools, to make you delay what you plan on doing until you forget about it and not do it, as well as make you waste your time. It is a constant struggle to fight the need to pass time and procrastinate. If you have something you want to do, or plan on doing, start it now, do it NOW.

**Self-Reflection:** it is part of our *deen* (religion), to look back at how we have spent our time, daily, monthly, annually, to reflect on our accomplishments, what we have done, memories, good deeds, shortcomings, bad deeds, mistakes - how the day or time has benefited you, or how you have lost and know what to work on, improve, add, or get rid of. Plan ahead on areas of improvement, new goals, new friends, new routines, habits.

**Consistency/Routine:** Change one small routine of your day (to benefit you) and you will significantly change your whole life. Routines are embedded in our religion, in the daily *salah* - five times a day at specific times, annual fasting - every day for a whole month, Sunnah fasting - twice every week, daily supplications at specific occasions, annual *Zakat*, etc. This is our training - make a routine, have a schedule, and strictly stick to it, don't break it. Routines develop discipline and self-control in us.

The most beloved deeds to Allah are the ones that you routinely do.

**TO EXCEL IN THIS WORLD AND THE HEREAFTER, TIME MANAGEMENT AND DISCIPLINE ARE KEY!**

## Friendships - Associations

You can tell the behaviour of a person by looking at who their friends are. Make good friends, friends who will help you to stay focused.

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*The Prophet S.A.W said, "A man follows the faith, ways, and habits of his friends".*

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He also used the analogy of a blacksmith and a perfume seller saying,

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*"The example of a good companion (friend) in comparison with a bad one is like that of one who sells musk and the blacksmith. From the first, you would either buy musk or enjoy its good smell (and walk away smelling good), while from the blacksmith, you would either get burned or smell a bad scent"*

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So, carefully choose your friends, they will have an impact on who you are and who you will become.

## Peer Pressure

We are all susceptible to peer pressure, in one way or another. First let us start with understanding what it means; it is the tendency to be influenced by people around us, to do things we would not otherwise have done so that people like us, so that we can be like them.

Let us now stop to think - **why do we do it?**

Do we really want to be like them, if they are all losers in life, do we really want to be losers like them? If we are lucky, we are surrounded by mediocrity, who consist of 80% of the people, is this all we can aim for? As Muslims, we do not settle for mediocrity, Allah requires more from us because He equipped us with greater potential.

**Or, what do we want from them? Are we seeking respect, friendship, honour?**

Allah tells us in the Quran that He Alone is the owner of respect, honour, dignity, prestige, leadership and He gives it to whoever He wishes.

When you give in to peer pressure seeking to please the people around you, while disobeying Allah, Allah will not only be displeased with you, but will also make the same people displeased with you.

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*The prophet S.A.W said, "Whoever seeks the pleasure of people at the displeasure of Allah, Allah will be displeased with them and will make the people displeased with them, He will humiliate them"*

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The Quran also tells us that we shall regret our bad company on the day of Judgement

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*“Oh, woe to me! I wish I had not taken that one as a friend! He led me away from the remembrance after it had come to me; And ever is Satan, to man, a deserter.” Surat Al-Furqaan (25) Verses 28-29*

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Resisting peer pressure is certainly not easy, obeying Allah is not easy sometimes, that is why you will be different.

### **MOST WON'T DO IT! YOU WILL!**

Any successful person has to stand out of the crowd. Most of mankind do not aspire for higher goals, for most, life revolves around eating, sleeping, and procreating - more like animals.

Allah tells us “The majority of mankind do not want to be guided”

So be proud of being different.

Hold on to Allah, He will never disappoint you! But the friends you want to please so bad, will most definitely, without a doubt, disappoint you! In one way or another, at some point in time.

### **Shortcomings**

You will screw up every once in a while, Life is not about those mistakes, it is all about how you deal with them - repent constantly and frequently. It is never too late to repent, turn back to Allah, He is the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful. And when Allah forgives, He completely wipes the sin out, as if it never happened.

### **The Idols (minor *shirk*) of Our Time**

When we think about the definition of an idol, it is something or someone that one chooses to worship despite the fact that it can neither harm nor benefit them. And further understanding worship is knowing that it means what you choose to obey and what you choose to define you, what you choose to love and respect over and above anything else. It is that which you put first, ahead of anything, that which you choose to define the way you dress, talk, walk, behave. That which can possibly keep you awake at night, what controls your feelings, what you fall back on, and so on, and so forth.

So what are the common idols of our time following the latter definition?

Just to spark your imagination, we can give examples of a few here;

- Celebrities, from politicians, sports icons, to musicians, actors, actresses, and the ironically named idols, that is, the American, British, (and other) idols. When we choose for these individuals to define our looks and mannerisms, when we take what they do and say as gospel truth, we could be in essence choosing to indirectly worship them.
- Addictions, like video games, TV, movies, and anything else that brings about no tangible or intangible benefit, especially when these things make us forget about or neglect the worship of our creator, when they top our priority list, and come first before our duties they might in one way or another result into this category.



## Character / Manners / Akhlaq

Our character defines us, have your own identity, distinguish yourself, do not try to blend in. You will not be successful by being like everybody else - successful people stand out of crowds.

Some quick tips to keep in mind ...

- Never disappoint the person who thinks highly of you
- Always try to keep good standing with people

The Prophet S.A.W on many occasions talked about having good manners, some of these *hadiths* include but are not limited to ...

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“I was not sent except to beautify your character/manners”

“Nothing will weigh more on your scale on the day of judgement more than manners”

“If you have good manners, you obtain the same reward as one who prays the whole night”

“The best among you, are the ones best in manners”

“Fear Allah and have good manners”

“The best beloved slave to Allah is one best in manners”

Abu Huraira R.A asked what was the fastest way to *Jannat*, the Prophet S.A.W said  
“Watch what is between your lips and between your legs”

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Try to think more, and frequently about the next world, death, the grave, hell fire - it will improve your character

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*Aisha A.S said “if the laws of do’s and don’ts came down first, no one would have obeyed, but the descriptions of heaven and hell came first and Imaan (faith) entered the hearts, then the do’s and don’ts were easy to follow”*

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*Ihsan*/Excellence in the Quran is commonly associated with how we treat people, and almost synonymous with manners. For example, Allah talks about treating parents with *Ihsan*/excellence

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*Abdullah bin Abbas A.S said “act better than what is expected of you, that’s Ihsan”*

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The more ugliness you are showed, the more *Ihsan* you must show. That extra, that effort, is where excellence in manners (*Ihsan*) lies.

## Kindness

It's reported in Sahih Bukhari that the prophet S.A.W said in different Hadiths;

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*“You do not do evil to those who do evil to you, but you deal with them with forgiveness and kindness”*

*“Be kind, for whenever kindness becomes part of something, it beautifies it. Whenever it's taken from something, it leaves it tarnished.”*

*“Every act of kindness is charity”*

*“Allah is not kind to him who is not kind to people”*

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## Integrity, Honesty and Trustworthiness

Honesty builds credibility and trust. The prophet S.A.W during his first 40 years before revelation was known as *as-sidiq* and *al-ameen* (the truthful one / the trustworthy one). As Muslims, we must have the same character to be known as truthful, trustworthy, and honest to the entire world so that when they meet or think about a Muslim, they know they have someone they can fully trust.

We are a people who;

- Trust each other and others
- Are honest in our exams
- Are honest in our transactions, jobs, businesses
- Keep time and respect other people's time

We need to uphold our entrustments (*amaana*), you will be accountable to Allah for everything and everyone entrusted to you.

Trustworthiness and honesty is the best *da'awah*; we need to be honest in the little things, in order to be honest in the big things. Furthermore, when you cannot trust someone, you cannot respect nor listen to them, so if you want to receive respect, be trustworthy and truthful, do not lie, do not cheat, be honest in every single aspect of your deeds. True, it is not as easy as it sounds but we have to work hard on it, progressively, we shall get there, remember Allah values effort.

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*The Prophet (S.A.W) categorically said, “There can be no faith (imaan) to one who cannot be trusted and no religion (deen) to one who does not fulfil his pledge.”*

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## Honour and Dignity

Dignity is portrayed in the way we present ourselves, in the way we look, dress, walk, and talk. The prophet S.A.W was the most dignified human being - study his life and emulate it, you will attain high levels of honour and dignity.

Dignity in the way you look and dress means that you are always clean, with tidy modest clothes and well-kept hair. The prophet S.A.W had special clothes he put on for his guests in honour of them and himself. Honour yourself in the way you dress, you will lose your dignity when you lose your clothes.

Dignity in the way you sit, stand, and walk means that you sit upright and look directly at the person you are with. The Prophet S.A.W would always turn his whole body towards the person calling him, he never turned only his head, out of respect.

When you stand, you do not slouch, but rather keep your shoulders up - this will also add to the confidence you feel. When you walk, do not walk too slow, walk fast, without running, unless your intention is to jog/run.

Dignity in the way you talk means you talk audibly but never too loud.

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*The Prophet S.A.W said "the best speech is that which is direct and to the point".*

*He always talked respectfully in the highest and most eloquent speech.*

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So do not beat around the bush, do not use too many words, be precise in respect of time. Your speech needs to be clean, there is no room for filthy, vulgar language for a tongue that recites Allah's words.

You talk to each other with respect, even if speaking to opposition or to those with whom you do not hold the same views. Never think of yourself as better than anyone, you never know what is in their hearts.

Live in a dignified way in order to uphold the dignity of everyone and everything around you, animals, and the environment.

## Slander and Backbiting

Safeguarding the honour of others means that you uphold their dignity in their presence and in their absence, you do not backbite or slander them.

To deeply understand the magnitude of slander, Allah dedicated a Surah to just this - Surat 104 (Al-Humaza - The Slanderer)

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*Woe to every slanderer, defamer ...*

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*... Nay! He shall most certainly be hurled into the crushing disaster, And what will make you realize what the crushing disaster is? It is the fire kindled by God, which rises above the hearts, surely it shall be closed over upon them, in extended columns.*

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another reference in the Quran about backbiting and slander is Surat 49:12

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*Oh you who believe! Avoid suspicion, indeed some suspicions are sins. And spy not neither backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it. And fear God, verily, God is the one who accepts repentance, the Most Merciful.*

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Further on this topic, the prophet S.A.W this conversation with one of the swahabas (Abu Dharr)

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*Abu Dharr once asked the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. : O Messenger of Allah, what is gheebah? He replied: It is to mention about your brother that which he detests.*

*Abu Dharr said: O Messenger of Allah, what if that which is mentioned of him should actually be in him (is true)? He replied: Know that when you mention that which is in him, you have committed gheebah, and when you mention that which is not in him, then you have slandered him.*

*The Prophet then gave counsel to Abu Dharr saying: O Abu Dharr! Beware of backbiting, for backbiting is graver than adultery: Abu Dharr said: Why is that so, Oh Messenger of Allah? He replied: That is because when a man commits adultery and then repents to God, God accepts his repentance. However, backbiting is not forgiven until it's forgiven by its victim.*

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We are also supposed to stand up for the honour of others, not just in their presence but also their absence. Allah says in the Quran Surat 24, Ayahs 15-16

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*Behold, you received it on your tongues and said out of your mouths things you had no knowledge; and you thought it to be a light matter, while it was most serious in the sight of God*

*And why did you not, when you heard it, say, 'It is not right for us to speak of this, Glory to God, this is a most serious slander'*

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It is reported in a hadith that,

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*The Prophet once said to Ali R.A: O Ali! When someone hears the backbiting of his Muslim brother committed in his presence, yet he does not rally to his assistance despite being capable of doing so, God shall humiliate him in the world and in the hereafter.*

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## Responsibilities and Accountability

Taking care of responsibilities is a way to uphold your dignity, integrity, and honour. Every adult has a responsibility, this means you too, as a youth - in Islam, there is no adolescence, you are either a child or an adult: you are an adult as soon as you hit puberty, a time of which will vary for the male (when you start having wet dreams) and female (when you start having your period), though approximately at around 12 years of age.

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*The Prophet S.A.W said, "All of you are responsible: a shepherd is responsible for his flock, the ruler is the shepherd of his followers, the man is responsible for his family, the woman is responsible for her home and her children, so take care of what is entrusted to you."*

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## Responsibility of Men towards Women

### *Honouring the Womb (The Forgotten Sunnah)*

Allah starts Surat An-Nisa with the following verse

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*... show reverence to Allah through whom you demand your mutual (rights) and reverence the wombs ...*

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Showing a reverence means showing a high regard, a respect, and an awe. In essence, here Allah explains that you show reverence to Him, by showing reverence to the womb.

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*Hadith - Aisha R.A narrated, "Allah told the Prophet S.A.W that the womb is connected to the Arsh/throne of Allah. The womb spoke and said, whoever connects to me, connects to Allah, and whoever disconnects from me, disconnects from Allah."*

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Here the womb that's being referred to is the womb where you came from, which is the womb of the woman.

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*Abu Huraira R.A said, "Allah created the womb (Rahm) from his name Al-Rahman, and Allah then said, whoever connects to the womb, connects to me, whoever disconnects from the womb, disconnects from me."*

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Honouring the womb is not just a *Sunnah* of the Prophet S.A.W, but a *Sunnah* from Allah.

So what does the woman have that has to be honoured and protected? It's the womb - which is connected to the throne of Allah, the seed of majesty, the seed of the unseen, that for which when the unseen is commanded and descends into the earth - into the womb, when a woman is pregnant, no one knows when that exact moment occurs, no one knows what she is carrying, no one knows if she is carrying the next revolutionary, best scholar, best doctor, or the next best educator. No one knows what Allah has commanded to descend, what mercy, what secret,

what gift, what opener, or what change He has sent down. At 120 days, an angel is sent to this woman to write down the predestination of what is in her womb! Inside the woman, inside her spirituality, heaven and earth meet, the unseen and the seen connect! So, the man has the responsibility to honour, protect, and care for all this. He is protecting his future, the future of the *ummah*, the future of the world. And ultimately, through this protection, the man is connecting to their creator, Allah. The womb was created from Allah's all-encompassing Mercy: the womb is the most powerful, most encompassing, most beautiful form of mercy you will ever know.

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*The Prophet S.A.W said "Allah has caused me to love 3 things, I love Salat, I love good smell, and I love women. I love that which takes me to Allah, with which I can commune with Allah. I love good smell because it brings the angels" The Sahabahs asked, "Oh prophet of Allah, why do you love women?" He said "because of their mercy".*

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How did we lose the root of mercy? And then we started wondering why Allah's mercy is not descending upon us in the midst of all the wars, crises, natural disasters, religious profiling, brutality ... we started to lose as Muslims. We are being looked down on because we forgot a *Sunnah*, a *Sunnah* of Allah and a *Sunnah* of the Prophet S.A.W. When we go back to honouring the root of Allah's mercy, the womb, Allah's mercy will descend down upon us, upon the *ummah*. And honouring the womb, is not just for the men towards women, but also for women towards fellow women, standing up and honouring each other.

We need to remind our girls, that they are honoured, they are important, they are special to us, and most importantly to Allah.

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*The Prophet S.A.W always stood up when his daughter, Fatma walked into the room, he would kiss her hand and give her his seat.*

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But what happened? how did we, as Muslims, lose such an important *Sunnah*? How did we get so far away that we are no longer revering the womb like we should? How did other ideals, and other philosophies, and other cultures creep their way into our *deen*?

We need to begin to look back to colonialism (which later became 'norm' / 'modernity'), we live in societies where the effects of colonialism are predominant. Colonialism taught us that 'might (strength) makes right' and as such that which is physically stronger, physically more powerful, is therefore more important, it is more powerful, and therefore it is right, that whoever has more money, has more power, and is therefore more significant.

But this is not what Islam taught:

In the first part of Surah An-Nisa (4), Verse 34, Allah tells us that men are "*qawammuna*" to women. The term in brackets is normally mistranslated to mean "responsible for, or have authority over", this is completely wrong!, a better understanding of this Arabic word "*qawam*" reveals the basic responsibility of all men towards any females in their lives.

The root of this word is the same as the root of one of Allah's attributes/names "Qayyum" which means that Allah is actively involved in everything He created. One of the meanings of the word 'qawam' comes from the root word that means 'standing', hence the verse meaning that 'men stand up for women' and figuratively speaking, that means being 'active' - so this verse means that men are actively involved in the lives and affairs of the women in their families, they cannot be passive. Further, it means that men are supposed to be repeatedly and incredibly committed to women and are always close, accompany, stick with, in close proximity, and protective of women. Men are to be constant sources of support for women, they are supposed to provide stability for women, they have to constantly be there, incredibly committed to women, they cannot be unstable in the lives of the women in their families.

The next meaning is that men are caretakers of women, financially, emotionally, and physically. Women should be able to always lean on the men, find support in men. Men, in this verse, are given the responsibility of all the women in their lives, their mothers, aunties, sisters, daughters, nieces, grand-daughters, etc. They are the support for women when everything else in their lives is falling apart.

The next meaning is that men are supposed to always check themselves over and over again, in justice and fairness to women. They are to be fair judges over women, making sure that they evaluate their justice and fairness for every situation when dealing with the women in their lives.

Looking at the verb used in this verse, it's an active verb, in other words, it says "Men are 'qawam' over women", there is no use of 'supposed' or 'should', Allah says men are, showing that it is not a choice, it is part and parcel of being a man, Allah put within men this ability, it is within their nature. It is a responsibility that one cannot walk away from, it is there, without negotiation, there is no choice. What is for men, is theirs AND for the women in their families, and what is for women is their own - this is why men in inheritance receive more than women.

Continuing the verse, Allah says that 'because of the favour Allah gave some over others'. This statement is usually misinterpreted to mean that 'men have an advantage over women', an interpretation skewed and obscured by the colonial (modern) mind-set!

But let us think about the explanation above: men are given the responsibility over women, women are the beneficiaries of this responsibility, men are the guards, women are the ones being guarded, so the women have the advantage of being protected.

The womb protected the masculine structure of men when the masculine structure was being developed, so that when it would come out, and after it is fully grown to be physically stronger, it would then protect the womb, symbolic of the womb that bore it.

### Responsibility of Women towards Men

The second part of the *ayah*/verse then continues to mention the responsibility of women, "the good women are therefore obedient ..." meaning, since women are receiving the care from men (mentioned above), some women are going to have to be 'swaalihat'. The key word being 'some' meaning that this responsibility that is going to be mentioned does not come naturally for ALL

women, some will have to make extra effort to fulfil their responsibility, and those who fulfil their responsibility will be the good ones.

As result of what the men in their families are doing for them, constantly taking care of them in every aspect, they are supposed to be obedient in return, and this ultimately is a show of obedience to their Creator in appreciation of the favour that has been given to them from Allah.

Now to the meaning of '*swaalihat*', a poor translation is 'to be good', digging deeper, it is the opposite of '*fasadah*' something 'bad/spoilt' and when it is fixed/refreshed it becomes '*swaalihat*'. Meaning when the woman works extra hard against their natural tendency to be angry, show spite, revenge, and they choose to be respectful, loving, and kind, that will be '*swaalihat*'. This is also an active verb in the sense that it is something that needs to be checked for every situation.

The word '*hafidh*' is used as something women are supposed to do, as the sentence continues saying - "... guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded". First, it has to be noted that just like '*Qayyum*' is an attribute of Allah, the root of which was used to describe the responsibility of men, '*Hafidh*' is also an attribute of Allah, meaning that there is nobility in this responsibility for women. Allah directly relates it to Himself, meaning that women guard that which Allah has guarded. Conceal that which is not naturally seen to others. Women are supposed to constantly protect the honour and dignity of themselves, their husband, their children, and their home. Women should guard what they see and what they cannot see, including the worst they can imagine. And all of this is summed up in being 'obedient' - when one is obedient to someone, they watch their every word, their every move, with care and love - when you are obedient, you cannot be spiteful, rude, nasty, vulgar, abusive, nor demining, no matter the circumstance.

## Conclusion

In as much as we cannot do justice to the meaning of the words of Allah, we hope that we can bring some light and motivate further understanding of the Quran to be rightfully interpreted and followed accordingly.

## Hayaa (Bashfulness, Modesty, Humility ... )

In a number of *hadith*, the Prophet S.A.W talks about the value of bashfulness ... he says,

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*“Every single religion has a character trait, and the character trait of Islam is bashfulness.”*

*“Bashfulness does nothing but bring benefit and good.”*

*“All prophets told their people, if you are not bashful, then go ahead and do whatever you want”*

*“Imaan (faith) and bashfulness are always together.”*

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One time, the Prophet S.A.W found a *Sahaba* reprimanding his brother because he had too much *hayaa* (modesty & bashfulness) and the Prophet S.A.W told him, “leave him alone, for verily *hayaa* is from *imaan* (faith).”

Bashfulness will prevent you from wronging oneself, wronging others, it will prevent you from shaming yourself and your parents, however, it should NEVER prevent you from defending yourself and your loved ones.

Our bashfulness is not out of fear of people, it is out of fear of Allah and respect of the people.

Bashfulness has extremities, and is usually mistaken for the negative extremity - too much shyness. Avoid the extremities, too much shyness will prevent you from asking questions, from learning, and too much pride/arrogance (complete avoidance of bashfulness), is a sin and will also prevent you from asking questions, and learning.

### Role Model of Humility and Modesty - Fatima bint Muhammad S.A.W

Fatima (R.A) the daughter of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W saw her father being tortured, helped him, stood by him, more than any of her siblings, or anybody else, she took her mother's place when her mother passed away, cared for him, cooked for him. The Prophet S.A.W said that she is the Queen/the leader of the women of paradise, he treated her like royalty, always stopped what he was doing and stood up every time she walked into a room. You would think that with her status, she would act like royalty, on the contrary, she had the highest level of humility and modesty to the extent that one day Ali (her husband) saw blisters in her hands due to all the house work she used to do, and Ali told her to go to her father to request for a servant, however, when she went to the Prophet S.A.W, despite how much he loved her, he did not give her a servant, and told her to recite Subhana Allah, wa Alhamdulillah, wa Lailaha illah Allah, Allahu Akbar (each 33 times) before going to sleep - he preferred better for her in the hereafter.

The peak of her modesty was right before she died, when she requested Assma R.A (the wife of Abubaker), saying “Whenever you do my *ghusul*, *janaza*, and burial, do it at night so that the people will not see my figure”! She never, at any one moment, thought highly or showed pride of herself amongst the people she lived with, despite the fact that she was the most beloved to the Prophet S.A.W and he treated her as royalty!

## Another model for Modesty for ladies

The way you walk is ever more powerful, it has an impact in society, so powerful that Allah took the time to give an example in the Quran, in story of Prophet Moses; in the way that his wife-to-be walked towards him when she was sent by her father after he helped her and the sister with getting water for their flock.

Allah highlighted that she walked towards him 'shyly', despite her shyness, she approached him, walking in guard of her modesty. She was well aware of the power she had, her presence had an impact on others, she recognized the presence she carried. The fact that she walked over to a strange man by herself, means she was not shy by character, she was very confident, but she put shyness/modesty in her actions, choosing not to be provocative or attractive. This is one of the lessons to be drawn from the story.

So ladies, control your power! Your mere presence, has a power, has an awe, ... it inspires something in the men around you, take the time to notice, when a woman passes by a group of men or into a room, men automatically turn to look at her, at least for a second, they cannot help it!

## Role Model for Bashfulness and Modesty for Men

The best example of *Hayaa* in men is Uthman bin Afaan (R.A). He was extremely handsome/beautiful, he resembled the prophets, Ibrahim and Mohammad S.A.W, the most - he was very captivating, turned heads wherever he went. Before Islam, many women wanted him but he never came close to fornication. Even before he became a Muslim, he had a lot of modesty, he was very soft-spoken, he never boasted about his looks, was very humble and soft in his mannerisms, was never arrogant, never worshipped idols, and never drank alcohol. After he became a Muslim, he exemplified *Hayaa* in the Prophet's time - he showed modesty in every aspect of his life and in fulfilling his religious obligations! Some of the examples include;

- When he would change his clothes, he would not stand up, even when there was no one in the room with him, he would either bend or sit.
- He was so soft-spoken that when he would be speaking to someone, the person would have to come closer and lean in, just to hear him.
- He was so modest that even the Prophet S.A.W would sit up straight and cover his legs in Uthman's presence, which he never did in front of anyone else. When one of his companions asked him why, the Prophet S.A.W told them that, "How can I not be extra bashful in front of a man with whom the angels have extra *hayaa* for!"
- Uthman was also extremely rich, and very generous, but even in his giving, he maintained a high degree of modesty - one time a child went into the mosque and Uthman recognized his financial need so he brought him a shirt and told the boy to wear it, take it home and see what his parents thought about it. So when the boy got home, his parents looked at the shirt and found 10,000 dirhams hidden in the pockets!

## Self Reflection

So after looking at all these examples, let's look at ourselves ...

### How modest are you?

*What are your social media posts about? What is the level of modesty in the pictures? The videos? All the other posts? What do you choose to like/love or dislike?*

*How do you interact with people? Do you flirt, boast, think you are better than them, or are you humble? Do you choose to inspire and motivate? Are you proud or are you confident?*

Do not mistake pride for confidence, or confidence for pride.

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*Āishah R.A said "I saw some youths passing by and they were swaying in their walk". She asked her companions: "Who are they?" they replied: These are al-Nussaak (ascetics). She said: "Umar Ibn al-Khattaab A.S, when he walked, he was quick; when he spoke, he was heard; if he hit (someone), it would hurt; if he ate, he would eat till satisfaction; and indeed he was a true devout person."*

*[Madaarij al-Saalikeen (1/517)].*

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*How do you dress? How do you walk? How do you talk, how loud, how soft, what do you say?*

Remembering that everything you do, everything you say, is like a print, it all leaves a mark, on yourself (your record with Allah) and on the people around you. They are not only your sphere of influence, but YOU are their sphere of influence as well! So how you choose to influence could mean rewards or curses for you for generations to come till you get to meet your maker.

## Confidence, Self Esteem

Maya Angelou perfectly defines confidence in her saying,

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*When you know you are of worth - not asking it but knowing it - you walk into a room with a particular power. When you know you are of worth, you don't raise your voice, you don't have to become rude, you don't have to become vulgar, you just ARE and you ARE like the sky IS, as the air IS, the same way water IS wet*

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Understanding this quotation, means understanding your being, you exist as a creation like any other creation, and so does everyone else around you. You understand that all it took and all it takes Allah, is a simple command (like Allah repeatedly says in the Quran) "Be, and it is" - this understanding is the root of your confidence! Understanding that you are a creation, means you love and respect your Creator, you worship your Creator like you should. When others see you respecting Allah, they will respect you, when they see you disrespect Allah (disobeying or shying away), they will disrespect you. No one defines your worth but the One who created you.

Being a Muslim is a lifestyle, a Muslim finds a balance between too much confidence and too little confidence. People who have good confidence, have good mannerisms, and the more you grow in practicing Islam, the more you gain confidence about yourself.

It's easy to be and maintain confidence and the fruits of it when you believe and internalize that confidence comes from holding on to your Creator, knowing that everything is in the control of Allah, and not you. If your confidence comes from yourself, your achievements, your money, you will start to slip and fall, and when it's all taken away from you, you will break.

## Humility

Humility starts from deeply understanding God's qualities, the more you realize the greatness of God and magnitude of His creation, the more you will get to realize how small you are, and this will fuel your humility.

- You can only see as far as your sight can reach, God sees everything, all at the same time
- You can only understand as much as the knowledge you have been able to acquire, God is the owner of all knowledge and He gives a little to whomever He wills
- When you think you are superior to other beings, think about the angels made out of light that have lived for centuries upon centuries worshipping the same Creator who created you - Or think about the Jinn made out of fire, who see you but you cannot see them, they have the ability to influence you, but you cannot influence them!
- When you think you are invincible, remember that it takes a split second for the angel of death to take your soul away

## Shamelessness

Oppression is being judged by how you look, finding yourself worth in what people think of your physical appearance. Liberation is being judged by the depth of your character, intellect, and abilities. Covering your beauty is not oppression, it is liberation.

There is a reason why the best gifts we love come well wrapped up. That which is covered is treasured. Covering your beauty means choosing not to be a sex-object for all to look at.

Shamelessness is not simply in being looked at, but also in what we look at. The more you are exposed to it, the more desensitized you get. If you see nudeness, indecency, shamefulness, corruption, or hear vein talk, and it all feels normal to you, and you are not disturbed by it, then your heart is hardened, your spirituality is low - you will not be able to concentrate in your prayer, prayer will be a mere ritual, you will not be able to cry when asking of Allah, you will not feel any connection to the unseen.

Whether it is TV or social media, the more you expose yourself to, hear, say, or have obscene language, the more you become spiritually bankrupt.

To reduce on the effects of exposure to shamelessness, you need to keep remembering Allah, when you do something evil, immediately turn to Allah in repentance and do not persist in sin. Most importantly, do not be alone, be with good company - keep your room door open if you feel vulnerable to temptation, as well as get away from places that pull you to, or influence you into shamelessness.

## Social Media

This is the greatest trial of our time! We know, it is a hot topic, and to put you at peace, it is not illegal, it is just a 'tool', it is in your control whether you use it in your benefit or detriment, you just have to be conscious about it.

Although it did not exist in the Prophet S.A.W's time, it did and does equate to physical associations.

The Prophet S.A.W one time met some *sahabas* sitting along a road socializing, he told them, "do not sit along the road / on the side walk, socializing."

*Note:* the default was to stay away from socializing too much.

So the *Sahabas* said, "Oh messenger of Allah, we have to have our social gatherings" so the Prophet S.A.W said, "If you have to, then give the road it's right"

*Note:* this was the road then, now, the same applies to social media aka 'the information highway'. Giving the road it's right, or the information highway it's right means obeying social etiquette.

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*The Prophet S.A.W. continued to say: "spread salaam, lower your gaze, do not harm others, and use it to encourage what is good and forbid what is evil"*

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1. *"Spread Salaam"*
  - In other words, greet, keep in touch with friends, relatives/family, who you would otherwise take a long time to see physically.
2. *"Lower your gaze"*
  - Do not look at what you should not be looking at, or like in-appropriate pictures, videos, just because they are on a screen and not live does not demine it in any way. This also includes who you interact/talk/chat with.
3. *"Do not harm others"*
  - Do not use social media to harm, defame, others, whether you know them personally or not. Remember that the angels will record what you do, yes, even on social media, as much as they do for your physical deeds - worse that what you do on social media stays longer hence has greater, long lasting, impact/influence - all of which are recorded.
  - Do not take someone's picture and post it without their approval or knowledge, most especially when close to the line of indecency.
  - Respect everyone!
  - Take precaution, dress appropriately, you never know who will be taking and posting your picture.
4. *"Use it to encourage what is good, and forbid what is evil."*

## Curiosity - Knowledge / Thinking

As Muslims, we are a people of knowledge, thinking, and reflection - these are values embedded at the core of Islam. In the Quran, Allah repeatedly tells us to look around us and think and keeps asking “Why don’t you think?” Thinking is part of our worship of Allah!

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*The Prophet S.A.W said, “Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim.”*

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In the early centuries, Muslims were at the forefront of all knowledge, be it education, innovation, or technology. Most of the original theories in Math and Science (algebra, calculus, trigonometry, anatomy, et cetera) were written by Muslims. The system of higher education, universities, the doctrine of PhDs, legal systems, all started in the Muslim world. The printing press started in the Muslim world! We lost this prestige when we started letting go of this core, we focussed much on the rituals and slowly distanced further and further away from thinking, a doctrine that needs to be awakened!

### Some of the Top Inventions of Muslims that Changed the World

- Algebra
  - Algebra is one of the most important contributions of the Muslim Golden Age to the Modern World. It was developed by the great scientist and mathematician Muhammad Ibn Musa Al-Khwarizmi who lived from the year 780 to 850. In his book, ‘The Compendious Book on Calculation by Completion and Balancing’, he set forth the basic principles of Algebraic equations. The name of the book itself contains the word ‘Al-Jabr’ meaning ‘Completion’ in which the word ‘Algebra’ is derived. In the book, he explains how to use Algebraic equations with unknown variables to solve real world problems such as Zakat calculation and Inheritance division, *a unique aspect of his reasoning for developing Algebra is the desire to make calculations mandated by Islamic law easier to complete in a world without calculators and computers.* His books were translated into Latin in Europe in the 1000s and 1100s, where he was known as the Algorithmi. The word Algorithm is based on his name and his mathematical works. Without his work in developing Algebra, modern practical applications of Math such as Engineering and Computers, would not be possible. His works were used as math textbooks in European universities for hundreds of years after his death.
- Education Systems
  - In the year 859, a young princess named Fatima Al-Firhi founded the first degree-granting university in Fez, Morocco. Her sister Mariam founded an adjacent mosque and together the complex became the Al-Qarawiyyin mosque and university, still operating almost 1,200 years later. The centres are a reminder to people that learning is at the core of the Islamic faith and tradition.
- Aerospace / Flying and Astronomy
  - The first human to attempt a scientific flight in history of mankind was a Muslim called Abbas Kasim Ibn Firnas, not the Wright brothers! In the 9<sup>th</sup> Century, about 1,020 years before the Wright brothers. It was delivered that he could stay in

the air for a long time and do soft landings with his own scientific device, NASA named a crater in space after him. Besides this, he has numerous works in the areas of chemistry, physics and astronomy. With his own special methods and by using different stones, he produced glass, especially ultra-straightened glass that is used for eye glasses.

- Abu Yusuf Al-Kindi, the pioneer of the Relativity Theory. He was the first known Muslim philosopher in Europe in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century. In his view, philosophy had the aim to reach Allah. With this intent, he wrote 277 books from 20 different fields of knowledge. He is the first person who brought the frequency analysis in cryptology. What makes him stand out is that he found and wrote about the Relativity theory ages before Einstein. He also built Astrology and described the universe as a globe.
- Optics and Photography
- The first person to realize that light enters the eye instead of leaving it was a 10<sup>th</sup> Century Muslim mathematician, astronomer and physicist, Ibn Haitham, the founder of optical science. He invented the first pin-hole camera after noticing how light came through a hole in window shutters. Seeing that the smaller the hole, the better the picture, he worked out and set-up the first camera 'obscura' from the Arabic word 'qamara', meaning a dark or private room - the first to have used the 'dark room'. His works, like 'the book of optics' were translated into European languages which led sciences like Lambda, Newton, and Davinchi.
  - The Muslim scholar Abu Al-Hasan known as AlHazen from Basra was also the first person to describe how the eye works in detail. He carried out experiments with reflective materials and proved that the eye does not sense the environment with 'sight rays' as scientists had believed up until then.
  - Abu-Hasan also discovered that curved glass surfaces can be used for magnification, his glass 'reading stones' were the first magnifying glasses ever made. It was from these that lenses were later developed.
- Hospitals and Modern Healthcare
- The first modern hospital with nurses and a training centre was in Cairo in the Ahmed Ibn Tulun hospital which was established in the year 872. The hospital provided free care for anyone who needed it - a policy based on the Muslim tradition of caring for the sick. Although slightly more basic hospitals had existed prior to this in Baghdad, it was the Tulun hospital that would later serve as a template to all hospitals around the globe
  - Soon after the creation of hospitals, around the year 1000, a Muslim doctor known as Al Zahrawi published a 1,500 page illustrated encyclopaedia of surgery that was used in Europe as a medical reference for the next 500 years
  - Ibn An-Nafis described the pulmonary circulation of blood, 300 years before Europe did. He is the first scholar who brought out scientific works. He concentrated more on the reasons of diseases, their outbreaks, than on their treatments. He was the first to describe the fact that the heart pumps blood through the veins throughout the whole body and described the metabolism notion. He is known as the biggest physiologist of the middle age.

There are thousands of Muslim scientists mentioned in history books as pioneers in almost all fields of study. They started their ideas with the help of lessons from the Holy Quran.

History is witness of the fact that whenever Muslims were able to identify themselves with their faith, whenever they clung onto their religion, they were able to evolve and rise up in their times, and whenever they left this hold and tried to simply blend in, they fell as an *ummah* in their time.

On the other hand, there is also something like useless curiosity, that is, seeking information that has no benefit in it for you or anyone around you. Make sure to always seek beneficial knowledge.

If you are still studying, you, as a Muslim, are supposed to be the one excelling in your education as you not only have the mainstream books as a source of knowledge, but you also have a Quran. And it's not only for the sake of your future career in this world, but it is also a *Sunnah* which counts for rewards in the afterlife. And if the knowledge you gain benefits someone else, or better, generations to follow, those are blessings upon blessings!

## Activism, Social Justice, Civic Responsibility

Both the Quran and Hadith assert that civic responsibility is an obligation. In praising the last ummah, Allah (SWT) declares in 3:110,

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*“You are the best community (ummah) brought forth for (the good) of mankind”*

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It is clear that we have been chosen to be of benefit to humanity i.e. to serve the community at large; Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

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*The Prophet S.A.W said,*

*“The best of people are those who are most beneficial to people.”*

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### Social Justice

The Pact of the Virtuous (hilf al-Fudul) is a great example of cooperating with non-Muslims on matters of justice. The Prophet S.A.W, in his *youth*, was present in the house of Abdullah Ibn Jud’an where tribe leaders met and agreed basically on two main clauses;

- First, to respect the principle of justice,
- and second, to collectively intervene in conflicts to establish justice.

Years later, the Prophet S.A.W in his admiration of the pact recalls, “I witnessed in the house of Jud’an the pact of al-Fudul and if I were to be invited today (after the establishment of Islam) I would respond.”

The Qur’an and the *Sunnah* makes it clear that civic engagement with non-Muslims, upholding universal values that include freedom, equality and justice, and cooperating with them on matters of goodness is a religious obligation.

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*Allah commands, “And cooperate with each other in (matters of) goodness and righteousness, and do not cooperate with one another in sin and hostility. And Fear Allah, indeed Allah is severe in punishment” (5:2).*

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And we too must respond to any form of alliance with non-Muslims as long as the objectives and the means to achieving the goals do not contravene the basic teachings of Islam.

Civic engagement must be fundamentally based on justice. This must be the foundation of the framework.

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*Allah commands, “O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice as witnesses to Allah, even if it is against yourselves, your parents and close relatives ...” (4:135).*

*By the same token Allah (SWT) ordains, “O you who believe! Stand up for Allah as witnesses to justice ...” (5:8).*

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We have been granted an opportunity to stand up for justice as witnesses to Allah. Being the source of justice, Allah, the Most Just (Al-Adl), wants us to exercise our duty of ordaining good and forbidding evil. You stand up for justice even if it's against the people you love, even if it's against a Muslim who is oppressing a non-Muslim.

Although there is much good in our societies, we cannot ignore the injustice of systematic and institutionalized profiling where we have Muslims accused and imprisoned without proper legal intervention. We simply cannot continue to remain silent. We must get out of our comfort zones and engage in the struggle for justice.

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*The Prophet S.A.W instructs, "Whoever among you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand; and if he is not able, then with his tongue; and if he is not able, then with his heart, and that is the weakest of faith" (Muslim).*

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The word 'hand', in this context, denotes authority. Any injustice taking place may be challenged in the courts of law of any country you live in.

## Rights of Animals

Social justice is not just for humans, but for every living soul (all animals), from feeding them to protecting the sanctity of their lives.

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*Abu Hurayra (rA) narrates: The Prophet S.A.W said, "As a man was walking along, his thirst became intense. He climbed down a well and drank from it, then emerged to find a panting dog licking the dirt from thirst. He said, 'There has certainly befallen this [dog] what has befallen me.' He [returned] to fill his shoe, then held it in his mouth, then climbed upwards and gave the dog to drink. Allah appreciated him, and so He forgave him." They said, "O Messenger of Allah, is there reward in [kindness to] animals?" He said, "In every moist liver (i.e., living thing) is a [an opportunity for] reward." [Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim]*

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A man once visited the great Companion, Tameem ad-Dâri (RA), while he served as the governor of Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem). He found Tameem cleaning the wheat for his horse, so he said to him, "Don't you have among your family someone who could suffice you this task?" Tameem said, "I do, but I heard the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W) say,

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*'No Muslim cleans his horse's wheat, then serves it to him, except that it is written for him one good deed for every grain.'*

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There is sanctity to animal life, so we do not hunt animals, we only sacrifice them in a specified manner for the soul purpose of food.

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*Ibn ‘Abbâs (RA) narrates that the Prophet S.A.W said, “Do not take anything containing a soul as a target.”*

*‘Abdullâh b. ‘Amr (RA) narrated: The Prophet S.A.W said, “Any person who kills even a tiny sparrow without right will be questioned by Allah regarding it.” It was said, “O Messenger of Allah, what is the sparrow’s right?” He replied, “That it only be sacrificed to feed oneself, not to be thrown aside.”*

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Even if you are going to slaughter an animal for food, you need to be merciful to the animal.

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*When the Prophet S.A.W saw someone lay down a lamb while still sharpening his blade in front of it, he said, “Do you wish to kill it twice? Could you not have sharpened your blade before you laid it down?”*

*Shadâd b. Aws (RA) narrates: The Messenger of Allah S.A.W said, “Indeed, Allah has written excellence on all things. So when you kill, kill with excellence, and when you slaughter, slaughter with excellence; one of you must sharpen his blade and comfort his slaughter.”*

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Other animal rights include;

- do not brand animals with fire, or punish them with fire
- do not devastate animals especially by taking their children away from them
- do not cage animals for the purpose of torturing them
- do not starve, over-burden, over-work animals
- do not instigate fights between animals
- do not castrate or declaw animals
- do not give animals traits that are not true

If the prophet S.A.W had such a high standard for animal rights, imagine how much more concerned he was with human rights.

## Civic Responsibility

We not only get involved with our communities for Justice, but also for any other civic duties, some of which include; volunteering, voting, and simply being good Muslims.

**Volunteerism:** We must spare some time to serve and invest in the community, become a volunteer. Programs which include feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, blood drives, caring for the elderly, and free health clinics are but a few areas of much needed participation, especially those that involve all walks of faith, even if organized by Non-Muslims.

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*The Prophet S.A.W informed, “A person who strives to take care of the needs of the widow and the poor man is like one who struggles in the way of Allah, or like one who stands during the night to pray and fasts during the day.”*

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We need to cultivate a culture of volunteerism. Our primary motivation for helping others should be for the love and sake of Allah,

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*“And they give food out of love for Him (Allah) to the poor and the orphan and the captive. We only feed you only for Allah’s sake; we desire from you neither reward nor thanks.” (76:8-9).*

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**Voting:** Another area of interest to us is exercising the right to vote. All religious scholars have permitted the participation in the political electoral process. To be effective in this field, we must have a clear political agenda that serves our needs and rights.

We must live our faith as ordained upon us. Civic engagement that stands up for justice while upholding piety and righteousness will surely please our Lord and help us make a positive impression upon people who admire honesty and integrity.

## Conserving the Environment

*Ihsan*, excellence and beauty defines the overall character of a person. A person with *Ihsan* pays attention to things people don’t typically pay attention to. You cannot be extremely beautiful in one aspect of your life and ugly in another aspect. Civic Responsibility does not only involve people and animals, but also the environment. The world does not belong to us, the earth does not belong to us. It belongs to Allah! The earth is simply a home we rent; generations, come and go, but it stays and Allah, commands us to take care of it.

We need to conserve water, even when there seems to be an abundance of it.

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*It was narrated from 'Abdullah bin 'Amr that the Messenger of Allah passed by Sa'd when he was performing ablution, and he said: 'What is this extravagance?' He said: 'Can there be any extravagance in ablution?' He said: 'Yes, even if you are on the bank of a flowing river.'" [Sunan Ibn Majah]*

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The importance of preserving the environment and benefiting beings by planting trees ...

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*Narration of Anas (R.A), the Prophet S.A.W said, “There is no Muslim who plants a tree or sows a field for a human, bird, or a wild animal that eats from it, but it shall be reckoned as charity from him.” (Bukhari and Muslim)*

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*Anas ibn Malik reported that the Prophet S.A.W., said, "If the Final Hour comes while you have a palm-cutting in your hands and it is possible to plant it before the Hour comes, you should plant it." (al-Adab al-Mufrad)*

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Do not be destructive to the environment

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*The prophet S.A.W. said, "Do not uproot or burn palms or cut down fruitful trees."  
[Muwatta' Malik]*

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In conclusion, when we neglect our duties and responsibilities, we only harm ourselves.

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*Corruption doth appear on land and sea because of (the evil) which men's hands have done, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, in order that they may return. (Quran 30:41)*

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## Charity/Generosity

Generosity comes from the ability to be selfless, and selflessness takes *taq'wa* (God-Consciousness), knowing that the reward comes from Allah, hence expecting from no one else but God.

Allah tells us;

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*“The parable of those who spend their wealth in God’s way is that of a grain that produces seven spikes, in each spike is a hundred grains. God multiplies for whom He wills. God is Bounteous and All-Knowing. (2:261)*

*Who is it that will offer up unto God a goodly loan, which He will amply repay? For, such shall have a noble reward (57:11)*

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Spread goodness, even in your words - give words of hope and encouragement at every opportunity and cover the faults of others.

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*Allah says,*

*“Kind words and the covering of faults are better than charity followed by injury. Allah is free of all wants, and He is Most-Forbearing.” (2:263)*

*“Have you not considered how Allah sets forth a parable of a good word like a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches are in heaven, Yielding its fruit in every season by the permission of its Lord? And Allah sets forth parables for men that they may be mindful.” (14:24-25)*

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Please read more from the numerous verses about giving and charity and the rewards, some of which are in Surat Baqarah 2:3, 43, 83, 110, 215, 262 - 274, 276-277, 280, Surat Al-Imran 3:92, 17, 180, Surat An-Nisa 4:77, 114, 162, Surat Al Maeda 5:12, 45, 55, Surat An-Naam 6:141, Surat Al-Araf 7:156, Surat At-Taubah 9:5, 11, 18, 34-35, 60, 71, 75-76, 79, 103-104, Surat Yusuf 12:88, Surat Ibrahim 14:31, Surat Maryam 19:31-33, 55, Surat An-Anbiya 21:73, Surat Al-Hajj 22:34-35, 41, 78, Surat Al-Mu’uminoon 23:4, 60, Surat An-Noor 24:37, 56, Surat An-Naml 27:3, Surat Al-Qasas 28:54, Surat AR-Room 30:39, Surat Luqman 31:4, Surat As-Sajda 32:16, 33, 35, Surat Fatir 35:29, Surat Fussilat 41:7, Surat Al-Hadid 57:7,18, Surat Al-Mujadila 58:12-13, Surat Al-Munafiqoon 63:10, Surat Taghabun 64:16, Surat Al-Muzaammil 73:20, Surat Al-Lail 92:05, and Surat Al-Bayyina 98:5.

There are multiple forms of charity other than giving money, some of which are summarized below;

- Dua - pray for people you care about
- Knowledge - spread knowledge especially among people who cannot afford it
- Advice - give wise advice to anyone younger than you, even older ones
- Smile - poke, meet, and greet people nicely with a smiling face
- Help - help to solve people’s problems

- Time - take time out for the people you love especially parents and children
- *Tarbiyyah* - teach about manners , especially nurturing well-mannered children
- Patience - be very patient over difficult times and rely on Allah
- Remind - remind others to do good and stay on the righteous path
- Talk softly - do not be harsh and rude to fellow humans
- Forgive - forgive those who ask for your forgiveness and those who do not
- Give respect - give respect to all - elders and youngsters
- Be happy for others - be happy for someone else's happiness, do not be jealous
- Visit the sick - visiting the sick is a very important *Sunnah*
- Clear the path - remove harmful things from the path/road

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*Abu Dharr reported that Prophet Muhammad S.A.W said, "Charity is prescribed for each descendant of Adam every day the sun rises."*

*He was then asked: "From what do we give charity every day?" The Prophet answered: "The doors of goodness are many... enjoining good, forbidding evil, removing harm from the road, listening to the deaf, leading the blind, guiding one to the object of his need, hurrying with the strength of one's legs to one in sorrow who is asking for help, and supporting the feeble with the strength of one's arms – all of these are charity prescribed for you."*

*He also said: "Your smile for your brother is charity." (At-Tirmidhi, 1879)*

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Remember, the secret to living is giving! Give when you have nothing and you will have richness in your life, give when you have much, and you will find peace and tranquillity.

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*Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported:*

*The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Verily, Allah, the Exalted, and Glorious will say on the Day of Resurrection: 'O son of Adam, I was ill but you did not visit Me.' He would say: 'O my Lord, how could I visit you and You are the Lord of the worlds?' Thereupon He would say: 'Did you not know that such and such a slave of Mine was ill but you did not visit him? Did you not realize that if you had visited him (you would have known that I was aware of your visit to him, for which I would reward you) you would have found Me with him? O son of Adam, I asked food from you but you did not feed Me.' He would submit: 'My Lord, how could I feed You and You are the Lord of the worlds?' He would say: 'Did you not know that such and such a slave of Mine asked you for food but you did not feed him? Did you not realize that if you had fed him, you would certainly have found (its reward) with Me? O son of Adam, I asked water from you but you did not give it to Me.' He would say: 'My Lord, how could I give You (water) and You are the Lord of the worlds?' Thereupon He would say: 'Such and such a slave of Mine asked you for water to drink but you did not give it to him. Did you not realize that if you had given him to drink you would have found (its reward) with Me?'" [Muslim].*

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## Hardships

There are those moments in our lives that define us; difficulties, trials, that will get to the core of our being, our beliefs, these will be the defining moments that will make us or break us. Knowing that they will come is a way to prepare for them.

In the Quran, Allah shows us how to expect and deal with hardships through examples of the prophets - every single one of them went through a set of difficulties.

One good example is Prophet Yusuf / Joseph (A.S) - his whole life, from childhood was a story of Loss & Gain. *Go to the Quran, read, and comprehend about Surat Yusuf...*

Some of the lessons from his story are;

- Weird things will happen in your life, the kind you will fail to make sense of; hardships, pain, sorrow, loneliness, material loss and challenges, spiritual challenges, etc., when they do - trust in Allah, He is the Al-Wise, there is reason beyond what you will ever get to comprehend and when you turn to Allah, carefully listen to your heart, that is where the answers will be.
- The people closest and beloved to you may betray you, Joseph's brothers wanted to get rid of him so bad that they threw him in a pit in the middle of nowhere! Your ultimate trust must be in Allah.
- Patience (Sabr) comes from holding on to Allah, when feeling lonely, abandoned, terrified, seek comfort in Allah, keep thinking of Him, remember Him, turn back to dhikr (remembrance) of Allah.
- Uphold your integrity under all circumstances, it will save you. Joseph was seduced by the most powerful, beautiful woman in his time, but he did not give in.
- Maintain your identity in the face of constant change. When in the middle of a storm, you can only hold onto that which is still and strong enough not to sweep you away. When a storm literally comes in your life, hold on to Allah, the Quran, and Sunnah, this is all that will stay still - will never change. Allah is always and Ever Stable, everything else in the world is fragile and changes.
- Believe as much in what you cannot see as much as that which you see. Balance your metaphysical and physical worlds.
- As a child, you are reflective of the light that comes from your parents - Joseph always remembered and held onto that which his father, Jacob, had taught him as child.
- With success, you have to be strategic, do not tell or show off your success carelessly - certainly not on social media! Take precaution, the devil will mess with your loved ones and the evil eye will injure you.
- You will attain your deepest connection to Allah, you will get to the best you, when you go through external challenges, this is when you will gain internal growth (*Khushoo*).
- From both Jacob and Joseph, we learn about anger management, avoiding revenge in the face of the opportunity to revenge, handling rumours/slander, power, wealth, success, humility, truthfulness to Allah and to oneself.
- Always take caution - Jacob told his sons to go through different entries when entering the city, just in case something happened at one gate, the rest would be okay. We take precaution and then put our trust in Allah for the rest.

The life of this world is a test, whether through hardships or ease, both are a test. It is not always the case that you are going through hardships as a result of a wrong you did, it could simply be a test. And Allah gives the hardest tests to his best servants - the prophets went through greater hardships than any other human beings!

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*Allah says, "Have the people supposed that they will be left alone to say 'we believe', without being put to the test?" (29:2)*

*"Your Lord has not forsaken you, nor is he displeased with you, And surely what comes after is better for you than that which is in the past. And soon will your Lord give you so that you shall be well pleased." (93:3-5)*

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So when going through a trial or hardship, always remember that it is a test, everything in this world is temporary, it will come to pass, no matter how hard or painful it is, that feeling, that situation, will come to pass. And if best utilized, you will come out of the hardship stronger, better, wiser, and closer to your creator.

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*Allah promises, "So be patient. The promise of God is true. And do not let those who look certainly belittle you." (30:60)*

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During hardships, always first turn to your Creator, not the creation, the creation will always, without a doubt disappoint you, your Creator will never disappoint you.

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*We are aware that your heart is strained by what they say. So glorify the praise of your Lord and be among those who bow down. And worship your Lord in order to attain certainty (Quran 15:97-99)*

*Surely with every difficulty comes ease (multiple eases), Surely with every difficulty comes ease (94: 5-6)*

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Remember your Creator more often and help people in need for two reasons: you will get to realize that there are people going through worse and second, when you help someone, Allah will help you multi-fold in return.

## Leadership

Wrapping up all the qualities mentioned in this book brings us to Leadership. Leadership is your ability to influence, motivate, and inspire others. And to do so, here is a recap of the qualities you need.

- First and foremost, every leader must have God-Consciousness (*Taqwa*) - belief in the Creator, something greater than them, knowing that the at-most control comes from their Creator and not them
- Belief in oneself - mindfulness/confidence and good character - the ability to deal with life more, while being at peace, tranquil.
- Strengths needed must encompass all aspects of being - mind, body, soul, emotion - physical and psychological with qualities of forgiveness, compassion, empathy, mindfulness, patience, et cetera.
- Wisdom, knowledge, and manners, these include the ability to;
  - Know/see and recognize talents, strengths, utilizing resources appropriately,
  - Increase the self-esteem of others, increasing their value, compliment others
  - Know weaknesses of enemies / competition
  - Know personal strengths and weaknesses
  - Stand up for the weak and oppressed
- A leader has to uphold justice, activism, and social responsibility.

Leadership in terms of responsibility over others or over a society comes from Allah.

The best example of leadership was embodied in the life of our prophet (S.A.W). Take the time to read, understand, and emulate his character, mannerisms, tendencies, qualities, etc.

## The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens - by Franklin Covey

The habits summarized below by Franklin Covey are more like everything we have talked about in this book, once again emphasizing that Allah gave us all these solutions in Islam, an embodiment of the way to live, let's embrace it wholly.

- Habit 1. Be Proactive - take responsibility for your life
- Habit 2. Begin with the end in mind - define your mission and goals in life
- Habit 3. Put first things first - Prioritize and do the most important thing first
- Habit 4. Think Win-Win - have an 'everyone can win' attitude
- Habit 5. Seek first to understand and then to be understood - listen to people sincerely
- Habit 6. Synergize - work together (in a team) to achieve more
- Habit 7. Sharpen the Saw - Renew yourself regularly

## Words of the Wise

The best way to conclude this book, and a dedication to you and our children now and for generations to come after we leave this world, is in the advice of Luqman, the wise man to his son, this advice was so valuable and timeless that Allah put it on record in the Quran for generations and generations to benefit from it - a whole *Surah* (31) dedicated to just this advice, please go to the Quran to read it thoroughly and contemplate.

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*Allah says, "And certainly We gave wisdom to Luqman, saying: Be grateful to Allah. And whoever is grateful, he is only grateful for his own soul; and whoever is ungrateful, then surely Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praised."*

*Luqman said to this son,*

*Oh my son! Do not associate aught with Allah; most surely polytheism is a grievous iniquity;*

*Oh my son! Surely if it is the very weight of the grain of a mustard-seed, even though it is in a rock, or in the heaven, or deep in the earth, Allah will bring it to light; surely Allah is All-Knower of subtleties, All-Aware;*

*Oh my son! Keep up prayer and enjoin the good and forbid the evil, and bear patiently that which befalls you; surely these acts require courage;*

*And do not turn your face away from people in contempt, nor go about in the land exulting over much; surely Allah does not love any self-conceited boaster;*

*And pursue the right course in your going about and lower your voice; surely the most hateful of voices is the braying of the asses;*

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And the last Sermon of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W which took place on 9 Dhul Hijjah 10 AH (9 March 632) on Mount Arafat

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*After praising and thanking Allah, Prophet Muhammad S.A.W said:*

*"O People, lend me an attentive ear, for I know not whether after this year, I shall ever be amongst you again. Therefore listen to what I am saying to you very carefully and TAKE THESE WORDS TO THOSE WHO COULD NOT BE PRESENT HERE TODAY.*

*O People, just as you regard this month, this day, this city as sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust. Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners. Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you. Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord, and that He will indeed reckon your deeds. Allah has forbidden you to take usury (interest); therefore all interest obligations shall henceforth be waived. Your capital, however, is yours to keep. You will neither inflict nor suffer any inequity. Allah has judged that there shall be no interest and that all*

*the interest due to Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib (Prophet's uncle) shall henceforth be waived...*

*Beware of Satan, for the safety of your religion. He has lost all hope that he will ever be able to lead you astray in big things, so beware of following him in small things.*

*O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under Allah's trust and with His permission. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends with any one of whom you do not approve, as well as never to be unchaste.*

*O People, listen to me in earnest, worship Allah, perform your five daily prayers (salah), fast during the month of Ramadan, and give your wealth in zakat (almsgiving). Perform Hajj if you can afford it.*

*All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over black nor does a black have any superiority over a white except by piety and good action. Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim which belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly. Do not, therefore, do injustice to yourselves.*

*Remember, one day you will appear before Allah and answer for your deeds. So beware, do not stray from the path of righteousness after I am gone.*

*O People, no prophet or apostle will come after me and no new faith will be born. Reason well, therefore, O People, and understand words which I convey to you. I leave behind me two things, the QURAN and my example, the SUNNAH and if you follow these you will never go astray.*

*All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again; and may the last ones understand my words better than those who listen to me directly. Be my witness, O Allah, that I have conveyed your message to your people”.*

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## Disclaimer:

Nothing in this book is from our own creation, it is simply a compilation of lessons from numerous Islamic lectures with references to the Quran and Hadith. We therefore apologize where there is a lack of proper referencing.

All proceeds from this book shall go back into the charity organization to continue to benefit the needy.



Muslim Hands Uganda Limited dba Muslim Hands Foundation is a charity organization registered in Uganda since 2015.

Our Major Objectives are:

- To improve the livelihood of the needy through food aid, medical aid, access to clean water and affordable housing solutions
- To enhance the quality of secular and Islamic education
- To enhance the skills of youth through a structured approach to career guidance, mentoring and personal productivity / life skills
- To construct new and rehabilitate existing Islamic prayer places, mosques, Islamic centres and ablution blocks
- To promote income sustainability through offering start-up capital to businesses or business ideas, provision of skills enhancement in business productivity, financial literacy and financial management for business owners and entrepreneurs
- To increase Islamic awareness through continuous efforts to service Islamic causes within Uganda and around the world.



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