

# THE WAKE-UP CALL



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# The Wake-up Call

by

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# The Wakeup Call!

We live in the 21st century and the usual routine we see day in and day out is this

You turn on your computer, or your smart phone and a signal flashes on your screen saying "You have 1 message waiting." Is it your friend? Has that online order been shipped? You are too eager to wait. Or is it that "annoying mailing list" that sends out a verse-a-day that many delete without having a look?

All these good or bad mails and messages aside, there is an unread message waiting for us, Muslims and nonmuslims alike. It is the noble Qur'an. And its author is our Creator the Almighty God!

All Muslims worldwide should ask themselves the following question: Why did God reveal the Qur'an? Many Muslims will respond without hesitation,

"The Qur'an was revealed to bless us." But is that the correct response? The Qur'an is blessed, and blessed is he who recites it. However, reading the following verse carefully, we shall find out that this "blessedness" is not the main aim of revealing the Qur'an. Almighty God says,

*"[It is] a Book We have revealed to you abounding in good that they may ponder over its verses, and that those endowed with understanding may be mindful]" (38:29)*

Blessedness (barakah in Arabic) is a characteristic of the Qur'an, not the purpose of its revelation. The purpose of revelation is to contemplate and act upon its verses. This book has been revealed for

whole mankind and not just for the Muslims therefore a massive wakeup call is required to draw home this point.

The reason I have named this book as The Wakeup Call is quite frankly my belief that we as Muslims need one such call! This book is a humble attempt at trying to achieve it. By definition a wakeup call is something that serves to alert a person to a problem, danger, or a need. Understanding the role and responsibility that a Muslim must shoulder on account of his status as the sole representative and guardian of the last message of God is the crying need of our time.

The dangers of not understanding this role and therefore not living up to its expectations are not only limited to this temporary world of ours but spans and follows us to the next life as well. The problem of Muslims being oblivious of their main duty as the ones who must vouchsafe the only preserved message and share this with the rest of the mankind cannot be stressed enough.

As you can see the wakeup call to alert all Muslims about the problem of not understanding their role, the dangers of non engagement with the rest of the nations and the need to fulfilling our duty as Daiees (those who are charged with the responsibility of sharing Islam with the whole mankind and inviting them to seek the truth) is paramount and essential.

In order to get this wakeup call out there and for a person to benefit from it we need to keep it simple and make it easy for each individual to be able to play his or her role unimpeded. As a result I have divided this book into two parts. The first part describes what the role and responsibility is and the second part discusses the process and method of improving our own level of understanding and practise in order to achieve the goal of inviting all mankind.

# Dawah-An Introduction

Dawah is an Arabic word which has the literal meaning of "invitation or calling out to someone" or "reaching out with the intention of inviting them".

The Islamic belief is categorical in explaining the fact that each person has a God given right to choose his way of life and make choices based on his or her understanding. The Quran highlights this fact in the following verse.

*“There is no compulsion in Deen (Way of life). The Right path has been clearly distinguished from the wrong. Hence he who rejects the evil ones and believes in God has indeed taken hold of the firm, unbreakable handle. And God (Whom he has held for support) is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (2:256)*

As is clearly evident it is not the responsibility or right of individual Muslims to attempt to “convert” others to the faith. The goal of Dawah, then, is merely to share information, to invite others towards a better understanding of the faith. It is, of course, up to the listener or the audience to make his or her own choice.

In modern Islamic terminology, Dawah serves to invite all people, both Muslims and non-Muslims, to understand how the lifestyle and way of life described by the last messenger of God and duly preserved in His last testament- The Quran- is beneficial and helpful for all mankind in both the worlds.

In the above verse there are two main aspects clarified for us:

Firstly, Deen here signifies the belief about God and the entire system of life which rests upon it. The verse means that the system of Islam, embracing belief, morals and practical conduct cannot be imposed by compulsion. These are not things to which people can be yoked forcibly.

Secondly, it reminds us of the consequences of rejecting this way of life and adopting our own or any manmade lifestyle-either in the name of a religion or atheism. The consequence-like for all our choices- is that a person will end up living in a state of chaos and without any strong footing to base his thoughts and actions or to stand on!

The next verse clarifies this point further:

*“God is the Guardian of those who believe, He brings them out of darkness into light. And those who disbelieve, their guardians are the evil ones; they bring them out of light into all kinds of darkness. These are destined for the Fire, and there shall they abide” (2:257)*

The 'darkness' mentioned here means the darkness of Ignorance, which throws man off the path of salvation and well-being and directs his energies and efforts to wrong directions in defiance of reality. 'Light' here means the knowledge of Truth with the help of which man comes to know his own reality and that of the universe; this knowledge also shows him the purpose of his life, and thus leads him consciously, to adopt the Right path.

In this verse God has used the word taghut for those ways of life and those leaders that drive people away from the path of God. Literally taghut means anyone who exceeds his legitimate limits. In the Quranic terminology, however, it refers to the creature that exceeds the limits of his “creatureliness” and arrogates to himself godhead and lordship.

There are three stages of man's transgression and rebellion against God. The first stage is that one acknowledges in principle that obedience to God is right, but disregards it in practice. This is *fisq* (transgression). The second stage is wherein one not only disobeys but also rejects obedience in principle, and thus either refuses to become the subject of anyone at all or adopts someone other than God as the object of service and devotion. This is *kuf*r (infidelity). The third stage is that one not only rebels against one's Lord but also imposes one's own will (in disregard of the Will of God) on God's world and God's creatures. Anyone who reaches such a point is termed *taghut* and no one can be a true believer in God unless the authority of such a *taghut* (evil one) is rejected.

The verse thus implies that by turning away from God a man is subjected not to the tyranny of one, but to the tyranny of many *taghut* (evil one). One of these is Satan, who throws up new temptations and allurements. Another potential *taghut* (transgressor) is man's own animal self, which seeks to subjugate him to his appetites and desires. There are many more *taghut* in the world outside oneself ; the religious clergy, one's relatives, one's family and one's community, one's friends and acquaintances, one's social environment and one's people, one's leaders and guides, one's government and rulers are all potential *taghut*, each one of whom seeks to have his purposes served. Man remains subjected to these innumerable masters throughout his life, not knowing precisely whom he should please and whose displeasure and avoid. The belief in one true God frees man from the servitude of all such masters and provides a clear path towards fulfilling the rights and duties of each of the above mentioned potential *taghuts* in a better and fruitful manner.

# What Is Dawah For?

As defined above it is the Quranic word meaning “to Call out to” or invite someone:

In our current world terminology the best way to describe is the expression “Outreach for all fellow humans”

The duty of the Prophet Muhammed pbuh & all other prophets was to:

- 1) Be a Daiee (caller to the path of God)
- 2) Call for a positive change in their respective societies

For us to be given the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of these greatest men to have ever lived on our planet is a massive honour and a great favour from our creator.

## 1) Being a Daiee to path of God

Let us start by looking at the details of what it means to be a Daiee and what does he invite the mankind towards. One of the very basic but significant and fundamental of facts that a person; who wants to engage in Dawah, is to know what the actual invitation is for. The Quran has made it clear that the Dawah has to be towards the “Sabee Lil LAllah” which means the path of God. A Daiee from the very outset, therefore, has to give up all forms of personal choices and opinions, schools of thought and organisational compromises as well as individual attachments to particular issues or personalities. To be an active Daiee he or she has to keep at bay any and every aspect or issue that has the potential to make his invite adulterated. As an

example he or she may have a particular preference for a specific school of thought or an opinion in relation to a particular issue. This is all well and good if he is keeping it to his own practise and understanding however when he is involved in Dawah then any and every school of thought or opinion (that has a basis in the Quran) becomes his school of thought and opinion!

This is a very fundamental change in the approach of a Daiee that has to happen before he embarks on this great and rewarding journey. The reason that this has to happen at the outset is because if it doesn't then the Daiee will be inviting people to his particular views, opinions and school of thought without realising it! For him calling towards the path of God would be not different to inviting them to join his organisation for example, or propagate a specific view that he holds as "true Islam".

People make this mistake because of a perfectly innocent approach of wanting to get people to be same as their own-self. A Daiee may not realise this fallacy for a long time and sometimes never, especially if he is surrounded by like minded people doing the same thing in the same manner- in the name of Dawah!

So what is the true nature of Dawah? What is it that a Daiee has to invite others towards? The answer to this puzzle is the simplest of all approaches i.e. look up the Quran to find out what the path of God comprises for it is the path of God to which the invitation is!

The Quran describes three fundamental principles which are repeated throughout the Quran in all discourses and these very principles form the core of Dawah.

Three fundamental principles of Islam

Tauheed – Oneness of our Creator

Risalah -- Revelation as method of communication, oneness of message

Aakhirah – Life after death, oneness of the purpose of life

If you happen to open any page of the Quran, you will find either one, two or all three of these principles being discussed. These principles formed the core of the Message of all the Prophets sent to mankind. Let us try to look at the various aspects of these fundamental principles:

## **What Does Tauheed Mean?**

Tauheed means the oneness of God. It's one of the three basic and fundamental principles of Islam. These principles of Islam must not be confused with the five basic fundamental duties or pillars of Islam which are Shahadah, Salah, Zakah, Sawm and Hajj. These three fundamental principles of Islam are vital to understanding Islam, as they are the dominant themes in the Qur'an and can be found being discussed on any page in the Qur'an. There are at least five main aspects of Tauheed the first one of these is that God is one and the same God for everyone. Therefore there isn't a different God for the Muslims and then a different God for the Christians or the Jews or anyone else. He is the creator of everyone and everything that exists. Further, God is free from wants and needs therefore He is in need of nothing from his creation whilst all his creation is in need of His mercy and help. God is also the one and only one God with no partners. Explaining this further God does not need anyone to help Him carry out any action that He wishes to carry out. Also to associate any partners with God Almighty is like thinking of God as someone who is weak and incapable of controlling the entire

universe. God Almighty has never needed any help and will never need any help from anyone. Consequently the fourth quality is that God can't be compared to anything, therefore we can't think of God having a particular shape or form. Also in Surah 112 verse 4 the Quran explains that there is nothing comparable unto God.

The Jews and Christians asked Prophet Muhammed pbuh if what the nature and form of God was and if God was made of gold or wood so this Surah (chapter 112) was revealed so Prophet pbuh could answer them. The fifth quality of Tauheed is the fact that the God is the alpha (the beginning) and the omega (the end). Furthermore this means that God was there before the beginning of time and will be there at the end of time as well.

This also means that time is still for God & that God is exalted forever and is the King of Kings. It's notable that we have a direct relationship with God so we don't need to go to any priest to confess our sins or go to any Imam to intercede with God on our behalf. We are instructed to pray to God directly without anyone in between and if we are sincere to Him then He will definitely answer us when we call Him. Another point is even the accursed one (Satan) admitted that he wouldn't be able to lead astray people who are sincere and grateful to God; who is our true Lord and Sovereign.

A Daiee has to understand that the authority belongs to God Almighty therefore our Dawah is to acknowledge this power and authority of our creator in all aspects of our lives and follow his laws in the same manner as His laws provide balance, stability and peace in the rest of the universe. Inviting people towards pure Tauheed will automatically bring us closer to the Quran and thus pave the way for us to break away from all forms of sectarian, political and nationalistic divides.

## What Is Risalah?

Risalah means prophethood. This is the 2nd basic fundamental principle of Islam. There are three aspects to this. Firstly is the aspect that God chose Risalah as His method of communication with humans. Furthermore, human beings are the only creation of God that has been communicated with using this method. God, through this method, reveals His message through the arch angel Jibraeel or Gabriel (AS).. Then angel Jibraeel (AS) tells this to the Prophets of God who are human beings themselves and then they communicate this to the rest of the people. This has been the method used by God from day one of the creation of humans on our planet.

Second aspect of Risalah is the selection or choosing of Prophets! God Almighty specially selects some human beings from among His creation; who are known for their truthfulness and upright character, to be His prophets. It's notable that these great Prophets are protected by God from committing major sins, although, they make minor mistakes. An example of this is when Prophet Muhammed pbuh was chastised and warned by Allah in Surah 82 – Abasa. This incident was when Prophet pbuh was giving Dawah to the leaders of the Quraysh and the blind man Abdullah ibn Umm Makhtum came to him to ask about a verse of the Qur'an. However the Prophet frowned and turned away. Therefore the Prophet hadn't committed a sin here as he was giving Dawah to the leaders, however, this was a minor mistake he made. One of the most important points to understand is that all the Prophets brought the same message of obedience and worship to one God only. This exemplifies the fact that there exists the unity or oneness of the message sent by God Almighty to all mankind at all times.

Third aspect of Risalah is that the Prophets are our role models who should be followed by us. Prophets are the real beacons of light for all and true celebrities of this life. They are the best role models for us to follow in this life in order to attain true success and live a fulfilling life. Lastly these Prophets are the embodiment of struggle and sacrifice in this life as they gave everything for their and our Lord before returning back to Him. If anybody deserves to be emulated and followed it is these very Prophets of God.

A Daiee has to familiarise himself with all aspects of the Seerah (life history) of Prophet Muhammed pbuh and all previous Prophets pbuh mentioned in the Quran. It is the lifestyle and approach of these very role models that a Daiee must adopt and emulate.

As an example; let us examine the discussion between Moses and Pharaoh in the Quran wherein Pharaoh poses the Question about the fate of those elders who have passed away and were worshipping other deities. This question is posed by many during Dawah interactions and people start giving lengthy theological interpretations, however look at how Moses conducted himself in such a situation and gave a factual answer without any being disrespectful to anyone and making it clear that the right to decide about anybody's fate belongs to God and God alone, no clergy has the right to decide that:

*“Pharaoh asked: "Then, what is the fate & state of the former generations? (Of Idol worshippers). Moses replied: "Its knowledge is with my Lord, recorded in the Book. My Lord does not err, nor does He forget” (20:51-52)*

The question posed by Pharaoh was very subtle. He meant to say: If there is no other lord than the One Who has sent you with the true message, then what will be the position of our forefathers who had

been worshipping other deities since centuries? Were all those people in error? Did all of them deserve torment? Did they all lack common sense?

Thus Pharaoh perhaps wanted to give vent to his anger against Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) for showing disrespect to his forefathers. At the same time he also wanted to incite his courtiers and the common people of Egypt against the message of Moses.

This trick has always been used against the people who propagate the truth and has always proved very effective to incite those people who lack common sense. This same trick was being employed at the very time against the Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him) by the people of Makkah.

This answer given by Moses is full of wisdom. It has been preserved by the Quran for all times to come and for all Daiees to emulate. If Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had said: Yes, they all lacked common sense and had gone astray and would become the fuel of Hell, this answer, would have served the very purpose Pharaoh had in mind whilst posing the question. But the answer given by the Prophet was true and it frustrated the trick of Pharaoh as well. His answer was to this effect: Well, those people have now gone before their Lord, and I have no means of judging their deeds and intentions. However, their whole record is safe and secure with the creator, and nothing can escape Him. God alone knows how to deal with them and has the right to judge people- not you and me. What concerns you and me is our own position and attitude to life. We should be more concerned about our own end than of those who have already passed away into God's presence.

This is where our belief in Risalah takes on a practical shape, we believe in all prophets and their Seerah serves as a guide for us all

especially whilst doing Dawah in different circumstances and situations. All previous prophets mentioned in the Quran were faced with different situations and various tasks and challenges. Daiees will similarly face different challenges in different places, therefore learning the tricks of trade by studying and implementing the strategies used by previous prophets will aid the Dawah process and benefit it immensely.

## **What Does Akhirah Mean?**

Aakhirah means the life after death or the life hereafter. This is the 3rd basic fundamental principle of Islam after Tauheed and Risalah and brings these other two concepts to life. Without the Akhirah the other two concepts would become mere thoughts and ideas devoid of any life. It is this very belief in the day of recompense or Akhirah that provides us the motivation to improve our lives and gives us something to live for by following the Qur'an and Sunnah. There are two aspects to Akhirah.

The first aspect is that there is no yolo (you only live once) as this life will not be the only life for all human beings. God will resurrect all of us and judge between us based on how we conducted ourselves in this life. Our lives do not end with the passing away from our current state of consciousness. There will be no escape from God's punishment on the Day of Judgement and no one will be able to prevent the rewards He decides to confer on His servants. People who disbelieve in the Day of Judgement may only be living for this world but there will be a Hereafter which is much better and everlasting whereas this world is finite and all its allurements are temporary and short lived

Additionally the second aspect to Aakhirah is accountability. Accountability is where we will be held accountable for all the good or bad we did in this life. Therefore we should try our best to do as many good actions as possible and avoid evil deeds. What are notable here are we as human beings are passing through different stages of consciousness throughout life as we started off as a single cell with an extremely low level of consciousness but then our level of consciousness grew throughout our life! Then, when we all die, we revert to a lower level of consciousness again. Although God is more than capable of increasing our consciousness again by bringing us back to life on the Day of Resurrection.

We know that we pass through these different levels of consciousness in our lives from an embryo to a teenager and then to an adult and finally to death, this is a proof for the resurrection and Day of Judgement as God has passed us from lower to higher levels of consciousness throughout our life and He can most certainly do this again when we die in order to resurrect us.

Accountability is a key concept to Aakhirah because if there was no accountability then good people on the earth like the Prophets and their followers would have suffered on this earth for nothing. Moreover God's saying that He is just and fair would have no meaning if there is no life after death. Reasons for this are a just and fair God would never let His servants be mistreated or tortured without having a Day where He would recompense them for their efforts. The way this judgement would be laid out is as follows:

There will be three main courts which everyone will have to pass through on the Day of Judgement. These are the Court of Tauheed, Rights of God (Huqooq Ullah) and the Rights of the people (Huqooqul Ibaad).

In the first court (court of Tauheed) if someone hasn't associated any partners with God in his life then he is guaranteed Heaven at some point. On the other hand if someone has associated any partners with God and has died without repenting from this then his punishment is Hellfire.

The second court is the rights of God (Huqooq Ullah) which is about the duties towards our creator and if a person has followed these pillars by having faith in one true God, praying five times a day, fasting, giving obligatory charity and going to Hajj once in a lifetime he will be successful. If a person has done these five fundamental duties but he may have missed some parts, then hopefully with the mercy of God, he will pass this court.

The third court is the rights of the people (Huqooqul Ibaad) and is the most difficult one because if we have wronged anyone then they will take away our good deeds in lieu of the wrongs done by us to them!

Prophet pbuh said do you know who is the real pauper? The companions replied that someone who doesn't have much money. After this Prophet pbuh said that this isn't the real pauper. Prophet pbuh said the real pauper is someone who will come on the Day of Judgement with a mountain worth of good deeds but because he had been bad to the people then they will take away all his good deeds. Also there will still be more people he had been bad to so they will put their bad deeds on his shoulders. This will continue till all his good deeds run out and he would still owe moral debt to others! Then the bad deeds of others will be put in his account as a debt settlement. Moreover, at the end, this person will be left with a mountain worth of bad deeds which he will then be punished for- the bad deeds which he didn't even do! Therefore this person will be rightfully punished and get revenge taken on him for all the bad things he did to other people.

It is these very principles of Tauheed, Risalah and Aakhirah that a Daiee has to base his Dawah on and invite the rest of mankind to. After having understood the basic principles to be used for Dawah a Daiee has to learn that the behaviour of the Daiee is the most important aspect of doing Dawah. It is his or her Behaviour or Akhlaq that would determine how the audience respond to the call.

Akhlaq means behaviour, attitude, morals and ethics. Akhlaq is the fruit of true belief and a result of acting on the three basic and fundamental principles of Islam described above. By following the principles of Islam we can become confident without being arrogant. It makes us humble but not to the point of letting others crush and walk all over us. Moreover Akhlaq is about having humbleness and humility but not to the point of us feeling dejected and feeling that we're worthless. Another notable point in the Qur'an is that Prophet Muhammed pbuh is mentioned to have Khulooqin Azeem which means that Prophet pbuh had the best Akhlaq (behaviour, attitude, morals and ethics) Sura 68 verse 4. It's also important for our personal development and lets us identify our strengths and weaknesses thus bringing out the best in us.

## **2) Call for Positive Change in Society**

The second part of being a Daiee is to know our society and its ills. Every Prophet was charged with the responsibility of calling mankind towards Tauheed, Risalah and Aakhirah. In addition to this basic call they had specific tasks to perform depending on the needs of their era and societies. Let us examine various examples given in the Quran of how the prophets called for a positive change in their respective societies:

## Moses (Musa) pbuh

Moses calls for freedom of Children of Israel oppressed by tyrant:

*"Moses said, "O Pharaoh, I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds. I am truthfully bound to say nothing about God except the truth. I have come to you with a proof from your Lord, so **send with me the Children of Israel.**"*" 7:104-105

The above verse makes it clear that freedom of the children of Israel was part of the responsibilities of Moses as a messenger of God. it makes perfect sense as no revolutionary change can take place in the absence of freedom. If a nation is reeling under the oppression of those who have occupied and enslaved them no amount of preaching and teaching will help. In such circumstances the demand for freedom has to be paramount. This is what the sunnah of Moses has in store for us as a learning point for all times to come.

## Jesus (Eesa) pbuh

Jesus pbuh had a very tough job on his hand. Apart from the usual responsibilities of conveying the principles of Tauheed, Risalah and Aakhirah his job description included the reform of the Law & of the hypocrisy amongst the Priests and the society. He had to fight against those who not only claimed to be faithful servants of God but thought of themselves as the only chosen ones. He had to deal with the double edged sword of calling towards the Law given to Moses previously and to reform it from the unnecessary restrictions and interpretations of the so called scholars of Jews at the same time! Here is what the Quran says about his mission:

*“And I have come confirming that which was before me of the Torah, and to make lawful to you part of what was forbidden to you, and I have come to you with proof from your Lord” ( Quran 3:50)*

They had made a hundred things unlawful on Saturday in the name of observing the Sabbath. Even self-defence or calling a doctor to save a patient who was in a serious condition was frowned upon!

Jesus was on his way to the temple. Although it was the Sabbath, he reached out his hand to pick two pieces of fruit to feed a hungry child. This was considered to be a violation of the Sabbath law.

He made a fire for the old women to keep themselves warm from the freezing air. This was seen by the Rabbis as another violation of the law. He went to the temple and looked around. There were twenty thousand Jewish priests registered there who earned their living from the temple. Jesus observed that the visitors were much fewer than the priests. Yet the temple was full of sheep and doves which were sold to the people to be offered as sacrifices.

Every step in the temple cost the visitor money. They worshipped nothing but money.

In the temple, the Pharisees and Sadducees (Ruling class) acted as if it were a market place, and these two groups always disagreed on everything. Hypocrisy was at its worst in his era. The rabbis and the monks were steeped in material lusts and they had long left the true essence of god-fearness and spirituality. The common masses had relegated the right to decide on lawful and unlawful to these very materialistic worshipers of their own desires.

The Quran declares:

*"They (Jews and Christians) took their rabbis and their monks to be their lords besides God, (by obeying them in things which they made lawful or unlawful according to their own desires without being ordered by God). (9:31)*

Adi bin Hatim, who was formerly a Christian, came to the Holy Prophet with the intention of understanding Islam; he asked several questions in order to remove his doubts. One of these was: "This verse accuses us of taking our scholars and monks as our lords. What is its real meaning, sir? For we do not take them as our Lords(Gods)"

The Prophet pbuh replied:

"Is it not a fact that you accept as unlawful what they declare to be unlawful and lawful what they declare to be lawful?"

Adi confessed, "Yes, sir, it is so." The Prophet pbuh then said,

"This amounts to making them your lords"

Those who themselves set limits to the lawful and the unlawful without the authority of God's Book, assume for themselves the rank of Godhead, and those who acknowledge their right of making laws take them as their Lords. This is no different than any other form of Shirk (Polytheism) and associating partners with God,

Sadly we see Muslims of today falling prey to same deceptions of Satan. Muslims are seen today following the fatwas of different people as if it were the very book of God. No scholar, howsoever great his knowledge, has the right to legislate in contradiction to the book of God. A Daiee has to be very careful in saving his self from this difficult and treacherous terrain of fatwa business. He has to manage and maintain a very balanced outlook on all aspects of life

especially those new aspects that were not present at the time of Prophet pbuh and we may not have a direct reference to it in the precedence of Prophet pbuh.

## **Prophet Shoaib pbuh**

Prophet Shoaib calls for keeping business corruption free, establishing the rule of law and making earth safe and secure for all:

*"...so give full measure and full weight and wrong not men in their things, and do not do mischief on the earth after it has been set in order, that will be better for you, if you are believers."*

*And sit not on every road, threatening, and hindering from the Path of God those who believe in Him and seeking to make it crooked..."*  
(Quran 7:85-86)

It is clear from the above verse that at the time of the advent of Shoaib pbuh their state was no different from that of the Israelites at the time of the advent of Moses. They too were originally a Muslim people who had subsequently moved far away from Islam. For six to seven centuries they lived amongst a people who were steeped in polytheism and moral corruption, and this led to their contamination with polytheism and moral corruption. Despite their deviation and corruption, however, they claimed to be the followers of the true faith, and were proud of their religious identification.

This shows that the people of Midian suffered from multiple and major ailments – polytheism, gang culture, anarchy and dishonesty in business. Shoaib pbuh devoted his efforts to purging them of those evils apart from calling towards the path of God-Tauheed, Risalah and Aakhirah!

## **Prophet Muhammed pbuh**

Similarly the last of messengers Muhammed pbuh called towards reform in the society apart from inviting people to the path of God-Tauheed, Risalah and Aakhirah.

On the Day of Judgment

*'When the infant girl buried alive is asked,' for what crime she was killed.'*”(Quran, 81:8-9)

This was the first act which was made unlawful or Haraam in Makkah by Prophet pbuh. This highlights the importance of engaging with the wider community issues in order to make the Dawah fruitful and acceptable to common masses.

And the second improvement was for slaves:

The Prophet pbuh said,

*"Whoever frees a slave, Allah will save all the parts of his body from the (Hell) Fire as he has freed the body-parts of the slave"* (Bukhari 693)

This is why knowing our society is such an integral part of doing Dawah. Without this skill and tool we will be left handicapped and groping in the dark!

## **What Is The Dawah For?**

One of the most important questions that needs answering is what does this Dawah mean for the recipient of this information. Do we expect the individual accepting this Dawah to change his very

nature? Is he or she going to become someone else? What does this Dawah do to people's lives?

The Quran sheds clear light on it:

*“So set your face upright to the true Faith and adhere to the true nature on which God has created human beings. The mould fashioned by God cannot be altered. That is the True, Straight Faith, although most people are unmindful of this” (30:30)*

The invitation is clear and unambiguous. It invites each individual to discover his or her true self & follow the natural path. We are expected to attain moral uprightness after having gained physical uprightness in just 12 months after birth. At birth all children are horizontally inclined however, in a few months the child learns to stand upright, without any teacher, by natural disposition.

This happens because the child is predisposed by nature to look out for something strong to pull up on and gradually the child starts to lift itself up from the horizontal disposition to an upright physical posture. A Muslim, similarly, is one who accepts his nature-which is uprightness!

The call and Dawah is towards the acceptance of this very uprightness which is the true nature of all humans. It is being correct morally and in accordance with our true nature-Islam.

Here is the example of how physical uprightness is achieved by a human baby without the aid of any teacher in just a few months after its birth:



## The Principal Verse On Dawah

*“O Prophet invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and excellent admonition and discuss things with people in the best manner. Your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His Way and He knows best who is rightly guided” (Surah Nahl Verse 125)*

Let us take a detailed look at this principal verse regarding Dawah, which has been made compulsory for all Muslims.

Who is the call towards?

As we have specified at the very beginning of this discussion this verse leaves no ambiguity in clarifying the fact that the invitation is purely towards the path of God:

Call PURELY towards the path of God

Not for any personal gains or interests

Not towards any Masalak or schools of thought

Not towards any personalities or individuals

Not towards any specific opinions; personal or otherwise

After clarifying this basic theme the verse then specifies the division of the society into three main categories:

- The Intellectuals, the common masses and the scholars of other faiths.

The beauty and quality of the Quran is that it gives a command as well as teaches the methodology and approach in the same verse:

The verse specifies the use of different techniques for different categories of social fabric.

Intellectuals – Use Wisdom, logic, knowledge, Objectivity

Common Masses – Use good advice & exhortation to influence

Religious Scholars – Use a friendly discussion & dialogue

Towards the end of the verse there is a very important note of caution for a Daiee i.e.

**DO NOT START JUDGEING PEOPLE, THAT’S GOD’S JOB!**

The verse says:

*Your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His Way and He knows best who is rightly guided” (16:125)*

It is a great reminder to a Daiee that his job is only to be kind and generous to the audience in delivering the message and do it in the best possible way. You are not there to judge who is right and who is wrong, nor are you to assume the self styled fatwa machine for decreeing hell and heaven for people!

Your job is to be the most sincere of friends for all mankind-regardless of how deviated their appearance may look to you.

## **Clarity Of Purpose**

A Daiee has to have a crystal clear idea about the purpose of his Dawah as described above. The Dawah is not towards some blind faith that he professes and wants everyone of his audience to accept without question. In contrast his Dawah is open, honest and based on objective study of the facts and observations. The Quran clarifies this aspect of Dawah and describes the need to explaining to those who are invited the objective and rational nature of Islamic belief.

*“Say, This is my path. I invite unto God with full insight, I and whosoever follows me (must also invite other to God) with full insight” [12:108]*

The Daiee uses wisdom and intellectual acumen to invite people:

*“And he unto whom wisdom is given, truly he has received good in abundance” [2:269]*

Islam does not call for a blind faith as a blind faith means faith without proper understanding; in fact the Quran has condemned those who do not use reason and intelligence:

*“Indeed, the worst of living creatures in the sight of Allah are the deaf and dumb who do not use reason”. (8:22)*

*“Say: ‘Praise be to God. He will show you His Signs and you will recognize them. Your Lord is not heedless of anything you do.(27:93)*

These verses from Quran do not ask for blind belief, there are hundreds of such verses in the Quran which invite mankind to identify and recognize the signs of God in nature. The Quran is pretty clear about having a proper understanding of God and that there is no concept of a blind belief but only belief with proper understanding.

Islam encourages critical thinking, research and inquiry when it comes to understanding the realities of life including the concept of God and the purpose of life. The wisdom makes a Daiee ponder over & consider the situation, the nature, attitude & manners of those he or she is inviting. The Daiee does not overburden his audience and does not place obligations upon them unless making their hearts prepared to undertake them.

He uses different styles and approaches and attracts them according to their suitability. He calls to God with knowledge as opposed to ignorance.

## Some Ahadith About Dawah

The Prophet pbuh said:

*“Convey what you have received from me, even if it is one verse’.* [Bukhari].

Conveying the message or doing Dawah therefore does not require one to be a scholar: it is in fact the responsibility of each and every Muslim, according to his or her ability. The next saying of Prophet is a warning to those who have been given the knowledge but do not share with others:

*‘Whoever hides knowledge, God will brand him with the branding iron from the hellfire’.* [Ahmed]

Another saying makes it crystal clear that doing Dawah is part and parcel of our faith:

*‘If one of u sees a wrong, let him change it with his hand, and if he is unable then with his tongue, and if he is unable then with his heart. And that is the weakest of faith’.* (Bukhari)

The next saying is a glad tiding for those who engage in Dawah frequently and manage to convince people of the truth of Quran:

*‘Whoever guides [another] to a good deed will get a reward similar to the one who performs it’* [Muslim]

The Prophet pbuh said,

*“No servant will be let go on the day of judgment until he is asked about the four matters: his lifetime - and how he spent it, his knowledge - and what did he use it for, his money - where did he*

*gain it from and where did he spend it. And his body - in what way did he wear it away. [Tirmidhi]*

Have we used our bodies for fasting, praying, enjoining good and forbidding evil, or have we used them up by succumbing to our base desires?

The Prophet pbuh said,

*“By God, if God guides a man [to Islam] through you, it is much better for you than being blessed with the best pleasures of this world”.* (Muslim)

These sayings of Prophet pbuh make it amply clear that Dawah is an obligation on each Muslim and everyone has a responsibility to share the message of God with the rest of the world.

## **A Fundamental Reality**

We, humans, are creatures of interdependence; we get influenced by others or influence others. So we “Either receive Dawah or Give Dawah”. There is no sitting on the fence in this world! If we choose not to do Dawah actively we will end up becoming a part of the structures and systems that make up our environment either gradually or imperceptibly. A Daiee therefore is helping his own self to keep on the right track even if the others turn a deaf ear to his message. Dawah will at least guarantee our own success!

It is because of this very comprehensive responsibility that a Daiee needs to keep himself/herself regularly updated with what is happening in the society and what the Deen requires him/her to do in

particular situations and conditions. The Prophet pbuh highlighted this aspect of Daiees in the following hadith:

*“If your Today is not better than yesterday & your Tomorrow not better than today then you are in loss” (Ahmad)*

The only way to achieving this is regular training and learning on by all those involved in Dawah.

## **What Is The Requirement?**

A culture-free & Quran based understanding and propagation of Islam instead of any opinion or school of thought. Most people ask the pertinent question; what can I do? The answer to this is: Recognise & Get rid of your own cultural baggage and keep improving your communication and people skills. Regularly review and question everything you think you already know in order to gain the true Quran based learning and understanding.

So what is an Islamic practice? Islamic practices and beliefs are those that have roots in the Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammed pbuh. Any belief or practice, even if common among some Muslim-majority country, which does not go back to the Quran or the Sunnah, is not an Islamic belief or practice

More Importantly new issues of our time and of future are to be carefully discussed & opinions formed on Ijtihad. Our fuqaha, sadly, continue to refuse to review things. Just because a sheikh or Imam has issued a fatwa on a new issue does not make it the final word on that issue!

Another important aspect to be considered by the Daiee is his relation with those who accept Islam. New Muslims come with no cultural baggage when they accept Islam so avoid giving them your own baggages!

A Daiee has to mentor those new to Islam and not act in a prescriptive or patronising manner. A Mentor is a person who gives a younger or less experienced person help and advice over a period of time. He acts as an Adviser, Guide, Confidante, Counsellor, Consultant & Therapist – All these aspects are linked with friendship & facilitation. The Daiee should not try to be a preacher or a Murrabi. A Murrabi is someone like a Patron, Superior, Guardian, Teacher- all these are linked with discipline & prescription; which needs avoidance by the Daiee.

## **What Is In It For Me?**

This is a perfectly valid question to ask. Following are the rewards of engaging in regular Dawah:

Dawah is recognised by the majority of scholars as being obligatory upon every Muslim, so by engaging in Dawah you are fulfilling an obligation imposed by our creator upon us.

This was a duty performed by the best of all people to have lived on our planet i.e. the Prophets of God. It is an honour to be handed the duty of the Prophets of God.

By engaging in Dawah we can be part of the change by initiating it rather than just witnessing it from a distance or sitting on the fence.

Dawah is the best means to get a sense of purpose & belonging in life in the best possible way. It gives people both direction and purpose.

Dawah brings with it the opportunity to meet excellent people whose hallmark is sincerity & sacrifice. Dawah is not possible without the qualities of selflessness and putting the cause always first.

Being in the company of such sincere people allows you to form lifelong relationships & friendships that are not superficial in any manner. These are meaningful and fruitful relations.

Engaging in Dawah makes it very easy to improve & develop your own personality, knowledge & skills which then become a second nature of anyone doing Dawah.

Dawah is not just an activity but it takes the Daiee on to a beautiful journey in life that has both a purpose & direction.

Above all a Daiee is promised by God that he or she will be the proud owner of the everlasting Paradise in the next life!

Engaging in Dawah thus brings purpose, beauty, satisfaction, reward and benefits not limited to our current life but encompassing our life hereafter as well. Dawah is the responsibility that each believer has to shoulder on account of the fact that Muhammed pbuh was the last Messenger of God and the duty of sharing the Message of God now rests on the shoulders of the believers i.e. Muslims.

The Quran has specified this role quite clearly even amongst the Muslim community:

*“And from among you there must be a party who invite people to all that is good and enjoin the doing of all that is right and forbid the*

*doing of all that is wrong. It is they who will attain true success.”*  
(3:104)

## **Personal Development**

Personal development is the aim and objective of all forms of acts of worship and good deeds. Personal development covers activities that improve awareness and identity, develop talents and potential, build human capital and lead to a better society. Personal development takes place over the course of a person's entire life; it's an ongoing and a lifelong process. It is not limited to self-help; the concept involves formal and informal activities for developing others in roles such as a teacher, guide, counsellor, manager, life coach or a mentor.

Among other things, personal development may include the following activities:

- Improving self-awareness
- Improving self-knowledge
- Improving skills and/or learning new ones
- Building or renewing identity/self-esteem
- Developing strengths or talents
- Personal development can also include developing other people

From a Quranic perspective the personal development is defined as improving our Nafs:

Quran details three different aspects to a Human being, his Physical body – Jasad (Sura Saad verse 34), the spiritual and Life giving aspect – Ruuh or Soul (Sura 17 verse 85)

And Our unique personality – Nafs. The Nafs or personality has been classified into three subtypes:

- a) Nafs e Ammarah – The inciting part (Yusuf 12: 53)
- b) Nafs e Lawwama - Self critical part (Qiyamah 75: 2)
- c) Nafs e Mutmainna – Contented/satisfied self (Fajr 89:27)

The Structural model of brain given by Sigmund Freud the well-known Psychiatrist describes these aspects of self or personality as:

‘Id’ or the inciting self that follows desires recklessly. ‘Superego’ or the Self-critical part which is in line with the Nafs e Lawwama and the ‘Ego’ that plays the Balancing role between the other two.

## **Description Of Nafs (Self)**

It’s important to note that Nafs is the word for the self or the personality which Quran has used. There are three types of Nafs mentioned in the Qur’an.

- 1) Nafs-e-Ammarah is the part of the self which instigates us to follow desires and the word given to this part of the self by Freud is id. Moreover Nafs-e-Ammarah is the immature, childish part of ourselves and wants to go for absolutely everything to satisfy our carnal desires. In the Qur’an this type of Nafs is described in Surah 12, verse 53.

- 2) Nafs-e-Lawwama which is the superego and is mentioned in the Qur'an in Surah 75, verse 2. Lawwama (superego). This is the part of our self or personality that stops us from doing something bad, immoral or evil.
- 3) Nafs-e-Mutmaina is the third type of self which is discussed in the Qur'an and is likened to Ego of Freud but is better than ego. Nafs-e-Mutmaina is discussed in the Qur'an in Surah 89, verse 27 which says Ya Iyyatu Han Nafsul Mutmaina which means, "Oh, serene soul!" and here the verses talk about a soul who will go to Paradise which is the goal for all of us.

Nafs-e-Mutmaina is the satisfied and contented that has reached the level of development which is the highest pinnacle of self development. This personality is thus able to be a happy, content and satisfied soul and has gained the capability of how to be content with what he or she has. Mutmaina comes from the word Tamanina which means contentment and peace and the Mutmaina is a personality which God wants us to have. This will let us be satisfied and content with our life whether we possess a lot of worldly possessions or very little.

Believers who have this Mutmaina personality never feel wanting for anything for they have mastered the art of being content & are not a slave to their desires. They have the firm conviction that God Almighty can give them something better InshAllah in the next world if they fail to get it in the temporary life of this world. The believing person who has Nafs-e-Mutmaina is in a blissful state of contentment and such people are at peace with themselves, their environment, neighbourhood and the rest of the world.

If we continually improve and develop our personality and deeds for seeking the pleasure of our creator; we are sure to succeed, in both

the worlds. It's better therefore not to be sorrowful or feel dejected for things that we don't have and remember that the best possession is to have a self that is content and peaceful ie. the Nafs-e-Mutmaina. There is also always a lot of Divine Wisdom behind each of God's rulings and by having a Nafs-e-Mutmaina we can face everything that life throws at us. This is easy once we know that the most powerful God is always there for all of us and would always answer the call of a sincere slave.

The Quran explains the inbuilt qualities of our Nafs or personalities as follows:

*“And by the Nafs and by Him Who perfectly proportioned it and imbued it with its evil and its piety. He who purifies/improves it will prosper and he who corrupts it will be ruined” (91:7-10)*

As for the nations, the Quran forms a clear criterion for a positive change:

*“God does not change people's /nation's situation/conditions unless they themselves change their own characteristics” (13:11)*

From these verses, we learn the following basic facts about human personality:

All humans have similar basic characteristics and that God chose to give us the choice to either follow our Good or bad qualities.

All of us are capable of sin, being good & improvement thus every one of us has the ability and the opportunity to either be the best or the worst person.

Nafs (Personality) needs nurture, if we are to succeed. If we don't improve continuously we will be at a loss.

Another important lesson from these verses is the fact that making a change is our responsibility- both as individuals & as nations and God's help will come to those who help themselves by making conscious efforts to bring about positive changes in and around them.

The Quran mentions various types of personalities for us to take heed and by using such examples as a mirror in which we can compare our own characteristics and try and imbibe the positive types and refrain from the negative ones. In the future parts of this series we will be looking at different personality types described in the Quran in order to improve our own personality Insha'Allah.

God Almighty has given us the ability and the choice of either being disciplined or being careless with our lives. The Quran mentions about 52 times in its verses:

“why don't you use your brain and think with your intellect (Afala Ta'qiloon)”

Using our mind to reach the right conclusion is part of a disciplined person who is open minded and able to discern various aspects and figuring out different angles of any issue. When talking about personality traits it's important to be open to new ideas with a view to always reviewing the implementation and strategies, however, principles should never change. It's crucial to be open-minded and not be rigid and think of ideas outside the box but equally important is to guard our principles for if we compromise our principles in the name of accepting new ideas then we would give in to every temptation and immoral deed.

Disciplining our self and refining our character and conduct is a big challenge but we have to face this head on and with a lot of confidence, conviction, dedication and self belief. When we have this confidence, courage and belief in our abilities; we will be able to

stand up against any injustice and we can attain the power to change the world for the better, by forming friendships, within our community and with other communities as well.

## Personality Types In The Quran

The Quran has mentioned all types of personalities in its chapters so that we can mould ourselves on the frames of positive personalities and also to try and keep away from the traits that are negative. These personalities or traits described by the Quran act as a mirror for us to see our own image in it and improve our own traits accordingly.

Let us see some examples of the personality types described by the Quran

### A Pious/believing Personality:

Surah Baqarah verse 177 or the verse of Al-Birr (Virtue and Piety) describes the qualities of a true believer and also defines what piety is in reality and what it is not. This verse can well be described as the moral definition of belief.

*“Birr (piety) does not consist in turning your faces towards the east or towards the west; true piety consists in believing in God and the Last Day, the angels, the Book and the Prophets, and in giving away one’s property in love of Him to one’s kinsmen, the orphans, the poor and the wayfarer, and to those who ask for help, and in freeing the necks of slaves, and in establishing Prayer and dispensing the Zakah. True piety is attained by those who are faithful to their promise once they have made it and by those who remain steadfast in adversity and affliction and at the time of battle (between Truth and*

*falsehood). Such are the truthful ones; such are the God-conscious”(2:177)*

Turning one's face towards the east or the west is mentioned here only by way of illustration. The actual purpose of the verse is to emphasize that the observance of certain outward religious rites, the performance of certain formal religious acts out of conformism, and the manifestation of certain familiar forms of piety do not constitute that essential righteousness which alone carries weight with God and earns His recognition and approval. Piety is not about what attire you done or what appearances you try to maintain

The Prophet pbuh clarified the outward expression of piety as useless by declaring the fundamental fact about piety:

Abu Hurairah narrated: Messenger of God pbuh said,

*“God does not look at your physical appearances or at your attire but He looks at your hearts [and deeds].”* [Muslim]

The definition of piety in the above verse starts quite rightly with the clarification of what is not piety; most religious people are seen to be so focused on the outward appearance that the very appearance seems to take the most prominent position as a sign of piety!

The verse therefore describes from the very outset that there is no goodness in appearance as appearances can be deceiving and misleading. It is a blessing from God Almighty that He starts the description of piety by letting us know what isn't goodness and after making this clear to us, goes on to say what goodness or virtue really is. In these verses the word Birr means righteousness, goodness, Eeman (faith), piety and virtue.

After the above clarification, the verse explains the first quality of Piety is that we believe, firmly, in the oneness of God which means having a proper and insightful relationship with the creator by understanding our Creator through His signs and qualities and establishing a good connection with Him through daily prayers and regular reflection.

The second quality of a true believing personality as regards to the moral definition is to believe in the Day of Judgement so that we bring about changes in our behaviour, attitudes and character. Also this shows how a believing personality is aware that this life is just a temporary abode and a test for us. The third quality mentioned in the above verse is that we believe in the prophethood of all the Prophets sent by God from time to time over the course of human existence on earth. These Prophets and books were sent to guide the people and to show them that God loves them and cares for their wellbeing. By believing in other Prophets and books we know it won't just be Muslims of today who will be in Heaven but the Prophets who lived in the past and their righteous followers, who were believers as well, will be in Heaven, as well InshAllah. In addition we as Muslims believe in the angels as well so we believe in things which are above and beyond the comprehension of our 5 senses; this concept of believing in the existence of things which cannot be comprehended by the use of our five sensory abilities is called the belief in the unseen world. This belief takes us out of the confines of the materialistic approach to life and opens up for us the vastness of the unending universe which is way beyond our comprehension-if we limit ourselves to using just the sensory abilities only!

This belief in the unseen makes the comprehension of realities that cannot be touched, smelled, heard, seen or physically felt- not only possible but comprehensible by applying the tools of analysis and indirect deduction as evidence of their existence!

The next quality of a pious personality mentioned in the above verse (2:177) is one of the best qualities that this believing personality has i.e. he gives his wealth despite working extremely hard for it and despite having love for it, to those people who are in need. This person has developed such a level of commitment in his relation to the creator that his sole purpose is to please God, therefore he is not withholding his help from people who would need it or people who would ask him for help. He will not shy away from spending on the orphans, slaves and the needy and will help the vulnerable in whatever way he can.

Interesting enough, this quality of being charitable and generous has been mentioned before Zakah in the above verse, as not everyone can pay Zakah. Thus generosity has been delinked from Zakah (the annual charity) and this gives people an opportunity to be charitable in other ways even if they do not qualify for paying the Zakah. Generosity is thus a part and parcel of piety regardless of economic circumstances of an individual. This is what the Prophet pbuh advised when he said Giving a smile to someone who is depressed is charity as this can cheer someone up greatly. The generosity is first commanded for our relatives; as charity begins at home, and people who aren't generous with family could hardly be expected to be generous to other vulnerable sections of the society- who are not even related to them!

The sixth quality mentioned about piety in the above verse is to establish prayer which means not just to pray regularly 5 times a day but to build Islamic Centres and pass on Quranic knowledge and prayer to future generations and make sure that our knowledge we gained doesn't just die with us. Prophet pbuh said beneficial knowledge, righteous children and recurring charity is something which we will continue to be rewarded for even after death. Here talking about beneficial knowledge which people act on from us is

important as this will help future generations reach the correct conclusions concerning the path of God.

The seventh quality is paying Zakah and this is over and above all other forms of generosity mentioned above. This is crucial also as it's one of the 5 pillars of Islam and can purify an individual and society from greed and make them more compassionate towards our fellow human beings.

The eighth quality of a pious person is that he keeps a promise when he makes it. The Prophet pbuh said that a person who wilfully breaks a promise commits a major sin. Therefore a believer will always try to keep the promise and if it is not possible for him to keep it he would make sure that the person gets the message and he will make up for it. Not contacting the person whom you promised something is a gross lack of character and also a lack of consideration for our fellow brothers and sisters in the society. By breaking a promise a person becomes unreliable in the eyes of public and such a person can never be taken seriously by others. This person is unable to do Dawah as his very reliability and trust is doubtful!

The ninth quality mentioned in this verse is that a Muslim shows great forbearance and is very patient at times of difficulties and troubled times. He is able to keep his composure and not lose his temper even in the face of battle, war and severe conflict when everyone else is pushing the panic button and is losing their composure. Herein a Muslim will show strength and stand up to challenges and doesn't give up or give in but sticks to his or her principles. These are the times that test the mettle of a person and the true strength is revealed to all.

The verse ends with the words, "Ulayka Lazeena Sadaqu Wa Ulayka Humul Muttaqoon." which means these are the qualities that makes

the people true in their claim of Islam, and it is those very people who are the pious and righteous in the true sense. Therefore the people who fulfil these nine qualities are true and justified in their claims to be believers and it's these who are truly righteous and God fearing.

This verse, (2:177), therefore acts as a mirror for each individual to look into and peep in and search for the strengths and weaknesses that he has and start improving by making the achievement of these qualities as his goal.

## **Disbelieving Personality or Moral Definition Of Kufr**

The legal definition of faith or Eeman from an Islamic perspective is the fact that a person has declared Shahadah i.e. his belief in one true god and all prophets including Muhammed pbuh. As long as a person does not renounce his faith openly in public by his own admission no one has the right to declare him a non believer. Similarly the legal definition of Kufr or disbelief is the non acceptance of Islam or open renouncing of Islam by an individual.

However, we are not looking at the legal aspects here. The Quran exhorts people to look at moral aspects and tries to wake people up to the superiority of moral upper ground. Surah 107 describes what a disbeliever is like from a moral perspective:

Surah Maoon the 107 surah describes the four qualities of a disbelieving personality:

*“Have you seen him who denies the Deen (Islam and Reward and Punishment)? Such is the one who repulses the orphans away, and he urges not the feeding of the needy. Woe, then, to those who pray but are heedless in their Prayers, those who do good (in order) to be seen and deny people the articles of common necessity” (107:1-7)*

It begins by asking the question “have you seen the one who rejects the Deen” meaning one who rejects the faith & the Judgement Day. Then it explains the qualities or the Moral definition of denial (Kufr)

Four such Qualities have been mentioned in these verses:

1- Someone who mistreats and abuses the orphans and the vulnerable people of society

2- A miserly person or a scrooge. This person propagates miserliness and is very selfish. He does not care about anyone other than himself and prevents others from doing charitable work.

3- He is heedless of salah which means he does not do it with passion and love for God but just as a routine and a ritual. Furthermore, when this person does do it, it is for show, and to get a reaction from people, and not for seeking the pleasure of his creator. This showing off of deeds or described as Riya which in turn has been labelled as a minor shirk (polytheism and associating partners with God) and we should always purify our intentions and refrain from such whispers of Satan; otherwise it renders our efforts fruitless and useless.

4- Does not do even small acts of kindness such as- smiling, making small conversation, or even simply saying hello to other fellow humans or being helpful in the simplest of ways towards people.

Thus a disbelieving personality is a harsh, stone hearted person who mistreats & abuses the vulnerable, is extremely miserly and has no

care, concern or compassion for his fellow human beings; he is so unhelpful that he can't even bother to assist others in the very basic of everyday necessities. His relation with the creator is of a very ritualistic one wherein he may offer his prayers and other acts of ritual piety but he does not perform any act of goodness with a pure intention for the sake of God, but whatever he does, he does to be seen by others so that he is praised, considered righteous, his good act is publicized and its advantage and benefit accrues to him here in this world!

The word used for this disbelieving person not being helpful at is that he prevents and puts a stop to even the "Maoon". Let us study this word in order to get a better understanding of what this personality is like. The view held by Ali, Ibn Umar, Saeed bin Jubair, Qatadah, Hasan Basri, Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah, Dahhak, Ibn Zaid, Ikrimah, Mujahid, Ata and Zuhri is that it implies the Zakah while Ibn Abbas, Ibn Masud, Ibrahim Nakhai, Abu Malik and many other scholars have expressed the opinion that it implies items of common use; for example, cooking-pot, bucket, hatchet, balance, salt, water, fire, flint (now its successor, the match-stick), etc. which the people generally borrow from each other.

A statement of Saeed bin Jubair and Mujahid also supports it. Another view of Ali also is that it implies the Zakah as well as the little courtesies and kindnesses of daily life. Ibn Abi Hatim has related from Ikrimah that maoon of the highest form is Zakah and of the lowest form is lending of a sieve, bucket, or needle to a borrower.

Abdullah bin Masud says: We, the companions of Muhammed pbuh, used to say, and according to other traditions, in the time of the Prophet, used to say that maoon implies lending of the cooking pot, hatchet, bucket, balance, and such other things. (*Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Shaibah,*

*Abu Daud, Nasai, Bazzar, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Tabarani in Al- Ausat, Ibn Marduyah, Baihaqi in As-Sunan).*

Saad bin Iyad without specifying any names has related almost the same view from the companions of the Prophet pbuh, which shows that he had heard this from several companions. (*Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Shaibah*).

Dailami, Ibn Asakir, and Abu Nuaim have related a tradition from Abu Hurairah in which he says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) explained this verse saying that it implies the hatchet, bucket and other such things.

Maoon in fact is a small, little thing useful to the people. The other small items of common use are maoon as mentioned by Abdullah Ibn Masud and the scholars who share his viewpoint. The majority of the commentators say that maoon applies to all those small things which the neighbours usually ask each other for, and asking for these is not in any way blameworthy, for the rich and the poor, all stand in need of these at one time or another. However, to show stinginess in lending even these is regarded as a mean behaviour morally. Generally these things are used by the neighbour and he returns them in the original form after he has used them.

It would also be maoon if a neighbour asks the other for a bed or bedding items on the arrival of guests, or asks the neighbour's permission to have loaves baked in his oven, or wants to leave some valuables in the neighbour's custody when going out of his house for some days. Thus, the verse means to impress that denial of the Hereafter renders a man so narrow-minded and materialistic to the very core that he is not even prepared to make the most minor of sacrifices for the sake of others.

Another very important lesson in this surah is the fact that even those who are “Musalleen”, i.e. those who offer prayers, are included in the list of those denying the Deen! These are the ones who have no concept of what the Salah means and how it should improve their personality. The Quranic description and purpose of Salah is:

*“Surely Salah saves from indecency and evil acts. And God's remembrance is of even greater merit” (29:45)*

But this individual has no such moorings and his salah is just for show off and a mere act of ritual which devoid of any spiritual upliftment and is a soulless, heartless mechanical action!

## **Purpose Of Salah**

The virtue of the prayer that has been mentioned here has two aspects: It's essential and inseparable quality that it restrains from evil and indecent acts, and its desired quality that the one who performs it should, in fact, refrain from evil and indecent acts. As for the first quality the prayer does restrain people from the evils. Anyone who ponders a little over the nature of the prayer will admit that of all the checks and brakes that can be put on man to restrain him from the evils, the prayer can be the most effective. After all, what check could be more effective than this that man should be called upon five times a day for the remembrance of God and made to remind himself again and again that he is not wholly free and independent in this world but is the servant of One God, and his God is He Who is aware of his open as well as hidden acts, even of the most secret aims and intentions of his heart, and a time will surely come when he will have to account for all his deeds before his God.

Then he is not only reminded of this but is given practical training at every prayer time that he should not disobey any of his God's commands even secretly. From the time that he stands up for the prayer till its completion man has to perform continuously certain acts in which there is no third person, besides him and his God, who can know whether he has obeyed God's law or, disobeyed it. For instance, if the man's wudu (state of ablutions) has become void and he stands up for the prayer, there can be no one, besides him and God, who will know that he is no longer in the state of wudu.

As for the question whether or not man in actual fact refrains from the evils even after attendance at the prayer, this depends upon the man himself, who is undergoing training for self reform. If he has the intention to benefit from it, and endeavours for it, the reformatory effects of the prayer will certainly have their impact on him. Otherwise, evidently, no reformatory device in the world can be effective with a person, who is not prepared to receive any impact of it, or tries to avoid its impact intentionally.

This aspect has been highlighted and reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and some great companions and their followers. Imran bin Husain reports that the Prophet pbuh said:

*“He whose prayer did not restrain him from the evil and indecent acts, offered no prayer at all,”* (Ibn Abi Hatim).

Ibn Abbas has reported the Prophet pbuh as saying:

*“The prayer which did not restrain a person from the evil and indecent acts, led him further away from God.”* (Ibn Abi Hatim)

Another Hadith reported on the authority of Ibn Masud is to the effect:

*“He who did not obey the prayer, offered no prayer at all, and obedience to the prayer is that one should refrain from the evil and indecent acts.” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim).*

Several sayings to the same effect have been reported on the authority of Abdullah bin Masud, Abdullah bin Abbas, Hasan Basri, Qatadah and Aamash, etc.

All these reports make it crystal clear that the salah is not the performance a few ritualistic actions but a conscious effort of communicating with our creator with a view to strengthening our relationship with the creator and improving our morals, behaviour, attitudes and way of life.

Hence, the whole discussion about the person who is described as a disbelieving personality in Surah Maoun unfolds with all the layers deconstructed for everyone to see clearly and take heed for his or her own betterment and development!

The Quran describes numerous such eloquent and crystal clear definitions of different personality types and lets us see for our own selves what personality to be like and which one to avoid!

If we do not revert back to the original message of the Quran and get attached with the book of God we have been warned of the peril of going astray and serious consequences by the Quran itself!

In the Qur'an, Almighty God says,

*(And the Messenger will say, "O my Lord! Lo! My people have treated this Qur'an as a forsaken thing.") (25:30)*

# What Does Abandoning or Forsaking The Quran Mean?

Ibn Masood, a famous companion of the Prophet pbuh said:

*“None of you needs to ask himself [about anything] except for the Qur’an: If he loves the Qur’an, he loves God, and if he detests the Qur’an, he detests God and His Messenger”* (Ibn Taimiyah Alfurqan)

## **First Level:**

Hence, there is a direct correlation between one’s relationship with God and his relationship with the Qur’an. This is the case because the Qur’an is our source of knowledge about the truth of all matters, what God likes and dislikes, and the nature of His essence and actions. It is our means of connection with God and that is why He ordered us to recite it in each of our daily prayers. Therefore, he who abandons the Qur’an has, in fact, abandoned his connection and relationship with God.

If a Muslim continues abandoning the Qur’an in his life, the faith in his heart begins to weaken, he becomes accustomed to disregarding God’s commands, and he begins to forget about God’s promise in the Hereafter and, instead, desires the pleasures of this temporal life.

The connection with God, that gives true life to the hearts of humans, becomes severed and the heart becomes a dark dungeon; the filth of sins veils it and no light of guidance penetrates it. This is why `Uthman ibn `Affan (ra) said:

*“If our hearts were really clean, we would never become satiated (always be hungry for) with the words of God.”* (Ibn Taimiyah)

It becomes evident that abandonment of the Qur'an is of different levels. The worst level of abandonment is to disbelieve in the Qur'an and prevent others from listening to it as did the pagan Arabs of Mecca in the Prophet's time.

### **Second Level:**

The second level of abandonment is to not seek out its message, as is the case with so many human beings who go through their lives not even bothering to contemplate about God and hence they do not make any attempt to discover His true revelation.

### **Third Level:**

The third level of abandonment is committed by those who believe in the Qur'an, that is: Muslims who do not even listen to the Qur'an. Listening is put before reading because it is easier and doesn't require any knowledge (of rules of recitation) on the part of the listener. This level of abandonment doesn't imply that the Qur'an is never recited in the presence of those Muslims, but rather it means that when it is recited, they do not concentrate on listening to it, at the very least, out of respect.

Those who have abandoned the Qur'an in this way may even continue their idle conversations during the recitation of the Qur'an, feeling no shame or modesty in front of God. They may even joke or laugh aloud while the Qur'an is being recited, in complete contradiction to the mood of humility and contemplation that God has ordered us to assume when His words are recited. God says:

*“So when the Qur'an is recited, then listen to it and pay attention that you may receive mercy” (Qur'an 7:204).*

Therefore another part of abandonment in this level is to not be silent while the Qur'an is recited and allowing the mind to wander, not pondering over the meanings of its verses.

#### **Fourth Level:**

The fourth level of abandonment is to abandon the rules and regulations given by the Quran. Not making Quranic injunctions as the guiding principles of our life is the worst form of abandonment that a believer can undergo!

Another aspect of this abandonment relates to some peoples' usage of the Qur'an for worldly gain. Imran ibn Husain narrated that when he came upon a reader who was reciting the Qur'an and then asking for payment, he told the reader that he heard the Messenger of God say:

*“When anyone recites the Qur'an, let him ask reward for it from God, for (in the future) there will come a people who will recite the Qur'an and ask reward for it from men.”* (Tirmidhi)

#### **Fifth Level:**

The fifth level is abandonment of memorization of the Qur'an. This could refer to those who go through life memorizing hardly any portion of the Qur'an, or those who memorize the Qur'an but allow themselves to forget it by not reviewing. As for those who don't memorize anything of the Qur'an or very little, the following narration refers to them. Ibn 'Abbas related that the Messenger of God said:

*“One whose heart doesn't contain anything from the Holy Qur'an, is like a deserted house.”* (Tirmidhi)

## **Worst Level:**

The last and most dangerous level is the abandonment of practice. The essence of this type of abandonment is illustrated in the following narration in which the Messenger of God pbuh said:

*“...the Qur’an is either an argument for you or against you.”* (Bukhari)

Imam an-Nawawi states in regard to the meaning of this hadith:

“[It means] that you will benefit from it if you recite it and act by it, otherwise it will be an argument against you.” This means that on the Day of Judgement, the Qur’an will be a proof or a testament against those who disobeyed God and did not follow the path He outlined in His Holy Book.

The very purpose of listening, reading, memorizing, and reflecting upon the Qur’an is to be able to practice it and hence this is the gravest level of abandonment. Those who don’t practice the Qur’an will be in ruin and this is true even on the level of nations and civilizations. `Umar ibn al-Khattab narrated that the Messenger of God said:

*“God will elevate some nations through this book and degrade others with it.”* (Muslim).

This level of abandonment, when applied to nations, means their ruling by other than the Qur’an. The most potent example of how the Qur’an elevates nations is the example of the Messenger of God and his companions. Aisha, the Prophet’s wife, described his character as being the Qur’an, itself. He embodied the perfect and complete practice of Quranic tenets in his life and his companions followed suit by emulating his character.

Through their adherence to the just and balanced way of life prescribed by the Quran, in a matter of no more than 23 years, a group of 40 oppressed and poor men and woman grew to become the most powerful force in the Arabian Peninsula. Muslims of today need not ask why they are now living in a humiliating reality, even the huge numbers or wealth?. They need not look further than the Qur'an for the solution.

The levels of abandonment are, indeed, mere stages in the degradation of the Ummah (community) and its individual members. The levels of abandonment are categorized in this order because each level builds upon the other and makes the problem of abandonment deeper and deeper. One who cannot read will find difficulty memorizing and is more prone to make mistakes. And one who is not motivated by the desire to memorize the Qur'an will certainly not reflect upon it. And one who doesn't reflect upon the Qur'an could not conceivably practice it as a complete way of life.

May we thus all get a wakeup call and start living and organising our lives in the cool and salubrious shade of the Quran. Aameen

### **The Way Forward:**

Having identified the role that a Muslim must play; the purpose of our lives and the guide to our lifestyle-the Quran- the next step is to take action and start working towards the goals and vision that is outlaid by the Quran.

This obviously cannot happen at an individual level; albeit the start is always with an individual presenting and renewing this vision!

An organised effort on the part of those who have understood their purpose in life and have thus awakened their inner most recesses; of their hearts and minds, is what must follow.

In the absence of such a concerted and organised effort the understanding of the role and purpose would not yield any results for the community even though it may help an individual in some aspects of his life. This demands either forming an organisation or joining hands with the one that has realised the importance of this awakening and has already put in place a proper structure for the realisation of these goals.

## **Our Vision**

The first and the foremost aspect of any organised effort is to have a clear vision, that is easy to comprehend and unambiguous for all those who join in this effort, regardless of whether they join as proper members or as volunteers.

So what is a vision?

Organizations summarize their goals and objectives in mission and vision statements. Both of these serve different purposes for an organisation, but are often confused with each other. While a mission statement describes what an organisation wants to do now, a vision statement outlines what an organisation wants to be in the future.

The Mission Statement concentrates on the present; it defines the audience of the organisation, critical processes and it informs you about the desired level of performance.

The Vision Statement focuses on the future; it is a source of inspiration and motivation. Often it describes not just the future of the organization but the future of the society in which the organization hopes to effect change.

A Vision statement outlines WHERE you want to be. It communicates both the purpose and values of your organisation. It

answers the question, “Where do we aim to be?” It lists where you see yourself some years from now. It inspires you to give your best. It shapes your understanding of why you are a part of this organisation or work. The vision is the real purpose of your work and not just the projects or strategies. The vision cannot or should not be open to changes as strategies and projects that aim to achieve the goals leading to the vision may differ in different times and places therefore can be altered accordingly but not the vision.

The vision of the organisation is to develop positive, progressive and caring citizens promoting a better understanding of Islam in the wider community, with a view to celebrating the richness and diversity of the multicultural world. It has to be a community organisation and our vision is the guide to our objectives.

It will strive to developing individuals to the best of their abilities and to promote respect, honour, dignity, justice, equality and care for everyone and be inclusive of all sections of the society. We will work to promote brotherhood/sisterhood and to help each other in times of need. Islamic principle of cooperation for good would be our guiding principle in all our endeavours.

As your organization evolves, you might feel tempted to change your vision. However, mission or vision statements explain your organization's foundation, so change should be kept to a minimum. The features of an effective vision are:

Clarity and lack of ambiguity: Describing a bright future (hope); Memorable and engaging expression; realistic aspirations, achievable; alignment with organizational values and culture.

On the other hand when developing a mission statement, it should be seen that the following questions are answered:

What do we do today? What projects should we engage in?

For whom do we do it? Identify the target audience clearly!

What is the benefit? Be clear about what we can achieve by engaging in such projects.

Features of an effective mission statement are:

Purpose and values of the organization are clearly defined.

What area of the society the organization wants to be in or who are the organization's primary "clients" (stakeholders)

What are the responsibilities of the organization towards these "clients"

What are the main objectives that support the company in accomplishing its mission?

What are the ethos and culture of the organisation?

These are the fundamental questions that must be very clear to anyone who wants to join the work.

The vision of an Islamic organisation working in west is as follows:

i. To develop the individual as a God-conscious and Akhirah-conscious person, as a well developed Muslim individual is the building block of any such organisation and Movement.

ii. To develop those individuals who accept the vision into a well knit organised unit engaging in the outreach work in the Muslim Community as well as the wider community. This would include engaging in the most wide ranging networking in the society across all its sections. Including but not limited to religious institutions,

relief organisations, economic institutions, sports clubs and social organisations for cooperation and coordination in various activities that span the whole society and its social and cultural fabric. One to one contact in this outreach with individuals cannot be emphasised enough.

iii. To develop an outreach to the society at large and to involve in the affairs of society so as to help in solving the problems which are affecting us as citizens of the nation we live in.

iv. To take a lead in changing the individual and society with all its dimensions. This involves influencing policies as well as persons in authority so as to promote good and justice for all members of the society.

v. To remain Ummah-oriented, as the Ummah's problems are our problems.

vi. To create an atmosphere of sharing and caring for each member of the society and share the message of God with each individual with a view to producing positive, productive, caring and forward looking citizens that respect each other's differences and beliefs.

## **Aim**

The aim of the organisation shall be to establish the Islamic way of life within an individual's own life and invite the wider community to seek remedies and solutions to our problems in the divine revelation. The view would be to seeking the pleasure of God both in this world and the life hereafter. The guiding principles for this would be the last testament-The Quran- and the example of the

Prophets especially the Last Prophet Muhammed pbuh. Thereby, The Mission is to adopt all peaceful means to achieving its objectives.

## Objectives

- i) To invite all human beings to the message of our Creator according to the Quran and Sunnah.
- ii) To organise those who respond to this invitation into a disciplined community (Ummah)
- iii) To enjoin good for the benefit of humanity and to strive against all forms of injustice and oppression in order to create a caring, just and God-conscious society.
- iv) To establish cordial relations with all those communities and individuals who have chosen to make our society their home and especially work towards providing a better understanding of Islam to the People of other faiths and no faith at all.

The membership of this organisation has to be open to one and all. Any person irrespective of race, caste, language or colour may join this mission and anyone who wants to volunteer is most welcome. There will be absolutely no room for hate, sectarian thoughts or divisive ideologies in the organisation. The bare minimum requirement will be a person's agreement with the mission and its aims and objectives.

The people joining are expected to be of good moral character and willing to improve their knowledge and skills. The members or volunteers are not expected to be scholars or have huge amount of knowledge base. A basic understanding of Islamic principles will suffice to begin with; however, a keen interest in seeking knowledge and developing himself or herself will be a requirement.

## **Structure of the Organisation:**

The structure of our organisation is basically formed by its members. These very members elect the officials from amongst themselves and the officials will be at least the Chairperson, Vice Chair, Secretary and the Treasurer. The group should aim to be a community group and its membership is open to everyone who agrees with its constitution and vision.

One reason why some organisations fail is there's no process for letting everyone's views be heard so the membership will make sure that the decisions are made with due consultation and taking the whole team on board.

## **Decision making process**

The decision making process needs to be a collective one. Our vision and values are what our decisions will be based on and how our decisions will be made. All decisions are to be accepted and implemented even if they go against our own opinions. Sacrificing our opinion for the greater good of the community and team is a great expression of maturity in Islamic understanding.

The elected officials which are the Chair, Secretary and the Treasurer will have a meeting along with the rest of the members and there will be consultation or a Shura (Arabic for consultation) at the meeting before all decisions are made. We also need to be open in our approach and not narrow minded. Once we are clear about the decision making process then we will be very confident in ourselves. Coolness and calmness is a very good ingredient when making decisions. There must be a mutual bond in our organisation so there is care and concern for everyone in the group. Decision making can make or break organisations; brotherhood is a must therefore, for us to prosper.

Further the elected officials are members with extra responsibilities, official status does not make them in any way superior to other members nor does it confer any special privileges to them, they are part of the same team and each member plays his role and each member or volunteer is equally important and vital for the organisation.

### **Meetings:**

Meetings need to have the decision making process built in them. A week before the meeting there should be an agenda sent out to the group by the secretary of what will be discussed to see if anyone wants anything else discussed at the meeting and the expectation would be for all the members to come prepared. Once something is decided then the action point should be followed through. When we are not present at the meeting then we would still need to abide by what is decided at the meeting, as this is a requirement of Shura or team work.

Speaking your heart out is a very important part of the decision making process and we shouldn't be shy of speaking whatever we feel. We also shouldn't keep things to ourselves in regards to speaking out honestly, openly and from the heart. Experience, new blood and new ideas are important for the team as well.

It's also important not to be rude, harsh or abusive whilst discussing and putting our point across especially when we disagree and differ with each other instead the ethics of disagreement in Islam should be kept in mind and we must show a good level of respect to people as what we say and how we say things is very significant. Even if we disagree with each other this should be done in a mature and decent way as we are differing for the sake of God not for the sake of our ego!

## **Complaints procedure**

The complaints procedure is there for the benefit and ongoing improvement of the team and if anyone had a complaint against any member of the team this would be discussed in any other business part of the team meeting. Internal threats for the organisation are avoided by the complaints procedure. Complaints procedure makes it clear that we have a duty to express frank opinions and to express these politely. Additionally it's not just a right but a duty to express our opinion. When there's a complaint, this would go to the Secretary. If there is a complaint, however, against the Secretary, then the complaint would go to the Chair. Thirdly the Secretary would liaise with the other elected officials and a decision can be made by them or it can be brought back to the meeting. With the complaints procedure, when something is proved really wrong then there would be a motion of no confidence against that official and he/she could be removed from post or even membership if need be.

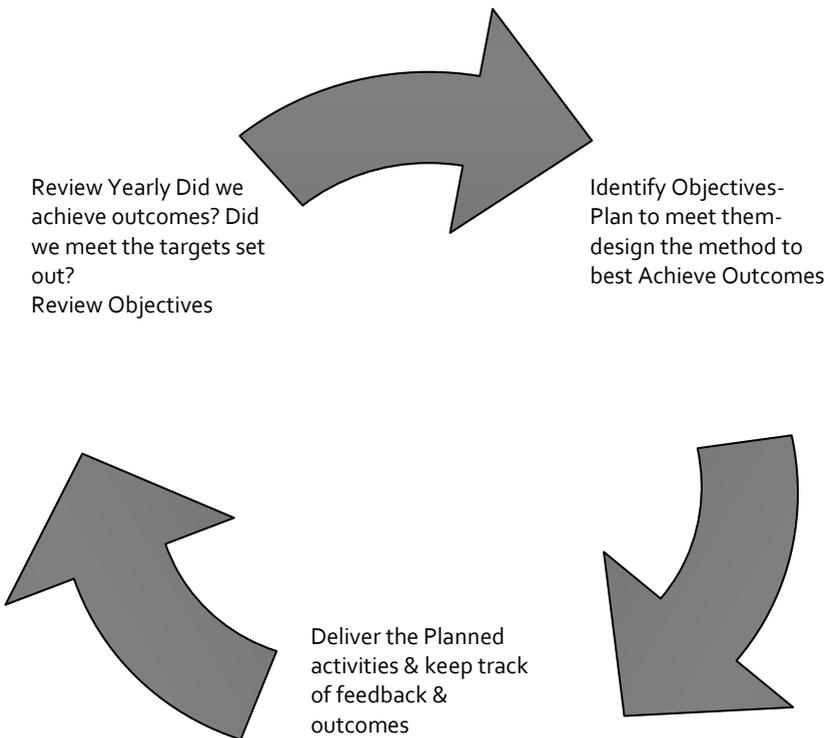
For the complaints procedure every organisation goes through the process of forming, storming, norming and performing. Forming is when everyone makes an initial contribution and has lots of energy. Storming is when there are disagreements and this is when people are fighting one another. Norming is when people settle down and start working together. Moreover norming could be of two types the abnormal norming and normal norming. Abnormal norming is when there is no complaints procedure and problems or complaints get ignored. Normal norming happens when there are proper complaints procedures to follow. Performing begins when the team has come through the thick and thin of storming and has settled into a well gelled unit and starts producing results.

Moreover chastising someone in public is against Islam and is not a sign of a good team. Significantly everyone has to keep the team

together especially the Chair. Crucially believing men and women are friends, supporters and brothers and sisters which is an important point. We also have to know that we are here to please Allah and not the people, therefore, we can make decisions for the greater good, even if unpopular.

**Review Analysis:**

Regular review of what went right or wrong is a big part of any successful organisations. This critical analysis should be built in the process of checks and balances of the team.



## Risks Analysis Example

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Level L/M/H</b>	<b>Potential Impact</b>	<b>Action To Prevent</b>
<b>Financial</b>			
Lack of Income	High	Activities affected	Apply for funding
Funding Not secure	Medium	Activities affected	Try get the targets met
Reliance on one source	Medium	Activities affected	Apply to multiple agencies
<b>Operational</b>			
Building needs repair	High	Can bring the team to a Halt	Funding applied and secured
Volunteers not staying	Low	Activities can suffer	More Members recruitment
<b>Political</b>			
Islamophobia on a rise	High	More misunderstandings	Be Proactive in interaction

## **Teamwork:**

When it comes to working in a team, not everyone is cut out for it. But the reality is, teamwork is one of the most vital competencies in most forms of employment and in any organisation and without it the organisations and the companies tend to fail.

Even if your role seems highly independent and you perform most of it remotely or alone, you'll still need to communicate with others about what you have done, and understand why you are doing it in the context of the organisation as a whole.

Because of this, interviewers will always test whether you have teamwork skills - and if you demonstrate a lack of these, or no such skills at all, you are unlikely to be successful. After all, who would want an employee who can't get along with others or has the tendency to spoil moods?

## **What Do Employers/Organisers Mean by Teamwork?**

Generally, employers mean the ability to work amicably with fellow employees in all kinds of situations and with empathy. Teamwork in essence requires not only people skills but also a sense of maturity, which allows the individual to think above petty misunderstandings that arise.

Teamwork involves helping other members of your team to achieve a common goal quickly and effectively. This does not mean that if you are in an interview you cannot use an example of you being a leader within a team. In fact, this is highly recommended, as you can demonstrate your leadership skills, so long as you do not portray yourself as arrogant. The teamwork skills are highly valued by organisations and companies largely because teamwork skills have a dual benefit: a harmonious office environment plus more effective

work. Teams that gel well are far more likely to impress clients, complete projects and seal deals. A company's reputation often rests on how competent the teams in it are perceived to be.

## **Types Of Teamwork Skills**

Teamwork involves a whole set of skills that can't easily be put under one heading. Below I have covered various skill areas that are integral to a great team player.

### **Communication Skills**

Team players need to be able to communicate verbally and using body language, on both emotional and intellectual levels, in a professional manner. Those who are effective at communication:

- Are able to explain their ideas
- Listen to others carefully and not always with an intent to reply
- Make efforts to express what their feelings are without sounding threatening
- Try to sense or understand how others feel, based on what they are saying or by their body language
- Ask questions whenever they want clarification or are uncertain about something
- Often reflect on events and interactions that took place and how things could have gone better (they try to learn from bad experiences)
- Avoid creating tension between others, and try to break tension rather than build on it

## **Support Skills**

- Team members can show support for one another in various ways: congratulating others in moments of achievement, or consoling in more trying times. It helps to look at other members of your team as collaborators rather than competitors. A huge part of support is the ability to respect one another.
- This is simple. If one of your teammates does not understand an idea, discussion, or task that is being completed, take the necessary time to explain it to them and work with them. There are no weak links when everyone helps one another. Some take longer to learn than others, but that doesn't mean that they are of less intelligence. In fact, it has been shown that some slow learners are much better at specific skills once they learn them.
- If at a meeting or an event someone asks a question because they don't understand, don't frown at them. Just answer the questions patiently and concisely.

## **Problem-Solving Skills**

- Certain problem-solving skills entail a level of wisdom and experience, whereas others are based on analytical prowess. In all cases they are concerned with the capacity to assess a given situation and arrive at a positive outcome.
- In the context of teamwork, problem-solving skills are valued because members and volunteers are expected to develop solutions as a team to situations that threaten to escalate into something potentially serious.

## **Question Regularly!**

"Question everything" is an intellectual endeavour everyone should partake in, and this applies to the workplace, classroom, or anywhere else where there are ideas coming together.

If someone brings up a topic of discussion and a solution to this topic, question them. Respectfully question, don't badger. Rather, ask them how it will work, why it will work over the long-run, and how everyone else can implement the idea.

## **Listening and Feedback Skills**

To ensure proper feedback is given in the different situations you are exposed to with fellow members and volunteers, it's important to listen attentively. Clarifying what other team members mean, and taking interest in their problems, demonstrates that you care about them and their development, not mere lip-service or a tick box exercise.

If a team of people in any group are going to work well together, it is important to listen to one another's ideas. Too often in a team meeting, you have a group of people simply waiting for their turn to speak, not paying one iota of attention to the persons on their left or right. So it is a good teamwork skill to have the ability to listen.

In order to assure that everyone is being listened to and considered, have the group speak and expand on each individual's idea(s) once they have finished their speech.

Feedback can of course also be delivered via email; some things are better said in written form. With time and exposure to different scenarios, one picks up on which feedback mechanism would probably work best. Respectfulness and kindness towards

each other in providing feedback is the most important aspect if you want the feedback to yield any fruits.

The truth of the matter is that not everyone is going to like each other all the time. There might even be people in your group that you really can't stand. Guess what? That doesn't matter. You are there to conjure up ideas and complete tasks. Show equal respect to each and every person, and work to your best ability.

If you and another person happen to be paired up and can't stand each other, you can still put that aside for a couple of hours, treat each other civilly, and complete the tasks at hand. You may even overcome the dislike toward one another. Especially when the task is done for the sake of pleasing our Creator, the differences melt away eventually.

Use critique regularly. By critique, I mean constructive criticism. Be able to give others constructive criticism and be able to listen to others critique your ideas and work. There shouldn't be any offense taken to constructive criticism. You all want to succeed, and this is a vital step in doing so.

If one of your teammates pitches an idea that you like, acknowledge that it is a great idea, and then offer thoughts in which you think it could be improved. It's that simple. If they happen to disagree with your assessment; then that's okay too.

### **Keep Your Ego Under Check**

This isn't saying abandon your ego all together, because that isn't healthy. But leaving your ego at the door temporarily is a very important team work skill. The reason this is so essential is because

there is always someone better than you at something, no matter how brilliant you are.

For example, if you have a room full of distinguished biologists, physicists, chemists, and psychiatrists, as soon as the discussion falls out of their area of expertise, they defer to the individual with the most knowledge on whichever subject is being discussed. In any teamwork environment, this is a must as otherwise the shaitan will introduce his wicked whispers into your minds and strive to cause discord and unhealthy competition amongst the team members.

Conflict in the workplace is something all of us experience at some stage. How you deal with conflicts can potentially make or break your career. Same applies to the teams as well.

Remember not to let your anger or frustration get the best of you. Ultimately you're trying to reach a solution that benefits the team generally, even if it puts a few individual noses out of joint.

### **Delegation**

If you look at the scouts camps, there are a number of chores the scouts have done by the end of the day. Clothes folded, wall lockers arranged, floors spotless, boots nice and shiny, weapons cleaned, loose strings clipped off of our uniforms. Scouts quickly discover that they are all good at specific tasks. So, what they do is to delegate each of these specific tasks to teams of 4-5 men who were better at them than the rest. The end result was a job of higher quality and it was done more efficiently. They became a well-oiled machine.

This same mentality must be applied to teamwork. Delegate roles to those who are best at those roles!

## **Participation**

Everyone has to pitch in and carry their own weight. Quite frankly, some folks prefer to work alone rather than in a team environment. They're introverted, shy, nervous, or have bad anxiety. It is important to bring these people out of their shells. Oftentimes the quietest person in the room is the most reflective and does the most in-depth thinking.

Have the entire team encourage shy people to engage in the topics of discussion. Don't demand it, but make them realize that you really want to hear their ideas.

## **Set The Right Environment**

Try to make the space in which your team is assembled as comfortable, relaxing, and inviting as possible. This means comfortable chairs, coffee, drinks, pastries, and other refreshments. When people feel taken care of, calm, and relaxed, their ideas flow more freely. If one is a team leader, the environment is of utmost importance. You do not want your team to be tense and with frayed nerves.

The team leader or the instructors must be charming, funny, and would even gently wake up when team members nod off from exhaustion.

Remember, no one wants to create ideas and come up with plans of action in an environment where their heads are throbbing and necks feel like piano wire! Prophet pbuh said

*“Make things easy do not make them difficult for people, give glad tidings and do not make people dislike (The Deen)”* (Bukhari)

# How To Build Teams?

Teamwork is a vital part of any organisation, but even more so for start-ups; when the work environment and culture requires all hands on deck working closely together all the time. In the end, teamwork and team-building comes down to cooperation and communication and without it, your team or organisation can certainly suffer.

Following are some strategies that can be used to build a team effectively.

## **Lead by example**

If you want your team to communicate with each other, work hard, produce strong results and keep the organisation moving forward then you must lead by example and do the same.

Treat your own roles, responsibilities and relationships with team members and volunteers the same way you want others to. Prophet pbuh used to show so much love and care towards each of his companions that each one of them thought that he was the most beloved to the Prophet. This in turn led to Prophet pbuh becoming the most beloved to each and every companion. The team leader has a huge part to play in this aspect. If the team leader is not performing his duties and still expects better input and outcome from others he is deluded to say the least!

## **Build up trust and respect**

Nothing is going to get done within a team, or an organisation as a whole, if there isn't mutual trust and respect among volunteers and the management.

Team members must trust each other to do their part as well as trust their leaders to be guiding them in the right direction.

### **Clearly outline roles and responsibilities**

Everyone in a team should have a crystal clear understanding of what their role and responsibilities within the group are.

This will help limit confusion or time spent organizing and delegating work so individuals can simply focus on their task at hand.

### **Cultivate open communication**

Encourage team members to speak openly, share ideas, make suggestions and voice their opinions across all aspects of the team and organisation.

Communication is a two-way street and members should feel like they can add to the conversation both with superiors and peers.

### **Encourage socializing**

Set aside time for team members to get to know one another on a more personal level to increase mutual trust, respect and understanding.

This can be as simple as after-hour tea coffee or a laidback informal party, just get people talking! This can even be achieved by weekend trips to encourage bonding and provide an informal environment for interaction away from the ever pressing need to “go home” at our usual places of work.

## **Set defined goals**

Each team should know exactly what they're working toward including what goals they need to be hitting and when.

Set measurable goals within a specific timeframe that group members can measure themselves against both individually and as a team.

Knowing where they stand in relation to the outlined benchmarks will provide added motivation and incentive to work together.

## **Organize team processes**

Along with establishing clear roles, there should be set team processes in place for working on a project, mitigating setbacks, communicating with each other and providing feedback.

Again, these guidelines will help volunteers spend less time on logistics and more on their actual work and the project will thrive.

## **Mediate conflict quickly and efficiently**

It's normal for conflict to arise in a team setting – there may be a communication breakdown at some point or people may have personal issues.

How conflict is managed should be clear under the team processes. If a team member has an issue how should they handle it? Who should they speak to first?

Make these practices and expectations clear from the beginning then handle situations quickly to help a team move on and maintain a good working environment.

### **Recognize good work**

Praising and recognizing a job well done will boost confidence and morale, encouraging teams and individuals to keep up the good work. A lot of the times teams put too much pressure on the volunteers and expect much more from them. Expectations should be matched by the encouragement and incentives provided from time to time like rewarding people for their good work or taking the whole team on a retreat of dinner.

Do not make working in the team a lifeless, ritualistic dry process. Make humour and enjoyment as a part and parcel of your work ethics.

### **Allow team members to actively take part in decision-making**

Having a sense of personal involvement in the decision-making process will solidify individuals' connection and investment in the team, making them feel like they are an integral part of something rather than just a piece of the puzzle. Members and volunteers are the lifeline of any voluntary organisation therefore they deserve the utmost respect and voice when making decisions, especially when such decisions are bound to affect them on the ground.

### **Maintain the balance of work**

Of course different team members will be working on different tasks, but try to ensure that everyone still has similar workloads. There shouldn't be any single person bearing the brunt of the work.

The point of being in a team is to work together to share the load and create something one couldn't do on their own. Some people may take on more tasks than others but try to keep a balance and regularly review what each member is doing.

## **Meet regularly... and mix it up**

Meetings shouldn't get in the way of productivity or be a waste of time, but teams should still meet regularly to touch base, check in on progress and goals, throw ideas around and build awareness about what each member is working on.

Plan regular meetings to reconnect, but make sure the time is used efficiently and effectively and consider switching things up by trying a walking meeting or meeting in a different place, like a coffee shop.

Taking things outside of the workplace has been shown to increase productivity and let communication flow more naturally.

## **Don't micromanage**

While teams should be meeting regularly together and with their supervisors, it's still important not to micromanage.

Give your team the time, space and independence to produce work on their own without feeling like they're always been watched or judged. Micromanaging is something that destroys the leader-team relationship. If a project is running well and is being managed by people who have worked on it for years and you have just been elected as the team leader let them work!

Do not try to establish your own mark as you may end up causing more harm than help. Keep an eye on what is happening but do not meddle if the programme is running well.

Micromanagement is a management style whereby a manager closely observes and/or controls the work of his/her subordinates or employees. Micromanagement is generally considered to have a negative connotation, mainly due to the fact that it shows a lack of freedom in the workplace.

## **Who is a Micromanager?**

Rather than giving general instructions on smaller tasks and then devoting time to supervising larger concerns, the micromanager monitors and assesses every step of a business process and avoids delegation of decisions. Micromanagers are usually irritated when a subordinate makes decisions without consulting them, even if the decisions are within the subordinate's level of authority.

Micromanagement also frequently involves requests for unnecessary and overly detailed reports ("reportomania"). A micromanager tends to require constant and detailed performance feedback and to focus excessively on procedural trivia (often in detail greater than they can actually process) rather than on overall performance, quality and results. This focus on "low-level" trivia often delays decisions, clouds overall goals and objectives, restricts the flow of information between members/volunteers/employees, and guides the various aspects of a project in different and often opposed directions. Many micromanagers accept such inefficiencies as less important than their retention of control or of the appearance of control!

It is common for micromanagers, especially those who exhibit narcissistic tendencies and/or micromanage deliberately and for strategic reasons, to delegate work to subordinates and then micromanage those subordinates' performance, enabling the micromanagers in question to both take credit for positive results and shift the blame for negative results to their subordinates. These micromanagers thereby delegate accountability for failure but not the authority to take alternative actions that would have led to success or at least to the mitigation of that failure.

The most extreme cases of micromanagement constitute a management pathology closely related to workplace bullying and

narcissistic behaviour. Micromanagement resembles addiction in that although most micromanagers are behaviourally dependent on control over others, both as a lifestyle and as a means of maintaining that lifestyle, many of them fail to recognize and acknowledge their dependence even when everyone around them observes it. Some severe cases of micromanagement arise from other underlying mental health conditions such as obsessive–compulsive personality disorder.

Although micromanagement is often easily recognized by members/volunteers/employees, micromanagers rarely view themselves as such. In a form of denial similar to that found in addictive behaviour, micromanagers will often rebut allegations of micromanagement by offering a competing characterization of their management style such as "structured", "organized", or "perfectionistic"!

The notion of micromanagement can be extended to any social context where one person takes a bully approach in the level of control and influence over the members of a group. Often, this excessive obsession with the minutest of details causes a direct management failure in the ability to focus on the major details. Most projects get stalled whilst the micromanager hides behind the cover of his positional authority and leads to a very unhelpful system of red-tape and bureaucracy leading to bureaucratic obstacles to action.

This is why most teams fail! We tend to micromanage and control every bit of activity and do not let those with core competencies take leadership in their areas of competence. Instead a micromanager wants everything to be under his tight control regardless of whether he has the competence for a certain aspect or not.

## **Create space**

Give your team the physical and mental space to create and work in peace. This may mean setting specific times where group members only work alone or are not allowed to send or check email.

Things can get done more quickly as a team; however individuals still need their personal time to focus on their part of the project.

## **Start team traditions**

This goes for teams and the organisation as a whole – create traditions to help bring people together and establish a sense of unified culture and solidarity.

They can be silly and simple, such as a running inside joke, or serious and elaborate, like offering a large incentive for when a team has reached their goals, but find a way for the team to connect on another level that isn't just work-related.

## **Use size to your advantage**

Both big and small teams have their own advantages. Larger teams have more manpower, but smaller groups often tend to show more personal investments and take individual responsibility for getting things done.

Whatever the size of your team is, consider what it needs to work best and use its size to your advantage. Most importantly do not get disheartened by the small size of your team; if you have a lofty vision and dedicated team members a smaller team can be a great advantage in being efficient and more productive!

## **Give frequent feedback**

Teams should receive frequent feedback from their leaders and each other. This can mean feedback on completed work but also include sharing any questions, insight, praise or problems the team may be having. A culture of improving each other should be introduced. The Prophet pbuh said that a Muslim is like a mirror to the other Muslim!

This means that a Muslim gives feedback to his brother in a manner that a mirror shows the true likeness of an individual. Just as a mirror won't exaggerate or minimize any spot on ones face; a Muslim would be very honest in his feedback to his fellow team member.

The intention of all feedback has to be personal and team improvement and development and not making anyone feel less of a human or degrading anyone.

## **Take time to celebrate**

Acknowledge and honour team wins. Not only is celebrating simply fun, but it also helps reinforce a team's willingness to work together and work hard for the organisation when their effort is clearly appreciated and celebrated. Celebrating success brings in the feelings of oneness and camaraderie into the team.

# **Prophet Muhammed pbuh**

## **As a Team Leader**

Who is a leader? This expression contains a key word "lead" which means "to show the way". It is the quality of a person to drive people forward with a view to achieving a common goal, like a captain on a

ship, commander in chief of Army Forces, and CEO of a company etc. There are some general inevitable characteristics that an individual must possess to be able to become a successful pioneer, such as confidence, honesty, communication skills, empathy, optimism, encouraging, intuition, acting as a role model and so on.

For Muslims, no one has ever come closer to Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) in having headship distinctiveness and they consider him as the greatest reformist and leader. God has regarded Him in the Quran in these words:

*“There has certainly is for you in the Messenger of God an excellent example for anyone whose hope is in God and the Last Day and [who] remembers God often.”* [33: 21]

Michael Hart in “The 100, A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in the History”, New York, 1978, p. 33, says:

*“My choice of Muhammad (PBUH) to lead the list of world’s most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in the history who was supremely successful on both the secular and religious level. It is probable that the relative influence of Islam has been larger than the combined influence of Jesus Christ and St. Paul on Christianity. It is this unparalleled combination of the secular and religious influence which I feel entitles Muhammad (PBUH) to be considered to be the most influential single figure in human history.”*

One of the important ways in which Prophet pbuh taught leadership qualities was through parables of being responsible-no matter what level-no matter what circumstance!

He said:

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said,

*“All of you are shepherds and each of you is responsible for his flock. An Imam is a shepherd and he is responsible for those in his care. A man is a shepherd in respect of his family and is responsible for those in his care. The woman is a shepherd in respect of her husband’s house and is responsible for what is in her care. The servant is a shepherd in respect of his master’s property and is responsible for what is in his care. All of you are shepherds and each of you is responsible for his flock.”* (Muslim)

Now we come to the actual topic of our discussion that is Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) as a team leader. There are three levels at which we can see and understand his model of leadership and each of these levels is explained below:

### **Leadership at Personal Level:**

Prophet pbuh was open and honest both in his personal and public dealings. He was known as Sadiq (Truthful) and Ameen (Trustworthy) and we can translate these terms as credibility and reputation management in modern words. He always used to keep his word and never lied to anybody in his entire life. He was self disciplined and always used his time properly. There are many examples where we see that he was the first person to arrive when some important issue had to be discussed or resolved. He led by example and implemented his teachings on his own self in the first instance. He preached by practise.

### **Public Leadership:**

He was a true leader and there are many dimension of his leadership some of which are discussed below.

- Communication:

He never treated himself different or special from others and his communication was always non-hierarchical. He used to sit even with his servants and they would eat on the same table. He was light hearted and had a good sense of humour. He used to listen to the suggestions and ideas of his companions and implemented them if they sounded good enough.

- Motivation:

He, like any good leader, used to motivate his followers but his style of motivation was transformational, not transactional. People believed in his mission with such passion that they were all volunteers and often sacrificed their lives to accomplish that mission.

He worked on the thought processes of individuals and once their thoughts were improved the behavioural changes became easy and natural.

- Leader without a Title:

Although, he had been the leader of his people all through his life yet he never used this title for himself. He also used to accept dissent and never imposed his own ideas on others especially when he was running the state of Madinah. Again, there are many examples when he expressed his true leadership skills such as at the treaty of Hudaibiya. He never used any title for himself, he described himself as the Abdullah i.e. slave of God.

- Emotional Quotient:

One of the greatest characteristics of Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) was that he was consistent and never lost hope even in the most adverse circumstances. He never cursed people who tortured him

when he used to invite them to his mission. Similarly, he forgave all of his enemies after the conquest of Mecca. He believed in gradual self regulation and introduced rules and values in a gradual manner under the divine guidance. He did not introduce reforms all at once but used his emotional intelligence to harness people's positive thoughts before asking them to give up bad habits or take on good ones!

### **Task Leadership:**

Just like the public leadership, the task leadership of Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) is multi-dimensional.

- **Problems Solving:**

Prophet always adopted a problem solving approach while managing various tasks. He used wise acts and proper timing to avoid controversies. He let people use their own ways in worldly matters and only acted as a guide towards change for them in the spiritual and lifestyle domain.

- **Consultative Decision Making:**

He was not a despotic ruler but he believed in consultative decision making. He used to council with wise people and let his companions participate in decision making process. Sometimes, he would also endorse their suggestions and implement them as in the case of the Battle of the trench when he ordered Muslims to dig trenches around the city of Madinah to protect it from attackers on the advice of his companion Salman Farsi. There are numerous incidents mentioned in the Seerah of the Prophet pbuh about his consultation and acceptance of advice from men and women.

- **Allocating Work:**

He believed in strength based assigning and always assigned jobs based on the capability and preference of the person. Such was his level of ergonomic precision that in just under 23 years he managed to build a team so strong that could spread his message to all parts of the world.

Similarly, he never appraised or penalised anyone for minor mistakes, delegated his powers whenever possible and finally, trained four caliphs that would run the Muslim state in succession after him. It is important to note that there is nothing superhuman about everything he did. All these acts are doable and very much practical in modern world. Muslim and non-Muslim leaders can take a leaf from the life of Prophet (PBUH) alike to improve their personal and professional lives.

#### LAW OF INFLUENCE: THE TRUE MEASURE OF LEADERSHIP IS INFLUENCE – NOTHING MORE, NOTHING LESS

The Law of Influence states that leadership is measured based on a person's ability to influence others; nothing more, nothing less. Let's look at the influence of the Prophet pbuh:

Only a few years after the Prophet and his followers were forced out of their hometown of Makkah, he came back accompanied by 10,000 others and became the ruler. Within the next 100 years, the Islamic Empire stretched from Morocco to China. Fifteen hundred years later, Muhammed is the most popular name in the world, and there are over 1.7 billion Muslims spread out across the entire globe. His name is being repeated across the globe millions of times daily. His life is being studied in homes, masajid and universities across the globe. Whether you walk into a mosque in Tokyo, Delhi, Dubai, London, New York City, Los Angeles, Bogota or Sao Paulo, you will

hear Surah al-Fatiha recited and see people praying exactly the way that the Prophet taught.

The incredible ways Prophet influenced the course of human history would require volumes upon volumes of books to enumerate.

## LAW OF PROCESS: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPS DAILY, NOT IN A SINGLE DAY

The Law of Process states that growth in leadership happens every single day, not in a single day.

Have you ever heard the story about the Prophet taking a day off from his leadership responsibilities? Of course you haven't because it didn't happen! He worked tirelessly for the sake of humanity. Every day was a new challenge for him; a new problem to manage; a new threat on his life or the lives of his followers; a new hypocrite to deal with; a new tribe to negotiate with; a new rumour about him or his family to quell; a new strategy to develop; a new leader to give Dawah to; a new Muslim to teach; and a new world to create.

Day in and day out he faced the kind of challenges that developed and sharpened his leadership skills, to the extent that he became the greatest leader ever. A leader who really wants to influence more has to come face to face with challenges and issues and thus find and provide solutions; this is what leadership is all about!

## **Leader Accessible To All**

God describes His Messenger in the Quran as,

*"There has come to you a messenger form among yourselves"*  
(Qur'an:9:128).

Thus, he was literally a man of the people, and accessible to all, rich or poor. In fact, the most vulnerable and weak among the people could always count on him to unload their burdens, and open their hearts to him. They recognized his selfless interest in their concerns. His companions tell us that the maids of Madinah would take him for a walk or sit with him - while he patiently listened to them. Some of the former kings or chiefs of Arabia, having seen this behaviour of his, had to exclaim that it was not definitely befitting for a king! They recognized he was indeed a prophet! The Prophet said,

“Seek me with the weakest among you.” Among his prayers were: “Lord! Let me live as poor; die as poor, and raise me up in the company of poor!”

The Prophet’s love for others knew no bounds; it embraced all of God’s creation, big and small. He stressed kindness to all of creation as the quintessential teaching of religion that he wants his followers to imbibe. He told the faithful,

“Everyone one of you ought to render acts of charity just as every day the sun shines in the sky!”

Then, he pointed out the many ways of rendering acts of charity such as the following:

Producing something beneficial for people if you are a producer or helping those who produce – if you are not; seeking to bring about peace between those who are fighting; removing the litter from the streets; speaking a kind word, or guiding someone who is unable to find his way, or simply by bringing joy to a sorrowful heart or by showing kindness to any of God’s creatures.

He also said,

*“A prostitute was forgiven because of her gesture of compassion to a dog. While she was crossing a path in a desert, she became thirsty, and on finding a well, she went down and quenched her thirst. Upon coming up, she found a dog panting in the dust and said to herself, ‘this dog is as thirsty as I was!’ Saying this, she climbed down the well again and fetched water in her shoes. She offered it to the dog to drink; God thanked her by forgiving her sins on account of her act of compassion!” (Muslim)*

The Prophet's teachings on acts of kindness towards God's creatures, small and big, including dogs, would later move Muslims to earmark endowments to look after dogs and cats. So the rich people set up water tanks in the city and elsewhere for dogs to drink; and some of the god-fearing men would seek to please God by performing the daily chore of cleaning those water tanks, immediately after finishing their morning prayers.

The Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him) has been widely recognized as one of the greatest leaders the world has ever known. Many point to the remarkable fact that he succeeded in accomplishing what he set out to achieve in an extremely short span of time: a period of twenty-three years. Today as we enter a new era, and face the mammoth challenge of creating a better world, we would do well to reflect on the many lessons from the life of the Prophet of mercy.

## **Purification or Tazkiya**

Quran has used the word “Yuzakee or TAZkiya” for the purification of hearts and minds. The word primarily means to grow and improve as well as to purify. places emphasis on the need for individuals to

purify themselves. After swearing by the sun and moon, day and night, as well as the heaven and the earth, God Almighty states: *“Indeed he succeeds who purifies his ownself (i.e. obeys and performs all that God ordered). And indeed he fails who corrupts his ownself (i.e. disobeys what God has ordered and by doing every kind of evil wicked deeds). [91:9-10]*

Commenting on these two verses, Imam Ibn Katheer says:

*This verse means: He who purified his soul obeying God almighty, and purified it from vices and bad manners, he succeeded. And he who corrupted it by immersing it in sins and disobeying God, he utterly failed.*

The Prophet pbuh frequently used to say in his supplication:

*“Oh God! Grant me the sense of piety and purify my soul as You are the best to purify it, You are its Guardian and its Master” [Muslim]*

Guiding individuals in the process of purifying their souls was one of the most important tasks for the messengers of God sent to the world, concluding with the prophet Muhammed pbuh The Quran declares:

*“Similarly (to complete My Blessings on you) We have sent among you a Messenger (Muhammed) of your own, reciting to you Our Verses and sanctifying you, and teaching you the Book (the Law) and the Hikmah (Reasoning behind the laws), and teaching you that which you did not know” [2:151]*

In the surah 91 verses quoted above man’s own self has been considered, and it has been said that after balancing it with suitable combination of the limbs, senses and mental powers and faculties the Creator has placed in it tendencies, inclinations and motives to both good and evil, which are contradictory to each other, and made him

understand by inspiration the distinction between the two: that one is fujur, which is evil, and the other is taqwa, which is good. Now, if the sun and the moon, the day and the night, the earth and the heaven, are not alike but necessarily different from each other in their effects and results, how can fujur and taqwa of the self be alike in spite of being reverse of each other?

Man himself in this world does not regard and acknowledge the good and the evil as equal, no matter what criteria of good and evil he might have devised for himself according to his self-propounded philosophies. In any case, about whatever he regards as good, he holds the opinion that it is appreciable and worthy of praise, reward and recompense.

On the contrary, about whatever he regards as evil, it is his own objective opinion that it is worthy of condemnation and punishment. But the real judgment does not lie with man; it lies with the Creator, Who has inspired man with his fujur and taqwa. The fujur is that which is fujur in the sight of the Creator and the taqwa is that which is taqwa in His sight. And both have separate results in the sight of the Creator.

The result of the one is that he who purifies his self, should attain to eternal success, and the result of the other is that he who suppresses his self, should be a failure.

Tazkiya means to purify, develop and cultivate. In the context it clearly means: The one who purifies his self of fujur and develops it to the level of taqwa and cultivates in it the good, will attain to eternal success. As against this, the word *Dassaha* has been used, the infinitive of which is *tadsiyah*, which means to suppress, conceal, seduce and lead astray. The meaning of this also becomes clear from the context; i.e. the one who suppresses the tendency in his self

towards good instead of developing and cultivating it, who seduces it into doing evil, and makes fujur dominate over taqwa so as to cover it up completely, like the dead body which is buried and covered with earth, will be a failure!

Some commentators have interpreted this verse to mean: Truly successful was he whom (whose self) God purified, and a failure he whom (whose self) God suppressed. But this commentary is, firstly, opposed to the style of the Quran in view of the language, for if God had meant to say this, He would have said: Truly successful was the self which God purified and a failure the self which God suppressed; secondly, this commentary clashes with the other statements of the Quran on this subject. In Surah Al- Aala, God says:

*“Truly successful was he who adopted purity”* (verse 14).

In Surah Abasa, God has addressed His Messenger pbuh, saying: *“And you would not be responsible if he did not adopt purity”*.

In both these verses, adoption of purity has been regarded as an act of man. Besides, the truth stated at many places in the Quran is that man in this world is being put to the test. For example, in Surah Ad-Dahr, it is said:

*“We created man from a mixed sperm-drop to try him, and so We made him capable of hearing and seeing”*. (verse 2).

In Surah Al-Mulk it is stated:

*“Who created death and life that he may try you to see which of you is best in deeds”*. (verse 2).

Now, obviously, if the examiner at the outset encourages one candidate and discourages the other, the test would be a farce. Therefore, the correct commentary is that which Qatadah, Ikrimah,

Mujahid and Saeed bin Jubair have given, saying that the subject Zakkaha and Dassaha is man and not God.

As for the Hadith which Ibn Abi Hatim has related on the authority of Juwaybir bin Saeed from Dahhak from Ibn Abbas, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself interpreted this verse to mean: Truly successful was the self whom the Almighty God purified. This saying is not confirmed to be from the Prophet (peace be upon him), for its one reporter Juwaybir, has been rejected as a narrator of Hadith, and Dahhak did not meet Ibn Abbas.

However, the Hadith which Imam Ahmad, Muslim, Nasai and Ibn Abi Shaibah have related on the authority of Zaid bin Arqam, is correct which says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to pray:

*“O God, grant myself its taqwa and purify it; You alone are the best to purify it; You alone are its Guardian and Master”*

In almost similar words, this supplication of the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been related by Tabarani, Ibn Marduyah and Ibn al-Mundhir from Abdullah bin Abbas and Imam Ahmad from Aishah.

It actually means that man can only desire and seek taqwa and tazkiyah; as for its attainment, it depends in any case on God’s grace and favour alone. And the same is also true of tadsiyah: God does not suppress a self forcibly, but when a man is resolved on iniquity, God deprives him of the grace of taqwa and tazkyah, and leaves him alone to suppress and bury his self under any heap of filth he likes.

This purification has to start from the clearing of our understanding of God-once the concept of God is clarified then our relation with him becomes crystal clear without any ambiguity. This clarity of who God is and what our relation is with Him makes all the difference in

shaping our thoughts, attitudes, behaviours and world view. This in turn leads to a better understanding of the purpose of our lives and what direction we need to take in life.

This very purification or clarity about the creator and the creation brings about a revolution in our thinking patterns leading to a transformation of our actions and deeds.

Once this level of insight is gained by man all other aspects fall in their rightful places without any fuss. A person is able to grasp the realities of life and gain full insight into the reason and purpose behind creation. This is what gives us the stronghold to attach ourselves to in this world and rely on it as a source of guidance and a beacon of light.

## Conclusion

The Quran explains this aspect:

*“There is no compulsion in Deen (Islamic way of life). The Right Way stands clearly distinguished from the wrong. Hence he who rejects the evil ones and believes in God has indeed taken hold of the firm, unbreakable handle. And God (Whom he has held for support) is All-Hearing, All-Knowing” (2:256)*

It is this firm and unbreakable handle; of understanding our relationship with our creator, that keeps us on the right path. Mujahid, one of the great scholars said, "The most trustworthy handhold is Eeman (faith)." As-Suddi said that it refers to Islam. Imam Ahmad recorded that Qays bin `Abbad said,

"I was in the Masjid when a man whose face showed signs of humbleness came and prayed two Rakahs that were modest in length. The people said,

'This is a man from among the people of Paradise.' When he left, I followed him until he entered his house, and I entered it after him and spoke with him. When he felt at ease, I said to him, 'When you entered the Masjid, the people said such and such things.' He said, 'All praise is due to God! No one should say what he has no knowledge of. I will tell you why they said that.

I saw a vision during the time of the Messenger of God, and I narrated it to him. I saw that I was in a green garden, ' and described the garden's plants and spaciousness, 'and there was an iron pole in the middle of the garden affixed in the earth and its tip reached the sky. On its tip, there was a handle, and I was told to ascend the pole. I said, 'I cannot.' Then a helper came and raised my robe from behind and said to me, 'Ascend.' I ascended until I grasped the handle and he said to me, 'Hold on to the handle.'

I awoke from that dream with the handle in my hand. I went to the Messenger of God and told him about the vision and he said,

“As for the garden, it represents Islam; as for the pole, it represents the pillar of Islam; and the handle represents the most trustworthy handhold (Of God-awareness). You shall remain Muslim until you die” (Bukhari)

This Companion was `Abdullah bin Salam, the Jewish scholar who accepted Islam!

(There is no compulsion in religion), meaning, "Do not force anyone to become Muslim, for Islam is plain and clear, and its proofs and evidence are plain and clear. Therefore, there is no need to force anyone to embrace Islam. Rather, whoever God directs to Islam, opens his heart for it and enlightens his mind, will embrace Islam with certainty. Whoever blinds his heart and seals his hearing and sight from seeing and understanding the

truth, then he will not benefit from being forced to embracing Islam.

It was reported that the Ansar were the reason behind the revelation of this verse, although its indication and application is general in meaning. Ibn Jarir recorded that Ibn `Abbas said that before Islam,

"When (an Ansar) woman would not bear children or who's children would not survive, she would vow that if she gives birth to a child who remains alive, she would raise him as a Jew. When Banu An-Nadir (the Jewish tribe) was evacuated from Al-Madinah, some of the children of the Ansar were being raised among them, and the Ansar said, 'We will not abandon our children.' But God revealed,

*"There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the right path has become distinct from the wrong path"* (2:256)

This verse was revealed in Medina when a child from one of the Muslim families who had been raised as a Jew and educated in the town's Jewish schools decided to depart with the Jewish tribe being expelled from Medina. His distraught parents were told by God and the Prophet in this verse that they could not compel their son to stay. Every individual has been given a choice by God almighty to either choose or refuse the following of the straight path delineated by the Quran. However, each choice will come with its relevant consequences because the Quran not only shows the path clearly but describes the pitfalls of making a wrong choice.

There are numerous verses of the Quran that highlight the fact that Islamic principles cannot be forced on people and that acceptance of Islam has to come naturally from the innermost core of a person's heart and mind! Here are some such verses

*"Say, "The truth is from your Lord": Let him who will believe, and let him who will, reject (it): ..." ,[18:29]*

*"And if your Lord had pleased, surely all those who are in the earth would have believed, all of them; will you then force men till they become believers?" ,[10:99]*

*"Therefore do remind, for you are only a reminder. You are not a watcher over them;" ,[88:21-22]*

*"He said: "O my people! See you if (it be that) I have a Clear Sign from my Lord, and that He has sent Mercy unto me from His own presence, but that the Mercy has been obscured from your sight? Shall we compel you to accept it when ye are averse to it?" .[11:28]*

These verses refer to the freedom that God has granted to mankind to believe or not to believe in Him. Otherwise He could have very easily created all the people as born believers and obedient servants and there would have been no disbelief and disobedience at all on the earth. Or He could have very easily inspired them to turn towards belief and obedience. But these methods would have defeated the very purpose and wisdom that underlies the creation of mankind. The purpose of testing mankind and the subsequent reward and punishment would have become meaningless.

The implication is this: "O people! Our Messenger has made the distinction between the guidance and deviation quite clear and plain by argument and pleading. Now, therefore, it is for you to believe or not to believe in the guidance. If you feel that someone should force you to adopt the right way, you should know that this duty has not been assigned to the Prophet. Prophets are not sent as enforcers and their job is not to police

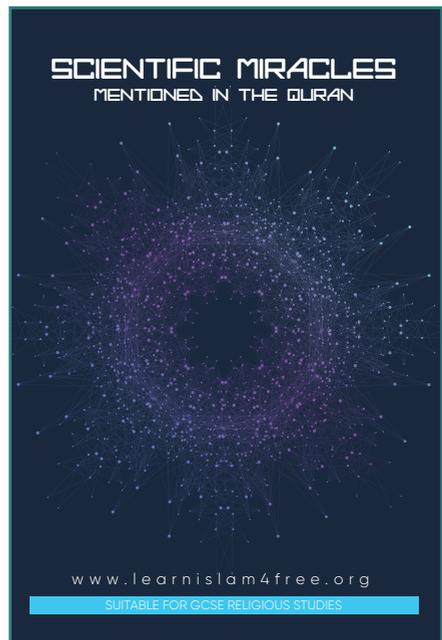
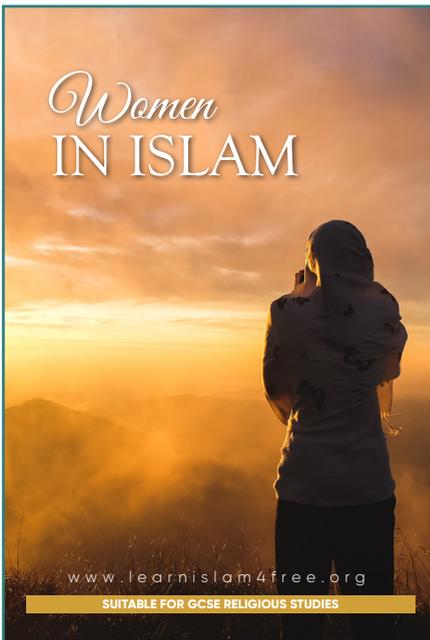
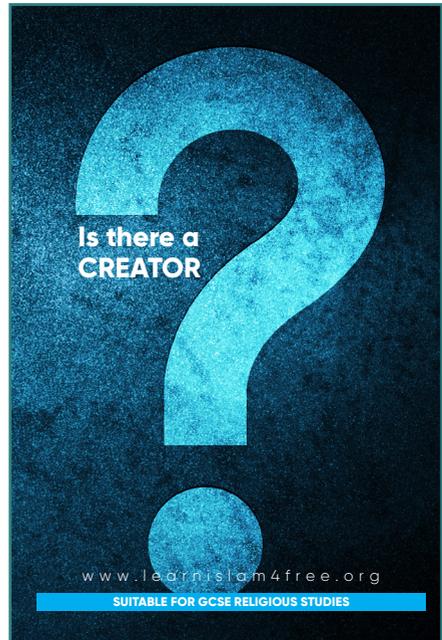
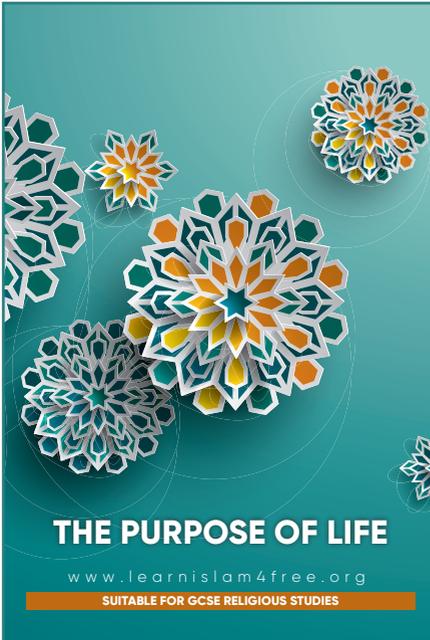
the people. Instead they are sent to guide and invite towards the right path without using any force or coercion.

Had God willed force conversions, He could have done it Himself: then there would have been no need of sending any Prophet to the world. That is, if a person does not listen to reason, he may not. A Daiee has not been appointed to force the will of the deniers: your only task is to distinguish the right from the wrong for the people and warn them of the consequences of following the wrong way; so this is the task you should continue to perform, as exemplified by all the messengers of God.

Awakening to this very multifaceted role of being a Daiee and developing one's own self in the process-working as a great team member of a dynamic and vibrant Jammah (team) is what the call of this book is all about. This is what the wakeup call is for and this is what should inspire the reader into acting on

May God grant us the capabilities to wake up and respond to His call in the affirmative!

## OTHER ESSENTIAL READINGS



## Booklets

1. The Quran
2. The Book That Shook The World
3. World's First Written Constitution
4. The Sharia Law
5. The Purpose Of Life
6. The People Of The Book
7. What Is Islam?
8. The Concept Of God In Islam
9. Jesus In Quran
10. Did Jesus Predict Coming Of Muhammad?
11. Common Misconceptions About Islam
12. Is There A Creator?
13. Women In Islam
14. The Hijab
15. Scientific Miracles Mentioned In The Quran
16. Message To Mankind
17. Islam's Solution To Terrorism
18. Islam For The 21st Century
19. Muhammed pbuh The True Role Model
20. Muhammed pbuh As A Teacher
21. Morals And Manners Of Muhammed pbuh
22. Marriage-Relevance And Importance
23. For Those Who Reflect
24. Salah-Islamic Prayer
25. Fasting In Islam
26. Hajj-The Islamic Pilgrimage
27. Islam Has No Clergy
28. Islam Against Sectarianism
29. Concept Of Halal & Haram In Islam
30. What Is Bank Interest And Riba?
31. Is There Life After Death?
32. What Is Zakah?
33. Role Of Masjid And Imam
34. What Is Shahdah?
35. The Wakeup Call
36. Islam Against Racism
37. Remembrance Of God
38. The Book Of Prayers
39. Etiquettes In Islam
40. The Rights Of Parents And Children
41. Beautiful Stories Of Prophet Muhammed pbuh For Children - Book 1
42. Moral Stories For Children - Book 2
43. The Book Of Manners For Children - Book 3
44. Islam For Children
45. The New Muslim Book

