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Preference of quality over quantity

Original essay by Yousaf Qardawi

Urdu Translation “مقدار پر معیار کی ترجیح”  
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**To Whom It May Concern**

**It is with reference to a group of students who are completing their graduate studies at LUMS and have approached with a request to get a book translated into English.**

**Being a member of the executive committee of the International Union of Muslim scholars headed by the eminent scholar Prof. Dr. Allama Yousuf al-Qardhawi, I hereby authorize them to translate the under considered book into English.**

**While expressing my goodwill for the translation, I like to point out that, since the original book is in Arabic, all possible care must be taken in maintaining spirit, words and message contained therein.**

**With best wishes.**

**Abdul Ghaffar Aziz**

**Executive Committee Member**

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From Shariah's perspective, it is important that condition and quality should be preferred over quantity and volume. In Shariah, the true value of something is based on its quality and condition rather than its abundance or volume.

The Holy Quran condemns such a majority which does not possess wisdom and knowledge or which does not believe and is ungrateful. Various verses of the Holy Quran support this concept. For example:

بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

*But most of them do not understand. [Al-Ankabut 29:63]*

وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

*But most of the people do not know. [Al-Ara'f 7: 187]*

وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

*But most of people do not believe [Hud 11:17].*

وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ

*But most of the people are not grateful [ Al-Bakara 2:243]*

وَإِنْ تَطِيعْ أَكْثَرَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يُضِلُّوكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

*If you obey the majority of those on earth, they will make you lose the way of Allah. [Al-An'am 6:116]*

On the other hand, Quran praises the minority which comprises of true believers—who are practicing and grateful. Allah says:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَقَلِيلٌ مَا هُمْ

*Except those who believe and do righteous deeds, and very few they are [ Saad 38:24]*

وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّاكِرِينَ

*Very few from My slaves are thankful. [ Saba 34:13]*

وَأذْكُرُوا إِذْ أَنْتُمْ قَلِيلٌ مُّسْتَضْعَفُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ

*Recall when you were few in number, oppressed on the earth. [Al-Anfal 8:26]*

فَلَوْلَا كَانَ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ أُولُو بَقِيَّةٍ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْفَسَادِ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِمَّنْ أَنْجَيْنَا مِنْهُمْ

*Then, why is it that there were no people, among the generations before you, who would have enough remnants of wisdom to stop others from creating disorder in the land, except a few among them whom We saved (from Our punishment)? [Hud 11:116].*

On this basis, it becomes clear that greater number of people is important only when it comprises of true believers.

Although many people quote the Hadith:

تَنَاقَحُوا تَنَاسَلُوا تَكْتُمُوا فَاتِي مَكَائِرِ بِكُمُ الْأُمَمِ

*"Marry and beget children and increase your numbers, for I will be proud of your great number before the nations on the Day of Resurrection."* <sup>1</sup> yet they do not take into consideration that the Prophet (SAW) does not take pride in people who are ignorant, disobedient (to Allah) and oppressors, rather the Prophet (SAW) will take pride in virtuous, chaste, practicing and beneficial people.

Prophet (SAW) said:

النَّاسُ كِبَابِلٌ مِثْلُهَا لَا تَجِدُ فِيهَا رَاحِلَةً

*"People are just like camels, out of one hundred, one can hardly find a single camel suitable to ride."* <sup>2</sup>

This is a clear evidence of the fact that the best among people are as rare as those camels, which are suitable for purposes of riding, traveling and transportation, among all other camels, so much so that sometimes there is not even one camel in a hundred which possesses all these characteristics.

This disparity and distinction is even greater among men as compared to animals, to such an extent that Prophet (SAW) said:

لَيْسَ شَيْءٌ خَيْرًا مِنْ أَلْفِ مِثْلِهِ إِلَّا الْإِنْسَانُ

*"There is nothing in the world which is better than thousands of its own kind except man"* <sup>3</sup>

We have become addicted to the quantity and amount in everything; and want to exceed in numbers by thousands and millions. We are usually not aware of the reality

<sup>1</sup> Reported by Abu Dawud and Al-Nasa'i on authority of Ma'qal bin Yasar; see Sahih Al -Jami' Al- Saghir, No. 2940

<sup>2</sup> Narrated by 'Abdullah bin 'Umar, Sahih Muslim, Volume 8, Book 76, Number 505

<sup>3</sup> Sahih Al -Jami' Al- Saghir, No. 5394; Also see Al-Mu'jam al-Kabeer by Al-Tabarani

behind numerical strength — neither do we ever think from the perspective that what these numbers are comprised of.

An Arabic poet of the age of ignorance had expressed his understanding that quality of something is more important than its quantity. He said:

فقلت لها : إن الكرام قليل

عزیز وجار الأكثرين ذليل

تعيرنا أنا قليل عديدنا

وما ضرنا أنا قليل وجارتنا

“ My beloved tried to embarrass me by saying that we are less in number. I replied that noble people are always less in number and our few numbers do not affect us because our companions are respectable people. On the contrary, the companions of people who are in abundance are disgraceful and despicable.”

The Quran has also explained how Talut’s small army overcame Jalut’s much larger army in battle:

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ بِنَهَرٍ  
فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَنْ لَمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلَّا مَنِ  
اعْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ فَشَرِبُوا مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ  
هُوَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ قَالُوا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ  
بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلْكُوا اللَّهَ  
كَم مِّن فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَت فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ  
مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

*So, when Talut set out along with the troops, he said: “Allah is going to test you by a river, so, whoever drinks from it is not my man, and whoever does not taste it is surely a man of mine, except the one who scoops a little with his hand.” Then they drank from it, except a few of them. So, when it (the river) was crossed by him and by those who believed with him, they said: “There is no strength with us today against Jalut and his troops.” Said those who believed in their having to meet Allah: “How many small groups have overcome large groups by the will of Allah. Allah is with those who remain patient.” [Al-Bakara 2:249]*

And then Allah says:

فَهَزَمُوهُمْ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ

*So, they defeated them by the will of Allah [Al-Baqarah 2:251]*

The Quran also explains how the Prophet (SAW) and his companions overpowered the non-believers in the Battle of Badr, even though their army was far smaller than that of the non-believers.

وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَأَنْتُمْ أَذِلَّةٌ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

*Allah certainly supported you at Badr when you were weak. So, fear Allah that you may be grateful. [Al-Imran 3:123]*

وَأذْكُرُوا إِذْ أَنْتُمْ قَلِيلٌ مُسْتَضْعَفُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ تَخَافُونَ أَنْ يَخَطِفَكُمْ النَّاسُ فَأَوَانِكُمْ وَأَيَّدَكُمْ بِنَصْرِهِ

*Recall when you were few in number, oppressed on the earth, fearing that the people would snatch you away. Then, He gave you shelter and fortified you with His support [Al-Anfal 8:26]*

On the other hand, at the time of the Battle of Hunain, when the Muslims were deceived by their large army; ignoring their quality, military preparation and spiritual strength, it had become obvious that they would be defeated. Their condition deteriorated initially so that they would learn a lesson, be warned and would seek forgiveness. Then Allah bestowed victory upon them and sent invisible forces to help them. Allah says:

لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيرَةٍ وَيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ إِذْ أَعْجَبْتَكُمْ كَثُرْتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تَغْنِ عَنْكُمْ شَيْئًا  
وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُمْ  
مُدْبِرِينَ

*Allah has surely blessed you with His help on many battlefields, and on the day of Hunain, when you were proud of your great number, then it did not help you at all, and the earth was straitened for you despite all its vastness, then you turned back on your heels.[At-Tawbah 9:25]*

ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ  
جُنُودًا لَمْ تَرَوْهَا وَعَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ  
الْكَافِرِينَ

*Then Allah sent down His tranquility upon His Messenger and upon the believers, and sent down troops that you did not see, and punished those who disbelieved. That is the recompense of the disbelievers.[At-Tawbah 9:26]*

The Quran has also mentioned the fact that when both strength of faith and willfulness—often analogous to perseverance—are present in a man, his power is anticipated to grow by ten folds as compared to that of an enemy who is devoid of the strength of faith and willfulness. Allah says:

يَأْتِيهَا النَّبِيُّ حَرَضٍ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى الْقِتَالِ إِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ  
عِشْرُونَ صَابِرُونَ يَغْلِبُوا مِائَتِينَ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ  
يَغْلِبُوا أَلْفًا مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ

*O Prophet, rouse the believers to fighting. If there are twenty among you, who are patient, they will overcome two hundred; and if there are one hundred among you, they will overcome one thousand of those who disbelieve, because they are a people who do not understand[ Al-Anfal 8:65].*

This proportion is true in the case of powerful Muslims. However, if they are weak, it is possible that their power will be twice the power of their enemies as is mentioned in the following verse of Surah Anfal:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ خَفَّفَ اللَّهُ عَنْكُمْ وَعَلِمَ أَنَّ فِيكُمْ ضَعْفًا فَإِنْ يَكُنْ  
مِنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا مِائَتَيْنِ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أَلْفٌ يَغْلِبُوا  
أَلْفَيْنِ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ

*Now Allah has lightened your burden, and He knew that there is weakness in you. So, if there are one hundred among you, who are patient, they will overcome two hundred; and if there are one thousand among you, they will overcome two thousand by the will of Allah [Al-Anfal 8:66]*

It can be concluded that success is based on faith and determination rather than on numbers or multitude. Whoever has studied the life of the Prophet (SAW) knows that the Prophet's (SAW) focus was not on quantity but on quality. The lives of the Prophets and the four rightly guided Caliphs also manifest this fact.

Hazrat Umar (R.A.) sent Hazrat Umroo bin Aas (R.A.) to conquer Egypt. He led an army of only four thousand. When he asked for support, a further army of four thousand was sent. In this reinforcement, there were four specific people, about whom Hazrat Umar (R.A) said that each one of them was equal to a thousand men. So consider the total army to be twelve thousand! And twelve thousand people should not be defeated by an army of fewer men.

So it can be concluded that Hazrat Umar (R.A.) believed that the real emphasis is on the quality, value and abilities of people, not on their quantity and number.

It has been associated with Hazrat Umar (R.A) that he was once sitting in a spacious house with some of his companions. During that time he said "Each of you! Express your wish."

One of them said "My wish is that I want silver dirham coins that are enough to fill this house, and then I will spend them in the way of Allah." Another one said "I want to have the same number of gold dinar coins which I will spend in the way of Allah"

Hazrat Umar (R.A) said I wish to have men like Abu- Ubaidah bin- Aljarah (R.A), Ma'az bin Jabal (R.A), Salim: the slave of Abu Huzaifa (R.A.), equal to (the size of) this house and I will use them in the way of Allah.

At present, the number of Muslims has exceeded 1.25 billion. But sadly, their condition is the same as has been described in a Hadith. Ahmad and Abu-Dawud reported on authority of Hazrat Soban that Prophet (SAW) said:

يوشك أن تداعى عليكم الأمم من كل أفق ، كما تداعى الأكلة إلى قصعتها

*"A time will come when the nations (of the world) will surround you from every side, just as diners gather around the main dish. Somebody asked, 'Oh Messenger of Allah, will it be on account of our scarcity at that time?'"*

He said,

بَلْ أَنْتُمْ كَثِيرٌ ، وَلَكِنْكُمْ غُثَاءٌ كَغُثَاءِ السَّيْلِ ، وَلَيَنْزِعَنَّ اللَّهُ مِنْ صُدُورِ  
عَدُوِّكُمْ الْمَهَابَةَ مِنْكُمْ ، وَلَيَقْذِفَنَّ فِي قُلُوبِكُمُ الْوَهْنَ

'No, but you will be scum, like the scum of flood water. Allah will remove fear from the hearts of your enemies and He will put Al-wahn in your hearts.' It was asked: what is al-wahn? Prophet (SAW) said:

حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا وَكَرَاهِيَةُ الْمَوْتِ

*The love for the world, and the abhorrence of death.*'<sup>4</sup>

This Hadith describes that if a majority is inflated from the outside but rotten from the inside, then such a majority is useless and will eventually end up being the scum of the flood water —as the history of the Ummah repeatedly tells us. And the traits that make the Ummah similar to the scum of the flood water are lack of faith, unity and visionlessness.

In this situation, the emphasis should be on the state and quality of something rather than its quantity. And quantity includes everything that has a material aspect attached to it like huge numerical strength, a warrior's gigantic size, big built, heavy weight, long life or other related things.

What has been said about abundance of quantity, the same is true about other matters.

For example, the true assessment of a person cannot be made on the basis of his height, physical strength, stoutness of the body or the beauty of the face. All these traits do not truly represent the actual talent and humaneness of a person. The body is just like a cover or outer cloth for a person. In essence, a person's true identity is a combination of his intellect and heart.

Allah has explained a trait of the hypocrites:

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ أَجْسَامُهُمْ

*And if you see them, their physiques would attract you [Al-Munafiqun 63:4].*

Likewise, a trait of the people of Aad in the words of their Prophet Hud (AS) is:

<sup>4</sup> Sahih Al -Jami' Al- Saghir, No. 8183; Also see Sunan Abu Dawud, The Book of Battles-The Gathering of all Nations against Islam, Book 37, Number 4297

وَزَادَكُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ بَصْطَةً

*And gave you increased strength in physique. [ Al-Ara'f 7:69]*

However, the hugeness of their form and stature led them to self-deception and arrogance. Allah says:

فَأَمَّا عَادٌ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَقَالُوا مَنْ أَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً

*As for Ad, they showed arrogance in the land with no right (to do so), and said, "Who is stronger than us in power?" [Ha-meem sajdah 41:15].*

A sahih hadith states:

إنه ليأتي الرجل العظيم السمين يوم القيامة، فلا يزن عند الله جناح بعوضة

*"A bulky person would be brought on the Day of Judgment and he would not carry the weight in the eyes of Allah equal even to that of a gnat. Nor shall We set up a balance for them on the Day of Resurrection"<sup>5</sup>*

[And then the Prophet (SAW) said:] If you desire read this verse:

فَلَا نَقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزَنًا

*We shall assign to them no weight at all on the Day of Judgment. [Al-Kahf 18:105]*

Once, Hazrat Ibn Masud climbed a tree. His companions saw his thin calves and started laughing so the Prophet (SAW) said:

أتضحكون من دقة ساقية؟ والذي نفسي بيده لهما أثقل في الميزان من جبل احد

*"Do you dare to mock him because of his skinny legs: By Allah in Whose Hands my soul rests, these two thin legs are heavier in Allah's Scale than the mountain of Uhud!"<sup>6</sup>*

So it can be concluded that the stoutness of a body has no significance if it lacks wisdom and purity of heart. There is an old Arabic proverb:

تري الفتيان كا التخل ، وما يدريك ما الدخل

*These youngsters apparently seem like dates to you, but you do not know what is inside.*

<sup>5</sup> Narrated by Abu Huraira, Sahih Muslim, book 39, number 6698, translation by Abdul Hamid Siddiqui; Also see Al-Lu'lu' Wal Marjan, No. 1773

<sup>6</sup> Majma' Al-zawa'id, narration of `All, Ibn Masu'd and Qurab Ibn Iyas, vol. 9, No.288, 289

Hazrat Hassaan bin Sabit said in satire of a certain nation:

لأبأس بالقوم من طول ومن قصر جسم البغال وأحلام العصافير

The small or big size of this nation holds no importance. The bodies of these people are like that of mules but their wisdom is like that of sparrows.

This does not mean that Islam does not give significance to physical health and vigor. Absolutely not! Islam gives it importance to the maximum extent. Allah has praised Hazrat Talut (AS) on the same basis and said:

وَزَادَهُ، بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ

*And has increased his stature in knowledge and physique. [Al-Baqarah 2:247]*

In addition, it is mentioned in sahih hadith that:

إِنَّ لِبَدَنِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا

*“Your body has a right upon you.”<sup>7</sup>*

Similarly, Prophet (SAW) said:

الْمُؤْمِنُ الْقَوِيُّ خَيْرٌ وَأَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِ الضَّعِيفِ

*“A strong believer is better and dearer to Allah than a weak believer.”<sup>8</sup>*

Actually Islam does not make physical might and vigor the basis of superiority. As the stoutness of the body and its strength is not the basis of superiority and gallantry, so is the case with facial beauty and glamour.

There is a hadith that:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى أَجْسَادِكُمْ وَلَا إِلَى صُورِكُمْ، وَلَكِنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ

*“Verily Allah does not look to your bodies nor to your faces but He looks to your hearts.”<sup>9</sup>*

A poet paid tribute to Abdul Malik bin Marwan in the following words:

<sup>7</sup> Narrated by 'Abdullah b. Amr, Sahih Muslim, Book 6, number 2599, Book of Fasting

<sup>8</sup> Narrated by Abu Huraira, Sahih Muslim

<sup>9</sup> Transmitted on the authority of Abu Huraira, Sahih Muslim, book 32, number 6220, Translation by Abdul Hamid Siddiqui

يَأْتَلِقُ التَّاجَ فَوْقَ مَفْرَقِهِ عَلَى جَبِينِ كَأَنَّهُ الذَّهَبُ !

*'His head is adorned with a crown and it is shining on his golden forehead.'*

He rebuked the poet that you have praised me as you should praise beautiful and delicate girls; and he asked him why you have not praised me in the manner Mus'ab bin Zubair was complimented by a poet who said:

إِذَا مَصَّعِبٌ شَهَابٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ تَجَلَّتْ بِنُورِهِ الظُّلُمَاءُ

حُكْمُهُ حَكْمٌ قُوَّةٌ لَيْسَ فِيهِ جَبْرُوتٌ مِنْهُ وَلَا كِبْرِيَاءُ

*'Mus'ab is like a star among the stars of Allah, whose light has wiped out the darkness. His decision is a powerful decision but it does not have any arrogance and tyranny'*

Oh yes! Knowledge, belief and actions are the basis of evaluating men.

It should also be kept in mind that Islam does not measure actions by their volume or quantity but by the extent to which they have Ahsan (excellence) and steadfastness.

In Islam, Ahsan (excellence) is not voluntary but an obligatory act which Allah has declared as compulsory for the Muslims, the same way that fast and other obligatory acts are binding on them.

The Prophet (SAW) said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَتَبَ الْإِحْسَانَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ، فَإِذَا قَتَلْتُمْ فَأَحْسِنُوا الْقِتْلَةَ ،  
وَإِذَا ذَبَحْتُمْ فَأَحْسِنُوا الذَّبْحَةَ ، وَلِيُحَدَّ أَحْدَكُمْ شَفْرَتَهُ ، وَلِيُرِحَ ذَبِيحَتَهُ

*"Verily Allah has enjoined Ahsan (goodness) to everything; so when you kill, kill in a good way and when you slaughter, slaughter in a good way. So every one of you should sharpen his knife, and let the slaughtered animal die comfortably."*<sup>10</sup>

Here the word **كَتَبَ** has been used and it relates to mandatory and obligatory acts.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) also said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ مِنَ الْعَامِلِ إِذَا عَمَلَ أَنْ يُحَسِّنَ

*"Verily, Allah the Exalted loves that the doer of an action perfects his action."*<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Narrated by Shaddid b. Aus, Sahih Muslim, volume 3, number 1955, Translation by Abdul Hamid Siddiqui

<sup>11</sup> Sahih Al-Jami as Saghir by Al Albani, number: 1891

Just like Allah has made Ahsan (excellence) obligatory and mandatory for the fulfillment of every act, similarly He loves both Ahsan (excellence) and the one who strives for it.

The Quran not only demands Amal-e-Husn (good action) from Muqalifeen (people held accountable) but also invites them towards Amal-e-Ahsan (excellence in an action). Allah says in the Quran:

وَاتَّبِعُوا أَحْسَنَ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ

“And follow the best of what has been sent down to you from your Lord.” [Az-Zummar 39:55].

فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ ۝ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ

So, give the good news to My servants. Who listen to what is said, then, follow the best of it [Az-Zummar 39:17-18]

The Quran even emphasizes Ahsan (excellence) when arguing with one’s opponents:

وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ

And argue with them in the best of manners [An-Nahl 16:125]

Allah has commanded adopting a manner of Ahsan (excellence) in eliminating evil:

وَلَا تَسْتَوِ الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ

Good and evil are not equal. Repel (evil) with what is best [Ha-meem sajdah 41: 34]

He even forbids going near an orphan’s property except by way of Ahsan (excellence):

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ

Do not approach the property of the orphan, except with the best possible conduct, until he reaches maturity [Al-An’am 6:152].

The Quran has explained the purpose for the creation of the sky, the Earth, the universe and life and death so that He can test His Muqalifeen (people held accountable):

أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

Who among them is better in deeds [Al-Kahf 18:7]

There are many verses of the Quran which bear witness to the same. [Also see: Hud 11:07, A-Kahf 18:07, Al-Malik 67-02]

The competition and contention between them is not on the basis of the fact that who does a wrong act and who does a good act, but the real competition is based on who does a good act and who does an excellent act. The essence of the matter is that a Muslim's actual vision should be such that he is always striving for Ahsan (excellence) and perfection

Prophet (SAW) said:

إِذَا سَأَلْتُمْ اللَّهَ الْجَنَّةَ، فَاسْأَلُوهُ الْفِرْدَوْسَ، فَإِنَّهُ أَوْسَطُ الْجَنَّةِ، وَأَعْلَى الْجَنَّةِ، وَفَوْقَهُ عَرْشُ الرَّحْمَنِ

“...So if you ask Allah for anything, ask Him for the Firdaus, for it is the last part of Paradise and the highest part of Paradise, and at its top there is the Throne of the Beneficent.”<sup>12</sup>

The famous Hadith-e-Jibrael also states that when Jibrael asked the Prophet (SAW) about Ahsan (excellence), the Prophet (SAW) replied:

الإحسان أن تعبد الله كأنك تراه فإن لم تكن تراه فإنه يراك

“...To worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you cannot achieve this state of devotion then you must consider that He is looking at you.”<sup>13</sup>

This is the explanation of Ahsan (excellence) in worship and it means: to be so devoted and so sincere in action as if one is seeing Allah.

The face value or the quantity of the highly acceptable acts in the eyes of Allah, does not matter; but their true nature and condition does. It often happens that an action is seemingly right but it lacks spirituality which gives it life, hence it is neither rewarded nor weighed for acceptance. Allah says:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ ۖ الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُونَ ۖ

<sup>12</sup> Narrated by Abu Huraira, Sahih Bukhari, Chapter: Oneness, Uniqueness of Allah (Tawheed), number 519, Translation by M. Muhsin Khan

<sup>13</sup> Sahih Bukhari, Chapter: Belief, number 47, translation by M. Muhsin Khan

So, Woe to those performers of Salah. Who are neglectful of their Salah. Who (do good only to) show off [Al-Ma'un 107:4-6]

The Prophet (SAW) said regarding fasting:

من لم يدع قول الزور والعمل به، فليس لله حاجة في أن يدع طعامه وشرابه

“Allah has no need for the hunger and the thirst of the person who does not restrain from telling lies and acting on them even while observing the fast.”<sup>14</sup>

In addition the Prophet (SAW) said:

رب صائم ليس له من صيامه إلا الجوع، ورب قائم ليس له من قيامه إلا السهر

“Many persons get nothing out of their Fasts but hunger and thirst; many more get nothing out of their night prayers but exertion and sleepless nights.”<sup>15</sup>

Allah says:

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ

While they were not ordered but to worship Allah, making their submission exclusive for him with no deviation [Al-Bayyinah 98:5]

The Prophet (SAW) said:

إنما الأعمال بالنيات وإنما لكل امرئ ما نوى فمن كانت هجرته إلى الله ورسوله فهجرته إلى الله ورسوله ، ومن كانت هجرته إلى دنيا يصيبها أو امرأة يتزوجها فهجرته إلى ما هاجر إليه

“Deeds (their correctness and rewards) depend upon intentions, and every person gets but what he has intended. So whoever emigrated for worldly benefits, or for a woman to marry, his emigration is for what he emigrated for.”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Reported by al- Bukhari (Sahih Bukhari)

<sup>15</sup> Reported by Ibn Maajah on authority of Abu Hurairah and Shaikh Al-Albanee declared it to be authentic in his Sahih ul-Jaami'; Also reported by Nasa'I and Ibn- Khuzaimah (in his Sahih)

<sup>16</sup> Narrated by Umar bin Al-Khattab and reported in Sahih Bukhari, Chapter: Revelation, number 1, translation by M. Muhsin Khan

This is the reason why the scholars of Islam have attached great importance to this Hadith.

Imam Bukhari has started his book (Sahih) from this Hadith. Some scholars have declared it to be one-fourth and some have declared it to be one-third of Islam, because intentions play an important role in the acceptance of actions. Scholars have considered this Hadith as a standard for the inner aspect of actions.

As is mentioned in Hadith:

من عمل عملاً ليس عليه أمرنا فهو رد

*"Whoever does an action which we have not commanded will have it rejected." (meaning that it would be returned to its doer.)*<sup>17</sup>

This hadith is a test for the outer aspect of acts.

Fazeel bin Ayaz was asked that in the Quranic verse:

أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

[Who among you is Ahsan-ul-amal (better in deed)] [Hud: 11:07] what is Ahsan-ul-amal? He replied that it is the most correct act and has sincerity to the maximum extent.

It was asked that: what does it mean to be the most correct and to be sincere to the maximum extent? He replied: Allah does not accept any act unless it is simultaneously correct and sincere. If it is correct but lacks sincerity then it is not accepted and if it is sincere but not correct then it is again not accepted. The sincerity of an action is when it is done for the sake of Allah and it is correct when it is in accordance with the Sunnah. In religious dealings and worship, this is the meaning of Ahsan-ul-Amal (excellence in action).

Now considering Ahsan (excellence) in worldly affairs, it should reach that standard where it is not only equivalent to that of other people but also surpasses them.

<sup>17</sup> Reported by Imam Muslim on authority of Aishah, Also agreed upon on the authority of `Aishah, **"Whoever introduces into this affair of ours something that does not belong to it, will have it rejected."** (Muslim).

Hence, there is no place for anyone in the world except for those people who perform their actions with high standards.

One of the hadiths which guides us in this issue has been narrated from Abu Huraira in Muslim etc.

من قتل وزغاً في أول ضربة كتب له مئة حسنة، وفي الثانية دون ذلك، وفي الثالثة دون ذلك

*“He who killed a gecko (lizard) with the first stroke for him is one hundred Hasanaat (rewards), and he who killed it with a second stroke for him is a reward less than the first one, and he who killed it with the third stroke for him is a reward less than the second one.”<sup>18</sup>*

This hadith is also guiding us towards the same matter that excellence should be considered in all affairs along with expertise and steadfastness, even for trivial matters like killing a lizard. This is the meaning of excellence in killing, which has been indicated in this hadith.

فإذا قتلتم فأحسنوا القتل

*“So when you kill, kill in a good way”<sup>19</sup>*

When anything is killed swiftly, it does not feel any pain, whichever the animal may be.

Just like actions cannot be measured by their quantity and volume, similarly the life of people cannot be measured by its duration. Sometimes a person is given a long life but it is devoid of any blessing. And sometimes it happens that life is not too long but it is filled with Amaal-ul-khair (good actions) and Khair-ul-Amaal (best of actions).

With reference to the same issue, Ibn Attaullah says in his wise words: Some lives are long but their benefits are fewer and some lives are short but their benefits are numerous. The one who has blessing in life attains many bounties of Allah in a short time; so many that they cannot be described in words and others cannot even reach the dust of their feet.

With regards to the preceding matter, only this example is enough for us that Allah blessed the life of the Prophet (SAW) so that he (SAW) laid the foundations of the greatest religion and organized the best generation, in a period of twenty three years: which is the life of Prophethood. Prophet (SAW) established an excellent nation and laid

<sup>18</sup> Reported by Muslim upon authority of Abu Huraira, book 26, number 5564, translated by Abdul Hamid Siddiqui

<sup>19</sup> Narrated by Shaddid b. Aus, Sahih Muslim, volume 3, number 1955, Translation by Abdul Hamid Siddiqui

the basis of a fair system of government. Prophet (SAW) defeated the system of idolatry and the rapidly spreading Judaism and besides the book of Allah also left as heritage for the Muslims: a guiding Sunnah and the example of his complete life.

Hazrat Abu-Bakr in two and a half years exterminated the false claimants of Propethood; brought back the victims of Fitna Artadad (the tribulation of apostasy) into the religion of Islam, who then performed many marvelous feats in the victory of Persia and Rome. He taught a lesson to those who refused to pay Zakat and protected those rights of the destitute, which Allah has declared in the wealth of the rich. Thus he recorded the fact in history that Islamic state is the first state that fought for the rights of the poor.

Hazrat Umar bin al-Khattab accomplished foreign conquests in a period of ten years and internally strengthened the foundations of justice, equality and Shura (advisory council) as well. He devised many magnificent methods for his successors, called “Awwaliyyat-e-Umar”. He laid the basis of collective Fiqh and Ijtihad, especially the Fiqh related to state and governance, which was established on the basis of comparison and mutual guarantee between purpose of law (sh’ra) and public interest (masalih)

He encouraged the people to advise and criticize the rulers. He said:

لا خير فيكم اذا لم تقولوا لها ، ولا خير فينا اذا لم نسمعها

“ If you do not say anything then you are useless and if we do not listen then we are useless.”

Besides this, he was not interested in the world; he had the power of truth and established justice and egalitarianism among people. So much so that he brought before the court the governors of various provinces and even his sons and provided justice to the oppressed.

Through Hazrat Umar bin Abdul Aziz, Allah revived the Sunnah of justice and guidance in a period of thirty months, which was the duration of his Caliphate, and through him Allah ended the Bid’ah (innovations) of oppression and misguidance. Hazrat Umar bin Abdul Aziz returned the usurped properties and protected the rights of the people; as a result of these steps, conviction in Islam was rekindled in the hearts of the public. The lives of the people were protected and the hungry were able to eat their fill. The Muslim cities prospered to such an extent that the rich were worried about finding people to give Zakat to, as everyone was rich and any Zakat deserving poor could not be found.

Imam Shafi died at the age of fifty four years (150-204 Hijri) and left behind glorious treasures of knowledge and wisdom.

Imam Ghazali lived for fifty five years (450-505 Hijri) and left magnificent and valuable resources of knowledge.

Imam Nawawi was forty five years old when he died (431-575 Hijri) but during this period he presented assets to the world from *Arba'een* to *Sharh-Muslim* and from *Al-Minhaj-fil-fiqh* to *Rawdhat al-Talibeen* and *al-Majmu'* in Hadith and Fiqh, through which Allah provided benefits to the entire nation. Apart from these, *Tahdhib al-Asma* and *Al-Lughat* are also amongst his books.

Besides them, there were many Imams like Ibn al-Arabi, Sarkhasi, Ibn Juzayy, Ibn Qudamma, Qarafi, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim, Shatibi, Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Hajar, Ibn Hamam, Suyuti, Dehlavi and Shawkani who filled the earth with eruditeness.

Some people die even before death and their lives end although they are considered as living and there are some who live on even after they die. They leave behind virtuous deeds, beneficial knowledge, righteous children and good students who augment their lives and as a result, their lives becomes longer and longer.

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