

FUNDAMENTALS OF CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Naeem Siddiqui

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Munira Amin

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Table of Content

Publisher’s Note	05
About the Author	06
Introduction	08
Strengthening the Bond with Allah	11
Relationship with the Movement Organisation	17
Relationship with Co-Workers	35

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Publisher's Note

Character is the main instrument in the struggle to achieving Islamic social reform. This book discusses briefly but succinctly the ways to obtaining that sharpened instrument. The overwhelming demands of those who aspire to establish Islam in every aspect of life had prompts us to re-publish this book. We hope they will read and develop their character in the light of this book.

About The Author

Naeem Siddiqui is a foremost leader of the Islamic Movement in the Subcontinent. He was among the first few Companions to join Allama Syed Abul A'la Maududi's mission to establish an Islamic nation in British ruled India Subcontinent in the first half on the 20th Century. Naeem Siddiqui was of who dedicated their outmost effort and endeavour to establishing the foundations of the Islamic movement in this Subcontinent.

The monthly Tarjuman-ul-Quran (*Meaning of the Quran*) published by Maulana Abul A'la Maududi undoubtedly played a monumental role in the historical beginnings of Islam and Islamic movement in the 20th Century within the Himalayan Subcontinent. During his lifetime and even after the passing of Syed Abul A'la Maududi, Naeem Siddiqui continued as editor of this international periodical for many years while carrying out his responsibility with outmost dedication and competence.

The introduction of Islamic movement in the Indian Subcontinent affected a significant change in the social, political, economic, cultural and educational arena in this region. Marxism had a big ideological influence on the culture and literature of that time. The Marxist writers and composers of the time were poisoning the culture and literature in Bengali, Hindi and Urdu languages with their notions of secularism, class struggle and anti-religious thoughts.

They called it ‘Progressive Literature.’ In response to such cultural aggression, Naeem Siddiqui’s prose and poetry in the 1940s reflected Islam’s humane moralism against Marxism’s anarchy in the name of progress. Around that time, he created a new wave in Urdu poetry and spoken literature with characters and themes focusing on Islamic Jihad and movement. As a result, a group of poets and writers came forward to join him and advance this effort. This became known as an ‘Islamic Adab’ or Islamic Literature. This endeavour was supported by the monthly periodical founded by Naeem Siddiqui called ‘Chiragh-E-Rah’ which he edited for many years.

Naeem Siddiqui was a poet, novelist, writer, editor and also researcher. Later in life, he dedicated much of his time on researching and writing articles on Islamic thought and development. At this point, his extensive seerah book on the life of the Prophet SAW titled ‘Mohsin e Insaniyat’ (*The Benefactor of Humanity*) was widely acclaimed. It focused on the entire life and activities of our beloved Prophet SAW through the lens of Islamic movement and his struggle for truth and justice against falsehood and injustice.

The booklet ‘Fundamentals of Character Development’ is an important prose written by Naeem Siddiqui which was published in Lahore in the 1960s. It was translated to Bangla and published in Bangla around the same time. The original Urdu version was titled ‘Tameer E Seerat Ke Lawazim.’

Abdul Mannan Talib
(Bangla translation)

Introduction

The more active Islamic Movement workers become, the more impactful their activities grow to be; the greater is the Shaytan's interference. In regards to this, the current era displays some significant characteristics. On one hand, the Western materialistic and individualistic civilisation has brought the Ummah's moral decline to a record low. On the other hand, the atheistic ideas of Socialism continue to invade our beliefs. This invasion has caused within our hearts, grave doubts about the fundamental faiths and principles of our religion. As a result, the root of our Ummah's devotion to Islam is shaken. The challenge thrown by Shaytan, the commander of all bad and evil, is manifest in its complete form in the world today.

Shaytan had sworn,

قَالَ فَبِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ۖ ثُمَّ لَآتِيَنَّهُمْ مِّنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ ۖ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ

“Because you have sent me astray, surely I will sit in wait to lead them (human beings) against Your Straight Path. I will come upon from all sides- from the front and from the rear and from the right and from the left, then You will not find most of them to be grateful.” (*Al A'raf* : 16-17)

In this situation, many well-wishers would advise us to avoid the trials of this world, retire within the confines of our own homes and try to retain and safe-guard only our deen. It is not an easy matter indeed, to remain steadfast in this situation. Under comfortable circumstances, every pious man is able to uphold Islamic values. However, trying to uphold Islamic values when one is almost submerged in a tidal wave of moral degeneration is not easy by any means. In our opinion, there is no one more selfish than those who stay away from the moral epidemic and engage in protecting their health while allowing the epidemic to continue its course.

Imagine a town that has been ravaged by a new disease of epidemic proportions. The town's only hope is its doctors who have the capability of treating the disease. However, people are afraid that the town will be doomed if the doctors are exposed to patients and become sick. In this situation, if the doctors are quarantined, then will the town face any better prospects? Definitely not! Despite the risks, the doctors have to be exposed to the sick in order to treat them and find a way to contain the epidemic. Otherwise these doctors are nothing but a useless burden for the town.

Similarly, if Iman, Islam and Taqwa take shelter in mosques from the fear of opposition instead of illuminating their surroundings, then these are nothing but some cumbersome accessories. If the foremost capital of one's character is

always kept locked in a chest and kept unproductive for fear of damage, it might as well be non-existent. If Islamic groups, Muslim men and women have some 'capital' of pious character and Iman, it should be widely circulated in the marketplace (in this case, the society). Then, if the investors have the right capabilities, the capital will return with profits. However, if the investor is incapable, it will result in the loss of even the capital, let alone the production of profits.

Since the workers of the Islamic movement have decided to invest their modest capital of pious character and Iman in Allah's path, their duty lies not only in striving to save their personal capital, but to also maximise profits for the nation, its people and ourselves in this venture. Like a struggling merchant with a meagre capital, we must be very cautious in investing that which we earned through much blood and sweat. We must employ all necessary profitable and overseeing management procedures to maximise this investment. In areas inflicted with severe moral epidemic, we need to invest the above mentioned capital extensively and implement crucial measures to provide benefit for the population and protection for ourselves.

Strengthening the Bond with Allah

Establishing a strong bond with Allah SWT is the first and foremost requirement of this difficult trial ground. When this relationship slides below its minimum standard, individuals' actions and endeavour becomes focused on the dunya and their conscience becomes readily susceptible to the Shaytan. After that, there would be no obstacle to prevent the 'soldiers of sin,' from doing wrong. To maintain this important relationship with our Lord and advance it through different levels for future needs, we must take note of the following:

Due to Allah's great mercy, no workers intimately involved with this movement fail to perform the primary ibadaahs. However, the physical rituals of these ibadaahs alone are insufficient. In addition, we should attain the qualities of performing the ibadaahs according to their set rules and allocated times, fearing Allah and attending to Him with obedience and reverence. In this respect, we still remain at the bottom of the desired level. This is such a weakness that if we leap into a great struggle in its presence - being aware that we are not isolated from the struggle of life - then we are sure to suffer grave devastation.

Using the sources of Qur'an and Sunnah, we should be informed of the rules and regulations set by Allah SWT for salah, sawm, hajj and zakah and also know the mental state expected to be generated by these ibadaahs. After that knowledge, we have to make a conscious effort to carry out these ibadaahs in their real spirit. In particular, if we don't keep a close watch on performing salah on time and in jam'ah, it is very difficult to attain taqwa, khushu' and humility in our prayers. We should also remember that if we are not familiar with and used to criticising our performance, it is impossible to attain proper spirit in our ibadaahs. In the absence of self-criticism, the interior remains lifeless regardless of the exterior appearance of an ibadaah.

To enhance and improve our relationship with Allah, we need to study the Qur'an and Sunnah directly.

If the workers of an Islamic group do not go back to these sources regularly, then it is possible for them to be misguided at any moment. In striving for our aim, we will inevitably encounter with popular Jahiliyyah ways of the modern world, where we have to march forward through the barricade of Shaytan. It is undoubtedly true that we cannot go on this path confidently if we lack Islamic education and the light of knowledge.

In order to realise the purpose and the obligations towards the ideology we have devoted our lives to establish, it is important to spend at least some 15-30 minutes each day in studying the original sources –

the Qur'an and Sunnah. At its minimum, we should be able to read at least one ayah from the Qur'an and one hadith and implement them in our actions. If taken regularly even in small doses, these medicines of Haqq will Insha-allah protect us from the poisonous effects of a morally degenerate society.

Literature which assists the understanding of the Qur'an and hadiths, especially those contributed by Islamic Movement writers, should be studied regularly and extensively. After studying a significant number of literatures, many movement workers develop the feeling that there is no need for them to study any further. They think that they understand the movement and its organisation completely. However, it is a grave misunderstanding on their part. In addition, there are others who do not feel the need to re-read previously read books. It is vital to study these literature over and over again to generate fresh inspiration and understanding.

Throughout the decades, it has been regarded vital for Islamic movement workers to place outmost emphasis on nafl ibadah for fortifying relationship with Allah SWT. It is necessary to perform nafl ibadah regularly and privately.

Nafl salah, especially salatut tahajjud has a very high rank amongst the nafl ibadahs. Tahajjud prayers become a great aid to movement soldiers in surviving difficult times.

Nafl sawm has second place amongst the nafl ibadahnya. This is an excellent way to develop strong bonds with Allah SWT. Fasting three days a month is a tradition of the Prophet SAW and is in fact, equivalent to fasting for an entire decade. Moreover, according to the hadiths, certain days in the week are desirable for fasting and the rulings in this issue are very lenient. Nafl sawm can also be observed once in every ten days or once every month.

Another nafl ibadah is spending in Allah's cause. We should make ourselves accustomed to putting away part of our income, to spend for the purposes of establishing the deen. There is no other way to water the roots of this movement. It would not be an exaggeration to point out, that some current phases of the movement proceedings may require us to forego or sell off objects of our desire and personal prize to amass provisions for the deen. We are aware that most of our fellow workers are poor, along with a handful of working middle-class and they generally stand away from worldly endeavour. The rich and privileged do not support this movement in general. In this situation, the extent of monetary sacrifice our members and supporters have undergone to sustain the baitulmal (funding), is unparalleled to any worldly groups. However,

Allah SWT stands witness to the fact that, in comparison to the examples set by the sahabas of Prophet SAW, our contribution is yet to lift off the 'ground level.' Take a moment to think! In the present vulnerable condition that

we are advancing through, if the limbs and major organs of the movement were to fail from inadequate blood circulation due to insufficient nutrition in the baitulmal and the movement eventually ended in failure, how would we answer to Allah SWT? Hence, we need to strengthen the mentality to finance Allah's cause through much greater contributions.

To develop appropriate relationship with Allah SWT, constant dhikr and du'a is of elemental importance. Instead of the misunderstood idea of dhikr that leads one to leave home and all worldly affairs, the Prophet of Allah SAW taught his ummah many du'as for the countless actions performed during the day and the night. There are du'as to be recited for sleeping; awaking; travelling; leaving home; entering home; at times of joy; at times of grief; when repenting for a sin; beginning a task; listening to adhan; performing wudu; sneezing; meeting another Muslim; when eating and drinking etc. In other words, for every action, Rasulullah SAW taught us some beautiful words to praise Allah and ask for His protection and guidance. Conscious and sincere utterances of these words make a Muslim aware of his relationship with his Master. He does not forget Allah while busily carrying out his everyday affairs. His life fills with dhikr and du'a. He spends morning to evening either reciting 'Subhanallah,' 'Alhamdulillah,' 'Astagfirullah,' 'La howla wala qu'watta illabillah,' 'Sadakallahu wa rasuluhu,' 'Anta waliyi fid funya wal akhirah,' 'Hasbunallahu rabbi,' or 'Ni'mal mawla wa ni'mal waqil.' His heart urges him to recite these du'as

constantly. In doing so, he asks the Almighty for guidance, the strength and the opportunity for performing righteous deeds, protection from the temptations of Shaytan and he also repents for his sins and disobedience in every step.

It is very important for every one of our fellow movement workers to become used to this constant mode of dhikr. In addition, we should pray with every breath, for our iman, character, patience, tawaqqul, self-restraint, punctuality, strength, resolve and steadfastness. If developed properly, these qualities may prove extremely influential in the movement effort.

It is worthy of mention that the dhikr and du'a which is not a conscious expression, does not involve the heart, performed in unawareness of Allah's presence, stained with the wish for public admiration or is a mere verbal exercise, will inevitably fail to derive the desired outcomes. Therefore, dhikr and du'a should be with complete conscious thought and sincerity and free from exhibitionism.

Relationship with the Movement Organisation

If the administration of an organisation is unstable and the organisation embarks on a major expedition, its fate will be of that car which does not have its parts tightened in place and the driver decides to take it on a lengthy drive on a mountainous track. The car will face problems in every step and fall apart before long.

Organisation is a usual necessity for every group. However, for us, it is not only a necessity but more importantly, a testimony of our devotion toward the deen, the worship of Allah SWT and obedience to the Prophet SAW.

Organisational weaknesses create many problems in carrying out the organisational activities. Therefore, all groups try to remove these weaknesses. In addition, we acknowledge that organisational weaknesses will ultimately jeopardise our akhirah. For these reasons, we always strive to keep such weaknesses away. Every one of us bears the responsibility of strengthening the organisation's discipline and guarding it.

We will now focus on some other important issues associated with the organisation of an Islamic Movement.

The balance between 'command' and 'obedience' constructs the backbone of an organisation. Without this balance, the existence of an organisation is meaningless. That is why violating this balance is in fact committing a major sin. More clearly, it means rebelling against Allah and His Messenger SAW. After committing this sin, no one can attain success either in this dunya or in the akhirah.

Al Quran's command is,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ

Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those of you who are in authority." (*An-Nisa: 59*)

Remember that these three kinds of obedience are wajib (obligatory). Muslims will incur great loss if they violate any of these three kinds of obedience.

Narrated by Abu Huraira RA, Rasulullah SAW said, "Whoever obeys the leader obeys obeys me and whoever disobeys the leader disobeys me." (Bukhari & Muslim). A further saying of Abu Huraira RA clarifies this idea. He said, "It is an undeniable fact that, obeying leaders is obeying Allah and disobeying them is nothing but disobeying Allah." There are numerous other sahih hadiths in support of this command.

The main message of these hadiths is that, it is amongst the most important fard and wajib obligations of the shariah to obey the leaders in righteous efforts. Obviously,

the leaders are elected because of their higher degree of knowledge and taqwa, by the organisation based on the Islamic shariah and devoted to the establishment of the deen or engaged in running an Islamic State.

Rasulullah SAW also made it clear that those who disregard the right of the leaders to be obeyed will not succeed on the Day of Judgment despite of having a high level of taqwa. In his words [narrated by Ibn Umar RA], "Whoever turns away from obeying his leader will stand before Allah on the Day of Judgement in such a state that he will find no argument in his defence." (*Muslim*)

From this brief discussion, it is evident that leaders of an Islamic Movement are not the same as the presidents, vice presidents and advisors of other worldly political, social or economic organisations. In this movement, the leaders, administrators and Majlis-e-shura hold a special Islamic shariah based authority. Their rights and responsibilities are not based on temporary benefits and gains, but determined by the deen and the shariah. Hence the question of submission and obedience in this respect is very different from submitting to the typical worldly leaders.

As long as our leaders do not clearly and publicly stand away from the path of Qur'an and Sunnah, it is a kabira sin on our part if we do any of the following:

- disobey their commands
- obey with dissatisfaction rather than with eagerness and enthusiasm;
- harbour jealousy, hatred and/or prejudice against them;
- backbite or slander them;
- wish them ill instead of success;
- conspire against them;
- create public unrest against them;
- misinform them about events and situations
- withhold or to be stingy when required to give counsel, advise and support to the leaders

These sins are of such magnitude that even though a person may be performing the ritual and other ibadaahs and improving personal character, yet their akhirah may be in jeopardy if he is committing these. This awful situation can reduce a person to the state of a munafiq. Thus, participants in Islamic organisations and groups need to be cautious about the matter of 'obedience.'

Islam, however, never demands 'blind submission.' Obedience is required only in righteous acts. If the leader ventures outside the boundary of virtue, Islam commands:

وَلَا تَعَاوُنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ

"....and do not help one another in sin and aggression"
(Al-Mai'dah: 2)

For the betterment of an Islamic organisation and its internal structures, all its workers need to keep a sharp eye on the organisation's activities and operations to prevent its leaders from stepping outside the boundary of virtue. Omar RA said in this regard, "If any of you see a deviation in me, it is his duty to put it right."

In the case of a difference of opinion on issues, the workers hold the right to present and discuss the issue and if the answer is not satisfactory, then according to the shariah the workers also hold the right to retain their own viewpoint. However, both opposing parties must submit to the decision made by the leader on the issue. You cannot withhold obedience saying, "The decision is taken against my viewpoint and the problem hasn't been approached from my perspective." In this and any other issues, obedience can only be withheld according to the Prophet SAW, when the leader is treading a path clearly away from Islam.

To keep the leaders on the right path, the workers of the Islamic Movement have an essential right to criticise the leadership. However, although criticism based of doubt and unsubstantiated evidence may be acceptable in other groups. This policy is against the principles of Islam. In an Islamic organisation, criticism is based on positive assumption. Here, instead of accusation and finger pointing, well wishes and sincere advice is delivered. The only method of criticism acceptable to an Islamic organisation is where:

- the criticiser does not harbour bitter feelings
- the person being criticised does not feel irritated
- no intention of revenge is associated with the criticism
- no persistence to establish one's own claim and
- the criticiser does not become angry if the criticism is not accepted.

Furthermore, criticism in Islamic groups occurs face-to-face, in front of the person concerned and not behind anyone's back. Saying something negative in their absence is backbiting, not constructive criticism. Backbiting is the foremost agent of harm to an Islamic organisation whereas constructive criticism bears well wishes for a co-worker. There is great difference between the two and so are their impacts.

The nature of our organisation is such that the more its leaders are criticised, the greater it benefits the movement. However, addressing leaders in derogatory terms, undermining their authority to gratify personal dislike, making fun of them and enjoying discussion of their weaknesses clearly conflict with the principles of Islamic character.

The practice of criticism can become a problem for an organisation if there is no definite restrictive rules on the right to criticise. If criticism is turned it into a regular habit where workers are criticising the leaders' every action, decision and command and demanding the rationale

behind each of their commands, then this important organizational tool can cause more harm than good. In this situation, a leader cannot maintain his leadership even for a day. In an environment like this, the leaders and in-charges will have to spend all their time in accountability to the workers. They'll have to spend all their time explaining their actions to restore confidence in their leadership and prove that there is not cause for complaint against them.

Keeping this crisis in perspective, it is clear that significant caution is required in adopting the correct method for criticising the leadership. Otherwise, the misuse of criticism by workers may prove pathological for the movement and result in grave detrimental consequences for the workers as well.

A major impact of unwarranted criticism is that it creates an obstacle to the obedience of leadership. When somebody steps into this path, that person engages in unashamed wrong-doing and disobedience to the command of leadership. Therefore, criticism and obedience are intertwined but must remain within their distinct boundaries as the violation of one affects the other. Workers need to carefully maintain the regulations in regards to both.

Change of person in leadership does not change the nature and extent of obedience on the workers' part. Even though it might happen that amongst the people in leadership within a large organisation, some have superior

personal qualities while others have lesser, some are superior in their knowledge while others in their taqwa, some are more competent in the matters of the modern time while others are more knowledgeable in regards to the Prophet's time, some are more knowledgeable about the external aspects of the shariah while others are more knowledgeable about the inherent implications of these laws, some regard one aspect of the organisation to be more important while another may regard another matter more important, some are strict while others are lenient in nature, some favour informal and casual air while others prefer a serious demeanour, some prefer to publicise while others prefer silent progress.

Apart from these, the leaders may have different preferences in terms of clothing, diet, personal bearing and other conduct. Personal styles, likes and tendencies vary to a certain extent in each individual despite of the unity of beliefs and principles in a system of organisation.

This difference or personality variation amongst leaders does not mean that workers may vary the degree of obedience towards them. If leaders are exchanged, workers should not start asking why such and such tastes and preferences are absent in this leader which were present in the previous leader.

Usually, when the workers become used to a certain manner of doing things, a change in leadership stalls their work as they anxiously compare and judge the new leader's work method against the previous. When it does not measure up,

the workers become dissatisfied and their work pace becomes slow. To minimise these judgmental tendencies, Rasulullah SAW said (Narrated Anas RA):

“Hear and obey even if a Negro slave whose head is like a raisin (small) is placed in authority over you.”

(Bukhari)

Workers should not concern themselves with his ancestry, social status, appearance, attitudes, manners, clothes, likes and dislikes. The shariah did not make the obedience of leadership dependent on the workers’ acceptance of the leaders’ nature, personal preferences or other such characteristics.

The Islamic movement is not centered upon an individual. It was first led by the Prophet Muhammad SAW and then by Abu Bakar-as-Siddiq RA who upheld:

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِن مَّاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ
عَلَى أَعْقَابِكُمْ

“And Muhammad is no more than a Messenger and indeed many Messengers have passed away before him. If he dies or is killed, will you then turn back on your heels?”

(Al-Imran: 144)

Abu Bakar RA proceeded with the recitation of this ayah and carried out the responsibility of leadership.

After him, came the ruthlessly strict leader Omar ibn Al Khattab RA, then the kind and generous Othman bin Affan RA and lastly, Ali ibn Abi Talib RA with his great store of knowledge and wisdom.

During the change of leadership of each of these leaders, the code of obedience remained unaltered and breaking this code was regarded a grave sin.

As workers, we must remember that we are commanded to give obedience not due to the personality of the leader but due to the right of obedience bestowed on their position by the shariah.

Therefore, when change of leadership is necessitated by circumstances, the rights given to the leaders by Allah and His Messenger must be rendered by the workers with outmost sincerity.

So far, only the workers' duties have been explained. Compared to these, the duties of the leaders are much more difficult and weightier. The leader's accountability on the Day of Judgment will also be much more severe. The lion share of the success of Islamic Movement is dependent on their actions. The workers can only obey the leaders in the correct manner if the leaders fulfil their duties correctly. The following ayah offers a good advice in this regard:

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ ۚ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ ۚ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ ۚ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

“And by the mercy of Allah, you (O Prophet) dealt with them gently. And had you been severe and hard hearted, they would have scattered away from you, so tolerate their faults and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the affairs. Then when you have taken a decision, put your trust in Allah, certainly Allah loves those who put their trust in Him.” (*Al-Imran: 159*)

This ayah provides a fundamental principle for every leadership under the obedience of Prophet Muhammad SAW, without which an organisation’s discipline cannot remain firmly established.

In the light of this ayah, aspects that require obedience and perspectives according to which every worker must mould their attitude and character have

been discussed below:

- a. If an organisation does not possess the qualities of indiscriminate love, affection, compassion, and co-operation within its entire senior and junior members, it will never be able to advance successfully. The organisation’s leaders’ and in-charges’ regard for the workers should be such extent that each worker believes they are the one closest to the leader and most relied upon. The organisational atmosphere created by the

leader should be such that no one is hesitant to speak of what is in his/her mind, no one is prevented by apprehensions or other negative feelings while presenting their thoughts to the leader and no one feels biasness in terms of being more or less valued. Where such atmosphere is absent, the leaders and workers develop wide mental and conceptual gaps between themselves which weaken the spirit of co-operation. Allama Iqbal expresses this great truth in his poetry:

“From the ranks of the caravan
Some withdrew
Some became doubtful and inclined
Towards the harem
Due to unpleasant manners
Of our commander”

Having pleasant manners does not mean that the leader should not be strict about anything, that will not take accountability for errors and misdeeds or prevent evil actions and strive to please each worker. Rather, if circumstances require the observance of strict discipline, doing otherwise may prove damaging to the movement. For the purpose of maintaining principles, the ideology and objectives of this movement, the leaders sometimes need to give direct verbal commands and observe harsh discipline. However, these commands must bear the essence of affection and care. The strictness and the harshness of the commands should be nothing but an external manifestation.

- b. The leaders have an opportunity to closely monitor the manner, attitude and behaviour of all workers. Thus, many of the workers' errors, mistakes, weaknesses, and inadequacies are apparent to them. Someone might have slacked off an assigned duty, some may have behaved unpleasantly towards the opponents, others may have expressed undue emotions, someone may have publicised an important organisational matter of grave confidentiality, and a few might have displayed undue behaviour towards fellow workers or others may have engaged in backbiting or slander.

After constant exposure to such character deficiencies, the leader automatically harbour dislike, ill thoughts and annoyance towards those workers. Watching these deficiencies all the time, gradually, the leader may feel bitter about some workers and the whole organisation in general. In such a situation, certain irritation may become evident through the leader's harsh and unpleasant manner and speech. This results in broken spirit, barriers of doubt and mistrust which starts to loosen the bond of leadership and obedience. The aforesaid ayah warns about this situation. It teaches the leaders to become aware of but to forgive the weaknesses of their workers, to avoid blackening their hearts with ill thoughts and becoming frustrated. Human beings display various weaknesses at various times for various reasons. These weaknesses can only be eliminated through constant and consistent endeavour. It is not enough only to forgive the workers' weaknesses, but also ask Allah's forgiveness and guidance on their behalf with great love and affection. This is also the best way of strengthening mutual relationship.

- c. "...consult them in the affairs" (*Al Imran:159*) - In the light of this Qur'anic command, from time to time and according to necessity, the leaders must consult and discuss organisational matters with their associates and workers according to their level of knowledge, judgmental ability and taqwa. This mutual consultation eliminates doubt and mistrust and eases the task of decision making.

Consultation is fard (obligatory), more so in conducting the operations of an Islamic organisation. For any issue, Allah's command is to with consult those who have the capability of giving relevant and appropriate advice and suggestion. Not every matter needs consultation, rather, it is necessary to consult the person who is experienced and knowledgeable in the matter of concern. Consultation with shura members, workers and/or associates and then weighing and analysing the arguments against and in favour- reinforce the endeavour to establish the deen. Furthermore, consultation strengthens the backbone of the organisation and administration in this movement. Mutual consultation results in the meeting and unification of diverse brains and minds which facilitates the conclusion and implementation of resolutions.

- d. The last command issued to the leaders in the ayah, is to remain single-minded and steadfast on a decision that has been made after the necessary consultation and exchange of opinions. In an organisation, after a decision has been taken on an affair, leaders often

continue to face differences of opinion and unfortunately, still newer opinions. Now, if the leader is compelled to alter the decision repeatedly, it will not propel the organisation towards success, instead, it will create in him mindless doubt and despair. As a result, all policies, strategies and principles of the organisation will become permanently unstable. For these reasons, after a certain conclusion has been reached, Allah has urged the consultants and the leaders alike, to accept the decision and then busy themselves in implementing the decision.

More lessons about leadership and obedience:

- e. Workers often give less importance than that conferred by the shariah, to the circulars and instructions issued by leaders. These are often treated like mere instructions given in any worldly office and institution. However, in reality, each circular of this kind issued forth is equivalent to ‘amal-bin-ma’roof’ (enjoining good). The obedience of ‘ulil amr’ in this regard is an obligatory duty. Workers need to employ their full power and capacity with a similar level of commitment that they apply when carrying out the injunctions of the shariah.
- f. We still do not possess the qualities of:
 - i. attending all organisational meetings and programs on time,
 - ii. carrying out a certain duty by a given date and time,
 - iii. conveying a message or
 - iv. running an organisational errand by the prescribed method and allocated time.

The workers do not yet realise that each of them is part of a functioning machine. If the parts of the machine do not work in organised synchrony, then the whole machine will become disabled and dysfunctional. This disability will prevent the organisation from any major accomplishment. Therefore, we must prepare ourselves to work punctually and correctly like the interrelated components of a machine.

- g. We have already discussed the fact that disobedience to the system of leadership and discipline is an act of grave sin. We have to account to Allah SWT for all such actions. When asked to explain such actions by a fellow co-worker, a worker usually experiences feelings of guilt and shame, but not in the deep sense. Disobedience to the organisation's system of discipline is no less than major offences such as lying, calling names, breaking oaths, violating someone's rights, stealing, backbiting and giving false evidence etc.

We acknowledge that the above actions are contrary to a desired personal character mentioned and we feel tremendous mental discomfort as soon as they are committed (by a participant of the organisation). We feel a compulsion to repent and seek Allah's forgiveness. Surprisingly, when the code of group discipline is broken, there are no such feelings of guilt to prompt its immediate correction through repentance and istighfar.

The importance of organisational character is far greater than our personal character. That is why any weakness in organisational character is a major offence. All workers must understand the significance of this matter. If we cannot make time for undertaking any organisational duties, to arrive in a particular venue on time, if we do not render the right of the leaders, not wishing them well, adopting the correct method for criticising them, maintaining confidentiality. If we fail to follow any orders of the leaders, then we must feel outmost shame and guilt after every such offence. The extent of these feelings should be such that it inclines us towards repentance and istighfar, bowing our heads to Allah and making us more concerned and fervent in seeking Allah's forgiveness.

If we do not develop this quality, then it is not possible to run an organisation and establish discipline the way laid down by Islam.

- h. Mere verbal request or the usual democratic and constitutional regulations do not provide the adequate motivation to fulfil the above motioned demands of leadership and obedience. Only the workers' personal feeling of compulsion towards these duties alone is sufficient for resulting in their completion. This feeling can only be prevalent in them if they participate in an organisation and always remain aware of the oaths they took by Allah in the presence of mu'mins as their witnesses. This feeling should remind each worker that the organisational discipline is a trust from Allah and

His Messenger SAW and he should dedicate himself in its maintenance along with fellow workers. This is a trust of priceless value. To keep it in its elevated state of existence, hundreds and thousands of scores of effort stood behind it throughout history, supplied thoughts and research, struggled with life, money, sleepless nights and great sacrifices. Therefore, if anyone tries to insert a weakness into this system of discipline, then every worker's foremost duty is to protect this trust from his undesirable intrusion. Whoever fails to do their outmost in this duty plays the role of the guard who sleeps through his watch.

Hence, workers should create such an atmosphere and tradition that prevents the succession of any negative influence and even if it does, so that it can be quelled at its roots. Only in this way, the leaders and the workers can work from their prescribed positions to undertake the demands of Qur'an and Sunnah.

Relationship with Co-Workers

The collective environment which promotes the workers' interpersonal relationships on proper moral basis alone can be responsible for maintaining the system of leadership and obedience. Allah SWT has established this basis through His messenger SAW. These principles have been specifically mentioned in Surat al Hujrat. The workers of the Islamic movement and the Islamic organisation must keep these ayahs in perspective at all times. They are briefly mentioned below.

The first command is to maintain a faultless community:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا
عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ لُدْمِينَ

“O you who believe! If a fasik comes to you with any news, verify it, lest you should harm the people in ignorance, and afterwards you become regretful for what you have done.” (*Al-Hujrat: 6*)

Making a hasty decision after being informed about a certain news or event often leads people the wrong way.

As a result, feelings of embarrassment and guilt are often experienced afterwards. This command is applicable to a vast

number of situations. The members of an Islamic community must firmly be rooted onto this command. They should not make a hasty decision on the basis of intelligence provided by the *fasik*.

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

“The believers are but a single brotherhood, so make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers.” (*Al-Hujrat: 10*)

The aim of this command is very clear. Due to human weaknesses, if misunderstandings or quarrels do happen between brothers, others should not exploit it to a greater magnitude, but help remove the misunderstanding, the communication gap and mediate the quarrel so that friendship can be re-established. Without this atmosphere of brotherhood, the discipline of an Islamic organisation can never be strong.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّن نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَرُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ ۚ
يُسِّى الْأَسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ ۚ وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

“O you who believe! Let not a group amongst you scoff another group, it may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor let your women scoff at other women, it may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames. How bad is it to insult one’s brother after having faith! And whosoever does not repent, are indeed oppressors.” (*Al-Hujrat: 11*)

This command is to prevent the Muslims from name calling, looking for faults and to give them a warning that whoever does not reject these habits will not be amongst the mu'mins, but amongst the dhalims (oppressors). These little faults shatter the mutual bond of brotherhood. The group which is infected with the disease of insulting, belittling, degrading and dishonouring its workers can never reach the highest level of brotherhood. All our workers should work to immunise themselves against this disease.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا
وَلَا يَغْتَبِ بَّعْضُكُم بَعْضًا ۚ أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ ۖ^ط
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ

“O you who believe! Avoid too much suspicion; indeed some suspicions are sins. And spy not, neither backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it. And fear Allah. Verily, Allah is the one who forgives and accepts repentance, Most Merciful.” (*Al-Hujrat: 12*)

The first demand of this ayah is that the workers of the Islamic Organisation must not have ill assumptions about one another. They must not sow into their hearts, the seeds of mistrust, doubt and suspicion. They must not blame one another, pile up complaints and accusations of misdeeds against one another on the basis of hearsay because every baseless suspicion and accusation is an act of sin.

The second demand is that, the workers must not spy to find out each other's faults and secrets. Spying here means to look for other people's faults, eavesdropping conversations or participate in conversations to uncover other's secrets or being eager to uncover another groups' problems or matters of confidentiality. These acts are a great offense and destructive to the discipline of an organisation.

And the third demand is that, the workers must not speak of other's faults in their absences and derive enjoyment from it. This is another great sin. In the Qur'an, it is likened to eating the flesh of another brother.

The more we are aware of these demands and fulfil them devotedly, the greater will the unity and brotherhood between the workers of this movement will be. The ultimate result will be the flourishing of leadership and obedience in the effort to establish Islam in all corners of the world.

May Allah SWT give us the Taufiq to achieve the character needed to contribute to success of the Islamic movement in establishing His deen. Ameen.

