

Our Traits

al-Ḥabīb ‘Umar b. Ḥafīz

Prologue

Praise be to God, the Benevolent, the Munificent, the Bestower of pre-eternal good. I bear witness that there is no deity but God, unique, without partner, in a manner befitting of a slave who truly declares Lordship for Him and revels in true slavehood unto Him. And I bear witness that our master, prophet and great one, Muḥammad, is the messenger of God, the holder of tremendous character, the upright way and the straight path.

*He summoned us unto truth, in truth revealed,
To him, from the Beneficent, the supreme right,
We answered, we accepted, in submission to his command,
We heard and obeyed based on guidance and insight,
So, my Lord, affirm us on truth and guidance,
Lord grasp our souls upon the best religion, aright.*

O God, bestow supreme mercy and unadulterated peace upon Your beloved and our master Muḥammad, and his family, companions and all those who follow them in perfection.

To proceed: These qualities that I hereby present include tremendous characteristics and magnificent attributes; they being the characteristics and attributes of the believer who has embodied the realities of faith, as faith is that which has settled in the heart and is substantiated by action. It is ridding (oneself) of foul traits and embellishing (the self) with noble traits of character. And since the noblest in character possesses the highest rank and the greatest affair, then the mission of the seal of the messengers of God ﷺ would indeed be to complete, perfect and ground the essential aspects of it. The Prophet of God ﷺ said in this regard, 'I have only been sent to complete the virtues of character.'¹ It is therefore necessary for the believer to make it his primary concern, as it is impossible for him to attain true adherence to his Prophet ﷺ and position beneath his ethical standard until he has completely characterised himself with and adopted that which the Messenger of God ﷺ was sent to complete, as it is indeed the basis of our ascension and the pillar of our renaissance.

¹ On the authority of Abū Hurayrah as related by Mālik, Aḥmad, al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, al-Bayhaqī in *the Branches of Faith* and Ibn Ḥibbān in his sound compendium.

*Civilizations remain for high traits length of stay,
And when such traits are lost they fall into decay.*

I compiled these virtuous character traits and tremendous natural dispositions, delineating each one in turn so that they serve as a reminder as to what is incumbent upon us, first and foremost, to demand from ourselves, gather upon it and consequently embody. Each one of these traits is extensive when commented upon and verses and noble traditions have been related in order to encourage them. We intend that this serve as a reminder hereby as we have previously mentioned and we live in hope that an opportunity will be presented in the future for us to comment upon each one individually.

Muslims, after having first affirmed their belief, are now in dire need of holding fast to these noble traits, virtues and lofty examples which also serve to affirm belief. This is regardless of whether one is a scholar, a manufacturer, a judge, a trader or a labourer operating within the relative sphere of his own profession. With each trait directly relating to either his Lord, his social circle or himself. How often have we been afflicted with the absence of these traits only to be replaced by division and enmity? We have consistently complained about the great mistakes that have come about due to our remoteness from them. All you can now see amongst our great multitudes is a disdain for the rights (of others), an extreme partisan for self-opinion, self-haughtiness and corrupt dealings and there is no might nor strength except in God, the High, the Tremendous. And we are absolutely certain of the fact that unless we come together and mutually assist one and other and shoulder each other's burdens we will never stand tall nor will we ever be rendered victorious in any sphere of life.

How apt it is for us to hold fast to these values and to spread them amongst our children. We are the ones whom the nations have leagued together to ravish just as hungry diners are prone to assemble in order to ravish (food placed in) a large wooden dish. We are surrounded from all sides by enemies laying in wait and we have been confronted by their terrifying plots that have been manufactured with craftiness, deceit and foul intent. To the extent that enemies have turned some from within our ranks who declare, 'I am indeed a Muslim,' whilst simultaneously waging war against Islam with his acts and his mannerisms, launching a large scale attack upon anything that brings benefit to Islam or honour to the Muslims. Who could say, 'I am indeed a Muslim,' and then be content with a judgement that

contravenes what God has revealed or support it or attribute unto it advancement and progress? Who could say, 'I am indeed a Muslim,' whilst flinging the commandments and prohibitions of God behind his back? Who could say, 'I am indeed a Muslim,' thereby not displaying a care in the world for the affairs of Islam and the state of the Muslims? Who could say, 'I am indeed a Muslim,' whilst the only thing he knows about Islam is the units of prayer he performs heedlessly, and the fast, when convenient, and the purificatory alms and pilgrimage, when the ego permits.

As for other than the aforementioned then it has nothing at all to do with Islam. They have likewise manufactured those from amongst us who believe that holding fast to the protocols of his religion under specific circumstances is a fault that must be removed and backwardness that should not be manifested under any circumstances in front of progressive masters! As for Islam, in the real sense, the complete religion, the supreme ethic and the comprehensive way which was ordained by the Lord of Heaven to regulate the works of man and his movements in every single aspect of his life, this he is ignorant of. Only some, or rather a few, truly embody this. As for the vast majority of, what is said to be, one billion Muslims, they are a people whose works lie in ruin at the hands of the enemy. They have no aspiration or concern other than the fancies of the world and the satiation of desires. They have no inclination or turning towards other than that. Most of them, or even all of them, will spend the night in a dissolute manner and by day in pursual of every hideous reprehensible deed. How on earth can this be considered Islam?

O nation of Muḥammad ﷺ, has not the time come for us to awaken from our sleep? Has not the time arrived for us to arise from our heedless state? It is upon us to realise what it means to be associated with the religion of God and our standing beneath the banner of '*There is no deity but God.*' For, by God, it is not a mere word uttered, rather it is a supreme oath of allegiance with God and a covenant of great importance with God. '*And the covenant of God brings accountability.*'² Verily it requires humility and submission to God, majesty and exalted is He. For indeed the Messenger of God ﷺ struggled earnestly for many years for its sake only for his people to openly refuse to utter it, and because of it they began to declare open enmity towards him ﷺ. If it was just a simple word uttered, they would have said it and the matter would have reached a swift conclusion. However, his people realised the true

² The Confederates: 15

extent of it's meaning and the reality and visionary intent such that it became difficult for them to say and acknowledge it. Verily it demands entering into the principle of submission and surrender to the One, the Unique, in everything that He commanded and warned us against. Yes, O Muslims, understand properly what you profess, for verily in *'There is no deity but God,'* lies hidden the secret behind our strength and the life-force of our greatness. Verily, it is perfect freedom from any type of submission and surrender to other than the Creator, glorified be He. This is why it is the fortress of God and the courtyard of his security, as related in the holy tradition, " *'There is no deity but God' is My fortress! So whoever says, 'There is no deity but God' has indeed entered My fortress. And whoever enters My fortress is rendered safe from My chastisement.*"

So, O people of *'There is no deity but God'* what have we done in the name of *'There is no deity but God'*? Why do we sink to the ground when we are summoned to give victory to the religion of God, to stand in defense of His law and raise aloft the standard of *'There is no deity but God'*? Are we content with the life of the world over the hereafter? *'The enjoyment of the world is but little compared to the hereafter.'*³

And I noticed that I have allowed my pen to get carried away and for the words to be prolonged, so now we proceed to gather that which pleases God concerning tremendous character traits that are obligatory for us to be characterised with; when with our Lord, His servants and with ourselves. Providence lies with God, alone, and from Him we seek extensions of guidance and divine assistance.

al-Fārūq Muḥammad Sālim
22nd Rabī' al-Awwal, 1403

³ Repentance: 38

*'And if any want the hereafter and strive for it with effort, as a believer,
their effort is appreciated.'*⁴

Our Traits

⁴ The Night Journey: 19

Chapter 1 With God

We are vigilant with regards to God in every situation, as if we are gazing upon Him. We are sincere unto Him with regards to what is openly manifest and that which remains hidden. We adopt a daily litany in (the recitation of) His mighty scripture, taking care to understand properly and contemplate (what is recited). We are eager to ensure that our hearts are present when praying to Him and that we only pray in congregation except under difficult circumstances. We humble ourselves in front of His greatness and we stand in prayer unto Him in the darkness and depths of the night, seeking His forgiveness and overjoyed due to intimate discourse with Him. *'For they used to do good before that. They used to sleep little at night and pray for forgiveness in the latter hours of the night.'*⁵

We immediately turn towards Him whenever an affliction occurs and we rely upon Him, alone, in all affairs. We remember Him and show gratitude towards Him in abundance and we wholeheartedly trust in His promise and His succour. We are profuse in our beseechment and earnest supplication unto Him in times of ease and adversity and we extol His sacred symbols and that which He has rendered inviolable. We are resilient for His sake in the face of a critic's criticism, observing His limits and true shyness in front of Him. *'Whoever observes true shyness in front of God then let him guard his head and what it contains, let him protect his stomach and what it retains and let him remember death and tribulation. Whoever longs after the hereafter forsakes the finery of the life of the world. Thus, whoever does that then he has indeed observed true shyness in front of God.'*⁶

⁵ The Scattering Winds: 16-18

⁶ This was related by Aḥmad, al-Tirmidhī, al-Ḥākim and al-Bayhaqī on the authority of Ibn Mas'ūd

Chapter 2 **With His Servants**

We love for every servant who believes in God that which we love for ourselves, showing compassion and mercy towards them. We respect the old and are compassionate towards the young. We embrace all extensions of goodness and respond in an appropriate manner. We overlook and pardon all wrong done unto us. We do not get angry for ourselves, rather we reserve our anger and good pleasure for God. We do not build up expectations of benevolence from anybody nor do we allow their transgression to prevent us from sincere counsel unto them and extending goodness unto them. We protect ourselves from them and behave cautiously with them without holding them in suspicion. We love for the sake of God and we hate for the sake of God and we rise above personal interests and desires. Our ultimate objective is eternity as opposed to that which is finite, we are not content with any material gain in exchange for Paradise. We call unto God with veracity, sincerity, kindness and gentleness, by engendering hope and fear, and in word and deed. We expend the utmost of effort in that regard and we do not allow any opportunity to call them unto their Lord and Protector to pass us by, we take full advantage of it, without desiring from them any recompense or gratitude. Our reward is upon none other than the one who created us. *'Say, "This is my way; I invite to God, based on evidence; I and whoever follows me. And glory be to God, I am not a polytheist."'*⁷

Every day we give as much as we are able in charity, regardless of how little. We research and discuss matters amongst ourselves and we avoid disputation with whoever does not desire to reach the path of truth, having, in all likelihood, been overcome by his passions. Thereby his sole aim is to aid his own opinion, regardless.

There are four types of people from our perspective;

i) An individual that believes with certitude, possesses absolute conviction coupled with contentment and begins to act seriously in accordance with the dictates of his faith and to realise his principles, exerting the utmost effort and ability. He is one of us and we are from him, supporting him and placing our hand in his hand as we sojourn along the path of the first battalion 'and

⁷ Joseph: 108

the latter part of this community will not be rectified except by means of that which rectified its pioneers.'

ii) An individual who knows the truth and believes in it but his belief is of one who is dormant and languid and who finds acting in accordance with it dictates burdensome and expending for its sake difficult. We thereby invite such a person unto action and seriousness for the sake of the principle of truth which he believed in and is well pleased with, making it clear to him that 'faith is not by virtue of wishes, in vain, rather it is that which settles in the heart and is substantiated by action.'⁸ If he comes out of his heedlessness and awakens from slumber then that is exactly what we want from him. Otherwise he is still our brother and we ask God for guidance for us and for him!

iii) An individual who is in constant doubt or flagrant denial, bereft of guidance. However he is not at war (with the Muslims) nor does he throw obstacles in the path of the prophetic call. Our relationship with such a person is based upon inviting unto God with wisdom and discourse in ways that are best. We proceed with the light of truth behind his deviant ideas and we turn them upside down in the midst of darkness in the hope that God will enlighten his mind and illuminate his heart with the light of guidance.

iv) An individual who does not suffice with disbelief and denial, but embarks on a campaign of enmity, endeavouring to bring down the standard of guidance and truth, biding his time to inflict harm upon Islam and its adherents. Our relationship with such a person is based upon war until he returns back to the affair of God or God ordains an affair that is inevitable. 'And God will surely grant victory to those that give victory to Him, for God is powerful, almighty.'⁹

Our allegiance is to whomever God has befriended and granted His protection, whilst we reserve enmity towards those who show enmity unto Him and whoever extends a helping hand or supports anyone of the enemies of God. We struggle against them with our words, deeds, wealth and lives. That is our path and our motif.

We are deeply concerned with the development of our sons, daughters, wives and families in accordance with the Qur'anic and prophetic ethic. We instill into their hearts love of God and His messenger alongside exaltation

⁸ This was related by al-Najjār and al-Daylamī in Musnad al-Firdaws on the authority of Anas b. Mālik. al-Suyūṭī was of the opinion that its chain of transmission is weak.

⁹ The Pilgrimage: 40

for them and whatever God exalts and we belittle whatever God belittles. We set good examples for them, as education and proper guidance when expressed are theoretical matters that are duly apprehended with the metaphysical eye, whereas education and proper guidance, when expressed by ones deeds, are self-evident realities that can be apprehended with the physical eyes. And those that gaze with the physical eye are greater in number, as well as the fact that that which the soul physically sees and witnesses exerts a greater and more profound effect upon it than that which it hears and imagines.

We derive benefit from any intelligent, wise or gifted person, seeking to extract the fruits of the gifts bestowed upon them. We do not, under any circumstances, belittle anything that God has created. 'It is sufficient evil for a person to belittle his Muslim brother.'¹⁰

¹⁰ This was related by Muslim, Aḥmad and al-Tirmidhī, who said it was a well-authenticated tradition.

Chapter 3 With Ourselves

We nurture, purify and cleanse ourselves, and never feel safe from it. *'By the self and its balance, and its inspiration with its depravity and its conscience: whoever purifies it is triumphant, and whoever corrupts it is a failure.'*¹¹

*Be aware of the self, never feel safe from its mischief,
For the self is greater than seventy demons in deceit.*

We do not go to excess in food and drink, nor do we sleep a lot. We allot a portion of our time for revision, we cultivate our knowledge, expand our understandings and give depth to our thoughts. We derive benefit from and seize the lessons, admonitions and experiences that we encounter throughout our lives. Each and every one of us manage effectively our income to ensure that we spend it in the appropriate place and on that which is deemed preferable. We are visionaries who prepare well for the future. We are not deluded by power, position, fame wealth, acclaim or success, nor do we despair or show discontent with poverty, difficulty, tribulation or failure. Our reliance is upon God alone, and in Him alone do we seek support. We acquaint ourselves with Him in adverse times, such that He acquaints Himself with us in times of ease. He suffices us and how beautiful a guardian He is!

O God, He who ordained good for good people and assisted them therein, ordain good for us and assist us therein. *“Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the hereafter; and keep us from the torment of the fire.”*¹²
*“Our Lord, forgive us our sins and our transgressions in our affairs; and set our feet firmly and help us against a disbelieving people.”*¹³

And may prayers and peace be upon the one of tremendous character, he beloved of the Creator and upon his family, companions and all of his followers.

¹¹ The Sun: 7-10

¹² The Cow: 201

¹³ The Family of Imrān: 147