

# أربعون حديثاً في الأخلاق

43 Prophetic Narrations on  
Developing the Character &  
Reforming the Soul with  
Commentary

Compiled by  
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Commentary by  
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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the ever Kind

قال النبي صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ:

"مَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ أَثْقَلُ فِي الْمِيزَانِ مِنْ حُسْنِ الْخُلُقِ" (سنن أبي داود)

The Prophet Muhammad PBUH mentioned:

*Nothing is weightier in the scale of a believer than good character*

(Sunan Abu Dawood)

## Introduction

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the ever Kind. All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the universe and Master of our fortunes, may peace and blessings be showered upon our beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, his companions and upon all who follow in their footsteps.

Islam is a complete religion. The rulings of Islam are not restricted to mere acts of worship to Almighty Allah. Rather, the holistic nature of the religion includes guidance that ranges from interactions with our fellow human beings, animals and even the environment to the building of human civilisation. The science of akhlaaq includes inculcating good character, personal development of the self and reformation of the soul. No doubt, they form key aspects in the lives of believers. A cursory glance at a few of the proverbs from the Holy Qur'an, authentic prophetic narrations and pearls from the pious predecessors will accurately provide a barometer into appreciating the importance of developing the character and reforming the soul.

Almighty Allah mentions in regard to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, 'And indeed, you (O Muhammad) are of a great moral character'. [Al-Qalam, 68:4]

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ mentioned, 'Nothing is weightier in the scale of the believer on the day of judgment than good character'. [Sunan Abu Dawood, 4799]

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ mentioned, 'Indeed a believer can reach the ranks of the one who fasts throughout the day and stands in night prayer by merely adopting good character'. [Sunan Abu Dawood, 4798]

In fact, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ once mentioned, 'Good character... increases the life of an individual (and is a means of blessings)'. [Musnad Ahmad, 25259]

The life of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is filled with numerous examples that portray exemplary character, from amongst them is the incident of the Bedouin who urinated in the mosque. The companions were ready to pounce on the Bedouin and rebuke him harshly for urinating in the sanctified area. However, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ held them back and instructed them to be calm and collected in their reaction. He taught them to treat him with love and compassion and whilst maintaining his composure, he instructed them to wash away the urine. He then uttered the words, 'Indeed, you have been sent as people who facilitate ease and not as those who create difficulty'. [Saheeh al-Bukhari, 6128]

The renowned scholar, Ibrahim ibn Habeeb ibn ash-Shaheed once advised his son thus; 'O son, go to the jurists and scholars and seek knowledge from them. Take from them their manners and their wisdom, for that is more beloved to me than you compiling a great number of Prophetic Narrations'. [al-Jami' of al-Khateeb al-Baghdadi, 1/80]

Imam ibn al-Qayyim mentioned, 'Religion is good character, whoever increases in good character has indeed increased in religion'. [Madarij as-Salikeen of Ibn al-Qayyim, 2/307]

Hafidh ibn Rajab al-Hanbali mentioned, '*Taqwa* (God consciousness) cannot be attained except with the adorning of oneself with good character'. [Jami' al-'Uloom wal-Hikam, 18]

The scholar, 'Abdurrahman al-Maydani has divided good character into four categories; interactions between the human being and the Creator, interactions between human beings with other humans, the interactions of an individual in regard to themselves, the interactions between the human being and non-humans. He then goes on to provide examples of each and indicates that the rights of the four different categories are mandatory to fulfil. He clarifies that it is possible for people to adorn themselves with such beautiful character that they fulfil that which is from the rights of Almighty Allah whilst simultaneously fulfilling the rights due towards oneself, other human beings and non-humans too. [al-Akhlaaq al-Islaamiyyah of 'Abdurrahman al-Maydani, 1/52]

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would consistently supplicate to Almighty Allah with, 'O Allah, guide me to the best of character, for indeed, nobody guides to the best of character except Yourself. O Allah, protect me from evil character, for nobody can remove bad character except Yourself'. [Saheeh Muslim, 1848]

The few statements above clearly indicate towards the emphasis Islam lays on upholding good character and removing the vices and bad character from our lives. Hence, the aim of this compilation was to present 43 Prophet Narrations in regard to matters pertaining to developing the character. This ranges from the rectification of the intentions and worshipping Almighty Allah to helping the community (Muslim or non-Muslim) and even caring for animals. This includes all facets of society; showing respect and reverence to the scholars and the elderly to displaying compassion towards the young. All of which have been discussed at length in light of the Quranic verses, authentic Prophetic Narrations and wisdoms from the pious scholars. The length of explanation adopted is of a consistent nature for each narration; neither a very lengthy explanation which could bore the reader, nor a very brief explanation which may result in ambiguity in understanding the texts. Furthermore, the length and choice of words is specifically chosen to facilitate teachers to use the book to deliver lessons, for scholars to employ in their lectures and speeches and for parents to use as short daily or even weekly study-circles in the homes. May Almighty Allah allow us all to take immense benefit from this book, the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, the Prophetic narrations and the wisdoms of the pious scholars.

For the completion of this compilation, I must express my gratitude and show an immense appreciation to many. First and foremost, I would like to thank the Creator, Almighty Allah, for granting me the ability to understand, comprehend and express the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, the Prophetic narrations and the wisdoms of the pious scholars. There is no doubt, without this blessing of the Almighty Allah, one would be incapable of completing the most minute of tasks. Furthermore, I would like to thank all the people who helped in the compilation of this work and I pray Almighty Allah makes this work a means of entry into Paradise without any reckoning for all of us. I want to express a special gratitude to my dear father and respected teacher, Mufti Abdussamad Ahmed. His teachings, spiritual upbringing, advice and guidance have always been instrumental for me in all my endeavours. I am grateful to him for selecting 43 beautiful Prophetic narrations relating to the science of *akhlaaq*. I also want to extend a special thanks to my dear friend Amir Isap who did a thorough edit of the whole book repeatedly, ensuring the book is an easy-read for the scholarly and laity alike. I pray Almighty Allah increase him and all others in knowledge and adorn us all with the best of character; the character of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

May Almighty Allah make the work a means of great success for all of us in both worlds, especially the ultimate success of entering Paradise without reckoning and gaining the pleasure of Almighty Allah. Aameen.

**Muawiyah ibn Mufti Abdussamad Ahmed**

## إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ

**Verily, actions are (rewarded) in accordance to the intentions**

*(Sahih al-Bukhari)*

This narration emphasises the importance of intentions, prior to the undertaking of any action; even if it be a day-to-day task, an individual should rectify and correct their intention, as this renders the action into one that gathers and accumulates reward.

If an individual performs an action without any intention, then they will not receive reward for that action, however, the mere formulation of a correct intention prior to that action can be the means of immense reward.

For example, if an individual sits to eat without making an intention, then they will neither be sinful for it, nor will they be rewarded for it. Nevertheless, if an individual sits to eat with the intention that they will perform virtuous and righteous deeds by means of the energy gained from this food, then this action of eating will become rewarding.

A further example is of the individual who dons a watch, if void of any intention, then neither will they acquire any reward, nor any sin. However, if an individual dons a watch with the intention that he will be able to use it as a means to assist him in becoming punctual (with his prayers etc.), then this wearing of the watch will become a means of gathering reward.

This narration of 'actions are in accordance to the intentions' is regarded as a primary narration amongst the scholars and is regarded as a very important narration, indicating to its importance. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal RA would indicate towards three narrations as being from amongst the foundations and roots of Islam; one of them being this very narration, famously recognised as 'the narration of intentions'.<sup>1</sup>

The great scholar, 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Mahdi RA would advise authors to initiate every chapter of their book with this very narration; thus serving as a reminder to

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<sup>1</sup> Kashf al-Mushkil

the individual and their audience to rectify their intentions even when reading and studying a book.<sup>2</sup>

Imam 'Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak رحمته الله mentioned, 'Any small action becomes magnified due to a good intention preceding it, whereas many great actions become insignificant (and devoid of reward) due to a lacking in the presence of a correct intention that precedes the action', this is from amongst the many statements of the scholars that highlight the necessity of rectifying the intention.<sup>3</sup>

This applies to even the smallest of acts of goodness, if an individual was to clean away dirt from the floor with the basis of their action being the protection of the creation of Allah and to save them from harm, then this action of removing the dirt will become very valuable and appreciated by Almighty Allah. Picking up litter may seem seriously insignificant, nevertheless, the purity of intention has rendered it as extremely valuable.

On the other hand, if an individual performs one of the most noble of deeds such as the performance of a two-unit prayer, however, this action of his is void of an intention altogether or his intention is corrupt (he intends to pray so he can showcase his piety to the people), then this great and noble act of prayer will not be a means of reward for him, rather, he may even receive sin for this action as he had a corrupt intention.

A great scholar by the name of Salim RA once received a letter of advice from the leader of the Muslims, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz RA. He wrote thus; 'Know that the help of Almighty Allah is apportioned in accordance to the intentions of the individual'.<sup>4</sup>

He is indicating that if an individual has high aspirations and lofty intentions, then Almighty Allah will help him fulfil those intentions. On the other hand, if an individual does not have high hopes or he fails to construct correct intentions then Almighty Allah will not assist him in his actions.

Imam Ghazaali RA highlights the importance of making an intention by explaining that the mere formulation of a correct intention is a means of reward, even if he does not complete the good action. However, if he fulfils the action (which he intended to do) then upon completion of that action he will receive ten rewards.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 'Umdah al-Qari

<sup>3</sup> Jami' al-'Ulum wal-Hikam

<sup>4</sup> Az-Zuhd by Imam Ahmad, narration number 1761.

<sup>5</sup> Ihya 'Ulum ad-Din.

The Prophet ﷺ mentions in a narration,

*Almighty Allah does not look at the external appearance of an individual, nor their wealth when deciding on the apportioning of rewards; rather He looks at the hearts (sincerity of intentions) and the deeds of an individual (and it's conformity with the Quran and Sunnah) when deciding to reward.*<sup>6</sup>

Scholars of the past would make considerable effort in an attempt to improve and perfect their intentions just as one works on improving other physical actions and skills.

A devotee by the name of Sahl RA was once asked his thoughts in regard to the most difficult of actions for an individual, he replied, 'The rectification of the intention (and making one's action purely for Allah), as the ego has no benefit in the rectification of intentions!'<sup>7</sup>

The scholar Abu Sulaymaan ad-Daraani RA mentions, 'When an individual continues to rectify their intentions, then Almighty Allah will remove the disease of bad thoughts (doubts) from their heart'.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, it is important to note that the real place for making the intention is the heart, one should constantly ponder upon the action he is performing and remind himself, 'For whom is this action of mine?'

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<sup>6</sup> Sahih Muslim

<sup>7</sup> Bustaan al-'Arifeen

<sup>8</sup> ar-Risaalah al-Qushayriyyah



## أَكْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِيمَانًا أَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقًا

**The most perfect of believers is the one with the best of manners** (*Sahih at-Tirmidhi*)

The rectification of one's manners is a pivotal aspect of Islam. One should display good manners to every individual; ranging from one's parents, one's husband or wife, one's children, and even towards non-Muslims. The manners of Islam are not limited to humans, rather they extend to even animals, plants, trees and every other creation of Almighty Allah. The Quran itself describes the conduct of the Prophet ﷺ,

*Verily, you are upon the best of manners.*<sup>9</sup>

The Companion Abu Dharr رضي الله عنه mentions that the Prophet ﷺ mentioned,

*Fear Allah in all places, whenever you commit a sin (or a mistake), follow it up with a good deed, the good deed will remove the harms of the bad deed, and treat people with good manners.*<sup>10</sup>

In this narration, the Prophet ﷺ has ordered the Muslims to treat all people with the best of manners. Just as the prophet ﷺ commanded us to perform the prayer, to give in charity, to perform the pilgrimage; he also ordered us to treat everyone with the best of manners.

In another narration the Prophet ﷺ emphasises this principle further, he does so whilst addressing the men in regard to their treatment of women. The Prophet ﷺ mentions,

*The best believer is the one who possesses the best of manners, and the best from them is the one that is the best to his women.*<sup>11</sup>

It is common practice today for many to be neglectful of the rights of the women folk, some are even harsh and cruel to them. The Prophet ﷺ clearly emphasised the importance of treating them fairly and with impeccable manners. The Prophet ﷺ mentions,

*Indeed, manners are distributed amongst the people just as the food and sustenance is distributed amongst the people.*<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Surah al-Qalam, chapter 68, verse 4.

<sup>10</sup> Sunan at-Tirmidhi, vol 3 page 235, Hadeeth number 2102.

<sup>11</sup> Sunan at-Tirmidhi, vol 2 page 360, Hadeeth number 1194.

The mother of the believers, 'Aa-ishah RA was once asked regarding the character of the Prophet ﷺ, she replied, 'His character was the Quran!'<sup>13</sup>

She intended a very profound meaning with this statement, such that if one were to read the Quran with deep understanding and contemplation whilst maintaining an appreciation for the meaning and message of the Quran, then one will comprehend that the Prophet ﷺ was the practical manifestation and embodiment of the teachings found within the Quran.

In another narration the Prophet ﷺ mentioned,

*An individual attains such a status by way of good conduct which a person would normally attain by means of consistent fasts and staying awake in prayer for nights on end!*<sup>14</sup>

The Prophet ﷺ himself outlines one of the major reasons for him being sent to this world, he says,

*I have been sent only to (improve and) perfect exemplary character.*<sup>15</sup>

In another narration the Prophet ﷺ mentions,

*The most beloved to me and the closest to me on the day of Judgment will be the person who has the best of manners.*<sup>16</sup>

This emphasis in regard to good character is not only emphasised by the Prophet ﷺ, but it was a consistent theme amongst his Companions and the scholars after them too, the fourth caliph, Ali عليه السلام would mention that good manners is the implementation of three principles:

1. Abstention from the prohibitions,
2. The seeking of only the lawful,
3. Spending upon one's family.<sup>17</sup>

The great scholar, 'Abdullah bin Mubarak عليه السلام defined good manners as the meeting of people with a cheerful face, spending on that which is a means of goodness and to avoid causing harm (to others).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Musnad Ahmad

<sup>13</sup> Saheeh Muslim

<sup>14</sup> Sunan abu Dawood

<sup>15</sup> Musad Ahmad

<sup>16</sup> Sunan at-Tirmidhi, vol 3 page 247, Hadeeth number 2137.

<sup>17</sup> Ihya 'Uloom ad-Deen

<sup>18</sup> Jami' al-'Uloom wal-Hikam

Imam Ahmad RA used to define good manners as the abstention from anger and hatred.<sup>19</sup>

Hafidh Ibn al-Qayyim RA mentions that the Prophet ﷺ possessed two great qualities, god-consciousness and good manners. He then explains that god-consciousness perfects the relationship between the slave and Almighty Allah, hence a person of god-consciousness is loved by Almighty Allah, whereas good manners perfects the relationship between an individual and other people, hence a person of good manners is loved by the people.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Jami' al-'Uloom wal-Hikam

<sup>20</sup> al-Adab ash-Shar'iyah

## الطُّهُورُ شَطْرُ الْإِيمَانِ

### Purification is half of faith

(Sahih Muslim)

Islam provides guidance regarding all aspects relevant to an individual's life, one of these features includes the purity of an individual, purity consists of both; the esoteric purity (i.e. internal purity such that it is only understood by the knowledgeable) along with exoteric purity (i.e. external purity such that it is easily understood by the laity).

The esoteric purity includes the correcting of one's beliefs and working on removing evil traits, the likes of jealousy, hypocrisy, hatred, etc.<sup>21</sup>

Almighty Allah mentions in the Quran, 'Collect charity from them; for it will purify them.'<sup>22</sup> Commentators of the exegesis of this verse mention that the collecting of charity will be a means of purifying them from their sins.<sup>23</sup>

The Companion, Abdullah ibn Umar رضي الله عنه mentions, 'Once the ruling of charity was made, Almighty Allah made charity a cause of purifying one's wealth.'<sup>24</sup>

It is of imperative importance that a person makes every effort to purify their esoteric being whilst simultaneously working on the exoteric body too, it is only after the acquisition of inner purification that an individual will begin to appreciate and experience the sweetness of worship and faith.

The third Caliph, Uthman رضي الله عنه makes mentions, 'If our hearts were purified, then we would never be negligent and deficient in the reading of the Quran (rather, we would strive to read more of the Quran as the sweetness of the Qur'an would penetrate our hearts).'<sup>25</sup>

Almighty Allah mentions in the Quran that he loves those that adopt a life of purity, Abul 'Aaliyah RA mentions in the exegesis of this verse, 'The quality of purity in water is desired, but Allah loves those that purify themselves from sins.'<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Mirqát al-Mafátih

<sup>22</sup> Qurán, Surah at-Tawbah, 103

<sup>23</sup> ad-Dur al-Manthúr

<sup>24</sup> Sahih al-Bukhari

<sup>25</sup> Igaathah al-Lahfaan

<sup>26</sup> Tafsir ibn Kathir

The purification of the exoteric qualities includes the cleanliness and purification of one's clothes and body from impurities, the performance of ablution prior to the prayer etc.

In one Prophetic narration the Prophet ﷺ has mentioned, 'Wear white clothes as it is cleaner and superior.'<sup>27</sup>

Commentators mention that white clothing is the more superior clothing, it was the colour the angels would wear when they used to come to this world and greet with the noble prophets, the Prophet ﷺ himself would prefer donning white clothing and would encourage others upon the wearing of white.<sup>28</sup>

The great scholar ibn al-Qayyim mentions, 'If an individual meets their Lord in the hereafter in a state of purity, without any dirt, then they will directly enter into Paradise. However, if an individual meets their Lord with permanent impurities (of disbelief), then they will never enter Paradise, and if a person meets their Lord with temporary impurities (of sin), then they will be cleansed first and then entered into paradise with a delay.'<sup>29</sup>

Scholars have mentioned many benefits of purity; these include:

1. Gaining the pleasure of Allah,
2. A higher degree of perfection in a number of acts of worship,
3. Strengthening of the body,
4. Improvement of hygiene standards within the society.

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<sup>27</sup> Sunan at-Tirmidhi, vol 4 page 103, Hadeeth number 3014.

<sup>28</sup> 'Umdaul Qari

<sup>29</sup> Igaathah al-Lahfaan