

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Allāh Ta'āla sa Sharam Kīiyen

THE PATH
TO PARADISE

Allāh Ta'āla se Sharam Kījiye

THE PATH TO PARADISE

Principles of Good Character &
Appreciation of the Hereafter

MUḤAMMAD SALMĀN MANṢŪRPŪRĪ

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CONTENTS

AUTHOR'S PREFACE	29
MODESTY BEFORE ALLAH ﷻ	31
Importance of Modesty before Allah ﷻ in Islam	31
Who Should be Modest?	32
How to Inculcate Modesty before Allah ﷻ?	32
CHAPTER 1	
PROTECTING THE HEAD	33
1. Mental Well-Being	33
<i>Shunning Polytheism</i>	33
<i>Removing a Misconception</i>	34
<i>A Covert Form of Polytheism</i>	34
2. Shunning Arrogance	34
3. Protecting the Tongue	35
<i>Mischief Caused by the Tongue</i>	35
4. Telling Lies	36
<i>Truth Ensures Deliverance</i>	36
<i>Deception as a Lie</i>	37
<i>Advice to Businessmen</i>	37
<i>False Appreciation</i>	38
<i>Caution in Appreciation</i>	39
5. Backbiting—A Brazen Act	40
<i>Backbiting Amounts to Eating the Flesh of One's Dead brother.</i>	40
<i>What Constitutes Backbiting?</i>	40
<i>Speaking Ill of One in His Presence is Also a Sin</i>	41
<i>Backbiting Ulama</i>	42
<i>Carrying Tales</i>	42
<i>How to Respond to Backbiting and the Carrying of Tales</i>	43
<i>Sayings and Anecdotes of Some Masters</i>	43
<i>An [Illustrative] Incident</i>	44
6. Using Filthy and Indecent Language	44
<i>Ensuring Self-Respect</i>	45

7. Protecting the Eye	46
<i>Some Hadith [on the Matter]</i>	47
<i>The Consequence of Ogling</i>	47
<i>Commands for Segregation</i>	47
<i>The Prohibition of Transparent and Tight-Fitting Clothing</i>	50
<i>Do Not Undress, Even in Private, Without a Valid Reason</i>	50
<i>A Husband and Wife are to Act Modestly</i>	51
<i>A Husband and Wife are Not to Divulge their Sex Life</i>	52
<i>Prying Into Others' Houses</i>	52
8. Protecting the Ear	52
<i>Hadith Forbidding Songs</i>	53
<i>The Stance of the Ulama and Jurists on Singing and Music</i>	53
<i>The Prevailing Qawwali is Forbidden</i>	53
<i>Sacrilege of Ramadan</i>	54
<i>Listening to Others' Secrets</i>	54
<i>An Incident Full of Lessons</i>	54
9. Shaving the Beard is a Brazen Act	55
<i>Soul Searching</i>	56
<i>Western Hairstyles</i>	57
<i>Women's Hair</i>	57

CHAPTER 2

PROTECTING THE STOMACH	59
1. Shunning Unlawful Income	59
<i>Hadith [on the Matter]</i>	59
<i>Good News for Businessmen</i>	60
<i>How to Develop the Urge to Shun Unlawful Income</i>	60
<i>The Rich Will be Detained</i>	61
2. Unlawful Means of Income	61
<i>Usury</i>	61
<i>Bank Interest is Definitely Usury</i>	62
<i>Usury and the Abode of War</i>	63
<i>Gambling</i>	65
<i>Lottery</i>	65
<i>Insurance</i>	66
<i>Usurping Someone's Money or Property</i>	66
<i>Taking a Bribe</i>	67
<i>Unlawful Hoarding</i>	68
3. Protecting the Income of Madrasahs and Community Institutions	69
<i>The Pretext of Ownership is only Permissible in Exceptional Cases</i>	69

<i>Mawlana Binnorī's Stance</i>	70
<i>Collecting Donations on Commission</i>	71
<i>Leading Tarāwih. Prayers on Wages</i>	72
<i>What if One is Unable to Find a Sincere ḥāfiẓ?</i>	73
<i>Wages for Other Religious Services and for Reciting the Qur'ān</i>	73
<i>Wages for Collusion in a Sin</i>	74
4. Protecting the Private Parts of the Body	74
<i>Man's Most Vulnerable Spot</i>	74
<i>A Fornicator's Supplication is Not Accepted</i>	74
<i>A Fornicator is in the Pit of the Hellfire</i>	75
<i>A Fornicator will Exude an Odious Smell</i>	75
<i>Fornication Incurs Divine Punishment</i>	76
<i>Fornication Causes Poverty and Starvation</i>	76
5. The Menace of Homosexuality	76
<i>Keeping Company with Young Beautiful Boys May Cause Mischief</i>	77
<i>Reward for Maintaining Chastity</i>	78
<i>A Useful Strategy for Shunning Unlawful Sex</i>	78
<i>A Sign of the Approaching Last Day</i>	78
CHAPTER 3	
PROTECTING THE HEART	81
1. The Essence of Spiritual Disease	81
<i>Ailments of the Heart</i>	81
<i>Love of this World</i>	82
<i>Greed</i>	82
<i>The Effective Cure for Greed</i>	83
2. Miserliness	84
<i>The Severe Punishment for Zakat Defaulters</i>	84
3. Generosity	86
<i>The Prophet's Generosity ﷺ</i>	86
<i>The Prophet ﷺ Giving His Sheet to a Companion</i>	87
<i>The Bedouins' Misconduct and the Prophet's Forbearance</i>	87
<i>Taking a Loan to Help a Beggar</i>	88
<i>80 Goats for a Single Lash</i>	88
<i>Abu Bakr's Generosity ﷺ</i>	88
<i>'Umar's Generosity ﷺ</i>	89
<i>'Uthmān's Generosity ﷺ</i>	89
<i>Ali's Generosity ﷺ</i>	89
<i>Ṭalḥah's Generosity ﷺ</i>	90
<i>Layth ibn Sa'd's Generosity</i>	90

4.	Hospitality towards Guests	90
	<i>The Hospitality of the Prophet ﷺ and His Companions ﷺ</i>	91
	<i>The Rights of a Guest</i>	91
	<i>The Obligations of a Guest</i>	92
5.	Hostility and Enmity	93
	<i>Boycotting Someone</i>	94
	<i>Some Evils of Hostility</i>	95
	<i>Root Cause of Hostility</i>	95
	<i>What to Do When Angry</i>	96
	<i>The Strongest Person</i>	96
	<i>Reward for Controlling Anger</i>	97
	<i>An Incident Related to Zayn al-‘Abidīn</i>	97
	<i>When to Express Anger</i>	97
	<i>Severing Ties is Allowed on Religious Grounds</i>	98
	<i>An Effective Strategy for Good Relations</i>	99
6.	How to Purify the Heart	100
7.	Curing the Ailments of the Heart	101
	<i>Being Constant in the Remembrance of Allah ﷻ</i>	101
	<i>Profusely Seeking Allah’s Forgiveness Keeps the Heart Clean</i>	101
	<i>Keeping Company with the Pious</i>	101
	<i>Association with a Perfect Spiritual Master</i>	102
	<i>How to Recognise a Perfect Spiritual Master</i>	102
	<i>Ultimate Objective of Spiritual Exercises</i>	103
	<i>Beware of Cheats!</i>	103
CHAPTER 4		
REMEMBERING DEATH		105
1.	The Command to Remember Death	105
	<i>Sayings and Observations of Masters on Death</i>	106
	<i>Advantages of Remembering Death</i>	107
	<i>Disadvantages of Forgetting Death</i>	107
	<i>Visiting Graves as a Way of Remembering Death</i>	108
	<i>Bathing the Dead and Joining Funerals</i>	108
2.	The Truth about Death	109
	<i>The Agony of Death</i>	110
	<i>Satan’s Last Attempt at One’s Death</i>	111
3.	May Allah ﷻ Make Good Our End	111
	<i>Fear of an Evil End</i>	111
	<i>Punishment for Cursing Abū Bakr and ‘Umar</i>	112
	<i>Drinking can Lead to Destruction</i>	112

<i>Consequences of Excessive Worldliness</i>	112
<i>Consequence of Torturing Those Devoted To Allah</i> ﷺ	113
<i>The Horrible End of the Assassin of Ḥusayn</i> ﷺ	113
<i>The Horrible End of the Slanderer of Sa'īd ibn Zayd</i> ﷺ	113
<i>The Horrible End of the Slanderer of Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ</i> ﷺ	114
<i>Sa'd's Curse upon those who Abuse the Companions</i> ﷺ	114
4. A Successful End is the Supreme Achievement	115
<i>The Envidable Death</i>	115
<i>The Prophet's Death</i> ﷺ	116
<i>Commander of the Believers Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq's Death</i> ﷺ	119
<i>Commander of the Believers Umar's Sagacity at His Death</i> ﷺ	120
<i>Commander of the Believers 'Uthmān's Assassination</i> ﷺ	122
<i>'Alī's Mental Agility at the Time of His Assassination</i> ﷺ	122
<i>The Death of Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ</i> ﷺ	124
<i>The Outlook of Bilāl Ḥabashī</i> ﷺ <i>at His Death</i>	124
<i>'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr's Tragic Assassination</i> ﷺ	124
<i>The Condition of Salmān Fārsī</i> ﷺ <i>at His Death</i>	126
<i>'Ubādah's Engagement with Hadith until His Last Breath</i> ﷺ	126
5. Some Rulings Pertaining to Death	127
<i>Recommended Actions Prior to Actual Death</i>	127
<i>Early Burial</i>	127
<i>The Reward for Joining the Funeral Prayer and Burial</i>	127
<i>How to Perform the Burial</i>	128
<i>Making Structures on Graves</i>	129
<i>Visiting the Graves of Saints</i>	129
CHAPTER 5	
THE EVENTS OF THE GRAVE	131
1. Interrogation inside the Grave	131
<i>The Initial Questioning</i>	131
<i>The Bearer of Glad Tidings and a Warner</i>	133
<i>The Plight of Unbelievers and Hypocrites inside the Grave</i>	133
<i>What will One Take to His Grave?</i>	135
2. The State of the Body	135
<i>Most People will Decompose in the Grave</i>	135
<i>The Fortunate Ones whose Bodies Do Not Decompose</i>	136
<i>Account of the Martyrs of the Battle of Uh.ud</i>	136
<i>Fragrance and Light at Graves</i>	137
<i>Glad Tidings for a Muezzin</i>	137
3. Comfort and Punishment inside the Graves	137

<i>Protection against Punishment in the Grave</i>	138
<i>Animals Hear the Punishment in the Graves</i>	139
<i>Those Not Interrogated in the Grave</i>	139
<i>Glad Tidings for Those Dying on Friday and in Ramadan</i>	140
<i>How to Attain Deliverance from the Punishment in the Grave</i>	140
<i>Common Causes of Punishment in the Grave</i>	141
<i>An Illuminating Dream of the Prophet ﷺ</i>	141
<i>Punishment for Dressing Up for Unlawful Acts</i>	142
<i>Punishment for Praying after the Appointed Hours</i>	142
<i>Punishment for Carrying Tales</i>	142
<i>Punishment for Indulging in Fornication</i>	143
<i>Punishment for Indulging in Sodomy</i>	143
<i>Punishment for Embezzling Public Money</i>	143
<i>People Observing the Punishment inside the Grave</i>	143
<i>What Will Prove Beneficial for One in His Grave?</i>	144
<i>Crediting a Dead Person with Reward</i>	144

CHAPTER 6

THE LAST DAY	147
1. The Major Events before the Last Day	147
<i>When Will the Last Day Occur?</i>	147
<i>Ten Signs of the Approaching Last Day</i>	148
1. <i>The Smoke</i>	148
2. <i>The Dajjāl</i>	148
3. <i>The Beast of the Earth</i>	149
4. <i>The Sun Rising from the West</i>	149
5. <i>Appearance of the Prophet 'Īsā ﷺ</i>	149
6. <i>The Emergence of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj</i>	149
7–9. <i>Three Landslides</i>	150
10. <i>Fire in Yemen</i>	150
<i>The Order of these Signs</i>	150
<i>The Assembly of People in Syria</i>	151
<i>Who will Assemble in Syria?</i>	151
<i>The Blowing of the Trumpet</i>	152
2. Resurrection and Gathering in the Grand Assembly	153
<i>The Second Blowing of the Trumpet</i>	153
<i>A Grand Spectacle of Allah's Greatness and Glory</i>	154
<i>The Grand Assembly</i>	154
<i>The Earth Will Be Levelled</i>	155
<i>Honour and Disgrace in the Grand Assembly</i>	156

	<i>The First Stage will be Clothing</i>	157
	<i>People Sweating in the Grand Assembly</i>	157
	<i>The Great Length of the Grand Assembly</i>	158
3.	The Kawthar Spring	158
	<i>The Description of Kawthar</i>	158
	<i>How will People be Identified at the Spring?</i>	159
	<i>The First to Reach the Spring of Kawthar</i>	159
	<i>Those Who Failed to Do Good or Indulged in Innovations will be Driven Away from the Spring</i>	159
	<i>A Clarification</i>	160
4.	The Prophet Muhammad's Grand Intercession ﷺ	161
	<i>Kinds of Intercession</i>	162
5.	Being Brought to Account	163
	<i>The First Matter to be Questioned</i>	164
	<i>Accountability Regarding the Prayer</i>	164
	<i>Compensation for Injustice and Denial of Rights</i>	165
	<i>Humiliation for Those Who Betrayed Their Pledges</i>	166
6.	Balance of Deeds	166
	<i>How Will Deeds Be Weighed?</i>	166
	<i>Whose Deeds Will Be Weighed?</i>	167
	<i>How Will Good Deeds Weigh Heavy?</i>	168
	<i>Why the Companions' Deeds Have the Highest Credit</i>	168
	<i>Some Noteworthy Acts which Attract Significant Credit</i>	169
7.	A Spectacle of Allah's Mercy	170
	<i>The Vast Mercy of Allah</i> ﷻ	170
	<i>In the Shade of the Divine Throne</i>	170
	<i>Everyone will be in the Company of their Beloved</i>	171
	<i>The Honour of a h.āfiz.</i>	172
	<i>How the Parents and Family of a h.āfiz. will be Honoured</i>	172
	<i>Pulpits of Light in the Grand Assembly</i>	173
	<i>Four Ordinary Questions</i>	173
CHAPTER 7		
TOWARDS THE FINAL ABODE		
		175
1.	Spectacle of Hell in the Grand Assembly	175
	<i>The Polytheists and their False Gods will be Hurlled into Hell</i>	175
	<i>The Fate of the Jews and Christians</i>	175
	<i>The Distinction between the Believers and the Hypocrites</i>	176
2.	Light in the Darkness of the Grand Assembly	177
	<i>What Will Increase One's Light?</i>	178

	<i>The Şirāt</i>	178
	<i>The Second Stage of Intercession</i>	179
	<i>Checking of Integrity and Mercy at the Şirāt</i>	179
	<i>The Glory of the Believers while Crossing the Şirāt</i>	180
3.	<i>Towards Paradise and the Settlement of Affairs</i>	180
	<i>The Prophet's Recommendation for the Opening of the Door to Paradise</i>	180
	<i>Account of the Fortunate Ones who will be the First to Enter Paradise</i>	181
	<i>A Grand Spectacle of Entry into Paradise</i>	182
	<i>The Vastness of Paradise</i>	183
	<i>A Brief Qur'ānic Description of the Joys of Paradise</i>	183
	<i>The Account of Paradise in the Hadith</i>	184
4.	<i>The Description of Hell</i>	185
	<i>A Brief Qur'ānic Description of the Horrors of Hell</i>	185
	<i>Hadith Describing the Horrors of Hell</i>	186
5.	<i>The Later Stages of Intercession and the Final Abode</i>	187
	<i>The Prophet's Intercession for the Release of Sinful Believers from Hell</i>	187
	<i>The Dwellers of Paradise Interceding for their Sinful Brethren</i>	188
	<i>Those Specially Released by Allah ﷻ</i>	189
	<i>Account of the Last Person to Enter Paradise</i>	189
	<i>The End of Death</i>	190
6.	<i>Final Exhortation: Take Little from the World</i>	191
	<i>Directive for Shunning Worldly Adoration</i>	191
	<i>Parables for Worldly Adoration</i>	191
	<i>The World in the Sight of Allah ﷻ</i>	192
	<i>Be Not Overawed by the Worldly Success of the Unbelievers</i>	193
	<i>One Should Not Engage Himself Much in this World</i>	193
	<i>How Much Attention Should be Paid to this World</i>	194
	<i>There is No Abiding Peace in this World</i>	195
	<i>This World is a Prison for a Believer</i>	196
	<i>Worldliness is the Root Cause of All Evil</i>	196
	<i>Worldliness is Injurious to One's Prospects in the Hereafter</i>	196
	<i>Allah ﷻ Does Not Love Worldly-Minded People</i>	197
	<i>Shunning Worldliness Brings Peace of Mind</i>	197
	<i>Contentment: an Abiding Asset</i>	198
	<i>The Order to Be Like a Traveller in this World</i>	198
	<i>The Prophet's Glorious Example</i>	199
	<i>On Wasting One's Time and Energy</i>	199
	<i>Be Ever Prepared</i>	200
	<i>The Path to Paradise</i>	200

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful and Compassionate, I bear witness that there is no god but Allah alone, without partners, and that Muhammad is his servant and messenger. I invoke the blessings of Allah ﷺ and peace upon his final Messenger, Muhammad, his family and Companions, along with all those who follow them in goodness till the Day of Rising.

Among the narrations that Tirmidhī transmits in his collection is a Hadith from ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd ؓ who relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Be modest before Allah, as is His due.” The Companions then said: “O Messenger of Allah, we are modest and praise Allah.” He said: “This is not so. Modesty before Allah means protecting the head and all that is in it; and protecting the stomach and all that is inside it. Furthermore, you should remember death and decay, for one whose eyes are set on the Hereafter keeps away from worldliness. One who accomplishes all of this is one who is modest before Allah the Exalted.”

The author of this book has used this above Hadith as the basis of the work contained herein. The Urdu title is *Allāh Ta’āla se Sharam Kījiye*, which gives the impression that the work is solely based on modesty (*sharam*), which is not the case; rather, the work focuses on many aspects of the life of a Muslim, with worship at the core of our existence in this transient worldly life. The author explains that if we follow the guidelines in this work then we will be upon the path of Paradise, which is how this work culminates.

The author Shaykh Muḥammad Salmān Maṣūrpūrī is the grandson of the shaykh of my late dear beloved father, with whom he studied Bukhārī with full permission to transmit (*ijāzah*), namely Sayyid Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madanī (may Allah have mercy on them both). I can still remember the day when the author came to visit my father. At that time my father was gravely ill, fragile and weak. However, upon hearing that his guest was about to

arrive, he somehow mustered the strength to put on some fresh clothes; and when the door bell rang, he went to receive him at the door himself. Upon looking at him my father said: “You are the grandson of my shaykh, so I welcome you.” They then spoke at length about his student life and his beloved shaykh. My dear beloved father spoke as if it was just yesterday he had graduated; and he seemed to be loving every moment of his student life once again as he recalled it. At that moment, I could see all that he was, in his finery, and that what had made him was his teachers and the love they had for their students; hence he would often supplicate to Allah ﷻ for them. I pray that Allah ﷻ forgive all his teachers and elevate their status in Jannah. I pray that Allah ﷻ enter my father into Jannah with the Prophet ﷺ, along with this family and his dear beloved teachers for whom he had so much love and affection.

When the learned author, Shaykh Muḥammad Salmān Maṣṣūrpūrī, discovered that I was a publisher, he gave me his book *Allāh Ta’āla se Sharam Kījiye* and requested that we translate it into English. I was overjoyed by his considering us worthy of such a task. Now this labour of love is before you.

Firstly, I would like to thank Dr Abdur Raheem Kidwai for translating the initial work; and thereafter I would like to thank our dear beloved friend Andrew Booso for his meticulous editing, and for shaping the work as it stands before us.

I pray that Allah ﷻ reward them for their hardwork and accept from us our efforts to uplift the *dīn* and bring the Ummah back to the path of Paradise. *Āmīn*.

YAHYA BATHA

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

I begin in the name of Allah, Compassionate and Merciful, to whom all praise belongs. In addition, I ask God to send his peace and blessings upon His Chosen One, our Master and the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad.

It is with great pleasure that I compose this Foreword in the aftermath of having completed the editing of the English translation of the Urdu *Allāh Ta'āla se Sharam Kijiye*, which has been titled *The Path to Paradise: Principles of Good Character & Appreciation of the Hereafter*, by a contemporary cleric, Muḥammad Salmān Maṣṣūrpūrī. Not only is this manual an inspiration in itself, but the lineage of the author—back to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ through the author's maternal grandfather, Sayyid Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madanī (1879–1957)—serves as a source of spiritual renewal.

Sayyid Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madanī led the life of a prominent traditional religious teacher, as well as being fully involved in the social challenges of his time in India. This commitment to the formal religious life, in its most widespread sense, with a view to engaging and attempting to improve social norms, can be here seen in this work of Madanī's grandson, who himself has conducted a clerical life in dedication to the teaching of the religious sciences in the traditional seminary setting, as well as being involved in publications for the general public (as detailed in the later Foreword by Muhammad Saleem Dhorat). This work serves as the author's culminating contribution to imparting religious instruction to the society at large, with a view to correcting people's conduct and, in so doing, accomplishing the requirements of calling to a Godly-life.

In the original Urdu title, there is an emphasis on *sharam*, which is understood as *ḥayā'* in Arabic (a term that is comprehensively, yet succinctly, explained in the later Foreword by Shaykh Saleem Dhorat, and thus spares me the need to recount the difficulties concerning its definition). Now

the author’s choice of this key word for his title is understandable because the work is an elaboration of a famous Hadith, narrated by Tirmidhī, and graded by the latter as “*gharīb*” or “isolated”¹ (transmitted by a single transmitter at any one stage of the *isnād* or chain of transmission²), in which the Prophet (may the peace and blessings of God be upon him) instructs in the beginning of the narration, “Be modest [*istahyū*] before Allah, as is His due.” Yet one will see that this work is far more comprehensive than a simple composition about modesty in Islam. In fact, it is an inclusive manual, touching on a vast array of matters relating to good character—both spiritual and practical (with a view to imbibing pious acts with a healthy spiritual disposition)—and an extensive treatment of the signs before the Day of Judgement, the events of the *barzakh* world between life and resurrection, and then an elaborate treatment of the fates of people in the Hereafter, culminating with a description of Heaven and Hell. Hence it was decided that any English title would have to attempt to convey the broad sweep of topics covered in the text, which would have been ill-served by recourse to a simple “Modesty before God” title.

An endearing feature of the text, and one that makes it worthy of presentation to the English-speaking audience, is its rich presentation of Prophetic narrations for almost all of its chosen subjects, as well as the inclusion of profound scholarly gems from some of the greatest Islamic scholars of history, including most prominently Ghazālī, Kāsānī, Qurṭubī, Ibn Ḥajar and Ibn ‘Abidīn, which are rarely seen in English works on Islam. Yet despite the work being dominantly traditionalist and classical in relation to the primary texts and their essential understanding, there are references to contemporary scholars, such as Qāsim Nanotawī and Ashraf ‘Alī Thānawī, especially in relation to some topics that need a current contextualisation (such as understanding the legal rulings on modern usury and insurance; or paying a *ḥāfiẓ* to lead *tarāwīḥ*; or the rights of a guest; or the qualifications of a legitimate spiritual master; or issues concerning the segregation of the

1 See Jonathan A.C. Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad’s Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford, UK: Oneworld, 2009), 94–5.

2 See Mohammed Akram Nadwi, *Mabādī’ fī uṣūl al-ḥadīth wa’l-isnād* (Oxford and London, UK: Ma’had as-Salām, 2015), 19–20; Muhammad Mustafa Azami, *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature* (Plainfield, IN, USA: American Trust Publications, 1992, reprint), 43; and Muhammad Mansur Ali, “Al-Tirmidhi and the role of the *Isnad* in his *Sunan*” (Ph.D. diss., University of Manchester, 2009), 29–30.

sexes). This composite nature, between the traditional and the contemporary, makes the work speak to a modern audience, without being a mere recounting of classical citations devoid of appreciating the context which it addresses.

While the work is entirely Maṣūpūrī's, it has been abridged by myself from the original translation by Abdur Raheem Kidwai, with a view to making the work of greater benefit by having a more terse text. Therefore, relatively repetitive narrations, stories containing morals that had already been sufficiently conveyed and any recurring analysis were deemed surplus to our goal, and were, hopefully, painlessly removed, whilst retaining the essential message and narrations of the book's many arguments.

This text is essential, without being basic or necessarily one's first English book of Islamic ethics—maybe it should be one's next text after something like 'Abdallāh ibn 'Alawī al-Ḥaddād's *The Book of Assistance*, trans. Mostafa al-Badawi (London, UK: Quilliam, 1998, reprint); and it serves as an excellent stepping stone towards more extensive texts on Islamic ethics and remembrance of the Afterlife, such as 'Abdallāh ibn 'Alawī al-Ḥaddād's *Counsels of Religion*, trans. Mostafa al-Badawi (Louisville, KY, USA: Fons Vitae, 2010), and then Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's *al-Arba'ūn fī uṣūl ad-dīn* (soon to be published in an English translation by Turath Publishing), followed by al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' ulūm ad-dīn*. Of course, all of the aforementioned works, including the one presented herein, should benefit from having the Hadith included therein tested by the scholars of Hadith.³ Even where such ethical works use “weak” Hadith on occasion, they rarely introduce a new concept into the faith, so a more “authentic” narration on the very same subject can usually be found with ease, from the Six Major Books of Hadith (Bukhārī, Muslim, Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, Nasā'ī and Ibn Mājah) or, more accessibly, from the *Riyāḍ aṣ-ṣāliḥīn* of an-Nawawī.⁴

3 For a list of recommended editions of works that deal with “source-critique and exposition of the rank of the hadiths, distinguishing the *ṣāliḥ* from the faulty”—and any such list cannot avoid contentiousness, regardless of its overall benefit, as is the case in this example—see Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Approaching the Sunnah: Comprehension & Controversy* (Herndon, VA, USA and London, UK: IIIT, 2006), trans. Jamil Qureshi, 56–61.

4 Any discussion around “weak” and “authentic” narrations has to consider the vast differences in rankings attributed to the same narration by authorities of equal stature. A case in point is the Hadith narrated by Tirmidhī, “I am the city of knowledge and 'Alī is its gate.” Mullā 'Alī Qārī has noted how this latter narration has been described as “unacceptable” (*munkar*) by Bukhārī and

In conclusion, after thanking and praising God for all matters, and crediting Him with all success, I wish to offer my deep appreciation to Yahya Batha of Turath Publishing for involving me in this uplifting and noble project and supporting me through its progress. May God bless everyone involved in this effort, and make it a source of good for us and the people in this world and the next.

ANDREW BOOSO
20 August 2015

Tirmidhī, “a baseless lie” (*kidhb*) by Ibn Maʿīn, Abū Ḥātim, Ibn al-Jawzī and Dhahabī, and “uncorroborated” (*ghayr thābit*) by Dāraqūṭnī; yet Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī and Abū Saʿīd al-ʿAlāʾī declared it to be “well authenticated” (*ḥasan*), and Ḥākim called it “rigorously authenticated” (*ṣaḥīḥ*). See Ahmad ibn Naqīb al-Misri, *Reliance of the Traveller: A Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law*, trans. Nuh Ha Mim Keller (Evanston, IL, USA: Sunna Books, 1994, revised edition), 954–5. Therefore, the wise student treats the individual judgement of a Hadith expert with caution until surveying the pronouncements of various experts on the same narration. For a comprehensive exposition in English of the complexities underlying the ranking and analysis of Hadith, in addition to works cited earlier in these footnotes, see Zafar Aḥmad al-ʿUthmānī, *Qawāʾid fī ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth: Underlying Principles of the Science of Ḥadīth*, trans. Abdassamad Clarke & Aisha Bewley (London, UK: Turath Publishing, 2014).

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

FOREWORD

SHAYKH MUHAMMAD SALEEM DHORAT

Ḥayā' is an Arabic word that cannot be satisfactorily translated into any other language. Commonly, we find *ḥayā'* translated simply as *modesty*, an outward characteristic generally confined to certain shameless actions, such as the code of dress an individual adopts. This deficient interpretation fails to do justice to the profound concept of *ḥayā'*. In reality, *ḥayā'* is a character trait that causes one to abandon all that is shameless and repugnant, and prevents one from neglecting the rights of every rightful owner.

Ḥayā' holds a central place in Islām and is one of its salient features. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ stated:

إِنَّ لِكُلِّ دِينٍ خُلُقًا وَخُلُقُ الْإِسْلَامِ الْحَيَاءُ

Every religion has a special characteristic, and the special characteristic of Islam is *ḥayā'*.⁵

Ḥayā' is the cornerstone of a Muslim's character and regulates how he conducts himself in private and public, in his dealings with Allāh ﷻ and with the creation. It creates a realisation that Allāh ﷻ is fully aware of all that one does, says, or thinks, and deters one from engaging in acts that are displeasing and vulgar. A society in which *ḥayā'* is entrenched will flourish with values of chastity, mutual respect, compassion, accountability, a general sense of social responsibility, a high sense of morality and regard for family values and justice. It is for this reason that the Prophet ﷺ stated:

⁵ *Sunan Ibn Mājah.*

الحياء لا ياتي الا بخير

Ḥayā' only brings goodness.⁶

الحياءُ شُعْبَةٌ مِنَ الْإِيمَانِ

Ḥayā' is a very significant branch of *īmān*.⁷

Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī رحمته الله explains how *ḥayā'* is a very significant branch of *īmān*:

أَنَّهُ كَالدَّاعِي إِلَى بَاقِي الشُّعَبِ إِذِ الْحَيُّ يَخَافُ
فَضِيحَةَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ فَيَأْتِمِرُ وَيَنْزَجِرُ

Ḥayā' is like a catalyst to the other branches of the religion, because the one with *ḥayā'* fears the humiliation of both this world and the Hereafter, and so he obeys all of Allāh's commands and refrains from all that displeases Him ﷻ.⁸

The loss of *ḥayā'* from our society has led to the wholesale proliferation of indecent images imposed upon us in every facet of daily life. The impact of this is an imbalance in the nature of man, such that the fulfilment of carnal desires has become the primary objective and overriding deity to be followed. The outcome of this over-sensualisation has led to the rise in the pervasive crises of indecent assault, rape, teenage pregnancy, STDs and infidelity in marriage. The latter crisis leads to divorce and the break-up of the family unit, resulting in children being raised in an imbalanced environment, which can lead to a wave of depression, an isolating feeling of gross discontentment and, in some instances, suicide. These collective problems have now escalated to such an extent that even government authorities are perplexed as to how to solve these issues, which have led to the corrosion of humane values, and has in turn bequeathed a plague of violence, crime and other anti-social behaviour that is prevalent throughout society.

The Prophet ﷺ came into the world at a time when the absence of *ḥayā'* and the dominance of heedlessness had exceeded all limits. Thus in a mere

6 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.

7 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.

8 *Fatḥ al-Bārī*.

twenty-three years, the Prophet ﷺ successfully revived the lost spirit of *ḥayā'* in both the individual and the society. He taught how every limb has its share of *ḥayā'* and how it is best preserved. In addition, frequent remembrance of death, the reality of the grave, the horrors of the Day of Judgement and the bliss or torment of the final abode, coupled with his blessed company and teachings of compassion, mercy and other noble traits, transformed a hedonistic society into a shining example of civilisation upholding the commands of Allāh Ta'ālā. If we, too, desire the same success, we also need to strive and bring *ḥayā'* back into our lives.

This book, *Allāh Ta'āla se Sharam Kijiye*, has captured the Prophetic example of rekindling the forgotten trait of *ḥayā'* and concern for the Hereafter. Turath Publications have accomplished the commendable task of translating this book into lucid English. It has arrived at a time strikingly reminiscent of the pre-Islāmic period—an era devoid of *ḥayā'*. It provides straightforward guidance and instructions that, if implemented, can revitalise society from its current degeneration.

THE AUTHOR

Ḥazrat Muftī Salmān Maṣūrpūrī ṣāhib (may Allah ﷻ preserve him) is the grandson of *Shaykh al-'Arab wa'l-'Ajam* Ḥazrat Mawlana Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madanī ؒ. He is a lecturer of Ḥadīth and the Grand Muftī of the renowned institute of Islāmic studies Jāmi'ah Qāsimiyyah Shāhī Murādabād, India. He is also the Editor of the widely-acknowledged monthly Islāmic journal *Nidā-i Shāhī*. He has been gifted with a deep insight into the fields of fiqh and issuing of legal verdicts and is ranked as one of the highest authorities in the fields. Coupled with his academic excellence, he is a personality well-versed in the field of *tazkiyyah* and *Iḥsān* and is engaged in promoting and teaching this beautiful branch of Islam. His many books published in the Urdu language include *Kitāb al-Masā'il*, *Allāh Walon ki Maqbūliyyat ka Rāz* and *Da'wat-i Fikr aur 'Amal*, each one worthy of translation into the English language.

In an age of materialism and religious decline, his presence and hard work is a blessing for this ummah. Being a prolific writer full of sincerity, he captures the attention of the reader through his affectionate yet candid

pen, highlighting and guiding towards the avenues through which one can gain eternal success. May Allāh ﷻ grant Ḥazrat Muftī ṣāḥib a long and healthy life and enable him to continue and excel in his exemplary services to the religion. *Āmīn*.

I am in no position to write a foreword on the work of Ḥazrat Muftī ṣāḥib (may Allah ﷻ preserve him), because my words pale into insignificance before his writing just as a candle does in front of the sun. However, Ḥazrat Muftī ṣāḥib's insistence, coupled with the craving to possibly acquire salvation in the Hereafter by associating myself with this noble work, encouraged me to put pen to paper.

MUHAMMAD SALEEM DHORAT
Islamic Da'wah Academy
Leicester
8th Rabī' al-Awwal 1436
30th December 2014

Allāh Ta'āla sa Sharam Kijiyen

THE PATH
TO PARADISE

THE QUR'ĀNIC MESSAGE

*O Believers! Fear Allah as He should be feared, and
do not die except in the state of Islam*

(3:102)

DEDICATION

I begin by dedicating this work to my beloved, affectionate and supportive teacher, the great scholar, the jurist of the Community, who was devoted to Allah ﷻ, Mawlana Mufti Maḥmūd Ḥasan Gangohī (may Allah ﷻ fill his grave with light). He was also the Grand Mufti of Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband. It was his invaluable attention to our spiritual, moral and intellectual development that infused us with guidance and rectitude, as well as consciousness of the Hereafter and a firm religious disposition. May Allah ﷻ illuminate his grave with light. *Āmīn*.

Then, I must dedicate this work to my respectable and honourable father, Mawlana Qārī Sayyid Muhammad Usmān Maṣṣūrpūrī, teacher of Hadith and Vice Rector, Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband. Not only is he my affectionate father, but he has been my most beneficial teacher and mentor. His ideal moral upbringing, training and supervision helped me to consistently adhere to the straight path and serve the faith. May Allah ﷻ prolong his loving care and affection and bless him with health and happiness. May Allah ﷻ reward him in both the worlds for his favours to me.

Finally, I must pay my respects to my esteemed mother, who is the daughter of Shaykh al-Islām Mawlana Sayyid Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madanī (may Allah ﷻ fill his grave with light). Her sincere supplications for me at dawn have been my most precious asset. May Allah, Who is Most Merciful, Most Compassionate, grant her a long life, good health and peace of mind. May her supplications enable me, despite my incompetence, to render acts of righteousness which may please my parents—*Āmīn*. Allah Almighty can no doubt accomplish all of this, so may He help me.

MUḤAMMAD SALMĀN MAṢṢŪRPŪRĪ

NOTE OF APPRECIATION AND SUPPLICATION

AMĪR AL-HIND MAWLANA SAYYID ASAD MADANĪ
PRESIDENT, JAMĪ'ATUL 'ULAMĀ-I HIND

All praise belongs to Allah, and may blessings be upon His noble Messenger.

Today, moral degeneration in the Muslim society has crossed acceptable limits. Indecency, major sins and unlawful acts are rampant while Islamic morals and manners are on the wane. Yet the Qur'ān exhorts us repeatedly to abide by the Islamic moral code, to fear Allah ﷻ and to perpetually heed the Hereafter.

I am immensely happy that my dear Moulvi Muftī Muḥammad Salmān has adeptly performed the duty of enjoining the good and forbidding evil [by compiling this work]. He has compiled an extensive collection of reports and elaborated upon them. As a result, he has produced an authentic work on morals and manners. Those who read this book will develop a deep consciousness of the Hereafter and strive to attain success in the Hereafter, if Allah ﷻ so wills.

I pray to Allah ﷻ to accept his hard work and to make this book of benefit for everyone. *Āmīn.*

ASAD MADANĪ
Madanī Manzil
Deoband

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

All Praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. May blessings be upon the Leader of the Messengers, our chief and patron, Muhammad, and on his family and on all of his Companions.

At this moment, every pore of my body is full of gratitude to my real Benefactor, my noble Lord. For it is only thanks to His grace and favour, and on account of my association with the benefactor of humanity, pride of both the worlds, and our chief and patron, Muhammad (peace be upon him), that I have been able to compose this compendium despite my incompetence and lethargy. Contained herein are Qur'ānic verses, Hadith, and sayings and accounts of early Muslim authorities. No matter how much I thank Allah ﷻ for the privilege of this gift, it will not suffice. There is an Arabic couplet that says "When the divine will aids someone, a person will succeed in his task despite his weaknesses." This couplet aptly describes my condition.

Some ten years ago I had commenced writing on this subject. What occasioned this composition was my custom of delivering a brief sermon after the *ẓuhr* prayer during Ramadan 1413 AH at the Shāhī Mosque at Jāmi'ah Qāsimiyyah, Madrasah Shāhī, Murādabād. I decided to fulfill this assignment by commenting on one extensive Hadith throughout the month, rather than explaining a different Hadith every day, so as to ensure thematic continuity and unity and to facilitate the audience's memories. I therefore chose the Hadith which commences "Be modest before Allah. . ." and elaborated on it for four weeks, whereby I composed a list of themes and topics for further discussion while consulting *Mishkāt*, 'Allāmah Mundhirī's *at-Targhīb wa-t-tarhīb* and Imam Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' al-'ulūm*.

Upon the conclusion of that particular Ramadan, I decided to compile all of the sermons into book form for my own guidance, and so I did, while reposing trust in Allah ﷻ. The first installment was published in the Urdu

periodical *Nidā-i Shāhī* (December 1993). However, this series of ten articles came to an end owing to my own inaction. Although years passed by, I did not give up on the idea of the project. Eventually, Allah ﷻ enabled me to resume it and it was serialised in *Nidā-i Shāhī* from August 1995. Due to my supplementing and complementing the original sermons, it extended into 55 installments. All praise and gratitude belongs to Allah.

This book includes a vast number of Hadith about remembering the Hereafter. Those who study it with sincerity and intending to act upon the counsel are, Allah willing, bound to benefit from it. It will reinforce our conscience, make us realise the transience of this world and heighten our concern for success in the Hereafter. In order to effectively benefit from these Hadith, it is essential to take account of ourselves. With such consciousness, its study will greatly guide us and illuminate our life, Allah willing.

Allah, undoubtedly, showered upon me health, time, opportunities and numerous other blessings; but owing to my lethargy, I did not avail myself of these blessings, and I subsequently wasted the major part of my life. I nonetheless regard it as a great privilege upon me that in my career stretching 35 years I have now been able to write this book, whose aim is to correct everyone's character. By Allah's grace, I have thus been able to do at least some good and I trust the Most Honourable Lord will reward me for this in the Hereafter. More importantly, it will help me in overcoming my own indifference. Allah is indeed Most Glorious; He not only enables us to perform good actions, but He also appreciates them and rewards us for them.

O Allah! Accept this effort exclusively for Yourself and bestow upon us success and welfare in both the worlds. *Āmīn*.

MUḤAMMAD SALMĀN MANṢŪRPŪRĪ

PRELIMINARIES

MODESTY BEFORE ALLAH ﷺ

Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd ﷺ relates that the Prophet ﷺ once said:

“Be modest before Allah, as is His due.” We said: “O Messenger of Allah, we are modest and praise Allah.” He said: “This is not so. Modesty before Allah means protecting the head and all that is in it; and protecting the stomach and all that is inside it. Furthermore, you should remember death and decay, for one whose eyes are set on the Hereafter keeps away from worldliness. One who accomplishes all of this is one who is modest before Allah the Exalted.”

(Narrated by Tirmidhī in the Chapters on the
Description of the Day of Judgement)

IMPORTANCE OF MODESTY BEFORE ALLAH ﷺ IN ISLAM

It is stated in *Mazāhir-i Haqq* that modesty is an innate human quality. Moreover, the greater one’s modesty, the more esteemed one is in society. Modesty represents a particular state of mind which keeps one away from everything bad and evil. This trait is of vital importance in the Islamic shariah, as highlighted by the Prophet ﷺ exhorting the Muslim community to imbibe it. Abū Hurayrah ﷺ relates that the Prophet ﷺ said: “Modesty is part of faith and the faithful will be in Paradise. Immodesty is an evil and evildoers will be in Hell” (Tirmidhī).

WHO SHOULD BE MODEST?

Every human being possesses a certain degree of modesty. For instance, people, in general, do not like to do anything indecent in public, so they try to shield such indecency from public view, for the sake of maintaining their reputation — and all of this is prompted by modesty. Another example can be observed by the fact that most people only undress in private.

In Islam, modesty is not only restricted to the public domain; but Islam requires the believers to be modest before Allah — Who is All Knowing, All Aware, and knows all that is manifest and hidden and present and absent — by avoiding every act which He disapproves. In this regard, one should bind all of one’s bodily parts to His norms, and should not do anything which betrays any lack of regard for Him. One’s mere claim [to possess such a state] is not sufficient by itself; but one must align one’s body and soul to the obedience to Allah ﷻ, in all circumstances.

HOW TO INCULCATE MODESTY BEFORE ALLAH ﷻ?

A number of instructive and insightful strategies for developing modesty before Allah ﷻ have been recorded in *Shu’ab al-īmān*. For instance, Junayd Baghdādī is reported to have said: “In addition to reflecting on Allah’s favours, one should also be cognizant of one’s shortcomings, because this develops modesty in one before Allah.” Furthermore, Dhū’n-Nūn Miṣrī stated: “Modesty before Allah is attained through the realisation of one’s inadequacy in showing gratitude to Allah for His favours upon one. Allah’s glory is limitless, and accordingly our gratitude to Him should not admit any limit.”

CHAPTER 1
PROTECTING THE HEAD

1. MENTAL WELL-BEING

In the Hadith under discussion, mention is made first of the head and of all that is associated with it. The directive is not merely to save the head from physical ailments and to take some medicine for protecting it; but what is really meant is its protection against every evil and all that is forbidden by the shariah. For example, our head must not bow before anyone other than Allah ﷻ. Nor should our eyes look at something unlawful. Likewise, our ears should not hear any prohibited things.

Shunning Polytheism

The first and foremost part of protecting the head is to not surrender, in any circumstances, to someone other than Allah ﷻ in acts of worship. Taking any partner with Allah ﷻ is an unpardonable sin in Islam. Allah ﷻ declares: “Allah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgives anything else to whom He pleases” (Qur’ān 4:48 and 4:116).

Furthermore, Hadith strictly forbid all polytheism, both overt and covert forms. During his last illness, the Prophet ﷺ gave some crucial advice to the Muslim community, which included: “Beware! People before you used to prostrate before the graves of messengers and the pious. Beware! You must not do so at graves. I forbid you from doing this” (Muslim). Generally speaking, people do not take the Messengers or saints as Lord, nor prostrate before them in the same way. Nevertheless, prostration at graves is still strictly prohibited, for it is outwardly akin to polytheism; moreover, it gradually develops the tendency of polytheism.

Removing a Misconception

Due to the prevalence of people ignorantly prostrating towards graves, it is important to clarify the legal ruling pertaining to one who undertakes this practice. A clear elucidation of the matter is found in the celebrated Ḥanafī legal work *Durr al-Mukhtār*:

Those who kiss the ground in front of ulama and other leading persons commit a forbidden act. He who indulges in it and he who allows it are both guilty. This act is akin to polytheism. As to the question whether the guilty will be declared an unbeliever, if he does this act as [a form of] worship then he will be considered to be an apostate. However, if it is [performed merely] out of respect, then it will still be a major sin, though not one that amounts to unbelief.

In explanation of the above statement, ‘Allāmah Ibn ‘Ābidīn Shāmī states: “It is recorded in *Fatāwā Zāhidī* that greeting someone whilst in the posture of bowing is like prostrating before him.”

A Covert Form of Polytheism

Covert polytheism is for one to perform an act of worship to Allah ﷻ in order to please someone else or for gaining some worldly objective, such as fame, honour or wealth. Although the shariah does not brand this act as [outright] polytheism or unbelief, it is a loathsome act, which lays to waste man’s deeds. The Messenger ﷺ thus warned: “Whoever seeks the world while pretending to work for the Hereafter, his face is disfigured. His name is thrown into oblivion and recorded in Hell” (*at-Targhīb wa’t-tarhīb*).

2. SHUNNING ARROGANCE

A further obligatory facet of maintaining modesty in the head before Allah ﷻ is to be completely free of arrogance. Glory befits Allah alone! The Qur’ān states: “Do not walk insolently through the earth, for Allah does not love any arrogant boaster” (31:18).

The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: “Allah ﷻ says: ‘Glory and greatness belong to Me. Whoever tries to snatch them from Me, I will throw

him into Hell” (Muslim). In addition, he ﷺ said: “No one with an iota of arrogance in his heart will enter Paradise” (Muslim).

3. PROTECTING THE TONGUE

Of the body parts related to the head, it is absolutely obligatory that one protect the tongue. If one’s tongue serves the cause of truth, it may become the means of attaining an exalted rank. However, if the tongue is brazen and utters forbidden words, in total disregard for Allah ﷻ, then it leads to man’s severe loss. One cannot attain piety unless one controls the tongue. Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī ﷺ relates the Prophet ﷺ having said: “When one wakes up, all of the limbs humbly tell the tongue to fear Allah for their benefit. If the tongue acts well, all of them will be on the straight path. However, if it turns sour, they too will fall a prey to wickedness’ (Tirmidhī). Furthermore, he ﷺ said: “If one safeguards well his tongue which is between his two jaws and his genitals which are between his two legs, then I assure him of Paradise” (Bukhārī).

Mischief Caused by the Tongue

The sins of the tongue are simply innumerable. Imam Ghazālī, nonetheless, places them under the following twenty rubrics:

1. Speaking without a valid basis.
2. Unnecessary speech.
3. Speaking about forbidden things, such as films, gatherings of wicked people, etc.
4. Quarrelling.
5. Making noise with a view to degrading someone.
6. Using abusive and indecent words.
7. Affectation in speech.
8. [Wrongfully] reproaching people.
9. Mocking someone.
10. Singing and reciting improper couplets.
11. Ridiculing people.
12. Divulging someone’s secret.

13. Making a false promise.
14. Telling lies.
15. Backbiting.
16. Carrying tales.
17. Duplicity in speech.
18. Praising someone without his deserving it.
19. Not paying attention to one's own lapses.
20. Discussing religious issues with people who are unable to comprehend the topics, such as [discussing] the divine decree, and the names and attributes [of Allah ﷻ].

4. TELLING LIES

Telling lies or giving false testimony results in one becoming heedless of Allah ﷻ. The Qur'an curses liars, saying: "Invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie" (3:61). The Messenger ﷺ said: "When one tells a lie, its stench drives the angel of mercy away from him" (Tirmidhī).

The Prophet ﷺ had a dream in which he saw that he had been taken by two angels to the heavens. There he saw two men—one standing and the other sitting. The former kept tearing open one cheek of the latter's jaw up to his neck, and he did the same to the other side. In the meantime his first cheek was restored, whereupon he cut it open again. The scenario continued in this manner. Eventually, the Prophet ﷺ asked the angels about the person's predicament. The angels replied: "The one whose jaw was cut was a great liar, whose lies spread throughout the whole world. He will be treated in the same way until the Last Day" (Bukhārī).

The Prophet ﷺ forbade people from lying even while joking and condemned those guilty of it: "He who tells a lie in order to amuse people will be afflicted with loss." He then used the expression "May loss be upon him!" thrice (*Mishkāt*).

Truth Ensures Deliverance

One becomes infused with genuine modesty and closeness to Allah ﷻ by shunning lies and adhering to truthfulness; and one will also, consequently, be further induced towards being charitable. In contrast, one's indulgence

in lies entails serious loss and ruin. Although one may obtain a momentary material gain because of telling a lie, this will never bring about one's ultimate deliverance. By the same token, one may suffer some loss while adhering to the truth; however, such steadfastness will eventually bring him tremendous good and benefit. The Prophet (peace be upon him) advised: "Look for truth, even when it might be harmful, because truth alone ensures deliverance" (*at-Targhīb*).

Some sincere Companions—namely, Ka'b ibn Mālik, Murārah ibn al-Rabī' and Hilāl ibn Umayyah—did not have a valid excuse for not participating in the Battle of Tabūk. However, their names are recalled with great esteem in view of their truthfulness in front of the Prophet ﷺ [when he asked them for the reason for their non-attendance]. As a result [of their truthfulness], they had to undergo social boycott for 50 days; yet they were eventually pardoned in the Qur'ān (9:118), and attained Allah's mercy and forgiveness. In contrast, those Hypocrites who had apparently, in the same instance, secured the Prophet's leave on false pretexts were condemned in the Qur'ān as inmates of Hell (Bukhārī).

Deception as a Lie

'Abdullāh ibn 'Āmir relates: "The Prophet ﷺ was in our house. My mother, with her closed palm [showing to me], asked me to come inside, saying that she would give it to me. The Prophet ﷺ asked her whether she really meant it. When she replied that she wanted to give me some dates which were in her palm, he told her, 'Had you not given him dates, this would have been recorded as a lie on your part'" (*at-Targhīb*).

We learn from the above Hadith that certain acts may not be considered a lie in our society, but [the shariah] considers them to be types of lies and deems them to be sinful. It is fairly common to make a false promise to a child in order to keep them quiet. [What is] worse [than the simple deception] is that such practices are not even regarded as a lie. The Prophet ﷺ himself categorically clarified that such practice is also a lie.

Advice to Businessmen

Lies are rampant in trade and business, without the notion that this malpractice is a sin even occurring to anyone. This [latter disregard is because] a businessman's only concern is his sale performance, even if he has to resort

to lies [in order to increase his profit margin]; and they employ all sorts of [misleading] gimmicks to attract customers. For some petty material gain, these guilty persons destroy their prospects in the Hereafter. The Prophet ﷺ warned: “Most businessmen will be with the wicked people. The only exception will be those businessmen who fear Allah ﷻ, do good and always speak the truth” (Tirmidhī).

Abū Dharr Ghifārī ؓ relates that “the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Allah will not even look at them and they will undergo a severe punishment.’ When I requested him to further specify who such wretched people were, he said: ‘He who drags his clothes below the ankle; he who reminds a recipient of the favour done by him; and he who sells his merchandise by taking a false oath’” (Muslim).

At present, and in general, numerous malpractices are prevalent amongst merchants. Firstly, they represent their low quality merchandise as being of a superior quality. Secondly, without any scruples, they quote an unfair price, insisting that they themselves had bought it at a higher price, so as to raise their selling price to customers. Thirdly, if a customer orders an item of a particular brand [that they do not currently possess], they do not simply excuse themselves by saying that it is not in their stock, and that the buyer should purchase it at another shop [which actually possesses the item]. On the contrary, they mislead the buyer, saying that the item sought is unavailable on the market; then they sell him the item of the brand actually stocked by them; and they do all this in order to merely clear their own stock [without due regard to the buyer].

What is worse than this unscrupulous conduct is the fact that such businessmen regard such behaviour as a grand success. This betrays their disregard for their faith. Therefore, businessmen should rectify the usage of their tongues. If they adhere to honest business practices while reposing faith in Allah ﷻ, He will bless their business. More importantly, they will be in the company of the Messengers [of Allah], the truthful ones, martyrs and the pious (as narrated in Tirmidhī).

False Appreciation

Satan has invented numerous forms of falsehood, and he continually perpetuates new types. One of these is to confer false compliments or titles on people—a malady which even ulama are negligent about. For instance, one

finds public notices for programmes carrying false titles next to the names of the speakers; and ordinary persons are credited with long, extensive honorific appellations. Likewise, while welcoming and introducing speakers, one observes incredible exaggeration. What is worse is that such practices are not regarded as lies.

Furthermore, it is religiously necessary to refrain from praising a wicked person. Today, while flattering political leaders and state officials, we do not exercise such self-control; and the committing of such abuse is a serious wrong deed. In fact, such a practice is so perilous that it might incur the divine wrath, as the Prophet ﷺ has warned: “Almighty Allah is enraged as a wicked person is extolled and His Throne shakes over this misconduct” (*Mishkāt*).

Caution in Appreciation

We should observe caution in praising someone because that person is liable to be misled by excessive praise and may thereby act arrogantly, perhaps ignoring his weaknesses and lapses. In fact, the shariah directs us to not praise anyone to their face. Controlling the tongue in this regard will ensure a good, sincere courtesy to our Muslim brethren.

There are various types of praising someone, and [the shariah] has forbidden two forms: firstly, praising someone in his presence; and secondly, praising someone in his absence, yet ensuring that one’s praise for him is conveyed [to him].

Upon once hearing a person lavish praise upon another, the Prophet ﷺ told him:

May you perish, for you beheaded your friend! [He repeated it]. If you have to compliment someone, you should say: “I have this opinion about him.” While expressing such a view he should have a strong conviction. Allah alone knows the truth. The one praising should not use any emphatic words in praise, because it is only Allah Who knows the truth. (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The Prophet ﷺ also discouraged those who praise one with a selfish motive, saying: “When you come across those who praise you for their own benefit, then disregard them altogether” (Muslim). His advice directs us to not encourage self-seekers.

However, it is perfectly legitimate [under the shariah] to compliment someone in his absence, irrespective of its transmission to him or otherwise.

5. BACKBITING—A BRAZEN ACT

Backbiting is one of the most repulsive sins committed by the tongue, and it betrays sheer disregard for Allah ﷻ. This menace pervades all strata of our society, from the commoners to even the scholars dressed in religious attire. No gathering warms up without indulgence in backbiting, and prolonged conversations centre around it. It is so rampant that nobody considers it to be a sin or an evil act, which is an alarming situation.

[This tragedy] can only be remedied by keeping in mind the Prophet's advice about protecting our head and all that is connected to it. At the same time, we should fervently pray to Allah ﷻ to save us from this horrible evil and to cure us. Without His special favour we cannot think of avoiding this evil in our time.

Backbiting Amounts to Eating the Flesh of One's Dead brother.

The Qur'an likens backbiting to eating the flesh of one's dead brother, and its description speaks volumes about its loathsomeness: "Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? No, you would abhor it" (49:12).

What Constitutes Backbiting?

When people are challenged for backbiting, they usually reply that they were only stating the truth. The Prophet ﷺ has explained the flawed logic of such a defence:

"Do you know what is backbiting?" Those present replied that Allah and His Messenger know better. Then he said: "Backbiting consists in saying something about your brother which may offend him." Someone asked: "What if he has the weakness which I describe?" To this he replied: "If it is so, it constitutes backbiting. If you ascribe to him some weakness which he does not have, it amounts to slandering." (Muslim)

Moreover, backbiting includes the description or reference to any weak-