



# A MUSLIM PERSONALITY

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“The worst kind of poverty and inadequacy is the deficiency of one’s personality.”

Imam Ali (pbuh)

### What is personality?

- Manifestation of the nature of the ‘nafs’
- The means by which we determine the real worth and status of a human being.
- That which distinguishes one human being from another

Despite the fact that all human beings possess common characteristics as well as common reactions particular to the human species that are similar in regard to basic social instincts, every individual has acquired qualities and particular gifts that distinguish him/her from the rest.

Personality is not certain abstract characteristics of a person, rather it is the whole individual on which identity is based. It is the unity of a group of qualities and inner motives which have some degree of permanence.

The qualities of moral and ethical character are more significant – in fact ‘the character’ of a person is his personality viewed from a moral angle. An individual’s development of his personality is directly related to his/her attachment to and the evaluation of things. One’s behaviour and conduct is tuned to what he/she considers to be of greatest worth and value in life.

For example – Those whose greatest values in life are based on materialism and who direct their endeavours throughout life only on the attainment of material objectives, shatter even the basic concept of a ‘human’ personality, let alone a Muslim personality.

There is always an intense conflict going on among human urges and instincts, each trying to pull us in a direction different from that of another. Thought and reflection resolve this conflict. There does not exist a finished and final personality – whenever there arises a new conflict between urges, the mind endeavours to establish a kind of balance between them to bring a truce. Here one needs a set of basic values which

takes into account all human dimensions and potentials, so that an overall balance is achieved.

Islam takes into account all innate characteristics of a human being. It builds a human personality which on the physical plane utilises all the possibilities offered by the world and on the spiritual plane unlimited opportunities.

Before we look at the most important factors necessary for a Muslim personality we must acknowledge that there are many other things that have a great influence on the building of a personality – the most potent of them are laid in the early formative years. During childhood years the field of imagination is expansive but the intellect is weak and closer to the world of outer senses than to the spiritual world. Gradually there is a movement from simple to complex. Imagination mingles with facts.

Bertrand Russel writes;

Every bad habit acquired is a barrier to better habits later, that is why the first formation of habits in early infancy is so important...Habits acquired very early feel in later life just like instincts having the same profound grip. New acquired habits afterwards cannot have the same force.

Family, school, social environment which includes community constitute the three most influencing factors on the building of a personality.

### **Important factors necessary for a Muslim personality**

- Eiman – Knowing that in His hands there is only goodness (...biyadihil khayr....)
- Sound intellect
- Calm Temperament – ‘Qalbe Saleem’

### **How do you recognise it in yourself?**

- There is a resistance to dependencies and addictions – “One who dominates his/her desires preserves his/her human dignity and worth.” Imam Ali (pbuh) “The spirit of a person with eiman is more resistant than the hardest stone.”

- Trust in oneself /Allah (“One who cannot raise him/herself and ascent to the ultimate height to which he/she is capable, will not be lifted by anyone else” – Imam Ali (pbuh))
- Stronger healthier relationships with others
- Basically happy -
- Benefits other people (Most dearest of human being to Allah – “One who is of the greatest benefit to people” – Prophet (pbuh) “The best of works with Allah, is to make happy a brother/sister in eiman by relieving him/her of hunger, distress and sorrow.”

It's lack shows up in –

- Vulnerability to peer pressure
- Under performance
- Eating disorders
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Strained relationships
- Unhappiness

**Eiman** – Suratul Fath – 48:4

When there is an effect of eiman it appears in all the vital functions. There is a decisive reduction in the pressure of animalistic tendencies –Will Durant writes – Our urges are like the wind that drives the sails of a ship – you cannot leave the ship at the mercy of the wind – eiman guides and steers the ship.

**Intellect** – It is activated by thought and contemplation. The Qur'an continuously exhorts – Afala tafakkarun – Do you not think????

An 'Aalim was asked – Where can peace be found? He replied – In the beauty of human thought.

Imam Ali (A.S.) – “Accustom yourselves to thought and contemplation because that will deliver you from misguidance and reform your character and conduct.”

The intellect demands of the human being to have a goal or an ideal.

Insight and belief – difference from animals

Animal's awareness solely through external senses, individual and particular, local (animal environment), immediate – confined to the present, animal not aware of it's history.... Animal thus confined to a

fourfold prison – captive to compulsions of nature, and instinct without awareness or intelligence. Level of desire and objectives limited – 2 kinds of acts – pleasure orientated and goal orientated – pleasure excites appetite – benefit mobilises will – no pleasure in goal orientated act – rather satisfaction that step taken towards ultimately beneficial course – goal orientated performed under governance of reason - power of will – e.g. student – there is a plan, a design a theory in which he/she believes – not always good.

Without ideals, aspirations, and faith – the human being cannot be called human – dies in his/her shell of private interests or a wavering bemused being who does not know the purpose of his/her own existence - thus necessity of an ideal.

My father instilled in me – “Rabbibniy liy indaka baytan fil Janna....” As a goal.

### **Calm Temperament (Qalbe Saleem) –**

If you reflect you will see that among your friends and family, those who have positive thinking fascinate you more than the others. They get things done – they make them work – when they make mistakes – they acknowledge them – correct them and are determined to start again. They do not waste time worrying or getting upset over something that may never happen.

In every 24 hours, there are approximately 20 million meteorites that enter the earth’s atmosphere. There are no reliable record of any person getting killed due to the fall of these meteorites.

Make alist of all the things that you consider cause worries and anxieties. On paper they will appear vague and indistinct – Survey - 40% are such that will never take place – 30% relate to past or future sorrow which not even the sympathies of the whole world can alter – 12% consist of unfounded fear of loss of health or beauty – 8% may really be causes of worry – then also that does not include taking into account the power of dua –

Most are in account of melancholic self pity –

Only one cure for this egoism - Know that life is made for achievement – history of the world written in achievements and not personal happiness – those pages are empty and blank –

Qur’an 90:4

Indeed we have created the human being in trouble, suffering  
Life cannot be lived twice – one with qabe saleem derives maximum benefit from the passing moments of life – remains steady, unmoved like the centre of a wheel in the face of any event –  
Suffering raises a human being just like coal under pressure, perfume extracted from plants –

Rumi writes –

“Cast was the wheat grain under the soil,  
Then ears of corn were gathered from it’s dust,  
Then it was ground between the millstones,  
And lo! It’s worth rose and it became life giving bread.  
Then the bread was crushed under the teeth,  
And lo! It became intellect, soul and gainful understanding.”

That which leads to the development of the most profound thoughts is not knowledge, science, ability, expertise, emotion or feelings but hardship and suffering.

### **Irada (Intention)**

Intention is the longing felt when one feels lonely and helpless and desires to be untied with the Truth to remove the feeling of loneliness and helplessness.

Mawlavi in his mathnavi – poem entitled “The complaint of a flute”

“Listen to what the flute says. It is complaining of separation. It says that since it has been cut off the jungle and brought here people are tired of it’s loud wailing. It wants it’s chest to burst open so it can express the pain of it’s home sickness. Whatever is separated from it’s origin is always in the quest of it’s meeting time.”

Qur’anic aya – 29:69, 13:28, Yaa Fattahu, Yaa Dalilal Mutahayyireen

### **Riyadhat (Spiritual Exercise)**

3 aims –

1. Get rid of all causes which divert attention from Allah
2. To set the inner and spiritual faculties in order to gain inner composure
3. Soften the inner self in order to receive enlightenment.

Qur’anic ayaat – 45:23, 28:88, 16:96, 55:27, 9:20-22

## How?

- Renunciation of customs, usages and social formalities – 5:54
- Determination - 3:122
- Moderation – Imam Sadiq “Faith has 10 degrees like the steps of a ladder which are climbed one by one. If you find anyone below you by one step, pull him up to you gently and do not burden him with that which he cannot bear, or else you will break him.”
- Steadiness – e.g. After asking forgiveness for a sin, to make sure it is not committed again – to fulfil promises.....
- Continuance –
- Meditation – Contemplation
- Checking & Assessing – “He who does not take account of himself everyday is not one of us.”
- Censuring oneself –

## Practical Tips

- **Silence** – 2 types of silence – general/particular. Relative silence means to refrain from talking to people in excess to what is absolutely required. (Imam Sadiq – “Silence is a part of wisdom. It is a sign of every virtue) Particular silence means to refrain from talking during verbal remembrance of Allah.
- **Abstaining from food** – Imam Sadiq “The believer enjoys hunger. For him hunger is the food of the heart and soul.”
- **Solitude** – 2 kinds of solitude – general/particular. General meeting people only when absolutely necessary. Qur’an 6:70 Particular solitude is keeping away from others in times of ibada
- **Vigil** – Wake up before dawn as early as he/she can. 51:18
- **Continued Tahara** –
- **Modesty and Humility** –
- **Secrecy** – 2:45
- **Daily recitation**
- **Eradication of evil thoughts** – 7:201. (Astaghfirullah, Ya Fa’aalu, Yaa Baasitu, Auzhu Billah, Laa Mawjuda Illallah)



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