

*"Basic Elements  
of  
Character Building for  
Islamic Activists"*

Na'im Siddiqui

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Translated by

AbūSamīhah Sirājul-Islām



**MUSLIM UMMAH OF NORTH AMERICA (MUNA)**

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## **About This Booklet**

With the fall of Muslim nations to the colonial powers and the subsequent changes brought about to those nations, caused a huge change to Muslim thought and behavior. However, by the early twentieth century new movements for the revival of Islam and Muslim societies, sprang up in different parts of the Muslim world. Many of these movements took very well-organized forms. The movements dedicated their activism to revive Islam in all aspects of human life. A lot of activists were created by these movements who sincerely devoted their lives to the cause of Islamic revival and to save humanity from the impending disaster caused by Satanic challenges and the ideas and ideologies spread by different man-made isms. This booklet was written in the 1960s as a guide for the Islamic activists by Poet and Islamic activist Na‘īm Siddīqūī to help them build and strengthen their Islamic character as activists, so that their activism could be fruitful and they will not be lost. Although written a few decades ago, the contents of the booklet remain relevant to our time and will remain relevant for the future generations of activists. We hope the Islamic activists will find the booklet helpful and Allah will guide them build strong Islamic character through its teachings.

The booklet was originally published in Urdu with the title “Ta‘mīr-e-Sīrat ki Lawāzim”.

– AbūSamīhah Sirājul-Islām, New York

## About the Author:

Na‘īm Siddīquī was a leading personality of Islamic movement in the Indian Subcontinent. He was one of the pioneers who responded to the call of Sayyid Abū’l ‘Alā Mawdūdī to revive Islam and build a society guided by the principles of life presented by Islam, during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the South Asian subcontinent. Together they dedicated their abilities and efforts, and built the foundation of Islamic revivalist movement in South Asia.

Na‘īm Siddīquī was the editor of the Journal Tarjumān Al-Qur’ān, founded by Al-Imām Sayyid Abū’l ‘Alā Mawdūdī. This journal made the pioneering contribution in creating the history of Islam and Islamic revivalist movement in the Himalayan Subcontinent during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mr. Siddīquī successfully carried out his responsibility as the editor of this renowned international journal during the lifetime of Ustādh Mawdūdī and long after his passing.

Noteworthy changes took place in social, political, literary and cultural fields in the Subcontinent after the initiation of Islamic revivalist movement. Marxism made a huge infiltration in the literary field of the time. Subcontinent’s main languages, like Urdu, Hindi and Bangla [Bengali], were used by Marxist writers to promote their anti-religious views and communist class-struggle. They termed their works as “progressive literature”. Na‘īm Siddīquī wrote poetry and prose in the 1940s which reflected the “moral humanism” of Islam as opposed to the “progressive anarchism” of the Marxists. He generated a trend of the flow of “Islamic revivalist struggle” in Urdu poetry and prose. A whole group of other poets and writers joined him to complete this flow. This trend came to be known as “Islamic Adab” or “Islamic Literature”. Na‘īm Siddīquī founded a journal named “Chiragh-i-Rah” which patronized this Islamic trend in literature. For a long period of time, he remained the editor of this journal.

Na‘īm Siddīquī is a multitalented personality, who is a poet, a novelist, a story writer, essayist and a researcher in a single personality. In his later life he dedicated more time to produce Islamic oriented essays and research articles. At this phase of his life he produced the monumental work on Prophet Muhammad’s (ﷺ) biography “Muhsin-i-Insaniyat” or “The Benefactor of Humanity”, which became immensely popular. In this work he highlighted the Prophet’s (ﷺ) movement orientation and the struggle for dignity & justice for humanity against injustice, and truth against falsehood.

This booklet “Basic Elements of Character Building for Islamic Activists” is a special essay written by Na‘īm Siddīquī. It was first published in the 1960s from Lahore, Pakistan, in Urdu. It was originally titled “Ta‘mīr-e-Sīrat ki Lawāzim” / تعمیر سیرت کے لوازم.

– Abdul Mannan Talib, Dhaka

## Chapter 1: Challenges for the Activists

As humans increase and intensify their efforts, Satan also extends his intervention in their affairs. The contemporary era has attained special excellence in this regard. In this era the materialistic and self-centered civilizational norms of the West have driven the moral decadence of our ummah to the greatest extent on one hand and on the other hand socialism's atheistic philosophy is continuously attacking our beliefs and thoughts. This attack has been able to create serious doubts in our ummah's basic faith and creed. As a result, the deep emotional attachment that our ummah had with Islam has become shaky. This reflects the exact challenge that Satan, the commander-in-chief of all mischief and evil, made to Allāh. He said:

﴿۱۷﴾ ثُمَّ لَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أَلَّا يَدْبُهُمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ وَلَا بَجْدُ أَكْثَرِهِمْ شَاكِرِينَ

“Then I will come to them from before them and from behind them and on their right and on their left, and You will not find most of them grateful [to You].” [Al-Qur’ān, 7: 17]

In such a circumstance, some of our well-wishers advise us to forsake all the troubles of the world by detaching from it and strive, from the realm of our personal world, to preserve our Iman and Islam. However, it is not easy to live such a life. In ordinary circumstances every sincere person may be able to maintain Islamic personal moral standards. However, it is not simple and easy to maintain upright moral standard when one is in the midst of a strong storm of moral decadence.

There could be no greater selfishness on the part of some individuals to preserve their personal moral health by detaching themselves from a “moral-pandemic” hit world and letting the pandemic wrack havoc around the world without any intervention. The way the existence of expensive lamps and golden lamp-holders that give unnecessary light rays near some shrines of dead people is meaningless when caravans lost in the nearby jungle are attacked by bandits due to darkness, the same way the Iman, Islam and taqwa that takes shelter in the masjid or in a safer place due to the fear of the opponents, instead of illuminating the surrounding environment, are nothing but ornamentations of one's own mind and soul only.

The existence of the “capital” of character, that is locked in a safe due to the fear of loss and which always remains in an unproductive state, is useless for the good of society. If Muslim men and women, and Muslim groups possess some “capital” of character and Iman then that should be invested to be circulated in the market. If the investors are capable and able to prove their ability then they will be able to

recover the capital with dividends; otherwise, the capital will be lost, let alone earning any dividend. However, the success of the capital lies in its circulation in the market. Without that, whatever capital one may accumulate, it is doomed to total depletion one day.

As the activists of Islamic movement have decided to invest the minimum capital of their character and Iman in this path, they should take all necessary measures to not only safeguard it from loss, but also to achieve much dividend from it for their own selves, and their communities. We must take all security measures in the investment process, the way a small capital owner invests all of his little capital that he earned with much labor and takes precaution to safeguard it from incurring loss. We must adopt all necessary measures to properly govern and nurture it. As we cannot isolate ourselves from the pandemic hit area, we must take all necessary and possible steps to protect ourselves while serving the community.

That is the challenge for the activists of Islamic movement.

## Chapter 2: Relationship with Allāh

In this challenging and difficult field of operation, the first and foremost necessity is building proper relationship with Allāh (ﷻ). If the level of this relationship fluctuates down below the bare minimum standard, then all of our efforts and activities will be centered around worldly desires and then the gates of our hearts and minds will be opened to Satan and his temptations, after which there will be no resistance for the soldiers of vice to enter the fortresses of our conscience. In order to maintain minimum positive relationship with Allāh and help it flourish, we must pay due attention to the following:

### 1. Worship and Ihtisāb

Al-Hamdulillah, due to the infinite mercy of Allāh (ﷻ), no activist with sincere attachment to our Islamic movement has forsaken the fundamental acts of worship. However, mere performance of rituals is not enough; one must also develop the qualities of regularity, proper devotion, sincerity and humility before Allāh (ﷻ). In this regard we are still at the lowest of the required standard. This is such a weakness that will cause us serious setback in our struggle for bringing about a greater social change, of which we cannot stay aloof.

Our activists must learn, with the help of the Qur'ān and the sunnah, the proper rulings of salah, sawm, hajj, zakat, etc. as prescribed by Allāh (ﷻ) and changes that He expects in our lives. Consequently, they must take proper measures to perform those acts of worship accordingly. One must be extremely cautious about punctuality in performing salah. It is hard to develop humility, modesty and submission in prayer unless someone gradually nurtures the desire to perform salah in congregation in the masjid. One must also remember that without proper self-evaluation [ihtisāb] along with the ritual acts of worship, they will be devoid of true spirit of ibadat. Without self-evaluation ritual acts of worship remain empty and void, despite looking complete and perfect outwardly.

### 2. Planned Improvement in Islamic Knowledge

One must study the Qur'ān and the sunnah directly, in order to establish, nurture and complete the relationship with Allāh (ﷻ). If the activists of the movement, whose overall activities and struggle are based on the Qur'ān and sunnah, do not make a daily effort to probe into these two primary sources of knowledge regularly then there is always a possibility that they might adopt a

path of deviance. The dark alleys of the popular jahiliyyah\* of our contemporary world that we have to cross, and the circle of the bandits equipped with knowledge of arts, sciences and technology that we have to break, make it more so obvious that we cannot proceed, with confidence, even a furlong of path without equipping ourselves with proper knowledge of our deen and the light of Islamic learning and wisdom.

We must spend from half an hour to an hour a day to learn the significance and requirements of the deen and the ideology that we are struggling to establish. If we cannot do much then we must study at least an ayah and a hadith a day, understand their proper meaning, and make sincere effort to implement their teachings in our personal life. This medication of Truth, insha'Allāh, despite being low in dosage, will protect us from the corrupted environment of modern jahiliyyah, due to their regular and continuous application.

The literature that helps us understand the Qur'ān and sunnah, especially the ones produced by our movement, must be regularly studied. Some activists have studied certain books once and have become so confident that they do not feel the need to reread them. They think that they have understood the movement and the organization perfectly. However, this is nothing but a misunderstanding on their part. There are some other activists who have read some literature a few years ago, but do not feel the necessity to renew their inspiration by rereading them; yet it is essential to study and reread these literatures time and again.

### **3. Supererogatory Acts of Worship [Nawafil]**

Giving due importance to supererogatory acts of worship has been considered indispensable for the Islamic movement activists of all era. Performing nawafil regularly and maintaining secrecy about it are especially important. Of all the supererogatory acts of worship nafl salah, especially tahajjud, is the most virtuous. Tahajjud helps the activists of Islamic movement pass the most difficult times of their life easily.

Supererogatory fasting [nafl sawm] has the second most virtuous position among the nawafil ibadat. It is one the most effective ways of strengthening the bond with Allāh. It is a sunnah to fast three days every month and it is equivalent to fasting one's entire life. Besides, some specific days and dates are

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\*Jahiliyyah literally means ignorance. In popular Islamic writings it refers to the pre-Islamic era of ignorance. It also means any thought, action or behavior that goes against Islam's teachings and norm. - Translator

cited in the hadith literature for nafl fasting.<sup>†</sup> Overall, flexibility is maintained in this regard. One can even fast a day in every ten days or in every month.

One should become accustomed to putting aside a portion of one's hard-earned wealth with the intention of spending that in the path of Allāh, to establish His deen. This is one of the greatest acts of nafl<sup>‡</sup> worship. There is no second way of irrigating the field of our movement to provide it with the much needed life giving support. It will not be an exaggeration to state that we might have to sell all of our jewelry and other goods of luxury and beauty to provide for the supplies needed for the movement due to the opening of our activities on many fronts. We are aware that most of our associates are of low-income backgrounds and a few are of middle-class backgrounds, but they abstain from worldly interests. The rich usually have no support for this movement.

In such circumstances, the sacrifice made by our activists to keep the “baitul-māl” alive can never be achieved by any movement dedicated to worldly vested interest. However, Allāh knows that the sacrifice made by our associates is much less than the financial sacrifices in the path of Allāh made by the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ). We must think and reflect! How are we going to face Allāh and answer to His reckoning if our movement ends up being a failure just because we were not able to feed the baitul-māl with proper financial support which is like the blood circulation in the body? Therefore, we must strengthen our motivation for spending more in the path of Allāh.

#### **4. Perpetual Dhikr & Du‘ā [Remembrance & Supplication]**

A fundamental requirement to build and maintain a relationship with Allāh is the perpetual du‘ā and dhikr. Instead of monastic life of remembering and attaching oneself to God, Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) taught his ummah remembrance and supplication for every single act of day and night. These must be done while one is in the bed or awake and walking, talking, working, standing, sitting, etc.

Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) taught many short but sweet adhkār and du‘ā to be said after waking up, while leaving the home, entering the home, to express joy or sorrow, at times of making a mistake, to begin a task, after hearing adhan, after completing wudu, after sneezing, while meeting a Muslim, while eating or drinking, and any other actions a believer might do. Muslim keep themselves

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<sup>†</sup> Like Mondays and Thursdays, Day of Arafah [9<sup>th</sup> of Dhul Hijjah], Day of Ashura [10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram], etc. - Translator

<sup>‡</sup> Many a times it becomes wajib or obligatory. - Translator

attached to their Lord when they say these adhkār and du‘ā with a conscious mind. They do not get lost in the business of this world by forgetting Allāh (ﷻ), the Lord of the worlds. Their lives fill up with adhkār and du‘ā.

In the morning and evening a believer keeps saying sometimes “subhan Allāh” [سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ] – Allāh is free from all sorts of shortcomings, weaknesses, incompetence, inability, imperfectness, etc., sometimes “al-hamdulillah” [الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ] – all praises are for Allāh, sometimes “astaghfirullah” [أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ] – I seek Allāh’s forgiveness, sometimes “la hawla wala quwwata illa bi-Allāh” [لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ] – there is no might or power except with Allāh, sometimes “sadaqAllāhu wa-rasuluhu [صَدَقَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ] – Allāh and His messenger spoke the truth, sometimes “rabbigh-fir wa-r-ham [رَبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ] –My Lord, forgive me and have mercy on me, sometimes “anta waliyyi fid-dunya wal-akhirah” [أَنْتَ وَلِيٌّ لِي فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ] – You are my ally in this world and in the hereafter, sometimes “hasbiyAllāhu rabbi” [حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ رَبِّي] – My Lord Allāh is enough for me, sometimes “ni‘mal-mawla wa-ni‘mal wakil” [نِعْمَ الْمَوْلَى وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ] – how excellent is Allāh as an ally and disposer of affairs, etc. and he/she says these with total devotion and sincerity. This is how one builds one’s relationship with one’s Almighty Lord and seeks strength and opportunity to perform righteous deeds with that all-powerful being. He seeks guidance and goodness from Him, seeks refuge with Him to withstand satanic temptations, and seeks His forgiveness after becoming aware of his own mistakes and shortcomings. Thus, his life fills up with dhikr, goodness, and righteousness.

Each one of the activists of our movement must become accustomed to doing such conscious and all-time dhikr of Allāh. Above all, he/she should earnestly beseech Allāh at all times to increase the strength and firmness of his/her Iman, akhlaq [character], sabr [patience & perseverance], tawakkul [reliance and dependence on Allāh], self-control and adherence to the Islamic way of life. The power of this strength could be proven very influential in any struggle for change.

Needless to say that the dhikr and du‘ā which is not the expression of a conscious heart and which has no connection to the conscious mind, which is adulterated with riya and which is merely a neuro-exercise, can never bring the desired outcome. Therefore, dhikr and du‘a must be done with a conscious heart and mind, and be free from riya.

## Chapter 3: Relationship with the Organization

If the organizational system of a movement is loose and in such circumstances the movement participates in a hard struggle for change then its parable will be like that of a car whose engine parts are not properly connected and nuts & bolts are not properly tightened, yet the driver sets out with it to cross a mountain pass; so he faces obstacles every moment and even gets the car broken down. The organization is a natural requirement for every movement. To us, it is not just only a natural requirement but in reality, is the expression of our religiosity, morality, worship of Allāh, and obedience to His Messenger (ﷺ). Organizational weakness causes a variety of difficulties for a movement's functioning. That is why different movements try to overcome this weakness in different ways and methods. However, we consider that this weakness may cause us a loss in the hereafter. So, we consider such weakness must be forsaken. Therefore, every single activist of our movement must consider strengthening organizational discipline and guarding it as his/her indispensable responsibility. A few important matters regarding organizational discipline are discussed below:

### 1. The proper balance between authority and loyalty

This balance is like the backbone of our organization. Without this balance, in reality, the organization's existence is meaningless. That is why disrupting this balance is tantamount to committing a sin. In other words, this is a form of disobedience to Allāh (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ). An individual cannot succeed here and in the hereafter after committing this crime. The Qur'an requires the following:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ

“O you, who have believed! Obey Allāh, Obey the Messenger and those in authority from among yourselves.” [ Al-Qur'an, 4: 59]

We must remember that these three forms of obedience/loyalty are obligatory. A Muslim faces loss if he/she gives up obedience to any one of these. Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) himself said, “Whoever obeys me, obeys Allāh and whoever disobeys me, disobeys Allāh. Whoever obeys my ameer, obeys me and whoever disobeys my ameer, disobeys me.” [Bukhari and Muslim] A statement of Abu Hurayrah (RAA) further clarifies the point. He said, “This is true beyond any doubt that obedience to the leadership is obedience to Allāh and disobedience to them is disobedience to Allāh.”

The books of hadith contain many ahādith with definite ruling on this matter. The point of these ahādith is that obedience to the individuals elected to the leadership positions of a Muslim state or a movement established in line with the Islamic law and constitution to struggle for iqamat-ud-deen, due to their knowledge & piety and especial Islamic leadership capability, is part of the most important obligations [fard/wājib] of Islamic Sharī‘ah.

That is why, the Prophet (ﷺ) declared in an unequivocal term that complete loyalty to the leadership is indispensable, even if he is a flat-nosed Abyssinian whose physical appearance, lineage, conduct, dealings, taste, feelings, etc. however different and disliked may be to a person. Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) also made it clear that those who deny this requirement of obedience of the leadership will have no chance to succeed in the hereafter even if they seem to possess superb taqwa. He (ﷺ) said, “The one who turns away from the obedience of the amir/leader, he will face Allāh on the day of judgment in a state in which he will have to no proof for himself.” [Sahih Muslim]

From this brief discussion, it has been made clear that the leadership of the Islamic movements and organizations are not like those of the presidents, vice-presidents, etc. of secular worldly movements and organizations. In an Islamic movement, the presidents/amīrs, central leaders, and the shura members enjoy a special Islamic position based on the Sharī‘ah. Their rights and responsibilities are also determined in light of the Sharī‘ah, not on available opportunities and privileges. This is why obedience to their leadership cannot be placed at the same footing with those of the leaders of the ordinary political parties or social organizations.

So long as the leadership does not openly deviate from the path directed by the Qur’ān and Sunnah, it will be from the grave sins to disobey their directives, or to obey their directives with reservation, harboring hatred and envy against them, conspiring against them, backbiting them, and stirring resentment against them instead of being pleased with them or instead of wishing them well, not informing them about proper environmental circumstances and events, being stingy in providing them with correct nasīhah and counseling, and publicizing their secrets. These are such grave sins that may jeopardize individuals’ hereafter, despite doing righteous deeds and good conduct in general. This grievous condition may relegate a believer in hypocrisy. Therefore, activists of Islamic movements and organizations must exercise great care about obedience to the leadership.

## 2. No Blind Following

Islam never demanded blind following; rather it only required obedience in righteousness. Islam's directive about matters beyond righteousness is: وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ “.....and do not cooperate in sin and aggression.....” [Al-Qur’ān, 5:2]

The activists must carefully observe all activities and performance of the organization and movement due to the internal dynamics and needs of the organization, and prevent the leadership from stepping beyond the limit of righteousness. Regarding this Sayyiduna Umar ibn Al-Khattab (RAA) stated: “My friends! If anyone of you sees any crookedness in my policies and actions, then it will be incumbent on you to straighten that.” [Sīrat Ibn Hisham]

In case of disagreement and controversy, members reserve the right to present their views on how to solve that and discuss that; and if they do not get any satisfactory answer to their queries then they have their shar‘i right to stand by their views and opinions. However, they still have to obey the decisions made and implemented by the leadership. No one has the right to disobey just because the adopted decision was made against their propositions and leadership did not view the situation from the members’ perspectives. The chain of loyalty can only be broken when a path other than Islam’s was adopted clearly, as stated by the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ).

## 3. Constructive Criticism

One of the fundamental rights of the activists is to criticize the leadership to keep them on the right track. However, even though criticism based on doubts and conjectures are acceptable in other movements, this mode of criticism will be deemed un-Islamic in an Islamic organization. Criticism in Islamic movements and organizations is based on a good thought. Here it reflects goodwill and sincere counsel, instead of objections and complaints. Only that style of criticism suits the overall environment of an Islamic organization where the critic does not harbor any bitterness in his/her heart and the criticized person does not feel annoyed due to the absence of the sense of vengeance in criticism, and the insistence of forced acceptance of criticism. The critic also does not feel sorry or annoyed because his criticism was rejected. Above all, criticism in the Islamic movement’s organization takes place face to face, not behind the back. What is done behind the back is not criticism but backbiting [ghībah]. Ghībah is proven to be the number one harmful factor in an Islamic movement. On the other hand, constructive criticism demonstrates the message of the atmosphere

of the best mutual goodwill. So, there is a gulf of difference between backbiting and constructive criticism.

The nature of our movement and organization is such that the more the impartial criticism for the leadership and others is encouraged the more it proves to be beneficial for the organization. However, uttering sarcasm, speaking words to vent one's anger that do not conform to the dignity and honor of the leadership, laughing and joking about matters related to them, and finding pleasure in discussing their weaknesses are totally against Islamic manners and etiquettes.

It could be a cause of disaster for the movement if someone makes criticism a routine, or criticizes every single directive, action, and the decision of the leadership or each of their speeches and demands explanation and justification for every single one of their directives and decisions, just because there is no legal hurdle on criticism. If this becomes the norm then no leader can perform his/her duty for even a day. In such cases, leaders will always be facing the general members on account of accountability and will have to provide a detailed explanation for each of their conducts and actions, in order to convince the critics that there is nothing to complain about it, so as to restore their credibility.

Considering the above, it will be easy to comprehend that members need to take extreme care to be fair in their criticism of the leaders. If caution is not practiced, then activists could become a serious malady for the organization and movement due to their exploitation of the right to criticize; and they might delve into a great loss themselves.

One of the most visible symptoms of unfair criticism is that it becomes an obstacle in the path of loyalty. A person openly indulges in clear and open misconduct as soon as he/she steps into this path. Therefore, one needs to understand that there are limits of loyalty and criticism and one must abide by those limits. One should remember that nothing ends loyalty except disobedience to Allāh!

#### **4. Loyalty is to the position of leadership not to the personality**

There should be no change in the system of loyalty and obedience due to the change of individuals in the leadership position. Naturally, people holding leadership positions in a large organization and movement may vary in their qualities; some may be of high caliber while others may be of low caliber, some

are more knowledgeable than others; some may have more piety than others; some may have more expertise in the contemporary issues; some others may have a deeper understanding of the earlier era of Islamic history; some are better aware of the outward directives of the Shari‘ah, while others have the deeper theoretical insight of the intrinsic matters; some may consider one aspect of the movement important while someone else may consider another aspect more important. It may also be the case that someone may be of hard temperament while someone else would be of soft temperament; someone could be very frank and straight forward while someone else may be of reserved and calculative type; some may be very eloquent and talkative while others may prefer silence. Besides these, people may also differ from each other in their tastes about clothing, food, and other aspects of everyday lifestyle. Individuals’ personality traits, tastes, and attitudes may work up to a certain level despite the overall system of unity in an organization.

In spite of these differences and distinctions no such change takes place in the position of leadership, so that differentiation may be made in the degree of leaders’ right to loyalty; or whenever there is a change in leadership activists may indulge in such curiosity as to inquire and compare certain tastes, attitudes, and lifestyle of the present leadership with the past one and say, “Why does this one does not have those qualities that the other one had?” After being accustomed to certain ways of conduct and method, some activists develop a kind of restlessness in their hearts and slowdown in their performance whenever a change is made. To close the door of this destructive attitude, the Prophet (ﷺ) exhorted that even if a flat-nosed Abyssinian were to be appointed into leadership position then he must be listened to and obeyed. One should not be looking at the appearance, features, clothing, or tastes of leaders. The shari‘ah has not made obedience subjected to the leaders’ personal tastes and styles to be in accordance with people’s demands.

Islamic movement does not revolve around any specific individual personality. This movement was once led by Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) and then Abu Bakr proceeded to lead this movement by saying the following message from the Qur’ān, “Muhammad is not but a messenger. [Other] messengers have passed on before him. So, if he was to die or be killed, would you turn back on your heels [to unbelief]?”<sup>§</sup> [Al-Qur’ān, 3:144] After him Umar, with a stern and strong personality and temperament, led this movement, and then after him, Uthman, a soft-hearted personality, led this movement. When Uthman’s time

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§ وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَى أَعْقَابِكُمْ ۗ

was over, this movement was led by Ali Ibn Abi Talib, who was endowed with certain other special qualities. During all these changes of personalities in leadership positions, the mandate of obedience remained intact, and breaking that system is always considered a grave sin.

Muslims are commanded to obey the discipline by keeping in mind the status assigned by the Shari‘ah to certain responsibilities, not keeping in mind the personalities of different leaders. Therefore, Muslims must discharge, with total sincerity, those responsibilities that Allāh (ﷻ) and His Messenger ordained upon them towards the leaders.

## 5. Role of the Leaders

So far, we have only discussed the responsibilities and roles of the subordinates. Compared to theirs, the roles and responsibilities of the leaders are more delicate. A complete balance cannot be established between authority and loyalty unless the leaders discharge their duties fully and properly. On the Day of Judgment, the reckoning of the leaders will be harder compared to the followers. Similarly, the major success of the Islamic Movement in this world depends on their correct and appropriate strategies and actions. The followers and activists can only demonstrate true loyalty when leaders discharge their responsibilities regarding authority. We may derive a beautiful direction from an ayah of the Qur‘ān, where Allāh has described the nature of the prophetic leadership in the following words:

فِيمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لَئِن لَّمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ لِيَدِّكَ ذَاوِلًا لَّيَكُونَ لَكَ جُنُودًا مِّنَ السَّمَاوَاتِ يَنصُرُونَكَ وَيُخْرِجُونَكَ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَنصُورًا ۗ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ

“So by mercy from Allāh, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allāh. Indeed, Allāh loves those who rely [upon Him].” [3: 159]

In this ayah Allāh (SWT) provided such a basic guide for those leaders who obey Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) that in the absence of that guidance no organizational discipline can remain intact. The matters that every individual in our movement should be loyal to, and in light of which build their characters according to this ayah, are described below:

- a. **Kind and Compassionate Conduct:** No organization can proceed towards success if it lacks the atmosphere of loving, kind, and compassionate conduct towards all its activists regardless of their being big or small. The love and

affection of the leaders should be such that every individual activist should feel that he/she is the most beloved and that he/she has relied upon the most. Nobody should feel any hesitation to express themselves. No individual activist should be hindered by any kind of mental apprehension to face the leaders. Individuals should not see or feel the discrimination based on seniority-juniority, rich-poor, etc. Where this atmosphere is lacking there will be a mental, cordial and sessional gap generated among the activists, and the driving force of mutual cooperation will become weak. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal expressed this situation in the following:

*“If any got detached from the caravan,  
If any developed confusion about the internal affairs  
Then it is because  
the conduct of the caravan leader lacks compassion.”*

The ayah mentioned above requires this kind and compassionate conduct from the leadership.

Kind conduct does not mean that the leaders will never be strict about anything at anytime; that he/she will not hold anyone accountable for their wrongdoings; that he/she will not prevent wrongdoings; and that he/she will always be flattering the activists. Rather, failure to implement the strict and timely disciplinary measure, if the need arises, may prove to be destructive for the movement and organization. Leaders sometimes need to use a commanding tone with their followers for the sake of the aims, objectives, and discipline and to get works done. However, even that command must still be flowing with love and kindness. The outward strictness should be nothing but a cover only.

**b. Overlooking Mistakes and Seeking Forgiveness for the Followers:**

Leaders have the opportunity to closely observe the conduct, manners, attitude, and behavior of the followers. Therefore, they see a lot of their weaknesses, faults, and mistakes. Some might have demonstrated negligence in discharging duties, some others might have said something unpleasant to the opponents of the movement, some might have displayed faulty emotions, some might disclose some sensitive organizational secret in public, some might have wronged a fellow activist or somebody else; someone may indulge in backbiting and yet someone else might bring a complaint against somebody else. These may all happen in an organization.

Naturally, one may develop bad-feelings, bitterness and annoyance, when all these are before him/her. Leadership may gradually develop bitterness about certain individual activists or maybe even about their entire organization because of observing these weaknesses. They may then express some sort of annoyance through their harsh and strict words and actions. As a result, confidence is shaken, suspicion and doubts become widespread, and the bond of authority and loyalty becomes weak.

There is a warning for the leadership in the aforementioned ayah [3:159]. Allāh taught the leadership that they should observe the weaknesses of their followers and overlook them but should not have their mind engulfed with bad thought and get disappointed, because different individuals have different types of weaknesses. These may only be corrected after much continuous and rigorous effort and training. Allāh (ﷻ) also says that forgiving them and overlooking their mistakes are not enough, leadership should also make du‘ā for them and ask Allāh (ﷻ) for their forgiveness due to the bond of love and affection. This is the best way to strengthen the mutually loving and cordial relationship.

### **c. Mutual Consultation [Shura]**

Due to the commandment of Allāh (ﷻ) “and consult with them in the matter”, leaders should consult with their followers per their knowledge, wisdom and piety, from time to time and whenever the necessity arises. Consultation improves confidence in each other, removes doubts and suspicion, and eases the execution of decisions.

Consultation is fard or mandatory. However, Allāh’s command implies that consultation should be done with people who are able and has expertise on relevant matters. It is not necessary to consult with everyone on every matter; consultation must be done with the appropriate person(s) on appropriate matters.

Leaders sometimes should consult with some people with specialized expertise, sometimes only with the elected executive members and sometimes with general members. They should then reflect on those counsels and analyze them before reaching a conclusion. This method will strengthen the organization of the movement. Different minds with different abilities get a chance to meet and exchange views through mutual consultation and thus develop unity and become ready to execute the decisions made.

**d. Being Firm on Execution of Decision and Reliance on Allāh (ﷻ)**

The last commandment of Allāh (ﷻ) for the leaders in this ayah is that they must remain firm after a decision is made through consultation and be steadfast in its execution. The leadership of a movement may face disagreement daily on many different isolated issues even after a decision was made and new opinions may be forwarded to them regularly. But if the decision is being continuously changed then nobody can successfully proceed to implement that, and this will generate hesitation and mental anarchy in the leaders. As a result, the principles of the movement will suffer from lasting instability. Due to these reasons, Allāh (ﷻ) encouraged the believers that after they have provided the leadership with their counsels, they should wholeheartedly accept the decisions made after due consultation, and discharge their duties in cooperation with the leadership and help them execute those.

**6. A few other important aspects of authority and loyalty:**

**a. Follow the instructions given in letters, circulars, etc.**

Generally, it is observed that there is a lack of due attention and following, as required by the shari‘ah, to the written directives and circulars issued from time to time by the leadership. Probably, the activists take these directives and circulars as regular letters and circulars issued by different social and political organizations. However, one needs to understand that a letter or circular issued by the leadership is equivalent to *Al-Amr Bil-Ma‘ruf* [the commandment to do good]. Obedience to the *ulu-l-amr* [person(s) of authority] is made obligatory in this regard. The activists must give due attention and consideration to every word of the letters and circulars and must use all means at their disposal for their timely implementation, with the same spirit of worship shown to the instructions of our shari‘ah.

**b. Punctuality & Methodology**

We still lack the quality of punctuality. Many of the activists do not observe punctuality when attending meetings, reporting for duty, submitting reports, conveying messages, etc. Many times they also do not observe the proper method of discharging duties.

People have not yet completely realized that they are all parts of a functional machine and if any individual part of the machine malfunctions or fails to function in due time then the whole machine will malfunction. It would be impossible for any movement to succeed in any endeavor with such

weakness. Therefore, every individual activist of the organization must properly function like parts of a machine.

**c. Attitude Towards Organizational Discipline**

From the above discussion, it is clear that failure to duly observe the balance of authority and loyalty is tantamount to committing sins. Almighty Allāh (ﷻ) will hold us accountable for this. However, our associates probably feel a little ashamed when held accountable in this regard, but they fail to realize that they have committed a sin. Violating the due balance of authority and loyalty and disregarding discipline in this regard is no less a sin than lying, verbally abusing someone, breaking a promise, misappropriating someone's property, stealing, backbiting, false testimony, and other such grave sins. To rectify their mistakes and to repair the damage done, unfortunately, many activists do not feel any remorse and do not immediately repent and seek Allāh's forgiveness after violating organizational discipline, the way they would have done so after committing the above-mentioned sins related to personal morality.

Our associates must realize that collective organizational discipline and character is much more important than individual character. Our activists should have a stronger sense of remorse if they fail to carry out a responsibility assigned to them; to reach an assigned place in time; to discharge the due responsibilities towards the leaders and showing true goodwill [naseehah] to them; abiding by the correct manners of criticism; providing them with due counsel and information needed; carrying out the responsibility of maintaining their secrets, and properly carrying out the directives of the leadership. The remorse should be strong enough to cause us to incline towards repentance and seeking forgiveness, bowing before Allāh (ﷻ) in humility and create a strong urge in us to apologize to the leaders and co-activists and seek their forgiveness. It should also activate in us a strong sense of desire to spend in the path of Allāh from our wealth as an expiation for our mistakes and faults.

**d. Sense of Responsibility**

In order to fulfill the requirements of the above-mentioned system of authority and loyalty, mere appeal and having some democratic-administrative bylaws are not enough; only the strong sense of responsibility of the activists can help fulfill these requirements. If every single activist always remembers the pledge, he/she made with Allāh (ﷻ) in the presence of the faithful, after becoming part of the movement, then this sense of

responsibility will remain alive. For the sake of this realization, all of our associates should remember that organization and its disciplines are trusts from Allāh (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ), and they are all trustees who should safeguard these sacred trusts. This is an extremely precious trust. In order to bring this trust alive thousands of different forces have worked and much thinking and research, labor, money, sleeplessness, ceaseless endeavor, struggle, and sacrifices were made throughout different ages in history. Therefore, if anyone tries to weaken this system of discipline then it becomes a primary responsibility of every single activist to safeguard the organization from such interference. Whoever shows weakness in carrying out this responsibility is like that sentry who evades his responsibility of guarding his post.

So, the activists must create such an environment and continuously struggle hard to develop a tradition and heritage in which no element for subverting the disciplinary system may rise up, and if such an element rises then that could be immediately suppressed. Only in such a system can leaders and followers may move forward from their respective positions following the requirements set by the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

## Chapter 4: Relationship with Co-activists

The system of authority and loyalty, as required by Islam, can properly be established in that collective system in which individual mutual relationship is based on authentic moral foundations. Allāh (ﷻ) has duly determined these moral bases through His messenger (ﷺ). Allāh (ﷻ) has briefly described these principles especially in surah Hujurāt [Chapter 49 of the Qur’ān]. Members of Muslim societies and activists of Islamic movements must always consciously remember and follow them. They are as follows:

### 1. Verification of Information

The first commandment to keep social life free from the defect is:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْبِحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ ﴿٦﴾

“O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful.” [49: 6]

Many times, instant decision making and acting upon them immediately after receiving a piece of information or statement may be misleading which could prove to be embarrassing and regretful. The scope of this commandment is very comprehensive. Members of Islamic societies must firmly adhere to it. Impromptu decision and action should never be taken against any activist by anyone in the movement.

### 2. Brotherhood Must Be Upheld

The next commandment in this regard is:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

“The believers are but a single brotherhood, so make settlement between your brothers. And fear Allāh that you may receive mercy.” [49:10]

The objective of this commandment is very clear. If there ever occurs any hurt-feelings, controversy, quarrel, and fighting in Muslim societies then other Muslims should never fuel this fire. Rather their duty will be to remove doubts and confusions, bringing the disputing parties closer together and reduce tension, in order to re-establish the bond of brotherhood. It is because, without this bond of brotherhood, the system of organizational discipline can never become strong in an Islamic movement.

### 3. Mockery, insulting and belittling is destructive to a faithful life

Allāh (ﷻ) next commanded by the following:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّن نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْألقَابِ بِئْسَ الإِسْمُ الفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الإِيمَانِ وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُم الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿١١﴾

“O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after [one's] faith. And whoever does not repent - then it is those who are the wrongdoers.” [49:11]

Through this commandment, Muslims are prevented from mocking, insulting and calling others with offensive nicknames. They are also warned that those who do not give up these behaviors will not be considered righteous Muslims but will be amongst the wrongdoers. These vices are like termites for societies that eat up the mutual bonds from within and destroy the social system. The movement and organization, in which members are ridiculed, belittled, disrespected, looked down upon, can never remain firmly established on the high standards of brotherhood and unity. Every single activist associated with our organization must do their best to free themselves from these moral illnesses.

### 4. Suspicion, Spying and Backbiting Must be Shunned

Allāh says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَب بَّعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُّبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾

“O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allāh; indeed, Allāh is Accepting of repentance and Merciful.” [49:12]

The very first requirement of this ayah is that activists of Muslim organizations must stay away from the negative assumption about each other. They must not harbor suspicion in their hearts and minds. They should neither blame each other nor should they build accusations against anybody based on mere suspicion and rumor; for every such thing is a grave sin.

The second requirement of this ayah is that activists must not spy on each other to find out their weaknesses and faults. Spying here implies such behavior as actively searching or eavesdropping everywhere to find out people's faults or making active efforts to learn the secrets of every meeting. These are extremely evil deeds and very destructive to organizational discipline.

The third requirement of this ayah is that activists must not find amusement in describing others' faults behind their back, because it is a grievous moral crime. This crime is tantamount to the disgusting act of slicing the flesh from the body of the person and eating it.

The more attention is given to these requirements, the stronger will be the unity of the movement and brotherhood of the activists; and the system of authority and loyalty will also function in a more balanced way.

There are a few more points related to organizational characteristics and discipline discussed in Surah al-Hujurat. If you wish, you may reflect on those issues as well. Here we have only mentioned some very clear moral points.

Finally, we can say that if we dedicate ourselves in a continuous struggle with due obedience to the organizational principles and disciplinary procedures after establishing a proper relationship with Allāh (ﷻ) and attain above mentioned moral qualities then, Allāh willing, there will be no chance of our failure. If Allāh (ﷻ) enables us to attain those three qualities sufficiently then, you must believe, the “capital” that we invested will bring a manifold return.



**MUSLIM UMMAH OF NORTH AMERICA (MUNA)**