

way in life, if founded on a just estimate of himself and a steady obedience to the rule he knows & feels to be right. It holds a man straight, gives him strength & sustenance, and forms a mainspring of vigorous action. “No man,” said Sir Benjamin Rudyard, “is bound to be rich or great, – no, nor to be wise; but every man is bound to be honest.”

But the purpose, besides being honest, must be inspired by sound principles, and pursued with undeviating adherence to truth, integrity, uprightness. Without principles, a man is like a ship without rudder or compass, left to drift hither & thither with every wind that blows. He is as one without law, or rule, or order, or government. “Moral principles,” says Hume, “are social & universal. They form, in a manner, the PARTY of humankind against vice & disorder, its common enemy.”

Truthfulness is at the foundation of all personal excellence. Even Muhammad’s enemies vouched for his honesty. It exhibits itself in conduct. It is rectitude – truth in action, and shines through every word & deed. It means reliability & convinces other men that it can be trusted. And a man is already of consequence in the world when it is known that he can be relied on, – that when he says he knows a thing, he does know it,—that when he says he will do a thing, he can do & does it. Thus reliability becomes a passport to the general esteem & confidence of mankind.

In the affairs of life or of business, it is not intellect that tells so much as character, – not brains so much as heart, – not genius so much as self-control, patience & discipline, regulated by judgment. Hence there is no better provision for the uses of either private or public life, than a fair share of ordinary good sense guided by rectitude. Good sense, disciplined by experience & inspired by goodness, issues in practical wisdom. Indeed, goodness in a measure implies wisdom – the highest wisdom – the union of the worldly with the spiritual. The correspondences of wisdom & goodness are manifold; and that they will accompany each other is to be inferred, not only because men’s wisdom makes them good, but because their goodness makes them wise. Muhammad’s (p) goodness is renowned.

It is because of this controlling power of character in life that we see men exercise an amount of influence out of all proportion to their intellectual endowments. They appear to act by means of some latent power, some reserved force, which acts secretly, by mere presence. As can be said of all the Prophets, “their virtues were their means.” The secret is, that the aims of such men are felt to be pure & noble, and they act upon others with a constraining power.

The man of energetic character is inspired by a noble spirit, whose actions are governed by rectitude, and the law of whose life is duty. He is just & upright, – in his business dealings, in his public action, and in his family life—justice being as essential in the government of a home as of a nation. He will be honest in all things – in his words & in his work. He will be generous & merciful to his opponents, as well as to those who are weaker than himself.

The career of a great man remains an enduring monument of human energy. The man dies & disappears; but his thoughts & acts survive, and leave an indelible stamp upon his race. And thus the spirit of his life is prolonged & perpetuated, moulding the thought & will, and thereby contributing to form the character of the future. It is the men that advance in the highest & best directions, who are the true beacons of human progress. They are as lights set upon a hill, illumining the moral atmosphere around them; and the light of their spirit continues to shine upon all succeeding generations.

It is natural to admire and revere really great men. They hallow the nation to which they belong, and lift up not only all who live in their time, but those who live after them. Their great example becomes the common heritage of their race; and their great deeds & great thoughts are the most glorious of legacies to mankind. They connect the present with the past, and help on the increasing purpose of the future; holding aloft the standard of principle, maintaining the dignity of human character, and filling the mind with traditions & instincts of all that is most worthy & noble in life. Character, embodied in thought & deed, is of the nature of immortality. The solitary thought of a great thinker will dwell in the minds of people for centuries until at length it works itself into their daily life & practice. It lives on through the ages, speaking as a voice from the dead, and influencing minds living thousands of years apart. Thus, Moses & David & Solomon, Plato & Socrates & Xenophon, Seneca & Cicero & Epictetus, Noah & Jesus & Muhammad still speak to us as from their tombs. They still arrest the attention, and exercise an influence upon character, though their thoughts be conveyed in languages unspoken by them and in their time unknown.

So Muhammad (p) left behind him, as one of the greatest treasures, the example of a stainless life – of a great, honest, pure, and noble character – a model for the world to form themselves by, in all time to come. His greatness did not so much consist in his intellect, his skill, and his genius, as in his honour, integrity, truthfulness, his high & controlling sense of duty – in a word, in his genuine nobility of character. Surmounting difficulty is the crucible that forms character. What immense difficulties he surmounted!

PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S Character THE MOST CHERISHED BEQUEATHMENT TO HUMANITY

Some are born, like Prophet Muhammad (p), with spiritual immune systems that give rejection to the illusory worldview grafted upon them from birth through social conditioning. They begin sensing that something is amiss, and start looking for answers. Inner knowledge & anomalous outer experiences show them a side of reality others are oblivious to, and so begins their journey of awakening. Each step of the journey is made by following the heart instead of following the crowd & by choosing knowledge over the veils of ignorance. In happiness & unhappiness, in joy & sorrow, in success & failure, in victory & defeat; in religion, business, and circumstances; in all the issues of life, the determining factor is character. In the mentality of individuals lie the hidden causes of all that pertains to their outward life. Character is both cause & effect. It is the doer of deeds & the recipient of results. Heaven & hell, are contained within it.

The character that is impure & vicious will experience a life from which the elements of happiness & beauty are lacking, wheresoever they may be placed.

A pure & virtuous character will show forth a life that is happy & beautiful.

As you make your character, so will you shape your life. All outward oppression is but the shadow & effect of the real oppression within. Nature magically suits a person to their fortunes, by making them the fruit of their character.

AND YOU, O MUHAMMAD, STAND ON AN EXALTED STANDARD OF CHARACTER.

The excellent moral character of a man is alleged as ground for **accepting his statements** about things which he **cannot** possibly have known. Character is one of the greatest motive powers in the world. In its noblest embodiments, it exemplifies human nature in its highest forms, for it exhibits man at his best. Men of genuine excellence, in every station of life – men of industry, of integrity, of high principle, of sterling honesty of purpose – command the spontaneous homage of mankind. One such man was Muhammad (p) who said: “By their good character, a believer will attain the degree of one who prays during the night & fasts during the day.”

It is natural to believe in such men, to have confidence in them, and to imitate them. All that is good in the world is upheld by them, and without their presence in the world it would not be worth living in.

Although genius always commands admiration, **character most secures respect**. The former is more the product of brain-power, the latter of heart-power; and in the long run it is the heart that rules in life. Men of genius stand to society in the relation of its intellect, as men of character of its conscience; and while the former are admired, **the latter are followed**. Great men are always exceptional men; and greatness itself is but comparative. Indeed, the range of most men in life is so limited, that very few have the opportunity of being great. But each man can act his part honestly & honourably, and to the best of his ability. He can use his gifts, and not abuse them. He can strive to make the best of life. He can be true, just, honest, and faithful, even in small things.

In a word, he can do his Duty in that sphere in which Providence has placed him. Commonplace though it may appear, this doing of one’s Duty embodies the highest ideal of life & character. There may be nothing heroic about it; but the common lot of men is not heroic. And though the abiding sense of Duty upholds man in his highest attitudes, it also equally sustains him in the transaction of the ordinary affairs of everyday existence. Man’s life is “centred in the sphere of common duties.”

The most influential of all the virtues are those which are the most in request for daily use. They wear the best, and last the longest. Superfine virtues, which are above the standard of common men, may only be sources of temptation & danger. Burke has truly said that “the human system which rests for its basis on the heroic virtues is sure to have a superstructure of weakness or of profligacy.”

When Dr. Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury, drew the character of his deceased friend Thomas Sackville, he did **not** dwell upon his merits as a statesman, or his genius as a poet, but upon **his virtues as a man in relation to the ordinary duties of life**. “How many rare things were in him!” said he. “Who more loving unto his wife? Who more kind unto his children? Who more fast unto his friend? Who more moderate unto his enemy? Who more true to his word?” Indeed, we can always better understand & appreciate a man’s real character by the manner in which **he conducts himself towards those who are the most nearly related to him, and by his transaction of the seemingly commonplace details of daily duty**, than by his public exhibition of himself as an author, an orator, or a statesman. Such a civilized picture has always been drawn of Muhammad (p). Many uncivilized persons in this 21st century act on the fleeting impulses of an unstable nature... abusing their families. They need the Prophet’s example. He said: “The best of you are those who are best to their families.”

Intellectual culture has no necessary relation to purity or excellence of character. In religious scriptures, appeals are constantly made to the heart of man and to “the spirit we are of,” whilst allusions to the intellect are of very rare occurrence. “**A handful of good life**,” says George Herbert, “**is worth a bushel of learning**.” Not that learning is to be despised, but that it must be **allied to goodness**. Intellectual capacity is sometimes found associated with the meanest moral character with abject servility to those in high places, and arrogance to those of low estate. A man may be accomplished in art, literature, and science, and yet, in honesty, virtue, truthfulness, and the spirit of duty, be entitled to take rank after many a poor & illiterate peasant.

“You insist,” wrote Perthes to a friend, “on respect for learned men. But don’t forget that largeness of mind, depth of thought, appreciation of the lofty, experience of the world, delicacy of manner, tact & energy in action, love of truth, honesty, and amiability – that all these may be **wanting in a man who may yet be very learned**.”

When some one, in Sir Walter Scott’s hearing,

made a remark as to the value of literary talents and accomplishments, as if they were above all things to be esteemed & honoured, he observed, “God help us! what a **poor world this would be if that were the true doctrine!** I have read books enough, and observed and conversed with enough of eminent and splendidly-cultured minds, too, in my time; but I assure you, I have heard **higher sentiments from the lips of poor UNEDUCATED** men and women, when exerting the spirit of severe yet gentle heroism under difficulties and afflictions, or speaking their simple thoughts as to circumstances in the lot of friends & neighbours. We shall never learn to feel and respect our real calling & destiny, unless we have taught ourselves to consider everything as moonshine, **compared with the education of the heart**.”

Still less has wealth any necessary connection with elevation of character. On the contrary, it is much more frequently the cause of its corruption and degradation. Wealth & corruption, luxury & vice, have very close affinities to each other. **Wealth, in the hands of men of weak purpose, of deficient self-control, or of ill-regulated passions, is only a temptation & a snare** – the source, it may be, of infinite mischief to themselves, and often to others. On the contrary, a condition of comparative poverty is compatible with character in its highest form. A man may possess only his industry, his frugality, his integrity, and yet stand high in the rank of true manhood.

When Luther died, he left behind him, as set forth in his will, “no ready money, no treasure of coin of any description.” He was so poor at one part of his life, that he was under the necessity of earning his bread by turning, gardening, and clockmaking. Yet, at the very time when he was thus working with his hands, he was moulding the character of his country; and he was morally stronger, & vastly more honoured & followed, than all the princes of Germany.

Character is property. It is the noblest of possessions. It is an estate in the general goodwill & respect of men; and they who invest in it – though they may not become rich in this world’s goods – will find their reward in esteem & reputation fairly & honourably won. And it is right that in life good qualities should tell – that industry, virtue, and goodness should rank the highest – & that the really best men should be foremost.

Simple honesty of purpose in a man goes a long

IN THE MESSENGER OF GOD YOU HAVE A
BEAUTIFUL PATTERN OF CONDUCT

Quran 33: 21

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