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## Self-Development in Islam: Ways and Methods

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### Abstract

The development concept is a broad and widely understood term and philosophy. Its active presence is ever-present in the multidimensional process of life cycle. The continuous process of development leads to the pinnacle of development. The development of the material side of man is visible and recognized, likewise, the development of its immaterial aspect (souls) is essential. A person is composed of body and soul. Balanced development of both sides of the human being gives recognition to a complete and fulfilled human being. The soul is the main director of the body. The effectiveness and success of his material development depends to a large extent on the development of the soul. The best of creation is seated in the best seat of mankind through the proper development of the soul. Philosophy and principles that play an important role in the development of the soul, it will undoubtedly be identified as a role model for building a developed and ideal human society for generations to come.

**Keywords:** Forms of Self-improvement, Murakabah, Quran and Hadith, Self-Purification.

### Introduction

Mankind is the best creation of Allah. Allah Almighty has blessed mankind with conscience. Like other living creatures, six elements length, width, girth, physical body, feelings, free movement, etc. are present in humans, but the main power of knowledge and intelligence has been given to mankind only by conscience. So people should be held accountable for their actions. Humans are guided by conscience and other living creatures such as animals and birds are not guided by knowledge and conscience, they are guided by emotions. So there is no accountability for their actions. There is no reward for good deeds and punishment for bad deeds. Man can climb to the highest peak of improvement and reach the bottom of degradation through the actions he pursues. Allah Ta'ala has given man this special ability to make him the best of creation or the worst of

creation. So that people can check good and bad, excellent and inferior, etc. Prophets and Messengers have been sent as teachers of mankind. They taught people in the light of Allah's revelation, awakened conscience, freed the nation from sin and corruption, and gave the right direction to the path of Allah. By following and imitating the teachings of the Prophets, they have become the best children of the nation. Ashraful has been blessed with the intention of the creation of Allah, the Great Creator. Continued pursuit of that education will undoubtedly take them to higher heights of development. If the trend of development continues, mankind will reach its desired goal. Life at this time will be an unimaginable nest and abode of paradise-like peace and harmony. As the best model and ideal of mankind, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), the leader of the Prophets and Messengers, gave the basic development guidance to the world, which is the only direction for eternal development and proper development. It is essential to properly follow the basic principles as instructed by the Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) if mankind is to get the benefits of real development. In following the path shown by him lies the final destination of ultimate progress.

## The form of self-development

### Self-Development

Allah Ta'ala created humans as Ashraful Makhluqat. He has given the seat of excellence among the creation. Man attains the seat of excellence through his deeds. Superior deed makes one sit in the highest seat, and inferior deed makes inferior beings. This action is performed through the five senses. The main director of the five senses is the soul. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said, *ألا وإن في الجسد مضعفة، إذا صلحت، صلح الجسد كله، وإذا فسدت، فسد الجسد كله، ألا وهي القلب* "Know! There is one flesh in the body. If it is corrected, the whole body will be corrected. If it is destroyed, the whole body will be destroyed. And that is the soul." (Bukhari, 1986)

The union of both the soul and the body makes man endowed with wisdom and the perfect man is formed. Islam has given guidelines for the balanced development of both body and soul. Therefore, Islam is recognized as a perfect way of life. Materialists have created consumerism by emphasizing only the development of the body to the exclusion of the development of the soul. Rather Islam has fully signed by drawing attention to the development of both body and soul. So the dynamic process of improving from the lowest class of soul i.e. animal instincts to human instincts is self-development. It is said about general development—"A dynamic process which involves change plus growth" (Michael P. Todaro). Therefore self-improvement is the process of improving from lower self to higher self through taking care. Regarding development, Allah Ta'ala says,

*لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَن طَبَقٍ* "Surely you will ascend one level after another" (Quran 84: 19). Just as there are specific principles and ideals for economic development and social development, some principles also play an effective role in self-improvement. Among them, I will try to present the important ways and methods below.

### 1. Sincerity

The first principle of self-improvement is sincerity or devotion, which is the lifeblood of every action. It is the most precious secret action of the heart and the highest in dignity. All the rules of Islam are founded on the pillar of sincerity. The only criterion for every act of a servant to be

acceptable to Allah or not is devotion. Therefore, performing any deed for the sake of Allah's satisfaction is devotion. Allama Yusuf Karjawi ((RA) said,

إن أساس القبول لأي عبادة هو إخلاص القلوب لله تعالى

"The basis or condition for any worship to be accepted is the sincerity of the heart for Allah Ta'ala". (al-Qarawi, 2009) Allama Qusayri (R.A.) said,

الإخلاص إفراد الحق سبحانه في الطاعة بالقصد

"Devotion is to obey Allah Ta'ala alone in sincere obedience". (al-Qushayri, 1998) Allama Abu Ali ad Daqqaq (RA) said, فالمخلص لا رياء له، والإخلاص التوقي عن ملاحظة الخلق،

"Sincerity is to be free from observation of creation. Therefore, a faceless person has no worldliness". (Previous, p. 301) Shaykh Junaid al-Boghdadi (RA) said، الإخلاص سر بين الله وبين العبد، لا يعلمه ملك فيكتبه ولا شيطان فيفسده ولا هوي فيميله

"Devotion is a secret between Allah and the servant. What no angel knows, who writes. No devil knows, who destroys, and what is not a virtue, to which people are attracted." (Previous, p. 302) Therefore the opposite of Devotion is Riya. Allah Ta'ala says، "They were only commanded to worship Allah with sincerity" (Quran 98:5). In this verse, Allah Ta'ala did not simply ask to worship: rather He commanded to worship sincerely with a pure heart. He also said،

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ

"I have revealed this book to you in truth. Therefore, worship Allah with sincerity". (Quran 39:2). He also said، "قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ" "Say, I have only been commanded to worship Allah with devotion" (Quran 39: 11). He also said، "قُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْبُدُ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ دِينِي" "Say! I only worship Allah Ta'ala with devotion" (Qur'an 39: 14). Sayyiduna Abu Umama (RA) narrated that a person came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said،

...أَرَأَيْتَ رَجُلًا غَزَا يَلْتَمِسُ الْأَجْرَ وَالذِّكْرَ مَا لَهُ؟ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: لَا شَيْءَ لَهُ فَأَعَادَهَا ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ يَقُولُ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: لَا شَيْءَ لَهُ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَقْبَلُ مِنَ الْعَمَلِ إِلَّا مَا كَانَ لَهُ خَالِصًا وَابْتِغَايَ بِهِ وَجْهَهُ

"That person what do you say about the one who strives for reward and fame, what is there for him? The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, there was nothing for him. Thus the man repeated three times. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said three times, nothing for him. Then he (SAW) said, Allah Ta'ala accepts only sincere and devoted deeds for Him, which are done for His pleasure" (Nasa'i, 1986). Therefore, the key to progress in all areas is devotion and sincerity towards Allah.

## 2. Strong Confidence

One of the principles of self-improvement is strong confidence. In Islamic terms that is called Yaqeen. To be so rooted in the heart, with which the relationship of the heart is established like the relationship visible. Where no doubt or skepticism works. And this is the final stage of faith. Just as life is necessary for the body, Yaqeen is necessary for faith. So Yaqeen is equivalent to the soul for faith. Regarding the nature of Yaqeen, Shaykh Junayd al-Boghdadi (RA) said،

اليقين هو استقرار العلم الذي لا يتقلب ولا يحول ولا يتغير في القلب.

"Yaqeen is the firmness of knowledge, which does not change and transform in the heart". (Zawziyyah, 2002) Allama Jurjani (RA) said,

اليقين هو طمأنينة القلب، على حقيقة الشيء وتحقيق التصديق بالغيب، بإزالة كل شك وريب.

"Yaqeen is to establish faith in the reality of something and to establish faith in the unseen by removing doubts" (Jurjani, 1985)

Sayyiduna Abdullah Ibn Abbas (R.A.) said, "Yaqeen is complete faith" (Bukhari, 1986) Allama Ibn Taymiyyah (RA) said, الصَّبْرُ نِصْفُ الْإِيمَانِ، وَالْيَقِينُ الْإِيمَانُ كُلُّهُ

"Patience is half of faith and Yaqeen is full faith." (Zawziyyah, 2002). Three levels of Yaqeen are particularly notable in Islam: 1. Ilmul Yaqeen; Cognitive rigor. 2. Ainul Yaqeen; Visual acuity. 3. Haqqul Yaqeen; Practicality. The third type is considered the highest level of Yaqeen. Yaqeen is one of those heart excellent qualities, through which the beloved servants of Allah attain excellence in the world. Due to this unique quality, people are always ahead in the world of deeds. Therefore, Allah Ta'ala says at the beginning of the Qur'an, distinguishing the strong believers who are distinguished by the quality of Yaqeen from others by guidance and success,

﴿وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ \* أُولَئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ﴾

"And those who believe in what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you, and those who are certain of the Hereafter. They are the ones who have been guided by their Almighty, and they are the successful ones"(Quran 2: 4-5). So confidence and strong trust are the basis of development.

### 3. Good manners

Virtue or honest character is called Husnus Suluk (حسن السلوك) or Husnul Khuluk (حسن الخلق) in Arabic. Husnun means beauty and excellence, used in contrast to ugliness. And the words Khuluk and Suluk are used in the meaning of nature and behavior. So Husnul Khuluk means good behavior or good character. One of the most important principles of self-improvement is virtue. This superior character makes people like friends and enemies, irrespective of caste and creed. It also plays a leading role in achieving self-purification by making people the best for everyone. Sayyiduna Ali (RA) said,

حسن الخلق في ثلاث خصال؛ اجتناب المحارم وطلب الحلال والتوسعة على العيال.

"Husnul Khuluk or beautiful character exists in three behaviors; 1. Abstaining from haram things 2. Seeking halal things and 3. Kindness to family members"(Manahizu, p. 336). The famous Muhaddith Abdullah Ibnul Mubarak (RA) said about good character,

هو بسط الوجه وبذل المعروف وكف الأذى.

"It is the cheerfulness of face, striving for good deeds and refraining from harming (people)" (Muttalib, 2013) Allama Ibnul Qayyim (R.A.) said,

إن حسن الخلق يقوم على أربعة أركان، وهي: الصبر والعفة والشجاعة والعدل.

"Husnul Khuluk or honest character is based on four basic things. That is-1. Patience or endurance, 2. Character integrity, 3. Valor and 4. To be fair" (Zawziyyah, 2002). In this regard, Allah Ta'ala commanded the beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) and said,

﴿خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ﴾ (O Prophet!) Cultivate the habit of forgiveness, enjoin (people) to do well and avoid the foolish and ignorant"(Quran, 7: 199). The Prophet (PBUH)

followed the Quran perfectly. He was a living and moving Quran. He possessed all good manners and virtues. Allah Ta'ala praises his character and says, ﴿وَأِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ﴾

"Surely you are possessed of a great character". (Quran 68:4) Therefore, the virtue of good behavior is the unique feature of becoming the beloved of the Prophet (PBUH) and being close to him on the Day of Resurrection. In a hadith narrated by Sayyiduna Jabir (R.A.), the Prophet (S.A.W.) said,

إِنَّ مِنْ أَحَبِّكُمْ إِلَيَّ وَأَقْرَبِكُمْ مِنِّي مَجْلِسًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَحْسَنُكُمْ أَخْلَاقًا

"He who has the best character and behavior is the most beloved of you to me and will be very close to me on the Day of Resurrection" (Isa, 1988). Not only that, good behavior and good manners are an informal and advanced form of worship, more weighty than any other deed in the world. Sayyiduna Abu Darda (R.A.) narrates that the Prophet (S.A.W.) said,

مَا شَيْءٌ أَثْقَلُ مِنْ مِيزَانِ الْمُؤْمِنِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنْ خُلُقٍ حَسَنٍ

"On the Day of Resurrection, nothing will weigh more on the scale of a believer than good deeds." (Isa, 1988) Therefore, good character and good conduct are very important for climbing to higher heights of progress.

#### 4. Humility

The most beautiful principles of self-improvement are modesty and humility. This is one of the characteristics of the believers and the opposite of arrogance is the elevated nature. This quality plays an important role in uplifting human dignity and building mutual goodwill. This essential quality of self-improvement is an incomparable indicator of the excellence and greatness of the individual. As a humble Muslim becomes the favorite of Allah Ta'ala, he becomes the object of praise for all. Allama Ragib Isfahani (R.A.) introduced modesty and humility and said,

رضا الإنسان بمنزلة دون ما يستحقه فضله ومنزلته. وهو وسط بين الكبر والصَّعَة، فالصَّعَة: وضع الإنسان نفسه مكانًا يزري به بتضييع حقه. والكبر: رفع نفسه فوق قدره.

"Man is satisfied with a rank lower than his deserved rank. This is the stage between pride and baseness. Baseness is when people lower their rights and bring themselves down to an abominable place. On the other hand, pride is exalting oneself above one's dignity". (Asfahani, 1980) Hafiz Ibn Hajar Asqalani (RA) said about modesty,

المراد بالتواضع إظهار التنازل عن المرتبة لمن يراد تعظيمه

"The purpose of Tawadu or modesty is to lower one's rank in order to show respect to the person". (Askalani, 1959). When Allama Fudwail Ibn Ayadwa (R.A.) was asked about humility, he said, يخضع للحق وينقاد له ويقبله ممن قاله.

"Bowing before haqq or truth and obeying it and accepting whatever the right says" (Zawziyyah, 2002). Islam has always emphasized the virtue of modesty and humility to earn the pleasure of Allah through specific statements in the Qur'an and Hadith. In this context, Allah Ta'ala says, ﴿وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا﴾

"The servants of the Most Gracious (Allah) are those who walk in the world humbly and when fools (ignorant) speak to them, they speak peaceably" (Qur'an, 25: 63) Allama Saadi (RA) said,

“This is the characteristic of those people who behave in humility and humility towards Allah and His creation” (Saadi, 2000). Thus the Prophet (PBUH) said,

ما نقصت صدقة من مال، وما زاد الله عبداً بعفوٍ إلا عزاً، وما تواضع أحد الله إلا رفعه الله

"If you give sadaqah, your wealth does not decrease, Allah exalts the status of a forgiving person, and if someone humbles himself for the sake of Allah's pleasure, He exalts his status". (Hajjaj, 2008) Allah Ta'ala will raise the status of people of modest and humble character in both this world and the Hereafter. Love in the hearts of people in the world is honored through creation and reward in the Hereafter. Therefore, adorning the human spirit with modesty and humility is an essential demand for self-improvement.

## 5. Honesty

Honesty is one of the most noble and respectable qualities of the human spirit. If the seed of honesty is planted in the human soul, it can eradicate all kinds of evil qualities. This essential quality of the soul is considered to be a very precious jewel of ordinary human life. Honesty plays an important role in all forms of trust, comfort, and tranquility due to its wide influence on individual and social life. Because of honesty, the soul of humans gets success everywhere in the world and the hereafter. Without an honest and pure soul, a believer can never achieve the desired success. Therefore, it is very important to have the quality of honesty in self-improvement. Imam Ragib Isfahani (R.A.) said,

الصدق مطابقة القول الضمير والمخبر عنه معاً، ومتى انخرم شرط من ذلك لم يكن صدقاً تاماً

"Honesty or truthfulness is that the words of the mind and the statement of the mouth are one and consistent. When one condition of both is defective, it will not be defined as complete honesty". (Asfahani, 1980)

Allama Ibn Aqeel (RA) said, هو الخبر عن الشيء على ما هو به.

"It is to report something as it is" (Aqeel, 2008)

Allah Ta'ala said, يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ

"O you who believe! Fear Allah and stay with the truthful" (Quran 9:19). That is, O followers of Islam, fear Allah Ta'ala! Immediately after saying this, He advised to ensure the company of honest and truthful people. Without the virtue of honesty, it is never possible to fear Allah or obey His commandments. Therefore, the believer must acquire piety by being characterized by the virtue of honesty in all aspects of life. Allah Ta'ala will reward the truthful on the Day of Resurrection and will say to the truthful,

﴿قَالَ اللَّهُ هَذَا يَوْمُ يَنْفَعُ الصَّادِقِينَ صِدْقُهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ﴾

"Allah will say, this is the Day when their truthfulness will benefit the truthful. For them are gardens beneath which rivers flow. They will abide therein forever. Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Allah. This is a great success". (Quran 5:119) The Prophet (PBUH) said, إِنَّ الصِّدْقَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْبِرِّ وَإِنَّ الْبِرَّ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَإِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَصْدُقُ حَتَّى يَكُونَ صِدْقًا

"Surely, honesty guides people towards goodness and goodness reaches Paradise. People who persist in honesty eventually attain the door of 'Siddiq' (Bukhari, As Sahih, 1986). Honesty leads people to the path of goodness, the path of righteousness. Striving to follow the path of truth at one time paves the way for people to become truthful. Which is one of the essential qualities of self-improvement.

## 6. Company

As a social being, people have to come close to people of various professions. Different thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes greatly influence people's lives. Righteous intimacy purifies the heart of man and wrongful intimacy pollutes the heart and leads it to destruction. So one of the essential qualities of self-improvement is companionship or closeness. Imam Isfahani (R.A.) said about companionship,

الصاحب: الملازم، إنسانا كان أو حيوانا أو مكانا أو زمانا، ولا فرق بين أن تكون مصاحبته بالبدن أو بالعناية والهمة، ولا يقال في العرف إلا لمن كثرت ملازمته

"A partner is an associate. Be it man or animal or place or time. Whether companionship is physical or through importance and interest makes no difference. However, achieving excessive intimacy is only considered companionship in terms" (Asfahani, Al Mufradat Fi Garibil Quran, 1980). When the Prophet (PBUH) was asked about good and good proximity, he said,

مَنْ ذَكَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ رُؤْيَيْتُهُ، وَزَادَكُمْ فِي عِلْمِكُمْ مَنْطِقُهُ، وَذَكَرَكُمُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَمَلُهُ

"Whom the meeting or nearness reminds you of Allah, whose uttered words increase your knowledge and whose actions remind you of the Hereafter" (Al-Haythami, 1991). Therefore, every step of life following the guidance of Allah's beloved servants and acting according to the Qur'an and Hadith is the name of honest companionship or honest company. The company of good people not only makes the life of the world happy; Rather, it is a unique means of attaining paradise by remaining firm and steadfast in the path of Allah in an easy way.

والإمام مالك رحمه الله عندما سأله رجل بقوله: يا إمام قل لي على عمل يدخلني الجنة فرد مالك وقال له يارجل عليك بحب الصالحين لعل الله يطلع على قلب واحد منهم يجد اسمك مكتوبا في قلبه فيغفر الله لك ويدخلك الجنة

"A man said to Sayyiduna Imam Malik (RA), O Imam! Tell me a deed that will take me to Paradise. In reply, Imam Malik (R.A.) said, Make it obligatory upon yourself to be sincere towards the honest people. If Allah wills, He will write your name in the hearts of some of them, then he will ask forgiveness of Allah Ta'ala for you, and finally He will admit you to paradise" (Hulul, 2006). The bad company diverts people from the Hereafter and turns towards the world. Allah Ta'ala instructed the Prophet (PBUH) to avoid the company or company of those people and said,

﴿فَاعْرِضْ عَنْ مَنْ تَوَلَّىٰ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَلَمْ يُرِدْ إِلَّا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا﴾

"So (O Messenger!) Whoever turns away from My remembrance and desires nothing but the worldly life, you should ignore him" (Qur'an 53: 29). That is, the ultimate stage of one's thought, knowledge, time and action is the delusion of the world. It is a goal in which no welfare is implied (Kasir, 2004). Allah Ta'ala instructs the believers to fear Him as well as take the companions of the truthful and says,

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ﴾

"O believers! Fear Allah and be with the truthful." (Qur'an 9:119) Fear Allah according to the demands of faith and those who show honesty in word, deed, and various adverse environmental conditions (Saadi, 2000). In this world, people are tied to each other in various bonds, but on the Day of Judgment, none of the bonds or relationships that are common in this world will be useful. On that day, only mutually beneficial relations for the sake of the pleasure of Allah Almighty will be beneficial. Only among the Muttakis, this kind of sincere friendship develops. Allah Ta'ala is making it clear,

﴿الْأَجْلَاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ إِلَّا الْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

"On that day friends will become enemies of each other, except the righteous." (Qur'an 43:67) The Prophet (PBUH) warned his followers about the fine example of good company and bad company, the effects and consequences of fearing both,

مَثَلُ الْجَلِيسِ الصَّالِحِ وَالْجَلِيسِ السَّوِّءِ كَمَثَلِ صَاحِبِ الْمِسْكِ وَكَبِيرِ الْحَدَّادِ لَا يَغْدَمُكَ مِنْ صَاحِبِ الْمِسْكِ إِذَا تَشَنَّرَ بِهِ ، أَوْ تَجِدُ رِيحَهُ وَكَبِيرُ الْحَدَّادِ يُحْرِقُ بَدَنَكَ ، أَوْ ثَوْبَكَ ، أَوْ تَجِدُ مِنْهُ رِيحًا خَبِيثَةً

"The good company and the bad company are like the musk sellers and the workers. You will not return empty-handed from the perfume seller. Either you will buy perfume, or smell it. On the other hand, the sweat of the worker, either will burn your body or your clothes, or you will smell its stench" (Bukhari, 1986). Therefore the association of righteous people is very important for self-improvement

## 7. Self-criticism

Self-criticism in Islamic terms refers to mental preparation for accountability. Which is called Ihtisab or Muhasabah. In this regard, Allama Ibnul Qayyum (R.A.) said, المحاسبة وهي التمييز بين ماله وما عليه، فيصحب ماله ويؤدي ما عليه.

"Muhasabah is to distinguish between what is good and what is bad for him. So that he can take what is good for himself and fulfill the duties assigned to him" (Zawziyyah, 2002) Allah Ta'ala says,

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ﴾

"O believers! Fear to Allah Ta'ala. Every person should think about what he sends for tomorrow. Keep fearing Allah Ta'ala. And Allah is aware of what you do" (Quran 59:18). A self-critical heart is highly respected by Allah Ta'ala. So He swore by a reproving heart. He says, ﴿وَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ﴾

"I also swear by the Nafs, which despises itself" (Qur'an, 75:2). By the reproving Nafs is meant the heart of man which rebukes him for evil deeds and encourages good deeds. Allah Ta'ala has placed like every human being a spirit that rebukes him for doing evil. This unique quality of self-criticism has crowned man with excellence in creation. A self-critical person is no ordinary person; rather, he is the wisest and clever person. The Prophet (PBUH) said,

الْكَيْسُ مَنْ دَانَ نَفْسَهُ، وَعَمِلَ لِمَا بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ

"He who is wise is his own. Controls the nafs and works for the life after death" (Abu, 1981). Imam Tirmidhi (RA) said, "It is essential to control the nafs and make self-criticism in this world before being accountable to Allah in the Hereafter (Isa, 1988). So self-criticism leads to a higher peak of improvement.

## 8. Striveness

Mujahada in Arabic means to make an effort, expend hard work, and strive. Any effort in the path of religion is called Mujahada or Jihad. It also includes armed effort, i.e. fighting in the way of Allah Ta'ala. Moreover, peaceful hard work and self-purification are also part of Jihad (Usmani, 2015). Effort and struggle are known as Mujahada in Islamic terms. Allama Ragib Isfahani (RA) said,

الجهاد والمجاهدة: استقراغ الوسع في مدافعة العدو.

"Jihad and Mujahadah are to eliminate the ability to face the enemy" (Asfahani, Al Mufradat Fi Garibil Quran, 1980). He said Mujahadah is of three types: 1. Struggle with public enemy 2. Struggle with evil and 3. Struggle with Nafs. These three types are included in the verses described below. Allah Ta'ala says,

﴿وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ﴾

"Strive in the way of Allah, as you should strive." (Quran 22: 78) Allah Ta'ala also said, ﴿وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا﴾ "Those who strive in My way, I will certainly guide them to My way" (Quran 29: 69). The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, ﴿جَاهِدُوا أَهْوَاءَكُمْ كَمَا تُجَاهِدُونَ أَعْدَاءَكُمْ﴾ "You Struggle against the desires of your heart, as you struggle against your enemies" (Asfahani, Al Mufradat Fi Garibil Quran, 1980). The Prophet (PBUH) also said,

﴿الْمُجَاهِدُ مَنْ جَاهَدَ نَفْسَهُ فِي اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ﴾ "The real mujahid is he who strives in the way of Allah." (Isa, 1988) Therefore, comprehensive efforts and continuous strives are very necessary for self-improvement.

### 9. Murakabah (Islamic Meditation)

The Arabic word Muraqabah means to observe or monitor one another. Man firmly believes in all his situations and activities that Allah Ta'ala is watching over him. He is aware of what his limbs are achieving and he is aware of the hidden mysteries of his latent mind. We can call this belief of a Muslim towards Allah Ta'ala as Muraqabah. Allama Ibnul Qayyim (R.A.) said, دوام علم العبد، وتيقنه باطلاع الحق سبحانه وتعالى على ظاهره وباطنه فاستدامته لهذا العلم واليقين، هي المراقبة "Murakabah is for a servant to be steadfast in his permanent and firm belief in the observation of Allah Ta'ala in secret and public matters" (Zawziyyah, 2002). Allama Hasan Ibn Ali Ad Damghani (R.A.) said, عليكم بحفظ السرائر، فإنه مطلع على الضمانر "Be careful about your secret matters." It must be because Allah Ta'ala is aware of your hearts" (Affani, 1997). Some scholars said, من راقب الله في خواطره عصمه في حركات جوارحه "He who fears Allah in his heart, Allah will protect him in the use of his body parts". Allama Ibnul Qayyim (R.A.) said, المراقبة هي التعبد باسمه "الرقيب، الحفيظ، العليم، السميع، البصير" فمن عقل هذه الأسماء، وتعد بمقتضاها، حصلت له المراقبة

"Murakabah is the worship of Allah's name and the names of Rakheeb, Al Hafiz, Al Alim, As Sami, Al Basheer, etc. Whoever understands the meaning of these names and worships according to the demands of the names, will achieve Murakabah (Zawziyyah, 2002). Allah Ta'ala says, ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا﴾ "Surely Allah Ta'ala is watching over you (Qur'an 4:1) Allama Ibn Kasir (RA) commented on this verse, "Surely Allah watches all your deeds and conditions" (Kasir, 2004). Allah Ta'ala said in the Holy Qur'an describing the words of Jesus (A.S), ﴿فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي كُنْتُ أَنْتَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ﴾

"Then when You transferred me, You are aware of them" (Qur'an 5: 17). Allama Shawqani (RA) said in the explanation of this verse, the original meaning of Muraqabah is to oversee. So this verse means Allah is their protector, aware of them, and their witness (Shawqani, 2007). Allah Ta'ala said, ﴿أَلَمْ يَعْلَم بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرَى﴾

"Does he not know that Allah sees?" (Qur'an 96:14) That is, does he (Abu Jahl) not know that Allah Ta'ala is witnessing all actions? When he is trying to stop the Prophet (PBUH) from performing his Ibadah (Tabari, 2000). So this kind of Muraqabah will undoubtedly take people to a higher peak of progress.

### 10. Abstinence

(Al Wara) means to be abstinent or pious. A good character protects the believer from various religious temptations and questionable acts and through this quality, one can attain the highest status of faith. The original form of Al-Wara' is to avoid the actions that Allah Ta'ala has

prohibited for the believer and the danger of getting involved in the forbidden. As well as all kinds of precepts and actions that lead to follow seriously. Allama Sayyid Zurjani (RA) said about the identity of الوَرَع (Al-Wara), الورع هو اجتناب الشبهات خوفا من الوقوع في المحرمات.

"Al-Wara is to abstain from doubtful acts for fear of falling into the haram" (Jurjani, 1985). Famous Muhaddith Sufian Sawri (RA) said,

مَا رَأَيْتُ أَسْهَلَ مِنْ الْوَرَعِ، مَا حَاكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ فَاتْرُكْهُ

"I have never seen anything as simple as abstinence. Avoid that which arouses doubt in your mind" (al-Qushayri, 1998). Allama Abu Sulaiman Ad-Darani (RA) said,

.الرضا. "Al-Wara' is the main Zuhd (abstinence) just as a little satisfaction is the main satisfaction" (Zawziyyah, 2002). After that, abandoning all kinds of doubtful matters and harmful to the Hereafter, one should engage in clear and harm-free work. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

دَعْ مَا يَرِيْبُكَ إِلَى مَا لَا يَرِيْبُكَ فَإِنَّ الصِّدْقَ طُمَأْنِينَةٌ وَإِنَّ الْكُذْبَ رِيْبَةٌ

"Leave that which you doubt, and accept that which has no possibility of doubt. For truth is peace and comfort and falsehood is doubt" (Isa, 1988). Allah Ta'ala said, (وَتِيَابَكَ فَطَهِّرْ) "Do pure your clothes" (Qur'an 74:4). Here the Nafs is referred to as clothing in a metaphorical sense. It will mean you purify your soul from the impurities of sin. الوَرَع (Al Wara) or abstinence removes the impurities of the heart and makes the heart clean and pure as water removes the dirt and impurity of clothes. In this regard, there is direct and indirect harmony between cloth and heart. Therefore, the outer clothing of a person reveals his true form inside. The following hadith is one of the four basic hadiths in the hadith treasury of Islam

مَنْ حُسِنَ إِسْلَامُ الْمَرْءِ تَرَكَّهُ مَا لَا يَغْنِيهِ

"One of the virtues of a person's Islam is the avoidance of useless behavior" (Isa, 1988). The Prophet (PBUH) summarized all types of Wara in this hadith. Non-verbal behavior will include all the overt and un-overt movements of human beings like speech, action, hearing, sight, energy, thought, and movement. That is why it is not befitting for a believer to do anything. A pious person is like that in the world, as well as respected by Allah Ta'ala. So the Prophet (PBUH) advised Sayyiduna Abu Hurairah (RA), يَا أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ كُنْ وَرِعًا ، تَكُنْ أَعْبَدَ النَّاسِ

"O Abu Hurairah! Be circumspect, then you will become a great worshiper" (Isa, 1988). The famous Sufi Ibrahim Ibn Adham (R.A.) said,

الورع ترك كل شبهة، وترك ما لا يعينيك.

"Al Wara is to avoid every doubt and to avoid matters that are not necessary for you." (al-Qushayri, 1998)

## 11. Turning away from the world

Arabic Juhod means to ignore and turn aside. Being turned away from the beauty of the world and disdainful of worldly matters is called Juhod. He who despises the lust and glitter of the world is called in Arabic 'Zahid fi ad Dunya' or a person who turns away from the world. Being endowed

with the virtue of Juhud is essential for self-improvement. To whom the beauty of this world is very insignificant in front of the endless blessings of the Hereafter, the world is as great as a distraction. You can be blessed with quality. Shaykh Junayd Bogdadi (RA) said,

الزهد استصغار الدنيا ومحو آثارها من القلب

"Regarding the world as light and freeing the heart from its influence" (Zawziyyah, 2002). The famous Sufi Ibrahim Adham (R.A.) said,

الزهد فراغ القلب من الدنيا لا فراغ اليد، وهذا زهد العارفين، وأعلى منه زهد المقربين فيما سوى الله تعالى من دنيا وجنة وغيرهما  
"Juhud is the freeing of the heart from the world, not the hand of action. This is the Juhud of the Arifeen of Allah. But a higher level of Juhud than this is the Juhud of the Mukarribeen (those who are approached) which means turning away from the world, even paradise, and everything except Allah Ta'ala" (Shabarkhiti, 1922). Some educated people have completely rejected this unique feature of Islam by calling Juhud un-Islamic. They think that Juhud is an infiltrating innovation, which secretly entered Islam from Christian asceticism or foreign religious culture. This kind of idea they have about Juhud can be easily guessed by the lowness of their knowledge about Islam if you look at the hadiths related to Juhud. Not only that, the world-famous Muhaddith of Hadith, Amir al-Mu'minin Fil Hadith, Imam Bukhari (R.A.), and various other Muhaddiths have arranged chapters called Kitabuz-Juhud.

Sayyiduna Sahl Ibn Sa'd As Saidi (R.A.) narrates, a man came to the Prophet (S.A.W.) and said،  
ذُلِّي عَلَى عَمَلٍ إِذَا أَنَا عَمَلْتُهُ أَحَبَّنِي اللَّهُ وَأَحَبَّنِي النَّاسُ؟ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: إِنْ هَذَا فِي الدُّنْيَا يُحِبُّكَ اللَّهُ، وَإِنْ هَذَا فِيمَا فِي أَيْدِي النَّاسِ يُحِبُّكَ النَّاسُ

"O Messenger of Allah! Tell me a deed that will make me love Allah and the people of the world. Then the Prophet (SAW) SA) said to him, "You turn away from the world, then Allah will love you and turn away from what people have and they will love you" (Abu, 1981). Thus, there are numerous verses in the Holy Qur'an, where the world has been called a life of inferiority and deceit, and the servant has been instructed to leave the temptation of the temporary world and engage in the establishment of religion knowing the power and might of Allah Ta'ala. Allah Ta'ala says،

(إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِاللَّهِ الْغَرُورُ)

"Surely the promise of Allah is true. Therefore, let not the life of this world deceive you in anything. And let not evil, the great deceiver of Allah, deceive you in anything" (Qur'an 31: 33).

In another verse, Allah Ta'ala also said،

(وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهْوٌ وَلَعِبٌ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِیَ الْحَيَوَانُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ)

"This worldly life is nothing but sport. The life of the Hereafter is the real life if only they knew" (Qur'an 29: 64). So it is essential to be free from worldly delusions and attachments for self-improvement.

## 12. Performing Zikir

Another quality essential for self-improvement is the remembrance of Allah. The only way to enliven a dead heart is the remembrance of Allah. Allama Isfahani (R.A.) said،

الذكر تارة يقال ويراد به هيئة للنفس، وتارة يقال لحضور الشيء القلب أو القول ولذلك قيل: الذكر ذكران: ذكر بالقلب، وذكر باللسان

"Zikir is sometimes called and by it, a form of the heart is understood. Sometimes it is said the presence of something in the heart or mouth. Therefore, it is said that there are two types of Zikir: one. Zikir of the heart and two. Zikir of the mouth" (Asfahani, Al Mufradat Fi Garibil Quran, 1980). Zikir is the Quranic prescribed Islamic treatment to calm and calm the restless heart. Allah Ta'ala says،

﴿الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ﴾

"Those who believe and their hearts are at peace by the remembrance of Allah, know that their hearts are at peace by the remembrance of Allah" (Qur'an, 13:28). It is not possible for any traveler in the path of Allah to attain his identity without the remembrance of Allah. As a result of Zikir, the servant can purify the soul and gain nearness to Allah. Therefore, the stronger and bigger the tree of his Zikir, the more fruits he can enjoy. In this way, Zikir is the main basis for attaining various maqams or levels in the Tasawuf world. The word Zikir is used in the Holy Qur'an to mean different types of worship. Sometimes the Quran Majid is understood as Zikir. Allah Ta'ala says, ﴿إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ﴾

"I have sent down this book of advice (Qur'an) and I am its guardian" (Qur'an 15:19). Sometimes it came to mean prayer. Allah Ta'ala says,

﴿فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ﴾

"Then when the prayer is over, spread yourselves on the earth and seek the grace of Allah and remember Allah more and more that you may be successful" (Quran 62:9) In another verse the word Zikir is used to mean divine knowledge. Allah says,

﴿فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ﴾

"..So if you do not know, but ask those who know about (advice)" (Qur'an 21:7). In the above verses, the word Zikir is used indirectly in the meaning of each Zikir, even though it has different meanings. Because through all worship, Allah's name is mentioned and Allah is remembered. So remembering Allah Ta'ala is worship. However, in most places of the Holy Quran, the words of Zikr have been sent down in the meaning of Tasbeeh, Tahlil, Takbeer, and Blessing on the Prophet (PBUH), etc. Allah Ta'ala says,

﴿فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِكُمْ﴾

"When you finish the prayer, remember Allah (at all times) standing, sitting, and lying down" (Qur'an 4: 103). He also said, ﴿وَادْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلًا﴾

"Remember the name of your Lord and be absorbed in it with concentration" (Qur'an 74:8).

Allah Ta'ala says, ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمْ فِئَةً فَاثْبُتُوا وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ﴾

"O believer! When you face a team, be steadfast and remember more, that you may succeed." (Qur'an 8:45). In a hadith narrated by Sayyiduna Abu Musa al-Ash'ari (RA), the Prophet (PBUH) compared a heart immersed in the remembrance of Allah and a heart free from remembrance,

مَثَلُ الَّذِي يَذْكُرُ رَبَّهُ وَالَّذِي لَا يَذْكُرُ مَثَلُ الْحَيِّ وَالْمَيِّتِ "The example of one who remembers his Lord and one who does not remember his Lord like the dead and the living" (Bukhari, 1986). In Hadith Qudsi, Allah Ta'ala says,

يَقُولُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى أَنَا عِنْدَ ظَنِّ عَبْدِي بِي ، وَأَنَا مَعَهُ حِينَ يَذْكُرُنِي ، فَإِنْ ذَكَرَنِي فِي نَفْسِهِ ذَكَرْتُهُ فِي نَفْسِي ، وَإِنْ ذَكَرَنِي فِي مَلَأٍ ذَكَرْتُهُ فِي مَلَأٍ خَيْرٍ مِنْهُ

"I am near to My servant according to his thoughts. When he remembers Me, I am with him. If a servant remembers Me alone, I remember him alone. And if he remembers Me in a gathering then I also remember him in his best meeting" (al-Qushayri, 1998). Allama Fakhruddin Ar Razi (R.A.) said,

إن الموجب لدخول جهنم هو الغفلة عن ذكر الله تعالى، والمخلص من عذاب جهنم هو ذكر الله تعالى

"Indifference to the remembrance of Allah makes hell inevitable. On the other hand, the Zhikr of Allah Ta'ala paves the way for release from hell" (Razi, 2000). Shaykh Hasan Basri (R.A.) said, ما زال أهل العلم يعودون بالتذكير على التفكير، وبالتفكير على التذكر، ويناطقون القلوب حتى نطقت

"The wise still remember Allah Ta'ala through remembrance through deep meditation and deep the pursuit. They still speak to the inner soul and the inner soul speaks to them" (Zawziyyah, 2002). So there is no substitute for dhikr for self-improvement.

### 13. Repentance

Tawbah or repentance means to return or back. Tawbah is the return from a deplorable deed in the eyes of Islam to a reprehensible deed in Islam. This is the initial journey to becoming a friend of Allah and the secret key to the success of Allah's followers. So repentance is recognized as a prerequisite for moving to Allah. Allama Ibn al-Qayyim (RA) said,

التوبة هي رجوع العبد إلى الله ومفارقة لصرراط المغضوب عليهم والضالين

"Tawbah is the return of a servant to Allah and departure from the path of anger and misguidance." (Zawziyyah, 2002). Hujjatul Islam Imam Ghazali (RA) said, التوبة عبارة عن معنى ينتظم ويلتئم من ثلاثة أمور مرتبة: علم وحال وفعل.

"Tawbah refers to a meaning that consistently arranges three things: knowledge, status and action" (Ghazali, 2008). In the above definition, Allama Ghazali has defined Knowledge as being aware of the severity and harmful aspects of sin, changing the state by turning away from the state of sin, deed as giving up forbidden actions or halal earning and eating. Allah Ta'ala instructs in various verses to describe the way for a servant to be ultimately successful in this world and the hereafter by possessing the quality of repentance, ﴿وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ﴾

"O believer! Return to Allah, all of you, so that you may be successful" (Qur'an 24:31). He also said, ﴿اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ﴾ "Ask forgiveness from your Lord and return to Him" (Qur'an 11:52). Allah Ta'ala says, ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا توبوا إِلَى اللَّهِ توبَةً نَصُوحًا﴾

"O you who believe! Repent sincerely to Allah" (Qur'an 66:8). In a hadith narrated by Sayyiduna Ibn Mas'ud (RA), the Prophet (PBUH) said, "Repentance is tawbah" (Hibban, 1987).

Even though the Prophet (PBUH) was innocent, he repented daily to teach the Ummah. In a hadith narrated by Sayyiduna Agar ibn Yasar (RA), the Prophet (PBUH) said,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ توبوا إِلَى اللَّهِ، فَإِنِّي أَتُوبُ فِي الْيَوْمِ مِائَةَ مَرَّةٍ

"O people! Seek repentance and forgiveness from Allah. For I repent a hundred times a day" (al-Qushayri, 1998). Imam Nabvi (RA) said that it is obligatory to repent for every sin. If the relation of the sin is between the servant and Allah Ta'ala, i.e. human rights are not involved, then there are three conditions for repentance from such sin to be accepted. Namely 1. Refraining from sins committed, 2. Repentance for actions, 3. Make a firm promise never to indulge in this sin in the future. Therefore, if any one of these three conditions is violated Repentance will not be pure. However, if the sin committed is related to human rights, then there is one more condition in addition to the above three conditions. And that is to get rid of his rights. If the right is related to money then it must be returned to the owner. If it is a person's exclusive personal

rights or slander or the dignity of such a person is concerned, then an apology should be sought from that person ( (Usaymin, 1997). Therefore repentance is the key to self-improvement.

#### 14. Dependence on Allah

Tawakkul means to trust and depend on Allah. And the biggest gift of the Muslim faith is this Tawakkul. Tawakkul is an important way to gain peace of mind and worldly happiness. Allama Jurjani (RA) said, التوكل هو الثقة بما عند الله، واليأس عما في أيدي الناس

"Tawakkul is trusting in what is with Allah Ta'ala and despairing of what is with man" (Jurjani, 1985). Form of Tawakkul Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (RA) said in the narration,

التوكل عمل القلب، ومعنى ذلك أنه عمل قلبي، ليس بقول اللسان، ولا عمل الجوارح، ولا هو من باب العلوم والإدراكات

"Tawakkul is a deed of the heart. It means that it is not a deed of the soul, words of mouth and limbs. It is also not a matter of knowledge and understanding" (Zawziyyah, 2002). Allama Qusayri (RA) said, التوكل محله القلب، والحركة بالظاهر لا تنافي التوكل بالقلب

"The place of Tawakkul is the heart. Therefore, external actions are not inconsistent with the Tawakkul cherished in the heart" (al-Qushayri, 1998)

Imam Ghazali (RA) said,

قد يظن الجهال أن شرط التوكل ترك الكسب وترك التداوي والاستسلام للمهلكات، وذلك خطأ لأن ذلك حرام في الشرع، والشرع قد أثنى على التوكل، وندب إليه فكيف ينال ذلك بمحظوره

"Foolish people sometimes think that the prerequisite of Tawakkul is to drive oneself towards destruction by avoiding income and treatment. It is grossly wrong to do so. Because such work is prohibited in Sharia. Moreover, Tawakkul is a commendable virtue in Shari'ah, which is one of the representative parts of Islamic Shari'a. Therefore, on the one hand, is it possible to get involved in the prohibited activities of Islam, and on the other hand, is it possible to gain the virtue of Tawakkul?" (Ghazali, Al Arabain Fi Usulut Din, 1996). Therefore, for self-improvement, one must depend on Allah.

#### 15. Be satisfied with Allah's decision

In Islam, a special level of the heart above sabar or patience is called Ar Ridwa Bil Qaza, or being satisfied with Allah's decision. If he can rise to this level, he evaluates every creation of Allah as goodness and mercy. Riza is a level of soul that, if confirmed, enables one to face major worldly calamities with firm faith. Rather, no matter how much danger comes to him, he will accept it with joy. It is mainly due to true knowledge of Allah Ta'ala and true love for Him.

Therefore, all the sufferings of the world seem insignificant in front of the love of Allah. As a result, just as he thanked God in times of happiness, he accepted all sorrows and hardships with a smile. Scholars have presented their analysis by determining the nature of Riza. Among them the following two definitions are applicable. Allama Zurjani (RA) said, الرضاء سرور القلب بمر القضاء

"Riza is done to feel peace in the heart after a difficult decision from Allah" (Jurjani, 1985) Allama Barkawi (R.A.) said, الرضا طيب النفس بما يصيبه ويفوته مع عدم التغير

"Riza is a sense of ease without reaction to gain or loss" (Nabloosi, 2001). A truly happy person is satisfied with Allah's decision in any matter, good or bad. He is the one who feels more relaxed and calm. Because he does not feel the impression of anxiety, anger, and resentment when he is ready to accept the judgment of Allah Ta'ala directly without looking for any good or bad. So it is

not the real rich who possess great abundance, but the abundance of faith and contented hearts is the real abundance. One of the five important pieces of advice that the Prophet (PBUH) gave to Sayyiduna Abu Hurairah (RA) was –

وَارْضَ بِمَا قَسَمَ اللَّهُ لَكَ تَكُنْ أَغْنَى النَّاسِ

"If you are pleased with what Allah Ta'ala has decreed for you. You will be considered the most self-reliant of people" (Isa, 1988). The Prophet (PBUH) associated being happy with Allah's judgment with experiencing the taste of Iman. He said,

ذَاقَ طَعْمَ الْإِيمَانِ مَنْ رَضِيَ بِاللَّهِ رَبًّا ، وَبِالْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا ، وَبِمُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ رَسُولًا

"He has tasted Iman who accepts Allah as Lord, Islam as Deen and Accepted Muhammad (pbuh) as a Messenger with a satisfied heart" (al-Qushayri, 1998). He (PBUH) also said,

مِنْ سَعَادَةِ ابْنِ آدَمَ رِضَاهُ بِمَا قَضَى اللَّهُ لَهُ وَمِنْ شَقَاوَةِ ابْنِ آدَمَ تَرْكُهُ اسْتِخَارَةَ اللَّهِ وَمِنْ شَقَاوَةِ ابْنِ آدَمَ سَخَطُهُ بِمَا قَضَى اللَّهُ لَهُ

"Allah is pleased with what Allah has decreed for the children of Adam is his luck. And it is his misfortune to leave the supplication of goodness to Allah Ta'ala and to be unhappy with Allah Ta'ala's decision." (Isa, 1988). Allah Ta'ala says,

﴿يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ \* ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَرْضِيَّةً \* فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي \* وادْخُلِي جَنَّاتِي﴾

"O tranquil soul! Return to your Lord satisfied" (Qur'an 89: 27-28). So to enter Paradise, the heart must first return to Allah with a satisfied heart. Only a satisfied heart can enter paradise. No one has the right to be dissatisfied with the decision of Allah and the Messenger (PBUH). Be it related to people's world or hereafter. Allah Ta'ala said,

﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا مُبِينًا﴾

"If Allah and His Messenger make a final decision on a matter, no believing man and believer women have no rights over themselves. Whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he is in open transgression" (Qur'an 33:36). So it is essential to be satisfied with Allah's decision for self-improvement

## 16. Satisfaction

Being satisfied with little is one of the best human traits. Through this quality, people can enjoy a comfortable life with little satisfaction. In Islamic terms, this is called Qanaah. Qanaah in general means being content with what one has. Allama Suyuti (RA) said,

القناعة: الرضا بما دون الكفاية، وترك التشوف إلى المفقود، والاستغناء بالموجود

"Being satisfied with what is insufficient, giving up hope for what is lost and considering what is sufficient" (Suyuti, 2004). Sayyiduna Ibn Abbas (RA) said, "Satisfaction is a wealth that never runs out" (Rabbihi, 1987). Sayyiduna Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz (R.H.) said,

"The greatest understanding is contentment and preservation of the tongue" (Abdullah, 1989). Allah Ta'ala says,

﴿مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أَنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾

"Whoever does good deeds and is a believer, male or female, I will give him a pure life and reward them according to their best deeds" (Qur'an 16: 97). In the explanation of this verse by Sayyiduna Hasan Basri (RA) says, 'A holy life means a contented life. On the authority of Sayyiduna Ibn Umar (RA), the Prophet (PBUH) said, قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَرُزِقَ كَفَافًا وَقَنَعَهُ اللَّهُ بِمَا آتَاهُ

"Whoever is fortunate enough to accept Islam, who is given the minimum amount of sustenance and Allah Ta'ala gives him the power to be content with what he has bestowed upon him, has achieved success in that life" (al-Qushayri, 1998). So a person who acquires the above qualities will be able to reach the desired goal and enjoy great success in both this world and the hereafter. Therefore, being content with little is fundamental to self-improvement.

### 17. Patience

Although the word Sabar is Arabic, it is equally used in the Bengali language. The literal meaning of sabar is to bind and restrain. As Allah Ta'ala says in the Holy Qur'an,

﴿وَأَصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْعَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ﴾

"Keep yourself with those who call upon their Lord in the morning and evening seeking His pleasure" (Quran 18:28). Faith is divided into two parts. One part is patience and the other part is gratitude. So sabar or patience is half of faith. In the definition of patience, the famous Sufi Junnun Misri (R.H.) said,

الصبر هو التباعد عن المخالفات والسكون عند تجرع غصص البلية وإظهار الغنى عند حلول الفقر بساحة المعشبية

"Patience is refraining from doing the opposite, remaining calm and quiet in the face of danger, and showing ease when there is difficulty in living" (Allan, 1993). Allah Ta'ala commands patience, saying,

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ﴾

"O you who believe! Be patient, be firm in the face and stand firm in defending the border"(Qur'an 03:200). It is clear from the above verse that the meaning of the word patience is very broad. It has various branches. According to this verse, there are three types of patience. 1. being steadfast in obedience to Allah Ta'ala, 2. Suppressing the urge to live from vice, 3. Enduring suffering (Qur'an 03: 200) The Prophet (PBUH) identified patience as a precious gift from God.

Narrated Sayyiduna Abu Saeed Khudri (RA), the Prophet (PBUH) said,

"No one has been given a better and greater blessing than patience" (Bukhari, 1986). So patience plays an important role in self-development.

### 18. Gratitude

Gratitude is one of the highest virtues of a believer. Because it involves the human heart as well as the face and body parts. Not only that, the virtue of gratitude pervades numerous physical and spiritual acts of worship, like patience, and contented voluntary praise to Allah. Allama Ibn Uzaybah (R.A.) said,

هو فرح القلب بحصول النعمة مع صرف الجوارح في طاعة المنعم والاعتراف بنعمة المنعم على وجه الخضوع

"Using one's limbs in obedience to the Bestower and feeling joy in the mind at receiving that boon. At the same time expressing gratitude to the Bestower with obedience and humility" (Ahmad, 2003). According to Allama Jurjani (RA), Gratitude is,

الشكر هو صرف العبد جميع ما أنعم الله عليه من السمع والبصر وغيرهما إلى ما خلق لأجله

"Gratitude is Allah's gift to the servant. Blessing means using the blessings of ears, eyes, etc. in the work for which they were created" (Jurjani, 1985). Allah Ta'ala has commanded people to worship in remembrance of Him in gratitude for His blessings. He has directly mentioned to people the description of His innumerable and endless blessings. And indirectly he says to possess the quality of gratitude. He says, فَادْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ

"So remember Me, and I will remember you, and Express My gratitude; Do not be ungrateful" (Qur'an 02:152). He also said, مَا يَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ بِعَدَائِكُمْ إِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ وَأَمْنْتُمْ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ شَاكِرًا عَلِيمًا

"If you become grateful and believe (in truth), what will Allah punish you for? Allah is Merciful, All-Knowing" (Qur'an 02:147). In a hadith narrated by Sayyiduna Anas Ibn Malik (RA), the Prophet (PBUH) said,

ما أنعم الله على عبد نعمة فقال الحمد لله إلا كان الذي أعطاه أفضل مما أخذ

"Whenever Allah bestows a blessing on a servant, if he says, "Alhamdulillah", it is (praise) of things given to him much better than " (Abu, 1981). Therefore, gratitude is an extraordinary virtue, which directs the way to self-improvement.

### 19. Charity

Charity and generosity are one of the moral and character virtues that the Holy Quran has given special importance to. Allah's blessings on people, i.e. money, and wealth, will not only benefit him but he will also spend it on other servants of Allah and they will also benefit. So its scope is wide. Giving is one of the virtues of the Muttaqis who were guided by Allah Ta'ala at the beginning of the Holy Qur'an. He said about generosity – «وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ» "And of all that I have given them, they spend for My servants" (Qur'an 02:06). In another verse, he says,

﴿مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنبُلَةٍ مِائَةٌ حَبَّةٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾

"The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed, from which seven grains grow. Each grain contains a hundred grains. Allah is Most Beneficent, All-Knowing" (Qur'an 02: 261) Allama Ibn Kasir (RA) said, "Those who are in the way of Allah and only His, this example is presented to show that by spending for pleasure, they will double the reward of that charity (Kasir, 2004). That is, if you spend in the way of Allah, you will get seven hundred times the reward. Allah gives more to whom he wills. Note that charity means any money that is spent for the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala. Zakat, Sadaqah, and general charity are all included in it (Qur'an 02:261). According to Allama Kirmani (R.), charity is

الجود إطاء ما ينبغي لمن ينبغي "Charity is giving the right thing to the right person" (Zubaidi, 1965). Allama Jurjani (RA) said, الجود صفة هي مبدأ إفادة ما ينبغي لا بعوض

"Giving and generosity is a virtue, which is also a principle of providing appropriate benefits without recompense" (Jurjani, 1985). A giver is a fortunate person, whom Allah Ta'ala appoints angels from the sky daily to seek the reward of his charity. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

مَا مِنْ يَوْمٍ يُصْبِحُ الْعِبَادُ فِيهِ، إِلَّا مَلَكَانِ يَنْزِلَانِ. فَيَقُولُ أَحَدُهُمَا: اللَّهُمَّ أَعْطِ مُنْفِقًا خَلْفًا. وَيَقُولُ الْآخَرُ: اللَّهُمَّ أَعْطِ مُسْبِكًا تَلْفًا

"Every morning two angels descend. One of them says, 'O Allah! Reward the giver well for his charity, and the other says, 'O Allah! Destroy the miser'" (Bukhari, 1986). In a hadith narrated by Sayyiduna Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri (RA), He (PBUH) said,

مَنْ كَانَ مَعَهُ فَضْلٌ ظَهَرَ، فَلْيُعْذُ بِهِ عَلَى مَنْ لَا ظَهَرَ لَهُ، وَمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ فَضْلٌ مِنْ زَادٍ، فَلْيُعْذُ بِهِ عَلَى مَنْ لَا زَادَ لَهُ

"Whoever has an additional means of ascension? If there is, he should help him with it who has no vehicle. The one who has extra food should help him with it, and the one who does not have food" (al-Qushayri, 1998). Imam Nabvi (R.A.) in the explanation of this hadith said, through this hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) taught people to give charity, benevolence, generosity, compassion, helping the needy, instructing above all to be kind to creation (Nabbi, 1972). So charity and generosity make an unprecedented development in every field of human life. Its important contribution to spiritual and human development is undeniable.

### Conclusion:

Finally, in view of the above discussion, we can say that there is no alternative to self-improvement for the sake of self-interest in the creation intention of mankind. Through self-improvement, people can have more respect than angels in the sight of Allah. With the correct application of these basic principles, the common believer will be considered a loyal servant who is close to Allah and satisfied. He is close to Allah in the correct judgment of the practical level, he will be rewarded with various rewards in this life and the Hereafter and will be considered as the closest friend of Allah by ascending to the highest peak of prosperity. In the words of Allah –

(أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ \* الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ \* لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَى فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْأَجْرَةِ لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ) "Know! The friends of Allah have no fear nor will they grieve. For those who believe and practice piety, there is glad tidings in the life of this world, and in the Hereafter, there is no change in the word of Allah; this is the great success".

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