

Good News

'...And give good news to those who do good (to others)' – Holy Quran 22:37

February 2019

A Publication of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, South Africa Volume 10 No. 02

Timeless Wisdom of an African Saint

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'And certainly We gave **Luqman** wisdom, saying: Give thanks to Allah. And whoever is thankful is thankful for his own soul; and whoever denies, then surely Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praised.' - Holy Quran 31:12

Chapter 31 of the Holy Quran is entitled '**Luqman**' in honour of that great Ethiopian sage whose wise teachings are preserved in the Holy Quran for the benefit of humanity.

Ibn Kathir, the respected 14th century Muslim historian and

commentator of the Holy Quran relates the following report about the identity of Luqman in his book *Stories of the Prophets*¹:

'Ikrimah on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas (May Allah be pleased with him) said that he (Luqman) was an Ethiopian slave who worked as a carpenter.'

The majority of scholars, though, are of the view that Luqman was not only an extra-ordinary wise sage, but also a righteous servant of God, who was gifted with 'saintly' revelations but was not a prophet.

'Luqman' of the Holy Quran

Luqman, we are told in the Holy Quran, received wisdom from

¹ Cf. *IqraSense.com*

the greatest Source of Wisdom, namely, the All-Knower, the one and only Supreme Lord of all the Worlds.

His guidance to his son, we will see, is indeed indispensable in the ‘grass roots’, moral shaping of not just the individual but of the nation.

We are already witnessing, on a daily basis, especially in this country, that nations that neglect to implement their adopted higher ethical standards and moral values from the very start, eventually succumb to corruption and are destined to fail.

The divinely inspired guidance Luqman gave to his people, one might argue, is very basic; but its efficacy, if put into practice and upheld by all, should not be underestimated.

So what are these sublime teachings of Luqman, the African Saint, that are of such great value to humankind?

1. Gratitude to Almighty God

Luqman is reminded to give thanks to God Almighty so that he does not lose his ‘humanity’.

‘Whoever is thankful is thankful for his soul’

We know all too well that a mindset bereft of gratitude to one’s Benefactor from on High or even to deserving humankind such as parents, for example, inevitably breeds selfish tendencies that stifle the soul and gives birth to heartless villains.

What does it mean to be ‘thankful’ to God?

To be thankful to God Almighty, however, means we should use our God-given faculties to the maximum for the good of all humankind and the rest of creation.

Think of it in this way; if you were a farmer and some benefactor, be it a private or government sponsor that gave you the best tools to work the land in order to grow a crop with the goal of reaping sustainable benefits from it; and let’s say you decide to sit around idle and

let the equipment rust away instead of making optimum use of it. That would be the height of ingratitude you are showing to your benefactor. So our talents, intellects, our senses; sight, hearing, touch, tongues, are God-Given tools that should be put to good use for the development of our own souls and society at large. This is how we show gratitude to Almighty Allah, our Benefactor, Who gave us life. This way we will not be paying mere lip service when we thank and praise Him in our daily prayers and meditations.

2. Do not set up partners with Almighty Allah

The Holy Quran continues the narrative of Luqman by sharing with us the good advice he gave to his son; advice that will for generations serve as a guiding light for all societies regardless of race, religion or nationality.

He implores his son thus:

‘O my son, do not ascribe a partner to Allah.’ - 31:13

This is a very important lesson especially for our vulnerable youth who are so easily inclined to idolize someone they admire; be it a peer at school, an entertainer, a sportsperson, a teacher, a parent, a cleric...the list goes on. This trait is present in adults too for how often don't we see, nowadays, how people will die for their leaders or even commit the worst atrocities at their bidding, directly or indirectly, as if they are 'gods' that have to be obeyed at all costs. This type of behaviour is but just another form of idol-worship so toxic in our 'so-called' civilized societies. Thus we find that despite the allegiances and blind loyalty these human crafted deities enjoy, they so often, out of sheer weakness, miserably disappoint and the worshipper ultimately has to submit to the fact that only God Almighty is free from all forms of weakness. The prophet Jesus, on whom be peace, addressing an enquirer who lauded him, reminded us of this when he told him:

‘Why do you call me good?’...
 ‘No one is good - **except God alone.**’ - Mark 10:17-19

3. Gratitude towards parents:

Our God-Given humanity is most probably most manifested and pronounced in our bond with parents. No matter the circumstances, the bond between mother and child is inseparable or at least most difficult to sever. Thus the importance of the home as the ‘nurturing ground’ for the development of future generations cannot be over emphasised. The parents’ vital role in this is acknowledged and we are reminded to give thanks to them:

And We have enjoined on man concerning his parents – his mother bears him with fainting upon fainting and his weaning takes two years – saying: Give thanks to Me and to thy parents. To Me is the eventual coming. – 31:14

Our gratitude to God Almighty, our great Benefactor thus

extends to the parents as well. The two goes hand in hand; this goes without saying, for how can we say that we are thankful to Allah that is Unseen if we do not care about those closest to us that we can see, such as our parents who cared for us when we were young and weak and reared us?

It is therefore with utter disgust that these days we witness a growing trend of disrespect and a ‘care less’ attitude toward parents emerging in a ‘techno-charged’ young society. It is this culture of ill-discipline, the flagrant disregard and disrespect for the parents, teachers, the elderly and those in authority that ultimately leads to a complete breakdown of the ethical and moral fabric of society and thus as a result the nation suffers. This beckons an urgent need to restore a culture of gratitude as a start. And it all starts in the home, though not forgetting the important role places of worship and secular institutions play as well.

We need to teach our children from a young age to say ‘thank you’ and for the parent it is important be aware of the positive effects on the child if the parent leads by example and gives thanks to a deserving child when the occasion to do so arises. In this way the seeds of a culture of mutual ‘gratitude and respect’ between elders and the youth will be planted at grass roots level with the hope that its positive spinoffs will flow over into the rest of society.

4. Delinquent Parents should not be obeyed – but treated kindly

The Holy Quran, however, prohibits obedience to such parents that strive to persuade or indoctrinate a child to set up partners with God Almighty. The Holy Quran instructs:

‘Obey them not, and keep kindly company with them in this world’ - 31:15.

‘Setting up partners with God’ here also talks to those parents that encourage immoral lifestyles such as drug and alcohol consumption,

fornication, prostitution, bribery etc., as well.

Islam thus strikes an equitable balance at the very root of our upbringing in favour of a ‘righteous, God-fearing’ lifestyle, even, if in the quest of doing so, it might entail disobedience to a ‘loved one’ such as a parent.

5. Take responsibility for your actions

Luqman teaches his son:

O my son, even if it be the weight of a grain of mustard-seed, even though it be in a rock, or in the heaven or in the earth, Allah will bring it forth. Surely Allah is Knower of subtilities, Aware - 31:16

There is no escaping the Divine Law of ‘cause and effect’ that operates throughout the universe. The consequences of good or bad deeds will be manifested. Many are under a delusion that their evil deeds would somehow just disappear and be forgotten and that they would not be held accountable

and thus escape punishment. But they are told that the consequences of their deeds will be manifested at some point in their lives whether here or in the Hereafter and they will ultimately be held accountable for whatever they did.

6. Keep up Prayer

O my son, keep up prayer

and enjoin good and forbid evil, and bear patiently that which befalls thee. Surely this is an affair of great resolution.

31:17

Luqman knows that a mindset of responsibility and accountability can only be developed and sustained once there is a true connection with Almighty Allah. He therefore tells his son to ‘**keep up prayer**’ which is more than telling him to just say the ritual prayer. ‘**Keeping up of prayer**’ has a much higher and deeper significance in that it entails communion with Almighty Allah with humility and sincerity of heart. ‘**Keeping up**’ means he should

elevate his prayers to this higher level at all times. It is this sincere communion with our Life Source, the ***Rabbul Alameen***, the Nourisher, Sustainer and Fosterer to perfection of the entire creation that will help us to subdue those lower passions of animality common in all of us and make it possible for the good qualities latent in us to surface and flourish.

7. Enjoin good and forbid evil - 31:17

‘Enjoining good and forbidding evil’ are noble acts that are inspired by our communion with Almighty Allah and are therefore inseparable from the prayer. Luqman, inspired by the Almighty, not only tells his son NOT to commit evil but is encouraging him to be actively engaged in doing good by also opposing all forms of evil and not to be a mere ‘fence-sitter’ indifferent to the woes of humankind.

8. Bear patiently that which befalls thee – 31:17

Luqman teaches his son the important lesson of bearing with patience any difficulties and challenges life throws at him. Young people, misled by a false world of ‘glitz and opulence’, popularised by the media and advertising moguls, often find it difficult to cope when faced with hardship or challenges of any kind. Many of them, whose endurance span of patience under trial is low or non-existent, end up losing any faith they might have had and commit suicide. That happens because most young people, generally, want everything to run smoothly all the time. They do not realise that this is not how things happen in the real world we live in. We need challenges and upheavals at times for our growth and character building. It works on the same principle as the student or athlete, who has to work hard, from early in the morning until late at night in order to succeed. By developing the qualities of gratitude referred to

above by not wasting away God-Given talents and attributes and reach out to Almighty God, will develop the much needed patience and endurance they need in order to cope and face life’s challenges head on.

9. Respect for fellow-man

Luqman then draws his son’s attention to the importance of treating fellow human beings with respect and dignity:

And turn not thy face away from people in contempt, nor go about in the land exultingly. Surely Allah loves not any self-conceited boaster.
31:18

In just about every society in the world including here in South Africa we come across ‘elitist’ communities that think their high salaried jobs and positions of power give them the right to look down upon other less fortunate ones. We are warned here that conceit and boastfulness and treating others with contempt are traits that Almighty

Allah dislikes. This ‘dislike’ from on High will soon manifest in the dislike of fellow human beings. To put it mildly, people will see through their superficiality and soon they will have to face the scorn of the people; for no one likes an arrogant, pompous boaster who thinks he or she is beyond reproach.

10. Set proper goals based on righteousness, keep a civil tongue and avoid the loud and ignorant

Luqman *Hakim* (the Wise) then continues and tells his son

And pursue the right course in thy going about. And lower thy voice. Surely the most hateful of voices is the braying of asses.’ – 31:19

The ‘**right course**’ is made up of a combination of all the above values he taught his son that ought to now serve as a practical ‘life fulfilling’ road map for success for

him and humanity at large – and these are:

- To be grateful to Almighty GOD at all times by keeping your soul alive and using your God-Given talents for the good of humanity; and NOT to associate anyone with Him.
- To show gratitude and to be respectful and kind towards your parents, except those who wish to turn you away from righteousness – but continue to keep cordial relations with them.
- Have regular communion with Almighty God through prayer in order to generate good qualities within.
- Be an activist in the way of good and forbid evil.
- Be patient in times of difficulty and when facing life’s challenges.
- Do not treat people with contempt and do not behave

arrogantly and boastfully in the land.

- Keep a civil tongue and avoid being influenced by the repetitive mantras of the ignorant (**braying of asses**).

It is regrettable that we often find the sensible protestations of right-minded ‘peace loving’ people being drowned into the background by the **asinine outpourings** of mischief makers. You hear their noises at political rallies, on social and news media networks, from the pulpits, etc. It is these noises that often comprise incitement to hatred that turn ‘vulgar dim-wits’ into killers. The Holy Quran refers to this empty rhetoric when it says: ‘Surely the most hateful of voices is the braying of asses.’

Conclusion – Lessons for all time

The wisdom of these noble lessons of Luqman Ḥakim to his son have been immortalised by the Holy Quran to help serve as a basis for the development of good character, so

vital in the process of ‘**nation building**’. It is our duty now to see to its implementation as a matter of urgency if we are even remotely hopeful of saving our much valued humanity from the self-destruction we are heading for.

God Bless Luqman Ḥakim!



We strongly condemn all Acts of Aggression and Terror including all Violations of Basic Human Rights specifically those carried out in the Name of Religion or State!

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