Faith, Spirituality, and Character: An Overview of The Qur'ānic Principles of a Successful Life

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ABSTRACT

From Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics to modern psychologists such as Martin Seligman (b.1942), it has been an old-age human quest to know the principles of success, happiness, and fulfillment. In the rapidly changing modern world, defining the concept of a 'successful and happy life' through the teachings of various philosophies has become an important and popular study. A great number of self-help books and research articles are being published to teach the principles and practices of success. Different ideologies and philosophers suggest different principles of success. Some of which may be effective while some may not be. It is important to explore the most authentic and reliable principles of success. For this article, the literature review of the Qur'ānic verses has been conducted under a governing question: What is true success, and how to attain it in the light of Qur'ān? The goal of this study is to identify the Qur'ānic view and principles of success and examine their validation for immediate socioeconomic success as well as the ultimate bliss. This article has attempted to define the concept of true success, explore the best pathway to success, and elaborate on the essential principles of fulfillment in the light of Islam. The researchers have used the qualitative method to analyze Qur'ānic verses with deductive reasoning as their research methodology.

Introduction

All want to succeed, only a few know what true success is and how to attain it. Success depends a great deal on how you define and measure it. The concept of success varies from one person to another, but all concepts converge in the pursuit of 'happiness'(Ko & Cho, 2022). "Happiness is a positive emotional state characterized by feelings of utmost joy, inner satisfaction, contentment, and self-fulfillment. It is a profound experience of ecstasy, serenity, benediction, peace, and blissfulness where there is less or no fear and sadness." (Vedavati P. Surve And, 2020). People follow two different approaches to defining and attaining happiness based on their philosophy of life, worldview, ideology, and level of awareness. These

approaches can be categorized as external and internal views of success. The majority of people think that happiness is to attain something, and the sources of happiness are external and out there. A person's success is measured by the number of material resources he possesses. Hence, they tend to seek happiness by having more wealth(Noe, 2011), power, fame, designations, recognition, progress, influence(Dang-Pham et al., 2017), security, and social standing(Nisa & Solekah, 2022). They believe that the more material resources and social achievements they have, the happier they will be. This concept of success is linked with materialistic ideology, economic decision-making, institutionalization, system creation, and following a strategic approach to resource management (Daron Acemoglu & James A. Robinson, 2012).

Some people are of the view that happiness is to purify the human self from vices and eliminate false desires because the sources of happiness are internal, and the treasure is within. They seek happiness in being themselves and becoming more aware, awake, conscious, flourishing, and enlightened. They dig deep down themselves to experience happiness, ecstasy, and blissfulness. They prefer activities that develop self-awareness, self-purification, self-transformation, self-actualization, self-mastery, knowledge (Wolhuter, 2021), freedom (Lahmar, 2020), service of humanity, dedicated worship, meaningfulness, morality, and spirituality. They believe that the deeper they go, the more they will be filled with joy and bliss. The roots of this notion of success can be traced back to perennial philosophies, classic literature, and the world's religious traditions. These people set out on a journey to the vastness of the metaphysical world for intuitive experience to attain ultimate bliss (Osho, 1999). To decide which is the better approach to success and happiness, we need to first understand the nature of the human self, its potentialities, needs, motives, and aspirations. Once we gain clarity about the truth of the self, we can adopt a better approach to success and happiness.

Method

This study uses a literature approach taken from various reputable international journals as a force for finding strategies for integrating traditional music learning at the elementary school level. The researcher collects a number of studies related to this topic, and the results of this literature investigation are separated based on the differences and similarities in the research results stated by previous researchers. The strategy for finding reference sources is carried out using specific terms and is searched consistently by using the terms Faith, Spirituality, and Character. This method is to get results of literature searches that are relevant and contextual to the topics studied in this research. The researcher looks for sources

containing information regarding this research problem to maximize the findings of Faith, Spirituality, and Character.

Results and Discussion

Success does not find only in profession and finance, but rather in all aspects of life. If one area of life is lacking, then all others will suffer as well. The human personality consists of four major components-body, mind, heart, and soul, see Fig. 1. Each of them has different potential, different abilities, different priorities, and different aspirations to grow, give, and gain.
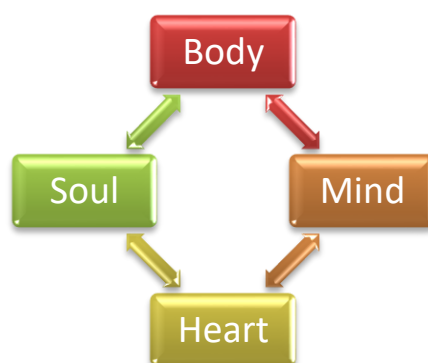
Fig 1. The human personality consists of four major components

The body is the first stage and material layer of the human personality. The human body is the juncture of all life experiences. It is the container of uncountable potentialities. We see how perfectly and elaborately the human (Diamond, 2010)(Yoshizato & Tateno, 2009) body has been created by Allah. All of its intricate functions run so perfectly that every second of our lives seems a miracle and testimony to the infinite greatness of Allah. Each one of the trillions of cells in our body fulfills its tasks perfectly as a result of Allah's perfect plan, so that we may lead our lives without any difficulty. In many cultures, the human body is seen as a vessel for the soul, therefore, is considered sacred. It is also seen as a manifestation of the divine and is, therefore, reversed. It must be treated with respect, love, and dignity. Fulfillment of physiological needs is essential to survival. We need adequate resources for physiological well-being. Quality food, proper nutrition, good sleep, a neat and clean environment, health facilities, and physical workout are essential requirements for our physical growth and safety.

The human mind refers to the group of cognitive psychiatric processes that include functions like attention, perception, memory, reasoning, analyzing, imagination, coordination, and creativity. Despite extensive research, the human mind is still a great mystery. Can you count the whirling, electric, and vibrating cells of the mind? No, not until you can count the sand grains on the ocean's shore. Not even the universe with all its countless galaxies represents greater wonder or complexity than the human brain. The core function of the human mind is to give meaning and rationale to a phenomenon through gathering information,

critical analysis, logical reasoning, and sound judgment. The human mind works better when it is challenged to solve problems and make informed decisions. Intellectual capital is the most important component of human personality. When the mind works well, life becomes magic. When it is down, life becomes a mess. Quality education, lateral thinking, scientific investigation, philosophical reasoning, and higher-order thinking skills are essential requirements for the transformation of the human brain to mind, mind to intellect, intellect to discernment, discernment to insight, insight to wisdom, and wisdom to enlightenment.

The metaphor 'heart' is used for emotional states, feelings, and inner environment. Human beings have immense emotional potential to experience love, compassion, and empathy. God reflects and life throbs in a compassionate, kind, loving, and empathetic heart(Fauchon et al., 2017). Trustworthy relationships, empathy, belongingness, compassion, recognition, love, and respect are the socio-emotional needs of every heart. A good social experience improves emotional intelligence which is the art of utilizing emotions for interpersonal effectiveness. Love is such a great and sacred emotion that it is considered the essence of existence. We are social beings, and our emotions need to be expressed. The human heart feels better when it is understood. A life without compassionate experience is not worth living(Kono & Walker, 2020)(Mellor, 2016).

The Soul: The soul is the deepest state of the human self which has the infinite potential to transcend the limits of time and space. The human soul is not meant for the material world. The longing of the soul is to immerse in the ocean of Ultimate Reality for limitless expansion, cosmic union, divine experience, and liberation from compulsiveness. For a spiritual experience, you need to liberate yourself from false identities and earthly bounds. You cannot become truly happy unless you listen to your soul. Self-awareness, self-purification, devotional worship, total submission to the will of God, reflective thinking, dedicated service, and contemplation on the purpose of life are necessary practices for spiritual elevation. These are all equally important components in finding success and feeling fulfilled. The basic framework of an 'ideally happy and successful life' can be imagined as a square, where each side of the square represents an essential dimension: physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. holistic well-being is the best term that reflects a sophisticated and balanced view of a truly successful life. It is, therefore, important to set goals in these four aspects of life.

Holistic Well-being and Islam

It is now clear that the secret to a happy life lies in maintaining balance and harmony between a healthy body, a creative mind, an empathetic heart, and a conscious soul. At this stage, a dilemma befalls us. Opting for material well-being may lead to a compromise of

spiritual growth, while focusing more on spiritual transformation may curtail socio-economic activities. Life becomes eventually imbalanced, and we remain unfulfilled. The challenge is not to be perfect; it is to be whole. The solution to this dilemma is to identify and follow an ideology that demands our whole being and transforms our whole potential. Since life is an indivisible whole, success is not just having more but also being or becoming more. But the difficulty is that most of the ideologies, philosophies, and strategies are limited in scope- either external or internal, either material or spiritual. Some ideologies, such as Western, are effective for economic prosperity. Some are good for mental enlightenment such as Buddhism, while others are great methods for spiritual elevation such as Eastern yogic and meditational traditions.

Only Islam is such an idealogy that deals with the whole person. The life of the Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is the perfect and the most beautiful example of a holistic and balanced life. He also established a society that was the best example of material, moral, and spiritual balance. The Islamic model of success is holistic, inclusive, and balanced. Islam gives equal importance to immediate success in this world and the ultimate bliss hereafter. Islam gives a program that is perfect for holistic well-being. The Holy Qur'ān says:

فَمِنَ ٱلنَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ رَبَّنَآ ءَاتِنَا فِي ٱلدُّنْيَا وَمَا لَهُۥ فِي ٱلْأَخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَٰقٍ ۞ وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَقُولُ رَبَّنَآ ءَاتِنَا فِي ٱلدُّنْيَا

حَسَنَةً وَفِي ٱلْأَخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ ٱلنَّارِ ۞ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبُواْ وَٱللَّهُ سَرِيعُ ٱلْحِسَابِ

"Among the people is he who says, "Our Lord, give us in this world," and he will have in the Hereafter no share. But among them is he who says, "Our Lord, give us in this world [that which is] good and in the Hereafter [that which is] good and protect us from the punishment of the Fire." Those will have a share of what they have earned, and Allah is swift in account." (al-Baqarah: 200-202)

The Right Path to Success

It is of utmost importance to follow the right path to live a successful, happy, and fulfilling life. Despite their hard efforts, many people fail; many of the best visions never get realized; highly potential and passionate individuals can't do something worthwhile; and thousands of fascinating ideas even fail to get translated into actions. Do you know why? Because they do not follow the right path to success. Allah says in Surah al-Mulk:

أَفَمَن يَمْشِى مُكِبًّا عَلَىٰ وَجْهِهِۦٓ أَهْدَىٰٓ أَمَّن يَمْشِى سَوِيًّا عَلَىٰ صِرَٰطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ

"Who is better guided: he who walks groveling on his face, or he who walks upright on a Straight Path"? (al-Mulk: 22)

There are various paths to choose from, and every path may be rewarding in different ways,

but the best path prevents us from succumbing to false directions and adopting unsound practices of conduct. The Holy Qur'ān advises us to follow the straight path which is the path of sound beliefs, universal principles, and moral actions. Muslims beseech Allah and pray many times a day in the following words:

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

"(O God!) Guide us to the right path; the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not those You are displeased with, or those who are astray." (al-Fatihah: 6-7)

The Holy Qur'an identifies those whom Allah guides to the right path of success:

وَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهَادِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

"And no doubt, Allah does guide the believers to the straight path." (al-Hajj: 54)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَ رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هذا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

"Verily, Allah is my Lord and your Lord too. So worship Him alone. This is the straight path." (Maryam: 36)

وَ مَنْ يَعْتَصِمْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ هُدِيَ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

"And whoever holds fast to Allah, is most surely guided to the straight path." (ali-Imran: 101)

Following passage of the Holy Qur'ān gives the details of the attributes of the right path:

قُلْ تَعَالَوْا أَتْلُ ما حَرَّمَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَلاَّ تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئاً وَ بِالْوالِدَيْنِ إِحْساناً وَ لا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلادَكُمْ مِنْ إِمْلاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَ إِيَّاهُمْ وَ لا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَواحِشَ ما ظَهَرَ مِنْها وَ ما بَطَنَ وَ لا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلاَّ بِالْحَقِّ ذلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ وَ لا تَقْرَبُوا مالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلاَّ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَ أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَ الْمِيزانَ بِالْقِسْطِ لا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْساً إِلاَّ وُسْعَها وَ إِذا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوا وَ لَوْ كانَ ذا قُرْبى وَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ أَوْفُوا ذلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ وَ أَنَّ هذا صِراطِي مُسْتَقِيماً فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَ لا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ذلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

"Say: 'Come, I will recite to you those things which your Lord has forbidden to you: Do not set up anything as a partner with Him; be morally excellent with parents; and do not kill your children owing to poverty. We alone give you sustenance and (will provide for) them as well. And do not draw near to shameful deeds (whether) open or hidden. And do not

kill the soul whose (killing) Allah has forbidden, except when it is rightfully due (according to law in self-defence against disruption and whilst combating terrorism). It is these (injunctions) He has enjoined upon you so that you may apply reason. And do not go near the property of the orphan but in the most likable manner until he reaches the age of maturity.' And always give full measure and weight with justice. We do not burden any soul beyond its ability to bear it. And when you say (something pertaining to somebody), do justice even though he is (your) near relative. And always fulfil the promise of Allah. These are (the matters) which He has strictly ordained for you in order that you may accept direction and guidance. And that this (Islamic law) is My straight path. So follow it and do not follow (other) paths, because they (the other paths) will move you away from Allah's path. This is what He has enjoined you strictly so that you may become Godfearing." (al-An'am: 151)

Islamic Principles of Success

The right path to success is the path of faith, spirituality (Self-purification), and character. The Holy Qur'ān uses two terms for success al-fauz and al-falah. Al-fouz pertains to the ultimate reward in the hereafter, whereas al-falah pertains to both this world and the hereafter. Al-falah is working out of latent faculties to the best ability; whatever is noble and good hidden in us must come out. Whatever is in the form of potentiality in the human self must be converted into actuality just like the plowing of land and cultivation results in the actualization of the potentialities of a seed. There is no other word in the Arabic language that is more comprehensive in the signification of what is good in the present life and in the afterlife than Al-falah. The Holy Qur'ān qualifies Al-fouz and Al-falah with faith, spirituality, and character. No one can succeed without following these principles.

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَعَمِلُوا۟ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ لَهُمْ جَنَّٰتٌ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا ٱلْأَنْهَٰرُ ذَٰلِكَ ٱلْفَوْزُ ٱلْكَبِيرُ

"Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds will have gardens beneath which rivers flow. That is the great success (attainment). (al-Buruj: 11)

Surah al-'Asr explains the secret of success thus:

وَٱلْعَصْرِ إِنَّ ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَعَمِلُوا۟ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا۟ بِٱلْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا۟ بِٱلصَّبْرِ

"By the time. Verily, man is in loss. Except those who believe and do righteous good deeds, and recommend one another to perform all kinds of good deeds, and recommend one another to patience." (al-'Ashr: 1-3)

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَمَسَاكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِي جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ ۚ وَرِضْوَانٌ

مِّنَ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

"Allah has promised the believing men and believing women gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally, and pleasant dwellings in gardens of perpetual

residence; but approval from Allah is greater. It is that which is the greatest success." (Taubah: 72)

Likewise, the first four verses of Surah al-Baqarah explain chief characteristics of believers and then says:

أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

"They are on guidance from their Lord, and they are successful." (al-Baqarah: 5)

At another place the Qur'ān explains:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّاهَا وَقَدْ خَابَ مَن دَسَّاهَا

"Indeed, he succeeds who purifies his own self. And indeed, he fails who corrupts it." (as-Syams: 9)

It is now crystal clear in the light of Qur'anic verses that the path to success is the path of faith, spirituality, and character. Let us discuss how these principles work in our lives.

Faith as the Principle of Success

Faith plays a crucial role in all accomplishments. It is the primary source of trust, power, and persistence to live a life of higher purpose, positive impact, great mission, and heavenly vision. The Holy Qur'an refers to numerous examples from the lives of the great prophets who remained faithful and persistent in their endeavors and missions. All prophets set great examples of faith and persistence but the life of prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) is the best model of faith, persistence, patience, hope, struggle, mission, vision, and values. The Holy Qur'an explains the role of faith for a truly successful, happy, and blissful life:

أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَى فِي الْحَيَاوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ

لَا تَبْدِيْلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ وَلَا يَحْزُنْكَ قَوْلُهُمْ إِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلهِ جَمِيْعاً هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ

"Oh, surely the friends of Allah have nothing to fear, nor shall they grieve. The ones who believe and are God-fearing. For them are glad tidings in this world and in the Hereafter. The words of Allah shall not change. That is the supreme triumph. (O Prophet!) Let not the utterances of the opponents distress you. Indeed, all honour is Allah's. He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing." (Yunus: 62)

Belief when mixed with emotion, prayer, and action becomes faith. Without faith, no one can achieve anything worthwhile. Many of the mysteries of faith may not be analyzed by the rules of science but one thing is obvious faith works through the subconscious mind which connects to the Infinite Intelligence, higher power, or God and transforms the vibration of thought into it's physical equivalent (Joseph Murphy, 2018). The rule of creation is that

everything is created twice: first in the mind, then physically. Thoughts Become Things as a seed becomes a tree. When a seed is sown in the soil, the natural forces turn to actualize its potential. In the same way, the universe reads our subconscious mind and conspires to draw what we think repeatedly and focus constantly (Stephen R. Cove, 1989). Our success depends upon the strength of our faith. If we fill our mind with fear, doubt, and disbelief, the law of attraction uses it as a pattern that our subconscious mind will translate into its physical equivalent- FAILURE. When we fill our minds with faith, hope, trust, and confidence, the law of attraction brings positive results- success (Nepoleon Hill, 2003). The effectiveness of faith depends upon the strength of its articles. Not all beliefs are always noble. A wrong or weak belief system can spoil our life and destroy our dream and destiny. It is, therefore, important to select articles of faith carefully and consciously. Faith in Islam consists of the following five articles which lay a solid foundation for a successful and fulfilling life, see Fig. 2.
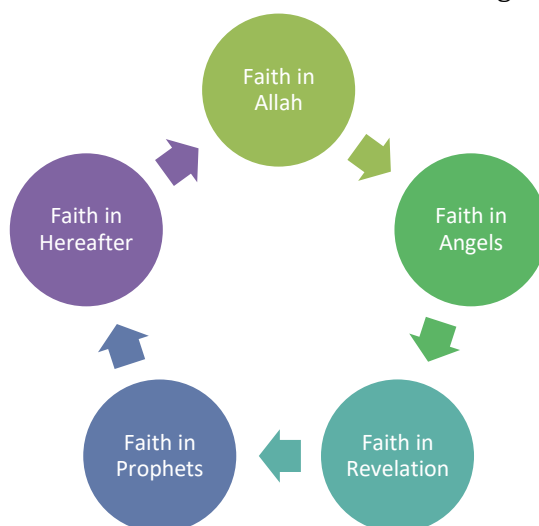
Fig 2. Faith in Islam

These articles on the Islamic faith are highly empowering, transformational, and result oriented. These beliefs interpret ultimate Reality, give meaning to life, improve personal quality, unleash human potential, instill true freedom, inculcate high moral values, teach submission to God, and develop a universal mindset. Islamic beliefs are consistent with universal truths, general observations, everyday experiences, and rational vindication. These beliefs dispel fear, doubt, and ambiguity by generating hope, clarity, and confidence.

Spirituality as the Principle of Success

True success is not solely measured by external achievements or material possessions. Personal fulfillment and a sense of purpose are integral components of true success. One's spiritual transformation contributes to inner satisfaction and well-being by actualizing one's real potential to the highest possibility. The Holy Qur'an says that those who purify themselves

succeed. Research shows that people fail because of a lack of self-mastery and self-control. It is a spiritual process that improves self-mastery, self-control, and self-actualization. Self-purification is the essential element of personal transformation and spiritual elevation. Western psychologists also profess that the source of authentic success and happiness is personal growth, flourishing, and spiritual elevation. Despite the extraordinary material progress and socio-economic success, the human inner self remains empty, unsatisfied, and unfulfilled because the longing of the human soul is to do something higher to attain eternal bliss, cosmic union, and divine experience. Spirituality is not mystical only for those meditating on a mountaintop. It is everybody's innate potential and natural longing to experience life beyond physical experience and become fulfilled. Everyone can elevate spiritually but spiritual growth is a choice you make, not something that happens to you. You need to follow an authentic pathway for self-purification for spiritual transformation to attain authentic happiness. Islam provides the most authentic spiritual practices (Pillars of Islam) for self-purification and self-actualization.

Islam has devised the best system for self-purification known as Tazkia-e-Nafs. The five Pillars of Islam eradicate all those vices, lusts, and evils from the human self which hinder success and happiness (Pan & Zhou, 2013). These spiritual practices cultivate positive virtues which bring success and happiness. Kalima eradicates drifting, meaninglessness, human slavery, fear, and ambiguity, and cultivates the right focus, meaning, true freedom, and clarity of ultimate aim. Prayer (Salah) eradicates ego centralism, thanklessness, and arrogance, and cultivates surrender, gratitude, and purity. Charity (Zakat) develops a sense of service, sharing, giving, and sacrifice by eliminating greed, selfishness, and accumulation. Fasting purifies the human self from impulsiveness, gratification, and lust and inculcates taqwa, patience, control, willpower, and self-mastery. Hajj reminds us about the true destination of life by eradicating false goals and worldly attachments. These Pillars are the perfect plan for the purification of self to prepare it for spiritual elevation. No one can attain true success and happiness without purifying their selves from evils and false desires.

Moral Character and Success

Moral character plays a significant role in achieving success, happiness, and fulfillment. Moral character encompasses traits such as honesty, integrity, truthfulness(Merk et al., 2021), responsibility(Buitrago Rojas, 2020), charity (Goenka & van Osselaer, 2019), and fairness (Wörle & Paulus, 2018). These traits are essential qualities that contribute to the overall well-being of individuals and society. The Holy Qur'an repeatedly says that those who are faithful and do righteous deeds will succeed.

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهُ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً ۖ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

"Whoever does righteousness deeds, whether male or female, while he (or she) is a true believer verily, to them We will give a good life and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do." (an-Nahl: 97)

Merely doing the right action is not moral character, one must be a moral being. How you behave when no one is watching is your real character. People of good character do not need a babysitter, nor do they need to be micromanaged. Lawrence Kohlberg identifies three levels of morality: pre-conventional morality (doing right because of extrinsic reward/punishment), Conventional morality (doing right because of social reason), and post-conventional morality (being right because of intrinsic reason) True moral character refers to the post-conventional state of morality (Daron Acemoglu & James A. Robinson, 2012). How does morality bring success in life? Moral character guides individuals in making ethical decisions, even in challenging situations. By adhering to a strong moral compass, individuals are more likely to make choices that align with their faith and values, even if they may not offer immediate gains. The moral character may not be expedient, or profitable immediately, but it brings fruits ultimately.

We need to be good and morally upright because that is the sort of person we ought to be. Virtues are essential to our fulfillment, personal growth, and Self-actualization. Only the good can be happy, and only the virtuous can be good. Unfortunately, in today's world, success has become an arbitrary accomplishment. But in reality 'all that glitters is not always gold.' The indicators of true success include self-fulfillment, credibility, inner peace and happiness, meaningfulness (Popaitoon, 2022)(Meng et al., 2022), legacy, contribution(Ridder, 2017)(Mursal et al., 2023), material well-being, trustworthy relationships, and wisdom. Building trust is crucial in personal and professional relationships. When individuals consistently demonstrate moral character, they become more credible, authentic, and trustworthy. The corporate world admires those who are competent in doing their job, diligent and capable performers, socially and emotionally mature individuals, ethical and responsible moral agents, self-disciplined persons who pursue healthy lifestyles, democratic citizens and contributing community members, and enlightened and noble in nature. Islam adopts an inside-out approach to developing moral character by inculcating Taqwa. Islam gives a proper and perfect plan for Tazkia-e-Nafs and guides how to reach the level of Nafs-e-Mutmainna to be authentic and credible.

Conclusion

Islam presents a universal strategy for sustainable and true success. A positive attitude, hard work, qualification, professional training, and technical skills are important for socio-economic growth but not sufficient to become truly happy and fulfilled. We need to establish a strong foundation for a great life. Faith, spirituality, and character are three pillars of all achievements. These principles transform your potential, improve your personal quality, make you an authentic being, build your capacity to persist and give meaning to your life. Those who internalize faith, spirituality, and character become highly trustworthy, resilient, effective, and productive. These principles can easily be validated by the conscience of each human being. Faith, spirituality, and character have always been true and will always be true because they are innate and grounded in human nature. This is the Right Path to live a fulfilling, successful, and happy life. It is now our responsibility to follow the right path to be successful here and hereafter.

Declarations

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