

Introduction

There are numerous ways for man to achieve guidance and emerge from darkness and move towards light. Allah, for the prosperity of man and perfection of his morals, has created proofs, evidences and vestiges¹ so great in number that they are beyond reckoning and computation. For the guidance of mankind, He sent the Prophets with Clear Proofs², books, miracles and signs so that perhaps, the people might perceive the right path and attain prosperity and success.

During the entire period of his prophethood, the Noble Prophet (s.a.w), with regards to refinement of souls and perfection of morals, was an exemplar in speech and did, and had (even) said, “I have been sent (as a Prophet) for (the purpose of) perfecting the morals”³.

Man's problem lies in his disregard for virtues, acquisition of vices, inclination towards lust and obedience to the Shaytan. Some men stoop so low that they even lead their lives akin to animals. For the purpose of refinement and treatment of human morals, abatement of rebelliousness and controlling the natural disposition, the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) spared no effort and mentioned all that was necessary in this regard.

Attainment of prosperity in this world and the hereafter is only accomplished under the auspices of a teacher and at the same time, not every person can completely identify the two extremes of moral behaviour in order to demonstrate the moderate and balanced path. Allah, Who is the Absolute Wise, introduced all the Prophets, especially the Noble Prophet (s.a.w), as the 'teacher and trainer' of morals so that the people, by following in his footsteps, distance themselves from vices and acquire the honour of the two worlds.

In the Qur`an, there exists a chapter by the name of **الْقَصَص** (The Narratives), which itself is proof that man is in need of stories and narratives.

In many places in the Qur`an, stories of Prophets, kings and nations have been mentioned. In addition, Allah has presented issues pertaining to wars, peace, family, religion, society and other similar topics, in the form of stories and narratives. By reading these accounts, the people can comprehend and distinguish the paths of progress and regress, and ascent and descent in every field, especially morals.

The entire chapter Yusuf has been devoted to the story of Yusuf, Yaqub, Zulaikha and the brothers. In the beginning of the Chapter, Allah says:

“We narrate to you (O’ Prophet) the most excellent of the narratives by (means of) what We have revealed to you this Qur’an.”⁴

While, in the concluding verse of this very chapter, He says:

“Indeed (there) in the history of theirs, is a lesson for men of understanding.”⁵

Indeed, one of the distinguished feats of the Qur’an is this very story of Yusuf (a.s.), which it refers to as the 'best of the narratives' and at the end of which, it says:

“In these stories there is a lesson for those, who desire to take a moral and adopt the path of the Perfect Men.”

In this regard, Amirul Mo`minin (a.s), in Nahjul Balagha, says to his son Imam Hasan (a.s.)

“Even though I have not reached the age, which those before me have, yet I have looked into their behaviour and reflected over the events of their lives. I walked amongst their ruins till I was as one of them. In fact, by virtue of those of their affairs that have become known to me, it is as though I have lived with them from the first to the last. I have therefore been able to discern the impure from the clean and the benefit from the harm. I have selected for you the choicest of those matters and collected for you their good points while keeping away from you the useless ones.”

Years ago, I had written a book on ethics (for the treatment of vices), by the name of Ihya al-Qulub. Ever since, I had been reflecting over the idea of compiling a book on moral stories. It so happened that divinely, an opportunity came up before me and with it the motivation for undertaking this assignment. In spite of the lack of necessary books, I contented myself with those that were available and commenced the compilation of this book, recording four to five stories for every topic.

I have certainly not come across any book which has been compiled in this fashion. Books like *Namunah-e-Maarif-e-Islam* and *Pand-e-Tarikh* have been present for around 30 years and I have made use of them too (in the course of this collection) but in those books, Qur`anic verses, traditions, poems and analogies have all been accumulated together; whereas, I have sought to satisfy myself by mentioning only the stories, while abstaining from presenting considerations relating to Qur`anic verses, traditions, poems and analogies, which would not only have increased the size of the book but would also have made it difficult to understand for many of the readers.

This collection caters for the general public, young and old alike, who are acquainted with basic reading and writing. As far as possible, I have endeavoured to omit scientific issues and those aspects, pertaining to traditions, whose comprehension would be demanding and exacting for the general masses.

Although some of the stories may not possibly possess any aspect of reality and actuality, what I have focused on is the admonition and 'taking-a-lesson' aspect contained in them, which hopefully, the honourable readers would perceive and comprehend.

As far as the issue of associating a story to a particular topic is concerned, I do not claim that the stories allude to just one topic or that particular one which has been specified here; rather there are stories which can be associated with several other topics too, in addition to the topic under which it has been mentioned here.

When narrating a text or presenting a translation, I have not restricted myself to the literal meaning but, for a better comprehension, have resorted to paraphrasing, allusion and conceptual explanation too.

To avoid interference of topics with one another and prolongation of discussion, I have refrained from bringing forth topics which are related to those already presented. For example, *Ithar* (altruism) has been presented as one of the topics but *Infaq* (spending in the path of Allah) has been excluded.

To prevent the reader from experiencing exhaustion and boredom, and for the sake of variety, I have desisted from presenting stories of a monotonous kind, like those of philosophers and poets, but have strived to make the collection varied. In this way, the readers will hopefully, derive a greater pleasure from the narratives.

In view of the fact that trustworthiness ought to be adhered to, I have referred every narrative presented here, to the book from which it has been extracted, also mentioning the volume and page. It is only with the objective of achieving a greater fluency of work that I have endeavoured to correct, polish or alter some of the words or sentences of the original text.

It is hoped that the readers, after going through the stories and narratives, reflect upon and take lessons from them so that they are able to create within themselves, a new impetus towards perfection of morals; and Allah Willing, those who are endowed with laudable morals, should relate them to others, for rectification and remedy of the weaker souls.

Sayyid 'Ali Akbar Sadaaqaat

And our final prayer (is):

All Praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

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1. Surat Ibrahim (14), Verse 5:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا أَنْ أَخْرِجْ قَوْمَكَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ

2. Suratul Hadid (57), Verse 25:

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ

3. Safinatul Bihar, vol. 1, pg. 411:

بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ

4. Surat Yusuf (12), Verse 3:

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ

5. Ibid., Verse 111:

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

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