

'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

- 1 Four qualities: whoever combines them is a total hypocrite, and whoever has one of them has a quality of hypocrisy unless he abandons it:
- 2 when he is placed in trust, he betrays;
- 3 when he speaks, he lies;
- 4 when he gives a pledge, he is treacherous;
- 5 and when he quarrels, he resorts to falsehood.<sup>(1)</sup>

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 34; Muslim, 58.

#### From the Qur'an

- ﴿God commands you to deliver whatever you have been entrusted with to their rightful owners, and whenever you judge between people, to judge with justice.﴾ (4: 58)
- ﴿The hypocrites will be in the lowest depth of the Fire, and you will find none who can give them support. (145) Excepted shall be those who repent, live righteously, hold fast to God, and are more sincere in their faith in God. These shall be with the believers. God will in time grant a splendid reward for the believers.﴾ (4: 145-146)
- ﴿Believers, be true to your contracts.﴾ (5: 1)
- ﴿Believers, be steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity. Never allow your hatred of any people to lead you away from justice. Be just, this is closer to righteousness.﴾ (5: 8)
- ﴿Believers, have fear of God and be among those who are truthful.﴾ (9: 119)

#### The Narrator

Abu Muhammad – or as some reports put it Abu 'Abd al-Rahmān – 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ ibn Wā'il belonged to the Sahm branch of the Quraysh tribe. He learnt writing before the days of Islam, and he mastered the Syriac language. He embraced Islam long before his father. He was a scholar and a devout memorizer. He fasted frequently and spent much of his nights in voluntary worship. He sought the Prophet's permission to write down his hadiths and the Prophet granted him this. He was, thus, able to narrate a large number of hadiths. He died in Year 65 AH 685 CE.

#### Summary

The Prophet (peace be upon him) mentions four of the main characteristics of hypocrites. No Muslim may have any of these characteristics. Whoever combines all these four is a total hypocrite, and whoever has one of them is a partial hypocrite. These four are betrayal of trust, lying, treachery and being wild in a quarrel.



# Message and Meaning

Hypocrisy is one of the worst ills that affect individuals and communities alike. Islam gives very strong warnings against hypocrisy. It clearly states the hypocrites' characteristics so that believers should beware of them, ensuring that none such can be attributed to them.



In this hadith the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentions four qualities that must not belong to a Muslim. These are the qualities of hypocrites, and if all four happen to be combined by one person, then that person is a complete hypocrite.

Hypocrisy means that a person shows himself differently from his reality. It is of two types: the first is hypocrisy in belief, which means that a person pretends to be a Muslim but in reality he disbelieves in Islam. Such a person is not a Muslim. The following verses refer to such people: 'The hypocrites will be in the lowest depth of the Fire, and you will find none who can give them support. (145) Excepted shall be those who repent, live righteously, hold fast to God, and are more sincere in their faith in God. These shall be with the believers. God will in time grant a splendid reward for the believers'. (4: 145-146) The other type is practical hypocrisy, such as lying and reneging on one's promises and pledges, as mentioned in the hadith. This type does not take a person out of Islam altogether, but it gives him a quality of hypocrisy, making him similar to the hypocrite and equally liable to suffer God's punishment.



A person may not possess all four qualities combined, but he may have one or more of them. He, thus, harbours a measure of hypocrisy in proportion to what he has collected of these qualities.



The first of these qualities is that of betraying trust. Betrayal means to act unlawfully in respect of what is given to him on trust, such as selling an item, or denying having it, or taking a portion of it, or being careless about keeping it safe. 'Trust' refers to everything a person is entrusted with, which may be money or property, honour or a right due to someone else. It may also mean the entire religious message, because God has given this to us in trust so that we should implement it and teach it to others. God describes disobedience to His Book and the Prophet's Sunnah as betrayal. He says: 'Believers, do not betray God and the Messenger, nor knowingly betray the trust that has been reposed in you'. (8: 27)



The second quality is lying. God commands us to speak the truth. He says: 'Believers, have fear of God and be among those who are truthful'. (9: 119) The Prophet (peace be upon him) warns against the ultimate outcome of lying. He said: 'Lying leads to transgression, and transgression leads to Hell. A person will continue to lie until he is recorded with God as a liar'.<sup>(1)</sup> The Prophet saw in his dream a man whose mouth, nostrils and eyes were being slit open right up to his back. He asked about him and he was told that he would tell a lie and it is then reported throughout the world.<sup>(2)</sup>

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 6094; Muslim, 2607.

2 Related by al-Bukhari, 6096.

5

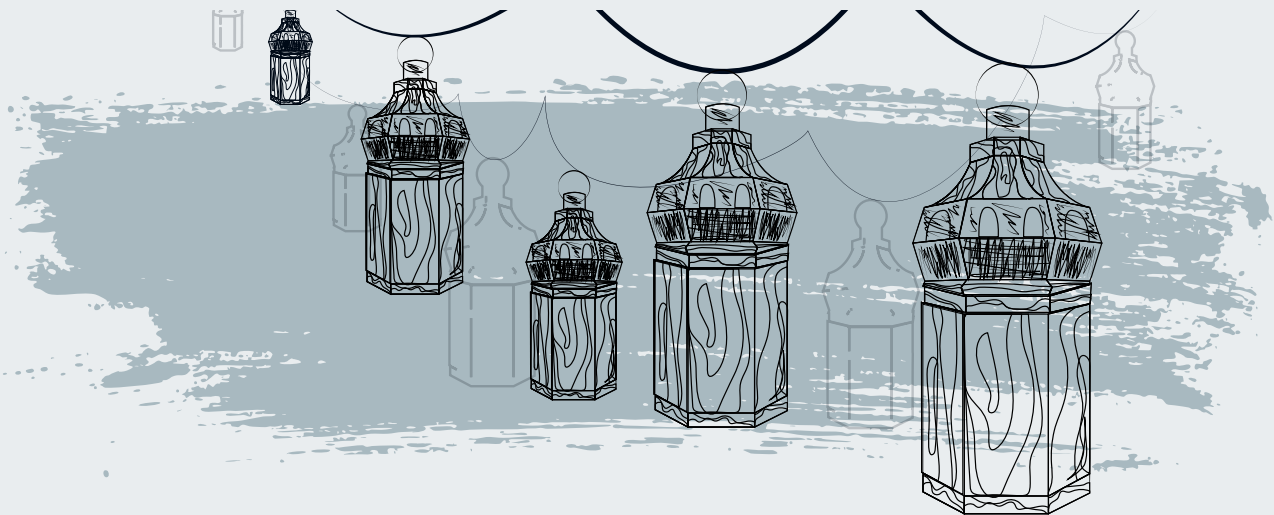
The third of these qualities is being treacherous. A person may promise and give pledges, but he does not honour that promise. God has forbidden treachery and emphasized its prohibition in several places in the Qur'an. He says: 'Fulfil your covenant with God whenever you make a pledge. Do not break your oaths after you have confirmed them, and have made God your surety. God certainly knows all that you do'. (16: 91) 'Be true to all your promises, for you will be called to account for all that you promise.' (17: 34)

6

The last of these four qualities is that when having a quarrel, a person moves away from the truth, makes dishonest responses and tries to take what is not rightfully his. This is particularly true if he is eloquent and argumentative.

God has commanded all His servants to be fair in all matters. He further orders us not to allow our hostility to tempt us to treat our opponents unfairly. He says: 'Believers, be steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity. Never allow your hatred of any people to lead you away from justice. Be just, this is closer to righteousness'. (5: 8) The Prophet (peace be upon him) tells us the ultimate outcome of one who wrongfully takes something that belongs by right to someone else. He said: 'You put your disputes to me, and it may be that some of you have a better argument than others. I will then judge for that party according to what I have heard from him. If I give anyone something of what rightfully belongs to his brother, he must not take it. I am only giving him a piece of fire'.<sup>(1)</sup>

These four qualities sum up the essential qualities of hypocrisy. There are other characteristics that may come under these four, such as being untrue to one's promises. In fact, hypocrisy comprises many characteristics, but all these come under the four main umbrellas outlined in this hadith. It behoves every Muslim to endeavour not to collect any of these qualities or characteristics.



1 Related by al-Bukhari, 2680; Muslim, 1713.

# Implementation

1

A distinctive feature of the Prophet's method of teaching is that he uses all aids to illustrate his meaning. One such aid is the use of numbers. When a person learns that the qualities that are about to be mentioned are four, he will be eager to listen and count, so that he subsequently remembers. Scholars and advocates of Islam should use such aids when they address people and teach their students.

2

Hypocrisy is the worst of all characteristics. Indeed, every part of hypocrisy is evil. A wise and true person will steer away from it, but does not claim immunity from it. Ibn Abi Mulaykah, who belonged to the *tābi'īn* generation, said: 'I met thirty companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Every one of them feared that hypocrisy might creep into him. None of them said that his faith was as strong as that of the Angels Gabriel and Michael'.<sup>(1)</sup>

3

A Muslim should be a responsible person. He should be careful about whatever is given to him in trust, whether it is given by one's parents, managers at work, friends, or anyone else. If he fears that he may forget it or forget where he has put it, he should write it down. It is reported that some devout people used to write down anything given them in trust, even if it were nothing more than a pencil or a small sum of money.

4

To be faithful to one's trust is a quality of good and noble people. Prior to Islam, the people of Makkah gave the Prophet the nickname *al-amīn*, which means 'trustworthy'. Being true to one's trust requires patience, accuracy and care.

5

It is important to train oneself to be always truthful, even in simple and trivial matters. Truthfulness is a very good habit to acquire. One should not justify a lie as a joke, or a pleasantry, etc. Nothing is served by lying. A person may continue to lie until lying becomes a characteristic which he does not even try to avoid. He thus becomes known as a liar. Remember that lying is the worst characteristic. Abu Sufyān was still an unbeliever when he was interviewed by Heraclius about the Prophet. He could have lied, but he felt that it was a disgrace to lie, and he answered truthfully.

6

The Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered Muslims to remain true to their pledges, even when dealing with unbelievers at a time of war. Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān narrated: 'Noting stopped me from taking part in the Battle of Badr except that my father, Ḥusayl, and I marched, but we were taken by the unbelievers of the Quraysh. They asked us: "Are you going to join Muhammad?" We said: "We are not. We only want to go to Madinah". They took from us a firm pledge by God that we would go to Madinah and would not fight with him. We went to God's Messenger (peace be upon him) and told him. He said: "Go home. We honour the pledge given to them and we seek God's help against them"<sup>(2)</sup> It should be noted that the Prophet did not allow Ḥudhayfah and his father to join him in the battle against unbeliever enemies, honouring the promise that had been given to those very enemies.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, without a number, The Book of Faith.

2 Related by Muslim, 1787.

7

A treacherous party may achieve some victory or gain through such treachery, but he should not rejoice at this. The ultimate result is a great and shameful exposure. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'God shall raise a banner on the Day of Judgement for every treacherous person, and it will be said: This is the treachery of so-and-so'.<sup>(1)</sup> A treacherous person may be able to manage his affairs so that his treachery remains unknown to people in this life, but where will he hide on the Day of Judgement when a banner is raised over his treachery and beheld by all mankind?

8

It is important not to justify being untrue to trust, lying, treachery or resorting to falsehood in a quarrel on account that someone else has done the same. Do not do any of these to anyone who does it to you. A Muslim heeds God's commands and does not follow his own desires. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Deliver what is given to you in trust to the person who trusted you; and do not betray the one who betrays you'.<sup>(2)</sup>



1 Related by al-Bukhari, 3188; Muslim, 1735.

2 Related by Abu Dāwūd, 3534.

