

## ***Developing of Personal Mission Statement: Integration of the Islamic and Contemporary Perspectives***

Hafiz Abdul Ghani<sup>i</sup> Faisal Mehmood<sup>ii</sup>

### ***Abstract***

*Most of the contemporary strategic leaders and success gurus believe that success depends upon strategic thinking, proper planning, writing of a personal mission statement and the application of effective principles and framework. Islam being a religion like other religions is fundamentally concerned with the success in hereafter while being a Din it is equally interested in the worldly success of its followers. Islam gives universally accepted principles and proven effective framework of how to become successful here and hereafter.*

*It properly guides its followers how to live a fulfilling life with peace, prosperity and self-fulfillment. There are numerous theories and frameworks of success that teach how to write a personal mission statement for the attainment of goals. Islam also asserts that we should work for a meaningful life and strive for the straight path. This article identifies salient principles of Islamic way of successful life and integrates them with the contemporary method of writing and applying a personal mission statement.*

**Key words:** *Success, Happiness, Islamic framework, Mission statement, Vision, Values.*

The ultimate purpose of all human efforts is to obtain eternal peace, happiness and contentment. The concept of success, wellbeing, peace and happiness are central to every discipline. Science, philosophy, religion, economics, business, technology etc. are only the means to achieve that goal. Religion on the basis of its functions, scope, and sources of knowledge, is in the best position to guide human beings towards eternal peace and ultimate happiness. The purpose of this study is to examine the Islamic framework of success and happiness.

At first we need to understand what is religion? Many definitions are proposed. Some of these are phenomenological, trying to state that which is common to all the acknowledged forms of religion; for example, religion is:

*“The belief in the existence of a god or gods, and the activities that are connected with the worship of them.”<sup>1</sup>*

Others are interpretative and psychological; for example:

*The feelings, acts, and experiences of individuals in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.”<sup>2</sup>*

Some definitions are cultural and sociological, for example:

*“A set of beliefs, practices, and institutions which people have evolved in various societies.”<sup>3</sup>*

Yet others are philosophical and spiritual definitions of religion, for example:

*“Religion is the recognition that all things are manifestations of a Power (Ultimate Reality) which transcends our knowledge.”<sup>4</sup>*

Such definitions are all stipulated: they decide how the term is to be used in different contexts. Perhaps a more realistic view is that the word “religion” does not have a single definite meaning. However, all the great religions have a specific structure.

---

<sup>i</sup> Associate Professor of Religious Studies, F.C. College (A Chartered University), Lahore

<sup>ii</sup> MPhil Research Scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan

They offer a transition from radically an unsatisfactory state to a limitlessly blissful spiritual life.

Now what is success and what we want to achieve? For every human being there is a natural desire to become successful and live a happy and peaceful life. Success is defined as obtaining a desired goal. Personal growth, meaningful life, economic prosperity, peace of mind, self-contentment, social recognition, salvation, nirvana, moksha, paradise, liberation from sadness and fears are a few examples of such goals that people want to achieve.

The concept of success keeps changing. At one time people define success as having a lot of money, beautiful house, big car, and social recognition. At another time they may change it and consider self-contentment and inner-peace more important than material resources. Some say that success is only a state of mind. Others believe that success is about living a purposeful and fulfilling life.

By studying such different approaches to success, we learn that people struggle for four types of goals:

**1. Basic Life Needs**

First of all people want to fulfill their basic physiological needs such as air, food, shelter, drink, sleep etc. These are natural requirements. We are all born with built-in pleasure-pain reactors. If we ignore these physiological needs, we would soon die. But at the same time we must understand that excessive indulgence in physical pleasure causes suffering and diseases.

**2. Socio-economic Achievements**

The next stage is to obtain socio-economic success with three prongs of: *power*, *fame* and *money*. These achievements last longer than pleasure and give better feelings about social position and safety. However human beings are not fully contented at this level because material resources and social status do not reflect true happiness and blissful life.

**3. Self-contentment**

The next goal is to obtain inner-satisfaction and self-contentment. In socio-economic success we enjoy respect and gratitude from peers. But more important, however, is self-respect, self-esteem, and self-contentment which come from consciousness, wisdom, contributions, character, and service.

**4. Eternal Peace**

The ultimate purpose of human struggle is the pursuit of eternal peace and true happiness free from all sorts of worries. We want to survive death and other threats to our existence. Physical immortality is not possible but we can attain eternal peace by spiritual elevation, self-purification, self-actualization, and self-transformation by way of complete surrender and submission to the will of God.

All the above mentioned four types of goals are so important for a good life that nothing can be dropped from the list without serious consequences. We want to attain all these goals but our problem is that we don't know how to plan our life for maximum achievement and which framework of success can help us achieve them. As usual if we struggle for material well-being we have to compromise spiritual elevation and if we decide to transform ourselves for mystical experience we are supposed to compromise socio-economic success. It is a great dilemma that we have to make alternative choices among these goals. Many people know how to set and achieve goals but hardly any of them teach how to achieve integrated success.

What is the best course of action to obtain maximum success in life without compromising anything good and important? There are many frameworks of success but most of them are limited in scope and depth. Some frameworks are more

concerned with material success but ignore human personality; while others focus on human transformation but ignore professional progress. Some philosophies prefer asceticism but neglect social needs of human beings. Thus different theories and frameworks suggest different skills, different principles, different practices, and different paradigms. None of these frameworks is comprehensive and integrated to entertain all aspects of human life. We need a comprehensive framework of success for a true blissful and happy life.

Islam adopts an integrated and comprehensive approach to success to facilitate all major aspects of life. It gives due importance to all fields of life e.g. material, social, professional, psychological, moral, and spiritual.

To take maximum benefit from Islamic teachings and practices we need to adopt a strategic approach and start with proper planning. For this purpose following three vital steps are taken:

**Step 1:** Explore Your Personal Potential

**Step 2:** Write Your Mission Statement

**Step 3:** Apply the Islamic Framework of Success

### **STEP 1: EXPLORE YOUR PERSONAL POTENTIAL**

We are more conscious about *having* than *being* but being is more important than having for true success. Knowing personal potential is the first necessary step toward greater achievements. Ali bin Abu Talib said:

"من عرف نفسه فقد عرف ربه"<sup>5</sup>

*"He who knows his Self knows his God".*

True learning is about discovering and tapping our latent talent. It helps us explore opportunities compatible with our talent and avoid situations in which we may have troubles. When we do something compatible with our potential we thrive and succeed. Knowing and exploring our inner potential helps to understand what we want to "Be" and what we want to "Do." It entails questions such as: Who am I? What is the purpose of my life? What is important to me? What are my strong points? What are my weaknesses? What am I capable of? What does make me happy and what bothers me?<sup>6</sup>

Life does not work better when we oppose our soul nature. If we want a magical life, we have to drop our unauthentic transactions with the world. We can discover our own power and potential by spending time to figure out our real worth which Allah has blessed us with.

Allah has created every human being with some latent potential and energy. We all are unique from each other in one or the other way. Everyone is given a unique potential to grow, develop and contribute. But the most people are unaware of their potential and true worth. As a result they are more likely to make incompatible decisions and hence face problems or remained unsuccessful.

**The very first step towards success is to know** the personality type; to understand ones strengths and weaknesses; to reflect upon our paradigm, belief system, habits, psyche, the patterns of our intrinsic motivation, and things we value the most. This is known as self-awareness.

Self-awareness helps with better decision making skills, improved management and leadership qualities, effective interpersonal communications, and bright career options. No plan for personal growth and professional success works until we know who we are and what we want to achieve in life. When we make decisions on the basis of our personal potential and goals our success increases.

Self-awareness strengthens our natural abilities and leads us to grow and actualize our ego. The Greek writer Nikos Kazantzakis (1883-1957) wrote, "I said to the almond

tree, 'Friend, speak to me of God,' and the almond tree blossomed."<sup>7</sup> How better to know God than to blossom? For when we blossom we actualize the potential God has given us. In this way we do God's work. What work is that? First we become realized and then help others become actualized. Only actualized people grow flowers in the garden of life by inspiring, encouraging, and motivating others so they burst into bloom too. It happens only when we know, respect, and develop our personal potential.

Self-understanding improves self-confidence. The more we explore our potential, the better we feel. Sometimes we lack self-confidence because we are ignorant of our true worth and strengths. It is this very lack that makes us have no faith in others too. Once we have faith in ourselves, we start believing in others too. Faith starts from within.

Self-awareness is a great power that transforms human personality for the attainment of self-actualization. Regrettably, most of us are unaware of this great power. What distinguishes us from stones is our ability and capacity to act. What distinguishes us from animals is our ability to act wilfully. It is by our actions that we change our world and can change the world around us. Our potential is to be used, not abused. It is the wind beneath our wings. It enables us to soar to new heights. When we were born with wings, why prefer to crawl through life?

Self-awareness is such a fundamental step for personal development that nothing is more important than it. We can study all the scriptures in the world, we can know every religious tradition and recite every page from every holy book, we can be excellent in every meditational technique and all the austerities, but if we don't know what our potential is and we don't value it, we cannot transform our personalities and lives. The effective way to make progress in life is through persistent effort for self-actualization. The inner spark is our guiding light; without it we are lost. When we actualize our inner potential, it illuminates our spirit and we feel bliss.

To reclaim our personal power, we must apply reflective thinking. We can do this by examining our thoughts, feelings, experiences, and paradigm. Am I unhappy with my current state of affairs? If so, I must ask myself, is it because I'm powerless or because I think I'm powerless? What do people who think they are powerless and have no potential do? They give up! What do people who believe they have potential and power do? They look for ways out, invade nature, solve problems and make proactive decisions.

By developing self-awareness, we create a vibration, a feeling, a kind of intensity from deeply within that begins to condense and then expand and change the chemistry of our whole body. When you don't reach from a deep place within, how is anything going to happen? What can grow in rocks and sand? Self-awareness gives us the courage to change what we can.

If someone is not yet what he wishes to become, how can he become so without changing? Change involves effort or discomfort. We need to step outside of our comfort zone. This is the primary purpose of personal power. Life is not always a walk in the park. It is mostly a walk in the bushes. As you move forward, you get entangled in thorns and thistles, stumble over rocks, and get scratched as you squeeze through tight places. But the exhilaration and joy that the journey brings makes the struggle eminently worthwhile.

"إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ"<sup>8</sup>

*"Verily Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves."*

‘Change yourself to change the world’ works better for all of us when we know our personal traits and make necessary changes in your habits and choices. Sometime a small shift in attitude, habits, or behavior has a quantum effect on life and results which is possible only by being aware. We cannot experience the depths of joy, intimacy, authenticity, connection, peace, and fulfilment without constantly working on our personal enhancement and self-transformation.

What are some of the steps we can take to improve our power and gain control over our destiny. We can begin by discarding limiting beliefs. When we were a child, it might have been appropriate to believe “I can’t.” But now, as adults, it’s time to recognize, “I can.” In fact, it’s time to go even beyond that and say, “I will!” After all, to say, “I can” is merely to state you have potential, but to say, “I will” is to take the first step in actualizing that potential by taking responsibility and charge of our life. If we do not take the responsibility of our self-transformation, we give power to other people and circumstances to shape our lives. In this way we give our destiny in others’ hands and lose our control. Self-awareness is important to enable us to take the control of our own destiny.

Self-awareness can be enhanced through focusing our attention on the details of the content of our personality and behavior. We can learn theories of personality types and do some online personality tests to know more about us.<sup>9</sup>

### **STEP2: WRITE YOUR MISSION STATEMENT**

In contemporary market it has become a norm to talk and ask about future plans and goals. Interviewers frequently ask questions like: Have you ever thought about what you want to be doing in five years’ time? Are you clear about your main objectives at work? Do you know what you want to have achieved by the end of next month? Do you have an ultimate destination in mind where you intend to end up your life?

Successful people always deal with such top lines. They know that success does not depend solely on how much work they do, but on whether or not the effort they make in the right direction. They set goals and make every possible effort to achieve them.

The 2nd necessary step, after self-awareness, is to take the charge and responsibility of our life. Responsibility makes us superior to other creatures. Man is superior to the whole universe, as much as he carries within him a great trust (responsibility) which, in the words of the Qur’an, the heavens, the earth, and the mountains refused to carry. Allah says:

"إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا"<sup>10</sup>  
*“Verily we proposed to the Heavens and to the earth and to the mountains to receive the trust (of responsibility), but they refused the burden and they feared to receive it. Man alone undertook to bear it, but has proved unjust, senseless!”*

Allah has blessed us with free will to make reasonable choices and informed decisions in life. The principle of accountability is a clear proof of our ability to make independent choices. Since our destiny is affected by our choices, we are responsible to find the right direction and set goals within the parameters of moral laws.

There are three principles of goal setting.<sup>11</sup>

- Our destiny depends on our decisions-not conditions. We are free to choose our goals and are responsible for our choices.
- We have been given the power of imagination. What we visualize today will come true tomorrow because mental creation precedes physical creation. This is why we should write and live by a ‘Personal Mission Statement.’

➤ By setting goals we will be able to prioritize our targets by putting first things first. Effectiveness requires the integrity to act on our priorities.

A properly crafted 'Mission Statement' reflects these principles. Mission statement is a declaration of the purpose of our existence. It defines your direction, dreams, goals, objectives and values. Without having a properly developed 'Mission Statement' we would be just drifting through existence.

Mission statement comprises of three elements:

- Our Vision (Direction, Aim and Dream)
- Our Mission (Strategy, Goals, and Objectives)
- Our Core Values (Code of Conduct)

### ***Vision***

The vision is a mental picture of what we want to achieve or reach over the time. The best way to predict the future is to create it by developing our own creative visualization. Momentum comes from having a clear vision of what we ought to be and from a well-thought-out planning to achieve that vision. Our vision is a mental but clear picture of the future we want to create- *Our Dream*.

All great success stories begin with a clear future picture (vision). Clarity of purpose provides guidance for making choices about time and other resources. The word '*Vision*' evokes pictures in the mind. It suggests a future orientation, implies a standard of excellence or virtuous condition, and has the quality of uniqueness. Vision is an ideal image of our ultimate aim of life.

As mentioned before that mental creation precedes physical creation. Look around you! What do you see? You find huge buildings, automobiles, computers, cell phones, and all manners of wonder. Where did they come from? We owe their creation to humanity's imagination and vision. Our power of imagination and envisioning future is a great gift from Allah. Visualization enables us to create of our own future and destiny. Our vision depends upon our creative imagination which can see the unseen, and imagine the unimaginable. It is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, vision embraces the entire world.

Following are some characteristics of vision.

- Vision defines the optimal desired future state - the mental picture - of what we want to achieve over time;
- It provides guidance and inspiration as to what we are focused on achieving in five, ten, or more years;
- Vision functions as the "north star" or "compass"- it is what we ultimately contribute towards accomplishing over the long term; and,
- Vision is written in an inspirational manner that makes it easy for us to repeat it at any time.

Some people call it "The Law of Attraction."<sup>12</sup> It says *like attracts like*, and so as we think a thought, we are also attracting *like* thoughts to us. If we see something in our mind, we are going to hold it in our hand. If we can think about what we want in your mind, and make that your dominant thought, we will bring it into your life. The principle of vision can be summed up in three words. Thoughts become things! It means what we can conceive, we can achieve; what we can visualize, we can materialize.

### ***Mission***

It is a statement of how we will materialize your vision. The vision is often expressed as a dream or ideal, the mission clarifies practical steps of what we will actually do. It typically describes your strategy to make your dream true. It is an

action statement that usually begins with the word "to" and emphasizes action verbs such as establish, develop, design, write, arrange, serve, etc.

The mission contains your goals, objectives, strategies and activities. The metaphors, "How do you eat an elephant? – One bite at a time" and "A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step", fit well in regard to achieving vision. Goals and objectives create the bite size pieces, the road map and manageable stepping stones to achieve the vision and make it a reality, and navigate the course you have set for your business or for yourself.

Sometimes there is confusion about the difference between a goal and an objective. Goals are generically for an achievement or accomplishment for which certain efforts are put. Objectives are specific targets within the general goal. A goal is defined as:

1. The purpose toward which an endeavour is directed.
2. The result or achievement toward which effort is directed or aimed.

An objective has a similar definition but is supposed to be more specific and measurable target within the targets. It does not really matter what we call them as long as we keep in mind the principle of, "start small and break down to minuscule" in terms of identifying the steps that will move us in the direction we want to go.

To be effective, goals and objectives should be written. Clearly and specifically written goals and objectives keep us focused, organized, and eliminate confusion. Goal setting is one of the most important skills. We can't simply say, "I want." and expect it to happen. Goal setting is a process that starts with careful consideration of what we want to achieve, and ends with a lot of struggle to actually do it. In between there are some very well defined steps that transcend the specifics of each goal. Knowing these steps will allow us to formulate goals that we can accomplish.

While setting our goals, make sure that our goals are SMART.<sup>13</sup>

- We must state exactly what we want to accomplish and avoid being general and vague. Our goals should be **specific**.
- They should be **measurable** by the dates or other appropriate units.
- Our goals should be **attainable** for us situation. We might even be able to complete part of your goals right now.
- If our goals are **realistic** and **relevant** to our life, they'll be easier to achieve. Identify the resources we will need to reach them, and review and revise them when necessary.
- We will need a **timeline** to accomplish our goals. Since there's never enough time to complete all of our goals immediately, we need to prioritize them.

Integration between vision and mission is extremely important. This can be attained through benchmarking. Following three questions are considerable:

1. Where are we now?
2. Where do we want to go?
3. How will we get there?

Our goals represent our vision of future. So create a compelling vision and set lofty goals that stretch us outside of our comfort zone.

*"Our goals should command our thoughts, liberate our energy, inspire our hopes, lead toward our destination, and enhance our life quality."*

Our attitude to our own goals determines their worth. There are two types of attitudes to destiny. Some people have the potential to succeed and they believe in dreaming and strategic planning. They explore dreams, set goals, apply action plan, make things happen, and change their lives. And there are other people with the same kind of

potential but they don't believe in dreaming and goal setting. They don't visualize future, don't set goals, and hardly accomplish something worthwhile.

A fulfilling life requires a clear mental image, strong desire, motivation, perseverance, concentration and a right attitude. This is a winning mentality, and this is what 'Mission Statement' is all about. Vision without systems thinking ends up painting lovely pictures of the future with no deep understanding of the forces that must be mastered to move from here to there. We must think in terms of goals that may be *plausible*, those that are *possible*, those that are *probable*, and of course those that are most *desirable*.

This part of the 'Mission Statement' is highly technical. Selection of the appropriate goals and crafting a suitable strategy must be done with caution to ensure realistic rather than idealistic vision. To maximize our success its better if our mission statement includes goals related to physiological needs, socio-economic achievements, self-contentment, spiritual enlightenment, and eternal bliss. We should not ignore any of these goals of life.

### **Values**

Values are the principles of how we behave during the process. They provide the bound or the limit of how we will conduct our activities while carrying out the vision and mission. Values are defined as beliefs, guidelines, rules, best practices, and a set out in a code of conduct. Core values provide us guidelines in decision making especially tough ones, such as allocation of scarce resources or making choices from alternatives. *"When everything becomes a commodity what is going to matter is the ability to design and deliver values. That needs creative and design thinking."*<sup>14</sup>

We should never compromise our core values. All successful organizations and individuals own a set of core values to create a winning culture for their success. Without core values, we are likely to drift and may lose our focus.

Values are fundamental requirement for success. Studies show that people and companies that have written core values make tremendous progress and maintain their quality. To be meaningful, values must enter into our daily practices. Values must reflect enduring commitments, not vague notions and empty platitude. We can select as many core values as we want, but lack of clarity and reinforcement will be a problem. Sometimes it is not the problem that people believe in too little, it is that they believe in too much. Likewise sometimes not the lack of meaning, but glibness of meaning is the trouble.

Values must be selected carefully because the first wave of trust-self-trust- is all about credibility.<sup>15</sup> It's better if we select values that meet your personal, professional, spiritual, cultural, national, and international requirements. Certain values are mentioned most in the current workplace:

- **Honesty** in all dealings, as a foundation for all other values.
- **Respect** for other, as shown by consideration for their beliefs and needs.
- **Service** to others, guided by the golden principle of doing for others as we would have them do for us.
- **Excellence** in all work performed, reflecting the classical ideal of excellence as a virtue.
- **Integrity**, having the courage to act and live by one's conviction.

Writing a 'Mission Statement' is vital to success. It comes from within but most people have little sense of creative visualization. Success comes from continuous improvement, proper planning, finding direction, setting goals and developing effective strategy for achievements. Direction, purpose, dreams, goals and values are



important elements of your 'Mission Statement'. Absence of vision and mission makes life haphazard, confused and chaotic.

Some people do set goals, but do not have a good sense of ultimate purpose of their life. When asked what they want, many people would say they want to: assume a leadership position in a multinational company; become CEO of a well reputed organization; become a high rank public officer and so on and so forth. This is a subtler form of diminished vision 'focusing only on the means not the purpose.' It is the same as some philosophers do philosophical investigation without the quest of God.

The problem of modern frameworks of success is that they do not emphasis on the ultimate purpose of human existence. They get stuck only with the means. Islamic framework asserts that one should explore his purpose of life and develop one's very "Self" as well. By purpose, we mean an individual's sense of why he is alive and how he can enlighten his being for ultimate peace.

Each of us is born with a role and purpose. Identifying, acknowledging, and honoring that purpose is extremely important for meaningfulness. If you are truly on purpose, the people, the resources, and the opportunities you need naturally gravitate towards you. The law of attraction says thus. The world helps too, because when you act in alignment with your true life purpose, all of your actions are likely to be aligned with the whole universe. Paulo Coelho writes in his famous novel *The Alchemist*:

*"And, when you want something, the entire universe conspires in helping you to achieve it."*<sup>16</sup>

The Holy Qur'an draws our attention to the fact that life has a purpose and meaning:

"أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ"<sup>17</sup>

*"Did you think that we had created you in play (without any purpose), and that you would not be brought back to us?"*

The Qur'an calls them 'wise' who contemplate to explore meaning in the universe.

The Qur'an says that the wise people exclaim:

"الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا  
سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ"<sup>18</sup>

*"Our Lord! You have not created this (universe) without purpose; glory to you! Give us salvation from the torment of the Fire."*

Life without purpose and direction is like a ship in the ocean without the direction and destination. This is why Islam has made it compulsory for every Muslim to pray to Allah many times a day in these words:

"إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ"<sup>19</sup>

*"(O God!) Guide us to the right path. The path of those on whom you have bestowed Your Grace."*

### **Step3: Apply the Islamic Principles of Success**

First two steps were prerequisites for the third one. We need to apply an effective framework which comprises of universal principles and the best practices of success. We must note the fact that many of the best visions never get realized. Thousands of the brilliant people fail in life. Thousands of fascinating ideas even fail to get translated into actions. Do you know the reason? It is because people do not follow appropriate framework and do not empower themselves with the true principles of success.

The Islamic framework of success does endorse the role of attitude, aptitude, potential, power of vision and mission, significance of training and skills, but the most important, according to Islam, is the empowerment of human 'Self' with the power of Faith, Spirituality and Character. Any framework of success which is not based on faith, spirituality and characters cannot bring true success in life.

The Holy Qur'an uses two terms for success *al-Fouz*(الفوز) and *al-Falah*(الفلاح). When we study these terms with the reference to their contexts, we see that both of these have been conditioned with faith, spirituality and character. The Qur'an makes it clear in Surah *al- 'Asr*:

"وَالْعَصْرِ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ"<sup>20</sup>

*"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."*

First four verses of Surah *al-Baqarah* enlist some characteristics of successful people thus:

- They believe in metaphysical reality (Allah);
- They offer salât (worship);
- They spend out of what Allah has provided them (charity);
- They believe in revelation (Qur'an and other Books);
- They believe with certainty in the Hereafter.

Then the fifth verse goes on to say:

"أُولَئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ"<sup>21</sup>

*"They are on guidance from their Lord, and they are successful."*

In Surah *al-Mu'minun* first eleven verses mention following characteristics of successful people:

"قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ فَمَنْ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَوَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ الَّذِينَ يَرْتُونَ الْفَرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ"<sup>22</sup>

We infer from these verses that successful people have the following qualities:

- They are faithful;
- They offer prayer (worship) dedicatedly;
- They turn away from vain talk;
- They give alms;
- They guard their chastity; and
- They keep their commitments.

At another place the Qur'an states:

"قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا"<sup>23</sup>

*"Indeed he succeeds who purifies his own self. And indeed he fails who corrupts it."*

Following verse unveils the secret of eternal peace:

"إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْكَبِيرُ"<sup>24</sup>

*"Verily those who believe and do righteous good deeds, for them will be gardens under which rivers flow. That is the great success."*

We learn from these aforementioned verses of the Qur'an that success comes from faith, self-purification and righteous good deeds. Islamic framework of success is unique and most effective.

Islam wants us to play active role in the world, take our responsibilities seriously and fulfil our commitments to the best of our abilities. It also asks us to be conscious of our duties to Allah, fellow human beings, and the whole world. Islam

teaches its followers to create a balance between immediate success and ultimate bliss. Following prayer is noteworthy in this regard:

"رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ"<sup>25</sup>

"Our lord, give us good (success) in this world and good (salvation) in the Hereafter, and save us from the punishment of the Fire."

In the light of above discussion, we derive three principles of the Islamic framework of success:

1. **Faith**(Trust, Conviction, Certitude)
2. **Spirituality**(Self-purification, Self-actualization, Meaningfulness)
3. **Character**(Doing Righteous Moral Deeds)

If we compare and contrast different philosophies and models of success, we will come to the point that Islamic perspective and framework of success is more integrated and comprehensive. This framework of success is not the mere production of human intellect but a composition of divine teachings, prophetic practices and universal human experience. It is the most moderate in entertaining all aspects of success e.g. fulfilment of physiological needs, socio-economic achievements, self-contentment, and eternal peace.

Faith gives us the strength to face all challenges of life; spirituality gives us meaning and enlightens our inner-self for the self-realization of innate potential; and moral character enhances our self-esteem and makes us trustworthy.

### **Conclusion**

Islamic gives the best principles of success and practically provides a complete framework of success which guides how to set a solid foundation for greater and highly fulfilling life. Its three principles of success, Faith, Spirituality and Character, are universally accepted by all traditions, philosophies, cultures and religions. These principles are a part of every major religion as well as all enduring social philosophies and ethical systems. They are self-evident and can easily be validated by the conscience of each human being.

### **References**

- 1 Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, International Edition (2001), p. 1119
- 2 William James, Religion and Psychology, Henry Holt, New York (1872), p.34
- 3 Talcott Parsons, The Social System, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, London (1951), p. 77
- 4 Herbert Spencer, First Principles, Penguin Books, London (1867), p.11
- 5 Shl bin Abdullah, Hilyat-ul-Aoulia, Ahlebeit Culture Press, Iran, vol.10 p.208
- 6 Rebecca Walker (Editor), What makes a man, Penguin books, New York 2004, p. 31
- 7 Nikos Kazantzakis (Quotes), Retrieved from: [https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/5668.Nikos\\_Kazantzakis](https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/5668.Nikos_Kazantzakis)
- 8 Ar Rad 13:11
- 9 Visit: [www.16personalities.com](http://www.16personalities.com)
- 10 Al Ahzab 33:72
- 11 Stephen, R. Covey, Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Harper & Row, New York (2006), p. 65
- 12 Rhonda Byrne, The Secret, Simon & Schuster UK (2006)
- 13 Robin Sharma, Leadership Wisdom, Harper Collins Publishers UK (1998), p. 98
- 14 Edward de Bono, The Six Value Medals, Vermilion, London (1999), p.4
- 15 Stephen M.R. Covey, The Speed of Trust, Simon & Schuster, New York (2006), p. 45
- 16 Coelho, P. (1992), The Alchemist, Retrieved from: file:///C:/Users/ZBY/Desktop/Paulo\_Coelho\_-\_The\_Alchemist.pdf
- 17 Al Muminun 23:115
- 18 Al- Imran 3:191
- 19 Al Fatihah1:5-6
- 20 Al 'Asr 103:1-3

- 21 *Al Baqarah* 2:5
- 22 *Al Muminun* 23:1-11
- 23 *Ash Shams* 91:9-10
- 24 *Al Buruj* 85:11
- 25 *Al Baqarah* 2:201