



Al-Absar (Research Journal of Fiqh & Islamic Studies)

ISSN: 2958-9150 (Print) 2958-9169 (Online)

Published by: Department of Fiqh and Shariah, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur.

Volume 03, Issue 01, January -June 2024, PP: 22-33

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52461/al-abr.v2i2.2581>

Open Access at: <https://journals.iub.edu.pk/index.php/al-absar/about>

Personality Development in the light of Sīrah

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Abstract



Personality development and character refinement are intricately connected to human morality. A virtuous character serves as the primary tool for cultivating an admirable and morally upright individual, while a lack thereof leads to moral degradation. It is imperative for individuals to prioritize rectifying moral aspects pertaining to their personality and fostering attributes such as constructive thinking and refined judgment. This includes embracing values such as truthfulness, gratitude, compassion, gentleness, open-mindedness, trustworthiness, integrity, intellectual freedom, and a dedication to moderation and pacifism. Furthermore, fostering a love for knowledge and enlightenment contributes to societal transformation, enabling personal growth and character development to flourish.

Personality encompasses one's disposition, intellect, and social conduct, shaping the collective demeanor within society. When a prevailing positive temperament characterizes the populace, it fosters an atmosphere of solace and reassurance for others. Islam, drawing from Quranic teachings and the exemplary life of the Prophet (peace be upon him), advocates for steps crucial in nurturing personality development. By adhering to these principles, the emergence of exemplary individuals is facilitated, essential for the establishment of a righteous and ideal society. In the contemporary era, there exists a necessity for guiding principles that cultivate individuals



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of elevated and dignified character within society, enabling them to mold their personalities in alignment with these principles and traverse the paths of perfection.

This article underscores the significance of personality development and character building through insights drawn from the Prophet's biography. It delves into the principles underpinning these processes.

Keywords

Personality development, Importance of Studying Sīrah , contemporary challenges, Sīrah.

1. Introduction

Allah Ta'ala bestowed upon humanity superiority over angels by virtue of their capacity for learning, a distinction affirmed when angels prostrated before Adam (peace be upon him). Simultaneously, endowed with the innate potential to explore and conquer the universe, humankind was set apart from other beings, thus dignifying their existence. It is therefore stated:"

﴿وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا﴾ (1)

“We have honored the children of Adam and carried them on both land and sea. We have provided them with good things and greatly preferred them above much of Our creation.”

As per this verse, every individual of humanity inherently possesses a status of honor and dignity, integral to human nature itself. This dignity is inherent and universal, regardless of one's moral standing, religious affiliation, or belief system. Consequently, the Quran does not specify conferring dignity solely upon believers, but rather emphasizes bestowing dignity upon the progeny of Adam. This distinction highlights the innate greatness bestowed upon humankind, enabling them to exercise dominion over the elements of the universe and harness its resources for their benefit. Thus, it is evident that this inherent dignity is an inherent aspect of human nature, transcending individual differences and affiliations.

Derived from this inherent dignity, one can argue for the accountability of humanity. With the extent of human superiority over other creatures, there arises a corresponding increase in responsibility. The journey of learning and comprehension propels individuals forward, affording them the opportunity to acquire knowledge, accomplish feats, and amass material wealth. The measure of one's humanity is often gauged by the fruits of their endeavors in life. At times, individuals exemplify consent through their actions, while at other times, they transgress the bounds of animality,

embodying a sense of recklessness. The crux of the matter lies in human achievement, as elucidated in the Quran:

﴿كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ رَهِيْنَةٌ﴾ (2)

"Everyone is responsible for his own achievement"

Therefore, the development of human character is rooted in their actions. It is the actions that make a person virtuous or wicked. Here, we point towards those principles which open the pathways to noble conduct. By aligning oneself with these principles, one can tread the paths of excellence and perfection in light of their personality development. Before delving into these principles, it is essential to clarify what is meant by these principles.?

Personality-building principles encompass the fundamental laws and guidelines prescribed by Allah Almighty to steer individuals towards well-being, taking into consideration both individual and societal needs. These principles play a pivotal role in self-improvement. While Shariah rules containing specific details also contribute to an individual's success, they are not considered foundational elements or personality-forming principles. The rationale behind this distinction is clear: these principles serve as a framework, akin to a mold, within which the detailed rulings of Shariah operate. In essence, they provide the pathway, necessitating the determination of detailed rules in each circumstance to reach the desired destination. Conversely, neglecting these principles renders one devoid of any path forward.

2. Principles of personality construction

The principles of personality construction are elucidated in the following divine statement:

"Allah says:"

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ (3)

” O people! The fact is that We have created you all from one male and one female, and divided you into different nations and families so that you may recognize one another. Indeed, the most honorable among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious among you. Believe that Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware“

The portion of the universe known as the earth is the abode of humanity, from which individuals derive benefit for a period of time, as it was divine command to send humans to inhabit it. Furthermore, it was ordained that divine guidance would continue to be bestowed upon them. Those who accept this guidance will attain success and prosperity, while those who turn away from it will face failure and despair.

Moreover, the Lord of the universe did not stop there; rather, with the same proportion and balance with which He created the universe, He created humans with utmost kindness and appointed them as the noblest of creatures and His vicegerents on earth. The purpose of all these kindnesses was for humans to pay attention to themselves and perform good deeds for their own welfare. However, this task cannot be accomplished alone; rather, the true assessment of one's actions occurs when they live alongside other human beings like themselves. In such circumstances, their personality is developed

Personality refers to one's temperament, intellect, knowledge, and social behavior. If the individual temperament in society is predominantly positive, the society will also exhibit a positive disposition. Islam's aim is for individuals to possess noble character, so that others may find comfort and ease in their presence.

3. Personality development in the light of Sīrah of Prophet Muhammadﷺ

Islam has prescribed actions in light of Quranic teachings and the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that are crucial for personality development. By adhering to these actions, one becomes a better individual, embodying righteousness and becoming essential for an exemplary society. The Islamic actions include:

3.1 Peaceful Behavior

Peace is among the fundamental teachings of Islam. Islam rejects the causes of conflict and advocates for human unity. Its essence fosters an environment of tolerance and tranquility on Earth. The foundational principle of Islamic teachings is peace-loving. Islamic injunctions are not stringent; rather, they aim for reformation and prosperity. Upholding peace is the key to society's success, where not only Muslims but all adherents of religious beliefs learn the lesson of maintaining dignity through fair-mindedness, justice, and peace. Concerning personality development, it is essential for every individual to play their role in maintaining an atmosphere of peace individually. It provides an opportunity to connect and unite people of diverse backgrounds, colors, and religions through love, mutual understanding, and compassion. Islam opposes wars driven by personal and national interests. Its objective is to liberate individuals and communities from narrow-minded objectives, leading them towards higher goals. Islam elevates humanity to embrace comprehensive and elevated perspectives. These objectives can only be achieved when individuals adopt a peaceful attitude. Islam has imparted teachings of peace and security from its inception. In this regard, the Noble Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

((المسلم من سلم المسلمون من لسانه و يده))(4)

"A Muslim is one from whose hands and tongue other Muslims are safe".

"One of the beauties of Islam is that it not only teaches the rights, honor, and protection of Muslims but also imparts lessons on the rights, dignity, and safeguarding of life, property, and wealth of non-Muslims." As advised by the Noble Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

((من قتل معامدا في كلهه حرم الله عليه الجنة)) (5)

"Whoever unjustly kills a peaceful citizen, Allah has made Paradise forbidden for them."

3.2 Good Ethics

The most significant factor in shaping human character is morality. Merely outward appearance, wealth, and possessions do not define a person as human. The essence of personality lies in purity of soul and ethical conduct.

It is also a fact that through ethics, great achievements can be made in both individual and societal life, which cannot be attained through power and strength alone. Gentleness, kindness, love, and affection are sometimes more effective than the stroke of a sword, and the dissemination of Islamic teachings and the integration of people into Islam, through the spread of excellent morals and best conduct among Muslims, was the greatest means.

It is also true that as a result of good ethics, civilization and culture have reached their zenith. Here are a few instructions to elevate morality: "I have been sent to perfect good character. The most beloved among you to me and the nearest to me on the Day of Judgment will be those of you with the best character. Undoubtedly, a believer attains the rank of those who observe prayers at night and fast during the day by virtue of their good disposition.

3.3 Good Ethics

The first thing for the construction of personality is faith, because through faith, a person keeps themselves accountable. They fear the Day of Judgment and accountability, so faith is the first thing that forms the essence of personality. Without good deeds, faith remains incomplete. The effects of good deeds are clearly visible on the individual; their thoughts and considerations change, and they strive to perform every action that leads to the pleasure of Allah. Therefore, they do not cause distress to people but rather consider their comfort and ease. (6)

3.4 Keeping in mind human rights

No individual can live their life alone; rather, they spend their life alongside other humans. Therefore, it is essential for them to consider the rights of other individuals. Islam has not only mentioned the rights of parents or a few individuals within a family but has delineated the rights of all humans step by step. It has even mandated the fulfillment of the rights of fellow travelers for a short period. Such a compassionate

religion can teach lessons against violence, dishonesty, and oppression, which are based on peace and safety, the true understanding of human rights. When we talk about the rights of neighbors, see how Islam emphasizes their rights. In any case, the fulfillment of the rights of other humans leads to the completion of one's personality. (7)

3.5 Moderation and courtesy

Moderation holds great importance in personality development. Muslims are instructed to be a moderate nation in the Holy Quran, and there is a command to approach every matter with moderation. (8) The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) advised Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-Aas against excessive worship, saying, "Your body has a right over you." These golden words indicate the necessity of moderation even in worship. Similarly, courtesy is a fundamental principle of Islamic teachings. The Prophet (peace be upon him) showed great humility to the Christian delegation from Najran and hosted them in a tent in the Prophet's Mosque. In this way, he taught his followers the best lessons of moderation and courtesy.

Islam does not teach hatred towards people; rather, it is essential to have the best character and love for others. Islam has arranged for the upbringing of human personality and recommended actions in such a way that the best Muslim can emerge, who can be a shining example for others. A person with integrity and a moderate temperament is desired by Islam.

3.6 Favorite action

The beloved Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated, "Among the actions that are pleasing to Allah, one is to gladden the heart of a believer and relieve him of distress." This hadith emphasizes the importance of showing kindness and compassion to fellow believers. It highlights the significance of bringing joy and happiness to others, thereby promoting unity, empathy, and goodwill within the Muslim community. This act of kindness is highly valued by Allah and contributes to fostering stronger bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood among believers.

3.7 Rights of neighbor's

The divine commandment is:

وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ ۗ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَن كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا ۗ ﴿١٠١﴾

"And worship Allah and associate none with Him, and be good to parents, relatives, orphans, the needy, the close neighbor, the distant neighbor, the companion at your side, the traveler, and those whom your right hands

possess. Indeed, Allah does not like those who are self-deluding and boastful." ⁽¹⁾

The instruction of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is: "By Allah, he is not a believer! By Allah, he is not a believer! By Allah, he is not a believer." It was asked, "Who, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "The one whose neighbor is not safe from his evil conduct."

3.8 Facilitation in Shariah Laws

Islam is the religion of nature. In all the injunctions of Shariah, human nature and temperament have been taken into consideration. Since humans are inherently weak, Allah, the Lord of Majesty, has not revealed strict laws for them but has said:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِهَ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِهَ الْعُسْرَ ⁽⁹⁾

Allah desires ease for you and does not desire hardship for you.
Allah also said:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ ⁽¹⁰⁾

"Allah wants to remove the burden from you."

The Prophet has also forbidden to be gentle and to be strict and extreme in one's attitude:

"يسروا ولا تعسروا، وبشروا ولا تنفروا." ⁽¹¹⁾

Create ease in religion, do not be strict and make people love and do not hate them.

Prayer which is fundamental in worship. He said about it:

"يا أيها الناس ان منكم منفرين فايكم ماصلي بالناس فليوجز فان فيهم الكبير والضعيف ذو الحاجة." ⁽¹²⁾

"Some among you harbor hatred towards others. So, whoever among you leads the prayer should shorten it, for among the congregation are the elderly, the weak, and those with pressing needs."

Narrated by Anas bin Malik, it is reported that once Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) entered the mosque and noticed a rope stretched between two pillars. He asked, "What is this for? Why is it here?" People informed him that it belonged to Umm al-Mu'minin Zainab (may Allah be pleased with her), and when she felt tired during prayer, she would hold onto it for support. Upon hearing this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

"حلوه ، ليصل احدكم نشاطه ، فاذا فتر فليرقد" ⁽¹³⁾

"Unlock it, for one among you should pray when he feels cheerful and energetic. But if laziness predominates, he should sleep."

¹ Al-Quran 4: 36

3.9 The beautiful harmony between religion and the world

Today, we find ourselves trapped in extravagance and excess in every aspect of life. People associated with every field tend to view themselves as "knowing everything" while considering others as knowing nothing. Those inclined towards scientific studies are far removed from religious sciences, while those inclined towards religious sciences are oblivious to scientific and worldly knowledge. There is a class of people who are not interested in educating women, and another class that promotes dance and music education. One class is so obsessed with veiling that they cannot tolerate even a slight breeze touching the body, while another class exhibits such nudity in the name of freedom that one cannot walk with dignity without averting their gaze. One class is so extreme that they declare a person who misses prayers as being out of the fold of Islam, while another class is so lenient that they declare a disbeliever who performs good deeds as deserving of paradise.

The purpose of this extremism and excess is deeply rooted in our nature. What we need is a personality and a system that provides us with a perfect model, and that is the personality of the Noble Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and the system of Medina. This system provides us with a complete code of life.

Allah says:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ⁽¹⁴⁾

In fact, for you, the personality (life) of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, is an extremely beautiful example.

One special characteristic of the era of the Noble Prophet, peace be upon him, was that the society and state of Medina were free from extremism and excess. There, we see a beautiful harmony between religion and the world, where neither was religion influenced by worldly affairs nor was the world influenced by religion. Both aspects progressed together. The Noble Prophet, peace be upon him, maintained his worldly engagements alongside his day and night worship. His practical examples of ethics and behavior have made him an unparalleled figure and a role model whose emulation makes it easy for humanity to reach its desired destination.

Islam is not just a religion; it is a complete code of life that encompasses magnificent values and cultural norms. This aspect is elaborated with complete comprehensiveness in the Noble Quran and the blessed Seerah.

وَابْتَغِ فِيهَا مَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنْ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفَسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ⁽¹⁵⁾

"So, seek the home of the Hereafter with what Allah has given you, and do not forget your share of the world. And do good as Allah has done good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters."

3.10 Prohibition of anger in human behavior

"Anger destroys peace and tranquility, and it brings about unnecessary distress. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) strongly discouraged it because anger prevents a person from maintaining moderation. Once, a person came to your presence and requested advice. You (peace be upon him) advised him not to get angry, repeating the advice several times. But you (peace be upon him) consistently replied:"

"Do not get angry."⁽¹⁶⁾ **لا تغضب** -

3.11 Establishment of brotherhood

"Islam, after its advent, fostered unity, harmony, and brotherhood among humanity. It turned sworn enemies into brothers. It eradicated enmity, jealousy, hatred, and malice. The Quran invites the people of the Book to unity, saying:"

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ⁽¹⁷⁾

"You should come towards a common word between us and you."

On the other hand, the foundation of Islamic brotherhood is based on the command of Allah the Almighty.

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ⁽¹⁸⁾

"The fact is that all believers are brothers. So, make peace between your two brothers, and fear Allah, so that you may receive mercy."

These sacred verses demonstrate that Islam is a religion of peace and tranquility in the world, raising the banner of unity and harmony in the entire human race, aiming to contribute to the cause of unity in humanity.

3.12 Elimination of prejudices

"The fundamental reason for our problems today is that our society is plagued by racial, regional, linguistic, and sectarian prejudices, and we are divided due to conspiracies and intrigues of enemies. Due to these divisions and conflicts, we are becoming increasingly fragmented into different classes. Islam has eliminated all forms of discrimination based on privileges, lineage, race, language, color, gender, social status, and wealth, and has declared equality for all human beings. In the Holy Quran, Allah Almighty has instructed:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ⁽¹⁹⁾

"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily, the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most righteous among you. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.

Indeed, it is imperative for us, being aware and knowledgeable, to rise above all forms of prejudice and demonstrate practical equality, so that we can eradicate extremism from society. A society plagued by extremism cannot be deterred from terrorism."

3.13 Establishment of world peace

"The establishment of global peace has become essential for the Muslim Ummah in the present era, as the safeguarding of its intellectual, political, and religious freedoms has become a challenge, and world peace is facing new threats. In the context of contemporary international circumstances, the study of the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has become imperative, as the Muslim Ummah has been provided with the blueprint for the New World Order through the Seerah of Muhammad (peace be upon him).

During the Farewell Pilgrimage, which took place in the year 10 AH, commonly known as the Farewell Sermon, the Prophet (peace be upon him) delivered a sermon on the Day of Arafah, which was the first formal charter of human rights for humanity and a new global system for nations worldwide.

The most crucial aspect of this Islamic World Order was the establishment of global peace at the international level. Nations, tribes, and clans were perpetually afflicted by killings, looting, and conflicts. Endless wars persisted among tribes. In these dire circumstances, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) declared the establishment of global peace with these words:

"فان دماءكم و اموالكم و اعراضكم عليكم حرام كحرمة يومكم هذا في بلدكم هذا في شهركم هذا."⁽²⁰⁾

"O mankind! Indeed, your lives and your wealth and your honors have been forbidden to you, just like the sanctity of this day and the sanctity of this month in your city"

It has become a necessity not only for the world of Islam, but for the whole world. Prophet Giri Mali has given mankind the life system, rights and duties, rules and manners and orders and instructions through his teachings and deeds which can solve all problems by adopting and implementing them.

This New World Order in the history of Islam still provides the world with principles by following which the world can become a cradle of peace. Therefore, there is no need for any other world order in the presence of the world order given by the Holy Prophet of the Muslim Ummah

3.14 Building Character and Demands of the Present Era

- The foremost aspect of character building is that one should focus on improving moral aspects regarding personality first and foremost. To make ethics positive, attention should be directed towards matters associated with goodness. Develop traits such as truthfulness, gratitude,

compassion, broad-mindedness, reliance, integrity, freedom of thought, moderation, and peace-loving tendencies, along with a connection to knowledge. This can only be possible when each individual contemplates on these matters, instills self-confidence within, acts upon them first, and then imparts them to others.

- For the construction of character and individual development, it is imperative to eradicate negative tendencies within individuals. If negative inclinations persist, a person will not ascend to moral heights, but rather become prone to moral degradation. That is, arrogance, envy, prejudice, hypocrisy, materialism, sectarianism, hypocrisy, distrust, backbiting, corruption, idolatry, linguistic bigotry, and extremism should be eliminated.
- Strive for the spiritual aspect of character building and purification of the soul by seeking the knowledge of Allah Almighty. The true purpose of Islamic worship is to attain the essence of spirituality and to fear the Day of Judgment, to distinguish between good and bad deeds, and to follow the guidance of Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him).
- It is essential for character building to focus particularly on reformative and social aspects, by establishing good relations with fellow beings and stabilizing ties with human rights in the best possible manner. Purify and reform one's own and one's family's political and economic life. Strive to become the best human and a good citizen in every aspect and remain prepared to invite others to the path of truth. Pay attention to the character development of loved ones and relatives.

Allama Iqbal says:

"Every moment of a believer brings new grace, new dignity
Proof of Allah in speech, proof of Allah in actions."⁽²¹⁾

3.15 Recommendations and Suggestions

1. Individual self-purification is essential for character building and personal development.
2. Efforts should be made to align human life with the teachings of Islam.
3. Life should be lived according to the principles of enjoining good and forbidding evil.
4. It is necessary to eliminate sectarianism and bias within oneself.
5. Avoid hypocrisy and pretentiousness.
6. Strive to stay away from backbiting, suspicion, and prying into others' affairs as much as possible.
7. Life should be lived in accordance with the principles and ways outlined

by the Quran and Sunnah, upholding the rights of Allah and the rights of fellow human beings.

Allama Iqbal says:

"Thousands of years, Narcissus weeps over his lack of light
It's quite difficult for a dewdrop to emerge in the garden." (22)

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(21) [https://www.rekhta.org/couplets/hazaaron-saal-nargis-apnii-be-nuurii-pe-rotii-hai-allamaiqbal\\$-couplets?lang=ur](https://www.rekhta.org/couplets/hazaaron-saal-nargis-apnii-be-nuurii-pe-rotii-hai-allamaiqbal$-couplets?lang=ur)
(22) <http://concordance.allamaiqbal.com/stanza.php?phrase=8411&stanzano=310059&sentence=&DB&81&D8%B1%D9%84%D8%Attps>