STEADFASTNESS & DETERMINATION (AZEEMAT) - THE FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

None of us have the picture of perfect life. Trials, tribulations, hardships, fear, anxiety are all a part of our lives and even more for those who have chosen to work in the way to Establish Islam and dedicated themselves for the cause of Allah.

Quran, seerah and the Islamic history are brimming with such examples. Not a single soul who have chosen this way had an easy and an uncomplicated life. The examples Allah (SWT) has set for us are not merely for discussion but to guide us. What we learn from our beloved Prophet (PBUH) is that patience, Steadfastness (Istiqāmah) and DETERMINATION (AZEEMAT) is the key. It not only makes the worldly trials and tribulations light like foam from the sea but makes us worthy of immense rewards from Allah in the Hereafter.

What is Steadfastness (Istiqāmah) & DETERMINATION (Azeemah)?

Istiqāmah is a comprehensive term: It is to stand for the pleasure of Allah in all truthfulness in the fulfilment of one's covenant with **Azeemah** as it's a reflex and a defining trait that will help us survive through tough times. It is the ability to be not backed down by challenges, losses or adversities. Determination (AZEEMAT) is a decisive factor in defining whether we want to play victim and cave into the life's circumstances or be an optimist and embrace the situation in the light of Divine Guidance and move on. For this reason, we have the beautiful hadeeth:

On the authority of Abu `Amr — and he is also called Abu `Amrah Sufyān bin Abdullah ath-Thaqafee (may Allah be pleased with him) who said:
I said, "O Messenger of Allah! Tell me something about Islam which I can ask of no one except you."

He (SAS) said,

"Say I believe in Allah — and then be steadfast." [Muslim, 38]

Why is it Important?

The absence of Steadfastness (Istiqāmah) & Determination (AZEEMAT) has a long term negative impact in our life leading to stress, anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, chronic pain, isolation and pessimism. Steadfastness in the religion of Allah is a basic requirement for every sincere Muslim who wants to follow the Straight Path with determination and understanding. This matter is of great importance for a number of reasons, including the following:

The present situation of the societies in which Muslims live, the types of temptation to which they are painfully exposed and the kinds of whims and desires, doubts and confusion which have caused religion to become something strange, so that those who adhere to it are likened to something weird: "The one who holds on to his religion is like one who holds on to a burning coal." Anyone who can ponder upon will not doubt that Muslims today need the means of Steadfastness (Istiqāmah) more than their predecessors among the salaf did, and that the effort required is greater, because of the corruption of our times, and the scarcity and weakness of brothers and supporters who could help.

Know that Allah has commanded all of His servants with Istiqāmah and He commanded the Messenger (sas) specifically. Allah, said

"Say (O Muhammad): "I am only a human being like you. It is inspired in me that your God is only one God, therefore be steadfast upon the Straight Path to Him, and seek forgiveness of Him. And woe to the idol-worshippers." [Quran 41:6]

Allah gives glad tidings to the steadfast

Surely those who say, "Our Lord is Allah," and then remain steadfast, the angels descend upon them, saying, "Do not fear, nor grieve. Rather, rejoice in the good news of Paradise, which you have been promised. We are your supporters in this worldly life and in the Hereafter. There you will have whatever your souls desire, and there you will have whatever you ask for (Quran 41:30,31)

While some are naturally resilient. But, most of us could acquire the following skills to help us to sail through the storms of life.

MEANS OF STEADFASTNESS (ISTIQĀMAH) & DETERMINATION (AZEEMAT) IN ISLAM

1. Put Your Trust in Allah Alone

We should develop the ability to view every adversity such as illness, trauma, personal affliction or even natural disaster, in the larger perspective and accept it as a part as Qadr by putting our complete trust and faith in Allah (SWT) and look for comfort in Him alone during the difficult times. Allah plans and decrees what is best for His creation. Allah (SWT) says in the Quran – "*No calamity befalls on the earth or in yourselves but is inscribed in the Book of Decrees (Al-Lauh Al-Mahfooz), before we bring it into existence. Verily, that is easy for Allah. [Quran 57: 22]*

2. Be Grateful in Every Situation

We should be truly grateful and thankful to Allah (SWT), despite being in an unsatisfactory position. We should realize that it could have been much worse and try to be content with what we already have.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "How wonderful is the case of a Believer! There is good for him in whatever happens to him -and none, apart from him, enjoys this blessing. If he receives some bounty, he is grateful to Allah and this bounty brings good to him. And if some adversity befalls him, he is patient, and this affliction, too, brings good to him". [Sahih Muslim]

3. Seek Help from Allah & do not be Despaired

Instead of blaming ourselves for our failures and trying to do it all on our own, we should reach out to Allah (SWT) for guidance in all times.

Prophet Muhammad (*Peace be upon him*) said, "Seek help from *Allah (SWT)* and do not lose *heart, and if anything (in the form of trouble) comes to you, don't say: If I had not done that, it would not have happened so and so, but say: Allah (SWT) did that what He had ordained to do and your "IF" opens the (gate) for the Satan." [Sahih Muslim]*

4. Turning towards the Quran & Adhering to the Laws of Allah and Doing Righteous Deeds

The Qur'an is the foremost aid for standing firm in Islam. It is the strong rope and clear light of Allah. Whoever adheres to it, Allah will protect him; whoever follows it, Allah will save him; and whoever calls to its way will be guided to the Straight Path.

Allah says : Allah makes the believers steadfast with the firm Word of faith in this worldly life and the Hereafter. And Allah leaves the wrongdoers to stray. For Allah does what He wills. (Quran 14:27)

5. Studying the Stories of the Prophets and Following their Example

The evidence for this is the ayah: *And We relate to you O Prophet the stories of the messengers to reassure your heart. And there has come to you in this surah the truth, a warning to the disbelievers', and a reminder to the believers. (Quran 11:120)*

6. Remembrance of Allah (*Dhikr*) & Seeking his Forgiveness

This is one of the greatest means for Steadfastness (Istiqāmah) in Islam. We should seek Allah's grace and mercy by his Dhikr & asking for His forgiveness repeatedly.

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) said: If anyone continually asks pardon, Allah will appoint for him a way out of every distress, and a relief from every anxiety, and will provide for him from where he did not reckon. [Sunan Abu Dawood]

Think about the combination described in this *ayah*: *"O believers! When you face an enemy, stand firm and remember Allah often so you may triumph" (Quran 8:45).*

Dhikr & Istighfar are the most effective aids to stand firmly in Islam.

7. Training and Education

Gradual, conscious training in faith, based on knowledge, a training based on knowledge is that which is based on *sahih* evidence, as opposed to mere imitation and blind following is one of the basic factors in standing firm in Islam.

Training in faith is that which fills the heart and consciousness with fear, hope and love (of Allah), as opposed to the dryness which results from ignoring the texts of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* and devoting too much attention to the words of men.

8. Calling Others to Allah (*Da'wah*)

The soul that is not active will stagnate. One of the most important fields in which one can be active is the field of *da'wah*, calling others to Allah. This is the work of the Prophets, work which will save you from punishment, realize your potential and enable you to achieve great things.

"Now then, for that (reason), call (them to the Faith), and stand steadfast as you are commanded" (Quran 42:15).

It is not true to say that someone is neither making progress nor slipping back (for if you are not making progress, you are therefore falling back – no one is static). If a person is not occupied in acts of worship and obedience, he will be busy with sin and disobedience, and faith can wax and wane (it does not remain constant).

Calling to the correct methodology – by devoting time to it, making mental and physical efforts, and speaking out, so that *da'wah* becomes the main concern of the Muslim – will block the Shaytan's efforts to tempt him and lead him astray.

9. Being Confident of the Help of Allah, and that the Future Belongs to Islam

We need to stand firm even more when victory is delayed, so that we will not go astray after being steadfast.

Imagine how many devotees fought along with their prophets and never faltered despite whatever losses they suffered in the cause of Allah, nor did they weaken or give in! Allah loves those who persevere. And all they said was, "Our Lord! Forgive our sins and excesses, make our steps firm, and grant us victory over the disbelieving people." So Allah gave them the reward of this world and the excellent reward of the Hereafter. For Allah loves the good-doers. (Quran 3:146-148)

10. Understanding the Reality of Falsehood and Not Being Misled by It

The following verse offers reassurance to the believers and helps them to stand firm.

Do not be deceived by the prosperity of the disbelievers throughout the land. (Quran 3:196)

There is a lesson for those who have intelligence, not to fear falsehood or to submit to it.

He sends down rain from the sky, causing the valleys to flow, each according to its capacity. The currents then carry along rising foam, similar to the slag produced from metal that people melt in the fire for ornaments or tools. This is how Allah compares truth to falsehood. The worthless residue is then cast away, but what benefits people remains on the earth. This is how Allah sets forth parables. (Quran 13:17)

With regard to the heart and the trials it is subjected to, the Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*) said:

"Hearts are exposed to trials one after the other. Any heart that succumbs to them is stained with a black spot, and any heart that resists them becomes pure white, until all hearts of one of these two types. The white heart is intensely white and will not be harmed by any trial so long as heaven and earth remain, and the black heart is intensely black and does not recognize good or forbid evil, except what suits its own whims and desires." Reported by *Imam* Ahmad, 5/386, and by Muslim, 1/128 – this version was narrated by Muslim

Istiqāmah therefore is in following the Sunnah correctly and precisely, without negligence and without extremism – and always striving to achieve the best outcome – and seeking forgiveness and pardon when one falls short.

O Allah, make us among them. O Allah, we ask you to make us adhere to Islam with determination and wisdom. Aameen.