

## Imam Muttaqi al-Hindi's ﷺ Classification of Man

Paraphrased by Muaz Billoo

The following is a summary of Imam ‘Ala al-Din ‘Ali ibn Husam al-Din al-Muttaqi al-Hindi ﷺ's (d. 975 AH)<sup>1</sup> brief treatise on the classification of mankind entitled, *Ni'm al-Mi'yar wa al-Miqyas li Ma'rifah Maratib al-Nass*. While reading this treatise, one should critically analyze his own life to see which of the classifications he will fall under.

### Summary:

Mankind can be grouped into one of four categories: the sinful laymen, the righteous laymen, the best, and the best of the best.

1. **The Sinful Laymen:** Refers to those who neither carry out the obligations ordained by Allah ﷻ, and instead engage in that which has been forbidden.
2. **The Righteous Laymen:** Those who suffice on carrying out obligations and abstain from that which has been forbidden, and nothing more.
3. **The Best:** Those who carry out obligations, abstain from prohibitions and engage in an abundance of supererogatory<sup>2</sup> acts. Supererogatory acts are not just restricted to *salah* (prayer), but there are numerous types of supererogatory acts that are difficult to enumerate, the greatest form of which is the repetition of the statement of *La ilaha ilAllah* (there is none worthy of worship except Allah), and the smallest form of which is removing an obstacle from the path.<sup>3</sup>
4. **The Best of the Best:** Those who engage in what was mentioned in #3 with such a level of steadfastness (*istiqamah*) that is greater than the performance of miracles (*Karamat*).<sup>4</sup>

The aforementioned classifications are with respect to their deeds. As for their character,

1. **The Sinful Laymen:** predominantly cause harm to the people.
2. **The Righteous Laymen:** never harm the people, but if anyone harms them, they retaliate in a manner that is in accordance with the parameters set by the divine law.
3. **The Best:** bear the harms of the people and don't take revenge.
4. **The Best of the Best:** bear the harms of the people, and respond with kindness and excellence, even if by making dua for them.

Hereunder are proofs from the Qur'an to support the above classifications.

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<sup>1</sup> Imam Muttaqi al-Hindi ﷺ is mostly known for his magnum opus, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, which is arguably the largest Hadith collection in existence. Although a tertiary source of Hadith (as it combines Imam al-Suyuti's *al-Jami' al-Saghir* and *Jam' al-Jawami'*), it contains approximately 45,000 Hadith.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. Optional; *Nafl*

<sup>3</sup> This in reference to a Hadith found in the *Sahih* of Imam Muslim ﷺ #35, wherein the Prophet ﷺ says, "Faith has over seventy or sixty branches, the best of which is the declaration that there is no god but Allah, and the smallest form of which is the removal of something harmful from the road, and modesty is the branch of faith."

<sup>4</sup> The famous adage goes, "Steadfastness (*istiqamah*) is greater than one thousand miracles (*Karamat*)."

1. The proof for the **sinful laymen** from the Qur'an is,

وَلَمَنِ انتَصَرَ بَعْدَ ظُلْمِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ مَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ {41} إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَظْلِمُونَ  
النَّاسَ وَيَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ۚ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ {42}

**Translation:** “The one who defends himself after having been wronged, there is no blame on such people. Blame, in fact, is upon those who wrong people and make mischief on earth unjustly. For such people there is a painful punishment.”<sup>5</sup>

2. The proof for the **righteous laymen** from the Qur'an is,

وَجَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِثْلُهَا

**Translation:** “The recompense of evil is evil similar to it.”<sup>6</sup>

3. The proof for **the best** from the Qur'an is,

فَمَنْ عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ

**Translation:** “Then the one who forgives and opts for compromise has his reward undertaken by Allah.”<sup>7</sup>

4. The proof for **the best of the best** from the Qur'an is,

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ۚ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ  
وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

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<sup>5</sup> Surah al-Shura: ayah 41-42

<sup>6</sup> Surah al-Shura: ayah 40

<sup>7</sup> Surah al-Shura: ayah 40

**Translation:** “Good and evil are not equal. Repel (evil) with what is best, and you will see that the one you had mutual enmity with him will turn as if he were a close friend.”<sup>8</sup>

Although patience and forgiveness of someone else’s harm is by itself a good thing, it is still better to repel it with good and supplication, just as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ supplicated when his blessed tooth was broken (during the Battle of Uhud),

اللهم اغفر لقومي فإنهم لا يعلمون

**Translation:** “Oh Allah, forgive my people for indeed, they do not know (any better).”<sup>9</sup>

### **Another Classification with Respect to Love for the World**

When it comes to mankind’s love for this temporal world, they are of five types:

- 1. Those who love this temporal world more than the hereafter:** Their sign is that they readily perpetrate numerous sins just to acquire portions of this world, such as their delaying of salah out of its time, taking false oaths while engaging in transactions, etc. These are from the category of sinful laymen.
- 2. Those who love this temporal world as much as they love the hereafter:** Their sign is that they engage in disliked (*makruh*) behaviors in order to acquire portions of this world, such as the performance of salah during disliked times, and perpetrating that which is disliked while buying and selling, etc. They avoid sin. These are from the category of righteous laymen.
- 3. Those who love the hereafter more than this temporal world:** Their sign is that they do not engage in any disliked behaviors in order to acquire portions of this world.
- 4. Those who love the hereafter and have absolutely no love for this temporal world, even if the world is in their hands:** Their sign is that they do not eat any morsel, nor do they take any step except for the sake of Allah Ta’ala. In other words, they do not engage in any mundane action except that it is connected with a righteous intention, thus their mundane acts become forms of worship. These are the best of the best.
- 5. Those who love this temporal world and have no love for the hereafter:** These are the disbelievers. We seek Allah’s refuge from His wrath.

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<sup>8</sup> Surah al-Fussilat: ayah 34

<sup>9</sup> *Sahih ibn Hibban* (Tartib ibn Bulban) 973 with a similar narration found in *Sahih al-Bukhari* 3477.