

A Person with a Livelihood Will Never Be Destitute

[Cover]

The name of this poem in Ajami is:

A person with a livelihood will never be destitute.

Distributed by Malam Na Baban-Inda, Kano Yalwa

His house number is four hundred and eighty-six (486)

Below is a description of the location.

The Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings of be upon him, said:

"Surely part of poetry is wisdom."

See below the business address of the author,

by the Grace of Allah, the Most Generous.

Distributed by Malam Aminu Na Baban-Inda, Kano Yalwa

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In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. May Allah's peace and blessings be upon our master Muhammad, his household, and his companions. May more peace be upon them!

In the name of the Lord, offer me good fortune.

I will recite a poem on those who do not have a livelihood.

Oh people! You should all lend me your ears!

Listen to this poem on those who do not have a livelihood.

Rambling and wandering around; you're not working

and you don't like it when one suggests that you take up a livelihood.

The one who wanders aimlessly in the town,

doing absolutely nothing, without a livelihood,

will never be rich. You should know this!

Once one is said to be lazy,

if people see him in good clothes,

then they will be suspicious of him.

Certainly, they should be suspicious of him, and ask

where would he get money if he has no livelihood?

Eventually, he will be called a thief.

This is the name for people who have no livelihood

He will not say to you "what did I take?"

for fear of being dragged to court!

He will be tracked down, apprehended and jailed.

You will not find him innocent before the law.

If you say even one word to him, he will run away.

A dishonest person is one who does not engage in any livelihood.

You will see that good people

never trust someone who has no livelihood.

Furthermore, you should not listen to their chatter,

disparaging dutiful malams (teachers)

In addition, if we are to be asked who amongst us

lacks a livelihood?

Who is expected to be given a gift?

Respond by saying: "a person with no livelihood!"

If something is stolen from you, you will see that

he will be the first to be suspected.

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The one whose intelligence is blocked, the dimwit,

is the one sitting around refusing to take up a livelihood.

The one begging someone for a dime is burdensome.

It is better to give this up and go and find a livelihood.

When he begs from you, tell him you will not give him anything.

Do not sympathize with a lazy person who has no livelihood.

It would be better for you to feed a crazy person

than to give to a lazy person without a livelihood.

If you give money to him, then you have disobeyed Allah.

If you deny him, you have followed the sayings of sharia (Islamic law).

You can also strive to prevent others from giving to him,

the one who squanders money, an idle person without a livelihood.

In turn, they will say this person is stingy.

They will condemn the one with a livelihood.

The moment you say somebody is stingy, you are envious.

This envy is found in the one who has no livelihood.

Go away useless person, I will not befriend you,

because I do not like a lazy person without a livelihood.

It is an injunction¹ that states it; hence it cannot be denied.

Never go near someone not engaged in a livelihood.

It is only useless work, never productive,

that interests the one without a livelihood.

This is where selfishness resides

with those not engaged in any work.

Even if I do not have money, I thank Allah.

I will at least be acknowledged as someone who engages in a livelihood.

If Allah wants to disgrace one of his servants,

then introduce him to a person with no livelihood.

Nothing is said to be as bad

as one who is hostile toward dutiful malams.

The moment he sees your money, he will try to snatch it.

¹ By injunction, the poet means it is a teaching of the Quranic or Prophet Muhammad.

He does not put in the effort to make his own living.

He will gather up the things you toss away and sell them.

You see, a useless person does not want to take up a livelihood.

He's the one who sets out for the market very early in the morning,

but he does not go there to run a business.

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He only goes there to find lost items,

seeking wealth without labor is an evil livelihood.

If not through lack of foresight,

how can you choose to be without a livelihood?

Wealth will not come and meet you

unless you seek it and put in the work!

If you look among your peers,

you will see that they are working.

Why then do you remain lazy?

Why are you begging from them, and do not want to work?

Stop being so arrogant, as if you were a malam.

[Quranic] learning directs people to engage in a livelihood.

Whoever seeks shall find a livelihood.

No one would ask others not to engage in a livelihood.

It has been said that a malam that has no livelihood

will follow his caprices and ignore sharia.

Even the Prophet, our leader, practiced trading.

If you are emulating him, pursue a livelihood.

The notion of a livelihood figures in *Samraqandi* ²

It points out the necessity of having a livelihood

Ibrahim is Allah's Prophet.

He is better than you. Yet, you see, he had a livelihood!

It has been said that Prophet David was a smith.

He manufactured chainmail armor; you can be sure he had a livelihood.

Prophet Zacharia practiced carpentry.

Each of them had their livelihood.

All who admire them [the prophets]

should emulate them by pursuing a livelihood.

If you want to show your children your love,

they say not to let them live without a livelihood.

They say you shouldn't tell them there is money.

If you give them money, they will not take up a livelihood.

If not you, who will provide for them?

There is no providing for someone who does not have a livelihood.

Likewise, his children will come to him asking for help.

Where will he get money, if he has no livelihood?

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Now you see, it ends up even worse:

an adult with no livelihood will

² *Samraqandi* here refers to a book on Islamic jurisprudence by Abd-al-Razaq, a Maliki jurist and scholar.

forever live with hunger.

Hunger resides with those who don't have a livelihood.

In the entire town, nobody will lend them money

simply because they do not pay back debts.

Women, too, are more interested in good men.

I have observed that they prefer someone with a livelihood.

You see, neither in cities nor in villages,

is a lazy person popularly accepted.

Well, I have personally pondered over this:

I just don't spot many people who are without a livelihood.

Because even a dog is wanted,

but no one wants a person without a livelihood!

A person who is inferior to a dog is a fool!

I seek refuge from those without a livelihood.

I am protecting myself from seeing them!

Who wants to see people with such poor character?

If only they would have changed their ways, I would have liked them.

We could have established a friendship in the interest of business.

Your attitudes are what people dislike, you see!

This is because one can see that you don't look after your character.

Now my advice to you is,

for Allah's sake, to stop living without a livelihood!

But here is a warning to you!

If you agree to listen, then take up some form of livelihood.

Do not become *daudu*³ or their pimps!⁴

Do not serve as town musicians begging for money, instead engage in a livelihood.

What leads me to say that you should avoid doing these things

is because they have no place in a livelihood.

Now I'm going to confront you, jobless people wandering around aimlessly:

Why don't you want to take up a livelihood?

And don't try telling me that it's just laziness,

because one can exercise a livelihood even while seated!

Or have you given up hope of becoming wealthy?

Perhaps, this is why you detest engaging in a livelihood!

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If a man is seeking marriage in this town,

it will not be granted to him unless he has a livelihood.

I saw that the Emir has formulated a good law

that says no lazy person should be left alone.

Of the big things that annoy me,

there is nothing like laziness—living without a livelihood!

You see now healthy, able-bodied people;

³ *Daudu*, the term used by the author, refers to a *Bori* spirit that takes the form of a man dressed as a woman. Also used more generally for men seen dressed as women and acting womanish. Although such men may have married and had children, they nevertheless act as if they were females.

⁴ *Kawalci*, the term the author used, is the act of serving as the middleman between sex workers and their clients. Traditionally, *kawalci* were the intermediaries between female prostitutes and their male clients, but with time, the meaning of the term has expanded and become a blanket term that describes middleman services that link a wide range of clients with sex workers. In short, *kawalci* refers to linking clients to services proscribed by Hausa society.

yet they are begging without having a livelihood,
and they are neither lepers nor blind.

Imagine a healthy person refusing to work!
If they come to you begging, do not give to them.

A person without good character is not to be assisted.
On behalf of Allah, one gives to the destitute
and to the poor who have good character!

I have reached your part, you people pretending to be Sharif.⁵

Covetous are people who do not have a livelihood.
You will see a clumsy able-bodied man roaming around,
claiming to be a descendant of the Prophet, but without a livelihood.

Oh you who claim descent from the Prophet, give it up!
Abandon your arrogance and engage in a livelihood.

Allah's curse is upon false claims to prophethood!
The sayings of our Prophet are the sayings of sharia.

The greatest one before Allah, no doubt is
the one who fears Him, the one who follows the sharia.

For it is well known that the real Sharifs of Allah
are not greedy because they are well disciplined.

Oh Allah, shower us with their blessings,
and open the way for all those who are engaged in a livelihood.

⁵ *Sharif* is an Arabic term referring to the descendants of Prophet Muhammad. In Hausaland, there are families that claim to be descendants of the Prophet. They are called *Shariffai* or *Sharifai*. Some of them walk round the town begging people to give them alms in honor of the Prophet – their claimed great grandfather. These are the people that the poet refers here.

For all over the world, if you observe carefully,

there is no one more useless than a person without a livelihood.

Notice that if officers come here,

they do not arrest one who is engaged in a livelihood!

When they go to arrest offenders,

they will include those who have no livelihood.

The best gifts of this world are given to servants of Allah.

Part of this gift comes in the form of a livelihood!

Someone who sleeps night and day is just a dimwit!

As for him, he is out of luck because he has no livelihood.

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I am certain that money is a blessing!⁶

One only acquires it through the path of a livelihood.

Where are you located? I am heading to Lagos.

I shall expose those not engaged in a livelihood.

At a high court, I will say they are debtors!

And it would not be settled until we go into litigation!

I will put fear in their hearts so that they will quit

being idle and engage in some form of livelihood!

⁶ The poet uses the word *riʒq* to describe money. *Riʒq* means wealth, livelihood, subsistence, and abundance. The Quran mentions the term 123 times. For instance, it says: "For each one there are successive [angels] before and behind him who protect him by the decree of Allah. Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves. And when Allah intends ill for a people, there is no repelling it. And there is not for them besides Him any patron" (Quran 13:11). In this verse, the Quran teaches that a people's condition cannot improve unless they change by themselves. Being lazy or not being passionate to work, does not lead to *riʒq* but hard work does. This can be compared to the Protestant work ethic.

Even if you gave something to a lazy person to keep for you,

in the end both you and he will end up in court!

When you go and ask him to give you back your belongings,

he will tell you that he has lost them.

Then a dispute has arisen between you and him!

Stop giving advances to someone who does not have a livelihood!

He who wants what you have, yet will never give what he has to you,

this is someone who has money but an evil character!

Should you have evil thoughts,

just send them to someone who has no livelihood!

Should beautiful thoughts arise,

send them to a true believer who engages in a livelihood!

The key to wealth is to have a livelihood!

The padlock on wealth is not having a livelihood!

Here is where I Aminu will say farewell to you!

The husband to Hajiya who has good character!

This is Aminu of Kano, a poet from Yalwa.

Also, I am a tailor – I have a livelihood!

Father of Safiya and Abu, I Aminu

Father of Maimuna – a professional poet!

I did not compose this poem to be acknowledged as a wise man.

I composed it so that people appreciate the importance of engaging in a livelihood.

It was composed in the Islamic calendar in the year three hundred and eighty

five plus one thousand following the sharia (1385 AH/CE1965).

Oh Lord, shower blessings upon our leader,

and upon Ali and the faithful companions of the Prophet!

The poem ends with thanks to Allah and His kind intervention,

with the pen of [the scribe] Malam Yaro Hakayi Yalwa

in the year 1388 AH/1968 CE.