

THE FASTING OF RAMADAN: FORMING POSITIVE PERSONAL CHARACTER

Sukron Ma'mun

Character Building Development Center, Bina Nusantara University
Jl. Kemanggisian Ilir III No. 45. Kemanggisian, Palmerah, Jakarta Barat, 11480
Sukronmakmun_aladhwa@yahoo.co.id

ABSTRACT

Article discussed the relationship between the fasting of Ramadan with the formation of a positive character. The purposes of this article were exploring the meaning and finding the influence of fasting in shaping the character of a person. A descriptive-analytical method was applied in the research. The procedures were data collection, data classification, data analysis, and conclusions. The source of the data was gained from information available in the literature study. The data was analyzed by using content analysis method (content analysis), which was an attempt to explore the symbolic meaning of the message or the contents. The result shows that Ramadan fasting worship performed by Muslims for 29 or 30 days is not just limited to the ritual, but it also contributes to the formation of one's character when is viewed from the perspective of the character education. It can be concluded that fasting is done in earnest to bring a positive influence on the formation of character for someone. The positive character built through fasting are the habit of appreciating the time, keeping the rights of others, being honest and patient, and the habit of giving and being helpful.

Keywords: *Ramadan Fasting, positive character, personal character*

INTRODUCTION

In the article 3 of law No. 20 of 2003 on the national education system, it mentions that education serves in developing the ability to form character and the civilization of the people's dignity in the framework of the intellectual life of the nation. The education aims to develop students' potential to be faithful, pious, noble, healthy, knowledgeable, skilled, creative, independent, democratic and accountable.

By the law No. 20 of 2003, it is clear that in addition to competency development, the creation of the character also becomes a major focus in the field of education. Currently, the establishment of a national character is necessary since the nation of Indonesia is a nation of the religious and strongly upholding moral values and customs. Therefore, education is expected to not only develop the scientific competence of learners but also strive to establish and build their characters.

Character education is a system of cultivation of character values for learners that includes components of knowledge, awareness or willingness, and actions to implement those values, both against *Allah*, self, neighbor, neighborhood, or nationality to have high human dignity. In character education, all parties should be involved, so the formal education institutions are not the only party responsible for shaping the character of the nation, but the religion or religious institutions also have a role in it.

All religions on this earth including the Islamic religion has teachings concerning worship rituals as a form of servitude to *Allah* Almighty. People should peruse that the teachings about the

rituals of worship are not just limited to the form of worshipping the *Allah* Almighty, but also have educational value spiritually and character education that can be felt by the people who administer it. Similarly, with fasting, it contains a comprehensive character education. Fasting which is done sincerely and truly will be able to shape the cognitive, affective, and conative abilities. Cognitive ability manifests in knowledge and way of thinking by the rules and norms of Islam. Then, the affective ability materializes in understanding the teaching so that people can manage high emotions and empathy to the environment. Last, The conative ability appears in behavior regarding charity which is fun and profitable for people around. These characters are only achievable if the man does fasting earnestly.

Based on the background of the problem as described above, the main issue in this article is "What is the positive character formed in fasting Ramadan?". From the main problem, several questions can be explored like what the fasting is, how fasting of Ramadan forms the character of a person, what the values of character that results from fasting are. Therefore, the purposes of this article are exploring notions of fasting, finding the influence fasting in shaping one's character and finding the positive character values formed from the implementation of fasting.

METHODS

The research uses a qualitative research method that is descriptive and analytical. In this case, it means the researcher makes a systematic, factual and accurate description of the facts, characteristics and relationships between the investigated phenomena (Nazir, 2005). Then the facts or phenomena are analyzed with the following procedure: data collection, data classification, data analysis and conclusion.

The source of data is based on the information in the literature study which is relevant to the discussion. Data analysis techniques used in this research is the analysis of qualitative data. It is done through the process of collecting and drafting the data that is obtained from the results of library study by organizing the data into categories, sorting into units, doing the synthesis, compiling into a pattern, choosing which are important and which will be studied so as it will be easy to understand.

Data analysis is also done by the method of content analysis (content analysis), which are the attempt to dig the content or meaning of the symbolic message of a book or other writing works. This method has three conditions namely: objectivity, systematic and generalization. Objectivity is based on the formulated explicitly rules. The systematic are the categorization of content with the need to use certain criteria, while the generalization means obtained findings must have the theoretical contribution (Muhadjir, 1996).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

All religions on this earth have teachings about fasting. In the language, the fasting means to stifle and prevent yourself from something, like withstand eating, drinking, lusting, useless talking and others (Rasjid, 2007). In Islam, it is referring to the word of *Allah* in Surah Maryam verse 26 with meaning as following: "Behold, abstinence from speech have I vowed unto the Most Gracious; hence, I may not speak today to any mortal." (QS. Maryam: 26). The word "fasting" of this verse means silence, prevention and restraint to speak. While fasting colloquially means: refrain from eating, drinking and having sex as well as things that can invalidate the fasting for a certain period with the intention to serve *Allah* (Sabiq, 2007).

In the perspective of religion, fasting is a way to purify the soul from bad characteristics, temperament and behavior to be good characteristics, temperament, and behavior. The great lusts which can make humans diverged are physical satisfaction either in the form of stomach or pubic while fasting is a habit that can control those lusts (Hawwa, 2007).

There are two categories of fasting in Islam, which are obligatory fasting and voluntary fasting (*sunnah*). Obligatory fasting should be done by Muslims who are adults and healthy. The example is Ramadan fasting. While, voluntary fasting can be done by Muslims outside the Ramadan. Voluntary fasting has been exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad during his lifetime and followed by his people. The example of voluntary fastings are fasting for 6 days in the month of Syawal; fasting on certain date (9, 10) of Muharram; fasting on certain date (9) of Dzulhijjah; fasting on certain date (13, 14, 15) of each month; fasting on Monday and Thursday; and the fasting of the Prophet (David AS) which consists of one day fasting and one day breakfasting.

The Ramadan fasting is done by the Muslims for a month of Qomariah (based on the cycles of the Moon) with 29 or 30 days. The calculation starts from the end of the month of Shaban (month 8) and ends with the entry of Shawwaal (Moon 10). The month of Ramadan is one of the special months by the belief of the Muslims. In the verses of the Qur'an and Hadith, many texts are talking about the perks of Ramadan. For example, the month that starts the beginning of the Qur'an (QS 3:185), the present Night of Power is better than a thousand months (al-QS Qodar verse 1-5), the month that multiplies reward for the worship, the month of compassion and forgiveness, and others.

The Ramadan fasting is obligatory by *Allah* SWT to Muslims in the second year after *Hijrah* (switching) of his Prophet Mohammed from Makkah to Medina. So, the obligation of Ramadan fasting starts when the Muslims has been in Medina. The Prophet Muhammad died in the 11th year of *Hijrah*. Thus, it is known that during his lifetime the Prophet only has time to do the Ramadan fasting about nine times.

The obligation of fasting in the month of Ramadan for Muslims is based on the Word of *Allah* contained in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 183 meaning as follows: "O YOU who have attained to faith! Fasting is ordained for you as it was ordained for those before you so that you might remain conscious of *Allah*". Then, based on the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad which is narrated by Imam Bukhori has a meaning as following: Islam is built on five basic: testifying that there is no *Allah* but *Allah*, and Muhammad is the Messenger of *Allah*, praying, paying zakat, fasting in Ramadan and Hajj.

According to Suma (2007), the word of *Allah* Almighty contained in Surah Al-Baqoroh verse 183 can be understood as following: first, theologically people who are called by *Allah* to do fasting are those who believe. The phrase "*ya-ayyuhalladzina amanu*" in paragraph 183 above hint it. Thus, people who do not believe are not included in the group. Secondly, by law, the Ramadan fasting is obligatory. The phrase "*kutiba alaikum Shiyyam*" (obligate you to fast) indicates the certainty of this fasting. All Muslims agree on liability to do the Ramadan fasting. Thirdly, historically fasting has a very long history. The Phrase "*Kama kutiba a'lalladzina min qoblikum*" (are required of those before you) shows it. Fasting has a very long twist and turn of history. Last, by management, fasting has concrete goals that form people to restrain themselves. The phrase "*la'allakum tattaqun*" (that ye may ward off) clearly show this. In other words, the primary target of fasting is to make people restrain themselves. Making people pious is not only the target of fasting but also as a target for all kinds of worship in Islam. It can be seen in the letter of Al-Baqoroh paragraph 21: "O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, that you may become righteous."

Character Education has several meanings. Etymologically, the word "character" is derived from Greece, namely *charassein* meaning "to engrave" (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). The word "to engrave" means carving, painting, or putting (Echols & Shadily, 1995). Whereas in terminology, according to Lickona (1992) character means "An inner character that is reliable to respond to situations morally."

He further says that character relates to the concept of moral (moral knowing), the attitude of moral (moral feeling), and moral behavior (moral behavior). Based on these three components, it can be said that good character is supported by the knowledge about goodness, the desire to do good deeds, and doing good deeds.

In the Indonesian language dictionary, the word "character" is defined by the habits, psychological traits, morals or character that distinguishes a person with another. The character can also mean letters, numbers, space, special symbols that can appear on the screen with the keyboard (Pusat Bahasa Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2008). As for the character, it is personality, behavior, and mannerism.

In Arabic, the character is known by the term "*akhlaq*," which is the jama' from the word "*khuluqun*" which is interpreted linguistically as temperaments, behaviors or habits, manners, etiquette, and action. Ibn Miskawai (d. 421 H/1030 M) as the leading scholar of *akhlaq* declares that morals are properties embedded in the psyche which prompted him to do the deed without requiring thought and consideration. From these understanding, it can take several important characteristics of the term *akhlaq* or character. First, It is the act that has been firmly entrenched in someone so that it becomes a personality. Second, it is done easily and without forethought. Third, it is the act arising from within the person working on it, without any coercion or pressure from outside. It is pure because of willingness, the choice, and the decision. Fourth, it is done truly, not as a joke or act. Last, that deed is done sincerely, only because of *Allah* Almighty, not because that person wants to get praise (Tanszil, 2012).

Having a good character can not be simply obtained when someone is born but requires long process and stages in life. One of them is through character education (Tanszil, 2012). Character education is the cultivation of the character values to the people in the school. It includes the components of knowledge, awareness, or willpower, and action so they can implement those values to the *Allah*, themselves, neighbor, neighborhood, or nation to become a perfect man (Samani & Hariyanto, 2013).

Character education also refers to educational value because the value is the character in action or values that are embodied in the act (Lickona, 1992). The character is also called operative value or values that are implemented in action (behavior). Characters are formed by the results of the internalization of various virtue values and is believed to be used as a cornerstone in thinking, behaving, and acting. The virtues are sourced from some values which are believed to be the truth that manifests in those relationships that build interaction between man and his *Allah*, fellow man, the environment, the people and the country, and with himself. These relations will cause the assessment of one's character.

Therefore, a character education means in the process of internalizing, presenting, embedding and developing the good values on its learners. By internalizing the good values on the learners, they are expected to have a good behavior. In character education, students are not just taught about which is right or wrong but they also cultivate the good habit themselves, so they understand, feel, and want to do a good deed. The example from educators is also important in shaping the character of the students. It is important to be noted that the optimal character education cannot be handled by only one party. It should be implemented thoroughly by all circles, starting from the family, communities, schools to the government.

Worshipping in Islam is close to the establishment of morals or character. The word of *Allah* Almighty in Surah Al-Baqarah which states in Verse 21: "O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, that you may become righteous." In this verse, *Allah* Almighty associates the relationship between worshipping and committed attitude. Piety means to carry out the commandments of *Allah* and away from his prohibitions. *Allah* deals with good deeds; the prohibition

is related to bad acts. Thus righteous people are they who carry out *Allah's* order and go away from his prohibition. According to Nasution (1995), this is related to the teaching of "*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*", that invites people to do the good deed and prevent them from bad things. Those who are righteous have virtue or good character.

In the Holy Qur'an, many verses describe the righteous character. In Al-Baqarah (2): 177, it about the righteous character like keeping a promise, honesty, patience. Next, in Surah Ali Imran (3): 102-103, it states that righteous characters are building a relationship, being grateful, protecting themselves. In addition, in Surah Ali Imran (3): 133-135, incorporating social responsibility, self-control, forgiving, kindness, repenting are the righteous character. Then in Al-Ahzab (33): 35, obedience, honesty, patience, devotion, charity (social care), keeping ourselves and chanting. In other verses, it states that sincere, humble, caring, responsibility, trust and others are the righteous character.

Being a righteous man is one of the purposes of fasting as written in the QUR'AN Al-Baqoroh verse. 183. Therefore, when *Allah* requires people to do fasting, then it will bring forth the characters as mentioned above. This is because people who are fasting is trained to do good things and avoid bad things. This exercise will be visible in self-controlling from lust of doing bad thing. People who are fast, refrain themselves from eating, drinking and lusting during the specified time. Then, people who are fasting will also refrain themselves from bad behavior and actions so they can get the immunity on committing bad things when they are not fasting. This is spiritual exercise that will sharpen their purity and moral sense (Ardani, 1995).

In the psychology, the period of fasting is for 29 or 30 days to provide time for embedding good habits. The process is not easy. Al-Ghazali in his book illustrates that the human soul is like a kingdom. Lust is like the tax man who always impose their will. Anger is like a rude and arbitrary police. Intelligence is the minister who helps the king to carry out the task, and the heart is a king who controls all the processes in the kingdom. If heart and rationality can defeat the lust, it will bring forth the good character. Otherwise, lust will lead people to the bad character. Does not corruption occur because the conscience is defeated by greed to accumulate wealth? Does not affair happen because the rationality is overpowered by the lust to get pleasure?. Fasting is to train the heart so it can bear a positive character (Hatmanto, 2009)

As been mentioned before, fasting affects the formation of one's character. From the studies that have been done by the researcher, it can be found that there are about five positive characters built through the fasting in Ramadan. The five positive characters are: (1) the habit of appreciating time; (2) the habit of preserving others' rights; (3) the habit of being honest; (4) the habit of being patient; and (5). The habit of giving and being helpful. These are five important positive habits formed by education and intensive training of Ramadan which is the precious gifts in Ramadan. Next, the five positive characters formed through the education and training in Ramadan will be explored.

First, it is the habit of appreciating the time. For example, someone has given a man money about Rp. 86.400 daily and he has to spend it on one day. If there is leftover money, it will be considered as forfeit, and he cannot spend it anymore. If that is the case, that man will try hard to spend all the money. It is the same as the time. If Rp. 86.400 is what has been given by *Allah* to people every day, will they do the same thing?. It turns out differently from the parable. People waste 86.400 seconds that *Allah* has given to them. As a reflection, if people spend an hour for activities with no benefits in a day, it is the same with wasting 3.600 seconds in a day. If it is multiplied by one month, then there are approximately 108.000 seconds that people do not use properly. If it is a year, it is approximately 1.296.000 seconds and so on. It is just simple musing, but people sometimes do not realize it. However, *Allah* does not give it all away without calculation and accountability.

In a Hadith, it states that two of the four important questions that will be asked to man on the day of reckoning is about time like age and youth. In the hadith, it is narrated by Muadh Ibn Jabal Radi

Allahu Anhu and say: "The two feet of the son of Adam will not move from near his Lord on the Day of Judgement until he is asked about five (matters) concerning his life - how he spent it; about his youth - how he took care of it; about his wealth - how he earned it; and where he spent it; and about that which he acted upon from the knowledge he acquired". (Narrated by Al-Tabaraani and Bazzar).

In fact, Islam has given great attention to the time. Many verses of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet state the importance of time in different versions and depictions. An example related to the importance of time in Qur'an is *Allah* swears to use it as the beginning of the Makkiyyah letter that: by time, by the night when it covers and [by] the day when it appears, by the dawn and [by] ten nights and others. These are proofs of Islam's attention to the time. Besides, if people read the Sira (the life history of the Prophet and his Companions), then it will be seen that the attention of the companions to the time is so great exceeding their attention to the treasure. Thus, they are more willing to lose treasure than to lose time and opportunity. There is also a story about a woman who is enjoying the beautiful views of her garden, and she does not realize that the Asr has passed. Having realized that, she repents to *Allah* and gives her entire garden to charity as *iqab* (punishment).

Fasting is the most secrecy prayer seen by humans, which can develop self-discipline, feeling of being watched by *Allah*. People will be aware that they are watched by divine and sharp "camera", so they will refrain themselves from demons' persuasions and desires. Education of discipline in fasting includes discipline to fulfill the obligation and do the command as commanded by *Allah* in Al-Baqoroh paragraph 183 (*Kutiba 'alaikumushshiyam*). Discipline in time is breakfasting when it is the time, and physical and law discipline is refraining oneself not to eat, drink and make love from dawn to sunset.

Indeed the Ramadan fasting has trained the fasting people to appreciate the time. In this month, they have been trained to be on time, especially during the suhoor and iftar. Because if they do not, it will ruin their fasting. Then, for a month they will spend the days with useful and religious activities. With a strong will and intent, a month is enough to make people appreciate the time.

Second, it is the habit of preserving others' rights. In *Khutbatul Wada* (the farewell sermon of Hajj), prophet instructs the Muslims to protect their life, blood, treasure and honor with each other. Every Muslims is prohibited from killing, harming, oppressing, insulting and taking other Muslims' treasure. Islam teaches that whoever utters two sentences about the confession of truth, then that person will receive security and defense of the Muslims. In Surah Al-Hujurat 49:10. Almighty *Allah* says: "The believers are but brothers." In paragraph 11 and 12, Almighty *Allah* describes the ethic that should be done by Muslims towards their brothers to create unity and brotherhood, for example, no ridiculing, no denouncing, no gossiping, no finding faults and no prejudicing.

The Prophet says: "A Muslim is a brother of another Muslim, so he should not oppress him, nor should he hand him over to an oppressor. Whoever fulfilled the needs of his brother, *Allah* will fulfill his needs; whoever brought his (Muslim) brother out of a discomfort, *Allah* will bring him out of the discomforts of the Day of Resurrection, and whoever screened a Muslim, *Allah* will screen him on the Day of Resurrection". (Al-Bukhari, 2442). In another Hadith, the Prophet states: "The Muslim is the brother to the Muslim, he does not cheat him, lie to him, nor deceive him. All of the Muslim is unlawful to another Muslim: His Honor, his wealth, and his blood. At-taqwa is here. It is enough evil for a man that he belittles his brother Muslim". (At-Tirmidhi, 1927). In another occasion, the Prophet Muhammad also says that the Muslims' Brotherhood is like building which is mutually reinforcing.

During the month of Ramadan, the fasting people have been trained to keep their mouth, eyes, ears, hands, feet and feeling not to do silly actions or beyond the limit. All is done so the fasting will run perfectly and be accepted by Almighty *Allah*. A month is enough to practice to get used to preserve others' rights. For a month, the fasting people has to keep their mouth from dirty speaking, insulting, taunting, lying, backbiting and other causing other people safe from their words. They have

also kept their hands, feet, and attitude from persecuting others. This practice is more than enough. Therefore, if in the month of Ramadan the fasting people can do it all why in the other months they cannot. Then, they have to maintain the positive habits for next eleven months by doing two things before and after activity namely considerations and calculations.

Third, it is about honesty. Honesty is one of the characters that is highly recommended in Islamic teaching. The opposite of honesty is a falsehood or lie, a character that should be avoided by Muslims. Islam strongly encourages honesty because it will lead people to the kindness, then the kindness will lead them to heaven. Vice versa, lie will lead people to evilness and hell. Is not it true that many good people become guilty because of witness's lie in court ?. Contrarily, many guilty people are free from the law because witness lies in court. In politic, if the leader is not honest to the people, then it will cause misery and suffering. In economic matters, dishonest traders will disserve the buyer. In social life, a dishonest society will lead to hostility and quarrels between each other. These negative impacts are from lying. Therefore, Islam emphasizes people to avoid it strongly.

Theologians categorize fasting as special worship. It said to be special because it depends on one's honesty, which only *Allah* knows. Each worship contains potential alibi. For example, people who do the prayer (*salat*), will be easily known from the visible motion. Similarly, those who pay *zakat*. Then, *Zakat* payer (*muzakki*) can earn a *zakat* certificate in the future. Likewise, for people who do Hajj will be seen by many people, not only their families and neighbors. However, it is different with the fasting. In fasting, the dishonest person can drink or eat secretly when they travel to another place. When they have broken procedure of fasting, only *Allah* knows. It depends on the honesty that *Allah* will give His assessment.

Fasting can result from honesty. Someone who has honesty can tell the truth. This character has important significance in forming one's personality and society. If people can be religious by following the command *Allah* and avoiding his ban, they will be trustworthy people. For instance, someone who can be trusted completely is the Prophet Muhammad. Even when he was a teenager, he was called "Al-Amin." Al-Amin means a person who can be believed or trusted to solve problems.

The character of the trustworthy can be developed by three traits: telling the truth, being faithful or fulfilling the obligation and keeping the promise, respecting the agreement. These are the asset which will be the base in the business transaction or organization. Honesty, responsibility, and prudence are not easy to be done. Honest people can be contaminated by the environment. They can be enticed by power and money. Thus, honesty needs to be protected. The responsibility and prudence should not depend on external supervision or from outside, but must be from inside. In other words, the character is a discipline which is reflected from the religious personality. If this kind of discipline is committed by many people, the mutual trust will be developed gradually between the citizens of the community. Fasting is the most effective way of developing self-discipline.

Fourth, the habit of waiting is related to patience. Patience is one of the traits that is highly recommended in Islam. Patience is the key to surviving in the world. Many people are impatient in living their lives and then cause it to be wretched. Many people are also impatient in following commands of *Allah* and avoiding His ban that they become infidel and immoral. There is also an impatience in accident and poverty that many people take short way to earn money. It can be going to the shaman or "smart people", robbing, gambling, corrupting, and etc.

Allah states about patience in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 153: "O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, *Allah* is with the patient.". Because if people are patient, *Allah* will save them from evilness. Through spiritual education and training in Ramadan fasting, it can lead Muslims to become more patient. If the meaning of *shaum* (fasting) is analyzed, it also means to wait because in both languages means "restraint." The hadith Qudsi states that "the fast is for Me. So I will reward (the fasting person) for it, this is equated by many theologians in the letter of Az

Zumar verse 10 which states “Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account.” In here, the patient people are the fasting people.

The fasting people must be patient not to eat, drink and make love (sexual intercourse) for married couples during the day in Ramadaan except it already enters the time of Maghrib. They have to be patient not to do bad things, tell bad words and ridicule others. They practice these because they understand the true meaning of fasting. Therefore, this good habit must be preserved for next eleven months. Undoubtedly this life will be more meaningful and good.

Last, habits like giving and helping are the goal of the Islamic religion, and the mission is sent to the Prophet Muhammad. *Allah* says this in Surah Al-Anbya paragraph 107 that “And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds”. The realization of His word is becoming the bounteous and helpful person to others. Thus, the presence of Muslims everywhere must be perceived as a grace and compassion carrier for the environment.

For a month, the fasting people are recommended to give charity and food to help relatives, neighbors and people who need it. Thirst and hunger that they feel for thirty days during the day make them aware that this is often experienced by many people during day and night because of famine, unemployment or poverty. The fasting people only feel hunger and thirst for 30 days in daylight, so “their hearts will ask themselves if they will let their brothers who are suffered from hunger and thirst through the day and night. Almighty *Allah* in Hadith Qudsi has criticized people by saying “O son of Adam, I fell ill, and you visited Me not. O son of Adam, I asked you for food, and you fed Me not”. Then, Almighty *Allah* also says, “I am with those who are hungry, but you do not care about them. I'm with those who are sick, but you do not care about them. I am with people who are suffered, but you do not care about them”.

Social awareness that has been developed through the education and training in Ramadan should be preserved for the next eleven months in advance by always helping people in need. If Muslim put aside 2.5 percent from their salaries, that social fund can be *zakat* (the purifier of wealth and soul), *sadaqah* (proof of true faith), *infaq* (social charity) to the society and the environment.

CONCLUSIONS

Ramadan Fasting is done by the Muslims for 29 or 30 days that are not just limited to the rituals of worship. If it is seen from the perspective of the education, Ramadan fasting can have a role in forming one's character. Based on the study that is done, it can be inferred that the fasting done earnestly will affect the formation of a positive character for someone. The positive characters developed through fasting are the habit of appreciating the time, the habit of preserving the rights of others, the habit of being honest, the habit of being patient, and The habit of giving and helping.

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