

Luqman al-Hakim: A Syncretic Analysis of a Sage in Scripture, History, and Global Tradition

Introduction

In the landscape of Islamic tradition, few figures occupy a position as unique and revered as Luqman al-Hakim, "Luqman the Wise." He is a man singularly honored in the Qur'an with a namesake chapter, *Surah Luqman*, which immortalizes his profound admonitions to his son. This distinction is all the more remarkable given the overwhelming scholarly consensus that Luqman was a righteous sage and a saint (*wali*), but not a prophet (*nabi*).² His story, therefore, represents a divine affirmation that wisdom (*hikmah*), piety, and moral excellence are paths to eternal recognition, independent of prophetic office or noble lineage.

This report presents a comprehensive analysis of Luqman al-Hakim, arguing that he is a complex, composite archetype whose significance extends far beyond the Quranic text. The figure of Luqman is a syncretic embodiment of multiple traditions: he is the pious servant of Allah whose wisdom is divinely inspired; he is the inheritor of pre-Islamic Arabian legends of heroism and longevity; and he is a reflection of a broader, ancient Near Eastern wisdom tradition that includes figures like the Mesopotamian Ahikar and the Greek Aesop.⁵ This multifaceted identity has allowed his story to be adapted and embraced across the globe, transforming him into a universal model for ethical conduct, parental guidance, and righteous living.

To fully explore this thesis, this report is structured in five parts. Part I will construct a detailed portrait of Luqman based on the foundational Islamic texts and the rich, albeit often contradictory, tapestry of post-Quranic scholarly tradition. Part II will provide a thematic exegesis of his core teachings as presented in the Qur'an. Part III will situate Luqman within the broader matrix of the ancient world, conducting a comparative analysis with his historical and literary precursors. Part IV will trace the journey of his legend through the major literary traditions of the Islamic world, examining his reception in Persian, Turkish, Malay, and Urdu cultures. Finally, Part V will explore his enduring legacy in the contemporary era, analyzing his modern institutional manifestations and his powerful symbolism in a world grappling with questions of ethics, identity, and social justice.

Part I: The Sage of the Qur'an: An Exegetical and Traditional Portrait

While the Qur'an itself offers scant biographical information, focusing instead on the content of Luqman's wisdom, a rich and detailed persona emerges from the vast body of Islamic exegetical literature (*Tafsir*), prophetic traditions (*Hadith*), and historical accounts. This traditional portrait, though containing varied and sometimes conflicting reports, provides a foundational understanding of the man revered as Luqman al-Hakim.

Section 1.1: The Enigma of Identity: Lineage, Ethnicity, and Status

The deliberate ambiguity of the Quranic narrative regarding Luqman's specific biography is not a deficiency but a profound feature. The text mentions him only twice by name, focusing entirely on his wisdom and advice without providing any historical markers.² This created an interpretive space that early Islamic scholars sought to fill by drawing upon existing oral traditions, including

Isra'iliyat (narratives from Jewish and Christian sources), in an effort to contextualize the Quranic figure. This process resulted in multiple accounts of his life, yet it also served to universalize his message. By not tethering him to a specific tribe or noble lineage, the Qur'an and the subsequent traditions transformed Luqman from a particular individual into a universal archetype of wisdom, accessible to all regardless of background.

Lineage and Time Period

Scholarly traditions offer differing accounts of Luqman's genealogy. One of the most prominent opinions, supported by a majority of Tafsir scholars, identifies him as Luqman bin Ba'uraa bin Nahoor bin Tarakh (also known as Azar, the father of Prophet Ibrahim). This lineage positions him as a relative of the Prophet Ayub (Job), variously described as his nephew or cousin.² This tradition places him as a contemporary of the Prophet Dawud (David), living around the 10th century BCE, and serving as a judge among the Children of Israel before Dawud's own prophethood.² This timeline is supported by a narration in which Luqman is present with Dawud as the latter skillfully weaves chain mail, a moment where Luqman's wisdom prevents him from asking a premature question about its purpose. An alternative lineage presented by scholars such as Imam Ibn Kathir identifies him as Luqman ibn 'Anqa' ibn Sadun or Luqman ibn Tharan.⁴ These varying accounts reflect the efforts of early commentators to historicize a figure whose Quranic role was primarily moral rather than historical.

Ethnicity and Origin

Among the most consistent and powerful themes in the traditional accounts of Luqman is his Black African heritage. Numerous sources, citing early authorities such as Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, and Saeed bin Musayyib, describe him as a Black man, originating from either Nubia (a region corresponding to modern-day southern Egypt and northern Sudan) or Ethiopia (Habshah).² His physical attributes are often described with striking detail: he was a Black man with thick lips and toughened, cracked, or "armored" feet.² This consistent portrayal is highly significant. In a pre-Islamic Arabian context that prized noble lineage (*nasab*) and often looked down upon those of darker complexion, Allah's elevation of a Black man to such a revered status—immortalized in the divine revelation—serves as a potent and enduring statement against racism and pride based on ancestry or appearance. His story became a powerful counter-narrative, demonstrating that honor in the sight of God is contingent upon piety and wisdom alone.

Social Status and Profession

The majority of traditions concur that Luqman was a slave who was later emancipated, a narrative that further amplifies the theme of inner worth over outward station.² His profession before gaining freedom is variously reported; some accounts describe him as a carpenter, others a tailor, and still others a shepherd.² His liberation is often linked to a pivotal demonstration of his wisdom. The most famous of these anecdotes involves his master, who, seeking to test him, ordered him first to slaughter a sheep and bring its two best parts. Luqman presented the heart and the tongue. Some time later, the master ordered him to slaughter another sheep and bring its two worst parts. Luqman once again brought the heart and the tongue. When asked to explain this paradox, Luqman replied, "There is nothing better than these if they are good, and there is nothing worse than these if they are bad".³ This profound insight into the dual potential of speech and intention so impressed his master that it led to his emancipation, powerfully linking his wisdom directly to his freedom.

Section 1.2: The Question of Prophethood vs. Wisdom (Hikmah)

The scholarly consensus within Islamic theology is overwhelmingly that Luqman was a wise man (*Hakim*) and a saint or ally of God (*wali*), but not a prophet (*nabi*).² The view that he was a prophet is considered an isolated opinion attributed to the early scholar 'Ikrimah al-Berberi.² This distinction is crucial, as it highlights wisdom as a separate and distinct divine gift. This point is beautifully illustrated in a tradition that recounts how Allah offered Luqman a choice between prophethood (or kingship) and wisdom. Luqman, in his profound humility and foresight, chose wisdom. He reasoned that if prophethood were commanded, Allah would

provide the necessary aid and protection, but if it were a choice, the burden of accountability would be immense and difficult to bear. He preferred the "well-being" of wisdom over the "hard trials" of leadership.³ The angels were said to have been astonished by this response, which was beloved by Allah.¹⁰ This narrative serves as the ultimate proof of his wisdom; his choice itself demonstrated that he was already wise enough to understand the immense responsibility of prophetic office and the sublime value of *hikmah*.

The foundation of Luqman's revered status is the explicit statement in the Qur'an: $\text{وَلَقَدْ ءَاتَيْنَا لُقْمَانَ الْحِكْمَةَ}$ $\text{\$ (Wa laqad 'ātaynā Luqmān al-ḥikmah)}$, meaning "And indeed We bestowed upon Luqman Al-Hikmah (the wisdom)" (Qur'an 31:12).² The term *Hikmah* is understood not merely as intelligence or knowledge, but as a comprehensive divine gift encompassing deep understanding, sound reason, piety, correctness in speech and action, and the ability to discern the true nature of things.² It is this divinely-granted wisdom that forms the core of his identity and the basis for his enduring legacy.

Section 1.3: The Archetype of Righteousness: A Character Study

The traditions collectively paint a vivid portrait of Luqman's character, presenting him as an archetype of the ideal sage. His wisdom was not an abstract intellectual quality but was manifested in every aspect of his being and conduct.

Key Virtues

Luqman is described as a man of profound self-restraint and contemplation. He was taciturn, speaking little and ensuring his words were always imbued with wisdom.⁴ He was a deep thinker who never slept during the day, dedicating his time to reflection. His humility was exemplary; he was never seen to laugh foolishly, spit in public, or engage in trivialities that did not concern him.⁴ When asked what had elevated him to his high status, he would list virtues such as "truthful speech, fulfilling the trust, and leaving what does not concern me".⁴ His piety was expressed through constant gratitude to Allah, lowering his gaze, guarding his tongue, eating only what was lawful, and meticulously fulfilling his promises and commitments.³

Social Engagement

Despite his contemplative and quiet nature, Luqman was not a recluse. His wisdom was applied and socially engaged. He made it a point never to walk away from two quarreling individuals until he had made peace between them.¹⁰ He actively sought the company of scholars, jurisprudents, and the wise, absorbing their knowledge.¹⁰ He would also visit judges, kings, and rulers, not to seek favor, but to observe and learn from their conditions. He felt

compassion for the difficult duties of judges and for the ignorance of kings who were distracted by the material world.¹⁰ This demonstrates that his wisdom was holistic, derived from divine grace, personal reflection, and keen observation of the human condition in all its strata.

Part II: The Core Teachings: A Thematic Analysis of the Admonitions in Surah Luqman

The heart of Luqman's legacy is preserved in verses 12 through 19 of the Surah that bears his name. These verses are not a random collection of aphorisms but constitute a structured and holistic curriculum for character development. The sequence of his advice reveals a sophisticated pedagogical method that progresses logically from the internal to the external, from the theological foundation to its practical manifestation in daily conduct. It begins with the most fundamental concept—the relationship with God—and builds upon it layer by layer, addressing the family, personal accountability, religious practice, social duty, and finally, the outward expression of an inner state of piety. This progression forms a complete system for cultivating a righteous and balanced individual.

Section 2.1: The Theological Foundation: Tawhid and Gratitude

Luqman's counsel begins not with ethics or manners, but with the bedrock of faith, establishing the theological principles from which all righteous action flows.

Primacy of Tawhid (Monotheism)

The first and most important admonition Luqman gives to his son is a clear and unequivocal command: $\text{\$ \text{يا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ} \$}$ (*Yā bunayya lā tushrik billāh, inna ash-shirka laẓulmun ‘aẓīm*), meaning "O my dear son! Never associate [anything] with Allah in worship, for associating [others with Him] is truly the worst of all wrongs" (Qur'an 31:13).¹³ This places the principle of *Tawhid*, the absolute oneness of God, as the non-negotiable foundation of a righteous life. The act of *Shirk*, or polytheism, is condemned with the strongest possible language as a "grievous iniquity" or "great injustice".¹³ This concept extends beyond the worship of physical idols to encompass more subtle forms of association, such as prioritizing worldly ambitions, seeking the approval of people over the pleasure of God, or allowing fear of social consequences to prevent the fulfillment of religious duties.

Gratitude (Shukr) as the Root of Wisdom

The entire discourse is framed by the opening verse, which directly links wisdom to gratitude. Allah states that He bestowed wisdom upon Luqman for the purpose of being grateful: $\text{\text{أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِلَّهِ}}$ (An *ishkur lillāh*), "Be grateful to Allah" (Qur'an 31:12).² This establishes gratitude not as a mere polite response, but as the fundamental expression and purpose of wisdom. The verse further clarifies the dynamic of this virtue: "for whoever is grateful, it is only for their own good. And whoever is ungrateful, then surely Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy".² This highlights a profound spiritual reality: gratitude is a form of self-cultivation that benefits the soul of the grateful person, while ingratitude does no harm to God, who is inherently complete and worthy of all praise. Wisdom, therefore, begins with the recognition of divine blessings and culminates in the act of gratitude.

Section 2.2: The Ethical Framework for Social Conduct

Having established the theological foundation, Luqman's (and the Qur'an's) guidance moves to the primary spheres of human interaction: the family and society.

Filial Piety

In a striking textual feature, immediately after Luqman's command against *Shirk*, the Qur'an inserts a direct commandment from Allah to humanity regarding parents: "And We have commanded people to [honour] their parents. Their mothers bore them through hardship upon hardship, and their weaning takes two years. So be grateful to Me and your parents" (Qur'an 31:14).¹³ The placement of this verse is profoundly significant, elevating the duty of kindness to parents to a station second only to the worship of the One God.²⁵ The specific mention of the mother's immense struggle during pregnancy and nursing serves to awaken the conscience to the depth of the debt owed to her.²⁰

Limits of Obedience

This high duty to parents is, however, carefully nuanced. The following verse establishes a clear hierarchy of loyalties: "But if they (parents) strive with you to make you join in worship with Me others that of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not, but treat them kindly in the world" (Qur'an 31:15).¹³ This verse provides a critical principle for navigating potential conflicts of duty. The command of the Creator takes precedence over the command of any created being, including one's parents. Yet, this theological disobedience does not abrogate the fundamental duty of kindness, respect, and good companionship in all worldly

matters.²⁰

Social Responsibility and Patience (Sabr)

The ethical framework then expands from the family to the wider community. Luqman instructs his son: $\text{\text{\$ \text{وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأَصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ} \$}$ (*Wa'mur bil-ma'rūfi wanha 'anil-munkari waṣbir 'alā mā aṣābak*), "enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and be patient over what befalls you" (Qur'an 31:17).²⁰ This establishes a crucial social responsibility for every believer to be an agent of moral good. The command is immediately followed by the injunction to be patient, acknowledging that the path of advocating for truth and justice is fraught with difficulty and opposition. Patience (*sabr*) is thus presented not as passive resignation, but as a determined and resolute act of faith—a necessary virtue for anyone committed to social reform.²⁰

Section 2.3: The Cultivation of the Self: Internal and External Morality

The final set of admonitions turns inward, focusing on the cultivation of personal character and ensuring that one's outward behavior is a true reflection of inner piety.

Divine Omniscience and Accountability

Luqman instills in his son a profound awareness of God's absolute knowledge, which serves as an internal moral compass. He says, "O my son! Be it anything equal to the weight of a grain of mustard seed, be it in a rock, or in the heavens or in the earth, Allah will bring it forth" (Qur'an 31:16).¹³ This powerful imagery emphasizes that no deed, no matter how small or hidden, escapes God's notice. This consciousness of divine oversight (*murāqabah*) is meant to govern all of a person's actions, both in public and in the deepest privacy, fostering a constant state of accountability.²⁰

Humility vs. Arrogance

Having cultivated this internal state, Luqman addresses its external manifestation. He gives specific instructions on physical comportment as a reflection of inner humility: "And do not turn your face away from people (in contempt), nor walk in the earth exultantly; verily Allah does not love any self-conceited boaster" (Qur'an 31:18).²⁰ This is a direct and comprehensive prohibition of arrogance, condemning both the contemptuous attitude and the proud, boastful gait.

Moderation in Conduct

The final pieces of advice complete this picture of a pious and humble demeanor: $\text{\$ \text{وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاعْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ}}$ (*Waḡṣid fī mashyika wagħḡuḡ min ṣawtik, inna ankar al-aṣwāti laṣawt al-ḡamīr*), "And be moderate in your pace and lower your voice; indeed, the most disagreeable of sounds is the voice of donkeys" (Qur'an 31:19).²² This counsel champions moderation and gentleness. Walking should be neither hurried and arrogant nor sluggish and lazy, but balanced and purposeful. Speech should be soft and measured, not loud and jarring. The striking comparison of a raised voice to the braying of a donkey serves as a powerful deterrent, linking loudness not with strength, but with a lack of dignity and sense.⁴ Together, these final instructions emphasize that true faith is reflected in a character marked by tranquility, humility, and moderation.

Part III: The Ancient World Matrix: Luqman in Comparative and Historical Context

The figure of Luqman in Islamic tradition did not emerge in a vacuum. He is part of a rich and interconnected tapestry of ancient wisdom literature that spanned the Near East and the Mediterranean. Analysis reveals that the Quranic sage absorbed and Islamized traits from at least two other major figures: a pre-Islamic Arabian hero of the same name, and a broader archetype of the wise counselor exemplified by Mesopotamia's Ahikar and Greece's Aesop.

Section 3.1: The Pre-Islamic Precursor: Luqman ibn 'Ad

Long before the revelation of the Qur'an, the name "Luqman" was already legendary in Arabia. This pre-Islamic figure, known as Luqman ibn 'Ad, was a celebrated hero of the ancient and powerful tribe of 'Ad.⁵ Unlike the Quranic sage, whose fame rests on his piety and wisdom, the primary attribute of Luqman ibn 'Ad was his phenomenal longevity. Legend holds that he was granted a lifespan equal to that of seven successive vultures, with each vulture living for eighty years, making his total age 560 years or more.⁸

This ancient Luqman was also renowned for his wisdom and great deeds. He was credited as one of the architects of the great Dam of Ma'rib in Yemen, a marvel of ancient engineering. His fame was so entrenched in the Arab consciousness that his name became proverbial; pre-Islamic poets such as Imra'ul-Qais, Labid, and Tarafa would invoke his name as the ultimate benchmark for wisdom.⁵ In the centuries following the advent of Islam, the distinct characteristics of this mythical, long-lived, and powerful hero began to fuse with the pious, humble sage of the Qur'an. This syncretism occurred in popular Arabic literature and proverb collections, creating a composite Luqman who possessed both the divine

hikmah of the Qur'an and the superhuman attributes of the pre-Islamic legend.⁶ This fusion helps to explain the vast corpus of fables, proverbs, and tales attributed to him, which far exceeds the concise admonitions found in the sacred text.⁸

Section 3.2: Echoes of Mesopotamia and Greece: Ahikar and Aesop

The stories and wisdom attributed to Luqman show striking parallels with two other seminal figures of ancient wisdom literature, suggesting a shared cultural heritage and a process of literary transmission across civilizations.

Ahikar the Wise

The Story of Ahikar is one of the most ancient and widespread tales of the Near East, with the earliest surviving fragments written in Aramaic on papyrus from 5th century BCE Egypt. The story revolves around Ahikar, a wise and righteous vizier to the Assyrian king Sennacherib, who, being childless, adopts his nephew Nadan. Ahikar showers Nadan with wise counsel, but the nephew proves treacherous and conspires to have his uncle executed. In later Arabic adaptations of this story, scholars have found that elements of Ahikar's character and wisdom were transferred directly to the figure of Luqman.⁸ The parallels are not merely thematic but extend to specific maxims. For instance, a saying attributed to Ahikar is: "Spare not thy son, for strokes of the rod are to a boy like dung to the garden." A nearly identical proverb is found in the Luqmanic tradition: "A father's blows upon his son's back are like manure upon a field".⁸ This suggests that the corpus of wisdom associated with Luqman drew from a common pool of Near Eastern proverbial lore, with Ahikar as a major antecedent.

Aesop the Fabulist

The parallels between Luqman and the Greek fabulist Aesop are even more pronounced. The traditional biographies of both men are remarkably similar: both are described as physically unattractive (Luqman with thick lips, Aesop often depicted as deformed), both were slaves of Ethiopian or African origin, and both earned their freedom and renown through their extraordinary intelligence and wisdom.

The most compelling connection lies in the fables themselves. In the medieval period, a large collection of animal fables, nearly all of which are identical to the fables of Aesop, became attributed to Luqman in the Arabic-speaking world.⁷ This has led to a scholarly debate regarding the direction of influence. The prevailing view is that the Greek fables, being older, were translated and adapted into Arabic, with Luqman's name attached to give them cultural and religious resonance. However, some scholars propose the possibility of a common, more ancient source, perhaps Babylonian, from which both the Greek and Arabic traditions

independently drew. Regardless of the precise path of transmission, the result was a near-complete fusion of the two figures in the popular imagination of the Islamic world. This shared intellectual heritage is best illustrated through a direct comparison of the themes and narratives present in their respective traditions.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Wisdom Sayings: Luqman, Ahikar, and Aesop

Theme	Luqman (Quranic/Traditional)	Ahikar (Aramaic/Syriac)	Aesop (Fables)
Child Discipline	"A father's blows upon his son's back are like manure upon a field."	"Spare not thy son, for strokes of the rod are to a boy like dung to the garden."	Implicit in fables where characters learn lessons through harsh consequences.
Humility vs. Arrogance	"Do not walk in the earth exultantly... lower your voice." (Qur'an 31:18-19)	Admonitions against pride directed at his treacherous nephew, Nadan.	The fables of "The Tortoise and the Hare" and "The Frog Who Wished to Be as Big as an Ox" directly moralize against arrogance.
Choosing Company	"When thou seest people who remember God, join them... do not join [those who do not]." ⁸	"Join the wise man, then thou wilt become as wise as he, but join not the brawler and babbler, lest thou become associated with him."	Fables illustrating the danger of bad company, such as "The Ass and his Purchaser," warn against associating with the wicked.
Speech and Silence	Attributes his high status to "watching my tongue" and "keeping silent regarding what does not concern me." ⁴	Advises caution and wisdom in speech, particularly when before kings and rulers.	Numerous fables address the consequences of foolish or boastful speech, contrasting it with wise silence.

Section 3.3: Luqman the Healer (al-Hakim)

The legacy of Luqman extends beyond moral philosophy into the realm of medicine. This connection is rooted in the Arabic language itself. The title *al-Hakim*, which is universally appended to his name, means "The Wise." However, the same root, *ḥ-k-m*, gives rise to the word *hakim*, which also means "physician" or "healer".³⁵ This linguistic link fostered a strong folkloric tradition that reimagined Luqman as the progenitor of medicine.

In these traditions, Luqman was said to possess a profound, divinely-inspired knowledge of

the natural world. It was believed that he understood the properties of all herbs and plants, and that the plants themselves would speak to him, revealing their specific medicinal and healing uses.³⁸ He was seen as the one who first organized therapeutic knowledge and prescribed remedies for ailments.

This folkloric identity is not merely a historical curiosity. It has an enduring legacy in a living medical tradition known as *Elaj-e-Lokmani*, or the "treatment of Lokman." This system of orally-transmitted herbal medicine is still practiced today, particularly in Eastern India and Bengal, and its origins are explicitly attributed to the pre-Islamic sage Luqman. This demonstrates a unique and persistent branch of his legacy, where his celebrated wisdom is interpreted specifically as the knowledge of physical healing.

Part IV: The Journey of a Legend: Luqman's Reception in Global Islamic Literature

As Islam spread from Arabia across Asia and Africa, it encountered diverse and deeply rooted local cultures. The story of Luqman, with its universal moral appeal and unimpeachable Quranic authority, proved to be a remarkably adaptable vehicle for transmitting Islamic values. His persona was integrated into the major literary traditions of the Islamic world, where he was reinterpreted to fit different cultural contexts. This process was not merely one of translation but a strategic act of cultural appropriation and Islamization. Luqman served as an ideal "bridge" figure; his biographical flexibility allowed him to be woven seamlessly into local narrative styles like the Malay *Hikayat* and the Urdu *Kahaniyan*. By replacing older epic heroes with Luqman, local storytellers could retain familiar literary forms while infusing them with Islamic ethics and a monotheistic worldview, thus embedding Islamic principles into the cultural fabric of these societies.

Section 4.1: The Sage in Persian and Turkish Letters

Persian Literature

Luqman became a familiar figure in classical Persian literature, where his wisdom was often invoked to illustrate profound spiritual and ethical points. The most notable example is found in the *Masnavi* of the 13th-century poet and mystic Jalal al-Din Rumi. Rumi recounts the story of Luqman patiently observing Prophet Dawud crafting chain mail. For a year, Luqman watched without asking a single question, until Dawud himself explained its purpose. Rumi uses this anecdote as a powerful allegory for the virtue of spiritual patience (*sabr*) in the face of divine mysteries. Furthermore, the strong association between Luqman and Aesop was cemented in the Persian-speaking world, where translations of Aesop's fables were often

published under Luqman's name, such as *Luqman Hakim*, effectively merging the two figures in the Persian literary imagination.

Turkish Literature

The stories and wisdom of Luqman are noted as being widely prevalent in Turkish literature and folklore.⁶ His character, representing the archetypal wise man, appears in various didactic and moral tales. It is important, however, to distinguish the legendary sage from a historical figure of a similar name: Sayyid Luqman Ashuri. This Sayyid Luqman was a prominent 16th-century Ottoman court historian (*shahnameji*) who wrote official chronicles of the sultans' reigns, such as the *Shahinshahname* for Murad III, in both Persian verse and Turkish prose. While this historian was a significant literary figure in his own right, he is distinct from the ancient sage whose wisdom permeates Turkish folklore.

Section 4.2: The Didactic Tales of South and Southeast Asia

Malay Tradition (Hikayat Luqman al-Hakim)

In the Malay Archipelago, the story of Luqman was adapted into the popular literary genre of the *Hikayat*, a form of epic narrative or romanticized history. The *Hikayat Luqman al-Hakim* is considered a significant early work of Malay Islamic literature.⁴⁶ These tales served a crucial didactic purpose, using Luqman's authoritative voice to impart lessons on Islamic creed (*aqidah*), law (*fiqh*), and mysticism (*tasawwuf*). The introduction of Islamic figures like Luqman into the *Hikayat* genre was a key strategy in the Islamization of the region's literary culture, gradually replacing the heroes and deities of the older Hindu-Buddhist epics that had previously dominated the narrative landscape.⁴⁶

Urdu Tradition (Luqman ki Kahaniyan)

In the Indian subcontinent, Luqman's wisdom found a home in the rich tradition of Urdu didactic literature. His stories (*kahaniyan*) and anecdotes (*hikayat*) became staples of moral instruction, particularly for children.⁴⁹ These tales, collected in books like *Hikayat e Luqman* and *Sawaneh Umri Hakeem Luqman*, convey ethical lessons in an accessible and memorable format.⁵² One of the most famous and widely circulated stories in this tradition is that of Luqman, his son, and their donkey. As they travel to the market, they are criticized by onlookers no matter what they do: when the son rides and Luqman walks,

when Luqman rides and the son walks, when they both ride, and when they both walk. The story culminates in Luqman's timeless lesson to his son: it is impossible to please everyone, so one should focus only on seeking the pleasure of God. This simple yet profound narrative has become a cornerstone of moral education in Urdu-speaking cultures, perfectly encapsulating the practical and accessible nature of Luqman's wisdom.

Part V: The Enduring Legacy: Lokman Hakim in the Contemporary Era

The figure of Luqman al-Hakim continues to resonate powerfully in the modern world. His name and the wisdom associated with it have been institutionalized in centers of learning, while his character has been reinterpreted to address contemporary social and ethical challenges. His legacy persists not as a relic of the past, but as a living source of guidance and inspiration.

Section 5.1: Institutional and Individual Manifestations

Institutional Embodiment (Lokman Hekim University)

A prominent example of Luqman's modern legacy is the establishment of Lokman Hekim University in Ankara, Turkey. Founded in 2017 by the non-profit Sevgi Foundation, the university began its educational activities in 2018 with a distinct and explicit focus on the medical and health sciences.⁵⁵ The choice of name is a direct invocation of Luqman's folkloric identity as

al-Hakim—the wise healer. The university's mission is to nurture qualified and ethically grounded medical professionals who can contribute to society while adhering to high moral standards, reflecting the core teachings of the Quranic sage. With multiple faculties, research centers, and affiliated hospitals dedicated to healthcare, Lokman Hekim University institutionalizes the connection between wisdom (*hikmah*) and healing, carrying Luqman's name into the forefront of modern scientific education.⁵⁵

Contemporary Namesakes

The name Luqman, or its variant Lokman Hakim, remains popular across the Muslim world, often bestowed with the hope that the child will embody the qualities of wisdom and piety. The name is borne by individuals across a wide spectrum of fields. These include the

Malaysian author Lokman Hakim, known for his novels and short stories, and the Indonesian photographer and artist Muhammad Luqman Hakim. Unsurprisingly, given the name's etymological link to healing, it is particularly prevalent among medical professionals. A survey of the modern world reveals numerous physicians, urologists, dentists, and Ayurvedic practitioners named Dr. Luqman Hakim in countries like Indonesia, Pakistan, and India, demonstrating the name's continued and powerful association with the arts of wisdom and medicine.⁵⁹

Section 5.2: Luqman as a Modern Symbol

Beyond names and institutions, the very idea of Luqman has been adapted to serve as a powerful symbol in modern discourse, offering timeless solutions to contemporary problems.

The Universal Parent and Educator

In an age of evolving family dynamics and challenges in inter-generational communication, Luqman's gentle and reasoned approach to his son stands as a Quranic and universal model for parenting and mentorship.²⁹ His repeated, affectionate address, "O my dear son" (*Yā bunayya*), establishes a tone of love and empathy, not authoritarian command. His advice provides a comprehensive curriculum that balances spiritual obligations with practical ethics, making it a timeless guide for parents seeking to raise children with strong moral character and a balanced worldview.

A Model for Modern Preaching (Da'wah)

For contemporary Muslim preachers and scholars, Luqman's methodology offers a powerful template for effective *da'wah* (invitation to Islam) in a world marked by moral relativism, extremism, and the distractions of technology. His approach is rooted in wisdom, not dogmatism. It begins with the most fundamental principles of faith and builds outward to encompass social ethics and personal character. His counsel represents a balanced, holistic framework that can help preachers address modern challenges, such as the erosion of moral values and the negative influences on youth, by providing guidance that is both authentic to Islamic principles and relevant to contemporary contexts.

A Symbol of Wisdom Transcending Race and Status

Perhaps the most potent aspect of Luqman's legacy in the 21st century is the re-contextualization of his identity. The traditional accounts of his Blackness, once a detail

emphasizing that God's favor is independent of worldly status, have acquired a new and urgent significance in a world grappling with the legacies of colonialism and systemic racism.¹² While early traditions noted his African origins to show that piety transcends race, today this fact is actively highlighted as a powerful symbol of anti-racism and Black excellence within an Islamic framework. For communities in the diaspora, particularly African-American Muslims, figures like Luqman and Bilal (the first Muezzin of Islam) are not just historical personalities; they are vital links to a non-Eurocentric history of greatness and a validation of their heritage within the faith. Luqman's story, as enshrined in the Qur'an, stands as a divine and enduring testament that true worth in the sight of God is measured by righteousness and wisdom, not by color, lineage, or social standing. He is a beacon of light, encouraging a path of wisdom, integrity, and unwavering faith for all humanity.

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