

Whenever my mother sees me grumbling about something, she tells me "Always praise God so you might not be deprived of His blessings. Blessings may vanish, but the only way to keep them is with constant gratitude." These words were planted deep within my soul and have become a lighthouse that illuminates my life's path. I have never stopped reciting them, though sometimes it doesn't resonate well with others.

On this subject I wrote an article called "The Saaidi." When I was young, I heard a silly joke about a Saaidi which applies to people who don't appreciate the blessings they already have. The Saaidi are people from Upper Egypt and they are an honest, hard-working people who lead simple lives. Although many great scholars and statesmen of the Arab world were Saaidi, they are unfairly stereotyped as being uneducated and are often the target of insensitive humor. So, while it is true the joke may cross the line of decency, I can't help repeating it to my children and now to my grandchildren whenever I find them taking things for granted, or when I need to convince them not to do something they'll regret later. I never published it for fear that it would be misunderstood because it could be considered offensive, but it addresses this complicated subject. I've included the article in this book, however. I hope all Saaidi will pardon me, because they are the kindest people, and I ask my readers for their pardon too if they are offended with the joke.

In addition to the joke, there's a Pakistani proverb which I always apply into my life as it reflects the basis of moderation and adaptation. The story behind the proverb goes back into my days in college when I watched a documentary about Pakistan's secession from India. As I said earlier, I became friends with the groups of Pakistani and Indian students during my last years of college. I found the documentary intriguing because it offered answers to some of my questions about the old