



A WAKE-UP CALL



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A WAKE-UP CALL

AND OTHER INSPIRATIONAL STORIES

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‘FI SABEEL ILLAH’

This book is not for sale. It is distributed free to wake up and remind the Muslim population of their duties towards Allah. Any Daawah organization or individual can reprint and distribute it for free (fi sabeel illah), as an act of charity, to achieve this noble goal. God bless. ... Author.

Printer : Daud Banndgi Printers

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Layout : Syed Husnain Fazil Kirmani

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DEDICATION

**To those who suffer for being honest,
righteous and strive for the cause of Allah.**

**‘And of those whom We created, there is
a nation who guide with the Truth and
establish justice therewith.’**

(Quran 7 :181)

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WHAT NEXT?

Thousands lost their lives – an irreparable damage – and about twenty million people lost their possessions. Financial damages run into billions. They became homeless, penniless, poor and dependent on us for their survival. They are still looking up to the lucky ones living comfortably in big cities, who were spared the wrath of nature.

This was the wake-up call I wanted to talk about; this was the calamity I wanted to warn you about; and this was the reminder I saw in the Holy Quran and wanted to convey to you its warning. I finished this book in a hurry, in July 2010, so that I could wake people up as soon as possible, but due to the lack of God-fearing publishers (and due to unreasonable terms & conditions of greedy publishers), I had to do the printing & publishing myself. I could not bring it out earlier. Probably it wasn't meant to be. In the meantime, the calamity hit the poor and helpless people of Pakistan, sending them back to the stone age.

On the Day of Judgement, many of us shall be answering questions in front of our Creator; many of us will face the fury of the Almighty, and many of us will be thrown into the Hellfire. I guarantee you that. We are all responsible, in one way or the other, for this disaster.

And now the million-dollar question: Did we learn any lesson and change our ways? Do you know your friend and foe now? Allah says:

‘... So establish worship, pay the
poor-due, and hold fast to Allah.
He is your protecting Friend, a blessed
Patron and a blessed Helper.’
(Quran 22:78)

What next? We are heading towards the end of the world. Now is the time for us to do something. At least do your part and leave the rest to Allah. It might be your last chance! May Allah guide you and give you strength to become good Muslims ... ameen!

M. Javed Naseem

Lahore (Pakistan).

September 2010.

FOREWORD

اگرچہ بُت ہیں جماعت کی آستینوں میں
مجھے ہے حکم اذان لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ
(علامہ اقبال)

(Although there are hypocrites among the Ummah,
I am commanded to proclaim (the Truth) that
there is no god but Allah.)

Thinker of the East and the poet philosopher who gave the idea of a Muslim homeland to the believers of the Sub-continent – Dr. Mohammad Iqbal – regretfully expressed his concern in the above verse. But he was an optimist and saw the potential in the Ummah. He was very steadfast in his effort and despite all odds followed the same path which our Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was commanded in the Holy Quran to follow : Deliver the message !

‘And We have not sent thee (O Muhammad) save
as a bringer of good tidings and a warner unto all
mankind ; but most of mankind know not.’
(Quran 34 :28)

‘And our (prophets’) duty is but plain
conveyance (of the Message).’
(Quran 36 :17)

‘You are (O Muhammad) but a warner.’
(Quran 35 :23)

‘O Prophet ! Lo, We have sent thee as a witness
and a bringer of good tidings and a warner. And
as a summoner unto Allah by His permission,
and as a lamp that gives light.’
(Quran 33 :45-46)

‘But the messenger has no other charge
than to convey (the message) plainly.’
(Quran 24 :54)

The duty of the messengers of Allah had been to convey the divine Message to the mankind. All of them did that to the best of their abilities. It was up to us, the people, to accept the Message and follow the path prescribed by the Creator of mankind. The prophets are not responsible for the actions or deeds of the people and they will not be asked by Allah about that. We are responsible for our own actions and only that will decide our fate. We have to carry our own burden. The prophets conveyed the Message and told the people how to follow the commands of Allah. They led by example. Those who follow them successfully, they are the winners in the Hereafter. But those who don't follow them, and rather do mischief or evil, they will face the wrath of Allah. We cannot deny the revelations of Allah and escape from Him. There is nowhere to go!

‘Lo, this Quran is a Reminder.
Let him, who will, then choose
a way unto his Lord.’
(Quran 73 :19)

The Almighty Allah says that Quran is a Reminder to the mankind. And this little book of mine is an effort to remind you of the Holy Reminder (The Furqan). I have tried to give you the examples from the real life, and stories have been laced with conforming verses from the Holy Quran. If we want to succeed, we need to bring Allah back into our lives. It requires a strong determination, honesty and sincerity – and sacrifice, of course. It is very important and at the same time very rewarding too. It is very difficult but that is the way. As a matter of fact, there is no other way. We don't have a choice – we have sort of a choice between Heaven and Hell, but who will choose Hell over Heaven ?

Hypocrisy or ‘Munafiqat’ has been the dilemma of Muslim Ummah for centuries. There are always a few who will sell their conscience, their faith or Imaan, their motherland, their honour and their dignity for petty material gains. They try to win the comforts of this world in exchange to the Hereafter – and eventually end up losing both of them.

‘Bear unto the hypocrites the tidings
that for them there is a painful doom.’
(Quran 4 :138)

‘Lo ! The hypocrites (will be) in the
lowest deep of the Fire, and you will
find no helper for them.’
(Quran 4 :145)

The Almighty Allah told the Prophet (s.a.w.) that his job was to convey the message to the mankind. It is up to people whether they accept the divine message, believe in One God or not. This is actually called ‘Dawaah’ in Islam. All prophets of Allah did that and Dr. Mohammad Iqbal followed the prophetic tradition. He always strived to remind Muslims of the divine message in a meaningful way.

I, with my very limited imagination, resources and power, am trying to do the same thing. Following Iqbal’s path, I am trying to send a wake-up call to the Ummah so that they revert to Allah. The forces of evil are once again all around us and are determined to destroy the Muslim Ummah. It is time to wake up and stand up to them. We need to get united, find a common goal and adopt a common strategy to thwart this malicious attack. Mind it, it is getting late ! The time is running out ! Open the Book (Holy Quran) and you will find the solution to the problems we are facing today due to lack of Faith or Imaan.

The forces of evil are controlling the media and all other sources of information or education. They are misleading simple people by their crooked ways, lies, false propaganda and deception. It is our responsibility to find out the truth, dig out the reality and do the research for our own good. Nobody else will do it for us. The evil-doers are strong and have all the resources of the world to their disposal. These resources are being used to mislead those who want to follow the ways of Allah. They forget that it is Allah Who is controlling the Heavens and the earth and whatever is between them. He gives people enough time to correct their mistakes, repent and revert to the right path. If they choose not to, then they will be the greatest losers in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

‘Who debar (men) from the way of Allah and would have it crooked, and who are disbelievers in the Hereafter. Such will not escape in the earth, nor have they any protecting friends besides Allah. For them the torment will be double. They could not bear to hear, and they used not to see. Such are they who have lost their souls, and that which they used to invent has failed them. Assuredly, in the Hereafter they will be the greatest losers.’
(Quran 11 :19-22)

When we accepted the Message and said ‘La ilaha illa Allah’ (There is no god but Allah), we, in fact, agreed to abide by the rules and regulations prescribed for us in the Holy Book (Quran). Then how dare we violate the laws of Allah ? At so many places in the Holy Quran, the Almighty reminds us of our obligations and codes of ethics. Why don’t we pay attention?

‘Lo, Allah enjoins justice and kindness,
and giving to kinsfolk, and forbids
lewdness and abomination and wickedness.
He exhorts you in order that
ye may take heed.’
(Quran 16 :90)

‘Confound not truth with falsehood,
nor knowingly conceal the truth. Establish
worship, pay the poor-due (Zakat), and bow
your heads with those who bow (in worship).’
(Quran 2 :42-43)

‘Eat and drink of that which Allah has
provided, and do not act corruptly,
making mischief in the earth.’
(Quran 2 :60)

There is absolutely no confusion or ambiguity in these commands of Allah. They are as clear as sunlight. Nobody, in his right frame of mind, can say that he did not get the message or did not understand it. The sins we commit unknowingly or unintentionally, can be forgiven by Allah, if we repent and don't repeat them. But the evil deeds we commit intentionally, cannot go without reprimand or punishment. The Almighty Allah warns us throughout in the Holy Quran. These warnings are impossible to ignore.

‘And whoso among you does wrong, We
shall make him taste great torment.’
(Quran 25 :19)

‘We destroyed the generations before you
when they did wrong ; and their messengers
(from Allah) came unto them with clear
proofs (of His sovereignty), but they

would not believe. Thus do We reward
the guilty folk.’
(Quran 10 :13)

Can there be any warning clearer than this? No, absolutely not. Then why don't we pay attention and correct our ways? Nobody wants to go to Hell ! Logically, it is very difficult to understand why people choose the ways to destruction ? Everybody knows that so many nations and generations of the old had been destroyed because they chose the evil ways of living. They violated the divine laws and they got what they deserved. What guarantee do we have that it won't happen to us if we continue to follow the paths of evil?

‘Because of their sins they (the tribes
of Noah) were drowned, then made to
enter a Fire. And they found they had
no helpers in place of Allah.’
(Quran 71 :25)

‘(The tribes of) Thamud and Aad disbelieved
in the judgement to come. As for
Thamud, they were destroyed by the lightening.
And as for Aad, they were destroyed by a
fierce roaring wind, which Allah imposed
on them for seven long nights and eight
long days so that thou mightest have seen
men lying overthrown, as they were hollow
trunks of palm-trees. Canst thou (O Muhammad)
see any remnant of them ? And Pharaoh
and those before him, and the communities
that were destroyed, brought error. And
they disobeyed the messenger of their Lord,
therefore did He grip them with a tightening grip.’
(Quran 69 :4-10)

Be afraid of that grip ! You can't afford it. The laws of nature cannot be changed. The only thing that can be changed is us. We can change our behaviour, attitude and actions. We can change our ways for better and thus we can change this world. We should be able to distinguish between 'Halal' and 'Haram' ; between right and wrong. For the wrongs we have done in our lives, it is never late to repent. His doors are always open. Let us do it while we still can.

‘Turn unto your Lord repentant,
and surrender unto Him
before there come unto you the doom,
when ye cannot be helped.’
(Quran 39 :54)

This world is a big trial or test for us. We need to resist the temptation and stop the race for material gains. These things cannot benefit us in the Hereafter. On the contrary, they create many problems in our society and promote corruption. Only the good deeds can earn us the mercy of the Lord of the Worlds in the Hereafter. We should try to live within our means. It is Allah Who gives some people more and some people less. And in that lies their test or trial. We should learn to be content. Remember : If things are going our way, we are lucky. But if things are not going our way, we are even luckier because they are going God's way. We should be content with it. We cannot change the destiny. Whatever has been prescribed for us by our Sole Provider, we'll get that. We need to have strong faith (Imaan) in Allah as He is the distributor of 'rizq' (provision). Of course, He can increase or decrease the 'rizq' whenever He likes. We should not compete with the rich because this can land us in big trouble. Islam recommends a simple life.

‘Wealth and children are an ornament
of life of the world. But the
good deeds which endure are better
in thy Lord’s sight for reward,
and better in respect of hope.’
(Quran 18 :46)

We always talk about changing the world for better but practically we do nothing to achieve this goal. Everybody tells others to change. But the change starts within. Charity begins at home. If we try to change ourselves first and stop criticising others, we’ll probably be doing a good service to the community. It always starts with one and then spreads. On our part, we should be ready to make sacrifices. We have to make an effort with perseverance and then leave the rest to Allah.

‘Lo, Allah changes not the condition
of a folk until they (first) change that
which is in their hearts.’
(Quran 13 :11)

Wake up Ummah ! It is about time. May Allah guide us and help us through these difficult times. Ameen. Try to do good and stay away from evil ! It is not easy but it can be done. Pray for the entire Muslim Ummah (and don’t forget me in your prayers, please). Thanks and may Allah bless you all!

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July 2010.

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STILL WAITING

It's four o'clock in the morning and third day of Ramadan,
I've been thinking wildly and want to put them down,
Some thoughts that make no sense, but have'm off and on.
If I don't care to write now, they might disappear by dawn.

From place to place I wandered for something so divine,
But every place I went to see, it wasn't what I sought.
I cruised through the oceans, was thirsty all the time,
Was hungry all those years though it wasn't food I thought.

I knew I was missing something, no clue of what it was.
One day I asked a wise man if he had vision of that.
He said I needed Darvish, so deep in love I was.
'What non-sense, you oldie! Am too smart for that.'

You know love hurts too much, it leaves your soul to bleed.
As 'love is like a slaughter-house', said Rumi who was
hurt.
They killed the best therein, I wasn't best breed.
He said, 'You are so restless, and know not what you need.'

'And that was sure a sign of love, the love for an unseen.
Then why you go from door to door, on roads you haven't
seen?
I'll tell you where to knock at, and knocking have you
been.'
Then oldie brought me down there, and vanished in the
green.

I asked him what to do there, if no one helps me out?
He said, 'don't worry about it, they know who's coming
down.

Have patience and be steadfast, no matter what the doom!
Your best defense is always: Ya Haeeyo Ya Qayyum.'

So, that's what I'm looking for, and don't even I know.
What happens, I am wondering, if ever in I go?
I got my guts together and gave a gentle knock.
I waited for an instance, then gave a second knock.

At that moment I pondered, what Prophet had declared.
If no answer on third knock, you better turn away.
I didn't knock the third time, I got a little scared.
What if that door now opens not, how can I go away?

I'm waiting still at the same door, it opens not for me.
I wish to see that wise man who talked about doom?
And am so tired and dizzy now, don't even have the key.
I start whispering to myself: Ya Haeeyo Ya Qayyum.

I feel if rain's coming down, my cheeks are getting wet.
Ya Haeeyo Ya Qayyum, Ya Haeeyo Ya Qayyum.
It's warm and salty in my mouth, the skies are clear I bet.
Ya Haeeyo Ya Qayyum, Ya Haeeyo Ya Qayyum.

(M. Javed Naseem)

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

خالقِ ارض و سما تو، مشرق و مغرب میں تو،
 تیرا جلوہ ذرہ ذرہ اور تو، کل الوجود
 قادرِ کل ذاتِ تیری اور تو مختارِ کل
 خالق و معبودِ ہر کس، تو ہی شاہدِ توشہود
 تو ہی تو صوتِ اذان میں، تو ہی تو میری نماز
 تو میری جانِ کوع ہے، تو میری روحِ سجود
 لم یلد اور لم یولد تو، تو ہی واحد لا شریک
 تو صمد ہے، تو احد ہے تو ہی لائقِ سجود
 تو ازل ہے تو ابد ہے، تو ہی باقی ذوالجلال
 دھرم میں آئے گئے ہیں کتنے فرعون و ثمود
 تو سمایا جان و دل میں، مالکِ خواب و خیال
 تو ہی سرچشمہ سلام اور تو ہی منبعِ درود
 ایک لمحے میں بنادے تو گدا کو بادشاہ
 تو قدیرِ کل شئی، ہر جگہ تیری نمود
 نورِ حق ہے ذاتِ تیری، تو ہی رحمان و رحیم
 تیری رحمت کا سمندر بیکراں اور بے حدود
 مالکِ کون و مکان تو، فائزِ عرشِ العظیم
 تو ہی اول تو ہی آخر بے نیازِ هست و بود
 تو ہی جلّ شانہ ہے تو ہی باسطِ تو جلال
 لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ یا کریم و یا ودود
 ہر رگ و پے میں بسا ہے لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ
 أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ يَا رَبِّي، دل میں ہے تیرا ورود
 يَا رَوْفًا يَا رَحِيمًا، حَبِيْبُ يَا قَيُّوْمُ تو
 کبھی نسیم صبح تو بھی یا ودوداً یا ودود
 ایم جاوید نسیم۔

الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ اَمِّ صَاحِبِيَّ

خَيْرِ خَلْقِ اللّٰهِ وَخَيْرِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
مَلَجَا الْمَحْرُومَ ، مَوْلَايَ يَتِيمَ
مُحْسِنِ الْإِنْسَانِيَّةِ ، شَمْسِ الضُّحَى
الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ اَمِّ صَاحِبِيَّ

أَحْمَدِ مُخْتَارِ ، مَحْمُودِ زَمَانِ
تُوْنَبِيِّ الْهَاشِمِيِّ ، صَادِقِ ، أَمِيْنِ
تُوْ شَفِيعِ الْمَذْنُبِيْنَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامِ
الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ اَمِّ صَاحِبِيَّ

عَاصِيُوْنَ كِيْ آسَ ، أُمَيَّدِ جِهَانِ
تَمَّ يَتِيْمُوْنَ بِيَكْسُوْنَ كَيْ آسَرَا
بِيَكْرٍ رَّحْمَتِ هُوَ تَمَّ حَاجَتِ رَوَا
الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ اَمِّ صَاحِبِيَّ

سَيِّدِ الْإِخْلَاقِ هُوَ يَا مُصْطَفَى
تَمَّ مَجَسِّمِ عِلْمِ وَعُرْفَانِ بِيْ كِرَا
حَامِلِ فَرْقَانِ هُوَ نُورُ الْمُبْيِّنِ
الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ اَمِّ صَاحِبِيَّ

يَا إِمَامُ الْإِنْبِيَا يَا سَيِّدِي
ابْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ قَرِيْشِيْ هَاشِمِي
يَا مُحَمَّدَ رَحْمَتٌ لِّلْعَالَمِيْنَ
الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ اَمِّ صَاحِبِيَّ

سَرُوْرٍ كُوْنِيْنَ ، فَخْرِ كَائِنَاتِ
بَاعْثِ تَسْكِيْنِ ذَاتِ بَاصِفَاتِ
مُنْتَظَرِ نَظَرِ كَرَمِ كَاهِيْ نَسِيْمِ
الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ اَمِّ صَاحِبِيَّ

ایم جاوید نسیم

اَغْفِرْ لِي رَبَّ اَلْغَفُوْر الرَّحِيْمِ

دکھاؤں کسے دامنِ تار تار	سناؤں کسے اپنے حالاتِ زار
اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ۝ ط	سوا تیرے کوئی نہیں اُمے کریم
اندھیروں میں گم ہوں یا نُورُ السَّماءِ	ہو نظرِ کرم یا کریمُ العطاءِ
اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْغَفُوْر الرَّحِيْمُ ۝ ط	تو واقف ہے اَنْتَ الْخَبِيْرُ الْعَلِيْمُ
ہوئے گم گناہوں میں قبلِ اَجَلِ	کمائے تھے جو چند صالحِ عمل
اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ ۝ ط	بہرِ وسہ ہے تجھ پہ فہیم و حلیم
ملے قُرب تیرا کروں کیا جتن	مِلا خاک میں ہر ہنر اور فن
اِنَّ اَللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ۝ ط	میں نادم مِیں تائبُ تُو رَبِّ الْعَظِيْمِ
میں شیطان کے آگے نحیف و نزار	تیرے سامنے آج پھر شرِ مَسار
اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْقَدِيْرُ الْكَرِيْمُ ۝ ط	لو پھر کھو دیا راستہ مستقیم
رضاپہ ہوں راضی حَمِيْدٌ وَمَجِيْدُ	پریشان بخوفِ عَذَابُ شَدِيْدِ
اِنَّكَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيْمِ ۝ ط	میں بیکس ہوں اور تُو عَلِيْمُ وَ حَكِيْمُ
یہی ہے اثاثہ بہ یومِ الْحَسَابِ	یہ اشکِ ندامت، یہ حُبُّ الْكِتَابِ
اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ۝ ط	تو کُل تری رَحْمَتوں پہ کریم
نِعْمَ الْمَوْلٰی وَ نِعْمَ النَّصِيْرُ	حَسْبَا اللّٰه وَ نِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ
اَغْفِرْ لِي رَبَّ اَلْغَفُوْر الرَّحِيْمِ ۝ ط	یہی ذکر ہے بَرَزبانِ نَسیم

ایم جاوید نسیم

SUBHAN-ALLAH

Once, the army of Prophet of Allah, Hazrat Sulaiman (Solomon), PBUH, was passing through a valley. There were Jinns and Humans in his flanks, and the birds in the air were casting their shadows to protect them from the heat of the sun. A pious man passed by and said to Sulaiman:

‘Allah has blessed you with such a big kingdom and you even rule over Jinns, humans, beasts and cattle, animals and birds.’

Sulaiman (PBUH) replied: ‘One word of “Subhan-Allah” in the Record of Deeds of a Muslim, is better than this whole kingdom of Sulaiman. Because this kingdom is going to perish one day, but the reward of ‘Subhan-Allah’ is going to stay for ever.

Scholars have quoted many references from Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and concluded that the best words to utter (Kalima) as ‘Zikr’ (or Dhikr) are ‘Subhan-Allah’, ‘Alhamdo-lillah’ and ‘Allaho-Akbar’. The scholars of all four schools of thoughts agree on the following.

The best Kalima for Zikr during the day or night, which is very easy and light on the tongue, but would be the heaviest in the scale of good deeds on the Day of Judgement, is:

‘Subhan Allah wa-Behamdeh,
Subhan Allah al-Azeem.’

It is recommended that you recite it at least 100 times after each prayer (Salaat). Allah will shower His mercy upon you, Inshallah. If you cannot do that, then at least recite it after Fajr and Isha prayers.

A GLASS OF MILK

‘Allah loves those whose deeds are good.’
(Quran 3:148)

Prophet Mohammad (s.a.w.) said: ‘The best among you (Muslims) is the one with the best conduct (akhlaaq).’
And don’t forget that the best conduct is a part of Sadaqah too. If you can’t help mankind with your money and material then at least keep smiling to them. Your smile is Sadaqah and will bring you rewards in the Hereafter.

‘Spend your wealth for the cause
of Allah, and cast not (yourselves)
by your own hands to ruin;
and do good. Lo! Allah loves
the beneficent.’
(Quran 2:195)

I went through so much in life that I would love to share with you some beautiful experiences; some harsh realities, some heart-touching real stories and some great writings. I am not sure, with all my limitations, how successful would I be in bringing all that to you. ‘The art is long and time is fleeting’. But let’s start with a real-life story that made me cry. It happened to somebody in a remote part of our world. The guy was very lucky to return the favour during his lifetime. That reminds me of Surah Ar-Rahman (Holy Quran, ayah 60) – ‘the reward of goodness is nothing but goodness’ (In Urdu: Neki ka badla neki).

There was that little boy who worked hard to support his own education. He belonged to an average family with modest living. He did not want to burden his poor parents

who were having hard time to make both ends meet. So, after school, he used to sell goods from door to door in his hometown. And he did it for many years. There was very little profit-margin in that hard labour, therefore, he always tried to get some free food whenever possible.

One day he had no money in his pocket and he was hungry. He decided that he will knock at the next house and ask for some food. When he knocked at the door, a beautiful young woman opened it and asked him what he wanted. The boy felt a little shy and got so nervous that he could not express himself. He showed her his basket full of things he was selling. The lady looked at it, smiled and shook her head saying ‘no, thanks’.

The boy got disappointed. He mustered his courage and said: ‘Water... a glass of water, please’.

She looked at him and smiled again. The boy looked poor and hungry. So, she brought him a muffin and a large glass of milk. He drank it slowly and then asked: ‘How much do I owe you for that?’

‘You owe me nothing,’ she replied. ‘My parents have taught me never to accept money for an act of kindness or a favour.’

‘Well, in that case, I thank you very much from the bottom of my heart. May God bless you’, he bowed and left. He was touched by the gesture and the kind words of the young woman. He felt inspired and his faith in God grew stronger too. He continued his part-time work and never abandoned his education. Time went by.

Years later, that young woman became critically ill. The doctors of the town tried to cure her illness but with little success. Finally, they sent her to the big city hospital where they called in specialists to study her complicated disease.

Dr. Mateen Hashemi was called in for the consultation. When he was going through the patient’s case history, he saw the name of the small town she came from.

‘How interesting!’, he whispered to himself as a strange light filled his eyes. ‘That’s my childhood town,’ he said. He rose immediately and went down the hall to the patient’s room. Dressed in his doctor’s white gown, he went in to see her. Despite the signs of a painful disease and frustration on her face, he recognized her at once.

He went back to the consultation room feeling obliged to do something for this lady. ‘I will do my best to save her life’, he said in a determined tone. He gave special attention to that particular case and prayed to God for her life. After a long but sincere struggle he started seeing the positive results. Finally, the battle was won and she recovered.

Dr. Hashemi requested the admin. office to pass the final bill to him. He looked at the invoice and then wrote something on the margin. And the bill was sent to the patient.

When she received the envelope with invoice inside, she feared to open it. She was sure it would take the rest of her life to pay the whole thing. Eventually, with trembling hands, she opened it. She was right. It was a tremendous amount that she could never pay. Her jaws dropped in frustration but suddenly she saw something written on the margin of the bill. She slowly read these words:

‘Paid in full, with one glass of milk.’

(Signed) Dr. Mateen Hashemi.

Tears of joy and gratitude flooded her eyes and started flowing on her cheeks. She realized who the doctor was. She covered her face with both hands and sobbingly said: ‘O God! Thank you so much for this favour. Your love has spread through human hearts.’

‘Is the reward of goodness
ought save goodness?’
(Quran 55:60)

We human beings are supposed to take care of each other; be nice and merciful to our fellow beings. You never know who is going to be your mentor tomorrow. Our Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) advised us to treat others with compassion. He said:

‘Those who have no mercy for others,
will not be treated with mercy.’

Learn to care about others because there is always somebody somewhere who cares about you. This world is ‘tit for tat’. You will get back whatever you give. Don’t frown at people. Smile, even when you are saying ‘sorry’. Here is a beautiful excerpt from Maulana Rumi’s works:

‘This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honourably.
He may be clearing you out
For some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.’

MODESTY IS A VIRTUE

The Almighty God has commanded all believers in the Holy Quran to be modest. He says:

‘Be modest in thy bearing and subdue
thy voice. Lo, the harshest of all voices
is the voice of the donkey.’
(Quran 31:19)

Modesty is a virtue – the virtue of the prophets and the saints. It can only bring good and protect us from evil. It is actually a part of our faith that will lead us to Heaven.

Muslims are required to be modest in all walks of life. The true Muslim community always encourages the believers to be modest, kind and generous. Modesty is a virtue the Prophet Muhammad (saw) was keen to stress upon. He himself had a very modest lifestyle and believed to be simple. Modesty is a universally acclaimed virtue and most of the world’s religions or cultures praise it. In Islam, it is a part of the faith itself.

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said:
‘By God! A person is not a believer
unless he loves for his (Muslim) brother
what he loves for himself.’

This Hadith makes modesty a condition of faith that one considers others in the same way as he/she considers his/her own self. This promotes not only simple lifestyle but also eliminates the evil of selfishness from the society. A Muslim cannot be a snob or an arrogant. He has to be considerate of others. He is always humble. Remember that old saying our elders used to repeat to us: ‘When a branch

of a fruit-tree bears fruit, it bends down.’ Now, that is being humble and modest. You are loaded but you are modest. In the Western society people sometimes cast an air of disapproval on modesty considering it a weakness. They say that it inhibits a person from claiming what is due to him. They emphasize the need to be assertive so that others do not take advantage of their modesty. It is probably true for a society that has no concept of modesty. In a different Hadith, one of the Prophet’s companions, Imran ibn Hussayn, narrates:

The Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said:
‘Modesty brings nothing but good.’

Here is a true story from our modern times. Everybody knows Muhammad Ali, the ex-heavyweight boxing champion of the world. An incident took place when Ali’s daughters arrived at his place wearing clothes that were not modest. Here is the true account as narrated by one of his daughters:

‘When we finally arrived, the chauffeur escorted my younger sister, Laila, and me up to my father’s suite. As usual, he was hiding behind the door waiting to scare us (great sense of humour!). We exchanged as many hugs and kisses as we could possibly give in one day. My father took a good look at us. Then he sat me down on his lap and said something that I will never forget. He looked me straight in the eyes and said:

‘Hana, everything that God made valuable in the world is covered and hard to get to. Where do you find diamonds? Deep down in the ground, covered and protected. Where do you find pearls? Deep down at the bottom of the ocean, covered up and protected in a beautiful shell. Where do you find gold? Way down in the mine, covered by layers and layers of rock. You’ve got to work hard to get to them.’

He looked at me with serious eyes and said:
'Your body is sacred. You are far more precious than diamonds and pearls, and you should be covered too.'

(From the book: More Than A Hero: Muhammad Ali's Life Lessons Through His Daughter's Eyes.)

Now, that is a beautiful piece of advice from an experienced and wise father to his young and aspiring daughters. Indeed, it is a great message of modesty.

Islam has elevated the status of woman by giving her more rights than other nations, but at the same time granting her a lot more respect for her modesty. In the Western materialistic cultures, a woman is an object of physical pleasure. A pretty model or a blonde actress of film/TV can attract big gatherings. But if you ask those people who come to see her, they will tell you that they came because they 'liked' her, and not because they 'respected' her. It is physical (sexual) attraction. On the contrary, a modest and pious woman is considered a treasure in Islam and men are considered lucky to have such a wife. She is more valuable than all the gold and silver you can possess.

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was once talking to Hazrat Umar bin Khattab and said: 'Let me tell you what the best thing is to safeguard as treasure. It is the woman who is pious and modest that when her husband looks at her, he gets happiness from the sight of her. And when he tells her to do something, she obeys him. And when he goes away temporarily, she respects the limits of Halal & Haram and protects his property including her own honour.'

Some people misinterpret modesty. They think it is like poverty. Not at all. Modesty is a great quality that springs from contentment. When you are satisfied and content with whatever God has provided for you, you are modest. There are millions of examples of people living in different eras

who had the means and the wealth but they chose a modest lifestyle. Simplicity is a part of modesty. A modest life is a simple life, close to nature and far from material corruption. Living within your means also falls within the limits of modesty.

Here is a beautiful example of modest living. Hazrat Laith bin Saad was a famous scholar of Islamic studies and a collector of Ahadith (sayings of the Prophet) during the time of Caliph Haroon Rasheed. His daily income during certain period was around one thousand Dinars. But he was never liable for paying Zakat because he never kept the money. He always distributed among the poor and the needy. Amazing! Zakat is payable on the money that you store, invest or keep for one year. His son Shoaib narrates that during certain time his father's income was around 25 thousand Dinars per year but he was always under debt. Zakat was never due from him. The amount of income kept fluctuating during different periods of time but he always gave away his money in charity. So, at the end of the year he never had a taxable amount.

One day a woman came to Laith bin Saad with a small empty cup and said that she needed some honey. Laith gave her a leather-skin full of honey. Somebody said: O Laith! She was asking for a little bit of honey but you gave her a whole bag. Hazrat Laith replied: She asked for it according to her need. I gave her according to my capacity. Allah has blessed me with His bounties, therefore, I cannot hold back.

Those who understand Islam, they know that modest living can protect them from material problems or corruption. Despite the fact that sometimes they had a lot of money, they used only what was sufficient for their needs. The rest of it they shared with the less fortunate. When you lead simple life, you are modest in your appearance too. Men are not allowed to wear silk clothes and gold jewellery, and women are asked to pay Zakat on their jewellery. Gold and

silver utensils are not allowed in a Muslim household. Muslims should look modest in their clothing too – no luxury robes. And then comes the modesty of character. The Almighty Allah (SWT) directed all believers to be modest. He says in the Holy Quran, Surah Noor (An-Nur), Ayah 30 & 31:

‘Tell the believing men to lower their
gaze and be modest. That is purer for them.
Lo, Allah is Aware of what they do.’
(Quran 24:30)

‘And tell the believing women to lower
their gaze and be modest; and to display
of their adornment only that which is apparent;
and to draw their veils over their bosoms;
and not to reveal their adornment save to their
own husbands or fathers or’
(Quran 24:31)

The woman gets concession when she is among the family members. Otherwise, both men and women have the lines drawn, the limits or the ‘Hudood’ in this respect. The rules have been laid down, clear as black and white. No questions should be asked.

I live in a so-called Arab Muslim country and always see the young girls on the beach in their bikinis. Some of them dressed far worse than the non-believing women. Even the young women who wear Hijab, dress in very tight, revealing pants or shorts, skimpy blouses and short skirts. It is a shame to see the city streets full of ‘sexy’ looking objects, and not self-respecting young ladies. There is no doubt that their parents will get their share of punishment for not bringing up their children according to the teachings of Quran and Sunnah. How strange that people feel the heat

of summer to dress half-naked and do not feel the heat of Hell that is waiting for them!

Here is another Hadith related by Al-Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad, Ibn Majah, and al-Hakim. They quote our Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) as saying:

‘Modesty is part of faith, and faith
leads to Heaven; while vulgarity is part
of unfaith, and unfaith leads to Hell.’

It is unfair to blame the society or the surroundings for all the evil in our lives. We are the society; we are the community and we are responsible for the surroundings.

The western world consider the famous Indian leader, Mahatama Gandhi, as the most influential personality of the twentieth century. In some quarters he is treated like a saint. Indians in general, and Hindus in particular, claim Gandhi as the greatest ‘son of India’. He always preached modesty and showed the world his simple lifestyle. In 1937, while addressing the Indian Congress government’s cabinet of ministers, Gandhi advised all cabinet members to lead simple life. He said:

‘I cannot give you the examples of Ram Chander and Krishna, because they were not the historical personalities. I have no other choice to give you the examples of Abu Bakar and Umar (bin Khattab) – the first two Caliphs of Islam – as symbols of modesty and simple life. They were the rulers of a great empire but all their lives they lived like beggars.’ (Quote from ‘Hareejan’, dated 27th July, 1937).

Amazing, isn’t it? The funny thing is that non-Muslims appreciate the teachings of Islam, whereas we Muslims don’t even care about it. As Muslims, we are terrible role-models for others. It is time to get up and play the role we are supposed to play for the sake of our future generations. We should act with care and responsibility. We are gradually losing our identity. We better do something

quickly before we lose everything – this world and the Hereafter. May Allah guide us all – Ameen.

THE POWERFUL SERVANTS

‘And walk not in the earth
exultant. Lo! You cannot rend
the earth, nor can you stretch to
the height of the hills. The evil
of all that is hateful in the sight
of thy Lord.’
(Quran 17:37-38)

The Almighty Allah does not like arrogance. When you become powerful, by grace of God, don't let the power go through your head. It might prove more harmful than beneficial.

Money and power (authority) can solve most of the problems the mankind is facing today. But at the same time if these two are not rightly controlled or directed through proper channels, they themselves can create havoc in the world. It is difficult to separate money from authority. Money is power and so is the authority. All power is evil (fitna) if it is not used for the benefit and welfare of mankind. In this age, it is the power that is creating all kinds of social, economic and political problems for mankind.

Humans are known for the abuse of power. They cannot handle it. Power should be used to enforce justice, and eradicate inequality and injustice. But in this world what we see today is that power is being used to escape from justice. This is corruption. To solve this problem, we should create the powerful servants. The power should be taken from the hands of the corrupt and given to the honest and God-fearing. That will make the world an ideal place. The question is: Can this be achieved during our lifetime? Hey, there is always hope!
The Almighty Allah says:

‘Whoso desires power,
(should know that)
all power belongs to Allah.’
(Quran 35:10)

Power is a Godly quality and only God can use it justly. Human beings, when given power, often try to play God and end up doing injustice to the fellow humans. They cannot resist the temptation, therefore, the corruption prevails. Power is responsibility and it should be used for the service to humanity. A ruler who enjoys power, is actually given responsibility to serve his people. A ruler is a servant of Allah who should serve His people; take care of them, solve their problems and promote peace and justice in the society. On the contrary, the modern day ruler considers himself as ‘king’ of the people and takes people as his servants. He likes it very much when people gather in rows for his reception, bow in front of him and kiss his hand.

As per one Hadith, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said that if a ruler lets people wait in rows for his reception, let him know that he has reserved a place in Hell. Now, take a minute and think about it. Sometimes, a bad ruler has ignorant cronies around him who are even worse than him. They cross all limits to please the ruler and benefit from their position. Many a time the ruler is not aware of what they do. Hazrat Ali ibn Taalib said:

‘If the ruler is just, he will not
need the oppressive police.’

There is another Hadith about the unjust ruler. Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said that on the day of judgement, Allah will not talk to four kinds of people; and the unjust ruler is one of them. He will be ignored and sent to Hell.

The Almighty Allah has all the power but He gives a little bit of it to the humans so that they serve His creation. They are the powerful servants of Allah who feel obligated to serve the people. The abuse of power or manipulation is not allowed. There are rules and regulations for the use of it and there are also limits to it.

‘The way (of blame) is only against
those who oppress mankind, wrongfully
rebel in the earth. For such,
there is a painful doom.’
(Quran 42:42)

‘..... These are the limits of Allah.
He manifests them for people
who have knowledge.’
(Quran 2:230)

On the Day of Judgement, all rulers would be asked questions about their people. A ruler must be a humble and God-fearing servant of people, and not an arrogant tyrant. He is responsible for social justice, equality, peace and prosperity of his nation. He is not allowed to take people’s money or property. He is answerable to God for the sufferings of his people during his tenure.

‘Lo, Allah commands you that
ye restore deposits to their owners,
and if ye judge between mankind,
that ye judge justly.’
(Quran 4:58)

‘..... and seek not corruption
in the earth; lo, Allah loves not
corruptors.’
(Quran 28:77)

Caliph Umar bin Khattab had the largest Muslim territory under his rule and people's welfare and social justice was his main concern. He used to wander in disguise at night in the streets of Medina to see for himself if people were living in peace. One night, as he was doing his patrol, somebody saw him and asked him who he was. When the man came face to face with Caliph Umar, he recognized him and said:

‘O Ameer-el-Moumineen, is that you?’

Caliph Umar said: ‘Yes, it is me, Umar bin Khattab.’

The man said: ‘But O Umar, you are the Caliph, the king, the leader of all Muslims. You can depute somebody to patrol the streets. Why are you doing it yourself? You run the affairs of the Caliphate during the day, you should be sleeping at night.’

Caliph Umar replied: ‘Yes, I am the Caliph and the leader of all Muslims. And for the same reason, I am patrolling the streets because if, during my tenure as Caliph, even a dog stays without food, I will be held responsible for it. How would I answer Allah for that on the Day of Judgement?’

Now, that's how a ruler should be – especially a Muslim ruler. The problem with us, Muslims, is that we don't fear Allah. We don't think that we are going to die sooner or later. We don't think about the Day of Judgement and answering questions in front of Allah. We have become hypocrites (Munafiq) as we say one thing and we do something else. We lie to others every day and we don't consider it a sin or something immoral. It is accepted as normal behaviour in the society.

We read the Holy Quran and still we don't get the message! We read about other nations and generations that were destroyed because of their sins and evil-doing. We don't learn any lesson from the Quran, nor from the history of the nations. We know that it happened to other nations

but we think it is not going to happen to us. Why not?
Allah says:

‘How many a township have
We destroyed while it was sinful,
so that it lies (to this day) in ruins,
and (how many) a deserted well
and lofty tower! Have they not
travelled in the land, so that they
may have hearts wherewith to feel,
and ears wherewith to hear?
For indeed it is not the eyes
that grow blind, but it is the hearts,
which are within the bosoms,
that grow blind.’
(Quran 22:45-46)

So, we are getting blind and cannot see things coming. Maybe, we don’t want to see it as the mere thought of it is very disturbing for us. We just want comfortable lives, but we don’t want to do anything for that. We want others to do it for us. We ask the governments to do things for us, but we forget that the governments also consist of people like us. Those who are in power, they care for their own interests. Nobody cares about the man in the street. Ironically the man in the street is also thinking how to get closer to the powerful to benefit from it. It is a vicious cycle.

The funny thing in most of the Muslim countries is that everybody who works for the government would like to play the ‘boss’ but nobody takes any responsibility. Power, but no responsibility? Yes, that is what they believe.

Caliph Umar bin Khattab used to say: ‘If a camel in Baghdad (Iraq) tumbles during my tenure, I will be responsible for it because I did not pave the way or facilitate the passage for Muslims.’ Now, who are we going

to hold responsible for our miserable lives? Like so many other things, we leave this one also to God. We don't want to do anything. We want God to do everything for us, as if He created this problem so He should fix it. At the same time those who are supposed to take care of these problems, they are having good time.

Here is an example. The people of Pakistan elect members and send them to the National Assembly. The MNAs, who are supposed to take care of people, take care of themselves only. According to one report, each MNA enjoys the following benefits. I copied this information from a website during the month of July 2010. If it is not true, then somebody should tell the truth. People have the right to know because they vote for these members and it is their money which is being spent on the MNAs.

Salary & Govt. Concessions for a Member of NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (MNA)

- Ø Monthly Salary: **Rs. 120,000 to 200,000**
- Ø Expense for Constitution per month: **Rs.100,000**
- Ø Office expenditure per month: **Rs.140,000**
- Ø Travelling concession (**Rs. 8 per km**): **Rs.48,000**
(**For a visit to ISLAMABAD & return**): **6000 km**
- Ø Daily BETA during Assembly meets: **Rs.500**
- Ø Charge for 1st class (A/C) in train: **Free (For any number of times all over Pakistan.**
- Ø Charge for Business Class in flights: **Free for 40 trips / year (With wife or P.A.)**
- Ø Rent for Govt.. hostel any where: **Free**
- Ø Electricity costs at home: **Free up to 50,000 units**
- Ø Local phone call charge: **Free up to 1,70,000 calls**
- Ø TOTAL expense for a MNA per year: **Rs. 32,000,000**
- Ø TOTAL expense for 5 years: **Rs. 1,60,000,000**
- Ø For 534 MNA, the expense for 5 years:
Rs. 85, 440,000,000 (more than 8544 crores) .

From Pakistani standards, it is extravagant, lavish and maybe, in some respect, criminal too. With all the poverty, misery, inflation, joblessness, lack of electricity (load-shedding), increasing prices and shortage of basic food items, this huge amount of money must be spent on people's welfare projects. It is sheer wastage to spend big amounts of money on the officials who already enjoy higher salaries and fringe benefits.

Here is a quote from the statement of Pakistan's Finance Minister, Mr. Sheikh: '..... Those MNAs keeping six cars at home must be ashamed of themselves.'

Vow! What a luxurious lifestyle! Govt. officials always have good time at the expense of public. And these are the people's representatives! In some areas of their constituencies, people are dying of hunger, they don't have electricity, no clean drinking water, not enough food on the table (not even the table!), no jobs, no source of income, and no life. Aren't these MNAs responsible for their misery? This is criminal. These people should be in jails, not in the Assemblies. They have committed perjury – breach of oath. And perjury is a crime punishable by prison in other countries.

When they took office, didn't these guys take oath – the pledge of allegiance? They betrayed the trust of millions, they cheated the whole nation, and you are telling me that there is no law to punish this rascals! Are we living in a jungle? Are we already gone back to the stone age? When the 'mighty America' invaded Afghanistan, it threatened President Musharaf that if he does not submit to their demands, Pakistan would be destroyed and sent back to the stone age. I guess we are already there. During stone age, people used to walk around naked and had no shame. These days, the criminals walk around with their naked crimes and feel no shame!

If this is true for the MNAs, you can imagine the lives of Ministers. Some of them may not be even University

graduates! There is one consolation though. The good times did not last long, therefore, the bad times are not going to last for ever either.

If we are Muslims and believe in the Day of Judgement, there should not be any doubt in our minds about the accountability process. It has been narrated on the authority of Ibn Umar that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Beware! Every one of you
is a shepherd and every one
is answerable with regard to
his flock. The Caliph (ruler) is
a shepherd over the people
and shall be questioned about
his subjects (as to how he
conducted their affairs).

A man is a guardian over the
members of his family and shall
be questioned about them (as to
how he looked after their
physical and moral well-being).

A woman is a guardian over
the household of her husband
and his children and shall be
questioned about them (as to how
she managed the household and
brought up the children). A slave
is guardian over the property of
his master and shall be questioned
about it (as to how he safeguarded
his trust). Beware, every one of
you is a guardian and every one of
you shall be questioned with regard
to his trust."

Those who are in charge of others, will be questioned on the Judgement Day. There is no escape from it. In a Muslim society, everybody is responsible. These days, most of the people complain about corruption and mishandling of affairs, but who is responsible for that? What happened to the accountability set-up? Alas, there is no such thing! The Muslims do nothing, as usual, and wait for Allah to intervene, do the justice and punish the culprits. Amazing!

As for the powerful but corrupt rulers, they can learn a lot from the Muslim rulers of the past, only if they open the history books.

Haroon Rasheed was a great Caliph of Islam, known for his social justice, compassion and charity. He was a 'powerful servant' of God. He had many scholars and wise men in his court. Everyday they would discuss inspirational events and enlighten others with their wisdom. One day, one scholar asked Caliph Haroon Rasheed what would he do if a drop of urine blocked his urinary track and he could not urinate? Haroon Rasheed said that he would give half of his kingdom to cure that. The scholar asked, what if again another drop of urine got stuck and he could not release himself. Caliph Haroon Rasheed answered that he would give the remaining half of his kingdom for that. Then the Sufi scholar told the Caliph: 'Your entire kingdom is worth two drops of urine. Why should you be so proud and boastful of that? A ruler should be a humble servant of people.' Caliph Haroon Rasheed listened calmly and started crying.

They were honest and God-fearing rulers. They knew that authority meant responsibility and it was for the service to the mankind. Here is another Hadith. According to Ma'qil, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said:

‘Any man whom Allah has given
the authority of ruling some people

and he does not look after them
in an honest manner, will never feel
even the smell of Paradise.’

According to Abd al-Rahman bin Samura, The Messenger
of Allah (s.a.w.) said to him:

‘Abd al-Rahman, do not ask for a
position of authority, for if you
are granted this position as a
result of your asking for it,
you will be left alone (without
God’s help to discharge the
responsibilities attendant
thereon); and if you are granted it
without making any request for it,
you will be helped (by God
in the discharge of your duties).’

In another Hadith, Abu Burda narrated:

The Prophet (s.a.w.) sent my father
(Abu Musa) and Mu'adh bin Jabal
to Yemen (as rulers/governors) and
said (to them): "Make things easy
for the people and do not put hurdles
in their way, and give them glad
tiding, and don't let them have
aversion (i.e. to make people hate
good deeds) and you both should
work in cooperation and mutual
understanding." Abu Musa said to
Allah's Apostle: "In our country a special
alcoholic drink, called ‘Al-Bit', is prepared.”
The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "Every
intoxicant is prohibited.”

During the times of Caliph Umar bin Khattab, a great servant of Allah, Saeed bin Aamer, was appointed as governor of Hams. After some time, some people of Hams complained and asked for his removal. Caliph Umar was a bit surprised. He was an excellent judge of people and could not believe what he heard. He prayed to Allah to bless him with wisdom, and then went to Hams to see the concerned parties. He held the court at Saeed's place and suggested that Governor Saeed bin Aamer listen to the complaints of the people. He then asked the people about their complaints. The people said that they had three complaints. The first complaint was that the governor used to leave home late and never started the business of the court early in the morning.

Caliph Umar asked Saeed bin Aamer to explain. Governor Saeed replied that his wife was the only person at home who would take care of the household. They had no servants. He helped her to make the dough and bake the bread. Then they would eat together. After that, he would do the ablution (wudhu) and leave home for work.

Caliph Umar then asked the people what their second complaint was. The people said that the governor did not entertain their complaints at night. He would tell them to come in the morning.

Caliph Umar turned to Governor Saeed and asked for his explanation. Saeed bin Aamer said that he did not like to answer that question but as a token of respect for the Caliph, he would explain. He said that he had divided the day and night into two parts. The day was reserved for the service of the creation (people); and the night was reserved for the Creator (Allah). He said that he prayed to Allah all night, therefore, he could not attend any worldly business.

Caliph Umar bin Khattab asked the people what was their third complaint. The people said that the governor used to take one day off every month. On that day, he would not take care of people's business.

Hazrat Umar bin Khattab asked Saeed bin Aamer how would he answer to that? Governor Saeed explained that he had no servants or maids. He washed his own clothes once every month and then waited for them to dry. When the clothes were dry by the evening, he would put them on to go out. He could not come out of his house earlier.

Caliph Umar thanked Allah for his selection of Saeed bin Aamer as governor, then he advised the people to appreciate such a governor. Later on, Caliph Umar sent a gift of one thousand Dinars for Saeed bin Aamer to facilitate his household needs. His wife suggested that she could hire a maid for the household. Governor Saeed told his wife that there were still poor people around who needed the money more than her. What if they came to ask for help? The wife understood and agreed with his suggestion to donate the money in charity (sadaqah). Then both of them put that money in small pouches and distributed it among the needy. That's how a ruler should take care of his subjects!

If the rulers of today's Muslim countries take a minute and think about their kingdoms and so-called democracies in the light of the Holy Quran and Sunnah (or Hadith), hopefully they might get the message and wake up. Otherwise, the grip of Allah is very severe and the punishment would be their destiny.

‘And how many a generation
we destroyed before them, who
were mightier than these in prowess
so that they overran the lands! Had
they any place of refuge (when
the judgement came)? Lo! Therein
verily is a reminder for him who has
a heart, or gives ear with full
intelligence.’
(Quran 50:36-37)

The Almighty tells us again and again that we should pay attention; use our intelligence and show heart. We should think and reflect, and eventually repent. He is infinite mercy and He will guide us through. We just cannot disregard all calls and warnings. It is time that we change our attitude and bring some positive changes. If not, then He will bring the change. And when Allah brings the change, it is very sudden. It is very easy for Him to turn the world upside down. He makes the nations disappear in an instance, and replace them with the new ones. Are we waiting for that?

STEADFAST IS A WINNER !

‘And verily We shall pay those
who are steadfast, a recompense
in proportion to the best of
what they used to do.’
(Quran 16 :96)

Fidelity and steadfastness are two basic requirements of Islam. A total surrender to the will of God Almighty and then staying on course is the way of a perfect Muslim. It is a hard course, full of all kinds of obstacles and temptations, but it is still achievable. Remember the story of a hare and the tortoise ? We all read it during our school years. The tortoise was slow but steady, and that won him the race.

If you can stay true and faithful to your cause and follow the course with perseverance or steadfastness, you are a winner. But that is not an easy job. You have to give your best or 100 percent to achieve the grade.

According to one Hadith (Bukhari, Volume 2, book 21, No: 232), narrated Masruq :

‘I asked (the wife of the Prophet,
pbuh) Aisha (r.a.a), which deed
was most loved by the Prophet (pbuh).
She said : A deed done continuously.’

That means one should always be good – every time and all the time. This is steadfastness. Being good to others is charity (Sadaqah) that brings rewards not only in this world but also in the Hereafter. If a person develops a character of being good to others, not harming or hurting anybody, he is earning the blessings of Almighty Allah all the time. This is a very simple case of steadfastness.

God the gracious commands mankind to be faithful and steadfast. The Almighty says in the Holy Quran :

O ye who believe ! Seek help in
steadfastness and prayer. Lo, Allah is
with the steadfast.'
(Quran 2 :153)

We should always try to do good – whatever good is in our capacity, and do it continuously. Even if we do a little but do it on a regular basis, that's fine. That's being steadfast. We will definitely be rewarded for that. The Almighty will shower His blessings on us. But as they say : Everything comes with a price. So is the steadfastness. When we try to be good and honest in life, we are tested by God. We should make sure that we pass these tests and go through these trials with patience. And don't quit, ever ! Perseverance is the best asset alongwith faith (Imaan) that a Muslim possesses. Allah says :

'And surely We shall try you
with something of fear and hunger,
and loss of wealth and lives and
crops ; but give glad tidings to
the steadfast.'
(Quran 2 :155)

These tests and trials are very discouraging and heart-breaking. But then again you have to rise up to the occasion. Show your mettle and prove to the world, with your perseverance and steadfastness, that you are true to your cause ; honest in your struggle ; and fidel or faithful to your Creator. Your conviction only can earn you honours. There is another very important factor in Islam. All deeds or good work you do, you've got to do voluntarily and willingly. If you don't feel Islam in your actions, they

are not Islamic. A Muslim is a volunteer who willingly and knowingly surrenders himself to the will of God. It is a way of life for 'believers'. You believe in the powers of Allah and, therefore, you are sure that your actions are counted and accounted for. You believe that every action contributes towards the 'balance sheet' which will be presented to you in the Hereafter on the Day of Justice. And on the basis of that you will merit Heaven or Hell. But if you don't believe in the Hereafter, then this world is all you have got because in the Hereafter your destination would be Hell. Allah the Great says that in many places in the Holy Quran. Therefore, believe and do good !

Let me tell you a short story Maulana Rumi narrated in his Masnawi. It is about a preacher and Imam who used to lead prayers in his hometown mosque. He used to pray for the criminals, crooks and the evil-doers. He would say :

Lord, bless the criminals of
this world. Let thy mercy be on all
evil-doers ; Upon those who corrupt
others, and those who break the law
with insolence. Those who take
advantage of goodness in others,
let them know thy mercy too,
O God, the Merciful.'

The people were not happy with this prayer and started complaining. Somebody said : Whoever heard of prayers for the wicked ? Why you pray for them even before the innocent and the good ?'

The preacher replied : 'The reason is because I have always benefited from coming into contact with these folk. That's why I pray for them. They do so much evil, injustice and oppression that they drive me to the opposite extreme to do good. Whenever I encounter them in the world, their blows and beatings immediately drive me back to the holy

sanctuaries. It is their wolves that force me to walk in the true way. So, as they are the main means of my salvation, I feel obligated to pray for them first, whenever I can.'

Now, it is not easy to be nice to the crooks and criminals. But this can be the test of your character to distinguish you from them. So, stand up to the challenge and make a difference. It takes your determination only.

There was that saint who was famous for his kindness, sweet manners and highly civilised ways. Somebody asked him :

'Where did you learn these good manners ?'

'From ill-mannered and ignorant people,' he replied. 'Everything they used to do, I did not do.'

How simple ! But very difficult at the same time. The most difficult thing in our lives is to resist the temptation. This is the real 'Jihad'. If we succeed in that, we win all the honours ; but if we fail, we fall prey to the evil. And evil leads to Hell. In our struggle for good, we always need to seek help of Allah because without it we cannot achieve anything. And don't forget that Allah helps not the 'evil-doers'.

Here is a beautiful story! Naffia narrates that once Hazrat Abdullah bin Umar was travelling out of Madina. He was accompanied by his friends and servants. In the afternoon they stopped near a village to have a meal. The servants spread the sheets and fixed the food. Then all of them sat together around it and started eating. Right at that time, a shepherd passed by along with his sheep. Abdullah bin Umar invited him to eat with them. The shepherd replied that he was fasting. Abdullah bin Umar said that it was terribly hot and scorching wind was blowing in the desert. How could he fast in such conditions? The shepherd answered back that he was receiving the reward of his 'past days'. He was referring to these holy verses of the Quran:

'(And it will be said unto those therein):

Eat and drink at ease for that which ye
sent on before you in past days.’
(Quran 69:24)

Hazrat Abdullah bin Umar started enjoying the conversation with the shepherd and decided to test him. He said that he wanted to buy a goat, therefore, he should tell him the price of a goat. He further said that he will slaughter that goat and give the shepherd some meat too, so that he could have a good meal for breaking his fast in the evening.

The shepherd said that those were not his goats. They belonged to his master who was also the chief of his tribe. Abdullah bin Umar said that his chief would never know. And if he asked, he could tell him that a wolf took the goat away. The shepherd signalled toward the sky and asked: ‘And where would Allah go?’

Abdullah bin Umar was very amused by this answer and started repeating shepherd’s words: ‘And where would Allah go, and where would Allah go?’ He was telling his companions that it was amazing that a shepherd was aware of Allah’s presence and knew that He was watching over everybody. And that kept him faithful and sincere to his master.

Later on, when Hazrat Abdullah bin Umar returned from his business, he contacted that tribal chief and bought that slave and the goats from him. And then he freed the slave and gave him the gift of those goats.

Remember ! In your struggle in life, when events frustrate you and knock you down, only Faith can lift you up. It gives you hope and strength to stand up to the whole world. In your heart you know that what you are doing is right. Therefore, the Almighty hears your cries and comes closer to help you.

According to a Hadith (Bukhari, Vol 2, Book 21, No : 246), narrated Abu Huraira :

‘Allah’s Apostle (pbuh) said :
Our Lord, the Blessed, the Superior,
comes every night down on the
nearest Heaven to us when the last
third of the night remains, saying:
‘Is there anyone to invoke Me,
so that I may respond to invocation?
Is there anyone to ask Me, so that
I may grant him his request? Is there
anyone seeking My forgiveness,
so that I may forgive him?’

Allah’s blessings are with us when we continue doing good and staying away from evil. Even little things matter as they bring God’s mercy to us. And God does not hesitate while giving. He gives beyond measures. We just need to give Him a reason to bless us and He will shower countless blessings on us. We don’t have to kill ourselves to win that. In our normal daily life we can do little things, small good deeds within our capacity. They bring big rewards. Here is another Hadith from Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 21, No : 251. Prophet’s wife Aisha (r.a.a) narrated :

‘A woman from the tribe of Bani Asad
was sitting with me and Allah’s
Apostle (pbuh) came to my house
and said, ‘who is this ?’ I said, (she is)
so and so. She does not sleep at night
because she is engaged in prayers.’
The Prophet (pbuh) said disapprovingly:
‘Do good deeds which are within your
capacity, as Allah never gets tired
of giving rewards till you get tired
of doing good deeds.’

HE IS THE ONE !

‘... Say : Allah is the Creator of
all things, and He is the One, the Almighty.’
(Holy Quran 13:16)

=====

‘Who has created life and death that
He may try you, which of you is
Best in conduct; and He is
the Mighty, the Forgiving.’
(Holy Quran 67:2)

=====

And unto Allah belongs the sovereignty
of the heavens and the earth, and
unto Allah is the journeying.

Have you not seen how Allah wafts the clouds,
then gathers them, then makes them layers,
and you see the rain come forth from between them;
He sends down from the heaven mountains
wherein is hail, and smites therewith whom He will.
The flashing of His lightning all but snatches
away the sight.

Allah causes the revolution of the day
and the night. Lo, herein is indeed a lesson
for those who see.

Allah has created every animal of water.

Of them is (a kind) that goes upon its belly
and (a kind) that goes upon two legs
and (a kind) that goes upon four.
Allah creates what He will.
Lo, Allah is Able to do all things.
(Holy Quran 24:42-45)

ASK GOD FOR

‘Whoso does right, it is for his
(own) soul, and whoso does wrong,
it is against it’
(Quran 45:15)

As they say, ‘We make our own bed’, so we should be prepared to sleep in it too. But we want only comfortable, peaceful and happy life; free of problems, hurdles and worries. How much do we contribute towards it, we don’t want to ask ourselves. We are always complaining, nagging and are never satisfied. Good and evil (or negative and positive), keep the balance of life, and at the same time bring some excitement or joy. But eventually it is our own effort that counts.

‘And that man has only that
for which he makes effort.’
(Quran 53:39)

There is a positive lesson in everything negative we experience in life. Sweet are the fruits of adversity. All it needs is a little patience, cool and an honest try to get through. It is called ‘striving’, or struggle, or Jihad. In this struggle we should not forget that there will be trials and tests. Nothing comes for free. We need to stay on course. Allah says:

‘And surely We shall try you
with something of fear and hunger,
and loss of wealth and lives and crops;
but give glad tidings to the steadfast.’
(Quran 2:155)

If God told you that you could ask Him for one (and only one) thing and you will be granted; then what would you ask Him for? Huh... hundred and one things to ask, so many needs, so many desires and ambitions, so many essentials of modern & comfortable life... a tough choice. You think about it and I'll try to help you with some alternate answers.

If you ask for strength, God will give you difficulties and hurdles to go through. And that will make you strong. But you don't want difficulties and hurdles!

If you ask for wisdom, God will give you problems to solve. You always deal with problems trying to find solutions. In the process you turn grey and become wise. Do you want that?

If you ask God for prosperity, He will give you extra brain and brawn to work. You will be working hard, day and night to achieve your goals. Oh, you don't want to work?

If you ask for courage, God will give you 'danger' to overcome. You'll be scared to death every now and then, but you'll become courageous. Want that?

If you ask for love ... oh, yes! Love ... God will give you all the troubled people of the world – les misérables, the destitutes, the flood & quake victims – to help them, take care of them and love them. And you would become love personified.

If you ask for favours, God will give you opportunities but you should be able to recognise them and grab them.

And here is the best alternative:

If you ask God for nothing – no wants, no needs, no desires – and just be thankful to Him for whatever you have, He will give you everything you need – guaranteed. He promised:

‘..... And verily We shall pay those
who are steadfast a recompense

in proportion to the best of what
they used to do.’
(Quran 16:96)

‘And turn unto Allah together,
O believers, in order that
ye may succeed.’
(Quran 24:31)

And last but not the least: Ask God for His forgiveness.
That forgiveness contains everything you need in this
world as well as in the Hereafter. In the Holy Quran, Allah
tells you to do just that:

‘And seek forgiveness of Allah.
Lo! Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful.’
(Quran 4:106)

Now, you know what to ask for and how to ask. But, as the
saying goes: First deserve, then desire. The promise of
success is there and there is absolutely no doubt in that. We
need to make some effort on our part. There is no escape
from pains and hurts in life. It’s a ‘must’ of life. Therefore,
we should prepare ourselves, mentally and physically, so
that we don’t feel devastated. The best way to do it is to
bring God into our lives.

‘Therefore, remember Me, I will
remember you. Give thanks to Me,
and reject not Me.’
(Quran 2:152)

‘Seek help in patience and
prayer; and truly it is hard
except for the humble-minded.’
(Quran 2:45)

The One who brought us in this world, will take care of us too, provided we do what HE tells us to do. Be grateful to Him under all circumstances. Every calamity comes from Him and HE is the One who can get us out of it. Show some perseverance and stay on course. Don't chase your wild desires in vain, and don't ever get greedy. Greed is the base of all evil. Try to learn to be content with whatever Allah has blessed you with.

Don't ever forget that Allah is going to question you about everything you possessed in this world; and what you did with it. He blessed you with so many things in this world and He will ask you how you used those things to help the mankind. Therefore, seek His forgiveness. Invoke Him with all His beautiful names and ask Him alone for help.

‘O ye who believe! Seek help
in steadfastness and prayer. Lo,
Allah is with the steadfast.’
(Quran 2:153)

Remember one thing! If things are going your way, you are a very lucky man on earth. But if things are not going your way, you are even luckier, because then they are going God's way. And His is the best way, as He knows how to run the world efficiently. Don't look at others who are better off and richer than you. Look at those who are less fortunate than you, and I guarantee you there are millions in this world. Don't settle for a 'bad' bargain! If you are striving for a comfortable, nice and luxury life, with all the pomp and show, in this world, Allah might give you that. But that is the bad bargain I am referring to. For a comfortable life of this world, you are destroying the life in the Hereafter. He warns you:

‘Whoso desires the life of
the world and its pomp,

We shall repay them their deeds
herein, and therein they will not be
wronged. Those are they for whom is
naught in the Hereafter save the Fire.
All that they contrive here is vain and
all that they are wont to do is fruitless.’
(Quran 11:15-16)

Imagine those people in Africa, especially in Somalia and Ethiopia, who have nothing to eat, no clean water to drink, no nice clothes to wear, no refrigerators when the temperature is above 50c degrees, no airconditioners, not even electricity, no cars, no vacations, no birthday parties, no cakes and cookies! Most of them are surviving on corn and muddy water. Everyday they wait for somebody to bring them some good news – some food of any kind.

They look up to people like you and me to help them get out of this misery. They look up to us to give them life. They can really say that life is harsh and they are going through rough and tough times. As Muslims, we should ask ourselves: What are we doing for our fellow human beings? Can’t we see the command of the Almighty God in the Holy Quran? He says:

‘Give the kinsman his due,
and the needy, and the wayfarer,
and squander not (thy
wealth) in wantonness.’
(Quran 17:26)

‘Spend your wealth for the
cause of Allah, and cast not
(yourselves) by your own hands
to ruin; and do good! Lo, Allah
loves the beneficent.’
(Quran 2:195)

All our lives we struggle and try hard to accumulate as much wealth as possible because we believe that it is the wealth that will solve all our problems. Wealth can solve only economic problems, but at the same time can create many social and physical ills. According to one Hadith, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said:

‘Man is always worried about
his wealth and says: “my wealth,
my wealth”, but in fact he can
benefit from his wealth only
for three little things:
Whatever he ate from it (food);
whatever he wore from it (clothing);
and whatever he sent for the
Hereafter (charity). Whatever is
in excess (beyond his basic needs)
is not his and he leaves it behind
for others.’

Now, there is a good lesson in it for us. Your basic needs are fulfilled here in this world but these cannot bring anything for you to the next world – Hereafter. The only thing that goes with you to the next world, is your good deeds. And among those good deeds, charity is number one (the best).

During the times of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and his blessed companions, most of the Muslims gave away in charity whatever was surplus or beyond their needs. Once, a companion of the Prophet (PBUH) had a garden of date-palm trees. It was high season and the crop of dates was getting ripe for harvesting. One day that companion was offering prayer (Salaat) and during the Salaat the thought of ripe and profitable crop of dates came to his mind. He regretted it and repented so much that soon after the Salaat he went to see the Caliph Uthman bin Affan and offered

him his date-palm garden in charity. Caliph Uthman sold that garden for 50 thousand Dirhams and used the money for religious projects.

Here is another beautiful story. The rich Muslim traders used to send gifts to the Prophet (PBUH) so that they could earn Allah's blessings. The mother of believers, and wife of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), Ayesha Siddiqah (r.a.a.) once received two sacks of money. There was more than one hundred thousand Dirhams in those bags. She had instructions from the Prophet (PBUH) what to do with those gifts. She opened the bags and, with help of a maid, started distributing money among the poor and needy of the area, till it was finished.

The maid said to Ayesha (r.a.a.): 'You are fasting and you did not keep any money for yourself to buy something for dinner.' In the evening, at the time of breaking the fast, the maid complained that if she had bought meat for one Dirham from that money, they could have enjoyed a good dinner. Ayesha (r.a.a.) said: 'Don't regret now. If you had asked me while I was giving away that money, I would have given you one Dirham for meat.'

True Muslims never accumulated wealth. After meeting their basic needs, they gave away in charity whatever was extra. Most of them regarded wealth as Fire from Hell and nobody wanted to keep it in the house even for one extra night. They did not ask God for wealth or material gains. They asked God for His forgiveness and mercy.

YOU'RE IN THE QURAN !

Allah Subhanahu-wa-Taala (SWT) has mentioned you in the Holy Quran ! You did not know that ? Because you did not care to ponder what The Almighty talked about. He mentioned every group of people and their destination – Heaven or Hell.

If you don't have the time to study Quran, I'll try to make things easier for you and show you the selected verses that you can study and figure out for yourself where you stand. Actually in your heart you should know very well where you stand but don't have the courage to admit it. No problem. It is never too late to come back to the right path as that's the point where we started it all.

We were sent to this world with clear instructions. We were told that as servants of God we must worship our Creator – The only God ; glorify Him, pay our dues, take care of fellow humans, be honest and just, ward-off evil ; and make no friends with Devil.

‘O mankind! Worship your Lord,
Who hath created you and those
before you so that ye may ward off (evil).’
(Quran 2:21)

‘Turn unto your Lord repentant, and surrender
unto Him, before there come unto you the doom,
when ye cannot be helped. And follow
the better (guidance) of that which is
revealed unto you from your Lord,
before the doom comes on you
suddenly when ye know not.’
(Quran 39:54-55)

Satan is our biggest adversary; he is an open enemy to the mankind. He is out there to distract us from the right and pure. We should neither follow him nor hang out with his friends, as they are all destined for Hell.

‘This is the scripture wherein there is
no doubt, a guidance unto those
who ward off (evil). Who believe in
the unseen, and establish worship, and
spend of that We have bestowed upon them.
And who believe in that which is
revealed unto thee (O Muhammad)
and that which was revealed before thee,
and are certain of the Hereafter. These
depend on guidance from their Lord.
These are the successful.’
(Quran 2:2-5)

It has been made very clear as to who would be successful in the Hereafter. Here is The Almighty Allah talking to you. Listen carefully and figure out if you belong to this group of people or some other group.

‘Those who establish worship
and pay the poor-due and have
sure faith in the Hereafter, such
have guidance from their Lord.
Such are the successful.’
(Quran 31:4-5)

‘Successful indeed are the believers,
who are humble in their prayers, and
who shun vain conversation, and
who are payers of the poor-due,
and who guard their modesty.’
(Quran 23:1-5)

If you found yourself belonging to one of these groups, you are very lucky man indeed. If not, then hopefully you are among those who:

‘..... recite of it (Quran) that which is easy (for you),
and establish worship and pay the poor-due,
and (so) lend unto Allah a goodly loan!’
(Quran 73:20)

Does it sound familiar? If you don’t find yourself among these people, perhaps you belong to some other group. Let’s have a look at some other groups. Those who say:

‘O Allah! In Thee we put our trust,
and unto Thee we turn repentant, and
unto Thee is the journeying. Our Lord!
Make us not a prey for those who
disbelieve, and forgive us, our Lord!
Lo, Thou, only Thou, art the Mighty, the Wise.’
(Quran 60:4-5)

But the best among the believers are those who surrender to the will of Allah; worship Him, fear Him, praise Him, obey Him and seek His forgiveness. They say:

‘..... We believe in Allah and that which
is revealed unto us and that which
was revealed unto Abraham, and
Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and
the tribes, and that which Moses and
Jesus received, and that which the
Prophets received from their Lord.
We make no distinction between
any of them, and unto Him we
have surrendered.’
(Quran 2:136)

‘And serve Allah, and ascribe
nothing as partner unto Him;
show kindness unto parents,
and unto near kindred, and
orphans, and the needy, and unto
the neighbour who is of kin and the
neighbour who is not of kin, and the
fellow-traveller and the wayfarer,
and the slaves.’
(Quran 4:36)

So, these are the people who have been given good news of the Heaven. But remember that their lives are full of trials, tests and hurdles. They have to show the best of patience, gratitude and restraint from temptation. And, believe me, it is not easy at all. They say that everything comes with a price – so is the Heaven. You have to strive and work hard to pass all those tests with flying colours. During some of these trials you might have to risk your life too. If you look at the rewards, it is not a bad bargain.

‘And those who shun the worst of
sins and indecencies and, when they are
wroth, forgive. And those who answer
the call of their Lord and establish
worship, and whose affairs are a matter
of counsel, and who spend of what We
have bestowed on them. And those who,
when great wrong is done to them,
defend themselves.’
(Quran 42:37-39)

‘Lo, those who keep from evil
will dwell amid gardens and
water-springs, taking that which
their Lord gives them; for lo, aforetime

they were doers of good. They used to sleep but little of the night, and ere the dawning of each day would seek forgiveness. And in their wealth, the beggar and the outcast had due share.’
(Quran 51:15-19)

Now, do you think that you belong to them ? I hope you do. And if not, I wish you were. Maybe you are among those who make mistakes but then repent and come back to the right path. If so, Allah has a good news for you :

‘And those who, when they do an evil thing or wrong themselves, remember Allah and implore forgiveness for their sins – Who forgives sins save Allah only? – and will not knowingly repeat (the wrong) they did. The reward of such will be forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide for ever – a beautiful reward for workers!’
(Quran 3:135-136)

‘They only are the (true) believers whose hearts feel fear when Allah is mentioned, and when the revelations of Allah are recited unto them they increase their faith, and who trust in their Lord; who establish worship and spend of that We have bestowed on them. Those are they who are in truth believers. For them are grades (of honour) with their Lord, and pardon, and a bountiful provision.’
(Quran 8:2-4)

Then there are the ‘men of understanding’ whom The Almighty praises. They are His bondmen; His slaves, who have nothing to fear on the Day of Judgement. They already know what they have earned, or brought forward.

‘Only those believe in our revelations
who, when they are reminded of them,
fall down prostrate and hymn the
praise of their Lord, and they are not
scornful. Who forsake their beds to
cry unto their Lord in fear and hope,
and spend of what We have
bestowed on them.’
(Quran 32:15-16)

‘.....Therefore give good tidings
(O Muhammad) to My bondmen,
who hear advice and follow the best
thereof. Such are those whom
Allah guides, and such are men
of understanding.
(Quran 39:17-18)

‘And whoso brings the truth
and believes therein – such
are the dutiful.’
(Quran 39:33)

They were the gentle ‘dutiful’ people and the people of understanding. Now, there is another group of believers whom The Almighty Allah calls faithful. They are also given glad tiding.

‘The (faithful) slaves of the Beneficent
are they who walk upon the earth
modestly, and when the ignorant

ones address them (foolishly),
 they answer: Peace! And who
 spend the night before their Lord,
 prostrate and standing. And who say:
 Our Lord, avert from us the doom of
 hell. Lo, the doom thereof is anguish.
 Lo, it is wretched as abode and
 station. And those who, when they
 spend, are neither prodigal nor
 grudging; and there is ever a firm
 station between the two. And those who
 cry not unto any other god along with
 Allah, nor take the life which Allah has forbidden save in
 (course of) justice,
 nor commit adultery.....'
 (Quran 25:63-68)

And this group is called 'triumphant' as they overcame all
 hurdles. They are considered the good role-models for
 other believers.

'(Triumphant) are those who turn
 repentant (to Allah), those who serve (Him),
 those who praise (Him), those who fast,
 those who bow down, those who fall
 prostrate (in worship), those who enjoin
 the right and who forbid the wrong, and
 those who keep the limits (ordained) of
 Allah – And give glad tiding to believers!'
 (Quran 9:112)

'And those who will not witness
 vanity, but when they pass near
 senseless play, pass by with dignity.
 And those who, when they are reminded
 of the revelations of their Lord, fall not

deaf and blind thereat. And who say:
Our Lord, vouchsafe us comfort of our
wives and of our offspring, and make
us patterns for (all) those who ward off (evil).
(Quran 25:72-74)

Those who conceal the Truth, who are dishonest and unfair, they belong to another category of people. They will be punished on the Day of Judgement. They are the hypocrites – or the Munafiqeen. The Almighty Allah says:

‘And of mankind are some who say:
We believe in Allah and the Last Day,
when they believe not. They think
to beguile Allah and those who believe,
and they beguile none save themselves;
but they perceive not. In their hearts
is a disease, and Allah increases their
disease. A painful doom is theirs
because they lie.’
(Quran 2:8-10)

‘And when it is said unto them :
Make not mischief in the earth,
they say: We are peace-makers only.
Beware! They indeed are the mischief-
makers. But they perceive not.’
(Quran 2:11-12)

The ‘mischief-makers’ and the ‘liars’ would be treated as ‘guilty’. Therefore, they will get the punishment prescribed by Allah. You cannot lie against the Divine Truth.

‘And who does greater wrong than he
who tells a lie against Allah, and denies
the truth when it reaches him?’

Will not the home of disbelievers
be in hell?’
(Quran 39:32)

‘Their reckoning draws nigh for
mankind, while they turn away in
heedlessness. Never comes there
unto them a new reminder from
their Lord but they listen to it while
they play, with hearts preoccupied.
And they confer in secret.....
(Quran 21:1-3)

Then there are those who made mockery of the revelations
of The Almighty. They never believed that there would be
a Day of Resurrection and they will be held accountable for
everything they did on this earth. They belong to the group
of ‘losers’.

‘And when it is said unto them:
Believe as the people believe, they say:
Shall we believe as the foolish believe?
Beware! They indeed are the foolish.
But they know not. And when they fall
in with those Who believe, they say:
We believe; but when they go apart to
their devils they declare: Lo, we are
with you; verily we did but mock.’
(Quran 2:13-14)

‘Those who break the covenant of
Allah after ratifying it, and sever
that which Allah ordered to be joined,
and (who) make mischief in the earth;
those are they who are the losers.’
(Quran 2:27)

And then there are those who are called ‘transgressors’. They went too far in abusing the Word of God and making worldly gains from it. They are also ‘guilty’ and will be treated as criminals. They will get their share of punishment in the Hereafter.

‘They have purchased with the
revelations of Allah a little gain,
so they debar (men) from His way.
Lo, evil is that which they are wont
to do. And they observe toward a
believer neither pact nor honour.
These are they who are transgressors.’
(Quran 9:9)

Then there is the group of ‘friends of Devil’, who follow Satan and misguide innocent people. On the Day of Judgement they will face the wrath of The Almighty Allah. This ‘Devil’s party’ opposed the teachings of Allah (SWT) and always confronted ‘Allah’s party’.

‘Hast thou not seen those who
take for friends a folk with whom
Allah is wroth? They are neither of
you nor of them, and they swear a
false oath knowingly.They make
a shelter of their oaths and turn (men)
from the way of Allah; so theirs will
be a shameful doom.’
(Quran 58:14, 16)

‘You will not find folk who believe
in Allah and the Last Day loving
those who oppose Allah and His
messenger, even though they be their
fathers or their sons or their

brethren or their clan..... They are
Allah's party. Beware! Surely, it is
Allah's party who are the successful.'
(Quran 58:22)

Who can defeat 'Allah's party'? In the battle between the
'good' and the 'evil', it is the 'good' that is bound to
succeed as the 'evil' is bound to lose – that is the law of
nature. Allah (SWT) narrates that the dwellers of the
Heaven will ask the dwellers of the Hell about their plight:

'In Gardens they will ask one
another, concerning the guilty:
What hath brought you to this burning?
They will answer: We were not of those
who prayed; nor did we feed the
wretched. We used to wade (in vain
dispute) with (all) waders; and we
used to deny the Day of Judgement,
till the inevitable came unto us.'
(Quran 74:40-47)

Now, from their explanation we can learn a lesson and
don't do what they used to do to merit Hell. Those who
pray, pay thanks, spend in Allah's way and those who fight
for Allah's cause, they are the good believers. And Allah
(SWT) always rewards the good.

'Those who spend (of that which
Allah hath given them) in ease and
in adversity, those who control their
wrath and are forgiving toward
mankind; Allah loves the good.'
(Quran 3:134)

'Those who believed and left

their homes and strove for
the cause of Allah, and those
who took them in and helped
them – these are the believers in
truth. For them is pardon, and a
bountiful provision.’
(Quran 8:74)

And finally, there is the group of those who lead others
with good example. They are the people who guide others
with the Divine Truth and strive for justice.

‘And of those whom We created,
there is a nation who guide with the
Truth and establish justice therewith.’
(Quran 7:181)

So, what group do you belong to? Don’t tell me. Tell it to
yourself. Did you see Allah (SWT) mentioning you in
some of those verses? Therefore, you are mentioned in the
Quran! Are you happy with the group you are in? I am not.
Actually, I am ashamed. So, I have decided to go for an
‘upgrade’. It needs determination. May Allah (SWT) bless
us all ... Ameen.

FAITH IS POWER

‘Whoso desires power
(should know that) all
power belongs to Allah.’
(Quran 35 :10)

Faith (Iman) is power that gives you incredible strength to achieve miracles. It is the most powerful thing with which you can fight the whole world all alone – and still conquer it ! Faith is power and all power belongs to Allah. When you have unconditional faith in Him, Allah blesses you and lets you taste it a bit – the Power of Allah.

A unit is a part of the whole. But when the unit mixes up unconditionally with the whole, it gets lost in the whole. In other words it becomes the whole. In spiritual world, this is called reunion. You have to kill your SELF while seeking the Divine, and when it is lost in the Divine, it becomes The Divine. So, it is selflessness that brings you to the threshold of nothingness. And when you are nothing, you become something.

Maulana Rumi says :

‘Brother ! Stand the pain.
Escape the poison of your impulses.
The sky will bow to your beauty, if you do.

Learn to light the candle.
Rise with the sun.
Turn away from the cave of your sleeping.

That way a thorn expands to a rose.
A particular glows with the universal.

What is it to praise ?
Make yourself particles.

What is it to know something of God ?
Burn inside that presence. Burn up !

Copper melts in the healing elixir.
So melt your Self in the mixture
that sustains existence.

Here is a short – a really SHORT – story.

Once, the people of a village were facing a long draught. Weeks and then months passed without rain. The elders of the village started worrying as agriculture was the main source of their livelihood. Therefore, they decided to offer prayer for rain (Salaat-al-Istisqa). They announced the day and the time of prayer and asked all villagers to come and join. They told the people that if everybody believed honestly and sincerely, their prayers will be answered and God will bless them with rainfall. So, on the day of the prayer all people gathered but only one boy came with an umbrella.

Now, that is FAITH.

When your belief in Allah is total, your trust in Him is not shaky, and you look up to him for everything, you have the highest degree of faith. In response, Allah takes care of you and your affairs. He creates the means and resources from nowhere. Prophet Ibrahim had total faith in Almighty Allah. He would not deviate from the right path because he had totally surrendered to the will of God. So, when they decided to throw him into the fire, he did not budge. He knew it was Allah's will, therefore, he accepted it. At that time Gabriel came to Ibrahim and asked if he could do anything to help him. Prophet Ibrahim replied : No, I cannot ask you for anything because you cannot help me.

This is the height of faith (Iman). Ibrahim used to praise his Lord and say :

‘Our Lord ! In Thee we put our trust,
and unto Thee we turn repentant,
and unto Thee is the journeying.’
(Quran 60 :4)

With total surrender to the will of your Lord, you belong to Allah and you expect things from Allah alone, nobody else. The scriptures tell us how Allah then took care of Ibrahim.

‘Then shall We save our messengers and the
believers in like manner (as of old). It is
incumbent upon Us to save believers.’
(Quran 10 :103)

‘Will not Allah defend His slave ?’
(Quran 39 :36)

The faithful then become Allah’s responsibility. In the early days of Islam when believers were offering gifts and money to Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) to help the cause of Islam, Abu Bakr gave everything he had. Allah’s Prophet asked him if he had left anything for the family. Abu Bakr replied : ‘Yes, the name of Allah and his Prophet and that’s sufficient.’ He put his trust in Allah and did not worry about the provision. He had such a strong faith in Allah, the Almighty. Thus, he became one of the ten people who were given the good news of Jannah in this world. Those who believe that Allah alone is sufficient for them, He surely is sufficient for them.

‘Allah ! There is no God save Him.
In Allah, therefore, let believers put their trust.’
(Quran 64 :13)

‘And whosoever puts his trust in
Allah, He will suffice him.’
(Quran 65 :3)

It is the trust – the unconditional trust – that empowers you with immense strength and confidence to succeed. When you throw a baby in the air, she laughs because she knows you will catch her. That is Trust. And you catch her because you are connected to her and don’t want her to fall or get hurt. That’s how God protects you from getting hurt when you are connected to Him. When you are totally devoted to Allah, He takes care of your affairs. Allah never leaves His slave in distress as He is the sole Protector and sole Provider. All his needs are taken care of. He gets his provision from the sources he can’t even think of.

A saint narrates his story like this : ‘I, along with my companion, left the town and started living in the mountains where remembrance of Allah was our main motive and occupation. My companion was living in a cave not far from me. In the beginning we were surviving on plants, herbs and vegetation. Then Almighty God made some special arrangement for my nourishment. A female deer started coming to my place every day and would stand near me. I started suckling her milk. Soon after she would leave and come back the next day at the same time. This became her routine and continued for months.

‘They shall have what they will
of their Lord’s bounty. That is the
reward of the good.’
(Quran 39 :34)

One day my companion came to see me. He said that there was a caravan camping nearby. Let us go there and ask them for some milk and foodstuff. I refused to go but my

companion seemed desperate and insisted. Finally, I gave in and went along with him. The caravan people treated us good and gave us some food to carry also. The next day I had had a big surprise. I never saw the deer since then. I used to come out of the cave around the same time everyday and wait for her. But she never showed up again. Then I realized what a big mistake I had made. I counted more on the food from the caravan people than from Allah. Ultimately, I lost both. When you try to break the shell of your faith to come out as independent, and your trust is shaky, the greed creeps in and you lose everything. We should have been content with whatever provision Allah had made for us because He knows best what is good for us ; and how much.'

‘Allah is sufficient as a Friend,
and Allah is sufficient as a Helper.’
(Quran 4 :45)

‘And those unto whom they cry
instead of Him, possess no power
of intercession, saving him who
bears witness unto the Truth
knowingly.’
(Quran 43 :86)

Be honest and sincere to God and seek His pleasure wholeheartedly ! It will relieve you from all worries and dependence. Actually, it is the love of the world that keeps us away from the love of Allah. Those who love Allah, they are not interested in worldly gains. They rather discard its charm, wealth and material glitter. Our heart has room for one love only – either the love of Allah or the love of the world. These two things are not compatible with each other. You can choose only one of them. But remember! One takes you to Heaven and the other leads you to Hell.

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said that early part of this Ummah (Muslims) achieved their salvation with strong faith in Allah and disenchantment of the world. But the latter part of this Ummah will be destroyed because of their love of wealth and high hopes.

According to another Hadith, the Apostle of Allah (pbuh) said that when a man gets older, his heart feels younger with two things. One is his love of the world and the second his countless high hopes.

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) advised people that they should remember death every night, and they should remember how they are going to become dust with dust (in the grave). And one who remembers the Hereafter, cannot be seduced by the pleasures of the world.

Those who start preparing for the Hereafter, they have very strong faith in Allah. When they start loving Allah, they start withdrawing from the world. The wealth and other material ornaments of the world cannot attract them any more.

Umme Waleed (the daughter of Hazrat Umar bin Khattab) narrates that once Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) came out of the house in the evening and addressed the people by saying: ‘Don’t you people feel any shame?’ The companions said: ‘O Apostle of Allah, shame about what?’ The Prophet (pbuh) replied: ‘You accumulate so much that you can’t even eat; and you construct (or buy) so many houses that you can’t even live in; and have so many high hopes that you can’t even fulfil. Are you not ashamed of all that?’

The scholars explain that it means that one should have only that much food what he/she needs; and only that house in which he/she live. The wealth is not for accumulating. One must spend in charity whatever is extra after fulfilling the basic needs. You can give in charity when you have strong faith in Allah. When you consider Allah as your Sole Provider. You give in His name and you don’t have

any fear about the future needs. That's the kind of faith that will earn you paradise.

When you love the world and its material things, you are afraid of death. You want to enjoy life on this earth. You don't want to die, whereas a Muslim knows that everybody will die one day, sooner or later. Therefore, he has no fear. The only thing he is worried about is the accountability on the Day of Judgement. The more you have in this world, the longer the accountability process would be. And that can tear you apart. Therefore, the wise men live in this world with the minimum and try to get the maximum reward for their good deeds to carry over.

So, try to seek His pleasure, not the worldly pleasures !
You'll surely enjoy the power of Iman (faith).

A HAND THAT GIVES

‘It is not righteousness that ye
turn your faces to the East and
the West ; but righteous is he who
believes in Allah and the Last Day
and the angels and the scripture
and the prophets ; and gives his
wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk
and to orphans and the needy and
the wayfarer and to those
who ask ;’
(Quran 2 :177)

This is the definition of ‘righteous’ coined by Allah. If we want to prosper in this world and want protection from the Fire in the Hereafter, then we should give as much in charity (Sadaqah) as possible. A hand that gives is thousand times better than the hand that takes. There are very clear instructions to believers that they should give in the name of Allah, for the sake of Allah and for the love of Allah. In return, the Almighty Allah will multiply the reward and shower His blessings upon us. At so many different places in the Holy Quran, The Almighty has commanded us to give, share with others and help the needy.

‘Spend your wealth for the cause
of Allah, and cast not (yourselves)
by your own hands to ruin; and do
good. Lo ! Allah loves the beneficent.’
(Quran 2 :195)

Spending for the cause of Allah (Sadaqah) is the best guarantee against the Hellfire. Those who are materially rich, they are on trial by Allah. They are on a long leash in this world. What they do with their wealth is being observed by the Sole Provider. On the Day of Judgement they will be questioned about this wealth. And if they don't share it with the needy, they are casting themselves into the Fire.

There was once a man who lived in an Arab village. He went to see his friend. His friend was very happy to receive the man at his place. He entertained him well and asked about his well-being. The man told him that he was going through tough times and he had accumulated a debt because he kept borrowing money to survive. He had come to seek some help.

The friend asked him how much debt he had. The man said it was 400 Dirhams. The good friend immediately gave him 400 Dirhams. When the poor man had left, the good friend started to cry.

His wife saw that and thought that he was probably crying that he will never get his 400 Dirhams back. So, she said to her husband : If you were so worried about the money then you should have not given the man that much money in the first place. The good friend replied : I am not crying for 400 Dirhams. I am crying that this poor man had been my long-time friend and still I was unaware of his situation. Why did it come to that point that he had to ask me for help? As a friend, I should have known.

Now, that is a friend. I wonder how many of us have gotten such a friend ! Islam is a religion of community. In a Muslim society everybody is responsible for the wellbeing of their neighbours. And everybody is supposed to contribute towards the welfare of the community – materially or otherwise. It is a great social system that takes care of the less fortunate and, at the same time, brings harmony to the society.

In a culture like that the residents of a neighbourhood are supposed to know who is poor or needy in their street. Once they know it, they are obligated to help the poor. It is their responsibility, apart from the responsibility of the rulers or administrators of the area, to make sure that these poor people don't sleep unfed.

These are the people who fear Allah, who seek Allah's pleasure and serve the mankind. They are declared 'successful' by Allah. They care and share. They understand that everything comes from Allah and He wants people to take care of each other.

‘And in their wealth the beggar
and the outcast had due share.’
(Quran 51 :19)

‘Give the kinsman his due,
and the needy, and the wayfarer;
and squander not (thy wealth)
in wantonness.’
(Quran 17 :26)

If we find hungry, needy and poor homeless people around us, that means the rulers or administrators and the people of the area are not doing their job honestly or correctly. There must be something wrong with the system. It must be changed and the people responsible for the malfunction should be taken to task. Public money must be spent on public and for public, simple as that. Anything else is corruption.

Now is the age of materialism. We try to make life as luxurious and comfortable as possible. We try to get more than our neighbours and the race never ends. The saints say that money is 'fitnah' (evil). It is never enough. We always want more. And in this process we forget Allah. We forget

that it is HE Who blesses us with all comforts. But we turn to Him only when we don't get what we strive for.

‘And whatever of comfort ye enjoy,
it is from Allah. Then, when misfortune
reaches you, unto Him
ye cry for help !’
(Quran 16 :53)

The Almighty Allah has given some people more than the others and in that lies a test for them. If the neighbours do what Allah has told them in the Holy Quran to do, we don't need to look up to the government for the welfare of that neighbourhood. When we share Allah's bounties with others, it promotes love and sympathy among us. It does not diminish our wealth. On the contrary, Allah grants us ten times the reward here in this world and seventy times in the Hereafter. We need to have strong faith.

‘So give to the kinsman his due,
and to the needy, and to the wayfarer.
That is best for those who seek
Allah's countenance. And
such are they who are successful.’
(Quran 30 :38)

Once Hazrat Ali ibn Abi Talib was sitting and crying with tears. Somebody asked about the reason of his crying. Hazrat Ali said that it has been seven days now that no guest has showed up at my place. I am afraid that Merciful Allah might be angry with me and might have decided to reprimand me. In a Muslim culture a guest is always considered as an envoy of the Almighty Allah who brings His blessings. Therefore, everybody tries to entertain the guest with the best possible meal. The money spent on this occasion is considered as money spent for the pleasure of

Allah. According to the teachings of our Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), entertaining a guest is Sadaqah (charity) that brings rewards in the Hereafter.

According to another Hadith narrated by Kaab bin Ayadh, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said :

‘There was a ‘fitna’ (evil) for every
nation, and for my Ummah
(Muslim nation), this fitna
is ‘maal’ (wealth).’

The nations of all prophets had been tried with some kind of temptation or ‘fitna’. We, as Muslims, are being tried with wealth and material. If we get carried away by it, we will end up as ‘losers’. And we would be losers not only here in this world but also in the Hereafter. Hellfire is the destination of all such losers. This wealth here is to spend in this world. We cannot carry it with us to the next world. The only thing that goes with us to the next world is the ‘good deed’. And helping others is the best deed.

‘Wealth and children are an
ornament of life of the world.
But the good deeds which
endure are better in thy Lord’s sight
for reward, and better in
respect of hope.’
(Quran 18 :46)

Money (wealth) is the biggest trial for mankind. We love it and don’t want to part with it. We don’t easily share it with others either. In the back of our minds there is a small fear of losing it. We forget that it is Allah Who gives it to us and He can take it away in a blink. It is not difficult for Allah to shuffle things up.

‘O ye who believe ! Let not your
wealth nor your children distract
you from remembrance of Allah.
Those who do so, they are the losers.’
(Quran 63 :9)

Wealth should not become a distraction. The true servants of Allah always remember Him and when they have a little wealth, they remember Allah even more. They know that they have to share this wealth with the needy.

The wife of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and mother of the believers, Aisha Siddiqah (r.a.a.) was known for her generosity. She would not hesitate to give anything in the house to the needy. Hazrat Mankadar was a lesser known companion of the Prophet (PBUH), but was a pious man. Once he came to see the wife of the Prophet, Aisha (r.a.a.) and told her that he desperately needed some help. She regretted that at that particular time there was nothing in the house. If she had even ten thousand Dirhams, she would have given to him. Mankadar left disappointed.

Later on that day, Khalid bin Asad sent a gift of ten thousand Dirhams to the House of the Prophet (PBUH). Aisha (r.a.a.) said that she was being tested immediately about what she said to Mankadar. She sent a messenger to call upon him. When Mankadar came to her house she gave her the entire amount of ten thousand Dirhams. From this amount Mankadar bought a maid for one thousand Dirhams and married her. He had three sons from her, namely Muhammad, Abubakar and Umar. All three of them were among the well-known righteous people of Madina.

Aisha (r.a.a.) was known for her modest living and great deeds of charity. That was the training and teaching of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.). There are many stories of her generosity in the history books.

During those early days of Islam, the rich Muslims traders used to send gifts and bags of money to the house of the

Prophet (PBUH). Once she distributed two bags of money among the needy and did not even remember that there was no meat in the house. She was fasting and could have used one Dirham worth of meat for her and the Prophet's meal. One should not forget that meat was considered a luxury in that house.

The Prophet (PBUH) and his wives never kept the money in the house. Whenever it was given to them, no matter how much, it was given away or distributed among the needy of the area immediately. Money is evil (fitna) and it is very easy to fall in love with it. The more you have, the more you will be questioned about it on the Day of Judgement.

The worst thing that wealth brings is the greed that results in corruption. It is never enough. We always want more. Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said that if somebody had one valley of wealth (maal) he tries to get another one. And if he had two valleys of wealth still it won't be enough for him and he strives for the third one. The only thing that can fill up his belly (greed) is the dust of grave.

In other words we keep striving for wealth until death comes to us and we leave everything behind. We have seen it in real life that someone starts a small business or a small shop. He always tries to improve it and makes his shop bigger and bigger. Then he tries to make two shops out of the original one, and so on. There is no end to it.

Greed has no limits. It creates different kinds of material and moral problems. The worst problem among them is that we forget Allah. Since wealth is evil, it has Devil's full support. And when we follow the footsteps of Devil, we are marching towards Hell. Allah says :

‘O mankind ! Eat of that which is
lawful and wholesome in the earth,
and follow not the footsteps of the
Devil. Lo, he is an open enemy for you.’
(Quran 2 :168)

Greed is like a disease. The only cure – the best cure – is the charity. We should give away whatever is surplus or extra from our needs. We can start with helping our poor relatives, the less fortunate family members. They say that charity begins at home. The less fortunate have a right to our wealth. It is the law of the Almighty Allah. We dare not violate it otherwise we face heavy punishment. We need to tell ourselves that by sharing or giving in charity we don't deplete our wealth. It rather multiplies. Allah has been merciful to us and we should show mercy to the mankind in return. This is one way of thanking Him and appreciating His blessings He showered upon us.

Here is another story of generosity and charity (sadaqah) from the golden period of Islam.

Hazrat Abdullah bin Aamer bin Kreedh wanted to buy a house. He saw one that he liked and contacted the owner Hazrat Khalid bin Aqaba. The price was settled for 90 thousand Dirhams. When the house was sold and Hazrat Khalid told his family that they had to move out. His wife and children were shocked. They felt hurt and sad, and started crying. When the night fell, Hazrat Abdullah heard the crying voices of women and children. He asked his wife to enquire about it. She told him that it was the family of Khalid bin Aqaba. They were grieved at the loss of their house. Abdullah bin Aamer immediately sent his servant to Khalid's house with a message that the sale deal was cancelled. The house was theirs and they could also keep the money he paid for the house. The house had been given back to them as a gift from Abdullah bin Aamer. Allah-o-Akbar.

Those were the people with heart, who feared Allah and always wanted to please the Almighty with their noble gestures. No wonder they were blessed by Allah not only in this world but also in the Hereafter. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

‘If ye lend unto Allah a goodly
loan, He will double it for you
and will forgive you, for
Allah is Responsive, Clement.’
(Quran 64:17)

If we remember Allah, He will remember us. If we spend for His pleasure, He will grant us more. That’s His promise. So, let us keep our ‘giving hand’ busy and make charity (sadaqah) a way of life. We better do it today as we don’t know if we would be able to do it tomorrow. Life is short and Devil is working hard on us. Only the steadfast will survive.

NEED HELP? WE ALL DO!

‘O ye who believe! Let not
your wealth nor your children
distract you from remembrance
of Allah. Those who do so,
they are the losers.’
(Quran 63:9)

We are all human beings, always in a rush, always greedy, always taking care of our own interests selfishly, never content, always ungrateful and complaining. We have never enough and we always want more. Was that the human being before him angels bowed and prostrated? Do we still qualify to claim to be the best of God’s creations? I think we need help, some serious help – honestly.

‘The devil has engrossed them
and so has caused them to forget
remembrance of Allah.
They are the devil’s party.
Beware! Surely, it is the devil’s
party who will be the losers.’
(Quran 58:19)

A true believer cannot be a loser. But we don’t think reasonably and logically any more. Our thinking has been corrupted by the lifestyles of the rich and famous. We measure success on the scale of money or material wealth. We are trying to beat others in this fierce but ugly race that has either no end or an awful end. Our stay in the earth is temporary and everything that we see here will perish. We cannot carry anything with us except the good deeds.

‘And whatever ye have been given
is a comfort of the life of the world
and an ornament thereof; and that
which Allah has is better and more
lasting. Have ye then no sense?’
(Quran 28:60)

When the Almighty talks to the people, only the sensible, the intelligent and the men of understanding pay attention. Such men are in minority. Most of the people follow their desires and in this process start following the devil. The devil betrays and leads to Hell. The divine message is for all mankind but only the wise people understand it because it requires resistance to temptation, and sacrifice. It also requires a good amount of patience. If we pray to the Almighty honestly and sincerely, He will grant us patience and help us.

‘Lo, man was created anxious,
fretful when evil befalls him
and, when good befalls him,
grudging; save worshippers
who are constant at their worship.’
(Quran 70:19-23)

So, what makes one stand out among others? The Worship – remembering Allah, the Almighty, Who created life and death, heavens and earth; and everything in between. All power belongs to Him.

Life is short. Don’t rush. Stop for a moment and look around. There are so many beautiful things to enjoy and share; so many loving people to share with; the people who care. Let me tell you a great story someone narrated on the internet. May God bless him!

I was parked in front of the mall, wiping off my car. I had just come out of the car-wash and was waiting for my wife.

I saw somebody coming my way from across the parking lot. The guy looked terrible. In our ‘civilized’ part of the world we call such people ‘bums’. From the looks of him, he had no car, no home, no clean clothes; and of course no money.

There are times when you feel generous but there are other times that you just don’t want to be bothered. This was one of those ‘don’t bother me’ times.

‘I hope he doesn’t ask me for any money,’ I thought. He didn’t. He came and sat on the curb in front of the bus stop but he didn’t look like he could have enough money to even ride the bus. After a few minutes, as I expected, he spoke.

‘That’s a very pretty car,’ he said.

He was ragged but he had somehow an air of dignity around him. His bushy grey beard seemed to be keeping more than his face warm.

‘Thanks’, I said, and continued wiping off my car. He sat there quietly as I worked on my car. The expected plea for money never came.

As the silence between us widened something inside me said, ‘Ask him if he needs any help.’ I was sure that he would say ‘yes’ but I held true to the inner voice.

As per one Hadith, Jarir bin Abdullah narrated that Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said:

‘He who is not merciful to others,
will not be treated mercifully.

(Bukhari, vol. 8, book 73, No: 42)

Finally, I broke the silence and asked him: ‘Do you need any help?’

He answered in three simple but profound words that I shall never forget. We often look for wisdom in great men and women. We expect it from those of higher learning and great accomplishments. I expected nothing but an

outstretched grimy hand. He spoke the three words that shook my world.

‘Don’t we all?’ He said.

I was feeling high and mighty, successful and important, above a bum in the street, until those three words hit me like a rock.

‘Don’t we all?’

I needed help. Maybe not for bus fare or a place to sleep, but I needed help. I reached in my wallet and gave him not only for bus fare, but enough to get a warm meal and shelter for the night. Those three little words still ring true.

No matter how much you possess, no matter how much you have accomplished, you need help too.

On the other hand, no matter how little you have, no matter how loaded you are with your own problems, even without money or a place to sleep, you can still give help. Even if it is just a compliment, you can give that. We all need help no matter what kind.

According to another Hadith, Adi bin Hatim narrated that Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said:

‘O people! Save yourselves from the
(Hell) Fire even if with one-half
of a date fruit (given in charity),
and if this is not available, then
(save yourselves) by saying a good
pleasant friendly word.’
(Bukhari, vol. 8, book 73, No: 52)

You never know when you may see someone that appears to have it all. They are waiting on you to give them what they don’t have. A different perspective of life, a glimpse at something beautiful, a respite from daily chaos, that only you through a torn world can see.

Maybe the man was just a homeless stranger wandering the streets. Maybe he was more than that. Maybe he was sent

by a power that is great and wise, to minister to a soul too comfortable in its own little world.

Maybe God looked down, called an angel, dressed him like a bum, then said, ‘Go, minister to that man cleaning the car; that man needs help.’

Don’t we all? Yes, we all do. And who is better helper than the Creator Himself? Always ask Him because he is your sole Provider, the most Merciful, the Beneficent. He says:

‘..... So establish worship,
pay the poor-due and hold
fast to Allah. He is your Protecting
Friend, a blessed Patron and a
blessed Helper.’
(Quran 22:78)

Be kind and merciful to others. Love and affection never decrease by sharing. A kind and comforting word can sometimes turn a life around. Always try to give, no matter how small it is. It’s the thought behind it that counts. Everything or anything you give in charity, will bring you rewards from the Almighty. He is the One, Who tells you to help others, take care of your fellow human beings, and always treat each other good. All these gestures are counted for rewards in the Hereafter. The Merciful is just waiting for you to do one little thing for the benefit of others, and He will shower His blessings on you.

‘Therefore, remember Me,
I will remember you.
Give thanks to Me, and reject not Me.’
(Quran 2:152)

Here is another story from the old times. There was once a guy who lived in an Arab land. His main hobby was drinking wine in the company of his friends and have good

time. People of his neighbourhood did not like him, although he was kind at heart. Once, he invited his friends over drinks, as usual, and asked his slave to bring some fruits from the market. He gave him four Dirhams. The slave took four Dirhams and went to the market place. On his way he found the famous sufi saint of the town, Mansour bin Ammar Basri, who was collecting money to help some poor man.

He was saying that anybody who would give four Dirhams for that poor man, Mansour Basri will himself pray to Allah for granting the donor's four wishes. When the slave heard that, he immediately gave his master's four Dirhams in charity for the poor man. Mansour Basri acknowledged and asked the slave what his four wishes were. The slave said: 'Here is my first wish:

'I have a master who is not very popular among people. I want to get freedom from him.' Mansour Basri raised his hands and invoked Allah, then asked about his second wish.

The slave said that he wanted the substitute of those four Dirhams. Mansour Basri invoked the Almighty again, and asked the slave of his third wish.

The slave said that he wished Allah made his master quit drinking and repent, and accept his repentance. Mansour Basri prayed for that too, and asked the slave about his last wish.

The slave said: Lastly, I would like that Allah grant forgiveness to me, to my master, to you, and to all the people who are present here, and bless them all. Mansour Basri prayed for that too. After that the slave came back empty handed. He knew that he was going to get good beating from his master.

The master was waiting. He was very upset because of the delay. 'What took you so long? And where are the fruits?' he shouted. The slave begged his master to listen to his story before reacting harshly. The master agreed. When the

slave narrated what had happened, the master started laughing.

‘Alright, alright! Now tell me about your four wishes’, he said. The slave said that his first wish was to get freedom from his master. The master smiled and said: ‘Fine! I set you free. You are no more a slave. Now, tell me what was your second wish.’ The slave said that he wanted the substitute of those four Dirhams. The master got up and gave the slave a pouch containing four thousand Dirhams, and said: ‘This is a gift for you.’

The slave was shocked. Then his master asked about his third wish. The slave replied that he wished his master quit drinking and repent to God. The master said: ‘I promise you I’ll never drink again, and I repent to God for all my sins.

Now, what was your last wish?’ The slave answered that he had asked for God’s forgiveness and blessings for himself, his master, for the wise old man and for the crowd. The master said: ‘Now, that is not in my powers.’

That same night, the master saw somebody in his dream. A voice said: ‘When you did all three things that were in your power, what do you think, We won’t do what is in Our power? You, your slave, Mansour Basri and the crowd, all are forgiven and blessed.’

‘..... And turn unto Allah together,
O believers, in order that
ye may succeed.’
(Quran 24:31)

ISA (JESUS) SAID :

The prophet of Allah, Hazrat Isa ibn Mariam (Jesus Christ), PBUH, said:

Don't make the world your leader because it will enslave you.

Deposit your treasure (of good deeds) with the best Guardian (Allah) so that you don't run the risk of losing it. The treasures of the world (wealth) can be stolen, wasted or lost by some calamity, while the treasures of Allah are free of those dangers.

The world is full of evil and one big element of evil is that people disobey God in the world.

Another proof of its evil is that you cannot win the Hereafter unless you lose the world.

Always bear in mind that the love of the world is the basis of every evil. The worldly desire of a short time can cause you the pain and punishment for ever (in the Hereafter).

Some people want the world, whereas the world itself wants some people. Those who strive for the Hereafter, the world wants them to keep them away from God. And those who want the world, it runs away from them, till they die chasing their worldly desires.

The love for the Hereafter and the love of the world cannot live in the same heart, just like the fire and water cannot be combined in one pot.

PITY THE NATION

‘Corruption does appear on land
and sea because of (the evil)
which men’s hands have done,
that He may make them taste a
part of that which they have done,
in order that they may return.’
(Quran 30:41)

The Earth belongs to God Almighty. Whatever we do here, we’ll definitely bear the consequences of that. When we were sent down to earth, we were given a set of rules and regulations to follow. And as in any society, if you break the rules you are liable to punishment or reprisal.

For a layman, things are in black and white. A line has been drawn between right and wrong – nothing in between. But the modern man has blurred the line and added colours to the scene. He has no courage to stand up against the evil and has no guts to face the reality either. Therefore, he walks the blurred line, fooling himself and deceiving others, but at the same time claiming to be fair. He tries to please both sides of the conflict, and sometimes even favouring one over the other. His sweet lies earn him the title of a modern ‘diplomat’. The Almighty says:

‘Confound not truth with falsehood,
nor knowingly conceal the truth.’
(Quran 2:42)

As a matter of fact, a tactful liar is considered a successful diplomat. The modern smart diplomat is a hypocrite – that is ‘munafiq’ in Islamic terminology. He is a person who fools both parties with his lies, unfair tactics, deception and

sweet-talk. You can even challenge his honesty. Unfortunately, he is considered a very successful man today. That means either we have gone blind or have turned into crooks who change the values, laws, rules & regulations to serve their own interest, with no respect for humanity.

‘Lo, Allah commands you that ye
Restore deposits to their owners,
and if ye judge between mankind,
then ye judge justly.’
(Quran 4:58)

A nation should demand justice, equality and respect as its birth-right. There are moral values and civic laws that govern a society. In the absence of those values and laws, there would be chaos. It would be like living in a jungle. When people stop thinking and asking ‘how’ and ‘why’, they become a dead society. Such people are considered as a herd of sheep that will follow even a dummy. Have you seen the modern hobby of the rich, the dog race? The dogs chase a dummy rabbit. They don’t even feel that the rabbit is a toy. People of the developing nations are being programmed like that these days. The leaders in those countries are installed by the foreign ‘special interest’ group. The ‘dummy’ runs the affairs, as he is told to, and the nation follows. The nations which don’t demand justice, don’t stand up against evil, and don’t fight for their own rights, they are as good as dead. Miracles don’t happen unless you try to make them happen. You have to make an effort.

‘Lo! Allah changes not the condition
of a folk until they (first) change
that which is in their hearts’
(Quran 13:11)

In a society where ‘anything goes’ you cannot expect justice, respect or honesty. Nations like that are doomed. They don’t make no effort to change their lives for the better. They just sit back and wait for something to happen. These days the countries have the foreign armies on their soil to defend them. Vow! We did not learn any lesson from the history of nations. The people that cannot defend themselves have no right to freedom. The Jews used to have the same character during the time of Prophet Moses. They were so shameless that they won’t do anything but demand Moses to ask his God to get them this and that. They would even send Moses to ask God for meat, garlic and onions when God was providing them with Manna and Salwa. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

‘We destroyed the generations
before you when they did wrong;
and their messengers (from Allah)
came unto them with clear proofs
(of His sovereignty), but they would
not believe. Thus do We reward
the guilty folk.
(Quran 10:13)

What logic do we see in doing wrong and still expecting the blessings from Allah? It does not work that way. The saying goes: First deserve then desire. We can ask Allah for His help only when we are trying our best for a good cause.

Khalil Jibran said:

‘Pity the nation that raises not its voice,
Save when it walks in a funeral;
Boasts not except among its ruins, and will
Rebel not save when its neck is laid
between the sword and the block.

We have exactly the same situation today. We are almost dead as a nation. We have no character, no dignity and no identity. We are like that cricket team who sells the honour of their motherland for a few thousand dollars and feels no shame. Or like a politician who sells his motherland to his foreign masters only to get immigration status for his family.

Sheikh Saadi of Iran said that you cannot produce a good sword from a bad metal; meaning that you cannot produce quality product from the low-grade raw material. Nations of the world are laughing at our leaders and politicians. They are ridiculing the Muslim nation. And we can see it why! We have become a nation of mediocres, inefficient, incompetent and dishonest workers. No wonder we are producing the same kind of leaders and politicians.

Ah! My heart goes to Khalil Gibran who says:

‘Pity the nation whose statesman is a fox,
Whose philosopher is a juggler;
And whose art is the art of patching and
mimicking.

There is something called ‘self-respect’. We have lost it. It’s a hard-earned commodity. If we don’t respect ourselves, who is going to respect us? Nobody. Yes, nobody. And that’s what is happening today. It is out of fashion to talk about Allah, His Messengers, Islam and Muslims. People would leave your company if you start talking about national integrity, honesty, justice, fairplay and equality. They take pride in being associated with Devil or America or Britain; even India, Israel or the wretched of the earth Afghanistan. They are not proud citizens of Pakistan. They would rather call themselves Muhajirs, Sindhis, Pashtuns, Baluchis, Punjabis and Kashmiris.

Ah! Khalil Jibran! You knew my country very well when you said:

‘Pity the nation divided into fragments,
Each fragment deeming itself a nation.

Each fragment has its own short-sighted, narrow-minded and evil-oriented leader. There is no leader of the ‘Ummah’. No wonder it has become a herd of sheep. They are doing nothing to change their destiny. They are engaged in evil practices and are hoping for the blessings of Almighty Allah. They are all waiting for a miracle, for a Messiah. And the only Messiahs they are getting are the ones who are installed by their foreign masters. They come with great pump and show, only to leave with their tails between their legs.

Ah! Khalil Jibran! I love you when you say:

Pity the nation that welcomes
its new ruler with trumpeting,
And farewells him with hooting;
Only to welcome another
with trumpeting again.

Khalil Jibran wrote this poem in 1934. What a far-sightedness, what a vision!

It seems that the situation in the 1930’s was not much different from the current one in the year 2010. That means the humans don’t change much for the better. It is sad. If you try to apply the above thoughts on today’s Muslim world, they fit perfectly. Khalil Jibran could see the future of the Ummah. Things have deteriorated in the Muslim countries over the years. The only change we see there is in the material things – even those things have been copied from the West. Most of the Muslim countries – especially the French speaking, have lost their identity. Their people

try to mimick their Masters, but their masters don't accept them as equal. And they themselves consider superior to their fellow countrymen. So, they are hanging in the middle, belonging to neither group. In fact they have lost their culture, their values and ultimately their identity. It is happening in Pakistan too. There are radio & tv channels, newspapers and magazines that are working day and night to destroy the ideology of this nation. They are even ridiculing the founding fathers of Pakistan. At the same time Europe and America are appreciating Iqbal and Jinnah for their role in re-writing the history of the Sub-continent. Funny ?

Here is the complete translation of Khalil Jibran's poem.

KHALIL JIBRAN

(A poem written in 1934)

Pity the nation that raises not its voice
Save when it walks in a funeral ;
Boasts not except among its ruins, and will
Rebel not save when its neck is laid
between the sword and the block.

Pity the nation whose statesman is a fox,
Whose philosopher is a juggler,
And whose art is the art of patching
and mimicking.

Pity the nation that welcomes its new ruler
with trumpeting,
And farewells him with hooting ;
Only to welcome another
with trumpeting again.

Pity the nation whose sages are dumb with years,

And whose strong men are yet in the cradle.

Pity the nation divided into fragments,
Each fragment deeming itself a nation.

HE NEVER SAYS ‘NO’

‘Whoso desires the harvest
of the Hereafter, We give him
increase in its harvest. And whoso
desires the harvest of the world,
We give him thereof, and he has
no portion in the Hereafter.’
(Quran 42 :20)

Most people don’t understand the difference between ‘Rahmaan’ and ‘Raheem’. In many books the authors have translated both as ‘Merciful’. It is correct to a little extent. Rahmaan is the best attribute of Almighty Allah. It is one of His best names, His character, His quality. Rahmaan is the Creator of ‘Raheem’ and all mercy. He is the absolute Beneficent. Therefore, we cannot name any human being as ‘Rahmaan’. We must call him ‘Abd-ur-Rahmaan’ – the servant of Rahmaan. On the other hand the quality of Raheem can be found in any human beings. Anybody can be merciful. This is the summary of a scholarly and academic debate. I can’t get into the lengthy details of that here.

The Almighty Allah is absolute Beneficent and infinite Mercy. He loves to bless His best creation – the humans – with every good thing. Just ask Him and He will give you. Let me tell you one thing the most Muslims don’t know. The Gracious Allah never says ‘no’ to us. You should not be surprised. He is our Creator and He loves His creation. So, how can He say ‘no’ to us ? Actually, He doesn’t ! He says :

‘Lo, thy Lord is full of bounty
for mankind, but most of

them do not give thanks.’
(Quran 27 :73)

‘..... Allah wills no injustice
to (His) creatures.’
(Quran 3 :108)

‘Therefore, remember Me,
I will remember you...’
(Quran 2 :152)

Most of the time we humans ask for material things: money, financial prosperity, worldly success, economic well-being, status, a house, a car, etc., etc. We don’t even care whether we deserve it or not ; we just want it because somebody else has it. We strive for the material benefits for this world which is temporary. The Gracious God says :

‘..... The life of this world is but
comfort of illusion.’
(Quran 3 :185)

‘And whatever ye have been given
is a comfort of the life of the
world and an ornament thereof ;
and that which Allah has is better
and more lasting. Have ye
then no sense ?
(Quran 28 :60)

The irony is that we all know that we are here in this world on a trial basis. We have to prepare for the Hereafter. Still we give more importance to our worldly comforts than ask God for something for the Hereafter. We make our own choices and ignore Allah’s directions. Many times we regret our decisions later. But we complain that God had

been ‘unjust’ to us. If only we could understand! The Gracious God suggests us through the Holy Quran that we should ask Him for the life of the Hereafter, and not the life of this world. This worldly life is just a game:

‘Naught is the life of the world
save a pastime and a sport. Better far
is the abode of the Hereafter for those
who keep their duty (to Allah). Have
ye then no sense?’
(Quran 6:32)

The Almighty Allah says : ‘Ask Me and I will give you.’ Now, everybody can mention some occasions when he/she did not get what he/she wanted. Even when they prayed and begged God, they did not get what they wanted at that particular time. That is true too. Well, here is the explanation.

The Gracious and Most Merciful never says ‘no’ to us. When we ask Him for something, the Almighty Allah answers our call in one of the three different ways. He says :

‘Yes, I will give you.’ And He showers His blessings right away. Or He says :

‘Yes, but not right now’. And you know what that means. There is a ‘right’ time and place for everything. Or He says :

‘Wait ! I have something better for you’. And He blesses you with it later on.

You see ! I told you He never says ‘no’. Only we don’t have the patience and the brains to comprehend the wisdom in those affairs. With our limited knowledge, restricted understanding, lack of insight and little patience, we don’t usually see the wisdom of the Almighty. We see and measure things on a different time scale whereas the Creator operates on a different level and a different time

scale. Our imagination cannot fathom it. It is, therefore, better to leave His affairs to Him. He is the One Who is running this world. Our tasks and limits are already defined, so we better stay within those limits. He says in the Holy Quran :

‘So establish worship,
pay the poor-due, and
hold fast to Allah.
He is your protecting Friend ;
a blessed Patron and a blessed Helper.
(Quran 22 :78)

‘And seek forgiveness of Allah.
Lo, Allah is ever
Forgiving, Merciful.’
(Quran 4 :106)

Let’s get back to His message : ‘Remember Me, I will remember you’. Actually this is the key to survival on this earth – survival with success. When we remember Him, He never forgets us. He continues to shower His blessings on us because we remember Him and pay thanks. In other words we pray to Him the way we were told to. When we call Rahmaan and Raheem, He listens and He answers too. These are the KEY words. Do you know how many times we call these names during our prayers (salat) ? Anything and everything we start, we start with these names – His best names. We say : In the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful (Rahmaan and Raheem). We are supposed to say that before starting anything.

Then comes Surah Fatihah. This is the gist and the essence of the Holy Quran, the heart of the Holy Quran. It is also called ‘Umm-ul-Quran’. And this is the most essential part of the prayer too. Without Surah Fatihah, our prayers are

not valid. They are not accepted. So, what is in the Fatihah ? Here, see it for yourself :

‘In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.’

‘Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

The Beneficent, the Merciful.

Owner of the Day of Judgment.

Thee (alone) we worship ;

Thee (alone) we ask for help.

Show us the straight path.

The path of those whom

Thou hast favoured ;

Not (the path) of those

who earn Thine anger nor of

those who go astray.’

(Quran 1 :1-7)

This is our pledge to God Almighty. We confirm and reiterate that He is the One and Only worthy of our worship ; the All-Beneficent, the All-Merciful ; the Sole Provider ; and we strive to please Him. In return, He showers His mercy on us. According to this pledge we should be true and honest to Him all the time. If we lack sincerity and falter, we lose control and go astray. That is where we lose His protection and guidance. To regain His mercy we need to repent and get back on the right track. Therefore, our fidelity, faithfulness, sincerity, steadfastness and gratefulness are the essential elements to please Allah and win His mercy. That’s the only guarantee that can save us not only from the worldly problems but also from the Hellfire. So, invoke Him by the names of Rahmaan and Raheem. And once He showers His blessings upon you, then remain grateful and faithful to Him.

But we are very selfish and ungrateful. He says in the Holy Quran:

‘And if misfortune touches a man,
he cries unto Us, (while reclining) on
his side or sitting or standing, but when
We have relieved him of the misfortune,
he goes his way as though he had not
cried unto Us because of a
misfortune that afflicted him.’
(Quran 10:12)

Now, this is the height of selfishness and ungratefulness. This is the attitude that lands us in trouble. We always expect Allah to fulfil His part of the responsibility whereas we, on our part, don’t even pay thanks, nor do we pray to Him. He does not need it but it is our obligation, our responsibility. We should be faithful and sincere to Him for He is our Creator, our Lord, the Almighty.

Hazrat Abdur Rahman bin Ghanim narrates that he heard it from ten companions of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) that once they were sitting in Masjid Quba in a learning session, when the Apostle of Allah (PBUH) arrived. He addressed those companions and said: ‘No matter how much knowledge you acquire, no matter how much you learn, The Almighty will not reward you unless you apply that knowledge on your actions.’ When we claim to be Muslims, the servants of Allah then we must prove it with our actions. If we love this world then we cannot love the Hereafter, because they both go in opposite directions.

It is very simple to understand that by obeying Allah we can please Him and when we please Him, He bestows His bounties and blessings upon us. According to a Hadith, our beloved Prophet (PBUH) said:

‘I am conveying to you what Allah has Conveyed to me. You cannot please Allah with anything other than the one that was made obligatory for you (like salat, zakat, fasting, Hajj, etc.). You need to fulfil your duties to Allah to get closer to Him.’

When we get closer to God, we start enjoying His blessings and bounties. But the precondition is that we replace 'love of the world' with 'love of Allah'. Bring your life in line with his commands. Eventually, you'll enjoy simple life and give away in charity everything that is in surplus to your basic needs. Remember! The more wealth or material things you possess, the more questions you'll have to answer on the Day of Judgement. The accountability process on the Day of Justice would be very painful, and the length of it depends on your possessions in this world. We should learn from the Lives of our Prophet (PBUH) and his companions.

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said that the love of the world hurts your cause in the Hereafter. But when you love the life of the Hereafter, love of the world cannot hurt you. Therefore, prefer the one which is everlasting (the Hereafter) over the one that is temporary and will perish.

No matter what circumstances, no matter what situation, always remember Allah and He will remember you. He will get back to you with all His mercy and compassion because He is your Lord, the Creator, the Beneficent and the Merciful. He never says 'no' to you. The only requirement is that you seek His mercy, ask for His blessings and call Him. We have all seen that even the mother does not feed her baby unless the baby cries for milk. That's the way it works normally. Just remember Him and call Him.

‘O ye who believe !
Let not your wealth
nor your children distract you
from remembrance of Allah.
Those who do so, they are the losers.’
(Quran 63 :9)

CAN YOU COUNT HIS BLESSINGS ?

‘And if ye would count the
favour of Allah ye cannot reckon it.
Lo! Allah is indeed Forgiving,
Merciful.’
(Quran 16 :18)

Allah indeed is the most Merciful that He keeps showering upon us His blessings day in, day out. In return, we are so ungrateful that we take things for granted and don’t even pay thanks to Him. But He still keeps forgiving us. That alone shows that He loves His creation. He keeps providing us with everything we need, therefore, fulfilling His part of the responsibility. How about the other part – our responsibility?
We should be ashamed.

‘And he gives you of all ye ask
of Him, and if ye would count the
bounty of Allah ye cannot reckon it.
Lo! Man is verily a wrong-doer,
an ingrate.’
(Quran 14 :34)

He is so Kind, so Merciful and so Forgiving that He gives provision (Rizq) even to those who don’t have faith in Him – the disbelievers. It is hard to believe that those who criticize Him, those who believe Him not, and those who deny His revelations, they all get food to eat and a place to sleep. He showers His blessings and bounties both upon

believers and non-believers. This is the extreme of graciousness. He is so Merciful and Forgiving.

Out of His millions of blessings and favours, here is the basic one that we don't even appreciate. It is water. We never took a second to ponder, before taking a sip of it, where it comes from and how it always reaches us ? How refreshing it is and how satisfying its taste is ! Water is life. It is one of those 'normal' things of life that we take for granted. We think that we pay the bill and we get water from the government. That is not totally true. When there is a shortage of water or no rain, no government can help it. Nobody can 'manufacture' drinking water and supply it to you. The Almighty Allah reminds us in the Holy Quran :

‘Say : Have ye thought if (all)
your water were to disappear into
the earth, who then could bring
you gushing water ?’
(Quran 67 :30)

‘Have ye observed the water which
Ye drink ? Is it ye who shed it from
the raincloud, or are We the shedder?
If We willed, We verily could make it
bitter. Why, then, give ye no thanks?’
(Quran 56 :68-70)

It seems that ‘thank God’ (Alhamdo-lillah) is the hardest word for us to utter. It should have been the easiest word to say appreciating all the blessings of The Almighty. It costs us nothing !

Here is a beautiful story. An old man, who was about 70 years of age, fell ill. He developed some kidney disease and was having hard times to urinate. Sometimes it became so painful and miserable that he wished himself death. Very often he could not urinate when he wanted to. He used to

scream with pain that was unbearable at times. He consulted doctors who tried to give him treatment for his disease but with very little success. The misery persisted. Finally, a doctor sent him to the hospital of the town where a specialist took care of him. He was told that he needed an operation to cure his disease. The old man had no choice but to agree. The next day he was operated upon and after some treatment, finally he was again able to urinate. Only then he realized how blessed he was. At the end of his stay in the hospital, he was handed over a bill. When the poor old man looked at the bill, he started to cry. It was not only enormous but also reminded him of the comfortable time before the disease. The doctor saw the old man crying and understood immediately that it was beyond his means. He put his hand on patient's shoulder, looked him in the eyes, and very affectionately said :

‘Listen! If you think that this bill is beyond your means then we can make some other arrangements. It can be taken care of. Don’t worry too much. We are here to help you. Now, please stop crying.’

The old man said : ‘I am not crying because of the huge amount of the bill. I am crying because Allah let me urinate for 70 years and He never sent me a bill.’

Now, that’s God, the Gracious. He never gets tired of giving. We cannot count his blessings and favours because they are innumerable. If we pay thanks to Him, He will give us more. That is His promise.

‘And when your Lord proclaimed :
If ye give thanks, I will give you more ;
but if ye are thankless, lo !
My punishment is dire.’
(Quran 14 :7)

If we open the Holy Quran and read Surah ‘ar-Rahman’ (No : 55), we’ll realize how indebted to God we really are.

The Almighty mentions numerous blessings and asks us which one we could deny, if at all! He has created life and death ; He created man and the jinn; He created the earth, the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars, the trees, the wind, the fire, the water, the fruits, the flowers and vegetables, the herbs, the grains, the animals, the birds, the sea wealth, the pearl and coral-stone, diamonds, the gold and silver, and minerals. He lets the ships sail on water; He lets the birds float in the air. He taught the man to read. The list of Allah's favours goes on and on.

‘Which is it, of the favours of
your Lord, that ye deny ?’
(Quran 55 :13,16,18,21,23,25,28,30)

Of course, we can deny none. Who can deny the truth ? We only need to sit back, relax and close our eyes for a moment, and then think of all the things Allah gave us to enjoy life on this planet. That we are healthy and breathing, alone demands our gratitude. When we think about the people living in jungles or in the desert, with no means and material facilities, we should consider ourselves very lucky and blessed. Thank God for that !

When we think of Allah's creations and His blessings upon us, our natural reaction is simply appreciative. We are obliged to thank The Almighty for His favours. The Almighty tells the believers to praise Him, pay thanks to Him and always remember Him. In return, He will remember us and shower His blessings upon us. At the same time, The Almighty Allah warns us that the ungrateful people merit His anger and punishment.

‘Hast thou not seen those who gave
the grace of Allah in exchange for
thanklessness and led their people down
to the Abode of Loss (even to) Hell ?

They are exposed thereto. A hapless end.'
(Quran 14 :28-29)

At so many places in the Holy Quran the Almighty Allah has commanded the believers to render thanks. Paying thanks to Him is the best way to earn His mercy. Allah is our Creator and He merits all praise. It is Him alone we worship and Him alone we ask for help. He is the owner of the Heavens and the earth, and whatever is between them, and He is the Beneficent. He is the Lord of the Worlds. We cannot survive without His mercy. Therefore, it is very logical that we appreciate His favours to us and be always grateful to Him. We depend on Him for everything and we ask Him for everything. He gives us, out of His mercy, whatever He considers suitable and sufficient for us.

We should be striving day and night to please Him and not to earn His anger. We should be accumulating good deeds for the Hereafter and abstain from accumulating the wealth in this world. Jubair bin Nafeer narrates a Hadith that our beloved Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said:

‘The Almighty Allah did not
send me the message (Wahee) to
become a trader and accumulate
wealth. Instead, He sent me the
message to glorify Him, praise Him,
prostrate unto Him in prayer,
and keep worshipping Allah until
death comes to me in that state.’

As a matter of fact Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was referring to the last two verses of Surah Hijar in the Holy Quran. In those verses, the Almighty Allah addressed the Last Prophet (PBUH) and said:

‘But hymn the praise of thy Lord,

and be of those who make
prostration (unto Him); and
serve thy Lord till the inevitable
comes unto thee.’
(Quran 15:98-99)

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) led his life by example. The more Allah showered His blessings on him, the more time he would spend in prayers and glorifying Allah. After the truce of al-Hudeybiyeh in the 6th year of the Hijrah, when Surah al-Fath (Victory) was revealed, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) started praying so much and so vigorously that he lost weight and became thin like an old date-palm branch. His feet used to swell during long prayers. The companions asked him:

‘O Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.)! Allah sent
down His mercy upon you and forgave
your sins of the past and the future,
as per Surah al-Fath. So, why do you
pray so rigorously and make it hard
on you?’ Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.)
replied: ‘Shouldn’t I be a grateful
and faithful slave then?’

We are not above the Prophet (PBUH). He showed us the way how to pay thanks to our Lord, and appreciate the countless blessings and favours of Allah.
Here is a great piece of advice from Maulana Rumi:

‘Don’t run around this world,
looking for a hole to hide in.
There are wild beasts in every cave!

If you live with mice, the cat claws will
find you.

The only real rest comes
when you're alone with God.

Live in the nowhere that you came from,
even though you have an address here.

That's why you see things in two ways,
Sometimes you look at a person
and see a cynical snake.

Someone else sees a joyful lover,
and you're both right!

Everyone is half and half,
like the black and white ox.

Yousuf looked ugly to his brothers,
and most handsome to his father.

You have eyes that see from that nowhere,
and eyes that judge distances,
how high and how low.

You own two shops,
and you run back and forth.

Try to close the one that's a fearful trap,
getting always smaller. Checkmate,
this way, checkmate that.

Keep open the shop,
where you're not selling fish-hooks anymore.
You are the free-swimming fish.

We need to turn to God wholeheartedly and curb our
worldly desires. We need to learn to be content and grateful

for whatever we have. Chasing wild desires can land us in trouble only. A good company can help us. Rumi says:

Spend less time with nightingales
and peacocks.
One is just a voice,
the other just a colour.

In any case we should be thankful to Allah and the best way to thank Him is to offer prayer (salaat). Allah does not like those who are ungrateful. Only the grateful will be rewarded in the Hereafter whereas the ungrateful will face the wrath of Him. May Allah give us the strength to be grateful ... Ameen.

THE INCREDIBLE BARGAIN !

Man is always greedy, even though he knows that greed is the mother of all evil. It often forces you to lie, cheat, deceive and invent new means of corruption. A believer always believes in Allah and pays thanks to the Almighty for everything he has been provided with. He is always content and grateful to his Creator. He is aware of the fact that all men are created equal yet they are not the same. They don't have the same material benefits or same amount of wealth. And in this disparity lies their test and trial.

‘Whoso desires the life of the
world and its pomp, We shall
repay them their deeds herein, and
therein they will not be wronged.
Those are they for whom is naught
in the Hereafter save the Fire.
All that they contrive here is vain
and all that they are wont to do
is fruitless.’
(Quran 11 :15-16)

Those who are unfortunate , Almighty Allah is testing their faith with misfortune to see how grateful and steadfast they are. And those who are more fortunate than others, they are being tested with their fortune (wealth) whether or not they take care of their less fortunate brothers and spend their wealth for the cause of Allah.

We are supposed to live in this world as one community and take care of each other in times of need. This is only humane. If we want to be treated with mercy, we must, first, treat others with mercy. In Islamic lifestyle and culture, the community has a lot more importance than the

individual. Most of the commands in the Holy Quran are concerning others. The message is loud and clear : Take care of the mankind and you will be taken care of. Serve others so that you could be served. The Almighty has clearly commanded us in the Holy Quran:

‘Spend your wealth for the cause
of Allah, and cast not (yourselves)
by your own hands to ruin ; and
do good. Lo, Allah loves the beneficent.
(Quran 2 :195)

Life in this world is not only a test for a believer but also a good opportunity to bargain with Allah for the benefits of Hereafter. The more we spend here for God’s pleasure, the more we will get as a reward in the Hereafter. It is like lending a loan to Allah, Who will multiply it in its repayment to us in the Hereafter. The Almighty says in the Holy Quran :

‘If ye lend unto Allah a goodly
loan, He will double it for you
and will forgive you , for Allah
is Responsive, Clement.’
(Quran 64 :17)

What a bargain ! Incredible ! But the irony is that despite all the benefits there are not many among us who go for this bargain. Have you not heard that if you give something in charity (Sadaqah), Allah will give you the reward of it, ten times in this world and 70 times in the Hereafter ? That’s God’s rule and nobody can change this rule. It has been valid since the beginning of the time and has no expiry date during our lifetime.

There was that guy during the era of Prophet Moses. Life was not very comfortable for the poor fellow. He was

always hand to mouth and struggling. He got so sick and tired of his life that one day he decided to go and see Prophet Moses. He said :

‘O Moses ! My life has been miserable.
You are the Prophet of Allah
and known for communicating with
Him. Please talk to Allah for me
and ask Him to have mercy on me
and make my life a little easier.’

Prophet Moses promised him to do whatever he could. When he had the opportunity, he talked to The Almighty and requested Him to ease up the life of the poor man. The Almighty replied that there was not much of ‘Rizk’ (provision) prescribed for this person. Therefore, whatever is meant for him is spread thinly over his lifetime. He gets a little but he will keep getting something for the rest of his life.

The next time when Prophet Moses saw this person, he explained to him what was prescribed for him in this world. The poor man said :

‘Alright ! Can you ask the Almighty
to grant me all my ‘Rizk’ (provision)
in lump sum, at one time, instead of
spreading it over many years ?’

Prophet Moses thought that was a very unreasonable demand and tried to convince the poor man otherwise. But the poor man insisted that he wanted all at one time. This way he would at least have some comfortable days and could enjoy life, even if it was for a short time. Prophet Moses agreed to do that. On the next occasion when Prophet Moses communicated with Allah, he conveyed to Him the poor man’s desire. The Almighty Allah accepted

the request and granted the poor man all his 'Rizk' at one time.

A few days later when Prophet Moses happened to pass by the poor man's house, he saw some kind of festival. Many people were enjoying food and drinks. He was surprised and wanted to talk to the poor man. The man was very happy and he thanked Prophet Moses for that. Moses asked him what was going on? The man said that he had invited all the poor and hungry people of his neighbourhood and told them that they could eat by him every day, as long as the food lasted. Moses thought that it was not going to last long, may be a few days or a few weeks or maximum for a few months. Then the man would be in a greater misery than before.

Time went by quickly. A few weeks later when Prophet Moses passed by the poor man's house he saw the party going on. He shook his head and left. He saw the same thing happening when he passed by, a couple of months later, and then after a year or so the party was still going on. Prophet Moses could not believe his eyes. He was perplexed. So, on the next occasion of communicating with God, Prophet Moses could not help asking God about the poor man's situation. How could it last that long?

The Almighty God told Moses that there was nothing surprising. 'It is Our principle that if anyone spends in Our way, for Our pleasure, We give him ten times more in this world and 70 times in the Hereafter. Therefore, the poor man as he keeps spending in charity, he keeps getting tenfold in this world. That's how the party goes on and on.' Subhan Allah ! What a bargain ! An incredible bargain ! Since The Almighty Allah is not going to change His principle, we should take advantage of it while we are still alive. As death can come at any time, we better do something now before it is too late. The life of his world is an opportunity for us to accumulate the rewards and blessings of The Almighty for the Hereafter. It is the

Hereafter that matters because that is the real and everlasting life.

Hazrat Qais bin Saad Khazarji once fell ill. To his surprise nobody came to see him nor did anybody send a slave to wish him speedy recovery. All the time, when he was healthy and active, he used to receive a lot of visitors, friends and well-wishers. He asked his family what could be the reason? The family said that almost everybody owed him money. Unless they paid back his debt, they were embarrassed to come and visit him.

Qais bin Saad started cursing the money because of which he had lost all his friends and well-wishers. He hired a man to make announcements in all parts of the city that whosoever owed him money, was relieved of his debt. He forgave everybody and no one owed him anything. After hearing that announcement, so many people came to visit him. It was so crowded at his doorstep that people broke the threshold of it.

Here is the key to success: Don't fall in love with this world, nor with money. Our stay in this world is but temporary. The greed and accumulation of wealth or material things can bring only the wrath of Allah upon us, unless we spend that wealth in Allah's way.

‘Such are those who buy the life
of the world at the price of the
Hereafter. Their punishment
will not be lightened, neither
will they have a support.’
(Quran 2 :86)

For a believer, the life of the Hereafter is a lot more beautiful than the life of this world. The Almighty says that the life of this world is just an illusion. We should not become slaves to our desires and temptation.

‘Beautiful is the life of the world
for those who disbelieve ;
they make a jest of the believers.’
(Quran 2 :212)

Here is a beautiful story of good bargain by a Muslim. Hazrat Abdullah bin Jaafer was once travelling and passing through a jungle. He saw a black slave working in a garden. The owner of the garden sent food for the slave. At the same time a dog also entered the garden and stood by the slave. The slave opened the pack and found three breads inside. He threw a bread in front of the dog and got back to his work. The dog ate the bread but did not go away. The slave then gave the dog another bread and watched him eating. The slave had only one bread left for him but the dog would not move. Therefore, he gave the dog the third and the last bread. During all that time, Hazrat Abdullah bin Jaafer had been watching the slave and the dog. When the dog finished, Hazrat Abdullah asked the slave how many breads he used to get everyday? The slave replied that he got three breads daily. ‘Then why did you give all three to the dog?’ The slave answered that there are no dogs in this area. ‘That poor hungry dog must have come from far away. I did not feel like sending it away without food.’ Abdullah bin Jaafer asked him what would he eat then? The slave said that he could survive for one day without food. It was not a big deal.

Hazrat Abdullah Jaafer said to himself: ‘O Abdullah! You consider yourself generous but this slave is lot more generous than you.’ Thinking about the slave, he went back to town and started looking for the owner of that garden. Eventually, he bought the garden and the slave from his owner. He freed the slave and gave him the garden as gift. Now, that was some bargain to please Allah!

So, if you are a smart businessman, do business with Allah. In this business there is only profit to make, and no losses.

Spend in the name of Allah and take care of your fellow human beings. This is the best bargain. Everything else is superficial.

‘And purchase not a small gain
at the price of Allah’s Covenant.
Lo, that which Allah has is better
for you, if ye did but know.’
(Quran 16 :95)

FIVE QUESTIONS

Here is the foundation of Islam! Allah commands us:

‘Establish worship and pay the poor-due
and obey the messenger,
that haply you may find mercy.’
(Quran 24:56)

Did we obey that command? When a person dies and is buried, he faces first set of questions in the grave. Some say it's 30, others say it's over 300. The grave squeezes him so hard that his ribs from either side penetrate into each other. Recounting this, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) put his fingers of both hands into each other and pressed hard, to give an example. The dead is also given a feel of Hell or Heaven, depending on his good or bad deeds. He stays in that condition (in Alam-e-Barzakh) until the Day of Judgement. On the Judgement Day, apart from other things, he (like every other soul) would be asked five obligatory questions. Nobody will enter Heaven or Hell without answering these questions:

- 1) How did you live your life on earth?
(As per commands of Allah?)
- 2) What did you do with your youth? (the most powerful, resourceful, beautiful and effective tool to work with).
- 3) How did you earn your livelihood (money)?
(By Halal or Haram means?)
- 4) How did you spend your earnings/wealth?
(For the cause of Allah & helping the needy?)
- 5) What did you do with your knowledge/education?
(Did you use it to perform good deeds,
serve mankind and Allah?)

MEN OF UNDERSTANDING

‘This is a clear message for mankind in
order that they may be warned thereby, and
that they may know that He is only One God,
and that men of understanding may take heed.’
(Quran 14 :52)

Yes, men of understanding ! The Holy Quran is Allah’s message and a Reminder to all mankind but only those who ponder , think and reflect, can benefit from it in the real sense. It is a warning light for those who have the eyes to see it. It is a plain message for those who have the brains to understand it and have the strength to apply it on their practical lives. They are called the men of understanding. They are really brave men. Not everyone falls into that category, as not everyone pays heed to it.

It means that the Holy Quran is not for fools. It is neither for the idiots nor for the morons. It is not for the dead. It is for the living – the reasonable and intelligent people who can think logically ; who can act, and who have the capacity to accept the divine message. Accepting the divine message means applying it entirely to the real life and living by it. That guarantees His blessings.

‘(This is) a Scripture that We have
Revealed unto thee, full of blessing
that they may ponder its revelations,
and that men of understanding may reflect.’
(Quran 38 :29)

‘Nay, but verily this (Quran) is an admonishment.
So let whosoever will pay heed to it.’
(Quran 80 :11-12)

There are those who say that you can believe in any religion because they may take different routes but they all arrive at the same destination. That is NOT true. When someone asks you a question, you have many options or choices to respond. But there is only one correct answer. All religions do not lead correctly to Allah, nor all roads go straight to the right destination. There are false gods, fake deities and misguided leaders who are unable to lead you to the straight path. Only one path leads to Heaven. But only those who pay attention and ponder can find that path and benefit from these revelations.

‘This is the path of thy Lord,
a straight path. We have detailed
our revelations for a people
who take heed.’
(Quran 6 :126)

The Almighty Allah has mentioned very clearly in the Holy Quran that it is He alone Who can rightly give the guidance. And those whom Allah guides, they never go astray. They are always rightly guided. In any case, one should always voluntarily and sincerely seek Allah’s guidance. The Almighty has given us a choice. We make the decision which way we want to go. And he is the One Who will help and guide us.

‘And Allah’s is the direction of
the way, and some (roads)
go not straight’
(Quran 16 :9)

‘Lo ! This (Quran) is a Reminder.
Let him who will, then, choose a way
unto his Lord.’
(Quran 74 :19)

The first and foremost thing is to believe firmly in Allah and the Hereafter. Because, if you are not a believer, you cannot be rightly guided. Your faith in Allah forms the basis or the foundation on which you can build up your career, or your entire life. Allah helps and guides you only when you have faith in Him. You must be a believer. If you are not a believer, you are a loser. In other words, if you don't believe in one God and the life of Hereafter, you are not on the right path. Therefore, your efforts will not bear fruit in the Hereafter. Allah says in the Holy Quran :

‘Lo ! The worst of beasts in Allah’s
sight are the ungrateful who will
not believe.’
(Quran 8 :55)

‘ The prayer of disbelievers
goes (far) astray.’
(Quran 13 :14)

‘..... Lo, Allah guides not wrong-doing folk.’
(Quran 28 :50)

‘..... Lo, Allah guides not him who is
a liar, an ingrate.’
(Quran 39 :3)

‘..... Lo, Allah guides not one
who is a prodigal, a liar.’
(Quran 40 :28)

It is very clear that there is no guidance for the liars, disbelievers, ungrateful and the prodigal. If you believe in Allah sincerely, you cannot do wrong. But if you are involved in evil and violate the rights of others, you cannot

be considered a believer. We should make sure that our prayers are not wasted. Here is a story of men who had no understanding :

Four men went to the mosque to pray early in the morning. They all agreed that they will keep silent in the intensity of their prayers. As they were laying prostrate in their worship, suddenly the ‘Moezzin’ started calling for the prayer. One of them lifted his head and asked : ‘Is it already that time ?’

‘Hey’, said the second man without thinking. ‘You have spoken. Your prayer is null and void.’

‘You are a fool’, told the third man to the second. ‘If his prayer is null and void, so is yours. You are not supposed to talk.’

‘Thank God’, cried the fourth man, ‘that I have not fallen into the same pit of error like these three fools.’

Muslims are supposed to use their common sense. They always think as God Almighty gave them the understanding.

Apart from having Faith, we are also required to be honest, sincere and correct not only to ourselves but also to others. If we are seeking Allah’s pleasure and are sincere in our effort, we are bound to succeed. We cannot be on the right path if we violate the rights of others and try to win by cheating, lies or deception. We must be honest and correct all along. Allah is with the righteous.

‘As for those who strive for us,
We surely guide them to our paths,
and lo, Allah is with the good.’
(Quran 29 :69)

‘This (Quran) is a declaration for
mankind, a guidance and an admonition
unto those who ward off (evil).’
(Quran 3 :138)

Warding off evil and being 'good' is the key. But it is hell of a job ; not an easy task. It demands self-control, discipline, selflessness and sacrifice. All evil springs up from the base of desire. It is the temptation that sometimes pushes us with such a force that we cannot resist. Desire is a windstorm and the man is like a straw that gets carried away – helpless and weightless. So, learn to stand up to it, resist it and fight it with full mental and spiritual strength. That is the way – the only way.

Maulana Rumi narrates a beautiful story that can polish your wisdom and at the same time can remind you of paying heed. A certain man caught a bird in a trap. The bird says:

'Sir, you have eaten many cows and sheep in your life, and you are still hungry. The little bit of meat on my bones won't satisfy you either. If you let me go, I'll give you three pieces of wisdom. One I'll say standing on your hand; one on your roof; and one I'll speak from the limb of that tree.'

The man was interested. He freed the bird and let it stand on his hand. The bird says:

'Number one: Do not believe an absurdity, no matter who says it.'

The bird then flew and landed on the man's house-top. Number two: Do not grieve over what is past. It is over. Never regret what has happened in the past.'

'By the way,' the bird continues, 'in my body there is a huge pearl weighing as much as ten copper coins. It was meant to be the inheritance of you and of your children. But now, you have lost it. You could have owned the largest pearl in the world, but evidently it was not meant to be.'

The man started wailing like a woman in childbirth. He was cursing himself, rubbing his hands together, and hitting the ground with his foot.

The bird goes: 'Didn't I just say: Don't grieve for what's in the past? And I also said: Don't believe an absurdity? My entire body does not weigh as much as ten copper coins. How could I have a pearl that heavy inside me?'

The man came to his senses and realised that he was acting stupid. 'Alright, alright. Tell me Number three.'

'Yes', said the bird laughing. 'You have made such good use of the first two! But I'll tell you anyway: Don't give advice to someone who is groggy and falling asleep. Don't throw seeds on the sand. Some torn places cannot be patched.' And with that the bird took off.

Always pay attention to good pieces of wisdom. The lessons we learn from life are not to be forgotten. They need to be applied to life. Don't regret the past! The only thing we should be regretting is not paying attention to the Message of Allah. In every success and in every failure, we should get back to God as He is our only Helper. We cannot imagine what His mercy can do for us. Cry to your Creator! Invoke the Almighty! He listens and He has also promised to help. Without His help we cannot achieve anything.

Here is a beautiful quote from Maulana Rumi's works :

'The cloud weeps,
and then the garden sprouts.
The baby cries,
and the mother's milk flows.
The nurse of creation has said :
Let them cry a lot.

This rain-weeping and sun-burning,
twine together to make us grow.
Keep your intelligence white-hot,
and your grief glistening,
So your life will stay fresh.
Cry easily like a little child.

Let body need dwindle,
and soul decisions increase.
Diminish what you give your physical self.
Your spiritual eye will begin to open.

When the body empties and stays empty,
God fills it with musk and mother-of-pearl.
That way a man gives his dung,
and gets purity.’

FEAR ALLAH TO LOVE HIM

‘Lo, those who fear their Lord
in secret, theirs will be forgiveness
and a great reward.’

(Quran 67:12)

Discipline springs from the base of fear, the fear of reprisal or punishment or fine; the fear of losing it (what if...?); the fear of destroying it (what if...?); the fear of messing it up (what if...?). It is the fear that gradually turns into respect and respect into love. The respect for laws, rules & regulations, all come from the same source.

A child, in the beginning, fears the slap or the spanking or reprimand in his learning process and then he develops the habit of respecting the elders. Eventually this respect turns into love, no fear involved as he becomes part of it. And that is the most beautiful feeling when you love something or somebody without any fear and obligation. It takes a lot of hardwork and many a night's sleep to reach that stage but once you are there, nothing like it. It is simply amazing. Allah tells us:

‘..... And fulfil your (part of the)
covenant, I shall fulfil My (part of the)
covenant, and fear Me.’

(Quran 2:40)

The path to love Allah is full of hurdles; and what makes it more difficult in this world, is that we are on our own. In this particular sphere, there is nobody to punish us, to reprimand us or spank us. It's done voluntarily, hundred percent. You have to control and check yourself and you alone have to set the bar and raise it. Nobody can control it

as it's just between you and your Lord. When you become a devoted slave of Him, you become independent of all and everything. It sounds like the height of independence, but this independence comes with lots of strings attached.

‘Thinketh man that he is
to be left aimless?’
(Quran 76:36)

‘And they are ordered naught
else than to serve Allah, keeping
religion pure for Him, as men
by nature upright, and to establish
worship and to pay the poor-due.
That is true religion.’
(Quran 98:5)

Nothing comes without a price. And in the affairs of love, you are sometimes asked to give your own life. As a matter of fact it is not yours at all. It's borrowed from the Creator and if He asks us to return it, why should we hesitate? Why does it hurt? The reason is that we fall in love with life and not with the life-Giver. Once we start enjoying life, as a mercy of the Creator, we either forget or ignore the One Who gave us life and all its pleasures. The truth is that we have signed the ‘lease’ agreement with the Owner for our life. We can use it the way we want it but it is not at all ours. It is borrowed. It is like a trust.

‘Every soul is a pledge
for its own deeds.’
(Quran 74:38)

Every time we gain something, we feel good. But every time we lose something, it hurts us. Sometimes, it hurts a lot because we lose something that is very dear and

precious to us. Sadly, we have learned to love the creation and not the Creator. He is the most Merciful and never asks us for favours. He does not need that as He is above that. He tests and tries us to make sure that we are seriously, honestly and sincerely following the right path -- the path He prescribed for us. He wants to instil perseverance and steadfastness into us.

And when we get through all those tests, we start feeling that we are a lot closer to Him than we thought. At that point we feel like offering our life and soul to please Him, and to merge with Him.... out of love. We become part of Him, we become Him.

‘Therefore remind (men),
for of use is the reminder.
He will heed who fears, but
the most hapless will flout it.
He who will be flung to the
great fire wherein he will
neither die nor live.’
(Quran 87:9-13)

‘Lo, those who disbelieve,
among the People of the
Scripture and the idolaters,
will abide in fire of Hell.
They are the worst of
created beings.’
(Quran 98:6)

Every start is difficult and so is the first step on the path to love Allah. To tame your wild soul you have to work with fear – fear of Allah. That will be the foundation on which you can build a castle of love for Allah. It’s easier for me to give you the example of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) who showed the mankind how to achieve this goal. But you’ll

say that you are not a prophet (and neither am I). So, let's look around and try to find people in our towns who are doing that. You will find hundreds of them who have already achieved and thousands who are still striving for it and getting closer every day. Read the Holy Quran and follow the translation in your language, always. It will definitely help.

‘..... So recite of it (Quran) that
which is easy (for you), and
establish worship and pay the
poor-due, and (so) lend unto Allah
a goodly loan! Whatsoever good
ye send before you for your souls,
ye will surely find it with Allah,
better and greater in the recompense.
And seek forgiveness of Allah.
Lo, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.’
(Quran 73:20)

Honesty and sincerity of purpose are the basic but most important requirements of every mission you want to accomplish. This one is totally voluntary and you cannot afford to be cheating or lying to yourself. Hey, you are working for yourself, nobody else. If you can't be honest to yourself, you can't be honest to anybody. Above all, you will be hurting yourself and your cause. And believe me He knows what you do. That is the point where you need to start fearing Him. He is watching you.

‘Woe unto each sinful liar, who hears the
revelations of Allah receive unto him, and
then continues in pride as though he
heard them not. Give him
tidings of a painful doom.’
(Quran 45:7-8)

‘But whoso is averse and
disbelieves, Allah will punish
him with direst punishment.
Lo, unto Us is their return
and Ours their reckoning.’
(Quran 88:23-26)

‘Lo, We have prepared for
disbelievers manacles and
carcans and a raging fire.’
(Quran 76:4)

When you are honest and sincere in your effort you are bound to succeed. Allah promises to help and guide you in every step of life. But once you get used to lying and cheating you don’t care much. You think that you are very smart and are getting away with it as nothing is happening to you. Don’t fool yourself. He is giving you a long leash so that you could repent and amend. In the meantime you are losing His help and guidance gradually.

‘..... Lo, Allah guides not him
who is a liar, an ingrate.’
(Quran 39:3)

‘..... Lo, Allah guides not one
who is a prodigal, a liar.’
(Quran 40:28)

‘You can warn only him
who follows the Reminder and
fears the Beneficent in secret.
To him bear tidings of
forgiveness and a rich reward.’
(Quran 36:11)

‘That is because Allah is
patron of those who believe,
and because the disbelievers
have no patron.’
(Quran 47:11)

Every human being, and Muslims specially, need to remember that there is no escape or running away from Him. We are accountable. Allah keeps telling us that there will be a Judgement Day or the Day of Reckoning or the Day of Justice or the Resurrection Day or the Longest Day, whatever you may like to call it.

‘Then how, if ye believe, will ye
protect yourselves upon the day
which will turn children grey?’
(Quran 73:17)

‘..... On the day when the earth
and the hills rock,
and the hills become a heap
of running sand.
(Quran 73:14)

‘Ah, what will convey unto thee
what the Calamity is!
A day wherein mankind will be as
thickly-scattered moths and the mountains
will become as carded wool. Then as
for him whose scales are heavy (with good
works), he will live a pleasant life.
But as for him whose scales are light, so his
main abode will be the abyss (of Hell). Ah,
what will convey unto thee what she is!
The Raging Fire.’
(Quran 101:3-11)

Did that scare you enough? It better, because if you are not scared, you are not going to change. It is human nature. The fear of reprimand always makes us obey the rules and change our ways. We need to put this thought in our heads that it is not money or material wealth that will change our lives. It is the contentment, pleasure of Allah and gratitude that will bring some pleasant changes in our lives.

When we learn to be satisfied or happy with whatever Allah has provided us with, we'll be at peace. Only then the Merciful will give us more. It's time to please the Merciful, Who loves to shower His blessings on all human beings. It's we who need to be grateful and responsible.

May Allah bless us with courage and endurance to follow the path ('Siraat-i-Mustaqeem') that our beloved Prophet Mohammad (s.a.w.) showed us ... Ameen.

PEARLS OF WISDOM

A kind word with forgiveness is better than almsgiving followed by injury. Allah is Absolute, Clement'... (Quran 2:263)

Every breath is a gift from God. Be grateful to the Creator Whose blessings you cannot count. 'And if ye would count the favours of Allah ye cannot reckon it. Lo, Allah is indeed Forgiving, Merciful.' ... (Quran 16:18).

Be humble and down to earth. A branch of tree bearing fruit bends down. Arrogance is cursed. Allah says: 'And walk not in the earth exultant. Lo, you cannot rend the earth, nor can you stretch to the heights of the hills.' ... (Quran 17:37).

Be ready to give service. What we do for others counts most in life. You do something for somebody today and somebody will do something for you tomorrow. 'Therefore remember me, I will remember you. Give thanks to Me, and reject not Me.' ... (Quran 2:152).

If you see someone without a smile, give him/her one of yours. The magic about the smile is that when you give it to others, you don't lose it. It's 'sadaakah', meaning you'll get reward from Allah for that. And you know that smiling faces look beautiful!

Do not under-estimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring – all of which have the potential to turn a life around. And it's all 'sadaakah' bringing you reward in the Hereafter.

Become a 'people's person'. Be genuinely interested in people. If you try, you can like everybody and everybody will like you. It helps in fulfilling the obligations of 'Haqooq-ul-Ibaad'. And again you will get reward for that

in the Hereafter. Remember: ‘Lo, Allah loves not such as are proud and boastful.’ ... (Quran 4:36).

Call people by name as it pleases them. The sweetest music to anyone’s ears is the sound of his/her own name. Allah loves to be called by the best of names and the same goes for His masterpiece creation. And you’ll get reward for that in the Hereafter.

Learn to understand first and to be understood second. It helps in developing tolerance and mutual understanding. Allah loves those who love His creation. This is a great quality of ‘akhlaaq-i-Islami’ that will bring you reward in the Hereafter.

Allah has blessed humans with intelligence. Keep thinking positive. Life ends when you stop Thinking. Hope ends when you stop Believing. Love ends when you stop Caring. And friendship ends when you stop Sharing. Positive thinking, believing, caring and sharing – all parts of the character of a Muslim – will bring you reward in the Hereafter.

Every adversity, every situation, every issue, every pain and every concern has a positive side. Find it and bring it to life. There is a lesson for us in each one of them and that should be considered a blessing. Remember, every dark cloud has a silver lining. Allah says: ‘Allah would make the burden light for you, for man was created weak.’ ... (Quran 4:28).

Believe in your dreams. Every great success started with a small dream. When you find a dream inside you, don’t ever let it go; for dreams are the tiny seeds from which the big beautiful tomorrows grow, provided you nourish them with sincerity, hardwork and honesty of purpose.

Live a modest and simple life. There is beauty in simplicity. Allah says: ‘Be modest in thy bearing and subdue thy voice. Lo, the harshest of all voices is the voice of the ass.’ ... (Quran 31:19).

Put a smile on your face now. It is ‘sadaqah’ and you will get reward for that in the Hereafter. Why worry and have wrinkles when you can smile and have dimples? People would like you.

Be happy. I used to say that it is easy to be mad and hard to be glad. But one Darvish corrected me and said: It’s hard to be mad and it’s easy to be glad. Don’t be cruel to yourself. Try to be happy. Live without stress. That’s the best recipe for a healthy body and a healthy mind.

Don’t rush. Take your time. Easy does it. Rushing is Devil’s quality. Haste creates waste. Most of the things done in a hurry are not quality and need to be redone. When you are rushing, you are risking everything, even your life.

Live in truth and with truth. Truth is divine and will always lead you out of misery. It saves you from troubles. Honesty is the best policy, we all know that. Allah says: ‘Confound not truth with falsehood, nor knowingly conceal the truth.’ (Quran 2:42).

Be humane and treat others the way you want to be treated yourself.

‘Allah loves those whose deeds are good.’ ... (Quran 3:148).

May the rest of the day be the best of your day. Have a nice evening and remember me in your prayers, please. May God bless you ... Ameen!

THE HOUR IS NIGH !

‘Lo, the Hour is surely coming,
there is no doubt thereof; yet
most of mankind believe not.’

(Quran 40:59)

‘The threatened Hour is nigh.’

(Quran 53:57)

‘And when the Trumpet shall
sound one blast, and the earth with
the mountains shall be lifted up
and crushed with one crash, then,
on that day, will the Event befall.
And the heaven will split asunder,
for that day it will be frail.’

(Quran 69:13-16)

Many signs have come to pass one by one, and the remaining signs will also appear soon. The Judgement Day, The Resurrection Day, The Day of Justice, The Day of Reckoning, The Longest Day, The D-Day, The Day of Accountability or The Last Day – no matter what you call it – is fast approaching. We are now in an era that can easily be called the start of the End of the world.

If we want to do something beneficial for the Hereafter, now is the time. Once the Trumpet is blown, it is all over. It will be too late. Nothing will avail then. And if we die before that time – same thing – it’s over. The worst part of it is that we don’t exactly know when it will be, tomorrow, next month or in 5 years. That means we don’t really know how much time we have got to fix our lives and prepare for the Hereafter. Consider every day as your last day and do

as much good as possible. There is a lot to do. We better start working on it now because it is now or never.

‘Lo, they behold it afar off.
While We behold it nigh: the Day
when the sky will become
as molten copper, and the hills
become as flakes of wool.’
(Quran 70:6-9)

‘When the earth is shaken
with a shock, and the hills are
ground to powder, so that
they become a scattered dust ...’
(Quran 56:4-6)

We shouldn’t be waiting to see that happen. As intelligent creatures, we should be able to sense things from afar. And when we have the signs in front of us we can’t be blind to them. If we are not acting right at this moment, we are losing every moment of a few precious days left at our disposal. A day has still 24 hours to it but these 24 hours fly faster than those 24 hours 10 or 20 years ago. And this is also one of the signs of the approaching last Hour. According to one Hadith narrated by Abu Huraira (Sahih Bukhari, vol. 9, book 88, No: 183):

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said:
‘Time will pass rapidly,
good deeds will decrease,
miserliness will be thrown
(in the hearts of the people),
afflictions will appear, and
there will be much ‘Al-Harj’.’
The people asked: ‘O Allah’s
Apostle, what is ‘Al-Harj’?’

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said:
‘Killing! Killing!’.

As per another Hadith, narrated by Abu Musa (Sahih Bukhari, vol. 9, book 88, No: 185):

‘The Prophet said:
‘Near the establishment
of the Hour, there will be days
during which (religious) knowledge
will be taken away (vanish) and
general ignorance will spread, and
there will be Al-Harj in abundance,
and Al-Harj means killing.’

There is a lot of killing (bloodshed) going on in the world today. The forces of evil are spreading violence and waging wars against weaker nations killing innocent people. Even Muslims are fighting against Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Most of the Muslim countries are governed by incompetent and dishonest rulers who are ignoring the Quranic laws and imposing the non-Muslim western laws to destroy Islamic culture. Jungle music and musical instruments are being promoted worldwide. And poets are out there busy in praising the rich and the powerful.

Prophet Muhammad (saw) has mentioned many signs of Qayamat and those signs have been recorded in different Ahadiths. According to one of these Ahadiths narrated by Abu Huraira

(Sahih Bukhari, vol 9, book 88, No: 237):

Allah’s Apostle said:

‘The Hour will not be established till:
§ -- Two big groups fight each other whereupon
there will be great number of casualties on
both sides and they will be following one and

the same religious doctrine.

- § -- About 30 Dajjals (liars or false prophets) appear, and each one of them will claim that he is Allah's apostle.
- § -- The religious knowledge is taken away (by the death of religious scholars).
- § -- The earthquakes will increase in number.
- § -- The time will pass quickly.
- § -- Afflictions will appear.
- § -- Al-Harj (killing or bloodshed) will increase.
- § -- The wealth will be in abundance – so abundant that a wealthy person will worry lest nobody should accept his Zakat, and whenever he will present it to someone, that person (to whom Zakat is offered) will say: I am not in need of it.
- § -- The people compete with one another in constructing high buildings.
- § -- A man when passing by a grave of someone will say: Would that I were in his place.
- § -- The sun rises from the west. (At that stage, it will be all over, too late to repent or do good deeds. It won't be accepted any more).

‘So, when the sun will rise and the people will see it (rising from the west), they will all believe (embrace Islam) immediately; but that will be the time when (as Allah says in the Holy Quran, Chapter 6, Verse 158):

“On that Day when one of the portents of thy Lord comes, no good will it do to a soul to believe then, if it believed not before; nor earned good (by deeds of righteousness) through its Faith.”

(Quran 6:158)

The Prophet (s.a.w.) further said:

‘And the Hour will be established
while two men spreading a garment
in front of them but they will not be
able to sell it, nor fold it up.’

‘And the Hour will be established
when a man has milked his she-camel,
and has taken away the milk but he
will not be able to drink it.’

‘And the Hour will be established
before a man repairing a tank (for
his livestock) is able to water
(his animals) in it.’

‘And the Hour will be established
when a person has raised a morsel
(of food) to his mouth but will not
be able to eat it.’

In every age and time people have been rejecting or ignoring the calls of the prophets of their times. And so is the case today. Many don't believe in the Hereafter and they mock the Day of Judgement or the Resurrection. The powerful and the arrogant have always challenged the prophets and mockingly said:

‘Then bring upon us that wherewith you
threaten us if you are of the truthful.’
(Quran 7:70)

‘And they say: When will this
promise be fulfilled, if ye are truthful?’
(Quran 10:48)

But Allah's assurance is there. It shall come as it is promised; no denying. There is no escape from it. It's only a matter of time.

‘And they ask thee to inform them (saying):
Is it true? Say: Yes, by my Lord,
verily it is true and ye cannot escape.’
(Quran 10:53)

‘Lo, verily Allah's promise is true.
But most of them know not.’
(Quran 10:55)

‘But they will come to know.
When carcans are about their
necks and chains. They are
dragged, through boiling waters;
then they are thrust into the Fire.’
(Quran 40:70-72)

The coming of the wrath of Allah is always sudden. The Almighty gives the wrong-doers enough time to think over, repent and come back to the straight path. But if they continue their evil work and don't amend their ways, Allah strikes. The evil-doers are caught unaware. It comes at a time when it is least expected. The history of the nations tells us that after a long wait it did come all of a sudden and wiped them off.

‘Then we seized them unaware,
when they perceived not.’
(Quran 7:95)

‘As a raid by night or while they slept at
noon, Our terror came unto them.’
(Quran 7:4)

Now, the big question: What are we waiting for? Are we waiting for the Strike? If so, then it will be over in a second and we will not have a chance to repent, let alone do some good works for the Hereafter.

‘Is it (only) then when
it has befallen you,
that ye will believe?’
(Quran 10:51)

An intelligent person looks around and sees the signs. He learns from his and other people’s mistakes. He learns from the everyday happenings. And after all the signs, all the happenings and all the calamities or disasters in today’s world, the common sense should tell us what to do. We see the wildfires, the floods, the earthquakes, the Tsunamis but we don’t take heed. We think that it is happening to others and not to us. A very wrong thinking! God sends the signs for the entire mankind. It is up to us which path we choose – the world (dounya) or the Hereafter (aakhirah). May Allah be your Guide and Protector – Ameen.

SAVIOUR OF THE UMMAH

‘This (Quran) is clear indication
for mankind, and a guidance
and a mercy for a folk whose
faith is sure.’
(Quran 45:20)

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was designated as ‘Mercy for the Mankind’ by Almighty Allah. He led his life as per the teachings of the Quran thus he became the personification of Tafseer of Quran. He was the perfect example of how to live as per Quran.

He showed the Muslim Ummah how to embrace Islam & Quran as a way of life. He proved it that it was definitely possible for a human being to follow the divine rules & regulations set forth for mankind with devotion to Allah and dedication to the Truth. And despite all odds he followed them very successfully.

That’s the reason the Almighty Allah and the angels send their ‘salaam’ on him and ask the believers to do the same. Therefore, if you seek salvation, follow the Quran. It is a divine formula for success both in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

‘Those who establish worship
and pay the poor-due and have
sure faith in the Hereafter,
such have guidance from their Lord.
Such are the successful.’
(Quran 31:4-5)

The present world is full of chaos, disorder, violence, injustice, evil practices, oppression, invasion of small and

helpless nations by the stronger, and corruption to the maximum. The leaders of the Muslim countries look forward to the unbelievers to protect the believers. What a pity and what an irony. This is the time of 'need' for us and still we ignore the teachings of Quran and Sunnah. Muslims should know what door to knock at.

‘And those unto whom they cry
instead of Him, possess no power
of intercession, saving him who bears
witness unto the Truth knowingly.’
(Quran 43:86)

We are responsible for our own actions and in the Hereafter, we will be rewarded accordingly. It is a shame to blame the Almighty Merciful for the mischief of our own. We are following the footsteps of the Satan, hence this corruption and chaos. The Merciful God already warned us:

‘And lo, it is in truth a Reminder
for thee (O Muhammad) and
for thy folk; and ye will
be questioned.’
(Quran 43:44)

‘O mankind! Eat of that which
is lawful and wholesome
in the earth, and follow not the
footsteps of the devil. Lo!
He is an open enemy for you.’
(Quran 2:168)

It is absolutely clear, and there is no doubt or confusion about it, that we will be answerable on the Day of Judgement. But are we ready for that? Do we have the

answers? I am sure we don't. Because, if we did, we won't be doing what we are doing today.

Once, somebody asked Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) about the timing of the Day of Judgement. Allah's Apostle (PBUH) replied in a question form and said: 'What have you prepared for that?' Most of us don't even care that the Judgement Day is nearing, though there are clear warnings in the Holy Quran.

‘Assuredly the Day of Decision
is the term of all of them: A day
when friend can in naught avail
friend, nor can they be helped, save him
on whom Allah has mercy’
(Quran 44:40-42)

We are a herd of sheep and need a good shepherd. And who in the universe can get a better shepherd than Muhammad (s.a.w.) who'll beg Almighty Allah for mercy for his Ummah on the Day of Judgement, crying 'Ummati, ummati! (my Ummah, my Ummah)'.

Here is a beautiful Hadith from Sahih Bukhari (volume 6, book 60, No:3):

Narrated Anas:

The Prophet (Muhammad, s.a.w.) said: "On the Day of Resurrection the believers will assemble and say, 'Let us ask somebody to intercede for us with our Lord.' So they will go to Adam and say, 'You are the father of all the people, and Allah created you with His Own Hands, and ordered the angels to prostrate to you, and taught you the names of all things; so please intercede for us with your Lord, so that He may relieve us from this place of ours.'

Adam will say, 'I am not fit for this (i.e. intercession for you).' Then Adam will remember his sin and feel ashamed thereof. He will say, 'Go to Noah, for he was the first Apostle, Allah sent to the inhabitants of the earth.'

They will go to him and Noah will say, 'I am not fit for this undertaking.' He will remember his appeal to his Lord to do what he had no knowledge of, then he will feel ashamed thereof and will say, 'Go to the Khalil-r-Rahman (i.e. Abraham).'

They will go to Ibrahim and he will say, 'I am not fit for this undertaking. Go to Moses, the slave to whom Allah spoke (directly) and gave him the Torah.'

So they will go to him and he will say, 'I am not fit for this undertaking.' and he will mention (his) killing a person who was not a killer, and so he will feel ashamed thereof before his Lord, and he will say, 'Go to Jesus, Allah's Slave, His Apostle and Allah's Word and a Spirit coming from Him.'

They'll come to Jesus and he will say, 'I am not fit for this undertaking. Go to Muhammad, the Slave of Allah, whose past and future sins were forgiven by Allah.'

'So they will come to me and I will proceed till I will ask my Lord's permission and I will be given permission. When I see my Lord, I will fall down in prostration and He will let me remain in that state as long as He wishes and then I will be addressed.'

'O Muhammad! Raise your head! Ask, and your request will be granted; say, and your saying will be listened to; intercede, and your intercession will be accepted.'

'I will raise my head and praise Allah with a saying (i.e. invocation) He will teach me, and then I will intercede. He will fix a limit (number of people) for me (to intercede for) whom I will admit into Paradise.'

'Then I will come back again to Allah, and when I see my Lord, the same thing will happen to me. And then I will intercede and Allah will fix a limit for me to intercede whom I will let into Paradise. Then I will come back for the third time; and then I will come back for the fourth time, and will say, 'None remains in Hell but those whom the Quran has imprisoned (in Hell) and who have been destined to an eternal stay in Hell.'

The compiler, Abu Abdullah, said: 'But those whom the Quran has imprisoned in Hell', refers to the statement of Allah'. The Almighty said in the Holy Quran, Surah an-Nahl, Ayah 29:

‘So, enter the gates of hell,
to dwell therein for ever.
Woeful indeed will be the
lodging of the arrogant.’
(Quran 16:29)

You should remember one thing here – no wishful thinking! This intercession (Shafa’at) from Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) will be held after the judgement had been passed and people are destined for Heaven or Hell. Our beloved Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) would get people (believers but sinners) out of Hell and would get them admitted into the Heaven, by mercy of The Almighty. That should not give you a false hope that nobody will go to Hell! Let me explain to you what I mean by that.

I heard some of my Arab friends saying during a discussion that the Muslim sinners would spend half a day or one day or two, maximum three days in Hell and then they would be brought to Heaven because of the intercession (Shafa’at) of our Prophet. In other words, it is not a big deal or a problem, we’ll get out of there.

What? A day or two or three in Hell? Many Ulema say that a day in the Hereafter is equal to fifty thousand years of this world. Some Ulema say that it is equal to five thousand years of the time of this earth. It is not a big deal?

And now the chastisement! In Hell, the boiling water would be given to drink and would be poured out on the sinners while the raging fire would be burning their skins. Every time the skin is burnt and destroyed, they would be given new skin so that they continue tasting the torment.

‘But as for those who disbelieve,
garments of fire will be cut out for them;
boiling fluid will be poured down on
their heads, whereby that which is in
their bellies, and their skins too,
will be melted.’
(Quran 22:19-20)

Can you imagine that pain? Your whole body would be melted in fire and boiling water. And on top of it, you will not die. That life is forever.

Let me give you an idea of that! Many times we read the stories in the newspapers (or sometimes saw it) that a lady got burnt because a cooking oil-stove or gas-stove or a cylinder exploded while she was cooking in the kitchen. Did you ever see her face or body and did you ever ask her how it felt like that particular moment? It happened for a few seconds only. And the fire was not even as intense as the Hellfire (thousand times more intense).

Did you ever experienced a burn from the boiling water or steam from the pressure cooker? Did you ever see those blisters or burnt black or blue skin? How much pain it caused, though for a few seconds? And it was not even a fraction of the pain of the Hellfire burning which would be constant and non-stop!

And you think that you will stay there for a day or so (fifty thousand years) only. Can you?

It is hard to understand that Muslims, when they read the Holy Quran, don't get the message. If you don't read the Quran, that is a separate issue. But reading it means that you understand the message of Allah and you believe in all the warnings that this message conveys. How can you ignore them then? Allah says:

‘This is a clear message for
mankind in order that they

may be warned thereby, and
that they may know that He
is only One God, and that men
of understanding may take heed. ’
(Quran 14:52)

IQRA

Maulana Rumi, the author of Masnavi
(or the book of mystical poems) said:

‘Out of the Quran I draw the marrow
And throw away the bones to the dogs.

(The reference to ‘dogs’ is to those who quibble
unnecessarily on superficial issues, it is not used
in a derogatory sense.)

The first revelation descended on Prophet Muhammad
(s.a.w.), while he was meditating on Mount Hira, in the
month of Ramadan in his 40th year. He saw before him a
dazzling white figure. It was the archangel Gabriel, who
said to him:

‘Iqra’ (Recite/Read)!

‘Ma ana bi-quari’ (I am not a reciter/reader), the Prophet
(s.a.w.) replied.

Gabriel took hold of him, pressed him hard, and insisted
again that he read. Muhammad (s.a.w.) once again replied
that he could not recite/read. The Gabriel spoke and asked
him to repeat after him:

‘Recite/read in the name of your Lord,
Who is the Creator and Cherisher of all.
He created man from a clot of blood.

Recite/read:

And your Lord is the most bountiful.
Who taught by the pen.
He taught man what he did not know’.

(Holy Quran 96:1-5)

TRAVEL TO SEE ALLAH

‘Say (O Muhammad): Travel in
the land and see how He originated
creation, then Allah brings forth the
later growth. Lo, Allah is Able to
do all things.’
(Quran 29:20)

‘..... Do but travel in the land and
see the nature of the consequence
for the deniers!’
(Quran 16:36)

It’s a great invitation. Allah Subhanu-wa-Taala has invited you to travel and see the world He created and how He keeps it changing. His prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) did the same thing and asked the mankind to travel in the land and learn the lessons.

Now, this is not some kind of a travel agent’s invitation to some recreational vacation or holiday trip. This is an invitation to see Allah’s creation, reflect upon it and feel closer to Him. This is something very serious and if you are a believer, it will make you shiver. This travelling can unfold mysteries of the universe and can teach you the lessons of life that you are not going to learn in any classroom. It will tell you the story of mankind – your own story – from A to Z, through the ages without limits of a time-capsule. It can make you tremble with fear of Allah, the Almighty, and it can make you cry with the love of Allah.

Like every product comes with instructions on how to use it, the human being was also given a book of instructions by a messenger of Allah in every age and time. And these

were the instructions on how to live our short lives on earth. It is called Scripture. We are very clearly told by our Creator what to do and what not to do on earth.

‘So, establish worship,
pay the poor-due and hold fast
to Allah. He is your protecting
Friend, a blessed Patron and a
blessed Helper.’
(Quran 22:78)

We have to make a choice between good and bad. Our tenure on this earth is temporary still we are required to maintain some kind of discipline. Nature works with a system and we are supposed to be working with nature as a part of that system to help run it smoothly. As long as we are honest, just and respectful towards others, the system runs smoothly. But when we start breaking the rules of the system and violating the rights of others, we create problem for us as well as for others. Injustice and inequality promote corruption. We were reminded and warned time and again about our behaviour in this world.

‘Wrong not mankind in their
goods, and do not evil, making
mischief in the earth.’
(Quran 26:183)

‘..... And seek not corruption in the earth;
lo, Allah loves not corruptors.’
(Quran 28:77)

Every nation has a prescribed period of time to spend in this world – a fixed term that cannot be changed. During this term each nation is given tests and trials. Those who perform well, as per the commands of the Creator, they are

considered successful. They merit the blessings of The Almighty Allah.

Those who fail these tests and do evil, they suffer not only in this world but also in the Hereafter. They are the eternal losers. We are here, in this world, for a short period of time – even a thousand years period is considered like a day or so on the divine scale. Our performance would be scrutinized just like those nations who passed before us. There is no changing of the time-table:

‘And every nation has its term,
and when its term comes, they cannot
put it off an hour nor yet advance (it).’
(Quran 7:34)

‘No nation can outstrip its term
nor can they lag behind.’
(Quran 15:5)

‘No nation can outstrip its term,
nor yet postpone it.’
(Quran 23:43)

We were told that one day we’ll all return to Him, our Creator, and answer questions about our deeds here. We are responsible for everything we do here in this world and would be rewarded or punished accordingly. Every soul has to meet its Creator and answer questions.

‘O mankind! Your rebellion is
only against yourselves. Ye have
enjoyment of life of the world;
then unto Us is your return
and We shall proclaim unto you
what ye used to do.’
(Quran 10:23)

‘Unto Him is the return of all of you;
it is a promise of Allah in truth...’
(Quran 10:4)

It’s human nature that when we are having good time and enjoying prosperity, we forget about everything else. Nothing matters except ‘now’. We don’t like to remember that there were vast empires, great kingdoms and stronger rulers of the world before us and they are all buried under earth now. There were castles, monuments, gardens and palaces more gracious and beautiful than ours, but only the ruins reflect on them now. Why?

‘We destroyed the generations
before you when they did wrong;
and their messengers (from Allah)
came unto them with clear proofs
(of His sovereignty), but they would
not believe. Thus do We reward
the guilty folk.’
(Quran 10:13)

‘How many a township have
we destroyed while it was sinful,
so that it lies (to this day) in ruins,
and (how many) a deserted well
and lofty tower?’
(Quran 22:45)

‘Have they not travelled in the land and
seen the nature of the consequence
for those who were before them?
They were stronger than these in power,
and they dug the earth and built upon
it more than these have built.’
(Quran 30:9)

‘...Travel in the land and see
the nature of the sequel for
the guilty.’
(Quran 27:69)

‘And how many a community
have We destroyed that was thankless
for its means of livelihood!’
(Quran 28:58)

‘Have they not travelled in the
land, so that they may have hearts
wherewith to feel and ears
wherewith to hear? For indeed it is
not the eyes that grow blind, but
it is the hearts, which are within the
bosoms, that grow blind.’
(Quran 22:46)

The message is very loud and clear. Do what you are told to do by your Creator, the Almighty. If you dare to go against and rebel, you are actually going against yourself. There are lessons to be learnt from these real stories. The Almighty Allah reveals those facts of history of the mankind again and again so that we pay attention and change our ways. These are the wake-up calls we cannot afford to ignore. These might be the last calls. It is time to mend. We are responsible for our own deeds.

‘It was not for Allah to wrong them,
but they wronged themselves.’
(Quran 29:40)

‘Lo, Allah wrongs not mankind in aught;
but mankind wrong themselves.’
(Quran 10:44)

‘And never did thy Lord destroy
the townships, till He had raised
up in their mother (town) a
messenger reciting unto them
Our revelations. And never did
We destroy the townships unless
the folk thereof were evil-doers.’
(Quran 28:59)

I feel pain and hurt when I see my fellow Muslim brothers & sisters and their children going for worldly pleasures, trampling all Islamic values, ignoring all warning calls from Allah and disregarding the basics of Islam, while, at the same time, claiming that they are Muslims.

In France and Morocco I met many so-called Muslims who categorize Muslims in two groups. They say: ‘Oh, there are the Muslims who are believers (Type-A); and there are the Muslims who are practitioners’ (Type-B). Vow! This is new!. I always thought that those who practice Islam in letter and spirit, only they were the Muslims. I know a lot of Egyptian and Lebanese Christians and Jews who have Muslims names. Are they Type-A?

When we say something but practically we don’t do it, we are considered hypocrite or ‘Munafiq’. The Almighty does not like it when we say something else and do something else. It is the good intention followed by good action that makes us a true Muslim. We do what we believe, and what we believe we apply it to our lives.

The Muslim Ummah is in the process of revival. All God-fearing Muslims should join hands and do their duty to Allah. We cannot run away from our obligations. We’ll have to answer Allah for that. This effort on our part for a noble cause may please The Almighty Allah and He may bless us by pardoning our sins. He is the most Merciful and most Compassionate.

‘Those who believe and keep
their duty (to Allah), theirs
are good tidings in the life
of the world and in the Hereafter –
There is no changing the words
of Allah – that is the supreme
Triumph.’
(Quran 10:63-64)

IT COMES BACK TO YOU

‘Whosoever goes right,
it is only for (the good of) his
own soul that he goes right, and
whosoever errs, errs only to its hurt.
No laden soul can bear another’s load.
We never punish until We have
sent a messenger.’
(Quran 17:15)

When you have your piece of the pie, you want to eat it too. Similarly, when you make your own bed, you have to sleep in it too. We are responsible for our actions and we should also be prepared to face their consequences. In normal life, a good action generally generates good reaction and a bad action gets a bad reaction. Of course, there are always exceptions. But as a general rule loves begets love and hate begets hate. If you are kind and nice to other people, they will be kind and nice to you in return. And if you are nasty to others, you will get the same treatment in return. These are the basics.

‘Whoso intervenes in a good
cause will have the reward
thereof, and whoso intervenes
in an evil cause will bear the
consequences thereof. Allah
oversees all things.’
(Quran 4:85)

If we are doing something good, it is for our own sake. We are not doing any favour to God as He is above that and does not need it. We need it for our own good. Similarly, if

we are doing harm to mankind, we are not harming God (because we cannot), but we are actually harming ourselves. We are damaging our own cause. And we will be rewarded accordingly. The Almighty Allah says in the Quran (Surah Fussilat – also called Ha-Meem As-Sajdah):

‘Whoso does right it is for his (own) soul,
and whoso does wrong, it is against it.’
(Quran 41:46)

And then, like in many other places in the Quran, He repeats it in Surah Al-Jaathiyah:

‘Whoso does right, it is for his soul,
and whoso does wrong, it is against it’
(Quran 45:15)

‘Then evil was the consequence
to those who dealt in evil...’
(Quran 30:10)

It is tit for tat. You will receive whatever you give, simple as that. As a matter of fact we will be recompensed twice – once here in this world and then in the Hereafter where our deeds will earn us Heaven or Hell. In this world we have to face whatever we did. Everything we do to others in this world, will come back to us one day. There is no escape. The Almighty God says:

‘Corruption does appear on land
and sea because of (the evil) which
men’s hands have done, that He
may make them taste a part of that
which they have done, in order
that they may return.’
(Quran 30:41)

So, things come back to us so that we realise what we have done. We get the taste of our own medicine. The intelligent and the wise among us immediately repent and seek Allah's forgiveness. Therefore, they rectify the damage by getting back to the right path. But as for the arrogant and the ignorant, they suffer on both sides.

‘Whoso brings a good deed
will have better than its worth;
and such are safe from fear that Day.
And whoso brings an ill deed, such
will be flung down on their faces
in the Fire. Are ye rewarded aught
save what ye did?’
(Quran 27:89-90)

Let me tell you a story that teaches us the very basic lesson in life on this earth. It is actually a reality that we all have experienced in life as we were growing up.

A son and his father were walking on the mountains. Suddenly the son falls, hurts himself and screams:

‘Aaaahhhhhhhhhh !!!’

To his surprise, he hears the voice repeating, somewhere in the mountains: ‘Aaaahhhhhhhhhhhh!!!’

A little scared but curious at the same time, he yells: ‘Who are you?’

He receives the answer: ‘Who are you?’

This is strange, the boy thinks. And then he screams to the mountain: ‘I want to see you!’

He gets the same answer from the voice: ‘I want to see you
Now the boy gets upset and he shouts to the mountains:
‘Coward!’

He receives the same answer from the mountains:
‘Coward!’

He looks to his father and asks: ‘What’s going on, Dad?’

The father smiles and says: ‘My son, pay attention.’

This time the father screams: ‘You are a champion!’

The voice answers: ‘You are a champion!’

The father says: ‘Thank you and God bless!’

And the voice sends back the same message: ‘Thank you and God bless!’

The boy is surprised but does not understand. Then the father explains: ‘Listen my dear son! People call this Echo, but in reality, this is Life. It gives you back everything you say or do or give it.’

Our life is simply a reflection of our actions. If you want more love in the world, create more love in your heart and give. If you want more competence in your team, improve your competence. This relationship applies to everything, in all aspects of life.

The Almighty Allah says in the Holy Quran, Surah ar-Rahman, Ayah 60:

‘Is the reward of goodness
ought save goodness?’
(Quran 55:60)

Life will give you back everything you have given to it. Make sure you give it your best so that you may receive the best. It all comes back to you sooner or later. Have no doubt about it in your mind!

‘And that man has only that
for which he makes effort.’
(Quran 53:39)

‘And for those who strive for Us,
We surely guide them to Our paths,
and lo, Allah is with the good.’
(Quran 29:69)

Your life is not a coincidence. It's a reflection of you. So, be a good role-model; be a light to others; be a God-fearing Muslim so that others can learn from you.

Our life in this world is temporary. The world looks very beautiful and full of temptation. But Allah tells the believers that this is just a comfort of illusion. The real life is in the Hereafter. That life is for ever and that is the one we should be chasing and striving for. All saints and those who are closer to God, they reject this temptation. They ignore its charms because they know that it is a trap. Actually, this is the real test for a man – a believer. If you fall in love with the world, you move away from God. But if you fall in love with God, you stay away from worldly pleasures.

Hazrat Isa ibn Mariam (Jesus Christ), PBUH, said that the love for the Hereafter and the love of the world cannot live in the same heart. They are like fire and water. If you chase your worldly desires, you will become a slave to the world. Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said that a person whose sole purpose of life is running after the world, he has nothing to do with Allah. Allah gives the seeker of the world, four things and he is always occupied with them till death comes to him. These four things are:

- 1) The worry that never ends – he is always worried about his wealth, seeking ways and means to accumulate it.
- 2) An occupation from which he will never get free.
- 3) A poverty that will never make him content/satisfied (the more he has, the more he wants, as it is never enough for spending).
- 4) Long list of desires and high hopes that can never be fulfilled.

According to one Hadith, our beloved Prophet (PBUH), was talking to the companions and said: ‘On the Day of Judgement some people will bring large amount of good deeds like the mountains of Arabia but they will be thrown into Hell.’ Somebody asked whether these people used to pray (Salaat). The Prophet, PBUH, replied: ‘Yes, they used to pray, used to fast, even wake up at night for Tahajjud prayer. But they would be those who jumped at the temptation of the world (wealth, fame, status, material things, etc.) and never even cared what was Halal and Haram.’

That is the charm of the world, the temptation, the wealth and the lust. That is the recipe for Hellfire. Give the world your good deeds, your piety (Taqwah) and try not to take anything from it. Stay away from greed – greed for anything. Always remember death and the grave, and fear Allah. Spend the day, as if it was your last day, glorifying God and pleasing Him with your kind actions. One day you’ll be standing in front of Him, answering questions. May Allah bless you and guide you through these difficult times – Ameen.

COME HOME, **ALLAH LOVES YOU!**

‘And Allah summons to the abode
of peace, and leads whom
He will to a Straight Path’.
(Holy Quran 10:25)

It is very easy to get lost in the crowd and all of us have this experience in life. Right now, its the Muslilm who is lost in this world – a world full of temptation, enticement and attractions. We are lost because we went astray from the Right Path. Its not impossible to get back on the right track but it sure is difficult.

‘And Allah’s is the direction of the way,
and some (roads) go not straight.....’
(Holy Quran 16:9)

We can achieve this goal if we honestly and sincerely try. And that’s what life is all about – trying, striving and struggling for the good cause with steadfastness and perseverance. This is also called ‘Jihad’. Don’t get scared by this term. It is not what the Western media portrays. We do Jihad everyday of our life to earn an honest and Halal living, and ward off evil. It’s upto us to show our Lord Almighty how earnestly we want to change our course. A sincere effort is a pre-requisite on our part, the rest is Allah’s.

‘Lo, Allah changes not the condition
of a folk until they (first) change
that which is in their hearts’.
(Holy Quran 13:11)

Sometimes we do get carried away and forget that we have to go back home before it's too late or dark. It's quite normal as we all are humans. Our real home is in the Hereafter and it's never too late to take the Straight Path home.

‘And the reward of the Hereafter
is better for those who
believe and ward off (evil)’.
(Holy Quran 12:57)

‘Those who believe and
keep their duty (to Allah), theirs
are good tidings in the life
of the world and in the Hereafter ---
There is no changing the words
of Allah --- that is the supreme
Triumph’.
(Holy Quran 10:63-64)

The life of this world is nothing but a puppet show. We should enjoy its temporary glitter and pomp but must not lose sight of our real goal – the Hereafter. We, as believers of Hereafter; think differently from the non-believers. The non-believer do not, and cannot, see beyond this world and its pleasures. And Allah has a stern warning for them:

‘The world’s portion will be
theirs, then unto Us is their
return. Then We make them
taste a dreadful doom because
they used to disbelieve’.
(Holy Quran 10:70)

The God Almighty warns us further that if we don't believe and care about the Hereafter, He will still grant us the

bounties of this world. But then that's all we'll get. No benefits, no rewards and no glad tidings on the other side:

‘Whoso desires the life of
the world and its pomp, We shall
repay them their deeds herein,
and therein they will not be
wronged. Those are they for
whom is naught in the Hereafter
save the Fire. All that they
contrive here is vain and all that
they are wont to do is fruitless’.
(Holy Quran 11:15-16)

We have to make the choice here – this world or the Hereafter. If we try to achieve the Hereafter, we'll be rewarded by the Almighty. Thus we'll get the best of the both worlds.

But there is no gain without pain. We'll have to go through the trials, hardships and all kinds of adversaries. There is definitely no escape from that. That's the promised test for the true believers. The Almighty says:

‘Do men imagine that they will
be left (at ease) because they
say: we believe; and will not be
tested with affliction? Lo, We
tested those who were before
them. Thus Allah knows those
who are sincere, and knows
those who feign’.
(Holy Quran 29:2-3)

You see, there is no escape. This is a ‘must do’ thing and we better be prepared for that. And to prepare for that we need to seek His guidance, His help and mercy. We need a

strong will and some power of confidence. We've got to believe in ourselves and have faith in Him. And He assured us one thing:

‘And We task not any soul
beyond its scope, and with Us
is a Record which speaks the
Truth and they will not be wronged’.
(Holy Quran 23:62)

You must have read the story of the repentance of Nasuh (or Nasuha) – called ‘Nasuh’s Taubah’. Maulana Rumi narrated this beautiful story of ‘home coming’. If you don’t remember it, here is a rendition:

Some time ago there was a man named Nasuh. He made his living shampooing and massaging women in a bath-house. He had a face like a woman, but he was not effeminate, though he disguised his virility, so as to keep his job and have fun at the same time. He loved touching the women as he washed their hair. He stayed sexually alert, at full strength, all the time, massaging the beautiful women, especially the Princess and her ladies-in-waiting.

Sometimes he thought of changing jobs, of doing something where he wouldn’t be so constantly lustful. But he couldn’t quit. He went to a mystic saint and said: ‘Please remember me in a prayer’. That holy man was spiritually free and totally opened to God. He knew Nasuh’s secret but with God’s gentleness he did not speak it.

A gnostic says little but inside he is full of mysteries, and crowded with voices. Whoever is served that cup, keeps quiet. The holy man laughed softly and prayed aloud: ‘May God cause you to change your life in the way you know you should.’

The prayer of such a sheikh is different from other prayers. He has so completely dissolved his ego, ‘nothinged’

himself, that what he says is like God talking to God. How could such a prayer not be granted?

The means were found to change Nasuh. While he was pouring water into a basin for a naked woman, she felt and discovered that she was missing a pearl earring. Quickly, they locked the doors. They searched the cushions, the towels, the rugs, and the discarded clothes. Nothing. Now they search ears and mouths and every cleft and orifice. Everyone is made to strip naked, and the Queen's lady chamberlain probes one by one the naked women.

Nasuh, meanwhile, has gone to his private closet trembling. I didn't steal the pearl earring, but if they undress and search me, they'll see how excited I get with these nude ladies because I am a man. Trembling, he started crying: 'God, please, help me! I have been cold and lecherous, but cover my sin this time, PLEASE! Let me not be exposed for how I have been. I'll repent.'

He weeps and moans and weeps, for the moment is upon him. 'Nasuh! We have searched everyone but you. Come out! At that moment his spirit grows wings, and lifts. His ego falls like a battered wall. He unites with God, alive, but emptied of Nasuh. His ship sinks and in its place move the ocean waves. His body's disgrace, like a falcon's loosened binding, slips from the falcon's foot. His stones drink in water. His field shines like satin with gold threads in it. Someone dead a hundred years steps out well and strong and handsome. A broken stick breaks into bud.

This all happens inside Nasuh, after the call that gave him such fear.

A long pause. A long, waiting silence. Then a shout from one of the women: 'Here it is!' The bath-house fills with clapping. Nasuh sees his new life sparkling out before him. The women come to apologize, 'We are sorry, we didn't trust you. We just knew that you'd taken that pearl earring.' They kept talking about how they'd suspected him, and begging his forgiveness. Finally he replies: 'I am much

more guilty than anyone has thought or said. I am the worst person in the world. What you have said is only a hundredth of what I have actually done. Don't ask my pardon!'

'You don't know me. No one knows me. God has hidden my sneakiness. Satan taught me tricks, but after a time, those became easy, and I taught Satan some new variations. God saw what I did, but chose not to publicly reveal my sin. And now, I am sewn back into wholeness! Whatever I've done, now was not done. Whatever obedience I didn't do, now I did! Pure, noble, free, like a cypress, like a lily, is how I suddenly am. I said: Oh no! Help me!'

'And that 'Oh no!' became a rope let down in my well. I have climbed out to stand here in the sun. One moment I was at the bottom of a dank, fearful narrowness, and the next, I am not contained by this universe.'

'If every tip of every hair on me could speak, I still couldn't say my gratitude. In the middle of these streets and gardens, I stand and say, and say again, and it's all I say:

'I wish everyone could know what I know.'

That's how Nasuh's life was turned around. He begged Allah with all sincerity and honesty, and he was forgiven. Not only was he forgiven, but also guided back to the right path. He wandered, but finally came home.

We should be honest and sincere too. When we say 'we believe', we have to prove that we mean it. And we can do it only when He puts us to trials. He says: 'Successful indeed are the believers'...(Holy Quran 23:1). If our belief is strong, we'll be strong too. We need to work hard to pass through these trials. We'll definitely get hurt but that's a very small price to pay for a ticket to Heaven. He says in the Holy Quran:

'The life of the world is but
a pastime and a game. Lo, the
home of the Hereafter – that is

life, if they but knew'.
(Holy Quran 29:64)

‘Those who establish worship
and pay the poor-due and have
sure faith in the Hereafter,
such have guidance from their
Lord. Such are the successful’.
(Holy Quran 31:4-5)

So, O Muslims of the world, enough of the wandering! It's getting dark. It's about time to go home. Get back on the Right Path and be steadfast! Take your fellow Muslims along! Don't leave the weak and the disabled behind! Help them, assist them, guide them and tell them about the Divine Truth. Time is running out and we have a lot to do. Let's get united and start to work now. Look at your glorious past! We can achieve it. Together we can make a difference, Inshallah. Please come home! Allah loves you.

A BASKET OF FRESH BREAD

*(Excerpts from Maulana Rumi's
'Masnawi', translated by
Professors Coleman Barks & John Moyne)*

The Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said,
'There is no better companion
on this way than what you do.
Your actions will be your best friend,
Or if you're cruel and selfish,
Your actions will be a poisonous snake
that lives in your grave.'

But tell me,
Can you do the good work without a teacher?
Can you even know what it is
without the presence of a Master?
Notice how the lowest livelihood
requires some instruction.

First comes knowledge,
Then the doing of the job,
And much later,
perhaps after you're dead,
Something grows
from what you've done.

Look for help and guidance
in whatever craft you're learning.
Look for a generous teacher,
one who has absorbed the tradition he's in.

Look for pearls in oyster shells.

Learn technical skill from a craftsman.

Whenever you meet genuine spiritual teachers,
Be gentle and polite and fair with them.
Ask them questions, and be eager
for answers.
Never condescend.

If a master tanner wears an old,
threadbare smock,
That doesn't diminish his mastery.

If a fine blacksmith works at the bellows
in a patched apron,
It doesn't affect how he bends the iron.

Strip away your pride,
And put on humble clothes.

If you want to learn theory,
Talk with theoreticians. That way is oral.

When you learn a craft, practice it.
That learning comes through the hands.

If you want Dervishhood, spiritual poverty,
and emptiness,
You must be friends with a sheikh.

Talking about it; reading books,
and doing practices don't help.
Soul receives from soul that knowing.

The mystery of spiritual emptiness
may be living in a pilgrim's heart,
And yet the knowing of it may not yet be his.

Wait for the illuminating openness,
As though your chest were filling with light,
As when God said:

‘Did We not expand you?’ ... (Quran 94:1)

Don’t look for it outside yourself.
You are the source of milk. Don’t milk others!

There is a milk fountain inside you.
Don’t walk around with an empty bucket.

You have a channel into the ocean, and yet
You ask for water from a little pool.

Beg for that love expansion. Meditate only
On THAT. The Quran says:

‘And He is with you’ (57:4).

There is a basket of fresh bread on your head,
And yet you go door to door asking for crusts.

Knock on your inner door. No other.
Sloshing knee-deep in fresh riverwater, yet
You keep wanting a drink from
other people’s waterbags.

Water is everywhere around you,
But you see only barriers
that keep you from water.

The horse is beneath the rider’s thighs,
And still he asks: ‘Where’s my horse?’

Right there, under you!
Yes, this is a horse, but where's the horse?'
'Can't you see?'
'Yes, I can see, but whoever saw such a horse?'

Mad with thirst, he can't drink from the stream
running so close by his face.
He's like a pearl on the deep bottom,
wondering, inside his shell,
Where's the ocean?

His mental questionings
form the barrier.
His physical eyesight
bandages his knowing.
Self-consciousness
plugs his ears.

Stay bewildered in God,
And only that.

Those of you who are scattered,
Simplify your worrying lives.
There is ONE Righteousness:
Water the fruit trees,
and don't water the thorns.
Be generous
to what nurtures the spirit
And God's luminous reason-light.
Don't honour what causes
dysentery and knotted-up tumors.

Don't feed both sides of yourself equally.
The spirit and the body carry different loads
And require different attentions.

Too often we put saddlebags on Jesus
And let the donkey
run loose in the pasture.

Don't make the body do
what the spirit does best,
And don't put a big load on the spirit
That the body could carry easily

LOVE KILLS

In the slaughterhouse of love, they kill
Only the best, none of the weak or deformed.
Don't run away from this dying.
Whoever's not killed for love is dead meat.

THE FRIEND INDEED

A friend in need is a friend indeed; and we all know that. Still we cannot find one friend who is 100 percent reliable, strong, solid, dependable, more knowledgeable, wiser and great advisor; who could handle every situation and who could get us out of trouble of any and all sorts. The only entity of that magnitude is called Omnipotent. And there is no parallel to Allah, the Creator, the Cherisher, the Merciful and the Beneficent.

He is the best Friend, rather only Friend, that can help us, guide us and take us thru thick & thin. He is the One that can protect us from Satan and take us all the way to Heaven. He tells us:

‘And when you recite the Quran,
seek refuge in Allah from
Satan the outcast. Lo, he has
no power over those who believe
and put trust in their Lord’
(Holy Quran 16:98-99)

Satan is our biggest adversary, greatest enemy and the most ruthless of fighters who are out there to test our faith. Satan and his army are constantly fighting the believers right from the day one of the creation of Adam & Eve. Its very easy for them to mislead us, make us waver, derail us and misguide us in every step of life. Humans are their easy prey. Its only with the help and protection of Allah that we can stand up to them. And in this endeavour Allah is our only Friend, only Protector, who will always stand by us. Now, that is a Friend indeed.

If our faith is not strong and we are on shaky grounds, we are tempted to make Satan our friend as he approaches us

every minute of the day with something new and enchanting. And believe me its very very hard to resist the temptation. The Almighty says:

‘O ye who believe!
Follow not the footsteps
of the devil. Unto whomsoever
follows the footsteps of the devil,
lo, he commands filthiness
and wrong’.
(Holy Quran 24:21)

Millions of Muslims live in non-Muslim countries and they deal with non-believers. Secularism is the most fashionable term the followers of Satan use to mislead Muslim youth. Unfortunately, our young generation is falling prey to them. They trust some superpower more than Allah and they submit to their worldly charms. The Almighty says about Satan:

‘His power is only over those
who make a friend of him,
and those who ascribe
partners unto Him (Allah).’
(Holy Quran 16:100)

Its not easy to resist the temptation and fight the Satan. But a sincere and honest effort is due on our part. And Allah always helps those who have sincerity of purpose. Almighty Allah tells us to be careful:

‘Tell my bondsmen to speak
that which is kindlier. Lo, the
devil soweth discord among them.
Lo, the devil is for man an open foe’.
(Holy Quran 17:53)

You got to believe the word of God against the word of devil. Satan and his followers are our open enemy.

‘So, obey not the disbelievers,
but strive against them herewith
with a great endeavour’.
(Holy Quran 25:52)

‘Lo, the squanderers were ever
brothers of the devil, and the
devil was ever an ingrate to his Lord’.
(Holy Quran 17:27)

And here are the signs of those who fall an easy prey to the devils. The Almighty Allay says:

‘Shall I inform you upon whom
the devils descend?
They descend on every sinful,
false one. They listen eagerly,
but most of them are liars.
As for poets, the erring follow them’.
(Holy Quran 26:221-224)

Now, here is a clear warning. We must stay away from sin and avoid the company of the sinful. They are not our friends. As believers, we have to answer questions before Allah. And there is no hiding, no escape from this. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

‘You cannot escape (from Him)
in the earth or in the sky,
and beside Allah there is for you
no friend nor helpers’.
(Holy Quran 29:22)

‘.....Satan was ever man’s
deserter in the hour of need’.
(Holy Quran 25:29)

So, there is no Friend nor Helper except Allah. If we want to escape the fury of God on the Day of Judgment, we better obey Him and make friend of Him. We should please Allah instead of pleasing our worldly masters or so-called ‘friends’, who are actually the friends of Satan. Its very natural for Muslims to have Allah in their hearts and minds. As God says: Every child is born in the nature of Islam. It’s the parents who make him non-believer. Its difficult for the Westerners to understand the importance of Allah in our daily lives. We believe that He is our only Friend and Protector.

Prof. Caesar E. Farah of the University of Minnesota writes:

‘It would be difficult to observe a more thorough manifestation of devotion to God than is evinced by the followers of Islam. No other religion appears to inculcate as much dependence on God in the trivia of daily life, nor does God figure so centrally among other religious groups in the ups and downs of ordinary living. Indeed, no task, commitment, performance, journey or repose, however minute or momentous, pleasurable or unpleasurable; is undertaken without the involvement of Allah. No blessing or bounty of any sort is received except through the grace of Allah. Misfortunes are endured with passivity and resignation, but faith in Allah remains unwavering, as it is His sole prerogative to bestow or withhold as He sees fit’.

Yes Professor. You are absolutely right. Allah is Everything, and is in everything for us. He is our sole Provider. We cannot forget that one day we have to stand in front of Him and answer questions. We simply cannot ignore what He commands us:

‘..... And turn unto Allah together,
O believers, in order that
ye may succeed’.
(Holy Quran 24:31)

‘Establish worship and pay
the poor-due and obey the
messenger, that haply ye may
find mercy’.
(Holy Quran 24:56)

As they say that life is not a bed of roses. And even if it were, there are always thorns with the roses. Negative and positive make the essence of life. There is no appreciation of light without darkness. Similarly, the hardships are essential part of the comforts of life. Even the prophets were not spared from that. The beauty of Islam is that our faith tells us that Allah never abandons us. He is always by our side. When the forces of evil made the life of our prophet Muhammad (saw) miserable, he never gave up. He persisted against all odds because he had a friend in Allah. The Almighty Allah reminds him:

‘By the glorious hours of the
dawn and the still darkness of
the night, your Lord has neither
forsaken you, nor is He displeased
with you. Verily, what is to come
in the future is better for you
than what has happened’.
(Holy Quran 93:1)

The true believers always have the peace of mind that their Protector is with them and they don’t have to worry about Satan or any adversary. They have the assurance of Allah:

‘As for those who strive for Us,

We surely guide them to
Our paths, and lo, Allah is
with the good'.
(Holy Quran 29:69)

Its only the friends of Satan who need to worry about the
end result of this game show. As for Muslims, they know
that Allah will never let them down. The Holy Quran
affirms :

‘Life of this world attracts
disbelievers and they scoff and
mock at believers.
But on the Day of Resurrection
those who are pious shall
rise above them. For God showers
His bounties on those whom
He pleases’.
(Chapter 2:212)

‘And of mankind is he who
pays for mere pastime of
discourse, that he may mislead
from Allah’s way without
knowledge and makes it the butt
of mockery. For such there is a
shameful doom’.
(Holy Quran 31:6)

May Allah help us in our efforts to stay away from the
friends of Satan and establish a true, honest and sincere
friendship with Allah – the only Friend we need, the only
Friend indeed.

WHO IS SATAN (DEVIL) ?

‘And when We said unto the angels:
Prostrate yourselves before Adam,
they fell prostrate, all save Iblis. He
demurred through pride, and so
became a disbeliever.’

(Quran 2:34)

It is very easy to misinterpret this Ayah of Surah al-Baqrah and consider Satan or Devil an angel. That’s not true. The real answer is in other Surahs of the Holy Quran. And you should read them in context to interpret them correctly.

Satan’s (Devil’s) real name was Iblis. There is a big misconception among the Muslims that Satan was the Archangel, or the chief of the angels and was a trustee of Heavens. Wrong! Here is the correct answer! In Surah al-Araaf, Ayah 12, Allah asked Satan why?

‘He (Allah) said: What stopped you
(O Iblis) that you did not fall prostrate
when I commanded you? Iblis said:
I am better than him (Adam).
You had created me of FIRE while
him You created from MUD (earth).’

(Quran 7:12)

Did you get it? I intentionally wrote the words ‘fire’ and ‘mud’ in capital letters to make you understand the truth. There are three main categories of Allah’s creation – the Noori, the Naari and the Khaki (the fourth one is Aabi). The Noori had been created with Allah’s Spirit (Noor), like angels. The Naari had been created from Naar (fire), like

Jinns. And the third, the Khaki have been created from Khaak (mud or clay or earth), like human beings. The Aabi are created from Aab (water) like all animals.

‘Have not those who disbelieve
known that the heavens and the
earth were of one piece, then We
parted them, and We made every
living thing of water? Will they
not then believe?’
(Quran 21:30)

‘Allah has created every animal
of water. Of them is (a kind) that
goes upon its belly and (a kind)
that goes upon two legs and (a
kind) that goes upon four. Allah
creates what He will. Lo! Allah is
Able to do all things.’
(Quran 24:45)

Therefore, Iblis (or Satan or Devil) was a Jinn who was made of fire, like other Jinns. He was the most pious, righteous, upright and full of ‘Taqwa’ among the Jinns and was upgraded to the status of their chief. Allah, out of His Mercy, had allowed him to hang out in Paradise with Angels and was given some knowledge of the Unseen, like angels.

At that particular moment, which was a great occasion in Heavens, when Allah asked the angels to fall prostrate in front of Adam, Satan was also present and along with angels, participated in the ceremony. But he did not have enough knowledge of the Unseen and could not see what was coming up. So, he refused to prostrate because he misjudged the status of Adam. Although Allah had said:

‘And when your Lord said unto
the angels: Lo! I am about to
place a Viceroy in the earth ... ‘
(Quran 2:30)

Viceroy means deputy – a human being was being appointed as Allah’s deputy – the highest status for any creation. That’s where Iblis (Satan) erred in his judgement and made a fatal mistake. Eventually, he was cursed and destined for Hell.

‘He (Allah) said: Then go down hence!
It is not for you to show pride here, so
go forth! Lo! You are of those degraded.’
(Quran 7:13)

And so the Devil was degraded, thrown out of Paradise, banned from entering the Heavens, and was given reprieve for a fixed time – till the Day of Judgement. He is still the most powerful force, after Allah, in the universe. Only those humans who strictly follow the Quran and Sunnah, are protected from Satan by the Mercy of Allah. Others cannot stand up to him. They easily fall into his traps. The three main categories of creation would be present on the Day of Judgement. The fourth one, the animals would not be resurrected hence cannot be a part of the process of the ‘Accountability Day’.

The first category, Noori (angels), would also not go through the process of accountability (Hisaab). They are exempt from it because they don’t have the freedom of choice. They follow orders only and cannot disobey Allah. Now, that leaves us with two categories : Naari (Jinns) and Khaki (Humans). Allah says:

‘I created the Jinn and humankind
Only that they might worship Me.’
(Quran 51:56)

Jinns and Humans have been given freedom of choice. They may obey Allah or they may not, it is their choice. And for that liberty or choice, they are answerable to Allah on the Day of Judgement. And their actions in this world would determine their fate (Heaven or Hell) in the Hereafter.

Satan's job would be over with the end of this world as his and his followers (humans) fate has already been determined by Allah. They would be thrown into Hell:

‘He (Allah) said: Go forth from hence,
degraded, banished. As for such of
them who follow you, surely I will
fill Hell with all of you.’

(Quran 7:18)

The final destination of Satan and his followers (humans) would be Hell. It is as clear as sunlight. Let there be no doubt in your mind! The fuel of Hellfire would be Jinns, humans and rocks/stones.

‘Already have We urged into Hell
many of the jinn and humankind,
having hearts wherewith they
understand not, and having eyes,
wherewith they see not, and having
ears wherewith they hear not. These
are like cattle ... ‘

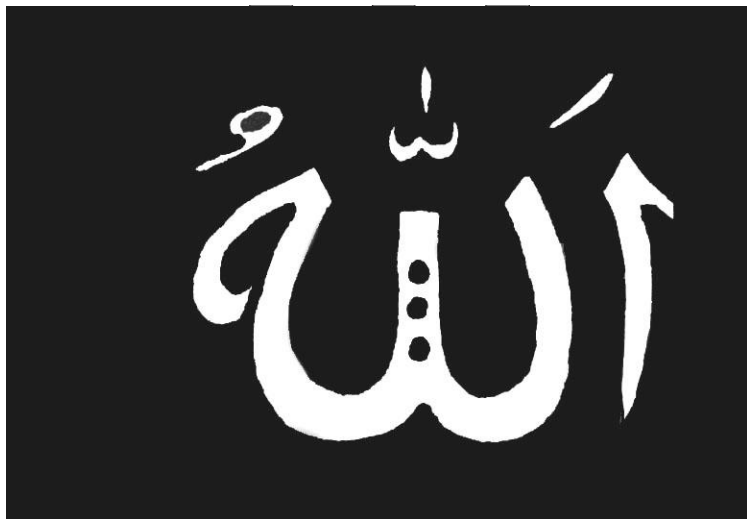
(Quran 7:179)

There is a big difference between Satan and us. The Devil (Satan) knows his destination as Allah told him when he refused to fall prostrate before Adam. We human beings don't know our final destination yet. We still have hope to achieve Paradise. And that is a big 'plus' point. We should

take advantage of this situation and put in the maximum effort to achieve our goal. Allah has made one thing very clear to us:

‘O mankind! ... follow not the
footsteps of the devil. Lo! He is
an open enemy for you.’
(Quran 2:168)

MIRACULOUS!



Here is a beautiful experience! Stare at this image without blinking your eyes for 15 seconds, middle dot in the word 'Allah' being the focal point. Then shut your eyes and reopen them in front of a light-colored plain (no designs) wall. Stare at the wall without blinking. Got it? Allah-o-Akbar.



THE AUTHOR

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