



Spiritual Notes

to enrich our lives



Institute for Islamic Studies and Publications
Paramaribo, Suriname

Introduction

The weekly mailing of *A Spiritual Note* by the Institute for Islamic Studies and Publications started in June 2005. Since then, more than 250 editions have been prepared and sent out.

Several times the Institute has been asked to publish a booklet with a selection of *Spiritual Notes*. This is now being done. The booklet contains *Notes*, taken from the emailed versions of the past five years.

Anyone wishing to receive future *Notes* through email could submit their email address to info@ivisep.org. Past editions can be read at www.ivisep.org/spirnote/snarchive.htm.

We thank Allah for giving us this opportunity to send His message throughout the world, and pray that He will continue to guide us in our efforts.

Khuda Haafiz.

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July 2010

Fiftieth Edition of 'A Spiritual Note'

**Message of Congratulation and a Poem by Ameer-i-Jama'at,
Dr Abdul Karim Saeed, on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Edition of
*A Spiritual Note***

Assalamo alaikum.

I congratulate your team on its great achievement of reaching the most coveted fiftieth issue of 'A Spiritual Note'. What is most envious for all those who venture into projects of this kind is the continuity and punctuality with which this publication has been published. Many a times I have realized it is Friday when, on opening my emails, I saw a new edition of your publication. The material is always valuable and thought provoking.

I pray to Allah that He continues to bless you all to continue this project for generations to come and thus serve the cause of Islam and its message of peace. I am sure your efforts would make every *Ahmadi* in the world proud of you. Keep up the good work and be assured that behind your venture will be the prayers of every member of our International *Jamaat*.

I dedicate this poem I was creating while I was typing my message to your team:

A SPIRITUAL NOTE

A Spiritual Note that I await all week,
Through it guidance and aspiration I seek.
It triggers my thoughts to reflect in my mind,
Have I been generous? Have I been kind?

How can I follow the right and straight Path?
Once on Guidance: how not to forget and stray.
Not to loose sight of the heavenly light,
Once on the Path, how on it I can stay.

Every Friday brings a new 'note' in my life,
Every Friday it wakes me up from my sleep.
I am reminded of my plans and higher aims,
I am reminded that I have promises to keep.

I pray for all those who *A Spiritual Note* send,
I pray for those who give me chance to mend.
I pray that they can carry this mission for long,
And bless this world with spirit pure and strong.

Dr Abdul Karim Saeed
Ameer-i-Jama'at
Lahore, June 2006

Golden Qualities

Be kind and merciful to humanity, for all are His creatures. Do not oppress them with your tongue, or hands, or in any other way. Always work for the good of mankind. Never unduly assert yourselves with pride over others, even those who are placed under you. Never use abusive language to anyone even though he abuses you. Be humble in spirit, kind and gentle, and forgiving, sympathetic towards all and wish them well so that you should be accepted.

There are many who pretend to be kind, gently and forgiving, but inside they are wolves. There are many on the outside who look pure, but in their hearts they are serpents; you cannot be accepted in the presence of the Lord unless you are pure, both on the outside and the inside.

If you are big, have mercy and not contempt on those who are small; if you are wise and well versed in learning, serve the ignorant with words of wisdom. Never desire to bring disgrace on their ignorance by trying to show off your own learning. If you are rich, instead of treating them with egoistic and scornful pride, you should serve the poor.

Beware of the paths of destruction. Fear the Lord, be righteous and do not worship the creation of Allah. Turn wholly and solely to Him so that you lose interest in this world. Become entirely His, living wholly for His pleasure, for His sweet sake, hating everything impure and sinful for, indeed, He is the Holy One. Every morning should be a witness for you that you spent the night in righteousness, and every evening should be a witness for you that you went through the day with the fear of Allah in your heart.

Source: *The Ark of Noah*
Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad

Bringing Light and Life to Others

"Consider the sun and his light. And the moon when she borrows light from him. And the day when it exposes it to view. And the night when it draws a veil over it. And the heaven and its make. And the earth and its extension. And the soul and its perfection. So He intimated to it by inspiration its deviating from truth and its guarding (against evil). He will indeed be successful who purifies it. And he will fail who corrupts it." (Qur'an, 91:1-10)

An evolved soul must bring, like the sun, life and light to others; he must bring them out of the darkness of ignorance, impiety and irreligiosity. He must energise those in lassitude, nerve them up and cleanse the world of all that is impure. Most of us, of course, do not possess this inherent light; we must borrow it (like the moon from the sun) from those more favoured - those great men, who received the light directly from God and appeared at times when the whole horizon of the world had become darkened. We should enlighten the world when those great luminaries of Divine love pass away, just as the moon does when the sun disappears.

Man, like the day, should arouse others from the drowsiness of inactivity and inertia. He should put them to work, and invigorate them against despondency, hopelessness and fear. He should infuse a new spirit into the world. When his fellowmen become tired and fatigued, he should approach them, as if with the wings of night, to give them rest and comfort. If his inspiration brings the latent faculties of others into operation, his kind words and deeds should refresh them and enable them to continue their work with a new spirit, and apply themselves to new avenues of exertion.

Source: *Message of Islam*
Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din

Gratitude

In many of its verses, the Qur'an shows us the countless blessings which man has at his disposal in this world. It also shows how an ungrateful man can be, despite the abundance which he has in this life. Some of these verses are:

"So eat of what Allah has given you, lawful and good (things), and give thanks for Allah's favour, if He it is you serve." (16:114)

"And surely thy Lord is full of grace to men, but most of them do not give thanks." (27:73)

"Why should Allah chastise you if you are grateful and believe? And Allah is ever Multiplier of rewards, Knowing." (4:147)

"And when your Lord made it known: If you are grateful, I will give you more, and if you are ungrateful, My chastisement is truly severe." (14:7)

The Qur'an shows us again and again that man should go through life with a positive attitude. What is the reason for this? Does Allah need our gratitude? Many of us find it difficult to be grateful, particularly when the circumstances are not to our liking. Others, however, have everything they wish for and still they are not grateful. Our society tends to think in terms of scarcity. We focus our minds on things we do not have instead of being grateful for those things which we have.

By being grateful, we can experience Allah and open ourselves to His favours.

Muslims often remember Allah by His attributes (*dhikr*). The objective of this is that we can experience the feelings connected with the *dhikr*, that we understand these feelings, and that we integrate them into our behaviour. One of these attributes of Allah is *Shakur*, which - among other meanings - means "very grateful."

A grateful heart attracts abundance and provisions from Allah like a magnet, both material and spiritual. Imagine how you feel when you have given something to a grateful person, and how you feel when someone is not grateful for your gifts.

It is better to have a grateful attitude towards Allah, as He, the Lord of the heavens and the earth, has the most to offer to us.

Yet it is still difficult for many people to be grateful, or to stay grateful. Others do not really believe that Allah is able to provide us with everything we need for a sincere, happy life in abundance.

The first step is to be grateful for everything we have, and see Allah's presence in those things. Also, when things are not going as well as we would like, there is still a lot to be grateful for. Gratitude makes our lives better, fuller, richer and far more wonderful. We should release our limited, miserable thoughts and think more in terms of welfare, prosperity and fortune, again and again, till gratitude becomes an integral part of our being. What we strive for, where we put our energy, that is what we will receive. (Qur'an, 53:39)

We have a choice. Choose gratitude and abundance for all good things in life.

Drs Sharda Ahmadali-Doekhie

The Importance of Knowledge

"Are those who know and those who know not alike? Only men of understanding mind." (Qur'an, 39:9)

Some sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) about knowledge:

"Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave."

"Excessive knowledge is better than excessive praying. ... It is better to teach knowledge one hour in the night than to pray the whole night."

"One learned man is harder on the devil than a thousand ignorant worshippers."

"Who are the learned? Those who practise what they know."

"The knowledge from which no benefit is derived is like a treasure from which no charity is bestowed in the way of the Lord."

Honest Earnings

Faith, patience, righteousness and truthfulness lead us to honest earnings. If someone tries to gain earnings in a dishonest way, he will lose innumerable good qualities. The Holy Qur'an stresses this point in many verses, among them:

“And swallow not up your property among yourselves by false means, nor seek to gain access thereby to the judges, so that you may swallow up a part of the property of men wrongfully while you know.” (2:188)

“O you who believe, devour not your property among yourselves by illegal methods except that it be trading by your mutual consent. And kill not your people. Surely Allah is ever Merciful to you.” (4:29-30)

“Woe to the cheaters! Who, when they take the measure (of their dues) from men, take it fully, and when they measure out to others or weigh out for them, they give less than is due.” (83:1-3)

The Holy Prophet, too, has said: “The honest businessman will share in the reward of the Prophets.”

When running our businesses, no means are allowed which are unworthy of us, and the merchant who thinks that falsehood and fraud are allowed, only cheats himself. He might have some material benefits, but his spiritual self loses, because he has no trust in the providence of his Lord, the Sustainer of mankind.

Source: *The Holy Qur'an and its Teachings* (Dutch)
G.A. Bashir

Poem

People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered;
Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives;
Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true
enemies;
Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;
Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight;
Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous;
Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow;
Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough;
Give the world the best you've got anyway.

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God;
It was never between you and them anyway.

Mother Teresa

Forgiveness

The Qur'an considers forgiveness as a virtue which is very pleasing to Allah. Although paying the wrongdoer back in the same manner in which he committed a wrong can have a positive effect on him, we should always have the person's improvement in mind as the main goal. Forgiveness is a good deed only if we apply it with good understanding and according to the circumstances and in such a way that the wrongdoer will not consider it a deed of disregard or cowardice.

Being unjust is a wrong attitude towards the enemy. The Qur'an leaves it to us to strike the golden mean, which will cause our sense of responsibility to be developed further and further. It tells us the following:

"And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden, as wide as the heavens and the earth; it is prepared for those who keep their duty; those who spend in ease as well as in adversity and those who restrain (their) anger and pardon men. And Allah loves the doers of good (to others)." (3:133-134)

"And if you take your turn, then punish with the like of that with which you were afflicted. But if you show patience, it is certainly best for the patient. And be patient and thy patience is not but by (the help of) Allah, and grieve not for them, nor be in distress for what they plan. Surely Allah is with those who keep their duty and those who do good (to others)." (16:126-128)

"And the recompense of evil is punishment like it; but whoever forgives and amends, his reward is with Allah. Surely He loves not the wrongdoers. And whoever defends himself after his being oppressed, these it is against whom there is no way (of blame). The way (of blame) is only against those who oppress men and revolt in the earth unjustly. For such there is a painful chastisement. And whoever is patient and forgives — that surely is an affair of great resolution." (42:40-43)

Source: *The Holy Qur'an and its Teachings* (Dutch)
G.A. Bashir

Practice Encouragement

"Speak good words to all men." (Qur'an, 2:83)

"To God do ascend the goodly words, and He exalts the goodly deed."
(Qur'an, 35:10)

Dr. Alfred Adler, the great psychologist, had an experience when he was a young boy. He got off to a bad start learning arithmetic, so his teacher became convinced that Adler was stupid when it came to mathematics. The teacher told Adler's parents that the boy was dumb, and also told them not to expect much from him. His parents were convinced that the teacher's evaluation was correct. Therefore, Adler passively accepted the assessment that they had made of his abilities. And his grades in mathematics proved that they were correct.

However, one day he had a sudden flash of insight and thought he saw how to work a problem the teacher had put on the board that none of the other pupils could solve. He raised his hand and announced that he would like to do the problem. The students, and even the teacher, laughed at this. He became indignant. He strode to the blackboard and solved the problem perfectly, much to everyone's amazement. And at that moment he realised that he could understand mathematics. He had been handed an unreal, negative self-evaluation, and he had believed it and performed on the basis of that assessment.

Many of us have done the very same thing. Someone has told us that our abilities are limited, or that our dreams are unreachable. We have accepted that without question, and we go through life unhappy and unfulfilled. We become estranged from ourselves simply because we believe what others people have told us about ourselves.

Every one of us - young and old alike - needs to be encouraged. To encourage someone is to put courage into them. To discourage is to take courage out of them. It costs nothing to put courage into another ... to speak a kind word ... to let them know you appreciate them ... to tell them you believe in them ... that you admire them ... and so on.

Source: Dick Innes on www.divinehumanism.org

Good Deeds

Good deeds are the evidence of a living faith. Those who do not do good deeds should know that their faith is barren and that their spiritual plant withers because good deeds in connection to faith are just as fruits in connection to a living tree.

The Qur'an emphasises this and stimulates Muslims to do as much good as possible. We can find this theme everywhere in the Qur'an where faith is dealt with, such as:

"And those who believe and do good, We shall make them enter Gardens in which rivers flow, to abide therein forever." (4:122)

"And whoever submits himself to Allah and does good (to others), he indeed takes hold of the firmest handle." (31:22)

"And He answers those who believe and do good deeds, and gives them more out of His grace. And for the disbelievers is a severe chastisement." (42:26)

"Say: O My servants who believe, keep your duty to your Lord. For those who do good in this world is good." (39:10)

"Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of this world; but the ever-abiding, the good works, are better with thy Lord in reward and better in hope." (18:46)

Source: *The Holy Qur'an and its Teachings* (Dutch)
G.A. Bashir

Giving to Humanity

"And the heaven and its make, and the earth and its extension." (Qur'an, 91:5-6)

Heaven and all the luminaries in it continually shed their light, which, piercing through space, goes into the earth, carrying into it all that lies in the firmament – the earth thus becoming pregnant by the forces from on high and bringing forth its treasures for our use.

"And the bearer of witness and those against whom the witness is borne. ... Surely the might of your Lord is great. Surely it is He Who originates and reproduces." (Qur'an 85:3, 12, 13)

Let man, like the sky, fill others' minds with the seeds of new and healthy ideas, and inspire them with useful thoughts and righteous aspirations. He should also act as the earth, and pour out things for others' good. He should fit himself to receive Light from the Most High, and thus enable himself to produce that which his Lord intends him to do in the service of humanity; he will lose nothing thereby. Hoards of wealth come from the recesses of the earth, every minute sees a renewal of its blessings, yet it diminishes never. Man, her best child, should follow his mother, Nature.

Source: *Message of Islam*
Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din

Love for our fellow men

Islam: And of them is he who is foremost in deeds of goodness by Allah's permission. That is the great grace. (Qur'an, 35:32)

No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself. (Hadith)

Buddhism: Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful. (Udana-Varga 5,1)

Christianity: All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye so to them; for this is the law and the prophets. (Matthew 7:12)

Confucianism: Do not do to others what you would not like yourself. Then there will be no resentment against you, either in the family or in the state. (Analects 12:2)

Hinduism: This is the sum of duty: do naught onto others what you would not have them do unto you. (Mahabharata 5, 1517)

Judaism: What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellowman. This is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary. (Talmud, Shabbat 3id)

Taoism: Regard your neighbor's gain as your gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss. (Tai Shang Kan Yin P'ien)

Zoroastrianism: That nature alone is good which refrains from doing another whatsoever is not good for itself. (Dadisten-I-dinik, 94,5)

Source: www.divinehumanism.org

What you sow, so shall you reap

We are all familiar with the saying "What you sow, so shall you reap." How true it is! If someone hurts you, then your most probable reaction is to hurt him/her back. If someone accuses you, you might accuse him/her back. If someone loves you, you will love him/her. It is difficult to hate a person, whoever he or she may be, if that person loves you.

The most important thing, and the one that is not paid attention to, is what goes on in our minds - our thoughts. As we think, feel and believe, so are the conditions of our mind, body and circumstances. The all powerful subconscious mind which is within us is influenced by our thoughts and beliefs. As we sow in our subconscious mind, so shall we reap in our body and environment. If we sow thoughts of peace, happiness, and goodwill and accept them fully in our conscious mind, then we shall reap a glorious harvest!

Our subconscious mind may be likened to the soil in which we grow all kinds of seeds, good or bad. Every thought is a cause and every condition is an effect. So for this reason it is vital to take charge of our thoughts so as to bring forth only desirable conditions.

"Man can have nothing but what he strives for, and his striving will soon be seen. Then he will be rewarded for it with the fullest reward." (Qur'an, 53:39)

Sources:

Be the God you are (Dr. K.B. Shetty)

The Holy Qur'an (Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation)

Unity

Be grateful for the favour of Allah by avoiding mischievous activities that lead to disunity in the community. Have favourable opinions about your brethren and leave the matter of their inner faith to be judged by Allah. Every one of you should try to avoid bad-mouthing another brother, and if you hear about someone that he speaks ill of you, do not try to get even with him because sometimes news, when reaching somewhere, becomes completely distorted and very different from reality. If you observe any mischief being created, then instead of vying to take part in it, keep your silence. The path of righteousness is in fact the path of caution, and at times of discord no path of caution is better than keeping silent.

In the Holy Qur'an Allah admonishes those who spread discord. It says that "if any news of security or fear comes to them they spread it all over;" (4:83), and it instructs that instead of spreading it they should refer it to the Messenger (pbuh) or those in authority. Keep in mind that to create disunity is not gallantry of any kind, but unity cannot be achieved without Allah's favour:

"If you had spent all that is in the earth, you could not have united their hearts, but Allah united them." (8:63)

Once you lose the gift of unity you will not acquire it again even by spending all that you can, and all your works will remain incomplete and unfulfilled. Instead of malice and spite, create love and compassion for your brethren in your hearts, and if you cannot go that far then at least remove the malice and spite from within you. If someone is working for your movement or serving religion, and you also notice some flaw in him, think of his service and his work in contrast with his flaw. Instead of trying to expel your brothers from within you, try to bring others to join you. If you expend all your energies in rejecting your brothers, then you will not have any strength left to do the opposite work.

It is not too late; do not discard the strength of unity. Take in the favours of God. Fight your egotism. If something is not to your liking, bear with it. Even if you are in the right, be like one who considers himself to be in the wrong. For God's sake, think. Are you trying to be like one who

considers himself in the right while being in the wrong, or like one who considers himself in the wrong while being in the right? If this teaching was not meant for you, for which other community was it meant?

Forgetting your disagreements, turn to matters which unite you. Incline not to worldly gain, but give preference to religion. You were brought into existence in this world to propagate and strengthen the religion. If you are set upon weakening the power of the religion, how can Allah the Most High come to your help?

Source: *Mujahid-i Kabir*

Keeping Promises

Keeping promises is one of the greatest qualities of man, as it can lead him to the highest pinnacle of spiritual development. In this lays the essence of peace, tranquility and harmony in the world.

The Qur'an tells us the following about this quality:

"Who break the covenant of Allah after its confirmation and cut asunder what Allah has ordered to be joined, and make mischief in the land. These it is that are the losers." (2:27)

"Yea, whoever fulfills his promise and keeps his duty - then Allah sure loves the dutiful. Those who take a small price for the covenant of Allah and their own oaths - they have no portion in the Hereafter, and Allah will not speak to them, nor will He look upon them on the day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them, and for them is a painful chastisement." (3:76-77)

"And those who break the covenant of Allah after its confirmation, and cut asunder that which Allah has ordered to be joined, and make mischief in the land, for them is the curse, and theirs is the evil end of the Abode." (13:25)

Source: *The Holy Qur'an and its Teachings* (Dutch)
G.A. Bashir

Asceticism

"And (as for) monkey, they innovated it — We (God) did not prescribe it to them." (Qur'an, 57:27)

Many exalted souls lived in the world among the people, and still were the greatest spiritual masters. Consider the life of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and Krishna, for example. They lived through wars and battles, and yet they reached the highest stages of spiritual development. If they had lived in caves in the mountains, we would not have been able to receive their blessings.

What benefit do we receive from those righteous people who never face the continuous trials of life with their attendant problems? What can those, living outside the society, do for those of us who face numerous problems every day? Leadership and holiness should be displayed here, amongst the masses. It is very easy to be isolated in the seventh heaven, but spiritual ecstasy, experienced here on earth and shared with others, is an exaltation which has far greater value.

Muslims are taught that they should not run after the trivialities of the world and make the amassing of wealth the object of their life. On the other hand, they are reminded that they should also avoid the other extreme of totally giving up worldly pursuits and adopting such practices as monkey. They are thus required to keep the balance between the material and spiritual sides of life, as the Qur'an says in 2:201:

"Our Lord, grant us good in this world and good in the Hereafter."

Sources:

Mental Purification (Inayat Khan)

The Holy Qur'an (Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation)

Religion as Goal?

We often identify ourselves with titles like Muslim, Hindu, Jew, Christian, Buddhist, etc. Most believers strictly follow the laws prescribed by their religions, but when they don't, for whatever reason, they suffer feelings of guilt (and fear of God's punishment), and in some countries they may be punished, or expelled from the community.

The way in which followers of different religions treat one another varies. If circumstances are good, they may live in peace and harmony, but in many countries religions cause arrogance, aggression, fear, and war, for many years already.

It often happens that our striving to become good Muslims, Jews, Christians, etc. is so limited that we forget how to be good human beings.

Those who have made the outer rituals of their religion as their main goal in life can be compared with the one who has an oyster in his hand, not knowing the value of the pearl that is inside.

The main reason that prophets and other holy people came to this world was to teach people how to be righteous. The main goal for God's guidance in different times and to different people is to show the followers how they themselves can be in contact with God. The holy books are just a means to know and recognize God, the Most High, Who created us, guides us, maintains us, and Who really loves us. They lead us to God, and thus to our real self.

Originally, religions were intended to keep man in, or bring him back to, the right physical, mental, and spiritual state, and so recognise and receive guidance from God.

It is not at all wrong to belong to a particular religious group, but we should be aware that religious ceremonies are only a means, and that the real goal is to become one with God and to realise the Divine qualities, both inward and outward.

Those who are able to taste only a little of God's mercy and love will know that it is not possible that God is only watching how many penalty

points we earn for each sin. On the contrary, we receive many wonderful opportunities to learn from our mistakes, to become more sincere and joyful human beings, and to share this feeling with everyone around us, regardless of their religion.

We all are residents of one world, under one sky; we all receive the same rain and we breathe the same air. We were all born as human beings; we should do our utmost to remain human and to develop ourselves in a positive way.

Drs Sharda Ahmadali-Doekhie

Our Ego

What disturbs us most in life is the ego of others. When one's ego is expressed without control, it can negatively affect the feelings of others, thus bringing about a disturbance in the life of people. Many wars and family problems have only one source, and that is the ego.

When developing our character, the first lesson is to control our ego. When our ego has been tamed, a charm will be noticed in our thoughts, words and actions. The finer the ego, the greater the person.

The ego is being fed every time it is satisfied, and it is controlled by patience. The greatest enemy of man is his ego. If his ego is not controlled, his thoughts, words and actions are only fixed on the satisfaction of his ego, and the more he satisfies his ego, the more satisfaction the ego desires. Therefore, instead of being a king over his life, the person becomes a slave of his ego.

Normal people compete with the egos of others, while exalted people fight against their own egos. The victories of normal people are temporary, because after every struggle of their egos with others, they will run into struggles again. Elevated people, however, once they control their egos, gain eternal victory because the egos of normal people will no longer disturb them on their way to spiritual perfection.

Source: *The Sufi Message*
Hazrat Inayat Khan

Necessity of Trials

Why should life be this way, that Allah grants us pleasurable experiences but also moments of deep sadness? As believers, should we expect that Allah should grant us only pleasure during our life on earth in return for our belief?

No, life is not that easy. On the contrary, Allah wants to test the believers, to see the strength of our belief, and with that comes matters such as fear, loss of wealth, loss of lives, etc. We will explain this further with some verses from the Qur'an.

"Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, We believe, and will not be tried? And indeed We tried those before them, so Allah will certainly know those who are true and He will know the liars." (29:2-3)

"And certainly We shall try you, till We know those among you who strive hard, and the steadfast." (47:31)

"And We shall certainly try you with something of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits. And give good news to the patient, who, when a misfortune befalls them, say: Surely we are Allah's, and to Him we shall return. Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord; and those are the followers of the right course." (2:155)

This verse concerns those who are not strong enough to undergo the trials of life:

"And among men is he who serves Allah, (standing) on the verge, so that if good befalls him he is satisfied therewith, but if a trial afflicts him he turns back headlong. He loses this world and the Hereafter. That is a manifest loss." (22:11)

Thus, Almighty Allah gives us trials again and again, to test the faith of the believers. However, in His Mercy He also gives the believers the tools to overcome these trials, namely *sabr* and *salaat* (patience and prayer), as the Qur'an teaches us in 2:45-46:

"And seek assistance through patience and prayer, and this is hard except for the humble ones, who know that they will meet their Lord and that to Him they will return."

We conclude with a prayer of comfort from the Qur'an, 2:286:

"Our Lord, punish us not if we forget or make a mistake. Our Lord, do not lay on us a burden as Thou didst lay on those before us. Our Lord, impose not on us (afflictions) which we have not the strength to bear. And pardon us! And grant us protection! And have mercy on us! Thou art our Patron, so grant us victory over the disbelieving people."

Let us gratefully use these supports from the Qur'an to overcome the difficult moments of our lives.

Riaz Ahmadali

The Hidden Effect of our Actions

"And We have made every man's actions to cling to his neck, and We shall bring forth to him on the day of Resurrection a book which he will find wide open." (17:13)

This means that the hidden effect of a person's actions will be displayed on the Day of Judgement in the shape of an open book.

It is a Qur'anic principle that every action has its hidden impress. Every action of a person attracts Divine action corresponding to it which preserves the quality of that action and does not let it disappear. Its impress is inscribed upon the heart and the countenance and the eyes and the hands and feet. This is the hidden record of actions which will be made manifest in the life to come.

"Whoever goes aright, for his own soul does he go aright; and whoever goes astray, to its detriment only does he go astray." (17:15)

Source: *The Islamic Review*, April-May 1989

Arrogance

Our earth, when compared to the universe, is smaller than a tennis ball. Our country may be the size of a small coin on this ball, our city may be just a spot, and we ourselves are of the size of sand particles. Imagine such a particle of sand trying to jump with anger, trying to bloat with pride! Of what use is it anyway? Who cares for this particle which can be blown away by a simple gust of wind?

The Holy Qur'an is very clear regarding those who choose to act with arrogance. We quote:

"And of men is he whose speech about the life of this world pleases thee, and he calls Allah to witness as to that which is in his heart, yet he is the most violent of adversaries. And when it is said to him, Be careful of thy duty to Allah, pride carries him off to sin — so hell is sufficient for him. And certainly evil is the resting-place." (2:204, 206)

"And turn not thy face away from people in contempt, nor go about in the land exultingly. Surely Allah loves not any self-conceited boaster. And pursue the right course in thy going about and lower thy voice. Surely the most hateful of voices is braying of asses." (31:18-19)

"And as for those who disdain and are proud, He will chastise them with a painful chastisement." (4:173)

"And go not about in the land exultingly, for thou canst not rend the earth, nor reach the mountains in height. All this, the evil thereof, is hateful in the sight of thy Lord." (17:37-38)

Pride is undoubtedly one of the most common forms of behaviour which is disliked by both God and our fellow being. Let us therefore use this knowledge to behave in a way which pleases both. Remember: Pride goes before a fall!

Sources:

Be the God you are (Dr. K.B. Shetty)

The Holy Qur'an (Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation)

To Deal with Criticism

"When you received it on your tongues and spoke with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge, and you deemed it a trifle, while with Allah it was serious." (Qur'an, 24:15)

Whenever someone rises head and shoulders above his fellow man, he quickly becomes the target for the jabs and jibes of jealous lesser men. Criticism can be very painful, especially when it comes from those who are closest to us. In the long run, however, it does much more harm to the one criticizing than it does to the one being criticized. Furthermore, criticism only destroys us if we allow it to.

If we are being criticized and the criticism is valid, we need to be big enough to accept the criticism and make necessary changes to correct where we have been wrong.

On the other hand, if the criticism is unjust, we need to realize (though easier said than done) that the more secure we become within ourselves, the less others' criticism will bother us. In such cases I like what another has said, "What you think of me is none of my business."

To conclude, a verse from the Qur'an:

"And let not their speech grieve thee. Surely might belongs wholly to Allah. He is the Hearer, the Knower." (10:65)

Sources:

Richard Innes, on www.divinehumanism.org

The Holy Qur'an (Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation)

Our Transient and our Everlasting Goals

With progress of time there is no doubt that man has conquered his outer world but unfortunately he has totally neglected the more important inner world, which is the prime cause for the present state of affairs. We must take care of the great gifts that God has so lovingly given to us. They are our body, mind and soul. How much time do we ever give to nourish these wonderful gifts? We have all along neglected them, taken them for granted and in an illusion have spent a life time running after toys like money, position and power. If we will only realise the transient nature of all these things that we are so desperate for, we would stop madly chasing them.

Happy is the man who may desire anything, prefers few things, but needs nothing.

Let us look back at our own lives. What happened to the cycle that as children we possessed and admired so much? Toys? Bicycles? Scooters? Cars? And what happened to them as we grew up? Our love and possessiveness for them slowly disappeared with time and growth. When we realise that we are made for bigger things, our desire for small toys just drop off.

Likewise, at some point in time, we will realise that this life was not more than "a love of desires, of women and sons and hoarded treasures of gold and silver and well-bred horses and cattle and tilth." These are only the provision of the life of this world, as the Qur'an teaches us in 3:14, and the verse continues by stating: "And Allah - with Him is the good goal (of life)."

We should try to life in such a way that we are aware of the transience of worldly things, and that we should strive for those goals which will be lasting.

Sources:

Be the God you are (Dr. K. Bhujang Shetty)

The Holy Qur'an (Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation)

The Importance of Good Company

Not everyone has a good influence on you. Some people will bring out negatives in you and because of their influence you can become estranged from your inner beauties. Such people, by appealing to the negatives within you, can turn you into an egoist. These people are of doubtful value and if you listen to them, you will fall into a shallow, flat way of life.

Some people may also depress you, take away your vitality and your belief in the good. These are cynical people who do not see the sense of anything and are sarcastic about everything. They reject even the dearest and most elevated things, pulverising everything with their omnipresent criticism. To be in contact with them is infectious. You think and speak like them without being aware of it. It is better to avoid such people or they can blemish you.

Fortunately though, there are other types of people – people who will have a beneficial effect on you; people who remind you of your true destination in a conscientious way; people who will inspire you to utilise your positive qualities optimally.

Seek out these people or make sure that they can find you. They have the best intentions with regard to you. As negative and pernicious as the others are, these people are heart-warming and affirmative. They are a source of light to you, and growth – growth in humaneness. You will become better and purer by their grace.

"And keep thyself with those who call on their Lord morning and evening desiring His goodwill, and let not thine eyes pass from them, desiring the beauties of this world's life. And follow not him whose heart We have made unmindful of Our remembrance, and he follows his low desires and his case exceeds due bounds." (Qur'an, 18:28)

Sources:

Zo mooi als je bent (Hans Bouma, Dutch book)

The Holy Qur'an (Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation)

The dangers of narrow-mindedness

"Have We not expanded for thee thy breast?" (Qur'an 94:1)

Narrow-mindedness is defined as lacking tolerance or not having the mental faculty to see beyond the superficial and recognize the underlying truth. Many people suffer from this, and the primary reasons are ignorance, and the inability to recognize this deficiency and take corrective action. This situation is further aggravated if the ignorant person considers himself to be the epitome of wisdom, and if he is in a leadership or a highly visible position, he can cause unnecessary harm to families, communities or even an entire nation.

Absence of insight can also result in narrow-mindedness by having a negative effect on one's thought processes. Insight is a rare virtue, and quite different from ignorance. A person who lacks insight may possess some knowledge, but derives no benefit from it due to a lack of analytical skills, while someone with insight assesses his or her knowledge of a situation and then selects and uses its relevant parts. Through insight, they are able to see what others may not. Ibn ul Qayyim, a famous Islamic scholar and author, said: "One person may read a text and learn one or two lessons from it, while another may learn one or two hundred."

Blind imitation creates another obstacle to one's intellectual growth. The two world wars of the past century are the perfect examples of this disability that can allow ruthless political or religious leaders to manipulate the minds of people who are unable to form their own objective view.

Some individuals habitually look at things from one angle and accept them as actual facts without thinking that there may be a different side to the issue, or that reality may actually be quite different from appearance. In the following verse of the Qur'an, for example, Allah points out that the appearance of the hypocrites may not be a true indication of their reality: "And when thou seest them, their persons please thee; and if they speak, thou listenest to their speech." (63:4)

And then He goes on to give this warning: "They are the enemy, so beware of them. May Allah destroy them! How they are turned back!" (63:4)

Furthermore, some people are impressed by quantity at the expense of quality. Referring to the battle of Hunain, Allah says: "On the day of Hunain, your numbers impressed you but did not benefit you." But, "If there be amongst you twenty who show fortitude, they will defeat two hundred." This does not, of course, mean that appearances are to be completely disregarded or that quantity is totally irrelevant. These fundamentals should not be valued in isolation, but should be understood through insight and common sense.

A failure to prioritize or differentiate wrong from right often leads people to lose sight of the broader picture. Often people will focus on the immediate and disregard the potential disastrous effects of an action further down the road. Along with ignorance, narrow-mindedness and, of course, a lack of insight, these gaps usually prove detrimental to that individual's future.

Source: www.islaam.com

Using our Resources for Mankind

"And who spend of what We have bestowed on them." (Qur'an, 2:3)

You will notice, all through the Qur'an, how great a stress is laid on the necessity of spending. Avarice is used on more than one occasion almost as a synonym for unbelief. The Muslim does not hoard up any of the gifts which Allah has bestowed on him; for this command does not apply to money only; it probably applies to money last of all.

Whatever you possess that is of good to men, do not keep it to yourself, but spend it freely. If you have learning, do not keep it for your own merely, spend it; apply it to the welfare, the instruction, the amusement of your fellowmen. A Muslim cannot say, this or that, of the gifts of God - it may be riches, or high influence, or learning - is mine, and I can do what I like with it, can hoard it or can use it as I please. Everything a Muslim has is held in trust for God, and God has ordered him to spend it freely for the good of the community, even the most precious gift of all - his life - if need arises. If everyone did this, there would be no social grievances, no labour troubles, no bloody risings of downtrodden, hopeless peoples.

The idea of property as absolutely vested in the individual, or a group of individuals, or in the State, is anti-social. Only the idea of property as a trust from God held for the benefit of those around us produces unity and brotherhood.

"The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies (further) for whom He pleases. And Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing." (Qur'an, 2:261)

"But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown." (Matthew, 13:23)

Source: *Friday Sermons* by Marmaduke Pickthall

Seeing the Good in Others

It is high time that we should learn to look for the good in others, instead of picking at their weaknesses. Mutual appreciation, mutual confidence, mutual goodwill should inspire all our actions. Even if we come across certain flaws in the ways of our friends, who are thoroughly honest in their motives, we should learn to overlook them.

Our mutual relations should be as the Holy Qur'an wants them to be:

“The believers are but brethren, therefore make peace between your brethren and be careful of (your duty to) Allah that mercy may be had on you.

O you who believe! let not (one) people laugh at (another) people, nor let women (laugh) at (other) women, perchance they may be better than they, and do not find fault with your own people nor call one another by nick-names; evil is a bad name after faith, and whoever does not turn, these it is that are the unjust.

O you who believe! avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is a sin, and do not spy nor let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of your dead brother? But you abhor it; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, surely Allah is Oft-returning (to mercy) Merciful.

O you men! Surely We have created you of a male and female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the most honourable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty); surely Allah is Knowing, Aware.” (49:10-13)

Source: *The Secret of Existence*
Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din

The Trial of Wealth and Power

Chasing after wealth very often causes man to deviate from the more lofty goals of life.

Enjoying the good things in life is allowed, within measure:

"O men, eat the lawful and good things from what is in the earth, and follow not the footsteps of the devil. Surely he is an open enemy to you." (Qur'an, 2:168)

"Eat and drink and be not prodigal; surely He loves not the prodigals." (Qur'an, 7:31)

However, simple enjoyment sometimes gives way to extravagance, and so wealth and power gain a too-prominent place in our lives. Those running after worldly gains only will have no part in the Hereafter, which is only for those striving for good both in this life and in the Hereafter. It is these who understand the real goals of life:

"Fair-seeming to men is made the love of desires, of women and sons and hoarded treasures of gold and silver and well-bred horses and cattle and tilth. This is the provision of the life of this world. And Allah - with Him is the good goal (of life)." (Qur'an, 3:14)

"The life of this world is made to seem fair to those who disbelieve, and they mock those who believe. And those who keep their duty will be above them on the Day of Resurrection. And Allah gives to whom He pleases without measure." (Qur'an, 2:212)

"Let not control in the land, of those who disbelieve, deceive thee. A brief enjoyment! Then their abode is hell. And evil is the resting-place. But those who keep their duty to their Lord, for them are Gardens wherein flow rivers, to abide therein; and entertainment from their Lord. And that which Allah has in store for the righteous is best." (Qur'an, 3:196-198)

"There are some people who say, Our Lord, give us in the world. And for such there is no portion in the Hereafter. And there are some among them who say: Our Lord, grant us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and save us from the chastisement of the Fire. For those there is a portion on account of what they have earned." (Qur'an, 2:200-202)

One of the ways of detaching ourselves from worldly goods and getting nearer to the sublime goals of life is by spending in charity:

"You cannot attain to righteousness unless you spend out of what you love." (Qur'an, 3:92)

However, if we choose to make worldly gain the only goal of our lives, we should know that this wealth will be of no use to us on the Day of Resurrection:

"Those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, the earth full of gold will not be accepted from one of them, though he should offer it as ransom. These it is for whom is a painful chastisement, and they shall have no helpers." (Qur'an, 3:91)

"Woe to every slanderer, defamer! Who amasses wealth and counts it. He thinks that his wealth will make him abide. Nay, he will certainly be hurled into the crushing disaster. (Qur'an, 104:1-4)

The wealth of Abu Lahab, a deadly opposant of the Prophet (pbuh), was not enough to save him from the fire:

"Abu Lahab's hands will perish and he will perish. His wealth and that which he earns will not avail him. He will burn in fire giving rise to flames." (Qur'an, 111:1-3)

May Allah grant us wisdom to find and keep to the middle course in life, and to deal in a right way with the trials He has given us on this path.

Ameen!