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سُورَةُ الْعَصْرِ

SURATUL 'ASR

The sura begins with Time and ends with sabr (Patience). Sabr is the shrinking of time. e.g. if we want to eat a fruit which is not yet ripe, we know we have to wait for it to ripen and we agree to do so. What we are doing is shrinking the time into "zero time".

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Most Kind, the Most Merciful.

وَ الْعَصْرِ

I swear by Time!

'Asr' literally means squeezing. It has been used for Time- in the sense of it's meaning the squeezing of the past unfolding as future.

It may refer to the era of the Prophet (S.A.W.) or the time of Asr on Ashura; or as per a hadith of our 6th Imam -the era of Imam Al-Mahdi (A.S.) Time is the most valuable commodity which man has...

If you look at the lives of great people - there is one thing in common that we all have with them and that is - 24 hrs in a day. The way they use their time has made the difference.

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ

Most certainly the human being is in a state of loss;

Man's lower nature is to be at a loss. Man's basic nature is to be confused, and dissatisfaction without any calm and peace - man fluctuates from one thought to the other, one idea to the other ... No sooner is one situation under control then he must move to another which is chaotic...

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ

وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

Except those who believe, and do good deeds, and advise each other to truth, and advise each other to patience. Advising each other to truth and to patience is 'Amr bil Ma'ruf ' and 'Nahy anil Munkar '. The highest degree of patience is that which is exercised when one keeps away from 'haram' .

CONCEPT OF CLOCK AND COMPASS

The Clock represents our activities, commitments, schedules, appointments – in other words what we do with our time –

The Compass represents our goals, values, principles – in other words what we feel is important. The aim of the lectures is to focus on spending our time on that which is most important in our lives.

When we find that there is a gap between our clock and our compass, some of us feel trapped – controlled by other people and situations feeling our lives are being lived for us; some of us feel uncomfortable because we feel we should do what is most important BUT we are caught in dilemmas and feel guilty all the time; some of us feel empty even though we might be ‘successful’ in the eyes of the world; some of us go on from one thing to another in a mechanical way and not getting anywhere and finally some of us don’t even want to change because we’re too scared to try something else.....Sometimes we are woken up from this disparity by a crisis which makes us aware that what we are doing with our time and what we feel is important don’t match. Give examples e.g. The young man who hurt his legs in an accident when driving too fast when asked what he wished to do most – he said – to be able to pray namaz standing (something he used to see as a chore before); or the young lady who after her mother died wished she had respected her more... or the person who found himself in jail and only then realised that he got carried away by his friends and stole...

We will look at the compass first for it is only when we have direction in our life that we can look at managing our clock. Just like the four directions of the compass, we will look at 4 aspects that are important in our lives – **N** for Networking, **E** for Eiman, **W** for Waalidayn and **S** for Salaa. Explain the 4 briefly (Networking – The friends we keep, Eiman – our aqeeda, Waalidayn – Parents, S – salaa)

E FOR EIMAN

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

“Those with eiman are certainly successful”

Suratul Mu’minun - 23:1

Eiman means faith. But what does faith mean? Does it mean to follow blindly; does it mean that you should not ask questions? Faith means trust, or belief founded on authority. Therefore if a person is to have faith, he has to believe in things. The next question is "What does he have to believe in?" The first and foremost belief is Tawheed – There is only one God – Allah. .

Eiman also means to believe in those things, which we cannot see with our eyes like Janna and Jahannam and the day of Qiyama, and Judgment day.

To believe in Allah is to have eiman, since we cannot see Allah with our eyes. 2:1 Alif Laam Meem, 2:2 This is the Book; no doubt in it a guidance for those with taqwa, 2:3 Those who believe in the Unseen, establish salaa, and spend out of what We have provided for them.

No one is asking us to follow blindly. There is proof everywhere around us, if only we stop to think and look around. If we think of the sky, and the earth, the plants and animals, then automatically we can see that there is someone who has made them so perfect, and that someone is Allah.

However, faith is no good without action. If there is no action, then that is not true faith, it is only faith of the tongue and not of the heart. If you believe in Allah, then do good to please him, because those people who have been given all the signs, and knowledge, if they still do evil then Allah has promised for them punishment. Imam Ja’fer As-Sadiq (A.S.) has said: “...Islam is the deen of Allah. One who acknowledges the deen of Allah is a Muslim, and one who acts according to that which Allah has commanded is a Mu’min.”

S FOR SALAA.

Salaa is a pillar of religion which connects the soul to Allah. In the Qur'an Allah says:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

"And I have not created the Jinn and Mankind but that they may worship Me" 51:56

It is not merely a few minutes of rituals but that which concentrates our attention on the hereafter and Qiyama thus refraining one from evil.

Salaa is a cure for anxiety, distress and fear. It is the support of the whole Muslim Umma (community). Each and every day on hearing the Adhan, Muslims assemble to pray salaa. On Friday, whole communities, villages and towns gather for Salaatul Jumu'a, likewise during Hajj Muslims from all over the world gather together for salaa. It is the me'raaj (ascension) of the mu'min. Salaa is like a factory which produces human beings. It draws out the corruption and evil from a nation by working through each individual.

Imam Ali (A.S.) has said: "If he/she who offers salaa knew how much grace Allah bestows upon him/her during the salaa, he/she would never lift his head from sajda."

To be able to attain the benefits of salaa it must be recited correctly and with full presence of mind. Just like a watch which is only useful if it shows the correct time. It would still look like a watch if it did not work but would not serve its purpose.

There are ten types of salawaat:

1. The five daily salawaat - Fajr, Dhuhr, 'Asr, Maghrib & Eisha.
2. *Salaatul Jumu'a
3. Salaatul Ihtiyat
4. Salaatul Ayaat
5. Salaatul tawaaf al wajib

6. *Salaatul Eid
7. Salaat alal mayyit
8. The qazha salaa of a father (deceased); the duty of which falls on the eldest son.
9. Salaatul Ijara - If the eldest son does not pray the qazha prayers of his father then he can hire someone to pray on behalf of the dead person.
10. Salaatul Nazhr, 'Ahad & Qasam. *Wajib only when established by the Imam of the time but highly recommended in his ghaiba.

Imam Ali (A.S.) says : "Indeed salaa removes sins like Autumn strips leaves off the trees, and it frees you from the rope of sins tied around your neck."

The Prophet (S.A.W.) likened it to a refreshing stream at one's door in which one takes a purifying bath five times in a day and night. After so much cleaning will any dirt remain on a person?"

Salaa is an expression of a person's surrender to Allah. It has been specified in such a manner that even one who wants to pray in a lonely corner must observe certain things which are of moral and social relevance such as cleanliness, respect of the rights of others, punctuality, a sense of direction, control over one's emotions, and expression of goodwill (salaam) towards other righteous servants of Allah.

It has a form and a soul, an appearance and an inner meaning. That which is expressed by the tongue and the movements of the body are the outer mould. The soul of salaa is:

- i) The significance attached to it by the prayer.
- ii) His/her attitude towards it.
- iii) The satisfaction and benefit derived from it.
- iv) The extent to which it has taken him/her on the journey towards Allah.

Imam Ali (A.S.) sums up the attitudes of people towards worship in the following hadith: "A group of people worship Allah out of desire for reward; This is the worship of traders. Another group worship Allah out of fear; This is the worship of slaves. Yet another group worship Allah out of gratitude; This is the worship of free people".

The root of all the aspects of salaa lies in the remembrance of Allah and to live by the knowledge that Allah is observing and watching. It is to this that the Qur'an says: "...Adhere to salaa in order that you remain in My remembrance." Suratut Taha 20:14

Those whose niyya for worship is solely for the pleasure of Allah are described by Imam Ali (A.S.) as: "Indeed, Allah, the Glorified has made His remembrance the shine of the hearts, which makes them hear after deafness, see after blindness and humble after being undisciplined. In all periods of times when there were no prophets, there were individuals to whom He spoke in whispers through their conscience and intellect." This speaks of the wonderful effect of salaa and other forms of worship on the heart, to the extent of making it capable of receiving divine inspiration and bringing it to communicate with Allah.

N FOR NETWORKING.

The network of friends we build around ourselves who mould our thinking. One of the most important influences of our lives besides family is the people we choose to be with – our friends. The Prophet (S.A.W.) has said: "One always absorbs the ways of his friend" (Safinatul Bihar, Vol.I, p.168)

Unlike family we can choose our friends – Let's look at what the ma'sumeen have taught us as to who to keep as friends – The Prophet, (S.A.W.) defines a good friend in these words: "He is the one whose very sight makes you remember Allah, whose conversation increases your knowledge and whose deeds remind you of the world in the Hereafter" (Biharul Anwar, Vol.XV, p.51) Imam Ali (A.S.) has said: "The best of companions (friends) are those who have knowledge and patience." If you have friends who have knowledge or are interested in learning than rather than waste time talking about worthless things or gossiping you will talk about events and ideas.

Our Ma'sumeen have told us that: "A friend who is reliable is an adornment at the times of happiness and a security in times of difficulty". This means that when one is happy and does not need anyone as such it is a pleasure to be in his/her company. When one is in difficulty then one knows that there is always someone there to fall back on.

Because the akhlaq of a friend affects and rubs off on another it is important to have and be friends with those having good akhlaq. There is a Spanish saying which says : "If you go to the wolves, it is howling which you will learn from them." Imam Muhammad Baqir (A.S.) has said: "Do not associate with a fool, a miser, a liar and a timid person, because a foolish friend, while thinking that he is doing you good, will cause you harm and a miserly friend will take from you but will not give you anything. In time of need, the timid friend will run away from you as well as from his own parents and a liar who tells too many lies

says that which cannot be believed and it is not, therefore, possible to benefit from his ideas and thoughts" (Biharul Anwar, Vol.XV, p.52)

Imam Ja'fer As-Sadiq (A.S.) has said: "Avoid friendship with three types of people : 1. A traitor because on one day he will deceive others in order to benefit you and on another day he will deceive you to benefit others.. 2. A tyrant because if he oppresses others for your sake, one day he will oppress you... 3. A rumour monger (one who gossips) because if he gossips about others in front of you then one day he will gossip about you before others."

A Muslim friend is a mirror for his friend. Imam Ja'fer As-Sadiq (A.S.) has said: "A friend is one who fulfils the conditions below: 1. What he/she feels towards you and what he/she says about you must be the same. 2. He/she should consider your good things as his/her good things and your bad things as his/her bad things. Similarly he/she should consider your honour as his/her honour and your disgrace to be his/her disgrace. 3. If his/her financial position changes for the better or he/she acquires a high position his/her attitude towards you should not change. 4. He/she should not fail to assist you to the maximum extent of his/her capability. 5. He/she should not abandon you and leave you alone when you are in trouble."

Finally, Imam Ali (A.S.) has said: "If after investigation a person establishes friendship, it will be a firm stable friendship."

W FOR WALIDAYN (PARENTS)

The Prophet (S.A.W.) has said: "Allah's pleasure is the pleasure of one's parents and His anger is their anger."

Let's see some of the ayaat of Qur'an regarding parents - "Your Lord has ordained that you must not worship anything other than Him and that you must be kind to your parents. If either or both of your parents should become advanced in age, do not express to them words which show your slightest disappointment. Never yell at them but always speak to them with kindness. Be humble and merciful towards them and say, "Lord, have mercy upon them as they cherished me during my childhood" Suratu Bani Isra'il, 17:23-24

"We enjoined man to show kindness to his parents, for with much pain his mother bears him and he is not weaned before he is two years of age. We said: Give thanks to Me and to your parents. To me shall all things return" Suratu Luqman, 31:14

The Prophet (S.A.W.) has said "Two doors of Janna are opened for a person whose day commences when his parents are pleased with him "He continued "Two doors of Jahannam are opened towards a person who causes the anger of his parents" "Be afraid of being disobedient to your parents or becoming the object of their anger because the fragrance of Janna covers a distance of five hundred years' time and reaches the nostrils of a human being but does not reach at all those with whom their parents are annoyed" Imam Ja'far Sadiq, (A.S.) has said: "If our Rabb had considered anything to be lower than 'Uf' (word of disgust) he would have prohibited it. One of the stages of disobedience is that one should cast a fierce glance on his parents" (Jame'us Sa'adat, p.258)

A man once came to the Prophet (S.A.W.) and said: "Ya Rasulullah! I am healthy and want to take part in jihad for Islam. However, my mother does not like me being separated from her and going for battle." The Prophet (S.A.W.) replied: "Go and stay with Your mother. I swear by Him who has appointed me as His messenger that the

thawaab for your spending one night in the service of your mother and her being happy is greater than you performing jihad for a whole year." He has also said: "Sitting with your parents for one hour is better than going for jihad. Even if only a word is spoken with a view to pleasing the parents, Allah is pleased."

Respecting parents means:

1. Never raise your voice while talking to them.
2. Do not sit when they are standing.
3. Do not walk in front of them unless they tell you to do so.
4. Do not talk when they are talking.
5. Never correct them in front of others.
6. Do not make them angry or displeased with you.
7. Never argue or shout at them. Always pray for them:

رَبِّ اَرْحَمُهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْنِي صَغِيرًا

"...Lord! Have mercy on them just as they had mercy on me when I was little..." Suratu Bani Israil 17:24

CONCEPT OF TIME

Allah in Suratul 'Asr describes It as 'Asr which means squeezing – the time of 'Asr squeezes the day into the night – time squeezes our life in the world into the aakhira. The hour glass is an excellent example of thos concept where the sand – grain by grain moves to the lower half just as life of the world moves – moment by moment into the aakhira.

First let's look at how we spend our time. List all the activities you do - It will be a list of countless bits and pieces- hundreds of trivial encounters - perhaps one or two meaningful ones - One days worth may not seem a lot but adding up days after days it is an entire life split into millions of fragments. All too often adults wake up after slogging through all their lives and ask themselves - What have I done with my life? We may have the greatest of aspirations but when our days are faced with so many things there is often no time – So how do we resolve the dilemma of matching the clock with the compass?

Before we go further ask yourself – What are the things you know if you did really well and on a regular basis have significant positive results in your personal life? What is the one activity you know if you did really well and on a regular basis which will have significant positive results in your school (working) life? Think about the answers – maybe for the first one you can consider our compass directions – being able to recite and understand Salaa in the way it should be for the benefits are manifold, having a close relationship with parents and useful friendships..... For the second question maybe having a disciplined timetable for studying and including study of religion too..... Now ask yourself – If you KNOW that these things will make a major difference to your life – why are you not doing them? As you think about your answer let's look at the things which drive our choices on how we use time – urgency and importance. Few of us realise how powerfully urgency affects our choice. E.g. There is a TV programme that is a continuation of a series, my friends want me to be at a certain

place now, the homework is due in tomorrow, salaa is getting qadha.... Look at the things that you see as urgent and analyse them seeing how you can improve the activities by taking out the urgency of them because doing things faster is no substitute for doing them properly. We have to work out which things are important using our compass and then have better planning, preparation and organisation.

ALIGNING THE 4 HUMAN NEEDS

Continuing with the way we utilise our time let's look at the importance factor keeping in mind the compass – N – Networking, E – Eiman, W – Waalidayn, S – Salaa.

There are 4 human needs that if not met make a human being feel incomplete and empty. Each of them is very important – physical needs, social needs, mental needs and spiritual needs . Again 4 different angles of the compass. **N for nafs** needs (spiritual), **E for emotional** needs (social), **W for well being** needs (physical) and **S for smart** needs (mental). All four need to be aligned with the help of eiman, walidayn, salaa and networking.

Let's start with the physical – **W for well being**. Ask yourself a question – Are you energetic through out the day or are there things you would like to do but you feel tired and out of shape? If we see our physical well being as a separate need from all others, than we may not realise how the quality of our health affects all the other areas. When we are not feeling well or feeling lethargic, it's much harder to think clearly, or relate to others positively or even focus on spiritual growth..... All the other areas are affected.

Good health is based on Islamic principles. It grows over time with proper nutrition, regular exercise, adequate rest, a healthy mind and avoiding things that are harmful to the health. Our problem is that we are caught up in the illusion of appearance – the fantasy of clothes, make up, quick fix cosmetic surgery, It brings short term satisfaction but it does not last.

Economic well being is based on the principle of halal earnings and being able to serve society with it, but we live with the illusion that having lots of things will give us peace or we live with the fantasies of winning the premium bonds or that there are 'magic' loans which will solve all our problems.

Let's look at food first as it provides the energy that sustains well being. . Allah in the Qur'an says: "O you who believe! Eat of the good

things We have provided you with and thank God if it is He that you worship" 2:172 The general criterion for food and drink is their being 'good'.

What is 'good' food and drink?

1. The food must be obtained by lawful means. It is forbidden to eat any food which is obtained by stealing, and deceit.

2. It must be halal which means permitted and not haram which means forbidden. Most fish and all vegetables are permitted, alcohol is forbidden and there are restrictions on meat. Let's look at some of the meats which are haram.

All products from the pig

Animals that eat other animals or excrement for food

Animals and birds that died of themselves (not slaughtered)

Animals which are strangled or stunned to death

Animals which are killed for food without being slaughtered in the Islamic way.

3. Alcoholic drinks, wine, beer, and all drugs which affect the brain are forbidden as well. Besides the 'fiqh' criteria – the food must also be healthy – junk food is that which turns us into couch potatoes.

Imam Ali (A.S.) has said: "Do not extend your hand to food unless you are really hungry and stop eating before you are full. Chew the food thoroughly softening it. Visit the toilet before you go to sleep. If you follow these four rules you will not need the services of a doctor."

Hazrat Luqman said to his son: "My son! When the stomach of a person is full, their faculty of thinking goes to sleep and his/her tongue of wisdom becomes dumb and his/her limbs fail to do the ibada of Allah".

During the reign of the khalifa Harun Rashid, there was a well known Christian doctor who lived in Baghdad. He once went to visit Waqidi who was an 'aalim and asked him about health issues in the Qur'an. Waqidi quoted aya 31 of Suratul A'raf: "Eat and drink but do not be extravagant" The doctor asked whether there were any ahadith of the

Prophet (S.A.W.) regarding health. Amongst the many, Waqidi quoted the following: “The stomach is the seat of all diseases and the best medicine is less eating.” The doctor commented: “Islam in a brief and basic rule has stated the prevention and cure of all diseases.”

It is recommended not to eat between breakfast and dinner – not to eat breakfast and dinner is harmful to health.

The essence of all this, is to know that we cannot sow one thing and expect to reap something entirely different.

FOCUS ON E FOR EMOTIONAL NEEDS (SOCIAL NEEDS)

Continuing with the 4 human needs of - N for nafs needs (spiritual), E for emotional needs (social), W for well being needs (physical) and S for smart needs (mental).

Let's look at the **E for emotional** or social needs. Good relationships in life are built on the principles of honesty and trust. The Prophet's two titles were As-Sadiq and Al-Amin – The truthful one and the trustworthy one. The qualities come out of one's character to make and keep commitments, to share resources, to be caring and responsible and to give unconditional love. All this has to be earned – the word trustworthy it self means to be worthy of someone's trust. It's far easier to again live and believe in the make believe world of TV soaps, music, books, advertising, movies.....which are filled with illusions.

Let's look at the 2 principles of honesty and trust. To appreciate the strength of honesty we have to look at the opposite and see what harm it causes. The Prophet (S.A.W.) has said: "A liar does not lie, except when he feels lower within himself/herself." Lies can be small and light natured like in jokes or serious with an aim to mislead someone. Be it small or big, light-hearted or in the form of a joke, it is still hated. Imam Ali Zaynul Aabideen (A.S.) has said: "Keep away from lies, be it small or big, whether in a serious way or not, or by way of a joke. For everyone who tells small lies will also dare to speak big lies."

One lie leads to another and soon it becomes a habit. Lying leads to disgrace and is the key to conflict in the home and society. It leads to false swearing and more sins. The best way to remove the habit of lying is to study history and look at the ends of those who lied. e.g. Abu Lahab, Abu Sufyan, Muawiya, Yazid..... They rejected the truth and lied. In the Qur'an Allah says: "Indeed there have been examples before you, so travel on the earth and see what was the end of those who lied." Suratu Ali Imran 3:136

To be trustworthy one has to be a person who makes and keeps commitments – in other words responsibilities.

The Prophet (S.A.W.) has said: ‘Allah has made 7 rights compulsory on all Muslims towards other Muslims’

1. To respect him in person
 2. Love him in his heart
 3. Share with him his property
 4. Abstain from backbiting against him
 5. Visit him when he is ill
 6. Escort his coffin
 7. And say nothing but good about him after his death
- (Shaykh al Saduq, Al-Khisal, II, 6; and Al-Amali, p. 20)

Let’s look at some of the responsibilities that Imam Ali Zaynul Aabedeen (A.S.) has listed in Risalatul Huquq (A charter of rights) which build up this character. Imam lists 51 rights in 6 categories – we will look at some of them –

- The right of your mother is that you know that she carried you where no one has carried you. She gave to you the fruit of her heart which she has not given to anyone else. She did not care if she went hungry/thirsty as long as you quenched your hunger and thirst. You will not be able to show her gratitude, other than through Allah’s help.
- The right of your father is that you know that he is your root. Without him you would not be here. If you see something good within yourself, you should know that it is because of your father.
- The right of your brother is that you know that he is your hand, your might and your strength.
- The right of one who does a kindly act (dhul l-maruf) is that you thank him and mention his kindness; reward him with your lind

words and pray for him (dua). If you can repay him one day, do so.

- The right of your sitting companion (jalis) is that you treat him mildly, fairly and you do not stand up from sitting with him without his permission. But it is alright if he stands without asking your permission. You should forget his slips and highlight his good qualities
- The right of your neighbour (jar) is that you guard him when he is absent and honour him when he is present.
- The right of the companion (sahib) is that you act as his companion with generosity and fairness. Honour him as he honours you and restrain him from any act of disobedience he might attempt.
- The right of him who is older than you is that you show reverence toward him because of his age and honour him because he entered Islam before you. Do not go ahead of him on a path and avoid confronting him in a dispute.
- The right of him who is younger than you is that you show compassion toward him through teaching him, pardoning him and covering your faults.
- The right of the people of your creed is that you keep them safe and show compassion for them. The old men should stand in place of your father, the youths in place of your brothers, the old women in place of your mother and the young ones in place of your children.

FOCUS ON S FOR SMART NEEDS (MENTAL NEEDS)

Continuing with the 4 human needs of - **N for nafs** needs (spiritual), **E for emotional** needs (social), **W for well being** needs (physical) and **S for smart** needs (mental).

Let's look at **S for smart needs** or mental needs. First ask yourself whether you are continually learning new skills, acquiring knowledge and improving your education in all aspects of your life or do you feel at a standstill? Often we just learn what is necessary to pass an exam or test rather than looking at long term development and growth in knowledge. Very often we have been duped into thinking that we will get the degree, get the job so we can get the money to buy the things with which we will be successful? But is that really success? If we study history we have many examples of those who thought they were knowledgeable as opposed to those who really are. An example is Abu Jahal (father of ignorance) who used to be called Abul Hikma (father of wisdom). The Prophet (S.A.W.) changed his name to the father of ignorance for despite having so much so called wisdom he refused to acknowledge the existence of a Creator.

The Prophet (S.A.W.) has said: "Allah makes the road to Janna easy for one who takes a step on the road to acquiring knowledge." It is not enough to acquire information on a subject of study, but it is important to be able to absorb, understand and practise upon the information in order to call it 'knowledge'.

He also said: "The treasures of knowledge are opened by asking questions. May Allah bless you. Ask questions because four persons are rewarded - The one who asks, the one who answers, the one who hears and the one to whom it is related." "Preserve your knowledge in writing." "Scholarly discussions enliven dead hearts provided they lead to Allah and His commands." "Teach others what you know so that the foundation of your knowledge may become strong and seek

knowledge from others so that the level of your information may increase."

The Qu'ran says: "Allah elevates to high positions those from amongst you who are faithful and those who have acquired knowledge". Suratul Mujadilah, 58:11)

But where do we start – Khwaja Nasiruddin Tsu (A.R.) in his work – Adabul Muta'allimeen (manners of students) writes that the first necessity is a firm intention - "It is necessary for the seeker of knowledge to have the intention of first pleasing Allah, to remove ignorance from him/herself to remove ignorance from others and to revive and continue the religion of Islam by enjoining good and forbidding evil first from him/herself and whosoever is associated with him/her and others if it is possible...."

Then he gives the following tips:

1. To start with tawheed and to know Allah with proofs.
2. To select a teacher who is the most knowledgeable, pious & eldest.
3. Enquire about the field of study and do not make a hasty decision.
4. "Check the earth by it's fruits and check a person by his/her associates"
5. Write legibly, not writing too small for if he/she lives he/she will regret it (not being able to read the text) and if he/she dies ; he/she will be cursed.
6. Do not sit too close to the teacher unless it is an emergency.
7. Begin the lesson on Wednesday for the Prophet (S.A.W.) has said: "There is nothing that begins on Wednesday, except that it would be completed."
8. It is necessary for the beginner to start only with the amount that can be mastered and repeating it twice slowly.... "The lesson is once, but repetition is one thousand..."
9. Begin with something easy, near the level of understanding.
10. The most excellent time is during adolescence. And the Time in the day before Fajr and before maghrib and Isha.

11. If one becomes frustrated to change the subject.
12. "Sit facing qibla at the time of reading." 1
3. "Pray salaa of submission, for it will assist in the acquisition of knowledge."
14. Take a notebook for every occasion. "One who does not have a notebook in his/her sleeve, does not establish the wisdom in his/her heart." Prophet (S.A.W.)
15. The strongest means of increasing memorisation is exertion and perseverance.
16. Reducing eating and to recite Salatul Tahajjud (Shab) also increases memory.
17. Reciting Qur'an especially Ayatul Kursi.
18. Reciting salawaat.
19. Brushing teeth, drinking honey and eating 21 red raisins everyday before breakfast will increase the memory.

FOCUS ON N FOR NAFS (SPIRITUAL NEEDS)

Continuing with the 4 human needs of - N for nafs needs (spiritual), E for emotional needs (social), W for well being needs (physical) and S for smart needs (mental).

Let's look at the last and probably the most important one and that is the **N for nafs needs** or spiritual needs. We live in a society where we tend to think that we should do things 'my way' and 'let me do my own thing' – in other words a very selfish existence – Not only is this attitude one that leads to frustration and no peace but thousands of years of history has taught us that the greatest fulfilment of life lies not in living for ourselves but for a divine cause which inspires the serving of others. The essence is to be able to do everything for Allah and according to the laws of Allah.

It is the ability of living to die – not dying to live. – It allows one to discriminate between right and wrong – to question the purpose of existence – to transform one's situation – As Imam Husayn (A.S.) said "Life is nothing but hijra and jihad." It gives a meaning to life. That which takes away the 'emptiness' in a human being –It makes us respond to the Qur'an –that allows us to witness janna and jahannam on earth – that which takes us closer to Allah. How do we recognise that we are meeting the needs of our nafs? – It is the ability in a person to bring higher vision and value to others and showing them how to use it – in other words a person who motivates others. One whose nafs is looked after is incapable of making anyone or anything a victim, one who does not use any force against another.... Our Ma'sumeen are perfect examples for they taught us with that which awakens in us the recognition of truth - When the needs of the nafs are not met it shows up in the form of grief and sorrow – A perpetual state of anguish and no possession of peace of mind and body – should an affliction visit them they lose all forbearance and strength and they have no fortitude in the face of events.

Prophet (S.A.W.) “Should I tell you who is the most intelligent and most stupid? “ (Kayyis and ahmaq) “The most cleverest of human beings is the one who takes account of his/her nafs and works for that which will serve him/her after death and the most stupidest is the one who follows the selfish desires of his/her nafs and seeks security from them.”

So where do we start? First with self awareness! Keeping your goal of Janna in mind answer the following questions – What is my current situation in relation to my goal? How do I need to change it to get me on course to it? What are my greatest strengths? What strengths do others notice in me? What do I enjoy doing? What qualities of character do I admire most in others? Who do I see as my role model when I look in the mirror of Karbala? Why him/her? What has been the most peaceful moments for my nafs in my life? Why? If I had unlimited time and resources what would I do? When I daydream, what do I see myself doing? What are the 2 most important things to me? When I look at my life, what activity do I put the greatest worth to? What do I think people would say if I were to die today? What do I want them to say?

The next step is to educate the nafs-
How?

1. By reading and pondering over the stories of Qur’an and of the past to make the nafs aware of the true reality of life on earth.
2. To stand apart and learning from our own experiences.
3. To observe and learn from the experience of others.
4. To take time to listen and respond to the inner voice of the nafs.

The third step is to do shukr of the freewill given to us by making and keeping promises – each time we do this it increases our integrity. It’s important to start small. Make and keep a promise even if it means you’re going to get up for salaa a little earlier than usual or not watching TV on Thursday night – Try not to break the commitment to

yourself and build slowly until your sense of honour becomes greater than your moods. Think carefully when you say “I will do this” and then no matter – do it. Remember that the greatest battles are fought in the silent rooms of our nafs. It is this that the Prophet (S.A.W.) called the greater jihad.

Finally visualise your future and work towards it. The best method to predict your future is to create it.

CONCLUSION

In essence we need to align the clock with the compass – in other words our time with that which we see as the most important aspects of our life. The first four directions of Eiman, Networking, Walidayn and Salaa are necessary to build harmony between the Physical (Well Being), Spiritual (Nafs), Mental (Smart) and Social (Emotional).

Suratul 'Asr sums it up – A human being is in loss unless he/she uses his/her time towards Eiman, Amilis Saalihah, Amr bil Ma'ruf and Nahyi Anim Munkar. Eiman relates to the spiritual, Amilus Saalihah (good deeds) can only be performed when there is mental agility (knowing what is good) and physical ability to perform it and amr bil ma'ruf and nahyi anil munkar are the ability to feel enough empathy towards others to be able to take them forwards – in other words to serve them by assisting them to reach their full potential.