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PURPOSE OF LIFE

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ
وَ مَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“And I have not created the jinn and the human being except that they should do my ibada” **51:56**

- ☞ All actions of life are as pearls. Purpose of life to be able to string them all together with ibada (connectivity to Allah). The final knot on the string being death – the human’s being crowning glory of life.
- ☞ All actions of a human being categorized into two – pleasure orientated and goal orientated. Pleasure orientated acts are under direct influence of instinct, nature or habit which is second nature. Goal orientated acts are according to reason and volition with a view of benefit. The human being constantly implementing some design, theory, plan... Just reason and reflection not enough. Insaan is a social being – thus consultation may be also required and one cannot choose one’s way independent of others. However, neither self sufficiency nor consultation can produce the goal – ultimate contentment – the pleasure of Allah – there is a need for a divine ideology. An ideology based on selfless love.
- ☞ Kant (German Philosopher) on his tomb stone – “two things fill the mind with ever new increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them; the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.”
- ☞ “Man arafa nafsahu, faqad arafa rabbahu’ Imam Ali (A.S.) He who has recognised him/herself has indeed recognised his/her Rabb.
- ☞ Physically ponder over the Designer of your body – e.g. a cut , who is the invisible mender? Who reproduces exactly the same

pattern of skin? Immediate reaction from body's emergency services – 250,000 – 500,000 platelets in each cubic ml of blood, then fibrin – the wonder sealant converted from fibrinogen by thrombin – from calcium and Vitamin K – clots- shrinks – new growth – redness and tenderness – more blood, antibodies, defending cells (phagocytes) to combat invading bacteria....The work of a Rabb

- ☞ Spiritually what is the nafs? Have you ever cried for no apparent reason or found yourself sad or agitated? This I the voice of the nafs crying out for attention, asking to be nourished. Have you ever felt at total peace? Maybe on an occasion such as this on the 'farsh' of Imam Husayn (A.S.)? This too, is the voice of the nafs expressing deep satisfaction The nafs manifests the very reason for our existence, it is the one part of our being that directly reflects our true ibada – our connection to Allah. Even though it is hidden and not observable, it is the very fabric of who we are.
- ☞ The key is to see the value in every moment - we can not add more minutes to the day but we can utilise each moment to it's fullest by totally investing ourselves in the one activity we are engaged in at any particular moment ignoring everything that came before it and that will come after it. Remember, in the journey of life, the body is the vehicle and the nafs its compass. By following its voice, you remain focused on your destination – to pleasure of Allah and each day, each moment brings you closer. The very next thing you do, however small or insignificant will determine the rest of your day and ultimately, the rest of your life.

BIRTH

The first pearl determines the size, quality....of the others. In order to understand ourselves and be able to live a life in which every action is ibada, we must return to the beginning and look at the significance of our birth. The birth of each one of us was not an accident. Allah chose each one of us to fulfil a specific mission on this earth - Each human being matters, each person is irreplaceable. Many times it is said that because we did not choose to enter the world, our births are a stroke of coincidence or accident This cannot be further from the truth. Our very presence here affirms that He – Allah wanted us here and that He has invested His will in creating us.

- ☞ “If you want to know the reasons for the success or failure of a person, first look in his/her mother’s womb.” “Choose a proper place for your ‘nutfah’ (embryo) for children resemble their maternal uncles/aunts.” Prophet (S.A.W.) The womb that bears the child rules the world. Importance of a mother.
- ☞ Scientists and psychologists are only now beginning to acknowledge that which that Prophet (S.A.W.) told us 1400 years ago – that our experiences as a newborn baby have a profound impact on our inner psyches. A newborn is as receptive as a dry sponge. He/she hears perhaps even more than an adult hears, precisely because his/her conscious mind is not yet at work. He/she absorbs everything in it’s purest form, unaffected by the adult ego or intellect. It is highly recommended that the adhan be recited in the right ear and the iqama in the left ear. This adhan and iqama is our first lesson and direction to life.
- ☞ Bilal narrates -I heard the Prophet (S.A.W.) say: i) Those who recite Adhan are the trustees of the salaa and the sawm of the people. ii) Whoever recites Adhan for a year with the niyya of

Qurbatan Ilallah, will be forgiven of all his/her sins on the day of Qiyama even if they be more than the Mountain of Uhud. iii) If one recites Adhan for one salaa with the niyya of Qurbatan Ilallah, Allah will forgive his sins and grant him a place with the shuhada in Janna". "If possible do not abandon Adhan and try hard not to die without being a Muadhin".

☞ "A human being is like a tree. If you make a scratch on the branch of a full grown tree, you affect only that branch. But if you make even a tiny scratch on a seed, it affects the growth of the entire tree."

EDUCATION

- ☞ If there is one single factor within our control that can directly influence who we are as people, it is education. It is the basis and sustenance of 'ibadah'. True education is that which reaches deep within a person empowering him/her to use the information to be more productive. It means sensitizing yourself and those around you to a good greater than one's desire.
- ☞ The why of education must precede the how? Dispute about what is education goes a long way – moral only v secular/scientific – in other words - religion v no- religion.
- ☞ After renaissance, rebirth of knowledge. Europe engulfed in darkness of ignorance when light from diff places - Arabic and Greek philosophy translated. Before Renaissance church dominated over crown - then logic and scientific facts clashed with the bible. Instead of dignity and honour to those who made discoveries they were persecuted and crushed. e.g. Galileo - talked of orbit of planets, imprisoned.....
- ☞ Truth can for a while be suppressed but not annihilated. Socrates when taking the hemlock was surrounded by his students - why? they asked - so that the truth in my mind be placed in the minds of all. In common history, he is one who saw 'death for a lofty purpose' as a ultimate force.
- ☞ Qur'an says - *"Soon those who do injustice will know what sort of revolution will revolutionalise."* **26:227** When there is injustice, there is an 'aah' from the heart, increase in injustice turns it into an appeal, then a flame and the flame becomes a revolution. In the Victorian age there was a problem of compromise for the intellectuals - faith or science and logic. It was difficult to reject science as it a hold over the intellect and conscience - the bible had a hold over habit - physical (Sunday church, social) and a declining hold over the soul.

- ☞ A complete force came against religion - LePlasse, Darwin, Newton... All abandoned religion saying we can now logically explain natural phenomenon without God. J Huxley said- "If the causes of the phenomenon are natural then it means they are not supernatural."
- ☞ Entered the age of reason. Reason became the standard criterion. Intellectuals approached everything in 2 categories. Accept that which made sense and reject that which did not . Therefore God & soul did not come into reason - rejected - World and body came into reason - accepted. Taqwa (righteousness) - only the functional norm was accepted. They deduced that all resources should be employed to make physical life comfortable - led to material and industrial revolution decorating the world as a bride. Intellectuals decided that religion gave nothing but persecution - freedom from French revolution - civilisation from Rome - Democracy from England. Therefore when West compared to East (where all religions were 'born) the West seemed as a giant (thus the term superpower).
- ☞ Nobody was asked to change their religion - Years of subtle social programming diluted religion. Keep Muslim names. Attend the mosques, read the Qur'an on special occasions but do not try to understand it - confine religion to the world and remove the concept of aakhirah . Thus those who seemed 'religious' were looked down upon and the secularists were looked up to. Their 'religion' was cash - this was credit..... This compartmentalised attitude was and is wrong for there can be no schism between the Creator and His creation. Science is ultimately the study of Allah – in essence science is the study of the Hand inside the glove of creation.
- ☞ Science and technology not something to be scorned at but we must balance the scientific with the spiritual. With

communication comes understanding, with understanding comes compassion and with compassion comes a natural movement towards universalism. Understanding science and technology as divine tools for personal and spiritual growth. Everyday our load of manual labour is lightened – do we take advantage of the extra hours?

- ☞ How do we revive the spiritual in order to unify it to the scientific? - Allah in the Qur'an in Suratun Nisaa - Aya 69 gives the hierarchy - *“And whosoever obeys Allah and the rasul, these shall be with those on whom Allah has bestowed ne'ma from among the **ambiya**, and the **truthful** and the **shuhada** and the **righteous**, and excellent are these as companions.”*
- ☞ Who is a nabi (pl. Ambiya) - comes from word naba' - news - one who brings news from a mystical world which is not understood. Then siddiqeen - **truthful ones** - who will verify these news - must be able to be cross examined to the full. Then **shuhada** - if truthful witnesses rejected then shahada is necessary for **righteousness**.
- ☞ “And indeed in the messenger of Allah you have a perfect example” He is ‘the’ teacher – what was his message? – “I have been sent if only to raise morality to it’s excellence” That is his definition of education!

QUR'AN

- ☞ Continuing with education – there are two main kinds of knowledge – ‘Irtiqaa’ – evolutionary and ‘Tanzili’ – revealed. That which is evolutionary is moving towards perfection whilst that which is revealed is perfection itself.
- ☞ Gaston Bachelard, a great thinker of our times, comparable to Descartes and Plato (who died quite unknown) believed that if an idea could be conceptualised into a geometric form, then it had found a proper language in which to express itself into. The most exact scientific concepts are mathematical e.g. numbers – a 5 is a 5 is a 5 because they are ‘tanzili’ – created in perfection by Allah.
- ☞ How do we understand the revelatory status of the Qur’an – It is a bound book with pages, numbers, ayaat. This book is Allah’s not ours – what is the demarcation – the difference between His book and one from human beings - Qur’an says – “Do they not ponder over the Qur’an, and if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many ‘ikhtilaf’ differences.” An- Nisa – 4:82
- ☞ In evolutionary knowledge it is through differences, disputes and contradictions that we progress – ‘ikhtilaf’ here is not a liability but an asset – if we did not have ikhtilaf we would not progress. No subject – abstract or concrete – science or arts-progresses without ikhtilaf. Museums graphically portray the history of progress through ikhtilaf. e.g. for 200 years, Newton’s theories remained unchallenged – then came progress through challenge. Compare old and new books on the same subject – you will see the flaws in thinking in the old.
- ☞ Qur’an presents a challenge – find ikhtilaf in our book and declare that it is not from Allah! Even he who said – ‘I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its door’ did not write the book –

However, interpretation and explanation also by those in whom there is no ikhtilaaf. Only one – the ma’sumeen – “Awwaluna Muhammad, awsatuna Muhammad, wa aakhiruna Muhammad.

- ☞ If we accept it as ‘the perfect book’ ‘the knowledge’ then where do we begin to study it and how ? Many aspects of ‘ilmul Qur’an besides reciting it correctly – tafahhum (understanding), ta’allum (learning), tadabbur (pondering), tafseer (commentary).. The Prophet (S.A.W.) – “The Qur’an is Allah’s university, so learn as much as you can in this university.” Biharul Anwar – Vol 92 – Pg 19
- ☞ Imam Ali (A.S.) – ‘Nothing shall remain of it (the Qur’an) except it’s name). He explains it by saying that Muslims will not respond to it. Suratuz Zumar – 39:23 – “Allah has revealed the best of narrations, where at do the skins shudder of those who fear their Rabb, then their skins and their hearts lean towards the remembrance of Allah..” e,g, Incident when Aya 2 of Suratul Hujurat revealed “ O you who believe do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet (S.A.W.)”
- ☞ Let us start with the aya that we recite day in and day out before we start anything “*I begin in the name of Allah, the Kind, the Merciful.*” What is the purpose of commanding human beings to begin every act in the name of Allah? The operative word here is name. When we wear name brands for instance we do that for a purpose - to be able to gain standing in a society where these names are recognised. A baby, for instance is named after someone whom one is fond of respected, thus reviving the memory of the name. Shaheed Murtaza Mutahhari in his book ‘Understanding the Qur’an’ writes that the reason why we begin in the name of Allah is.. He says “It is for the purpose of giving that act a sacred touch and making it blessed. When a human being who has a natural sentiment from Allah and considers Him a holy essence and a source of all Grace, begins an act in His

name, it means that owing to His sanctity, nobility and greatness, the action becomes sacred.”

- ☞ Imam Ja’fer As-Sadiq (A.S.) has said: “What stops one amongst you who has been busy in the day when he returns home to recite one sura before he/she sleeps? For every aya that he/she recites, ten good deeds are recorded and ten bad deeds erased..” “It is your duty to recite the Qur’an because stages of Janna are in accordance with the number of ayaat of the Qur’an. On the day of Qiyama a reciter of the Qur’an will be told : Recite and ascend, and the more he/she recites the higher the ascension.”
- ☞ The Prophet (S.A.W.) said to his companion Ma’adh: “IF you are eager for the life of the lucky ones. Desire the death of martyrs, wish for salvation on the day of Qiyama, want guidance when lost, then start the study of the Qur’an. This is because the Qur’an is the word of Allah, that which saves you from Shaytan and helpful in increasing good deeds.” Imam Ja’fer As-Sadiq (A.S.) has said: “It is for a believer that he/she should not die but in a state of either learning the Qur’an or teaching it.”
- ☞ Studying the Qur’an is not a passive act. It does not mean information transfer - rather it must reflect in our day to day living. It is the power that converts every act into ‘ibada’.. Our perspective of the world begins to change and we begin to see the ‘light’ within the ‘container’ - we learn to be sensitive to Allah’s grace. The recognition that everything from the falling of a leaf to the movement of the galaxies is mentioned in the Qur’an.
- ☞ Evolutionary – human being – “And Allah has brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers – you did not know anything – and He gave you hearing and sight that you may be thankful.” 16:78 Hearing and sight tools – collect ne’ma – evolution – towards perfection – through fallibility – we move ahead.

- ☞ Plato believed that everything tangible can be likened to a soap bubble as nothing that exists in the world of senses is lasting – He believed that we can never have true knowledge of anything as it is in constant change – we can only have opinions about things from the world of senses – he said we can only have true knowledge of things that can be reasoned – he found mathematics absorbing because the concepts never change – he believed that the nafs (soul) existed before the body but as soon as it entered the body it ‘forgot’ all it’s perfect ideas and a wondrous process of recollection and discovery begins – the nafs then yearns to go back to it’s true realm – Platos’ myth of the cave illustrating Socrates courage -
- ☞ Revelatory is perfect – through infallibility- – ‘The silent Qur’an (the book) and the speaking Qur’an (The Ma’sumeen).
- ☞ Challenge of Qur’an still stands – “And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our abd, then produce a chapter like it.....” 2:23 It goes on – “But if you do it and you shall never do it, then be on your guard against a fire whose fuel is men and stones....” 2:24 A book in our thinking has a topic, a theme... arranged in chapters with an intro and conclusion. The Qur’an has no subject, no topic, no intro, no beg, no end, no middle... wherever you pick it up, it is Qur’an. The linguists of the ‘Arab world took it upon themselves as a challenge but none could even comment.... Dr Taha Husein writes that the words in the Qur’an compress so much in such small sentences – like concealed lightning in a word....It’s originality stands – even the word ‘Qul’ – ‘Say’ not omitted – no one can ever say that Jibrail’s words – direct communication of Allah’s words. It’s eloquence and rhetoric could not be challenged – market place of Akkaz – poetry displayed and seminars held – best displayed on Ka’ba – Lebeyd bin Ziad – poet who embraced Islam after listening to Qur’an – stopped composing – “I can no longer do it, if this is the

words, all others are non sensical, I enjoy the Qur'an so much – no pleasure in comparable.”

- ☞ But how can 1 book be enough till the day of Qiyama? In life constants and variables – variables change – constants remain e.g. hunger remains as constant – variety of food changes.... Qur'an is constant – Eras may change - **Imam Ja'fer As-Sadiq (A.S.)** has said: "The Qur'an is living, its message never dies. It turns like the turn of day and night, it is in motion like the sun and moon. It will embrace the last of us, the way it embraced the first of us ”.
- ☞ It covers all subjects – it's universality is unquestionable – Does not say – ‘O Arabs’ – It is ‘O People’ ‘O you who believe’ ...surpasses all boundaries.... This was the main dispute between the rest of the Quraysh and Islam
- ☞ ‘A picture paints a thousand words’ – The speaking Qur'an (the Ma'sumeen) gave a graphical dimension to the words of Allah – no-one could twist and turn living examples – even history which records only exciting news records the excellence of the ma'sumeen – their ‘ilm – their mode of answering – their generosity- all news which is normally boring and unrecorded – why? Because it moved the nafs- it was a converter – it was ibada
- ☞ Dispute of rest of Quraysh remained the same with the Ma'sumeen – their universality – no Arab/non- Arab, no master/slave, no white/black. e.g. Bilal as first Muadhin.
- ☞ Recognise true educators, teachers not by what they have but what they do not have – ego, arrogance, self control – e.g. Imam Husayn (A.S.) and needy at door, gave all available, servant asked why not ask how much asker needs – “I too am one who asks at His door, to keep him waiting by asking could cause movement between hope and despair –I too do not wish to be kept like that at His door.”

- ☞ Recognise true educators by their students – Salman, Miqdaad. Abu Dharr –one teacher creates another and another and another – just as one candle’s flame lights another.....until there is radiance everywhere –
- ☞ The key to all this is ‘striving’ – trying our best. e.g. lizard trying to put out the fire built by Namrud, man on seashore throwing back starfish in the water to save them....

MULK

‘Ibada’ being every act which connects to Allah is therefore a means, a policy, a way. What is the ultimate goal? It is to be able to LIVE! To be able to create our own our own Mulk (home where we have absolute authority, where we are at peace, where we are content).

- ☞ What is the ideal Mulk – in human terms recognised as great through population, intellect, science, technology, wealth, safety, comfort – peace but not at the expense or exploitation of others. A life where there is no death, no illness, no old age..a life where there is no dreams or aspirations which cannot be made alive... a life where there is no negative aspects.... In other words that which Allah terms as Jannah. The place which we make by converting the material into the spiritual – converting every act into ibada.
- ☞ What is living? The world at large is fighting through all forms of media available to instil in us that we have been born to maximise the pleasures for life. Continually we are bombarded with ‘Die for this life’ – die for wealth, status, power, money... The approach of Islam is radical – it is – **LIVE TO DIE**.
- ☞ Allah in Suratul Mulk says “ (Allah is He) Who created death and life so that He may try you, which of you does the ‘ahsanu ‘amal’” Death first – Life afterwards – the essence of the message is to recognise that what we call life is temporal and death and that after death (the aakhira) is life.
- ☞ In Suratut Tawba Aya 38 – “....Are you content with the life of this earth instead of the aakhira? But the provisions of this world compared to the aakhira is but a little.”? We dressed our world like a bride? Filled our tables with delicacies? Filled our cupboards with the rainbow? Yet Qur’an asks _ Are you content with this?We are sent to the world with resources (main ones

reason and hands (no animal given them) – filled the world with rich cultures, history, epox... Are we content? In other words are we content with the physical/the material?

- ☞ Let us look at the phases of our lives – Childhood – a time to play – yet we spend it in studying, today the pressures of exams start even younger – Youth – a time for enjoyment – but the pressures of qualifying, employment, relationships, family take over – Middle age – riddled with worries – Old Age – health and energy give way – In this world troubles and pleasures go hand in hand – Can we call this living?
- ☞ Rousseau - a renowned philosopher (1712 -1778) writes in his work 'Emile': "I know that I am destined to die, why then should I create attachments for myself in this world?... Emile my son! If you wish to live happily and rationally, attach yourself only to the beauties that are imperishable; try to limit your desires and hold duty in higher esteem than all else.....Accept nothing, until your conscience allows you..."
- ☞ In the world we find with science we have a lot of fiction – enables human beings to fulfil their hopes, their desires in the world of fantasy. When Insaan finds that his/her aspirations are larger than the space he/she is given – gives rise to frustrations which leads to the ills we see. Is this living or a fallacy of judgement? Whitehead – 'Life is nothing but a continuous rehearsal of death.'
- ☞ How do we live? Who do we follow? First instinct to follow parents? Qur'an says – " And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve any but Him, and show goodness to your parents.....say not to them even 'Uf'" 17:23 If we ponder over this – it is accepted that there will be differences because of the generation gap – but He orders – do not make it apparent on your lips to them – they are evolutionary and therefore fallible -

- ☞ The only examples to follow are those who are revelatory/infallible – in essence whose brain cells are not subject to decay – their judgements encompass every age – “Indeed in the messenger of Allah, you have a perfect example.” Ahzaab – 21
- ☞ From his teachings – let us look at how we can start LIVING TO DIE. An advantage of living to die is that Allah in return promises to make every act which would have otherwise died into a living one – Suratu Yaseen 36:12 “Indeed We give life to the dead, and We write down what they have sent before and their footprints, and We have recorded everything in a clear writing.” In essence conversion of e.g. Habib Najjar, Hurr, Hans Christian Anderson..
- ☞ By nature the human being is inclined to righteousness just as a lamb is to be gentle and a horse to be swift. The first stage is ‘irada’ or intention (to be a murid). It is the keystone to the entire structure – “Intention is responding to the call of haqq on one’s own accord” Socrates said – “He who knows what good is will do good.” Intention is not only recognising it but wanting to devise a plan, a course of action to be able to reach it. “And those who want Allah, will find a way towards Him.” e.g. Intention of Hannah to give her child onto the service of Allah, intention of Imam Ali (A.S) to have a son to serve Imam Husayn (A.S.) – Abbas. Actions are visible/tangible thoughts – if a thought is aborted or frustrated it does not come out as an action - no clear cut barrier between action and thought
- ☞ Next observing all the waajibaat ☞ and keeping away from all the muharrimaat.
- ☞ Spiritual exercise (riyadhat). In Arabic the word riyadhat means training a young horse. A daily programme with effective time management of reflection, nafila prayers, salatut tahajjud, Qur’an recitation and gaining knowledge. However, it must be with moderation, and continuance.

- ☞ Continued tahara - to be in a state of wudhu and/or ghusl as far as possible.
- ☞ The spiritual traveller must constantly assess him/herself.
- ☞ Nahjul Balagha - Sermon 198 - A companion of Imam Ali (A.S.) called Hammam wanted signs of a virtuous person (one with nafsul mutmainna); he requested the explanation to be so vivid and graphic that he could visualise it. Some of the signs are: “...they have visualised mentally the glory of Allah in such a way that beyond Him nothing in this world frightens or overawes them....when they come across an aya (in the Qur’an) describing Janna., they feel attracted towards it developing a keen desire to reach it, while an aya about Jahannam makes them feel if they are seeing and hearing the raging fire and the groans of those who are suffering it’s tortures.....” “You will find he/she is firm in faith, resolute though tender hearted and kind...he/she is greedy for knowledge...he/she forgives those who have harmed him/her fully knowing that they have wronged him/her....thought he/she does good deeds he/she feels nervous of his/her shortcomings....every night he/she thanks Allah for having passed one more day under His Rahma (mercy) and every morning he/she starts his/her day with dua....”

WOMEN

Continuing with 'ibada' being every act which connects to Allah – We need to have ideals follow.

- ☞ For **women** the ideals of Hajra, Aasiya, Maryam, Khadija, Fatima, Zaynab (A.S.) need to be studied and their examples followed. If a woman cries with her whole being at the recollection of the name of Fatima & Zaynab (A.S.), yet does not know them save for the day of 'Ashura until noon, it will not help her to know who she wants to be?
- ☞ The 3 major monotheistic religions agree one basic fact – that both woman and man were created by Allah but disagreements start from there on - In Judeo -Christianity, the first sin was the sin of a woman. "The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it." Consequently God says to Eve – "I will greatly increase your pains in childbirth.....your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you." To Adam He says – "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree...cursed is the earth because of you,,,,,"(Genesis – 2:4, 3:24). Compare with Qur'an – 7:19-25
- ☞ "No wickedness comes anywhere near the wickedness of a woman..Sin began with a woman – thanks to her we must all die. (Ecclesiasticus 25:19, 24) "The birth of a daughter is a loss" (Ecclesiasticus 22:3) Compare to the elevation of woman by the Prophet (S.A.W) in a society where new born girls were buried. That is why women in the thoughts of the people of the Middle ages is so hated, weakened and held back from the ownership of anything. Even today, if a woman marries, she changes her name. She has no essential existence - A name is significant - she does not possess sufficient value or credit to have a name.

- ☞ Plato said women had similar capabilities to men yet he said – thank God I was not born a woman – Aristotle said a woman was an unfinished man
- ☞ With industrialisation, little by little women became economically independent. From society's point of view, this also meant that she was socially independent. She no longer needed to be part of a family. So much so that a child too restricts freedom and child bearing is delayed until one can 'afford' home help, etc..... Yet, she is the one who rocks the cradle and rules the world.
- ☞ In the consumer society, sexuality replaces love. In our traditional culture love takes the form of intellectually, religiously thinking restrictions. She is like a fly caught in a spider's web. Islam revolutionises the position of women.
- ☞ 4:34 "Ar-rijaalu qawwamuna alan nisaa...." Men are physically stronger and thus more aggressive – in dramatic contrast women are embodies with inner dignity – true human dignity does not holler – it is subtle, it speaks from within and revolutionalises....
- ☞ All mankind follows the memory of **Hajra** in the rituals of Hajj. The validity of Tawaf is dependant on making sure that Hijre Ismail is within the tawaaf. The semi-circular wall resembles a skirt and hijr means a skirt. It is here where Ismail was raised and here where Hajra is buried. The 'house' was built by Abraham (A.S.), freed by Muhammad (S.A.W.) yet buried here is a a black, woman slave. He (Allah) further says: "Indeed Safa and Marwa are from the signs of Allah" - Qur'an 2:158"...And he who gives Greatness to the signs of Allah - it is he/she who has taqwa in his/her heart.." - Qur'an 22:32 Why are Safa & Marwa His signs? In memory of Hajra and her 'Sa'ee' (striving) to find water for her son.

- ☞ "Allah sets the example to those who believe of the wife of Firawn; when she said Lord make for me with You a house in Janna and save me from Firawn and his works and save me from the unjust people" Qur'an 66:11 Firawn claimed he was God. Aasiya disclaimed his Lordship & cursed all those who claimed to be Gods. She was pegged to the ground & killed. Why did she ask Allah for a house? After all she had all material luxury- Mufasssireen say a house is an abode of return and permanence - She wanted a permanent place near her Lord.
- ☞ The mother of Prophet **Musa** (A.S.) – 20:38 & 28:7 Allah revealed to her to place her baby in a chest and put him out to sea – do not grieve nor should you fear... her tawakkul and eiman in Allah.
- ☞ **Bilqis** – The Queen of Sheba – 27:44 – Acceptance of the truth as soon as she realised it despite her position – powerful, influential and successful ruler of her time.
- ☞ Sayyida **Maryam** was called "Tahira" Told to go the town with her baby - An unmarried mother! The whole world doubted her purity. "O sister of Harun! you father was not a bad man and neither was your mother an unchaste woman" Qur'an 19:28 Her eiman and strength knew Allah would save her. She replied: She pointed to him (the child)..19:29 They said How can we talk to a child in the cradle?...19:29 Prophet Isa (A.S.) replied ..Indeed I am a servant of Allah, He has given me the book and made me a nabi... 19:30 A French writer talking of her says- for 1700 years everyone talks of Maryam, yet her greatest accolade is being the mother of Isa (A.S.)
- ☞ “..And He found you in need, and made you independent.” Qur'an 93:8. **Sayyida Khadija** was known as the princess of Arabia. She made her entire fortune an endowment for Islam. There has never been a better ‘investment’ in the entire history of humankind, for it’s dividends will pay to the end of time.

☞ “Indeed We have granted you Kawthar (abundance)” Qur’an 108:1 Muhammad (S.A.W.) is born of faith, jihad, revolution, thought and humanity. He is the inheritor of Nuh, Ibraheem, Musa, Isa..(A.S.) **Fatima (A.S.)** is his only heir. She is the Kawthar. Allah made the final link - Fatima (A.S.) - a woman. Glimpses into her life - Umme Abeeha (the mother of her father), Mubahila, Dahr, the threat to burn down her house, Fadak, her social responsibility not neglected because of her ethical purity. She continues to fight the oppressive Khilafate. After her death she becomes a slogan for all the oppressed, all those whose rights have been destroyed by pressure or deceit. Her children too are as she was.

AHSANUL 'AMAL

Continuing with 'ibada' being every act which connects to Allah – a key factor of being able to convert 'earth' into 'light' – material into spiritual.

- ☞ Ibada is to convert the nafs into a higher stage – not just concentrate on the physical – Allah warns of this in Suratul 'Asr – 'Innal Insaana lafiy Khusr' (Indeed the human being is in loss) ...except those who believe, do ahsanu 'amal, and enjoin good and forbid evil.... Question – Given body and nafs – if at death body annihilated – nafs lives – what is success and what is loss? Life is to be able to better what was given at start – body decomposes unless converted to spiritual – nafs how do we better it?
- ☞ Made from this earth – returned to it – Question – when we are taken out will we be better? – Suratu Taha 20:55 “From it We created you and into it We shall send you back and from it We will raise you a second time.”
- ☞ One Adam & Hawwa from whom earth inhabited. Earth – one planet in the galaxy filled with ne'ma like no other – it's atmosphere, it's temperature, it's riches, it's minerals, Same earth provides human being with highest product of blood whose heat provides thought and emotion – senses, nerves,..... assist in taking raw ideas into thoughts, ideas, laws, same heat causes lust, greed, power, etc.... It is the power of base (earth) which takes a human being to progress of 20th century. Need to convert this 'heat' from the earth into coolness of 'nur' – convert lust into love, greed into generosity, and radiate instead of consume. Life of Ibada
- ☞ Modern physics has taught us that no substance truly disappears and that matter is just another form of energy. A tree for example may be felled to make furniture - a table or a chair.

Regardless of how the form changes, the wood remains wood. When the wood is burnt it changes form again becoming an energy that gives heat and gas. The tree, table and fire are merely different forms of the same substance. It is the same with a spiritual substance.. Whatever we do is stored in the archives of nature... “wa kulla shayin ahsaynaahu fi imamim mubeen” Suratul Yaseen- 36:12 (And everything is recorded in a clear writing)

- ☞ To understand this let's look at examples from nature - The great storehouse of mental images – the brain – what secret archive is hidden in the brain capable of storing things so they do not intermingle and can be recalled in a flash. Professor Gayton – “The most complex problem that confronts us in our study of awareness, thought, memory and retention is that we do not know the nervous mechanism of a single thought.” – e.g Telepathy, hypnotism.
- ☞ The only ‘amal’ that turns from earth to nur is ‘ahsanu ‘amal’ – Imam Sadiq (A.S.) when commenting on the aya 67:2 “...so that we may test you as that who does ‘ahsanu ‘amal...” said “It does not mean one of you whose deeds are more numerous but one who is more rightful in his conduct, and this righteousness is nothing but the fear of Allah and sincerity of niyya and fear.” Then he added “To persevere in an action until it becomes sincere is more difficult than performing the action itself, and sincerity of action lies in this that you should not desire anyone to praise you for it except Allah, and niyya supersedes action. Lo! Indeed niyya is action itself” Imam then quoted aya 17:84 “ Everyone act according to his/her shakilatih (character)..” Imam explained that character meant intention.
- ☞ Reflect deeply upon your personal world, you will find that your world is the result of your own actions and thoughts. There is very little separation from action and thoughts. Where does

thought end and action begin – we cannot define a boundary – Actions and thoughts are continuous – My thoughts and actions are not isolated from those around me and the environment – try for a minute to isolate your own private world – why did I create my world this way and not that? If we ponder deeply, break it up and look at it from different facets we will come to the conclusion that my world is a result of my actions and thought interacting and superimposed upon the actions and thoughts of those around me.

- ☞ Now let us look at the individual – the actions of the 'I' – every action has an equal reaction – If I am mean to someone, she will be cold towards me – As the Qur'an says in Suratuz Zilzal –that if you do as much as a mustard seed worth of good, it will come back to you. Actions and reactions are interlinked –you cannot say "I fooled them" You have only fooled yourself. Until one reaches that conclusion, one is baffled by how we can convert the earth to nur.
- ☞ One will find one's deeds 'illustrated' and 'manifested'. We know that an object's actuality depends on its form and not on its matter. Niyya constitutes the form of a deed and the action its matter. The apparent semblance of the salaah of Imam Husayn (A.S.) in its element may not have differed from that of Umar ibn Sa'd, but whereas for Imam it was a means of nearness to Allah and had the highest spiritual form; for Umar ibn Sa'd it was just a physical action. The difference was niyya.
- ☞ Good deeds will be manifested in attractive, pleasant figures which will be a source of joy and pleasure whilst evil deeds will be manifested as terrifying, harmful figures which will be a source of pain and suffering. "On that day, the human being will become aware of all the deeds, good and evil, he/she has committed through out his/her life" Qur'an 75:13

☞ Qays bin Asim relates that he visited the Prophet (S.A.W.) in Madina with some companions. Qays requested the Prophet (S.A.W.) to give them some words of admonition as they were desert dwellers and rarely got an opportunity to visit him. The Prophet (S.A.W.) replied: "Pride is followed by humiliation, life by death, the world by the hereafter. Everything is subject to accounting.....There is reward for every good deed and a punishment for every evil deed..." O Qays! You have a friend and companion who will be buried with you. When you are buried, he will still be alive...If your companion is noble, he will honour you, and if he is vile, he will torment you. He will be resurrected with you and you with him. No questions will be put to you; they will be directed to you. Choose then a worthy and righteous companion, for if your companion is righteous he will comfort you, but if he is wicked, you will wish to flee from him in terror. **That everlasting companion and friend is none other than your deeds."**

DEATH

- ☞ The crowning glory or the knot at the end of the string of pearls is death. There are only two things that are certain in one's existence. One is birth - - indeed we are from Allah - and the other is death - and indeed to Him we will return.
- ☞ We prepare for the birth of a child, even calling the mother an 'expectant' mother but we do not call ourselves 'expectant' marhumeen even though the journey of death to the aakhira' is inevitable and unavoidable. However, sooner or later, because of our old age or illness, or that of someone we love, or the news of the death of someone in the community we are forced to face the reality of death realising the need for preparation for the journey.
- ☞ Imam Husayn (A.S.) said to his companions on the day of Ashura: "Death is nothing but a bridge over which you pass from this world of distress and affliction towards a vast heaven of eternal bliss. Who amongst you does not like to migrate from the (worldly) prison to the (heavenly) palace? And as for your enemies, it is like migrating from the palace towards the prison."
- ☞ We were created in 9 stages – 1. All the nafs were created (born and yet to be born) (7:172-174), 2. The worlds and heavens, 3. Prophet Adam & Sayyida Hawwa. 4. More human beings by the transfer of blood cells, 5. Cells developed into foetus 5. Soul enters baby, 6, Death 7. Barzakh (interspace) 8. Resurrection 9. Aakhira (Janna & Jahannam)
- ☞ Dua Adeelah – “..I testify that death is certain, questioning by Munkar and Nakir in the grave certain, the raising of the dead is certain, the decrees are certain, the sirat is certain, the balance is certain, the account is certain, the book is certain, Janna is certain, the fire is certain...”

- ☞ What is death? “...It is He who created death and life that He may test you - as to which of you does the best of deeds; and He is the Honourable, the Forgiving.” **Suratul Mulk 62:1** We have not seen life or death. All we see is the effect of life and death. When we see bodily activity we say we are living... When we see no movement in the body, and there is no heartbeat or brain activity we pronounce the body dead. Islam says death is when the nafs separates from the body. What is the nafs or ruh – Qur’an 17:85 – It is from the ‘amr’ of Allah. Amr – command, work, creation without matter (a form of energy).
- ☞ Exact timing of death known only by Allah. When death approaches and the five senses cease to function, one sees in spiritual vision the whole of his/her life flash by. One also sees three things which claim to be friends -One of them says - I will remain with you till your death. This is worldly wealth and assets. The second says - I will accompany you to the entrance of your grave - These are family and friends. The third says - I will remain with you forever. These are one’s deeds.
- ☞ 4th Imam – “Allah has said: I do not hesitate in any order, except the death of a mu’min/a, he/she dislikes death and I do not like displeasing him/her, so when the time of death approaches, Allah sends 2 angels – Mushkiyya & Munsiiyya to make him generous and forget worldly affairs...” Then angel of death comes and tells him/her not to worry – Qur’an 89:27-30. Nafs near body, hovers overe through ghushl. Kafan, salaa ‘ala mayyit until burial. Thus handle gently, speak no evil of him/her.. Relationship described by ‘Aimma of nafs to body as mother to her infant.
- ☞ Izrail takes the nafs back to Allah – “:156 – “Indeed we are from Allah and to Him we return..” Nafs taken as in sleep – Suratuz Zumar – 39:42 “Allah takes the nafs at the time of their death

and those that die not during their sleep, He withholds those on whom He has passed the decree of death and sends the others back till an appointed term...”

- ☞ Is death painful? Because even the word ‘death’ strikes fear in the heart - fear is almost often associated with pain – Justified punishment ..We must therefore first understand the aspect of punishment (adhab). Punishment for sins is in seven stages. Adhab is not revenge of Allah, nor does Allah enjoy punishing mankind. It is a form of cleansing and curing just like a doctor who cures his patients. The cure may entail the need of pain - injections, operations.....and is not the result of the doctor being cruel to the patient but rather being merciful and kind The seven stages of punishment are i) In this world ii) When death comes iii) The squeeze of the grave iv) Barzakh v) Day of Judgement vi) The bridge of sirat vii) Jahannam The Punishment therefore is on a graded basis.
- ☞ Talqeen (understandable because ‘Arabic is a tanzili language – not irtiqaai) recited before burial and after people have dispersed at the graveside – Questioning in the grave – accountability is of attitude – squeeze of the grave – for some like the embrace of two friends but for those whose sins have still not been cleansed by death, it is severe – then enters the period of barzakh (interspace) “..And before them is a barzakh (barrier) till the day of Qiyama” Suratul Mu’minun 23:100
- ☞ Barzakh is therefore the period of time in the grave from burial upto the day of Qiyama. Life in barzakh is characterised by the liberation of the nafs from the fetters of the body. The nafs is no longer harassed by passion and instinct, and there is no question of time or space in barzakh just as it is in dreams, and thus the horizon’s of a human being’s vision is vastly enlarged. Everything can be imagined is a single instant. The nafs of he/she who is virtuous is no longer constricted in the cage of the

world and will delight in roaming freely through the infinite. The nafs is on a different realm after death, yet it does not completely sever its relationship with the body which it used as its vehicle for its destiny. Imam Ja'fer As-Sadiq (A.S.) has said: "The arwaah of mu'mineen meet each other....they talk to each other and recognise each other, when you see someone there, you will say. 'This is so and so.'" Those in barzakh can also establish contact with those in the world.

- ☞ Sleep is a daily instructor (a daily rehearsal) where the power of the nafs (self) is temporarily suspended in a limited sense. In other words the nafs is temporarily released from the body. It transcends the physical parameters.
- ☞ Death is a similar long suspension of the self except the body is totally neglected. Just as we get up after daily sleep, in the same way we will get up on the day of Judgement.
- ☞ In life, the abilities we acquire stand out of our self – what remains part of the 'I' the nafs - is the insight, the knowledge, the enlightenment, the theory of the experiences of the life of the world. The nafs therefore builds up an exclusive 'nature' (attitude).
- ☞ The tasting of death as mentioned in Qur'an is by the 'nature' – the 'attitude' of the nafs – what sort of energy, strength did we accord to our nafs.
- ☞ In the grave, therefore we are not asked about our actions – these are produced by the physical body – but since acts are grossified thoughts – it is the attitude of the nafs which is questioned – in other words the aggregate of the ideas, thoughts, beliefs...etc.. which are questioned – in other words aqeeda Your true self is the centre of accountability. The 'right' and/or 'wrong' of this will be awarded with its recompense in the grave – how? Just as it does in sleep – pleasant dreams, or nightmares which will be translated into reality in Qiyama when

the body and the nafs will be united so perfectly that Qur'an says verification will show that we will have the same thumb impression. e.g. Scrooge in The Christmas Carol, Habib Najjar in Surat Yaseen, Suratun Nahl – Ayaat 28, 29, 30, 32.

- ☞ “And We have made every human being’s actions to be bound to his/her neck, and We will produce it to him/her on the day of Qiyama – a book which he/she will find wide open. Read your own book...” Surat Bani Israil 17:13,14 We write our own autobiography – we make our own future!!!!
- ☞ Another facet in which to see death and prepare for it is to see it as a journey - When one undertakes to migrate or in other words travel in the world there are numerous preparations to be made: i) Tickets (means of travel) ii) Passport iii) Visas iv) Inoculations/Health certificates v)Clothes (befitting the particular climate of the country of destination) vi)Funds (in the right currency or recognised changeable funds) vii) Ensure that all is settled at home e.g. bills paid... viii)Leave behind someone trustworthy to look after affairs. The same criteria applies to the transitional journey of death. Imam Ali (A.S.) has said: “Believe me, I know not of any blessing as great as Janna, yet those who seek it are lazy and unconcerned about it. There is no punishment as formidable and everlasting as Jahannam and yet those who wish to escape it are so fearless of it.”
- ☞ We must be prepared all day, every day as the date of travel is not known. Fortunately, the tickets are provided by Allah and we do not have to bear the cost.
- ☞ Since there is a choice of two destinations, the passport and visa requirements vary. The first stage is to know which destination we wish to travel to and make a firm niyya (intention). Movements and journeys are useless if there is no arrival. It is said that niyya is a flame of a fire of love. When it is lighted in the heart then only does one begin to respond. For the

destination of the pleasure of Allah (Janna), the passport must confirm bay'a to Allah, his Prophets and the Aimma. We made the bay'at at birth. Unlike a worldly passport there is no necessity for witnesses or swearing the oath in front of a lawyer for allegiance to the country - Here the judge and the witnesses is our own nafs - for if we try and fool Allah we are only fooling ourselves as is said in Suratul Baqara, 2:8 & 9: "And from humankind, there are those who say - we believe in Allah and in the last day whilst they are not believers. They intend to deceive Allah and those who believe but they deceive only themselves but they do not understand." For the destination of Jahannam, there is no need of a passport at all.

- ☞ The visas for Janna are even more difficult to obtain. Numerous qualifications are required amongst them truthfulness, patience, salaa, zakaah, amr bil ma'ruf, nahyi anil munkar
- ☞ The clothes are simple and easily obtainable - A kafan. The Prophet (S.A.W.) has said: "One of the qualities that purify the heart is to acquire a kafan."
- ☞ Make sure all debts are paid or provisions made for them; be they in monetary terms or in the form of someone's feelings. Always keep a record of the dues to Allah (qadha wajibat).
- ☞ The funds to spend there must be in the right currency. In the hereafter, the only acceptable currency is thawabs. Besides daily wajibat and good deeds it is essential to invest in an investment that will yield constant return until qiyama (thawab e jari).
- ☞ Leaving behind someone to look after your affairs can be in the form of bringing up a righteous child and/or serving mankind by giving zakaah of time, wealth, knowledge... which will adopt this role.

IBAADA

**DO NOT DIE TO LIVE
RATHER
LIVE TO DIE**