

Today's Youth And Search For Sustenance

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ يَا وَلِيَّ الْعَصْرِ (عج) أَذْرِكُنَا

Today's youth and search for sustenance

The moment Allah the Almighty, of His Grace and Blessing, confers the bounty of child on them, parents – especially the educated ones – start making plans for their beloved. To achieve these plans, the child's education process commences. The most critical juncture in this process arrives when the ward reaches the 12th standard (H.S.C.) because it is here that he has to branch out in the field of specialization. The primary concern for the parents is that the child should be sent to a field where his income levels must be high enough to provide him with a comfortable life. To put it simply, 'Which field will lead to maximum monetary benefits?' This point is drilled so hard and so frequently in the child's mind that he starts believing that the only purpose of education is to make money.

Keeping this objective in consideration, the journey of education begins. The child is admitted into a course where he is expected to enjoy financial security. Admission into a good college and an important course

does not, by any means, guarantee success in that field. It's clear for all and sundry that all those who manage to get a seat in a prominent branch, do not necessarily go into its second year or semester. With passing of each year or semester, the drop-outs increase as well. Of these, only a few succeed in completing the entire course and of these successful candidates, the top rankers can be counted on fingers. Moreover, amongst these rankers, it is not necessary that everybody gains financial success. For instance, of those who gain admission in the first year of MBBS, not all succeed in passing its final year. There are many who drop out after the very first year itself while some leave in the second. The number of those who succeed in the final year is far less than those admitted in the first year. Also, of these successful candidates, not all have a flourishing professional practice. Only few enjoy a prosperous practice and mint money while others just manage to make ends meet. Often one comes across qualified doctors whose source of income is not their professional qualification. Rather, they earn their bread and butter through some other means. The same applies for all fields of education.

Why?

Special People for Special Tasks

Everybody cannot do all kinds of work. Admission into a prominent college is not the only criterion for success in any field; rather, it also requires natural disposition and innate inclination. Harmony between the selected course and the student's natural disposition is of paramount importance. If he is not naturally inclined towards complex mathematical calculations and figures, pushing him for a course in engineering or accountancy will not guarantee success.

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) advised,

إِعْمَلُوا فِكُلِّ مَيْسَرٍ لِمَا خُلِقَ لَهُ.

“All of you should act, but you should remember that only those works are easy for you for which you are created.”¹

In this regard, the experts are of the view that,

“There is consensus on the fact that potentialities open up after maturity. Youngsters should select only those fields that are compatible to their potential and talent. This is even more applicable for the youth who need to get immediate employment. Being attentive to these

¹ Safinatul Behaar, the word Yasr, page 732

potentialities and talents is extremely important. To detect one's aptitude and talent, aptitude tests developed by modern social scientists are quite useful. Of course, it should be borne in mind that in some special and selected cases, these tests may not be 100% beneficial and may even limit the fields of potentialities.”

Hence, before securing admission into a particular course in a college, either the parents or the youth himself, goes for an aptitude test and then selects the suggested course, success will not be far and will also manage to get quick employment. They will also be saved from the frustration and disappointment of unemployment and job-hunting.

It is an established reality that everybody cannot be a doctor or an engineer. If everybody becomes a doctor, engineer or a C.A., the system of the world will be disrupted in its entirety. An ordinary labour or a technician is as important to this world as a doctor or an engineer.

Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) informs,

لا يزال الناس بخير ما تفاوتوا فاذا استووا هلكوا.

“As long as people are different, it’s good for them. If they all become the same, they will be destroyed.”¹

Criterion For Respect

Here, it is absolutely essential to indicate that in the religion of Islam, world and its positions and status are not the criteria for respect and honor lest a qualified government officer considers himself as superior to an ordinary clerk or peon. The criteria for respect and superiority in Islam are piety and faith.

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

“Surely the most honourable amongst you is the most pious of you.”²

Hence, it’s quite possible that an ordinary peon gains proximity to the Almighty on account of his piety and strong belief while a top-ranking public officer may be lowly and degraded as he lacks these vital qualities.

¹ Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 77, page 385.

² Surah Hujuraat (49): Verse 13.

Differences in Potentialities and Abilities

Every individual can indulge in multi-tasking but his abilities and talent in all tasks and fields are not the same. Here, the point is not of rivalry and competition. Two brothers differ with each other talent-wise. Therefore, if one is weak in education does not necessarily mean that he may be weak in all walks of life. Now, if the parents continue to insist on this child to gain higher education, they may not meet with much success. The right approach to this problem is that after he has gained elementary education, the aptitude of the child should be tested and he should be placed in a field where he can use his talent and aptitude to the maximum. In this way, he will achieve great success in a very short time. With the help of his talent and abilities, he will locate newer avenues and sources of income. To maintain the system of the universe, all kinds of individuals are required. Allah the Almighty has created different folks for different strokes. It’s our duty to locate our aptitude, select the field and proceed in it to gain success.

Imam Ja’far Sadeq (a.s.) admonishes,

كُلُّ ذِي صِنَاعَةٍ مُضْطَرٌّ إِلَى ثَلَاثِ خِصَالٍ يَجْتَلِبُ بِهَا الْكَسْبَ وَهُوَ أَنْ يَكُونَ حَادِقًا بِعِلْمٍ، مُؤَدِّيًا لِمَا نَهَى فِيهِ مُسْتَمِيلًا مِمَّنْ اسْتَعْمَلَهُ

“For every industrialist and professional to succeed in his field, it is essential that he possesses three traits: a) He should have scientific (knowledge) expertise in his field, (b) He should be trustworthy and (c) He should be passionate about his work.”¹

Importance of Farming and Gardening

Today, the profession that has been sidelined and ignored is farming and gardening. The modern-age youths are busy searching their sustenance in jobs and businesses. He considers it as beneath his dignity in being involved in farming and gardening and considers them as a lowly profession. An important reason for such warped thinking is our social system, a system where a doctor or an engineer is revered but not a farmer or a gardener. After completing his formal education, instead of running around for employment, if a youth uses modern scientific and technical knowledge in farming, Allah the Almighty will definitely grant him sustenance. One should not think of farming and gardening as demeaning and disrespectful. It is such a highly respected profession that our holy Imams (a.s.) were themselves involved in it. Imam Ja'far Sadeq (a.s.) states,

¹ Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 78, page 235.

كُنُوزُ اللَّهِ فِي أَرْضِهِ وَ مَا فِي الْأَعْمَالِ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ اللَّهُ مِنَ الزَّرَاعَةِ وَ مَا بَعَثَ اللَّهُ نَبِيًّا إِلَّا زَارِعًا إِلَّا إِدْرِيسَ فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ خَيَّاطًا.

“Allah’s treasures are in His earth. There is no task that is more loved by Allah than farming. Allah has raised every Prophet as a farmer except Idris, who was a tailor.”¹

In another tradition, the same Imam (a.s.) underlines the significance of farming in the following words,

إِزْرَعُوا وَ اغْرِسُوا وَاللَّهُ مَا عَمِلَ النَّاسُ عَمَلًا أَحَلَّ وَ أَطْيَبَ مِنْهُ وَاللَّهُ لَيَزْرَعَنَّ الزَّرْعَ وَلَيُغْرِسَنَّ الْغَرْسَ بَعْدَ خُرُوجِ الدَّجَالِ.

“Farm and cultivate! By Allah, there is no task that the people perform that is more permissible and purer than it. By Allah! One should farm and cultivate because these are the works that shall continue even after the emergence of Dajjaal.”²

Amongst the causes of unemployment in the modern day youth, one reason is that they have confined themselves to a few selected fields only and seek jobs only in large metros.

¹ Wasaael al-Shia, vol. 17, page 41.

² Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 103, page 68.

There may be numerous professions akin to farming and cultivation that are waiting for the educated youths to tap their potential. But the lust for fast-money has thrown them in such professions and jobs where they have even lost their mental peace and physical comforts. The lengthy list of desires and wants cannot be fulfilled in an average income.

Moreover, the increasing cost of education by the day forces the parents to borrow money to fulfill the aspirations of their children. Worse, the money borrowed is on interest where the amount keeps mounting each day. In such a situation, everybody wishes that he gets a plum job as soon as he completes his education (i.e. a job where the pay is good regardless of the kind of work that is to be done). All these so that he can repay the loans, buy a house, get married and have a settled and peaceful life. But....in the present circumstances, it is easier said than done. Thus, we see, that everyday a new issue comes to the fore. The atmosphere at home becomes tense. Various forms of illnesses are contracted. Reliance on Allah and His Prophet (s.a.w.a.) reduces by the day. Gradually, he starts raising objections against belief in Allah, His system and His justice. Ultimately, he becomes dejected and disgusted with everything in life.

Come! Let us see what are our responsibilities in the search for sustenance? Is everything in our control? Is the straitening of the sustenance or its expansiveness in our volition?

Seeking Sustenance

In the holy religion of Islam, being a burden on others is roundly condemned. It recommends that each one must strive to earn to fulfill his expenses with his efforts. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) said,

مَنْ أَكَلَ مِنْ كَدِّ يَدِهِ مَرَّ عَلَى الصِّرَاطِ كَأَنْبَرٍ الْخَاطِفِ.

“One who eats through his own striving will pass on the Seraat (the Bridge) like a flash of lightning.”¹

In another tradition, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) says,

مَنْ أَكَلَ مِنْ كَدِّ يَدِهِ نَظَرَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ بِالرَّحْمَةِ ثُمَّ لَا يَعْذِبُهُ أَبَدًا.

“One who eats of his own striving, Allah will look at him with mercy and never ever punish him.”²

¹ Jaame' al-Akhbaar, page 139.

² Ibid.

In yet another tradition, he (s.a.w.a.) informs,

الْكَادُّ عَلَى عِيَالِهِ كَالْمُجَاهِدِ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

“One who strives for the expenses of his family is like the one who fights in the way of Allah.”¹

In the statement of Imam Ali Ibn Moosa al-Reza (a.s.), such a person is regarded as higher in reward than the one who fights in the way of Allah.

إِنَّ الَّذِي يَطْلُبُ مِنْ فَضْلِ يَكْفِي بِهِ عِيَالَهُ أَعْظَمُ أَجْراً مِنَ الْمُجَاهِدِ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ.

“One who struggles to acquire from the grace (of Allah) in order to fulfill the needs of his family members is greater in reward than the one who fights in Allah’s way.”²

There are numerous such traditions, which clarify that seeking sustenance for one’s family is regarded as divine worship in Islam; that too, the greatest form of worship, viz. Jehaad. Thus, in Islam, Jehaad does not only mean to go and fight in the battle field. Rather, it implies the struggle to fulfill the basic needs for one’s self and one’s family.

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 96, page 324.

² Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 78, page 339.

Idleness Denounced

Where seeking of sustenance is glorified and extolled in Islam, in the same breath, it vehemently denounces and criticizes idleness and laziness. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) warns,

مَلْعُونٌ مَنْ أَلْقَى كَلَّهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ.

“Divine curse is on the one who is a burden on the people.”¹

That is, the one whose expenses are borne by others and he is loafing around, idle and unemployed.

Kindly pay attention to the following tradition: When somebody came to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), he (s.a.w.a.) would enquire, ‘What do you do?’ If he replied, ‘Nothing’, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) would express his disgust saying,

‘He has fallen from grace in my eyes.’²

Zoraarah narrates from Imam Ja’far Sadeq (a.s.), “A person came to Imam Sadeq (a.s.) and said, ‘My hands are not healthy enough to work nor do I have a capital to invest in business. In such a situation, what do I do?’ (i.e.

¹ Tohaful Oqool, p. 37.

² Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 103, page 9.

Since I cannot work, can I beg for a living?) Imam (a.s.) retorted,

‘Work even if you have to carry loads on your head but be needless of the people.’¹

From the above tradition, one can decipher the level of modesty and shame taught by Islam. It considers carrying burden on one’s head and being a labourer far better than begging or being an encumbrance on others.

Guarantee of Sustenance

Among the prime reasons vis-à-vis our sustenance in today’s times is the thought that everything is in our hands. If our child will not achieve success in this field, he will be deprived of everything. But this is not the case. Allah the Almighty has taken the guarantee to sustain all that He has created on this earth.

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا
وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا كُلٌّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ.

“And no living creature is there on earth but its provision is due from Allah. And He knows its

¹ Mahajjah al-Baizaa, vol. 3, page 3.

dwelling place and its deposit. All is in a Clear Book.’¹

From the above verse it’s clear that the guarantee of sustenance lies with Allah. Since He is aware of the abode of each and every one, He knows where to place its sustenance. There are numerous such verses in the Holy Quran.

Now kindly pay attention to the following tradition:

Abu Hamzah Somali (r.a.) narrates from Imam Muhammad al-Baqer (a.s.) that on the occasion of the last pilgrimage, Hajjatul Wedaa’, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) addressed the Muslims thus,

“Verily, the archangel Jibrael has informed that unless a person’s sustenance is not complete, he will not depart from this world. Fear Allah and seek sustenance in a proper way. Beware! The delay in sustenance should not tempt you to search for prohibited means of acquiring it. Allah has distributed legitimate sustenance amongst His creatures. He has certainly not determined prohibited means of sustenance for them. Whoever fears Allah and exercises patience, Allah will definitely provide him with lawful sustenance. And whoever

¹ Surah Hud (11): Verse 6.

transgresses the limits set by Allah and attempts to acquire sustenance through unlawful means, the same measure of lawful means of sustenance will be reduced from his destiny.”¹

From the aforementioned tradition, the following facts come to light:

1. Every person's sustenance is destined and determined.
2. Till he does not receive his complete sustenance, he will not die.
3. Man must acquire sustenance in a proper way i.e. through lawful means.
4. Delay in sustenance must not make a person opt for prohibited means.
5. Whoever fears Allah and is patient, he will surely receive his share of sustenance.
6. Whoever is impatient and tries to acquire sustenance through unlawful means, he will not receive his destined quota of sustenance. In fact, only that amount of sustenance that he has acquired through unlawful means will be deduced from the destined quota of sustenance.

¹ Al-Meezaan, vol. 3, page 144.

On this occasion, it will not be out of place to mention this incident. One day, Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) went to the mosque and requested a person to take care of his mule. This supposed caretaker took off the mule's saddle and walked away. When Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) came out of the mosque, he (a.s.) had two dirhams in his hand, which he (a.s.) had intended to give it to that person. But he (a.s.) saw that although the mule was present, the saddle was amiss. Giving two dirhams to his slave, Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) ordered him to buy a saddle from the market. The slave spotted the stolen saddle in the market, bought it for two dirhams and gave it to Ameerul Momineen (a.s.). On seeing his saddle, Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) remarked,

“The impatience of that person deprived him of his lawful sustenance but he could not manage to acquire more than the two dirhams that were destined for him.”¹

You observed that had this person been patient, he would indeed have received two *lawful* dirhams. His impatience deprived him of lawful means of sustenance. He got the same two dirhams but through illegal means. He did get these two dirhams by selling the stolen stuff at the same determined time. In fact, he got it little late. Had he been

¹ Meezanul Hikmah, The Chapter of Sustenance, H. No. 7228.

present outside the mosque, Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) would have given him immediately. But he got it late; it was only when the slave went to the market that he came in possession of these two dirhams.

Regarding the guarantee of sustenance, Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) says,

“Look at the ant with its small body and delicate form. It can hardly be seen in the corner of the eye nor by the perception of imagination – how it moves on the earth and leaps at its livelihood. It carries the grain to its hole and deposits it in its place of stay. It collects during the summer for its winter and during strength for the period of its weakness. Its livelihood is guaranteed and it is fed according to fitness. Allah the Kind does not forget it and does not deprive it, even though it may be in dry stone or fixed rocks.”¹

So, Allah the Kind, Who does not deprive a very tiny ant in the vast desert on a black and dark stone, provides it with the required livelihood, why will He deprive man, the noblest of all creatures, of his livelihood?

¹ Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 185.

Degree of Effort in Acquisition of Sustenance

On browsing through Quranic verses and traditions of the Ahle Bait (a.s.), a question that crops up in the mind is, ‘When Allah has guaranteed sustenance and we will receive only the destined amount of livelihood, why should we work at all? We should simply sit at home and the destined livelihood is bound to reach to us. Also, if we are supposed to work, what is the extent of the effort that we should put in?’

The reply is as follows: The system of this world runs on means and causes. For every thing, Allah the Almighty has provided a cause. For a tree to bear fruits, it is essential that we plant it in an appropriate place, water it regularly and take care of it. Consequently, after the passage of some time, this tree will bear fruits for sure. Of course, Allah the All-Powerful has the ability and power to send fruits without trees. Hence, Allah’s power is one thing and His system, another. Certainly, Allah has provided a destined livelihood for everybody but at the same time, He has made effort and striving as a prerequisite for its acquisition. His system demands that to acquire his livelihood, it is obligatory that man strives and slogs. Take the ant as an instance. Allah the Almighty has determined its livelihood and even guaranteed the same for it. But how hard does this tiny

little creature work for its livelihood! Similarly, man has to work hard for his sustenance and livelihood.

How beautifully has Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba (a.s.) presented this point!

“Beware! Don’t work so hard to acquire your livelihood like a person slogs to overpower his enemy. Nor rely so much on your destiny that you sit idle, without work because seeking divine grace and Allah’s sustenance is modesty. To seek it with moderation is also modesty. Neither modesty reduces the sustenance nor does greed increase it because livelihood has been determined and decreed. Greed and avarice only lead to man being involved in sins and crimes.”¹

Imam Hasan (a.s.) has explained this concept in the most lucid manner. Moderation is the right approach. Neither should one become crazy after it as if fighting an intense battle and spend all his strength and resources for it nor should one become lazy and indolent as to remain idle and unoccupied.

Another tradition of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) explains the point even further as to how hard should we

¹ Meezanul Hikmah, The Chapter of Sustenance, H. No. 7150.

work for seeking a livelihood and how much energy should we devote for it.

“Beware! Being busy and engrossed in a thing that is guaranteed for you shouldn’t keep you away from the thing that is made obligatory on you. For, the thing that is guaranteed to you will reach you inevitably but the thing that you have missed (i.e. the obligatory actions) can never be gained by you.”¹

Usually it is seen that man becomes so crazy after seeking a livelihood that day and night, he is gripped by anxiety over its acquisition. He becomes so engrossed in it that he does not get the time to even perform the obligations imposed on him by Allah. Even if he manages to perform his duties, they are done in such a way that although the resplendent verses of the Holy Quran are on his lips, his mind is totally occupied with thoughts about his business and trade. He does not realize when his prayer commenced and when it came to an end. The aim of prayer is to remember Allah, Who ordered Prophet Moosa (a.s.)

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

¹ Ibid. H. No. 7130.

“Establish prayers for My remembrance.”¹

Our prayers are everything but Allah’s remembrance. In the light of these traditions, a person should work only that hard for his sustenance that does not act as an impediment in the performance of his religious obligations. How nicely has Allah the Almighty presented this reality by saying that **‘We have not created the Jinn and the humans but that they worship Me.’** Now, kindly pay attention to the verses following the above verse.

مَا أُرِيدُ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ رِزْقٍ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ يُطْعَمُونَ. إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الرَّزَّاقُ
ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِينُ.

“I don’t intend from them any sustenance nor do I desire from them that they feed Me. Surely Allah, He is the Sustainer, the Possessor of Strong Power.”²

Immediately after talking about worship as the aim of creation, Allah mentions about His power of sustenance and that too with underlined hyperbole. One should be extremely cautious that the involvement of sustenance does not prevent him from Allah’s worship. Worshipping

¹ Surah Zaariyaat (51): Verse 56.

² Surah Zaariyaat (51): Verses 57, 58

Allah is the duty of humans. Performance of obligations will be the cause of increase in one’s sustenance and not its decrement.

Straitening and Expansion of Sustenance

All of us desire to be endowed with loads of wealth and prosper with riches unlimited. That we should have all the necessities and luxuries of life and there should not be anything found wanting in our lives. We desire that we should get all these with comfort and ease. To achieve these ends, we are slogging day in and day out trying our hands at one business after another, while the employed try to engage in multiple employments. More than our own country, our gazes are fixed at vacancies abroad. Conversion of stronger foreign currencies makes us feel that we will earn more livelihood abroad than in our own country. Once abroad, our needs can be taken care of more comfortably. We see the lives of a couple of individuals (who have settled abroad and live luxuriously) and say, ‘See, when he was here, he was in such a miserable state. But since he has gone abroad, how things have turned for the better for him! There is nothing that he does not possess.’ We start toying with the idea of going abroad and gradually, the idea gets firmly rooted in our minds. If we have to do something

and attain salvation from life's difficulties, there is only one way. Travel abroad and pick up a lucrative job!!!

By no means are we trying to imply that going abroad is not permissible, or that we are trying to restrain the people from getting a well-paid job and set up a flourishing business abroad. We just intend to underline the fact that safeguarding religion should be given equal importance, if not more, as acquisition of wealth; especially the religion and faith of the younger generation. It should not be so that we are unable to hand over the trusts of a great religion and beliefs that we have in our possession right now to the next generation. Also, it should not be the case that our younger generation becomes so engrossed and entangled in worldly matters that religion and beliefs become unknown entities for them. Therefore, along with seeking greener pastures abroad, we must also strive to look for places where the religious beliefs of our children will remain safeguarded so that our religious beliefs and deeds grow in direct proportion to the acquired wealth. Here, it is extremely significant to know the edicts of Ayatullah al-Uzam Sayed Ali Seestaani (may Allah the Almighty prolong his life!) in this regard.

- | A believer is allowed to travel to non-Muslim countries provided that he is sure or has confidence

that the journey would not have a negative impact on his and the faith of those who are related to him.

- | Similarly, a believer is allowed to reside in non-Muslim countries provided that his residing there does not become a hurdle in fulfilling his religious obligations towards himself and his family presently as well as in future.
- | It is haram to travel to non-Muslim countries in the East or the West if that journey causes loss of the faith of a Muslim, no matter whether the purpose of the journey is tourism, business, education or residence of a temporary or permanent nature, etc.¹

We have already mentioned that the guarantee of sustenance lies with Allah. The Holy Quran has indicated towards this reality time and again. Allah grants expansive sustenance to whosoever He pleases and He straitens for whomsoever He intends.

اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ.

“Allah expands the sustenance for whosoever He pleases and He straitens (for whosoever He pleases).”²

¹ Practical Islamic Laws for Modern Age Problems, pg. 42-43.

² Surah Ra'd (13): Verse 26.

Thus, abundance of sustenance or its deprivation is in Allah's control. Hence, for acquiring greater livelihood, more than relying on our efforts, we should supplicate to Allah. If man accepts Allah as his Sustainer and prays to him every moment for increment of wealth and riches, these riches will not be the reason for him becoming proud and arrogant.

Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) informs,

لَا يَمْلِكُ اِمْسَاكَ الْاَرْزَاقِ وَ اَوْرَادَهَا اِلَّا الرَّزَّاقُ.

*"None has the power to increase or decrease sustenance except Allah."*¹

Therefore, if the increase and decrease in sustenance lies exclusively with Allah the All-Powerful. Thus, to think that somebody else is responsible for my financial misery is absolutely un-Islamic. All these are satanic insinuations and instigations. Going to pseudo-saints and bogus god-men is not the solution to these problems; rather, the only answer is to beg and plead before the Almighty Allah to increase our livelihood and expand our sustenance. Moreover, we should make the Imam of our time, Hazrat Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) as the intercessor between us and Allah and ask for divine blessings.

¹ Meezanul Hikmah, The Chapter of Sustenance, H.No. 7118.

Devastations of Abundant Wealth

Who can understand human nature better than Allah? He is our Creator and familiar with each and every nerve and sinew of our existence. He knows our capacity and limitations. He's aware as to how much sustenance does each one deserve. If Allah the Almighty gives wealth to everybody according to their desires, man will become rebellious and defiant.

وَلَوْ بَسَطَ اللَّهُ الرِّزْقَ لِعِبَادِهِ لَبَغَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَكِنْ يُنْزِلُ بِقَدَرٍ مَّا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرٌ بَصِيرٌ.

"Had Allah given vast amounts of sustenance to His servants, they would have indeed turned rebellious in the earth but He sends down (sustenance) in measure as He wishes. Surely He is Aware, Seeing of His servants."¹

The words 'Aware' and 'Seeing' clearly indicate that the differences in sustenance are due to the capacities and conditions of the people. It is second human nature to rebel and transgress the limits when he finds himself needless and powerful.² If our repeated requests and supplications for increased wealth are not answered by

¹ Surah Shura (42): Verse 27.

² Surah Alaq (96): Verses 6-7.

Allah the Almighty, we should rest assured that it is for our own good. Kindly pay attention to the following verses of the Holy Quran,

Surely Qaroun was of the people of Musa, but he rebelled against them, and We had given him of the treasures, so much so that his hoards of wealth would certainly weigh down a company of men possessed of great strength. When his people said to him: Do not exult; surely Allah does not love the exultant. And seek by means of what Allah has given you the future abode, and do not neglect your portion of this world, and do good (to others) as Allah has done good to you, and do not seek to make mischief in the land, surely Allah does not love the mischief-makers. He said: I have been given this only on account of the knowledge I have. Did he not know that Allah had destroyed before him of the generations those who were mightier in strength than he and greater in assemblage? And the guilty shall not be asked about their faults. So he went forth to his people in his finery. Those who desire this world's life said: O would that we had the like of what Qaroun is given; most surely he is possessed of mighty good fortune. And those who were given the knowledge said: Woe to you! Allah's reward is better for him who believes and does good, and none is made to

receive this except the patient. Thus We made the earth to swallow up him and his abode; so he had no body of helpers to assist him against Allah nor was he of those who can defend themselves. And those who yearned for his place only the day before began to say: Ah! (know) that Allah amplifies and straitens the means of subsistence for whom He pleases of His servants; had not Allah been gracious to us, He would most surely have abased us; ah! (know) that the ungrateful are never successful.¹

Read the above verses carefully and decide whether hoards of worldly wealth are better or the reward of Allah and His mercy.

Abundance of Wealth is NOT the Sign of Allah's Satisfaction

Generally, people think that Allah is satisfied with the one who has more wealth and worldly riches. Similarly, He is dissatisfied and angry with the one who is suffering from afflictions and difficulties. But in Islamic teachings, this is certainly not the case. One thing is sure: Allah is not satisfied and happy with disbelief or disbelievers.

لَا يَرْضَىٰ لِعِبَادِهِ الْكُفْرَ

¹ Surah Qasas (28): Verse 76-82.

“And He is not satisfied with disbelief for His servants.”¹

Now ponder over the following verses,

And were it not that all people had been a single nation, We would certainly have assigned to those who disbelieve in the Beneficent God (to make) of silver the roofs of their houses and the stairs by which they ascend. And the doors of their houses and the couches on which they recline. And (other) embellishments of gold; and all this is naught but provision of this world’s life, and the hereafter is with your Lord only for those who guard (against evil).²

It is possible that Allah the Almighty makes the house of an unbeliever from golden roofs and walls, and his pillows and mattresses of silver. But the abundance of these riches is not an indication of His satisfaction and happiness. The Hereafter is only for the pious and God-fearing. That is, Allah can give the world to anybody. Even if somebody has the wealth and riches of the entire world so what? These are merely provisions of a transient life that will not last for more than a few days. One day, he has to forsake all of these and depart. The

¹ Surah Zumar (39): Verse 7.

² Surah Zukhruf (43): Verses 33-35.

world of Hereafter, which will last forever, is only for the pious and God-fearing. Therefore, whosoever Allah loves and intends to inhabit his Hereafter, He gives him only so much of wealth that may help him fulfill the basic worldly needs and his Hereafter is not ruined. A believer is sure that since the Sustainer is neither ignorant nor oppressor nor unaware, rather, the most Merciful of all merciful ones, whatever sustenance and livelihood He grants after our efforts and prayers is good for us.

Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) says,

‘Affairs descend from the sky like rain drops. Every human gets his share of it, whether less or more. If you see that a particular house has received a fairly large share of it, check out whether it is a means of their destruction for them or not?’¹

In another tradition, he (a.s.) informs,

“Allah the Almighty has determined sustenance. To some He gives more than others. This uneven distribution is on the basis of Divine Justice so that Allah may test as to how the rich is grateful and the poor patient.”²

¹ Meezanul Hikmah, The Chapter of Sustenance, H. No. 7117.

² Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 91.

Sustenance of this world is naught but examination. Allah tests by giving vast riches and also by inflicting poverty on His servants. The important thing is to be successful in this examination because the grades of the Hereafter depend on this very success. It is likely that a rich person may fail this test by being ungrateful in abundance while a poor and destitute man may be successful due to his patience and forbearance.

Causes of Abundant Wealth

The aforementioned discussions elucidate the fact that Allah the Almighty has distributed sustenance and livelihood amongst His creatures on the basis of prudence and justice. Differences in sustenance and wealth are to examine the creatures. Nevertheless, we can bring changes in this destiny through our actions. Just like our age that has been determined by Allah beforehand but can be changed by our actions i.e. our good actions can increase our age while our evil deeds can reduce the lifespan. The same applies for sustenance and livelihood. Our actions can increase or decrease our sustenance.

Hereunder, we shall mention a few factors that can increase our sustenance.

1) Seeking Forgiveness:

“So I said (to them), ‘Ask forgiveness from your Lord. Verily, He is Oft-Forgiving. He will send rain to you in abundance. And give you increase in wealth and children. And bestow on you gardens and bestow on you rivers.’”¹

2) Piety:

“And whoever fears Allah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make a way for him to get out. And He will provide him from (sources) he never could imagine.”²

3) Good Behaviour:

Imam Ja'far Sadeq (a.s.) prophecies,

“Whoever behaves well with his family members, his sustenance will be increased.”³

4) Good Deeds:

Imam Ja'far Sadeq (a.s.) foretells,

“Whoever performs good deeds, his sustenance will be increased.”⁴

¹ Surah Nuh (71): Verses 10-12.

² Surah Talaaq (65): Verses 2-3.

³ Meezanul Hikmah, Chapter of Sustenance, H. No. 7185.

⁴ Ibid. H. No. 7186.

5) Good Ethics:

Imam Ja'far Sadeq (a.s.) informs,

“Whoever bears good ethics, his sustenance will be increased.”¹

6) Easy Reckoning:

Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) states,

“Rudeness destroys good ethics and easy accounting with family members increases the descent of sustenance.”²

7) To Feed Others:

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) informs,

“Sustenance descends faster when you feed others. It descends faster than a knife pierces through the meat of a rooster.”³

8) Helping a Believer:

Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) says,

“Helping a brother in religion increases one's wealth.”⁴

¹ Ibid. H. No. 7187.

² Ibid. H. No. 7189.

³ Ibid. H. No. 7190.

⁴ Ibid. H. No. 7191.

9) Trustworthiness:

Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) informs,

“Trustworthiness increases sustenance and livelihood.”¹

10) Praying for a brother in faith:

Imam Muhammad al-Baaqer (a.s.) advises,

“Pray for your brother in faith in his absence. This helps in the easy descent of sustenance.”²

11) Always Being with Wuzu:

A person came to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) and pleaded, ‘I intend to increase my sustenance.’ He (s.a.w.a.) replied,

“Always be with wuzu; it will increase your sustenance.”³

12) Giving Sadaqah:

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) advised,

“Do as much charity as possible that Allah may increase your sustenance.”⁴

¹ Ibid. H. No. 7192.

² Ibid. H. No. 7193.

³ Ibid. H. No. 7194.

⁴ Ibid. H. No. 7195.

13) Giving Zakaat:

Imam Muhammad al-Baqer (a.s.) informs,

“Payment of Zakaat increases sustenance.”¹

14) Good Intentions:

Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) states,

“One whose intentions are good and pure, his sustenance and livelihood will increase.”²

Causes of Straitening of Sustenance

Just as in the previous part we have discussed about the factors that increase our sustenance, here we will briefly talk about the causes that decrease our livelihood and wealth.

1) Sins:

Imam Muhammad Baqer (a.s.) says,

“When a person commits a sin, his sustenance is dispelled from him.”³

2) Non-fulfillment of the Rights of brothers in faith:

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) prophecies,

¹ Ibid. H. No. 7197.

² Ibid. H. No. 7198.

³ Ibid. H. No. 7199.

“If somebody does not fulfill the rights of his believing brother or tramples upon it, Allah will disallow blessings in his sustenance, unless he repents.”¹

3) Intake of Prohibited Foods and Drinks:

Imam Ja'far Sadeq (a.s.) informs,

“Intake of Prohibited Food Straitens sustenance.”²

4) To do the opposite of all those deeds that are mentioned in the factors of increase of sustenance and livelihood. Some of these are as follows: Evil intentions, not to pay zakaat, not to fulfill divine rights, not to give charity, bad morals and undesirable ethics, ill-behaviour and so on and so forth.

¹ Ibid. H. No. 7200.

² Ibid. H. No. 7201.