

LIGHTHOUSE

The Magazine for Muslim Youth

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My Mother : My Guiding Light

By Mrs. Lubna Ahmed

I begin in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Al-hum-du-lil-lah, All Praise is due to Allah, the One and Only God, our Creator. Allah, out of His attribute of Beneficence, gives us without our asking. He has showered upon us, countless blessings for our physical growth. The Holy Quran, a spiritual blessing, enables us to make the right choices in life. One of the greatest gifts given to us as children is the tender care, protection, and love of our beloved parents. They reflect Allah's quality of beneficence, by taking care of our physical and emotional needs, without our asking. The Holy Quran tells us to first be thankful to Allah, our Creator, and then be grateful to our parents.

And We have enjoined on man concerning his parents – his mother bears him with weakness upon weakness and his weaning takes two years – saying: Give thanks to Me and to thy parents. To Me is the eventual coming. (31:14)

“Do good to parents,” is a statement repeated in many verses of the Holy Quran. (2:83; 4:36; 6:151; 17:23; 29:8)

The intent of this article is for children of all ages to appreciate the need to honor their parents, especially their mothers. There is a hadith, or saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace of Allah be upon him, which supports this.

Abu Hurairah said,

A man came to the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, and said, O Messenger of Allah! Who has the greatest right that I should keep company with him with goodness? He said,

“Your mother.”

He said: Who then? He said:

“Your mother.”

He said: Who then? He said:

“Your mother.”

He said: Who then? He said:

“Then your father.”

(Sahih Bukhari Hadith 78:2)

preserve the emotional and biological bond with their children, even when the latter have become independent.

My mother was a source of inspiration and a guiding light for me throughout my life. I was ten years old when my beloved father passed away. There upon, she diligently took upon the responsibility of filling the role of both parents. I will always remember her patience, perseverance, and courage under the most difficult circumstances. My mother understood the emo-



A mother's love for her child is unconditional. She is usually the one contributing most towards the moral and spiritual development of her child. This is especially true in households where the father works to bring food to the table, and the mother is in charge of the children and other domestic responsibilities. Even mothers in the animal kingdom, out of instinct, nurture their young, until they are old enough to be on their own. Human beings share this trait with animals, except they continue to

tional stress and difficulties faced by other widows. She would guide others and offer assistance in handling their problems, as if they were her own. She gave them hope and strength in times of difficulty.

“Forgiving and charitable,” are the two traits that remind me the most of my mother. I can comfortably assign these qualities to her without reservation. She never held a grudge against those who failed to appreciate her kindness and friendliness. Giving to the needy

and to charitable organizations was my mother's way of life. She would always take us to the nearby Christian Hospice whenever I visited her in Pakistan. She would order *Samosas* (deep fried potato wrap) and *Jalaibee* (Pakistani sweet) for the staff and residents. I still remember the smiles on the faces of patients when they saw her. It was a very spiritually rewarding experience to observe the good spirits of bedridden patients in the hospice ward.

Parkinsonism, a neurologically debilitating illness, overtook my Mother. She struggled patiently and bravely as a victim of this disease for about eleven years. Despite her incapacity to move freely, she would always want to visit her friends, especially if they were sick. She would always reiterate, "It does not matter if they come to visit me or not, I want to check on their welfare." I was advised by her to do what is right, and not pay attention to what others do or don't do.

During her last few years of life, she would continue to check with her household servants to make

sure their children were going to regular or vocational school. Their financial worries were her financial worries. Their sickness was her sickness. She was always trying to resolve their problems in one way or the other. I will always treasure these special memories of my mother. She taught me how to be compassionate towards the sick and the needy. She was a perfect role model for me, and I pray that I am able to follow her footsteps.

The Holy Quran in chapter 36 verse 11, describes the doer of good as one who, "*fears the Beneficent in secret; so give him good news of forgiveness and a generous reward.*" They are informed of the generous reward for their good actions in this world. Such people find happiness in this as well as eternal life. They have nothing to worry about.

The Holy Quran continues:

Surely We give life to the dead, and We write down that which they send before and their footprints, and We record everything in a clear writing. Ch. 36:12

Allah will give life to those who are

physically dead, and will bring them back to life on the Day of Judgment. All their actions are being recorded, and Allah is Aware of their past. Allah will hold them accountable for their deeds. Such people who have passed away have left marks or footprints of their good deeds in the form of knowledge and goodness. They may not be physically alive, but their goodness lives forever, as it is remembered and followed by others.

Parents are a generation ahead of their children, because of their age, wisdom, and experience. The special bond between parent and child should be nurtured to promote love and harmony at home. Children should express their love for their parents through respect and kindness. Remember these words come from a daughter whose mother is not here anymore.

And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy, and say: My Lord, have mercy on them, as they brought me up (when I was) little. Ch 17 verse 24



Make your own Beeswax Candles

By Miss Malaika Sahukhan

In order to make two candles, you will need

- Beeswax sheets 2 blue and 1 white
- Cotton wick for candles
- Cookie cutter (optional)

1) Warm the wax sheets by rubbing them between your hands, or using a hair dryer on the lowest heat setting.

2) Place the cotton wick along the length of the blue wax sheet so that one end sticks out. Start rolling the sheet as tight as possible. Cut the wick to the desired length.

3) Warm the white wax sheet with the hair dryer and using a metal cookie cutter, cut out as many shapes as needed.

4) Warm the wax shapes with the

hair dryer and put them on the candles. You don't need to glue the shapes on. Heating the shapes will make them stick to the candles.

Place your candles in a safe glass container and light them with adult supervision. Enjoy the soothing fragrance of beeswax from your homemade candles!



Thoughts on the Concepts of Clothing given by the Holy Quran

By Miss Aafia Ahmad

7:26 - O children of Adam, We have indeed sent down to you clothing to cover your shame, and (clothing) for beauty; and clothing that guards against evil – that is the best. This is of the messages of Allah that they may be mindful.

In this verse, three types of clothing are mentioned. The first is only to cover up shame, like Adam and Eve in Eden after falling prey to the temptation of Shaytan. As people progress and become more advanced, clothing can become a means of beauty. The best type of clothing, however, is the one that guards against evil, because it shows the further progression of people to the point that they embellish their minds with virtue to protect against the temptations of Shaytan. Allah's guidance towards the right path is the sending down of clothing. Allah gave us physical clothing, He also provided spiritual clothing in the form of revelation to protect us from Shaytan. Clothing that guards against evil can also refer to the way we dress, since simply wearing modest clothes is very hard in these times, because Shaytan tries to misguide us by tempting us to wear indecent clothes. This verse suggests that there is a strong correlation between dressing modestly and having good conduct.

7:27 - O children of Adam, let not

the devil seduce you, as he expelled your parents from the garden, pulling off from their clothing that he might show them their shame. He surely sees you, he as well as his host, from whence you see them not. Surely We have made the devils to be the friends of those who believe not.



The clothing that Shaytan tries to take away from everyone is the virtue of the mind, the clothing that guards against evil. The people who don't believe are the friends of the devil because they remove themselves from Islam, the source of purity, and fall into impurity. Shaytan influences the hearts and whispers evil suggestions, but he doesn't have a tangible presence. We are not at fault for having evil

thoughts, but if we act on them then the blame is on us.

7:28 - And when they commit an indecency they say: We found our fathers doing this, and Allah has enjoined it on us. Say: Surely Allah enjoins not indecency. Do you say of Allah what you know not?

What I understand from this verse is that we often see other people doing something wrong even though they're otherwise good people, so we justify that wrong act to ourselves. However, we should not outsource our standards of piety to anything other than the Quran. Allah's book will always guide us to the right way and does not permit anything indecent. Humans have an inherent disposition towards purity, and all religions help us to further that inclination. Therefore, no religion would advise us to do anything that is impure. Many people today see modesty as archaic and opposed to freedom, yet if those people would look at the scriptures of their own religions, they would find similar injunctions.

7:29 - Say: My Lord enjoins justice. And set upright your faces at every time of prayer and call on Him, being sincere to Him in obedience. As He brought you into being, so shall you return.

Here, the topic shifts from modesty to justice and prayer. This is

because indecency and impurity is an injustice against our self and society. Prayer is a fundamental institution of Islam that preserves modesty. The garment of piety is developed through prayer. If we are sincerely praying five times a day, there is no opportunity for us to slip into misguided, indecent behavior.

7:30 - A party has He guided, and another party – perdition is justly their due. Surely they took the devils for friends instead of Allah, and they think that they are rightly guided.

Allah makes a distinction between two distinct ways of life that a person can follow. Making friends with the devils refers to taking bad company. Often, when one makes a mistake in the choice of friends, the boundaries between truth and falsehood, right and wrong are blurred. The first steps towards correcting our behavior are to see things as they really are and to recognize that changes need to be made.

7:31 - O children of Adam, attend to your adornment at every time of prayer, and eat and drink and be not prodigal; surely He loves not the prodigals.

After telling us of the importance of proper clothing, Allah emphasizes that since prayer is an important meeting with Him, we need to be prepared and dressed appropriately. Adornments for Muslims can be things like good manners and a cheerful attitude, since we are often drawn to kind people with those qualities, rather than people who are only outwardly beautiful. This verse shows that Islam is the religion of

moderation because we are told to attend to our needs but also not to be wasteful.

Some final points:

- Islam aims for our complete reformation, which includes our outward appearance as well as our behavior, manners and morals.
- We should always try to balance the spiritual and physical parts of our development, for example, when buying new clothes and thinking about how we look, we should also be concerned about improving our manners and kind behavior to other.
- Indecency has no place in the lives of those who submit fully to Allah, because that is the true definition of a Muslim.
- Modesty is not just the way we dress, but how we act and what company we choose.
- We should try to be around those who encourage our faith, while distancing ourselves from those who make us doubt our modest behavior and dress because it doesn't conform to their modern standards of "freedom" and "liberation".
- We can't neglect the physical or spiritual aspects of our development because purity of mind must be accompanied by modest dress and behavior.
- Everyone is mobbing the stores on Black Friday for things that will improve the outward part of their lives, but it would be nice if we showed the same enthusiasm for spiritual improvement.

'Lighthouse'

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You Are Beautiful

A message from a mother to children everywhere

Beauty is rather peculiar.
Who gets to say what beauty is,
and what it is not?
Must we follow the standards others set
even if we don't agree with them?
I know some real standards
not fads, fashions, or trends,
but deep and lasting rules
of beauty.
Timeless wisdom:
Modesty is beautiful.
It always is,
always has been
and always will be.
Stick to this rule and
never go out of style.
Those who expose themselves,
cheapen their worth.
Comparisons are odious,
for Allah created us all to be unique.
Do you want to be one of the crowd?
a clone among an army of clones,
or one with a unique style?
Let your inner beauty shine and dazzle.
The glitter fades fast,
the glow always lasts.
You are beautiful,
not because your mother says so,
because Allah made you so.
This is a loving reminder from a mother
Who doesn't follow the latest fashion,
but knows a diamond when she sees one.
You are one.
Remember that.

Ask Ayesha...

and she will answer all your weird, wild and wacky questions

Dear Ayesha,

In Islam we are supposed to love the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) more than our family and loved ones and more than ourselves. I don't really understand what that means and how it works. Please help me!

Want-to-be-more-devoted

Dear Want-to-be-more-devoted,

What is love? No really, what is it? I don't mean that like the lyrics of a cheesy song you hear on the radio, but I really mean that as a true question! Words like love confuse me. It's such a tiny little word, to express ideas of great grandeur. Of course, language is faulty and restrictive. We know that things that have one word to represent them in a certain language, often can't be translated into others without using multiple words. An example is the word *Rabb*. *Rabb* is a characteristic of Allah with no direct English translation; it means: He who nourishes a thing through various stages until it reaches a state of perfection. I think to understand what it means to love Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), we have to understand the Arabic word for love and see what it means.

Where should you go to find out what love means? After doing a little Google research, I learned that there are many words for love in

Arabic and none of them really make the meaning any more clear. The internet also has many ideas about the meaning of love in English. I also started to think about what love really means, to me as a person and to our community as a whole. After combining these sources, I came up with the following ideas.

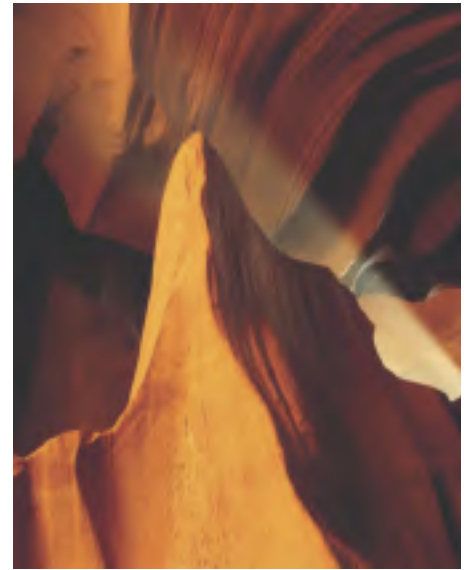
To love someone means:

- to prioritize them above all
- to want to emulate their good characteristics
- to respect and admire them
- to care for them deeply with tender feelings
- you hurt when they hurt
- you feel excited to be with them

Keeping these ideas in mind, how do we apply this to the loving of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). One thing for sure is: to love someone, you have to know him/her. The first step I recommend is that you spend some time getting to know the Prophet. The following is a quote about him that I like to keep in mind,

Ali, cousin and son-in-law to the Prophet, said of Muhammad (PBUH):

“He was the Last of the Prophets, the most giving of hearts, the most truthful, the best of them in temperament and the most sociable. Whoever unexpectedly saw him



would stand in awe of him, and whoever accompanied him and got to know him would love him. Those describing him would say: “I have never seen anyone before or after him who was comparable to him.”

Beyond this quote, maybe we can spend some time reading about the life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). There is a great book by Maulana Muhammad Ali called, *The Life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)* which I can recommend. As we read, we may learn how each of the above descriptions apply to him. As a start, though, I'd like to outline some thoughts on how we can love him:

- Prioritizing the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) really means putting his commands, which are Allah's commands, ahead of those

things our family wants or those comforts we would otherwise have. I can think of when Hazrat Umar's sister became a Muslim despite Hazrat Umar's hatred (at that time) for the Prophet. She loved the Prophet and his message more than her family – she prioritized him above all. Allah says, "Say (Prophet Muhammad), 'If you love Allah, follow me and Allah will love you.'" [Aal Imran : 31]

So it was with those who left their homes and families behind in Mecca to go to Madinah: And those who were settled in Madinah and [adopted] the faith before them. They love those who emigrated to them and find not any want in their hearts of what the emigrants were given but give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in need. (Al Hashr verse 9) Try to develop the same wonderful characteristics he had. Love for him will flow out of learning these characteristics, and so this is a good reason to learn about his life. Here is just one such characteristic:

The Prophet said, "My son, if you can refrain from holding a grudge in your heart from morning to evening, then do so." He then added, "My son, that is part of my prophetic way. Whosoever revives my way has loved me, and whosoever loves me is with me in the Garden." [Sunan Tirmidhi, Book of

Knowledge, Vol. 4, Page 151]

- Cultivate respect and admiration for him. Do so by learning about him and his life. If not through an intimate knowledge of his life, we can look upon others' views of him to do so. Here are some beautiful examples of the respect that people of other faiths had for him:

"Philosopher, Orator, Apostle, Legislator, Conqueror of Ideas, Restorer of Rational beliefs, the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he? (*Historie de la Turquie, Paris 1854, Vol. 11 pp. 276-277*)

If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astonishing results are the three criteria of a human genius, who could dare compare any great man in history with Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws, and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away be-



fore their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislations, empires, peoples, dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then inhabited world; and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and the souls. **Alphonse de LaMartaine**

"I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phase of existence which can make itself appeal to every age. I have studied him – the wonderful man. and in my opinion. far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the Savior of Humanity." **George Bernard Shaw**

- Love means having tender feelings for someone. For me, these tender feelings come about when I read about the Prophet's tender and loving actions. His charity, his playfulness with friends and children, and his humanity. One example that comes to mind, as I'm sure you've all heard of, is when, on Eid day, he picked up an orphan child on his shoulders and said, "I will be your father for today." There are countless other such beautiful examples.

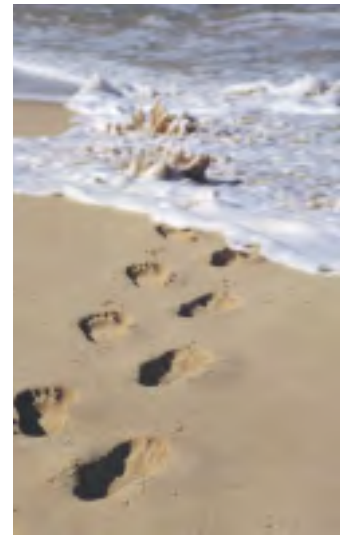
- Loving someone means you hurt when they hurt. So if we truly love the Prophet, it would hurt us deeply when we hear people say bad things about him. We

can't tolerate it. However, the proper response is not to fight against someone who utters hatred, or to ignore it. The best thing we can do is to calmly defend the Prophet and replace hurtful lies with truth. To do so requires ... (guess what?!)... reading about the Prophet!

- And that brings me to the final point... be excited to meet the Prophet! I don't mean literally, of course. But whenever you have a chance to spend time with him, through books, talks, hearing from your parents or others about his life, it should

excite you. It may not at first. I get it. It can feel like reading is boring sometimes. However, the Prophet was far from a regular person. He was a philosopher, a brave revolutionary, a wise man, a loving husband, a devoted father, a great friend, and his life was full of adventure. Really, it was!

I hope this helps. And we just entered a new year, perhaps you and I can make a resolution to learn more about the Prophet and at the end of the year, we can discuss how our confusion about love has changed.



Granny versus Smartphone

Oh there you are, Romaan. I was looking everywhere for you. What are you doing?

Homework, Grannyma. How are you feeling?

I would be feeling better if I did not have to huff and puff all over the house to find you.

Oops... Sorry. You should have called me and I would have come. Remember, I came here to help.

Allah bless you, my boy. I did call you and I am sure the neighbors heard me hollering, but my grandson did not. It's these tubes that you put in your ears.

Tubes? No no, they are headphones, Grannyma.

They look like tubes, so I shall call

them tubes. And how do they help you with homework?

They don't really. I was just listening to music.

Music ... hrmph ... no wonder you can't hear your old granny. Maybe I should sing too as I call to you?

Good idea, Grannyma. But I didn't know that you could sing.

Everyone can sing, dear. We all have music inside of us if we choose to let it out. I bet I can sing better than that crashing and banging you call music. Once I won a prize in school for singing a poem.

Oooh. Cool. Why didn't you ever tell me before?

Why? Because each time I meet you, you are not really there.

These tubes are coming out of your head and there is some strange device you are tapping or stroking.

Oh I'm just fiddling with my phone most of the time, Grannyma. But I like listening to your stories better.

You have a sweet tongue, my Romaan, but do you really mean that?

Yeah, I love your stories. They're always funny. Like the time you went to post a letter to Grand Baba when he was away in the army, and you tried to sneak a packet of spices for tandoori chicken into it. And the packet burst open and made the letter orange ... I bet a phone wouldn't think of that.

You really listen to what I say! I am impressed. That means that while

you are here with me, you can put these tubes and the phone away.

B...b...but Granny, I can't just lose touch with the world for a week?

Don't worry dear. No danger of that. The newspaper comes every day and you can read it to me. My eyes are not the sharpest now, plus it's a delight to hear a young person read.

I can just play a podcast for you, Granny. It's a recording in this flattened box.

I thought pods were where peas grew. The recording is in your voice?

No, but ...

Goats butt and good grandsons who come to take care of grannies, really spend time with them. Why do you try to make the box do things for you? What happened to your brains?

I'm using my brains to use the box, I mean the phone, Granny. It takes a lot of thinking to make it do things for me.

Seems like you want it to do everything for you, not just some things. You need to keep using your noodle, son, for it to remain sharp. If you let the smarty phone do all the work, it gets smarter, not you.

Oh, Granny! You really don't like technology, do you?

I like technology, but only the kind that makes life better for humans, not the kind that tries to take over our lives.

Really, and what kind would that be?

A washing machine... in my days, we would have to carry gigantic bundles of dirty clothes to the river

or the well to wash them. In summer it was blisteringly hot, in winter it was freezing cold. We washed all those clothes by hand, beating them with a stick to get the dirt out, squeezing by hand and then laying them out to dry on stones. Imagine that.

Wow! You really did that? No wonder you can beat me at arm wrestling any day.

Oh, yes, but all that work was better than going to the gym and lifting weights in clingy clothes. I thank God every day for washing machines. Your phone can't compete with that, can it?



My phone can tell you what to cook and how to cook it, and take photos of the food that you can send to anyone.

See, I told you that these devices prevent us from thinking for ourselves. If anyone has an ounce of common sense, they can figure out how to cook. People were

cooking way before these gizmos were invented. Why on earth would someone need a phone to tell you how to do these simple things?

Cos they're not that simple, Granny. In the olden days, people had a lot of time to hang around each other, so they learned how to do things by watching their parents and stuff. Now, we don't have a lot of spare time, so we look things up on our phones.

I did not realize my Roman is so extremely busy! Then how come you have time to play all those silly games? Like the ones when fat birds are flying in the air and hitting targets, and bikes are bouncing over ramps ...

I didn't know you liked Angry Birds! Do you want to learn how to play?

Sorry, son, but I am too busy being in my real life to worry about a bunch of fake birds. I'm busy crumbling up leftover bread to sprinkle in my backyard, and then I am busy watching real, beautiful birds come to eat. Tell me something in your smarty phone that can be as fascinating.

Yeah, I guess nothing competes with real life, and besides, the smarty phone can't make fried chicken like my smarty granny can!

Look at you buttering up your old granny. Today, I will teach you how to make my super friend chicken, and you shall do all the work. Afterwards we shall look at all your baby photos. Agreed?

Righty O Granny. Let's seal that deal with a granny grandson selfie. Big Hug!!

Surah al-Aadiyaat: The Racers

This chapter of the Quran was revealed at Mecca. It is a short surah, with only eleven verses, but it covers a huge aspect of our lives that we tend to overlook. Dr. Basharat Ahmad has written a very meaningful explanation of this Surah in his book, *Anwar al Quran*. This article is based on his tafsir, or explanation.

The first five verses may be translated as follows:

1. By the racers panting.
2. Igniting sparks.
3. Raiding at dawn.
4. Raising clouds of dust.
5. Storming into the midst.
6. Indeed, the human being is ungrateful to his Lord.

The chapter starts with a very powerful description of a galloping horse. For the Arabs, the example of a horse to represent loyalty and devotion was most relevant, since their culture involved horses and depended heavily upon them. We can definitely relate to this example as well, for we have seen horses racing and galloping, and can imagine how they were used in the past. The point being made is: we take care of horses and they serve us as their masters. What about us? We also have a Master and we have pledged to serve Him. He takes care of us in an infinitely greater way than the horse's master, so why are we negligent in our devotion, love, and service?

Let us picture a horse galloping furiously, panting due to the extreme exertion, its nostrils flaring. It keeps galloping because the master is urging it on. The horse may work itself so hard, that its heart can fail and it can drop dead, however it keeps going and does not refuse to do the work of the master. As it gallops over rocky surfaces, its hooves produce sparks that show us the intensity of its effort and its willingness to take on whatever the master says. The horse does not refuse to work if the master saddles him at night. Often he has to gallop all night long in order to attack an enemy at dawn. It willingly serves at all times. Let's imagine this horse that is galloping at full capacity ... all that can be seen behind it is a cloud of dust, while it focuses on what is ahead of it: an army ready



for battle. The horse gallops on, never faltering and at the master's beckoning it enters the battlefield, facing danger and death. It is willing to lay down its life in doing its duty to the master.

Let us compare the five qualities of the horse that were mentioned in the first five verses, with human behavior. How eager are we to serve our master?

- When called to serve Allah, we tend to complain and whine: the task is too hard, too much, too dangerous. How can it be done?
- Once we set out, if the going gets tough, we think of bailing out.
- We complain about the timing of our duties to Allah, or complain that we never have enough time. We say we are simply too busy and we need to rest and relax when we are done with our worldly obligations.
- The cloud of dust behind the horse signifies the fact that it is not looking back, rather its entire focus is on the journey ahead. We on the other hand, we always have excuses in the form of other obligations and duties that keep us bound. We insist that we cannot show more devotion to Islam because of various reasons.

- We often seek guarantees and assurances before we are done with a task. We want to know, what we do get out of this? How will we be recognized and rewarded and if there is no medal in sight, we wonder, why are we doing this anyway?



the same devotion to Islam, which is a complete way of life.

Another example is of the Islamic dress code that may be thought of as difficult, unnecessary, or restrictive. We see countless examples in our daily lives of the ways people will dress because of some worldly motivation. They will put on white coats and black robes with pride, and

The truth is that change cannot happen, indeed we cannot change the world for the better, if we do not show full devotion to good causes. We must be willing to make sacrifices, so that when the going gets tough, we try even harder, and like the horse, our feet strike the ground with purpose and dedication without faltering. Well wishers may tell us to take it easy and not put a burden upon ourselves, but we persist and persevere. This cannot happen without a true realization of the nature of our Rabb (Nourisher to perfection) and without wholehearted love of Him. A humble government servant knows that if he is injured or loses his life in the service of the state, he will be taken care of. His family will be supported and not left helpless. How does our faith in Allah correspond to that?

Allah presents our selves as witnesses of our behavior by drawing a parallel between our efforts for this world, and for our religion. We are asked to examine our thoughts, attitudes and behaviors. Allah reminds us that we certainly have the ability to exert ourselves fully for a cause, since we will give our best effort to get money, worldly gain, and prestige.

The last verses of this Surah may be translated as follows:

6. Surely mankind is extremely ungrateful to its Nourisher.
7. And surely he is a witness of that.
8. And truly on account of the love of good things does he hold back.
9. Does he not know that when that which is in the graves is raised,
10. And that which is in the hearts is made manifest,
11. Surely their Rabb that day is aware.

For the love of this world and its motivations and benefits, we are willing to do all manner of things. For money we will scale mountains, jump into rivers, fight fire, face tanks and snipers, put our health and life in danger.

Let's take the example of interns to see how devotion can look like. They have to completely give up their earlier lifestyle in order to receive training they need. They are up at all hours, temporarily leave family and friends, give up holidays, hobbies, and freedom, all because of their desire to be successful and to progress in their career. We should consider showing

even don clown costumes, wigs, strange hats and masks all because the world demands it of them. Isn't it strange that to fill our need to be accepted and respected, we take directions from the world, while we know deep down in our hearts that real respect and worth comes from Allah, and the world does not truly have the power to give us anything?

The Quran helps us understand why we give money and popularity more value than being a good Muslim. It come down to our deep-seated belief that abundant wealth is essential for us to live a good life. We think popularity makes our position strong, and a certain degree or career will get us places, give us the kind of lifestyle we want. In other words, we rely on these things to take us from a lower level to a higher level, or perform rabubiyah.

This is only true in a partial, superficial way. It is a house of cards built on a shaky foundation. Lots of people have wealth but they are lonely and miserable. They have fame, prestige, cool careers that are of no use because the spiritual component is missing from their life.

True nurturing is from Allah. In re-

ality our efforts for Allah should be far greater than those to attain some benefit of this world, for we can truly rely on Allah.

The chapter closes with the following message:

9. Does he not know that when that which is in the graves is raised,
10. And that which is in the hearts is made manifest,
11. Surely the Rabb that day is aware.

The image is given of our physical body in a grave. All the superficial things are lost and rotting with it. When we are alive is the time to think, how nourished is the eternal part of us?

The life of this world deceives us in many ways. It seems very solid, alluring, and certain while it is not. We forget that things that matter the most should never be at the mercy of things that matter the least.

The nurturing power of wealth is limited, while earning Allah's love through good deeds, is a guaranteed solution to all life's problems.

Of course study, professions, progress, are all good things. We are following the commands of Allah when we study, work, earn, but we must maintain a balance. If our intention is to use these things for good to serve Allah, then we must keep that intention alive

throughout. Otherwise by the time we are done, we will have forgotten our true purpose, and it is unlikely that we can get ourselves back on track. Children are full of beautiful ideals. They never say they want to be mean teachers, lazy parents, corrupt CEO's or ruthless dictators when they grow up.

If we all start out with pure ambitions and intentions, why do we lose sight of that goal somehow or the other? This chapter provides us with balance and perspective. If the intentions of our hearts are to remain pure, they need constant assessment. Studying the Quran gives us that opportunity to recharge our spiritual battery on a daily basis.

