

EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT IS THE BEST NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

Jumuah lecture by Mowlana Syed Aftab Haider on Friday 5 January 2018 (17 Rabi Al-Akhar 1439) at the Ahlul Bait (a.s) Masjid, Ottery, Cape Town

Indeed, another year has passed from our lives, and we have now ushered in a New Year, which reminds us of a very important issue in our life, namely, the issue of TIME! Time is amongst the most important favours of Almighty Allah (SWT) towards us. Time is that place in which we live and we perform and we produce and therefore whatever we are and what is our outcome is basically in this unit called time.

Therefore, Almighty Allah (SWT) gives the greatest of importance to this factor of time, when He takes an oath by time in Surah al-Asr (chapter 103 of the Holy Quran):

I swear by the time,

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Most surely man is in loss,

Except those who believe and do good, and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience.

This very short Surah (chapter of the Holy Quran) basically divides humanity into 2 groups. The one group being human beings who are in a complete loss – unfortunately this is the majority. Then there is the second group who are the exception (the minority) as the successful ones.

SUCCESS DEPENDS ON EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT

What is the connection between the failure and success of humanity with Surah al-Asr? The key to note is that this most important proclamation starts with Almighty Allah (SWT) taking oath by time. What is the connection?

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The commentators of the Holy Quran have explained to us that the connection is very clear, that the success and failure of humanity depends on effective time management. This is the space in which humanity achieves success or ends up in complete loss and a failure.

There are quite a few examples in the Holy Quran where Almighty Allah (SWT) takes an oath by time, again highlighting the crucial issue of time management in our lives. A few examples are Surah Fajr, Surah Shams, Surah Lail (chapters 89, 91 and 92 of the Holy Quran). Again, our success is hidden in the management of our time.

THE REALITY IS THAT TIME FLIES!

Therefore, end of the year and the New Year is a time to review and reflect, in addition to the celebration within the boundaries of what Islam permits. It is the opportune time to realise that this time is very fast, as articulated by Imam Ali ibn abi Talib (a.s) when he says that time passes like a patch of a cloud in the sky. You see it and then all of a sudden it is gone!

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That Hadith from our beloved Prophet Muhammad (SAWA), where he says: "Be extra considerate and careful about your time than you are with your money! Spend it cautiously in the same way that you would be prudent with your money".

Verse 68 of Surah Yaseen (chapter 36 of the Holy Quran) explains how time will change, rendering the frailty and dependence of old age to be equivalent to that of child being dependent for its basic needs like feeding:

And whomsoever We cause to live long, We reduce (him) to an abject state in constitution; do they not then understand?

This time of the year is really the opportunity for reflection and review to make some real resolutions. It is a common fashion to set New Year's resolutions and most people set feeble, short-term resolutions like making more money or losing weight!

LET US REMEMBER SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN OUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

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It is important to not lose sight of our long-term resolutions like improving the spiritual aspect of our lives. It is also a time to make a commitment to oneself to improve our relationship with our Lord Almighty Allah (SWT). It is also a time to renew our commitment to our community and service to humanity at large, for the pleasure of Almighty Allah (SWT).

This is the problem with Western ideology. Its approach has materialism and selfish pursuits as its foundation.

The whole Islamic system is tuned with time management. Everything, from our 5 daily prayers, to annual Hajj pilgrimage, to our fasting during the holy month of Ramadaan, and everything else in Islam gives us a very clear message that everything should be programmed according to its time.

Again, time management is a very popular topic to discuss, but what I would like to remind you of at the start of this New Year is to not confine your resolutions to short-term goals. Let me reiterate that there is nothing wrong in setting material goals. Almighty Allah (SWT) clarifies in the Holy Quran that we have a share in enjoying this Dunya (the material world). However, our investment in this Dunya should be according to its unreliable short-term duration.

There is a serious problem when we make our goals, our purpose and our priority in this life to

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be aligned with the temptations of this Dunya.

PHILOSOPHY OF TIME MANAGEMENT ACCORDING TO IMAM ALI (A.S)

Imam Ali (a.s) says that we should divide our time into 3 portions:

1. Ibadah (worship)
2. Yourself
3. Halaal entertainment

Islam recognizes that time needs to be allocated towards earning a Halaal income, but also recognizes that time should be allocated towards Halaal enjoyment too. However, we should not forget the purpose of our life and the final priority is to move towards attaining proximity of Almighty Allah (SWT).

Those priorities must be in your consideration, in investing time in our Akhirah (the next life), beyond the responsibility of a working day of 8 or 9 hours.

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Spiritual development involves the struggle against our desires, serving others and fulfilling your communal responsibility. Almighty Allah (SWT) has given us these blessings to share with others.

THE NEW AHLUL BAIT (AS) MASJID IS THE CENTRE FOR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

We cannot thank Almighty Allah (SWT) enough, for blessing us with this beautiful mosque complex, with all its facilities and state of the art technology Alhamdu Lillah. It is now on us to enjoy in its proper way and be grateful to Almighty Allah (SWT) for this great blessing on our humble community.

It is here that I want to ask quite frankly that each of us ask ourselves how much time in our daily program is dedicated towards this beautiful mosque, to make it an active, dynamic place of learning and development, empowerment and upliftment of the broader community who are less privileged.

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This is the time for all of us to make a firm New Year's resolution toward this important responsibility in our life, otherwise there is no difference between us and animals, which also live to fill their stomachs and satisfy their desires. That is not humanity! What distinguishes humanity from animals is to be have a clear purpose in life ie. to be thinking for the long-term and not simply revolving around ourselves and our individualistic goals and interests.

SECOND KHUTBAH – DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

All of us are busy, and all of us have plenty of responsibilities, but if we manage our time properly and have our priorities in line accordingly, we can achieve a lot. Those who have dedicated themselves, and diverted themselves from matters which have no purpose in life, have achieved a great deal in every field of life.

PASSING AWAY OF SHEIKH AHMAD MARANDURA

I would like to pay my respects to one of our scholars and Muballigh who passed away 2 days ago in Durban, Sheikh Ahmad Marandura. He is an Aalim originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, who worked very hard for the last 15 – 20 years propagating the message of Islam to the people. He left numerous students, of which some are studying at al-Mustafa Islamic University in various fields of Islamic Sciences.

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It was indeed very sad to receive the news of his untimely passing and we pray to Almighty Allah (SWT) to shower His infinite mercy upon his soul and reward him for his great, selfless services to convey the message of Almighty Allah (SWT) and religion at the grassroots level, to the most downtrodden people of our country in the townships.

PROTESTS IN IRAN ARE THEIR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

I am sure everybody is expecting some comments on developments in the Islamic Republic of Iran, especially in the past week. You have seen in the media about protests and clashes which took place last week in the Islamic Republic of Iran. There are a few points I would like to make here, to understand this situation in Iran.

Iran has a constitution, and a democratic system. This is not a Western democratic system, but its own democracy and a constitution which allows people to express their concerns and anger about the government and its policies. Therefore, you will find this type of phenomenon (protests) in the Islamic Republic of Iran, even though it is not very common, but at the same time not exceptional or abnormal.

There are people who are not happy with the government and its policies, and this is not a secret in any way. There are plenty of people who are not happy and do not support. This is no

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different to any other country in the world, and there is absolutely nothing wrong if they come out in the streets to express their disagreement or criticism. This is their right as citizens of Iran.

THE SUFFOCATING EFFECT OF SANCTIONS

For us, it may be difficult to understand, that the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Republic of Iran has survived after so many years of resistance against the arrogant superpowers. There is not a single system which managed to survive with the level of punitive sanctions, boycotts, opposition and pressures for such a lengthy period of time.

This system, without any doubt, has stood firm for its principles and values. Naturally, this stance did not come without any price. In fact, it comes at a heavy cost! For us, we are sitting comfortably here in Cape Town, enjoying all the facilities of the modern world and all the opportunities available on our doorstep.

It is very nice for us to praise Iran, and exclaim slogans in favour of Palestine and resistance against imperialism. We can give these slogans, but the price is paid by the people who really have to stand for these slogans and principles in their day to day life. This resistance naturally resulted in a great deal of hardships, economical and beyond.

PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA OF SANCTIONS

Iran is a country with such great heritage of civilization and rich culture. Citizens of this proud country have to face humiliation and insults when they are sidelined at airports like criminals purely from carrying Iranian passports. This is not easy to tolerate for them, besides economical pressure.

The opposition of the Islamic Republic of Iran by enemies has layers. Of course, the most important layer is military opposition, and economical opposition has indeed created a very, very difficult situation for the people of Iran. These are pressures which we cannot even imagine, when you cannot even import or export things.

When an ordinary Iranian living in Cape Town tries to open a simple savings account at the bank, a clearance is required! Can you imagine this? Something so basic and straightforward which anybody can open at any time without any hassles becomes a convoluted clearance process purely for being an Iranian passport holder. These are the obstacles in South Africa for Iranians, while South Africa has much favorable relations with Iran. You can imagine what other countries put them through, who are not very friendly towards Iran!

Besides these psychological pressures, we see media and especially the role of social media in

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exploiting these opportunities for negative propaganda towards Islam and Iran, as well as the principles of the Islamic Revolution which they stand for. Indeed, today we see this propaganda on a grand scale. A normal Iranian person will express frustration at why Iran should care about external problems of Gaza and Rohingya and Yemen while its own people are starving!

THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION CONTINUES TO DEVELOP THROUGH ITS SHORTCOMINGS

Not everybody is a revolutionary ideologue! Our own country South Africa is an example of this. Now this propaganda machinery, and this imperialist agenda has naturally created a situation which boils over, and the fires get stoked with the devious provocation from the enemies. Unfortunately, peaceful protests with their legitimate cry for economic justice in the society turned into violence and against the teachings of Islam.

Neither the leadership of the Islamic Revolution, nor we as friends and supporters of the Islamic Revolution ever claim that the system of management in the Islamic Republic of Iran is beyond reproach. Indeed there are plenty of flaws and challenges. Some of this is caused by our enemies and some is caused by us. It is a reality unfortunately.

Those shortcomings presented itself in disastrous situations for the people of Iran, resulted in the people reacting in the manner which we have now witnessed.

ENEMIES OF THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE IRANIAN NATION

I have experienced many times when landing at Tehran airport and then you catch a taxi to take you to your destination. That taxi driver will always be complaining about the system left, right and centre. However, if that same leadership whom he has been critical of calls to come out in the streets, in support of the Islamic Revolution, then you will find this very same taxi driver who has been moaning the whole journey through, will actually be in the frontline ready to give his life in defense of this beautiful Islamic Revolution and its pristine principles!

The problem is that Trump and others do not understand the Iranian nation. Iranian people can complain and complain, but this does not mean that enemies will gain their loyalty. These are 2 different matters which enemies do not understand.

IRANIAN NATION WILL NOT PLACE THEIR IMAAN FOR SALE

This Iranian nation has undergone the most difficult sacrifices and lost hundreds of thousands of lives in protection of this Islamic Revolution. They will not sell this revolution and their Imaan for a few dollars to racist bigots like Trump and company, after having paid such an expensive price!

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Therefore, we again witnessed, that after these days of protests, people came out in large numbers in the same cities, in support of the Islamic Revolution. There is no media coverage of this, even though there were easily 10 times more people taking part in these marches!

Blind prejudice again is clear when people pass ignorant statements that these people are paid to come out in support of the Islamic Revolution. If all these people are paid then what is the problem in the first place creating the protests? The protests were due to economical problems right?

Anyway, this is the situation and we should not be fooled by the media who portray a flagrant distasteful reflection of the Islamic Revolution through these legitimate protests which are meant to be peaceful.

The Islamic Revolution is protected, despite all its flaws and weaknesses. There certainly are genuine grievances from the people. One cannot deny this and we are also critical of certain aspects. There is unfortunately a huge divide between rich and poor in Iran, which is an indirect result of sanctions and creates growth in the black market!

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When sanctions are imposed on a country, the effect is that everybody looks for a backdoor to make money, because there are no straightforward channels of trade. Once you enter into these backdoor black market economies then the result is that the rich benefits significantly while others get absolutely nothing! This is because there is no system with all the doors closed due to sanctions. Therefore, the whole system of commissions and kickbacks come in, and creates opportunities for people to exploit!

The Islamic Revolution which is based on faith in Almighty Allah (SWT) will continue, with all its challenges that it has successfully ploughed through since inception.