

The Importance of Shukr

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Introduction

Shukr means acknowledgement (aetraf). If you get benefitted from someone, you say, "Thank You", this is to acknowledge. One is to acknowledge at the level of man, which one does by saying thanks. The other is to thank God and this is called "hamd" – big shukr. Shukr is the essence of religion. The first word in the Quran is alhamdillahi. Hamd means "shukr" or acknowledgment. The verse in the Quran reads

All praise is due to God (1:2)

It means that God is the One who gives everything and the One who sustains. Be it a small particle or a galaxy, everything is provided by God and thus man must acknowledge Him. This is the essence of religion. This topic came to my mind yesterday when I was at an international seminar. I drank the water from the glass and afterwards when I rose to check the glass, people started running to fetch water for me. I said I wanted to check if a drop of water was remaining in the glass. This amazed the people there.

I realized that people are bereft of "shukr". Water is 79% of earth and its 21% is dry land. This huge quantity of water on earth is because man needed water the most and so the Creator filled the Earth with water. And when man gets something in such abundance, he devalues it. But water is so important that man's life depends on it. When you think how did it become possible that two gases – hydrogen and oxygen combined to become water, two gases became liquid and there are such benefits of it. If you think like this, you will be thankful. If you compare it with the situation when you are very thirsty someone gives you gold to quench your thirst, you will say that drinking water cannot be substituted with gold. In whatever quantity you possess gold it cannot quench your thirst. When you do not get water, understand what water really is. When you think thus, only then will you be able to offer big thanks to God.

In 13th century A.D. the Abbasid Empire came to an end due to the invasion by the Tartaris. The last Caliph was arrested and imprisoned by the Tartaris. They put an end to his food but when several days elapsed and he was very hungry he sent a message to the Tartari leader to send some food. He was in the cellar of the palace. The Tartari leader sent a plate containing treasures of diamonds and precious stones. When the Caliph saw these he started crying and said Diamonds cannot be eaten. The same diamonds that were the source of his satisfaction earlier held no value to him now. Therefore man must realize the value of a thing before losing it. Only when you realize the value before losing are you rewarded. You are no longer rewarded upon it being taken away from you, God wants that you to be

thankful while you have the freedom to do so. In this world, we must give the proof of acknowledging the blessings of God from the inner most recesses of our heart.

In comparison that we understand It is in comparison that we understand but because we do not compare, we are not able to compare things and understand their importance. I came across a very exquisitely printed Quran. I thought, if someone had found such a Quran in 7th century, they would have thought it is that copy which the Muslims believe is with the angels. In the seventh century verses of the Quran were written on very ordinary paper, cloth, bones, leather and if they had compared their copy with the newly printed copies available today, they would have surely thought that this copy has descended from the skies. Now despite such magnificent technology being at our disposal no one offers shukr. Today, Muslims should think where the history of writing has reached from the time of the revelation of the Quran to the present day. Because people do not compare, they live in ungratefulness. It is only in comparison that we offer thanks. Unless we remember the past and compare the conditions that we are in, we will never be able to offer real thanks. Today, most Muslims protest against discrimination being done to them. I have asked several Muslims about the economic condition of their family prior to independence and all admit that it is far better today. Then if it is better, they must offer thanks. If earlier they were living in ordinary houses, today they are staying in well-built houses, earlier message transmission was difficult, however, today it is mobile driven. Today, we are in a world where we can take the reward for doing real shukr. Real shukr is which erupts as a storm in your heart and truly makes you acknowledge and say, "God, I thank You!" There is nothing that is more rewarding. This is why God made it the first verse of the Quran, that you realize God as the Super Giver and after this you say O God! I thank You.

Today's times give us innumerable opportunities to do shukr. If someone from seventh century comes here and sees the laptop, computer, camera and loudspeaker, he will think that he has come to paradise. Compared with earlier times, everything is very exquisite today. If we compare, we shall think that God has made us reach paradise with such ease and comfort. Earlier for one message, man used to travel on camel and at times some people even died during the course of the journey. Today, we pick the mobile and easily talk across continents. Therefore, God has given you the opportunity to live in the feeling of Shukr and grace yourself with blessings of God. Quran cites the instance when Satan challenged God and said that I will mislead man. Satan said to God, You will find most of them ungrateful (7:17)

Every moment we are surrounded by Satan who misleads us. We have been misled and have neglected the guidance from God. All the people have fallen in the path of Satan. People think negatively and are not able to see the positives in life. God created man and kept such feelings in him, the fulfillment of which is in paradise but we turned our backs towards paradise.

Here I am reminded of an illustrative instance. This is the time of post independence. Before independence, a person in UP was a congress worker. He made his son study and made him appear for the pre medical test. His son's rank was number 20 in the waiting list. He came to Jawaharlal Nehru who had then become the Prime Minister of India. He said that I worked for Congress all life and now my son cannot get into Medical. Nehru sought the file and saw that his son was 20 in the waiting list. He ordered for the increase of the seats by 20 so that his son could get in. When that man got to know that his son had got admission, he came to Delhi again and in those days security was not much and he went to meet Nehru. He stood on the gate waiting and when Nehru came he fell on his feet and said, Aapne woh kaam kar diya jo main soch nahin sakta tha. Mere bete ka admission ho gaya This man was so thankful for what Nehru had done that he fell on his knees. God has done this work billion trillion times more, but there is no one who will surrender to God and fall on his knees thanking Him. God created Jinns first and they were given much intelligence. They could not use it rightly and failed. God then created man. Alongwith intelligence, He also gave man intuition, which was an additional attribute. This was because reason alone can take you only to probability and not firm belief. With his intelligence man could only reach probability. For example, if a man applies only reason with regard to the belief of his mother being a mother, then he can only conclude probably that his mother is his mother, and he will not be able to love her much. If she is in your intuition and heart, then you will be able to love her. It is that feeling which makes you love her. The result of loving one's mother is not rewarding in the Hereafter, so Satan does not incite man. But love for God is the certificate for paradise and that is where Satan tries to deviate man. The work of Satan is to make something bad look beautiful. Therefore despite being in man's heart, he is not able to recognize the truth. So God gave man intuition so that to understand God and acknowledge Him man does not stop at probability and becomes one who loves Him. More than this, God kept his signs in everything from galaxy to every other thing in the world so that man feels a sense of awe but man took no lesson. Then God sent Prophets for man. Sending a prophet means breaking the existing norm of the world, as an angel from

God comes to a human being and reveals the word of God to Him; this is breaking the natural system of the world but still man did not take heed. This is so strange.

According to a Hadith People do not even desire Paradise from the bottom of their hearts (real talib) (Tirmidhi)

People do not desire paradise even as much as they desire new clothes. Even if someone becomes a true seeker (saail) of Paradise, God will give it to him. This can be understood from the following verse, God says, And do not chide the one who asks for help (93:10)

God is giving his introduction in saying that I give, so should you. God extended the list so much that he gave reason, gave intuition, sent Prophets and then lastly even said that you will get paradise if only you become the real seeker of it,

A verse in the Quran says If other relatives, orphans or needy people are present at the time of division, then provide for them out of it, and speak kindly to them (4:8) It says that if someone who is not an inheritor and he stands by at the time of division then give something to him also. It means that God has given His introduction in this verse, that I am someone who would give even if someone just stands by, so should you. Nehru had increased the list such that the #20th man could be accommodated. God has increased the list manifold so that man qualifies. Anyone who applies his intelligence, used intuition takes lesson from signs in universe, takes guidance from Prophets or even becomes a true seeker (real talib), paradise will be given to him. In such a scenario, you should be in an ocean of thanksgiving, that the blessings of God are so immense that He wants that everyone reach paradise. A Persian couplet List ko itna badhao ki mera bhi us meina naam aa jaye It is so strange, you may discover God at any of the levels – God has kept paradise for you but everyone is unaware and is ghafil of this. Prophet said Paradise is so precious, but man is sleeping (Tirmidhi) Thinking about death We are not to live forever. Today morning I was thinking that so many in my family passed away who were younger to me. Then I remembered an instance when God blessed me much. Such things happen with everyone but man forgets. This is about 1942 when I was young and had become very restless. I left my house in UP and went to Shahganj. From there I sat in a train to Lahore. Everything used to seem meaningless. When I got down there I realized that I knew no one there. I saw that a man was running around in a suit. He said I work for a bank. I thought this man is so fortunate, I neither have a service in bank and nor a house in Lahore. I spent the night in a mosque and the next day I was walking at the platform. I

saw an empty engine shunting and I wanted to jump on the railway tracks and kill myself. Then someone held me back. I do not know if he is still alive, his name was Qureshi. He took me to his shop; he was a tailor. He kept me for 15 days and took me to the shop of a big Hindu shopkeeper. When he saw me, he said that it looks as if he is from a good household and therefore must be returned. I did not even have the money to get back. He gave the money for my return and Qureshi bought me a ticket and I returned. If I had jumped, I would have been burning in Hell. This was such a blessing of God that He sent an unknown person and saved my life. Every man undergoes such occurrences but he forgets. Shukr comes only when you think about your present and your past. You have to discover those items that lead to shukr but we remain ignorant. Without discovery, there is no shukr, and without shukr, there is no paradise. Shukr is not a lip service. Shukr is a storm within you when you fall to your feet and thank God. First you have to discover the items of thankfulness and then you will be able to thank. Otherwise, death is waiting for you; it can strike at any moment. Everyone must die and die accidentally. Just as we have no say in an earthquake, similarly we have no say in death. Death comes at a point of no return and we cannot do anything then. Death neither leads to a return nor does it give you a chance to repent. Every man is standing at the tip of death. Whatever has to be done has to be done before death. After death, you only have to pay the price. Dawah work Quran is the book of Dawah. Some verses in it say that for a dayee there is special security. A verse in the Quran says Each has guardian angels before him and behind him, who watch him at God's command (13:11) It means that when you realize dawah work then put yourself into it with such trust that now the work is of God. God's help comes in a strange way. Dawah work is supreme. It is to make man aware of the Creation Plan of God why he was created, what will happen after death and what if we do, will we be able to find entry into paradise. Dawah work is neither social work, political work. It is only to make man aware of the creation plan of God. When man does it in this pure way, then God's help will be with such a person. If you do work according to God's way, you will definitely get God's help. If one does dawah work only for God – 100 percent pure – special succour of God for dayee. Because God has to get this task accomplished and if someone gets up for this work, it is God's responsibility to help him.