

Stress and Spirituality

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Excerpt:

In his talk, the Maulana explains that man-made bounties are limited, and yet man searches fulfilment of his aspirations through man-made things; he should instead seek fulfilment in God-made bounties, as these are unlimited.

He further elaborates and explains that in order to manage stress, man must find a solution at the level of his thinking, and must not shut off his thinking capacity. This is the reason why meditating and exercise do not help. They provide a temporary insensation and fail to have a permanent impact.

Maulana concludes by saying that man cannot de-stress himself without knowing the Creation Plan of God. The truth is that man is by birth a paradise-seeking being. However, this world is not paradise, and hence a paradise-seeking being has to live in a non-paradisiacal environment! Tension free life, he says is a must for achieving higher goals in one's life. It is extremely important to know the formula ourselves and to make people aware of the same. Otherwise the God given opportunities will be lost forever.

Introduction

Stress is the greatest problem of people, today. As a result, schools for de-stressing have been opened in large numbers everywhere. However, the success rate of such schools is not even one percent. On the contrary, stress is only on the rise.

I listen to All India Radio every day. In one of the talk shows, a senior psychiatrist was being interviewed on the subject of stress. The speaker spoke in fluent English but what he said could not be comprehended. This was because what he said was replete with confusion. Perhaps without any exception, no one can provide a solution to this problem of stress. Although the diagnosis that the psychiatrist gave was right, but the prescription he provided was not. This is the case with every psychiatrist.

He said while diagnosing the problem that our desires are more than what we get. Stress is the result of this difference between aspirations and reality. Stress is basically the result of this contradiction. This was a very correct hypothesis. However, the prescription was only full of confusion. After listening to the interview, I came outside of my office into the balcony. Here, when I sat on the chair, I saw that the sun was shining brightly. I exclaimed: “*What a beautiful morning and what a beautiful sun!*” Sitting under the sun during winter is very enjoyable. Then I saw around me, there were birds flying and chirping, at this I said: “*What beautiful birds!*” I saw trees around me full of greenery and I exclaimed: “*What beautiful trees!*” In this way, I observed various natural phenomena and gave similar response to all.

I discovered that the psychiatrist couldn't tell how to de-stress. But, at the same time, nature is giving a formula for this. There is an eternal bliss in the various objects of nature: the sky, atmosphere, wind, oxygen, etc. Then I got the answer to the question of how to de-stress our stress, and I also discovered the reason for stress.

What leads to stress?

The psychiatrist rightly pointed out that there is a difference between aspirations and reality. However, our aspirations have been kept in us by the Creator even though the realities of the world are man-made. There are two types of bounties: *man-made* bounties and *God-made* bounties.

Man seeks fulfillment (*taskin*) of his aspirations through man-made bounties, for example, in possessing a big house, having bank balance, and other material things of civilization. All these material things have their defects and disadvantages. On the other hand, there are God-made bounties all around us.

I remembered the following verse of the Quran:

He has subjected whatever is in heaven and on the earth to you. (45:13)

How strange is this verse! What is stated in this verse has been scientifically proven now. It's not merely a belief. The entire universe has been made such that it is in conformance with man's needs, his desires, necessities, etc. All that is there in the universe is proportionate to man's requirements. A scientist has therefore said: "*This universe is a custom-made universe!*" and, this is what the above verse means.

Seeking fulfillment

Man-made bounties are limited, we are searching for fulfillment of our aspirations in man-made things; we should instead look for fulfillment in God-made bounties, as these are unlimited.

Man does not have the correct philosophy, his philosophies are unnatural and as such he doesn't know how to de-stress. All methods such as meditation; physical exercises; etc. are unnatural. These methods are completely ineffective in distressing. The formula given in the Quran for de-stressing can be seen in the following verse:

Surely in the remembrance of God hearts can find comfort. (13:28)

'*Itminan*' used in the above verse means staying stress-free. Remembering God doesn't mean reciting some words mindlessly, it rather means **living with God**. For example, the sun is at a distance of 9,30,00,000 miles from us, but the light that it emanates stays with us every moment. Similarly, God's attributes, His blessings, bounties are with us continuously, and consciously remembering these is akin to living with God.

The entire world is seeking to de-stress itself in man-made bounties. But these are limited and will always be limited. For instance, those who make big house after living in a small one do not feel happy after actually being in possession of the big house that they had earlier desired. I know a person who lives in a house worth 50 crore but was not happy.

He consulted *Vastushatra* experts who advised to redesign the windows and doors. But after following their advice he is still unhappy. Similarly, I know a doctor who does physiotherapy. Many wealthy people are his clients, and he said of them that he found none of them happy.

People want to become stress-free in possessing homes, luxurious cars, bank balance, travelling etc. These days outing and holidaying are new means of de-stressing. This has become a culture in America. Ironically, after experiencing this method of de-stressing, a new word has been coined: *holiday-stress*; that is, the stress that one gets back from holidaying. If you gather worldly things, it means you are living in man-made world. You have to come out of it and live in the God-made world in order to de-stress.

Example from the life of Prophet

The Battle of Trenches, called *Ghazwa-e-Khandaq* although no war actually happened, was an event that took place in the early history of Islam. During this time, 12,000 Meccans came to launch an attack on Medina. At the time Medina was surrounded on two sides by dense forest and on one side by mountains. It was open only from the front. Since the Prophet did not want war to happen, he had a trench dug in the only portion that was open to the Meccans. Thus, the Muslims in Medina were in siege, they were closed from all sides. This created many problems as a result. At the time, a companion said: “*Muhammad used to promise us that the treasures of Khusrau and Caesar would be ours, and now here we are—unable even to relieve ourselves in peace.*” To this the Prophet replied: “*O God there is no aish (enjoyment) save the aish (enjoyment) of Hereafter. So, forgive the Ansar (**the helpers**) and the Muhajirin (**the migrants**).*” The word used by the Prophet is *aish*; it means peace, enjoyment, comfort, and happiness. All this is only in the Hereafter. So *aish* (enjoyment) is there only in the ideology of forgiveness (by God).

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There are two ideologies – one in which man plans keeping his goal on the life after death while the other is where he aims on the worldly pleasures. If the above statement of the Prophet is rephrased in today’s paradigm it would be “*you are searching for pleasures in the man-made world while it is there only in God-made world*”. Today’s world is the introduction of the Hereafter.

Schools of de-stressing

There are many schools opened, where people go for distressing. I have met many of them. Their experiences are that they momentarily get relief from the stress but as they come out of those surroundings, they again become stressed. What people do at these places is nothing but indulging in anesthesia. In order to manage stress, you have to find some solution at the thinking level, and not shut off your thinking capacity. This is the reason why meditating and exercise cannot help in anyway. Whatever these exercises provide are temporary and can never have a permanent impact.

A scientist once said that it seems that man has strayed in a world that was not made for him. This is true, because our desires are endless. Man is a desire-seeking animal. Desires are unlimited, but we are never able to fulfill our desires; we almost always meet with boredom, accident, disadvantages, diseases, etc. Also, the resources are limited in the world and those are getting exhausted. The world is crying that these resources are getting exhausted. Resources on the earth were meant only for man's limited use, but man's desires are unlimited. This is the contradiction.

One who is aware of God's Creation Plan can explain this contradiction. People want to be de-stressed without knowing God's creation plan. The truth is that man is by birth a paradise-seeking. However, this world is not paradise, and hence a paradise-seeking being has to live in a non-paradisiacal environment (*jannat pasand insaan ko ghair jannat mein rehna padta hai*).

The best formula for de-stressing was given by Ali ibn Abi Talib. His sayings and letters have been compiled in a famous book called *Nahj al-Balaghah*. Ali once said: *alkhairu fima waqa*. That is, whatever I got was better or, what happened, happened for my betterment.

My experience

Here I would like to tell you one of my experiences, which is the experience of all of us. Many times it happens in life that we are not able to get what we had earnestly desired. For me, I often literally count on my fingers what all I couldn't get in my life. And, today in old age when I think in retrospect, I realize that if had I got even one of these things, I would have been destroyed.

This world is being controlled by the Knower of hidden things. Giving to or taking away from somebody is not at random. God gives and takes according to His decision. Surah Al-Fajr says receiving something or having it taken away is entirely from God. If you get, it is God's blessing, and if it is taken away then it should be attributed to God, He did it for our betterment.

Fani Badayuni was a poet of different taste. He got a very big home in heritage but could not find happiness in that. In one of his poems he prayed for loneliness. He was a seeker but could not find the Truth. And he prayed that God may grant him death so he might get *taskin* (satisfaction).

Man-made bounties can never give you satisfaction (*taskin*), you will find *taskin* only in God-made bounties. The psychiatrists don't know this ideology; they are living in man-made world. The first thing is to know the **creation plan of the creator** and then adjust yourself accordingly.

Conclusion

First of all, you have to know the Creation Plan of God. Then you should know what your role, as per this Plan is. The case of every man is that he is not content with what he has. Generally people who are at big positions eat sleeping pills.

Two-point formula for de-stressing is: develop the thinking that you have to live in God-made bounties and not in man-made bounties. I think in nature and achieve great solace. One should stop living in the man-made bounties and learn to live in God-made bounties. Modern cities or civilization are man-made. Secondly those who want to be tension-free should discover the ideology of tension-free living, which is associated with the creation plan of God, according to which in this world they should live amidst nature, and aspire to live in the paradise in the Hereafter.

One will never find contentment in man-made world, as it is limited. This is the root cause of stress. Stress is due to not achieving something. It is due to loss of something, and not because somebody doesn't get to eat or drink. Seeing such people I am reminded of a Hadith: "One who has a place to live, a servant who does his work, and he has bread to eat and water to drink, then it is as if he has got the entire world."

Why did Prophet say so? I discovered that this is the formula for a need-based life. Saddam Hussein had eight palaces, but he lived in only one. Thus, Prophet told of man's need. If a person has need-based life then he has everything, beyond this there are only problems. Those who live in luxury do not have solace. (*Agar zaroorat puri ho jaye to bas usi par qanaat karo: baqadar-e-zarurat par qanaat*). This is the formula for tension-free life: have contentment on the necessities. The more material needs increase, the more there is an increase in problems.

First and foremost, one must understand the creation plan of God because man has to spend his life in this world itself. No one can create another world for himself. You have to understand the world in which you live, and adjust to it. One has to follow Ali's saying: '*What happened, happened for my betterment.*' This is my experience as well. There is somebody above us who is managing history; by His giving things are given and by His taking things are taken away. This is done through His super-wisdom. If we don't get something then there was a reason behind it. So Ali's saying is very important. Add my experiences to this as well. Any formula apart from this is unnatural.

One of the goals of our mission is to tell people as how to lead a tension free life. Tension free life is a must for achieving higher goals in one's life. It is extremely important to know the formula ourselves and to make people aware of the same. Otherwise the God given opportunities will be lost forever.

Questions and Answers

Q1. What is your advice for the New Year? Should we be happy or do introspection?

A1. Being only happy on the arrival of the New Year has no meaning. We should introspect on what we should have done last year and couldn't do, and also plan for the next year in a more realistic way.

Q2. Please give a realistic New Year's resolution for the CPS team.

A2. People want to live in the world without understanding the creation plan of God. Man must know that he is not in a world which he has made. A person should think about why the Creator has made him and kept him in this world. This is the first thing man should know. The day man understands the Creation Plan of God, he should plan accordingly – the world is not made to fulfill all our desires, but to spend a life that the Creator desires. On that basis He will select us for paradise in the next world. This world is a selection ground, and is not meant to attain comfort and luxury. Individuals are being selected to be settled in paradise. Man lives in the psyche of '*right here, right now*' – this is incorrect. Real life starts after death. This should be the sole concern of every person. One must read the Quran with utmost attention to find an answer to this question, and man will surely find the answer. The real happiness is in the Hereafter. No one has had happiness in this world and no one will ever find it.

Q3. What is the wisdom behind the human civilization?

A3. An introduction to paradise was required before putting man into paradise (*jannat se pehle jannat ka tarruf maqsud tha*). Modern civilization is a positive phenomenon of human history. God will enter man in a paradise of whose introduction He has given to him in this world.

The civilization per se is not paradise; paradise is a very exalted place. This world is a glimpse of paradise, not paradise in itself. After living in civilization, one must ponder over the fact that if the introduction of paradise is so pleasurable (*laziz*), then how *laziz* will paradise be. Therefore, the purpose of the world is to make it a means to remember paradise, and not to stay embroiled in the world.

Q4. What is the reason behind people lacking hereafter-oriented thinking?

A4. This is a phenomenon of degeneration in later generations. In this age, form of religion remains and the spirit goes away. The Prophet once said that in later ages, nothing will remain of Islam except its name, and nothing will remain of the Quran except its marks. This is the state of present Muslims. Their Islam is a community culture, not oriented to the Hereafter. Their spirit and thinking need to be revived, rather than telling them the *fazail* (benefits) of the forms which they sedulously perform.

Q5. What are the obstacles to need-based life: fame, influence, family, one's own decision?

A5. All these are obstacles. The purpose of creation is to lead a Hereafter-oriented life. But one needs to satisfy his basic needs as well. Wherever one feels that his real purpose is at stake, he should immediately realize that he is indulging in more than what are his needs. Man must introspect and discover where he has gone beyond his needs he should abandon those things (*qabil-e-tark*). One must never abandon one's real purpose. Fulfilling one's needs is important, as need is something without which man cannot live.

Q6. Is it true that serving others leads us to God and gives us solace?

A6. This is the philosophy of secular people. 'Solace is in serving people' is wrong, true solace is in remembering God. Mother Teresa is the greatest example of a person who dedicated her life to the service of the downtrodden. However, after her death it was revealed in her letters that she died in agony.

Q7. How much stress is resulted from negative thinking?

A7. The greatest reason for stress is negative thinking. An ideology is not required for man to become a negative thinker. Formula of de-stressing is: *inna lillahi wainna ilahi rajiun* (We belong to God, and to Him alone we shall return). You should have ideology to explain the sad, unpleasant experiences in life.

I always try to search for a justification for why somebody is engaging in negativity. For example, all Muslims are against the media. Every Muslim, without exception is negative of the media. But, I am not. Because, I have a justification: media is an industry and its task is to sell its news. The media is aware that masses prefer sensational news. No newspapers can function on providing good news. Thus, the media works in accordance with reaping maximum profits, and this it does by publishing sensational news, thus I am not negative for the media. In Jakarta a conference of Muslims took place on the issue of the media and Muslims; all spoke negatively. But, I have no such negativity, because I have a *mubarrar* or justification for its doings. To be positive, you must find justification as to why the person who has turned negative has turned negative. Muslims are negative for the media because they haven't found a justification for what the media does, thus all Muslims are negative.

Q8. The Quran says that prophets came to different communities and peoples, then why is no prophet coming today?

A8. Prophet comes only when the book or teachings of the previous prophet are no longer present in preserved form. God's religion is represented either by a living prophet or by a preserved book. Today the Quran is a preserved book, thus it represents the religion of God. The real purpose is not to have a living prophet in every community, but the real purpose is to have a preserved book. (*Maqsad yeh nahin hai ki living paigambar maujud ho, maqsad yeh hai ki mahfooz kitab-e-ilahi maujud ho*). Thus there is no need of a new prophet today. In earlier times, prophets came one after the other because the teachings of the previous prophets did not remain preserved. But, the book brought by the Prophet of Islam is still preserved. Thus, we must take guidance from it. The point is to know the guidance of God, rather than necessarily learning it from a living prophet.

Q9. How to receive inspiration from nature to get introduction to Paradise?

A9. Limitations or disadvantages become obstacles in the path of enjoyment in this world. This won't happen in the paradise. Thus in Paradise man will say: 'Praise be to God who has taken away all sorrow from us' (35:34). Present world is Paradise with sorrow, and *jannat* is paradise without sorrow. We are given the former so that we can discover the latter.

Q10. How will God select people for Paradise?

A10. God will select according to His criterion. It is provided in the following Hadith. The Prophet said to Ibn Abbas: 'If you can sleep and wake up in a manner that you don't have malice in your heart for anyone, then do so!'