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The Youth and Future Aspirations

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ آمَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنَاهُمْ هُدًى

[الكهف: 13]

In the Name of Allah, the All-Beneficent, the All-Merciful.

'They were indeed youths who had faith in their Lord, and We had enhanced them in guidance.'

(Glorious Qur'ān, 18:13)

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ، كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَ آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ، اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ، كَمَا بَارَكْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَ آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ.

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. O Allah! Send your choicest salutations upon Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, as you sent salutations upon Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim. And bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, as you blessed Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim. Indeed, You are all Praised and Glorious.

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About the Author

Hujjatul islam wal Muslimeen Allamah Sheikh *Hassan al-Saffar* (**الشيخ حسن الصفار,** born 1958) is a Shi'a scholar and Friday prayer leader from Qatif, Saudi Arabia. He is considered one of the most important Shi'a leaders in Saudi Arabia.

On 23 October 2009, The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre made mention of Shaykh Saffar as being 'one of the 500 most influential Muslims in the world'.

Beside his primary education in Saudi Arabia, he has studied and taught in several theological seminaries in different countries including Iraq, Iran and Kuwait.

He established and led a social movement aimed at promoting religious values, achieving the concept of citizenship and equality between citizens, overcoming sectarian discrimination, and cultural and sectarian exclusion by adopting the methodology of political, media and cultural work.++++

He plays a leading role in the movement of communication and openness between different sects and trends in the national and Islamic arena. He has spearheaded initiatives to open channels of dialogue between Salafis and Shi'a in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The author is also a popular orator in the region who started his public speaking from an early age, as young as 12. Some of his lectures are broadcast on various radio and satellite channels from Kuwait, Iraq, Iran and Lebanon.

Most of his speeches revolve around building character, developing society, spreading a culture of unity and tolerance and protecting human rights.

He has published more than 147 books in various fields of religious and cultural knowledge, some of which have been translated into other languages.

A number of scientific and cultural magazines have published his research work and articles, including: (Al-Kalima), (Al-Waha), (Insights), (Al-Hajj and Umrah), (Al-Minhaj), (Risala Al-Taqreeb), (Contemporary Awareness), Al-Hiwar, and (Ijtihad and Renewal, and other magazines. Some daily newspapers also published his regular weekly articles including Al-Youm (Saudi), Al-Watan (Kuwait), Al-Dar (Kuwait), Al-Ayyam (Bahrain), Al-Watan (Qatar).

In a demonstration of appreciation for his competence and in acknowledgment of his religious and social role, senior religious authorities have appointed him as their representative in religious affairs in the region.

His website: www.saffar.org

Preface

YOUTH: The Tempestuous Journey to Purpose and Morality

Introduction

Like a pliant clay, they are the fledglings upon which moulded human effort is set to rise. The edifice of that which is to come. Whether ethics, morality, chartering the varying dimensions of societal endeavour, youth are the compass by which future generations are layered upon. In their infancy, like sponges, they soak up their environment, whether in the home or outside, melting the shape and form of their personalities into all that they are destined to become. Rocks in the future sculpted by the hands of the present.

The world we live in is the way others have fashioned it. The nestling of home from whence they spread their wings, a stark dichotomy of all that surrounds it. These restless, bustling souls of childlike endeavour exist as islands of contrasting hues in an ocean of perpetual flux. Like rivers find their source in the soaring mountains, they meander their way to the infinity of the sea. The youth too need to find their way in life, steered by the weathered walls of parents and societal dictates, so they may find their way from their own source to a meaningful destination in life.

Youth is a pivotal stage in life, a time of growth, discovery, and the formation of future aspirations. It is during this period that young people often grapple with their identity, values, and the direction they wish to take in life. In today's globalized world, young Muslims face unique challenges as they strive to reconcile Islamic values with Western belief systems. This book explores how Islamic morality can guide the youth towards a purpose-filled life, adjusting a misspent youth filled with idle chatter, calming rebellion, in the belly of peer pressure.

The Importance of Future Aspirations

Future aspirations are the dreams and goals that drive youth forward, providing them with a sense of direction and motivation. In Islam, the pursuit of knowledge and self-improvement is highly encouraged. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized the importance of seeking knowledge, stating, "Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim." According to the teachings of the Purified Progeny (AS), reason is the foundation of our very existence. This pursuit of knowledge is not limited to religious studies but extends to all that is beneficial, contributing to personal development and societal progress. This book provides clear and concise directives by which our youth can delineate a path towards progress, direction, purpose, clarity and eventual success.

Guiding Youth Towards Purpose

To steer youth towards a purpose-filled life, it is essential to instill in them the values of hard work, perseverance, and the importance of setting goals. Islamic teachings offer a robust framework for this, emphasizing the virtues of sincerity (ikhlas), patience (sabr), and gratitude (shukr). Parents, educators, and community leaders play a crucial role in guiding youth by providing them with opportunities to explore their interests, encouraging them to set achievable goals, and supporting them in their endeavors. This book thus plays a very vital role as a durable building block upon which the life of our youth can be incrusted upon.

Islam and Morality

Islamic morality is based on principles that promote righteousness, justice, and compassion. These values are not only connected to individual conduct but also to collective well-being. The Holy Qur'an, Hadith of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and Sayings of the Immaculate & Purified Household ﷺ provide clear guidance on moral behavior, encouraging Muslims to act with integrity, show kindness to others, and uphold justice. For youth, understanding and internalizing these moral values can help them navigate the complexities of modern life with a strong ethical basis. The

author provides very clear directives with the brevity that befits the wandering mind of our youth today.

Misspent Youth and Idle Chatter

One of the challenges faced by youth is the temptation to engage in idle chatter and frivolous activities. In a digital age such as ours, social media and entertainment can easily consume a significant portion of young people's time, feeding procrastination and a lack of productivity. The end result is a mental state attune to wastage, an unproductive life devoid of direction, a lack of ambition and ultimately a socially and religiously deprived existence. The struggles of every era of our lives are fraught with their own challenges. The greatest challenge is that the energy of youth when misspent creates an empty foundation upon a future society is built. Islam warns against wasting of time on idle talk, wasting our efforts on futile activities, and wasting our talents on useless endeavours, as it detracts from all aspects of a meaningful life in this world. The Holy Prophet (S) said, "Part of the excellence of a person's Islam is that he leaves what does not concern him." Encouraging youth to focus on constructive activities, such as volunteering, sports, and hobbies, can help them avoid the pitfalls of idle chatter.

Calming the Rebellion Within

Adolescence is often accompanied by a sense of rebellion, as young people seek to assert their independence and challenge authority. While some level of rebellion is a natural part of growing up, it must be managed effectively to deter destructive behavior. Islamic teachings advocate for respectful conduct and obedience to parents and elders. The Qur'an states, "And lower unto them the wing of submission and humility through mercy and say: My Lord! Have mercy on them as they cherished me when I was little." By fostering open communication, understanding, and mutual respect, parents and mentors can help calm rebellious tendencies and guide youth towards positive expressions of independence.

Peer Pressure

Peer pressure is a significant influence on youth, shaping their nbehavior, choices, and attitudes. The desire to fit in and be accepted by peers can sometimes lead to compromising one's values and engaging in negative behaviour or harmful activities. Islam encourages strong personal integrity and the courage to uphold one's beliefs, even in the face of opposition. The Holy Prophet (S) emphasized the importance of choosing good companions, stating, "A man is upon the religion of his best friend, so let one of you look at whom he befriends." Teaching youth to be selective in their friendships and to seek out positive influences can mitigate the effects of peer pressure. A tree of sturdy foundation and firmly planted roots weathers the effects of the most turbulent of storms.

Aligning Islamic Values with Western Belief Systems

For young Muslims living in Western societies, aligning Islamic values with Western belief systems can be challenging, complicated, but not impossible. It requires a nuanced understanding of both cultures and the ability to identify common ground between which firm bridges of understanding can be constructed. Many Western ideals such as justice, equality, and freedom, resonate with Islamic principles. By emphasizing these shared values, young Muslims can confidently navigate their identity without feeling this duality is a compromise of their essence. Education and dialogue are key to fostering mutual understanding and respect between different cultural and religious perspectives.

Conclusion

The journey of youth towards future aspirations, guided by Islamic morality, is one of growth, challenge, and discovery. By addressing the issues of misspent youth, rebellion, peer pressure, and cultural integration, we can empower young Muslims to lead purpose-filled lives that honor their faith, instil in them an innate sense of goodness aligned to their spirit and in tandem contributes positively to society. In doing so,

they will not only fulfill their potential but also become ambassadors of Islamic values in a diverse and interconnected world.

The Dawn of a New Era

In the tapestry of human history, youth have always been the vibrant threads that weave change, innovation, and hope. They are the dreamers, the rebels, and the architects of tomorrow. In the context of Islam, a faith that has long championed the values of justice, compassion, and moral integrity, harnessing the potential of our young people is not just a pledge; it is a divine mandate that rests upon the shoulders of society and the older generation. As we stand at the crossroads of tradition and modernity, we are called to harness the boundless creative energies of our youth to paint a future that reflects the highest ideals of our faith.

Islam teaches us that every individual is endowed with unique gifts and talents, and it is the responsibility of the community to nurture these qualities. The Qur'an and the teachings of the Holy Prophet (S) emphasize the importance of knowledge, creativity, and moral rectitude. In a world often overshadowed by division and despair, the youth possess the power to transcend barriers, challenge injustices, and inspire a collective awakening. They are not merely the leaders of tomorrow; they are the catalysts of today. And hence this book comes at a vitally important time, given the overwhelming thrust from a society always frivolling the boundaries of an ethical abyss.

Imagine a generation that channels its creativity into art, literature, technology, and social activism, all grounded in the principles of morality and ethical conduct. Picture young minds collaborating across cultures and borders, united by a shared vision of a just and compassionate world. This is not a distant dream; it is an achievable reality if we empower our youth to embrace their potential and align their passions with the teachings of Islam. The book builds a very important bridge between an Islamic discourse within the household, with the positive elements in society from which our youth are consciously and inertly being fed.

From an era perspective, our youth are better equipped with the tools to address societal challenges in which we exist, but they need guidance,

mentorship, and a supportive environment to flourish. It is our duty to provide them with the resources and opportunities to explore their creativity, to question, to learn, and to grow.

In this exploration of youth, Islam, and morality, this book examines the teachings of our faith that inspire ethical leadership and social responsibility, uncovering the pathways through which our youth can transform their dreams into reality, illuminating the world with their brilliance.

As we turn the pages of this discourse, let us be reminded that the future is not a predetermined fate but a clear canvas waiting to be painted. With the brush of creativity and the palette of moral values, our youth can create a masterpiece that reflects the beauty of a shared humanity upon the bedrock of Islamic Teachings espoused by the Holy Qur'an, the pristine exemplar (Rasulullah S) and the shining lights (Immaculate Household (AS)). Let us stand together, as we empower the next generation to rise, to create, to lead us into a brighter, harmonious, morally conscious future with blossoming skills, as they assume the helm of all that is bright.

Syed Aftab Haider

Cape Town, South Africa – May 2025

Introduction

In the current era, our youth are faced with dangerous challenges regarding the formation of their personalities and development of their thought and behavior. They are not made to utilize their natural disposition (*fitrah*) and intellect to distinguish between that which is beneficial from that which is detrimental.

Furthermore, their parents are reeling from the rapid change and 'progress' that has shocked and affected their lives, such that they lost the ability to correlate contemporary developments with the preservation of traditional values and principles.
Religious institutions also lack the means to attract and captivate them, as they fail to proceed with a structured framework that is based on programming and planning.

Moreso, the environment that surrounds them is filled with seduction and temptation. Thus, there is an open space that is dominated by a media that promotes desires and pleasure, and a materialist culture that, like a sweeping flood, wants to drown all people within the quagmire of Western civilization, that too under the banner of globalization.

With their living conditions becoming increasingly more difficult and challenging, particularly in education, employment and in the acquiring of other necessities of life, the youth are becoming very anxious and uncertain about their future and the prospects of building a life for themselves.

As a result, they are in dire need of someone to stand with them, who understands their circumstances and perceives the extent of the challenges that face them. They need a helping hand to overcome the dangers of this sensitive and critical phase of their lives.

However, some youth collapse under the weight of these crises, while others stumble and fall on the path of these challenges. Some become confused and continue to wander aimlessly. Consequently, unpleasant phenomenon prevails in youth communities, resulting in inappropriate

practices that cause great distress and annoyance to parents, and anger to the religious.

Nevertheless, this annoyance or anger will not resolve the problem; rather, it may further complicate it and increase the gulf between generations, and further distant young people from religion.
Therefore, what is required is a deeper understanding of them, their situation, and problems. Only then will it be possible to assist and find solutions to their problems, as well as discover ways of rescue and salvation.

This places the matter as a priority on all our shoulders. We must ponder on it, present solutions, suggestions, and establish programs for implementation.

These humble lines are spoken from the heart to the heart of every young person. It is a message of sympathy and solidarity in the face of the challenges of this harsh world. These words are intended to be an open dialogue for a better understanding of the reality of life, hoping that it will contain something that illuminates the path towards progress and success, and motivates them to refine their endeavours and unleash their energies to build a better future.

I conclude by praying for the success and prosperity for all my young brothers and sisters.

Hassan Saffar
09/05/1427
05/06/2006

Youth in a World of Challenges

From time to time, certain groups of young people engage in alarming practices that disrupt social order and violate the ethical and value system of society.

These types of practices cannot be tolerated or justified, as the protection of individual dignity, as well as public and private property, is a fundamental religious principle. It is also the clearest form of social security and stability.

A good citizen is one who feels responsible for the interests of their country and other members of society. He is keen to protect them from any harm and aggression. However, mere condemnation and rejection of these wrongdoings is not sufficient to contain them nor prevent their recurrence. In this case, it is necessary to treat it like a warning bell and danger sign, indicating what is stirring within our children and youth.
This generation, which has grown up in a world full of challenges, inundated with media and cultural influences, is living a life of alienation and conflict between what they hear from their religious heritage and social values, and what they see in the world around them. Their reality and worldview are shaped through these social media outlets, television channels and live streams.

Subsequently, these difficulties and challenges are a circumstance of life in the contemporary era clearly impact the psychological well-being of the youth in this generation.

This requires clinical assessment and necessitates concerned and conscious individuals within society attempting to help this generation confront the challenges of life.

The Nature of Youth

Every stage of human life has its own unique nature and characteristics. This makes it essential to look at it through the lens of that specific stage and not through that of another. For example, it is inappropriate to deal with the stage of childhood based on the stage of youth or treat youth based on old age.

Indeed, youth is a period of aspirations, dreams and hopes. In childhood, individuals have not yet discovered their surroundings. They also do not possess the emotional and intellectual ability to think ahead and set targets. At this stage, their perception of themselves is still in its infancy and requires development, while their aspirations are simple and limited. Similarly, when they become adults, their hopes and aspirations often diminish due to the hardships and setbacks they have faced in life. This makes them more realistic and content with their current condition, and less focused on their distant hopes and fantasies. However, the stage of youth is when hopes and aspirations are renewed. Where they work towards building their future and life. It is in this stage where they contemplate securing their livelihood, developing their personality, and finding their rightful position within society.

The youth require a clear horizon for their ambitions. They need for scientific and practical advancements to be made readily available and require ease of access to the paths that would allow them to build their life and future. Similarly, they need proper guidance to ensure that they utilize their energies and capabilities correctly; that they embrace responsibilities and challenges. Thus, they will come to understand that it is only through effort and striving that their hopes and aspirations will be realized.

However, they perceive that their ambitions are being met with a closed horizon, making their legitimate desires unattainable. This feeling of not being able to utilize their capabilities and build a future causes the youth to be anxious and distressed, both mentally and emotionally. This then produces a state of frustration which, according to psychologists, is accepted and noticed more in young people.

This state is a psychological disorder that can lead to serious consequences, including enmity and rebellious social behavior. Numerous social studies have suggested that a lack of employment opportunities and high youth unemployment rates are closely linked to delinquency and rebellion among the youth.

Between Emotion and Reason

Man's emotions and feelings peak during his youth. They, like his physical characteristics, strengthen during this stage of their development, coinciding with the awakening of sexual desires. It is at this stage that youth succumb to the pressure of their emotions and feelings. So, in response to these pressures, they are led to make immature and hasty decisions that may be extremely detrimental to their futures. This point, i.e., that emotions get the better of reason within majority of youth, is indicated within certain Islamic texts. In these texts, these kinds of actions are considered to resemble those of the insane and drunk. For example, it is reported from the Noble Prophet ﷺ that,

الشَّبابُ شُعبَةٌ مِن الجُنُونِ[1]

'*Youth is a branch of insanity.*'

Similarly, Imam Ali ﷺ is reported to have said,

يَنبَغِي للعاقِلِ أن يَحتَرِسَ مِن سُكرِ المالِ ، و سُكرِ القُدرَةِ ، و سُكرِ العِلمِ ، و سُكرِ المَدحِ ، و سُكرِ الشَّبابِ ، فإنَّ لِكُلِّ ذلكَ رِياحا خَبيثةً تَسلُبُ العَقلَ و تَستَخِفُّ الوَقارَ[2]

'*It behoves the intelligent to protect themselves from the intoxication of wealth, the intoxication of power, the intoxication of knowledge, the intoxication of praise and the intoxication of youth, for each of these have foul odours that take away intelligence and reduce dignity.*

[1] al-Hindi, Ali al-Muttaqi, *Kanz al-Ummal*, Hadith no. 43587, Fifth Edition 1985, Muassisah al-Risalah, Beirut.

[2] al-Amidi al-Tamimi, Abd al-Wahid, *Ghurar al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, pg. 797, 1st Edition, 1990, Dar al-Kutub Islami, Qum.

So, if the emotional pull during youth is intensified, then it becomes necessary for reason and the intellect to be stimulated and actualized. To create harmony between reason and emotion for their behaviors and orientations, the centrality of the intellect must be emphasized. Thus, ensuring that they do not follow their whims and base desires, nor succumb to these feelings and emotions at the expense of their intellect and logic.

In this regard, they require constant reminders regarding the role of the intellect and warned against neglecting it. They also need the companionship of wise and mature individuals and to heed the advice given to them by mentors.

However, one of the greatest challenges facing the youth today is the media, and its impact on their lives. It both stirs their emotions and exacerbates their feelings and sensations. Consequently, most of the programs and films that are broadcasted aim to arouse lust and carnal desires. They also encourage adventurism and violence and promote rebellion and disregard for values and customs. All of this is under the banner of freedom and enjoying life.

Circle of Peers

From another angle, we notice a growing separation between the youth and their parents, such that the youth live amongst themselves in close circles, groups, and cliques. In addition, communication between them and their parents and families is weak and lacking.

This attachment to their peers and equals is natural, but it may lead to negative traits becoming reinforced if a suitable environment does not exist.

In his book, *Al-Shabab Arabi wa Mushkilatihi,'* Dr. Izzat Hijazi points to the positive and negative role that a group of peers can play in a young person's life. In summary, he writes:

'The social life of a young person can be divided into three domains, namely, family, colleagues and friends or a peer group. The peer group

are unique from amongst them. They have a distinct effect on an adolescent's life. They are their reference group, thus preceding others in importance. Youth derive their values, habits, behaviors and the criteria for judging others and themselves from this group.

The importance of this group in the lives of most youth can be attributed to several factors, of which the most important are:

The warmth, acceptance, and true friendship that it provides to its members. It gives them renewed energy to bear the difficulties of life and problems related to their age group. It presents them with an opportunity to redirect their tensions and stress that they may encounter in their lives. Additionally, it allows them to benefit from each other's experiences and skills and instills in them a sense of self-worth.

However, peer groups also have negative dimensions, the most important being:

1. Control over its members and the negation of their individuality and independence. Thus, a youth may live in the shadow of their friends, especially the powerful and domineering elements of the group.
2. It is common for a peer group to intensify the conflict between the youth and their families, guardians, and other adults. This is due to the support that they make available in challenging and rebelling against them.
3. A peer group may push its members to get involved in a variety of anti-social and disruptive behavior that they would not have done alone.
4. Often, these groups engage in haphazard activities lacking a clear objective. They usually also become insular, creating their own bubble, and alienating themselves from social reality, destroying its relationship with it.'[1]

It therefore becomes incumbent upon parents to cultivate and maintain a bond with their children, constantly involving them in their lives. This

[1] Hijazi, Dr. Izzat, *al-Shabab al-Arabi wa Mushkilatihi*, pgs. 249-252, second. Edition 1985, Silsalah Alam al-Marifah 6, Kuwait.

necessitates treating them with respect and listening to their opinions. This interaction become the young and old is vitally important, it will help the youth overcome the pressures attached to their emotions and sentiments and bring them closer to rationality and moderation.

Channeling Energy and Vitality

The physical maturity and emotional vibrancy that come with youth instill a tremendous amount of energy and vitality in an individual. However, this energy needs to be channeled and utilized effectively. Youth is indeed the prime of life. It is a period of strength that follows the vulnerability of childhood and precedes the limitations of old age. This matter is also alluded to in the Glorious Qur'ān, where Allah says,

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُم مِّن ضَعْفٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِن بَعْدِ ضَعْفٍ قُوَّةً ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِن بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ ضَعْفًا وَشَيْبَةً[1]

'It is Allah who created you from [a state of] weakness, then He gave you power after weakness. Then, after power, He ordained weakness and old age.'

This immense energy and vigor of the youth constitute a valuable asset for societal, scientific and practical progress. If society provides young people with opportunities for work and flexibility, and opens the doors of effectiveness and productivity to them in various fields, then significant advancements can be realized.

Throughout Islamic history, youth have played a prominent role in building the Islamic civilization, achieving noteworthy accomplishments. This was particularly evident when societal leadership propelled capable young individuals to the forefront, granting them the opportunity to highlight their talents and leadership abilities.

A good example of this was when the Noble Prophet, Muhammad ﷺ sought to appoint a governor for Makkah after its conquest he chose a young man, approximately twenty-three years old, named Attab ibn Asid. Despite having embraced Islam only on the day of the conquest, Attab was appointed as the governor of Makkah, the most sacred and significant city in the Arabian Peninsula.

[1] Glorious Qur'ān, 30:54

Similarly, the last military expedition that was ordered by the Noble Messenger of Allah ﷺ is another clear example of this matter.

During the last days of his blessed life, the Noble Prophet ﷺ assembled an army to be dispatched towards Rome. This army, which included prominent companions from the Muhajirin[1], and Ansar[2], such as Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, Qatada ibn al-Nu'man, etc., was placed under the command of Usamah ibn Zayd ibn Harithah, a young man who had not yet turned twenty. This appointment was met with disdain by the companions, with one of them, Ayyash ibn Abi Rab'ah al-Makhzumi, saying, 'Has this young boy been placed in charge over the Muhajirin?!?' When this reached the Noble Prophet ﷺ, he became extremely angry and agitated. Despite his illness, he went to the masjid and, after praising Allah, addressed the people, 'O people, what is this that has reached me from some of you concerning my appointment of Usamah? If you have criticized my appointment of Usamah, then you have criticized my appointment of his father before him. By Allah, he was suitable for that appointment, likewise, his son after him is also suitable…' He repeated the following statement numerous times during his final illness: Dispatch the army of Usamah!'[3]

Indeed, the energy of youth rejects inhibition and refuses stagnation. So, if healthy channels and suitable outlets are not presented for their release and expression, it will explode in wrong directions and via paths that violate the law and system.

It is for this reason that, today, countries attach significant importance to organizing and encouraging activities, such as sport, for the youth, as they provide an outlet for this excess energy.

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[1] Those companions who migrated from Makkah to Madinah before the Conquest of Makkah.

[2] The residents (referred to as helpers) of Madinah who welcomed the emigrants from Makkah.

[3] al-Salehi al-Shami, Muhammad bin Yusuf, *Subul al-Huda wa al-Rashaad fi Sirah ti Khair al-Ibad*, vol. 6, pg. 248, 1st ed., Dar al-Kutub al-A'lamiyya, Beirut.

Consequently, sports clubs and other institutions that focus on harnessing the scientific, technical, and social skills of young people have become a necessity in the contemporary world. Thus, progressive societies are those that concern themselves with the energies of their children and youth.

Engaging the Youth

It is unacceptable for us to leave our children and youth as prey to media, telecommunications and satellite channels that promote a materialist and consumerist culture, and which models itself on western behavior that opposes our values and endangers our societies. We should not distance or estrange ourselves from them when their impulsive behavior irritates us, for they are victims of an environment that lacks effective upbringing and a healthy social atmosphere.

Similarly, we cannot solely rely on deterrence and restraint, as this may push them towards further defiance and plunge us into a spiral of action and reaction. Indeed, while restraint and discipline within specific boundaries is necessary, our primary focus should be on engaging the youth, understanding their conditions and struggles, and providing them with the appropriate atmosphere.

Our societies urgently need to be more open to young people and bridge the gap between generations. Families, religious scholars, and officials should all play a role in helping young people navigate the challenges they face, especially during these critical years. By providing support and addressing their concerns about their future and their ability to meet life's demands, we can help them overcome the difficult circumstances some may be experiencing.

Here, the necessity of developing effective educational and religious discourse with the youth becomes crucial. The youth of today are exposed to the attractive language of the media and are aware of various contemporary sciences and knowledge. They appreciate emotional and empathetic communication styles, and seek opportunities for discussion, dialogue, and understanding diverse perspectives.

Therefore, we should not resort to a condescending approach characterized by commands, prohibitions and threats, nor excessively quote religious texts or suppress their right to question and critique.
In this regard, the conduct of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ provides us with the best example and role model. Once a young man came to him ﷺ and

exclaimed, 'O Messenger of Allah! Allow me to commit adultery!' On saying this, he was scolded by the people around him. They shouted at him, 'What are you saying?' Nevertheless, the Noble Prophet ﷺ came close to him and began to speak with him in a clam manner, saying, 'Would you like for your mother to commit adultery?' 'No' replied the young man. The Noble Prophet ﷺ then said to him, 'Similarly, others would not like for their mothers to commit adultery." Would you be ok with your sister committing adultery?' Again, he said, 'No.'

To which the Noble Prophet ﷺ replied, 'Just like you, others do not wish for their sisters to commit adultery. How about for your daughter, would you like it if she committed adultery?' For the third time the young man answered negatively. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ again responded, 'The same goes for other people. So, dislike for them what you dislike for yourself, and love for them what you love for yourself.' Thereafter the Messenger of Allah ﷺ put his hand on the chest of the young man and prayed for him saying, 'O Allah! Conceal his sins, purify his heart, and protect his private parts.'[1]

[1] al-Tabarani, Sulayman ibn Ahmad ibn Ayub, *al-Mujam al-Kabir*, vol. 8, pg. 183, 2nd ed., Maktabah ibn Taymiyyah, Cairo.

Programs and Institutions

Youth is the phase of life when one's personality is refined, and energies and talents are honed. However, this can only be realized through programs and institutions that accommodate the youth and aim to develop their potential and skills, thus, preparing them for the future and to benefit the nation. These programs should also provide an outlet to channel to their energy and make the most of their free time.

Whenever programs and institutions were made available to the youth, it guaranteed their well-being and progress to a large degree. Conversely, failure to provide such programs can result in the appearance of negative tendencies amongst this generation.
Therefore, every nation concerns itself with establishing special institutions related to the affairs of the youth, whether it be a ministry, agency, or administration, depending on the different systems of government in these countries.

Over half a century ago, circa. 1953, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia established a department to care for the youth which was affiliated to the Ministry of the Interior. Then, in 1961, it became part of the Ministry of Education. Thereafter, in 1963, it became part of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Eventually, in 1974, the Council of Ministers issued a resolution to establish an independent body called the General Presidency for Youth Welfare'. Presently, this body oversees to more than seventy-two sports and cultural institutions throughout the Kingdom.

Our Saudi society is at the forefront of young societies. The percentage of those under twenty-five accounts for 55% of the population. But they currently face major challenges in protecting their religious values and social traditions in the face of the onslaught of Western culture and mass media. Additionally, the years of economic boom have created changes in behavioral patterns and social norms, creating cracks in family relationships.

Some of these difficulties are prevalent in the sphere of education, especially regarding the ability of universities to accommodate those wishing to enroll, or in the field of securing work opportunities and employment for graduates. Other challenges concern the vast complexities required to build a life, including marriage, housing, etc. All these difficulties create pressure on those young people who are exposed to them.

It is not far-fetched to say that our society is being targeted from hostile parties who are striving to create an unstable and shaky situation amongst our emerging youth.

Therefore, it is essential for us to properly understand the challenges facing our youth. We must take the ill behaviors that appear from some sectors of our youth as a warning bell and danger sign. However, such phenomena should not distract us, causing us to forget the root of the problem, for there is no benefit in treating the apparent symptoms of a disease while the roots have not been diagnosed and treated correctly.
Families, government bodies, civic institutions, religious leaders - who serve as guides to the community - and every conscious individual in society are required to double their efforts and concerns for this generation of youth, in order to care for and help them face the challenges of the contemporary world.

Youth have an Affinity towards Goodness

Some imagine that the nature of youth, with its accompanying emotional confusion and awakening of instincts and desires, results in a negative attitude towards religion, and greater inclination towards amusement and entertainment and a desire to being free from all restrictions and responsibilities.

However, the reality is contrary to this. In fact, youth is when all inclinations, desires, and traits, which are hidden within the essence of the human being, manifest themselves, whether they are materialistic or spiritual.

In addition to the awakening of his sexual instincts, his thought and intellect mature, his innate and virtuous tendencies develop, and he begins to ask questions regarding his existence and the existence around him. This is while, in childhood, he was oblivious of these matters and did have the ability to consider them seriously. Thus, he finds himself at a crossroads, facing many choices. However, the choice he makes will be influenced by his environment and past experiences.

Therefore, Islam considers puberty *(bulugh)* to be the age of legal responsibility *(taklif)*. There is a consensus amongst scholars that, besides innate knowledge and moral development, there are additional inclinations that naturally become apparent within the human being when he reaches the age of twelve, which is the beginning of adolescence. One of these inclinations is towards religious knowledge. This inclination intensifies and strengthens gradually within the interplay of the natural factors of puberty until it reaches its peak at the age of sixteen. In this regard, John B. Geisel writes, 'Studies have shown that the development of religious faith begins to take root in individuals around the age of twelve.' Further, Maurice Debesse – former professor at the University of Strasbourg – opines, 'There is a consensus among psychologists concerning the existence of a relationship between the distress of

adolescence and a sudden leap of religious inclination within man. During this phase, a kind of religious revival and enlightenment is observed, even amongst those who did not previously attach importance to things related to religion and faith. This religious awareness continues to interact within the depths of man until it reaches its peak at the age of sixteen."[1]

Youth, the Vanguard of Believers.

If we were to carefully study the history of divine religions, we would clearly induce that the youth have been at the forefront of belief and in answering the call of Allah's noble messengers. Furthermore, we would see that they were its flag-bearers and defenders.
Prophet Nuh G was rebuked by his people, for they claimed that nobody but the weak and youth responded to his call. They said to him,

مَا نَرَاكَ إِلَّا بَشَرًا مِّثْلَنَا وَمَا نَرَاكَ اتَّبَعَكَ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَرَاذِلُنَا بَادِيَ الرَّأْيِ[2]

'We do not see you to be anything but a human being like ourselves, and we do not see anyone following you except those who are simpleminded riffraff from our midst.'

Indeed, most of those who followed Nuh ﷺ were youth, for their hearts were pure and so able to perceive the light of truth. They, in their search for truth and with their intelligence, found clear proofs of truth in the sayings and acts of the Prophets ﷺ.[3]

Similarly, we see that Prophet Musa ﷺ was surrounded by the youth of his people, forming a united front within an environment of dictatorship and oppression. In this regard, Allah ﷻ states,

فَمَا آمَنَ لِمُوسَىٰ إِلَّا ذُرِّيَّةٌ مِّن قَوْمِهِ عَلَىٰ خَوْفٍ مِّن فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِمْ أَن يَفْتِنَهُمْ[4]

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[1] Falsafi, Muhammad Taqi, *al-Shab bayn al-Aql wa al-Atifah*, vol. 1, pg. 329, 1st ed., 1994, Muassisah al-A'lami li Matbuat, Beirut.
[2] Glorious Qur'ān, 11:27
[3] Shirazi, Nasir Makarem, *Tafsir al-Amsal,* vol. 6, pg. 478.
[4] Glorious Qur'ān, 10:83

'But none believed in Moses except some youths from among his people, for the fear of Pharaoh and his elite that he would persecute them.'

Even at the time of our Prophet, Muhammad ﷺ, it was the youth who were at the forefront of the religion. For this reason, it has been reported that the Noble Prophet ﷺ said,

اوصيكُمْ بِالشُّبّانِ خَيْرا فَإِنَّهُمْ اَرَقُّ اَفْئِدَةً اِنَّ الله بَعَثَنى بَشيرا وَ نَذيرا فَحالَفَنِى الشُّبّانُ وَ خالَفَنِى الشُّيوخُ، ثُمَّ قَرَاَ فَطالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الاَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلوبُهُمْ[1] [2]

'*I advise you to act kindly with the youth, for indeed they are the most tender-hearted. Allah U sent me as a bringer of glad-tidings and warner, it was the youth who joined me, while the elders opposed me.' He ﷺ then recited the verse, 'Time took its toll on them and so their hearts were hardened, and many of them are transgressors.'*

Of the things that seriously provoked the elders of the Quraysh against the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was the inclination of their youth towards his invitation. This was clearly displayed in their complaint to Abu Talib[3] when they said to him,

إِنَّ اِبْنَ أَخِيكَ قَدْ سَفَّهَ أَحْلاَمَنَا وَ سَبَّ آلِهَتَنَا وَ أَفْسَدَ شَبَابَنَا [4]

'O Abu Talib! Your nephew mocks our dreams, insults our gods, and corrupts our youth.'

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[1] Gloriuos Qur'ān, 57:16

[2] Farid, Murtadha, *Riwayat min Madrassah Ahl al-Bayt*, vol..1, pg 349.

[3] Abu Talib ibn Abd al-Muttalib, was the leader of the Banu Hashim after the death of his father, Abd al-Muttalib. Abu Talib took care of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and protected him until his demise in the 11th year of the mission. He was the Prophet's paternal uncle and the father of Ali, the Prophet's son-in law.

[4] Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihar al-Anwar,* vol.18, pg 182.

In this vain, Ali ibn Abi Talib ﷺ[1] was the first of the people to accept Islam while being just thirteen. Other great companions, such as Ammar ibn Yasir, Abu Dhar al-Ghaffari, Mus'ab ibn Umayr, Bilal ibn Rabah also accepted Islam during their youth. They then became its standard bearer, thus, enabling Islam to become rooted. May Allah ﷻ be pleased with them.

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq ﷺ once asked his student, Muhammad ibn al-Nu'man[2],

كَيْفَ رَأَيْتَ مُسَارَعَةَ اَلنَّاسِ إِلىٰ هٰذَا اَلْأَمْرِ وَ دُخُولَهُمْ فِيهِ؟

'How did you find the people of Basrah with regards to our affair[3]?'

He replied,

قَالَ وَ اَللَّهِ إِنَّهُمْ لَقَلِيلٌ وَ لَقَدْ فَعَلُوا وَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَقَلِيلٌ

'By Allah! They are few and their activities are miniscule.'

The Imam ﷺ then said to him,

فَقَالَ عَلَيْكَ بِالْأَحْدَاثِ فَإِنَّهُمْ أَسْرَعُ إِلَى كُلِّ خَيْرٍ[4]

'*Focus on the youth, for they accept any goodness faster.'*

In the present era, it is the youth who are the community of the blessed Islamic revival. It is they who are orientating themselves with a religious worldview and who are majority players within Islamic activism.

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[1] Ali was the cousin and the son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. He ruled as the Fourth Caliph from 656-661 AD but he is regarded as the rightful and immediate successor to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ by Shia Muslims.

[2] He was also known as Mumin al-Taq and al-Ahwal. He assigned immense importance to spreading the knowledge and teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt ﷺ.

[3] I.e., Imamate

[4] *Bihar al-Anwar,* vol. 23, pg. 236.

Motivations for Religiosity among Youth

There are multiple motivations behind the phenomenon of young people turning to religion:

1. During the phase of youth, man's awareness begins to form, causing him to ponder about life and his surroundings. These pertinent questions, which are contained within his innate disposition and incited by his intellect, confront him because of his pondering and observation of the conditions that surround him. Consequently, as religion presents clear answers that are in harmony with man's innate disposition and correspond to the axioms of the intellect, young people find themselves in religion. Religion also provides refuge for them and enables them to attain self-contentment and intellectual stability.

   So, when young people are denied the opportunity to acquaint themselves with religion, its principles, and teachings, they will experience an emotional and spiritual void that could cause them significant anxiety and distress. Subsequently, they may also get exposed to deviant and corrupt ideologies. For this reason, Islam has emphasized for families and conscious members of society to show concern for the youth and protect them from idleness and ruin.

   In this light, Imam Ali ﷺ said,

   إِنَّمَا قَلْبُ اَلْحَدَثِ كَالْأَرْضِ اَلْخَالِيَةِ مَا أُلْقِيَ فِيهَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ قَبِلَتْهُ [1]

   'Indeed, the heart of a young person is like barren, fertile land; it will accept whatever is sown in it.

   In another narration, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ﷺ said,

[1] *Nahj al-Balagha,* letter 31.

بَادِرُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ بِالْحَدِيثِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَسْبِقَكُمْ إِلَيْهِمُ الْمُرْجِئَةُ[1]

'Hasten to teach your children our traditions before the Murji'iyyah[2] beat you to it.'

2. Youth are overly sensitive and emotional, but they also possess pure thought and intentions. As a result, they can accurately sense points of weakness and gaps that are present in the society they live in. And because they plan to build their future life within this social reality, these existing shortcomings and problems cause them stress and anxiety about what the future holds for them. They may perceive that their aspirations and ambitions in the fields of education, employment, family planning and life structure are hindered because of the existing problems. This then leads them to search for approaches and worldviews that will provide hope, salvation, and a path to a better future.

   Religion cultivates, in man, the spirit of striving for betterment. It strengthens their resolve to confront the challenges of life, and not to submit to its corruption and problems. It also encourages work towards reform and change. This is what captures their souls and incites a favorable response.

   The youth of Makkah and Madinah responded to the call of Allah and his Messenger, they flocked towards Islam for they saw in it a message of change, a revolution of salvation from ignorance, polytheism, and social corruption. The youth of Islam in this era have indeed responded to the call of the Islamic revival, as they tasted the bitterness of the Ummah's reality, manifested through cultural backwardness, hostile domination, dictatorship, and widespread corruption. Thus, they sought refuge in and turned to

[1] Al-Kulayni, Muhammad ibn Yaqub, al-Kafi, vol.6, pg. 47.

[2] The Murji'iyyah were one of the deviated sects in Islam. They emerged as a theological school that was opposed to the Kharijites on matters related to sin and what defines a true Muslim.

Islam like a ship of salvation and as a project for rescue and reform.

3. With the passage of time, mistakes may accumulate, and deviations may occur, even in righteous societies. Therefore, they require constant shocks and movements of renewal by which they can establish life structures and correct and overcome mistakes. However, this task may be difficult for the older generation, as they have become accustomed to the current reality, its ways, and manners. They fear the repercussions of any drastic change and lack the spirit of adventure and betterment.
   As for the youth, their connection to the prevailing reality is nascent and limited. Their emotional attachment to it is very weak, as it fails their ambitions. The vigor of youth drives them to take risks and venture into the unknown in search of something better. Religion, in its true meanings and teachings, is a constant invitation to reform and renewal, a motivation and an encouragement to dispel evil and endorse good in all spheres of life. This is the hallmark of religion that attracts and captivates the youth.

Responsibility towards Youth

These incentives that the stage of youth affords religion does not mean that they will automatically turn towards religion and become religious. Rather, they indicate the existence of a capacity and readiness, which requires external investment and actualization.

It is here where the responsibility of the family and society arises. It is they who must create an atmosphere for proper guidance and orientation. There are two fundamental matters required for taking the hands of our youth and guiding them towards religiousness and reform:

1. Appropriate awareness and education: Today, our children live in a world that is far more advanced with respect to its means and conditions than that of their parents. Through telecommunications and social media, they are exposed to every happening in the world, which brings about a sense of self confidence and desire for freedom. Therefore, religious concepts and teachings must be presented to them in an appropriate manner, using contemporary language, and a clear, attractive style that can engage them and address the questions and challenges they face .
2. Religious institutes and scholars must welcome and engage them. These young people need someone who will open their heart to them, show them respect and appreciation, and tolerate their problems and the mistakes evident in their behavior. Initially, many young people are unaware of religion, switching between different erroneous orientations and paths. However, the approach of some conscious religious scholars towards them, who received and showed concern for them, brought about a momentous change in their lives. This interaction transformed them into righteous and reformist youth who dedicated themselves to the service of their religion and community. Consequently, the commitment of religious scholars to the

welfare of the youth is one of their most important responsibilities in this era where young people are bombarded with Western, materialistic culture and corrupt temptations. In this way, any youth who is saved and guided becomes a clear referent of the Noble Prophet's ﷺ saying,

أَنْ يَهْدِيَ اَللَّهُ عَلَى يَدَيْكَ رَجُلاً خَيْرٌ لَكَ مِمَّا طَلَعَتْ عَلَيْهِ اَلشَّمْسُ وَ غَرَبَتْ[1]

'If Allah guides a single person through you, it will be more beneficial to you than whatever the sun rises and sets upon.'

The concern of a religious scholar for the youth is an indication of his sincerity. Youth does not allow for prominence and status, nor does it provide the privileges and opportunities afforded to adults and professionals. Similarly, the youth may not respect and honor a religious scholar in the same way as the elders typically would. Interacting with the youth is a test, it requires an open-mind and broad-chest. It is this that makes the divine reward for dealing with this generation greater.

In addition to the divine reward, whoever engages and is concerned with the youth, will see the fruits of their efforts, ripe and plentiful, as confirmation of the saying of Imam Jafar al-Sadiq ﷺ that youth respond to goodness faster; for, as stated by Messenger of Allah ﷺ, their souls are pure and hearts tender. Sins have not yet accumulated on it, nor has it been hardened with ego and negativity. Nevertheless, what we may witness of immoral behavior from certain youth is a result of boredom, lack of awareness and of attention.

During the school summer holidays, when young men and women have abundant free time, it is necessary that beneficial programs, which develop their skills and abilities, are made available to them. These programs must also cater to their religious education and prepare them for both the world and the Hereafter. If they are left to their own devices,

[1] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 21, pg. 361.

they will be susceptible to various deviant and corrupt influences. Idleness is dangerous and can be detrimental for the individual and society.
It is hoped that conscious and concerned scholars and individuals, who have the best interest of society at heart and wish to serve religion, will embrace the task of engaging these youth during their school breaks and arrange beneficial programs to enlighten, nurture and educate them.

Productive Use of Time

All education systems worldwide grant their students an annual holiday of approximately three months during the summer, referred to as the 'summer break'. The implementation of this holiday period was an outcome experiences gained by human society in the fields of pedagogy and sociology.

Regular academic studies require mental and emotional effort from the student, while also restricting their freedom and movement due to its constant nature. This necessitates a period of rest, during which they can disengage from their academic obligations and experience a sense of freedom and release.

This summer break serves several purposes for the educational process. It:
Firstly, it gives the students an opportunity to renew their mental and emotional energy, which has been depleted by academic strain. During this period, there should be nothing that causes fatigue, nor brings about boredom. This period should enable them to start the new school year afresh and with renewed energy.

Secondly, the summer break constitutes a divide between the levels of the educational program. It informs the students of their academic path, the courses they have passed, and the standard of their accomplishments. Thus, preparing their aptitude for every new level.

Thirdly, it provides them with an opportunity to address any gaps and shortcomings they may have in their studies, allowing them to keep pace with the curriculum and their classmates.

Fourthly, it allows them an opportunity to develop different dimensions of their personality. We, as human beings, possess various emotions, sentiments, talents, and capabilities, so, we need avenues to satisfy our diverse needs and pursue our various goals.

To achieve all these and similar goals, education systems have agreed to implement the summer vacation, just as labor systems globally have incorporated the right of annual leave for every employee.

Unquestionably, work, be it mental or physical, like study or labor in all fields of production, is the fundamental pillar for life. It signifies activity and direct engagement to acquire one's needs and achieve one's ambitions. However, holidays and leisure time are not outside of this framework. Rather, their purpose is to frame the desire to work, develop its motivations, and provide a level of satisfaction and emotional well-being.

Leisure Time

It is the time when a person is free from the obligations of work or the commitments of studies, in the case of a student. There are numerous definitions, classifications and means to measure leisure time. These have been discussed in specialized studies.

This topic represents intensive research in the field of sociology. Despite the recent scientific interest in this topic, it quickly caught the attention of scientists and their efforts. Presently, in terms of attention and study, it rivals many of the branches of sociology that have predated it.

This is because this topic has far-reaching implications for distinct aspects of human life, including educational, emotional, social, and economic. This aspect has ensured that leisure time has become a core discussion within sociology, as it is an essential part of the study of human personality and the existing social systems in contemporary life.

Indeed, the phenomenon of leisure time has become a prominent issue for contemporary man, especially on the back of the Industrial Revolution. This too, after the worker had been exploited in the feudal era, not enjoying any human rights, let alone the right of annual leave and vacation. However, in most rural and agricultural communities, people are forced to strive and work throughout the year to provide for their basic needs, leaving them with no leisure time as is common today.

Anthropological studies have revealed no clear distinction between work and leisure time within the daily lives of simple, traditional societies. While work consumed their energy, its activities were mixed with recreation and entertainment, such as dancing, singing, joking and collective work. In addition, some of these customs and traditions had a religious connotation.[1]

However, some sociologists argue that the phenomenon of leisure time is deeply rooted in all civilizations throughout human history. Like any other human phenomenon, it has undergone changes and developments, becoming more regulated and structured due to the passage of time and advancement of life.

Similarly, in the writings of Aristotle, Plato, and other Greek philosophers, we find reference to the presence of leisure time in those societies. These writings, deeply and extensively, detail this phenomenon, as they saw it as an opportunity for education and self-development.

In contrast, some sociologists consider leisure time as being confined to the elites and those with a high social standing within Greek society, and not the general condition governing society.

Whereas in modern times, every worker or student enjoys leisure time, as the prevailing global system specifies the hours of study and work, and advocates for leave and vacation. Furthermore, due to the advancement in the standard of living and life, leisure time has become part and parcel of people's lives.

The Importance of Leisure Time

From the very onset, Greek philosophers stated the importance of leisure time, emphasizing its spiritual function. Aristotle consolidated this idea. He stressed that leisure time should be used for music and contemplation. He believed that musical activities contributed to the development of the

[1] Muhammad, Dr. Muhammad Ali, *Waqt al-Firagh fi al-Mujtamiah al-Hadith,* pg. 48, 1985, Dar al-Nahdah al-Arabiyyah, Beirut.

intellet and critical thinking, while contemplation was central to building character and achieving one's full potential as a human being.
In modern times, great strides have been taken detailing the importance of leisure time, such that it occupies a vast portion of the intellectual and cultural spheres. As a result, since the 1920s and 30s, numerous books and studies on leisure time have been published in Europe and America.

In 1924, the International Labour Office organized the first global conference on workers' leisure time, which was attended by over 300 delegates representing nearly eighteen countries.

In Europe, the sociological study of leisure saw significant progress. In particular, the works of Georges Friedmann played a pivotal role in peaking interest in the study of the role of leisure time in reshaping man and his conformity with a civilization dominated by technology.

In England, the study conducted by Rowntree and Lavers, titled '*English Life and Leisure,'* impacted this field of sociology, resulting in the writing of numerous sociological articles and undertaking of specialized research. Similarly, in the Netherlands, Joffre Dumazedier began his research in 1953. His seminal and influential works are titled, '*Toward a Society of Leisure'* and '*Sociology of Leisure*".'[1]

A Religious Perspective

From religious texts and teachings, we can extract a deep and comprehensive perspective of religion regarding the topic of leisure time. This perspective addresses the issue of leisure from three angles:
First: Developing a sense of responsibility towards time and being careful about it, considering that life is limited. The importance of his ambitions and aspirations, and the immense capabilities that he has, must also be considered; they should motivate him to take advantage of every moment of his existence in the best possible manner.

[1] Ibid, pgs. 42-44.

Indeed, the lifespan that man experiences in this world seems short in comparison to absolute time, his hopes and desire for immortality. This matter is expressed in numerous verses of the Glorious Qur'ān. They recount about what transpires in a person's soul after they leave this world. In one verse, Allah ﷻ says,

قَالَ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ عَدَدَ سِنِينَ قَالُوا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ فَاسْأَلِ الْعَادِّينَ[1]

'*He will say, 'How many years did you remain on earth?' They will say, 'We remained for a day, or part of a day; yet ask those who keep the count.'*

And in another verse,

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ كَأَن لَّمْ يَلْبَثُوا إِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّنَ النَّهَارِ[2]

'On the day He will gather them [it will be] as if they had not remained [in the world] except for an hour'

It is narrated about Prophet Nuh ﷺ that once the Angel of Death came to take his soul after he lived for more than a thousand years, before and after the flood.The Angel asked him, 'O the longest-lived of the prophets, how did you find this world?' Nuh ﷺ replied,

كَدارٍ لَها بابانِ دَخَلتُ مِن أحَدِهما و خَرَجتُ مِنَ الآخَرِ

'It is like a house with two doors; I entered through one and then exited through the other.'

Any material loss, whether it be wealth, property, or gains, can be replaced or compensated for. However, time is something that, once passed, can never be replaced or compensated for. Every passing second is lost for ever, never to return. It is a limited and precious resource. Indeed, it is man's only true resource. Therefore, he must protect and benefit from it to the highest degree possible.

In reality, time is life. Imam Ali ﷺ in this regard is reported to have said,

[1] Glorious Qur'ān, 23:112-113
[2] Glorious Qur'ān, 10:45

إنّما أنتَ عَدَدُ أيّامٍ ، فكُلُّ يَومٍ يَمضي عَلَيكَ يَمضي بِبَعضِكَ [1]

'Verily you are only [the total of] a fixed number of days. So, every day that passes you by takes a piece of you with it.'

In another tradition, the Imam ﷺ is reported to have said,

ما انقَضَتْ ساعَةٌ مِن دَهرِكَ إلّا بِقِطعَةٍ مِن عُمرِكَ [2]

'An hour of your time does not pass but that it cuts away a portion of your lifespan.'

Similarly, a poet says:

Everyday that passes takes a part of me
the heart is bequeathed sorrow, then it leaves

Another poet says:

Verily, we rejoice the days that we have lived
And with every passing day, a piece of life

It is narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said in an advice to to Abu Dhar,

كُنْ عَلَى عُمُرِكَ أَشَحَّ مِنْكَ عَلَى دِرْهَمِكَ وَ دِينَارِكَ [3]

'Be more miserly over time than your than you are over your wealth.'

To emphasize the importance of time to man, Allah U swears by numerous time periods within the Glorious Qur'ān. Some examples are as follows:

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَىٰ وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا تَجَلَّىٰ[4]

'By the night when it envelops, by the day when it brightens.'

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[1] Ghurar al-Hikam, pg. 273
[2] Ibid, pg. 692
[3] Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 76
[4] Glorious Qur'ān, 92:1-2

وَالْفَجْرِ وَ لَيَالٍ عَشْرٍ[1]

'By the Dawn, by the ten nights'

وَالضُّحَىٰ وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا سَجَىٰ[2]

'By the morning brightness, and by the night when it is calm!'

وَالْعَصْرِ إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ[3]

'By Time! Man is indeed in loss.'

These divine texts and teachings educate people to respect time, emphasize its importance, and encourage its responsible and appreciative use, ultimately maximizing achievements.

Hence, man is accountable before Allah U regarding his interaction with the times of his life. It has been narrated from Mu'adh ibn Jabal that the Noble Prophet ﷺ said,

لا تَزُولُ قَدَمَا عَبْدٍ يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ حَتَّى يُسْأَلَ عَنْ أَرْبَعِ خِصَالٍ عُمُرِهِ فِيمَا أَفْنَاهُ...[4]

"A servant's feet will not move on the Day of Judgement until he is asked about four things: concerning his life and how he spent it..."

Furthermore, just as a person should be concerned with respecting and benefitting from their own time, they must also respect the time of others. They should not be a cause for wasting it by being late for appointments, visiting at inappropriate times, or prolonging meetings and conversations without benefit or purpose.

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[1] Ibid, 89:1-2

[2] Ibid, 93: 1-2

[3] Ibid, 103: 1-2

[4] Tabarani, Sulayman ibn Ahmad, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabir,* vol. 20, pg. 60, 2nd ed., Maktabah ibn Taymiyyah, Cairo; al-Bazzaar, Abu Bakr, *Musnad al-Bazzaar,* vol. 4, pg. 266, 1988, Maktabah al-Ulum wa al-Hikam, Madinah. (Both books have reported this tradition in a *sahih* manner).

Indeed, respecting time is one of the most important measures of progress of individuals and communities.

Diversity of Tasks and their Dimensions

This is the second angle of the religious perception on leisure time. Man is a unique being with multifaceted dimensions. He is both matter and spirit, body, and soul. He is a citizen of the two worlds: this world and the Hereafter. He has his individual interests and social connections and enjoys intellectual capabilities and physical strength.

These various dimensions of his personality make him capable of performing a variety of roles and tasks, due to these diverse abilities and potentials. So, if a person confines himself to only one dimension, he will stifle and suppress the remaining dimensions.

Similarly, if man focusses all their time on one task, it may result in boredom and weariness. Therefore, religious teaching advises him to divide his time among various tasks to develop his personality in its different dimensions, and to prevent tiredness and boredom. Thus, leisure time is an opportunity to engage in a variety of tasks.

Even in recommended acts of worship, religion does not advise excessive engagement such that it would lead to loss of interest and enthusiasm. Sahih Bukhari and Muslim, both narrating from Aishah, report that the Noble Prophet ﷺ said,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْأَعْمَالِ مَا تُطِيقُونَ، فَإِنَّ اللهَ لَا يَمَلُّ حَتَّى تَمَلُّوا وَإِنَّ أَحَبَّ الْأَعْمَالِ إِلَى اللهِ مَا دُووِمَ عَلَيْهِ، وَإِنْ قَلَّ [1]

'O people! Perform such acts as you are capable of, for Allah U does not grow weary but you. The most pleasing of acts with Allah U are those done continuously, even if they are small.'

[1] Nishapuri, Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim,* vol. 1, pg. 540, Dar al-Ihya Turath al-Arabi, Beirut; Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Muslim, *Sahih Bukhari,* vol. 7, pg. 155, Dar Tuq al-Najat.

In another tradition reported from Anas, the Noble Prophet ﷺ said,

لِيُصَلِّ أَحَدُكُمْ نَشَاطَهُ، فَإِذَا كَسِلَ، أَوْ فَتَرَ قَعَدَ[1]

'One should pray while they are lively, but when they tire or feel weak, they should stop and rest.'

And it is reported that Noble Prophet ﷺ, quoting from the scrolls of Ibrahim ؑ said,

يَنبَغِي لِلعاقِل أنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ أربَعُ سَاعَاتٍ ساعَةٌ يُناجي فِيها ربَّهُ، و ساعَةٌ يُحاسِبُ فِيها نَفْسَهُ، وساعَةٌ يَتَفَكَّرُ في صُنْعِ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَل، و ساعَةٌ يَخْلُو فِيها لِحاجَتِهُ مِنْ المَطْعَمِ والمَشْرَبِ [2]

'It is befitting for a wise person to divide his time into four hours: an hour in which he converses with his Lord, an hour in which he accounts for his soul, an hour in which he contemplates on the creation of Allah U, and an hour put aside for food and drink.'

In another tradition, Imam Kazim ؑ is reported to have said,

اِجْتَهِدُوا فِي أَنْ يَكُونَ زَمَانُكُمْ أَرْبَعَ سَاعَاتٍ سَاعَةً لِمُنَاجَاةِ اَللَّهِ وَ سَاعَةً لِأَمْرِ اَلْمَعَاشِ وَ سَاعَةً لِمُعَاشَرَةِ اَلْإِخْوَانِ وَ اَلثِّقَاتِ اَلَّذِينَ يُعَرِّفُونَكُمْ عُيُوبَكُمْ وَ يُخْلِصُونَ لَكُمْ فِي اَلْبَاطِنِ وَ سَاعَةً تَخْلُونَ فِيهَا لِلَذَّاتِكُمْ فِي غَيْرِ مُحَرَّمٍ وَ بِهَذِهِ اَلسَّاعَةِ تَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى اَلثَّلَاثِ سَاعَاتٍ [3]

'Try hard to divide your time into four hours. An hour to call upon Allah U; an hour to take care of your daily affairs and sustenance; an hour to interact with sincere and trustworthy brothers who will inform you of your faults and who whole-heartedly wish well for you and an hour put aside for your permissible pleasures and likes. It is by means of this final hour that you will find the ability to perform the duties of the other three hours.'

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[1] *Sahih Muslim,* vol. 1, pg. 541; *Sahih Bukhari,* vol. 2, pg. 53

[2] al-Qardawi, Yusuf, *al-Waqt fi Hayat al-Muslim,* pg. 19, 5th ed., 1991, Muassisah al-Risalah, Beirut

[3] Ibn Shu'bah al-Harani, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, *Tuhuf al-Uqul,* pg. 409, 1983, Muasissah al-Nashr al-Islami, Qum.

Through this perspective, vacations and breaks from study and work become an opportunity to develop other dimensions of one's personality and to perform roles and tasks in other fields and areas. In this regard, Allah ﷻ addresses His Prophet, Muhammad ﷺ in the following manner,

فَإِذَا فَرَغْتَ فَانصَبْ وَإِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَارْغَب [1]

'So when you are done, appoint, and supplicate your Lord.'

That is, when you complete one task, move onto the next one.

Indeed, every aspect of a person's life has its own rights and requirements. Therefore, it is not correct to exhaust one's energy in one aspect at the expense of the others. The Noble Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said in this matter,

فَإِنَّ لِجَسَدِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا وَإِنَّ لِزَوْجِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا وَإِنَّ لِزَوْرِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا [2]

'Indeed, each of your body, your wife and visitors has a right over you.'

The Legitimacy of Recreation

As for the third angle of the religious perspective, it emphasizes the legitimacy and permissibility of recreation and hobbies, as indicated in religious texts and teachings. In this regard, we find three approaches concerning leisure time, and how to deal with it.

The first approach is an extreme emphasis on time use, rejecting the waste of any hour outside of work and embracing commitments and responsibilities. Perhaps we find a model of this approach in the enthusiasm of the Japanese for work, and their reluctance to take vacations or be idle. In fact, a percentage of deaths among them occur due to overwork. Michel Albert mentioned in his book 'Capitalism against Capitalism' that 10% of adult males who die in Japan each year kill themselves due to excessive work. The Japanese get only one week of vacation per year, and the Japanese government has proposed reducing

[1] Glorious Qur'ān, 94: 7-8

[2] *Sahih Bukhari,* vol. 3, pg. 39.

working hours from 44 to 42 hours per week, but the majority of the people oppose this proposal .
As for the second approach, it is opposite to the first. In this approach one looks at leisure and freedom from work obligations as a goal and aspiration, and treats work commitments as a forced, necessasity. It seeks any opportunity to escape from them.

Reports that discuss the low level of productivity in developing countries indicate the prevalence of this approach. Some workers and employees invent excuses to take leave, arrive late for work, leave early. During work hours, they spend a lot of time on personal matters, such as drinking tea, chatting with colleagues, or talking on the phone, and other similar unproductive activities, which lead to a decline in production and delay in completing tasks.

However, the third approach promotes a more holistic outlook on leisure and recreation, considering it the other side to work. They are two sides that interact and complement each other.

This approach views leisure time as an opportunity for individuals to engage in activities aimed at renewing their energy, relaxing them, and relieving them from the pressures of work and its difficulties.

Further, prophetic traditions clearly indicate the legitimacy of recreation and entertainment. It is narrated that the Noble Prophet ﷺ said,

رَوِّحُوا القُلُوبَ ساعةً بعدَ ساعةٍ، فَإنَّ القُلُوبَ إذا كَلَّتْ عَمِيَتْ[1]

'*Rest your hearts after exertion, as hearts, when they become tired, will become blind.*'

It has also been narrated that Imam Ali ﷺ had said,

إِنَّ لِلْقُلُوبِ شَهْوَةً وَ إِقْبَالاً وَ إِدْبَاراً فَأْتُوهَا مِنْ قِبَلِ شَهْوَتِهَا وَ إِقْبَالِهَا فَإِنَّ اَلْقَلْبَ إِذَا أُكْرِهَ عَمِيَ[2]

[1] al-Andalusi, Shahab al-Din, *al-Aqd al-Farid,* vol. 8, pg. 90, 1983, 1st ed., Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut.
[2] Nahj al-Balagha, wisdom 170.

'Indeed, hearts have desires, there are times when they are receptive and others when they are withdrawn. So, approach them through their desires and when they are receptive, for hearts, when they are coerced, turn blind."

And in another tradition the Imam ﷺ is reported to have said,

إِنَّ هَذِهِ اَلْقُلُوبَ تَمَلُّ كَمَا تَمَلُّ اَلْأَبْدَانُ فَابْتَغُوا لَهَا طَرَائِفَ اَلْحِكَمِ[1]

'Hearts, like bodies, tires. So, refresh them with splendid wisdom.'

Similarly, the Glorious Qur'ān invites us to reflect upon the wonder of creation, listen to its beauty and think about the greatness of its Creator, who created it all from nothing.

In addition, numerous prophetic traditions have been reported encouraging travel and trips, permitting suitable humor and jokes, and promoting participation in sports, such as swimming, horse riding, archery, etc.

It has become clear in modern societies that leisure time significantly impacts work performance. As a result, there has been a growing interest in incorporating leisure hours, breaks, and vacations into work schedules to ensure that employees can enjoy their free time in a way that positively impacts their job performance.

Indeed, these activities are a source of vitality, productivity and motivation, as alluded to in a tradition from Imam Musa al-Kazim ﷺ,

اِجْتَهِدُوا فِي أَنْ يَكُونَ زَمَانُكُمْ أَرْبَعَ سَاعَاتٍ سَاعَةً لِمُنَاجَاةِ اَللَّهِ وَ سَاعَةً لِأَمْرِ اَلْمَعَاشِ وَ سَاعَةً لِمُعَاشَرَةِ اَلْإِخْوَانِ وَ اَلثِّقَاتِ اَلَّذِينَ يُعَرِّفُونَكُمْ عُيُوبَكُمْ وَ يُخْلِصُونَ لَكُمْ فِي اَلْبَاطِنِ وَ سَاعَةً تَخْلُونَ فِيهَا لِلَذَّاتِكُمْ فِي غَيْرِ مُحَرَّمٍ وَ بِهَذِهِ اَلسَّاعَةِ تَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى اَلثَّلَاثِ سَاعَاتٍ [2]

'Try hard to divide your time into four hours. An hour to call upon Allah U; an hour to take care of your daily affairs and sustenance; an hour to interact

[1] Ibid, wisdom 174.
[2], *Tuhuf al-Uqul,* pg. 409.

with sincere and trustworthy people who will inform you of your faults and who whole-heartedly wish well for you and an hour put aside for your permissible pleasures and likes. It is by means of this final hour that you will find the ability to perform the duties of the other three hours.'

In summary, recreation refreshes and reenergizes man. It enables him to fulfil, in various dimensions, his obligations and responsibilities.

Planning and Organizing Summer Holidays

Many people treat the summer holidays, and other work and study leaves, as if they are additional time that is not part of their lives and lifespan. Therefore, they waste their time during these periods, fail to plan how to benefit from them, and let their days slip away without achieving anything significant.

This failure to plan for how to utilize leisure time during vacations and breaks can transform these periods from sources of relaxation and rejuvenation into ones of boredom and depression. Instead of serving as opportunities for personal growth and development, they can become breeding grounds for negativity and vices.

A person may feel a sense of relief on the first and second days of vacation, due to being free from work or study obligations. However, after that, they may experience the pressure of idleness if they do not have an alternative program or hobbies to occupy their time and mind. When a person does not find something to engage in, they may feel a sense of loss and worthlessness, and negative interests may creep into their mind to fill the emotional and practical void.

A university student expressed his view on the state of leisure time, saying: "In my opinion, free time is when I don't do anything, meaning I'm not engaged in any activity, whether mental or physical. This time is the biggest cause of boredom for me, and I can't stand it for more than 15 minutes. The reason is that this time gives the mind a chance to think about many things that can lead to a state of depression, as these things are often part of the store of problems a person faces daily. Therefore, the best expression for free time is 'dead time'".[1]

[1] Muhammad, Muhammad Ali, *Waqt al-Firagh fi al-Mujtama'ah al-Hadith,* pg.244, 1985, Dar al-Nahzah al-Arabiyyah, Beirut.

Negative Perceptions

Leisure time often serves as a breeding ground for deviant behavior and negative tendencies. This occurs when a person does not feel a sense of existence or value, which they only feel when they interact with the issues of life around them. If they do not have anything to give them this positive feeling, they will suffer from a state of emptiness, which may give rise to uncontrolled obsessions and perceptions. Additionally, some unhealthy urges and desires may emerge from this, which are normally under control in regular and healthy situations.

Leisure time is at its most dangerous during youth, as this is when individuals possess a great deal of energy that needs an outlet and great enthusiasm that drives them towards activity and movement. So, if programs, roles, and suitable choices that engage them, develop their personality, and activate their capabilities in the right direction are accessible to them, it will certainly benefit both them and society.
However, the state of leisure time can make young people prey to feelings of boredom and frustration, and susceptible to corrupt and deviant trends. Unfortunately, this is a problem that many contemporary societies face.

It is, as the famous poet, Abu al-Atahiyyah, put it,

> Indeed leisure, youth, and novelty
> can be for man very corrupting.

And in the words of another poet,

> Verily, leisure has attacked and occupied him.
> The cause of troubles is it for him.

Further, it has been narrated that the second Caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab, once said to one of his workers,

إنَّ هذه الأيْدَيْ لا بُدَّ أنْ تَشْغَلَ فَاشْغَلْها بِطاعَةَ اللهِ قِبْلَ أنْ تَشْغَلَكَ بِمَعْصِيَّتِهِ [1]

'These hands must be kept busy. So busy them with Allah's obedience, before they busy you with His disobedience.'

Bayhaqi has also narrated the following from Abdullah ibn Zubair,

أشر شيء في العالم البطالة [2]

'The worst thing in the world is idleness and boredom.'

One of the negative outcomes that can result from unplanned leisure is boredom and idleness. These states are harmful to the soul and go against man's personality. There is a common saying in Arabic, 'To feel bored is to accept death'[3]. Boredom can push one to behave absurdly and harmfully for the sake of getting rid of boredom and escape its heavy burden.

Therefore, the failure to adequately plan for leisure time, particularly during the summer holidays and leave, and the lack of importance given to providing beneficial activities by individuals and societies, is responsible for the emergence of numerous negative phenomena that plague our societies. This is something we notice in many during their leisure time. The most prominent of these phenomena are:

Excessive Sleep

Some individuals find holidays and vacations an excellent opportunity to increase their hours of sleep, which may reach ten hours or more. This is while their average sleep during their study or work period is around six or seven hours at most.

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[1] al-Sadhaan, Abd Allah ibn Nasir, *Waqt al-Firagh wa Athara hu fi Inharaf al-Shabab*, pg 54, 1st ed., 1994, Maktabah al-Abikaan, Riyadh.

[2] *al-Waqt fi Hayat al-Muslim, pg. 27.*

[3] Similar to the English 'bored to death'. (Ed.)

There is no doubt that sleep is a natural condition and a biological necessity for humans, as it is for all living creatures. It serves an essential function by replenishing energy and vital resources and restores the balance that was lost during the waking hours.

When asleep, one loses perception of one's surroundings. They become unconscious about life and lose interaction with it. Sleep drains one of their vitalities, relaxes the muscles and slows down heart rate and breathing.

Hence, sleep resembles a temporary exit for man from the realm of life. If he sleeps for eight hours a day, a third of his life will be out of the boundaries of sensation and interaction with it. So, those who love life and set aims and aspirations for it must strive to gain any hour or moment from it. Excessive sleep is tantamount to losing and wasting a part of life.

Many have assumed that the daily sleep requirement is a third of a 24-hour day, or that which equals eight hours. Some have suggested that deviating from this average amount can be detrimental to the individual. However, research and trials have revealed that most people sleep an average of 5 to 6 hours per day, with some sleeping even less than this, i.e., a minimum of four hours. These differences in sleep duration between people can be caused by personal factors specific to everyone.

It has been observed that those who live an active, creative and meaningful life, free from worry and stress, have a lesser need for sleep than those of their peers who do not display such qualities.

Experts have determined that the minimum sleep requirement for a developing individual, male or female, is between 4 to 5 hours per day. Any amount of sleep beyond this may be an unnecessary addition, and the individual may be able to do without it.[1]

Determining the duration of sleep and timing is subject to what an individual has accustomed themself to, under normal circumstances. If

[1] Kamal, Ali, *Abwab al-Aql al-Mu'sadah – Bab al-Nawm wa Bab al-Ahlam,* pg. 118, 1st ed., 1989, Dar al-Jil, Beirut.

they habituate themselves to a specific duration of sleep, they will follow it and may become restless and uneasy with its disruption.

Numerous scientific studies comparing the traits and characteristics of long sleepers and short sleepers have revealed that short sleepers are more active, efficient, ambitious, decisive, and satisfied with themselves and their lives. They are also more sociable, less likely to complain about their studies or life circumstances, and are characterized by openness, low levels of anxiety, being busy and rarely suffering from emotional or psychological issues. These characteristics suggest that shorter sleep duration is often associated with more positive personality traits and a better quality of life, both psychologically and socially. Therefore, it can be inferred that sleep, to a certain extent, may be less necessary or beneficial than previously thought.[1]

In this light, sleep should be treated as a necessity and not as a hobby to be enjoyed and indulged in.

What we see amongst some people, in the increase of their sleep during the holidays, is a negative phenomenon, preventing him from benefitting appropriately from his free time.

In addition, we find in prophetic traditions an emphasis on reducing sleep, and warnings regarding the negative consequences of its excessiveness. The following appears in a tradition from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ

إِيَّاكُمْ وَ كَثْرَةُ اَلنَّوْمِ فَإِنَّ كَثْرَةَ اَلنَّوْمِ يَدَعُ صَاحِبَهُ فَقِيراً يَوْمَ اَلْقِيَامَةِ [2]

'I warn you against excessive sleep. For indeed, the one who sleeps excessively will be raised in a state of poverty on the Day of Judgement.'

The meaning of this tradition is clear; excessive sleep comes at the expense of righteous deeds, which are a person's true wealth, both in this world and the Hereafter.

In another tradition, Imam Jafar al-Sadiq ﷺ is reported to have said,

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[1] Ibid, pg. 115.

[2] *Bihar ul-Anwar*, vol. 73, pg. 180.

إِنَّ اَللَّهَ يُبْغِضُ كَثْرَةَ اَلنَّوْمِ وَ كَثْرَةَ اَلْفَرَاغِ [1]

'Indeed, Allah U despises the one who indulges in excessive sleep and leisure.'

And in another tradition,

كَثْرَةُ اَلنَّوْمِ مَذْهَبَةٌ لِلدِّينِ وَ اَلدُّنْيَا[2]

'One who sleeps excessively vanquishes his religion and worldly life.'

Time Wasting

Due to a weak sense of responsibility towards time and a misconception about the purpose of leisure time, some people unfortunately waste their time during summer vacations and holidays. They openly talk about 'killing' free time, either through pointless, long-lasting idle sessions or by aimlessly wandering the streets and sitting on street corners.

Meeting with friends and spending time with them is a good thing, provided that it is within reasonable limits and that it is invested in deepening bonds of affection and gaining intellectual and practical benefits, through discussing useful topics or developing skills and abilities.

However, sessions to 'kill' time take a different form. They last for hours without any justification, containing nonsense and trivial talk that can lead to problems and sins.

[1] Ibid.
[2] Ibid.

The Media and Negative Consumption

Currently, advanced media and communications technology, such as satellite TV and the internet, consumes a large part of contemporary man's time. They open vast gateways of knowledge for a person and provide outstanding services, which are only getting better.
During school and work breaks, the demand for these media is increased, with people spending countless hours on them every day.

The negative aspects that can arise from this form of usage can be categorized into two principal areas:

1. Unchecked consumption of time at the expense of other priorities and dimensions of one's personality. A report published over a decade ago indicated that some students, by the time they graduated from secondary school, spent approximately 15,000 hours watching television, whereas they may have spent not more than 10,800 hours in a classroom, that too with perfect attendance. Moreover, the average attendance of some university students is six hundred hours per year, whereas their average television viewing time is 1,000 hours per year.[1]

This unregulated attachment to media and communications has resulted in a drop of academic performance amongst a broad spectrum of students – male and female. Similarly, it has led to a deterioration in family relations, as well as the attention that spouses should give to each other and to their children, such that it has become an unfortunate commonality that mother's even neglect their children in favor of a television show or social media.

Reading books and self-educational programs have become things of the past for a large chunk of this generation, who are heavily attracted by the media and what it portrays.

[1] al-Umar, Nasir ibn Sulayman, *al-Bath al-Mubashir - Haqaiq wa Arqam*, pg. 14, 1991, Dar al-Watan li al-Nashr, Riyadh.

2. Poor choice and negative consumption. With 1000's of satellite channels broadcasting around the clock, and millions of websites offering anything and everything without restrictions, a person, especially if they lack values and control of what they view, can easily fall prey to deviant and illicit thoughts. Those which incite lust and desires encourage violence and criminality and promote behavioral patterns that are contrary to social norms. Consequently, they are tools for creating a 'global' culture that seeks to negate the civilizational identity of different nations and peoples, melting them into the quagmire of western materialist civilization.

So, just as a person is concerned about their physical wellbeing and will refrain from eating contaminated food, they should also be attentive regarding their thought and behavior. This will require them to be careful of what they watch, as not to acquire negative and harmful ideas. Imam Hasan bin Ali ﷺ is reported to have said,

عَجَبٌ لِمَنْ يَتَفَكَّرُ فِي مَأْكُولِهِ كَيْفَ لاَ يَتَفَكَّرُ فِي مَعْقُولِهِ فَيُجَنِّبُ بَطْنَهُ مَا يُؤْذِيهِ وَ يُودِعُ صَدْرَهُ مَا يُرْدِيهِ [1]

How strange it is that the one who thinks about his food yet does not think about his intellect. He avoids what harms his stomach but places in his heart what corrupts it.'

And as Allah U has blessed man with the faculties of hearing and sight, he will indeed be held accountable for how they were utilized. For Allah ﷻ says in the Glorious Qur'ān,

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۚ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَـٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا [2]

'Do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed hearing, eyesight, and the heart—all of these are accountable.'

[1] *Bihar al-Anwae,* vol. 1, pg. 281
[2] Glorious Qur'ān, 17:36

Leisure and Deviance

One of the worst consequences of the summer holidays, if not planned and organized properly, is deviant behavior among the youth. This is because the feeling of boredom forces them to pursue any action, and, if fallacious, is usually accompanied by illicit temptations and enticements. As a result, the youth, due to a lack of maturity and experience, easily partake in these behaviors.

Numerous studies and reports have confirmed the impact of inappropriate movies and programs have on sexual deviation and acts of violence among adolescents. Similarly, the internet serves as a means of temptation for young people, particularly during their leisure time. This is when they often visit pornographic websites and establish harmful relationships. Abdulrahman Musayqir, in his work on youth and drugs in the Arab Gulf states, notes that studies conducted in several Arab countries about drug users reveal that most of them used during their leisure time.[1]

Another researcher reported the results of several studies that were conducted regarding the relationship of leisure time and deviance. He concluded:

1. That most deviant acts are committed by individuals during their leisure time.
2. A sizable percentage of deviant acts are committed with the intention of enjoying leisure time.[2]

With the beginning of summer holidays, the state of calm and stability in many residential areas are disturbed. This is when certain youth engage in aimless cruising in their cars. They even perform stunts in the midst of neighborhoods. Some ride motorcycles with loud disturbing noises, while

[1] Musayqir, Abdulrahman, *al-Shabab wa al-Mukhadarat fi Dawwal al-Khalij al-Arabiyyah*, pg. 66, Shirkah al-Rabi'an li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi', Kuwait.
[2] *Waqt al-Firagh wa Athara hu fi Inharaf al-Shabab*, pg. 22.

others roam the street and gather in public places, acting in indecent and disrespectful manners.

Consequently, families must take great care to control their children during school breaks, while security forces prepare for an increase in accidents, crimes, and behavioral problems during this period.

It is not an exaggeration for us to say that every summer holiday period churns out groups that join corrupt and deviant trends. In this regard, Imam Ali ﷺ is reported to have said,

مِنَ اَلْفَرَاغِ تَكُونُ اَلصَّبْوَةُ [1]

'From boredom comes inclination towards [vain] desire.'

إِنْ يَكُنِ اَلشُّغْلُ مَجْهَدَةً فَاَلتِّصَالُ اَلْفَرَاغِ مَفْسَدَةٌ [2]

'If work is an effort, then leisure is corruption.'

This affirms that it is the responsibility of all to effectively plan for the summer holidays, and to try and engage students during their leisure time, providing them with activities that will be both beneficial to themselves and society.

How right and farsighted Aristotle was when he opined that the most important goal of education is to teach people how to spend their leisure time in a positive and productive manner.

[1] *Ghurar al-Hikmah,* pg. 671.
[2] *Bihar al-Anwar,* vol. 74, pg. 419

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