

Effective Leadership through Character

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Introductions

Name:

Company:

Designation:

How long have you been with the organization?

How did you come to know about Timelenders?

Jr. High School (Matric):

High School/F.Sc./F.A:

Graduation/Post graduation:

Hobbies:

Special mention:

Your expectations out of this course:

Training Norms and Guidelines for the Participants

- 1.0 Timings:** While following time schedules is very important in all aspects of our lives, it is all the more so at training workshops. This is because training is generally aimed at “behavior modification” and thus offers us an opportunity not only to gain knowledge about the theme at hand but also to realign our self-development habits.
- 1.1 The Strategic Visions/Strategic Time Management Workshops are very sequential and missing out on even a small section would necessarily entail later challenges; it would be difficult to reconnect with the group which would have moved forward and the learning deficit would not be easy to make up. Unless the participant’s absence is due to an unavoidable emergency, such absence would, at the very least, mean missing out on his or her responsibility to the sponsoring organization and also to herself or himself as a conscientious learner. Accordingly, we expect all participants to be on time at the beginning of every session of the workshop. Care must be taken to come back at the scheduled /agreed time(s) after the breaks. We shall not wait for any participant when starting or re-starting a session.
- 1.2 In the event of an unforeseen happening, if a participant happens to miss out on more than one and a half hours of the workshop, we shall not be able to award the certificate to her/him. We have, however, developed a fair mechanism to offset the learning deficit and enable delivery of the certificate to such participants. We encourage any participant who has missed out on one or more sessions of the workshop to come to us after the workshop hours (preferably during the workshop or otherwise after it ends) for a special one-on-one make-up session in which our trainer(s) shall happily go over the missed out sections in our own time. It would only be after this special session that we would award the certificate. We are sure that participants would agree with us on this policy which essentially comprises a rights and fairness issue (it is the right of all participants to be treated equally and it is fair that a distinction be made amongst those who attend the training fully and those who do not).
- 1.3 Even though we will try to be on the minute in terms of starting and finishing our sessions but sometimes we might be in the middle of a

discussion and extend our session by a few minutes and in this case we will inform you and try to give you a credit during the break.

2.0 Mobile/cell phones: We believe that training is a full time assignment. Like all other organizational activities, training should be undertaken with full concentration and seriousness. A distinction should not be made between office work which is generally considered to be “important” and “mere” training. The ringing of mobile phones disturbs the whole group and sets back the training process, often severely. Accordingly, we cannot make any allowance or compromise on mobile phone usage inside the training room. While we strongly urge participants to keep their cell phones turned off, if that is not possible, the sets may be kept in silent or vibration mode. Although emergency calls may be attended by walking out of the room, participants should appreciate that doing so not only deprives them of the required focus and continuity but also disturbs other participants. We have lately become very strict after receiving strong complaints from our participants in this regard. Thus, if any individual participant continues to move out of the room very frequently, he or she should expect a “behavior modification intervention.” We believe this is also a rights issue – as one participant’s attending to phone (even by walking out) deprives others of their right to focus. There are ample breaks in which calls can be made and taken. Sending or receiving short messages (sms) from/in the classroom is also counterproductive to the important task of training and hence not allowed.

3.0 Questions & Answers: We strongly request participants to ask questions. No question is irrelevant or trivial. We shall deal with these questions in the following five ways:

3.1 answer it immediately.

3.2 ask you to wait as the coming section(s) will cover the relevant topic which will then answer the question.

3.3 ask the individual to meet the trainers later for a one-on-one session (when the question is very specific to the questioner).

3.4 put all questions on hold for a specific time.

3.5 admit our lack of knowledge and try to find the answer which may be given at a subsequent time.

- 4.0 Workshop Language:** Depending largely on the choice of the participants (and partially on the facility of the trainers), the training shall be conducted in English, Urdu or a mix of both the languages (as is often the case in most Pakistani organizational settings). Sometimes we may have participants who are totally unfamiliar with Urdu and in such cases the training would be conducted in English. This shall be clarified at the outset of the training. During an all English session, we shall sometimes use Urdu (especially poetry) which we shall translate for our English speaking friends.
- 5.0 Design of the folder:** The folder which has been provided to all participants for use in the workshop has been specially designed and includes the following features:
- 5.1 Sheets of punched paper have been provided; it is strongly recommend that these sheets be used for note-taking and be subsequently inserted into the folder so that all the notes and handouts are in one place.
- 5.2 All of our workshops undergo continuous changes. Accordingly, when a major section is re-written or developed anew old participants would be informed via email; they may then download the material from our website, print it and place it in this manual.
- 6.0 Getting the most out of this workshop:**
- 6.1 The brain performs different functions in the body. Comprehension and expression of ideas are two distinct functions of the brain and amongst these two functions expression of an idea is higher in complexity. Whenever the brain is given a cue that an idea will have to be expressed together with being understood and comprehended, the brain sequences the information differently and comprehension is automatically increased. Also, the person is more attentive knowing that this information has to be reproduced.

The best way to get the most out of this workshop would be to make an intention of passing on the knowledge gained to at least one person, preferably who is close to the officer – and as soon as possible. Please also keep in mind that as a part of participants' homework individuals will be asked to deliver condensed versions of the sections of this workshop to someone who is close to them. Generally participants would be asked to share the experience (of sharing the knowledge) the next day. This training delivery does not have to be very elaborate; only a few minutes of instruction would also suffice.

Participants have permission to reproduce all our training materials including the multi-media presentations; they are free to use it to train others and also to make further copies. Of course, it remains their moral obligation to acknowledge the source.

- 6.2 When someone is spoken to, the listener is usually doing three things:
- a. The act of hearing, which is a mechanical action.
 - b. Comprehension, in which the listener is making sense of what is being heard by comparing it with all the relevant data that is available in the brain.
 - c. Judgment, in which the listener decides on the authenticity of the information received and the usefulness or the lack of it (for example the information may be correct but the listener may decide that it is not relevant to him/her or that it has limited or no use).

Since (b) and (c) cannot happen without (a), we can easily declare that (a) is a pre-requisite. Similarly it is clear that the better the comprehension, the better the judgment.

One of the most common errors that normal listeners make is trying to do both comprehension and judgment at the same time. So as individuals try to comprehend information while it is still in the process of arriving and as they comprehend it, they are also in the judging mode, many a times they arrive at a judgment before the complete information has arrived. Since the judgment has been made, the mind then tunes off to later pieces of information which could have resulted in a different judgment had those were also factored in. In general, this is called premature judgment.

Also, judgment takes away brain resources which were better suited for comprehension at that time, thus impairing our comprehension.

Premature judgment is one of the major reasons behind a lot of unnecessary conflict and misunderstanding.

Here are a few steps that we propose – and which participants would find valuable in getting the best out of this workshop:

1. Suspend judgment till all the information has been received. If some information is not clear, then a question should be asked to fill in the information gap.

2. If there is a lot of information (anything that goes on for more than five minutes), please take notes so that not only the important points but their sequencing is preserved.
 3. Once the information has been gained, participants should calmly analyze the information and then proceed to make a judgment. Also, judgment can be delayed to a later, quieter time.
- Our workshop is interspaced with breaks, group exercises, simple stories and anecdotes which provide ample time for judgment of critical ideas.

7.0 Reference manual vs. textbook: Please do note that this is a reference manual; during the workshop we shall be going back and forth in the manual. We apologize for any inconvenience that this may cause. Our workshops are dynamically structured which means that the sequence of questions and the flow of the discussions is based on the nature of the group; as we will keep restructuring the workshop flow, there is the need to move back and forth. We assure the participants that the little trouble that they would face will be well worth the payback in terms of clarity in developing concepts and improving understanding of the subject matter.

8.0 Quizzes: Quizzes might be given at various times during the workshop. The purpose is not to embarrass any one or more participants but to make sure that the whole group understands what is being presented. If any one or more participants do not pass a quiz, they need not get worried. It happens. In that case, we will ask the not-so-successful participants to give us two hours of their time after the workshop so that we may go over their questions and concerns. Any participant who fails the quiz, shall have her or his certificate withheld until the extra time which has been sought is made available by the individual trainee(s) to go through the concepts in which they had difficulty.

9.0 Guests:

9.1 The guests will be allowed to sit for a maximum of one half day (either the first half or the second half) during the workshop. The guests are not entitled for lunch. However, they can pay and join us at lunch. If someone wants to sit for more time, he/she will be charged the full fee of the workshop.

9.2 If the participants are planning to bring guests with them, they must inform the Marketing Team or the Event Manager at least one day in advance.

9.3 Guests will not be allowed to participate in discussions or ask questions. They can quietly sit in the back. They must also observe all the training norms especially regarding mobile phones.

10.0 General Instructions:

- 10.1 **Pre-workshop questionnaire:** Please fill out the pre-workshop questionnaires if not already done by this time.
- 10.2 **Names for certificates:** Please fill out the sheet which will be circulated for ascertaining the correct and full names to be written on the certificates. Please fill this sheet whether you are a new participant or are repeating the complete workshop. Please do not fill it out if you are a guest.
- 10.3 **Blank sheets:** Please use the blank sheets for taking notes – but remember to be environmentally friendly by using as little paper as possible.
- 10.4 **Name on the manual:** Participants are requested to please write their names on the manuals and keep them securely at all times.
- 10.5 **Valuables:** All valuables like mobile phones must be kept on the person of the participants – and especially so when leaving the training room, especially when going for lunch and breaks. The organizers are unable to assume any responsibility for loss of misplaced or lost valuables.
- 10.6 **Comfortable atmosphere and regulating temperature:** It is important that the participants feel comfortable. Therefore, they are requested to please inform the Workshop Coordinator immediately if the air-conditioning or the heating is either too high or too low. We highly recommend that participants bring a coat or jacket with them to the training to counter cold.
- 10.7 **Soft copies:** Soft copies of selected slides of the workshop presentation are available on Timelenders' website (www.timelenders.com).
- 10.8 **Assistance:** Participants should contact the Workshop Coordinator for any assistance.

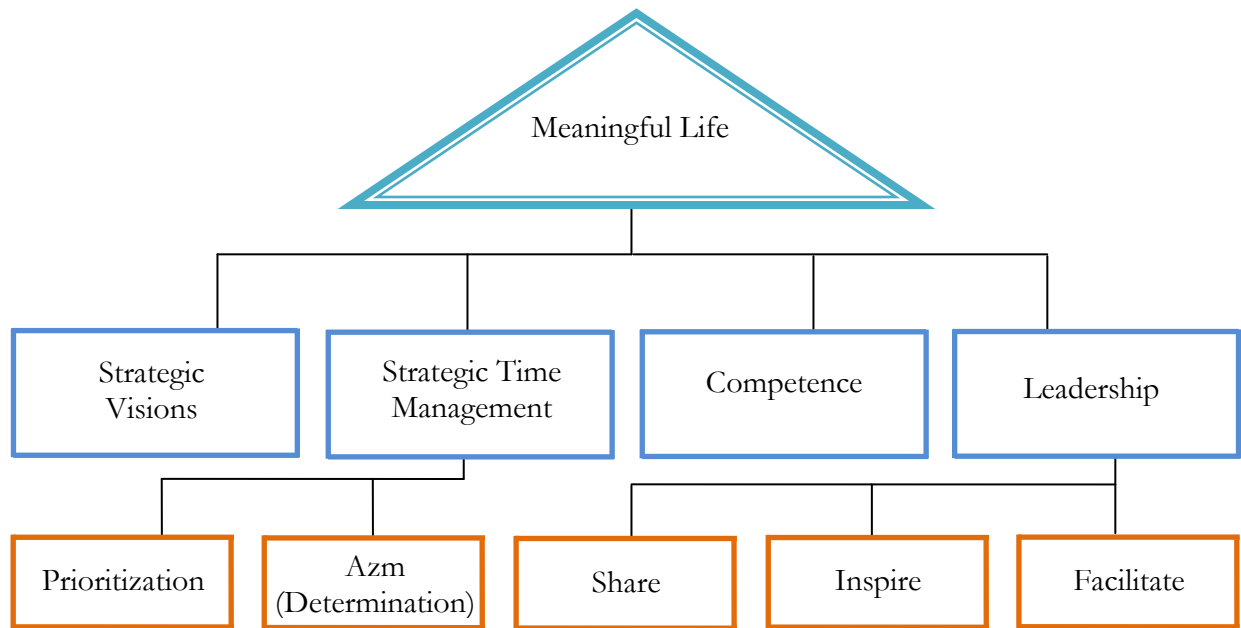
Key Topics of the workshop

- 1 Meaningful life: An introduction
- 2 Leadership: A crucial element of a meaningful life
- 3 The four elements of leadership
- 4 Character: The most important element
- 5 The Anatomy of Character
- 6 How to rectify and develop character
- 7 Matching Character and Vision
- 8 Case study: Bashir and Algeria
- 9 A personal game plan for developing leadership

Meaningful Life

1. Would you like to look back at your life at the time of your death and exclaim:
'It was worth it?'
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) I don't care

2. Suppose you are mentioned after your death in a gathering of a group of people with knowledge and wisdom. What would you like them to say about you?
 - a) This person's (your) life was really worth it
 - b) This person's life was not worthwhile
 - c) They don't care

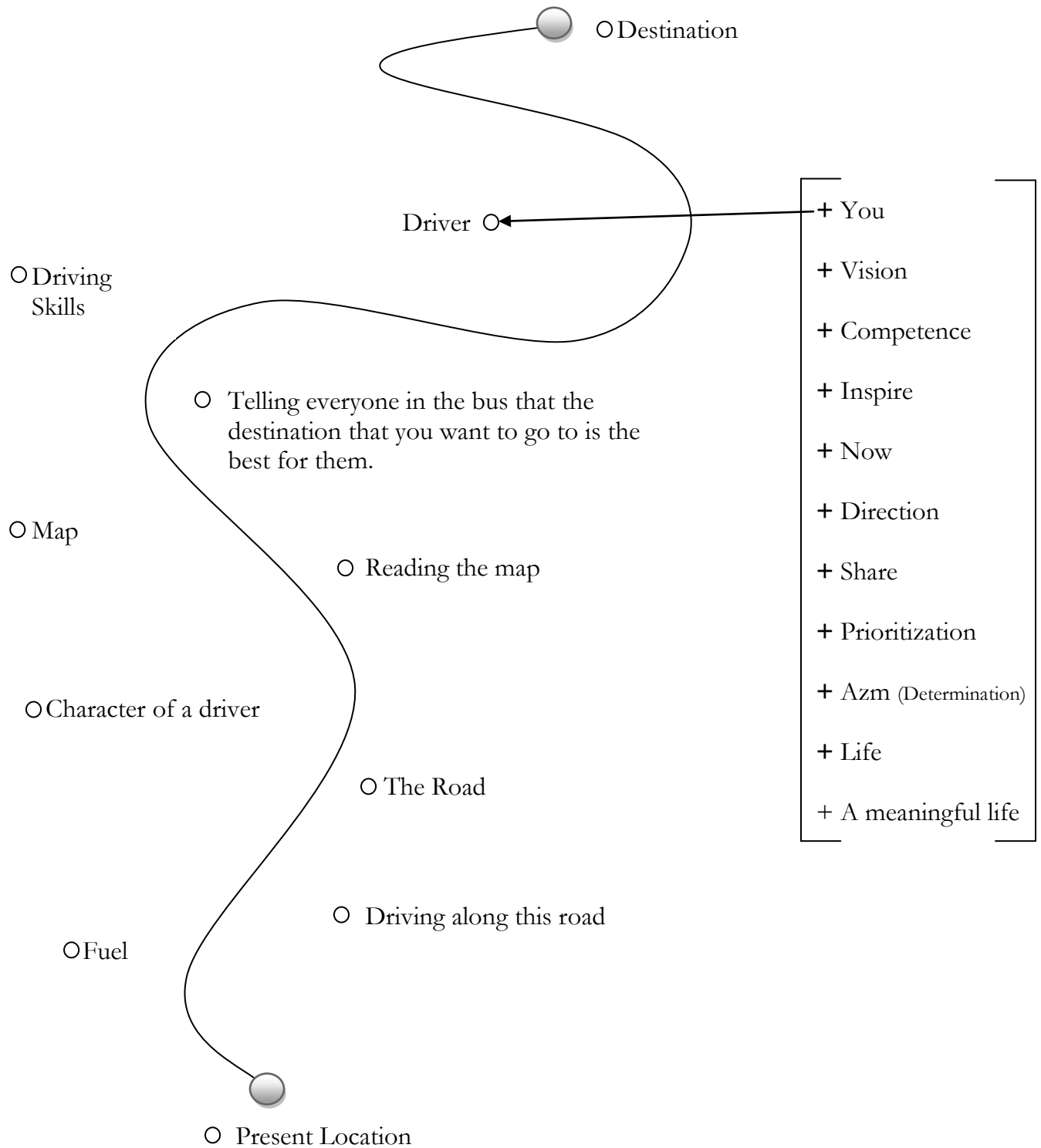


The Elements of Meaningful Life

Meaningful life has the following four elements:

1. **Strategic Visions:** A long term sound vision in our life. A sound vision is defined as a vision which has clarity and correctness.
2. **Strategic Time Management:** Strategic Time Management is defined as our ability to prioritize our lives in light of a long term vision and then to accomplish these priorities with Azm (determination).
3. **Competence:** Competence is the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) that are required for our visions. For example, our vision of scaling Mount Everest requires a minimum set of knowledge, skills and abilities.
4. **Leadership:** Leadership is defined as the ability to share our vision with others and to inspire and facilitate others in pursuing the shared vision. The key element behind the ability to inspire others to pursue the shared vision is a character worthy of that vision.

Metaphor: You are driving a bus filled with people going to a destination.



The definition of a ‘Meaningful Life’:

A meaningful life is a life that a sound ideology defines as meaningful.

Worksheet: Titles of concepts

Meanings	Words	Word list
<p>Select a word from the list which best depicts the following meaning: “The picture of the future that one wants to see.”</p>		<p>Aim, Objectives, Mission, Vision, Goal, Purpose, Dream, Aspiration,</p>
<p>Select a word from the list which best depicts the following meaning: “The reason for seeing this picture of the future.”</p>		<p>Strategy, Reason, Planning, Goal setting, Long range planning, Hope, Wish.</p>
<p>Select a word from the list which best depicts the following meaning: “How will this future be achieved?”</p>		

The Different Definitions of the words “Mission & Vision”

“For one thing, the term “vision” had been tossed around by so many people and used in so many different ways that it created more confusion than clarification. Some viewed vision as about having a crystal-ball picture of the future marketplace. Others thought in terms of a technology or product vision, such as the Macintosh computer. Still others emphasized a vision of the organization-values, purpose, mission, goals, images of an idealized workplace. Talk about a muddled mess! No wonder so many hardnosed practical businesspeople were highly skeptical of the whole notion of vision; it just seemed so –well--fuzzy, unclear and impractical.”

-Jim Collins

Kenneth Blanchard defines purpose in a dialogue as:

“As you see the first principle of ethical power is Purpose...By purpose, I mean your objective or intention—something towards which you are always striving.”

Values/mission statements: Articulation of what the company stands for.
Best Practice Framework, p. 35, *Business Ethics*.

“...Businesses must have a vision about what they exist for, which is shared by everyone in the company.”

Moon and Bonny in the
Introduction of Business Ethics: facing up to the issues.

Gouillart and Kelly write:

‘A strategic intent is the picture of the company’s ultimate purpose’. There are many classic examples of strategic intent:

- ❖ AT&T’s aim for *universal telephone service*; Coca-Cola’s drive to put its product *within arm’s reach* of anyone in the world;

❖ Pepsi's commitment to *defeat Coke*; or

❖ Toyota's design to *beat Benz*.”

“Real vision can't be understood in isolation from the idea of purpose. By purpose, I mean an individual's sense of why he is alive.

Peter Senge

“Vision is the picture of the future that we want to see.”

Peter Senge

Know Your Purpose¹

We can start by inquiring into what we mean by *mission* anyway. It is very hard to focus on what you cannot define, and my experience is that there can be some very fuzzy thinking about mission, vision, and values. Most organizations today have mission statements, purpose statements, official visions, and little cards with the organization's values. But precious few of us can say our organization's mission statement has transformed the enterprise. And there has grown an understandable cynicism around lofty ideals that don't match the realities of organizational life....

The first obstacle to understanding mission is a problem of language. Many leaders use *mission* and *vision* interchangeably, or think that the words — and the differences between them — matter little. But words do matter. Language is messy by nature, which is why we must be careful in how we use it. As leaders, after all, we have little else to work with. We typically don't use hammers and saws, heavy equipment, or even computers to do our real work. The essence of leadership — what we do with 98 percent of our time — is communication. To master any management practice, we must start by bringing discipline to the domain in which we spend most of our time, the domain of words.

The dictionary — which, unlike the computer, *is* an essential leadership tool — contains multiple definitions of the word *mission*; the most appropriate here is, “purpose, reason for being.” *Vision*, by contrast, is “a picture or image of the future we seek to create,” and *values* articulate how we intend to live as we pursue our mission.

¹ From a 1998 article by Peter M. Senge of MIT

Breakdown example of an Ultimate Subvision (USV)

Role: Father of one son

Purpose of the Vision (POV)

My son is a great blessing and a great responsibility for me.

I see my son as an extension of my own vision which is to contribute to the vision of the prophet (sas) which was to bring mankind to a comprehensive submission to Allah (swt). I have started late in my life and I would like to give my son an edge to contribute to this vision of the prophet (sas). I believe that this is the duty of all Muslims to share the precious gift of Islam with the mankind.

Alhamdolillah I believe that I am in a position both managerially and financially to facilitate such a development of my son; I see that my son is intelligent and able and would be able to mold into this vision beautifully.

If I can put my efforts in this direction, my son would become a sadaqa-e-Jaria for me in Akhirat.

In my USV as a father, I believe that these attributes are the attributes that Allah (swt) desires in me and are important for the development of my son as envisioned.

Ultimate Sub Vision (USV)

Father

I want to see myself as a caring and loving father, following the teachings of our holy prophet (PBUH) and his Sahaba.

A role model for my children.

To fulfill all my responsibilities as commanded by Allah SWT.

Son

I want to see my son grow up as a practicing Muslim, as a great visionary contributor to the Ummah in the best of his health, wisdom and intellect, with the fear of Allah in his heart, as a role model for others to follow.

Intermediate Vision-50 Years (2059)

Father (Age: 85)

I am a caring and loving father and have followed the teachings of our holy prophet (PBUH) and his Sahaba in regards to the upbringing of my children.

I have worked hard to develop my character which is worthy of a father who would like to have his son develop such a powerful vision.

I am a role model to my son and he has emulated me in vision, courage and selflessness. He has seen me lead a life of a vision and sacrifice for it.

I am there for him as an inspiration in his vision, as a person who he can turn towards for advice in the most difficult of the times.

I have fulfilled my responsibilities according to the will of Allah (swt) towards my son.

Son (Age: 53)

Spiritual and Emotional

A man with excellent character and sound knowledge of Islam. A true practicing Muslim. The fear of Allah SWT in his heart has made him balance his personal and professional roles excellently. He is emotionally balanced with a mature personality.

Intellectual

1. He is an Islamic Scholar and a hafiz of the Quran.
2. He is fluent in Urdu, Sindhi, Arabic and English
3. He has a bachelor's in Mathematics, Logic and a minor in Anthropology from Sindh University
4. He has a Masters in History from one of the top 10 international schools with a minor in business management.

Vision (Role of the member of the Ummah)

He has led a change in Sindh where he has been able to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and oppression from 30 percent of the Urban and 50 % of the rural population.

He has authored four books on the following subjects:

1. His experiences in working with the people of Sindh and his vision for this region for the generations to come
2. His experiences in Mechanized Farming in Sindh and the other countries that he has worked in.
3. His travelogue with historical sketches of the countries that he has worked in
4. A work of fiction where he introduces his vision for Sindh. The novel is set in the background of Sindh.
5. He has published at least 10 papers in international journals on Mechanized Farming and geopolitics of the countries that he has business presence.

Successfully running his own enterprise with a workforce of 4000 people. The enterprise is a group of businesses which includes large scale mechanized farming and export of local produce (Mangoes, Dates, Bananas etc.) to a global market. The enterprise will also own farms in at least 5 different countries including some in Africa where mechanized farming would be used to fight poverty and help alleviate illiteracy.

Head of Household

He has fathered 12 children and has been able to transfer his vision oriented life to his children.

He has focused on the education and healthy upbringing of his family according to the teachings of our sound ideology.

Physical

He is healthy and physically able to handle all requirements of his vision and life with excellence

Intermediate Vision-25 years (2034)

Father (Age: 60)

I am a caring and loving father.

I have educated myself on how to bring up children according to the Quran and Sunnah.

I have a mentor who I turn towards to seek advice for bringing up my children; my mentor is an aged and wise man with sound knowledge of Islam.

I have struggled hard to live a life of a vision and balance in all of my roles so that I can develop a character which is worthy of the powerful vision of my son.

I have taken on the world when it comes to the defense of the truth, I have demonstrated courage in battling the hardships that have come through my own vision; I have led a simple life, kept away from excessive luxury and have worked hard to develop my children.

I have prayed to Allah (swt) that I am inspiration for my son and others so that this inspiration is a source of Sadaqa-e-Jariah for me.

I am fulfilling my Islamic responsibilities towards my son.

Son (Age: 28)

Spiritual and Emotional

He has courage, humility, Adb (manners), fortitude and Taqwa.

He performs all of his religious obligations, has made a habit of praying Tahajjud, has completed his hajj with his wife, pays Zakat regularly and contributes in charity.

He has developed a vision in all of his roles and applied the Strategic Visions framework and is actively pursuing it. He has achieved balance in all of his roles. He is attached with two scholars who are his mentors. He goes to them regularly and takes their advice in the different facets of his life.

Intellectual

1. As a hafiz he leads Taraveeh prayers every other year in a masjid and alternate years at home.
2. He has completed his Dars-e-Nizami from a top reputed Islamic Institution.
3. As part of his education, he has spent a year in a Syrian institution learning Arabic and Hadith.
4. He is fluent in Sindhi and has competency in the Sindhi language equivalent to bachelor's level which he has done through private tuitions and appearing in exams privately.
5. He has secured a position amongst the first five in his Bachelor's degree in Mathematics, Logic and minor in Anthropology from Sindh University.
6. He has read 5 books on the history of Sindh and has written summaries of 2 of the books and submitted book reviews to newspapers on another 2 of the books.
7. He has completed his planning to get his Masters from one of the following Universities: Oxford, MIT, Harvard, Princeton or Yale. He has selected his topic for his Masters in History from one of the following areas: History of the Sub-continent with an emphasis on Indus Valley; Ottomon History with a focus on the elements which lead to the demise of the Empire; Central Asian History with an emphasis on the years leading to the conquest of Central Asia by Russia.

Vision (Role of the member of the Ummah)

He has bought a farm in the area around Khairpur, Sindh and has built a home there.

He has started farming and networking with the locals of that area. His farm has become financially viable providing a steady and handsome source of income. This is also the areas of his in-laws (he has married into a local family) and he spends at least a month every year at this place with his family.

The manuscript of his Novel on Sindh has been completed in Urdu where he introduces his vision for this region. The plan for publishing it in the year 2021 has been finalized.

He has spent at least 4 months in a war stricken area providing relief work.

He has spent at least 4 months with a poverty alleviation program in Africa.

He has spent 4 months with Tableegh in the Northern Areas of Pakistan.

He has taught the principles of Strategic Visions to at least 250 people and is leading a balanced life.

He has started his research on Mechanized Farming, has developed a business plan for launching a company on Mechanized Farming in Pakistan and has attended at least 4 international conferences on Mechanized Farming.

Head of Household

He has 3 children from his marriage at the age of 22 from a local family in Khairpur.

He has selected his wife who is from Sindh and is educated, religious, physically strong and vision oriented.

He has educated his wife in the intricacies of visioning and along with her has developed a vision framework in all the roles for his wife; her parents and siblings; and his children. His wife is responsible for ensuring that his 3 children are meeting their targets set out in the intermediate visions. His vision for her includes her development to ensure maximum contribution to his vision in the role of the member of the Ummah.

Physical

1. He has a black-belt in Tae Kwon do.
2. He has excellent horse riding abilities and owns two horses which are kept at his farm.
3. He is a member of the Karachi and Hyderabad shooting clubs and is an excellent marksman.
4. He has a passion for hunting and has completed 6 hunting expeditions in different parts of Pakistan with at least 3 in different areas of Sindh.
5. He has played intercity squash in under 18 category
6. He has appeared in intercity swimming in under 18 category

7. For two years, he has held squash coaching for the youth of Khairpur. This is to introduce the youth to the game of squash. These camps would last for 3 days once in a year.

Intermediate Vision-10 years (2020)

Father (Age: 45)

In addition to the regular care or providing accommodation and nutritious food with excellence, I give regular time to my son for his proper development on all of the aspects of the vision that I have developed for him.

I have had a one on one meeting with him once a month for the past 3 years over dinner where we discuss different matters pertaining to our mutual visions.

I have developed a habit of hugging him and kissing him on his cheeks every time I come home.

I have studied at least 4 books child psychology and how to bring up kids.

For the past 6 years, I have met monthly with my mentor who advises and guides me on how to bring up children. I have kept detailed notes of all of such meetings and have shared these notes with my wife.

I have developed Ultimate Visions in all of my roles and struggled hard to meet all of the intermediate visions. I have worked hard to develop my character which is worthy of the powerful vision of my son.

My life is simple: I avoid all forms of *Israf* and *Tabzēer* (forms of being spendthrift).

My accommodation and form of transport, clothes and the food are chosen on the basis of their importance towards my vision and the vision of my son (even the selection of his mother was made on the basis of the vision for the son as she is one of the most important contributors toward his vision!)

I pray to Allah (swt) regularly for the success of my son's vision. I get up in Tahajjud at least once a week to pray for the success of the vision.

I have researched on what are the Islamic responsibilities that I have towards my son and have worked hard to fulfill them.

Son (Age: 13)**Spiritual and Emotional**

He has Adab and good manners. He has completed reading Al Raheeq ul Muktoom (the biography of the prophet (sas)) and has written a summary. Also, he has gone through 'Tableegh-e-deen' by Imam Ghazali with his mentor and has understood all of the contents.

He prays 5 times a day and has performed Umrah with his father.

He has taken the Strategic Visions workshop and has started to understand the visioning process and has started to now participate in the refinement of his own vision document with his father and mother.

He has identified a scholar as his mentor and goes to him once in a week for an hour where in addition to going through Imam Ghazali's book, he learns some important lessons in life. He is keeping a log of all of his weekly meetings with his mentor and the key learning points from the meetings.

Intellectual

1. He has completed his Hifz and is has started learning Qiraat
2. He has completed 7th grade in O Levels and is now registered in Dar-ul-Uloom Karachi for doing traditional knowledge. He is continuing his O-level studies privately through private tutors.
3. He has traveled to Syria and Jordan and visited some of the religious schools in Syria.
4. He has completed 4 grades of education equivalence in Sindhi language and this is adding on to his proficiency in Sindhi as it is spoken at his home.
5. His academic performance is that he is amongst the first five in his school.
6. He has developed a habit of reading fiction and has his own library with 100 books both fiction and non-fiction.
7. He has regularly contributed articles to the children section of two newspapers.

Vision (Role of the member of the Ummah)

Along with his father he has trekked for four days in Tharparker and for a week in Northern Areas.

He has completed reading the 2 volumes of Syed Ahmed Shaheed by Maulana Abul Hassan Ali Nadvi.

He has spent a day in at least 3 Eids distributing Zabeeha meat to poor villages around Karachi along with his father.

He has attended at least one Congregation of Tableegh in Raiwand and visits Madani Masjid to hear the speech at least one Thursday every month.

He has spent at least two 15 days vacations with his uncle on his farm in the interior of Sindh.

Physical

1. He has a green belt in Tae Kwon do
2. He has learnt horse-riding
3. He has accompanied his father on one hunting expedition in Baluchistan
4. He has played intercity squash for under 12 years category
5. He has competed in intercity swimming for under 12 years category

Intermediate Vision-5 years (2015)

Father (Age: 40)

In addition to the regular care or providing accommodation and nutritious food with excellence, I give regular time to my son for his proper development on all of the aspects of the vision that I have developed for him.

I have taken him to parks regularly once in a week for the past four years, spent two hours a week playing with him for the past four years all the way from toys to board games.

I hug him and kiss him at least once daily and maintain a close physical contact with him.

I have gone through 2 books on child psychology and the art of raising children. Every quarter for the past 3 years I have met with my mentor and shared with him my experiences of raising my son and taken his advice. I have recorded this advice and have shared it with my wife.

I have developed Ultimate Visions in all of my key roles, derived the Intermediate visions and have struggled to fulfill the intermediate visions.

I have for the past 3 years worked with a mentor who I had selected to help me develop a character worthy of my son's vision.

I have kept my home, transport, food and clothes simple and have avoided wastage of money. I have bought Quicken, a personal finance software, and have managed my finances by keeping budgets for the past three years. I am financially disciplined and I put 10% of my income every month into savings.

I pray to Allah (swt) regularly for the success of my son's vision. I get up in Tahajjud at least once a month to pray for the success of the vision of my son.

On the prescription of my mentor, I have selected 5 books which outline the responsibilities of a father towards his son and have gone through these books and shared the gist with my wife.

Son (Age: 8)**Spiritual and Emotional**

Once a month he goes with his father to attend a lecture by a scholar. He prays at least 3 times a day and understands that he should be praying 5 times a day. He has completed the reading of the Quran and has memorized the last juz of the Quran.

He has read at least two books by Nasim Hijazi (history of Islam set in a fictional setting).

He has gone on Umrah with his father and has visited Madinah, Badr, Taif and Uhud.

He has completed a children's book on the biography of the prophet (sas)

He fasts for 15 days in Ramadan and is present in Taraveeh prayers for at least 10 days in Ramadan.

Intellectual

1. He has completed 3 grades in O-levels with excellent grades
2. He has completed 1 grade level of competency in Sindhi language
3. He has started reading books regularly and has 25 books on fiction and non-fiction in his personal library.

Vision (Role of the member of the Ummah)

He has trekked with his father once in the Northern Areas of Pakistan for at least 2 days.

His mother has read out to him at least 5 children's books on Islamic history.

He has the complete collection of Nasim Hijazi's books in his library collection gifted to him by his father.

He has spent at least a week long vacation at his uncle's farm in Sindh

Physical

1. He has completed two years of coaching in Tae kwon do and has a yellow belt.
2. He has completed a year of coaching in Squash
3. He has completed two years of coaching in swimming and can swim in the sea. He is comfortable with free style and backstroke.
4. He eats a healthy and balanced diet and understands that junk food has to be avoided.
5. He has had a comprehensive medical examination and his vaccinations are all completed.
6. He has had regular dental check-ups twice a year every year.

Intermediate Vision-1 year (Dec. 2011)

Father (Age: 36)

I have shifted this year to an apartment which is spacious and the complex where my children can easily play in the neighborhood. There is a masjid at a walking distance within the complex.

I have exchanged my new car for a used 4WD vehicle in which I can travel by road across the country and use it for camping out in the desert and hunting.

I have taken the Strategic Time Management workshop and learnt to use the Daily Scheduler, GK Book and the to-do lists. I have marked TRQ1s for the time that I would need to take out for having my son meet the intermediate visions that I have set out for him. I have taught all the fundamentals of Strategic Time Management to my wife so that she can facilitate me on helping our son meet his targets.

I have kept all of my weekly DS sheets as a reference to see how well I have been able to meet my targets in the year. I have reviewed these sheets for the past year and incorporate my learning points in the new year Intermediate vision that I have developed for my son.

My new intermediate vision for the year has been developed for my son, extracted from the IV-5 year and tempered by my learning points and wisdom acquired over the past year. I believe this is much more realistic than what I had in mind last year.

I have taken him to the parks once every week, spent two hours a week playing with my son and have introduced him to Mechano and Lego.

I have hugged him and kissed him daily, have given him a shower at least once a week (even though my wife would have preferred that I gave him more showers a week) and assisted my wife in potty training him.

I have read one self-help book on raising children (Dr. Spock) and have bought two books that I intend to read next year.

I have refreshed Strategic Visions workshop this year and had my wife take it for the first time. Both of us have taken the Vision's Retreat together and I have acted as a

facilitator this year which has given me a good working knowledge of the Strategic Visions framework. As a facilitator I have assisted 2 people in developing their visions as fathers.

I have started to keep a budget for my home expenses and trained my wife to follow a budget. I have started to save 5% each month from my income and put it into my savings. I have helped my wife start a bank account and asked her to start saving some from her pocket money.

Every month in the past year, I have prayed 2 rakah salat ul hajjat every month for the success of my son's vision.

I have read one book on the rights and responsibilities of a father towards his children. I have shared the gist of this book with my wife. I have selected a mentor who can guide me on bringing up my son in an Islamic manner.

Son (Age: 4)

Spiritual and Emotional

He has learnt the Kalima.

For three months he has spent half an hour every week with his father discussing fundamental concepts of life like the Creator, universe, good behavior, cooperation with parents etc. The father has kept a log of all of these meetings.

Intellectual

He is being home schooled and has exceeded the learning targets of children of his age. He has his library of story books with at least 20 books. He understands the concept of a library and knows that he is a proud owner of the books which are arranged on a shelf with his name marked on them. He has his own room with a map of the world, a map of Asia, a map of Pakistan and a detailed map of Sindh.

Vision (Role of the member of the Ummah)

With his father he has taken at least 2 road trips on vacations lasting at least a week long.

Physical

He has a balanced diet and has developed a love for the swimming pool where he goes at least twice a week with his mother. Once a month, he goes to the sea with his father.

He has gone at least once to Gwadar and accompanied his father on a jet ski.

He has gone once with his father to a water resort where he has spent a day.

Intermediate Vision-Current month

Father (Age: 36)

I have researched on a better living accommodation and environment which is conducive for the vision of my family and my son. I have discussed with wife and 2 friends on what I should be looking for.

I have researched on which vehicle would be better suited for my vision and the vision that I have for my son.

I have registered for the upcoming Strategic Time Management workshop. I have downloaded the manual from www.timelenders.com and have skimmed through the ground rules.

I have shared the vision document with my wife and asked her to reflect upon it. I have registered her for the Strategic Visions workshop after four months. I have also signed myself up to refresh the course this month ahead of time since there are limited seats available for refreshing of the workshops.

I have spoken with a friend whose wife can attend to my son for three days while we take the workshop. Since we still have time, I have asked the family to block their days well in advance. To compensate we shall be baby sitting their children while they take the Visions workshop next month.

I have identified the parks in the vicinity where I should be taking my son to and in this month I have taken him to parks at least 4 times and played with him there.

I have played with my son for 2 hours every week this month.

I have hugged him and kissed him daily, have given him a shower at least once a week.

Asked Timelenders to identify a few child psychologists from the Timelenders family so that I can meet with them and ask them to give me names of a few good books on child psychology and raising kids.

I have met with one scholar to find out about a good book to learn about my rights and responsibilities towards my children.

Son (Age: 4)

Spiritual and Emotional

He has learnt how to read the Kalima correctly when asked to recite after someone.

Intellectual

His father has met with two educational consultants to select the proper home schooling curriculum for the son.

His room has been affixed with a modular bookshelf that can hold 25 books.

In his room there is a map of the world.

The father has explained to him what a world is and what a map is.

Vision (Role of the member of the Ummah)

Initial research completed on which road trip to take and which trip would be the most intellectually stimulating to a toddler 4 years of age.

Physical

His mother has met a nutritionist and has a chart of what should be a balanced diet for a child 4 years of age.

A check-up done with the pediatrician to ensure that his vaccination is on the mark.

Inviting the pediatrician to the Strategic Visions workshop so that once he is done he would be able to understand the visioning process of the child and help in the section on the physical side. For example he could advise as to when the child should start horse riding etc.

Research on the possible trip to Gwadar and enquiring about the jet ski facility. Also, researching on the possibility of becoming a member of the Pakistan Adventure Foundation.

A list of water resorts in the vicinity of Karachi in addition to the Sunway Lagoon.

Taking membership of Shapes (pvt.) Ltd. so that the mother can start taking the child for swimming.

Central Asian Stories

Tajikistan: A silent victory for all of us.

June 1997

As I looked out, I became oblivious to the drone of the propellers of the Russian-built military transporter. The view was breathtaking. From the dusty terrain rose the majestic snow capped peaks of the mighty Hindu Kush, which divide Afghanistan into the North and South. Many armies have perished on its slopes since time immemorial. The Soviets had battled with the Afghans and the Hindu Kush and had lost to both. I tried looking beyond the peaks into the haziness of the April morning towards my destination, the camps for Tajik refugees near the Afghan-Tajikistan border.

In April 1997, as the war escalated in Afghanistan, the only route through the Hindu Kush into Northern Afghanistan, the Salang Pass, was closed. I was left with only one choice: to fly into Mazar Shareef, the de facto capital of Northern Afghanistan, and then to travel by land through the shifting frontlines to Kunduz and Takhar, the Afghan provinces bordering Tajikistan.

As Mazar appeared into sight, I caught myself taking a deep breath. The anticipation of what lay ahead was disquieting.

Tajikistan is one of the six newly independent Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union.

Lying to the north of Afghanistan, it has Uzbekistan on the west, China on the east and Kyrgyzstan to the north. Over 85% of the 5.8 million people are Muslims. Tajikistan is mountainous and is spread over an area of 143,100 sq. km (slightly smaller than Wisconsin).

In 30 Hijra², an Islamic army, led by Al-Ahnaf ibn Qaus, captured the city of Takharistan. In 88 Hijra, the remaining areas of Tajikistan—then called Eastern Bukhara—were captured along with Bukhara and Sumarqand and the region now known as Central Asia. A glorious history was written as Bukhara and Sumarqand later became the center

² The beginning of the Islamic Calendar (579 AD)

for Islamic learning and scholarship.

Russia occupied Tajikistan in 1880, initiating a century of brutal oppression with over 70 years of communist rule. An armed uprising in 1921 was brutally crushed and efforts were made to stamp out the Islamic identity of the Muslims. Thousands of scholars along with hundreds of thousands of Muslims died in massacres, which continued till the death of Stalin. During this period some scholars escaped to the mountains and kept the torch of Islam burning.

In the early seventies, these scholars secretly started returning and teaching Islam to the people in the cities. The year 1975 saw an Islamic reawakening, especially among the students, which became an Islamic political force after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The Tajik parliament declared independence on September 9, 1991 after which a vicious power struggle started between the Muslim and the communist parliamentarians. A series of coups and counter-coups saw the Islamic democratic coalition gain power with popular support.

The communists supported by the Russian and Uzbek military attacked the capital Dushanbe and seized power in December 1992. Over 100,000 people were massacred, 30,000 were wounded and another 100,000 fled into Afghanistan.

In the three years of guerrilla warfare, the Islamic coalition led by Nahzat-e-Islami (Islamic rebirth party) gained control of over 50% of rural Tajikistan whereas the capital and other major towns remained under the communist regime. Though many have made their way back into Tajikistan, up to 20,000 refugees remain stranded in Afghanistan³.

³Later a peace agreement was signed and the refugees moved back into Tajikistan. The following essays will deal with that.

Gradually the communist regime was weakened due to the protracted civil war and the inability of Russia to support it, thanks to the Chechen war, which distracted and humbled the Russian military machine. A cease-fire was reached in 1996 and talks aimed at establishing a coalition government are going on. There is hope that the refugees may return home. Until then, their struggle for survival and a meaningful existence will continue.

A combination of public transport (not very sophisticated, needless to say, in war-torn Afghanistan) and hitching rides took me and Haroon—our Peshawar⁴ based guide and interpreter—a distance of 200 miles from Mazar Shareef to the dusty city of Kunduz. The province and its capital have the same name: Kunduz.

Kunduz has frequently changed hands with the swinging fortunes of the war between different factions. With all that, not much remains in the city. The only sign of life is the main market bustling with activity as traders barter and sell goods. Being a provincial center, people from neighboring areas swarm into it. You can buy anything in Kunduz: cattle, vegetables, medicines, hand made rugs, Klashnikov rifles, rocket launchers...

A few miles north of the city towards the border with Tajikistan lies the largest Tajik refugee camp, Bagh-e-Shirket, housing up to 6,000 refugees. As we entered the camp I was struck by the silence shrouding the 5 square mile encampment of mud huts. Smoke rose gently from some of the huts as the people cooked. A midsize river lazily snaked its way along the eastern edge of the camp. At a distance in the South, snow peaked mountains were catching the reddish hue of the setting sun. A failing mud wall encircles the camp. I saw people quietly going about whatever little business they had. The undertone of quiet resignation could not be ignored.

As my hours in the camp turned into days, I was saddened by the tragedy of the refugees: missing loved ones, shattered families and broken dreams. Even the laughter of children has a quietness that never lets one forget that many of them are orphans.

Bagh-e-Shirket has a life of its own. I felt as if I were in a different world altogether, a painfully simple one with no electricity, no gas and no running water. Access to food and health care is limited. Forces of nature are brutal in Kunduz. The mercury reaches 100 degrees Fahrenheit in the summers and the winters are equally harsh and

⁴ A city in Pakistan near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border

unforgiving. Malaria and typhoid assume alarming proportions, stealing away lives that the civil war across the border couldn't take.

It appears as if time is in no great hurry in Bagh-e-Shirket. There is nothing much to do. Many of the men are in Tajikistan with the guerrilla units, while others are just memories now, a reminder to their children and widows—some widows just in their teens—that being Muslims is not always easy. The remaining men toil to eke out an existence; some cut wood in the forest to sell while others go after the few jobs that war ravaged Kunduz offers. One of the top entrepreneurs that I came across was the bright-eyed young Ahmed. With some savings that his family had managed to salvage, he had bought a donkey and a cart. Ferrying people between the camp and Kunduz guaranteed a better living. I was met with a sad smile when I asked Ibrahim, 50, a father of seven, as to how many times a month they could afford meat. “It is once a year,” he sighed, “during Eid al Adha⁵ when the relief organizations conduct the Zabeeha⁶ program.”

Marriages, albeit very simple, do take place in the camp, bringing a sense of happiness and a break from the tiring monotony. The community considers its growth important; far too many lives were lost in the war. I asked the camp doctor how many children were born each month. “Around 30 a month,” he replied and then corrected me, “you should asked how many Mujahideen⁷ are born?”

A group of five Muslim relief organizations struggle to make existence bearable. BIF⁸ runs a clinic, an orphan sponsorship program, and a sewing center to provide clothes for the camp. An organization from Kuwait runs a couple of Tandoors (ovens) providing a staple of bread while others run regular and Quran schools. Foreigners, especially young Arab brothers who came to fight during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and decided to stay, run these projects. They have gradually become a part of Bagh-e-Shirket speaking fluent Persian and dressing traditionally. “This is my home now,” said Basheer, a young Algerian, when I asked about his future plans, “I can't see myself deserting these people.”

The collective trauma of the war, personal tragedies and life as refugees has failed to break the will of these people. Under the quiet resignation lies a deep-rooted

⁵ An Islamic festival in which animals are slaughtered and some of the meat distributed to the poor.

⁶ A program in which animals were slaughtered in the camps on behalf of other Muslims

⁷ The plural of Mujahid, a person who fights for the cause of Islam

⁸ Benevolence International Foundation

determination. At the height of the guerrilla war these camps had served as the launching ground for military expeditions where teary-eyed wives and children would bid farewell to their husbands and fathers knowing that they may never come back. A generation is coming of age in this camp, opening its eyes to the freshness of freedom. The passion for Islam, which 70 years of brutal communist rule couldn't snuff out, kindles the souls of these people.

The Nahzat-e-Islami has set up a school system in cooperation with the Muslim organizations. It is a great achievement, as the children are kept constructively engaged. There are four schools for boys and girls, where everyday these former Soviet citizens memorize Quran. As I walked into a classroom, the children—some as young as 7—fell silent and looked up. It was as if the future of

Tajikistan was looking back at me—a bright and promising future. Within these mud walls in a forgotten corner of the world is a force being nurtured which all the Communisms and systems of the world will never be able to defeat.

I had some students write about their experiences. “My father was martyred in 1992,” wrote Gul Khumar, a 15-year-old girl who attends a sewing center. “I was in second grade then and there was no Islamic teaching. We emigrated to Afghanistan just for Almighty Allah.”

“When I was six years old the war started in Tajikistan and we emigrated to Afghanistan.” Wrote 11 year old Suraya.

“Our life was nice in Tajikistan. We had a car and other things. We did not need anything except Islam. We were deprived of Islam and [were] getting only Russian knowledge. Because of Islam, war started between the Communists and Muslims. My grandmother, grandfather, father and three uncles were martyred and we emigrated to Afghanistan.”

Eleven years old Tamara has memorized ten juz⁹ of the Quran after coming to Kunduz in 1992. She wrote: “I was in second grade, my sisters were four and two years old, my brother was two months old and my mother was thirty (when we emigrated to Afghanistan). We emigrated as it is the Sunnah¹⁰ of the Prophet (sas) and

⁹ Chapters

¹⁰ Tradition

we wish to have a green flag with ‘La ilaha illallah Mohammad-ur-Rasulallah’¹¹ written on it in Tajikistan.”

I met old men with flowing long beards, bent backs and hardened faces, who passionately speak of their struggle during the Communist rule, of hiding for years in the mountains, the hardships, the tortures and the deaths. Though the struggle continues, they are aware that the worst is over and a bright tomorrow is not far away. In spite of all that they lost in the bitter hundred years, they outlasted Russia and Communism. As the statues of Lenin and Karl Marx are being disgraced in Russia, the mountains of Tajikistan are echoing with Azans¹².

As much as I was saddened by the hardships of these brave people, I was strengthened by their determination, their love for Islam and their willingness to sacrifice for it.

With the help of Allah (swt), they have brought about a silent victory for Islam in Central Asia. A victory that will, inshallah¹³, impact millions of lives for centuries to come.

Once again, falsehood has lost to the faithful few in a forgotten frontier of the Islamic world– Tajikistan.

¹¹ There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and Mohammed is the prophet of Allah.

¹² Call for prayers

¹³ If Allah (swt) wills

Sham-e-Gul

October 1997

Two weeks ago I was in a TB sanatorium for orphans at Kofar Nihon, a small town 10 miles from Dushanbe, the capital of war-ravaged Tajikistan. As I entered one of the wards, Sham-e-Gul dragged herself to the corner of the bed and sat up. Like many others around her, TB has wasted her legs. I found her in pain and with no relatives at her side to console her. Her brother visits her twice a month. Sham-e-Gul is only six years old.

The staff and children of the sanatorium are Sham-e-Gul's family. She misses Daulat Shah, another six-year old who was sent home when some relatives visited a few weeks ago. "There is nothing more we could have done for Daulat Shah", said Dr. Nazir Rahimov. "We figured at least he would have a home and hopefully adequate food in his last days". Sham-e-Gul was not told why Daulat Shah left suddenly. She is too young to understand.

During the Soviet era, orphans who had TB were admitted to the sanatorium. When the war broke out, Kofar Nihon came under heavy fighting. People fled the area, leaving a skeleton staff that battled to keep the damaged facility running. With no electricity and an acute shortage of medicine, food and money, the orphans had nowhere to go. The sanatorium became a death trap, as the symptoms of TB grew worse. Soon, the children had started dying. I found thirty-two children there, between the ages of six and fifteen. Most have been there for the last five years and many with advanced TB.

The four long years that BIF¹⁴ had worked with the Tajik refugees in northern Afghanistan came to an end in the summer of 1997. By the Grace of Allah (swt), the Communist regime in Tajikistan gave in and signed a peace agreement with the Muslim opposition, ending more than four years of bitter conflict. This is a great victory for the Muslims as they now control around 50 percent of the territory and are partners in the newly formed coalition government.

The Tajik refugees from the neighboring countries have returned to their homes with dignity. Now we can concentrate on projects in Tajikistan that badly need our

¹⁴ Benevolence International Foundation

assistance like the sanatorium in Kofar Nihon. With the blessings of Allah (swt) and Muslims, we are determined to turn things around in Kofar Nihon. We could, Inshallah¹⁵, initiate surgeries which are long overdue, provide proper medicine, food and hygiene, fix the building and heating and provide decent salaries for the staff. For Daulat Shah we were too late, but for the remaining 32 children we still have time.

As I was leaving, I gave my pen to Sham-e-Gul to cheer her up. This was the least I could have done. She had smiled and the thought of it still warms my heart. With the pen I also gave her a silent promise that I would leave no stone unturned to see that she and the other children got a decent chance at life.

¹⁵ If Allah (swt) wills

Malika Pasha*November 1998*

It was a crisp October morning as I walked into the remains of the home of Malika Pasha in Takhan, a small beautiful village 70 miles South of Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan. She was happy to see us, her children crowding around us, knowing that every month the Foundation's officers deliver their monthly sponsorship money.

I looked around the destroyed house and asked Basheer, our manager, to translate as Malika spoke.

Malika Pasha had every thing before the war. She lived with her husband Khaleel and five children—four girls and a boy. Khaleel earned a modest living working as a commercial driver.

As war erupted in Tajikistan in 1992, the communists prepared to attack the Muslim villages. Khaleel stayed behind to fight and sent his family further south of the country. Malika left with Shamsi, 14; Jamal, 12; Mahistan, 9; Mahbano, 7 and Zeba, a mere 2 years old.

The war escalated and ten of thousands of refugees crossed into Afghanistan. Many thousands perished in front of the Advancing Communist army while thousands drowned trying to cross the river Umu between Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

Malika made it safely with all her children. It was not long when the devastating news came: Khaleel was dead—mercilessly killed by the Communists—and the house burnt to the ground. He was quietly buried, Malika was told, in the village graveyard.

Only 35 years old, Malika was now a widow with five children and a new life of hardship in the refugee camps.

She sent Jamal and Mahbano with a heavy heart to orphanages in Pakistan with a hope that they would learn Islam and for another obvious reason: she would only have three children to feed. In the next few months she married Shamsi—only 15 then—to an aspiring young Doctor named Mohammed Shareef. It was a joyous occasion marked by a painful emptiness, as the father of the young bride was absent.

Malika was blessed with a grandson in 1995 in the refugee camp. They named him Mohammed Iqbal.

Life was hard in the camps. Saying goodbye to his wife and his few months old son. Shareef left for Russia to look for a job.

A few months later Shareef became a victim of the crime wave that has gripped Moscow. He later died in a hospital with multiple stab wounds.

Now Malika had another widow in the family; Shamsi was barely eighteen.

After the peace agreement in 1997, along with other refugees, Malika's family returned to what remained of their house. They now make their living in a small room which escaped major damaged. She was able to visit Khaleel's grave, a short walk from her house, for the first time in five long and bitter years.

Zeba is now 8 and knows her father by the few pictures that Malika had managed to salvage. Mahbano, 13 recites Quran beautifully which she had learnt in her 3 years in Pakistan. Mahistan is 15. Jamal, 18 is in an Islamic school in Pakistan. Now 20 years old, Shamsi is chronically ill due to some infection she contracted in Afghanistan. The only one to escape the torturous memories is the three-year-old Iqbal. He will have to wait a few more years to understand the havoc that has wrecked his family.

We have started a project to build the houses of families such as Malika's.

We can't bring back the loved ones for Malika's family—or other such families—or reverse the clock. Building homes is the least we can do for the children of those who died fighting for Allah (swt) and Islam.

Sham-e-Gul Again!

November 1998

As I approached her bed, Sham-e-Gul woke up and squinted—it was a bright day and sunlight was streaming into the ward from the large windows. The startled look in her eyes slowly changed to recognition.

I had first met her in Kofar Nihon, a village 15 miles from Dushanbe, almost a year ago. She was the youngest of 32 children with advanced TB in a war-damaged hospital. With no electricity for several years, no heating, shortage of staff, food and medicine, the children—many of them orphans with no place to go—had started to die. I had given her my pen with a promise that I would leave no stone unturned to see that she and the other children got a decent chance at life.

Now 11 long months later, I looked around the brightly-lit ward of neatly lined beds with clean linen. I could smell the freshly painted walls. 15 children slept peacefully. Now there is no shortage of food or medicine. The repair on the wrecked heating system has started, which means heating for the hospital for the first time in 5 years. I could hear the clamor of the workers repairing the remaining part of the hospital.

It had been a struggle. Within a month of my return from the last trip, we had moved our staff from Afghanistan to Tajikistan and recruited new officers including Dr. Nazr-ul-Islam, a surgeon from England. With Kofar Nihon continually under heavy fighting, we shifted our focus to a similarly neglected Hospital in relatively safer Dushanbe—only to find what relative safety meant when one of our officers was shot and killed. We decided not to give up.

Taking the hospital from the Ministry of health, we started the repairs. BIF¹⁶ started to provide food, medicine, lab facilities, salaries and the operating costs. We serve 52 children with TB between the ages of 3 to 14 years.

¹⁶ Benevolence International Foundation

I asked Sham-e-Gul about the pen that I had given her. She broke into an embarrassed laughter: she had lost it.

By the grace of Allah (swt)—and to the astonishment of the doctors—she recovered from her paralyses. I believe that it had more to do with the prayers of the Muslims who had come to know her than medicine. I asked her if she could walk for me. When she nodded, I helped her out of bed. She hesitantly took the first step and slowly walked the length of the room.

I handed her the picture that I had taken with her the previous year. She held it in both her hands for a few moments then looked up and studied my face carefully, as if confirming whether I was indeed the same person. She said she wanted to keep the picture and asked me not to leave. I was saddened, as I didn't know where her parents were or whether they were alive. I promised her that I would come again.

I walked out with tears of gratitude to Allah (swt) and the Muslims who by their generosity helped me fulfill a promise made in a far-away, war-ravaged land to a seven-year-old ill girl— Sham-e-Gul.

Basheer: A friend's farewell

March, 1999

The assassin didn't have to wait for long in the cold winter morning: Basheer was seldom late.

I was in Florida raising funds when the news came. It was a shock: I was with him just a couple of months ago. The sequence of events, as they probably occurred, flashed into my mind.

Basheer had to be in the office in Dushanbe—the capital of Tajikistan—by 8:00 AM to let the other officers in. Dawlat Baig picked him up at 7:40 AM, 100 hundred meters from his apartment in the suburbs. Facing a wholesale market, the street is very busy in the morning. I had accompanied Dawlat Baig a number of times. As we would pull up the car, Basheer would appear out of the sea of people, walking fast with long purposeful strides with an air of confidence and mission. To be at the intersection on time he would have left at least 5 minutes earlier, putting him in the line of fire at precisely 7:35 AM on Monday, January 11, 1999.

The first time I met him was at the Tajik refugee-camps in Afghanistan in 1997. He was tall, slim and strongly built. He had become fluent in Persian and wore traditional Afghan dresses. What gave him away were his strong Arab-Berber features. A smile was never far from his stern face, which spoke of years of struggle and hardship.

The oldest son of a government officer, he came from a village 200 miles from the capital of Algeria. He gave up his studies in Engineering to help out in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion. He later joined BIF¹⁷ to provide relief assistance to the Tajik refugees in Afghanistan.

Life was hard in the camps in Kunduz and Takhar—the northern Afghan provinces bordering Tajikistan—with no electricity, running water or communication with the outside world. Food and medicines were always limited. Malaria, Typhoid and TB were close to assuming epidemic proportions. Basheer was going down with Typhoid every year, spending weeks in bed.

¹⁷ Benevolence Int'l Foundation

Kunduz was a lawless area then. A few months prior to my trip, bandits had fired at his jeep, narrowly missing him. None of these challenges had shaken his resolve.

I once asked him how he managed to stay there for five years. “I can’t see myself deserting these people.” He had said: “I see myself as holding a post. If we leave, the vultures will come in.” He was referring to some of the secular organizations. Alarmed by the return of the Tajik refugees to Islam, they were trying to get the Muslim relief organizations to leave. These organizations had one camp in their control where they distributed music and movies while the children in the Muslim-run camps learned Quran.

He had kept in touch with his family through letters, which would take up to six months to get to Algeria from the forgotten Mountains of Afghanistan. Basheer’s younger brother, whom he had last seen as a young boy, was in college now. One of his sisters had gotten married. We decided to arrange for a phone call. Using a wireless set, we connected via radio to Peshawar and then through telephone to Algeria. It was a joyous occasion, as the family hadn’t heard his voice in five years. They initially failed to recognize him as out of emotion, he could only speak in his adopted Persian. He had broken down during the call and wept.

Basheer managed a staff of 24 Tajik Muslims in the refugee camps and I could see the love and respect that flowed towards him. I didn’t have a shred of doubt that these Tajiks could have easily stood in the line of fire for him.

He was like a father to the orphans who had known him for 5 years and loved him dearly. Some, who were orphaned very young, didn’t know their fathers but they knew Basheer. I asked some of the young orphans—I didn’t ask the older kids, as they understood—where the money for their sponsorship came from. They pointed to Basheer. I explained that Basheer was just an officer and the money came from the Muslims in the US. They weren’t convinced: it was Basheer who cared for them and had been with them for years. To those little, simple minds that was what really mattered. I gave up. I wish I could tell them now that Basheer gave much more than care: he ultimately gave his life.

This dedication and compassion endeared Basheer to the Tajik Muslims. He loved them and yes, they loved him. He had gradually become an inalienable part of the Tajik cause, a hero who had come from a far away land. As the Tajik Muslims

struggled in their war against the Communists, Basheer stood by them, supporting their orphans, running clinics, sharing their joy and wiping their tears. His presence whispered to the Tajiks, ‘I believe in you and your struggle. Don’t give up.’

A cease-fire took hold and there were reports that the refugees may move back to Tajikistan. Basheer asked me whether we would move BIF into Tajikistan. I told him that we were thinking about it. “If BIF goes into Tajikistan, I would like to continue with you.” He said. I asked him what he would do if we didn’t move in. He paused. “I belong to the Tajik struggle. I will go to Tajikistan with the refugees.”

In the summer of 1997, the refugees started moving back into Tajikistan bringing an end to the five years of exile. Deciding to start work in Tajikistan, we established an office for BIF in Dushanbe in November of 1997 and later arranged for Basheer and the staff to move from Afghanistan.

A few months after moving to Dushanbe, Basheer married a Tajik sister by the name of Sadbarg—the only child of a local family. The mother requested Basheer to move in their apartment where they had lived for so long. She was widowed in this apartment when Sadbarg was very young. Basheer agreed.

The Muslims signed a peace agreement with the Russian backed Government and the overall situation started to improve.

We took Dr. Nazr-ul-Islam—a surgeon from England—to Dushanbe and established a TB hospital for children. Furthermore, we continued with the sponsorship of the orphans; started supporting families of men disabled in the war and started rebuilding homes of orphan families destroyed during the war.

A group of young sisters, who had set up an Islamic study group in Dushanbe, approached us for help. Concluding that the sisters were high on enthusiasm but low on knowledge, we decided to teach them the fundamentals of Islam and prepare them to reach out to more women in Dushanbe.

We gave Nurudin—a graduate of the Islamic University in Medina¹⁸—the charge of the program.

¹⁸ A holy city in Saudi Arabia

Nurudin had come to Afghanistan in 1993 and had set up an Islamic School for Tajik students in the refugee camps. This is when Basheer and Nurudin became friends. After the cease-fire, Nurudin had moved independently to Tajikistan where he had also married a Tajik sister. He had started some Dawah¹⁹ programs in the mosques in and around Dushanbe.

When we decided to sponsor the Sister's Dawah program, Nurudin was like a gift from Allah (swt): he was there; married to a local sister; spoke fluent Persian and above all, was a gifted scholar.

The classes started in March of 1998 with a group of 32 sisters and 20 brothers.

Unfortunately, the political situation started deteriorating. Soon it became apparent that a cold war was taking shape fueled by the Secular and Communists elements to undermine the Islamic movement in Tajikistan.

On June 15, 1998, only three months since the start of classes, Nurudin was shot and martyred outside his apartment. Only 36, he left behind a pregnant wife and a four-month old daughter, Asma.

No one claimed responsibility and the Tajik Government denied any involvement. 'Could it have been the Russian intelligence?' we were left wondering, 'Or could it be the breakaway Communist faction—which had split from the Government—and violently opposes the peace agreement?'

Nurudin was also involved in Dawah programs in some of the mosques in and around Dushanbe, an activity he had started even before joining us. Also, his brother-in-law was a known commander of the Muslim troops.

The shroud of mystery surrounding Nurudin's death left us all guessing. The only thing confirmed was that he was killed for being identified as a Muslim activist but how much his death had to do with working for BIF, we could not tell. We were faced with a question: 'should we pull out of Tajikistan on the basis of our unconfirmed

¹⁹ Calling towards Allah

suspicious?’ By the grace of Allah (swt), our work was directly saving lives in the TB hospital.

We immediately froze all Dawah activities. Our staff of 9 people in Dushanbe included two foreigners so we had reasons to be worried.

Our CEO traveled to the area and told both Basheer and Dr. Islam that they could leave if they wanted to. Both refused saying that we need not worry since we were no longer involved with Dawah and the relief services being offered to Dushanbe were badly needed. Soon a contract was signed between BIF and the Ministry of Health, finalizing the administration of the TB hospital. With all Dawah activities frozen and only relief projects remaining, we reasoned that the anti-Islamic elements—if indeed they were behind Nurudin’s death—would surely back off.

I arrived in Dushanbe for three weeks in September of 1998 to restructure the operations, gather information and personally evaluate the situation. Everything appeared under control.

Our office in Dushanbe faces the parliament building in the Independence Square. A statue of Firdousi, a famous Persian poet, stares down at the beautiful gardens lining the main street. In these gardens are small cafés where one can dine on a lunch of rice and Kabab²⁰ on tables scattered under the tall trees. Basheer and I would walk down, have lunch and talk. Surrounded by the rustle of leaves in the autumn breeze, we would spend hours talking with the snow-capped Pamir Mountains in the background. These meetings are now memories to be cherished for the rest of my life. We talked about a lot of things: our time spent together in Afghanistan, our families, BIF, the political situation and our plans for the future. I was amused with Basheer’s accounts of adjusting with his in-laws and how they were adjusting to him as a foreigner. They were impressed with his honesty and commitment to a cause. He was investing a great deal of time with Sadbarg and was very proud that she was quickly picking up Islamic knowledge.

In one such meeting I asked him why he didn’t leave Tajikistan after the death of Nurudin. “My mother-in-law would be left alone.” He said. I smiled. We both knew that there was more to it. I was also his manager and he was aware that I could have asked him to leave. He was careful in wording his answer. “Look Suleman,” he was

²⁰ Grilled meat

very serious and thoughtful, “ you know that I have given myself to this cause. I know that I am in Tajikistan for no other reason but for Allah (swt),” then he paused, “and if I were to die, I have the confidence of knowing that I shall be a Shaheed²¹.”

We visited the grave of Nurudin in Dushanbe. I fought tears as I read Fatiha²²; the death of the Sahaba²³ dying for Allah (swt) in far away lands came to my mind. ‘Nureddin’ I felt like saying softly, ‘you left too high a standard for us to follow.’ Little did I know that in a couple of months Basheer—then standing by my very side— would also be brought here.

Basheer was shot at point blank range. I can conjure an image of his assassin, most likely a local Tajik clad in a black suit—so common in Dushanbe—walking up to him as he stepped out of his home. Alone and unarmed, Basheer stood no chance and was hit a total of 7 times in the chest and the head. The \$600 in his pocket—a lot of money in poverty stricken Tajikistan—were not touched. I could envision the residents filing into the street on hearing the shots including Sadbarg and her mother.

Basheer was 34, at an age when most of us start thinking seriously about life. It would take us lifetimes to do what he did in his last 12 years.

For Sadbarg—who had lost her father when young—he would be a dream forever: a young handsome man who came from continents away to struggle along her people; who married her; led her closer to Allah (swt); gave her joy and walked out of her home one fine morning never to return.

For us he was and will remain an inspiration, a statement that this world is worthless in front of the hereafter and if it takes our lives to establish Islam, then so be it.

While we talk, write and lecture about sacrificing for Allah (swt) and Islam, Basheer lived it and etched it in history with his blood. He was a true embodiment

²¹ One who dies for the cause of Islam

²² A chapter from the Quran

²³ Companions of the Prophet Mohammed (sas)

of the statement that ‘a faith not worth dying for is not worth living for.’

He leaves behind in his legacy one more reason for us to struggle for the dream both he and Nurudin gave their lives for—to return Muslims to the arms of Islam from the torturous clutches of Colonialism and Communism.

Basheer, may Allah accept your shahada²⁴. (Ameen)

²⁴ Death for the cause of Islam

Dare to think!

I was surprised by the knock. It was late at night and I was the only guest.

I opened the door. It was the manager along with the cook.

“Sir, we wanted to ask you something that has been troubling us for the past few days?”

“Sure,” I replied while asking them in.

The guest house belonged to Dr. A. Q. Khan Research Labs (KRL), where I had come to conduct a workshop.

KRL is Pakistan’s nuclear research powerhouse with some of the finest scientists that you can find under the sun.

After being seated, the cook spoke, “Sir, our scientists have brains so big that it would take us a few lifetimes to have our brains grow to that size!”

I was amazed at the clarity of the expression knowing that here was an unschooled young man with his whole world limited to his village and now Rawalpindi, a town next to Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan.

“You are right” I said knowing that I had in my workshop seasoned PhDs in subjects such as nuclear physics, power electronics, vibrations and vacuum systems. And these scientists know how to make things happen; just ask Dr. ElBaradei, the former Director General of the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)**.

“Sir,” the cook continued, “everyday these scientists spend the whole day in your class. We don’t understand what *is it* that you are teaching *them?*”

I was stumped. What a wonderful observation!

And what a wonderful predicament!

How do I explain to these simple folks that I teach organizational restructuring based on strategic visions and then introduce the framework for converting these visions into short term actionable and quantifiable plans?

I was pushed into deep thought.

“I cannot teach anybody anything,” Socrates once said, “I can only make them think.”

Socrates believed that people can’t be taught; rather people can be facilitated to discover what they already know. I disagree with him. It is only partly true. Through prophetic revelations we learn many things that we didn’t know before.

Socrates was known to exaggerate. I believe that he was purposely exaggerating to provoke people because provocation forces people to think; for this, I respect the guy for his noble agenda to force people to examine their beliefs, their assumptions and their paradigms. No wonder he made so many enemies.

I have come to believe that sincere people who disbelieve us and challenge us are one of our greatest assets.

Professors know it. Teachers know it. Trainers, like I, know it. We all know that one of the best rewards of teaching is to come across a sincere, naïve and aggressive man

or woman who doesn't buy into what we hold to be correct or believe we know well. And if that person happens to be your spouse, then all the better!

On that cold winter night in Rawalpindi, I realized that I had come across such people.

In the few moments of silence that followed, by the grace of Allah (swt), a thought came to me which has indebted me to those simple men forever.

“You know,” I carefully picked my words, “these scientists have knowledge much greater than mine. They are experts in their fields. I can't teach anything that is related to their area of expertise.”

I can see that they felt relieved. How can someone much younger and an outsider teach *their* scientists? It just didn't make sense to them. And now I had vindicated them. They were right after all.

I looked them in the eye and said, “You know what *I* teach?” I held their attention, “I teach people that if what you do today –however big or small –doesn't impact the world a hundred years later then that doing is plain useless. It is just a waste of time.” I sat back.

Amazingly their eyes glistened with understanding and smiles erupted.

“You are right. This is absolutely true.” They were in complete agreement. I had told them something that they knew all along.

“We now understand what you teach. That is something good that you are teaching. Keep it up.”

Saying this and with satisfaction written all over their faces, they left me to rest. Not realizing that they had left me exactly the opposite: restless!

I thought about it for many days. I pondered and reflected and agonized. In my urge to make things simple –I questioned myself –had I lied to them or misled them? Then it dawned upon me that just like them, I had also known this all along my life; I had never clearly articulated it to others and most importantly, to myself. All I needed was an innocent question from those innocent men who had no fear of being called naïve, with no reservations and no artificial persona of ‘look we know’!

And they taught me something that I had not been able to learn through books or by my travels across the globe.

Look deep inside your heart and you will realize that you know it too: if what we do today doesn’t impact this world a hundred years down the road then it is simply a waste of time!

Dr. Yousuf Al Qardawi writes that there are people who die before their death while being counted amongst the living; while others live much after their death because they leave behind good deeds, beneficial knowledge, pious children and able students who keep increasing their life. In the words of William Wallace, the character in the

movie *Braveheart*:

“Every man dies, but not every man really lives!”

Please reflect on things that you know. Seek people who will challenge you. Hear them out patiently. Cherish them. You may have some valuable knowledge that is waiting to be discovered by none other than yourself.

Keep in mind the words of Socrates, “An unexamined life is not worth living.”

And my advice to you today: please dare to think!

محاصرہ ادرنہ

یورپ میں جس گھڑی حق و باطل کی چھڑ گئی
حق خنجر آزمائی پہ مجبور ہو گیا

گرد صلیب گرد قمر حلقہ زن ہوئی
شکری حصار درنہ میں محصور ہو گیا

مسلم سپاہیوں کے ذخیرے ہوئے تمام
روئے امید آنکھ سے مستور ہو گیا

آخر امیر عسکر ترکی کے حکم سے
آئین جنگ ، شہر کا دستور ہو گیا

ہر شے ہوئی ذخیرہ لشکر میں منتقل
شاہیں گدائے دانہ عصفور ہو گیا

لیکن فقیہ شہر نے جس دم سنی یہ بات
گرما کے مثل صاعقہ طور ہو گیا

’ذمی کا مال لشکر مسلم پہ ہے حرام‘
فتویٰ تمام شہر میں مشہور ہو گیا

چھوٹی نہ تھی یہود و نصاریٰ کا مال فوج
مسلم ، خدا کے حکم سے مجبور ہو گیا



Appendix A: About Suleman Ahmer

To further his work and research in Time Management, Suleman founded Timerunners, Inc. in Chicago in 1999 and Timelenders, Inc. in Boston and Karachi in 2002. He has trained thousands of individuals in Time Management in the United States, United Arab Emirates and Pakistan. He has trained over 60 companies and organizations including names such as Philips, Siemens, Pfizer, Nestle, Tapal Tea, Pakistan Navy and Higher Colleges of Technology, Abu Dhabi.

Suleman's interest in the power of missions and visions to transform organizations has resulted in consulting work with groups both in the US and Pakistan. He has consulted with groups such as Macter Pharmaceuticals, Shafi-ResoChem and Amreli Steels.

Before moving to Pakistan, Suleman was associated with a couple of Chicago based multinationals and has worked in North America, Europe and Asia and has traveled to over 25 countries. He was a member of the American Management Association and draws inspiration from his international management experience and his background in research.

Suleman is an Engineering graduate of the University of Nebraska and his research with the US Air Force in Solid State Physics culminated in published work.

Suleman is an award winning author and has two works: the essence of his travel experiences are captured in 'The Embattled Innocence' published in the US and his current focus is 'Strategic Time Management', which also serves as course material for the Time Management Workshop.

Reference Books

Fundamentals of leadership

1. Al Raheeq al Makhtoom *by Shaikh Mubarakpuri*
2. The Alchemist *by Paulo Coelho*
3. The autobiography of Malcolm X
4. Tareekh-e-Dawat-o-Azeemat *by Maulana Ali Hasan Ali Nadwi*
5. Bang-e-Dara *by Dr. Mohammed Iqbal*
6. The Embattled Innocence *by Suleman Abmer*

Character

1. Tableegh-e-Deen *by Imam Ghazali*
2. I am OK, you are OK *by Dr. Thomas Harris*
3. Games people play *by Dr. Eric Berne*

Sharing

1. Crucial conversations *by Kerry Patterson*
2. Getting to Yes *by William Ury*
3. Made to Stick *by Chip and Dan Heath*
4. Tipping Point *by Malcolm Gladwell*
5. The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People *by Stephen Covey*
6. Strategic Negotiations Skills *by Suleman Abmer*

Facilitation

1. Principled Centered Leadership *by Stephen Covey*
2. Strategic Time Management *by Suleman Abmer*
3. Strategic Visions *by Suleman Abmer*
4. Any good book on Project Management

Comments/Suggestions

Name (In Block letters)			
Designation		Department	
Company			
Office Address			
	City		Country
Office Tel	(Country Code + City Code + Number)		
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Please use the back side if required.

Please suggest any other person(s) that you think would benefit or be interested in this workshop.

Name:

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