

Which blessing from God are you most thankful for?

"Alysha, my dear, do you know what the great learned Sage Adi Shankar Acharya said when he was asked this question by his disciples? Without hesitation, the Archarya answered: 'What I consider to be the greatest blessing and boon from God Almighty is that He has finally allowed my soul to come into this world in human form. The human form is very precious, for which we must submit gratitude to God each day without fail.'

His disciples then requested him to explain further.

'It is only through the human form that our soul can find its way to its ultimate (final) destination – the state of Union with Him. But alas, most of us waste this great opportunity:

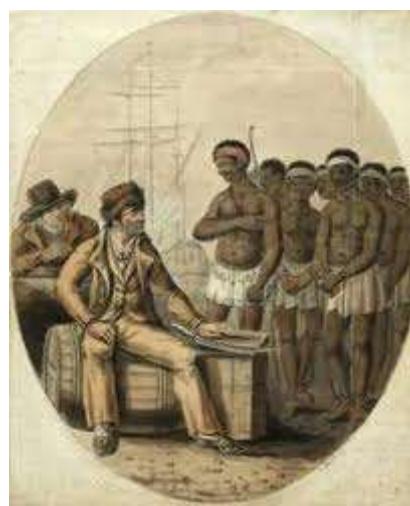
Think of a performer at the circus. After years and years of determined efforts and practice since childhood, he is finally ready to walk the tight rope without any kind of a safety net underneath – the ultimate culmination of his lifelong ambition. The rope is stretched tight high above the ground and the performer starts...his mind clear, his focus stable, with nerves of steel and unwavering discipline, he walks the rope one step at a time. The crowd is hushed, watching his every move raptly, painfully aware that one misstep will lead to certain death but the performer progresses forward. Alas! When he is just one step away from reaching the end of the rope and achieving his goals, his mind wavers; he becomes distracted, loses his concentration and misjudges the last step.....

That, my disciples, perfectly describes the condition most of us are in today. We do not appreciate the enormous blessing that has been bestowed upon us – we are God's highest creation, we are Human Beings! – and we tend to waste this golden opportunity behind meaningless pursuits and desires of money, power, fame, self-glorification etc. Perhaps this is so because we are unable to remember how long it has taken our souls to reach human form. The journey of the soul is aptly represented by each step taken by the performer on the tight rope. Step by step, our souls have progressed forward until this, the final step, the human form.' – "

I interjected my grandmother, "Oh, is that what our Pirs mean by 'lakh choraasi fera'? Also, the words of Imam Sultan Mohamed Shah come to mind; is it not true that the Imam said, 'Man is an exalted creature but he debases himself out of his own wilfulness'? The Imam has also said, 'You have been born in human form (insaan roop) but unfortunately, this whole birth just passes by in a flash like that of any common animal'."

"Indeed. Amongst most Hindu scholars, it is believed that the soul takes on 8,400,000 different forms before being granted human form. Our Holy Pirs have mentioned this several times with the words you have quoted. So, I believe that what these scholars say is true. And the farmans of Imam Sultan Mohamed Shah are also very clear about the exalted nature of the human form and about how regretful it is that we are just taking this unique opportunity for granted. I am sure you have heard this over and over again from Alwaezes and lecturers, so my perspective will centre around our Hazar Imam who has said clearly in one of His speeches – 'The beautiful thing about human beings, what differentiates them from animals, is that they can change.'

*This is indeed a cheerful thought and these words have become a mantra for me and I try always to remember them. We as human beings can **change**, that is something animals cannot do. And, my dear, we have to **change**. By **change** I mean: regain our focus and remember why we have been born and what is the main purpose of our lives.*

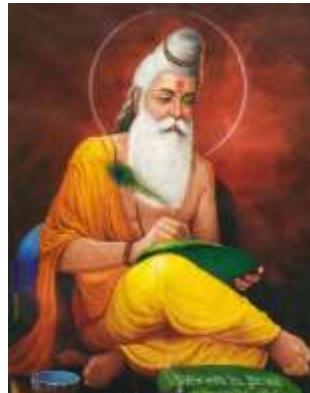


There lived a rich merchant in Mississippi, a landowner, with huge cotton farms. He had lots and lots of slaves whom he acquired during his frequent journeys to Africa at very favourable prices. He was a tough taskmaster and made each and every slave work from dawn to dusk in his farms. He took pleasure in the fact that these human beings belonged to him. They were his possessions, to treat as he wished, and he treated them very badly, doling out to them meagre meals and one loin cloth (even in the freezing winters) and making them live in appalling quarters. Even his many horses were better looked after than his slaves. A real tyrant! He became so used to seeing expressions of hatred and contempt on their faces – that pleased him a lot – that he immediately noticed a new slave whom he had just acquired. This particular slave went about his punishing routine with a smile on his face and this did not sit well with the merchant at all. He made his tasks tougher day by day and halved all his meals. But the man smilingly continued and cheerfully greeted his master whenever he passed by. The merchant was aghast. Why does this man not hate me like all the others do? Why is he so cheerful? He decided to pay a visit to the slave's tiny room one evening. The slave was kneeling down on the floor, his hands held high and he was thanking God Almighty for His mercies and His bounties. The merchant went weak at his knees and had to lean against the wall for support. This is a slave. He has no possessions. He works from dawn to dusk like a donkey and of late, I have made his tasks even more unbearable. He hardly gets

any food to eat, has only one loin cloth to his name and lives in a hovel, worse than a pigsty, and yet he is bowing down before God and thanking Him! And look at me! Tears flowed down his eyes and he went back to his mansion, his head bowed and his heart enlightened. That moment was a moment of awakening for him. The next day, he called all his slaves and informed them that they were no longer enslaved but would henceforth be his partners. Those who wished to stay would be paid for their work and would get proper housing, meals and clothes henceforth. Those who wished to leave were free to do so and would be provided with means to go wherever they wished. The slave he saw the previous evening was the first to react. He rushed forward and embraced the merchant and all others followed suit. This was a radical move for those days and times and many other landowners and merchants were inspired to do the same with their slave labour. This initiated the emancipation and eventual abolishment of slavery in southern USA.

*The main point of my story is that the merchant **changed** and became a better person and thus progressed forward towards his true purpose. As I have said, we all have to **change** and there will come a time when we will all face a moment of awakening. History is full of examples of people who changed:*

- *Valmiki **changed** from a thug, robber and murderer to one of the greatest and most learned sages. He was given the honour of writing the great epic, Ramayana.*
- *Angulimala Daku used to kill people and cut off their fingers to make a necklace to wear around his neck. One meeting with Gautam Buddha **changed** him into a devoted and learned sufi.*
- *Farid-ud-din Attar **changed** from a chemist, apothecarist and successful businessman to a renowned Sufi Darwesh who has authored the famous Conference of the Birds.*
- *Varas Ismail Gangji heard one verse of ginan in jamatkhana and that was his moment of awakening. His whole life **changed** and he became a devoted leader of the Ismaili community, very near and dear to the Imam. I am sure his story is very well known.*



*Similarly, we too must **change** but we are very stubborn. No, I should not say that. It is not that we do not want to fulfil the purpose of our lives and reach that blessed point, but we tend to forget easily or get distracted, via our minds and egos, in the temporal enjoyments of this world and thus keep postponing or procrastinating our intentions to **change**. But time ticks on and on and on..."*

"Sant Kabir visited Banaras often. On one visit, he met Manav and offered to guide him spiritually. 'Please give me some time, I need to get my children educated properly first then I will surely become your disciple. I really want to.'

'Fifteen years later, Sant Kabir met Manav again in Banaras and made the same offer. 'I am not ready yet, let me get my children married and settled down and then I will surely become your disciple. I really, really want to.'

'Five years later, Sant Kabir ran into Manav again and asked him to come and learn from him.

'Please forgive me, I am anxious to see the face of my first grandchild and to have him or her on my lap. Once I do that, I promise to sit down and learn from you. Nothing will make me happier.'

'Another five years later, Sant Kabir could not find Manav anywhere in Banaras. Eventually, a well wisher led him to Manav's house where he saw a huge portrait of Manav with a garland of flowers hanging over it..."'

"Darwesh Ibrahim's six statutes are an extremely useful way of not forgetting and avoiding postponement and procrastination.

Statute 1: *if you do not wish to change then you have no right to take anything free of charge from the Lord. You are not allowed to breathe in the free air, you cannot use the bounties of water and food which the Lord provides. No giveth, no taketh. So if you decide not to change today then don't breathe, drink or eat."*

I couldn't help but smile when I heard this powerful pronouncement. How can one live without breathing, eating or drinking for even a moment? Surely, this was a clever way the Darwesh used to ensure his disciples would not forget what was expected of them.

Statute 2: *you have no right to behave as you like and commit sins on earth or on any other part of God's creation. So if you wish to do as you like and behave improperly and create impurity then find a place (to do so) which has not been created by God or which is not part of God's creation.*

Statute 3: *if you wish to act in any manner that you like and indulge in wrong doing and sinful behaviour then you must find a place to do so where you are hidden from the eyes of God. You cannot behave badly in the presence of God and so, be bad only if you are sure God is not watching you."*

I could not help but admire the ingenuity of the Darwesh and also the truth of his words. Regular reminders of these three statutes would definitely inspire one to **change**.

“Statute 4: *When the Angel of Death comes for your soul, order him to wait. Tell him you are not ready, you haven’t repented for your sins and done all the good deeds that you have wanted but have kept on postponing. Command him to come back at a more convenient time when you have finished all this.”*

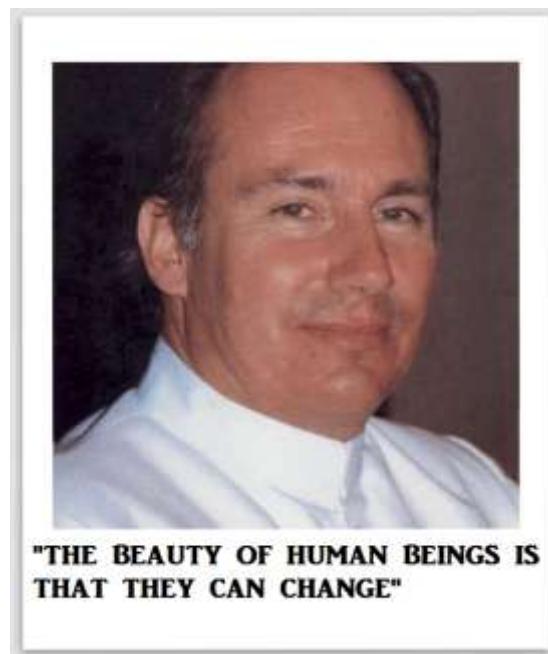
Oh my God. As if the Angel of Death can be halted. This obviously means that since we do not know at which moment the Angel of Death will appear to pronounce the end of our time on this earth then we can’t afford not to **change** immediately.

“Statute 5: *if you are unsuccessful in convincing the Angel of Death to wait and you are presented before the Lord for judgement, tell Him that you do not want to be judged. You have not had time to ‘balance your accounts’ and therefore cannot participate in the exercise of judgement. Command Him to close up His books immediately.”*

As if! Every thought that occurs in our minds, every word that escapes our mouths, each and every action of ours is noted down and will be examined at the time of judgement. We may not even remember what we did or thought or said five minutes ago but the Lord makes note of everything, right from our first breath to our last. Will He listen to us and close up His books? I don’t think so!!!

“Statute 6: *if the judgement is not in your favour and God commands that you be taken to hell then just put your foot down and tell Him that you won’t go. You’re not going to any such place. Just refuse.”*

I almost laughed out loud. Ibrahim Darwesh surely had a good sense of humour. This would just be like a convict refusing to be imprisoned upon sentencing. Truly an excellent way of remembering that we cannot afford a single minute more of postponement of **change**.
NO TIME LIKE NOW.



“THE BEAUTY OF HUMAN BEINGS IS THAT THEY CAN CHANGE”

Also by Alysha Javer:

Doing Right, A Test of Courage, Part 1 <http://wp.me/p1Z38-eRH>

Courage is a Must, Part 2 <http://wp.me/p1Z38-fuM>

Selfless Giving: <http://wp.me/p1Z38-ev0>

The Best Cure: <http://wp.me/p1Z38-eCS>

Karmic Catastrophe: <http://wp.me/p1Z38-eJ5>

Alysha Javer is a teacher. After completing her studies in the field of Education and Psychology in the UK, she taught English Language and Literature for a few years before joining the Writers' Bureau, UK. Currently, she lives part of the year in the UK and part of the year in Kenya (with her grandmother Zeenatara Allakrakhya) and she's working on writing her first novel. In her own words: "I'm very interested in learning more and going deeper into the subject of faith and ethics, and my grandmother is a great source of inspiration and knowledge in this vast subject."