

GRATITUDE

Written by Boorhaanol
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As Muslims, one of the phrases that we are taught from babyhood is “Alhamdulillah”. In fact, so ingrained is it in us that sometimes we say it without conscious thought. So, is this a good thing, or is it a bad thing? Well, it is certainly good to constantly thanking Allah for whatever bounties bestowed upon us, be it health, wealth or any number of other things. It is however not so good, when the word comes out without us being conscious of what we are saying, or feeling. When it in fact becomes like rote learning, or a stock response to any query about our health, work or family.

. When we say “Alhamdulillah”, we are simultaneously praising and thanking Allah. For this to be truly effective, we have to be conscious of what we are feeling and doing. When we are conscious, in the present moment, what we feel is gratitude. Muslims are perfectly poised to be constantly grateful for whatever we have, what happens to us, and for the people in our life. We have the most perfect training for the expression of gratitude, because it has been instilled in us from day one. We use it several times a day in our Ibadat, when responding to a query about our health, when we sneeze; in fact the list is too long to mention all. We should be grateful that we have this training; that our response to ‘how are you?’ is Alhamdulillah, and not ‘I am good’ or ‘fine thank you’. I have often wondered who is being thanked in the latter phrase; is it the person asking, or some amorphous being? We should be grateful for our ability to express thankfulness in any situation because here is the good news. Research has shown that when we are grateful for what we have, it actually makes us more optimistic, and optimism boosts the immune system. Optimism is the vital key to unlocking vast amounts of energy which will enable us to tackle onerous tasks, and manage difficult situations. When we are optimistic, everything is possible, and we attract any number of good things into our life, which in turn causes us to be more grateful. Gratitude results in feelings of inner peace. There is a growing body of psychologists, researchers and clinicians in mental health who believe in the beneficial effects of gratitude. It increases our feelings of health and happiness. Gratitude has a powerful effect in our lives; it recharges energy, improves our self-worth, causes a flow of energy, and most important, it strengthens our spirit. With a stronger spirit way, we are fully conscious of the greatness and mercy of Allah. There are many people who have everything they can possibly desire, yet they are miserable and dissatisfied. The one thing lacking is a sense of gratitude. When you focus on what you have, instead of aspiring to more and more, the feeling of peace you experience will be immeasurable.

Being alive necessitates growth, if we do not grow, we might as well stop living. Life is a

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constant ebb and flow, and nothing is ever perfect. When we are faced with a challenge, see it as just that, not a disaster, not an obstacle, but as an opportunity to learn. Most of the time what we consider to be crises and disasters, are actually a wake up call, for us to pause and consider. We should be grateful for these opportunities to grow and develop. To be truly successful in life, we have to be grateful. With heightened awareness, we see further than just what concerns us; we see how we are all connected in the greater scheme of things. For example, when you place the food on the table for your family, spare a thought for where it came from. The man who planted and tended the vegetables, the one who took care of the animal which is providing the meat or chicken you are about to enjoy; the one who baked the bread, and the driver who transported it to the shop where you bought it. If we just pause and look around us, we will realize how very much we have to be grateful for.

The human body and the way it works, is the greatest reason for gratitude. When you open your eyes in the morning, think about the fact that you can see your surroundings, the next time your child cries or whines bless and be grateful for the gift of hearing. When you need to communicate with your partner or employer, be grateful that you have the gift of speech. There are so many things we can be grateful for, and that is why "Alhamdulillah" comes so very naturally to our lips and thoughts.

However, as in all things, paying lip service is not enough. We have to consciously cultivate a sense of gratitude; this can be done by becoming aware of our blessings, concentrate on what is good in our life. By doing so, you will position gratitude as your top priority. When you look for, and find the best in yourself, you will automatically look for and find the good in others. When you appreciate the challenges and see them as opportunities to learn; as you patiently persevere, you will develop the quality of sabr.

Your self-confidence will increase, and you will move forward with renewed energy.

The greatest boon of feeling gratitude is that you will not be affected by negativity. Anger, envy, resentment and jealousy cannot flourish in the soil tilled with gratitude. Gratitude shrinks fear and defensiveness, and opens the heart to love. All of this has a powerful effect on your physical body, as well as your mental health. It will be very hard to feel depressed when you feel grateful for all the blessings in your life.

A feeling of well being and happiness is known to be a healing emotion, and when we are happy, we infect others with the same emotion; in doing so we are showing kindness and generosity to our fellow humans.

The best way to cultivate gratitude is to spend a few minutes at the start or end of each day in reflection. A good tip is to keep a 'gratitude journal' Try to write down at least five things you can be grateful for that day. It can be as simple as 'I did not get stuck in traffic this morning' to 'I finally finished that task that was giving me such grief'. No matter how small, there are always things we can be grateful for.

Remember, whenever we give someone else something, whether it is a smile, a word of encouragement or an article, it comes from our heart. We have had the benefit and joy and so we pass it on to someone else to enjoy. When you offer love and gratitude to someone, that love and gratitude is from your heart, and in giving, the feeling stays in your heart.

I am truly grateful that Allah has blessed me with the ability to write this article.

As you reach the end of this article, think of what you are grateful for, right now.

ALHAMDULILAAHI RABBUL ALAMEEN

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GRATITUDE IS AN ATTITUDE

Two boys attended the same school, but came from vastly different backgrounds. The rich one often invited his friend to visit his home. They would sit on the patio, enjoying rich cakes and juice. They would play in the huge swimming pool and run around with a tiny poodle. However, the poor boy never invited his friend to his home; he was ashamed because he lived on a farm. They had no luxuries, and he often envied his friend's lifestyle. One day the rich boy decided to go to his friend uninvited; after his initial misgivings, the poor boy enjoyed having his friend at his home. When the time came to say goodbye, he said to the rich boy: "Do you now see why I have never asked you around before? We have nothing compared to the wonderful things you have". The rich boy looked confused. "I don't understand," he said to his friend. "You are so fortunate. We have a large patio, you have the whole horizon, our pool has walls for boundaries, you have the entire river to swim in, we have a toy dog, and you have four large ones that you can play with. I get to eat rich sugary cakes, whereas you have an endless supply of healthy fruit from your trees. You are so blessed." The poor boy looked at his friend in amazement and realized that instead of enjoying the bounties in his own life, he had wasted time and energy in coveting what his friend had.

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