



Jamil Janjua,
ceo, Octara & Chief Editor
janjua05@gmail.com

Dear Reader,

The spirit of sacrifice is fresh in our minds as we rejoin work after an extended Eidul Azha break, and our back-of-the-book column Nature Calling for Action Stations highlights the essence of the Khutba from Singapore which said that sacrificing greed, selfishness, and overconsumption, which are contributing to environmental destruction and climate change, is considered a true act of sacrifice that Allah demands from believers.

Syed Affan-ul-Haq has contributed an insightful piece on becoming an empowered sales performer, emphasizing that people buy from people, and the more you understand people and the “why” and “how” behind how they interact, the greater success you will garner.

Tommy Weir takes the cake this issue with his piece on Bringing Simple Back. He writes about the Power of Simplicity, and how Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication. For Da Vinci, he says, keeping things simple was the epitome of elegance and style. “We seem to have developed a preference for overcomplicating things in order to appear smart and sophisticated, and the practice is rife within business circles, with Complexity oozing from almost every crack.” It is in this world that artificial intelligence finds its home, and like the smartest minds, AI puts in the hard work and turns webs of complexity into digestible insights. Most definitely a must read.

Dr. Frank Peter gives a quick 11 minutes master-class on Business Blogging and how to do it in three steps. He begins by clarifying that blogging is not for individuals to share what they had for breakfast or what they did on their holidays as many business executives think. This may have been true in the early days of blogging, but using this platform for a business to reach out is today a well-established way of connecting with prospects and customers. Business Blogging itself is part of a social media marketing campaign.

Here's wishing our readership the very best of health, wealth and happiness 😊

Explore JJ's curated articles for expert insights on managing people, business, and personal growth. Gain valuable knowledge and prepare for future challenges with confidence.

INSIDE:



Becoming an Empowered Sales Performer

Syed Affan-ul-Haq | 10 min read



Bringing Simple Back

Tommy Weir | 7 min read



Business Blogging

Dr. Frank Peter | 11 min read



Nature Calling for ACTION STATIONS!

Adil Ahmad | 17 min read

Becoming an



Sales Performer

Syed Affan-ul-Haq | 10 min read

Have you ever measured that how much time does a sales representative spend with his/her customer or prospects?

Surprisingly, the average sales representative spends only 15% of their time engaging with their prospects or customers as per the research by Alexander Group.

Do You Think Does This Matter To You?

Increasing time engaging with prospects or customers is one of the quickest ways to improve productivity. This is essential for most sales forces, given that only 57.1% of sales representatives meet or exceed their targets - CSO Insights

Productivity alone however will not garner the brass ring. The selling environment today requires sales professionals who can leverage every interaction with a customer. Process is not enough. Today's top performers are skilled at navigating the non-linear waters of human interaction.

The science of human interaction is becoming more essential as B2B buyers move to using more online tools to streamline buying. Consequently, expectations are shifting. B2B buyers are looking for sales representatives to be consultants who can create value. This requires a unique blend of knowledge and skills coupled with human interaction capabilities that help the buyer and their buying team through the buying process.

Human interaction in selling isn't dead. On the contrary, it's becoming more demanding.

This is how you can EMPOWER to become a real sales performer by increasing your human interaction skills....

1 KNOW THYSELF

First and foremost, it is important to know yourself. If you have had a comprehensive assessment completed, reflect on it and ask yourself, how it impacts the way in which you communicate. If you have not had a detailed assessment, consider some of the following:

Rate yourself

on a scale of
1 to 10





1. Are you a highly assertive person or a bit more submissive?
2. Do you like to win at all costs or naturally focus on helping the team to win first?
3. Are you an innovative person, who like to find new ways to approach a problem or do you tend to follow the tried and true?
4. Are you a person who is comfortable with lots of changes in your day and fighting fires or do you prefer a more orderly working environment with few or no changes during the day?
5. Do you like working alone or do you prefer to have others around you at all times?
6. Does it take you a bit of time to warm others to you or do you like to be the center of attention?
7. Do you take things to heart or do you let things roll off of your back?
8. Are you naturally focused on your goals and getting things done?
9. Are you naturally focused on your goals and relationships?
10. Are you a person who is more focused on helping others and relationships?
11. Are you a person who is focused on others' needs and getting tasks done?

Consider the areas that you rated yourself closer to a 1 or a 10. Reflect on how they impact your ability to adapt to others who are on the opposite side of the scale.

2 Identify how your prospect or customer communicates

Consider all of the questions below as they relate to your prospect.

- What does it mean in terms of how they want to be communicated with?
- Their approach to a buying process?
- Words that would have meaning for them?
- Words to avoid?
- What would help them to consider change?
- How they would want a proposal structured?
- How much detail they would want?

3 Identify your natural approach to communicating and consider what you will need to do to be effective in communicating with your prospect

- In what ways does your communication style align?
- In what ways is your communication style different?
- How will you adjust your approach to meet his/her needs?

4 Understand and practice protocols of communication

Be aware of the importance of matching where your prospect or customer is in their buying process. Most sales representatives lose sight that their role is to help a buyer make a buying decision. This includes no and yes.

When you violate the protocols of communication, you risk passing a message to the buyer that says I'm only interested in selling you. Being a consultant and trusted advisor means you must be, first and foremost, interested in helping your prospect make the right buying decision for their needs.

One of the most common errors sales representatives make is becoming too specific too soon. This is a typical communication trap sales representatives fall into when want to start "pushing" for a sale rather than helping a buyer through their buying process.

5 Learn and practice the principles of communication

Learn principles of communication such as influencing, negotiation and change. Understand them and leverage them to help your buyer make an effective buying decision.

6 Plan your use of inquiry and advocacy

Balance inquiry and advocacy effectively and align them with the buyer's buying process.

Construct key messages that match your prospect or customer's communication style.

7 Pay attention to body language, cues and meta messages

Focus on "The messages behind the words" to be certain you understand the intent behind what is said.

8 Become a student of human behaviour

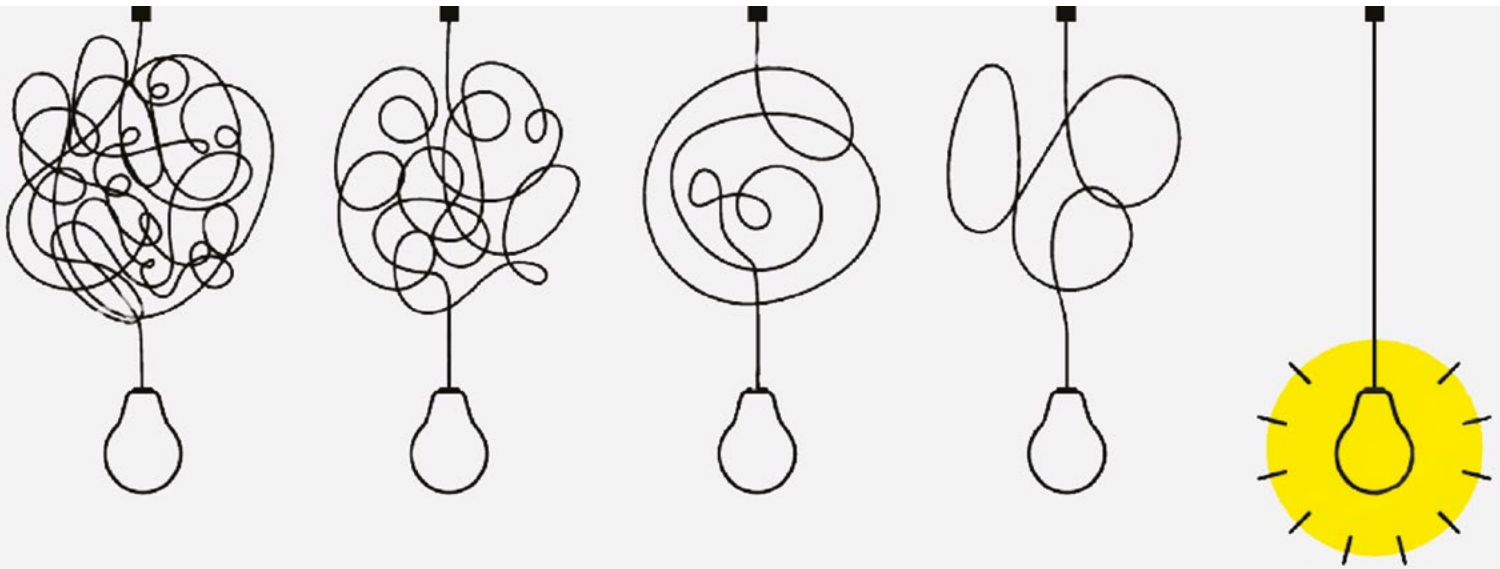
Read everything you can from sites like Psychology Today about human behaviour. Study and read about the brain and how we make decisions. Watch TED talks that help you to better understand yourself and others. Do curbside reviews after each dialogue with a prospect or customer to continue to learn, adapt and improve. People buy from people. The more you understand people and the "why" and "how" behind how they interact, the greater success you will garner.

The bottom line is this, when our clients identified their true EMPOWERED top performers based on valid criteria and the ability to repeat their performance over time, their list coincided with the sales representatives who embraced learning ■

Be aware of the importance of matching where your prospect or customer is in their buying process. Most sales representatives lose sight that their role is to help a buyer make a buying decision. This includes no and yes.

Source:

<https://www.octara.com/Publications/octara.com%20e-newsletter%20%28Issue-2%2C%20May2019%29.pdf>



Bringing Simple Back

Tommy Weir | 7 min read

Here's a question for you: What did Albert Einstein and Leonardo Da Vinci have in common? Genius, yes. But there's something else. Underneath all the mindboggling intricacy and complexity of their work, both believed in the power of simplicity. According to the German-born physicist, "The principle of the universe will be beautiful and simple," while for Da Vinci, keeping things simple was the epitome of elegance and style. "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication," reads the famous quote now associated with his name, and I am inclined to agree.

It is a philosophy that I was reminded of recently when I came across Ockham's razor – the problem-solving principle that the simplest solution is most likely the right one. Ockham was a medieval philosopher and Franciscan friar who famously wrote that "Entities should not be multiplied without necessity." As a

deeply religious man, he used the idea to defend divine miracles, but it has found a firm place in science too, where the simpler the theory, the more testable it is. According to the principle, it is necessary to shave away unnecessary assumptions in order to arrive at the right answer – hence the "razor" connection.

For more than 800 years, humanity has preached the importance of simplicity in one form or another, yet in today's world, the message appears to have gotten lost. Rather than heeding the wise words of Ockham, Da Vinci and Einstein, we seem to have developed a preference for overcomplicating things in order to appear smart and sophisticated – and the practice is rife within business circles. From the way we organize our people and processes, to the strategies we devise and the products we promote, complexity oozes from almost every crack.

Last week, I wrote about meetings (a pet peeve of mine), and I feel compelled to highlight them again. How many times have you endured a long presentation and emerged the other side asking yourself, “what just happened here?” All too often, colleagues leave the meeting room feeling dumb and perplexed, when in fact it is the presenter who is at fault. Like a kid who forgot to do his homework, employees and business leaders alike attempt to disguise their lack of prep or understanding by losing audiences in a labyrinth of slides, bullet points and lengthy explanations.

It reminds me of school; the very best

is not for the lazy; people who are serious about an idea spend weeks, months and even years honing it, challenging it and – to evoke Ockham’s razor – “shaving it down”, until it’s light, agile and effortless in the eyes of the observer. If someone can present a product or idea in a single sentence, you can guarantee that underpinning every carefully chosen word are countless hours of hard work.

All too often we view simple solutions with scepticism. We mistakenly equate simplicity with a lack of effort or incompleteness, when in fact it can be the hardest and most valuable of feats to achieve. The irony is, there’s something in

It is in this world that artificial intelligence finds its home. Like the smartest minds, AI puts in the hard work and turns webs of complexity into digestible insights. Finally, eight centuries on from Ockham’s razor, artificial intelligence is bringing simple back

teachers – the ones who were passionate about their subjects and really knew their stuff – could make the most complicated concepts sound simple, while those who had taken up teaching for the long holidays lacked the confidence and the knowledge to diverge from the textbook. Instead, they would bombard students with hours of dry and convoluted theory, leaving them feeling bored at best, stupid at worst.

We complicate to compensate. The smartest companies with the smartest people can articulate their ideas in a single page – or even a single sentence. But it’s not just a question of smartness. Simplicity

human nature that craves it. Repetitive mantras win presidential races and in a world of gray, we look for answers that are black and white.

It is in this world that artificial intelligence finds its home. Like the smartest minds, AI puts in the hard work and turns webs of complexity into digestible insights. Finally, eight centuries on from Ockham’s razor, artificial intelligence is bringing simple back ■

Source:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/bringing-simple-back-tommy-weir/>

Business Blogging

– How to do it in 3 Steps

Dr. Frank Peter | 11 min read

Many business executives think that blogging is for individuals to share what they had for breakfast, or what they did on their holidays. This may have been true in the early days of blogging, but using this platform for a business to reach out is today a well-established way of connecting with prospects and customers.

Business Blogging itself is part of a social media marketing campaign. The main difference between a website and a blog is that the website is a one-way street - visitors can consume your content and that's it. A blog allows for a two-way street: visitors can consume your content and engage with it by leaving responses, just like a social media post. So why not just use social media?

Let's say you have put a lot of effort and money into establishing a community on i.e. Myspace (one of the earliest major social platforms, some may actually remember it...). Myspace as a social media platform went into oblivion, and so would have your effort in creating a community there. All the effort and money would have been wasted. Who can guarantee that other, currently popular platforms will be around in a year's time? Twitter has experienced a drop in accounts, Facebook is struggling to get

young people to sign up, and so on. There is no guarantee that any effort you put into something that is popular today will be giving you benefits in the future. Simply put, I would not put a lot of effort and money into something that I cannot control.

Your business blog, on the other hand, is something you have full control over until the end of time. You set your own editorial guidelines, you can post in as many characters as you want, you post videos, images, infographics, etc., or a mix of it, as you see fit for your business. You are not reliant on other people's guidelines but set your own. Popular social media platforms will play a major role in getting your content out to the world, but they should not be your first priority.

Step 1

Setting up your Business Blog

The blogging platform of choice has to be WordPress. It's free, secure and there are more features available that you could possibly need. It's also the most userfriendly platform out there. If you know how to write an article in MS Word you can handle a blog post in WordPress. You will need to get your IT people to set

it up for you, everything after that you can do yourself without much technical knowledge.

The setting-up should be as a directory under your main domain, for example, www.domain.com/blog or www.domain.com/articles or whatever you fancy. This is a format that Google likes, so your posts have a higher chance of appearing in the Google search results. It should not be set-up as a subdomain, i.e. blog.domain.com, Google doesn't like this as much. Once your web person has set it up it's time to prepare content.

Business Blogging itself is part of a social media marketing campaign. The main difference between a website and a blog is that the website is a one-way street - visitors can consume your content and that's it. A blog allows for a two-way street: visitors can consume your content and engage with it by leaving responses, just like a social media post. So why not just use social media?

Step 2

What to post on your Business Blog

The purpose of writing blog posts has to be clearly defined. As a business, your main purpose could be to increase website sales, or possibly to drive more sign-ups or registrations. It could also be to get people to use your website's contact form to get in touch for additional info. Be clear on what you are trying to achieve. Once you have identified the goal of your blog you then only post content that will help you achieve that goal. I wrote another post on that, please read it at this link: [Personal and Corporate Branding thru Social Media](#)

- the What and the Who.

In a nutshell, your posts need to be well written and highly informative. The purpose is to establish yourself as an authority in your field so that prospects and future customers start to trust you and your company, which will eventually lead to new business.

The next question is: how often should you post. As pointed out in the earlier post I referenced above, there is no such answer as 'once a day' or 'twice a week' or any time metric. The purpose of your blog is to establish credibility, hence you should only post if you have highly valuable content that will provide benefits (=answers) to your most important readers. If you have such content then post it, if you don't have valuable content then don't post. It is much worse to post shallow content than not posting at all. Shallow content will hurt your credibility more than not posting.

Step 3

Getting your Business Blog seen by Prospects and Customers

You may have written the best blog post in the entire world but if nobody sees it it's not worth anything. To get some eyeballs to view your posts there are three tactics that you can employ:

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

The principle of SEO is to tell search engines, i.e. Google or Bing, what your blog content is all about. Once they know this they are able to feature it in their search results once a user searches for a related topic. Many books, blogs, and videos have been produced on how to do perfect SEO. While there are some technical tips and tricks to doing this, it all boils down to one

thing. In the eyes of Google, is your content useful to a Google user who searches for answers related to the info you provide in your business blog post? That's it. If you write a quality post that provides value to a reader then Google will pick it up and feature it prominently. The days of 'tricking' Google into ranking your content are long over. Provide value, and Google will reward you with a good position in the search results. If you want to get a bit more technical, there are some added functionalities (= Plugins) for WordPress that will help. The plugin we use is Yoast SEO, although there is a bit of a learning curve to use this one for its full potential. An SEO plugin is nice to have but certainly not necessary in the beginning.



Social Media

Remember, earlier I said 'don't rely solely on social media to post your content'? That is still true, but popular social media platforms can play a vital role to get your blog posts in front of potential readers. The way we do it is to post an exciting image from the post (or a good video still in case of a video post) on the most appropriate social media



platform, together with a very short but intriguing teaser. The image is there to stop a social media user from scrolling through their timeline. If the image is

good it will make the user stop scrolling and reading your text. This text should be short, no more than four lines in a social media post. The last part of your written text is a link to your blog post, something like "Want to know more? Click here: [followed by your blog post link]. Not everybody will click, but the people who do automatically show an

interest in your content, and those are the ones you try to reach.

Digital Advertising

Using SEO will take time - Google has to find your content, index it and present it to its users. This can take weeks. Social media 'teaser' postings have the disadvantage that your content competes with lots of other content on someone's timeline. It has also limited reach in terms of the number of eyeballs that to can attract organically. If you want to get many people fast to your new blog post you will need to spend some money. Advertising via Google Ads and i.e. Facebook ads will give you instant visitors. This works very well, but to do this cost-effectively it is necessary to learn how to do it best. You can easily spend a lot of money without getting the desired results.



Most digital advertising platforms allow your ads to be highly targeted. If done right only people who have an interest in your content will be seeing your ads. This cuts down on the numbers of wasted eyeballs and clicks that you otherwise would have to pay for. The best practices for this are too complex to be covered in this post. A good starting point is Google's own educational section here: Google Ads Support. If you prefer a faster and more direct way to learn about online advertising, I can train you and your colleagues on how to start out with the best practices. If you prefer some help and guidance on how to get started please contact me here at our Contact Form for a no-obligation chat ■

Source:

<https://drfrankpeter.com/social-media/business-blogging-how-to-do-it-in-3-steps>

Nature Calling for Action Stations (NCfAS#28)

GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM COMING ALIVE!



Students, Teachers & Parents Unite!

Amidst dire headlines of heat induced fatalities around the globe, with over 1300 during the Hajj alone this year, a move is in hand to strengthen the search for local solutions by reinventing a generally archaic platform known as the PTA wherein the teachers and parents faceoff in an adversarial setting, each blaming the other for the student's lack of progress.

The fact that the parents are made to occupy the tiny seats that accommodate the kids during school hours hands the teachers a psychological advantage which they leverage to maximum effect in passing the buck. In all my years of attending the PTA I have found it to be a mostly unpleasant experience, not surprisingly, I might add, given my rebel gene transference to my children. But all that is about to change if a little known not-for-profit civil society organization can have its way.

Current Affairs Research & Action, or CARA for short, has been curating media mentions on governance and its impact on global warming and climate change, and arrived at the inescapable conclusion that it's beyond the remit of big government to fix the situation if the governed remain apathetic to their plight and merely seek

“To be eligible the nominated organization must be a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) or a non-profit organization (NPO)”

– Zayed Sustainability Prize

solace in cursing the darkness without any effort at lighting a candle. After all, a people do get the governance they deserve, as it has long been said.

Countering disruption with reinvention

It's a no brainer that any and every neighborhood should take ownership of its problems and the lead in finding solutions to their resolution. Since we are all agreed that, given our present state of affairs, our children will inherit a hostile and largely unlivable world, it's only natural that they should spearhead grassroots efforts at climate change mitigation and adaptation, and lead the erstwhile PTA in a new life and death mission 'impossible' that seeks to bridge the generation gap and collaborate in the search for a better more livable future.

Environment clubs & enrichment societies

The students are the lynchpin that connect the community through their parents at one end and, through the teacher, have the world of limitless learning and opportunity open up to them. Renamed environment clubs or enrichment societies, these platforms will brainstorm ways and means of making their neighborhoods more livable, and actively engage with their elected councilmen and local bureaucracies in making their voices heard and effect change.

Harnessing teachers

In all of this the role of the teacher in directing and

coordinating the effort is central, as indeed it has always been through history in the nurturing of stable and vibrant societies. Hence CARA's primary focus is on teacher training institutes where the mitigation and adaptation mantra can be instilled, and a potent layer of purpose added onto the ladies and gentlemen of the revered teaching profession. This will make the teachers formidable agents of change, and enable the scaling up across the school system the reinvented PTA in its life and death mission 'impossible' to deliver executable plans that will withstand rigorous scrutiny of the most exacting sort by international experts.

The nod of approval by these international experts will unlock funds for implementation from massive resources earmarked for climate change mitigation and adaptation in the Global South by the Global North.

Acquiring world class competitive edge

The above basically means that our school system must drastically upgrade its human resource and make it internationally competitive in terms of its spirit of inquiry and ability to think critically. At present there is an enveloping darkness that makes it an easy target to curse, and curse and curse.

But all this cursing that we have engaged in with a rare abandon has sent society into a deadly spiral of despair and despondency, and the news media is replete on a daily basis with ghastly tales of social injustice that results in blood feuds, murders and suicides. Hope in the future is mandatory, and this is an article of faith. However, Allah does not alleviate the sad plight of the people unless they themselves resolve to improve their own plight, and this is what we must do, Insha'Allah.

Zayed Sustainability Prize

Take for instance the Zayed Sustainability Prize whose submissions closed on the 23rd of June 2024 at 5:00PM EST. It is awarded in the 6 categories of HEALTH, FOOD, ENERGY, WATER, CLIMATE ACTION, and GLOBAL HIGH SCHOOLS. The total prize fund is US \$5.9 million, distributed as follows: •

“A move is in hand to strengthen the search for local solutions by reinventing a generally archaic platform known as the PTA. It's a no brainer that any and every neighborhood should take ownership of its problems and the lead in finding solutions to their resolution”

Health US \$1,000,000 • Food US \$1,000,000 • Energy US \$1,000,000 • Water US \$1,000,000 • Climate Action US \$1,000,000 • Global High Schools US \$900,000

To be eligible the nominated organization must be a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) or a non-profit organization (NPO).

CLIMATE ACTION category

This recognizes organizations that have demonstrated innovative, impactful and inspirational solutions producing positive results in the following areas: • Climate Adaptation and resilience building • Sustainable Land Use and Forest Conservation • Nature-based solutions for conserving/restoring ecosystems and natural resources or carbon removal • Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage.

Quantifiable positive impact

The solution may be an approach, service and/or product that can be directly attributed to a quantifiable positive impact pertaining to the areas mentioned above. Organizations must also demonstrate a clear vision and long-term plan to further deploy their solution and scale up their impact, as well as inspiring others to follow suit by advancing sustainable and human development. The Prize fund for this category is US \$1,000,000.

GLOBAL HIGH SCHOOLS category

Here high schools or secondary schools are invited from six global geographic regions that propose innovative, impactful and inspirational sustainability



projects in the areas of health, food, energy and/or water. The proposed project could be in one area (e.g. water) or a combination of areas (e.g. health, food, energy, water and climate action). The Prize is intended to encourage students to develop and implement their sustainability ideas and is not aimed at administrative projects or educational reforms at the school.

The award in this category is not given for past achievements but will enable students from winning high schools to implement sustainability projects in their own schools. These student-led projects must demonstrate innovative approaches to address sustainability challenges and inspire students to take active roles in sustainable development.

Impact, innovation, inspiration

The application must be submitted by the students and supported by the school management. The projects must:

- demonstrate how they meet the three

“Our school system must drastically upgrade its human resource and make it internationally competitive in terms of its spirit of inquiry and ability to think critically”

– Author

criteria: impact, innovation, and inspiration. The proposal should be implemented and operational within one to two years; and • benefit the school community and/or their local/regional community for several years. In each of the following six global regions, one school will win up to US \$150,000: The Americas 2. Sub-Saharan Africa 3. Middle East & North Africa 4. Europe & Central Asia 5. South Asia 6. East Asia & Pacific.

The world has the money and we can get it

Not too long ago, under the auspices of the Network of Clean Energy Transition (NCET), Pakistan’s premier Policy Think Tank, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), conducted an hour and a half long webinar on Pakistan’s Electric Vehicle (EV) Market: Challenges, Opportunities, and the 2030 Agenda, bringing together the handful of movers and shakers pioneering EVs in Pakistan.

I was particularly struck by what Dr. Naveed Arshad had to say. He is presently Associate Professor and Director of the National Center in Big Data and Cloud Computing (NCBC) at Lahore University of Management Sciences, and also the founder of Energy Informatics Group (EIG) and Co-Director of LUMS Energy Institute.

Dr. Naveed Arshad spoke in the context of financing available for EVs around the world, saying there was so much of it that we don’t have to go for loans from

the IMF or World Bank to fund these projects.

“The world has the money and we can get it. The funders do not want EVs for Pakistan’s economic prosperity. They want EVs for their potential to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.”

He said that there are 28 funds with a war chest of over 100 billion USD that give money for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Pakistan has withdrawn a paltry 179 million USD despite being the second most vulnerable to climate change with the world’s fifth largest population. Maldives, with a population of 1 million, has withdrawn a similar amount as Pakistan.

Can we qualify on the strength of our homework?

“The Green Climate Fund, Mitigation Action Facility, Climate Transmission Facility and many others are all competitive funds. Anyone with a good project can go and get the money. LUMS applied to Mitigation Action Facility. Out of 330 proposals LUMS was in the top 27 in the first stage and the top 11 in the next stage, and now they have to select 5 or 6. Hopefully we will clinch the funding, but even if we don’t we have acquired invaluable experience in calculating the quantum of GHG emissions we can save as a consequence of our project in years 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10 and 15. If we can show that through authentic methodology the funding is assured.

There are great projects which we can develop in Pakistan if we have their GHG emissions potential calculated, and this is not rocket science. These are easy to master methodologies in a few weeks to time. This is where we can secure funding for 2 and 3 wheelers and public transportation.”

Singapore’s Aidiladha Sermon sanctifies sustainability

The spiritual dimension to climate action was emphatically encapsulated in the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore’s Aidiladha Sermon on the 17th of June 2024 / 10 Zulhijjah 1445H, titled Sacrifice Begets Taqwa (fear of Allah, love for Allah, and self-restraint) and Goodness, and sent to me by our man in Singapore who condenses its contents and writes

“The Islamic imperative to protect the environment and address climate change is part of our role as Muslims”

– Islamic Religious Council of Singapore’s Aidiladha Sermon on the 17th of June 2024

that it talks about the Islamic imperative to protect the environment and address climate change as part of our role as Muslims. While all this is familiar at some level I thought it was a useful recap. Some of the points that stood out for me included:

- 1. Sacrificing greed, selfishness, and overconsumption which are contributing to environmental destruction and climate change. This is considered a true act of sacrifice that Allah demands from believers.*
- 2. Preserving the environment and combating climate change is an act of worship and part of embracing Ihsan (compassion and generosity) towards all of God’s creation, as commanded in the Quran and Sunnah.*
- 3. The responsibility upon us is to be at the forefront of finding solutions to environmental challenges, rather than being complacent. This includes raising awareness, encouraging research, conservation efforts, and changing wasteful practices.*
- 4. Environmental degradation and extreme climate conditions pose risks to key Islamic practices like prayers, Hajj, and living according to Islamic principles.*
- 5. Protecting the environment ensures we leave a better world for future generations, fulfilling our trusteeship role.*

The Khutba essentially presents environmental protection as a religious obligation stemming from core Islamic concepts of sacrifice, taqwa, ihsan, and our role as khalifah on earth ■

The spiritual dimension to climate action was emphatically encapsulated in the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore's Aidiladha Sermon on the 17th of June 2024 / 10 Zulhijjah 1445H, titled Sacrifice Begets Taqwa and Goodness, and sent to me by a resident of Singapore. The extracts reproduced below are worth pondering.

When we give, we give with compassion and generosity, or *ihsan*. When we receive, we receive with gratitude. And when we **sacrifice**, we **sacrifice** with sense of *taqwa* (fear of Allah, love for Allah, and self-restraint) and *ihsan*. Remember, true **sacrifice** (*qurban*) is to **sacrifice** the greed in our selves; and to **sacrifice** our selfishness; by prioritizing collective interests over our personal interests. All these, we perform with *ihsan* or goodness and benevolence, with generosity and grace, and with utmost mercy.

This *ihsan* would mean preserving world peace and environmental well-being. This is one of our most important roles as humans, especially as Muslims, as *khalifah* or stewards on this earth. And this protection of the environment forms an essential part of our faith in Allah s.w.t., Who created us and this universe.

Eid ul-Adha, reminds us of the true meaning of **sacrifice** in order to achieve universal peace and well-being. All this is done with full goodness, benevolence, and mercy. The momentous event of Prophet Ibrahim's **sacrifice** makes it clear to Muslims, and to the rest of the world, that nothing is too precious to be **sacrificed** when Allah's call comes, and when it leads to a greater good.

The blood that flows from the slaughtered sacrificial animal is a profound depiction of what we, as *khalifah* (vicegerents) of this earth, need to **sacrifice**. Despicable traits that corrupt the human soul, such as greed, selfishness, and the neglect of humanitarian values, will only cause destruction to life and the environment.

Allah s.w.t. has decreed *ihsan* in everything. And the Prophet's message is for us to demonstrate *ihsan* in our interactions with everything on Earth: animals, plants, humans, the environment, and all of Allah's creations. We should act with benevolence and compassion in every action we take, even in difficult situations where benevolence may seem inapplicable.

When human greed has caused immeasurable destruction to life, environment, and the climate, we must hold ourselves responsible, and be prepared to **sacrifice** this greed.

Our *taqwa* to Allah s.w.t. with regard to the environment and climate, and having *ihsan* to the environment and climate means we have to preserve this environment and climate for the benefit of us and future generations.

As pious and good Muslims, are we not taken aback by recent research findings? That over the past two centuries, the hottest temperatures recorded were within these past ten years? And that the year 2023 was recorded as the hottest temperature in recorded history!

On a personal level, without realising, we may be contributing to this problem. In Singapore alone, the National Environment Agency (NEA) reported that 813,000 tons of food waste was discarded in 2022. And this amount has only

increased over the past five years. Imagine 10 cruise ships in terms of weight and size - such is the weight of food wasted in just one year! This negatively has impacted and polluted the environment. Even though recycling efforts are actively carried out, only 18% of food waste is recycled.

Some of us may think that this issue of climate change and global warming has nothing to do with religion. And that even if it does, it is only considered as signs of the end times. They believe that all of this is Allah's decree (*taqdir*), and that humans cannot prevent it from happening.

Truly, as faithful believers we hold that this phenomenon is Allah's decree. However, as faithful believers also, we believe that we have a role to be at the **forefront** of addressing this challenge. Let me speak to you of a hadith that illuminates the importance of that.

A Bedouin came to the Prophet s.a.w. one day and asked: "*When will the Hour (the Day of Judgment) come?*" The Prophet s.a.w. replied: "*What have you prepared for it?*" He replied: "*Love for Allah and His Messenger.*" [Hadith narrated by Imam Muslim].

Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. asked the Bedouin what he had prepared for Judgment Day. Realise that accepting fate is one thing. Making preparations is another thing. We must make preparations before a disaster strikes. We should not just say "I repent" and do nothing. It is even worse if we are the ones contributing to environmental and climate damage.

This is not the character of Allah's *khalifah* (vicegerents) on this earth.

Sacrificing our greedy and selfish attitudes in enjoying Allah's blessings without limits, will preserve life, and the well-being of the environment. In this way, we will be able to leave behind a better environment than the environment we found, for our grandchildren and future generations. This is the true **sacrifice**. This is *taqwa* and *ihsan*. Remember, my brothers and sisters, this world does not belong to us. It is what Allah s.w.t., the Creator, has entrusted to us.

The central principle of *ihsan* or benevolence in a Muslim's life should drive us as Muslims to act now, not only to act when the damage has already occurred, as we are witnessing now. The world has already been adversely affected. Countries, like Egypt, have recorded temperatures exceeding 50 degrees Celsius. Other countries have reported cases of heatstroke, resulting in death.

Imagine if the heat increases to extreme levels, will we still have the strength to walk to the mosque for Friday prayers every week? What about the Hajj pilgrims who will be exposed to extreme heat during the *wukuf* and other rituals? I truly hope we can view this issue through a religious lens and responsibility, and

not just from health and economic perspectives.

As Muslims who lay claim to be Allah's *khalifah* on this earth, it is imperative that we preserve and protect our environment. We should be at the **forefront** in contributing to solutions to these existential challenges. Among what can be done are:

Firstly, at the personal level, let us elevate our awareness and understanding in our efforts to preserve the environment and the climate. Study and internalise issues regarding environmental damage and climate change. Understand the impact of our daily practices, and how our actions contribute to the worsening situation.

Put careful thought into our actions. Do not be greedy. Do not be wasteful. Embrace recycling practices as much as we can. Every little contribution we make can and will contribute to the overall outcome. Do not underestimate even the slightest good we do. The Prophet s.a.w. advised Abu Dharr, one of his Companions: "*Do not disdain a good deed (ma'rif), even if it is only meeting your brother with a cheerful face.*" [Hadith narrated by Imam Muslim].

Secondly, encourage research and other efforts in environmental preservation and conservation. Muslims should be at the **forefront** of these creative efforts and studies.

Thirdly, national, community and religious leaders need to be united in encouraging and educating society towards this goal.

Environmental preservation efforts are an act of ibadah (worship). It is an effort to preserve one of the purposes and principles of the Shariah. We should all work to nurture *taqwa* and to embrace *ihsan* in our very souls. We have to act with *ihsan* towards everything, and in everything that we do.

Remember, Allah s.w.t. has repeatedly stated in the Qur'an: "*Indeed, Allah loves the doers of good (muhsinin).*" And no less than eight times Allah s.w.t. has emphasised: "*And thus We reward the doers of good (muhsinin)*", and various other verses that emphasise the reward for the doers of good.

My honoured brothers and sisters,

Let us aim to act with *ihsan* in everything. Let us make the resolution to **sacrifice** despicable traits such as greed, selfishness, and prioritising ourselves. This is the true **sacrifice**. We are aware that preserving world peace and environmental well-being is an act of ibadah (worship), and is among one of our most important roles as *khalifah* (stewards) on this earth.

May Allah s.w.t. accept our acts of **sacrifice**, purify our souls to be closer to Him, and make us among His pious and righteous servants. And may He grant us love for Him, love for His Prophets, and love for righteous deeds that bring us closer to Him. Ameen ya Rabbal 'Alamin.

by Adil Ahmad, Correspondent, TCS Octara.Com