

not just a personal matter, it is a spiritual matter. That is why the Prophets spent time teaching about its **twin evils** – the temptation for money to become the (a) Focus of our life, another master, another god and (b) Focus of our worries & cares & thus consume our joy & life direction.

Corrosive worry is thinly disguised unbelief. It's a death grip. Undue worry ought to be viewed as a lack of faith, something to be overcome. Instead of letting your worries rattle around in your mind, formulate them into prayers & petitions...then deliver them to God.

We should have a wise concern for the future and take whatever steps we need to now to provide for ourselves & our families. Farmers have done that for thousands of years – saving seed & planting crops for future harvest. But what is addressed here is the kind of destructive anxiety that eats into our souls & deprives us of sleep. Anxiety that robs us of our present peace and joy & propels us into a mythical future where we lack what we need, where we are gripped by fear – and which often is only that, a myth. Many fears & worries never materialize. Our worrying seldom has anything to do with fixing or repairing the future, only fearing it.

Materialistic people are consumed with storing **things** as the focus & priority of their lives. Avoid this evil from invading & overthrowing our souls. The true treasure is not to be found upon this earth, but in the eternal realm. **The true treasure cannot be locked up in a bank or sheltered in an investment, but is found in service to God.**

Materialism is a plague amongst the world's population. All forms of media incorporate materialism in their broadcasts because this concept fuels the capitalistic economy. Materialism is not entirely detrimental to society, but it should not constantly be drilled into peoples' minds. It is acceptable to strive for & enjoy what you need, but do **not** feed your greed...it should not consume us completely.

"Affluenza"? It is a painful, contagious, socially transmitted condition of overload, debt, anxiety & waste resulting from the dogged pursuit of more. This term was first coined in a documentary based on a book published in 1997. Simply said "Affluenza" is a form of materialism; when a person pursues wealth & luxury as the primary objective in life. It is an attitude or a way of thinking, which creates an **unhealthy preoccupation** with money & material things. And the more a person stays in this condition, the more it gets reinforced at individual & the social levels, constraining the person to derive the identities & sense of place in the world through their consumption activity.

Luxury have become our preoccupation identity. It breeds numerous social issues; corruption, crime, inefficiency, health issues, debts & waste. **Our society is in a state of moral crisis.** Our lives are so consumed by the dehumanizing forces of materialism that we have lost touch

with the deeper needs and values of the soul. Culturally, we value physical appearances, material possessions, creature comforts & addictive pleasures, as if we really believed that the one who dies with the most toys wins. We then rationalize the emptiness of these materialistic values by invoking another kind of materialism – that of modern science, which gives credence only to what can be seen & measured & believes that only the physical is real.

Materialism is not simply being rich; a person can be rich without being a materialist. A person may consider money as one of the most important thing in life; but not everything. A person can be rich, but also mindful of social responsibilities & appreciate the importance of love, kindness, family, friends, relatives, neighbours, community & society.

Balance in our lives via the concept of 'stewardship of wealth.' In the primary message of Quran, God has commanded us to: Be generous to fellow human beings; Honour the orphans, feed the needy. Give wealth to the poor [93:8-10, 90:4-17]; Cooperate in acts of goodness with fellow human beings; And in this way purify our soul [80:3] Stewardship does not mean renouncing wealth; it is an acknowledgment that the poor have a right in our wealth. God teaches us in Quran: "... **and in whose possessions there is a due share, acknowledged by them, for such as ask for help and such as are deprived of what is good in life** [70/24-25] It's God's way of accounting for true happiness in our lives.

Let us respect those perfectly human desires, and seek to create ways to make comfort, elegance & enjoyment more genuine and durable than purchasable & perishable commodities. But of mankind is the one who says: "Our Lord ! **Give unto us in this world & they have no portion in the Hereafter.**" (2 : 200) The Quran, the Voice of God, allows for trading in goods. But this same Voice warns of over-consumption. If there's one thing to remember from this brochure it's this: **The best things in life aren't things!** Things are hindrances to spiritual elevation. Materialism means the **denial** that the moral order is eternal, and the **cutting off of ultimate hopes**; spiritualism means the affirmation of the eternal moral order & the letting loose of hope.

Hopeful, successful people were those like Jesus, Muhammad, Moses, Noah. Peace be upon their sacred souls. They who knew where solace was truly to be found: "**The coolness of my eyes is in prayer.**" If you're burning with materialistic fever, try the medication in the Prophet's words. Take one five times daily...ahhh fever has abated & a heavenly coolness enwraps your soul...Beware of a relapse: "Those who expect **not** the meeting with God but **desire the life of the world & feel secure therein...**" **Expect that meeting with God...It's the only mental & spiritual supplement to Combat Greed!!! Greed is wrong. Greed is evil. Greed will not save you. God will! InshaAllah! Do not waste your powers!**

"God does **not** love the wasteful!" [Quran 6:141]

# **M** Invasion of the soul-snatchers... **Materialism**

**Malls, supermarkets, shop til u drop...into hell but the urge to splurge continues to surge...**

**A State of Moral Crisis...**

Over 150 years ago, Wordsworth penned this line: "Getting & spending, we **lay waste our powers.**" Little did he know of the incredible negative influence that modern marketing via TV & the Net would have. The endless treadmill of consumption defines human "**progress**", where fraud & crimes are the tools of business. The consumerism of our society, societies worldwide, the compulsive search for **abnormal** quantities of artificial products, is the **worst form of mental illness.** The products that surround us can be seen as the embodiment of **folly** – bags of candy sporting gaudy colours & weird names. Artificial food loaded with aggressive & habit-forming flavours. Kids hooked. TV/Internet ads invading us with **hysterical** rhythms & **demented** scenarios.

Violent games that turn out to be true crime manuals. Fast food to be eaten faster & faster...to get fatter & fatter. Glossy magazines about nothing. Designer clothes, one item of which would pay to feed a whole village in a developing country for a year. **Phones emitting sudden & bizarre sounds which we unhesitatingly & dutifully respond to.** Our wild consuming & compulsive habits are destroying us. Society looks like the huge delirium of a mind that has lost touch with sanity. However, when you're drugged to the gills on illusory stimuli of media-driven commercialism, you don't think too clearly. Your soul has been invaded by the materialistic cult. Those who chase the glittering rainbows of the consumer society, who buy into the perverted ideology of consumer culture, become moral cowards. **Go shop...it's the call of the wild.** Popular culture says you're successful if you have a huge house, a few late model cars in the driveway, wear designer clothes, and take luxury vacations to exotic places. If this materialistic vision is the definition of success, why are so many "successful" people so **unhappy?**

**YOU ARE OBSESSED BY GREED FOR MORE & MORE, UNTIL YOU GO DOWN TO YOUR GRAVES. IN TIME YOU WILL COME TO UNDERSTAND! ONCE AGAIN: IN TIME YOU WILL COME TO UNDERSTAND!**

**G**reed is good! Greed is right! Greed works! Greed will save the USA! – From the movie *Wall Street* – 1987. Hollywood always loves to glorify sin. Not to be ashamed of sin is to sin double. In the global economic crisis we have found out that Greed is **bad!** It is **wrong!** It does **not** work! Greed has **not** saved the USA. Materialistic desire is an instinct that overwhelms logical thought. Overwhelms morals.

The wheels of God turns slowly but surely. God is always right. How right? Peruse the following warning verse: "Woe unto every slanderer! Who **amasses wealth & counts it a safeguard, thinking that their wealth will make them live forever! Never! In the life to come such a one shall be abandoned to a crushing torment!**" [104/1-4] Before you reach that eternal hell all of your earthly nights will be hells of insomnia. One of the indices of the poverty of a culture is its lack of respect for the invisible world. *One guess for such a culture.* Only a culture that "believes in the unseen" is truly rich. *One guess for such a culture.*

"Qarun was doubtless, of the people of Moses; but he **acted insolently** towards them: such were the treasures We had bestowed on him that their very keys would have been a burden to a body of strong men. Behold, his people said to him: 'Exult not, for **Allah love not those who exult in riches.**'" [28/76] All materialism, be it for money, power, possessions or people, has to do with the epistemology of quantity. It is the mistaken belief that through the accumulation of quantity you can settle the task of your own identity. Materialism is a disease that causes permanent discontent.

Materialism is an attraction & an obsession with the visible. Materialism is defined by one's desire to attain & enhance their physical pleasures. This concept is ingrained in the average population's minds. It translates as the simple concept: "More money = more materialistic pleasures = more happiness in life." This is a formula for self-destructive behaviour. Unfortunately they fail to see the wealthy people, stemming from the upper echelons of society, who are gorged with luxuries & still **cannot** find happiness. **It is a healthy balance between materialism & social interaction** which act as a foundation for an enjoyable life.

The most terrible thing about materialism, even more terrible than its proneness to violence, is its **boredom**, from which illicit sex, alcohol, drugs, entertainment, all devices for putting out the accusing light of reason & suppressing the unrealizable aspirations of love, offer a prospect of deliverance. It is so easy for us to get caught up in the material world as if that is all there is...with breathless haste. We find ourselves basing our happiness on the things we possess as opposed to who we are in God.

There is something perverse about more than enough. When we have more, it is never enough. It is always somewhere out there, just out of reach. **The more we acquire, the more elusive enough becomes.** The satisfaction which results from gratified desire is brief & illusionary. It is always followed by an increased demand for gratification. **Desire is insatiable as the ocean**, and clamors louder & louder as its demands are attended to. It claims ever-increasing service from its deluded devotees, until at last they are struck down with physical or mental anguish, and are hurled into the fires of suffering. **Desire for more is the region of hell**, and all torments are centered there.

To seek security in material success (money, affluence, popularity, empowerment) is to place our hope in something so fragile, yet the temptation is great because it all seems so tangible & measurable. **An object in possession seldom retains the same charm that it had in pursuit.** Materialism draws us into its vise-like grip, holds on to us tightly, and like a bat out of hell, sucks our life blood. Much of our activity is nothing more than a cheap anesthetic to deaden the pain of an empty life.

What does this do to us internally? When all is well & according to our liking, we feel happy; however, what happens to this happiness when things take a turn for the worse or even spiral out of control? We become anxious, upset, miserable, and feel like a failure. The things of this world are fleeting & so are their momentary joys. We can't build our lives on shifting sands. St Augustine wrote in his famous autobiography *Confessions*, "Our hearts are **restless** until they rest in you, Lord!" Truer words have not been penned! We seek to satisfy our appetites & passions because they are so easily appeased, and we push aside the harder task of feeding our spirits with the life-giving and life-changing grace of God.

**Truly in the heart there is a void that cannot be removed except with the company of God.** Most of us spend so much time & energy trying to force other created things into this hole, even though none of them quite fit. **And in it there is a sadness that cannot be removed except with the happiness of knowing God. And in it there is an emptiness that cannot be**

filled except with love for God and by turning to and always remembering Him. **If a person were given ALL of the world & what is in it, it would not fill this emptiness.** Only God can truly give us happiness in the deepest, most meaningful sense of the word. No amount of earthly success can equal this, because real love & happiness are not earned. These are given to us as a gift from God himself, not just to be received by us but in order that we can give love & happiness to others as well. Happiness is not found in the amount of things we have or being able to do as we please. It is found in the presence of God in our souls & the detachment from everything else.

Those who believe in the lie that money & success buy love, happiness & purpose eventually discover that created things can never fully satisfy. Why? Because we are not only corporal (possessing a material body), we are also spiritual (possessing a soul). We are incomplete when we only give emphasis to one aspect of our personhood. We need God above all to truly fulfill the deepest longings of our human existence; herein lies true happiness. We cannot serve both God & mammon (money or possessions). We are not meant to have two masters. The true harmony of life helps us to put all spiritual & material realities into perspective. This is true success.

The Bible slams into materialism with these words of wisdom: "Therefore I tell you, do **not** worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. **Is not** life more important than food & the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet God feeds them. Are you **not** much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"

"Why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, **O you of little faith?** So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat/drink/wear?' For the **unbelievers run after all these things** & God knows that you **need** them. But **seek His Kingdom** & righteousness & all these things will be given to you as well. Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Money has the potential to derail our spiritual life disastrously. How we think about and handle our money is

**Consider: What would Jesus/Muhammad BUY during all these silly SALES? Would they be seen browsing the malls in their non-brand sandals & gowns?**