

WHERE'S IHSAAN ?



A SAD &
STRANGE
DISAPPEARANCE

Where's Ihsaan

Recently I read a book by The Arbinger Institute, "Leadership and self deception". The author does a wonderful job to highlight the following:

- A person that resists his natural inclination to do GOOD betrays himself
- Whence in this state the person has an inward battle to justify his rejection to his natural inclination.

Being a student of the book of Allah(Glorified is He) for some years, a serious question confronted me.

1. Why can't we see this divine ingredient of Goodness (Ihsaan) around us, especially in the Muslim community?

The "why" is even more striking? If you consider the following

- Allah(Praise to Him) commands us to "DO GOOD"

وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ
وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا

Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good- to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess: For Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious;-

Al-Qur'an, 004.036 (An-Nisa [Women])

- The character of the Prophet Muhammad(S.A.W) set the highest standard of GOODNESS ever seen in human history.

Ihsaan the stranger

Recently, a friend of mine got married. His neighbour attended the nikah(wedding) ceremony. The Imam stressed that man should love their wives intensely. He stressed that we should take time to look, stare at our wives with true love and affection.

With the name of Allah Most Kind Most Merciful

The neighbour went home and followed the advice of the Imam. The next day he returned, “that Imam got me into trouble.” he said, “I did as the Imam said and my wife asked, “Why are you giving me a dirty look.””.

I had a wonderful laugh, but now it struck me, Ihsaan is the stranger. Do good and it seems strange to people.

A man comes home from work all stressed, sits in front of the television, the wife sits next to him just as stressed and alls well. The same man comes home with smiles, greets his wife and asks her how her day was and she would be shocked. “What the matter, what’ wrong with you...”

A young boy comes home from school, greets his mother and says “I really enjoyed the lunch, thanks”. The mother is in tears.

It’s sad that Ihsaan has become a stranger. It’s so strange that once in a rare moment when we see it, it brings tears to the eyes.

I heard a song of, in my opinion Allah(The Most Merciful)’s blessing to mankind Dawud Wharnsby Ali. The song is partly about this boy who comes home late. He passes the Quraan on his way upstairs to his room. What will happen in the morning, will it be another big fight, he thinks. He would not be able to admit his wrong. All he wants to do is **FIT IN**. He thinks about all the prayers his missed. He feels like reading the Quraan, but he is scared.

When I heard it, I felt the feeling of this boy, I felt like I was in his shoes. Full of guilt and tears. Not purposely displeasing his parents, but just trying to **FIT IN**. Mankind, how awful, you have made anyone doing good feel like a stranger an outsider.

When Hector Peterson was killed the young man who carried him to the clinic became an instantaneous HERO. His mother said that he was not a hero for carrying the injured Hector but he just did what a brother does(lift the injured brother up), had he run away or over Hector he would not have been able to live.

What is IHSAAN(GOODNESS)?

Most translators simply translate Ihsaan as “good” or “goodness”. I would like to propose a more detailed meaning

1. “A selfless act of benefit to another without the intention of reward”

Ihsaan is the intensive form in Arabic of Goodness and hence could be summed up in the following equation.

2. Ihsaan = Good + kind + forgiving + over-looking + generous + compassionate + tolerant ...

3. A beautiful character.

Why has Ihsaan disappeared?

The Muslim community lead by it's scholars have decided to exclusively use the following checklist(The 5 Pillars) as testimony to their faith.

1	Shahaadah – Verbal testimony to the belief in ONE GOD We are told that anyone that utters these words would become a Muslim and go to Heaven	
2	Prayer – We are expected to pray 5 times a day	
3	Zakaat – We are expected to give 2,5% of our wealth in charity.	
4	Fasting – We are expected to fast for 1 month from sunrise to sunset.	
5	Haj – We are expected to make the pilgrimage to Mecca in the month of Zil-Hijja IF we can afford to once in a lifetime.	

If one were to look at these 5 Pillars any Muslim would feel confident of getting to Heaven and would become complacent. So easy, say a few words, pay 2.5% (PS South African tax is 29%), in Ramadaan, eat like a king before sunrise, fast and eat like the king's father after sunset, once in a lifetime spend a week at the Sheraton in Mecca, the Prayer ones a bit difficult so we'll try our best, I mean 4 out of the 5 pillars are covered quite well.

BY NO MEANS, WAKE UP AND SEE THE REALITY

“And they say “None shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian, those are their desires. Say produce your proof if you are truthful. NAY WHOEVER SUBMITS HIS WHOLESELF TO ALLAH(GOD) AND IS A DOER OF GOOD(IHSAAN), HE WILL GET HIS REWARD WITH HIS LORD, on such shall be no fear nor shall they grieve.” Chapter 2 Verses 111-112

“Did you think (calculate in your mind) that you would enter Heaven without Allah (God) testing those of you who fought hard (Jihad) and remained steadfast (Sabr)?” Chapter 3 Verse 142

From the above, it becomes quite clear that the way to salvation and Allah's (God's) pleasure is through

1. Total submission to Him.
2. Ihsaan – Beneficiality to creation without the intention for reward.
3. Exertion (jihad) for Him.
4. Endurance because you believe in His promise.(Sabr).

Our leaders and communities have spent far too much attention to the five pillars of Islam and unwittingly devalued the fundamental, natural aspects of Ihsaan(Goodness), Taqwa(Allah-conscious), Sabr(Endurance)...

Another reason to contemplate

The world has moved away from a social character to one of individualism. Capitalism has become the standard for most among mankind. In the past people spent time with their families, large families lived together and cared for one another. Concepts such as UBUNTU were the ideals of the people. UBUNTU – whatever is unused give it away, be it food, drink or money. People lived as communities that shared the joys and difficulties of each other.

We live in the capitalistic, usurious times. It's strange that people were complaisant enough to fall prey to the forces that worked to establish this system. This system that is based in self-worship can only be as strong as we see today by the willingness of those that adopt it. As James Allen states "It has been usual for men to think and to say "Many men are slaves because one is an oppressor; let us hate the oppressor!" But there is amongst an increasing few a tendency to reverse this judgement and to say, "One man is an oppressor because many are slaves, let us despise the slaves."

The result is simple, every man for himself. Survival of the fittest (in this case, survival of those who have capital, and suffering for those that don't.) We now have people worrying about inflation and tomorrow, next week, next year...and hence are less willing to risk helping people in the "NOW".

By subtly promoting greed and a desire to satisfy oneself the forces of Kufr have been successful simply because the lifestyle of Islam had degenerated to a set of rituals and in this weakened state the forces of Kufr became victorious.

Look carefully and you will notice that the forces of Kufr were pleased with the 5 pillars. The five pillars do not pose an obstacle to the standards of capitalism created by greedy rebellious man. Yes confess verbally, pray, go for Haj, fast, give 2,5% charity and you will notice that it does not offer resistance or pose a threat to the capitalist.

The real threat to capitalism is Justice, Goodness (Ihsaan) and Allah (God)-consciousness.

Justice cannot accept such an imbalance in the distribution of wealth. Justice cannot allow privileges for the rich. Justice cannot accept the imbalance in the remuneration standards...

Ihsaan being a social activity cannot accept a selfish order. It cannot exist within an individualistic society. It refuses to bow-down to it's enemy selfishness.

Taqwa – Allah (God)-consciousness will not accept the removal of divinity from society. It will strongly oppose and revolt against those that even mention the term "secular".

The truth discovered, follow your five pillars and you will be left alone. Slaves to those who control your fate and destiny. If you want true freedom, the joy of being human, the blessings of Allah(God) and an eternal home of rest and peace, than strive with your goods and lives to uproot this capitalistic, usurious system. Remember this Kufaaric system can only survive by your submission to it. Break yourselves away from it, tear out

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your urge to fulfil yourself and capitalism will crumbly as falsehood is by its nature bound to crumble.

Chapter 16 Verse 90

“Indeed Allah(God) commands Justice(Adl), Goodness(Ihsaan) and the liberality to kith and kin and He forbids all shameful deeds and injustice and rebellion; He instructs you that you may receive admonition.”

2 simple examples

“Today, across the world, 1.3 billion people live on less than one dollar a day; 3 billion live on under two dollars a day; 1.3 billion have no access to clean water; 3 billion have no access to sanitation; 2 billion have no access to electricity.”

The poorer the country, the more likely it is that debt repayments are being extracted directly from people who neither contracted the loans nor received any of the money.

The above does not minimise the importance of the five pillars of Islam. The five pillars are the preservation of the Islamic lifestyle, and create an environment in which faith in Allah(S.W.T), and good deeds can flourish.

Ihsaan

“Serve Allah(God) and join not any partners with Him, and DO GOOD(Ihsaan) to parents, kinsfolk(family and those close to you), orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the companion by your side, the way-farer, and what your right hands possess; For Allah(God) loves not the arrogant, the vainglorious.”
Chapter 4 Verse 36

Amazing! Another verse that draws our attention to the WILL OF ALLAH(GOD). Serve only Allah(God), don't take anyone's or anything's authority in your life over the authority of Allah(God), and BE GOOD(Ihsaan) to everyone.

I like asking people around me, what is Fard(obligatory). I seem to get the same answer from young and old alike. They would normally mention the 5 pillars. I wonder, after reading the Quraan in my own language, is not every of Allah's commands obligatory to a true Believer?

Strange, Allah(God) says “Be conscious of Me”, “Do good”, “Be just”, “Be patient”.... Are these all not obligatory? Are these not the Will of Allah(God)?

Amazing how selective we have become. We seem to follow in the footsteps of those that received scriptures before us. Like them we seem, over time, to become comfortable with rituals and forget the essence of the revelations. This leads to comfort and spiritual death.

Back to Chapter 4 verse 36 The Will of Allah(God)

Serve Allah, be His servant.

Take no other authority in your life over the authority of Allah(God). Don't take instructions that contradict the Will of Allah(God).

Be Ihsaan(good, kind, compassionate, overlooking...) to everyone, from those nearest to you to those who are strangers. Don't be selective when being Ihsaan. Here a special reported saying of the Prophet(Peace and blessings be upon him) that really fits in. **"Mankind** is a flock of sheep, each a Shepard to the next and responsible for the flock." Ihsaan dawns upon those who recognise the common Creator, the common origin of their existence and the common purpose of serving the One and Only Merciful Creator who forgives and overlooks again and again. The One who has created everything for our convenience. The One who has commanded the Angels to prostrate to us. The One to whom all shall return.

Back to the start

- A person that resists his natural inclination to do GOOD betrays himself
- Whence in this state the person has an inward battle to justify his rejection to his natural inclination

An example

Many times I find myself telling myself to greet someone, I obviously only have a few seconds and the moment is gone. **Natural inclination to do Good**
Sometimes I don't greet and it starts "He never greets me", "He is a sulky guy"... **battle to justify his rejection to his natural inclination.**

Doing Ihsaan(Good) cannot be person or situation dependent. Doing Ihsaan like in the above example should come from within and not be externally motivated. Rejecting that inclination can only result in internal and external stress.

To be Ihsaan is the Will of Allah(God) and an innate inclination placed within the very essence of humankind.

Ihsaan – the goal

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ لِيَبْلُوكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَلَئِنْ قُلْتُمْ إِنَّكُمْ مَبْعُوثُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْمَوْتِ لَيَقُولَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ

"He it is who created the heavens and the earth in 6 periods and His throne was over the waters; that He might try you, which of you is BEST IN CONDUCT..." Chapter 11 Verse 7

With the name of Allah Most Kind Most Merciful

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَهَا لِنَبْلُوَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

That which is on earth, We have made but as a glittering show for the earth
In order that We may test them, as to which of them
ARE BEST IN CONDUCT.” Chapter 18 Verse 7

“Best in conduct” - “Ahsana Amalaa” The trial of life is to see who has the most beautiful actions. Who has these actions of Ihsaan. This is your goal O humankind! This is the Will of Allah O those that want to submit to Him. Beautify your character.

Until the age of maturity and accountability the human being has no control over the moulding of his/her character and habits. Think of a young sweet six year old that, out of the blue uses the most disgusting word. Where did he learn this word? Did he have control to resist learning this word? What about the young boy who uses aggression frequently? What about the selfish little girl that refuses to share? What about the sweet little devil who keeps breaking things?

Can these little children be accountable for their actions? Do they have control over their circumstances? Did they purposely choose their behaviours? The answer to all these is obviously, NO. No they are not accountable, no they do not have control over their circumstances and obviously their actions are not intentional. Hence by the time we reach maturity life has already made us who we are.

Allah(Glorified is He) has given us the 5 sense organs as the input devices and genetic material that mould who we become. Some time ago, I read a wonderful parenting book. The title says it all, “How to behave so kids will too.” Kids are like little sponges, that soak up everything, language, behaviour, attitude... It is imperative for parents to realise the powerful influence they yield over the moulding of their children.

When we start this journey of accountability and responsibility, we need to know that this goal of transforming all our actions to Ihsaan is the trial of life itself. Do not look back, look forward. Start the journey to purifying your actions and character and fulfil the Will of Allah(God), if it is Him you serve.

How to “Ihsaan”

Step 1 – Know your origin

“...We created you out of dust, then out of sperm, then out of a leech-like clot then out of a morsel of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed in order that We may manifest (Our power) to you...”

Chapter 22 Verse 5

Step 2 – Know that every human being has had the same origin. Be it the most righteous person, a rebellious and wicked person, a president, a domestic worker, a scientist, a drunkard... To each has Allah(God) designed the same chemical origin and process.

Being conscious of this fact is fundamental to Ihsaan. Indeed one of the greatest enemies of Ihsaan is arrogance. Here we refer not only to Pharaohnic arrogance but little ones as well. Subtle arrogance withholds Ihsaan. It might be your garden boy(I wonder why we call them that, since in many cases they are old enough to be our fathers) or a child that you interact with that tests your Ihsaan. The aim is to treat everyone equally with respect. Know that, be it the garden uncle, or the aunt who makes your bed or your son or your son's friend, they have all been created from the same natural elements. I find it amazing when people especially parents say "Who the hell is he? Who does he think he is?". Analyse these words and you find an individual who is not interested in resolving the problem, rather the individual is just manifesting his superiority. It has become a common problem between parents and older teenagers. Each trying to show their superiority to the other. A battle that could so easily be avoided if people treat each other with Ihsaan.

Step 3 - Understand that each and every one of us has had different environments, upbringings, and different characteristics derived through our genes.

e.g. 1

Narrated By Abu Huraira: A bedouin **URINATED** in the mosque, and the people rushed to beat him. Allah's Apostle ordered them to leave him and pour a bucket or a tumbler (full) of water over the place where he has passed urine. The Prophet then said, " You have been sent to make things easy (for the people) and you have not been sent to make things difficult for them."

The Prophet(May Allah's Peace and Mercy be upon him) the true example of Ihsaan like all the other Prophets understood the circumstances of this Bedouin. His reaction was based not from his world view, but the world view of the Bedouin. The Bedouin most probably did not know better but had to be taught. In order to teach another one first has to earn the respect of the learner and hence the vital ingredient of Ihsaan.

e.g. 2

Step 4 – Understand that most of the time we do not know the **circumstances behind** an individuals actions or attitude.

e.g.

Imagine driving on the fast lane on the highway. You cruising at maximum speed, 120km/h. A car comes from behind, hooting and flashing his lights. Immediately you get upset and decide to make this guy wait a little longer before you move over to the left lane. Both drivers get agitated and fill themselves with anger. Finally you move over, the guy passes you and you never see him again.

With the name of Allah Most Kind Most Merciful

Now imagine driving on the fast lane on the highway. You cruising at maximum speed, 120km/h. A car comes from behind, hooting and flashing his lights. On his windscreen a message appears “My son was in an accident, please move to the left.” Immediately you give way and let the guy through. You hope that the man gets to his son on time and wave kindly to him. The man passes you and puts his hazards on in a gesture of appreciation. You never see him again.

Notice Ihsaan begets nothing but Ihsaan.

Unfortunately, in life, peoples circumstances don't flash up on a windscreen. In such circumstances the best thing to do to ensure Ihsaan is

“Why did not the Believers men and women, when you heard of the affair, **PUT THE BEST CONSTRUCTION ON IT** in their own minds and say “This is an obvious lie.”” Chapter 24 Verse 12

PUT THE BEST CONSTRUCTION ON IT if you are looking for Ihsaan and peace. People are not nasty by nature. There is always something that makes them nasty. That something is not known to us, so if we put the best construction to it, like make excuses for that person in our own minds, then we would be able to be Ihsaan to them. In so doing we follow the will of Allah(God). Since Ihsaan is contagious you will notice a change in that person's attitude most of the time. Remember not all people are the same, your duty is to be Ihsaan regardless of that persons attitude.

Step 5 – Know that you are not perfect, your past is full of flaws and mistakes. Now that you have changed after so long while the world waited patiently for you, it's your turn to be patient with others.

“O you who believe! When you travel, in the cause of Allah(God) investigate carefully and say not to anyone, who offers you a salutation “You are not a believer” coveting the perishable goods of this life, with Allah(God) are profits and spoils abundant,
**EVEN THUS WERE YOU YOURSELVES BEFORE
TILL ALLAH(GOD) CONFERED ON YOU HIS FAVOR...**”
Chapter 4 Verse 94

If you have changed for the better in the sight of Allah, know the most important thing that your change is but a favour from Allah and don't let your new better state lead you to righteous arrogance as has become so common in religion.

Step 6 – Treat everyone like your favourite student.

Ihsaan is contagious

I have a wonderful Aussie cousin filled with Ihsaan. Some time ago he persuaded me to watch a movie, “Pay it forward” with him. Reluctantly(movies offer us escapism and we

seem to use them to avoid reality) I agreed. What a wonderful movie. The movie is about a young boy who helps a beggar. The beggar is amazed by this young boy and wants to pay him back. The boy tells him to "Pay it forward". The beggar had to do good for someone else, and he does, but asks the next person not to thank or reward him but to "Pay it forward". The movie then follows this trail of "Paying it forward" Ihsaan (Goodness). Amazingly the "Pay it forward" idea moves out of the city and into the country. Truly amazing, expect nothing in return for your Goodness and see it spread.

Search for the Good in others

Catch someone doing Good(Ihsaan) and praise them. I've learnt that one of the most powerful motivations to an activity is recognition. Catch that someone doing Good and he/she will look forward to doing it again. We live in a selfish world and hence everyone, young and old alike is looking for some attention. Everyone is so busy that no one has time for each other.

Unfortunately we have created an environment that teaches that you only get attention if you do wrong. "You broke it!"

The End 4now....

Give of your most valuable possession

Give of your time. Time is one special gift of Allah(Our Creator and Sustainer) that is different from every other gift. Your time cannot be lengthened, you cannot ask your father to borrow you some time, and even if you were a thief you would not be able to steal someone else's time, nor can you make or buy time anywhere.

The most wonderful people(Muhsin) are those that sacrifice their most valuable possession, time, on someone else.

It is related that Ali(May Allah be pleased with him) said, "There are only 2 types of people, brothers in Islam or brothers in creation(humanity)."