

The journey and the destination

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EN ROUTE

Eid Mubarak, dear reader. I wish that you will experience peace and prosperity in your family, town, country, and beyond. The holy month of Ramadan, with fasting, prayers, reflection, as well as joy and togetherness, has made us see the *destination* clearer; we have come closer to God and fellow human beings. Yet, the proof and purpose of our faith is seen in the *journey*, how we live our everyday lives in the contexts and situations we are in. In certain ways, faith can be likened to poetry, music and beautiful hymns. Everyday life is more prosaic; it has all that is good and positive, but it also has what is sad and difficult. If we have faith and interpret it in positive ways, it will help us in our lives at all times, when the sun shines and when the days are rainy and dark.

Last Sunday, when I walked out to buy my newspapers it was a bit late in the morning, and it was still raining. All papers were gone, so I had to walk a bit further to the book shop. Never mind, it became a pleasant diversion to me. I ran into a group of young boys I know. They had been out at the yard on the side of the usually busy office complex, but because of the holidays a bit quiet, since early morning. There was a peaceful calm about the place, well, the young boys in their late teens and early twenties were hard working; they had embarked on a special project of repairing an old Suzuki Mehran car. All panel-beating had been done, the spray painting, too, and now the interior was to be changed. The boys had bought new door covers, floor mats, sun shades and various styling gear. The seats were not to be seen since yet; they had been given to professional upholstery men in a backyard nearby, and a two of the professional mechanics and locksmiths had come around to give advice and help. Obviously, the boys were Muslims, well, so we assumed, but those who had done the paintjob were Christians and also the locksmith, and even the young boy who had been called to scrub and sandpaper the floor for old rust before the new carpet and mats could cover it all.

The boys were so busy that they had little time to talk or smile for a snapshot. One of them quickly explained how much they had paid for the car, and he said the engine was perfectly alright. Saeed wasn't sure if they were going to keep the car, although he was the one who had chipped in most money. But it was quite clear that the dream was to keep it, and let the motorbikes take a rest. They boys were getting older and had ambitions to move up a step, find a safer means of transport and even be able to take the mother for a spin, and maybe a secret admirer, too.

I was glad to see the enthusiasm of the boys, the purpose and determination with which they worked, and the joy they had. I thought of similar projects of myself and brothers in my youthful years, and later, children's projects. Sometimes, they were about rabbit keeping, or pigeons, and later, it was about photography and darkroom work (now unfortunately taken over by computers), and some small-scale business projects, too, like hiring out seasonal sports equipment in order to make some extra money to supplement student loans.

My three friends in Layla Market in Islamabad and their whole little cricket team of friends and helpers, reminded me of how important projects of this kind are. Yes, because they make any neighborhood lively and pleasant. They make young people make their dreams come true, albeit perhaps just in a small way. They make their schoolmates pass by, and the secret admirers, too. An uncle may have a suggestion. Maybe the parents, too, but they shouldn't interfere, just look and admire, and ask how it all goes, at Iftar time later.

The boys, Saeed, Ali and Haider, were very busy yesterday, too, because they knew that today, on Eid Day, there were other things to do at home and in the mosque, and the whole family would come together, at least for two or three whole days. The Suzuki project would be put on hold. But on the Third Eid Day, the activity could resume, discretely at least, and certainly on Friday. Luck that this year there is a long weekend after Eid, and then it is back to 'real life' on Monday.

What is 'real life'? Is it not also important to do what the three boys engaged in? They learned a lot from it, I am sure. They learned about each other, about working together, about creativity and innovation, and more. They had fun and pleasure. And all those things are important in everyday life, when we year after year are on the 'treadmill', doing a job, raising a family, perhaps climbing the ladder and making a career. Or, we just do our best as we can, considering our lot in life, and the place we have, with family and friends.

Because it is not only the *destination* that is important, it is also the *journey*, too, the way we live our everyday lives - in sunshine, overcast and rain, on glorious days, and when problems arise, when sorrow and sadness cross our road. A deep faith will help, but good relations with fellow human beings are as essential.

When we talk about *destination*, it is not only about religious life. It is also about everyday life, about aims and goals that we, indeed about having a purpose and determination, without which most things will dwindle and become hard.

Now, when the holy month of Ramadan is over and we celebrate Eid today, let us also remember that the rest of the year, it is the everyday life that counts. What counts is how we live with God and fellow human beings when the feast is over. Our journey may not always be glorious and great, but it will be our journey, my journey and your journey. Let us do what we can to make the best out of it, the way Saeed, Ali and Haider did, too. Let us pray and hope that our days will not have more clouds and rains than we can bear, and then we must remember that God is our guardian and comfort on our life's journey, with fellow human beings.

Again, *Eid Mubarak*, dear reader.

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