

To find joy in WORK... is to discover the fountain of youth

Work was essential to human dignity & self-fulfillment. It gave us a sense of empowerment & identity. It allowed us to build a relationship with society in which we could feel we contributed to social harmony & cohesion, a relationship in which we had purpose.

The pope **castigated unemployment, underemployment, inadequate wages, automation & a lack of job security as violations of human dignity.** These conditions, he wrote, were forces that negated self-esteem, personal satisfaction, responsibility & creativity. The exaltation of the machine, he warned, reduced humans to the status of slaves & called for full employment, a minimum wage large enough to support a family, the right of a parent to stay home with children, & jobs & a living wage for the disabled. He advocated, in order to sustain strong families, universal health insurance, pensions, accident insurance & work schedules that permitted free time & vacations. He wrote that all workers should have the right to form unions with the ability to strike.

The encyclical said: [In spite of toil]—perhaps, in a sense, because of it—work is a good thing for man. Even though it bears the mark of a *bonum arduum*, in the terminology of Saint Thomas, this does not take away the fact that, as such, it is a good thing for man. It is not only good in the sense that it is useful or something to enjoy; it is also good as being something worthy & that corresponds to man's dignity, that expresses this dignity and increases it. If one wishes to define more clearly the ethical meaning of work, it is this truth that one must particularly keep in mind. Work is a good thing for man – a good thing for his humanity – because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfillment as a human being & indeed, in a sense, becomes “more a human being.”

Work, the pope pointed out, “constitutes a foundation for the formation of family life, which is a natural right and something that man is called to. These two spheres of values – one linked to work and the other consequent on the family nature of human life – must be properly united and must properly permeate each other. In a way, work is a condition for making it possible to found a family, since the family requires the means of subsistence which man normally gains through work. Work & industriousness also influence the whole process of education in the family, for the very reason that everyone ‘becomes a human being’ through, among other things, work, and becoming a human being is precisely the main purpose of the whole process of education. Obviously, two aspects of work in a sense come into play here: the one making family life and its upkeep possible,

and the other making possible the achievement of the purposes of the family, especially education. Nevertheless, these two aspects of work are linked to one another and are mutually complementary in various points.

“It must be remembered and affirmed that the family constitutes one of the most important terms of reference for shaping the social and ethical order of human work,” the encyclical continued. “The teaching of the Church has always devoted special attention to this question, and in the present document we shall have to return to it. In fact, the family is simultaneously a community made possible by work and the first school of work, within the home, for every person.”

Recreation is one of the necessities of life. Every man & woman should have some definitive work as the main object of life, and to which a considerable amount of time should be devoted, and he should only turn from it at given and limited periods for recreation and rest. **The object of recreation is greater buoyancy of both body and mind, with an increase of power in one's serious work.** It is, therefore, a means, not an end; and this should ever be borne in mind, for, to many, some forms of recreation innocent & good in themselves—become so fascinating that they are in **danger of making them the end of life, and of thus abandoning duty for pleasure. To make of life a ceaseless round of games and pleasures, with no other object in life, is to turn living upside down, as it were, and it produces monotony and enervation. People who do it are the most unhappy of mortals, and suffer from languor, ennui, and peevishness.** When a man has done his day's duty he can turn to his recreation with a free mind and a light heart, and both his work & his pleasure will be to him a source of happiness.

It is a true economy neither to devote the whole of one's time to work nor to recreation, but to apportion to each its time & place & so fill out life with those changes which are necessary to a long life & a fruitful existence. All agreeable changes is recreation & the mental worker will gain both in the quality & quantity of his work by laying it down at the time appointed for restful & refreshing recreation; while the physical worker will improve in every way by turning to some form of study as a hobby or means of education. As we do not spend all our time in eating or sleeping or resting, neither should we spend it in exercise or pleasure, but should give recreation its proper place as a natural tonic in the economic scheme of our life.

Rest is for recuperation after toil. Every self respecting human being should do sufficient work every

Working just for money is a CURSE!!!

day to make his sleep restful & sweet, and his rising up fresh & bright. Enough sleep should be taken, but not too much. Over indulgence on the one hand, or deprivation on the other, are both harmful. It is an easy matter to find out how much sleep one requires. By going to bed early, and getting up early (rising a little earlier every morning if one has been in the habit of spending long hours in bed), one can very soon accurately gauge & adjust the number of hours he or she requires for complete recuperation. It will be found as the sleeping hours are shortened that the sleep becomes more and more sound and sweet, and the waking up more and more alert and bright. People who are to prosper in their work must not give way to ignoble ease & over indulgence in sleep. Fruitful labor, and not ease, is the true end of life. Ease is only good in so far as it sub-serves the ends of work. Sloth & prosperity can never be companions & can never even approach each other. The sluggard will never overtake success, but failure will speedily catch up with him, & leave him defeated. Rest is to fit us for greater labor & not to pamper us in indolence. When the bodily vigor is restored, the end of rest is accomplished. A perfect balance between labor & rest contributes to health, happiness & prosperity.

Of all abilities, the capacity for work is the most useful & necessary. Its possession is a glorious power. **Men discover this when they are stricken down with sickness. When they are thus forcibly prevented from engaging in wholesome, invigorating labor, what would they not give to have once again the spirited & glowing use of brain or muscle, or to spend exuberant strength in healthful exertion?**

Quran 28:24 So Moses (p) watered their sheep for them, then went back to the shade, and made a supplication: “My Lord, I stand in need of whatever good You may send to me.” 28:25 Then one of the two women came to him walking bashfully. She said: My father invites you that he may reward you for having watered the sheep for us. So when he came to him and related to him the story, he said: Fear not, you are secure from the iniquitous people. Moses was married to one of the girls; he worked diligently for the father for ten years; and THEN...Quran 28:30: “And when he came to the Fire, he was called from the right side of the valley in the blessed spot of the bush: O Moses, surely I am God, the Lord of the worlds”

The lesson: Great things happen when you engage in honest work.

“The believer dies with his sweat on his brow”
THE PROPHET (P)



QURAN 28:26

“One of the women said: **O my father, EMPLOY** Moses (p).

Surely the best of those that you can employ is the strong, the faithful one.”

KHALIL GIBRAN

All knowledge is vain save when there is work, All work is empty save when there is love; And when you work with love you bind yourself to yourself, & to one another & to God.

The nature of work cannot be exactly expressed, because it is a divine thing & is judged by a divine standard. One must consider in all work two things; first, the object for which it is undertaken, & secondly the way in which it is performed. All work should have a high & unselfish intent, — without this, it perishes & is not considered work at all,—not at least by the Eternal Judge Invisible. If it is work, truly & nobly done, it carries with it its own reward. The laurels descend from heaven shaped ready for wearing,—no earthly power can bestow them. The person whose heart is centered in their work, who aims at the perfect performance of his duty, is a true worker whose usefulness & influence are cumulative & progressive, carrying them on from success to greater success, from low spheres of labor to higher & higher still. **Thinking little or nothing of the wages or reward, but eager & willing in service, they are sealed by Nature as one of her chosen ones, fitted by virtue of unselfish labors to receive the greater excellence & fuller reward.**

Whoever goes to bed **exhausted** because of hard work, has thereby caused their **sins to be absolved**

Lack of work, or at least lack of meaningful, rewarding work, can have a devastating effect on one's quality of life. Quality work enables the human to be independent & is a source of self-respect, satisfaction & fulfillment. **In Islam, work is given special importance to the extent that it is considered as an act of worship in itself.** However bored we may be with our jobs, however indifferent we may be towards the sorrows & satisfactions of a professional career, however cynical we may be about promises of fulfilment through work, and however skeptical we may be about the possibility that work might be organized, distributed and rewarded justly, it is nonetheless hard not to be personally affected by work, hard not to find oneself asking whether it is as it ought to be, both for oneself and for others, and hard to resist the urge to criticize the way work is done and the value that is attached to it. As with religion & politics, when it comes to work, everyone is a philosopher.

Although some people believe that they are not obliged to work because they dedicate themselves to worshiping God, this is actually a wrong perception of the concept of worship. The Muslim scholar Imam Al-Ghazali mentioned in his book **Revival of the Religious Sciences** that Jesus (p) saw a man who had completely devoted himself to worship. When he asked him how he got his daily bread, the man replied that his brother, who worked, provided him with food. Jesus then told him, **“That brother of yours is more religious than you are”** Al-Ghazali also mentions the Companion Umar, who used to stress this point further by telling people, “Never should anyone of you think that *dua* (supplication) for sustenance **without work will avail him**, for heaven never rains gold nor silver”.

Reflection on the nature & value of work is to be found throughout the Islamic tradition, not just in the margins & the footnotes, but in the doctrinal core. Islam is a religion of worshiping the Creator, **with an essential part of that worship being working for survival.** God tells us to traverse the universe & make

use of all the abundant resources that have been created for us. Quran 62:10. **Then when the Salat (prayer) is finished, you may disperse through the land & seek the Bounty of God. Remember God much, that you may be successful.**

Western tradition regards work & labour as a cost incurred by those who want to consume the goods thus made available to them. The natural condition of mankind is considered to be one in which the earth will not satisfy human needs except when human beings work to make it do so. It is neither a logical nor an inevitable corollary of this view that less work is preferable to more. Even in this tradition, it is logically possible that some work is much more agreeable than others, and perhaps so much so that some work ceases to be a cost incurred in satisfying wants. It is, however, usual for this point to be ignored, particularly since an assumption common to economists from the nineteenth century onwards – and most explicit in the ideas of utilitarianism – is that efficiency & disagreeableness increase together, and that **paid labor cannot be expected to offer much intrinsic satisfaction.**

The concept of work in Islam (called *'amal*) is far broader & has different characteristics & objectives than that understood in the Western economic tradition. In Islam, work ethic is defined by the Quran itself, which mentions the word *'amal* in 360 verses. A closely related concept of *fi'l* (also translated as work) is mentioned in an additional 109 verses. All these verses stress the need for work & action by human beings. It is based on this emphasis on work that Islam is considered as **the ideology of practice & the practice of ideology**, a religion of action, and “the praxis of the believers.”

The Quran considers **idleness – or squandering of time in pursuit of unproductive & non-beneficial work – as the manifestation of lack of faith & of unbelief.** Man is called upon to utilize time in pursuit of work by declaring that God has made the day as a means of seeking sustenance. A person who through hard work seeks God's bounty – which includes all appropriate means of earning one's livelihood – is most highly praised.

All able-bodied persons are exhorted to work in order to earn their living. No one who is physically & mentally able is allowed to become a liability on one's family or the state through idleness. The work which everyone is required to perform must be “good” or “beneficial” (*al-'amal al-salih*), but no work is considered as inconsequential in terms of its rewards or punishments

Blessed work opens up mighty blessings

in this world & in the next. One will have to reap whatever rewards or retributions are done as a result of his work. (Quran 99:6-8).

Work, therefore, is regarded not only as a right but a duty & an obligation. Islam extends to the individual the right to choose the type of work he desires, but along with this freedom comes the obligation to consider the needs of the society as well as the selection of the type of work permitted by the Shariah.

Since all class distinctions are negated by Islam, no line of work permissible by the Shariah is considered demeaning by Islam, which countenances only diversification on the basis of natural talents, skills and technology, or personal inclinations. Based on its concepts of justice & contracts, Islam makes it an obligation for the worker to perform the tasks which he has contracted to the best of his ability. Since individuals are endowed with different abilities & talents, their efforts will differ. Justice, however, demands that return to work of every individual must be commensurate with his productivity.

While Islam, in no uncertain terms, is against idleness & socially unproductive work, it maintains that those who are physically or mentally unable to work still retain a right to what the society produces. This conclusion is based on the property-rights principle of invariant claim to ownership which maintains that all human beings have a right in the resources which God has provided for mankind. Since the source of physical & mental abilities of human beings, due to which some members of the society are able to possess more than others, is also God, the right of ownership of those less able to the original resources remains valid; just as God's original right of ownership of resources is not negated when they, along with the creative labor of individuals, are transformed into products, property and wealth.

Laboring & owning are central to the Islamic concept of property rights. Islam encourages man to utilize, in the fullest possible way, all the resources that God has created & entrusted to man for his use responsibly. Non-utilization of these resources for his benefit & for that of the society is tantamount to ungratefulness to God's provision of these resources as is irresponsibility & extravagance. Wealth is considered an important means by which man can pave the way for the attainment of his ultimate objective. Islam refers to wealth as “good”, an object of delight & pleasure, and a support

for the community. Conversely, involuntary poverty is considered as undesirable. This particular conception of wealth, however, is qualified in terms of earning, possession & disposition of wealth.

Earning wealth is qualified through the emphasis that it is only a means for the achievement of man's ultimate objective & not an end in itself. It must be earned through “good”, “productive” & “beneficial” work. This type of work is specified by the Shariah which defines the methods of earning wealth lawfully. Unlawfully accumulated wealth for its own sake is condemned as “corruption”.

Success & progress on the job depend on hard work & commitment to one's work; in which acknowledgment goes a long way. Valuing someone's efforts is key. If more people in power simply acknowledged the work of their supporters, much would improve. How much effort do each of us put in to let someone know their work is of value to us? It's much more important that we are motivated and care.

Muhammad (p) himself, who is considered a paragon of virtues in Islam, used to pray seeking God's refuge from laziness or idleness. Even before he was chosen as a Messenger of God, he was a hardworking person. This earned him the respect of his employer, Khadijah, who later proposed marriage to him because of all the merits and virtues she saw in him.

The true message of Islam is not just for a Muslim to profess faith & do nothing for his or her society. Rather, Islam teaches that the **true faith is what is demonstrated through sincere deeds that make a noticeable addition to the progress of society.** **No job is worthy of claiming the whole of your life & spiritual energy.** The best of jobs remains only a place to learn how to draw closer to God in everything that we do. If you don't learn that sooner, rather than later, you will learn it when illness or retirement rob you of the opportunity to go on working.

Pope John Paul II in 1981 issued an encyclical titled “*Laborem exercens*,” or “Through Work.” He **attacked the idea, fundamental to capitalism, that work was merely an exchange of money for labour.** **Work, he wrote, should not be reduced to the commodification of human beings through wages.** Workers were not impersonal instruments to be manipulated like inanimate objects to increase profit.

A person can have nothing but what they strive for; the fruit of their striving will soon come in sight. Then will they be rewarded with a reward complete.

(QURAN, AN-NAJM 53:39-41)

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