

Challenges and Tests of Life Are Opportunities for Practice and Growth

Tests of Life: Examinations for Human Practice and Growth

When we hear the word 'gym,' we forget about comfort and physical rest. We know that by entering such a place, we should prepare ourselves for hard training or sometimes facing multiple opponents. A person who joins a gym aims nothing but growth, strength, and progress. Being aware of this, no one has any complaints about the difficult conditions he has to tolerate there. In fact, a gym is a place where we strengthen our physical wellness and put ourselves to the test by enduring hardships and doing practice. Now have you ever thought of the world as a gym, where we are exposed to tests of life to grow our soul and achieve a higher status?

We often associate the world in our minds with ups and downs. Maybe we all wish to have a carefree day in the world, a day in which nothing unpleasant and unexpected happens to us, no problems come our way, all things are done as planned, no one vents out his anger and fatigue on us, we are not subjected to sarcasm, taunting, and ridicule by others, and so on.

However, is such a thing really possible? Is there anyone who can give us such a guarantee? Of course not! Usually, when we do not know or forget the world's role in our journey towards the hereafter, we develop such unrealistic expectations from it. Otherwise if we know that this world is a gym designed for us to reach the purpose of our creation, we will not expect to sit in a corner of this gym and watch the practicing and growth of others. Instead, we practice seriously and prepare ourselves for tough challenges because we know that only these tests of life and

practices can prepare us to go through this path and guide us to our final destination.

Challenges of the World and Our Proficiency

The tests of life, disturbances, and incidents that we face every day are not without reason; rather, they act as exercises that challenge us. Our skill and growth lie in putting out the fire that is lit by others intentionally or unintentionally, and it targets us or those around us. However, not all kinds of fire can be extinguished in the same way. Some kinds of fire are extinguished by water, while for some others, water only fuels their flames. To put out the fire, we must not only know the type of fire, but also we should know that how that fire can be extinguished. Otherwise, instead of helping to solve the problem, we only worsen the situation. For example, if we pour water on a grease fire, it will become fiercer and more dangerous; not knowing this, we may cause an irreversible incident. In fact, extinguishing the fire of the soul, like worldly fire, requires knowledge and proficiency.

As humans, our growth lies in continuously equipping ourselves with the abilities and skills to extinguish the flames of intrigues and enhance our relationships. It means that we should be able to manage ourselves in tests of life. Otherwise, this fire can damage us, or we ourselves may flare up the fire in our relationships. For example, if in order to prevent a bad deed, we turn to doing an even worse deed, it means that our deed has been fundamentally wrong. Just like if someone spends one million dollars to repair a device that is worth a hundred thousand, ending up with a total loss in the end.

The Role of Tests of Life in Our Growth

Do we really need so many challenges and tests of life? Let us imagine that we passed school years without ever taking a single exam. What would you think your literacy skills would be like as an adult? Would we be able to achieve our desired goals without training and testing? If there had been no exam, we would not have made any effort because we did not feel the need for it. Consequently, we would not have learned anything without effort, and our intellectual faculty would not have improved at all.

This world has the most perfect system because it provides the conditions for our training, competition, growth, and reaching our destination. Lust, anger, ignorance, stupidity, and hypocrisy have surrounded us from all sides, and there is the possibility of committing sins so that we can blossom from within these conditions and hardships, acquire the different names of God, and get closer to Him. To grow spiritually and acquire the name of *al-Haleem* (the Most Forbearing), there should be an ignorant person, so that we can become forbearing by ignoring his ignorance. There must be pain and suffering so that by forgetting it, we acquire the name of *al-Ghafur* (the All-Forgiving); there should be mistakes to forgive so that through them we can become *al-Afuw* (the Pardoner who eliminates sins). In fact, other people are all our training opponents, and God has not made an exception in this regard even for His prophets.

We might ask, 'Why should we suffer?' What is God's purpose in testing us? It is good to know that God has created all of us equal in terms of *fitrah*, and all the incidents, trials and tribulations of the world relate to the animal part of our existence. It is our false self that becomes rich, poor, and famous. It is the false self

which is disgraced, gets annoyed, gains, and loses, so that we can grow in the midst of all these tests of life and become more and more similar to God's names. Whoever moves forward in this path correctly, he becomes kinder, more forgiving and humble, and this is the sign of getting closer to Allah.

In this article, we discussed the role of the world as a gym for the growth and development of human beings. We stated that the world is a place where we are put to the test through various hardships and troubles. We should try to put out the fire that has targeted us or those around us. But we cannot act recklessly to put out this fire. We need knowledge and skills to do that. In fact, this world has some conditions for our practicing, competition, growth, and achievement, so that by overcoming the difficulties on this path, we become more similar and closer to Allah.

If you would like to know more about the importance of our deeds for the hereafter, we recommend you to read the article on the status of the world and the hereafter. We would greatly appreciate hearing your thoughts and experiences on this matter.