



Influence



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Introduction

How does one affect us so much?

Human beings are shaped by two factors. In contemporary terms, we refer to them as **nature vs. nurture**.

The first is our *nafs*
We were all created with our
unique inborn characteristics,
impulses, strengths and weaknesses.

Our natural desires -
those which determine
our likes, dislikes,
and a large part of our personality
and Our inbuilt strengths and weaknesses;
the ones that make us unique.

These are our genetic imprints, or in Arabic, our *jibillah*. These characteristics are similar to our physical characteristics in that we were born with such qualities, they form part of our being, and they will remain with us forever.

The second is our external influences.

We are a sum total of all our experiences.
We are constantly exposed to external influences
which leave imprints on our beings
Whether a book, a tool, a friend, an experience,
a sensation, an inspiration or an idea.

This includes the people we meet. Our lives are not static. People come in and out of our lives, each one having an impact on us. Think of the people you have encountered in your lives and how they shaped your lives in one way or another:

- the people who raised you when you were a young child
- your family and relatives
- your friends
- your teachers
- your spouse
- your colleagues etc...

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Positive And Negative Influence

Each contact, each friendship, each relationship can carry with it positive or negative elements. We have little influence over who we connect with as children, but as we mature, we become more selective in who we associate with.

Look around us.

How many times have we said,
whether in a positive or negative way -

"Ever since she married him, She's become a different person."

"Ever since he had that group of friends, his personality has changed."

We should not underestimate the power of influence that others can have on us.

Think of the teacher who educated us, the friend who changed our manner of talking, the parents who influenced our behavior, the boss who inspired us, the love who motivated us

Think of people who, in their own way,
have influenced our mannerism,
introduced us to a new idea,

hobby, recipe, book, way of thinking.
Some in a subtle way,
while others can totally change the direction of our lives

The people we meet are not only a reflection of **who we are**, but also an indication of **who we want to be**.

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maturity to distinguish influences

Do we have the maturity to distinguish between the positive and negative influences? This distinction is important, because the people we meet can:

- unravel all that we have learnt
- defeat or encourage our natural desires
- change our way of thinking
- bring out the best or the worst in us

If we are influenced and affected by the right person,
that person can bring out our goodness,
reinforce our souls
and guide us towards making our lives a fulfilling one.

If we are influenced and affected by the wrong person, that person can lead us to emotional, physical and spiritual ruin.

Hence, whenever we build a new relationship, whether in terms of friendship or marriage, we need to reflect what the goal of that relationship will be.

What is the goal? Is it For fun? To learn a new hobby? To make money? To be popular? For love? To have a good time?

Or, is it because, We have a goal?
Does the person have the same goals we do?
Can the person lead us towards our goal?

This kind of introspection is tough. And it requires sincerity.

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Analyze the consequences!

Without a goal in life it is easy to enter into a relationship for the wrong values. We end up building relationships which are empty and do nothing to enrich our lives.

Human beings tend to follow their emotional inclinations.

When an aim in a relationship lacks an objective,
it is easy for emotions to take over.

With no goal in life,
concepts of right and wrong, good or bad... become blurry!

We become unfocused, and we move towards nowhere. We just drift along, living for the moment, without any common objective, or a known destination. And before we know it, we are stuck.

When people do not have a higher goal to aim for, their relationships
become a muddle of conflict, aimlessness and
eventually, emptiness.

Their relationships have no sense of purpose,
and are driven (or destroyed) by emotions and short term thinking.

With no destination, they allow themselves to be influenced by anyone who gets close to them, living moment by moment, without the ability to judge or filter whether such influence will benefit them in the long run.

The couple will keep changing directions, colliding constantly and going in circles, achieving nothing. Whatever influence that such people can exert over us, is likely to be devoid of value or meaning.

However, if a relationship is based on a common goal,
there is a focus and unity.

They are constantly
mindful of what they are trying to achieve,
and the relationship is a platform
in order for them to realize their objectives.

The overreaching goal overcomes any shortcomings in their *jibillah* and keeps their emotions in check. There is clarity in vision, mutual respect and long term vision. The influence that each person in the relationship has on the other is positive.

With the common goal in mind,
there is no catastrophic impact,
conflict of values
or loss of direction
on either side

Whether between friends, relatives, spouses, students, colleagues, such a relationship, fostered by a mutual goal as its foundation, will affect everyone in a positive way.

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Who is the lucky one?

So what is the criterion when we allow people to affect us? What is positive and what is negative? The answer depends on who we want to be and what our goal in life is.

The lucky one
is the one who structures his life
from a revelation and spiritual point of view.

To be governed by constitution and purpose of life, to have a self identity, which leads him to his goal and what he wants to achieve in this life and in the hereafter.

If this is the case, his emotions, feelings, thinking, the kind of people who accompany him, the kind of people who he allows to influence or affect him, will be governed and directed by all of the above.

One's goal and identity allows him to try and seek
the right book,
the right person, the right company,
the one who can affect him in a way
to help him to guard, grow
and achieve his spiritual goal...
His success in this life and in the hereafter.

Even his love, his hate, his likes, his dislikes, his will be all governed by his goal, what he wants to achieve and who he wants to be

This awareness is crucial for his salvation. If he has a spiritual goal in this life, he will seek:

- the one who has a positive influence on him
- the one who stays true to his spiritual goal
- the ones who can remind, educate and guide him

- the one who does not allow himself to be swayed or distracted from the goal
- the one who remains stable even if the environment is shaky

**On the other hand, consider the unlucky one.
He has no identity, goal, constitution or guidance.**

Everything is a bunch of feelings, up and down, to achieve short term benefits or things he likes or dislikes. He is living in a broken roller coaster. It takes him 60 miles per hour to nowhere, to break his neck, in this life and the hereafter.

He's happy, he's sad, he's a jumble of emotions and desires, and everything in his life is without conclusion, goal or purpose. If he has no goal in life, does he care what kind of criteria he applies in seeking his companions?

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Which side are you on?

You're lucky at this moment if you think – which one is me? The lucky one, or the unlucky one, a combination of both?

The majority of people are lost between one and the other.

People Straying... with no purpose in life,
no goal, no identity
and they never even think about
the question of
how one person affects the other so much.

Can we succeed if we have a combination of both? We cannot try to balance between relationships which build or destroy us. No man can travel in two directions at the same time. We must pick a side and decide who we want to be. We cannot be jumping from one to another. We cannot be part here and part there.

We have to define ourselves,
one way or another
To success or to loss.....
And from there, we will know the people
whom we would like to affect and influence us.



One last thing ...

Do we want to go through our life collecting the wrong relationships and wrong influences, or do we want to seek people who guide, strengthen and fortify us?

We are the gatekeepers of our own souls,
and we should constantly be vigilant of the ones we permit
into the private and vulnerable areas
of our minds and hearts.

If we are sincere, we should seek the company of those who will help us achieve salvation in this life and in the hereafter.

Do we give serious thought
about the ones in our lives
who will help us attain and maintain
the spiritual momentum we need?
Are we confident that the ones who influence

our hearts, minds and behavior
are the taking us along the right road?
Are we sure that we are absorbing
the correct kind of influence?

And likewise, are our hearts, minds and behavior taking others along the right road? Are we sure that we are projecting, giving and showing the correct kind of influence?

When we meet someone, do we question
whether he enhances our personalities,
our understanding in life,
our journey, our purpose,
our goal?

And what does success mean to us? Is the success of this life and the hereafter, or just the success of the material life?

The next time you meet someone, question yourselves:

Who am I? Who is he?
What can I gain from him? What can he gain from me?
Where are we going? Where am I going?
Am I serious about my journey? Is he serious about his journey?
Can I define myself? Has he defined himself?
Can I focus? Is he focused?
Can I?.....

