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RADIANT REALITY

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Allah knows
WHAT
is the best
for you and
WHEN
it's best for
you to have it.

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RADIANT REALITY

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This magazine is dedicated to the greatest and the last Prophet Sayyidna Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) on whom the succession of the Prophethood ended and was sealed forever.

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Question.

If a latecomer joins the Imaam in the sitting position of Tashahhud and then the Imaam makes Salaam, does the latecomer have to sit for a period of time before making up his missed Rakaats?

Answer.

A latecomer (Masbooq) should recite the complete Tashahhud when the Imaam completes the Salaah before standing up to perform his missed Rakaat/s.

However, if a latecomer does not recite the entire Tashahhud after the Imaam completed the Salaah, the Salaah will still be valid. (Shaami 1/496)

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

In relation to the fatwa below, what if some of the body parts are not found?

Question and Answer:

Question. A train knocked a Muslim man and all his body parts, head, hands, legs etc. were found in pieces. Is there Ghusl and Janaazah for such a person?

Answer.

Ghusl and Janaazah Salaah will both be performed for a Muslim who's body had been disintegrated upon impact if all his body parts are

found. In the enquired case, the same ruling would apply. (Shaami 2/199)

Answer.

In respect to the above query, hereunder are three scenarios:

If more than half of the body is found, Ghusal and Janaazah will both take place.

If less than half of the body was found, Ghusal and Janaazah will not take place.

If exactly half of the body was found, Ghusal and Janaazah will take place only if the head had been found as well. (Shaami 2/199)

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

Is it permissible for Muslims to attend the funeral of non-Muslims? If my non-Muslim co-worker or neighbour passes away, can I as a Muslim attend their funeral? What are the limitations of Shariah?

Answer.

In terms of Shariah, it is not permissible for a Muslim to attend the funeral of a non-Muslim as it entails customs and acts which are of detriment to one's Imaan.

However, there is no harm in giving moral support to the family and friends of the deceased and expressing one's condolences without participating in the actual funeral or going to the church/temple, etc.or graveyard. (Ahsanul Fa-

taawa 4/243)

Mufti Taahir

Question.

If a woman is removing her uterus, does She need to bury it? What if it's in a bad condition?

Answer.

The uterus is in the same ruling as all other parts of the human body, in that it should be respectfully buried.

It could be wrapped in a cloth or put in a packet before it is buried.

Mufti Taahir

Question.

Is it necessary to announce the mahr during the nikah ceremony? Should it be announced as "as agreed between the parties" rather than the actual amount? The amount of mahr given by a poor person will not match that given by a billionaire or rich persons. Announcements may cause some people to "live with the Jones" and agree to give deferred mahr which they do not possess and which the bride will never get as is the custom in some areas. A poor person may feel ashamed if he cannot match the value of mahr announced by the rich.

Answer.

The announcement of the Mahr amount at the time of the Nikah is not a requirement for the validity of the Nikah. Hence, it is not necessary to announce the Mahr amount at the time of the Nikah.

At the same time, to announce the Mahr amount at the time of the Nikah serves as an encouragement for grooms to give their brides a reasonable Mahr amount.

However, if this leads to grooms taking debts to compete with each other's families etc., the Mahr amount should not be announced at the time of the Nikah.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

A father 58 years and mother 53 years have been accredited to go for Hajj. However due to the limited Financial means they are unable to go. Their son 28 years has also been accredited In the second round of accreditation the wishes to go for Hajj. Is it the sons responsibility to first send his parents ?

Answer.

The financial responsibility of one's parents includes necessities such as food, shelter and clothing. (Shaami 3/571)

It does not include sending one's parents for Hajj. If one does so, it would be a form of goodwill towards ones parents, which is encouraged in Shariah.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

A 20 year old girl left the fold of Islam and is unmarried. Is the father still responsible for her maintenance?

Answer.

It will remain the responsibility of a father to provide maintenance for his daughter until she marries, begins earning or has her own wealth. This will be applicable even if she leaves the fold of Islam or does not share the same religion. (Badaai-us-Sanaai 4/36)

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

A revert Muslim is making Nikah. She does not have any Muslim family members. Who can represent her at the Nikah?

Answer.

A revert woman who does not have any Muslim male family members to act as her representative at the time of Nikah, may appoint a non-Mahram to serve as her representative, preferably the Imaam of the Masjid or an elder

of the community.

Her appointment may be done verbally or in writing and may be witnessed by the two males who will be the primary witnesses at her Nikah. (Fataawa Mahmoodiyyah 17/181-Tabyeenul Haqaaq 2/117)

Mufti Ismaeel

Answer.

The general habit of Rasulallah (saws) was to wash each limb three times in wudhu. However, at times he did wash his limbs once only. This indicates the permissibility of washing the limbs once only in wudhu. (Inaayah 1/31)

In light of the water shortage, a person may wash the limbs once only in wudhu.

Mufti Taahir

Question.

A non-Muslim couple had been married. The wife accepted Islam. Can she marry a Muslim man immediately after accepting Islam or does she have to wait for a period before making Nikah? When can she make Nikah?

Answer.

If a non-Muslim woman accepts Islam and her non-Muslim husband does not accept Islam, the woman will have to observe the Iddah period of three menstrual cycles if she is menstruating, three Months if she is not menstruating, or if she is pregnant, then until she gives birth before she can marry a Muslim man.

If her husband does not accept Islam before the termination of her Iddah period, her marriage with her non-Muslim husband will terminate and she is free to marry a Muslim man. (Shaami 3/191)

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

Do women have to attend Salaatul Istisqaa in a field or a Masjid?

Answer.

Due to severe shortage of water or rain, Salaatul Istisqaa is offered to attract the mercy of Allah with the hope of Allah showering the people with beneficial rain.

It is preferable (Mustahab) for the weak amongst us to be included in offering Salaatul Istisqaa i.e. in this case, the elderly and children as the mercy of Allah descends because of them. (Haashiyatut-Tahtaawi Ala Maraaqil Falaah 2/178)

This does not include females as the place of offering Salaah for females is at home. More so, there is greater hope of Salaah, Dua etc. of females being accepted at home.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

What are the waajibat of salaah?

Answer.

There are eighteen waajibaat of salaah which Allaamah Shurumbulaali (Rahimahullah) has mentioned in his kitaab. Below are the eighteen waajibaat of salaah as mentioned in Noorul Idaah:

- 1) The recitation of Surah Faatihah
- 2) The recitation of a surah or three Aayaat in two rakaats of fard salaah
- 3) The recitation of a surah or three Aayaat in all the rakaats of witr or nafl salaah
- 4) Reciting the qiraat in the first two rakaats of a fard salaah
- 5) Reciting Surah Faatihah before the surah
- 6) Placing the nose and the forehead on the ground in sajdah
- 7) Carrying out the second sajdah in every rakaat before proceeding to the next rakaat or rukn
- 8) To perform all postures with ease
- 9) Sitting for the first qa'dah in a four rakaat salaah
- 10) Reciting the tashahhud in the first qa'dah of a four rakaat salaah
- 11) Reciting the tashahhud in the last qa'dah
- 12) Standing up for the third rakaat without any

delay after completing the tashahhud of the second rakaat

13) Reciting 'As salaamu alaikum' at the end of the salaah

14) Reciting the qunoot of witr

15) Reciting the takbeers of Eid

16) To commence the salaah by saying the words of takbeer 'Allahu Akbar'

17) The takbeer of ruku in the second rakaat of the Eid salaah

18) The Imaam reciting the qiraat aloud in the fajr salaah, the first two rakaats of the esha and maghrib salaah, and the two rakaats of Jum'ah, Eid, Taraweeh and witr salaah in the month of Ramadhaan, and the Imaam reciting the qiraat softly in the zuhr and asr salaah, the second two rakaats of the esha salaah and the last rakaat of the maghrib salaah.

Mufti Zakaria

Question.

Someone told me that we should not ask Allah for patience. If we ask for patience, Allah will afflict us with trials. So instead, we should ask for a blessed life and a grateful heart. Is this correct?

Answer.

At the time of difficulty and adversity, you should ask Allah to bless you with sabar. You should not ask Allah to bless you with sabar at the time of ease and prosperity.

Mufti Zakaria

Question.

Is it permissible for a Muslim woman to leave her home in order to go to a beauty parlour or salon to style her hair or wax the hair on her body? What is the Shar'ee ruling in regard to this issue?

Answer.

In Deen, the most important obligation after Imaan is salaah. In regard to this obligation, the Hadith emphatically encourages women to perform their salaah within the confines of their homes. In fact, the Hadith explains that the sa-

laah which they perform in the innermost portion of their homes- most distant from the gazes of strange men- is more rewarding than the salaah which they perform in any other part of their home. This clearly highlights the extent to which Islam advocates concealment in the life of a woman.

When women have been discouraged from leaving their homes to perform salaah in the Musjid (despite salaah being the greatest ibaadat and the Musjid being the holiest of places in the world), one can well imagine how reprehensible it is for a woman to leave her home to visit a beauty parlour or salon in order to beautify herself. It should be borne in mind that if there is a valid need for a woman to leave the home (e.g. to visit her parents or relatives, or to visit the sick, or to console the bereaved, etc.) then Shari'ah has granted her permission to do so in order to fulfil the need, provided that she adheres to certain conditions. When leaving the home, she should ensure that she dresses in an unattractive manner and that she dons the niqaab. Similarly, she should refrain from applying any perfume when leaving the home and she should be accompanied by her mahram wherever she goes. It is reported in the Hadith that Nabi (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said:

"A woman should remain concealed (from the eyes of strange men). When she leaves her home, shaytaan stares at her" (Tirmizi #1173).

In another Hadith, it is reported that Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said: "May the curse of Allah be upon the man who casts lustful glances at the beauty of a woman, as well as the woman who is viewed (the woman who reveals her beauty, allowing strange men to view her)" (Shu'abul Imaan #7399). From these two Ahaadith, we understand the need for women to remain within their homes. When they leave the home, shaytaan makes a concerted effort to mislead them and mislead others through them. In regard to women applying perfume when leaving the home, it is reported that Nabi (Sal-

lallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said: “The woman who applies perfume when leaving the home and passes by a group of strange men, allowing them to get the fragrance of her body, is like an adulteress” (Tirmizi #2786). Hazrat Abu Hurayrah (Radhiyallahu Anhu) had once seen a woman who had left her home with perfume applied to her body. He immediately reprimanded her and commanded her to return to her home and wash off the perfume (Abu Dawood #4176).

It should be known that the concept of a beauty parlour is alien to Islam. Beauty parlours neither existed during the blessed era of Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) nor during the centuries that followed. This concept has been adopted from western culture. Unfortunately, in current times, let alone this becoming a “profession”, it has now become a thriving industry, bringing in its wake a host of wrongs and evils. This in turn has led to the degeneration of hayaa and modesty in the ummah. Nowadays, women beautify and adorn themselves when leaving the home, only to be viewed by others, whereas Islam has commanded that their beauty only be displayed before their spouses within the confines of the home.

Apart from this, the abundant wrongs that are associated with such an occupation go against the very fabric of shame and modesty. The satar (area between the navel and the knees) is exposed with the intention of hair removal, whereas exposing this part of the body before even Muslim women is haraam. In the case where the beautician is a non-Muslim woman, then let alone exposing the satar area before her, it is not permissible for a Muslim woman to reveal her hair or any part of her body before her (with the exception of her face, hands and feet). When the Hadith has cursed women who shape their eyebrows, one can well imagine the extent to which one will incur Allah’s curse through exposing one’s body for such purposes. Even if one has to argue that one is only visiting the beautician for something that is of a permissible

nature, the fact of the matter is that one is present in a place which abounds with immoral and immodest activities, such as the satar being exposed for the purpose of hair removal, the eyebrows being shaped, the hair of women being cut or trimmed and also being exposed before non-Muslim women, etc. It is the command of Allah that we stay far from all places where sins are perpetrated. With regard to being present in such places where the commands of Allah are violated, Allah declares in the Qur’an:

Do not sit, after realizing (that one is in an environment of haraam), with those who do wrong. (Surah An’aam v. 68)

Furthermore, when this is an environment which draws the wrath of Allah, then it is most likely that the wrath of Allah will fall upon all those who are present in that environment, regardless of whether they are involved in the sins and wrongs or not. Similarly, we should deeply reflect and ponder over the point that if death had to strike at that moment, would we be happy to meet Allah in such a condition?

While the various evils and harms in general have been discussed above, the issue is extremely compounded in the case where the beautician is a male. It is an act of utter shamelessness. He is going to be free to style her hair and touch various parts of her body. His job is to adorn and beautify so that the woman looks more attractive than what she is and so that she will be admired. In the process, he too will keep looking and admiring the woman he is beautifying – In other words, he will be busy intently admiring someone’s wife or daughter at very close range – from such closeness that perhaps besides the husband, nobody else will get so close!! He perhaps will also keep touching here and patting there to get the perfect look – Lahawla wala quwwata illa billah. This is the glaring indication of the death of shame. It is also a sure recipe to invite the wrath and curse of Allah – curse upon curse at every “admiring” look, both upon

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Immediate & the Hereafter

Whoever opts for the immediate (benefits from) life herein, We give him right here, in this life, as much as We will to whomever We intend. Then We assign Jahannam for him where he shall enter condemned, discarded. [18] And whoever opts for the Hereafter and makes efforts for it as due, while he is a believer, then, the effort of such people is appreciated! [19]

Two behaviour models of human beings appear in the cited verses side by side. As for those who elect to go for the readily available benefits out of their life in this world, and the punishment that comes in its wake, the words used were: (Whoever opts for the immediate life herein - 18). These words signify continuity and permanence meaning that this punishment of Hell will materialize only when one's actions are all the time motivated by material interests only, having practically no concern for the Hereafter. And as for 'those who desire to have the Hereafter and its rewards,' the words used were: The sense is that as soon as a true believer were to form an intention to have the reward of the Hereafter in whatever he proposes to do, that deed of his shall stand accepted - irrespective of any corruptive element having entered into something else he was intending to do.

The first condition can only be that of a denier of the Hereafter, therefore, none of his deeds is acceptable. Then, the second condition is that of a true believer. A particular deed by him that issues forth with sincerity of intention, and is for the Hereafter - along with the presence of other conditions - shall be acceptable. And a deed even from the same person, a deed that has no sincerity, or where other conditions are missing, will not be acceptable.

In verse (19), by adding the word: *Sa'yaha* (as due), it has been made explicit that every deed and every effort is not necessarily beneficial or acceptable with Allah. Instead, the only deed or effort credible is that which is appropriate to the essential objective (of the Hereafter). And whether or not it is appropriate can only be found out from the statement of Allah and His Messenger. Therefore, even well meaning efforts made by insisting on bland personal opinion and self-invented ways - which includes common customs of *Bid'ah* (innovations in established religion) - no matter how good and beneficial they may appear at their face, but are not appropriate to the effort made for the Hereafter. Consequently, they are neither acceptable with Allah nor are they of any use in the Hereafter.

Explaining the word: *Sa'yaha* (as due), Tafsir Ruh al-Ma'ani says

that the 'effort' should be in accordance with 'sunnah'. Along with it, it adds that this effort or deed should also have uprightness and firmness. In other words, this deed should be beneficial in accordance with the Sunnah as well as it should be upright and constant. Doing it haphazardly or doing it in a cycle of doing and not doing is not good. It never yields the maximum benefit.

Adapted from: Ma'ariful Qur'an by Mufti Muhammad Shafi (ra)

Three and Four

Abu Kabshah al-Anmariy reported that he heard the Messenger of Allah saying : There are three things over which I take oath, and I communicate to you a thing which you should remember.

As for the things over which I take oath, these are:

- the wealth of a man does not diminish if given in charity,
- no man is oppressed with an oppression and then he keeps patience at it but Allah increases there by his honour,
- nor a man opens a door towards begging but Allah opens for him the gate of poverty.

As for that which I communicate to you - keep it in memory.

Then he said, "This world is for four kinds of men:

(1) a man whom Allah has provided with wealth and knowledge, who fears his Lord in respect there of and perform his duties to his kinsmen and acts duly for Allah about it - this man has got the best of ranks;

(2) a man whom Allah has provided with knowledge but not with wealth, but who is sincere in intention and says - Oh, had I had wealth, I would have done the works of such and such a one - the rewards of both are equal;

(3) a man whom He has provided with wealth but not with knowledge, who rolls in wealth without knowledge, who does not fear his Lord therein, nor does he do his duty towards his kinsmen or acts justly therewith - he is the worst in ranks;

(4) and a man whom He has not provided with wealth or knowledge and who says: Would that I had riches, I would surely have done the works of such and such a one and that is his intention - the rewards of both are equal.

Tirmizi

Lessons from Sahih Bukhari

Dr. Rafiq Ahmad

Chapter 80 : A small door and a pathway in the mosque.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Al-Khowkhah is a small window like door that people used to place in a wall during early days. The Prophet's mosque was surrounded by the houses of Companions who had constructed small outlets in the walls of their houses along the side of the mosque through which they entered the mosque at the time of emergency. Rasulullah (saws) during his terminal illness days before his departure from this world instructed all such outlets to be closed down and except that of Sayyiduna Abu Bakr. It is said that this house of Sayyiduna Abu Bakr was situated near the mosque between Baab-us-Salaam and Baab al-Rahmah. Sayyiduna Abu Bakr sold it to Sayyida Hafsa for forty thousand Dhirhams, the money he spent on the welfare of Muslims. But even after that this house continued to be called the house of Sayyiduna Abu Bakr. Nowadays the area stands included in Masjid-i-Nabawi and there it is mentioned—"this is the Khowkhah of Sayyiduna Abu Bakr (RA)".

Hadith No. 453

Narrated Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudri

The Prophet delivered a sermon and said, "Allah gave a choice to one of (His) slaves either to choose this world or what is with Him in the

Hereafter. He chose the latter." Abu Bakr wept. I said to myself, "Why is this Sheikh weeping, if Allah gave choice to one (of His) slaves either to choose this world or what is with Him in the Here after and he chose the latter?" And that slave was Allah's Apostle himself. Abu Bakr knew more than us. The Prophet said, "O Abu Bakr! Don't weep. The Prophet added: Abu-Bakr has favored me much with his property and company. If I were to take a Khalil from mankind I would certainly have taken Abu Bakr but the Islamic brotherhood and friendship is sufficient. Close all the gates in the mosque except that of Abu Bakr.

Hadith No. 454

Narrated Ibn Abbas

"Allah's Apostle in his fatal illness came out with a piece of cloth tied round his head and sat on the pulpit. After thanking and praising Allah he said, "There is no one who had done more favor to me with life and property than Abu Bakr bin Abi Quhafa. If I were to take a Khalil, I would certainly have taken Abu-Bakr but the Islamic brotherhood is superior. Close all the small doors in this mosque except that of Abu Bakr."

Comments

Here Imam Bukhari has quoted two hadiths, one from Sayyiduna Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri

and the other from Sayyiduna Ibn Abbas, both mentioning the same incident. This incident took place five nights and four days before the Prophet's (saws) departure from this world. The famous incident called "Waaqia Qirtaas" or 'the incident of paper' took place in the morning of the same day.

Incident of Qirtaas or paper

This incident took place during the terminal illness of Rasulallah (saws) five nights and four days before his departure from this world. It was in the morning and people had gathered around him, that he asked them to get some paper as he wanted them to write something. The people around differed in their opinion whether to bring the paper or not. Some people including Sayyiduna Umar considered it troublesome for Rasulallah (saws) keeping his health condition in view. Others were of the opinion that they should comply with the orders of Rasulallah (saws). In this discussion people raised their voices which made Rasulallah (saws) uneasy and he directed them to leave from there. Late in the afternoon Rasulallah (saws) felt some relief and asked some people around to pour bagsful of water over his head. He then came out with a cloth wrapped around his head, ascended on to the pulpit inside the mosque to address the people. The incident of Qirtaas or paper had taken place in the morning of the same day, so it is obvious and most likely, as the learned scholars say, that this speech which Rasulallah (saws) delivered in the afternoon must have been about what he wanted to get written in the morning.

Some people because of bias and prejudice unnecessarily spoil their faith by attributing the possession of wrong intentions to the Companions (including Sayyiduna Umar) who wanted Rasulallah (saws) to take rest at that time. It should be borne in mind that the Prophets are continuously guarded and helped by Allah. It is never possible that a Prophet will fail to convey a message to the people which he

is supposed to.

Excerpts from the last Khutba of Rasulallah (saws).

As already stated, it was on Thursday four days before his departure from the world, that Rasulallah (saws) came out to his mosque in the afternoon with a cloth wrapped around his head and delivered this speech. The incident of Qirtaas had taken place in the morning of the same day when Rasulallah (saws) wanted his companions to write down something on his behalf. Since this speech was delivered by him in the afternoon of the same day, it is most likely that he conveyed the same message to the people which he wanted them to write down in the morning. Rasulallah (saws), as usual, first thanked and praised Allah and then paid homage and invoked Allah in favour of the martyrs killed in the battle of Uhud. Later he asked the Muhajireen (the Companions who migrated from Makkah to Madinah) to be kind to the Ansaar (the residents of Madinah) who had extended their whole hearted support to the Muslims. Afterwards Rasulallah (saws) informed the people that Allah had given his bondsman option to choose either the world or the Hereafter and his bondsman chose the latter. Hearing this statement Sayyiduna Abu Bakr started weeping which surprised a young man from Ansaar, Sayyiduna Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri. He could not comprehend anything in that message which could drive one to tears. In fact Allah had bestowed Sayyiduna Abu Bakr with extraordinary knowledge and comprehension that distinguished him from other Companions. He was the only one who understood and comprehended the indication of the departure of Rasulallah (saws) from this world. By mentioning 'bondsman', Rasulallah (saws) was mentioning himself. When Rasulallah (saws) saw Sayyiduna Abu Bakr weeping, he told him not to, and acknowledged his help and philanthropy he

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The Response

Straight Talk



The response of the Muslim world to the warnings and admissions of Western intellectuals and scholars with regard to the strengths of Islam in the face of a declining Europe has been crass materialism, crude consumerism and suicidal fatalism, writes

SYED IQBAL ZAHEER.

By the end of the seventeenth century, it was in the air in Europe that the Western civilization was unsustainable. Its moral and intellectual decline was worrying the thinkers. Several thinkers began to look into other systems and cultures. A cursory study led them to believe that the Indian (Hindu), the Japanese (Buddhist), the Chinese (Confucius Han Dynasty) cultures did not meet the material, moral, intellectual and ecclesiastic needs and demands of the human mind and soul. If any, it was the Islamic system which appeared to be the most promising. This is the reason why leading thinkers, statesmen and philosophers of the West began to take up studying Islam, and occasionally made pro-Islamic statements, or passing remarks on Islam. Here are some examples:

Voltaire (d. 1778)

Fresh from the memories and injuries of the seventeenth century 30-year pan-European War, and the excesses of the Roman Church (50 million ordered killed during the Middle ages), it was Voltaire who steadily allied himself with Islam and its Prophet Muhammad (saws) to criticize the Church, and suggest separation of

Church and State.

A French thinker of the Enlightenment times, historian, philosopher and critic, Voltaire's writings did not please everyone. He had to balance out his assessments by concealing his admiration, while yet criticizing the Prophet. His thoughts and criticisms, and the popularity he gained, tell clearly that his hopes in the resurrection of Western Civilization were fading.

The dissatisfaction with the Western way of life was growing. The intellectuals were, with the weakening of the Church's influence and political powers, speaking out with lesser fear. The influential French writer, philosopher and composer, Rousseau, did not conceal his approval of Prophet Muhammad(saws). He wrote:

“Mahomet had very sane views, he fastened his political system well, and as long as his form of government lasted under his successors, the Caliphs, the government was wholly unified and, to that extent, good. But once the Arabs flourished and became lettered, polite, sot and cowardly, they were subjugated by Barbarians.”

Napoleon (d. 1821)

Napoleon was no fiendish warrior. He was

an intellectual person too. He had realized the diminishing power of the Judeo-Christian order and the degeneration of the souls. When he was told that such a person was a charlatan, he quipped back: "Who is not a charlatan?" He characterized history produced by Western historians as, "lies agreed upon."

His effort to conquer Egypt, which lay thousands of miles away from France, seems to be guided by faith in Islamic sources of light. He wished to carry back with him to France five hundred learned men, obviously to reinvigorate the Western world with morals and wisdom. He unveiled his admiration of Islam when he said in a speech delivered before the elites in Egypt:

"O you judges, Sheikhs, Imams and Shorbadjis! Tell the people that we, too, are real Muslims. Are we not the ones who destroyed the Pope, who said that war must be made on Muslim? Did we not destroy the knights of Malta, those madmen who thought that God commanded them to wage war against Muslims?"

It was in that atmosphere of restive dissatisfaction that Islamic wisdom-writings were being brought out.

Thomas Carlyle (d. 1881)

Across the strait in Britain, intellectuals were no less conscious of the fact that influences of the Renaissance were fading fast. Thomas Carlyle found it necessary to educate the public on historical figures who had shown the path to moral, material and spiritual development. He pointed out that, as against the propaganda of the Church, Prophet Muhammad (saws) had exerted a huge influence on the civilizational development of humanity. Speaking on the most influential personalities in history, during his famous six lectures, to an elite audience in London, he chose to place Prophet Muhammad (saws) as the most influential human ever. He said:

"Our current hypothesis about Mahomet, that he was a scheming Impostor, a Falsehood incarnate,

that his religion is a mere mass of quackery and fatuity, begins really to be now untenable to anyone. The lies, which well-meaning zeal has heaped round this man, are disgraceful to ourselves only."

Goethe (d. 1832)

In neighbouring Germany, the feelings about the feared failure of the Western Civilization were no different. Goethe, the most famous German of his time was a polymath who expressed his ideas through poetry, novel and drama while at the same time writing treatises on scientific subjects. He also served the State in various capacities. In an unfinished work, he placed a poem called 'Song of Mohammed,' one of whose stanza reads:

Young and fresh,
From the clouds he danceth;
Down upon the marble rocks.
Then tow'rd heaven,
Leaps exulting.

Lamartine (d. 1869)

Another leading French intellectual, Lamartine, was a politician who expressed his ideas through poetry. He signaled the warning about the possibility of Islam emerging as a contender in Europe. He was quite open in his admiration of Prophet Muhammad(saws). He said, what has become a historical statement:

"If the grandeur of the aim, the smallness of the means, the immensity of the results are the three measures of a man's genius, who would dare humanly compare a great man of modern history with Muhammad?"

Oswald Spengler (d. 1936)

Then came the open admission of the failure of the Western Civilization. It was from a German scholar, Oswald Spengler, who produced an eye-opening book called *The Decline of the West*. Perhaps, it is the most popular philosophical book of modern times. Read widely, initially it was labelled as pessimistic. But events and

developments since then have proven it as an unsavory predictive truth.

Michael H. Hart (b. 1932)

The concealed warnings have continued. The most prominent is from USA. Michael Hart shocked the renewed hate-bearing leaders and public of the world by writing a book entitled, *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, in which he placed Prophet Muhammad (saws) at the top as the most influential person in history.

The fear of demise of Western Civilization in Michael Hart, who is Jewish and still alive, can be guessed from the fact that he appears to believe that this is the result of the West accepting non-Caucasian races into its fold. In 1996, addressing a conference organized by a white separatist party, he suggested that the United States be partitioned into four states: a white state, a black state, a Hispanic state, and a mixed-race state.

Samuel P. Huntington

In response, and, as if to show the direction the Western states should take, Samuel P. Huntington produced a predictive book called, *'The Clash of Civilization,'* disguising, it appears, his 'suggestions and plan of action' as 'warnings.' It is surely the product of a mind pessimistic about Western Civilization.

What has been the response of the Muslim world?

By and large, it has been – on the part of its in different common people, unproductive scholars, faith-corrupting Ahl al-Bid'ah, inter-bickering religious groups and activists, and its parasitic clergy– on the part of them all, it has been: crass materialism, crude consumerism and suicidal fatalism.

Loaded for Action

A little boy, whilst playing in a park, found a belt of bullets. He ran over to his father to show him what he had found. His father warned him that a single bullet is enough to kill a lion and that the bullets should be returned to where he had found them. As the boy ran along to place back the bullets, a small pup chased him. The little boy, in an effort to save himself, threw bullet after bullet at the pup, but to no effect. Eventually the owner came to the scene and with just one instruction, the pup stopped in its track.

Thereafter the boy innocently asked his father, "If one bullet can kill a lion, how come so many bullets could not stop a pup?" The father's simple reply was, "My dear son! A bullet will only work if it is loaded in a gun."

In the same way, a person may ask, "I have books and books loaded with incidents of how Allah help came to the Muslims. How is it that I, as a Muslim do not enjoy the same help of Allah?" The simple reply is that those Muslims were Muslims in the true sense of the word, loaded with good actions. This drew the help of Allah. We too need to load our lives with good actions. Then insha-Allah, we too will enjoy the help of Allah.

How the Turban Hijab Became a Symbol of the Modern Muslim Woman

Afia Ahmed

From a once hidden and repressed vessel of the Orient supposedly waiting to be explored and discovered, to adorning covers of Vogue and defying societal norms, Muslim women are all the rage. The hijab, representation, and breaking stereotypes has been discussed at length, and have quite frankly become mind-numbing and repetitive discussions. This is a risky topic to discuss, I know that – and this is because it speaks to millions of women across the globe. A wealth of women identify with the hijab and calling its fundamentals back into question will trigger many – however, I believe this is a topic requiring imminent attention.

I never really knew how I felt about the commercialisation of hijab until now. Once upon a time I wished for more representation in the West, but as they say, be careful what you wish for. Representation here didn't mean that I would somehow be accepted for who I was and what I wore – no.

My acceptance would come so long as I conformed to an acceptable and digestible version of Islam – a reformed, restructured and repackaged type. One where I covered my hair but didn't really cover it – one where I was a Muslim, but only to a tolerable degree. One where I kept my observance confined to my four walls and stayed a 'house Muslim'.

I would be accepted if I didn't drink but still went along to the pub and the socials where there is nothing but prosecco, prosecco, and more prosecco. I would be accepted so long as I covered my skin but maybe not all of it. So long as I continued now to not just live up to one standard of unattainable beauty, but two. Commercialisation didn't make hijab easier, it changed what it is. People no longer ascribe to the hijab, they ascribe to a fashion trend.

The Symbol of the Turban

The turban has become the symbol of the New Muslim Woman. A marker of success, liberation, and modernity. Yet this symbol supposedly aiming to help Muslim women feel included, for many, has done the exact opposite of what it set out to do. In including one faction of society, it has ostracised another, and a number of Muslim women no longer feel represented. If you find, and you will, that a Muslim woman who once adorned the traditional headscarf now feels obliged to change it up, i.e. wear a turban that she never felt the need to before, show some hair etc.,

then know that these campaigns for representation and inclusivity have achieved nothing but paved the way for a neo-Islam, palatable to the West and those seeking

reform. It seems that in this bid to be more inclusive, Muslim women who seem even remotely 'conservative' are being excluded.

Empowerment does not mean raising one at the expense of the other. All Muslim women are important, full hijab, mid-hijab, and no hijab. This isn't about cultural differences or interpretations of a dress code. It's about pressures to conform to either or. It's about the idea that Muslim women were once seen in a fixed way, and now this fixed way has changed but is still fixed. It's about young Muslims trying to navigate through this world faced with an identity crisis and two unattainable standards to live up to. It's about the creation of a binary. Where once we saw Muslim women in long dresses and head coverings, we now see a whole new Muslim woman, but where does that leave those who still ascribe to the former? If you cover in a certain way because of your culture, so be it – but if pressure to conform to a different mode of dress forms the premise for change, the issue is evident. If the point is the representation of diversity, where is the difference? Because I don't see it.

Commodification Culture

On the topic of diverse representation, we rarely see Muslim women who ascribe to an outwardly 'conservative' version of Islam spotlighted, and when we do, it's not for revolutionary campaigns. We can't have this false notion of acceptance when it doesn't exist. We're not suddenly being represented in the industry because Islam is being celebrated – no. We're just a target market, another number.

D&G, H&M, L'Oréal, River Island and co. care not for our Islamic values so much as they do our pay cheques – thinking otherwise is hopelessly naïve.

When Ofsted stop policing little girls about their hijab, when counter-extremism legislation is recalled and duly assessed for its negative impacts, when Muslim women in a traditional Islamic dress code alongside their contemporary

counterparts are given positions in institutions of power, then I'll take it, and only then will I believe in the tolerance, diversity and acceptance facade. But putting aside industry representation, we also lack in representing ourselves. I've seen numerous photo shoots and initiatives attempting to showcase the diversity of Muslim women, and in all of them, I was flooded with images of women wearing turbans or no headscarves doing amazing things – but I could count on one hand the number of women I saw photographed who adorned a traditional headscarf. And I have to say, it hurt.

It hurt that there are Muslim women who wear the niqab and are neuroscientists, tech geniuses, medical marvels, etc.

It hurt that there are women who wear the Abayah and work with sexual/domestic abuse survivors.

It hurt that there are women who wear a traditional headscarf and fight fires with their bare hands.

It hurts that they're nowhere to be seen and have been confined to a bygone era, as though they did not battle stereotyping and racial aggressions for decades, alone.

It also hurts that the elder generations are being forgotten in this tug of war of representation; we are supposed to be their voice, yet never speak for them.

All the elder women in my life cover in a traditional way (specific to the Asian community), and I know they feel more alone than ever. Coming to this country in the mid 60's to 70's and being the only women of their kind, and once again pushed to the sidelines by those they raised, it must hurt.

A note to readers here: highlighting the lack of representation of a 'certain kind' of Muslim woman doesn't mean that there is an issue or negation of the contributions of those are in the spotlight – rather quite the opposite. They should be applauded and commended for their work and sacrifice as there is finally some sem-

blance of recognition also.

The struggle of covering

It seems the case that those who struggle to wear hijab 'properly' are often shown collective support from multiple factions of society, yet if you've been wearing it your whole life, it's as though you're immune to the pressures and never seemingly struggle to wear it. Well, people couldn't be more wrong. Every day is a struggle. Wearing an Abayah is hard, especially when you see those gorgeous culottes in River Island or a dashing pair of work trousers in Zara. It's hard covering your hair when it fell just right in the morning and the color looked so radiant. It's hard walking around and feeling pressured to represent the Faith, act as though there is no struggle associated with it, and then face marginalisation from the sisters who 'outwardly' struggle, because they show a bit of hair, or they took it off.

Don't assume that Muslim women who cover conservatively are not battling the same pressures as everyone else. Sometimes, it feels more because I can't just whip it off. I can't say I didn't grow up with it. I can't say that I'm not used to it – because I did, and I am.

It needs to be stipulated here that this is in no way attempting to take away from the struggles of Muslim women who find it difficult to wear the hijab, who feel pressured to put it on or take it off, who still struggle to 'fit in' to their own world and friendship groups, and who are trying to find and express themselves. It's hard, and nobody said it would be easy. This isn't to say, 'do it properly or don't do it at all'. This isn't to say, 'you're doing it wrong'. And this isn't to say anyone is 'better than you'. Because they're not.

But what it is doing is calling a spade a spade. The reformation of hijab to fit beauty ideals is an exceptionally heart-breaking but very real reality, and though I can't and won't judge anyone's intentions, the public portrayal of these acts is diluting the message of hijab on a severe scale. Why is it that whenever we see hijab anywhere,

it's always portrayed in the context of 'Muslim fashion' or 'breaking stereotypes'? Why is it never spoken about from a context of Islamic values? And God forbid should you try to address this without being marred as a judgemental 'extremist' who doesn't appreciate the struggles of wearing the hijab.

The Commodification of Islamic dress code

The commodifying of the Islamic dress code ultimately reduces its purpose and significance and strips it of its ideological roots. It's a deceptive reformation of core values via something that is not necessarily haram. We need to speak up and say, 'actually wait, this isn't the prescribed method of wearing hijab. This is not why we do it. Under all schools of thought, in any madhab, any sect, in an offshoot, this is not hijab.' Why are we still succumbing to these ideals? I don't think I need to sit here and list all scholarly opinions on hijab, for its fairly simple and straightforward. Hijab is not all about being modest, for that can be done in many ways. Hijab is not to detract from sexual attention because it won't do that either.

The hijab is not a fashion statement or an entitlement to freedom of expression/religion. The hijab is a command, made compulsory upon the Muslim woman by God.

And that's it. And sometimes it's hard to say that, so we feel the need to identify more poetic ways of justifying our choices – we squirm under the pressure and adopt buzzwords and catchphrases which, no doubt will have truth to them, but will also facilitate in diluting our explanation behind why we do what we do. As a community we no longer seem to even have the zeal to help each other out or remind each other of the principles we hold so dear and the akhirah that looms on the horizon; our standards have dropped so low that we even reprimand those who do. (I'm not calling here for a reversion to the days of 'haram-police' or harsh accounting – but gentle reminders and remembrance of the greater good). There also lies the

issue with problematic terminology, 'liberal', 'moderate', 'extreme' – who gets to decide? Why is the niqab viewed as 'extreme'? Why is the traditional head covering with no Abayah 'moderate'? Why is the turban viewed as 'liberal'? Who came up with this and why did we adopt it?

Battling East and West

Muslim women come in all different shapes and sizes, with varying levels of Imaan and outward observance. They are not a homogenous group and this is a point we must recognise. They're all different, and if you're going to be inclusive, then be inclusive. If many Muslim women do not feel a part of the movement or the struggle, then its core aim of representing diversity has failed. If tomorrow you see my hijab is different, and instead I have a turban on, know that I don't feel liberated or represented. In fact, I have never felt less represented and more oppressed, and every day I pray for my strength back. Fighting misinformed readings of Islam was one thing but battling the entire Western beauty world is a whole other ball game, and I'm afraid to say I'm losing. Badly.

I don't feel strong and independent, instead, I feel beaten down and weakened. If you want to know how to cripple a Muslim woman, I'll tell you. You remove that which gives her dignity. Change it, reform it, and package it with values of beauty, freedom, and fashion.

Values she never previously ascribed to. And from there, you have her directly plugged into the matrix. The inherently flawed, oppressive and immoral matrix. A matrix in which she will always be lagging, never quite there and never quite good enough. In attempting to break stereotypes, as Muslim women, we, have unwittingly played right into them. Falling for a cleverly crafted rhetoric, we were once viewed as 'hidden and repressed' vying for representation and needing liberation. Yet our 'saviours' have not 'freed' us in any way. The only difference is that we are no longer just vessels of the East, but are also vessels of the West, subject to a new Master's rulebook.

Cont'd from page 10

invariably extended to him (i.e., Rasulullah (saws)).

Tirmidhi has quoted a hadith on the authority of Sayyiduna Abu Huraira in which Rasulullah (saws) mentions that he had repaid everyone whosoever had done some good to him except Abu Bakr, and Allah will bestow him with the rewards in the Hereafter for all he had done.

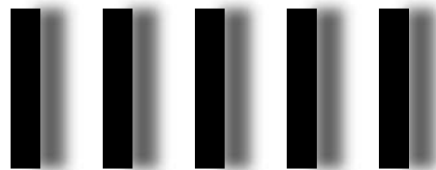
Close every door except that of Sayyiduna Abu Bakr

After praising Sayyiduna Abu Bakr, Rasulullah (saws) directed the Companions to close the doors leading towards the mosque except that of Sayyiduna Abu Bakr. There is consensus among the learned scholars of Ummah that keeping only the door of Sayyiduna Abu Bakr open there was a clear-cut message that after him (i.e., Rasulullah (saws)), Sayyiduna Abu Bakr should lead the Salaah and also become the caliph. The consensus of all the Companions on this point is one of the greatest proofs in this regard. The Companions like Sayyiduna Umar and Sayyiduna Ali would have never accepted something which they felt was not desirable to Rasulullah (saws).

“Were I to take a friend, I would certainly have taken Abu-Bakr”

“It is said that Khalil is the one who in whose heart no space is available for anybody other than his Khalil”

Rasulullah (saws) had taken Allah as his Khalil. His heart was completely occupied by His love and there was no space for anything or anyone except Him. Had there been any, he



ON MOCKERY

Muhamman Ghilan

Our modern culture has embraced mockery of anything and everything to the extent that nothing is off limits as the idea of the Sacred has by and large been discarded. The elders, parents, teachers, religion, prophets, and even God Himself have all become regulars on comedy sketches on television and many comedy acts. Mockery has become so much the norm that when an individual or a group of people has an adverse reaction to it, they're viewed as uptight, too serious, and lacking a sense of humour. After all, these are just words – so, take it easy. Right?

Words are not just sounds we produce to form letters that we string together and blurb out every once in a while. They have meanings and they represent an attitude and a thought process. We articulate our beliefs directly using words, but we also articulate how we see the other using words. Sometimes we directly state what we think, but most of the time our behavioural interactions that are described using words are much louder than our claims.

According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, mockery refers to an insulting or contemptuous action or speech; a subject of laughter, derision, or sport; a counterfeit appearance; an insincere, contemptible, or impertinent imitation; or something ridiculously or impudently unsuitable. This English definition sheds light on the state of mind of the individual who engages in such an act as mockery. It's a state of lack of re-

spect or reverence, a deep hatred or disapproval, and a general view towards what or who is being mocked as being vile or worthless. It also relies on a misrepresentation of the mocked in order to make a subject of mockery out of them.

The Arabic word for mockery is *sukhriyya*, which comes from the three-letter root *sa kh ra*. According to the dictionary *Tongue of the Arabs (Lisan al-Arab)*, this word means to debase or subjugate another thing or person to be at your service at no expense to you. This is the same word used in the Quran numerous times when God is referring to having subjugated the earth, livestock, planets, stars, sun, and the moon for Mankind to benefit from them. It's also used to refer to the different stations humans have been granted and elevated over each other to serve one another. However, when it's used as an active verb where one is performing *sukhriyya* of another, the Quranic position is the command to desist from such an act,

“Believers, no one group of men should jeer at another, who may after all be better than them; no one group of women should jeer at another, who may after all be better than them.” [49:11]

As this verse indicates, the essence of mockery is a view of oneself in relation to the mocked. The consequence of mockery is the view of oneself as the mocker to be elevated over the mocked. It's an assertion of superiority over the

other by way of debasing them through mockery. In the process of doing so, the humanity of the mocked is stripped away from them as they become an object of amusement. The verse saying,

“We have ennobled the Son of Adam” becomes meaningless as their dignity is discarded. The essence of mockery is “I am better than him: You created me from fire and him from clay.” [7:12]

All that is mockery, being sourced from a satanic origin, stands in stark contrast to all that is Sacred. This is evident in the main subjects of mockery, most of which are revered within religious discourse. To make it palatable, the likes of the late Christopher Hitchens say that, “Mockery of religion is one of the most essential things... one of the beginnings of human emancipation is the ability to laugh at authority.” If anything is truly deserving of mockery, it’s this statement and those like it, which fallaciously link human freedom with mockery of the Sacred. Statements such as this one are nothing but a reverberation of the first one of their nature that Satan made to Adam and Eve peace be upon them when he said to them,

“Your Lord only forbade you this tree to prevent you becoming angels or immortals.” [7:20]

Only an idle mind and a diseased heart can ever engage in mockery or enjoy it. For only an idle mind not engaged in beneficial work can produce and receive mockery, and only a diseased heart lacking reverence for the Sacred can accept it. But how can the Sacred be revered in a world that has divorced it from everything anyways? It seems that today mockery is used to show how “ridiculous” a belief is in order to get the one mocked to abandon their “craziness.” Given that the mockers view themselves above the mocked, they sustain their self-delusional

superiority by claiming themselves to be enlightened and pretend that their mockery is only to help the mocked. But they are similar to their predecessors as the Quran states,

“The wicked used to laugh at the believers – they would wink at one another when the believers passed by them, joke about them when they got back to their own people, and say, when they say them, ‘These people are misguided,’ though they were not sent to be their keepers.” [83:29-33]

The vile nature of mockery can never be understood within a worldview that doesn’t see the Sacred. If one is completely blinded from the spiritual realities behind everything, and is unable to see the world as a manifestation of *Kun Fa Ya’koon* (Be and it is), then it’s impossible to recognize the sanctity present in its essence. And so they’ll always be confused as to why believers, especially Muslims, have a problem with mockery.

Nietzsche claimed that mockery is a sign of health and everything unconditional, such as recognizing the Sacred belongs to pathology. It’s ironic that he’s the one who happened to go through a mental breakdown before his death, possibly indicating who had the pathological mind. In truth, mockery is a symptom of a pathologically warped worldview divorced from the Sacred. As long as one’s worldview is warped, they will continue to mock. Hence, the Quran commands the believers when faced with such a circumstance not to engage in any way, shape, or form because it’s futile,

“As He has already revealed to you [believers] in the Scripture, if you hear people denying and ridiculing God’s revelation, do not sit with them unless they start to talk of other things, or else you yourselves will become like them.” [4:140]

WHEN DEATH DRAWS NEAR

Salman al-Ouda

When we receive a sign that our life is nearing the end, it is a decisive and enabling moment. It empowers us to engage in righteous deeds that we had putting off all our lives. It emboldens us to go to people we have wronged and ask their forgiveness.

It inspires us to write our last will and testament, stating therein all of our debts, obligations, and the gifts we wish to give, and to do so according to the dictates of our conscience. We might also entreat our heirs to carry out some religious obligations on our behalf, like the pilgrimage, or advise them to engage in some other act of worship where we might share in the reward.

Allah has permitted us to set aside a third of our estate for bequests. The other two thirds are not ours to dispense with as we wish. They are to be divided up among the rightful heirs in fixed shares as Allah has prescribed in the Quran.

It is best for us to start assuming the best about Allah from now, so we will assume the best about Him when our time comes. We should not despair about our past sins, nor be anxious about what the future holds, nor grieve over our present state. We should pay heed to Allah's words when He tells us:

Indeed, those who have said, 'Our Lord is Allah' and then remained steadfast — the angels will

descend upon them, saying: 'Do not fear and do not grieve but receive glad tidings of Paradise, which you were promised'. (41: 30)

Ikrimah said that when death approaches, "you should not fear what lies ahead and nor despair of your sins, nor despair over your children."

This is because Prophet Muhammad (saws) gave this advice:

"When you die, you should assume the best about Allah." (Muslim)

Coping with the Death of our Loved Ones

Wailing and ritualized mourning are forbidden in Islam. It is not pious behavior, nor is it the proper way to honor the deceased. Allah advises us:

Do not grieve. (9: 40)

The Prophet (saws) enjoins the following upon us:

"Be patient and look forward to Allah's reward." (Bukhari and Muslim)

Rituals of mourning throughout the world sanctify the state of sorrow and bereavement, reviving the pain that we feel for our lost loved ones. Reason, on the other hand, dictates that we should put our sorrow behind us, and instead cultivate the beautiful sentiments that will

allow us to go forward in hope and with hearts full of light.

Those who are truly dead are not those who have passed over into the next life. Rather, they are people who are alive in this world, but they do not know life's value, nor the blessing of having a direct relationship with Allah. Allah points to this fact when he says:

And is one who had been dead and We raised him to life and made for him a light by which to walk among the people, like one who is in darkness from which he can never emerge? (6: 122)

Does this mean that we who are living should forget our loved ones who have passed away? Not at all. We must never forget them. We should remember them warmly and honor them with our words. We should applaud the good that they have done. Indeed, that is often a manifestation in this world of Allah's pleasure with them in the Hereafter.

Likewise, we can give charity or sponsor an orphan in their names and do other acts of worship for the sake of sharing the blessings with them. This could be as simple as keeping a savings bank in our living room where we collect our small change and periodically donate this to charity in our loved one's name, so that Allah can bless them for our good deed on their behalf.

Another way to commemorate our loved ones is to name a park, a street, a public library, or an endowment after them. In this way, their name and memory lives on in their community.

We can visit their graves and greet them in peace, keeping in mind that they will know of our greeting them even though they cannot reply to us.

We can see them in our dreams, sometimes as vividly as if we were awake, and feel joy in our hearts when it happens.

There is nothing wrong with shedding tears. Allah does not take us to account for the tears

that fall from our eyes, nor for the sorrow in our hearts. Crying relieves our pain. Ninety percent of people say that their emotional state improves after they allow themselves to cry.

A teardrop can be a poem. Someone had a dream where they saw a teardrop fall from my eye after the death of my child Abdurrahman, and that tear was a poem. Indeed, elegies for the dead are among the sincerest and most heartfelt of poems, rivaled only by love poetry.

I once visited a friend who had recently lost his wife and five children in a fire. Another friend of mine lost three of his children in an automobile accident. These are the hardest of deaths to endure. Their suddenness makes their pain all the more severe. This is why the Prophet (saws) said:

“True patience is exercised at the initial moment of realization.”

He also said:

“Those who exercise patience, Allah will bless them to have patience.” (Bukhari and Muslim)

Over time, that same pain will provide you with strength and fortitude. You will say to yourself: I have experienced pain, now what do I have to fear?

But at the moment when tragedy strikes, we are more likely to be asking another question:

“Why me? Of all people, why is this happening to me?” This is a passing moment of selfishness which almost inevitably strikes us, even in our deepest sorrow. Does anyone really escape it?

Maxine Schnall's daughter had a near-fatal car accident, and she felt acutely that her neglect was responsible for her almost losing her daughter. The experience changed her life. It led her to write the book *What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger*, which provides strategies for coping with loss interspersed with the stories of people who had to face tragedies, great and small.

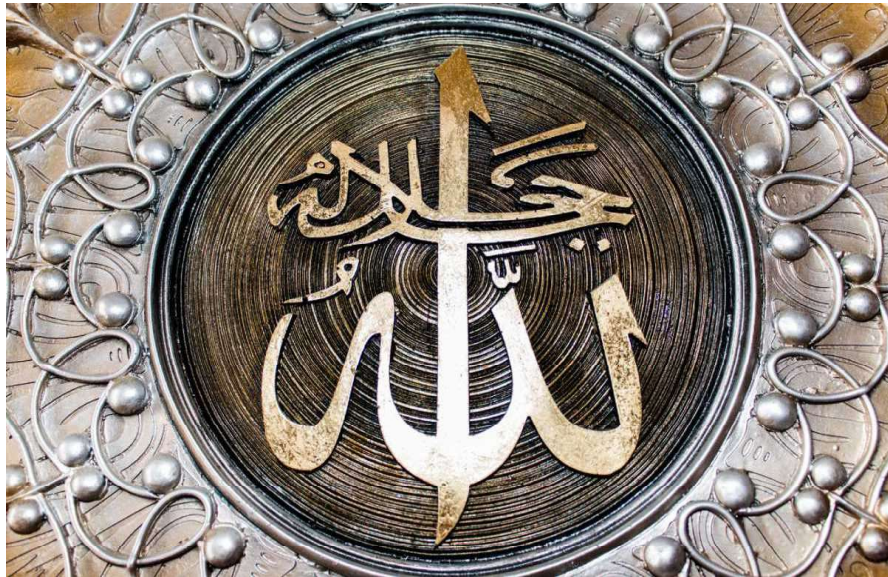
Universal Principle for Universal Success

Synchronize our will with the Will of Allah

Mansoor Alam

Allah's Law of creation is that whenever He wills something, the process of its creation starts right away (36:82). That is, Allah's Will is the fountainhead of creative power, which releases its directive energy in the form of law. It is accountable to no one outside of itself. This means that Sovereignty in the Universe rests with Allah alone. The most distinctive feature of His Sovereignty is that He is accountable no one. No one can question Him why He created such laws (e.g., the universal law of gravity). Similarly, no one can question Him why He created universal code of divine laws (contained in His Book, the Quran) for running the affairs of humankind. On the other hand, He will question people why they created different codes of life for running their affairs (21:23).

The Universe and all the things in it are, therefore, in direct and intimate contact with



the Divine Will every moment of their existence (23:17). The Universe contains two different categories of beings—one self-conscious and possessing a free will (humankind), the other without self-consciousness and not possessing a free will (animate and inanimate matter). The Divine Will relates in different ways to these two categories of beings, as each needs a different kind of sustenance and support. When the Divine directive energy released by the Divine

Will in the domain of Amr enters the realm of space and time, it manifests as Khalq. Allama Iqbal explains very clearly the Qur'anic distinction between Khalq and Amr:

“In order to understand the meaning of the word ‘Amr’, we must remember the distinction which the Qur’an draws between ‘Amr’ and ‘Khalq’. Pringle-Pattison deplores that the English language possesses only one word—creation—to express the relation of God and the universe of extension on the one hand, and the relation of God and the human ego on the other. The Arabic language is, however, more fortunate in this respect. It has two words—‘Khalq’ and ‘Amr’—to express the two ways in which the creative activity of God reveals itself to us. ‘Khalq’ is creation; ‘Amr’ is direction.” [Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, page 82.]

All the laws of Nature flow from the Divine Will and are at the heart of the constant order found in Nature. Nothing in this Universe can escape the grip of these Immutable Natural Divine Laws that determine every object’s behavior in its entirety. In several verses, the Qur’an draws our attention to the rule of law and the order exhibited by Nature. Allah constantly exhorts us to ponder on the regularity of natural phenomena. This regularity is the reflection of the Divine Will, which is free from any trace of internal conflict or contradictions:

“For, before God prostrates itself all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth.” (16:49)

Since every object in the Universe is subject to His Will (i.e. to His Immutable Laws), no human has the authority to change these laws; and Allah does not change any of these natural laws for anyone (10:64, 30:30). Human beings can only discover the natural laws and make use of them. “And He has made the night and the day and the sun and the moon subservient [to His laws, so that they be of use] to you; and all the stars are subservient to His command:

In this, behold, there are messages indeed for

people who use their reason!” (16:12)

Nevertheless, human beings occupy a unique exalted place in the Universe. Although by virtue of possessing a human body, human beings are part of the material world; and they are as much subject to natural laws as any other object in the Universe – birth, growth, degeneration, and death of the human body are natural processes and subject to the laws of Nature (23:12-13). However, a human being has “self” or “ego”, which expresses itself as freewill. Thus, freedom of choice is inherent in the “self.” Since the “self” is a special gift given to human beings by Allah, it is not part of the material body of human (23:14). Although “self” uses the body as a vehicle for its expression, it transcends space and time and, therefore, it is not subject to any physical laws.

Since the essence of “self” is freedom of choice, the Divine Will in the sphere of human-kind performs this function as guidance and not control, and human beings are free to accept or reject His guidance. The Qur’an is very clear on this point:

“The Truth has come from Allah. Then whoever will, let him accept, and whoever will, let him reject” (18:29).

However, this freedom of choice brings with it the responsibility of making that choice. No one can escape this responsibility and evade the results of one’s own actions. The Qur’an says,

“Verily, the grip of thy Sustainer is severe.” (85:12)

No one can bear the responsibility of someone else:

“Whoever accepts guidance, it is only for his own self, and whoever goes astray, does so to his own loss. No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another” (17:15).

“Whoever commits wrong, commits it only against himself” (4:111).

Every soul draws the consequences of its acts on none but itself. No bearer of burdens can bear the burdens of another” (6:164).

“Then guard yourselves against a day when no self shall avail another, nor shall intercession be accepted for it, nor shall compensation be taken for it, nor shall anyone be helped” (2:48)

It is also important to note that nothing can wipe out the results of one’s actions. They are entered in the credit and debit side of the ledger kept by Allah:

“And on every man We have fastened his record around his neck; and We will bring forth to him, on the day of judgment, a book which he will see wide open” (17:13).

A negative deed (i.e., sin) can only be countered by a positive (i.e., righteous) deed:

“Verily, good deeds annul ill deeds” (11:114).

Allah has given human beings freedom of choice but He wants them to exercise this choice based on reason in the light of His revelation. According to Allama Iqbal:

“Thus the element of guidance and directive control in the ego’s activity clearly shows that the ego is a free personal causality. He shares in the life and freedom of the Ultimate Ego who, by permitting the emergence of a finite ego, capable of private initiative, has limited his own freedom of His own free will. This freedom of conscious behavior follows from the view of ego-activity which the Qur’an takes.” [Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, pages 86-87]

Our Prophet (saws) and Sahaba (raa) synchronized their will with Allah’s will and raised humanity to its highest levels:

·> Allah’s Will is to give equal respect to all human beings (17:70); they gave their lives to fulfill this Will.

·> Allah’s Will is that no one will bear the burden of another (6:164, 17:15); they established a system in which even the Prophet (saws) and Khalifa (ra) did not shift their burdens to some-

one else.

·> Allah’s Will is that everybody should receive the output of one’s effort (53:39) and history bears testimony that the Prophet (saws) and Sahaba (ra) did not amass any wealth or fortune for themselves. They lived a very simple life in this world. In fact, Khalifa Abu Bakr (ra) fixed his salary equal to the poorest worker.

·> Allah’s Will is always to do justice— even to one’s enemies (4:135, 5:8, 16:90); they did just that—no bias was shown even in favor of the son of the Khalifa or against any non-Muslim.

·> Allah’s Will is to explore Nature (2:164, 3:190-191, 22:63-65, 23:80, 24:43-44, 39:21, 80:24-32) and they did this with such passion that they became the founders of modern science.

Although humans have freewill to choose any course of action, but the results depend on the course of action chosen. One cannot make one choice and bring about the result of another choice. This is Allah’s Law of Requit and it works inexorably in the entire Universe, including the human world. In the latter case, the result may come out in present life or in the Hereafter.

May Allah give us the strength to synchronize our will with His Will laid out in His Book, the Quran? This is the universal principle of life that will lead to universal success as it did for our Prophet (saws) and his companions!

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the admiring male beautician as well as the woman who has exposed herself to be admired. We should understand that women, throughout the past, were always adorning themselves for their spouses. However, they fulfilled their halaal needs while remaining within the confines of their homes. May Allah bless us with the tawfeeq of emulating the Mubaarak Sunnah of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) in all facets of our lives.

Mufti Zakaria

Persecution of the Previous Believers

S. Muhammad B. Salih al-Uthaymin



Ibn Mas'ūd related that on the day of Hunayn, Allah's Messenger favored some people [over others] in the distribution [of the spoils]. He gave to al-Aqra' b. Hābis one-hundred camels, to 'Uyaynah bin Hisn, he gave a similar amount, and he gave to the other notables from the 'Arabs, favoring them with the distribution [of spoils] on that day. A man said, "By Allah, there is no justice in this distribution, and he [the Prophet] does not intend the Face of Allah by it." I said, "By Allah, I will inform Allah's Messenger [of what you said]," so I went to the Prophet and informed him of what had been said. His face changed until it was like al-sirf and he said, "Who can be just when Allah and His Messen-

ger are not just?" Afterwards, he said, "May Allah have mercy on Mūsa, he was harmed with more than this, but he was patient." So I said, "There is no harm if I do not bring him any such information [again]." (Agreed upon)

The author relates this hadīth by way of 'Abdullah b. Mas'ūd, who said that on the day of Hunayn, which is a reference to the Battle of Tā'if, which took place after the conquest of Makkah. The Messenger fought against the inhabitants and acquired an abundant amount of spoils which included camels, sheep, dirhams, and dīnārs. The

Prophet halted at al-Jī'rānah, which it situated at the boundary of the Harm (Holy Sanctuary) toward the direction of Tā'if. The Prophet camped there and began to distribute the spoils, giving a portion of it to those whose hearts inclined [towards Islam], referring to the leaders of the clans, encouraging them to accept Islam.

The Prophet gave to these people many things, and to one of them he gave a hundred camels. A man, who was present, said, "By Allah, there is no justice in this distribution, and he does not intend the Face of Allah by it." We seek refuge from Allah [from such statements]. The man said this concerning the distribution that

Allah's Messenger was making; the love for this world and Satan leads people to destruction, so we ask Allah for safety. This statement is a statement of disbelief as it ascribes injustice to Allah and His Messenger, and that he did not intend the pleasure of Allah by it. There is no doubt that the Prophet did in fact intend the pleasure of Allah, because he wanted to draw the leaders of the clans and tribes closer, which would strengthen Islam. This is because if the leaders become inclined to Islam and strengthen their faith, it would result in a great amount of goodness, because other clans and tribes would begin to follow their example, and thereby becoming a further cause for strengthening Islam. However, as for ignorance, refuge is sought with Allah, it destroys a person.

When 'Abdullah b. Mas'ud overheard this wicked statement, he brought it to the attention of the Prophet, and the latter's face turned red like sirf, due to its deep redness and alteration. The Prophet said, "Who can be just when Allah and His Messenger are not just?" The Prophet spoke the truth, because if the division done by Allah or His Messenger is not just, then whose can be?

Afterwards, the Prophet said, "May Allah have mercy on Mūsa, he was harmed with more than this, but he was patient," which offers proof that the Prophets were harmed [by their respective people] but they remained patient. This statement was uttered against the Prophet eight years after the migration [to Madinah], meaning, it was not said in the beginning of his call, but after Allah had given him power [over his people], after the recognition of his truthfulness, and after Allah made the signs of his prophethood manifest in the universe and in their own selves. Even with all that, it was still said, "By Allah, there is no justice in this distribution, and he does not intend the Face of Allah by it."

If this can be uttered by a Companion of the Prophet, then do not be surprised when common people describe a certain scholar with

faults, saying, "He has this or that problem," as it is Satan who incites these people to insult the scholars. When they defame the scholars, people begin to lose respect for those scholars' words, thereby leaving none to guide them with Allah's Book. Who is it that will guide the people with Allah's Book when they have no confidence in the scholars and their words? It is Satan and his party who will become their guide.

Backbiting the scholars is more severe than backbiting a common person. This is because backbiting a person is considered a personal backbiting, and even though it is a harm, its harm is only on the backbiter and the one who has been backbitten. However, backbiting the scholars is a harm that affects the entire Islamic religion, since the scholars are the flag bearers of the religion and if people lose confidence in what they say, then the flag of Islam will fall, and the resulting harm will affect the entire Islamic community. If the flesh of the people who are backbitten is considered as carrion, then the flesh of the scholars is considered as poisoned carrion, due of the tremendous harm that results from it. So do not be surprised when you hear someone insulting the scholars, as this was done to Allah's Messenger, but be patient while anticipating a reward from Allah, and know that the [righteous] end is for those who are conscious of Allah (taqwā).

Similar to this are those who verbally insult and disgrace a friend or a family member who makes a single mistake. In such case, the person being abused must remain patient and know that the Prophets were also verbally abused, harmed, and belied. They were labeled as being possessed, poets, soothsayers, and sorcerers. Allah says,

**"But with patience they bore the denial, and they were hurt until Our help reached them."
[Surat al-An'am, 6:34]**

This hadith offers proof for the leader to
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Praying for Moths and Beetles



Robert C. Hoehler

starting places have at least this much in common: reverence for the planet and life itself; acknowledgment and awe that the universe is alive and we are connected to everything in it; and a sense that even the small, mocked, discarded fragments of civilization are to be valued

“... insects as a group are in terrible trouble and the remorselessly expanding human enterprise has become too much, even for them.”

And instantly I’m beyond the realm of anything I know, as I consider the gradual disappearance not of whales but of ... beetles, moths and hoverflies, thanks to the human enterprise we call civilization, as Michael McCarthy put it in *The Guardian*.

It’s too easy to isolate these deeply troubling matters, to focus on one, take aim and fire off blame, but in my uncertainty and aching sense of responsibility, as a full participant in the human enterprise, I find myself groping instead for understanding. We have to change course and I have no idea where or how to start, except in a million places at once, but all of these

... that they are sacred.

The human enterprise of the present moment — the culmination of ten millennia or so of “dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” — is founded on a polluted and perverted sense of the sacred. Money is what’s sacred, because money is the lever of power, conquest, control, dominion.

And thus, as McCarthy points out, dating back to the 1970s, “though unnoticed by the world at large, a whole giant ecosystem was collapsing. The insect world was falling apart.

“Today we know beyond doubt, and with scientific statistics rather than just anecdote, that this is true, and the question immediately

arises: what caused it?

“It seems indisputable: it is us. It is human activity — more specifically, three generations of industrialized farming with a vast tide of poisons pouring over the land year after year after year, since the end of the Second World War. This is the true price of pesticide-based agriculture, which society has for so long blithely accepted.”

The disappearing insects pollinate plants and are food for numerous species of birds, “and their disappearance,” McCarthy writes, “is a principal reason why Britain’s farmland birds have more than halved in number since 1970.”

In other words, insects are valuable — a crucial part of the world we inhabit — because all of life is complexly connected. But to leave it at this is to reduce “value” to functional necessity. If life is sacred, all the fragments of it are valuable in and of themselves, and contribute to the whole in ways we cannot begin to fathom.

In our ten-millennia (and remarkably successful) quest for dominion, we have, I deeply fear, lost a sense of the whole, “that great, amorphous void,” as Laura Bridgeman writes, “which we draw individuals out of, pour refuse in to, and in which lives the nameless, faceless ‘biomass’ that we refuse any real legal or political consideration on a categorical basis. . . .

“Within capitalist models, individuals of other species are not only neglected — their very existence is denied,” she goes on. “They are instead relegated to the realm of property, only to be considered or ‘conserved’ when their bodies are seen as necessary for the health of an ecosystem of value; and then, they are lumped into ‘populations’ or ‘stocks’ rather than recognizing them as individuals with interests, deserving of their fair share of resources like any human being.”

For me, the big question that emerges — the question I don’t want to face — is how to live within a system and mindset that devalues and diminishes most of life, regarding it as, at best,

a resource, and at worst, trash, to be landfilled, dumped into the ocean, tossed on the sidewalk. Even when I object to a particular situation, I utilize resources to do so — my computer, my car, my cellphone, whatever — that contribute to some serious and worsening ecological or social disaster.

How does one live in a world that needs to be reconceived at its core? I’m not a religious guy, but this when I stumble toward prayer.

“Many of us who grope toward praying today are like a city gutted by fire. Exhausted, over-committed, burned out, we scarcely have the time or the energy to pray,” Walter Wink writes in *The Powers That Be*.

“Prayer may or may not involve regular regimens, may or may not be sacramental, may or may not be contemplative, may or may not take traditional religious forms. It is in any case not a religious practice externally imposed but an existential struggle against the ‘impossible,’ against an antihuman collective atmosphere, against images of worth and a value that stunt and wither full human life.

“Prayer is a field hospital in which the spiritual diseases that we have contracted from the Powers can be diagnosed and treated.”

And from this field hospital, I pray into a void in which there are no answers, just overwhelming silence. The silence is respect. The silence is humility.

And the wisdom that emerges is indigenous: “When you go to dig your fields, or make a pot from clay, you are disturbing the balance of things. When you walk, you are moving the air, breathing it in and out. Therefore you must make payments.”

The quote is from *Survival International*, describing the philosophy of the Arhuaco people of northern Colombia. Is it too late to pay attention to this sort of knowing? What could it possibly mean? It can’t make the moths and hoverflies return, but perhaps it can make us notice and value the insects that are still here, and ask: What do they need?

Allah reveals an entire chapter

BECAUSE OF THIS WOMAN

Omar Suleiman

The story is about a very special woman, her name is Khawlah bint Tha'labah. Khawlah bint Tha'labah tells her story. She says that:

My husband, Al-Aws ibn Samit, was older than me and he had a really bad temper, so he used to constantly be verbally abusive with me. And we had an argument, and he said to me the famous words:

“You are to me like my mother’s back,” meaning you’re like my mom, you’re haram for me, so I’m not going to touch you, I’m not going to treat you like a wife, you have no rights upon me, I’m just going to leave you in the house like a prisoner.

This was a form of divorce that existed in the time of Ignorance. But the problem is now they’re Muslims.

So Khawlah says:

“He said this to me, and the next day, he came back and he tried to be intimate with me.

And I said:

“No. You can’t tell me that I’m like your mother’s back, and then try to be intimate with me the next day!”

So Khawlah says:

“He actually tried to force himself on me, and she says, I was a lot stronger than he was, I was a strong young woman, so I pushed him off and I went to the Prophet (peace be upon him).

When she went to the Prophet, and told him what happened, you know, Subhan Allah, Allah could have revealed to the Prophet some-

thing privately to deal with her situation, instead Allah reveals an entire chapter of the Quran in response to this woman Subhan Allah. And the first words of that are:

Allah has heard the plea of that woman that has come to you complaining about her husband and she grieves to Allah. (58:1)

There’s a whole chapter now that’s called the woman who pleads. If I ask you what chapter of the Quran has a mention of Allah’s name in every verse, most people would say chapter Al-Ikhlās, it might be some chapters in the last part of the Quran, but here you have a chapter that’s actually more than a couple of pages and Allah chooses this chapter to be the only chapter in which His name is in every single verse: The Woman who Pleads. As if Allah is saying that He heard that woman when no one else heard her.

So much so that He revealed a chapter with His name in each and every single verse to show how much He heard that woman subhan Allah.

The Culture of Respecting Women

Now, this created a culture amongst the companions.

Remember Umar ibn Al-Khattab? Umar was walking one day and he was with a man by the name of Al-Jarood. Al-Jarood says that:

“While we’re walking, this woman suddenly calls out and says:

‘O Umar I remember when you were Umayr (meaning little Umar), and you were in the marketplace Ukad, you were in the marketplace tending to your sheep with a stick, so fear Allah as Caliph taking care of the people, and know that the one who fears the threat of punishment in the hereafter realizes that it’s not distant, and the one who fears death, fears missing an opportunity in this life.’

Umar broke down into tears, he starts bawling. Al-Jarood says:

‘What is it with you old lady? Why did you make the man cry like that? Why are you talking to the Caliph that way?’

Umar grabs him and says to Al-Jarood:

“Do you know who this woman is? This is Khawlah, the woman that Allah heard from above seven heavens. Do you think I’m not going to listen to her? So it actually created a culture.

Ibn Kathir says in his Tafsir:

“There is another incident where a man was talking to Umar and then suddenly Khawlah came, and khawlah started talking to Umar, and Umar just completely neglected the man, he completely abandoned the man and Khawlah was just going on and on and on and Umar was sitting in a humble way and listening to her. And the man gets frustrated he says:

“You left a man of Quraysh to tend to this old woman?” Which shows you something: Khawlah didn’t actually belong to a powerful tribe, and that man has so much pride. He said:

“You’re leaving a man of Quraysh to talk to that old woman?”

Umar responds once again:

“This is a woman who Allah listened to from above the seven heavens. This is Khawlah bint Tha’labah. By Allah, if she did not leave me until the night fell, I would not tell her to leave until she got what she came for, even if salah time came, I’d go to pray and I’d come back and keep listening to her.”

So, Subhan Allah, it created a culture amongst the companions to respect women in particular, and to realize that just because people might not be heard in this world doesn’t mean that Allah is not hearing them.



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give to whomever he believes will be a benefit to Islam, even if he gives him more than others. However, this should not be based on personal interest, whereby he gives to the one he has affection toward and withholds from the one he dislikes. Therefore, the leader has the option to give more to some over others if he believes that doing so will be of benefit to Islam, but [he must remember] that he will be responsible for his decision in front of Allah. It is therefore unlawful for anyone to oppose him in his decision, and whoever does will only oppress himself.

This hadīth also offers evidence for the fact that the Prophet derived lessons from the [lives of the] previous Messengers, which [is evident from] the statement, “May Allah have mercy on Mūsā, he was harmed with more than this, but he was patient.” Allah also says,

“In their narratives is indeed a lesson for people of understanding.” [Surat Yusuf, 12:111]

Also,

“They are those whom Allah had guided. So follow their guidance.” [Surat al-An’am, 6:90]

Therefore, Allah commanded His Prophet to adhere to the guidance of the previous Prophets, and so it is also necessary for us to adhere to the way of the Prophets in being patient when a harm afflicts us, anticipating the reward from Allah. It is known that along with this anticipation [of reward], [patience] will raise us in rank and atone for our sins

Kindness to Animals



Aisha Stacey

When we mention the religion of Islam, often the first word that comes to mind is peace. The word Islam is derived from the infinitive 'sa-la-ma' which also is the root for the word salam, which means peace.

Islam is a way of life that promotes peace, dignity, respect, tolerance, justice and mercy. All of these qualities are tempered with serenity (calmness) that comes from submission to Allah. Perhaps the greatest of these qualities is mercy.

It is one of the overriding themes throughout the Qur'an.

Certainly, We have brought them a Book (the Qur'an) which We have explained in detail with knowledge, — guidance, and a mercy to a people who believe. (Al-A'raf 7: 52)

Mercy is that ethereal quality that embodies gentleness, piety, care, consideration, love, and forgiveness. When these qualities are observable in this world, they are a mere reflection of Allah's mercy towards His creation.

Allah the Almighty said clearly that Prophet Muhammad (saws) was a mercy for all creation, not just for his family and friends, for the Arab nation, for the people of his generation, or for human beings alone.

And We have sent you (O Muhammad) not but as a mercy for all creatures. (Al-Anbiya' 21: 107)

Prophet Muhammad (saws) was the embodiment of mercy, he showed compassion to all those around him, family, orphans, friends, strangers and even enemies.

He also treated the environment and animals with respect and mercy. He taught his followers that because animals were part of Allah's creation they should be treated with dignity and due care.

The traditions of Prophet Muhammad (saws) remind us that humankind was put on this earth to be the custodian of Allah's creation. Treating animals with kindness and mercy is just one of the responsibilities embedded in that custodianship.

Prophet Muhammad's words and behavior make it clear that causing defenseless creatures pain and suffering is not only completely unacceptable, but we will also be answerable to Allah the Almighty for such actions.

"If someone kills a sparrow for fun, the sparrow will cry out on the Day of Judgment, 'O Lord! That person killed me in vain! He did not kill me for any useful purpose.'" (An-Nasa'i)

The Prophet (saws) said, "Whoever kills a sparrow or anything bigger than that without a

just cause, Allah will hold him accountable on the Day of Judgment.”

The listeners asked, “O Messenger of Allah, what is a just cause?” He replied,

“That he will kill it to eat, not simply to chop off its head and then throw it away.” (An-Na-sa’i)

Islam expects humankind to treat all animals (all living creatures – birds, sea creatures, and insects) with respect and dignity. Prophet Muhammad continuously advised people to show kindness.

He forbade the practice of cutting tails and manes of horses, of branding animals at any soft spot, and of keeping horses saddled unnecessarily (Muslim). If the Prophet saw any animal over-burdened or ill-fed he would speak mildly to the owner and say,

“Fear Allah in your treatment of animals.” (Abu Dawud)

However, refraining from physical cruelty is not enough; abstaining from mental cruelty is equally important.

Even a bird’s emotional distress should be treated seriously. One of Prophet Muhammad’s Companions narrates, “We were on a journey and during the Prophet’s absence, we saw a bird with its two chicks; we took them. The mother bird was circling above us in the air, beating its wings in grief.

When Prophet Muhammad (saws) returned he said,

“Who has distressed this bird by taking its chicks? Return them to her.” (Abu Dawud and Authenticated by Al-Albani)

In pre- Islamic times, pagan superstitions and polytheistic practices included acts of torture and cruelty to animals. Islam condemned this and put a stop to all such practices.

When Prophet Muhammad and his Companions migrated to Madinah, they noticed that people used to cut off camels’ humps and the fat tails of sheep for food. The Prophet forbade

them from doing this and said,

“Whatever is cut off an animal while it is still alive, is carrion (i.e., unlawful to eat).” (At-Tirmidhi)

In Islam, the rules pertaining to slaughtering animals are very strict and fixed. Protecting animals from pain and undue suffering is paramount:

“Allah has ordained kindness (and excellence) in everything. If the killing (of animals) is to be done, do it in the best manner, and when you slaughter, do it in the best manner, sharpen the knife and put the animal at ease.” (Muslim)

Humankind must strike a balance in their treatment of animals. All living creatures were put on this earth by Allah for our benefit. They are not at the same level as human beings but neither should they be treated cruelly.

It is humankind’s responsibility to see that they have food, water, and shelter from the elements. Living creatures must not be overburdened, abused, or tortured and doing so will surely result in Allah’s just punishment.

A true believer in Allah demonstrates his or her belief by respecting the entire creation, and Prophet Muhammad’s character and actions are a shining example of respect for all that exists.

“There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab, nor for a non-Arab over an Arab. Neither is the white superior over the black, nor is the black superior over the white -- except by piety.” (Hadith)

Prophet Yusuf (AS)

THE KING'S DREAM

In due course Yusuf (as) was delivered from prison – but under the most unexpected circumstances.

The king of Egypt had a dream. This dream would become the main reason for Yusuf (as) to come out of prison in full honour and dignity.

Perplexed as to its meaning, the king related it to his chiefs and advisors.

“Indeed, I have seen [in a dream] seven fat cows being eaten by seven [that were] lean, and seven green spikes [of grain] and others [that were] dry. O eminent ones, explain to me my vision, if you should interpret visions.” (Qur’an 12:43)

His high ranking officials were as puzzled as the king himself. They declared the chimera as a mixture of false dreams, adding that they were not qualified to interpret dreams. (Qur’an 12:44)

When the cupbearer who had been in prison with Yusuf (as) heard about the king’s dream, he recalled the man who had correctly interpreted his own dream years earlier in prison. He volunteered to provide an interpretation of the dream and asked to be sent to see Yusuf (as).

He returned to the prison. He found the one he sought and addressed him with respect that he realized was due to him.

He narrated the dream to Yusuf (as) and requested its meaning so he may return to the people of the court for them to know. (Qur’an 12:46) His words were understood as meaning so that the king and others might know Yusuf’s

(as) true worth and the error of keeping him unjustly imprisoned.

From the springs of wisdom and knowledge that Allah had granted him, Yusuf (as) disclosed the meaning of the dream to the cupbearer.

“You will plant for seven years consecutively; and what you harvest leave in its spikes, except a little from which you will eat. Then will come after that seven difficult [years] which will consume what you saved for them, except a little from which you will store. Then will come after that a year in which the people will be given rain and in which they will press [olives and grapes].” (Qur’an 12:47-49)

YUSUF’S (as) RISE TO POWER

The king was impressed with the interpretation. He ordered for Yusuf (as) to be brought to him.

But Yusuf’s (as) response to the king’s messenger who came to release him from prison was totally unexpected by the king. Yusuf (as) refused to leave prison and insisted that the messenger return to the king and ask him about the case of the women who cut their hands.

“Indeed, my Lord is Knowing of their plan,” he added (Qur’an 12:50)

To noble Yusuf (as), there were two considerations far more important than freedom. The first was that his integrity and innocence should be established beyond any doubt by clearing

him of guilt in the matter of Zulaikha and her companions. Second, Yusuf (as) needed an assurance that if he left prison he would not continue to be harassed by the highly-placed women of the city, and by Zulaikha in particular. If one or both of these conditions were not met, he preferred to remain in prison.

Yusuf (as) respectfully demanded that the king investigate the affair of the women who cut their hands. The king became curious and summoned the wife of Al-Aziz and her associates for questioning.

The women's response was immediate and spontaneous. They cleared him of all the evil charges against him previously. They said,

**“Perfect is Allah ! We know about him no evil.”
(Qur’an 12:51)**

The wife of the minister then added her testimony.

“Now the truth has become evident. It was I who sought to seduce him, and indeed, he is of the truthful. (Qur’an 12:51)

For the aristocratic Zulaikha, this public confession of her blameworthiness was no doubt the ultimate act of penance and abasement. Earlier she had defended herself in front of the other women. But during the intervening years, she had reflected upon her own actions and upon the absolutely unwavering integrity and purity of the man whose she had deliberately set out to ruin.

Yusuf's (as) request to the king to clear the matter of the women was so that his former master Al-Aziz will know that Yusuf (as) was not a betrayer and that his Lord does not guide the scheming of betrayers. (Qur’an 12:52)

“And I do not acquit myself,” he continued. Indeed, the soul is a persistent enjoiner of evil, except those upon which my Lord has mercy. Indeed, my Lord is Forgiving and Merciful.” (Qur’an 12:53)

These words reveal the tremendous purity and integrity of Yusuf's (as) character. Although he was a prophet protected by Allah from Shaytan and his nafs, he did not hesitate to admit publicly that he too could be subject to temptation. And he pointed out an essential fact for all mankind to take note of: that the nafs always, without exception, incites or urges or commands us to do evil, unless Allah's mercy intervenes.

Once his innocence was established, Yusuf (as) appeared before the King. After hearing, Yusuf's (as) words the King became even more impressed and entrusted him to a position of high rank.

Directed and guided by Allah, Yusuf (as) made a request of the king and asked to be appointed guardian of the storehouses of the land. His request was granted and thus Yusuf (as) was made the chief minister of Egypt, bearing the title of Al-Aziz, the highest official in the land after the king. Yusuf (as) proclaimed his Lord's Message and established a just law base on Allah's commands. In addition to this, he stored up the country's grain during the first seven years of plenty, except that portion that the people ate.

The young boy betrayed and thrown into the well was now established as the chief minister of Egypt. His patience and perseverance, and above all his total submission to the will of Allah had already resulted in great reward. Yusuf (as) knew however that the greatest reward for patience and righteousness would be in the hereafter.

YUSUF (as) MEETS HIS BROTHERS

And the brothers of Yusuf came [seeking food], and they entered upon him; and he recognized them, but he was to them unknown. (Qur’an 12:58)

The time passed. During the first seven years of his administration, Yusuf (as) set aside abundant stocks of grain as provision for the lean years that were ahead. Then came the drought

and the barren years began. When the people became hungry, Yusuf (as) distributed the stored-up grain to them.

The famine affected neighbouring lands as well. Yusuf (as) gave grain to any needy person that came to him.

The nearby land of Palestine was also hit by famine and so was Yaakub's (as) family afflicted with hunger. They soon heard that the chief minister of Egypt was bartering food for goods. Accordingly, an aged Yaakub (as), dispatched his sons, Yusuf's (as) half-brothers, to Egypt to buy food. He kept home the son who was dearest to him from his remaining sons, Yusuf's (as) full brother, Binyamin.

When the brothers arrived in Egypt and were ushered in to see Yusuf, he recognised them immediately, but as they had not seen him since their separation at the well, they did not know him. How would they have known that the little brother that they had sold to the Egyptian caravan who had then been sold into slavery had now become the chief minister of Egypt?

Yusuf (as) was eager for news of his beloved father, mother and younger brother. He spoke to his brothers in a way that they could not recognise him, inquiring the purpose of their visit. They replied that they had heard he sold grain. He asked if they were spies.

They denied emphatically. Yusuf (as) then asked them where they lived. "In Canaan," they replied, "and our father is a prophet of Allah. His name is Yaakub."

Yusuf (as) inquired about other siblings. "We were originally twelve brothers," they replied, never suspecting to whom they were speaking. "But the younger, who was most loved by our father was killed. He had another brother, but our father did not send him with us, keeping him at home because he loves him so much."

Concealing his concern about the welfare of his father and the household, Yusuf (as) acted suspicious as to the truth of their story. He ordered for his brothers to be treated as official

guests, and for them to be given as much as grain as they could carry.

Before they left on the return trip home, Yusuf (as) made clear to them his terms for dealing with them in the future.

He ordered them to bring him a brother of theirs from their father, meaning the son to whom their father was most attached presently or they would not receive any grain from him nor be allowed to visit him in the future. They declared that they would attempt to bring their younger brother along.

Yusuf (as) ordered his servants to secretly place his brothers' goods that they had traded in for the grain, back into their saddlebags, so that they may see them upon their arrival home and perhaps come back to Egypt to return the goods.

THE BROTHERS RETURN TO YAAKUB (as)

When they returned to their father, Yaakub (as), they explained to him that no more grain would be provided to them unless they travelled with their youngest brother, Binyamin. He had become very close to his father, especially after Yusuf's (as) disappearance. Remembering his previous loss, Yaakub (as) did not want to part with his young son. Once again, the brothers promised to safeguard their youngest brother, and once again Yaakub (as) felt his heart constrict with fear.

Yaakub (as) was greatly troubled by their demand, for in truth he had never recovered from the pain of his sons' earlier betrayal of his trust. Indeed, for all he knew, this might be merely another plot of theirs for getting rid of their half-brother. But as in the case of Yusuf (as), Yaakub (as) was powerless. His sons must return to Egypt to bring more grain to feed their families, and if their story was true, they would not even be able to approach the ruler of Egypt unless his youngest son accompanied them. Thus he surrendered his will to whatever the

All-Knowing might decree for him and his sons.

To the brothers' amazement, they found that the goods they paid for the grain had been secretly returned to them.

The strangeness of his sons' treatment by the Egyptian nobleman now became another source of uneasiness. But the aged prophet's understanding was governed both by patience and by wisdom. Reading the signs, he readily understood that the matter had been decreed by Allah and that his responsibility was to accept the destiny ordained for himself and his sons. However, for his own peace of mind, he bound them by a solemn pledge – that they were to promise in the name of Allah to bring their youngest brother back to him unless they were surrounded by enemies and killed. When they gave their word, Yaakub (as) said,

“Allah, over what we say, is Witness.” (Qur'an 12:66)

Although Yaakub (as) was particularly close to his youngest two sons, he loved all his sons dearly. They were strong, handsome, capable men, and Yaakub (as) was afraid that some harm might befall them on yet another trip to Egypt. To minimise the risks, he made his sons promise to enter the city by different gates. (Qur'an 12:67)

THE BROTHERS' SECOND JOURNEY TO EGYPT

As their father had advised, the brothers entered the city through different gates. And soon again they were in the presence of the Al-Aziz.

We can imagine Yusuf's (as) feelings at seeing his beloved younger brother after a separation of so many years. It is reported that Yusuf (as) then paired off the ten brothers two by two for eating and sleeping. Then, since the youngest, Binyamin was without a partner, Yusuf (as) paired him with himself.

Yusuf (as) secretly revealed his identity to Binyamin and advised him not to grieve over

what they had done in the past or might do in the future.

Then, in keeping with his custom, Yusuf (as) ordered that one load of grain be given to each of the eleven men. Afterwards, he put a golden cup or bowl used for measuring grain as well as for drinking, into his beloved brother Binyamin's bag.

The eleven brothers set out for home with their load. Along the way, they were summoned back by officials of the minister, saying that the king's measuring cup was missing.

The brothers were astonished and defended themselves asserting that they were not thieves and had no knowledge of the missing cup.

The officials asked, “What is your punishment for one who steals?” The brothers replied that in the religion of their great-grandfather Ibrahim (as), the one who steals is taken as a slave. Yusuf (as) did not want his brother punished under the laws of Egypt but wanted the opportunity to keep his brother with him while the others returned to their father Yaakub (as). The bags were searched, and the golden cup was found amongst Binyamin's possessions.

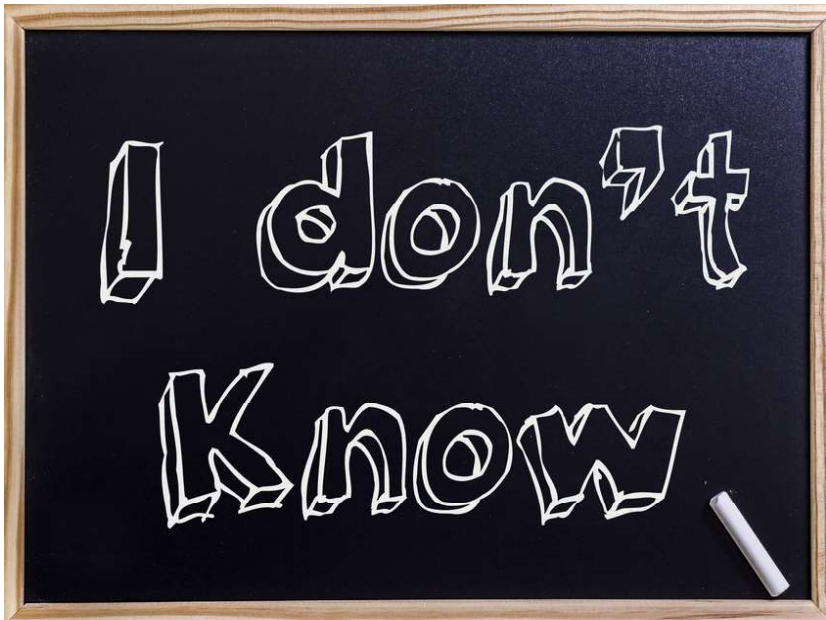
The brothers were profoundly shocked and bewildered by the evidence before them. Yet although they did not have the means to disprove it, neither did they make the slightest attempt to defend Binyamin's honour or deny the accusation, which they certainly knew to be false. They joined forces in the accusations against him, possibly out of eagerness to clear themselves of suspicion.

Thus they failed both Binyamin and their father, with them whom they had taken a sacred by Allah to do all in their power to protect their youngest brother and bring him safely home. As they had sold Yusuf (as) in the past for a paltry price, they now sold Binyamin for a load of grain.

Hearing his brothers' accusation, Yusuf (as) kept it all within himself, including all that he

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Importance of Saying:



I was once invited to a faraway place to an Islamic event as a keynote speaker. At the end of the event someone came up to me and asked a religion based question. I cheerfully replied to them and said: “That is a really good question, ma shaa Allah. But my apologies as I do not know the answer. I would like to know the answer too. I would recommend that you ask your local scholar.”

At that point I could tell the person was shocked by their facial expressions and then they verbalized their shock by saying: “You seriously don’t know the answer to this question! You traveled all the way here and you end up saying I do not know!” (I believe the person thought I was a scholar) So I smiled back and said: “I am sorry. But I really do not know the answer. You are better off having me say “I do not know” than giving you an incorrect answer

and ruining things for you and me.”

Generally speaking, being put in such situation and not knowing an answer to a question which people expect you to know may be a bit embarrassing to the one being asked. It has happened, countless times, where people guessed answers just so they can avoid such “embarrassment”.

With that being said, I couldn’t help but remember the following amazing hadith classified as authentic in Sefat Al-Fatwa. Please pay close attention to it as this may really have a long

lasting effect on you. A man asked Prophet Muhammad (saws): “What is the most disliked/evil place (i.e to Allah)?” Can you guess what was the response of the Prophet (saws)? Can you guess what was the response of the man who receives direct revelation from God, the one whom the whole ummah views as the most knowledgeable person about Islam on Earth! The Prophet (saws) said: “I do not know”

By Allah, this raises his status in our eyes even more! There was NO hesitation! NO “but umm... but I think...” It was a simple plain “I do not know”.

The Prophet (saws) then sought to ask Angel Jibreel (as) the question and said: “O Jibreel what is the most disliked/evil place/location?” Can you guess what was the response of the angel closest to Allah! Can you guess what was

the answer of the angel who was responsible to reveal Allah's commands to all prophets. He, Jibreel, said: "I do not know". Allahu akbar! This is mind-boggling!

Then Jibreel (as) left for some time and then came back to the Prophet (saws) and said: "O Muhammad, you asked me what is the most disliked/evil place/location to Allah? And I responded saying: "I do not know". So I asked my Lord: "What is the most disliked/evil place/location?" and He told me the"

Now surely, Allah, Al-Aleem (The All-Knowledgeable) knew the answer. But my intention for writing this article isn't for you to focus on the response since it is a lengthy topic that requires another article to explain. The point that I wanted to share is the fact that Prophet Muhammad and Angel Jibreel (May Allah's peace and blessings be upon them) didn't hesitate to say: "I do not know". They knew really well the severe punishment that falls on those who speak without knowledge and the honor brought forth to those who know their limits and remain humble.

Read carefully, please, Ch 7 V 33: "Say (O Muhammad (saws): "(But) the things that my Lord has indeed forbidden are Al-Fawahish (great evil sins, every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse, etc.) whether committed openly or secretly, sins (of all kinds), unrighteous oppression, joining partners (in worship) with Allah for which He has given no authority, and saying things about Allah of which you have no knowledge."

And the Prophet (saws) said: "Whoever tells lies about me deliberately, let him take his place in Hell." – Sahih Muslim

So when you are asked a question and don't know the answer ESPECIALLY if it was a religious matter then don't hesitate to say: "I do not know" and follow it with another statement if you wish such as "I will ask for you" as long as you will actually do it though.

Brothers and sisters, we are better off being

embarrassed in front of people for not knowing an answer to their question than being embarrassed in front of Allah for giving them an answer without knowledge.

May Allah bless you and increase you in beneficial knowledge.

Source: muslimatters

Cont'd from page 36

had observed of their selfishness and greed. (Qur'an 12:77)

Now recalling their solemn promise to their father, the brothers began to reflect on the difficulty of their situation. They were deeply troubled about how they would face him with such news, which would add so greatly to his grief over the loss of Yusuf (as), whom he had never ceased to mourn, that it might kill him.

They pleased to the Al-Aziz and spoke about his old age and weakness and his great love Binyamin. They also repeated that Binyamin's brother had been lost in the past, and since their father was already broken-hearted on that account, they would probably die when he heard this news. They begged him to take one of them in Binyamin's place. (Qur'an 12:78)

Yusuf (as) remained adamant. The brothers realised that they had reached a dead end. There was nothing further to be hoped for from the Al-Aziz unless they complied with his demand.

Yusuf's (as) scheme and actions were carried out under a divine plan for his brothers and father. Yusuf's (as) primary objective was their repentance and reform. If he had revealed himself to them at once, there might have been no repentance but merely more envy and resentment. The desired lesson and effect was therefore to be produced through suspense, drama and mystery, letting the brothers feel the threat of being denied grain to feed their families and of encountering unknown troubles in Egypt.

The eldest brother took charge and reminded the rest of their oath to their father and that they had previously failed concerning Yusuf (as). He offered to remain in Egypt whilst the others returned to Canaan with Binyamin.

Beware of Pseudo-Scholars & Half-Baked Knowledge!

Abu Aaliyah

The best proverbs manage to capture important ideas in just a few words. One well-worn Arab proverb has it that: *nisf al-'ilm akhtar min al-jahl* – ‘Half-baked knowledge is more dangerous than ignorance.’ ‘The greatest enemy of knowledge,’ insists Steven Hawking, ‘is not ignorance, it is the illusion of knowledge.’ In the scholastic tradition of Islam there is the concept of *ta’alum*, of ‘feigning knowledge’: claiming to be well-versed in religious matters merely by reading books, rather than by learning, studying and dialoguing with seasoned scholars. And so very often, such half-baked knowledge can be more corrupting and dangerous – to both the individual and the society – than simple, plain ignorance. Permit me to elaborate:

The whole notion of how a little knowledge can deceive a person into thinking they are more expert than they actually are has, I think, been wonderfully stated in a poem by the English poet, Alexander Pope. In his *An Essay on Criticism* (1709), he says:

A little learning is a dangerous thing;
drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:

there shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
and drinking largely sobers us again.

Some of the lines of his *Essay* have become part of the popular lexicon, such as: ‘To err is human, to forgive divine’ and ‘fools rush in where angels fear to tread.’ Then there is the famous first line of the above couplets, often misquoted as: ‘A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.’

In Greek mythology, it was held that drinking from the Pierian Spring would grant a person great knowledge and inspiration. Pope explains how if a person only learns a little; if they only drink shallow drafts, it’s likely to intoxicate them and make them feel giddy and delusional. It’s apt to make them feel as if they know a great deal. However, a greater share of learning should remove their false pretensions and humble them. For drinking largely sobers, in that one then understands their level and becomes aware of how little they truly know.

Pope’s dangers of a little learning finds an earlier parallel in Muslim heritage. In some of the manuals written to help train Muslim scholars, teachers and students of Sacred Law, it cau-

tions to beware of becoming an Abu Shibr (lit. “Father of a Span”). It’s said that: ‘Knowledge has three spans [or stretches]: Whomsoever enters the first stretch becomes puffed up with pride; whoever enters the second is humbled; while whoever enters the third realises they know nothing.’ An Abu Shibr is someone who gets stuck in the first stretch. Having dipped his toe in the ocean of learning; having only drunk shallow drafts, Abu Shibr is intoxicated, loses sight of his fledgling level, and acts as if he is seasoned in sacred knowledge.

Of course, not everyone who enters the first stretch of learning becomes intoxicated. Those who receive knowledge at the hands of wise, cultivating scholars are less likely to labour under such a delusion (and if some do slide into the Abu Shibr persona, the experienced shaykh is likely able to treat the disease with an effective cure). Rather, it’s those whose knowledge comes only by way of a few books or surfing the Net that are most at risk. And like an alcoholic in denial, Abu Shibr is a problem to himself as well as to others.

As for the second and third spans, or stretches, of knowledge, then as the months and years pass, the one seeking it appreciates, at first hand, just how vast and complex the ocean of sacred knowledge is. The seeker becomes aware, even via one single religious issue, the linguistic and juristic nuances entailed in deriving a ruling for it; the highly elaborate legal theory that underpins it; and the intricate scholarly conversations that surround it. This is very humbling, making one acutely aware of their own level. With further learning and engagement with knowledge, one is led to the stark realisation of just how little they truly know – in comparison to the great masters and experts of this blessed tradition.

Nowadays, online forums and chatrooms are awash with pseudo-scholars audaciously speaking about things they have no knowledge of. Ibn Taymiyyah wrote: ‘Whosoever speaks about the religion without knowledge is a liar,

even if he didn’t intend to lie!’ Such pretenders might know something about the subject they are discussing, but do not know enough for a God-pleasing, objective discussion. They know a thing or two on the matter, but are ignorant of ten other things about it: and all too often they are ignorant of their own ignorance! This is due to a diseased heart and diminished piety, so the ego pushes them into false pretence, denial, haughtiness, conceit and being too full of themselves – wa’l-‘iyazubi’Llah.

Al-Khalil b. Ahmad remarked: ‘There are four types of people: (1) One who knows and knows he knows; he is learned, so follow him! (2) One who knows and knows not that he knows; he is asleep, so wake him! (3) One who knows not and knows he knows not; he seeks to learn, so teach him! (4) One who knows not and knows not that he knows not; he is a fool, so shun him!’

Our ‘ulema explain that there are two types of ignorance (jahl): simple ignorance (jahl basit), and compounded ignorance (jahl murakab). Simple ignorance is, to a degree, a minor problem, in that it is easily remedied by the simple act of asking. Ask the people of knowledge if you do not know, orders the Qur’an [16:43] One hadith states: ‘The cure for ignorance is to ask (innama shifa’u’l-‘iyy al-su’al). Simple ignorance is where one is aware that one doesn’t know; in other words, one realises their state of ignorance. As such, there is a sense of humbleness that accompanies simple ignorance.

Not so compounded ignorance which, Islamically speaking, is a far more pernicious problem. For the person wallowing in this ignorance is convinced he knows what he doesn’t know. He thinks he has knowledge of the issue, while in reality he knows next to nothing about it. Much of the Islamic postings on the Internet are characterised by such ignorance upon ignorance, or half-baked knowledge, as they pass themselves off as the real McCoy. But what causes a person to pant like a dog on heat, insist-

ing: 'I do know, I do know', while the reality is very different? And what are the telltale signs of being soiled by such ignorance?

As noted earlier, the ego is all too often the culprit in such matters. In his censure of half-baked knowledge and pseudo-scholarship, the great Muslim polymath, Ibn Hazm wrote:

'Some people – who are overcome by ignorance, whose intellects are weak and whose nature is corrupt – think they are from the learned, but they aren't. There is no harm greater to knowledge or the learned than from the likes of such people. For they took a meagre part of some of the sciences, while missing a much larger portion than what they had grasped. Moreover, their seeking knowledge was not a search for knowledge of Allah; exalted is He, nor was their aim to escape the darkness of ignorance. Instead, it was to be one-up on people through showing-off and self-importance, or to attract attention by being cantankerous and stirring-up controversy, or to shamelessly boast about being from the scholars when in reality they are not.'

A telltale sign that one is afflicted with such a disease includes: An eagerness to poke one's nose into difficult religious issues that are well above one's proverbial pay grade, so as to offer their tuppence worth on the matter. The Arab proverb likely fits such a person: *laysa hadha bi'ushshik fadruji* – 'This isn't your nest, so hop along.'

Another telltale sign is: being obnoxiously adamant that one's own opinion is correct, and that everyone else is off. All too often this leads Abu Shibr to take this differing to the next level. His half-baked knowledge doesn't allow him to realise that there may be more than one valid take on the issue, and that his mightn't even be the soundest. But by this time it's already too late, Abu Shibr has already made a mountain out of a molehill. In his hubris, he thinks that he alone is on *haqq* and the others are on *batil*. Such delusions of grandeur lead him to demean, defame and even boycott and warn against those who

differ with him. In the bigotry and blind-following of his desires, Abu Shibr unwittingly does the devil's work, becoming an active agent in destroying unity and brotherhood among the believers – and we seek refuge in Allah from such mischief and misguidance.

Another sign is: hiding behind phrases like, 'I've got a brain to think for myself.' But I suggest that this is to draw from the phrase more than is warranted. Whilst it's a fact we've each been endowed with some level of intelligence or reason, it's also a fact that some are more intelligent than others. Moreover, a person who can reason well in one topic or area of life, may be unfit to do so in another. Surely, true intelligence should lead us to acknowledge that some disciplines of life and learning require an immense amount of study and specialisation. Such is the case for the intricacies of Islamic law and theology. Yet some will casually dismiss the verdicts of highly qualified scholars, not upon a detailed evidence-based critique, but upon a vainglorious whim. 'I've got a brain' demands that we engage the evidences and legal rationals of the experts before dismissing their conclusions, or humbly defer to their authority. Anything else would make intellects look suspect; or even down right stupid! The Qur'an says: Yet among people are those who argue about Allah without knowledge, guidance, or an illuminating Book. [31:20]

Compounded ignorance; this Abu Shibr syndrome, is extremely difficult to cure. For the one afflicted with it doesn't see the deficiency in himself. As far as he's concerned, he knows; and that's that! To reveal to him that he is ignorant of his own ignorance is nigh on impossible. And yet it's because the Abu Shibrs of this world are least likely to recognise their inadequacies, and because the Abu Shibr syndrome can be contagious, that we need to be alert to the following shari'ah cautions:

Firstly, that speaking about Allah, His religion, or its rulings, without due knowledge, is

a heinous crime and amounts to lying against Allah and the religion of Islam: And utter not lies in what your tongues allege [saying]: ‘This is lawful, and this is forbidden,’ so as to forge a lie against Allah. Those who forge lies against Allah will never prosper. [16:116] Such a crime against Allah requires an immediate handbrake turn to tawbah.

Secondly, to reign-in our soul from its egotism, exhibitionism and from seeking to be a wannabe. The Prophet (saws) said: ‘Whoever does deeds in order to be heard of, Allah will make him heard of; and whoever does deeds to show-off, Allah will make a show of him.’ That sincerity to Allah and sound intention are key, is vividly demonstrated in the next hadith too: ‘Whoever seeks knowledge so as to vie with the scholars, or to argue with the foolish, or to attract peoples’ attention, then Allah shall enter him into Hell.’ As can be seen, Islam doesn’t do ego. Those who are eager for it to be otherwise have possibly got the wrong religion and way of life.

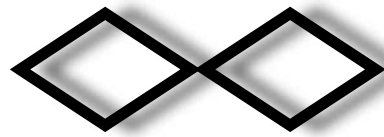
Thirdly, that one of the best defences against getting intoxicated on shallow draughts of knowledge is: learning to say, ‘I don’t know’. In fact, Ibn ‘Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, said: *la adri nisf al-‘ilm* – ‘To say: “I don’t know” is half of knowledge.’⁸ One of the scholars said: ‘Realise, that to reply with, “I don’t know” doesn’t diminish one’s status; as some of the ignoramuses imagine. Instead, it elevates it. For it is a splendid proof of his lofty rank, strength of his religion, his fear of his Lord, and the purity of his heart.’⁹

Fourthly, ask, inquire, learn, study, discuss, and grow in Islamic knowledge – but let us do so with humility and with being aware of our own levels. In this respect, let’s take our queue from how the Angels extolled Allah: ‘Glory be to You! We have no knowledge save what You have taught us. Indeed, You alone are the Knowing, the Wise.’ [2:32]

That a little knowledge can be a dangerous

thing is only when intentions are corrupt, or if we lose sight of our own levels. We all have half-baked knowledge about many matters. In some of those matters, our half-baked knowledge will mature and become seasoned knowledge. In some, it may improve but never fully ripen. In other cases, it may always remain half-baked. But that needn’t be a problem, so long as we are aware that we don’t know; that we don’t act like Abu Shibr; and that, if required or wanted, we are open to learning. In this regard it’s been wisely said that: ‘A half-baked idea is okay as long as it’s in the oven.’

Hear, hear!



Cont’d from page 44

Roger currently survive, five of which have complete text and eight of which have maps. Two are in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, including the oldest, dated to about 1325. Another copy, made in Cairo in 1553, is in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, acquired in 1692. The most complete manuscript, which includes the world map and all seventy sectional maps, is kept in Istanbul. [Source: Wikipedia]

Although he excelled in geography, Al-Idrisi, this Muslim scholar, was also a botanist who dabbled in pharmacology and medicine, he left behind a compendium about plants with a detailed explanation of their Syriac, Greek, Latin, Berber, and Arabic names and characteristics; with two other books credited to him, one in pharmacology and another in medicine.

His legacy in the world of geography and exploration remain to this day, one could even say that explorers like Christopher Columbus and Vasco Da Gama wouldn’t have accomplished much of their discoveries had they not had a solid foundation in the works of Al-Idrisi.

Al-Idrisi

GEOGRAPHER AND CARTOGRAPHER

Islam El Shazly

Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Abdullah Al-Idrisi, also known as AsShareef Al-Idrisi, was one of the greatest geographers and cartographers in the 12th century CE, if not the top geographer of his time, one whose capacity at visualising and putting into words what the world looked like was not matched by any contemporary mind in Europe where he resided at the court of King Roger II of Sicily. His book, *Nuzhat al-Mushtaq*, would live on inspiring countless future explorers from Ibn Battuta to Marco Polo.

And yet his life was not chronicled in depth by any Muslim historians, for reasons that can be debated, for which this is not the platform. One author, Muhammad Abdul-Ghani Hassan, broke the trend, and, in 1971 published a book about the life and times of Al-Idrisi in his book *AsShareef Al-Idrisi: The most famous of Muslim and Arab Explorers*. A lot of this post will be based on that book insha'Allah.

Al-Idrisi was born in Ceuta in Morocco — occupied by Spain since 1415 CE — in 493 AH (1100 CE), and while not much is known about his early childhood, nor about who he studied under, this much is known, much of his early life was spent travelling through North Africa and Andalucía and seems to have acquired de-



Al-Idrisi's world map, presented upside down in his book with South on top. Wikipedia Commons

tailed information on both regions. There's also some evidence that he visited Anatolia when he was barely 16. He is known to have studied in Córdoba, one of the greatest centres of cultural and Islamic learning at the time.

The roster of places he visited is as impressive as his body of literature; Egypt was one of his stops in the Islamic Orient, and in the west

it included Portugal, The Pyrenees, the French Atlantic coast, Hungary, and Jórdvik also known as York, in England. [Source: Wikipedia]

In 1138 CE he received an invitation to the court of King Roger II of Sicily, by none other than the king himself. There he would be treated to a hospitality rarely seen at a royal court, where the king venerated him to extents never before heard of. It is said that he allowed him to ride his mule all the way into the palace in Palermo and when he arrived he would seat him to his side in the throne room or counsel.

It's worth mentioning that the Norman kings of Sicily were an anomaly within European Christian Kingdoms, in that they followed in the footsteps of the Muslim rulers, to the extent that at one point Roger II himself was accused of converting to Islam!

Tabula Rogeriana

Al-Idrisi was commissioned by Roger II — who was no stranger to philosophy, mathematics, and forays into unusual inventions — to construct a map of the known world. Using 400,000 Drachmas worth of silver (the equivalent of 1,720 kg of silver!) he then created multiple spheres, mounting and amalgamating one on the other, then sculpting and engraving it into a three dimensional map of the world. The map only used a third of the amount of silver, ultimately weighing in around 450 lb, the rest were given to Al-Idrisi as a gift.

Over a period of 15 years, Al-Idrisi would incorporate knowledge of Africa, the Indian Ocean, and the Far East gathered by Islamic Merchants and explorers along with Islamic records and maps, and interviews of Norman sailors and voyagers conducted both by him and by the King. They dispatched draftsmen, and travellers to the corners of the known world to gather first hand information and relay it in detail to be copied in to the great tome on geography. In 1154, just a few weeks before the king died, al-Idrisi's book was finally complete. Written in

Arabic and Latin and accompanied by maps, it presented the world as a sphere. It calculated the circumference to be 37,000 kilometers (22,900 mi)—an error of less than 10 percent. It followed the classical Greek tradition, dividing the world into seven climate zones supported by 70 longitudinal section maps which, when put together, made a rectangular map of the known world. [Source: Saudi Aramco]

Sadly, the silver map appears to have been destroyed during civil unrest shortly afterwards, in 1160.

A Diversion for the Man Longing to Travel to Far-Off Places.

In his book, *The History of the Moorish Empire in Europe*, Samuel Parsons Scott (8 July 1846 – 30 May 1929), known as S.P. Scott, an American attorney, banker, and scholar, wrote about the immensity of the undertaking of Al-Idrisi and its consequence, legacy, and bearing on cartography and geography:

“The compilation of Edrisi marks an era in the history of science. Not only is its historical information most interesting and valuable, but its descriptions of many parts of the earth are still authoritative. For three centuries geographers copied his maps without alteration. The relative position of the lakes which form the Nile, as delineated in his work, does not differ greatly from that established by Baker and Stanley more than seven hundred years afterwards, and their number is the same. The mechanical genius of the author was not inferior to his erudition. The celestial and terrestrial planisphere of silver which he constructed for his royal patron was nearly six feet in diameter, and weighed four hundred and fifty pounds; upon the one side the zodiac and the constellations, upon the other-divided for convenience into segments-the bodies of land and water, with the respective situations of the various countries, were engraved.”

Only ten manuscript copies of the Book of

Cont'd on page 42

Introduction to God

by God Himself

Collection of verses from the Holy Quran

Compiled by Dr. Abid Ahmad

- To God do all questions go back (for decision). 210
clear to mankind. 221
- God is strict in punishment. 211
God loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean. 222
- God bestows His abundance without measure on whom He will. 212
God is One Who heareth and knoweth all things. 224
- God guided whom He will to a path that is straight. 213
He is Oft-forgiving, Most Forbearing. 225
- Verily, the help of God is (always) near! 214
God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. 226
- And whatever ye do that is good, - (God) knoweth it well. 215
And God is Exalted in Power, Wise. 228
- But God knoweth, and ye know not. 216
Know that God is well-acquainted with all things. 231
- God knows the man who means mischief from the man who means good. And if God had wished, He could have put you into difficulties: He is indeed Exalted in Power, Wise. 220
God knows, and ye know not. 232
- God beckons by His Grace to the Garden (of bliss) and forgiveness, and makes His Signs
And know that God Knoweth what is in your hearts, and take heed of Him; and know that God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Forbearing. 235

God is full of bounty to mankind, but Most of them are ungrateful. 243	Nor doth God give guidance to a people unjust. 258
And know that God heareth and knoweth all things. 244	God giveth manifold increase to whom He pleaseth: And God careth for all and He knoweth all things. 261
It is God that giveth (you) want or plenty, and to Him shall be your return. 245	God is free of all wants, and He is Most-For-bearing. 263
God has full knowledge of those who do wrong. 246	And know that God is free of all wants, and worthy of all praise. 267
God granteth His authority to whom He pleaseth. God careth for all, and He knoweth all things. 247	God promiseth you His forgiveness and bounties. And God careth for all and He knoweth all things. 268
God is with those who steadfastly persevere. 249	He granteth wisdom to whom He pleaseth; 269
God is full of bounty to all the worlds. 251	God is well acquainted with what ye do. 271
God fulfilleth His plan. 253	God sets on the right path whom He pleaseth. 272
God. There is no god but He,-the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth? He knoweth what (appeareth to His creatures as) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as He willeth. His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory). 255	He loveth not creatures ungrateful and wicked. 276
God is the Protector of those who have faith: from the depths of darkness He will lead them forth into light. 257	It is God that teaches you. And God is well acquainted with all things. 282
	To God belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth. Whether ye show what is in your minds or conceal it, God calleth you to account for it. He forgiveth whom He pleaseth, and punisheth whom He pleaseth, for God hath power over all things. 284
	On no soul doth God place a burden greater than it can bear. 286

Every religion has a distinctive virtue, and the distinctive virtue of Islam is modesty.

Appeal

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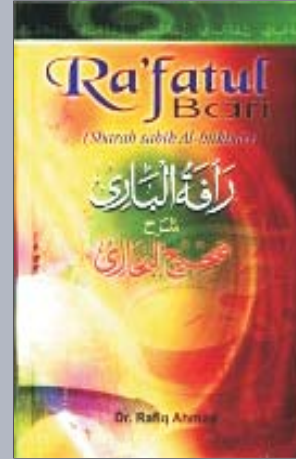
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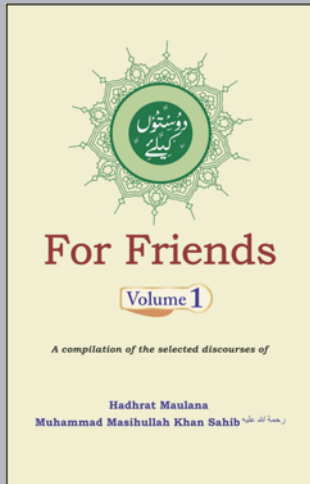
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