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RADIANT REALITY

Published from Srinagar, March 2015, Volume 16, Issue 03.

The whole world is
A PROVISION,
& **THE BEST**
OBJECT OF
BENEFIT
of the world is
THE PIOUS
WOMAN.

[Sahih Muslim]



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Regd. No.: JKENG/2000/4174,
Published From Srinagar. Mar. 2015. Vol.16, No: 03.

Editor, Printer & Publisher: Mawlana Hamidullah Lone	Contents	
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EDITORIAL

All thanks for Almighty, the most Merciful and Exalted

Inequity and Islamic Ethos

One basic element in the value system of Islam is the principle of equality. However, it does not seek to level down humanity to any artificially created uniform standards. It seeks to establish equality only in respect of opportunity. In the Islamic economy, every man and woman shall have equal opportunity to attain the highest levels of productivity and progress. Artificially created inequalities have to be removed. In the sight of God, all men are equal, but they are not necessarily identical. There shall be differences of abilities, potentials, ambitions, wealth and so on. Yet, none of these differences can, by itself, establish a status of superiority of one man or race to another. (49:13)

The enforcement of universal brotherhood is the gr social ideal realised by Islam. The last sermon of Prophet Muhammad (S) in Mecca is the ultimate declaration of human equality. He said: 'O men! Your creator is one, you are the sons and daughters of one father, and therefore no attempt at dividing you into high and low is acceptable. No Arab has any superiority to a non-Arab nor has a non-Arab any superiority to an Arab Neither the Whites are superior to the Blacks, nor the Blacks superior to the Whites. The only mark of excellence is the fear of God and an individual's personal virtue and piety' (*Bukhari*) These words clearly indicate that Islam is against all forms of social gradation and stratification.

The Qur'an underlines an egalitarian social and economic ideology (7:137, 6:132, 17:26). God has provided all necessary resources for man's material well being (2:29,

31:20, and 16:12-14). It is the duty incumbent upon each individual to take care of the needs of others and extend all possible material help to each other to enable them to live adequately and survive meaningfully (107:1-3, 104:1-9, 51:19, 63:7, 68:24, and 2:177).

Mankind is one community (21:92, 2:213). Man is created from matter (6:2), but has been infused with a part of the Divine spirit (15:28,29). Each human being is a descendant of Adam (15:29). His mission is to fulfil his obligations as the vicegerent of God on earth. A Muslim is not only a member of the brotherhood of Islam but also a representative of mankind, a member of the family of God (9:11,49:10). He has to practice loyalty in the entire sweep of social relations on the principle of upholding all that is good and striving against all that is evil for humanity (3:110), and not on petty tribalism or racism.

Islam does not allow sorting of mankind on the conjunctures of blood and lineage. The Qur'an has wiped out all the surmises of superiority on the basis of blood, which was the biggest obstacle on the path of equity (4:1, 10:19, and 49:13).

It gives equal status to the people living in different parts of the *world* and speaking different languages and having dissimilar colours and countenances (30:22). It repeatedly clarifies that God does not have a special relationship or friendship (or enmity) with any group of human beings that would make a particular group an exception to Divine universal

Cont'd on page 11

Question Answer

Question.

Is it permissible to greet another Muslim by saying 'Jumuah Mubaarak' or 'Eid Mubaarak' on the day of Jumuah and on the day of Eid?

Answer.

There is no record of the Sahaabah Radhiyallahu anhum regularly greeting each other with these words.

Therefore, it should not be practiced in such a manner or with such regularity that an impression is created that it is Sunnah or compulsory.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

My fiancée is a foreigner and I am a local South African? My fiancée wishes to make Nikah with me secretly? Is it correct to make Nikah secretly in Islam?

Answer.

After a potential couple decides to get married, the Nikah of both couples should be announced and made known to the people. Consider the following Hadith. Rasulullah Salallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam said: "Publicize the Nikah." (Musnad Ahmad)

Furthermore, if a couple decides to make Nikah secretly, there are many challeng-

es and consequences they will be faced with:

- The couple will not freely interact with each other as they would want to conceal their Nikah/marriage. This defeats the purpose of a Nikah.
- The couple will not be free of accusations of an illicit relationship when seen in public.
- The couple will inevitably have to lie to conceal their relationship which is a serious sin.
- Pregnancy with its consequences and many further difficulties.....

Therefore, the Nikah should not be performed secretly. It should be publicized.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

My mother and father jointly owned a house. Half the house belonged to my mother and half the house belonged to my father. After my mother passed away, my father remarried and gave my mother's half of the house to his second wife. My father says that my mother's share of the house belongs to him because they were married to each other and he has the right to do what he wishes with it. Is this correct?

Answer.

According to the Shariah, spouses do not automatically share in each other's prop-

erty by virtue of marriage. We therefore assume that your mother acquired 50% share of the house by some other valid means, and not by virtue of the marriage.

Your mother's 50 % of the house formed part of her estate upon her demise, and should be distributed amongst her rightful heirs in accordance to the Islamic Laws of Succession. You should approach the Ulama with further details in order to ascertain who her heirs were, and in what proportion.

Since your father did not own the whole of your mother's share after her demise, he could not have validly given it over to his second wife. It still remains the property of your mother's heirs.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

A friend of mine told me it is wrong to possess a Credit Card. When I pointed out that there is nothing wrong as long as I don't pay interest, he put forward the following argument: At the time of signing the contract with Credit Card company, one is required to give an undertaking that if he is unable to pay at the specified time, then he would pay interest on the amount due. That is, one is committing to interest since one doesn't know what situation he would be in, in future, which Allah (SWT) alone knows, or since the person has the intention to pay interest on failure to pay back. Also there is a Hadith which says that deeds depend upon intentions. Therefore if one has intentions of paying interest on failure, one might actually pay in future. My question is it a sin to have a credit card?

Answer.

The contention of your friend is principally correct. It is prohibited to enter into an interest bearing loan even though one will endeavor to avoid paying interest.

In an avoidable situation, one should avoid obtaining a credit card.

In an unavoidable situation, if one obtains a credit card, then from a juridical point of view, it is a loan with a condition to pay interest. Accordingly, the condition will fall off and the loan will be regarded as interest free.

We do understand that if the credit card holder did not make timeous payment, the creditor still has a legal right to claim interest from him and the Shar'i implication of the condition falling off will have no effect.

It is important to note the fiqhi rulings set out by the Fuqaha have two dimensions; one is of a judicial nature while the other is non judicious and is an issue of personal consciousness.

If one is pressed by need to take out a credit card and there is no alternative and doing without a credit card would put a person in difficulty, then there is a leeway for him to make use of the credit card facility and make timeous payments. This relaxation is based on the fiqhi maxim:

Needs or necessities permit prohibition.

However, this is not a general ruling and many avenues are taken into consideration before acting upon such a maxim.

To illustrate this with an example and close analogy, it is a norm to pay the electricity and water bills to the municipality that bills its clients with an interest clause in it. It is difficult to arrange our individual and personal light and water sources. It would be impractical to advise people to use lanterns, dig boreholes, or bring water from the rivers to their houses.

In such a situation, the practical difficulties are considered to grant relaxation to merely enter into a contract with an impermissible clause but with the intention not to practice on the clause and maintain the contract according to Shari'ah. In this day and age, the use of credit card has become so common that

at times, not having a credit card becomes very challenging, especially when dealing in a conventional and corporate world. In many instances, a deal or payment cannot be done except through a credit card. While we acknowledge that the ideal situation is to avoid using a credit card, Shariah also takes into consideration practical realities and difficulties.

It is also advisable that since the condition in a contract is a violation of a Shar'i right, if one takes out the credit card contract due to need and necessity, he should also make tawbah and istighfaar.

Most importantly, a person must take it upon himself to act upon the following when obtaining a credit card:

- Try to obtain the credit card based on need and necessity.
- The user of the credit card must have a firm intention and must endeavor all efforts in paying the bills within the stipulated time without fail.
- To remove any possibility of a default payment in which case interest is charged, it is recommended to set up an online payment scheme which will directly debit all purchases and payments to his account. Precaution must be exercised to ensure there is sufficient cash in the account to pay the total monthly amount before it is due.

M. Abdul Mannan

Question.

Is it permissible to smoke Marijuana if it does not intoxicate a person?

Answer.

The use of drugs such as Marijuana, Cocaine, Opium, etc. are Haraam (forbidden) in Islam even if it does not intoxicate a person.
(*Raddul Muhtaar*)

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

Due to poor condition of the husband, upon request to his wife, she forgave her mahr before touch. Is it acceptable in Islam?

Answer.

Mahr is the right of the wife and it becomes obligatory on the husband upon the marriage (Nikah) being contracted. Since Mahr is the right of the wife, if she decides to waive her right by her own free will after the marriage, it will be permissible and the obligation of Mahr will no longer remain binding upon the husband. (ad-Durrul Mukhtar)

Mufti Suhail

Question.

I am in a business partnership. I have decided to terminate my 50% share in the business partnership. What happens to my 50% share of the business partnership? Can I sell it, give it to someone or does my business partner inherit it? Your response will be appreciated.

Answer.

You are the owner of your share. When the partnership ends, you are at liberty to sell your share to your partner at a mutually agreed price. Your partner does not simply own your share without purchasing it from you.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

I work as a manager in a spare parts shop. My boss had put +/- 37,000 in a drawer below the counter. My boss told me to give it to his friend if he came to the shop. My boss's friend did not come to the shop to collect it. Unfortunately, the shillings were stolen without my knowledge.

My boss did not grant me leave that was Due to me and asked me to bear half the

loss of the stolen shillings. As a manager, am I liable for it?

Answer.

If your boss had left money in the drawer below the counter and had told you to give the money to his friend but the money was stolen in the interim without your negligence, you will not be liable to bear the loss of the money that was stolen. Your boss will have to bear the loss of the money that was stolen.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

Lillah money is collected at a Musjid for its own purposes.

Will it be permissible to use the Lillah money collected at the Musjid for another Musallahs purposes which is coordinated by the same people?

Answer.

At the time of collection, if it was made clear to the donors that the money that is donated will be utilized for one Musjid only, it will not be permissible to utilize it for another Musallah. However, if it was made clear to the donors that the money that is donated will be utilized for one Masjid and one Musallah collectively, it would be permissible to utilize it collectively for the Musjid and Musallah.

As such, donations should be utilized in accordance to the expectations of the donors.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

My father wishes to gift his house to my mother after his death? Is this correct? Can this be done?

He does not want his children to receive the house after his death, as my mother will not have a house to live in. He wants to provide a shelter for my mother after his

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death.

Answer.

It is incorrect for your father to gift his house to your mother after his demise.

Alternatively, your father may gift his house to your mother in his lifetime.

In this way, the house will forthwith belong to your mother and will not form part of your father's estate after his demise. When your mother passes away, the house will form part of her estate and will be distributed amongst her rightful heirs.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

If a husband gives his wife Mahr at the time of the Nikah, what authority does the wife have over it? If she remarries, does she have to return the Mahr to the previous husband?

Answer.

The wife is the sole owner of the Mahr she receives and has full authority over it.

If she remarries, she does not have to return the Mahr to the previous husband as it belongs to her.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

I am a divorced girl. After my divorce I met a guy on Facebook. He was going through a separation and I helped him through it. He used to smoke weed and gamble and I told him I can't marry someone who does such things. We were on and off for 2 years ... but eventually we went our own ways. It's been 5 years since we've been friends ... just friends.

I realised that I really love him when he moved on but I left it in Allah's hands and tried to move on. The thing is every time I tried to get married to someone else there's always an obstacle. Like the one guy that

wanted to marry me, he's family was against it and so we left it. Then one guy I was going to marry and met his parents but that too somehow didn't work out. And then there was another guy who came and went.

The thing is this guy and his girlfriend broke up and I want to be with him. I sometimes get the feeling that we meant to be but I don't. I read all my namaaz and it's not that my faith is weak. I don't want a relationship ... I want marriage. And I don't know if this guy and his girlfriend will get back together or not. He gives me mixed signals and I'm very confused.

Is it possible for me to make istikharah for guidance? I really don't want to do haraam. I'm just looking to complete half my imaan and do things properly. Like if this guy is not meant for me I don't want to keep talking to him. I'm in a state right now. Please advise.

Answer.

You should firstly make sincere taubah for being in contact with this person for all these years. It is impermissible for you to be in contact with him, even if you may be just friends.

With regards to marrying him, you may make istikhaara to ask Allah Ta'ala for guidance. You should also first adopt the normal procedures. Among the correct procedure is to first check the qualities of the person. Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) has highlighted that the deen and character of the prospective groom be checked. If this is satisfactory, one should consider the proposal positively.

If he has sincerely repented from his bad habits and has been stable for a reasonable amount of time, does not engage anymore in haraam relationships, performs his salaah regularly, joins good company, etc, and has decent character, it will be fine to marry him.

You must also certainly take the guidance and direction of your parents and elders in these matters.

Perform your salaah regularly, avoid any sinful actions and engage in much istighfaar, zikrullah and excessive du'aa.

Uswatul Muslimah Panel of 'Ulama

Question.

Is it necessary to change a Muslim revert's non-Muslim name to a Muslim name for a Nikah to be valid?

Answer.

Once a person accepts Islam, he/she should be given a suitable Muslim name.

If however, a person is not given a suitable Muslim name after accepting Islam and a Nikah is performed using a non-Muslim name, the Nikah will still be valid.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

Is it permissible to wear perfumes that contain synthetic alcohol? Will Salaah be valid with it?

Answer.

In general, the alcohols in sprays and perfumes are synthetic and pure.

The Salaah performed with such sprays on the clothing and body will be valid.

Mufti Ismaeel

Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-as (May Allah be pleased with them) reported: A man asked Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam), "Which act in Islam is the best?" He (Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam) replied, "To feed (the poor and the needy) and to greet those whom you know and those you do not know." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Lesson From The Qur'an

*“If you avoid the major sins which you have been forbidden, We will blot out from you your minor evil deeds and make you enter by a noble entrance (to an abode of glory).”
(An-Nisā’ 4:31)*

The Qur’anic commentaries that are usually based on the narrations from the noble Prophet (S), and the opinions of his Companions, include the following hadith in explaining this verse:

(God’s Messenger said:) “Avoid the seven deadly things.” People asked the Prophet: “What are they O Messenger of God?” He answered: “Associating partners with God, magic, unjust killing, which God has made unlawful, devouring usury, consuming the property of an orphan, turning away on the day of fighting, and slandering chaste, believing women (who have nothing to do with illicit acts).” (Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud)

The threat in the part of the hadith, “turning away on the day of fighting” includes not only turning away from the battlefield when the believers are fighting against attacking enemies but also drawing aside even for the purpose of personal spiritual progress while there is a “cold war” between the believers and unbelievers in the fields of culture, education, politics, art, and so on. One who turns away from struggling in these fields is considered to have committed a “major sin” according to the above hadith. It is undoubtedly a “major sin” especially if those who have been awakened to the service of Islam leave

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this service. Since this will also damage the spiritual power of the Muslim community and delight the enemy side, one who acts so is considered as a spoil-sport.

If one can avoid these deadly sins, only one of which we have tried to explain, God Almighty promises to “blot out the minor evil deeds” one commits without insistence or the evils that are not as lethal as those mentioned in the hadith. This means a Divine purification in regard to this world and a peaceful and joyous life in the Hereafter.

Those heroes who are able to resist sins enter their graves by “a noble entrance” like victorious commanders, and the grave will be an abode of glory for them. They walk around and travel through the “hillside of the intermediate realms” in the same comfort, and they advance into Paradise in the same safety and happiness to observe the Beauty of God. They deserve all these because the struggle in the name of performing good deeds is equal to the struggle in the name of abstaining from sins. If observation of these positive and negative sides of the religious life signifies a profundity in spirit, the steadfastness in observing them is an important dimension of this profundity. Consequently, this firmness conveys believers to their decreed ends at rocket speed.

Lesson From Sahih al-Bukhari

Dr. Rafiq Ahmad

The Book of Menses

Chapter 16 : The untying of hair by a woman when taking her ritual bath after the cessation of menses.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

It is mandatory for a woman to moisten her hair roots during when taking ritual bath to obtain purity after the cessation of her menses.

Hadith No. 310

Narrated 'Aisha (RA)

On the 1st of Dhul-Hijja we set out with the intention of performing Hajj. Allah's Apostle said, "Any one who likes to assume the Ihram for 'Umra he can do so. Had I not brought the Hadi with me, I would have assumed the Ihram for 'Umra. "Some of us assumed the Ihram for 'Umra while the others assumed the Ihram for Hajj. I was one of those who assumed the Ihram for 'Umra. I got menses and kept on menstruating until the day of 'Arafat and complained of that to the Prophet . He told me to postpone my 'Umra, undo and comb my hair, and to assure the Ihram of Hajj and I did so. On the night of Hasba, he sent my brother 'Abdur-Rahman bin Abi Bakr with me to At-Tan'im, where I assumed the Ihram for 'Umra in lieu of

the previous one. Hisham said, "For that ('Umra) no Hadi, fasting or alms were required.

Comments

This Hadith will be discussed in Kitab-ul-Haj, Insha Allah.

Chapter 17 : The statement of Allah, "(A little lump of flesh) partly formed and partly unformed".

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Alaama Ibn Butaal, who has written a commentator of Bukhari, says that the purpose of Imam Bukhari to quote this Hadith in 'the book of menses' is to support the view of those people who say that a pregnant woman does not get menses. (Fathul Baari).

The Hanafite and Hanbilite schools are also of the same opinion. Alaama Anwar Shah Kashmiri says in Faidh-ul-Baari, that Imam Bukhari (RA) wants to say that the blood clot in the pregnant woman's womb is thrown out as menses if it does not proceed on to form the embryo and then baby i.e., غير مخلقة Ghaira Mukhallaqa.

Hadith No. 311

Narrated Anas bin Malik (RA)

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The Prophet said, "At every womb Allah appoints an angel who says, 'O Lord! A drop of semen, O Lord! A clot. O Lord! A little lump of flesh.'" Then if Allah wishes (to complete) its creation, the angel asks, (O Lord!) Will it be a male or female, a wretched or a blessed, and how much will his provision be? And what will his age be?' So all that is written while the child is still in the mother's womb."

Comments

When the sperms from a male reach into the womb of a woman, these cause fertilization of the ovum. When this fertilization takes place, Allah Ta'ala appoints an angel over it. The angel asks Allah Ta'ala if that fertilized ovum (Nutfa) will go through to the stage of Alaqa (blood clot), if Allah Ta'ala permits further development, this fertilized ovum goes through to the stages of Alaqa (blood clot) and Mudhga (flesh piece) and then full fledged embryo. At each step the angel takes the permission from Allah Ta'ala to go ahead.

When the embryo takes the human shape then comes the stage of inspiring the spirit into it. At this stage the angel asks Allah Ta'ala what would be the age of the person, his sustenance and other things like gender etc. The angel also asks if that person would be pious in life or impious. All these things are written by the angel.

Chapter 18 : How should a menstruating woman assume Ihraam for Haj and/or Umrah.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Ibn Hajr and others say that the purpose of this chapter is to debate whether a menstruating woman should put on Irhaam for Haj and/or Umrah or not and that Imam Bukhari has quoted the Hadith which says that she can do so. The next question remains that

normally Gusul is performed before putting on Ihraam, should a menstruating woman also take Gusul? The answer is yes, she should take the Gusul before putting on Ihraam. This Gusul will not make her ritually pure as she is menstruating but by doing so she will fulfill the Sunnah of Gusul before Ihraam (Eidha-ul-Bukhari).

Hadith No. 312

Narrated 'Urwa (RA)

'Aisha said, "We set out with the Prophet in his last Hajj. Some of us intended to perform 'Umra while others Hajj. When we reached Makkah, Allah's Apostle said, 'Those who had assumed the Ihram for 'Umra and had not brought the Hadi should finish his Ihram and whoever had assumed the Ihram for 'Umra and brought the Hadi should not finish the Ihram till he has slaughtered his Hadi and whoever had assumed the Ihram for Hajj should complete his Hajj.'" 'Aisha further said, "I got my periods (menses) and kept on menstruating till the day of 'Arafat, and I had assumed the Ihram for 'Umra only (Tamattu'). The Prophet ordered me to undo and comb my head hair and assume the Ihram for Hajj only and leave the 'Umra. I did the same till I completed the Hajj. Then the Prophet sent 'Abdur Rahman bin Abi Bakr with me and ordered me to perform 'Umra from At-Tan'im in lieu of the missed 'Umra."

Chapter 19 : The commencement and cessation of menstruation.

Some women used to send the pads of cotton with traces of yellowish discharge to Ayesha (RA). And Ayesha (RA) would say: "Do not hurry till you see the lime-like whiteness", (on seeing that) they would intend to get ritual impurity purification from menses.

The daughter of Zaid bin Thabit was told that

some women used to ask for lanterns at mid-night to know about their cleanliness (from menses) and she said that the women were not used to do so earlier and that she disliked it.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Here Imam Bukhari (RA) is referring to a controversial issue i.e., whether the commencement and cessation of menstruation is dependent upon the colour of the menstrual fluid or the routine cycle of a woman? The Hanafite school of jurists say that it is not dependent upon the colour of menstrual fluid but on the menstrual cycle of a woman. When the bleeding starts, may be of any colour, it is considered as the commencement of menses and when the colour of this fluid changes to white i.e., all colours vanish, then it is considered as the cessation of menses. Imam Bukhari (RA) also seems to be of the same opinion. As per Imam Shafa'ee (RA), Imam Maalik (RA) and Imam Ahmad bin Hambal (RA), the oozing of red or blackish blood will be considered as the commencement of the menses and when the colour slowly fades and changes to yellowish, then it will be considered as the cessation of menses for those women who can distinguish these colours. These scholars argue with a Hadith of Abu Dawood, which says:

"It is blood of black colour which is recognized". (Abu Dawood)

Hadith No. 313

Narrated 'Aisha (RA)

"Fatima bint Abi Hubaish used to have bleeding in between the periods, so she asked the Prophet about it . He replied, "The bleeding is from a blood vessel and not the menses. So give up the prayers when the (real) menses begins and when it has finished, take a bath and start praying."

Comments

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) told Fatima bint Abi Hubaish that when the menses will begin, stop offering Salaah and when it has finished, you should take a bath and start offering Salaah. Here Ulema say that Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) did not ask about the colour of the blood but straight away asked her to see the routine when her menses starts and when it stops.

Islam is easy

The daughter of Zayd bin Thabit saw that some women used to ask for lanterns at midnight to know about their cleanliness (from menses) and she disliked it and asked the women not to do so as she knew that Islam basically is an easy religion and it does not want to put its followers in trouble.

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laws (5:18, 2:80).

Islam is opposed to reckoning some people worse or better than others because of their colour or culture, their religion or lack of it. It not only condemns discrimination, as in racial segregation and religious persecution, but also rejects sexism and intolerance based on differences of wealth, power and status.

The ethos of Islam would be happy only if the full equality of the Negroid, the Mongolian and the Polynasian races are genuinely recognized as being on par with the White races of Europe and North America. Islamic ethos calls for organized movements against imperialistic virulence, social exploitation and economic oppression. Man has a general tendency to entertain self-exaltation, egotism, snobbishness etc., to establish his superiority over his fellow beings. Islamic ideology thrives to break into pieces the citadels of feudalism, slavery, racism, casteism, zionism, colonialism, blind nationalism, and ethnocentrism.

Trust Undertaken by Humanity

Ali Unal

Although the Trust mentioned in the verse 33:72 includes the Divine Religion which humankind must follow in life, it is not restricted to it. Not only human-kind, but also the jinn, are responsible for following the Divine Religion. Some commentators are of the opinion that the Trust is human free will or the faculty of volition. This is also included in the meaning of the Trust, but we should bear in mind that the jinn also have been endowed with free will. So, what is meant by the Trust is, first of all, the human ego.

God has absolutely no limits at all. So something absolute and unlimited cannot be determined in such a way that its essential nature can be comprehended. For example, light undetermined by darkness cannot be known or perceived. However, light can be determined if a real or hypothetical boundary line of darkness is drawn. In the same way, the Divine Attributes and Names (e.g., Knowledge, Power, Wisdom, and Compassion) cannot be determined, for they are all-encompassing and have no limits nor anything similar. Thus, what they are essentially cannot be known or perceived. A hypothetical boundary is needed for them to become known.

God Almighty, so to speak, has drawn a hypothetical line before His Names and Attributes and created ego, reflecting in it all

His Names and Attributes. Since absolute Independence is the most essential quality of Divinity ego finds in itself the same quality. It imagines within itself a fictitious lordship, power, and knowledge, and so posits a boundary line, hypothesizes a limit to God's all-encompassing Attributes, and says: "This is mine, and the rest is His." Ego thus makes a division.

Through this imagined lordship, ego can and must understand the Lordship of the Creator of the universe. By means of its own apparent ownership, it can understand the real Ownership of its Creator, saying: "As I am the owner of this house, the Creator is the Owner of this creation." Through its partial knowledge, ego comes to understand His Absolute Knowledge. Through its defective, acquired art, it can intuit the Exalted Fashioner's primary, originative art. For example, ego says: "I built and arranged this house, so there must be One Who made and arranged this universe." So, ego is the key to the Divine Names and Attributes and also to solving the enigma of creation.

However, ego has aspects or faces. One face looks toward its Creator and, therefore, to good. With this aspect, it only receives what is given; it cannot create. It is not the origin of the good and virtues God creates in

or through it.

The other face looks toward evil. Here, ego is active and is the source and doer of all evils.

Essentially, as stated above, ego is like a measure, a mirror, or an instrument for seeing or finding out. Its real nature is only indicative - like a letter that has no meaning by itself - and indicates the meaning of things other than itself. Its lordship is completely hypothetical, and its own existence is so weak and insubstantial that it cannot bear or support anything on its own. Rather, ego is a kind of scale or measure showing the degrees and quantities of what is measured. The Necessarily Existent Being's absolute, all-encompassing, and limitless Attributes can become known through it.

Ego must realize that it is God's servant and that it is to serve the One other than itself, and that its essential nature has only an indicative function. It must understand that it bears the meaning of the One rather than that of itself, and that it can be meaningful only when it points to that One upon Whom its existence depends. Its existence and life depend upon that One's creativity and Existence. Its feeling of ownership is illusory, for it enjoys only an apparent, temporary ownership by the real Owner's permission, and it only has a shadow-like reality. It is a contingent entity, an insignificant shadow manifesting the true and necessary Reality. Its function of serving as a measure and balance for its Creator's Attributes and essential Qualities is a conscious, willing service.

Those who know and realize that this is the reality of their essential nature or the human ego act accordingly; these are included in: He is indeed prosperous who has grown it in purity (away from self-aggrandizing rebellion against God) (91:9). Such people truly carry out the trust and, through their ego, see

what the universe really is and what duties it performs. They also find that their ego confirms the information they have gathered about the universe. As a result, this information will retain the quality of light and wisdom for them, and will not be changed into darkness and futility. When ego has performed its duty in this way, it renounces its claim to lordship and hypothetical ownership (mere devices of measurement) and proclaims: His is the sovereignty and ownership of all beings, and to Him are due all praise and thanks. His is the Judgment and rule, and to Him we are returning. Thus it achieves true worship and attains the rank of the best pattern of creation. But if ego forgets the Divine purpose of its creation, abandons the duty of its nature, and views itself as a self-existing being independent of the Creator, it betrays the Trust. Thus, it supposes itself to be a permanent reality that has, as its duty, the quest for self-satisfaction. It falsely assumes that it owns its being and is the real lord and master of its own domain. Those who see ego in this way fall into the class of those warned and threatened by: And he is indeed lost who has corrupted it (in self-aggrandizing and rebellion against God) (91:10). This development is responsible for all the varieties of polytheism, evil, and deviation that have caused the heavens, earth, and the mountains to be terrified of assuming the Trust - lest they might be led to associate partners with God, because such an ego grows and swells until it gradually permeates all parts of a human being. Like some huge monster, it completely swallows such people so that they and their faculties consist of nothing more than an ego. Eventually, the ego of the human race gives strength to the individual ego through mere individualism and national racism. This causes the ego, swollen by support from the ego of race, to contest, like satan, the Majestic Maker's commands. Finally, taking itself as a

yardstick, it compares everyone and everything with itself, divides God's sovereignty between them and other causes, and begins to associate partners with God in the most grievous manner. It is such people that are being referred to in: surely associating partners with God is indeed a tremendous wrong (31: 13).

This betrayal causes the ego to sink into absolute ignorance. Even if it has absorbed thousands of branches of science, its ignorance is only compounded by its knowledge. Whatever glimmers of knowledge of God that it may have obtained from the universe through its senses or reflective powers have been extinguished, for it can no longer find within itself anything with which to confirm, polish, and maintain them. Whatever comes to the ego is stained with the colors within it. Even if pure wisdom comes, it becomes absolutely futile within an ego stained by atheism, polytheism, or other forms of denying the All-Mighty. If the whole universe were full of shining indications of God, a dark point in that ego would hide them from view, as though they were invisible.

We will now shed some light on the truth of this subject. Consider the following: from Adam's time until the present, two great currents or lines of thought have spread their branches in all directions and in every class of humanity just like two tall trees. One is the line of Prophethood and Religion; the other is that of mere human thinking. Whenever they have agreed and united (whenever human thinking joins the Religion in obedience and service to it), humankind has experienced brilliant happiness in individual and collective life. But whenever they have followed separate paths, truth and goodness have accumulated on the side of Prophethood and the Religion, whereas error, evil, and deviation have been drawn to the side of human thinking.

Human thinking, whenever it has split

from the Religion, has taken the form of a tree of Zaqqum, that spreads its dark veils of ascribing partners to God and of all other innumerable kinds of misguidance. On the branch of empowered reason, which is one of the three cardinal faculties with which human beings are endowed, it has yielded the fruits of materialism and naturalism for the intellect's consumption. On the branch of empowered anger and passion, it has produced such tyrants as Nimrod and the Pharaoh who tyrannized people. On the branch of empowered animal desires and appetites, it has produced the fruits of "goddesses," idols and those who have claimed Divine status for themselves. This line has shown the "lowest of the low" into which humankind can fall.

In contrast, the blessed line of Prophethood, which takes the form of the Tuba tree of worship, has borne the fruit of Prophets, Messengers, saints, and the righteous in the garden of earth and on the branch of empowered reason. On the branch of empowered anger, the branch of defense against and repelling of evil, it has yielded the fruits of virtuous and just rulers. On the branch of empowered animal desires or appetites, which have taken the form of empowered attractiveness, it has borne the fruits of generous, benevolent persons of good character and modest bearing throughout history. As a result, this line has demonstrated how humankind is the perfect fruit of creation.

Prophethood considers that the aim and function of human beings is to be molded by the Divine values and to achieve good character. Prophets believed that people should perceive their weakness, and seek refuge with Divine Power and rely on Divine Strength; realize their insufficiency and essential poverty, and trust in Divine Mercy; know their need and seek help from Divine Wealth; see their faults and plead for pardon through Divine

Forgiveness; and perceive their inadequacy and glorify Divine Perfection.

According to human thinking that has been deviated, power is approved. "Might is right" is the norm. Its maxims are: "All power to the strongest;" "Survival of the fittest;" "Winner takes all;" and "In power, there is right." It has given moral support to tyranny, encouraged dictators, and urged oppressors to claim Divinity. By ascribing the beauty in "works of art" to the works themselves, and not to the Maker and Fashioner's pure, sacred Beauty, it says: "How beautiful it is," not: "How beautifully it is made," and thus considers each as an idol worthy of adoration.

Charlie Hebdoism and *Ra'fa adh-Dhikr*

Prof. G.R. Malik

When the Prophet (SAW) began his holy mission in Makkah, a storm of malicious propaganda was raised by the enemies of Truth. They called him a poet, soothsayer, a sorcerer, a possessed man and a fabricator. All this caused intense grief to the sensitive soul of the Prophet. What grieved him most was the obduracy of the Makkans to see and accept the Truth. Allah consoled His Messenger saying that he should not worry himself too intensely for what his enemies said and did against him. No doubt it was a back-breaking burden for him but Allah was going to contrive things in a way as to convert the malicious campaign into the elevation of his name and fame (*Raf'a adh-Dhikr*).

What actually happened was that men of good sense and reason like Tufail bin 'Amr Dawsī, would try to find the real truth behind the sadistic maligning which had yet to get its proper name, Charlie Hebdoism. Meeting with the Prophet and listening to the verses of the Quran would open their eyes and awaken their spiritual sight

The phenomenon repeated itself after the shameful distortion of the Prophet's image during Medieval Ages in Europe. Men of understanding turned to discover the reality of the Prophet and the greatest revolution of history that he brought about in a short span of two decades. A time then came when even the enemies of Islam began, willy-nilly, to sing his praises. They included not only impartial thinkers like Carlyle and Michael Hart but also committed adversaries like Gibbon and H. G. Wells, not to speak of the venerated devotees of Islam like Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (HA), Muhammad Asad (RA) and Murad Hofmann.

The sadistic tirade that is now going on in France is also going to lead to a revival of interest in Islam and the Prophet of Islam (SAW) as the Divine pledge of *Raf'a adh-Dhikr* is everlasting and universal. God willing, objective and unperverted souls will turn, in curiosity, to study the holy life of the Prophet and his message of mercy and peace and embrace the Truth. That will be the time when Charlie Hebdoism will die its own death. Only we should be careful not to violate, in our reaction, the principles taught by and the life-pattern set by the Messenger of peace and mercy. (Source: GreaterKashmir)

Reading

The Lost Legacy of Muslims

Books – Windows of the Mind

“Books are to the mind what windows are to a home!” Imagine living in a home with no windows. How dark, how stale, how dreary! Windows bring light to a home. Windows bring in crisp air to a stale room. Windows open on to a vast and sweeping landscape. Books do the same for the mind. Books bring light into the mind. Books stir a fresh breeze of thought in a stale mind. Books open new horizons to the mind.

Iqra! – The First Lesson of the Qur’an

Reading is second nature to a Muslim. The Qur’an’s first words: “Iqra!” teaches us the lesson to “Read!” Ever since that day, Muslims lead mankind to the wonderful world of reading, learning and study, which they knew nothing about before this revelation. The Muslim public of the past were avid readers. Muslim authors churned out books by the thousands. Just take the Qur’an; no book in the world can boast of so many commentaries as the Qur’an. Take the biography of the Holy (S) no person has been more chronicled than Nabi Muhammad (S)– [chronicled] even by his non-Muslims admirers. Coming from such a rich literary heritage, it is sad to observe that in our times, Muslims tend to be very poor readers overall. By right, Muslims should be leading the world in reading as they had done in the glorious past. A ‘secret’ of the Muslims’ successes in the past is the fact that they read profusely,

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thereby producing razor-sharp minds and geniuses of the finest order.

Today, the finest of Islamic literature is available in a bewildering variety of topics in almost all major world languages. Ranging from thick, voluminous works to glossy monthly magazines and even double-sided, single-page flyers – the needs of almost every kind of reader is catered for. As a further service, a big percentage of this Islamic literature is available absolutely free-of-charge or at a very nominal price. Even so, many Muslims just do not have any interest in reading at all.

“No Time” and Other Common Excuses

The most common excuse is “No time!” This is surprising because the very same people tend to have ample time for any of the following activities: reading and digesting the propaganda of daily papers, reading social-gossip magazines, watching TV and videos, playing computer games or surfing on the internet for hours. Time is also available for sports, spectating sports, taking drives, browsing in shopping malls, socialising with friends at clubs or [barbecue] parties. Unfortunately the people that ought to read this message are probably too busy with any one of the above activities so it doesn’t matter to them anyway. However, a plea is made to those who are convinced of the importance of reading to pass this article (or its message) to our ‘busy brethren’. It may just have an effect, one never

knows.

The fact that “knowledge is an ocean” and “there is no end to learning” are well-known to all Muslims. Every Muslim has to acquire a minimum level of knowledge of Islam that will enable him to lead a 24-hour and a 365-day life according to Allah’s chosen way of life. “Acquiring knowledge is compulsory upon every Muslim male and female” – Hadith. The way every individual goes about doing this is his personal choice. However, Islamic literature is one of the easiest and most effective method of acquiring a sound Islamic education.

A Book: An Easy-Going Companion

A book does not dictate the pace of learning. It has no fixed times. It is not limited or restricted to space or venue. Books do not make any demands nor do they get tired. Books can be studied in the privacy of the home at one’s own leisure and pace. Books are not limited to just one person,; the whole family can benefit from a single book and for many years on end.

Today when a deluge of filthy and unsavory reading material is flooding the homes of the world, it is time that Muslims turned quickly towards good, authentic Islamic literature to fill their homes and adorn their bookshelves. Remember, a vacuum does not remain void for long. It has to be filled sooner or later. Rather than letting it fill with the wrong, let it be filled with what is right and wholesome! Islamic literature is a little candle of light and guidance in the pitch dark night of misguidance outside.

Books bind the family

Books can provide hours of joy for the Muslim family if read as a family unit. It helps to cement the family bond of love and caring. Instead of the home being a ‘motel’ housing ‘strangers’ on their own course of life (the pre-

sent home atmosphere), it will bring everyone together in a shared activity. It helps to imbue the mind of young and growing children with the wonderful values of Islam. It will also help to rid the home of the evil and negative influences of the twin-terrors: TV and videos.

Five advices

Take note of five sentences of brief advice at this point:

1. Be extra careful about the choice of Islamic literature one reads. Not every nice-sounding title is safe to read. It’s a minefield out there. Always ask the opinion of a learned, trusted, experienced elder [and scholar] before buying or reading anything.
2. Islamic literature always contains an element of Qur’an and Hadith. Great respect must be shown to books of this nature. It must also be studied with respect and dignity, never with outstretched legs or in any disrespectful posture. Also endeavor to be with Wudu. Keep [the book] in a clean, high and respectful place. Do not scratch, tear or mishandle. If worn out, bury [it] with respect.
3. Buying or borrowing a book is one thing. Reading is another. Many people tend to confuse the two. Just having it is not good enough. It has to be read to be useful and beneficial.
4. Set aside time for reading, say 15-20 minutes daily at a fixed time. This will help with self-discipline.
5. Try and establish a little library corner or bookshelf in the home. Also strive to establish a reasonable Islamic library in every Muslim locality. This will be very beneficial, especially for those who are eager to read but cannot afford it.

Invest in a good book today. It should last a lifetime and beyond. If not you, [then] your children or grandchildren might appreciate it some day!

Change

Talha Ghannam

Since reading Muhammad Asad's "The Road to Makkah", I have become fascinated with exploring the perspectives non-Muslims and converts have on Islam and life generally. Being born Muslim, many of us take for granted the way we think and act, rarely paying attention to the reasons why. We casually assume every person to be the same as us, unable to fathom the nuances between different perspective, the rationality behind their thought or the background with which they speak. What Asad brought to light in his book was a perspective on life which underlies all these different issues, something I had rarely ever considered before; change.

Change is a word we often hear. Though many of us understand what it is, few of us know how to actually achieve it. Ramadan has become the Muslim equivalent of a New Year's resolution; they come and go with promises of change but we often end up with very little to show for it. Change just seems too inconvenient.

What fascinates me with converts like Muhammad Asad is how they embody change. Every aspect of their life gradually changes over time, sacrificing the most deeply rooted of habits in order to align themselves with their new found faith. Their conversion is encapsulated through two key dimensions: an open mindedness to address the most fundamental aspect of their humanity - their faith - and a willingness to explore other perspectives

of reality which were previously considered as foreign or wrong. By changing their faith, they are not only changing an identity or set of values, they acknowledge that all their previous decisions and actions may have been wrong and concede that the perspective they disagreed with was right all along. If they can overcome these two obstacles, everything else becomes a walk in the park. These two things are the keys to their success. The resulting changes are all fruits of this change.

As Muslims, we seem to have forgotten so much of this. We fail to understand that conviction is what drives the change, not our own actions. We need to 'convert' ourselves back to our original disposition, ridding ourselves of our intellectual and spiritual arrogance to search for the truth ourselves and recognize it wherever we see it. We must look beyond our own culture, habits and desires and be willing to place ourselves to learn what true faith and submission means. So many Muslims close their minds to any perspective other than their own, scarcely ever trying to understand the essence behind what they believe and practice. The process is gradual and the results take time, but this is the key which brought the fruits of change we witness in the great men and women in our history and the key to our own self reformation. I often reflect at what made the generation of the companions (RAA) of the Prophet (S) so great. There are so many things we can cite; their support

of the Prophet (S) during the heydays of Islam, the transmission and preservation of the sacred tradition, their devoutness in following Islam in its entirety. But for me, there is a more fundamental role that each of these companions played before any of these could happen; their honesty in recognizing their own misguidance and their ability to change everything in order to live in accordance with their new found faith. Imagine an entire society of individuals whose focus was on their own spiritual journey before casting judgment on others. Abu Bakr (RA), the greatest of men to walk this earth after the prophets, was named As-Siddiq (truthful and trustworthy) for his unequivocal faith in revelation and his rush in applying it to himself.

With this regard, converts are the modern day manifestations of the companions. Their journey is precisely what those great individuals went through in the past, and to understand them is to understand the companions of the prophet . I recently had the privilege to talk with a convert who has only been Muslim for a few years. Here is one extract which I will never forget:

"It's been almost one year to the day since I started practicing - praying five times a day, no pork/wine - although it took me a bit longer to take my shahadah (testimony of faith) formally since I wanted to be sure of what I was doing. There's something indescribable about such a huge piece of your life you never knew you were missing coming back one day to fill that gap you didn't realize you had."

"Even after I took my shahadah, in some respects it felt like getting a driver's license but not really having a car to drive. We really need to be training our imams (religious leaders) who do the shahadas to facilitate the spiritual process and not just the 'repeat after me and sign here' process."

"The thought of having your slate wiped completely clean is actually quite a daunting one. You would think one would feel all light and spiritually weightless knowing that everything you've done wrong before that day has been forgiven, alhamdulillah (praise be to God), but for me, it was quite a heavy feeling. It's the weight of sensing just a molecule of the immensity of Allah; that He can, would and does forgive you, even after a lifetime of disobedience. It's the weight of knowing He still loves you after denying Him to His face, year after year, and that He never gave up on you. But most of all, it's the weight of knowing you don't want to let any dirt get anywhere near your now clean slate again, but the realization that you'll definitely continue to make mistakes, because you're human after all. But even then Allah will continue to forgive you until you get tired of asking. Subhanallah (glory be to God), it's nothing short of mind-blowing."

Reading that blew me away. So much of our perception of converts is the "all your sins are forgiven" part that we often neglect the huge struggle and reconciliation the person has to go through behind the scenes. We assume the change is "rational" and "easy" with just a simple utterance of a few words, yet we forget the difficulties that come with changing bad habits and adopting new ones, difficulties which perhaps merit the forgiveness. Rarely do we ever empathize through our own struggles of reformation yet we expect an immediate reconciliation and change in others, something we ourselves are incapable of! How many of us know that being fat is bad for us and against the sunnah (tradition of the Prophet (S)) yet never put anything in place to change it? How many of us know that food should be halal and Tayyib (pure) yet are content to eat the conveyor-belt meat that fills our shelves? The list can go

on...Relating to their struggle is far more effective than judging it.

I remember sitting with one of my teachers in Egypt as we read the 'Letter of Imam Qushayri' (Risaalah Al-Qushairiyah), a book which describes the biographies of the great scholars during the early period of Islam. What struck me when reading the book was the number of these people who began their life as bandits, thieves and other kinds of criminals yet went on to become some of the greatest Muslims who have walked this earth. As we read through the book, I remember asking my teacher; "I know when someone converts all their sins are forgiven, but what happens if someone is already a Muslim? Is their only route to forgiveness the penal punishment?" As I said this, my teacher looks me in the eyes, smiles and says, "Is the One who is able to forgive the greatest sin of all (shirk) at the utterance of one sentence unwilling to for-

give the smaller sins in the same way? All we need is to have that same conviction they do when they make that testimony of faith."

So perhaps change is not the most difficult thing to understand or achieve after all. Most of us have not reached the level of criminality that some of the great people before us did before they began their process of reformation, so surely our journey shouldn't be as difficult. In fact, how many of us regularly demonstrate the capacity to change our lives when we hear the commandments of Allah; fasting, praying and giving zakah (charity) when asked to? In this light, the words of Allah become so much more meaningful as the significance of our own inner struggle and the tribulations of this world are cast in a new light:

"Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." (Qur'an 13:11)

Respecting our Leaders and Seniors

On the occasion of the Battle of Mutah, a Sabaabi who was not officially part of the army killed one of the Roman warriors and as per the normal system, it was understood that he will be able to take the weaponry and armour of this warrior as part of his share of the booty. However, at the time of the distribution of the booty Hadhrat Khaalid bin Waleed (RA) decided to join it with the general booty. Hadhrat 'Auf bin Maalik (RA) objected but Hadhrat Khaalid did not accept it. After returning to Madeenah, both these Sabaabah (radhiyallahu 'anhuma) went to Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) to enquire as to what was the correct decision to have been taken. Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) replied that the warrior's weaponry etc. will be given to the one who killed him. On receiving this reply, Hadhrat 'Auf bin Maalik (RA) gestured to Hadhrat Khaalid (RA) that his objection was correct and valid. On noticing this, Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) became upset and reprimanded Hadhrat 'Auf bin Maalik (RA), that why can't you leave the leaders that I have appointed. Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) then retracted and ordered that the warrior's weaponry etc. should be mixed again with the general booty.

One of the lessons we learn from this incident is that the person who is reporting the incident word for word is the very same person who was being reprimanded. When you reflect then this can only be the miracle of Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam). The Sabaabah (RA) wished that the word and teaching of Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) should prevail irrespective of their name being tarnished. You cannot get a group of people as the Sabaabah. Will it ever be possible for any of us to do this? Further, if we were corrected we will have a grudge for the one who corrected us. So look at the cleanliness and purity of the hearts of the Sabaabah.

Belief and Superstition

Khalid Baig

"No soul knows what it will earn tomorrow." [Luqman, 31:34]

"The person who goes to a soothsayer and believes in him has rejected that which was revealed to Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)." [Musnad Ahmad]

The president of an American company informs his anxious employees that they are about to get a big contract that will ensure jobs for coming years. Then he adds, "Knock on wood." If things are more uncertain, he will say, "Keep your fingers crossed." Keeping fingers crossed is expected to ward off evil. Knocking on wood is meant to bring good luck by enlisting the support of spirits who according to the ancient pagans Druids, lived in trees. There are U.S. Air Force crews who insist on touching or knocking trees before taking off.

The fear of the number thirteen is so pervasive in the U.S. and Europe that there is a term for it: Triskaidekaphobia. American presidents Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt avoided eating at tables where 13 people were present. Many tall buildings avoid 13th floor or room number 13. According to one report published in 1990, this fear costs America more than a billion dollars a year in absenteeism, travel cancellations, and drop in trade on the 13th of the month. Of course, it is the horror of horrors if the 13th of a month were to fall on a Friday. (This has a Christian root; 13 is reportedly the number of people who sat at the Last Supper on the night Judas betrayed Jesus and it was a Friday!)

Welcome to the post-modern, post-enlightenment, neo-pagan civilization. Superstition is alive and well here. In a big city like Los Angeles or New York, one can find thousands of palm-readers, tarot-card readers and astrologers who even have professional associations and certification programs. Daily horoscopes are an indispensable part of even the most prestigious newspapers.

Every year as the year ends, big names in the prediction business make big headlines --- and millions of dollars--- telling the world what will happen in the coming year.

Superstitions are as old as darkness itself. Fear of the unknown and inability to control or predict our own future have led people to all kinds of irrational acts and beliefs. But that was during the Dark Ages. In the age of science and technology that was supposed to end. Britannica notes, "Being irrational, it [superstition] should recede before education, and especially Science." That did not happen.

So the experts have chosen to do the second best thing: Put a happy face on their defeat by giving scholarly explanations for its obvious failing. The Americana recognizes superstitions as part of being human. It calls it folklore. "Plainly, despite supposed sophistications, hu-

man beings are all the folk and thus are - the source of folklore." It goes on to quote American anthropologist Melville Herskovits as saying: "All human custom is meaningful; nothing without some living value survives in any culture."

Such fancy rationalization cannot hide the fact that belief in the irrational is a direct result of lack of belief in the All Knowledgeable, All-Powerful God who controls everything. He created this vast universe and it is running according to His plan. Not a leaf falls from a tree or a droplet of water falls from the sky except through His will.

We do not know what will happen to us tomorrow, but He does. We put our trust in Him, seek His protection and help, and accept His will. The person lacking this awareness will endlessly take omens from cats, birds, and mice; sticks and greasy stone; sun and stars; or itching in one's body.

The Arabs were as superstitious as anyone before Islam. They would not undertake a journey or do anything important without first "determining" that it would be safe to do so -- by looking at birds and beasts. If a bird flew from right to left in front of them, that was a bad omen: flight in the other direction was a good omen. During travel, if a deer crossed going from right to left, the trip was cancelled. When they reached a destination, they would seek protection of jinn by supplicating to them. Yet, such deeply held beliefs and practices were uprooted completely by Islam in a very short period.

Much later, weakening of faith in segments of Muslim societies did lead to seeping in superstitious practices from other societies. Weakening of our understanding of --- and belief in --- the articles of faith inevitably leads to superstitions of one form or another. That, unfortunately, is the situation of large segments of our ummah today.

The illiterate masses may go to a sooth-

sayer who tells the future with the help of a bird. The western educated elite of their country laugh at their ignorant ways, yet depend on horoscopes, sayings of Nostradamus, and predictions of Jane Dixon, etc. Both are equally ignorant and equally involved in unbelief!

There is no doubt that a believer faces the same uncertainties in life as the non-believer but he faces them with the help of Allah.

When announcing a plan, he does not knock on wood; he says Insha-Allah (if Allah wills), putting his trust in his Creator. When embarking on a journey, he makes supplication to Allah for his safety. When he is unsure about a plan, he seeks Allah's help in making up his mind. Here is the translation of the beautiful dua of Istikharah that we have been taught for the occasion:

"O Allah! I seek Your guidance (in making a choice) by virtue of Your knowledge, and I seek ability by virtue of Your power, and I ask You of Your great bounty. You have power, I have none. And You know, I know not. You are the Knower of hidden things.

"O Allah! If in Your knowledge, this matter is good for my religion, my livelihood and my affairs; immediate and in the distant future, then ordain it for me, make it easy for me and bless it for me. And if in Your knowledge, this matter is bad for my religion, my livelihood, and my affairs; immediate and in the distant future, then turn it away from me, and turn me away from it. And ordain for me the good wherever it be and make me pleased with it."

Each word of this dua invites reflection. It shows how uncertainties in our life bring us closer to Allah. In Allah we put all our hopes, not in the cryptic words of an ignorant astrologer or soothsayer.

It is not the human destiny to be afflicted with superstitions: It is just an evil consequence of unbelief. The light of Islam can cure it.

How Ibrahim (AS) Initiated Globalization

Omer A. Haleem

Social scientists, historians, and economists have been running something of a competition to theorize the origins of the two hallmarks of our time: The catalyst that occasioned the modern era, and the event-onset of globalization.

They've mostly spun sightlessly from speculation to conjecture, blinded by the cowls of secularism they must wear. This causes them to miss the real driver of social transformation among humanity—the divinely ordained brotherhood of the prophets of tawhid, or revealed monotheism.

Anyone who studies prophethood can easily discern the celebrated harbinger of both. Ibrahim (AS) father of prophets. Two aspects of his advent are decisive in history: His coming ushers in a new era for humanity, and he enters as the inspired herald of the end of time, the vast bulk of humanity's generations having already passed from the earth before him. So in mission and message, Ibrahim (AS) proclaims the inevitability of the modern era and globalization.

Before Ibrahim (RA), humanity is not nearly as connected as it is after him. Peoples in the eras preceding him fundamentally live in their own worlds. That is why, as the Quran tells us, to each one God sends its own messenger, a brother from among themselves,

with a specialized message directed exclusively to them.

That is also why there is so little meaningful continuity between the nations before Ibrahim (AS). A people would rise to prominence. A messenger would be awakened among them. He would call them to Oneness and away from their self-styled idols. He would condemn their treatment of their downtrodden and poor—for always the exploited were the “necessary” byproduct of a people's propagated identity. And bleakly he would censure the very particular vices that they claimed their beliefs arrogated to them.

Then the people would disbelieve. Then God would bring down a shocking cataclysm upon their heads, or from beneath their feet, or from before their very faces, or from behind them, unaware—until the unmoved earth and tearless sky swept their faceless corpses and traces into silence. Then another messenger would arise among a successor people.

The Run Up to Ibrahim (AS)

Yet there is perceptible motion among humanity preceding Ibrahim (AS). In travel. Gradually the trade routes become more established and better. In recording. It grows easier to keep records of human events, and

so to obtain them. I would guess that improvement in political organization could similarly be detected, until out of these sophistications a people like the Romans can envision a global empire; whereas in pre-recorded history, the notion of empire as such is unrealized (not to say that expansive realms didn't exist).

But when the new era verges, nothing but a change in prophethood can usher it in and match the unprecedented capaciousness of its mind.

So it is the mission of Ibrahim to reintroduce monotheism in the globalizing world—and this time for good. For the world will never after return to a state vacant of monotheism.

And how could it? The elaboration of travel, the capacity for capture of datum and occurrence—and now the expansion and elevation of prophethood—all the elements of returning man to a whole-earth, human-wide level of home, place, and space existence would make it forever unnecessary to reinstate monotheism in the world.

Ibrahim (AS), and the Sacred Way Ever After

This speaks to Ibrahim's (AS) unique God-given characterization in the Quran as a nation, or community in entirety, in himself (16:120).

Thus Ibrahim (AS)—exemplar of monotheism, devoutly obedient to the immutable morality set by God for all humankind—goes where God commands him in the earth, his purpose to sow the seeds of tawhid, therein, and to set its geo-spiritual axes for all human beings and nations after him.

Centrally, in this quest, Ibrahim (RA) raises the foundations of the Ka'bah, the very First House of God established on earth, and simultaneously purifies it for worship and reestablishes the human obligation of pilgrimage in the season of Hajj to it.

This is crucial. For had humanity not come full circle to the threshold of globalism, Allah would not have had Ibrahim (AS) raise up the Ka'bah's foundations to reintroduce it to us for these four specific purposes: (1) For the Hajj as the unifying focal point of humanity; (2) as our human origin in the world; (3) as the source of the cardinal directions, from which east becomes east, west west, and north and south the left and the right respectively; and (4) as the culminating place and rite of all human worship of Him as Sole Divine. Before Ibrahim (AS), it would have been too much to expect a person on the other side of the world to make Hajj.

This leaves us with an important question. Where did God command Ibrahim (AS) to go, aside from the Valley of Tears, Bakkah, where Makkah stands? He went to three other places: Iraq (where he was born and started his call to tawhid). Al-Shâm (Greater Syria, which hosts the Furthest Sacred House, Al-Aqsa, in Jerusalem). And Egypt. Indeed, the event of building and re-sacralizing the Ka'bah of Makkah comes last on this inspired itinerary, and thus does the last become first.

If we look at these four regions, we see that today they share certain defining characteristics:

All are predominantly Muslim.

All are Arabic-speaking, which naturally keeps them closely tied to the Quran, the Sunnah (Way) of the Prophet Muhammad (S), and Islam.

All have tangible connections between them and Heaven: (1) The sources of the Nile and Euphrates are in Heaven. (2) The Ka'bah in Makkah holds the Black Stone, a stone of Heaven, and is connected with Al-Bayt Al-Ma'mûr (The Much-Frequented House (by the Angels in pilgrimage) in Heaven. (3) And in Al-Shâm, in Jerusalem, within the Sanctuary of Al-Aqsa Mosque (established by Ibrahim (AS) 40

years after the Ka'bah), there is a Stairway to Heaven from The Sakhr—the Stone from which the Prophet Muhammad (S) ascended to Heaven during the Mi'raj, Ascent to Heaven. All exist in or near the desert.

In the case of Makkah, Iraq, and Egypt, civilization has been made possible by miraculous water: Zam Zam, the Nile and Euphrates (as above-mentioned).

They hosted the oldest civilizations in the world.

They occupy the most central geographic position in the world, and hence its central trade routes must pass through them.

The region as a whole God has blessed with rich natural resources.

None of the Holy Scriptures (The Torah of Moses (AS), The Evangel of Jesus (AS), or The Quran) specifies any place outside of this region. Rather, all the events of the Revealed Scriptures occur within these places.

Makkah enjoys a special station as the place of the Hajj-Pilgrimage, we've noted. But set it aside and look at the modern-day political conditions of the Ibrahimic countries, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. Each is in calamitous upheaval, metamorphosis from which they shall not return to their previous socio-political states.

In this context, let us recall the command of God to Ibrahim (AS), to call people—all humanity!—to His Oneness and worship, to make the Hajj-Pilgrimage to His House.

What does Ibrahim, stark in the desert vale, do? He ascends Mount Abi Qubays near the Ka'bah and cries out, against all the odds, in this wilderness to the far-flung family of man, who cannot hear him. He calls man to return to his origin, to the sole worship of his Sole Creator, to the singular, most unifying, comprehensive, and equalizing Pillar of Worship, the Hajj-Pilgrimage.

He proclaims and Allah conveys.

It is as if we can hear his prophetic, clarion voice ring out upon the winds and through the ages today, calling humanity to return all together, in unified peace, to the pure, easy, and upright belief in God, the One, and to the faith and prophetic conduct this entails.

Source: al-Jumuah (Jan 2015)

A Hundred Excuses

Shamsuddeen Muhammad bin 'Abdur Ra-beem Maqdisi was from amongst the outstanding scholars of the seventh century. Once he and his wife, who was also a pious woman, were digging a piece of land at the foot of a mountain for some need of theirs. As they dug they came across a jar full of gold coins. Immediately he recited "Innaa lillaahi ..." and covered the coins. Thereafter he told his wife: "This is a test for us from the side of Allah. It is possible that someone had buried these coins here." He further took an oath from her that she would not touch it and would not inform anyone of it."

(Shazaraatuz Zahab, vol. 7, pg. 709)

Lesson: Notwithstanding their poverty, the two left the coins and went away. The fear of Allah and His love are such qualities that will guide a person at each step of his or her life. Minus these, we will easily formulate a hundred excuses to justify our wrongs and go on making the unlawful into lawful. This should never be the case. A Muslim must never allow his desires to lead him in life.

"You go Ahead"

A Story of Ishq-i-Rasul

Shaykh al-Islam 'Allamah Zafar Ahmad 'Uthmani (May Allah shower him with mercy) writes:

After performing Hajj, I went to the Illuminated City of Madinah. Once during my stay there, we happened to eat a meal outside the inn at which we were lodging. After finishing, we swept the uneaten remains and crusts of bread off the dastarkhwan [picnic blanket] into the grass for the animals to eat, and I returned to my room.

A short while later, however, when I came outside again, I saw something shocking: A sweet and adorable nine-year-old child was nibbling at those remains! I was filled with pity. I took the boy inside and fed him until he was full. Was I not in the city of he (May Allah grant him Peace and Blessings) who was the keeper of the poor and the guardian of the destitute? The boy was very moved by how I had treated him. As we were walking back, I asked him, "My child, what does your father do for a living?" The boy replied that he was an orphan. So I said, "My child, will you come with me to Hindustan?"

"When we get there, I will feed you lots delicious food. I will buy you fine clothes to wear. I will give you an education at my madrasah, and when you have earned your Ālim Fażil diploma, I will bring you back here myself so that you can take care of your moth-

er. Run along home and ask your mother for permission." The boy was very happy. He ran skipping backed home to his mother.

The poor widow was already worried because she did not even have enough money to raise her other children, and she immediately gave her permission. The boy ran back to me and said, "My mom says yes! I'm coming with you." Then he began asking me, "Hey Mister, when we get to your country, do they have lots of beans [chanay] to eat?" [I] told him, "Yes, you will have all these things in abundance!"

The child grabbed my finger. He led me to Masjid al-Nabawi (May Peace and Blessings be on its patron) and [when we reached inside] he stopped. His eyes fell on the blessed Rawḍah of the Master of Both Worlds (May Allah grant him Peace and Blessings), and the great doors of the Masjid, and he asked me, "Mister, in your country, do they have these doors and this Rawḍah also?"

I looked at him. "My child, if they could be found there, then why would I come all the way here?"

The color in the boy's face changed. He let go of my finger. "Mister, you go ahead. If they don't have these, then I'm not letting go of these doors."

He was choosing to remain hungry and remain thirsty. He could have just as well said,

“I’ll relieve my hunger and thirst by gazing at these doors, just like I have kept relieving it up till even today.”

Having said this, the child began to

Translated by Shoab A. Rasheed

Ibn Al-Baitar

Abu Muhammad Abdallah Ibn Ahmad Ibn al-Baitar Dhiya al-Din al-Malaqi was one of the greatest scientists of Muslim Spain and was the greatest botanist and pharmacist of the Middle Ages. He was born in the Spanish city of Malaga (Malaga) towards the end of the 12th century. He learned botany from Abu al-Abbas al-Nabati, a learned botanist, with whom he started collecting plants in and around Spain. In 1219 he left Spain on a plant-collecting expedition and travelled along the northern coast of Africa as far as Asia Minor. The exact modes of his travel (whether by land or sea) are not known, but the major stations he visited include Bugia, Qastantunia (Constantinople), Tunis, Tripoli, Barga and Adalia.

After 1224 he entered the service of al-Kamil, the Egyptian Governor, and was appointed chief herbalist. In 1227 al-Kamil extended his domination to Damascus, and Ibn al-Baitar accompanied him there which provided him an opportunity to collect plants in Syria His researches on plants extended over a vast area: including Arabia and Palestine, which he either visited or managed to collect plants from stations located there. He died in Damascus in 1248.

Ibn Baitar's major contribution, Kitab al-Jami fi al-Adwiya al-Mufrada, is one of the greatest botanical compilations dealing with medicinal plants in Arabic. It enjoyed a high status among botanists up to the 16th century and is a systematic work that embodies earlier works, with due criticism, and adds a great part of original contribution. The encyclopedia comprises some 1,400 different items, largely medicinal plants and vegetables, of which about 200 plants were not known earlier. The book refers to the work of some 150 authors mostly Arabic, and it also quotes about 20 early Greek scientists. It was translated into Latin and published in 1758.

His second monumental treatise Kitab al-Mlughni fi al-Adwiya al-Mufrada is an encyclopaedia of medicine. The drugs are listed in accordance with their therapeutical value. Thus, its 20 different chapters deal with the plants bearing significance to diseases of head, ear, eye, etc. On surgical issues he has frequently quoted the famous Muslim surgeon, Abul Qasim Zabravi. Besides Arabic, Baitar has given Greek and Latin names of the plants, thus facilitating transfer of knowledge.

Ibn Baitar's contributions are characterised by observation, analysis and classification and have exerted a profound influence on Eastern as well as Western botany and medicine. Though the Jami was translated/published late in the western languages as mentioned above, yet many scientists had earlier studied various parts of the book and made several references to it.

A Civilization We Do Not Belong To

Syed Iqbal Zaheer

The Abbasid Caliphate created a civilization to which we do not seem to belong. Except for morals and well-spread piety, its spirit was more in consonance with the Western civilization, at least so far as knowledge and learning are concerned, than with the Muslims of today's world. Indeed, today's Muslims seem to be at an irreconcilable hostile confrontation with the civilization of the Abbasids. To be sure, if it is said that today's Muslims stand apart in complete contradiction with – not only the Abbasid – but their entire past, root and branch, then, it would be no overstatement.

Consider a few facts concerning books and libraries alone, not to touch on the more important, the educational and knowledge aspects.

Libraries then were an integral part of the life of the majority of people. They crowded into them as their counterparts crowd into shopping malls today. The buildings – the houses of learning – they loved were built lavishly and maintained lavishly, while their own homes were decorated with thatched roofs. Those massive buildings were topped by domes supported on monumental columns. With rooms large and roofs tall, every class of books had its own housing area: history, economics, social sciences, geography, religion, science, etc. Every subject had its collections in thousands. Windows tall, that would allow in luxurious swash of fresh air, had to pass over trees and lakes that surrounded the building, describe the luxury.

Those libraries were not an uncommon sight. Baghdad at one point of time had some three dozen libraries. Their racks were filled by the supplies from hundreds of book dealers. In Morocco, not as great a city of 28. (*Vol.16, Issue: 03*)

learning – and the learned – as Baghdad, one particular street had one hundred libraries and bookshops. It looked as if books were the main business of the people of the town, as if they ate and drank them.

Zaytuna Mosque library in Tunisia stocked 100,000 books. But it was not an exceptional case. Every mosque in the Islamic world, particularly in the northern Arab provinces from Marrakash to Bukhara to Ray to Andalus, had libraries attached to them. The books were donated to the mosques as waqf property. Khateeb al-Baghdadi had given away his personal library as waqf – for the delight of voracious readers. In addition, knowledge-hungry men borrowed books from personal libraries or read them on the spot. Scholars spent years searching material through libraries spread as far wide as a thousand miles. Late in the years, Zarkashi, the writer of 4-volume “Al-Burhan fi `Uloom al-Qur’an,” whose book is still extant, cites hundreds of books from which he took his material.

Bookshops too were not to be left behind by the libraries for their luxurious atmosphere. People came in not merely looking for

titles, but also to meet with other like-minded scholars, to discuss what was there within two hard covers of the books, over tea and refreshments in no short supply within the bookstores. The bookstore owners themselves were bookworms, knew the author's level of learning, quality of material the author had presented, and could easily advise the novices or the specialists, on the contents of a book.

Bookstores and libraries were, however, not the only place where you saw piles upon piles of books, new and old. Every second man's home had its own library. Imam Muslim had to forage through a whole night amongst his books, to find a particular hadith he wished to double check. Jahez had such a tall library in his house, that when the books fell on him they buried him to bestow martyrdom on him. When scholars moved, they carried their books on a dozen camels and when libraries were moved, they needed hundreds of camels. Khateeb wrote a history of Syria, never like its kind has been written since then in any language. The 30-volume books of the east or west, past or present, pale before it. Translated into English, its 80 Arabic volumes would need 150 fat volumes today. In the Bhatkal library, arranged on tables, they run into four meter length. It was in this tradition, that as late as the 19th Islamic century, Shah Abdul Aziz had some 15-20,000 books in his private library, of which, he had not missed to ready any.

Referring to the intellectual activities of the Abbasid period, Phillip K. Hitti wrote, "When, therefore, we speak of Arab medicine or philosophy or mathematics, what we mean is the learning that was enshrined in Arabic books written by men who were themselves Syrians, Persians, Iraqis, Egyptians or Arabians Christians, Jews or Moslems and who drew their material from Greek, Aramaic, Persian and other sources." (Syria, a Short History)

Imagine the influence of the lingua franca of Islam – Arabic – that the all-time most influential Rabbi Maimonides, wrote his famous commentary on Mishna, apart from several others such as "Dalaat al-Haa'ireen" – books of Jewish interest – in Arabic.

Compare that situation with that prevalent in any country of today's Muslim world. It is, at best, only large cities that can be proud of a library. While in the USA every village has a library, many towns of the Islamic world, especially Asian, miss them altogether. An acquaintance who peeped into a village library in USA, found a few books on Islam too, including one on the life of Bilal. Not many Muslim libraries will boast of the life of this, their perennial hero, and a constant and un-drying theme of their preachers.

Muslim libraries of today are housed in decrepit buildings, dimly lit, with plaster falling off from every wall. They are poorly furnished, stink from inside, and are surrounded by filth and squalor generously left to rot all over around the building. Furniture creaks. Books are old, torn, and some incomplete. Volumes are missing, good books have disappeared, and the unwanted works – worthy of waste baskets – are lined up in racks in disorderly manner. No catalogue will lead to a book of demand – if the book is still there in stock. Many entries of the catalogues are missing, about which no one knows how they were lost. The librarian and attendants hardly know what they have, and are, invariably, clerks and officials who deal with books as vegetable merchants deal with potatoes and cucumber. They are, so to say, unlettered, and completely disinterested in their jobs.

The visitors to the libraries of today's Muslim world come in to pass time, to browse through colorful magazines, where it is illustrations and photographs that catch their eye. If they read an article, it will be either on a

sportsman, a celebrity or a film hero. Hardly ever will they borrow any book. The old religious manuscript-type of priceless volumes, which could be sold to the Western libraries at good price, are of no use to them.

In consequence, good authors and their knowledge-bearing books have disappeared from bookstores, from printing presses. Not a single readable title has appeared in Indian any language since about 30 years. For the non-Arab world, Arabic has become a language of the Martians. After the standards of learning were lowered when books began being written in Urdu, Malay, and other vernaculars, which were a mere shadow of Arabic books, now it is the turn of books in English, which are shadows of shadows. The language of these English books seems to be in an English which has been invented anew. The language is poor, diction defective, expressions vague, sentences enigmatic, and the text most boring.

Such is also the quality of religious literature available on the fantastic, the beloved, authoritative, modern source of deep knowledge and profound learning: the Net. To sink anyone into an ocean of ignorance and stupidity, a man may be advised to obtain his knowledge of Islamic disciplines from the literature on the Net – a Sanctum Sanctorum of the disputants in support of their deviant opinions.

At the international level, but, once again, specifically in the non-Arab world, the graph indicating the level of Muslim ignorance has been rising up, and up, steadily, and it seems it will soon become completely vertical.

No Jama'ah, group, or study-circle pays any attention to qualitative learning. At best they indulge in, as a Western writer aptly described, "ever more perfect re-statement of the stated." The halaqas are a good place for a little nap. The speeches are what you would have heard in your childhood. When they

speak of knowledge, they mean acquaintance with what their founding fathers wrote. Their's is the final authority, and their books the Bible. To differ with them is to commit Kufr. To criticize a Jama'ah is to ask for an exit ticket. To talk of Arabic, is like talking of Sanskrit. Qur'an and Sunnah are slogans to help netfresh adherents. The latest victim of the carrion call is handed over pamphlets, instead of the promised Qur'an and Sunnah. To differ with the statements, guidelines and fatwas of the minor contemporary scholars of those pamphlets, who are not known outside their countries, but because of the propagandists, is a bid'ah. To criticize the renowned scholars of the past, of outstanding repute, is the Sunnah faithfully followed by members of the Jama'ah. The Lilliputian who most loudly criticizes the most learned of the past, is the winner of the hotly contested leadership in his group.

Hardly are the Muslims of today aware that scholars of the West having lost hope in their own life, culture and society, that they will ever recover from the on-going decline, are now reading more and more of those books whose titles are unknown to the modern-day Muslims. Most new biographies of the Prophet are being written by Western intellectuals. Thorough going, well researched articles on Islamic topics are being produced by Western writers. The best civil, economic, political and even religious aspects of Islam and Muslims of the past and present, are being explored by Westerners. As an example, a single academic Western site offers as its weekly contribution 10 books and articles concerned with Islam. Leave alone the contents, many titles are beyond the comprehension of today's argumentative protagonist of Islam:

- *The Identity of the Sabians: Some Insights*, Dov Schwartz and Raphael Jospe (eds.),
- *[Toward] Abstract Models for Islamic History*

(working paper), by Maxim Romanov | Bookmarked by Fatma KIZIL

- *Tafsir and Islamic Intellectual History: Exploring the Boundaries of a Genre*, by Andreas Goerke | Bookmarked by Fatma KIZIL
- *Violence in Islam*, by Michael Schmidt
- *Trying Islam: Muslims before the European Court of Human Rights*, by TuranKayaoglu
- *Three Takes on Islamophobia*, by TuranKayaoglu. *International Sociology*. 27(5): 509-515,
- *Structural changes in the settlement geography of Medina*, by Mehran Esmaeili
- "What's there under your hijab?" *What do International Muslim Graduate Students in the U.S. report about...?* by Methal Marzouk
- *The Education of Islamic Boarding Schools; Religious Humanism Perspective Study* by Mukodi Dr
- *Auto-Bio/Ethnography as a Curriculum in Cross-Culture Communication: A Voice from the Other Shore* by MethalMarzouk

Leslie Hazleton – a British Jewess – delivered a speech at TED, on the Qur'an, in the 20 allotted minutes, without referring to any note carried in the hand, that astonished many a Muslim. Describing the beauty and power of the Qur'an, in such exemplary rhetoric, she did what no Muslim scholar of Arab or non-Arab world is capable of delivering today. Rumi's mystical poetry rendered into English, are the best-selling titles in the West. Shah Waliyullah's difficult classic, "Hujjatullah al-Baligha," is now of such interest that it sees a translation – for the first time – into English by the learned society in Brill, Holland. Books of other similar renowned Muslim scholars of the past are in the pipeline. The texts of such books are, for today's Muslims, filled with such riddles as to tire them out by the third line – but they are of interest to those who are looking at how they could benefit from them.

There isn't any quick-fix solution to the problem of rising ignorance, not among the common people, but among those who think

they are educated. Scholars, Da'wah workers, Jamaa'aats and anyone concerned, need to shove back their differences and courageously take up the task of educating the Ummah's educated class. A hundred thousand mosques conducting classes in basic Arabic language and delivering Dars on Hadith on weekly basis, for next ten years, will turn the tides; (yes, dars al-hadith and not the Qur'an, because once a man learns a bit of Arabic, his attachment to the Qur'an grows). It might sound a stupendous task, but Muslims of the past have demonstrated their penchant for stupendous tasks.

Transformation in One Week

A husband once complained that his wife does not listen to him, she leaves the home in disarray and passes her life following her desires. He was advised to start taleem (keitaab reading) in the home. On the first day when he opened the book to read, she grabbed her children, went in the next room, locked it and switched on the television loudly. On the second day she did the very same thing. On the third day she needed to use the toilet. As she walked past her husband, the words being read caught her attention. She stopped, her heart was captured, so she returned to the room and switched off the television. On the fourth day the entire family sat together for taleem. On the fifth day she removed the TV from the home, since it was destroying her life and her children's lives. By the sixth day she decided not to leave the home like before. Within a week the entire home changed with the blessing of taleem at home.

Why Earthquakes Occur

Shaykh Mawlana Muhammad Saleem Dhorat

Having just experienced an earthquake early dawn couple of days back, we would like to share with you an editorial of the respected Shaykh-ul-Hadith, Shaykh Mawlana Muhammad Saleem Dhorat, which appeared in the monthly journal 'Riyadul Jannah' after the earthquake that occurred in February 2008 in the UK.

At 12:56am on 27th February the UK was shaken by an earthquake of a significant enough magnitude to make the headlines. Buildings shuddered, furniture shook, and people were woken from their sleep. By morning, everyone was talking about it.

The largest earthquake to strike the UK in over 25 years was regarded by most people as no more than an exciting incident. Their curiosity was satisfied by scientific explanations, and there their interest ended. They did not see the shaking of the earth beneath their feet as an opportunity to learn valuable lessons.

The question we need to ask is: 'Why do earthquakes occur?'

We can learn a lot about the world around us by using the 'aql (intellect) that Allah has given us. 'Aql, however, has its inherent limitations, and as believers we should not remain content with the often incomplete picture of events that it can present. Where 'aql reaches its limits, wahy (Revelation) takes over. As Muslims, we should turn to the teachings of our beloved Nabi Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) to understand the significance of the recent earthquake.

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has declared the cause of earthquakes to be

disobedience to Allah exceeding limits. Whatever the scientific explanation may be – and there is no need to reject or ignore scientific explanations – Allah made the earth shake. Allah uses physical agencies to bring about physical events in the universe, e.g. a child is born as a result of the union of its parents, yet Allah is the Originator; He gives children via the agency of the parents. Allah may cause an earthquake to occur through the means of huge stresses building up at fault lines in the earth's crust or, if he wishes, without it. But, in either case, it is Allah Who causes earthquakes.

Allah first causes small earthquakes, like the 5.2 quake felt in the UK, which do not result in any major harm. They do, however, affect the hearts of people, causing a moment of fear, awe and a sense of one's mortality. These minor earthquakes can be described as wake-up calls from Allah, inviting His servants to take stock of their lives and turn to Him in repentance. In this way, they are a mercy from Him. It is reported that on the occasion of an earthquake occurring in the time of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) he turned to the Sahabah radhiyallahu 'anhum and said: 'Your Rabb wants you to turn to Him in repentance, so repent.'

Allah states in the Glorious Qur'an: *Calamities have appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned, that Allah may make them taste a part of what they have done, in order that they may turn back. (30:41)*

When people do not heed these warnings and continue to disobey Allah, He may repeat the wake-up calls of magnitude 4 or 5 before suddenly unleashing a magnitude 8 quake, resulting in Qiyamah-like scenes. Whole localities are razed to the ground, as if they had never existed. And these things are not hypothetical, they are happening now, in our lifetime.

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) foretold that as Qiyamah nears, earthquakes will become more frequent, a prediction we are seeing come true with our very eyes. The reason for the increase in earthquakes foretold by Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) is an increase in disobedience to Allah.

When, as a result of excessive disobedience, a large earthquake occurs anywhere, the Qur'anic principle is that everyone, good and bad, is afflicted.

And beware of a scourge that will not afflict the wrongdoers among you only... (8:25)

Everyone suffers: people die or suffer bereavement, injury, fear, financial loss, anxiety and depression etc. The victims of a catastrophic earthquake can be divided into four groups:

1. Good people who die. They are classified as shuhada (martyrs) and will enter Jannah. Their suffering will be a means of elevating their status in Jannah.
2. Bad people who die. Due to their disobedient and unrepentant ways they will be destined for Jahannam. Their suffering will be a

punishment.

3. Good people who survive. The calamity is a test for them. By remaining patient and content with taqdir and the Will of Allah they will be rewarded with closeness to Him.
4. Bad people who survive. The calamity is a warning and admonition for them to repent and change their ways.

What we need to do

1. Accept that the earthquake was a result of disobedience to Allah. Each individual should think: 'Out of all the disobedient people, I am top of the list. It was because of me that the earthquake struck.'
2. Thereafter, make tawbah and istighfar with sincerity.
3. When the earth quakes, so does the heart. Treat it as an opportunity to rectify your life. Make use of the fear that developed in your heart. Think: 'I commit many sins; what if the earth had split and swallowed me up? Allah has saved me. O Allah, forgive me.'
4. Give sadaqah. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said: *'Truly, sadaqah extinguishes the anger of the Rabb and prevents an evil death.'* (At-Tirmidhi)
5. Having experienced the disturbing effects of a small earthquake, try to imagine Qiyamah. What will the mighty earthquakes of Qiyamah and the Resurrection be like?

It is very serious that the land we live on shook; it means that so much disobedience is taking place on it that Allah is displeased. We must turn to Allah and do tawbah, istighfar and rectify our lives. We should also have concern in this regard for those around us. May Allah make this earthquake a mercy for us and may it prompt us to change our lives for the better. Amin.

Each Drop Counts

Amal Al-Sibai

Water is a precious gift to mankind on Earth, and if a collective global conscience does not awaken soon enough to the importance of preserving water, we risk seriously depleting our water supplies. We are drawn to the beauty of the ocean, seas, rivers, and lakes, which calm our minds and soothe our souls. Water is the source of life for all living creatures.

And We have made from water every living thing. (21:30).

In Islam, water is to be viewed as a blessing from our Creator. Several verses in the Holy Qur'an enumerate the marvels in nature that come to life with water, such as how dry, barren land is restored to lush greenery after a rainfall.

Dr. Mohamed A. Raouf, a PhD holder in environmental sciences, stated in a report for the Middle East Institute, that scientific research centers have discovered that the amount of water in the world is enough for all living creatures on Earth. The problem lies in mankind's misuse and mismanagement of this valuable resource.

The general culture of today is one of consumerism and economic gain, without taking into consideration social and environmental sustainability, which are at the core of Islamic values. Islamic teachings command men and women to serve as custodians of the Earth by preserving natural resources and leaving a

minimal negative impact on the ecosystems in which they live.

Water depletion is a looming threat in many parts of the world. In the US, three consecutive dry years have pushed California into a historic drought.

Reservoirs are at half-capacity or less and dropping, groundwater basins and ecosystems are stressed. About 82% of the state is in "extreme drought," while 96% is now in "severe drought", announced the Association of California Water Agencies.

In the Gulf region, scarce rainfall, together with increasing temperatures, poor farming methods, and high rates of evaporation and human consumption, will result in severe water shortages in the future. According to the United Nations, all the GCC countries except Oman fall in the category of "acute scarcity" of water. It is expected that the supply of water will satisfy only 67% of demand by 2015.

According to a report in The National, "Water supplies are being depleted in GCC countries at among the quickest rates in the world. Among Arabian Gulf countries, the rate of depletion in the UAE is second only to that in Kuwait."

To waste water or to use water carelessly and excessively is a blatant disregard for a cornerstone of our faith as Muslims, which is moderation. Balance and moderation is called

to in every facet of our lives. A balance must be reached between fear and love of Allah, between miserliness and squandering, between seriousness and cheerfulness, between praising and advising others, between starving oneself and gluttony.

As the verse in the Holy Qur'an states, *Eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loves not the wasters. (7:31)*

Every time we use water, we should consciously think of what a wonderful blessing it is. Water is the best drink to quench thirst, it is what we break the fast with, and is what we cleanse ourselves with before prayer five times a day.

Islam teaches us that we are to use water sparingly, even for ablution (wudu), the obligatory ritual of cleansing before each prayer.

Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) had spoken clearly against using too much water during ablution.

When the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) passed by and saw one of his companions performing ablution, the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "What is this extravagance?"

The companion asked, "Is there extravagance with water in ablution?"

The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) replied, "Do not waste water even if performing ablution on the bank of a fast-flowing river."

As for how much water the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) used for cleansing, it was surprisingly little and goes hand in hand with the water conservation regulations that many countries today are setting, due to water shortages. When performing ablution, Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) only used 625 ml of water, and he used about 3 liters of water for bathing.

Islam from its very beginning preached

the preservation of water, wildlife, plants, and all natural resources.

Each drop of water counts and you can play an active role in water conservation by following these tips:

Close the tap when brushing your teeth and in between the several steps of ablution. If you remember to turn off the tap whilst you are brushing, you could save about 3.5 liters each time you brush your teeth.

Take a quick shower, and not a bath. A full bath uses up to 80 liters of water whereas a 5-minute shower uses about 35 liters, saving 45 liters of water.

Routinely check for any leaks from the taps and pipes in your bathroom and kitchen. A small drip from an unrepaired tap can waste up to 20 gallons of water per day.

Install low-flow aerators on the nozzle of your taps and shower-heads to significantly reduce the amount of water wasted each time you turn the tap on. This simple and cheap method will help you save not only water, but also money spent on water bills. Aerators are available at most hardware stores.

To save water, use the dishwasher and the clothes washing machine only when they are full. With clothes washers, avoid the permanent press cycle, which uses an added 20 liters for the extra rinse.

For washing vegetables, wash them in a bowl of clean water, rather than under a running tap.

Do not wash your car with a hose of running water; instead wash it with only one bucket of soapy water.

You can collect the water that was used in the home for ablution or for washing vegetables. This water collected in a basin can be re-used for watering plants.

Pick the right time of day to water your outdoor gardens: in the cool of the early mornings or in the evenings to reduce water lost by evaporation.

The Art of Arabic Calligraphy

Samar Yahya

The Arabic language is very ancient, but it was not a written language until perhaps the third or fourth century. The Arabic language and its 28 letters, written from right to left, spread with the spread of Islam. The letters are derived from only 17 distinct forms, distinguished from one another by a dot or dots placed above or below the letter. Short vowels are indicated by small diagonal strokes above or below letters.

The early Arabs' culture was prolific in terms of writing and poetry; they acknowledged the power and beauty of words. Poetry, for example, was an essential part of daily life. The early Arabs felt an immense appreciation for the spoken word and its written form.

Styles of Arabic Calligraphy

Arabic calligraphy is undoubtedly one of the highest achievements of Islamic art, and over the centuries an enormous number of calligraphic styles have emerged from different regions of the Islamic and Arab world.

Kufi Script

The first formal calligraphic style is called the Kufi style, named after the city of Kufah in Iraq. It was used in many early Qur'an manuscripts and for inscriptions, including those at the Dome of the Rock.

It had a combination of square and

angular lines on one hand, and compact bold circular forms on the other hand. The vertical strokes were short, while the horizontal strokes were long and extended. In the second half of the eighth century, the Kufi style became the predominant script used for copying the Holy Qur'an for the next 300 years.

The Kufi styles had more or less vanished by the 13th century; they were replaced by the range of more rounded styles in use at present.

Diwani Script

The Diwani script, which was developed in the late 15th century is a cursive script based on the Ta'liq style, written on a less dramatically hanging baseline, though its letter connections are vertical and slanted. It is characterized by dramatically curved non-dotted letters, which are joined together in an unconventional fashion, and by ending swashes that often extend below the baseline of letters.

Diwani is written without vocalization marks. It was practiced primarily in the diwan or council where it was used for all of official correspondence.

Thuluth Script

The Thuluth script was first formulated in the seventh century during the Umayyad caliphate, but it did not develop fully until the

late ninth century. Though rarely used for writing Qur'an, Thuluth has enjoyed enormous popularity as an ornamental script for calligraphic inscriptions and the titles, headings, and colophons in books. It is still the most important of all the ornamental scripts. Curved letters written with barbed heads characterize Thuluth script. The letters are linked and sometimes intersect. Thuluth is known for its elaborate graphics and remarkable plasticity.

Riq'a Script

The Riq'a script evolved from Naskh and Thuluth. Although Riq'a has a close affinity with Thuluth, Riq'a developed in a different direction. Riq'a became simplified. The geometric forms of the letters are similar to those of Thuluth but are smaller with more curves.

Riq'a is rounded and densely structured with short horizontal stems, and the letter alif is never written with barbed heads.

Riq'a was one of the favorite scripts of Ottoman calligraphers and underwent many improvements. Riq'a went on to become the most popular and widely used script. Today, Riq'a is the preferred script for handwriting throughout the Arab world.

Naskh Script

The Naskh script was one of the earliest scripts to evolve. It gained popularity as it displayed a very rhythmic line. Naskh was reformed into an elegant script worthy of the Qur'an and many writings of Qur'an have been written in Naskh script. Since the script is relatively easy to read and write, Naskh appealed particularly to the general population.

Naskh is usually written with short horizontal stems and with almost equal vertical depth above and below the medial line. The curves are full and deep, the uprights straight and vertical, and the words generally well spaced.

Calligraphy on Kiswa of Kaaba

Throughout Islamic history, it has been considered a great honor to be able to perform a service to the Kaaba. One of these services is to be able to contribute in the sewing of the Kiswa.

The Kiswa is made of pure natural silk dyed in black. The belt is embroidered with protruding designs that are enameled with silver threads covered with gold. Some Qur'an verses are written on it in Thuluth script.

Under the belt, at each corner of the Kaaba, Surah of Ikhlas is written inside a circle surrounded by a square shape of Islamic embellishment. At the same height, also under the belt, there are six verses of the Holy Qur'an. Each of these verses is written in a separate frame. All that is written under the belt is in Thuluth script of handwriting, embroidered in protruding designs and interwoven with silver threads covered with gold. Each separate side of the Kaaba has certain Qur'an verses written on it.

Decorating Calligraphy

As well as being written with great elegance, there were many ways in which calligraphy could be enhanced by adding decoration. The words themselves could be written in gold, or in colors other than black. Letters and words could also be outlined or lie against a background pattern. In addition, calligraphers combined different sizes, colors, and styles of text for different phrases or sections of text. The decorated frames and background patterns do not interfere with the clarity of the script, or distract from the content of the text. Designs with calligraphy were created out of many different materials, yet calligraphy often imitates the technical effects of pen on paper, even when it appears on other media.

Free Speech: Absolutely Skewed

Abid Ahmad

The previous week the terror struck in Paris. But this time, it struck at terror itself. If Charlie Hebdo represents what is wrong with the so-called free world, the gunmen who attacked the magazine office and killed many people there represent what is wrong with Muslims. While the killings by the gunmen deserve unequivocal condemnation, the tragedy has a context.

The issue has two dimensions - the Charlie Hebdo and the Quachie brothers, the magazine's lampooning of the Prophet of Islam (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) and the Muslim reaction thereof. The cartoons of the Charlie Hebdo were not the issue of free speech. The cartoons were drawn to provoke Muslims. The powerful always like to lampoon the oppressed. The cartoons were drawn from the position of power, colonial and contemporary. The response of the Quachie brothers was not Islamic. It was desperational, quite usual of the helpless. However the way the Islamophobic media of the West and India portrayed it made it look like a war on the so-called core values of the French spirit which is as young as the post-French-revolution-born, the revolution which was so barbaric as to put even the sensitive poets like William Wordsworth to shame.

Muslims respect their revered figures and normally expect others also to respect

them. But if they don't they concede them their position of ignorance and forgive their bigotry. But the killings by two individuals with criminal background and the history of social otracisation are declared to be a war by a worldwide community of around two billion souls on something called absolute free speech which never exists, in the first place. France is a country, like most of the Western countries, which believes in freedom to be absolute without any restrictions and conditions. It allows the unlimited freedom to lampoon and insult the revered figures of a religious community. At the same time, it restricts the freedom to its Muslim citizens, not allowing them to wear headscarves. It proscribes the freedom to question the so-called holocaust of Jews, thereby contradicting its own stand about freedom being absolute. While allowing the so called free speech it does not differentiate it from the hate speech. Besides, brutal racism, corrupt power structures and selective justice are still in vogue in France as in most of the West. France is also beset with multiple tensions along religious, cultural, ethnic and racial lines where Muslims accuse the state and the dominant society of discriminating against them and not letting them integrate respectfully into the French society.

Therefore, tolerating both the absolute freedom and the injustice at the same time is skewed understanding of both. Charlie Hebdo misused the freedom to insult the Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), the most revered personality of the Muslims, the community which has been their subjects in Algeria and elsewhere. Such a misuse of this unlimited freedom reflects the insatiable thirst to stoop to any low possible of those who have it. Second, the Charlie Hebdo did not restrict this freedom to the French confines. They stretched it as far as to enrage Muslims across the world. Most probably they did it for commercial gains. Probably they believed that the surest way of being noticed worldwide is to prick Muslims because Muslims live everywhere in the world and they react the same way when it comes to the most revered personality of the Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), the soul and spirit of their religion.

Absolute freedom is anarchy. Freedom comes with responsibility, social and cultural. If you believe in freedom to be an absolute value, practice it within the confines of your borders. If you can go as far as thousands of kilometers and kill Afghans to protect what you think are your values, then respect the values of other nations and communities too. If you can lie to your own people and to the

world at large that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction which later proved to be a hoax, and wage war and impose deadly sanctions against Iraq which led to the death of five million children out of malnutrition which Madeline Albright, the then US Secretary of State said was the price Iraq must have paid for having retained Saddam Hussain as their ruler, then grant the same freedom to others also who, like you, kill in the name of their values.

Terrorists with Muslim names don't emulate the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). Would they do it, they would respect human life of whosoever it is. Their inspiration lies in the West only whose countries keep hullabalooing and attacking country after country in the name of the values they espouse.

Such policies of the West have bred resentment among Muslims. Most of the terror strikes against the Western countries have their origin in political factors more than in religious. The problem with the Islamophobic media is that they look at terrorism exclusively in religious terms. They ignore its political dimension. People are passive consumers of such ill-informed and agenda-driven media and get fed with lies, bigotry and fanaticism which breed more of it in Muslims. And the cycle goes on.

Flesh Eating

Sayyadina Anas (RA) said: The Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "During the Mi'raj (the Night of Ascension), I saw a group of people who were scratching their chests and faces with their copper nails. I asked, 'Who are these people, O Jibril?' Jibril replied: 'These are the people who ate flesh of others (by backbiting) and trampled on people's honour.'"

Commentary: "These are the people who ate flesh of others" is a metaphor for backbiting. "To trample people's honour" is akin to harming their goodwill and honour. The punishment for these things mentioned in Hadith makes their seriousness obvious.

Message for Muslim

Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (ra)

Summary of a speech delivered in Urdu at Markaz, Dewsbury in 1982. Though titled 'Message for Muslims in the West', there is message for all Muslims world over.

Your warm reception and friendliness is a source of great happiness for me. If I do not respect your wishes and express my inner feelings, I would be most ungrateful. If I desire, I could shower you with praises, for Almighty Allah has bestowed me with an abundance of vocabulary, but I would not be fulfilling the right of friendship.

As you are aware, the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) had a burning desire to invite humanity to accept Islam. Despite 13 years of untiring effort in Makkatul Mukarramah and 7 years in Madinatul Munawwarah, there was no large scale conversion of non-Muslims into Islam. However, between 7 AH and 10 AH, after Fateh Makkah until the Prophet's demise, there was such an influx of people entering into Islam as was not witnessed in the preceding 20 years.

Imam Zuhri (ra), an eminent Muhaddith and Tabee, expresses surprise on this sea change, with so many people embracing Islam in a matter of just 3 years. He along with other distinguished Muhaddith have commented that this large scale conversion was due to non-Muslims having an opportunity, for the first time, to observe and intermingle with Muslims, witnessing their honesty, fair dealing, compassion, and their

sole reliance on Almighty Allah. This left such a deep and profound impression on non-Muslims that thousands entered into the fold of Islam within a relatively short period of time.

This incident also contains abundant lessons on how Muslims should live in this country. Their conduct should be so sublime and captivating that whosoever sees us accepts Islam. Whosoever sits with us should be inclined towards Islam. There should be no need to convince anyone to accept the Truth.

Therefore, in this country, if you wish to live peacefully and have an opportunity to present Islam to the host community, you will need to inculcate and manifest sterling qualities "not just inside the Mosques" but also outside in the streets, in the markets, in your daily activities, and at home. A life of Taqwah will immediately attract non-Muslims towards Islam.

As an ordinary student of Islam it is my religious responsibility to warn you. If you do not lead an upright life, if you continue to live an insular lifestyle, and if you fail to manifest the beauty of Islam to non-Muslims, then you face some real dangers. In such a case, there is no reason for you to feel content and secure in this country.

If ever the fire of race, religion or nation-

alism rages here, then you will not be saved. In Spain, there were Mosques a hundred times more beautiful than yours. So do not feel content and self-satisfied. As an ordinary student of religion, I would wish to express my joy and happiness at this wonderful new Mosque. But how shall I congratulate you on your achievement when the words of congratulation are self-evident on the walls. How better can I compliment you?

Others may not speak to you as plainly, but remember the glorious Masjid-e-Cordova still stands in Spain. Iqbal so eloquently reminisces the great legacy of Islamic Spain in his famous poem Masjid-e-Qurtaba. In Islamic Spain there were such brilliant Mosques, celebrated Madressahs, famous scholars, for instance Shaykh-e-Akbar, Ibne Hazm, Qurtubi, Shatbi - and how many others shall I mention? However, when the flames of religious sectarianism raged, then the Mosques and Madressahs became deserted. Once Islamic Spain boasted such magnificent structures, distinguished educational centres, and a refined culture and society. Regrettably the Muslims, despite such a high standard of living, did not draw the native non-Muslims of that country to see the Truth of Islam, to warn them of the dangers of disbelief, with the result that religious subsequently consumed Muslims like a morsel. The Arabs with their glowing history, architectural splendour, vast ocean of knowledge, were displaced from the country, and today the ears eagerly wait to hear the Adhaan and the empty Mosques thirst for your Salaat.

You must earn your place in this country. You should leave an imprint on the host community of your usefulness. You must demonstrate your existence here is more beneficial than that of the native people. You must impart on them the lessons of humanity. You should demonstrate how noble and principled you are, and that there cannot be found more upright humans

elsewhere besides you. You need to establish your worth, that you are a blessing and mercy for this country. However if you decide to live in an enclosed environment content with your Prayers and Fasting, apathetic to the people and society you live in, never introducing them to the high Islamic values, and your own personal qualities, then beware lest any religious or sectarian flares up. In such a situation you will not find safety.

I pray to Almighty Allah my prediction is totally untrue and baseless. Remember, you are guests here. Your Tabligh, Mosques, Madressahs, Ibaadah, and religious sacrifices are all worthy of commendation. May Almighty Allah grant you Barakah, but do not forget to earn your place in this country. Gain mastery of the national language and become proficient so that you can use it effectively to propagate Islam. Prepare writers and orators and, although you will distance yourself from their religion, do not distance yourself from them. Earn credibility through your daily activities, so much so that if you are entrusted with onerous responsibilities, as was Prophet Yusuf (AS), you do not shirk but embrace all challenges wholeheartedly.

You will have to present a new pattern of life to this country. You will not earn recognition by exerting yourselves in the workplace. If you overwork, you will be looked upon disparagingly and be likened to horses and bulls and labelled as money-making machines. However if you can show to the natives here that you are worshippers of Almighty Allah and not wealth, you do not bow before power but only before virtue, you are humans and think like humans, you are concerned not only about yourselves but also about others, and you are compassionate not just to your own children but also to theirs - and to them - you are earnestly concerned about the path of destruction they have chosen for themselves, you will then earn their respect. They will begin to respect Islam and become desirous of

studying it. They will ask you for literature concerning Islamic beliefs and practices, and an opportunity will arise here for you to propagate Islam.

However if you remain preoccupied in eating and working and engaged in Prayers, indifferent to what is happening in the country, insulated within Muslims, totally apathetic to what is happening outside, which direction the country is taking, in such a situation if there is any trouble you will not be able to save yourselves.

I have been meaning to convey and emphasise this message to you, because I do not know whether I will be able visit you in the future. You gathered here with love and affection and therefore it was easy for me. As a student of religion it would have been convenient for me to suggest virtues of reciting various Zikr or prescribe certain Wazifahs, but you might not have had an opportunity of listening to the message I have just conveyed from anyone else.

Please strengthen your position in this country and earn your recognition. Do not be like a straw or crop that is uprooted by the slightest breeze. You should be so firm that not even a hurricane is able to shift you. Display such noble character that you enslave the natives, then see how these people will stand to defend you. If there is the slightest opposition against you, they will be the first ones to argue on your behalf and vouch what a blessing you are for them.

May Almighty Allah grant us the ability to understand what is right; may He bless and protect you. Ameen.

(trans. by Sulaiman Kazi)

Who is Muhammad (SAW)

*I saw a Man Of Striking Appearance, Radiant Face,
Beautifully created.*

His belly wasn't Protruding, nor was his head Disproportionate and small Proportionate and Delicate, Finely made, A Specimen of a creation.

In his eyes there was a Contrast, The Dark was immensely Dark, The White was excessively White And his eye Lashes were long.

His voice was a Natural echo And his neck was elegantly Long.

His Beard Was Full and Thick.

His eye brows were arched, But they were not joined it was separated.

When he was silent, Dignity Covered him And when he spoke, It was Audible and clear Almost commanding and Overtaking.

From Afar, The Most Striking and Outstanding in Appearance, And when he came near, The Best of Them And the Most Handsome of them In Closeness such an Exalted And sweet level of logic, Like When He used to Speak It was so Coherently Logical It was smooth and easy to understand.

He was to the point, not excessive nor too short.

His logic, His Utterances, His words were like jewels coming out of a Necklace Calculated, Polished one after the other it would flow Magically.

He was Medium in height, Your eye Didn't Have to strain to look up at him nor was he it tendious to look down at him, He was a comfortable Sight to look at.

He had Friends, The people that were with him They were working around him to try to serve and protect him.

When he used to say something they used to harken to what he used to say, When he commanded they used to complete to fulfil the command.

This Is Muhammad, The Messenger of Allah.

This Is Muhammad , The Messenger Of Allah.

(Narrated by Umm Ma'badh (RA) quoted by Tabarani)

The Matrix is Real

Modern Enslavement to Tech

John W. Whitehead

If ever Americans sell their birthright, it will be for the promise of expediency and comfort delivered by way of blazingly fast Internet, cell phone signals that never drop a call, thermostats that keep us at the perfect temperature without our having to raise a finger, and entertainment that can be simultaneously streamed to our TVs, tablets and cell phones.

Likewise, if ever we find ourselves in bondage, we will have only ourselves to blame for having forged the chains through our own lassitude, laziness and abject reliance on internet-connected gadgets and gizmos that render us wholly irrelevant.

Indeed, while most of us are consumed with our selfies and trying to keep up with what our so-called friends are posting on Facebook, the megacorporation Google has been busily partnering with the National Security Agency (NSA), the Pentagon, and other governmental agencies to develop a new “human” species, so to speak.

In other words, Google—a neural network that approximates a global brain—is fusing with the human mind in a phenomenon that is called “singularity,” and they’ve hired transhumanist scientist Ray Kurzweil to do just that. Google will know the answer to your question before you have asked it, Kurzweil said. “It will have read every email you will ever have written, every document, every idle

thought you’ve ever tapped into a search-engine box. It will know you better than your intimate partner does. Better, perhaps, than even yourself.”

But here’s the catch: the NSA and all other government agencies will also know you better than yourself. As William Binney, one of the highest-level whistleblowers to ever emerge from the NSA said, “The ultimate goal of the NSA is total population control.”

Science fiction, thus, has become fact.

We’re fast approaching Philip K. Dick’s vision of the future as depicted in the film *Minority Report*. There, police agencies apprehend criminals before they can commit a crime, driverless cars populate the highways, and a person’s biometrics are constantly scanned and used to track their movements, target them for advertising, and keep them under perpetual surveillance.

Cue the dawning of the Age of the Internet of Things, in which internet-connected “things” will monitor your home, your health and your habits in order to keep your pantry stocked, your utilities regulated and your life under control and relatively worry-free.

The key word here, however, is control.

In the not-too-distant future, “just about every device you have — and even products like chairs, that you don’t normally expect to see technology in — will be connect-

ed and talking to each other.”

By 2018, it is estimated there will be 112 million wearable devices such as smart-watches, keeping users connected in real time to their phones, emails, text messages and the Internet. By 2020, there will be 152 million cars connected to the Internet and 100 million Internet-connected bulbs and lamps. By 2022, there will be 1.1 billion smart meters installed in homes, reporting real-time usage to utility companies and other interested parties.

This “connected” industry—estimated to add more than \$14 trillion to the economy by 2020—is about to be the next big thing in terms of societal transformations, right up there with the Industrial Revolution, a watershed moment in technology and culture.

Between driverless cars that completely lacking a steering wheel, accelerator, or brake pedal, and smart pills embedded with computer chips, sensors, cameras and robots, we are poised to outpace the imaginations of science fiction writers such as Philip K. Dick and Isaac Asimov. By the way, there is no such thing as a driverless car. Someone or something will be driving, but it won't be you.

The 2015 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas is a glittering showcase for such Internet-connected techno gadgets as smart light bulbs that discourage burglars by making your house look occupied, smart thermostats that regulate the temperature of your home based on your activities, and smart doorbells that let you see who is at your front door without leaving the comfort of your couch.

Nest, Google's \$3 billion acquisition, has been at the forefront of the “connected” industry, with such technologically savvy conveniences as a smart lock that tells your thermostat who is home, what temperatures they like, and when your home is unoccupied; a home phone service system that interacts with your connected devices to “learn when you

come and go” and alert you if your kids don't come home; and a sleep system that will monitor when you fall asleep, when you wake up, and keep the house noises and temperature in a sleep-conducive state.

The aim of these internet-connected devices, as Nest proclaims, is to make “your house a more thoughtful and conscious home.” For example, your car can signal ahead that you're on your way home, while Hue lights can flash on and off to get your attention if Nest Protect senses something's wrong. Your coffeemaker, relying on data from fitness and sleep sensors, will brew a stronger pot of coffee for you if you've had a restless night.

It's not just our homes that are being reordered and reimagined in this connected age: it's our workplaces, our health systems, our government and our very bodies that are being plugged into a matrix over which we have no real control.

Moreover, given the speed and trajectory at which these technologies are developing, it won't be long before these devices are operating entirely independent of their human creators, which poses a whole new set of worries. As technology expert Nicholas Carr notes, “As soon as you allow robots, or software programs, to act freely in the world, they're going to run up against ethically fraught situations and face hard choices that can't be resolved through statistical models. That will be true of self-driving cars, self-flying drones, and battle-field robots, just as it's already true, on a lesser scale, with automated vacuum cleaners and lawnmowers.”

For instance, just as the robotic vacuum, Roomba, “makes no distinction between a dust bunny and an insect,” weaponized drones—poised to take to the skies en masse this year—will be incapable of distinguishing between a fleeing criminal and someone merely jogging down a street. For that matter,

how do you defend yourself against a robotic cop—such as the Atlas android being developed by the Pentagon—that has been programmed to respond to any perceived threat with violence?

Unfortunately, in our race to the future, we have failed to consider what such dependence on technology might mean for our humanity, not to mention our freedoms.

Ingestible or implantable chips are a good example of how unprepared we are, morally and otherwise, to navigate this uncharted terrain. Hailed as revolutionary for their ability to access, analyze and manipulate your body from the inside, these smart pills can remind you to take your medication, search for cancer, and even send an alert to your doctor warning of an impending heart attack.

Sure, the technology could save lives, but is that all we need to know? Have we done our due diligence in asking all the questions that need to be asked before unleashing such awesome technology on an unsuspecting populace?

For example, asks Washington Post reporter Ariana Eunjung Cha: What kind of warnings should users receive about the risks of implanting chip technology inside a body, for instance? How will patients be assured that the technology won't be used to compel them to take medications they don't really want to take? Could law enforcement obtain data that would reveal which individuals abuse drugs or sell them on the black market? Could what started as a voluntary experiment be turned into a compulsory government identification program that could erode civil liberties?

Let me put it another way. If you were shocked by Edward Snowden's revelations about how NSA agents have used surveillance to spy on Americans' phone calls, emails and text messages, can you imagine what unscrupulous

government agents could do with access to your internet-connected car, home and medications? Imagine what a SWAT team could do with the ability to access, monitor and control your internet-connected home—locking you in, turning off the lights, activating alarms, etc.

Thus far, the public response to concerns about government surveillance has amounted to a collective shrug. After all, who cares if the government can track your whereabouts on your GPS-enabled device so long as it helps you find the fastest route from Point A to Point B? Who cares if the NSA is listening in on your phone calls and downloading your emails so long as you can get your phone calls and emails on the go and get lightning fast Internet on the fly? Who cares if the government can monitor your activities in your home by tapping into your internet-connected devices—thermostat, water, lights—so long as you can control those things with the flick of a finger, whether you're across the house or across the country?

As for those still reeling from a year of police shootings of unarmed citizens, SWAT team raids, and community uprisings, the menace of government surveillance can't begin to compare to bullet-riddled bodies, devastated survivors and traumatized children. However, both approaches are just as lethal to our freedoms if left unchecked.

Control is the key here. As I make clear in my book *A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State*, total control over every aspect of our lives, right down to our inner thoughts, is the objective of any totalitarian regime.

George Orwell understood this. His masterpiece, 1984, portrays a global society of total control in which people are not allowed to have thoughts that in any way disagree with the corporate state. There is no personal free-

dom, and advanced technology has become the driving force behind a surveillance-driven society. Snitches and cameras are everywhere. And people are subject to the Thought Police, who deal with anyone guilty of thought crimes. The government, or “Party,” is headed by Big Brother, who appears on posters everywhere with the words: “Big Brother is watching you.”

Make no mistake: the Internet of Things is just Big Brother in a more appealing disguise.

Even so, I’m not suggesting we all become Luddites. However, we need to be aware of how quickly a helpful device that makes our lives easier can become a harmful weapon that enslaves us.

This was the underlying lesson of *The Matrix*, the Wachowski brothers’ futuristic thriller about human beings enslaved by autonomous technological beings that call the shots. As Morpheus, one of the characters in *The Matrix*, explains: The Matrix is everywhere. It is all around us. Even now, in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work... when you go to church... when you pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth. “What truth?” asks Neo.

Morpheus leans in closer to Neo: “That you are a slave, Neo. Like everyone else you were born into bondage. Born into a prison that you cannot smell or taste or touch. A prison for your mind.”

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time to name your feelings and really clarify how you feel, you will be amazed at the relief and inner peace you feel within yourself!

Action Tip: The next time you are feeling a negative emotion of some kind, try being empathetic to yourself. Name the feelings that you are experiencing. Notice how just clarifying your inner thoughts and feelings helps you feel better! Similarly, daily journaling is a great habit to do regularly as a way of long-term self-reflection and emotional wellness.

How To Develop Your Empathy

Empathy is a trait that improves with time, and the more you develop this trait, the more it will benefit your life. Basically, when you make the intention to be empathetic with other people, your practice will in turn improve your empathic abilities. Dr. Carl Rogers describes being empathetic as an almost “mystical” experience, because it is as if you almost become the other person.

The first step is to make the intention to try to “walk in the shoes” of others.

The next step is to understand yourself and your own feelings better. The better you understand your inner world, the better you will understand the inner world of others. Realize that your life experiences help you to develop your empathy, so make a point to use your life experiences to improve this trait.

Action Tip: The next time you have an experience that arouses strong emotions of some kind, tell yourself to use this experience to become more empathetic. For example, the next time you are very sick, notice your feelings of perhaps hopelessness or negativity (or any other feeling). Make a mental note of this experience and use it to feel empathy for other ill people in the future!

The purpose of showing empathy is to improve your life along with the lives of others, by spreading compassion, care and comfort. Being empathetic does not mean that we put the needs of others above our own needs. Empathy is a tool that we use to make more effective decisions and to show that we care.

Empathy

A Trait that Can Transform Your Life

Sheima Salam

Empathy is a transformative character trait that positively enhances all areas of your life, including your personal well-being, family life and work relationships. Not many people know the power of empathy in enhancing their own personal well-being, as well as in changing the way they interact and feel about the world around them. In this article, we will discuss what empathy is, how it is encouraged in Islam and how you can use it to bring transformative change to your life.

What is Empathy?

Empathy is the ability to recognize, understand and share the feelings of others, like walking in someone else's shoes.

Many times, without realising, our brains can interpret the emotions or feelings that we detect in others and copy them automatically. For example, if you see or hear of someone who hurt their finger, the areas of your brain associated with that pain gets activated, as if you can feel their pain.

Humans are naturally tuned to show empathy; however, we can still actively try to develop this trait and use it in our day-to-day lives.

A general example of empathy is if your friend is looking for a job but keeps receiving rejections, you might say to them: "Perhaps you feel disappointed and discouraged right now, is that right?" If you are right, your friend will feel relieved to hear someone understand his or her feelings accurately. It is essential as well as effective to empathize with a person before offering any sort of advice.

Empathy in Islam

Is empathy encouraged in Islam? Absolutely!

Consider this Qur'anic verse about our beloved Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam):

"There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you and to the believers is kind and merciful." [Qur'an: Chapter 9, Verse 128]

Our Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) would always feel our suffering and is praised by Allah subhānahu wa ta'āla (glorified and exalted be He) for his empathetic nature.

The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) himself also encouraged us to feel empathy for each other, he was reported to have said:

"The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion and sympathy are just like one body. When one of the limbs suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever." [Bukhari]

This Qur'an describes believers as those who practice compassion, which is a form of empathy that moves one to help others.

"And what can make you know what is [breaking through] the difficult pass? It is the freeing of a slave, or feeding on a day of severe

hunger, an orphan of near relationship, or a needy person in misery. And then being among those who believed and advised one another to patience and advised one another to compassion.” [90, 12-17]

One account of the Prophet’s (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) empathy in action is when he was sitting in with his companions one morning, and members of a miserable tribe approached them. They had no shoes and their skin was stuck to their bones because of hunger. The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) became instantly moved upon seeing their condition and the color of his face changed. He had Bilal (RA) give the call to prayer and gathered his companions. After praying, they took up a collection for the tribe, generously helping them. [Muslim]

The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) even had care and empathy for animals. Once, upon entering a garden, the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) saw a camel that was just skin and bones. Upon seeing it, the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) began crying, then he put his hand on its head until it was comforted. He said to the owner of that camel: “Don’t you fear Allah about this beast that Allah has given in your possession? It has complained to me that you keep it hungry and load it heavily which fatigues it.” [Abu Dawud]

There is also the famous hadith about the Prophet’s (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) empathy for mothers in the masjid, that was narrated by Anas bin Malik:

“The Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said: ‘I start prayer and I want to make it long, but then I hear an infant crying, so I make my prayer short, because I know the distress caused to the mother by his crying.’” [Ibn Majah]

How Showing Empathy Can Transform Your

Life Socially

Showing empathy will improve your relationships and develop your character as a Muslim, because you will become a more compassionate and helpful person. When you show someone that you understand them, either by reflecting their feelings or summarizing what they’ve said, you bring instant comforting relief and peace to that person.

In the field of counselling, showing empathetic understanding is usually more helpful to a person in distress than giving them advice. Dr. Carl Rogers, the founder of the Person-Centered Counselling Theory, did extensive research on using empathy in counselling. His research showed that empathy is a counsellor’s most powerful skill in bringing about growth in clients, and lack of empathy actually makes clients feel worse! Therefore, it is very effective to show empathy before thinking of offering advice.

Action Tip: The next time people you care about are feeling upset about a situation, rather than give advice, simply listen, and then try to reflect their feelings back to them to show you understand them accurately. Then notice how they respond.

Empathy transforms your social relationships because it gives you a more accurate and deeper understanding of issues and conflicts. Empathy is a key trait to becoming a better spouse, parent, teacher and friend.

Showing empathy at work enhances your professional relationships because you will begin to deal with your co-workers and clients by trying to first understand what they want, think and feel.

Personally

We often think we understand ourselves well enough, but when you take the

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