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EDITORIAL

All thanks for Almighty, the most Merciful and Exalted

The Ultimate Goal

How would you respond to the following question: What is your ultimate goal in life? Would any of the following responses ever be heard?:

To become super-rich

To keep expanding one's business

To have the best comforts and luxuries

To acquire the highest qualifications in one's field

To build one's dream home or to own the smartest car

Never! ... A thousand times never! We are Mu'mineen (Believers). Our ultimate goal can never be such mundane things. A Mu'min's ultimate goal can only be that which Allah has himself declared: "And the Pleasure of Allah is the greatest" (S9:72). Since the pleasure of Allah is the ultimate goal, whatever is necessary in order to acquire His pleasure must be happily undertaken while anything that becomes an obstacle in the path of obtaining His pleasure must be sacrificed.

The great ibadah of Qurbani (sacrificing an animal on the occasion of Eidul-Adha) teaches us exactly this lesson. The love for one's child is more than the love for everything in the world. One's last cent will be spent to save the life of one's child. Yet when Hazrath Ibrahim (A.S.) was commanded to slaughter his son, he set out to fulfil the command in order to acquire the pleasure of Allah. Qurbani is a commemoration of this great spirit of sacrifice. It is a reminder of the fundamental

lesson that the pleasure of Allah is the ultimate goal and nothing must come in the way of attaining it.

FOR ALLAH ALONE

In order to acquire the pleasure of Allah, we must be guided by His commandments and by the noble example of our beloved Rasul (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). Everything must be for Allah alone, as commanded in the Glorious Qur'an: "Say, verily my salaah, my acts of worship, my living and my dying are for Allah, the Rabb (Nurturer) of the universe" (S6:162). To understand this fundamental concept, consider the following examples:

BUSINESS

If one engages in business, it must be for the sake of Allah alone – that is to fulfil His command to acquire halaal sustenance and to take care of the needs of one's family. Hence when the business is for Allah alone, the business must stop for salaah – salaah must not be put on hold for business. Likewise the most lucrative deal must be sacrificed if it entails any haraam element. All the laws of Shariah pertaining to business must be upheld, since the business is for Allah alone.

LEAST EXPENSES

NIKAH: Nikah is a great ibadah. One who gets married has completed half his Imaan. Nikah is also for Allah alone. Therefore it

will be done in a manner that earns His pleasure. One of the most fundamental aspects to earn His pleasure in Nikah is adopting simplicity. Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has declared: "The most blessed Nikah is wherein the least expenses were incurred" (Mishkaat). Thus if a Nikah is for Allah alone it will be a simple affair, not a lavish function. Thousands of rands will not be wasted on "deco." Intermingling of males and females, music and other haraam activities will never take place. Let alone haraam activities, nothing will be done merely to impress people – since it is for Allah alone.

DRESSING: One's dressing is also for Allah alone. Thus the choice of clothes must conform to the Qur'an and Sunnah. Tight-fitting, revealing or western-style garments must never be worn, nor must the brand culture be followed. One must never dress to impress people (except the wife dressing for her husband) since Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has declared: "The one who wears clothing to impress people, Allah will clothe him in garments of disgrace on the day of Qiyamah."

GONE TO WASTE SERVING DEEN:

The primary objective of our existence on earth is to worship Allah and to serve His Deen. It is obvious that serving Deen must be for Allah alone or else it will be rejected in His court. Therefore, one will ensure that the manner of serving Deen that one has adopted is pleasing to Allah. Hence transgressing the laws of Shariah to "serve" Deen totally contradicts the objective of working for Allah alone. The Qur'an describes such people as "... those whose efforts in the world have gone to waste, whereas they thought they were doing great acts" (S18:103). Thus if our service to Deen is for Allah alone, it must be done in conformance to Deen. These are merely some examples. Every aspect of our life must be scrutinized in the same way. Is it for Allah alone ... or is it for my ego, status, position, power, name and fame or for any other ulterior motive.

FULL OF BARAKAH

Whatever is for Allah only is full of barakah and will be accepted in the court of Allah. The benefits of such actions are received in this world and the unimaginable rewards await one in the Hereafter, where Allah will manifest His total pleasure. That is the ultimate goal.

The Wiles of Woman

"If women adorn themselves with expensive garments and jewels genuinely for the sake of the happiness of their husbands, then this is permissible. However, if the adornment is for ostentation to show others then it is sinful. The sign of adornment being sinful is that within the home, her appearance is that of a menial worker. She dresses shabbily without having concern for her husband. But when she has to go out of the home or attend a function, then she adorns and decorates herself like a princess."

(Hadhrat Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi)

Question Answer

Question: What do we do with money found on the floor?

Answer: If you feel that someone may pocket it unjustly, then pick it up and find the owner. Otherwise just leave it there.

If one knows the owner or one feels that the owner will be disturbed by losing the money and the place is such that the money will be taken away without the owner being sought, then one may pick up the money with the sole intention of searching for the owner and returning the wealth.

If the owner cannot be located after investing reasonable effort and time in his search, one may either keep the money in trust or give it in charity on behalf of the owner. (One cannot take the money for personal use, unless one is poor and needy.) However, in the case where it was given to the poor and needy or used by oneself, then if the owner thereafter appears and demands his money, one will be obligated to repay the owner the money. And Allah Knows Best.

Question: My brother passed away recently. He had verbally told his four daughters (he has no sons) that after his death all his property belongs to their mother. The deceased has four daughters, two surviving

brothers and three sisters. Do they have any rights on the deceased's property?

Answer: If the deceased had only gifted away his assets to his wife upon his demise, then this is a bequest in terms of the Shariah. The hadith is emphatic that a bequest cannot be made for an heir. Since the wife is an heir it was incorrect to make such a bequest for her and hence the bequest is invalid. The net-estate (i.e. after funeral expenses and debts, and thereafter bequests ---to non heirs--- up to a maximum of 1/3rd of the remainder) needs to be distributed according to the Shariah, which in the case of being survived by a wife, four daughters, two surviving brothers and three sisters with no ascendants, is distributed into 168 equal shares, 21 for the wife (i.e. 1/8th), 28 shares for each daughter, 10 shares for each brother and 5 shares for each sister.

However if the deceased had in his lifetime given over his assets to his wife whereby he relinquished complete control and possession over to his wife in his lifetime then these assets belong to the wife. And Allah Knows Best.

Question: As a Muslimah, would it be halal for me to work as a marriage counselor? I feel like we need more Muslim counselors.

Muslim should be helping out other Muslims. We can't always go to non-Muslims for certain things. I am studying Psychology so I will be going in to family and marriage counseling. My concern is that sometimes I will have to talk to couples. Is there any option for me in this field? It is really my passion to help people.

Answer: Working as a marriage counselor in order to assist Muslims is a noble task, which will Insha Allah prove fulfilling as well as rewarding provided it is done with sincerity, within the framework of the Shariah and for the pleasure of Allah SWT. We advise that when embarking upon the same one should seek advice from Ulama pertaining to one's methodology and the advice one imparts as there may be certain specific guidelines of Shariah that one should not overlook.

At the same time, involvement in domestic matters and disputes is generally the responsibility of pious family elders and Ulama. Women, due to their soft nature could be swayed by emotion and thereby not be as effective in such circumstances. However, for woman to offer general encouragement and motivation is an act of goodness and reward.

Nevertheless, it is our observation that due to escalation in marital problems in our community the need for pious, competent and experienced women counselors does arise in the initial stages of trauma and to settle emotions etc. Women tend to relate better to females in these initial stages. Ulama are then required to assist the matter further.

Hence, you should work within your home and restrict yourselves to counselling women only. Try your best to avoid consulting with the husband and if there is

a genuine need to do so and there is no Alim or pious experienced male to refer them to then one may do so in the presence of some mahram or at least in the presence of the wife whilst observing the strict rules of purdah e.g. speaking from behind a screen and not speaking in alluring tones etc.

One should also be aware that there is a big difference between counselling in Islam and in other conventional forms of counselling. In Islam, obedience to Allah and following the sunnah form the cornerstone of our advices and counselling. And Allah Knows Best

Question: Can we give zakat or fitra to non-Muslims who are needy?

Answer: Obligatory charities such as zakat and fitra should only be given to eligible Muslim recipients. One could give voluntary charities to non-Muslims. And Allah Knows Best

Question: I want to know whether I can hear the Qur'an or hear talks from islamic scholars while working on some software code or while playing games?

Answer: It is obviously disrespectful to hear the Qur'an being recited and not listen to it attentively. Hence, one should avoid playing a Qur'an audio while one is engaged in other activities.

Similarly one must also give due attention when listening to an Islamic lecture, though this does not have the same status as listening to the Holy Quran and as such one may listen to a talk whilst engaged in other activities. However, this is not preferable as it could lead to incorrect understandings and misquotations etc. And Allah Knows Best.

Lesson From The Qur'an

Commentary: Tafsir Division, Darul Uloom Ilahiya.

Surah Al-Imran - Verse 82-84

Contract Betrayers

Then those who turn back (in rejection) after this (i.e., the covenant so solemnly entered into and its ratification), they are the sinful. (82)

From the verse the following lessons can be drawn:

- No one refuses to follow the last of the Prophets (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) but a transgressor, and no one rejects Allah's faith but a deviant who stands alone in rebellion against the whole universe, which submits to Allah. (*In the Shade of the Qur'an*)
- Though the covenant (in the previous verse) is taken from the Prophets (AS) but, as per the commentators, there is a lesson for the people (in this verse) that they should not breach the covenant of the Prophets (AS), otherwise they will be deemed from among the *Fasiqun* (sinful). (*Ma'alimul Irfan*)
- This serves as a warning to him in whose heart the lamp of the Prophet's (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) love has extinguished, whose heart remains blind to the light of his Sunnah and whose outer-self remains turned away from his Shariah even after the manifestation of his (i.e., the Prophet's) miracles and lofty stature. (*Mawahibur-Rahman*)
- Whosoever restrains himself from following the last Prophet – Sayyidna Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) will be breaching the covenant with Allah. (*Quran-i-Azeez*)

Opposition to the True Faith

Are they (those who turn away), then (after their covenant to submit), seeking a religion other than that of Allah (i.e., Islam), while to Him (before His exalted Being) alone submit

(to His decree) all those in the heavens and the earth¹, willingly (without refusal) or unwilling² (with force), and to Him they shall be returned (when everyone shall be dealt with according to his deserts)? (83)

1. This verse is the proof of Islam's being the only true religion. When all the creatures of the world, including man, bow down to Allah, even the infidels are compelled to obey Allah's laws of nature. Even the staunchest rejector of faith has to walk with his feet, see with eyes and smell with his nose, and all these acts are performed according to the laws made by Allah, to deviate from which is not possible for anybody. Then how can it be permissible for him in his voluntary life that he should not surrender himself to Allah and should try to adopt any religion or method for conducting his life in this world?

Another point that comes out from this verse is that Islam is not a religion of any race or any group, but that it is really a religion of the whole world and the entire universe, and any person, who adopts another religion or apostasy or atheism, does not harmonise with the religion of the universe, but deviates from the basic reality. (*Dawat-ul-Qur'an-PS*)

In its essence, human nature is in harmony with the laws governing the universe. Human nature submits to its Lord like the nature of every living thing. When man forces his own life out of the system laid down by God, he finds himself in conflict not only with the universe, but also with his own nature. This results in misery and worry. He suffers a great deal just as erring humanity now suffers, despite all its scientific achievements and all the facilities provided for man by this materialistic civilisation.

Man suffers a great deal because he finds himself in a terrible void. His soul is devoid of the truth which it desperately needs, the truth of faith. His life is devoid of the Divine method which achieves harmony of movement between man and the universe in which he lives. When man leaves the cool shade provided by God's way of life, he finds himself in the blazing heat of the desert.

Having left the straightforward path, man suffers a worrying type of corruption. This is indeed the reason for all the misery, worry and confusion suffered by humanity, and for all its hunger, thirst and deprivation. Man tries to escape from all this by resorting to drugs and drink, fast cars and aimless adventures, inventing a new craze every day, but to no avail. Material affluence, high levels of productivity, an easy life and a great deal of spare time do not help reduce his misery and worry. Indeed, the more he has of these, the greater his worry and confusion. This emptiness continues to chase man like a fearful ghost. Man tries to run away, but he can only run into an endless void.

The first impression formed by anyone who visits rich countries is that their people are trying to escape. They want to escape even from their own souls. The thin veil of affluence and sensuous enjoyment which is carried too far is soon lifted to reveal all sorts of psychiatric complaints, crime, deviation, perversion, worry, madness, alcohol and drug addiction. There is nothing worthy of respect in such a material life.

The people of these countries cannot determine the true purpose of their lives. They grope in the dark for that divine system which alone will ensure harmony of movement between themselves and the universe around them, and between their system and

that of the universe. They cannot enjoy peace of mind because they do not know God, to Whom they shall all return. *(In the Shade of the Qur'an)*

No matter what sense is taken of Islam – the general or the particular – the outcome of both is the same, that is, after the coming of the last of the Prophets (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) only that religion, and that alone, will be termed as Islam which has come to the world through him. On belief in that alone depends the salvation of all human beings for it is their indispensable need. *(Ma'ariful Qur'an - M.Shafi.)*

2. Allah's commandments are of two types. Those in which His creations have a choice: whether to act upon them or not, for instance prayers, fasts etc. The second type is that in which the creations have no but to submit, such as hunger, sickness, death and so forth. The obedience to the second type of commands is referred to in the statement, 'to Him alone submit all those in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly'. *(Bayanul Qur'an – q.f. Ishraq al-Ma'ani)*

Succession of the Prophets (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)

Say (on behalf of Muslims, O Prophet!), "We believe in Allah (alone without any partner) and in what has been revealed to us and in what was revealed to Ibrahim, Ismail, Ishaq, Yaqub and the descendants (i.e., the prophets among them), and in what has been given to Musa, Isa and the prophets, from their Lord: We do not differentiate between any of them (so far as the fact of their apostleship is concerned, by accepting some and rejecting others); and to Him we submit ourselves (acknowledge His worship and divine Oneness and we are sincere to him in Religion)." (84)

This verse enunciates a very important principle of faith of a Muslim i.e., to confirm all the Divine Books and all the Prophets/Messengers without exception. A Muslim in no way behaves in a way to believe in some prophets and reject some. Islam does not support in falsifying any true prophet or a divine Book. According to it the way a man falls into disbelief (Kufr) by falsifying Qur'an or the prophethood of Sayyidna Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), similarly, it is disbelief to reject any other prophet or a divine Book. *(Uthmani)*

It is due to this essence of Islam which makes its beauty manifest and then to reject it is a dangerous disbelief and injustice. *(Bayanul Qur'an)*

The Wisdom of a Junior

The Elders say: "Do not look at who is speaking (i.e. offering words of advice). Look at what is being said."

Once Imaam Abu Hanifah (RA) saw a child running with speed.

Imaam Abu Hanifah (RA) admonishing the child said: "Son! Be careful. You may slip."

The child spontaneously responded: "O Imaam! You be careful and walk. If you are careful, the world will be careful. If you slip, the world will slip with you." These words of wisdom had a profound effect

Lesson From Sahih al-Bukhari

Dr. Rafiq Ahmad

The Book of Ablution

Chapter 63 : Urine of babies.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Imam Bukhari (RA) is of the opinion that the urine of babies whether male or female is Najas (ritually impure).

Hadith No. 218

Narrated 'Aisha (RA)

“(the mother of faithful believers) A child was brought to Allah's Apostle and it urinated on the garment of the Prophet. The Prophet asked for water and poured it over the soiled place”.

Hadith No. 219

Narrated Ummi Qais bint Mihsin (RA)

“I brought my young son, who had not started eating (ordinary food) to Allah's Apostle who took him and made him sit in his lap. The child urinated on the garment of the Prophet, so he asked for water and poured it over the soiled (area) and did not wash it.”

Comments

All the four Imams i.e., Imam Abu

Haniefah, Imam Shafa'ee, Imam Malik and Imam Ahmad bin Hambal are of the opinion that the urine of babies whether male or female is Najas (unclean). Imam Bukhari (RA) is also of the same opinion. There is difference of opinion regarding the methods of cleaning it. As per Imam Shafa'ee and Imam Ahmad bin Hambal, it is not necessary to wash the garment but just pouring water over it is enough. As per Imam Abu Haniefah, Imam Malik and Sufiyaan Thouri, it is important to wash the garment. They also recommend that more water should be applied to wash the garment if the urine is of a female child.

Imam Nawawi says:

“And you should know that this difference of opinion is only that how the garment should be cleaned on which a baby has urinated and there is no difference as regards to its Najaasat (ritual impurity). And some of our people have quoted a consensus from the learned scholars about the impurity of the baby's urine except Dawood Zaa-hiri”.

Chapter 64 : To pass urine while standing

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and sitting.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Imam Bukhari (RA) wants to say that it is permissible to urinate while standing at the times of need, though it is Sunnah to urinate in sitting position as that was the usual practice of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam).

Hadith No. 220

Narrated Hudhaifa (RA)

"Once the Prophet went to the dumping place of some people and passed urine while standing. He then asked for water and so I brought it to him and he performed ablution".

Comments

Allaama Ayni says:

"Majority of the Ulema say that to pass urine in a standing position is Makrooh Tanzeehi and not Makrooh Tahreemi

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) told Hadhrat Umar:

"Do not urinate while standing, O Umar".

The Ulema say that Rasulullah urinated while standing as mentioned in this Hadith either due to some problem or just to convey that at times it is also permissible.

Chapter 65 : To micturate besides one's companion and under the cover of a wall.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Shah Wali Ullah Muhaddith Delhvi (RA) says— Imam Bukhari (RA) wants to say that if there is no closed latrine available nearby, one needs to go to a far off place to defaecate so that nobody sees him, but in order to micturate, this is not needed as one can face the wall and hide his private

parts.

Hadith No. 221

Narrated Hudhaifa' (RA)

The Prophet and I walked till we reached the dumping place of some people. He stood, as any one of you stands, behind a wall and urinated. I went away, but he beckoned me to come. So I approached him and stood near his back till he finished.

Comments

Hadhrat Sheikh-ul-Hind (RA) says that once Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) intended to micturate, Hadhrat Hudhaifah wanted to go away. Rasulullah told him that there was no need to go away and asked him to stand behind him and that was enough. By this way the companion will be behind the back of a person who is micturating and there is no chance of looking at his private parts.

Chapter 66 : To micturate near the dumping place of some community.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Shah Wali Ullah Delhvi (RA) says that here Imam Bukhari wants to say that one needs not to take the permission to micturate at the dumping place of any community.

Hadith No. 222

Narrated Abu Wail (RA)

"Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari used to lay great stress on the question of urination and he used to say, "If anyone from Bani Israel happened to soil his clothes with urine, he used to cut that portion away." Hearing that, Hudhaifa said to Abu Wail, "I wish he (Abu Musa) didn't (lay great stress on that matter)." Hudhaifa added, "Allah's Apostle went to the dumps of some people and uri-

nated while standing."

Comments

Abu Musa al-Ash'ari (RA) was very strict about the matter of micturition. He used to keep a bottle with him and would micturate in that so that there is no chance of getting his body or clothes soiled with the urine. Once he saw someone urinating while standing, he forbade him to do so. Hadhrat Hudhaifa (RA) said that Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was not very strict about it as he had seen him urinating while standing.

Chapter 67 : The washing out of blood.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

The blood stains on the body or clothes need to be washed as these are also unclean.

Hadith No. 223

Narrated Asma' (RA)

"A woman came to the Prophet and said, "If anyone of us gets menses in her clothes then what should she do?" He replied, "She should (take hold of the soiled place), rub it and put it in the water and rub it in order to remove the traces of blood and then pour water over it. Then she can pray in it."

Comments

A lady came to Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) and asked him what should a woman do with the stains of menstrual blood on her clothes? Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) told her that when it dries up, rub that part of the cloth

which has been stained with it, then put it in water and rub it again and then wash it.

Hadith No. 224

Narrated 'Aisha (RA)

"Fatima bint Abi Hubaish came to the Prophet and said, "O Allah's Apostle I get persistent bleeding from the uterus and do not become clean. Shall I give up my prayers?" Allah's Apostle replied, "No, because it is from a blood vessel and not the menses. So when your real menses begins give up your prayers and when it has finished wash off the blood (take a bath) and offer your prayers." Hisham (the sub narrator) narrated that his father had also said, (the Prophet told her): "Perform ablution for every prayer till the time of the next period comes."

Comments

Imam Bukhari (RA) has quoted two Ahaadith in this chapter, stressing that the blood is unclean and needs to be washed out.

As per Imam Abu Haniefah (RA) and Sufiyaan Thouri (RA), the blood stains need to be washed out but if the stains are less than the size of a coin, then it is waved off i.e., one can offer Salaah while having that garment on.

Imam Shafa'ee says that the blood needs to be washed out whether less or more. Imam Maalik says that all impurities need to be washed whether less or more, however smaller blood stains are waved off.

Note: Istihaadha will be discussed in coming chapters. Insha Allah.

The New Symbol of Women's Liberation

Sara Bokker

I am an American woman who was born in the midst of America's "Heartland." I grew up, just like any other girl, being fixated with the glamour of life in "the big city." Eventually, I moved to Florida and on to South Beach of Miami, a hotspot for those seeking the "glamorous life." Naturally, I did what most average Western girls do. I focused on my appearance and appeal, basing my self-worth on how much attention I got from others. I worked out religiously and became a personal trainer, acquired an upscale waterfront residence, became a regular "exhibiting" beach-goer and was able to attain a "living-in-style" kind of life.

Years went by, only to realize that my scale of self-fulfillment and happiness slid down the more I progressed in my "feminine appeal." I was a slave to fashion. I was a hostage to my looks.

As the gap continued to progressively widen between my self-fulfillment and lifestyle, I sought refuge in escapes from alcohol and parties to meditation, activism, and alternative religions, only to have the little gap widen to what seemed

like a valley. I eventually realized it all was merely a pain killer rather than an effective remedy.

By now it was September 11, 2001. As I witnessed the ensuing barrage on Islam, Islamic values and culture, and the infamous declaration of the "new crusade," I started to notice something called Islam. Up until that point, all I had associated with Islam was women covered in "tents," wife beaters, harems, and a world of terrorism.

As a feminist libertarian, and an activist who was pursuing a better world for all, my path crossed with that of another activist who was already at the lead of indiscriminately furthering causes of reform and justice for all. I joined in the ongoing campaigns of my new mentor which included, at the time, election reform and civil rights, among others. Now my new activism was fundamentally different. Instead of "selectively" advocating justice only to some, I learned that ideals such as justice, freedom, and respect are meant to be and are essentially universal, and that own good and common good are not in conflict. For the first time, I knew what "all

people are created equal" really means. But most importantly, I learned that it only takes faith to see the world as one and to see the unity in creation.

One day I came across a book that is negatively stereotyped in the West--The Holy Qur'an. I was first attracted by the style and approach of the Qur'an, and then intrigued by its outlook on existence, life, creation, and the relationship between Creator and creation. I found the Qur'an to be a very insightful address to heart and soul without the need for an interpreter or pastor.

Eventually I hit a moment of truth: my new-found self-fulfilling activism was nothing more than merely embracing a faith called Islam where I could live in peace as a "functional" Muslim.

I bought a beautiful long gown and head cover resembling the Muslim woman's dress code and I walked down the same streets and neighborhoods where only days earlier I had walked in my shorts, bikini, or "elegant" western business attire. Although the people, the faces, and the shops were all the same, one thing was remarkably distinct--I was not--nor was the peace at being a woman I experienced for the very first time. I felt as if the chains had been broken and I was finally free. I was delighted with the new looks of wonder on people's faces in place of the looks of a hunter watching his prey I had once sought. Suddenly a weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I no longer spent all my time consumed with shopping, makeup, getting my hair done, and working out. Finally, I was free.

Of all places, I found my Islam at the heart of what some call "the most scandalous place on earth," which makes it all the more dear and special.

While content with Hijab I became curious about Niqab, seeing an increasing number of Muslim women in it. I asked my Muslim husband, whom I married after I reverted to Islam, whether I should wear Niqab or just settle for the Hijab I was already wearing. My husband simply advised me that he believes Hijab is mandatory in Islam while Niqab is not. At the time, my Hijab consisted of head scarf that covered all my hair except for my face, and a loose long black gown called "Abaya" that covered all my body from neck to toe.

A year-and-a-half passed, and I told my husband I wanted to wear Niqab. My reason, this time, was that I felt it would be more pleasing to Allah, the Creator, increasing my feeling of peace at being more modest. He supported my decision and took me to buy an "Isdaal," a loose black gown that covers from head to toe, and Niqab, which covers all my head and face except for my eyes.

Soon enough, news started breaking about politicians, Vatican clergymen, libertarians, and so-called human rights and freedom activists condemning Hijab at times, and Niqab at others as being oppressive to women, an obstacle to social integration, and more recently, as an Egyptian official called it--"a sign of backwardness."

I find it to be a blatant hypocrisy when Western governments and so-called human rights groups rush to defend woman's rights when some governments impose a certain dress code on women, yet such "freedom fighters" look the other way when women are being deprived of their rights, work, and education just because they choose to exercise their right to wear Niqab or Hijab. Today, women in Hijab or Niqab are being increasingly barred from work and education not only under totali-

tarian regimes such as in Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt, but also in Western democracies such as France, Holland, and Britain.

Today I am still a feminist, but a Muslim feminist, who calls on Muslim women to assume their responsibilities in providing all the support they can for their husbands to be good Muslims. To raise their children as upright Muslims so they may be beacons of light for all humanity once again. To enjoin good--any good--and to forbid evil--any evil. To speak righteousness and to speak up against all ills. To fight for our right to wear Niqab or Hijab and to please our Creator whichever way we chose. But just as importantly to carry our experience with Niqab or Hijab to fellow women who may never have had the chance to understand what wearing Niqab or Hijab means to us and why do we, so dearly, embrace it.

Most of the women I know wearing Niqab are Western reverts, some of whom are not even married. Others wear Niqab without full support of either family or surroundings. What we all have in common is that it is the personal choice of each and every one of us, which none of us is willing to surrender.

Willingly or unwillingly, women are bombarded with styles of "dressing-in-little-to-nothing" virtually in every means of communication everywhere in the world. As an ex non-Muslim, I insist on women's right to equally know about Hijab, its virtues, and the peace and happiness it brings to a woman's life as it did to mine. Yesterday, the bikini was the symbol of my liberty, when in actuality it only liberated me from my spirituality and true value as a respectable human being.

I couldn't be happier to shed my bikini in South Beach and the "glamorous" Western lifestyle to live in peace with my Creator and enjoy living among fellow humans as a worthy person. It is why I choose to wear Niqab, and why I will die defending my inalienable right to wear it. Today, Niqab is the new symbol of woman's liberation.

To women who surrender to the ugly stereotype against the Islamic modesty of Hijab, I say: You don't know what you are missing.

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Source: islaminfo*

Institutions of Protection

Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: "Protect your wealth with Zakaat. Treat your patients with Sadqah, and fortify yourselves against calamities with Dua."

Zakaat and Sadqah do not deplete wealth. On the contrary, wealth increases with charity despite the perception of temporary decrease. Allah increases the barakat and replenishes the paid Zakaat and Sadqah manifold. Sadqah is also a cure for physical diseases. It invites the Pleasure of Allah.

Furthermore, the supplications of the poor who are given Sadqah, are readily accepted by Allah. The sick should increase Istighfaar and Sadqah.

Calamities are generally acts of punishment. It is only Dua which can ward off or eliminate calamity.

Passing the Examination of life

Maulana Yunus Patel (ra)

If in any school, university, college or institute, questions of an examination are given or there is a paper 'leak-out', the examination is cancelled or reset.

Allah has given us the final question paper consisting of three outwardly simple questions.

The preparation time has also been given – i.e. our lives.

The examiners are also known: Munkar and Nakeer.

The consequences too have been spelt out. There is tremendous reward and honour in passing the examination, and there is disgrace and punishment on failure.

Even though it would take just a few seconds to learn such simple questions and answers, such that even 3 and 4 year olds could be taught the same, and can memorize them, it is not as easy as it seems.

Had it been so extremely easy, many more would have led their lives in accordance to the demands and dictates of the nafs because the answers are known. However this is not the reality of

our final examination.

These answers depend on one's life and one's preparations for it.

The 3 questions to be asked, as we know, are :

Who is your Rabb ?

What is your Deen ?

Who is this man ? (i.e. Rasulallah (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wasallam))

If we say that Allah is our Rabb (Sustainer), we have to recognize Him as our Creator; as the One who has blessed us with all our spiritual, physical and material gifts. We have to recognize Him through His signs and we have to submit to and obey Him in this worldly life. This recognition is what will bring Ibaadah (worship) into practice.

The second question can only be answered if a person has lived a life of Submission to Allah by following the Shariah which He revealed to His Messenger (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wasallam).

The third question can only be answered if a person has followed the way of life of Rasulallah (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wasallam). It won't be possible for the person

who lived the lifestyle of the enemies of Islam to answer this question easily.

Although we claim that we have Imaan and love for Allah and His Rasul (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wasallam), our actions contradict our claim. We assert and affirm that the true religion is Islam but we do not practice on its beautiful teachings. ...Why?

A person may bribe, lie and cheat just to pass an examination of this world but there is no possibility for the same in the Grave. To fly through the examination of the grave, we need to develop our Imaan in Allah, adorn our hearts with His Love and Ma'rifat (Recognition) and grace our lives with a practical expression of Islam by following the Sunnah of Rasulullah (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wasallam).

There is no other way to pass this most crucial examination of life. And we should always keep in mind that there is no re-testing and no re-marking. A person either passes or he fails.

May Allah grant us the understanding of the greatness of this test, and the effort to work in the direction of preparation for the questioning of the grave, that we may pass without any difficulty and with distinction.

Fanaa

(Annihilation)

Shaikh Sayyid Ahmad Rifaa 'ee (ra), a contemporary of Hadhrat Sayyid Abdul Qadir Jeelaani (ra) stated that the fastest way to reach Allah and gain His proximity is through fanaa.

What is fanaa? Literally it means annihilation. However, each science and field has its own terminologies. Hence, the word fanaa in sulook refers to one annihilating his personal opinion and giving preference to the opinion and advice of his senior. In doing so, there will be joy and happiness from both ends; the learner and the instructor. This does not only apply to tasawwuf, but to all branches of life. Look at a patient who visits a doctor. It will be incorrect of him to question the doctor and offer his personal suggestions. If he does so, the doctor will be unconcerned of him and it will be to his own harm.

When the Sahaabah (RAA) were given any instruction, they willfully complied without any reservation. It was the first and last time that they were needed to be told to do something. There was no need for them to be asked to do it again.

It was on account of not practising fanaa that Shaytaan was rejected; he employed his personal reasoning and refused to make sajdah to Aadam (AS). On the other hand, Aadam (AS) accepted and acknowledged his misjudgement. This is the first step to progress.

There are some steps to adopt in order that one reaches the level of fanaa: (1) Unconditional kindness – the affection and kindness is not shown to only those who have done us a favour or act of kindness, nor is it done with the anticipation of a favour in return. (2) Unconditional endurance – one endures the difficulties that come his way solely for the pleasure of Allah.

Has Gossip Made You Bankrupt..??

Umm Ammarah

Ssshhh..You hear a juicy tit bit from a neighbour, who heard it from a friend, who heard from her sister on a social chat group, who added some "spice" to make it more appetizing... and so the gossip goes around town...sounds familiar?

Gossip is dangerous and harmful; it can destroy the fabric and morality of a society. People spread gossip for many reasons such as to feel superior (they feel better if someone is worse off than them), out of jealousy, to fit in the group, for attention (they become centre of attention for a few moments), out of revenge and even out of sheer boredom (an idle mind is a devils workshop).

We need to remind ourselves over and over again that we are accountable for our deeds in the Court of Allah. Allah says: "Oh you who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest you harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of repentance for what you have done" (Quran 49:6).

There once lived a gossip monger.

He always preoccupied himself in talking about other s. He could not resist the urge. Whenever he heard a story about somebody he knew, and sometimes about somebody he did not know, he just had to tell it to his friends. Since he was in business, he heard a lot of rumours and stories. He didn't care if it was true or not. He loved the attention he got from his gossip, which he sometimes spiced up with little details he invented to make them funnier, juicier and more palatable. Other than that, he was really a pleasant man.

He kind of knew it was wrong, but . . . it was too tempting, and in any case, most of what he told had really happened, didn't it?

One day he found out something really weird about another businessman and his wife. Of course he felt compelled to share what he knew with his colleagues, who told it to their friends, who told it to people they knew, who told it to their wives and so the gossip spread around town until the unhappy businessman who was the main char-

acter in the story heard about it. He ran to the wise man of the town, and wailed and complained that he was ruined! His good name and his reputation were gone with the wind.

The wise old man decided to call the man who loved to tell stories. If he was not the one who started them, he might at least know who did. When the nice man with the nasty problem heard from the wise man how devastated his colleague was, he felt truly sorry and admitted his guilt.

"True, or not true, that really makes no difference! You just cannot tell stories about people. This is all slander, and it's like murder—you kill a person's reputation," shouted the wise man. The man who started the rumour now felt really bad and sorry. "What can I do to remedy the harm?" he sobbed. "I will do anything you say!"

The wise old man looked at him. "Do you have any feather pillows in your house?, bring me one." The man was mystified, but he returned with a nice fluffy pillow under his arm. "Cut it open!" said the wise man. The man cut the pillow. A cloud of feathers came out. Being a windy day, they floated all over the place and a lot of them flew out of the window in a big swirling, whirling trail.

The wise man waited a while. Then he ordered the man: "Now bring me back all the feathers, and stuff them back in your pillow. All of them, mind you. Not one may be missing!" "That is impossible! The ones here in the room I might get, most of them, but the ones that flew out of the window are gone. I can't do that, you know it!"

"Yes," that is how it is... once a rumour or a gossip or a 'secret,' leaves your mouth, you do not know where it ends up. It flies on the wings of the wind, and you can never get it back!"

He ordered the man to sincerely repent to Allah and with remorse deeply apologize to the person about whom he had spread the rumour; that is difficult and painful, but it was the least he could do. After that he talked about the importance of guarding your tongue to all his friends and colleagues. And in the end he became an upright man who overcame a nasty addiction of tale telling!

Allah, The Most Wise, says in the Qur'an: "Oh you who believe! Avoid suspicion for suspicion, in some cases is a sin. And backbite not on each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? No, you would abhor it...But fear Allah. For Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful" (49:11-12).

The Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said: "When man wakes up in the morning each day, all his body parts warn his tongue saying: 'Fear Allah with regards to us, for we are under your mercy; if you are upright, we will be upright and if you are crooked, we will be crooked.'" (At-Tirmidhi)

The Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) once asked: "Do you know what backbiting is?" His companions replied: "Allah and His Messenger know best." He then said: "It is to say something about your brother that he would dislike." Someone asked: "But what if what is said is true?" The Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) replied: "If what you say about him is true, then you have backbitten him, but if it is not true then you have slandered him." (Hadith-Muslim)

Let's face it, we live in a world where gossip often crosses our path. People gossip and this cannot be changed overnight. But we do have the ability to change what happens when the rumour comes our

way. We can simply break this chain of gossip by considering the following :

- Beneficial or not? Try to ascertain the worth of the subject under discussion. If non-beneficial refrain from it. Why would I want to be a link in this sinful chain?
- Put yourself in their shoes: Would I like people to know this about me? How would this person feel if they knew about this rumour?
- Look for positive qualities in people: If you really have to talk about someone who's not there, talk about how great, hard-working, funny, humble they are instead of deficiencies.
- Fear Allah and Repent: Remember Allah can see and hear everything, we are accountable to Allah! If we have engaged in gossip than repent and also ask the wronged one for his or her forgiveness.
- Don't be an audience: Remember that according to a hadith by listening and letting it continue makes us equally responsible.
- Change the topic or leave: Allah praised such action in the Quran: "If they hear gossip, they walk away" (Quran 28:55). Diplomatically change the topic and if you cannot than just walk away when your friend tries to gossip or just say "I'm not interested" and ignore any nasty comments. "When you see men engaged in vain discourse about Our Signs, turn away from them unless they turn to a different theme. If Satan ever makes you forget, then after recollection, do not sit in the company of those who do wrong."(Quran-Al-An'am6:68)
- Stop it right there! Do not provide the oxygen needed to spread the fire. Politely and with hikmah (wisdom) admonish and stop the perpetrator/s.
- Guard the honour of your fellow be-

ing ,remember if you respect people's privacy they will respect yours. The Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said:"if anyone defends his brother's honour in his absence, then it is Allah's responsibility to set him free from the fire (hell)."(Hadith-Musnad Ahmed)

An excellent practice to apply in our lives is the TRIPLE FILTER TEST. One day a man tried to gossip about someone to a pious person. He asked the pious man whether he wanted to hear what he heard about his friend. The pious man replied: Wait before you tell me anything I want you to pass this Triple Filter Test.

First Filter is TRUTH: Is what you are about to say absolutely true?

The Man: No, I just heard about it.

Pious Man: Alright so you tell me that you don't really know if it is true or not.

Second Filter is GOODNESS: Is what you are going to say is GOOD?

The Man: No.

Pious Man: So you want to tell me something bad and you are not sure that if it is true or not.

Third Filter is USEFULNESS: Is what you are going to tell me going to be USEFUL to me?

The Man: No.

Pious Man: Well if you want tell me something that is neither True nor Good nor even USEFUL, why tell it to me at all?

The Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was once asked: "Who is the best Muslim?" He replied: "He is the one from whom Muslims are safe from the evil of his tongue and hands." (Hadith-Muslim)

Once The Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) asked the Sahabah (RA) "Do you know who is bankrupt?" They replied, "Bankrupt among us is he who has no money or property." He said, "Verily,

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When Iman Level Dips

Sana Gul

The journey of motherhood, and the aim of undertaking it with the utmost effort to be most productive, has been explored in first two parts of this series. But in spite of our best efforts we still hit a rough patch.

How do we get back on track? How do we motivate ourselves to be a productive mother once more? In this article, we'll explore the inner heart so you'll have the tools to boost your iman when things get overwhelming.

Experiencing Those Low Iman Days

The ultimate goal of a Productive Muslimah is to "spend each day better than the one gone by". We aim at increasing the quality of our worship and fulfilling all our duties.

When we have faith, we can breeze through each day. Nothing seems impossible! Come what may, we are able to smile and manage everything, Alhamdulillah!

And then slowly, the brightness dims and we cannot seem to muster the strength to do anything. The household chores seem mountainous and the worship

seems to lack any steam. Suddenly the connection with Allah (glorified and exalted be He) is breaking, or feels broken.

Nobody likes to go through these "low morale" days, but as Productive Muslimahs, we call them "low iman" days. And especially as mothers, we really cannot afford these days, right?

So first, let's see explore the reasons behind it before we look for the cure.

Exploring the Inner Heart

The high and low of morale or iman as Productive Muslims call it is a reality of our lives in this world and a battle that needs to be continuously fought.

Yes, it is tiring. And at first glance something that we don't really need. But, in truth, it is something that actually strengthens us and hence proves to be more beneficial than harmful.

First, we need to identify the root cause or causes of our low iman and diminished morale. With honest introspection, we can quickly pinpoint the parts of our heart that shaytan is taking advantage of, and then we can rectify it with tools that

will not just boost up our iman again, but also make it stronger, In sha Allah.

Here is a simple process you can use to guide you:

Make & Enlist the “Good” Intentions

Our intentions behind doing any deed play an important role in the lows and high of faith and morale. We generally start with the correct intention of doing it all to please Allah (glorified and exalted be He), but somewhere down the line that gets mixed up with self-recognition, self-satisfaction, arrogance etc.

Hence thinking of a good intention, saying it aloud and further writing it down helps to keep them in check. By writing down the good intentions that you initially started with, you’ll realign your heart to your true purpose. Only then, are you better able to identify the whisperings of shaytan that has permeated your heart and deviated you.

Enlist & Organise Your Priorities

An incorrect intention leads us to mix up our priorities. As productive mothers, our main responsibility is our children and husband, but somewhere down the road, the self-satisfaction we get from doing something of our own makes can mix up the order of our priorities. That then leads to guilt, until finally it gets too overwhelming for us to bear and our iman/morale takes a nose dive.

So offer Salat-ul-Istikhara and ask Allah (glorified and exalted be He) to tell where you went wrong and then sit down with yourself. Get your Daily Taskinator out and your Ultimate Goal Planner. Analyze yourself: are you fulfilling all your duties according to their priorities? Are you fulfilling the promises that you made to Allah

(glorified and exalted be He), yourself and others? Re-strategise, organise and de-clutter your daily to-do list.

Identify if You Are Under-Planning or Over-Planning Your Day

Sometimes, we don’t use the correct resources available to figure out the best manner in which we can plan and organise our duties and responsibilities. But sometimes, the opposite also occurs. We go over board and plan too much, but when unexpected events throw our neat routine into a tizzy, we lose control, start feeling like a failure and hit a low in moral or iman.

So analyse carefully what’s causing your dip in iman — could it be that you are under-planning or over-planning? Identifying this will help you make proper use of available resources in planning, or being more realistic in your planning to protect your iman.

Are You Outsourcing Your Iman / Morale?

Many of us may assume that our morale or iman for being productive depends upon our doing certain actions, like attending a class or listening to some lectures or doing our bit in the way of Allah (glorified and exalted be He). So, if due to any reason for example, a child is sick or guests are at home, or we are sick or busy with something and we are not able to devote enough time to these activities, we feel that we have lost our connection and hence start feeling a dip in iman.

By remembering that we are not outsourcing our iman, it is easier for us to avoid that dip in iman when such unexpected events occur.

Tools to Re-boost Your Iman

Once you've identified the root cause and taken the necessary reflections to rectify the cause, you'll also need to make an effort to cleanse and strengthen the heart so that you are protected from the whisperings of shaytan. Masha Allah, Islam has given us many tools to do this.

Open the Qur'an

If you have a favorite passage in the Qur'an that soothes you then read it, else open it from where ever it opens from by itself. Read and see what message Allah (glorified and exalted be He) has in it for your aching heart. Recite and read the translation. Reflect upon what its saying. Remember Allah (glorified and exalted be He) a lot. A sister who went through trying times said it feels as if angels are holding your heart and you feel strengthened to go on.

"Those who have believed and whose hearts are assured by the remembrance of Allah. Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured." [Quran: Chapter 13, Verse 28]

Increase in Salah

Talk to Allah (glorified and exalted be He). Seek help in salah. Pray salah on time. Even if your level of khushu' is low, don't give up. Get up for tahajjud. Cry and ask Allah (glorified and exalted be He) to help you out. Say what you feel to Allah (glorified and exalted be He). He is As-Sami, he is always listening to you.

Seek the Company of Righteous People

Seek the company of righteous people whose focus is akhirah. Talk to friends or family members who want to achieve the pleasure of Allah (glorified and exalted be He) and not this dunya. They will

always encourage you to strive harder in the way of Allah (glorified and exalted be He). They will not take you to the movies to cheer you up. Rather they would listen to you and recite verses from the Qur'an and hadith which will lighten your heart. They will even drag you to the next halaqa in town if need be.

Read Stories of the Sahabah

Listen to lectures or read about the sahabah and what they went thorough. It is one of those instant energy pills for the iman!!

Increase Private Good Deeds

Do deeds which no one except Allah (glorified and exalted be He) can see. Give sadaqah, help out a needy relative anonymously, volunteer in some organisation where no one knows you, wake up for tahajjud, and start memorizing the Qur'an.

Spend Time with Your Family

A family that remembers Allah (glorified and exalted be He) together and eats, laughs and cries together is a big support system. Have fun together, go for a picnic, discuss an incident from the seerah, clean the masjid together, and call your relatives.

At the end of the day, our purpose in this dunya is to worship Allah (glorified and exalted be He). And to fulfill this purpose, we seek to be more productive each day in all aspects of our lives.

A Stepping Stone to Climb Higher

Don't let a dip in iman drag you down. Use it as a stepping stone for climbing higher towards Allah (glorified and exalted be He).

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The Status of Salah

By Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (ra)

It should be remembered that in Salah, one communicates with one's Lord, therefore, one should consider how one offers his/her Salah. Allah has commanded us to establish the Salah. Establishment means to carry out Salah and all its constituents (including its pre-requisite: wudu [ritual ablution]) very carefully. Although the command will apply to the Salah in general, however, one should be extremely particular about the following points:

To accomplish the wudu by fulfilling all the acts of sunnah and mustahab (preferable).

To recite the specific du'as mentioned in the Hadith when washing each part of the body.

Also, to ensure that the clothes and the water of wudu are free [from] any impurity. But do not go out of your way regarding this, letting minor doubts bother you, as these are usually created by Shaytan, who uses tricks like these to waste the precious time of the obedient Servants of Allah.

An Extraordinary Wisdom Behind Wudu and the Purity of Clothes

The clothes of a musalli (person performing Salah) can be likened to the outer peel of a fruit and the body the inner layer. The heart above all is like the kernel within, and needless to say, that the object of the fruit is the kernel. Now the arrangement of all these is such that the condition of one will affect the other. Hence, the peel has to be protected in order to preserve the kernel.

Similar is the case with Salah. The soul and the heart are sure to be influenced due to the outward condition of the body and clothes. Accordingly, one will experience a unique feeling of purity and cleanliness in the heart after having performed wudu that was not present before it.

Evidently, this is the effect of wudu. In conclusion, what seems to be a mere washing of arms and face isn't only a means of physical cleanliness, but a spiritual one as well. In fact, the act of wudu has been designed chiefly to do away with the impurities of the heart and thereby, building within, the capability to face and communicate with the Lord.

The Benefits of Salah

All the constituents of Salah should be carried out in the correct manner, regardless of whether they are fard, wajib, sunnah or mustahab. One should remember that as the purity of body and clothes affect the heart, the manner in which the Salah is performed, in general, will also have an effect.

A musalli, in spite of his ignorance of the secrets and spiritual effects of Salah, will nevertheless benefit from it.

A musalli, in this context, can be likened to a sick person who, despite not knowing the ingredients and the healing properties of a medicine, is cured by it.

Salah also has a Spirit and a Body

In the transcendental world, like the tangible phenomena, the abstract too have been accorded bodies and spirits by Allah. Salah is no exception. Each of its constituents will go to signify something. Sincerity and concentration form its spirit; the various postures its body, with the ruku' and sajdah being the arms and legs; the recitations of different postures will stand for the essential organs, such as the eyes and the ears.

Further, to comprehend the meaning of these recitations will give the organs the senses they require, like the sense of hearing and the power of vision etc. Moreover, to offer the Salah with calmness, humility, and fear will constitute its beauty and good complexion. In short, the degree of the beauty and perfection of Salah will be judged by the manner in which it is performed.

In addition to above, there is also the Nearness of Allah that is an objective of Salah.

To make this better understood, it can be said that Salah in the Court of Allah

is like a precious gift that is being presented to a king. In this context, it would be more appropriate if we used the example of a slave maid as the gift.

If, suppose, the Salah lacked ruku' and sajdah, it will be like presenting a lame and crippled slave maid. Similarly a Salah performed without any recitation and dhikr is like the mutilated body of a slave maid. If the recitation is present, but the musalli can hardly comprehend its meaning or is unmindful towards it, it is as if the slave maid lacks the basic senses of seeing and hearing. If, say, the Salah is devoid of sincerity and concentration, it is like presenting the king with the dead body of a slave maid. The gravity of this crime of insulting the king is not too difficult to imagine and it will be punishable only by death. What the outcome of a person gifting such a slave maid will be is quite obvious.

Perhaps, one may object by saying that when all the compulsory acts of Salah are discharged, the Ulama render the Salah valid, regardless of whether the musalli has understood the meaning of any recitation or not. The purpose, therefore, is achieved. This ultimately [means] that to comprehend the meanings of the recitations is not at all necessary due to not having any effect on the validity of the Salah.

The point to understand here is that the Ulama are like physicians and doctors. No matter how frail and disabled a person is, as long as he is breathing and still alive, the doctors will not pronounce him dead.

Similarly, if the major constituents of Salah, like ruku', sajdah and recitation are present, the Ulama will deem the Salah to be valid. Their rendering it valid is undoubtedly correct, but the point to consider here is that the Salah stands as a pre-

cious gift presented in the Royal Court; and, as mentioned, a physically and mentally impaired slave maid will never do as a precious gift. In fact, this would be classed as an outright insult to the king, deserving his anger and severe punishment. Likewise, the presentation of a deficient Salah will inevitably result in the Salah being rejected and thrown back at the musalli's face.

It should be understood that the above example has been cited only for the sake of understanding the point, otherwise there is no comparison between the Court of Allah and that of a king.

In short, since the object of Salah is to dignify and honor Allah, the degree of this dignity and honor will be assessed in proportion to the perfectness of Salah. Any deficiency in Salah will, therefore, amount to dishonoring the Divine Being.

The Soul and Limbs of Salah

One should be extremely particular about the soul of Salah, i.e. sincerity and concentration.

The words uttered by the tongue should penetrate the heart. Upon the utterance of the words "Allahu Akbar" (Allah is the Greatest), for instance, the heart should reflect upon the Greatness of Allah and imagine every other entity to be downright inferior in comparison.

When saying the words Alhamdulillah" (All praises are due to Allah), the heart should fill with gratitude and joyfully sing praises of the Almighty. Similarly, upon reciting the verse "Iyyaka na'budu wa-iyaka nasta'een" (You Alone we worship, and from You Alone we seek help) the feelings of humility, weakness and inability should prevail and the Omnipotence of Allah should be predominant. The various movements and postures of Salah should also

send an impact on the heart. In the case of ruku', for example, the heart, in harmony with the body, should also bow with humility. To sum up, it can be said that the outward and inward conditions of the body should be in total consistence, as regards the recitations and other constituents of Salah.

Another point to remember here is that the Salah which is recorded in the Book of Deeds as creditable is only one performed with due concentration, sincerity and attention. A Salah devoid of these factors will be unworthy of acceptance.

The Method of Acquiring Concentration

In the initial stages, it is not uncommon for anybody to suffer from digression of thoughts and lack of concentration, but one will have to be determined and show diligence in regulating one's thoughts and regaining concentration. Gradually, however, such diligence will not be required as one will begin to get accustomed and digression will soon diminish.

In the meantime, one should never become frustrated due to setbacks, but continue to practice as only practice will make it perfect. Concentration should increase in every subsequent Salah.

If ever, one notices any decrease, it should be compensated by offering optional (nafl) rak'ats – as a penalty – in proportion to the ones performed without concentration. Say, for instance, out of four rak'ats of compulsory Salah, only two or the amount of two were performed with due concentration, nafl rak'ats should be offered for as long as one acquires enough concentration to make up for the two compulsory ones.

Similarly, if one has to even per

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Let Your Imagination Take You Places

Shaykh Salman al-Oudah

Khabab b. al-Aratt (RA) was one of the first people to accept Islam, and he lived through the time when the Muslims suffered persecution at the hands of the Meccans, enduring much suffering himself. He relates the following:

We complained to Allah's Messenger (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) while he was sitting in the shade of the Ka`bah using his cloak as a cushion. We said to him: "Will you not ask for help for us? Will you not pray to Allah for us?"

The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said: "In the days of old, a man would be subjected to being placed in a ditch dug in the earth. Then a saw was brought and placed on his head and he would be cut in two. [Or a man] would be raked with iron combs which would remove his flesh from his bones or sinews, and that would not deter him from his faith. By Allah, this matter will be resolved so that a traveler will be able to go from Sana'a to Hadramawt fearing only Allah, or the wolf for his sheep, but you are trying to hasten things on." [Bukhari and Muslim]

The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) recounted images from history which were brought vividly to life in the listeners' minds. Then the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) spoke about the future, providing them with an image of a brighter future, an image of widespread peace and security, where even a traveler on a desolate road would feel no fear. People would not have to worry about their rights being stripped of them, or their liberty taken away. And this would be a world where faith in Allah and fear of Him was paramount. They would be "fearing only Allah".

This would not be a state of security enforced through tyranny, where people are stripped of their rights and their dignity. It would be, by contrast, one where people's dignity is protected, and where faith and ethical conduct hold sway.

It is impossible to hear the Prophet's (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) words without getting an image in your mind of a lone traveler on a horse or camel making his way through some remote de-

sert pass, being trailed by a tethered flock of sheep. You might also get an image of a wolf watching from a distance, looking for a way to get to one of those sheep. And this wolf is the only thing the traveler has to fear in this land of safety and peace.

Let us consider another example. During the Battle of the trench, Madinah was under siege from the confederate tribes, and the Muslims had to protect themselves by digging a huge trench to prevent access to the city. While digging the trench, a large rock was causing great difficulty and their picks could not break it. When the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) went down to it and struck the stone with his pickaxe breaking off a third of the rock. Thereupon he said: "Glory be to Allah, the keys of Syria have been given to me." Invoking Allah's name when he struck the rock, his second blow hewed off another third. He said: "Glory be to Allah, the keys of Persia have been given to me. By Allah, I see white castle of Ctesiphon." In the third attempt, the remaining portion of the rock was broken into pieces. The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) then said, "Glory be to Allah, I have been given the keys of Yemen. By Allah, I can now see the gate of Sana'a." [Musnad Ahmad]

The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was the recipient of revelation. He saw things that his Companions could not see. However, their faith allowed them to get beyond those limitations, and they could envision the events the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) foretold to them, even in their state of abject weakness.

Moreover, during the siege, the hypocrites of Madinah tried to shake their resolve: "And [remember] when the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is disease

said: 'Allah and His Messenger promised us nothing but a delusion!' " [al-Ahzab: 22]

However, the believers took heart: "And when the believers saw the confederate forces, they said: 'This is what Allah and His Messenger had promised us, and Allah and His Messenger spoke the truth.' And it only increased them in faith and acceptance." [al-Ahzab: 22]

It is the ability to imagine that sustains our hopes. Prisoners can only get through their incarceration because they can imagine a day when they will be free. This allows them to bear the challenges and demeaning circumstances of their present situation.

Believers who put their trust in Allah and beseech Him with certainty of faith can all the more easily conceive of a better future and a time beyond their immediate pain.

However, the school systems of many parts of the world, and especially those in the Middle East, do not emphasize the imagination. It is not a focus of childhood development, and it is not a concern of many parents. This is a mistake. In my own experience, I only learned about the importance of imagination late in life, and the positive effect that it has on productivity and on advancing our thoughts.

Einstein said: "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand."

What Einstein said is true in many ways. Our present knowledge, no matter how extensive it is, will never allow us to envision future possibilities unless we unite it with our imaginative faculties. Imagination allows us to reconfigure our past ex-

perience in new ways to come up with new insights and innovative solutions. Imagination is the tool for transforming the knowledge in our minds into a practical reality.

The British writer Herbert George Wells was, through his imagination, able to accurately predict the development of the European Union, writing in the 1930s, Europe's darkest and most divisive times. He also predicted tarmac roads, motorways, the spread of suburbs due to the automobile, wind farms, tanks, and the Internet, particularly e-mail.

Many of the inventions we take for granted today began as ideas in the minds of speculative fiction writers. They made their first appearance in stories and novels. From there, they captured the imaginations of the reading public and ultimately became the reality of people's lives. Cars, phones, computers, and televisions all made their first appearances in fiction.

It was by watching birds and the pressure exerted by the wind that permitted `Abbas b. Firnas in ninth century Spain to develop his glider by which he became the first man to fly in recorded history. He took off from a hill for a considerable distance and then landing right back where he started. This was followed by Eilmer of Malmesbury's 200 meter flight in 1010. Both of them sustained minor injuries upon landing. But their work ultimately led to the airplane invented by the Wright Brothers.

Thomas Edison said: "To invent, you need a good imagination and a pile of junk." Edison not only invent the light bulb, he discovered a way to live that was conducive to creativity and success. Imagination is the inexhaustible gold mine for scientists and artists. It is their raw material from which they produce their most enduring achievements.

Science and art are not always that far apart. The Renaissance German astronomer Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) wrote a fantasy story about a trip to the Moon. He did so to describe the experience of practicing astronomy from the vantage point of another planet. It presents a detailed imaginative description of how the earth might look when viewed from the moon, and though it was written as a work of imaginative fiction, it is considered the first serious scientific treatise on lunar astronomy. The book also was a precursor to the modern understanding of gravity.

Source:islamtoday.com

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the real bankrupt one from my Ummah is he who will come on the Day of Resurrection with prayer, fasting and Zakat that he performed. However, he had cursed this person, falsely accused that person, ate up the property of another person, shed the blood of another person and beaten another person. So, this person will be given from his righteous deeds, and that person will be given from his righteous deeds. If his righteous deeds finish before his account is paid in full, sins from their records will be transferred from them to him, and he will then be thrown in the Fire." (Hadith Muslim)

We can destroy all our good actions by a few loose words that we utter in moments of heedlessness. We need to seek forgiveness of ALLAH, and from the one we wronged, if we have backbitten, slandered or hurt anyone, otherwise on the day of Qi-yamat(Resurrection) we will have to compensate them with all our good actions.

"Great minds discuss ideas. Average minds discuss events. Small minds discuss people." May Allah guide and protect us all... aameen

Waste Amid Suffering

“And, be not wasteful. Verily, the wasters are the brothers of the shayaateen, and shaitaan was to his Rabb ungrateful.”(Qur’an)

WASTE IS THE effect of kufr (ingratitude). Those who waste are ungrateful for the bounties of Allah, hence the Qur’an describes them as ikhwaanush shayaateen (the brothers of the devils). Waste of money and food has degenerated to intolerable levels in Muslim society. The rich and the poor, the learned and the ignoramus, are all involved in the sin of massive waste of the ni’maat (bounties) of Allah. And, all of this waste is the effect of pride and show.

Large scale waste is committed especially of food at functions – wedding functions and Islamic institutions or gatherings (jalsahs) of a variety of kinds which have become evil characteristics of the affluent Muslim society of this era. Simplicity, sacrifice and love for the suffering Muslims of the world no longer are among the attributes of Muslims. Whilst massive waste of food is the style of jalsahs and merry-making functions the teaching of Islam and

the practice of our illustrious predecessors and Ulama were always eethaar (sacrifice) for the suffering Muslims. This attitude constrained them to practice self-denial.

Although the Islamic Institutions and the related organizations are vociferous with stories of the Auliya and Ulama and even organize wasteful gatherings in their names, they have extremely little affinity with these seniors. Hadhrat Khwaajah Nizaamuddeen Auliya (ra) fasted perpetually. His attendant, Hadhrat Khwaajah Abdur Raheem would bring a meagre meal for Sehri and Iftaar. However, on most occasions, Hadhrat Nizaamuddeen (ra) would decline and refrain from eating. Once his attendant pleaded: “Hadhrat, if you refrain from both Sehri and Iftaar, weakness will overwhelm you.” Hadhrat responded: “How can this food go down my throat when there are so many poor and forlorn persons passing the nights in hunger?”

Once a fire ravaged the locality of Ghiyaathpur. It was in the midst of the summer season. Stricken with grief, Hadhrat Nizaamuddeen (ra) stood on the roof of his house in the searing heat ob-

-serving the heart-rending scene of houses being gutted by the raging fire. He remained standing on the roof until finally the fire was extinguished. Then he instructed Khwaajah Iqbaal to make a survey of the number of homes destroyed, and to give every household two silver coins, two loaves of bread and a jug of cold water. When people observed this distribution at the time of their distress, their eyes welled up with tears of gratitude. In that age, two silver coins could purchase a substantial amount of commodities.

These two episodes of Hadhrat Nizaamuddeen Auliya (ra) are presented as samples for us to reflect. Emulation of his example in exactitude is not the objective. No one is expected to abandon eating the delicious food which can be afforded. But waste is haraam, and sacrifice is Waajib. Sacrifice is a vital tenet of Islam, and it was always a distinguished trait of the Auliya and Ulama. This attribute no longer exists in the Ummah. Therefore, wasting the bounties of Allah selfishly and forgetting the suffering segments of the Ummah do not affect the Muslim's conscience in any way.

All over the world, in the so-called third world countries, Muslims are suffering and living in abject squalor and poverty. Wars and civil wars have reduced millions of Muslims to dire straits of hunger and starvation. In the Syrian refugee camps Muslims struggle to find even some grass to boil in water to provide some kind of solace for their hunger. In Chad, Muslims have been reduced to sub-human levels and are constrained to eat even manure. Literally, their skins cling to their bones. Muslims are suffering – really suffering without homes and food while we are squandering the bounties of Allah in waste-

ful functions to fill toilets. The net result of the sumptuous foods served at the wasteful gatherings feeding people who eat delicious food thrice daily, is the manufacture of tons of faeces. There is no goodness in the food served so wastefully to people who are not in need of it. What has happened to the hearts of the Ulama who organize such gatherings where hundreds of thousands are squandered to feed affluent people who really find no enjoyment in the food although they derive nafsani pleasure from the outing and wasteful, futile gathering where merrymaking is the hallmark!

Besides the millions wasted by the Islamic Institutions of the country on gathering-food, many more millions are squandered annually on absolutely haraam wedding functions. All the religious institutions – the small and the big – are caught up in this vicious disease of waste, pride and show. This is a time when all functions should be abolished and the focus directed to the suffering Muslim masses all over the world. Lack of Taqwa has blighted our vision. Whilst we receive the news of the suffering Muslim masses, it strikes no responsive chord in our hearts – fossilized hearts – hearts in which lies a deadened Imaan – an Imaan stripped of its inherent attributes of sacrifice, altruism and philanthropy.

In particular, the Ulama of the Islamic institutions should do some serious and sincere soul searching (Muraaqabah) to ascertain the degree of the waste, hard-heartedness, lack of vision and spiritual fossilization which has afflicted them. Both the Ulama and the masses should abandon their wasteful and extravagant life style, and channel these resources to where they are most needed, and to ensure success

and salvation in the Akhirah. Remember that doling out some charity and paying your Zakaat are not ample, nor will such crumbs suffice for meaningful relief of the suffering Muslims. It is imperative that all Islamic Institutions should abandon every kind of wasteful functions of merry-making – functions of *riya* and *takabbur* – functions of *israaf* which are being concocted in the name of the religion whilst in reality there is no religious dimension to such *israaf*, *riya* and *takabbur*. Also, all Muslims should abandon their *haram* wasteful wedding functions and gain Allah's Pleasure by contributing towards projects of the religions all such funds which are earmarked for the drain and toilet.

The Ummah is burning and bleeding while you are wallowing in waste and *haram*. Brotherly feelings are dead in the hearts of Muslims. Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: "Muslims are like a single person. If the eye pains, the whole body is affected, and if the head pains, the whole body is affected." While such is the inherent attribute of a healthy Imaan, this Hadith and many similar other narrations are meaningless concepts for the spiritually diseased Ummah of this age. When even the Ulama are the victims of satanic waste amid the heart-rending suffering of millions of Muslims, then the spiritual corruption of the Ummah is better understandable.

On the Day of Qiyaamah there shall be no escape for the crimes of colossal waste amid suffering which Muslims are perpetrating. An account shall have to be given for the ingratitude and for the impiousness of the hearts. The Qur'an warning us of the Reckoning says: "On that Day you will be questioned about the bounties." The bounties are bestowed by Allah for correct use and discharge of all the hu-

qooq (rights) attached to the *ni'maat*. The bounties are not awarded for abuse and waste. If Muslims fail to do real soul searching, they will not understand the injustice they are committing towards the suffering millions of the Ummah who are the responsibility of those to whom Allah has awarded opulence.

Mujlisul Ulama of South Africa

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SARS, quarantine officials arranged for appropriate medical assistance, which sometimes included medical isolation and restricted travel movements. The CDC says isolation is necessary not only for the patient's comfort but also to protect members of the public. Many levels of government around the world are legally able to compel sick, infectious people to remain in quarantine or in isolation in order to stop the spread of disease.

The teaching and principles of Islam are designed to benefit all of humankind. Rules and recommendations for personal hygiene and cleanliness promote the well-being of individuals and communities. Infection control is inherent in Islamic hygiene behaviour. Washing the hands, covering the mouth when sneezing or coughing, voluntary isolation, when one is feeling unwell, and restricted travel is an effective and comprehensive public health strategy. Measures taken in the 21st century to prevent the spread of infections and viruses conform almost exactly to the hygiene and infection control practices taught by Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam).

Dealing with Grief : V

J. Hashmi

All of what has been stated in this article is extremely interesting, but it all boils down to the following question: how should we deal with grief when a calamity strikes? Every person on earth will face some grief in his life, and some more than others. People deal with grief in different ways, but how should a believer deal with it?

The first thing that a believer should realize is that the calamity is from God. The Quran declares: "All things (good and bad) are from God." (4:78)

Once we realize that it is from God, we should realize that God is the Most Loving (Al-Wadud) and the Most Kind (Al-Barr). Therefore, there is some good in whatever God has decreed for us, even if we do not immediately see what it is. God Almighty says: "Perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not." (2:216)

Imam Hasan al-Basri, a great scholar of Islam, said: "Do not resent the

calamities that come and the disasters that occur; perhaps in something that you dislike will be your salvation, and perhaps in something that you prefer will be your doom."

For example, if a man is laid off, perhaps it will be a means to securing an even better job, which he might not have opted for had he not been fired in the first place. One of the benefits of calamity that we know about for sure is the fact that a person's sins are forgiven by the will of God. Mus'ab b. Sa'd b. Malik (RA) narrated that his father said: "O Messenger of Allah, who are the most tested and tried people in this world? He answered: 'The Prophets, and then who are similar to them (i.e. the god-fearing and pious). A man would be tested and tried according to his piety and faith. If the individual has strong faith, he would be tested and tried in a severer manner; similarly, if the man's faith is weak, he would be tested accordingly. A person would be struck by calamities until he is be sin-free." (Ibn Hibban)

Fadl ibn Sahl said: "There is a blessing in calamity that the wise man should not ignore, for it [calamity] erases sins, gives one the opportunity to attain the reward for patience, dispels negligence, reminds one of blessings at the time of health, calls one to repent, and encourages one to give charity."

The believer should turn to God when a calamity strikes. In this way, the calamity reminds the believer that his only purpose in life—the reason for his creation—is to worship God alone. This is in fact the meaning of our existence and the purpose of our life. God says in the Quran: "I created the jinn and humankind only to worship Me." (51:56)

Oftentimes, when life is good and man is living in prosperity, he forgets to worship his Lord. It is only when calamity strikes that he remembers to invoke God. So, in this way, a calamity serves as a reminder to fulfill the purpose for which we were created. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said: "A calamity that makes you turn to God is better for you than a blessing which makes you forget the remembrance of God."

Imam as-Sufyan said: "What a person dislikes may be better for him than what he likes, because what he dislikes causes him to call upon God, whereas what he likes may make him heedless (of worship)."

Therefore, whenever calamity strikes, we should show our gratitude to God by saying "All praise is due to God" (Al-Hamdu Lillah). Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) commented: "How wonderful is the affair of the believer, for his affairs are all good, and this applies to no one but the believer. If something good happens to him, he is thankful

for it and that is good for him. If something bad happens to him, he bears it with patience and that is good for him." (Sahih Muslim)

When Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah was wrongfully imprisoned, he regarded it as a blessing that his enemies had enabled for him. Shaykh al-Islam used that time to increase his worship of God. He said: "What can my enemies do to me? ... My imprisonment is a religious retreat (an opportunity to worship God), my being killed is martyrdom, and my being expelled from my city is a journey."

Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said: "There is no Muslim who is stricken with a calamity and (then) says what God has enjoined (to say): 'Verily, to God we belong and unto Him is our return; O God, reward me for my affliction and compensate me with something better' but God will compensate him with something better." (Sahih Muslim)

We should remember that God tests those whom He loves most. The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said: "The greatest reward comes with the greatest trial. When God loves a people, He tests them. Whoever accepts this, wins His Pleasure." (Tirmidhi)

And the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said further: "The path to Paradise is surrounded with difficulties."

Calamity and grief is a way of having our sins forgiven in this life, so that we won't have to face the punishment for these sins in the next life. Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said: "Trials will continue to befall the believing man and woman—with regard to themselves, their children, and their wealth—until they meet God with no sin on them." (Tirmidhi)

God does not send calamity down upon us in order to destroy us, nor to shatter our will, nor to finish us off, but rather as a means of checking on us, to test our patience and faith. If it were not for trials and tribulations, a person would develop arrogance, heedlessness, and hardheartedness, which would lead him to the pits of Hell. So it is indeed a Mercy of God that He sends down upon us this remedy to cure us of these diseases of the heart, and to eliminate all evil elements in our personality that might lead to our doom.

When some calamity strikes us in this life, we should remember that God will recompense us, but we must show patience; the ultimate recompense will not even be in this life, but in the next one, and in this, we should take comfort. Abu Sufyan lost his eye in battle whilst defending the Muslims; he asked the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) to pray to God that he (Abu Sufyan) get his eyesight back. The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) asked him if he would rather have his eye in this life or the next, and Abu Sufyan responded that he would rather have the recompense in the next life. Abu Sufyan would in fact go on to lose his other eye as well.

God says: "We shower Our Mercy upon whomever We will, and We never fail to recompense the righteous. Additionally, the reward in the Hereafter is even better for those who believe and lead a righteous life." (12:56-57)

A believer must never despair in God's Mercy; he should not think that God will not get him out of this rut. In fact, the name of Satan in Arabic (Iblis) comes from the root word *ablasa*, which means "to despair". A certain calamity hit Satan (he was "demoted" when Prophet Adam (AS) was

created); instead of thinking that this was something good from God, Satan despaired of God's Mercy, and thereupon began his hedonistic lifestyle. Likewise, when calamity strikes some people, they resort to booze and other sinful devices to ebb their pain. But the believers do not fall into despair, but rather they turn to God in worship. God reassures His creation: "By the Glorious Morning Light, and by the Night when it is still! The Guardian-Lord has not forsaken you nor does He hate you. And verily the Hereafter will be better for you than the present. And soon will your Guardian-Lord give you that wherewith you shall be well-pleased." (93:1-5)

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I am saying this from my experience and also from the experience of other productive mothers that I am honored to know in this life.

How true are these words of our Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) with which I leave you:

"Strange are the ways of a believer for there is good in every affair of his and this is not the case with anyone else except in the case of a believer for if he has an occasion to feel delight, he thanks (God), thus there is a good for him in it, and if he gets into trouble and shows resignation (and endures it patiently), there is a good for him in it." [Muslim]

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form ten *nafl rak'ats* in order to gather sufficient concentration for a few *fard* (compulsory) *rak'ats*, one should not desist from doing so.

It may be hoped, then, that Allah, through His Grace, will accept the latter *rak'ats* as a recompense for the deficiency in the former ones.

Courtesy of Islamic Da'wah Academy

Infection Control in Islam

Sister Aisha Stacey

In recent years, health professionals around the world have become increasingly concerned with the spread of infectious diseases. Outbreaks of swine flu, avian (bird) flu, and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) have meant that infectious diseases have taken on a global context and are now on the agenda of world leaders and health policy makers alike. In developed and developing countries, health officials are focusing on infectious disease research and linking it to policymaking and infrastructure.

The scope of infectious diseases is progressively more challenged by globalisation. Easy and frequent air travel allows diseases to spread rapidly between communities and countries. Infectious disease control will continue to be confronted by 21st century issues including global warming, conflict, famine, overpopulation, deforestation, and bioterrorism.

Due to ongoing media attention, most of us are aware of the dangers associated with swine flu and bird flu and in 2003-2004 the world held its collective breath when 8098 people became sick with SARS,

before the global outbreak was contained. These three diseases have led to renewed interest in infectious diseases by the public; however, Gideon Informatics, the world's leading global infectious disease database, has tracked and documented more than 20 major infectious diseases since 1972.

Some basic measures are appropriate when trying to control the spread of any or all infectious diseases. These include meticulous hand washing, covering the mouth when sneezing or coughing, proper disposal of tissues, staying at home and away from public places, and in extreme cases such as SARS, quarantine. In the series of articles entitled Health in Islam, we explained in some detail that Islam is a religion concerned with creating a community of healthy believers.

Islam is a holistic belief system and it takes into account the physical, emotional, and spiritual well being of individuals and societies. Although care of the individual is important, safeguarding communities, including its weakest members, is of paramount importance. More than 1400 years ago, Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu

Alaihi Wasallam), was teaching his followers hygiene practices that are still applicable in the 21st century.

From the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) we find evidence that clearly indicates Islam's stance on coughing and sneezing openly. Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) instructed the believers to cover their faces when sneezing. The most obvious effect of sneezing and coughing without covering the mouth is the spread of airborne bacteria and viruses, in addition, droplets invisible to the naked eye, may fall onto surfaces or other people.

According to the Centre for Disease Control in the USA, the virus that causes SARS is thought to be transmitted most readily by respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. What is known as droplet spread can happen when droplets from the cough or sneeze of an infected person are propelled a short distance (up to 3 feet) through the air and deposited on the mucous membranes of the mouth, nose, or eyes of persons who are nearby. The virus also can spread when a person touches a surface or object contaminated with infectious droplets and then touches his or her mouth, nose, or eye. The SARS virus might spread more broadly through the air (airborne spread).

Islam is referred to as the religion of cleanliness. "Truly, God loves those who turn unto Him in repentance and loves those who purify themselves." (2:222) In the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) cleanliness is mentioned as half of faith, therefore, it is important to keep the body fresh and clean and Islam insists on several practices to facilitate this. The private parts are washed

after using the toilet and Muslims must pay particular attention to being clean before praying. They wash their hands, faces, (including rinsing the mouth and nose) arms and feet, a minimum of five times per day. Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) insisted that the believers wash their hands, before praying, before and after eating and upon waking up in the morning.

When trying to stop the spread of any type of influenza, including swine flu and bird flu, the first line of defense is frequent hand washing. Both the World Health Organization and CDC recommend the following precautions. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and dispose of the tissue in the trash after use. Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth, germs spread that way. Stay home if you get sick. CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

Infection control in Islam includes isolation and quarantine. Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), instituted strategies that are today implemented by public health authorities. He commanded his followers not to travel to places known to be afflicted with illness and he advised those in the contaminated areas or communities not to leave and spread the disease further afield. He said, "If you hear that there is a plague in a land, do not enter it; and if it (plague) visits a land while you are therein, do not go out of it". He also counseled ill people not to visit healthy people

During the worldwide outbreak of
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The Great Emptiness of the Soul

Abu Muntasir M. Manwar Ali

Surely, before that, they indulged in ease and plenty. [56:45]

Engrossed in the pursuit of our desires we keep ourselves back from reflecting upon the state of our souls. Scholars have always taught and lived by the truth that love of this world is the source of all error.

Umar (RA) thought about the following words in the noble Qur'an:

Fair in the eyes of men are the love of things they covet.

Women and sons; heaped up hoards of gold and silver;

Horses branded (for blood and excellence) and (wealth of) cattle, And well-tilled land.

Such are the possessions of the life of this world;

But the best (thing) to return to is in the presence of Allah.

[3:14]

Umar (RA) then responded, "O Allah! We cannot but be happy with those things which You (yourself) have made fair in our eyes. (So) O Allah! I request You to give me power to spend all those things in the right way."

We have the great gift of intellect and plainly some of us never lack in our will power to rake in all sorts of gains we wish to gather in this world. However, let us try to imagine for a moment all the gaps we have in our lives. We have gaps in empathy, understanding of realities, compassion, courage, knowledge, and self-reliance to gaps in gratitude, charity, justice, inventiveness, appreciation and being resourceful. Put all these gaps together and they form a great void indeed. With our faith and the knowledge we have of it, especially with regards to the life story and practices of the last Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (S), we have little trouble in recognising this void as nothing else but a great emptiness of the soul. Being able to impose my intellect and will; my mind; on that great emptiness, so that it can take shape and leave a beautiful trace in time, forever to my credit, is what true devotion, learning and service to humanity is all about.

This is the Sunnah that can neither be expressed in a simple 'yes' or 'no' nor set down as a dry list of rules. It is the comprehensive Sunnah of worshipping Allah in

sincerity and love. It is as much to do with removing the sins in our lives as to fill that emptiness within. It is a way to behave with our hearts, minds and bodies; so that God is witnessed in truth in our being who we are. At its core is Tawhid and purification of the heart. The pure heart fills the emptiness of the soul and makes it peaceful and sound. That is the goal of faith and the result is not union with Allah but nearness to Him in this life and then a vision of Him in the Hereafter in Paradise.

This is the reason why it is so very hard, perhaps impossible, to understand with acceptance, the constraints and motives of those who confuse, or hinder, or put to trial others about Islam when we all need to come closer to Allah. This is the reason why it is so difficult, perhaps impossible, to understand with acceptance, the constraints and motives of those who do not inspire sacrifice or striving or sincerity for Allah when all of us do need to come closer to Allah.

From whom and from what do I learn to fill the unqualified nothingness of the emptiness of the soul unless it is from the selfless life of the Messenger of Allah (S) and the words of Allah's revelation? From whom and from what do I learn to fill the unqualified nothingness of the emptiness of the soul so that I can have the honour and eternal credit from Allah to become blessed to be a witness to Him in unbounded happiness in Paradise?

Maybe identification and solidarity are related, but they are certainly not the same thing. I identify with the Messenger of Allah (S) but how much solidarity do I really have with him? Solidarity with him in what? Really? How? Who and what helps me to build that solidarity? Who and what deludes me away or holds me back? Should

I not understand that? My life, my health, my wealth, my knowledge – do they not determine my being busy, my company with others, my priorities, my enjoyments and efforts, my helpfulness and generosity, my learning, my desires, my ambitions and goals? And I have to answer for them all.

No doubt most of us are readily able to feel sympathy with these words for victims of the emptiness of the soul, but how far does that bring us to a moral understanding of this tragedy? This is and has been the moral need for all time – to truly understand the tragedy of being an intelligent person gifted with faith and mind, yet neglect the emptiness of the soul. Maybe we see this as less than a tragedy? Al-Hasan al-Basri had once said, "The World is nothing but the present hour you are in, and it has deceived you away from Paradise and has induced you towards the Fire!"

We can do what we mostly do at times of moral need – remain as bystanders. Or we could stop cheating ourselves and understand that a vacant space cannot be filled with more emptiness, only made larger.

*Say: Shall We inform you of the greatest losers in (their) deeds?
(These are) they whose labour is lost in this world's life
and they think that they are acquiring good by their works.*

[18:103-104]

Anas b. Malik (RA) said that the Messenger of Allah (S) said, "A disbeliever will be brought on the Day of Judgement and asked, "Suppose you had as much gold as to fill the earth, would you offer it to ransom yourself?" He will reply, "Yes". Then he will be told, "You were asked for something easier than that!" [Al-Bukhari]

Try to identify with the bystanders

who are victims of the great emptiness of the soul. When we identify with the victims, we believe we see ourselves. If we are not looking away, and we have honesty in our hearts and sincerity towards others, we will forsake solidarity with the bystanders and instead fill that void with true devotion, learning and service to humanity, for the sake Allah; for us and for them. It would then be a life of sacrifice, striving and sincerity with what Allah has given each one of us, and even that would be merely a small token of gratitude.

*And if you would count Allah's favours,
you will not be able to number them;
most surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.
[16:18]*

Ibn Jarir at-Tabari explained this to

mean that Allah forgives even as we fail to thank Him properly, thus we should be repentant, obedient and strive to do that which pleases Him. Let us help one another to follow this small advice.

Spend in His way from what Allah gave us and do not seek to fill that emptiness of the soul with deeds that others pay you to do!

Alif, Lam, Mim.

*This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt,
to those who fear Allah;
Who believe in the Unseen, are steadfast in prayer, and
spend out of what We have provided for them; [2:1-3]*

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Mere expression of shukr with the tongue unaccompanied by the true state of shukr of the heart is only lip-service. It is essential that along with verbal expression of shukr, the heart should value and honour the ni'mat of The Benefactor. Mere verbal shukr will be like the outer-casing, like the outer-covering which is its external form. The rooh (soul and essence) of shukr is that the honour and appreciation of the Mun'im (Benefactor) and the ni'mat (the bounty) are ingrained in the heart.

The initial stage of shukr is at the intellectual level. In other words, it is the correct understanding of the true meaning

of shukr and the realization of the honour of the Benefactor. The final stage of shukr is the manifestation of its effect on one's body, movements and all states. In short, all the beliefs, acts of worship, mundane acts, moral and social life of the shaakir (the one who is truly grateful to Allah) will be in conformity with the Shariat.

ACQUIRING SHUKR

Shukr is acquired by contemplating the bounties of Allah. Every ni'mat is to be related to Him. By degrees such meditation will imbue the Love of Allah in the heart, the result of which will be the attainment of the perfect stage of Shukr.

The Lofty Concept of Amanat

One evening Hadhrat Ali (RA) went to the home of Hadhrat Umar (RA). The moment Hadhrat Ali (RA) entered, Hadhrat Umar (RA) extinguished the lamp. When Hadhrat Ali (RA) queried the reason, Hadhrat Umar (RA) said: "The lamp contains oil of the Baitul Maal. I used it because I was engaged in doing work of the state. Now that you have come, it will be a private session. I, therefore, may not derive any benefit from the funds of the Baitul Maal."

Praiseworthy Morals

Shukr

Maulana Maseeh-Ullah Khan (RA)

Allah says:

“Be grateful unto Me.”

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasalam) said: “If happiness reaches him (the believer), he is grateful.”

THE NATURE OF SHUKR

Accepting that all benefit is from the True Benefactor (Mun'im Haqeeqi), the effect of which is to be happy with the Benefactor and be ever ready to render obedience to Him, is the meaning of Shukr.

The meaning of Shukr envisages:

Acceptance of the fact that all benefit is from Allah, the True Benefactor. This acceptance induces:

1. Happiness with the Benefactor.
2. Eagerness to execute the commands of the Benefactor and to abstain from his prohibitions. One should consider all benefit, goodness and pleasant conditions as the bounties of Allah and regard these to be in greater measure than what one really deserves. Praise is to be offered to Allah and His bounties should not be employed in evil and sin. His favours should be used in obtaining His Pleasure. This is the true meaning of Shukr.

This conception of Shukr will be

comprehended only when one has realized the purpose underlying creation and the functions of the various aspects of creation. For instance, the eye is a ni'mat of Allah. Its shukr is to employ it correctly—to employ it in only lawful avenues, e.g. making tilawat of the Qur'aan Majeed, acquiring knowledge, studying the wonderful creation of Allah so as to gain lesson and realize the greatness and splendour of Allah, etc. The shukr of the eye further demands that it be restrained from glancing at and viewing objects which Allah has prohibited. Similarly, the ear is a ni'mat. Its shukr is to employ it correctly, e.g. in listening to the thikr of Allah, to such talks which remind one of the Akhirat, and to prevent it from listening to evil, nonsensical and futile talk.

The tongue is a ni'mat. Its shukr is to employ it in thikr, in expressing hamd, thanaa and shukr of Allah, and to restrain it from complaining in adversity and from all evil generally. It is highly inappropriate and sinful for such a worthless slave as man to complain about any condition which Allah, the True King, has imposed on him. A word of shukr emanating from the tongue is recorded as an act of obedience.

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