

Editor, Printer & Publisher:
Mawlana Hamidullah Lone

Printed at:

**Adam Publishers,
New Delhi.**

Mailing Address:

**The Editor In-Charge
“Radiant Reality”**

**P.O. Box 974
G.P.O. Srinagar,
Kashmir, 190001, India.**

***Letters should be addressed to the
Editor-in-chief.**

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Yearly :- Rs 180/-

Half Yearly :- Rs. 90/-

+Postage Rs. 40/- within country.

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Regd. No.: JKENG/2000/4174

Published From Srinagar.

August. 2012. Vol.13, No: 161.

Contents

1. Editorial	2
2. Question Answer	3
3. Lesson from the Qur'an	5
4. Lesson from Sahih al-Bukhari	7
5. Saving Islamic Activists	9
6. Pleasure of God	12
7. What is Truth	14
8. Lessons fro Islamic and Ethical. . .	17
9. Love the Prophet?	20
10. The Story of a Smile	22
11. The Mediator	24
12. Madrassas help Students. . .	26
13. The Universe as a Mosque	28
14. Scholarly Acceptance. . .	31
15. This is Awakening	33
16. The Maid of Firaun's Daughter	36
17. The Ideal Prophet	37
18. Why a Puppy? Why not a Chick	40



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EDITORIAL

All thanks for Almighty, the most Merciful and Exalted

The Choice is Yours

Does your heart harbour respect and honour of some pious person, teacher, aalim, ascetic, friend, leader, religious personality - living or dead? Surely you must be having of someone. If it is a fact, then ponder over the reason behind it. Is it that the person dons costly clothes? Or that he has tasty foods to eat? Or that he has amassed a lot of wealth? Or that a number of people serve him? Or that he accumulates wealth from bribe or usury and spends it on liquor etc? Or that he spends major portion of his time in listening to music or watching television?

Question is not being asked as regards to fear or awe but only visa-a-vis honour and prestige. On what basis does your heart, of its own without any overt pressure or materialistic interest, praise him or feel his greatness? Is it because of the above mentioned factors? Probe your heart and haul out the answer. And surely the answer will be in negation. You don't honour a person for the above factors but for the reason that because there is a quality in him which is intrinsic not extrinsic, within not without, and in essence not a feigning. Some special features of your venerable personality have attracted you to him leaving an impression on your heart. Truthfulness, austerity, selflessness, determination, betterment of mankind, harmless attitude, contentment, humility, eloquence – it is these or similar kinds of noble qualities which have established honour and prestige of this personality upon your heart.

If this is the reason then why do you consider overt ostentatiousness necessary for your own self? Why does the lure of owing a spacious and beautiful house haunt you? Why do you desire to travel by vehicle and not on foot, even without any reason? Why do you yearn for having a number of servants around you? Why do you aspire for good amount of wealth to spend on decoration and adornment? Why do you want to expend on such "necessities" which neither Allah nor His messenger have ordained; and which are not even considered good by the reason? Is it a matter of proper thinking and perfect intellect to waste energy or spend money on things which render you sinful before Allah and hold no worldly advantage? Embellish your inner self if you desire to come up illustrious before Allah. Amend your morals if you want to live with honour and prestige in this world. Craft your character into a lofty and pious one if you yearn to spend life comfortably and with peace of mind. The founders or guides of every religion, who today rule millions of hearts, weren't slaves of their self but its masters. Our Lord and Master (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), was a victor and at the same time austere. Your ego should be subordinate and in control of yourself and not the vice versa. The unenthusiastic feeling towards wealth and fame, emancipation from ego, lessening the needs, and the endeavour to remain indifferent towards them all, is the real freedom.

*"Shyness does not bring anything except good."
(Bukhari, Muslaim)*

Question Answer

Question

Recently I have been feeling a huge depression inside me. I have lost interest in studies and in any kind of work. I remain sad/upset and get anxious for no reason. Please tell me something with regards to Qurān and Hadīth. Why am I feeling so useless and uncomfortable? I failed doing anything I wanted to do. Isha Allah I will wait to hear from your team.

Answer

The inner feelings and conditions of every human being vary from time to time. Sometimes one feels very happy and excited while at other times one feels sad and unpleasant. This is part of life. This should not cause one to lose hope and become despondent.

Pondering over the blessings and favors of Allah upon you will give you internal contentment and satisfaction. Think of the blessings allotted to you by Allah that have not been granted to others. There are so many people who cannot see, hear, or talk. Imagine if Allah did not bestow us with these faculties, how straitened life would become. Every time you drink a cold glass of water, know that there are people who are struggling to acquire a single sip. Thereafter praise Allah for favoring you with such bounties. This will create the love of Allah within your heart and you will feel content and satisfied. This is a prescription given by Allah Himself to Nabī SallAllahu A'laihi Wa Sallam in the Qurān. Almighty Allah says:

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(98-97)

And We know that your heart feels distressed for what they say. So proclaim the purity and

glory of your Rabb and be among those who prostrate. (Qurān 15:97-98)

Consider taking out some time daily and sitting in seclusion for the Dhikr (remembrance of Allah). On a daily basis, set a time wherein you recite the Kalimah Lā Ilāh IllAllah. Think of the might and grandeur of Allah while doing Dhikr. Have conviction in your heart that each time you recite the Kalimah Allah is filling your heart with divine light. Through the Dhikr of Allah, Allah will give you contentment of heart. Allah says in the Qurān:

(28)

Behold! The hearts find peace through the remembrance of Allah. (Qurān 13:28)

Lastly, have confidence in yourself. Keep your spirits high. Involve yourself in those permissible activities that you enjoy.

We ask Allah to grant you happiness and success in both the worlds. Amīn.

Question

I am having problem of bad thoughts every 5 minutes. I tried my best to stop it but it doesn't. Sometimes the bad thoughts come about Allah Ta'ālā. I wanted to ask having bad thoughts about Allah does it make a Muslim a disbeliever? What solutions are there to get rid of it?

Answer

Thoughts are of two types, voluntary and involuntary. One should not introduce evil thoughts in the mind. This could be done through exposing the mind to things which develop bad thoughts. For example one should be careful of the material one reads or sees. A bad read or an impermissible sight will develop evil thoughts.

Lesson From The Qur'an

Commentary: Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani

Sura Baqarah—Verse 256-264

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ
يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ وَلَا شَفَاعَةٌ ط
وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ٢٥٦ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ
الْقَيُّومُ ٢٥٧ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ ط لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ
وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ط مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ ط
يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ٢٥٨ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ
مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ ٢٥٩ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضَ ٢٦٠ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا ٢٦١ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ ٢٥٥
لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ٢٦٢ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ٢٦٣ فَمَنْ
يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمَرْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ اسْتَمْسَكَ
بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى ٢٦٤ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا ط وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

٢٥٦

O you who believe! Spend from what We have given to you before a day comes when there will be no trading, no friendship and no intercession, and it is the disbelievers who are unjust. (2:254)

Allah: There is no god but He, the Living, the All-Sustaining. Neither dozing overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belong all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth. Who can intercede with Him without His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them; while they encompass nothing of His knowledge, except what He wills. His Kursiyy (Chair) extends to the Heavens and to the Earth, and it does not weary Him to look after them. He is the All-

High, the Supreme. (2:255)
There is no compulsion in Faith. The correct way has become distinct from the erroneous. Now, whoever rejects the Tāghūt (the Rebel, the Satan) and believes in Allah has a firm grasp on the strongest ring that never breaks. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

(2:256)

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ٢٥٦ يُخْرِجُهُم مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى
النُّورِ ط وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَهُمُ الطَّاغُوتُ ٢٥٧
يُخْرِجُونَهُمْ مِنَ النُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ ط أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ
النَّارِ ٢٥٨ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ٢٥٩

Allah is the Protector of those who believe. He brings them out of the depths of darkness into the light. As for those who disbelieve, their friends are the Rebels. They bring them out from the light into the depths of darkness. Those are people of the Fire. There they will remain forever. (2:257)

الَّذِي تَرَى إِلَى الدَّيْتِ حَاجِبٍ إِبرَاهِيمَ فِي رَبِّهِ أَنْ اتَّهَمَهُ اللَّهُ
الْمَلِكُ ٢٦٠ إِذْ قَالَ إِبرَاهِيمُ رَبِّىَ الَّذِى يُحْيِى وَيُمِيتُ ٢٦١ قَالَ أَنَا
أَحْيِى وَأُمِيتُ ط قَالَ إِبرَاهِيمُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِى بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ
الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ فَبُهِتَ الَّذِى كَفَرَ ط
وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ٢٥٨

Do you not know the one who argued with Ibrāhīm¹⁴⁴ about his Lord, because Allah had given him kingship? When Ibrāhīm said: "My Lord is the One Who gives life and brings death," he said: "I give life and I bring death."¹⁴⁵ Said Ibrāhīm: "Allah brings the

sun out from the East; now, you bring it out from the West.” Here, baffled was the one who disbelieved, and Allah does not bring the wrongdoers to the right path. (2:258)

144. It was Namrud, the emperor of Babylon, who claimed sovereignty on the universe for himself.

145. He meant that he, too, can kill anyone through his order, and thus bring death to him, and can also let off a person sentenced to death, and thus give life to him. Hearing this absurd argument, Ibrahim (AS) felt that the foolish kind does not understand the meaning of giving life and death, therefore, he challenged him as mentioned in the next sentence.

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ ۗ قَالَ أَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِنُ ۗ قَالَ بَلَىٰ وَلَكِن لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي ۗ قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا ۗ وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ۚ ٢٦٠ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَتَتْ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُبُلَةٍ مِّائَةٌ مِّنْ حَبَّةٍ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُضِعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ۚ ٢٦١ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتْبِعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا مَتًّا وَلَا آدَىٰ ۗ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۗ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ۚ ٢٦٢ قَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوفٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ صَدَقَةٍ يَتْبَعُهَا آدَىٰ ۗ ۝ وَاللَّهُ غَفِيرٌ حَلِيمٌ ۚ ٢٦٣

(Remember) when Ibrāhīm said: “My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead.” He said: “Is it that you do not believe?” He said: “Of course, I do, but it is just to make my heart at peace.” He said: “Then take four birds and tame them to your call, then put on every mountain a part from them, then give them a call, and they shall come to you

rushing, and know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.” (2:260)

The example of those who spend in the way of Allah is just like a grain that produced seven ears, each ear having a hundred grains, and Allah multiplies (the reward) for whom He wills. Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing. [2:261]

Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah, then do not make their spending followed by boasting about favour, or with causing hurt,___ they have their reward with their Lord and there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve. [2:262]

A graceful word and forgiving is better than charity followed by causing hurt. Allah is All-Independent, Forbearing. [2:263]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَبْطُلُوا صَدَقَتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَىٰ ۗ كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِثَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۗ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَ كَهَٰذَا صَلْدًا ۗ لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

٢٦٢

O you who believe, do not nullify your acts of charity by boasting about (doing people a) favour and by causing (them) hurt, like the one who spends his wealth to show off before people and does not believe in Allah and in the Last Day. So, his example is like a rock on which there is dust, then a heavy rain came over it and left it barren.¹⁴⁸ They have no ability to gain anything out of what they have done, and Allah does not give guidance to the people who disbelieve. (2:264)

148. In this parable, rain stands for charity, the rock for the person who spends in charity only for posing himself as a generous man, and the dust stands for the apparent virtuous act of charity. The dust has ability to grow

Cont'd on page 16

Lesson From Sahih al-Bukhari

Dr. Rafiq Ahmad

The Book of Knowledge

Chapter 21 : Don't clean the private parts with dung.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

(here Hadith has been explained and not tarjamatul baab).

Comments

In this Hadith it has been recommended to use only two stones or clay pieces for Istinja in case of unavailability of more stones but not to use dung for the purpose. This Hadith is narrated by Zuhair who quotes it from his teacher Abu-Ishaaq. Imam Tirmidhi (RA) has quoted this same Hadith from Abu Ishaaq but through his another student namely Israeel. Imam Tirmidhi (RA) has objected Imam Bukhari (RA) in getting this Hadith through Zuhair and not through Israeel as he thinks that Israeel is more authentic than Zuhair. Learned scholars of Hadith reject this objection of Imam Tirmidhi (RA), saying that Imam Bukhari's narration is more authentic.

Hadith No. 154

Narrated 'Abdullah (RA)

"The Prophet went out to answer the call of nature and asked me to bring three stones. I found two stones and searched for the third but could not find it. So took a dried piece of dung and brought it to him. He took the two stones and threw away the dung and said, "This is a filthy thing."

Comments

Ibn Masood (RA) always used to remain in the service of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). He used to carry his Miswaak, shoes and pillow etc. He says that one day Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) asked him to get three stones or clay pieces for Istinja purpose. He went in search but could find only two stones and got a piece of dung in place of the third one. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) used the two stones and threw away the dung saying that "it is filthy and has changed its form" i.e., previously it is some food stuff and then it changes into dung. It is neither permissible to use its initial form i.e., food stuff nor its later shape i.e., dung, because as a food stuff it is simply prohibited and after changing into dung it is dirty and infectious.

Chapter 22 : The washing of the body parts (i.e., the parts which are washed in ablution) once only while performing ablution.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

After finishing the chapters of Istinja,
(Vol.13, No: 161) 7

Imam Bukhari (RA) again starts the chapters on Wudu.

Hadith No. 155

Narrated Ibn 'Abbas (RA)

The Prophet performed ablution by washing the body parts only once.

Comments

To wash the body parts in Wudu once is obligatory (Fardh) which is proved by this Hadith and to wash them two or three times is Sunnah and a matter of excellence.

Chapter 23 : The washing of body parts twice while performing ablution.

Hadith No. 156

Narrated 'Abdullah bin Zaid (RA)

The Prophet performed ablution by washing the body parts twice.

Chapter 24 : To wash the body parts thrice while performing ablution.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Imam Bukhari (RA) has established three chapters (two before this chapter) here regarding the number of times a particular part of body is to be washed during Wudu. In the first chapter it is mentioned that the body

parts should be washed only once; in the second chapter, twice and in this chapter it is mentioned to do so thrice. The purpose of Imam Bukhari (RA) is to say that all the three are permitted but it was the usual practice of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) to wash the body parts during Wudu three times.

Hadith No. 157

Narrated Humran (RA)

(the slave of 'Uthman) I saw 'Uthman bin 'Affan asking for a tumbler of water (and when it was brought) he poured water over his hands and washed them thrice and then put his right hand in the water container and rinsed his mouth, washed his nose by putting water in it and then blowing it out. then he washed his face and forearms up to the elbows thrice, passed his wet hands over his head and washed his feet up to the ankles thrice. Then he said, "Allah's Apostle said 'If anyone performs ablution like that of mine and offers a two-rak'at prayer during which he does not think of anything else (not related to the present prayer) then his past sins will be forgiven.' " After performing the ablution 'Uthman said, "I am going to tell you a Hadith

Cont'd on page 21

Da'wah

Saving Islamic Activists from Exaggeration and Clashes

Sheikh Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi (RA)

The body of Din which has reached us can be divided into two kinds. One kind is that which has reached us in a particular state and form; it is called mansus bi'l wada' (laid down in writing by the Lawgiver), and is desired and required in the same state and form. In other words, these are the affairs of al-Din, which have reached us through authentic historical records in a particular state and form, such as the pillars of Din and many obligatory duties which the Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)) not only examined verbally but also demonstrated in their physical forms by his own practice, i.e., prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, ablution, etc.

The other kind of Din is that in which the spirit (essence) of the thing is desired and required. In view of the multifarious exigencies, benefits and interests arising out of the changing environments and needs of people, the Lawgiver did not fix any particular forms and ways of these things. The thing desired was mentioned without any definite form of it being laid down. Though the thing itself is mansus and so obligatory, its form or method, is left open. For instance, jihad fi sabil Allah (struggle in the Cause of Allah), and da'wah 'ila Allah, to carry on the work of Din and to transmit the knowledge of it and its Commands to the people — all these are required from the Millat-i-Islamia, and if the Ummah neglects it and completely forsakes its duty, it will be regarded as sinful.

All these things are desired but no form or method is fixed; it is left to the judgment of the Ummah to adopt any form or way of fulfilling these duties according to their convenience and the requirements of time and place.

A clear example of these duties (ghair mansus bi'l wada') is the matter of dress. There are laid down special instructions about the dress required for men and women. It should cover their private parts and men's clothes should not be made of silk, which is lawful only for women. It should not be conspicuous. Thus dress is necessary (mansus) and its condition are also necessary but a particular form, color, design etc., are not necessary (i.e., ghair mansus). All these things are left to the wisdom and intellect of the Ummah and the convenience of the people according to the requirements of their environment. Another example is mosques, which are required, and also their cleanliness. It is also desired that people should engage in the remembrance of Allah in them. But no special form of architecture is required or desired. The form of the mosques is left to the intellect and convenience of the people.

Only a building is required for praying and remembering Allah and the Muslims are free to build these mosques (places of worship) in any manner they choose for their convenience, provided they fulfill their functional requirements. Likewise, calling to Allah (da'wah 'ila Allah) is obligatory whether indi-

vidually or collectively, by speech or writing, openly or secretly; but no form is prescribed. The Quran has clearly stated through the tongue of the Prophet Nuh (peace be upon him) that it can have many forms and ways: "O My Lord! I have called to my people night and day" (70:5). "I have called to them aloud" (70:8). "I have spoken to them in public and in private" (70:9).

Thus every individual and party engaged on the work of calling people to Allah is free to adopt any method to convey the message of Islam which he regards as suitable and effective in any situation. They have full liberty to use any manner or style in their efforts to do this work of da'wah which they think effective and beneficial to their work. In this respect no one has the right to call any of these ways of da'wah lawful or unlawful, so long as no unlawful element which is against Shari'ah or the object of Din is included in them.

But many of the people have now mixed up both these aspects of Din and given mansus (prescribed by the Lawgiver) the status of ghair mansus (not obligatory) and ghair mansus the status of mansus. This can create many difficulties and different forms of disputes and wrongdoings between different parties and groups. If the difference between these two aspects of Din is properly understood, many of the difficulties and disputes can easily be solved. When the real nature of things is understood and the standard of judging the place and status of each element of Din is fully grasped, then there is no room left for dispute between sincere people and organizations which are working for the cause of Allah. If there is any difference left in between them, it is only the difference of their experiences and the conditions in which they are working. Obviously, each party or each person is the best judge as to what form and method of da'wah is most effective in achieving the best results in their

own circumstances.

In the same way, effectiveness and benefit of a particular form and method in a particular situation can be explained to people. But no one can be compelled to follow any particular experience or method, as is the case with the obligatory Commandments in the Quranic texts (mansus Quran). Any party engaged in the work of da'wah is fully justified in adopting any method (provided it is not opposed to the principles of Din or the established way and thinking of the salaf salihin).

If we consider our particular method of work better and more beneficial in enlivening and revitalizing the Din, it is perfectly proper to present this way of Din to others; in fact we may present it in even more attractive and better ways. But because of differences of work and methods, we consider others wrong and negate the usefulness of the approach which they have adopted on the basis of their experience and study, then this is a mistake. We can request them to reconsider their approach and compare the results of the two methods, but it would be absolutely wrong to debase them, contradict them wrong and in error. This attitude would only confine and limit the bounds of the work of da'wah within narrow boundaries and would be equivalent to severing the relation between Din and environment of time.

In fact, there are some things in the work of da'wah and the method of Din on which the Shari'ah has laid special emphasis. And there are administrative methods that can be deduced from the Quran and the Sunnah and which can be found in principle in the lives of the Companions of the Prophet, but which are not explicitly described.

All those matters are subject to independent judgment (ijtihad) and individual experience; it is therefore not right to

insist on particular forms in every situation or for every individual as in the case of mansur (prescribed by the text) Commands.

Moderation is the most difficult thing of all. The Prophets (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasalam) have perfect moderation but after them people gradually leave the path of moderation and go to extremes, this way or that way. Thereafter, some righteous individuals make a few adjustments in the work of da'wah or the work of Din according to the changed circumstances of their time and place and find them useful and effective, but sometimes others oppose them and organize resistance to their work on the grounds that it is against the way of their ancestors. This attitude is not tenable and insistence on it is sheer prejudice. It is because some people think that whatever way they have inherited from their forefathers is the only Right Way and all other ways are wrong. So long as people do not follow their way, they consider their efforts a sheer waste.

This attitude and way of thinking is far from the moderate way of the Prophets. It is this way of thinking which has created different sects and groups in the Ummah. The only reality is that deliberations, reflection and experience has shown such-and-such to be useful and beneficial in practice. As long as it is beneficial, we should continue to use it, but when the benefit no longer results, we should look for better more effective ways to carry on our work of Din and da'wah. But if people follow any particular way, come what way, even when it has lost all its benefits, than that way becomes a mere custom. Then it is the duty of the righteous and the virtuous to work and destroy such customs. Many practices are adopted in the beginning with pious intentions and good objects but later on take wrong forms. Then it becomes difficult to distinguish between reality and custom, Sunnah and innovation, obligation and option.

If kufr, ilhad, and sin are external enemies of the Prophet's da'wah and training, then formalism (with any real spirit) is its internal sickness, which drains the life-blood of the Ummah and renders its life ineffective. Its beliefs become ineffective and its deeds and 'Ibadah without any essence (or spirit) so that it does not reflect any Light (of Revelation). All obligations are fulfilled like empty ceremonies and rites, without any purpose. These have no real power to help to withstand the temptations of the self or the attractions of the environment or to safeguard them against the attacks of the Devil. They lose all their revolutionary spirit and intellectual appeal or become so weak as to have absolutely no effect. Usually this situation is the result of the absence of da'wah and training, or deprivation of effective, reformatory, and educative personalities.

Centuries may pass without any movement for the revitalization of Din Allah which might enliven the dead souls with the Light of Faith and create a spirit of sacrifice in the Cause of Allah. The evil consequences of this on the Ummah are devastating: division and disputes on petty things become common. People confuse 'obligatory' with 'permissible', so that what is permissible becomes obligatory and what is obligatory becomes permissible. They lose sight of the true essence and spirit of Din and its obligatory duties and concentrate on the formal rites, without realizing the original purpose or object of the Commandments.

The result is that rites and ceremonies (forms) of Din become the be-all and end-all of their activities and the spirit of Din is completely lost. The body of the Ummah is rendered lifeless and all its revolutionary spirit from the original inspiring Message is sacrificed on the altar of formalism and rites.

("An Important Principle to Save Distortion of Din and the Workers of Din from Exaggeration and Clashes", in Al-Furqan, Lucknow, July, 1981, pp. 19-26)

Practice

Pleasure of God

Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah

The common folk desire that God should love them in a sort of one way traffic without their loving Him – that He should give them well-being without their obeying Him. The Qur'an (2:165) teaches: “. . . those who believe are stauncher in their love for God.” Again, it indicates the traits of the best men and says (5:54): “. . . a people whom He loves and who love Him.”

Obtaining Divine pleasure is not analogous to the enjoyment of material comforts, which God may give a man in order to test his gratefulness. Sometimes a man remains deprived of these comforts so that his endurance and constancy may be tested. In both cases man must show his devotion and attachment to God. This necessitates, on the one hand, abnegation of the ego by getting absorbed in the will of God, and on the other, a constant feeling of the effective presence of God.

The philosophic conception of pantheism emanates from the necessity of “self-abnegation in God.” For a mystic, the mere affirmation of this belief has no value, he aspires to assimilate it and feel it as a reality. Thus it is that the learned distinctions between pantheism in the sense of the unity of existence, and that of the unity of vision, or any other, are for a true mystic mere logomachy, [verbal disputation] which makes the eager traveller lose his track, and retards his arrival at his destination.

It may be recalled here that the Islamic notion of pantheism does not lead to the reunification of man with God. However close a man may approach God, there is still a

distinction, a separation, and a distance between the Creator and the created. One abnegates one's ego, but not one's person. The higher the level we attain, the more does God speak with our tongue, act with our hand, and desire with our heart (cf. Bukhari). There is an ascension and a journey of man towards God, but there is never a confusion between the two. Thus it is that a Muslim does not use the term ‘communion,’ which may imply a union and a confusion. The Muslims designate the spiritual journey by the term *mi'raj*, which means a ladder, an ascension, which varies according to individuals and their capacities. The highest imaginable level a human being can attain is the one that has been reached by the holy Prophet Muhammad. And this experience of his is also called *mi'raj*. Even there, in this state beyond time and space, the Qur'an (53:9) indicates formally that the distance between God and the Prophet, “was of two bows' length or even nearer,” and this graphic description lays emphasis simultaneously on the closeness of proximity as well as the distinction between the two. The Prophet himself employed the term *mi'raj* in connection with the common faithful, when he indicated that “The service of worship (*salaah*) is the *mi'raj* of the believer.” Evidently to each according to his capacity and his merit.

The spiritual journey has a whole series of stages, and it is only gradually that one traverses them. In the life of the Prophet Muhammad, we see that he began with retreats in the cave of Hira: then came the Meccan period, in which there was in store

for him suffering and self-abnegation for the sake of the Divine cause. It is only after the Hijrah that he permits himself (under Divine instructions always) to oppose injustice with force. It is quite possible that someone, who pretends to be a dervish, should only be so in appearance, being in reality a wolf disguised as a sheep. Similarly it is quite possible that a king, with all the powers and treasures accumulated in his hands, should still be in practice a saint, who does not at all profit by these things, but makes a great self-sacrifice, in the course of accomplishing his duties, by renouncing his personal comforts.

To break the ego, the first requirement is a feeling of humility, which should be developed. Pride is considered to be a sin against God. Based on a Hadith, al-Ghazzali says, "ostentation is the worship of self, therefore it is really a kind of polytheism."

Temperaments differ, that is why the roads also are numerous. One insists on the need of a guide and master. One who has studied medicine privately, without passing through a period of apprenticeship or even attending the courses of study with proficient doctors, is not allowed to practice medicine. The cases are rare where one sees all one's defects. Rarer still are instances of people who correct themselves immediately. A master is necessary in the first instance to indicate to us our defects and also the way in which these are to be removed. There is a constant development and a perpetual evolution in the individual, and the master spares us a great deal of unnecessary effort. If one were not to profit by experiences of the past, and if each newborn were to recommence each new task by falling back on his own individual self, there would be no growth of culture and civilization – which may be defined as the accumulated knowledge and practice of generations of our ancestors. The pupil has a regard for the judgment and counsel of his master, that he never has for his comrades

and equals. After theoretical studies, one passes through a probationary period, for learning their practical application. This is as true of the material sciences as of the spiritual ones. There are many things which one can never learn by mere reading or listening; their practical application under the supervision of an experienced master is always useful, if not indispensable. Furthermore, mere knowledge does not suffice, it should be assimilated and become second nature.

Mystics recommend four practices: eat less, sleep less, speak less and frequent people less. "Less" does not mean complete abnegation, which is sometimes impossible (such as is eating and sleeping), and always undesirable; there must always be moderation.

One should eat to live, not live to eat. To eat for the purpose of obtaining the energy to accomplish the will and the commandments of God, is an act of devotion. And to diminish nourishment and become weakened to the extent of diminishing spiritual productivity is a sin.

Sleep is necessary for health, and is a duty imposed on man. But laziness, which causes us to remain in bed too long, affects our spiritual progress. Sleeping less does not mean spending more time attaining material needs, but in finding more time for the practices of devotion and piety.

Speaking less means diminishing frivolous talk, and avoidance, if possible, of all evil talk. It is often our habit to give good counsel to others, but to forget to practice it ourselves. Frequenting people less, means refraining from unnecessary talk and wasting time in needless contacts. To do a good turn to others, and to be occupied with the realization of things which could procure the pleasure of the Lord are rather desirable frequentations. However, it should not be forgotten that the needs of the individuals differ

Cont'd on page 39

Religious Interfaith

According to Jesus, Bible and Quran - What is truth?

Irshaad Hussain

Jesus said, "To this end was I born, and for this came I into the world, to bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth hears my voice. Pilate then said unto him, What is truth?" (John 18:37-38)

Pilate's response is a fascinating one. "What is truth?", he says, but he does not voice the question as a genuine query - it is a rhetorical question, a statement describing reality as Pilate observes it - there is no truth, there are only constructed ideologies and practical necessities and people act based upon these and function within the social/economic/political realms generated by these constructs. Right and wrong, truth and justice exist only within the relativistic confines and context of these constructs.

Pilate's response is a quintessential modern response - in a world of relativity, "what is truth?" In a world dominated by pragmatic realities, ideological loyalties, and political manipulation what, indeed, is truth?

Jesus answers Pilate's question with silence. And so perhaps it is presumptuous for us to seek an answer, or to listen for elucidation from within his quiescence. Yet this is a question which is a very human one - and one that every age has struggled with and sought to answer in different ways - some from the vantage of faith, some from philosophical logic, some from the rationalism of science, some from postmodern relativism,

some from an individualistic mix of different avenues - it is a question which has been approached from every conceivable direction. Pilate asks the question cynically, rhetorically - seemingly not truly seeking an answer - and he receives only silence. But perhaps, in the case of Jesus, even his silence can become a potential exegesis, a speech of subtle elucidation - a pointer, not to a single answer, but to a direction which may take us to a mode of understanding.

Pilate's world is governed by ideological fealty to the empire and a path governed by pragmatic decision making. His choices hinge, not on any particular concern with distinguishing between truth and untruth (he perhaps is unconcerned to even contemplate what these might mean), but on the weighing of threats and inconveniences to the empire, on the politics of dealing with the constituents of the empire, and on his own personal ambitions within this milieu. Pilate acts and reacts, as we all tend to do, within the limits and parameters of the surrounding society and his own ideological loyalties - juggling personal ambitions and personal compunctions with the realities of his time, and his place within the Roman hierarchy. There, pragmatism and political and economic realism, not some "abstract" truth, carries weight. For Pilate, as perhaps for many of us, existing worldly "realities" over-

whelm truth rendering it irrelevant to immediate events.

Jesus' taciturn silence in response to Pilate's "What is truth?" is indicative of the vast gulf that stretches between someone like Jesus and someone like Pontius Pilate - a sign of the chasm between two modes of understanding, one mode being rooted in the mundane and the other rooted in deeper modalities - one mode bespeaking the cynicism inherent in Pilate who the world had bent to its connivance (and who in turn sought to further the empire's influence by his own exercise of authority), the other indicating the certainty of one who sees the world as only a passing shimmer rippling across the surface of Reality. Between these two viewpoints there is an unbounded void.

Pilate's independence is no independence - it is action tightly bound within the confines of a limited and worldly set of controls and inputs - the rules of the empire he serves, the relationship with Herod and Tiberius, the local politics of the province he governed - Pilate no doubt weighed all these inputs and made decisions that best suited the current situation according to his own internal ranking of the hierarchy of importance of these inputs. This is human nature shaped and governed by worldly circumstance, unmoored from higher realities.

But Jesus speaks from an entirely different realm of inputs - between his world and Pilate's the gulf is so vast that Jesus' answer to "what is truth", can be nothing other than silence.

If truth is that which corresponds most fully to reality, then the truth Jesus acts upon stems from the realities that extend from the throne of God down to the earth of this world. These constitute the foundational metaphysical verities which encompass, penetrate, and underlie the worlds of the heavens and the worlds of matter - not the fabricated constructs of human power struc-

tures. Truth, in the sense that Jesus speaks of it, is found along the vertical dimension of reality - that dimension which cuts through a hierarchy of existence that stretches from this world to God.

So Jesus acts upon a truth that goes so deep and that has such a powerful grounding in the foundations of reality itself, that every word he speaks and action he performs has a solidity and deep resonance and spiritual potency arising from its integral connection to the throne from which the reality of the world emerges and from which it draws its subsistence.

"For man does not live by bread alone but from every word that proceeds from God." (Matthew 4:4) God's words are the engendering, shaping, and sustaining commands which hold the world in existence, from instant to instant. These words are truth - they are the essential substance that shapes reality.

The first truth and the foundation of all truth is God - "God is the Truth (the Real)" (Qur'an 22:6). His right over His creation is above all other rights.

And He has created in accordance with His nature "We created not the heavens and the earth and what is between them but through the Truth (the Real - Haqq); and the hour will most surely come, so turn away (from the ignorant and heedless) with kindly forgiveness." (Qur'an 15:85)

And He has placed within each creature's essence a truth and a nature which can connect it with other truths. "Our Lord is He who gave each thing its creation, then guided it...." (Qur'an 20:50)

Through this nature, truth can connect with truth - "Every one that is of the truth hears my voice." (John 18:37)

By this connection and attraction, He (God) makes possible the connection between the ones who bring the truth (the Prophets) and the ones who accept the truth

- "And he who brings the truth and (he who) accepts it as the truth...." (Qur'an 39:33) Those whose hearts are on the paths of the prophets, whose beings have a resonant identity with them, whose spirits are seeking congruence with theirs - they are the ones who accept the truth.

And He sends truth in the form of revelation, as guidance - "And with truth have We revealed it, and with truth did it come...." (Qur'an 17:105) This is why there is the potential for revelation to enact an al-chemical transformation in the one who approaches its truth with their own intelligent and honest sincerity.

And the truth overturns falsehood, revealing falsehood's self-seeking and ephemeral nature - "We cast the truth against the falsehood, so that it demolishes it, and lo! it vanishes away...." (Qur'an 21:18)

In the Qur'an, truth is repeatedly connected with reality at its deepest and most profound levels. So Jesus' being is integrally connected to the realities which permeate and suffuse all aspects of creation from the heavens to the earth and all that is in-between. Jesus draws upon and manifests that truth in each glance, in each word, and in each silence. He manifests the truth in the most appropriate manner in each individual action, in each separate time and place, to each person and group - he gives to each aspect of creation he encounters, that which is most appropriate to it. Sometimes he gives healing, sometimes an awakening, sometimes harsh words (to the hypocrites) and reprimands, sometimes specific guidance, sometimes silence, but always, it is truth - conveyed in the most effective manner since its root is firmly established in the full depth of reality. He is a Word from God - cast into Mary's womb. "...O Marium (Mary), surely Allah gives you good news of a Word from Him, who is the Messiah (Christ), Isa (Jesus) son of Marium, worthy of high honor in this

world and the hereafter and is of those who are in near proximity (to Allah)." (Qur'an 3:45)

God's word is the truth - so when Pilate asks, "what is truth", the answer is manifest before him. At that juncture, the silence of Jesus' presence was the most potent response.

The totality of absolute Truth is only possible within the unique singularity and unknowable hidden essence of God - there all contradictions and oppositions find their termination and reconciliation. But here, in the world in which we presently dwell, the Prophets drew upon their profound connection with the unseen, they recognized the true nature of things, they understood the vast substance of the ocean of reality upon whose surface the ephemeral world floats unaware ("You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes...." (James 4:14)) They gave to each thing they encountered its rightful due, drawing out from each its unique truth - the nature with which it was created - since it is by standing on truth, by being true to one's profound metaphysical nature that one acquires substance, and gains a firm foothold in reality. And it is from this acting on truth, from "...bearing witness to the truth." (John, 18:37) that the felicitous bond with the ultimate Truth, Al-Haqq, emerges. "God is the Truth (the Real - Al-Haqq)" (Qur'an 22:6)

Irshaad Hussain is a contemporary Islamic thinker and author of Islam from Inside.

Cont'd from page 6

plants when irrigated by rain, but the rock lying beneath the dust is unable to grow, and once the rain is showered upon it, it makes the dust slip down, leaving the rock flat and barren. Similarly, charitable acts are able to grow if done with good intention, but the bad intention destroys this ability, and becomes like a rock that throws away the cultivable dust when it is rained.

Commerce

Lessons from Islamic and Ethical Finance for Today

By: Ann Pettifor

The notion of the moral economy is intrinsic to all the major faiths, each of which has placed ethical boundaries on the behavior of those active in the market.

The ten commandments of the Jewish Torah or Christian Old Testament laid down an ethical boundary - or regulation - for work, "for six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work - you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns".

The Qu'ran lays down clear ethical boundaries for lending and borrowing, and for trade.

These boundaries have been vital in the maintenance of great civilizations. As Karl Polanyi, the great economic historian argued (in his 1944 book "The Great Transformation") - the regulation of the conduct of human affairs by law is vital to the maintenance of civilized society, and to the market, because "robbed of the protective covering of cultural institutions, human beings would perish from the effects of social exposure; they would die as the victims of acute social dislocation through vice, perversion, crime and starvation....neighborhoods and landscapes defiled, rivers polluted, military safety jeopardized, the power to produce food and raw materials destroyed".

So one of the great contradictions we in the West face today is this: law - or

regulation - needs boundaries, in particular ethical boundaries; but also geographical and political boundaries.

However markets, in particular financial markets, abhor boundaries.

How do we reconcile therefore, the ethical boundaries/regulation advocated by the world's great religions with the resistance of, in particular financial markets, to these boundaries?

That is the great challenge faced today by those who would promote the notion of a moral economy.

One of the most important ethical boundaries set by the Prophet in the Qu'ran has to do with the 'price' paid for a loan: the rate of interest. While many would regard the Qu'ran's strictures on interest rates as antiquated, I would like to argue that they are acutely relevant to today's financial crisis.

This is because one of the economic characteristics of the period from 1980 to the present day is high real rates of interest (i.e. adjusted for inflation/deflation) paid by borrowers. By this we mean interest rates in the broadest sense: those for short, long, real, risky as well as safe loans. While the Federal Funds or Bank of England rate might seem low, the real rate paid by credit card holders or entrepreneurs taking risks, has for a long period, been much, much higher.

Indeed it is these high rates of interest, that I contend, led to the 'debtonation' of the financial system in August, 2007, and the

most severe financial crisis in history. For it is high real rates of interest that ultimately made debts unpayable - for sub-prime mortgage borrowers in the US, for the millions that have defaulted on their mortgages and had their homes 'foreclosed'; for thousands of companies that have been bankrupted by a heavy burden of debt; by semi-states such as Dubai, and now by states such as Iceland, Ireland and perhaps Greece.

Historically the average rate of return on investment has been in the range of 3-5%. Any borrowing above that rate presents repayment difficulties for most entrepreneurs and investors. The post 1977 rates of interest can be described as usurious.

Sidney Homer's A History of Interest Rates, has been the definitive analysis of the subject since its first edition in 1967. He published a second edition ten years later. Homer died in 1983, and his pupil Richard Sylla was entrusted with the production of a third edition of his work. On the opening page, Sylla warned: "The spectacular rise in interest rates during the 1970s and early 1980s pushed many long-term market rates on prime credits up to levels never before approached, much less reached, in modern history. A long view, provided by this history, shows that recent peak yields were far above the highest prime long-term rates reported in the United States since 1800, in England since 1700, or in Holland since 1600. In other words, since modern capital markets came into existence, there have never been such high long-term rates as we recently have had all over the world." (Homer and Sylla, 1991, p. 1)

High rates across the whole architecture of rates - for short and long, safe and risky loans - have prevailed ever since.

Tremendous capital gains have effortlessly been made by those who held assets, lent them on to governments, corporations or individuals, and thereby extracted

even greater wealth. This is what has always been understood as usury.

Islam and interest-bearing money

"Those who consume interest shall not rise, except as he rises whom Satan by his touch prostrates [i.e. one who is misled]; that is because they say: "Trade is like interest"; whereas, Allah [God] has permitted trading but forbidden interest.whosoever reverts (to devouring interest) those, they are the inhabitants of the fire, therein dwelling forever." Qu'ran 2:275

Islam prohibits the taking or giving of interest or riba, regardless of the purpose of the loan, or the rates at which interest is charged. "Riba" includes the whole concept of effortless profit or earnings that comes without work or value added production.

In Islam money can only be used for facilitating trade and commerce - a crucial difference with the world's major Christian religions. This was because Islamic scholars were fully aware that debt-creating money can stratify wealth, and exacerbate exploitation, oppression and the enslavement of those who do not own assets.

The Qur'anic ban on interest does not imply that capital or savings are without cost in an Islamic system. While Islam recognizes capital as a factor of production, it does not allow capital to make a claim on the productive surplus in the form of interest. Instead Islam views profit-sharing as permissible, and a viable alternative. The owner of capital can legitimately share in the gains made by the entrepreneur. That implies that the owner of capital will also share in the losses.

Investors in the Islamic order have no right to demand a fixed rate of return. No one is entitled to any addition to the principal sum if he does not share in the risks involved. Another legitimate mode of financing recognized in Islam is based on equity participation

(musharaka) in which partners use their capital jointly to generate a surplus. Profits or losses are shared between partners depending on the equity ratio.

Islamic banking is a risky business compared with conventional banking, for risk-sharing forms the very basis of all Islamic financial transactions.

Global finance, in the shape of un-

regulated and unethical capitalism, poses a profound threat to Islam. Because Islam expressly prohibits the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, i.e. hoarding (kenz) waste (tabthir) extravagant consumption (israf) and miserliness (bukhl) - the excesses of global financial liberalization are in deep conflict with Muslim values.

Not only Muslim values, but the values of Jews and Christians too.

Excellences of Fajr and Asr Prayers

"There are angels who take turns in visiting you by night and by day, and they all assemble at the dawn (Fajr) and the afternoon (Asr) prayers. Those who have spent the night with you, ascend to the heaven and their Rabb, Who knows better about them, asks: 'In what condition did you leave My slaves?' They reply: 'We left them while they were performing Salat and we went to them while they were performing Salat.'" [Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

"He who observes Al-Bardhan (i.e., Fajr and Asr prayers) will enter Jannah." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

"He who performs Salat (prayers) before the rising of the sun and before its setting, will not enter the Hell." [Muslim].

"He who offers the dawn (Fajr) prayers will come under the Protection of Allah. O son of Adam! Beware, lest Allah should call you to account in any respect from (for withdrawing) His Protection." [Muslim].

"He who misses the Asr Salat (deliberately), his deeds will be rendered nul and void." [Al-Bukhari].

Love the Prophet? Follow Him.



By: Aisha Aijaz

Love is a beautiful emotion. It encompasses all the most beautiful things in the world. Every relation and connection gets stronger and more durable when there is an element of affiliation and love added to it. Beginning from our first love as a child for our mother to choosing someone to spend our whole life with, love is what makes life worth living. And, like all precious things in the world, this priceless treasure demands guarantees to keep it flourishing.

When you love someone, they are always on your mind and become the driving force of your direction in life. You love to follow them, obey them, do whatever you can to please them and try your best to avoid whatever displeases them. You share with them your problems and consult them for their best advice. Their name soothes you and their company is the most precious time of your day. Never do their messages and mails go unread or ignored. The world sees you change when this beautiful feeling overpowers you, whether this love be for a human, a mission, a career or simply a car or a gadget. Love changes your priorities and the color of this feeling is evident on your face and in your feelings, words, and actions.

We all love the Prophet Muhammad, the personality whose greatness is acknowledged by Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers and scholars—a warm friend and a guide for his companions, a devoted and loving husband to his wives, a shady tree for his

daughters, a leader of the Ummah (community), an exemplary politician and a reformist who transformed the most uncultured Bedouin into the most disciplined force of people known to history.

His message, which begins with the oneness of Allah, gives answers for all the problems we face today. But how many of us have actually explored the message he brought? Do we really know the message? The Qur'anic code of life sent to us through our beloved Messenger of Allah still remains untouched, only to be 'recited' when we are in trouble or a calamity afflicts us, or it becomes a part of the deluxe package that goes with the bride. How many of us consult his way in our practical lives whether it's a matter of celebration or woe?

We never see the Prophet telling a lie, deceiving a human or even an animal, breaking a pact or a promise. He forgives and prays for the humiliating tribal chiefs of Taif and the people who throw stones at him. He rejects social inequality and all sorts of racial supremacy and lays down in his final sermon, the basic charter of human rights,

"An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action."

He sets best examples of justice and warns that the previous nations were destroyed because they only punished their weak and poor for crimes. He teaches us to be on our best behavior and to have

'akhlaaq' (manners) with our neighbors (Muslim or Non-Muslims) so much so that he once thought that they might get a share in inheritance (because of the stress Allah has put on their rights). He cries for Allah's forgiveness for us and stresses us to remain united and not be divided due to language, castes or sects.

Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim which belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly. Do not, therefore, do injustice to yourselves.

Non-Muslim minorities are at peace under his rule. Justice is served irrespective of faith, status or personal affiliation. He lifts the status of a woman from the one who was buried alive at birth to a guarantee to get best rewards, may it be through serving and obeying one's mother, taking care of a wife or raising a daughter with love. He brings a message that puts rewards in charity and spending from what we love most, giving an orphan a home and helping a widow to survive.

No one has the right to question anybody's sincerity of 'love for the Prophet' but we all need some serious self-evaluation. When we claim to be his followers, it automatically makes us his ambassadors and representatives in whatever roles and responsibilities we take. Do we consult the Prophet in different matters of our lives?

Let's follow the Prophet to prove that we love him. Let's celebrate him every day. Let's light up our hearts with the beacon of this message like we light up the streets on his birthday. Let's engrave those beautiful stories of his life, which we memorize and narrate, on our actions. Let's check if our deeds are compatible with our claims of love towards him. In following him, lies the secret of Allah's love, mercy and forgiveness for us.

"Say, [O Muhammad], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful." (Al-Qur'an 3:31)

Cont'd from page 8

which I would not have told you, had I not been compelled by a certain Holy Verse (the sub narrator 'Urwa said: This verse is: "Verily, those who conceal the clear signs and the guidance which we have sent down...)" (2:159). I heard the Prophet saying, 'If a man performs ablution perfectly and then offers the compulsory congregational prayer, Allah will forgive his sins committed between that (prayer) and the (next) prayer till he offers it.

Comments

Humran, a freed slave of Hadhrat Uthman (RA), narrates that he saw Hadhrat Uthman performing Wudu by washing each body part thrice and then said that Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) used to perform Wudu in this way. Hadhrat Uthman (RA) further quoted Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) saying that whosoever performs Wudu like this and then offers two Rak'ats of Salaah in such a way that he does not talk to himself during that, Allah forgives all his sins. Talking to oneself means not to bring any thought to one's mind. Here a distinction has to be made between bringing of a thought and coming of a thought. To bring a thought is prohibited because such act is voluntary whereas coming of a thought is involuntary. A person will be punished or rewarded for his voluntary deeds and not for the involuntary ones. This is an important lesson to be learnt. The thoughts induced by Shaitaan and those coming to one's mind of their own are involuntary, hence not required to be taken seriously. But, after that voluntarily thought one continues to think upon it, then it will be a sin as the later act of thinking is voluntary.

Social Etiquettes

The Story of A Smile

By: Faisal Ansari

As we move through history and the chaos of our time, and amid the chaos in places like Gaza, when all they can hear is the thunder of gunshots, and all we can hear is the thunder of materialism and greed and all they could smell is the violence in the air, and all we can smell is our own lack of content. I think back and am amazed at how I could allow myself to loose hope whatever the circumstance in my own life be here in the land of the free and the home of the brave. We all have something we are hurting from and we reach out to each other as Muslims hoping someone will lend a helping hand. Maybe it is time to rethink whether we really care or not, or are we just living day to day?

And it is then that my thoughts become so clear and true, that three words run through my mind endlessly, repeating themselves like a broken record: Smiling is a charity, Smiling is a charity, smiling is a charity. His saying softening my heart somehow and seeing things differently allowing the anguish and the pain to fade like the stars at dawn.

The final messenger of God named Muhammad (peace be upon him), when first learning of him it was through a smile that I became a practicing Muslim.

And now when thinking of the Prophet he reminds me of a Desert Rose, a desert rose dressed tall in Red standing and illuminated by the light of the moon, his message calls to me like a siren in the night and he is a freedom to me from the evil of my soul, hope, faith and the strength to carry on and his selfless message contained the greatest gift to me and to you, a healing and a sol-

ace - the greatest gift being the love of God and a clean soul. A hope that through a smile we can end the injustice and hatred against the innocent.

In every story of the Prophet Muhammad there is a reminder of how he would treat people with a soft heart, affection, concern, love, and most of all, a smile. They say that He once said something magnificent- "Even a smile is charity."

A long time ago this young man in his early twenties used to hate going to the mosque and would only go when his mother would force him to. When he would go there all he would see were faces of hatred and discontent. One day feeling lost and alone he found himself at the footsteps of that mosque. As he stood outside it, a brother of Syrian origin appeared and he had a great big smile on his face and he was smiling right at the young man. This brother had noor (light) on his face and around him, metaphorically speaking. He really did, and the young man could not gather why he smiled at him and actually greeted him and asked him how he was doing. The young man developed a burning desire after that day to seek out this man and he eventually became his student and learned the basics of Islam from him.

It was a smile that brought that confused young man to the light of God. A simple implementation of the practice of our beloved Prophet Muhammad being a smile that shined the light of Islam on him. Who would have every thought that a smile could go so far and it came from the heart connected to the light of God. "Light upon Light."

It is through learning about the Prophet and how he dealt with people that we can learn to love again and treat our loved ones with respect and a kind word. It is not easy to do but it can be attained. The Prophet Muhammad who had a prayer for everything one could think of conveyed stories of how he dealt with his people including the non-Muslims, the new converts to Islam, travelers, the poor, the passerby, his friends and his loved ones and so on. And we learn from his history that he took everyone's situation into consideration and dealt with them with a gentle word and not with harshness as we are so accustomed to these days. As the Prophet said, "one who is devoid of mercy is not shown any mercy (Sahih Muslim)."

It's hard to go up to a father who treated you and your family in an inhuman way on a daily basis for years and forgive. What will we do as Muslims? Let's, let the hurt go, because it is time to stop playing victim to depression, anger, hatred, guilt, and greed as our Prophet taught us to not dwell on the past.. As one scholar said, if we were tested with some of the things that Muhammad, had to deal with, then we would end up in the puzzle factory wondering what hit us. Because the problem with our new culture is that we can't handle pressure and we break at the slightest things because we live in a Prozac society of instant gratification.

Instead, Shine your light and be all that you can for Allah and his Prophet and help yourself and lead yourself and your family and humanity. And lastly the Prophet said, "Sabr (patience) is a shining glory. The Qur'an is an argument either for you or against you. Everybody goes out in the morning and sells themselves, either setting themselves free or destroying themselves." It is time to stop running and hiding between the shadows and the lies wherever that may be for us and to be a light to other people and make the world a better place as the Quran tells us.

*Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth,
The parable of His Light is as if there were a niche,
And within it a Lamp: The Lamp enclosed in Glass;
The glass as it were a brilliant star;
Lit from a blessed Tree,*

*An Olive, neither of the East nor of the West,
Whose oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it;
Light upon Light!
Allah doth set forth parables for men: and Allah doth know all things.*

Quran 24:35 Al Nur (The Light)

THE BEST WEALTH

Rasulullah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said: "The best wealth is a tongue which remains in the remembrance of Allah, a grateful heart and a believing wife who helps her husband in his Imaan." (Tirmizi)

Nowadays we have understood only material possessions to be wealth, whereas in the words of Rasulullah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) the best wealth is a tongue that remembers Allah and is moist in zikr.

Secondly, a thankful heart appreciating the favours of Allah. Our life should not evolve around acquiring the wealth of this world nor should our hearts be simply filled with the desire for more of the world. Instead, while making a moderate effort for halaal sustenance, one's heart should be filled with contentment.

Thirdly, a wife is a man's best wealth if she helps him in matters of deen and encourages him to serve Allah. His wife should not become an obstacle in his journey towards Allah by not allowing him to keep a beard, taking him out visiting at the time of salaah, forcing him to work harder at the expense of his deen so that she has more money to squander and enjoy. The need of the time is that the society be filled with believing men and women who assist each other in their journey towards Allah.

Advice

On - The Mediator

Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani (RA)

The mediator is essential. Ask your Lord for a physician who can treat the diseases of your hearts, a healer who can heal you, a guide who can guide you and take you by the hand. Draw near to those whom He has brought near to Him, His elite, the ushers of His nearness, the keepers of His door. You have consented to serving your lower selves and pursuing your passions and natural inclinations. You work hard to satisfy and satiate your lower selves in this world, although this is something that you will never achieve. You keep to this state hour after hour, day after day, month after month and year after year, until you find that death has suddenly come to you and you cannot release yourselves from its grip.

The Prophet (*Sallallahu Alaihi wasalam*) is reported to have said: "In every specialized craft seek the help of its experts". Worshipping is a craft, and its experts are those whose deeds are righteous, those who are knowledgeable of the Law and have put it into practice, those who have bidden farewell to all creatures after knowing them, those who have run away from their lower selves, their possessions, their sons and everything other than their Lord ('Azza wa Jall) on the feet of their hearts and their innermost beings. Their bodies are in populated places, in the midst of creatures, but their hearts are in the wilderness and deserts. They keep to this until their hearts grow and their wings strengthen and fly to heaven. Their spiritual aspiration has ascended and therefore their hearts flew up and reached the True One ('Azza wa Jall). Thus, they became of those

about whom Allah ('Azza wa Jall) said: **And they are in Oursight of the righteous elect.**

You have this world in your hearts. Let me take charge of you to purify you with drinks that I offer you. The drinks that I shall give you are pious restraint, renunciation, fear of Allah, faith, certitude, knowingness, knowledge, forgetting everything and being in a state of extinction to everything. Having reached this state, your existence through your Lord ('Azza wa Jall), nearness to Him and remembrance of Him will come to you. When all of this has become true of someone, he will become a sun, a moon and a guide for creatures, taking them by their hands from the river of this world to the shore of the hereafter.

Woe unto you! You depend exclusively on your opinion and say: "What do I do with the company of the jurisprudents and the scholars?" You think you have been created only for earning worldly things, eating, drinking and having sexual intercourse. Repent and return before the Angel of Death comes to you and takes you while you are amid the worst of deeds. Everyone of is told to observe the commandments and prohibitions and endure with patience whatever destiny brings.

Sayyiduna Musa (AS) came to his people carrying the Torah containing the commandments and prohibitions. They said to him: "We will not accept what you say unless We see the face of Allah and hear his speech". He said to them: "He has not shown me His face so how would He show it to

you?" They replied: "If you do not show us His face and let us hear His speech, we will not accept His words". Therefore, Allah ('Azza wa Jall) revealed to Sayyiduna Musa (AS) that: "Tell them if they want to hear My speech, let them fast for three days, and on the fourth day purify themselves and dress in clean clothes, then bring them to hear My speech". Sayyiduna Musa told them that, and they did what they were told to do. Then they came to the place on the mountain where Sayyiduna Musa used to privately converse with His Lord ('Azza wa Jall). Sayyiduna Musa had chosen seventy men from among the scholars and ascetics of his people. Then the True One ('Azza wa Jall) addressed them and they were all thunderstruck, with Sayyiduna Musa (AS) remaining alone. He said, "Lord! You have killed the elite of my nation", and he wept. Allah responded to his weeping with mercy and revived them. They stood on their feet and said: "Musa, we do not have the capacity to hear the speech of Allah, so be the mediator between us and Him!" Thus, Allah spoke to Sayyiduna Musa who, in turn, enabled his people to hear Him by repeating His words. Sayyiduna Musa could hear the speech of Allah ('Azza wa Jall) because of the strength of his faith and the realization of his obedience and servitude, while they failed to hear Him because of the weakness of their faith. If they had accepted from him what was brought to them of the Torah, acted with obedience concerning the commandments and prohibitions, kept to good manners and did not put to test what they were told, they would have been able to hear the speech of Allah ('Azza wa Jall).

"TRUST"

*O` son of Adam, what grieves you
Never did my bounties suffice you
A scratch in your nail, you com-
plain
A trivial test to withstand, you fail
The patient one; I single him out
And the content one; I purify.
O` naïve man, you know not
Just muse over what I taught.
The Lord of the Unseen I am
Aleemul Azeem I am.
Never shall I let you grieve
If only Tanwaku you keep.
Scarce is the vision of your eye
My wisdom unfathomable and
high
I say: "Inn al laaha ma`as saabi-
reen"
In your gay hours and days bleak
I am there always, you see
But with those who refuse to find
me.*

By: Nida Fatima

Education

Madrasahs Help Students Make Sense of World

Mukul Kesavan

When I first came to Jamia Millia Islamia to teach, some 30 years ago, the madrasah in my mind was a quaint holdover from the past. In the course of studying colonial Indian history I had read about the Darul Uloom at Deoband and the Nadwa in Lucknow, but I didn't think of them as living institutions; they belonged to the past as firmly as Humayun's tomb did.

I knew, as a historian, that the Darul Uloom at Deoband and the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental (MAO) College at Aligarh, the precursor of the Aligarh Muslim University, had been founded inside ten years of each other in the late 19th century; despite that knowledge, the madrasah at Deoband was, for me, a medieval seminary, while AMU was a great modern university.

There was, of course, a reason for the stereotypes in my head. The Darul Uloom, as Barbara Metcalf had shown us in her authoritative book ("Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900") was established to preserve a style of traditional Muslim education and learning threatened by colonial modernity, whereas MAO College was founded by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan as a model of modern, western-style education for Indian Muslims. So for those like me with a superficial understanding of these institutions, the former belonged firmly to the past while the latter didn't merely have a glorious

history, it had a future.

So in 1983, complacent in the 'correctness' of my knowledge of the world, I came to teach at the Department of History in Jamia. Jamia wasn't a Central University in those days; it was a Deemed University, just one notch higher than the degree-giving college it once had been. It was a much smaller place than it is now and the B.A. Honours class in the history department had all of five students. The brightest of them, by far, was a student called Muhammad Ishaq, now Dr Muhammad Ishaq and a distinguished member of Jamia's faculty in the Department of Islamic Studies.

Ishaq was from a madrasah, and he wasn't just a brilliant student, he was brilliant in an engaged and argumentative way. While his classmates deferred to my views as a teacher, Ishaq had strongly-held views of his own and we had long arguments inside and outside of class about history, modernity, community and the nature of nationhood. What struck me as particularly impressive, even formidable, was the way in which his arguments combined rhetorical rigour with remarkable language skills.

Ishaq was the first student I encountered who had been educated in a madrasah and while he was exceptional in every sense of that term, I discovered, in the course of the years that followed, that he was also in

many ways representative of a madrassa education.

For example, while correcting tutorials I discovered that students from madrassas often wrote the more cogent and consistent essays. This was for two main reasons. First of all, their essays were generally written in Urdu. Since their readings were mainly in English, this meant that they had to paraphrase and translate their understanding of these texts before they could incorporate them in their essays. As a result these essays were, perforce, written in their own words. They didn't have the option, which my English-medium students had and sometimes exercised, of cutting and pasting whole paragraphs from the articles and books that they read and joining them together in a kind of collage to confect a tutorial.

Secondly, madrassa students had been taught rhetoric as part of their curriculum. Rhetoric is the art of argumentation, of discourse. From Aristotle onwards, rhetoric was a central part of classical education both in the West and the Muslim world. It was no coincidence that essays written by madrassa students were cogently and forcefully argued: they had been given a first-rate training in the skills of persuasion.

Over the years, it has become clear to me that while there are many shortcomings to the quality of education provided in the run-of-the-mill madrassa (as there are in the average 'modern' school), their strengths, that is, their emphasis on teaching rhetoric, logic and grammar, their success in teaching students from underprivileged backgrounds, and languages, both classical and modern, were considerable. And not only were they considerable, these were also strengths that contemporary schools in Delhi and other metropolitan cities in India could learn from. So when we talk about 'modernising' or 'mainstreaming' madrassa teaching, we should also remember that

there is a great deal that modern schools and colleges can learn from the pedagogical practice of madrassas.

I don't want to gloss over the problems of madrassa education, but it is useful to remember that most of them are problems with all educational institutions in India: an absence of resources and infrastructure, a shortage of skilled and specialised teachers and the challenge of systematically renewing a syllabus and a school system so that it responds to the challenges of modernity and the job market.

At a time when policy makers are increasingly concerned with drawing into the process of development those who live outside the charmed circle of big cities and large to medium-sized towns, madrassa are one way in which 'mofussil' India is drawn into the metropolis. The story of Ikramul Haque is instructive. He studied in Azamgarh, a town in eastern Uttar Pradesh at Madrassa-al-Islah. From there he travelled to Lucknow to study Arabic at a more celebrated seminary, the Nadwat-ul-Ulama. From there he made the journey to Delhi when he applied to Jamia for the B.A. Honours degree in History and was accepted.

By his own account, Ikram has found his educational journey various and fulfilling. "I had an interest in Urdu literature and had read a lot. I wanted to connect those stories to history, because behind every story, there is history."

We see here not a rejection of traditional education, but a self-conscious drive to build upon it, to test it against a modern curriculum and to look for more expansive horizons. There is a seriousness to Ikram that has something to do, I think, with his madrassa training, the almost solemn sense that education is meant to help you make sense of the world.

Courtesy Greaterkashmir

Quest

The Universe as a "Mosque"

The Malacca Straits Mosque (Malay: Masjid Selat Melaka) is a mosque located on the man-made Malacca Island near Malacca Town in Malacca state, Malaysia. It looks like a floating structure if the water level is high.

Islam is a religion that inevitably leads to the creation of a virtuous comprehensive culture and civilization which benefits not only Muslims, but also non-Muslims and all the other worldly creatures as well. Islam also creates individuals who through a complex hierarchy of institutions and establishments are organized in a community (ummah) which is well equipped to meet the challenges of its and its members' earthly mission. This is so because life in its totality is seen as both the field and a form of worship ('ibadah) in Islam. Every life activity believers effortlessly transform into an act of worship. Every part of the earth where they live, believers, as a result, turn into a vibrant place of worship as well. They turn it into a mosque (masjid). Thus, Islam, believers, worship as a lifestyle, and the notion of the mosque, one originating from the other and each one needing the others for its functioning and continued existence, are inseparable.

As a matter of fact, the earth is just a part of another more expansive mosque (a place of worship), that is, the whole of the universe. The Holy Qur'an repeatedly asserts that everything in the universe: the sun, the moon and all the stars, including the earth itself, incessantly glorifies, sings praises and prostrates itself to Allah, the Creator, Master and Sustainer. A hint as to the way in which Allah created the heavens and the earth and how obedient and devoted they are, Allah

says: "Then He turned to the heaven when it was smoke, and said unto it and unto the earth: "Come both of you, willingly or unwillingly." They said: "We come, obedient." Then He ordained them seven heavens in two periods and inspired in each heaven its duty and command; and We adorned the lower heaven with lamps, and rendered it inviolable. That is the measuring of the Mighty, the Knower." (Fussilat, 11, 12)

"To Him belongs every being that is in the heavens and on earth: all are devoutly obedient to Him." (al-Rum, 26)

By the universe and its numerous worshippers, we do not mean only the celestial planets, stars and other objects, but also all the physical unintelligent living things therein. It is exceptionally interesting that Allah in His Qur'an is explicit about this aspect of His creation. He says: "And one of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and what He has spread forth in both of them of living beings (dabbah); and when He pleases He is all-powerful to gather them together." (al-Shura, 29)

Abdullah Yusuf Ali commented on this verse as follows: "Life is not confined to our little planet. Though no scientific demonstration is possible, it is reasonable to suppose that life in some form or other is scattered through some of the millions of heavenly bodies scattered through space. What a wonderful sign of Allah! The Almighty Who created such countless beings has surely the power to bring them together."

We assert - and Allah knows best -- that those faithful and obedient life forms scattered through space, which render the

universe a place of worship (mosque), are unintelligent, in the sense that they are dissimilar from and cannot possibly rival man, because the presence of man for whom, and because of whom, the universe has been created, is confined to the planet earth alone. This has been explicitly and in various contexts divulged by Allah, the Creator, time and again in the Qur'an. He said, for example: "Behold, your Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth." (al-Baqarah, 30)

We also cannot but contend that those extraterrestrial life forms are physical, which exclude angels and jinns who are spiritual beings, because the word used in the verse quoted above is "dabbah" which normally means any type of animals, or mammals and reptiles that crawl or walk on two or four legs. Allah says: "And Allah has created every animal (dabbah) from water: of them there are some that creep on their bellies; some that walk on two legs; and some that walk on four. Allah creates what He wills for verily Allah has power over all things." (al-Nur, 45)

The universe, thus, is replete with "aliens" which may or may not be similar to what exists on the earth. However, those "aliens" are non-human and, in all likelihood, unintelligent animals. Their forms, lifestyles and the environments in which they subsist have been designed in such a way that they perfectly suit and support each other. As another possible hint at this remarkable truth, Allah says that He creates many other things, apart from what is known to man, of which man has no knowledge whatsoever. (al-Nahl, 8) Allah also affirms that of knowledge it is only a little that has been communicated to man (al-Isra', 85), and regardless of what his achievements and discoveries might ever be, man will never be able to triumph over this inborn "ignorant" state of his.

Besides, to the virtually infinite king-

dom of the heavenly mosque (a place of worship) we can also add the world of angels many of whom, although spiritual beings created from light (nur), reside in the heavens and some even on the earth due to a number of assignments given to them by Allah. They by nature endlessly worship Allah never experiencing any deficiency or fatigue in their total and incessant devoutness. They are Allah's most obedient servants who are unable to err. The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has said that in the earthly heaven (al-sama' al-dunya) there is no space as big as a span of a hand, which is vacant. It is all occupied by angels who continuously and in different postures worship Allah.

The Qur'an makes a reference to the al-Bayt al-Ma'mur (the Oft-Frequented House) (al-Tur, 5), or the seventh heaven's holly mosque or the Ka'bah, of which the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) also spoke. The following is an extract from Ibn Kathir's commentary of the Qur'anic verse in which a reference to the al-Bayt al-Ma'mur has been made: "In the two Sahihs (the Sahihs of al-Bukhari and Muslim) it is confirmed that the Messenger of Allah said in the Hadith about al-Isra', after ascending to the seventh heaven: "Then, I was taken to al-Bayt al-Ma'mur. It is visited every day by seventy thousand angels who will not come back to visit it again." The angels worship Allah in al-Bayt al-Ma'mur and perform tawaf (circumambulation) around it just as the people of the earth perform tawaf around the Ka'bah. Al-Bayt al-Ma'mur is the Ka'bah of those who reside in the seventh heaven. During the Isra' journey, the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) saw Ibrahim al-Khalil, who was reclining with his back on al-Bayt al-Ma'mur. It was Ibrahim who built the Ka'bah on earth, and surely, the reward is compatible with the action. Al-Bayt al-Ma'mur is paral-

lel to the Ka'bah; every heaven has its own house of worship, which is also the direction of prayer for its residents. The house that is located in the lower heaven, is called Bayt al-'Izzah."

The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has also said that the earthly Ka'bah was built directly under the heavenly al-Bayt al-Ma'mur. If the latter falls, it would fall directly on the former. Such is the arrangement between the two holy mosques, or Ka'bahs, that despite the constant movement of all the heavenly bodies, including the earth, the two mosques always remain one above the other. Prophet Adam too is said to have worshipped Allah in the al-Bayt al-Ma'mur prior to his descent to the earth.

In this context we can also mention the world of jinns, many of whom are believers, and who constantly roam the earth and the heavens for different reasons. They are made from fire (nar). The believing section of jinns, though spiritual beings, certainly helps in rendering the universe an infinite and a very amazing and complex place of worship, or a mosque.

In addition, Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has been sent to convey Allah's final revealed message to both men and jinns. In the Qur'an there is an entire chapter dedicated to jinns. It is called "al-Jinn" (jinns).

Indeed, by all these and other similar Qur'anic truths about existence, believers have been invited to constantly reflect on their surrounding earthly and heavenly realities in order to try to comprehend them and their own position in the matrix of creation, and to try to comprehend the nature and framework of their relations with the other protagonists of life. They are thus to always grow, to be optimistic and visionary. Being passive or static is uncharacteristic of them. Believers' growth starts from their private domestic mosques, and via the neighbor-

hood, jami' and the earthly mosques, it culminates in the highest levels of spiritual meaning and experience, a state which transcends their physical contexts dominated by the time and space factors. These are typified by the nature and expanse of the heavenly mosque which extends as far as the furthest frontiers of the phenomenon of creation and towards which everything earthly aspires and aims. The supreme heavenly mosque signifies the limitless potentials of the truth and its seekers, as well as that there are neither insurmountable obstacles nor unreachable goals in a believer's quest for enrichment, success and growth. Even the sky does not constitute the limit. Believers aim higher than that.

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Cont'd from page 40

food in our own backyard and rear animals which provide the food? This engagement will serve as a good hobby and help us to grow our own food – food which is safe and pure!

Allah has warned us about a dog in our home – it comes with dirt and earns us the displeasure of Allah. For those who wish to have pets – plenty are there which are more useful and less harmful. For today, I ask you, why a dog why not a chick?

Modesty

Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was even shier than a virgin behind her veil. When he saw something which he disliked, we could perceive it on his face.

Impression

Scholarly Acceptance of Imam Abu Hanifah's al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil

By Zameelur Rahman

'Allamah Zafar Ahmad al-'Uthmani wrote in his *Abu Hanifah wa Ashabuhu al-Muhaddithun*: "Know that the opinions of Imam Abu Hanifah in *al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil* (narrator-criticism) and the principles of hadith were accepted and received from him by the 'ulama of this field. They quoted him in their books as proof or for consideration, just as they took from Imam Ahmad, al-Bukhari, Ibn Ma'in, Ibn al-Madini, and other scholars of this field. This shows you his great standing in [the science of] hadith and his expansive knowledge and mastery." (*Abu Hanifah wa Ashabuhu al-Muhaddithun, Idarat al-Qur'an wa al-'Ulum al-Islamiyyah*, p. 45)

I will quote below a few examples of the scholarly acceptance of Imam Abu Hanifah's pronouncements in this important field:

1. Al-Saymari narrates in his published book *Akhbar Abi Hanifah wa Ashabih*: Muhammad ibn 'Imran ibn Musa al-Marzubani reported to us: Muhammad ibn Makhlad al-'Attar narrated to us: Abu Musa Qays al-Mu'addib narrated to us: Suwayd ibn Sa'id narrated to us: Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah narrated to us: "The first to sit me down to narrate hadith was Abu Hanifah." I [Suwayd] said: "How was this so?" He said: "When I entered Kufa, Abu Hanifah said to them [i.e. the Kufans]: 'This is the most learned of them regarding [the hadiths of] 'Amr ibn Dinar.' Then the scholars (mashayikh) gathered around me, asking me about the hadiths of

'Amr ibn Dinar.'" (*Akhbar Abi Hanifah wa Ashabih*, p. 82)

This chain is hasan: Abu 'Abd Allah al-Husayn ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad Al-Saymari (351 – 436) is a Hanafi faqih and muhaddith who narrated from al-Daraqutni and Ibn Shahnin, and is *saduq* according to al-Khatib (*Tarikh Baghdad* 8:634-5); Abu 'Ubayd Allah Muhammad ibn 'Imran ibn Musa al-Marzubani (296 – 384) is *thiqah* according to al-'Atiqi. (*Tarikh Baghdad* 4:227-9); Muhammad ibn Makhlad al-'Attar (d. 331) is *thiqah* according to al-Daraqutni (*Tarikh Baghdad* 4:501); Abu Musa Qays ibn Ibrahim ibn Qays al-Tawabiqi al-Mu'addib (d. 284), al-Daraqutni said he is acceptable (*salih*) (*Tarikh Baghdad* 14:478-9); Suwayd ibn Sa'id ibn Sahl al-Harawi (140 – 240) is *thiqah* according to Ahmad ibn Hanbal, and a narrator of Muslim (*Tahdhib al-Kamal*)

The same narration was also narrated by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr through a different chain: Ibn 'Abd al-Barr said: [Abu Ya'qub Yusuf ibn al-Dakhil narrated in his book *Fada'il Abi Hanifah wa Akhbaruhu*]: Abu l-'Abbas al-Farid narrated to us: Muhammad ibn Isma'il [al-Sa'igh] narrated to us: Suwayd ibn Sa'id al-Anbari narrated to us: I heard Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah say: "The first to sit me down to narrate hadith in Kufa was Abu Hanifah. He sat me down in the mosque and said: 'This is the strongest of people regarding the hadith of 'Amr ibn Dinar,' then I narrated to

them.” (al-Intiqa fi Fada’il al-A’immat al-Thalathah, p. 199)

Ibn al-Dakhil (d. 388) is described as the “muhaddith of Makkah” by al-Dhahabi in *Siyar A’lam al-Nubala*, but besides this there is no other criticism or praise of him, although his biography is known. Abu al-’Abbas Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Farid, his reliability is unknown. Muhammad ibn Isma’il al-Sa’igh (d. 276) is *thiqah* according to Abu Dawud and al-Dhahabi. Hence, although the chain is weak because of the unknown narrator in the chain, it is not “very weak” (*da’if jiddan*) that it cannot be used as a supporting narration. This narration therefore strengthens the previous one.

The narration also corresponds with the information known about Sufyan ibn ‘Uyaynah (107 – 198) from the books of Rijal. As mentioned in *Taqrib*, he “was the strongest narrator from ‘Amr ibn Dinar (45 – 126).” Ibn ‘Uyaynah himself referred to ‘Amr ibn Dinar as “*thiqah thiqah thiqah*” – the repetition is for emphasis. And it is known some major Kufan narrators like Waki’ ibn al-Jarrah and Yahya ibn Zakariyyah ibn Abi Za’idah narrated from him as mentioned in *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib* (4:118). Waki’, as mentioned in an earlier post, would issue fatwas according to the opinions of Abu Hanifah, and Yahya ibn Zakariyyah ibn Abi Za’idah, who was the strongest and greatest narrator in Kufa after Sufyan al-Thawri, is known to have been a “student of Abu Hanifah” as mentioned in al-Dhahabi’s *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz*.

After mentioning the abovementioned narration, ‘Allamah Zafar Ahmad al-’Uthmani says: “Sufyan ibn ‘Uyaynah is one of the outstanding imams, chief of the muhaddithin and shaykh of Islam, yet he says: ‘The first to sit me down to narrate hadith was Abu Hanifah.’ In this is a great proof of the greatness of Abu Hanifah in the science of hadith, and people’s reliance on his opinion with respect to the reliability of narrators.

Thus, he (Allah be pleased with him) was not only a muhaddith, but he was from those who made men muhaddithin!” (Abu Hanifah wa Ashabuhu al-Muhaddithun, p. 17)

2. Imam al-Tirmidhi narrates in his *Kitab al-’Ilal*: Mahmud ibn Ghaylan narrated to us: He said: Abu Yahya al-Himmani narrated to us: He said: I heard Abu Hanifah say: “I have not seen anyone a greater liar than Jabir al-Ju’fi (d. 128), nor anyone more virtuous than ‘Ata’ ibn Abi Rabah (27 – 115).” (*Al-Jami’ al-Kabir*, Dr. Bashshar ‘Awwad Ma’ruf ed., 6:233)

Imam al-Tirmidhi narrated this in the context of determining the provenance of the science of al-Jarh wa al-Ta’dil. The narrators in al-Tirmidhi’s chain are reliable: Mahmud ibn Ghaylan (d. 239) is a narrator found in the *Sahihs* of al-Bukhari and Muslim, and declared *thiqah* by Ibn Hajar al-’Asqalani in *al-Taqrib* (*Tahrir al-Taqrib* 3:353). Abu Yahya ‘Abd al-Hamid al-Himmani (d. 202) is also a narrator found in the *Sahihs* of al-Bukhari and Muslim, and declared *thiqah* by Ibn Ma’in, al-Nasa’i, Ibn Qani’ and others, although some invalid criticism was levelled at him because of *irja’*. (*Tahrir al-Taqrib* 2:300-1)

This narration has also been quoted in the books of Rijal under the biographies of Jabir al-Ju’fi and ‘Ata’ ibn Abi Rabah (e.g. *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib* 2:48), illustrating the acceptance of Imam Abu Hanifah’s view amongst the later experts of this science.

3. In an earlier post, I also quoted Imam Abu Hanifah’s authentic criticism of deviant groups: Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi narrates: al-Khallal reported to us: al-Hariri reported to us that ‘Ali ibn Muhammad al-Nakha’i narrated to them: Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Mukram narrated to us: Bishr ibn al-Walid narrated to us: I heard Abu Yusuf say: Abu Hanifah said: “Two groups of the worst of people are from Khurasan: the *Jahmiyyah* and the *Mushabbihah* (antropomorphists),” and he probably said

“Muqatiliyyah (followers of Muqatil ibn Sulayman (d. 150 H)).” (Tarikh Baghdad 15:514-15) Dr. Bashshar ‘Awwad Ma’ruf said: “Its isnad is sahih, its narrators are trustworthy (thiqat).”

With the same chain, al-Khatib narrates: al-Nakha’i said: Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ibn ‘Affan narrated to us: Yahya ibn ‘Abd al-Hamid ibn ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Himmani narrated to us from his father: I heard Abu Hanifah say: “Jahm ibn Safwan is a kafir.” (Tarikh Baghdad 15:515) Dr. Bashshar ‘Awwad Ma’ruf said: “Its isnad is hasan.”

Imam Abu Hanifah’s opinion on Jahm is in fact quoted in the books of Rijal. Al-‘Asqalani said in Tahdhib al-Tahdhib (vol 10:281): “Muhammad ibn Sima’ah (who is thiqah according to al-Saymari and saduq according to al-‘Asqalani in al-Taqrīb) narrated from Abu Yusuf from Abu Hanifah that he said: ‘Jahm went overboard in negation until he said: He [i.e. Allah] is nothing, and Muqatil went overboard in affirmation until He deemed Allah to be like His creation.’” Al-‘Asqalani also quotes him saying: “Two disgusting opinions came to us from the east: Jahm the negator [of Allah’s attributes] and Muqatil the anthropomorphist.”

Source: *Ilmgate*

Straight Path

This is Awakening

By: Yasmin Mogahed

It’s hard to describe the feeling. Imagine living your entire life in a cave and believing it was your whole world. Then suddenly you step outside. For the first time in your life, you see the sky. You see the trees and the birds and the sun. For the first time in your life, you realize that the world you once knew was false. For the first time, you discover a Truer, more beautiful Reality. Imagine the high of that realization. For a moment, you feel you can do anything. Suddenly, nothing from your previous life in the cave matters. You become empowered, fully awake, fully alive, fully aware for the very first time. It is an unexplainable feeling. This is the spiritual high that comes with newly discovered Truth.

This is Awakening.

A convert to Islam knows this feeling. A born Muslim who comes back to the deen knows this feeling. Any human being who lives their life away from God, and returns, knows this feeling. This state is what Ibn ul Qayyim (RA) calls ‘yaqatha’ (awakening) in his book ‘Madarij Al Salikeen’ (Stations on the Path to God). He describes this state as the first station on the path to Allah. This is the state sometimes referred to as the “convert zeal”. When a person first converts or starts coming back to Allah they are often full of motivation and energy that others do not have. The reason for this energy is the spiritual high, characteristic of this state.

Characteristics of the Station of Awakening

Allah makes worship easier:

While in this state, worship becomes much easier. A person is so driven and motivated that they may easily sacrifice everything for the sake of the new reality they have discovered. This zeal can take a person from 0 to 60 in no time. It’s like being on spiritual steroids. The strength you have is

not from your own self, but from an aid that was given to you. In this case the aid is given by God. Some may advise not changing too much, too fast. I don't think fast change is the problem. I think arrogance is. I think hopelessness is. If Allah gives you a gift whereby you are able to do more, use it. But thank Him—not yourself, for that ability. And know that the heightened state is temporary. You may go from 0 to 60 in a very short time due to it, but when the high passes, don't lose hope and let yourself slip back to 0.

Temporary:

Like every state in this life, this state is temporary. Life is never linear. And neither is the path to God. Not realizing this can cause despair and hopelessness once it passes.

Pitfalls of This State

The 2 pitfalls associated with this state correspond to not understanding the characteristics of the state listed above. These pitfalls are also the 2 causes of stagnation on the path to God: arrogance/complacency and hopelessness. The arrogant person already feels they are good enough, so they stop striving. The hopeless person believes that they will never be good enough, so they stop striving. Two opposite maladies, leading to the same result: To stop moving on the path to God.

Arrogance: The first pitfall corresponds to not understanding that the increased ability to worship came from God and is a characteristic of the state—not the individual! The one who doesn't understand this wrongfully attributes the heightened ability to worship to one's own righteousness. This false attribution is very dangerous because it leads to arrogance and self-righteousness. Rather than realizing this heightened 'religious state' is a gift from God, the worshiper feels a sense of hidden pride

and may look down on others who don't share similar zeal.

Despair and Hopelessness: This pitfall corresponds to not understanding that like all states in life, the spiritual high is temporary. This does not mean you have failed or done something wrong! Most people know what it feels like after the Ramadan high has passed. The instability of the 'high' is a characteristic of life. And that lesson is one even Abu Bakr (RA) had to learn. One day Abu Bakr (RA) and Hanzala (RA) came to the Prophet (pbuh) and said: 'Hanzala is a hypocrite, Messenger of Allah!' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Why is that?' I said, 'Messenger of Allah, when we are with you, you remind us of the Garden and Fire and it is as if we could see them with our eyes. When we leave your presence, we attend to our wives, children and estates in a state of great heedlessness.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'By the One in whose hand my soul is, if you were to remain in the state you are in when you are in my presence and in the dhikr (remembrance), the angels would shake hands with you on your bed and in the street, but, Hanzala, different times are not the same.' three times." [Muslim]

After the Spiritual High Has Passed

The most important part of this journey is never giving up! Know that you don't feel the same zeal, not because you have failed at something. The dip that follows the high is a natural part of the path! Just as the Prophet (pbuh) explained to Abu Bakr (RA), these ups and downs are part of the path. And had we always remained in the high, we wouldn't be human. We'd be angels! The determining aspect for success is not so much what we do when we're up. The question is what we do when we're down—when we're not feeling it. The key to succeeding on this

path is that once you do reach your 'low', you keep going, knowing that it's normal.

Shaytan's Traps

Remember Shaytan will get at you in different ways depending on your state.

When You're High:

When you're high, he'll try to get you by making you arrogant. He'll try to get you by making you look down on others. He'll try to get you eventually by being so pleased with yourself that you don't think you need to keep striving because you are already so great (and better than others around you). He will consistently make you look at those who appear to do less than you to justify your own shortcomings. For example, if you don't wear hijab, he'll make you think, "There are hijabis that do x, y, z bad things! At least I don't do those things! I do x, y, z good things that hijabis don't do!" Or if you slacken in prayer, you may think, "At least I'm not clubbing or drinking like so and so." Remember, Allah isn't grading on a curve. It makes no difference what others are doing. We all stand alone on the Day of Judgment. And this is just a tool of Shaytan to make us stop striving.

When You're Low:

But when you're low, shaytan will try to get at you differently; he'll try to get you by making you hopeless. He'll try to make you believe that you're worthless and that there's no point in trying. He'll try to make you believe you are a failure and no matter what you do, you'll never get back to where you once were! Or he may try to make you believe that you're too 'bad' for Allah to forgive you. As a result, you may let yourself fall further. You may have been up once, and then felt so bad about yourself because you started to slacken in your worship. And maybe because of your previous self-

righteousness you didn't give people permission to make mistakes or be weak. This ends up becoming self-destructive because it further translates to not giving yourself 'permission' to make mistakes and be weak.

Since you believe you don't have permission to be human and fallible, when you do make a mistake, you are so hard on yourself that you lose hope. So you let yourself go. You may end up committing more sins, which only makes your hopelessness worse! And it becomes a self-perpetuating vicious cycle. Shaytan will also try to make you believe that you shouldn't try to repent or pray because you'd be a hypocrite since you are such a 'bad' person. He wants you to despair in the mercy of Allah. That's what he wants! These are all lies, of course. But he's good at what he does, after all. When you have sinned, that's when you need to turn to Allah even more—not less!

To protect yourself from this downward spiral, remember that the lows are part of the path. Remember that 'futoor' (the dip) is part of being human. Once you realize that this does not mean you failed or that you are a hypocrite (like Abu Bakr (RA) thought), you can keep from giving up once you get there. The key is to develop certain habits which become your 'bare minimum'. That means no matter how you feel, how unmotivated, how low, you still do these things at the very least. You realize that when you're at your low, it's going to be harder, but you struggle to keep doing them. For example, the bare minimum is the 5 daily prayers at their appointed times. This should *never* be compromised no matter *how much* you're 'not feeling it'. They should be considered like breathing air. Imagine what would happen if every time you were exhausted or in a bad mood you decided not to breathe!

It is preferred to have other rituals that are part of the 'bare minimum'. For example, stick to certain extra prayers and ath-

kar or daily Quran—even if it's little. Remember that Allah loves a small *consistent* action more than a huge inconsistent one. If you hold onto certain essentials during your 'low', you will ride the wave of iman and come back up, insha Allah. And, God willing, when you do go back up, you'll be at a higher place than your last 'high'.

Know that the path to Allah is not a flat one. Your iman (faith) will go up and down. Your ability to worship will go up and down. But, know that for every dip, there is also a rise. Just stay patient, stay consistent, don't lose hope and seek help in Allah. The path is hard. The path will have bumps and drops. But, like all things in this life, this path will come to an end. And that end will make it all worth it!

Allah says:

'Oh mankind, indeed you are ever toiling towards your lord, painfully toiling...But you shall meet Him' (84:6)

The Maid of Firaun's Daughter

Firaun's daughter had a maid who was under her command. The maid had brought Imaan on Moosa (alaihi salaam). However, she did not expose her Imaan out of fear for Firaun. Once while she was combing the hair of Firaun's daughter, the comb fell from her hand. When she bent down to pick it up she recited Bismillah. The daughter asked her, "What was it that you recited just now? Whose name is that?" She replied: "It is the name of the one who created your father and also gave him a kingdom." Firaun's daughter was astonished and remarked, "Is there anyone greater than my father?" saying this she ran to her father and related the entire incident to him. Firaun became angry, called for the maid and threatened her. She said, "Do whatever you wish. I will not leave my Imaan." Nails were driven into her hands and feet and red hot ash was placed on her. Her child was even thrown into a fire. However she remained steadfast on her Imaan until she was also thrown into the fire.

Lesson: *We also need to be firm on our Imaan despite all tests and conditions. We should not allow any shortcomings and defect in our Imaan and deen on account of desires, motives, and difficulties. We should never do anything contrary to the commands of Allah and His Rasul (sallallahu alaihi wasallam).*

The Ideal Prophet

The Perfectness of the Holy Prophet's Life

Maulana Syed Sylaiman Nadvi (RA)

The list of subjects treated by the authors, some of which have been cited here, are merely illustrative of the details available about the life and character, conduct and behavior of the Prophet of Islam (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). They show how meticulously every incident, great or small, important or insignificant relating to the Prophet's (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) life has been preserved, leaving nothing more to be desired. These details also show, by the same token, what the perfection of any character really means and how the Prophet of Islam (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) stands apart from all other founders of religions in having a complete and exhaustive record of every aspect of his life and character preserved for the benefit of posterity.

It is no less significant that the Prophet of Islam (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) had given definite instructions to his followers that whatever they saw of him, saying or doing, amongst them or alone, in the mosque or in the battlefield, leading the prayers or conducting wars, on the pulpit or in a closet, should invariably be brought to the notice of others. His wives, as a consequence, freely talked about his private affairs while seventy of his followers lived close to his house in his mosque to learn all about him. These companions earned their living by selling firewood collected from the forest or similar other trades, but they had arranged between themselves to leave a party always in attendance of the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasal-

lam) so that nothing escaped their attention. One out of these seventy was Abu Huraira (RA) who is credited with the transmission of the largest number of traditions or reports about the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). There were also the inhabitants of Madinah besides these seventy companions, who attended congregational prayers led by the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), five times a day, for ten long years. All of them had the opportunity of observing his actions, habits and customs. Then, there were occasions when even larger numbers gathered round the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). In the expedition for the capture of Makkah, ten thousand Muslims accompanied the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) while their number was thirty thousand in the battle of Tabuk and one hundred thousand during the Farewell Pilgrimage. Everybody knew that it was his bounden duty to tell others whatever he came to know about the Messenger of Allah. Nothing about his life from the closet of his sleeping chamber to the market place, thus, ever remained a secret, and everything of it was handed down from generation to generation. But, all this abundance of reports about him notwithstanding, even his most inveterate enemies could never bring up any charge against him except polygamy and the holy wars waged by him. Which will you call a spotless and virtuous life—that of Muhammad, the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), or the life of those already shrouded in mystery?

One more aspect of Muhammad's (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) life needs attention. He was not always surrounded by his devoted followers. He spent the first forty years of his life with the Quraish in Makkah. He had his business dealings with them which is a sure test of one's honesty and trustworthiness. How he acquitted himself in these transactions, when he was still a youth, is illustrated by the fact that he won the title of the Amin or Trustworthy from the Makkans. Even after he was favored with the revelation from on High, those who opposed his claim to prophethood had such a trust in his honesty that they entrusted their valuables to his safekeeping. It is a well-known fact that the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) had to leave behind Ali (RA), on the occasion of his migration to Madinah, for returning several of these goods to their owners. The whole of Makkah had stood up against the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), boycotted and heaped invectives upon him, thrown rubbish and stones on him, made plans to kill him and accused him of being an enchanter and a poet and a lunatic, but none ever dared bring his character and morals in question. Does not the claim to divine apostleship mean a claim to innocence and unblemished character? Would have not a few instances of his immoral behavior been sufficient to refute his claim to prophethood? Why was it that the Quraish spent their wealth and put their own lives at stake but they never framed any charge to blemish his character? Does this not prove that the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was as much above reproach in the eyes of his foes as he was to his followers?

Once all the leading men of the Quraish had assembled to talk about the problem posed by the Prophet's (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) defiance of pagan gods. Al-Nadr b. al-Harith, the more experienced among them, got up and said: "O Quraish! A

situation has arisen which you cannot deal with. Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was a young man most liked amongst you, most truthful in speech and most trustworthy, until, when you saw gray hairs on his temple, and he brought you a message, you said he was a sorcerer, a diviner, a poet and was possessed, but, by Allah! there is nothing of this sort in Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) for I have heard him speaking and preaching." [Ibn Hisham, p.191]

None was a greater enemy of the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) than Abu Jahl, but he once said to him: "Muhammad, I do not call you a liar, but I do not think that whatever you preach is correct." It was on this occasion that the revelation came:

"We know well how their talk grieveth thee, though in truth they deny not thee (Muhammad), but evil-doers flout the revelations of Allah. [6:33]"

When the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was commanded to announce the truth he had received, he climbed the top of a hill and called out the Quraish. After they had all gathered round him, he asked them: "What would you think, if I were to tell you that the enemy is lying in ambush behind this hillock to attack you?" The reply he received was, "Oh yes! For we have never heard you speaking a lie." [Tirmidhi, "Tafsir Surah al-An'am"]

After the envoy of the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) had delivered his message to the Byzantine Emperor, Heraclius, the latter called for Abu Sufyan, a sworn enemy of the Prophet JS, who had been arraying his forces against him for the last six years, for making enquiries about the man who had dared to address him. An enemy was thus called to vouch for his bitterest foe whom he wanted to destroy at any cost. Abu Sufyan also knew that if he could somehow provoke the passions of the powerful Emperor against his adversary, the Roman le-

gions could devastate Madinah in a couple of days. But this was the conversation that passed on between the two:

Heraclius first demanded: "Tell me about his lineage amongst you." "It is pure," replied Abu Sufyan, "our best lineage."

"Has any of his house made the same claim earlier?" asked Heraclius again. "No." replied Abu Sufyan.

Heraclius now demanded again, "Did anybody possess sovereignty in his family?"

Abu Sufyan had again to say "No" in reply.

Now Heraclius put another question: "What sort of men are those who have accepted his religion? Are they poor or influential people?" "Weak and helpless," replied Abu Sufyan.

Heraclius asked again, "Is the number of his followers increasing or decreasing?"

"Increasing," Abu Sufyan had to acknowledge in reply. "Has he ever told you a lie?", demanded the Emperor.

Abu Sufyan again replied in the negative and then Heraclius enquired, "Has he ever been treacherous?"

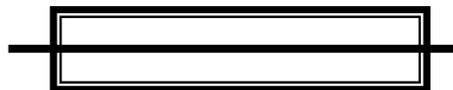
"No," said Abu Sufyan in reply, but added, "But we will see what he does in future."

"And what does he teach you" was the last question asked by Heraclius. "He asks us," replied Abu Sufyan, "to worship only One God, to offer prayers, to become virtuous, to speak the truth and to discharge our obligations to the kinsmen." [Ibn Is'haq, The Life of Muhammad, p.655]

Does Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) need any more proof in support of the perfection of his character? Was such a conclusive evidence ever produced for anyone by one's enemy?

But, there is something more about Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) that catches the eye. Those who first found cre-

dence in the call of Muhammad JS were neither the fishermen of a subject race nor the despised slaves of a Pharaoh: they belonged to a free and proud race, never subjected to alien rule in their memory. Known for their pragmatism, they were the people who had commercial dealings with Iran, Syria and Asia Minor. They have left their marks, still visible today, as a keen, intelligent and sagacious people. They produced military generals comparable to the greatest of conquerors, fought valiantly against forces many times their numbers and acquitted themselves well as rulers of vast and populous lands. Can anybody feign that the men who had proved the strength of their arms and intellect had remained ignorant of the true character of their own guide and teacher? Was it ever possible to dupe such a people? Rather, they were the people who followed in the footsteps of their mentor with the greatest enthusiasm and took every possible step to preserve the memory of their beloved master. This is, of a fact, an incontrovertible sign of the perfection of Muhammad's (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) character.



Cont'd from page 12

according to their stage of evolution; one does not give the same advice to an expert master as to a young novice. Mundane frequentations often occasion temptations, wasting useful time, and the forgetting of our more important obligations. It may be permitted to add a fifth counsel: spend less, meaning on luxuries, flirtation, and personal pleasures. The amount thus saved could be used for purposes dear to us but for which we have no money (in our spend-thrift habits) to contribute our two cents. The five counsels may constitute five principles of economy in Islam, both spiritual and material.

From a Sister's Desk

Why a Puppy, Why not a Chick?

Someone known to me got a small, so called cute German race puppy for her nine year old – to play with. The puppy's arrival into the home was no less than the arrival of a VIP. A room was set aside for him, a cot arranged, bedding purchased and the darling was no less than a heart throb being lulled to sleep in the laps which have never handled human breed. The puppy lolls out his tongue, saliva comes drooling down, and pisses anywhere he likes and excretes the awful in any cozy corner he desires. That is what pets are for – “we care for them, love them, kiss them and they in turn entertain us and our kids” will be the reply you will get if you ask them why do they keep puppies at home?

Puppies will not remain puppies, they will become dogs and dogs will bark, will disturb a neighbor's sleep and peace and will bite and spread dirt. Frequent washing, frequent feeding and frequent cleaning will be needed. They will bite and terrify the kids of the neighborhood – unless held in cheek. They will be the companions for an evening stroll for all those who don't wish to be with humans. But then ,why do people desire them at home?

They won't agree, but we know keeping a puppy at home is a status symbol, a symbol of Westernized outlook. To the Western population, puppies as companions may be appropriate because of the weak human relations they have.

We know keeping a dog at home unless for security purpose is not allowed in Islam. Angels don't descend into a house

where a dog resides. So, a follower of Islam will desist from keeping a dog at home. To those who don't care about the pleasure or displeasure of Allah – should we apply a logistic approach to make them understand?

I remember how it was when chicks, hens, goats, sheep and cows used to be kept in homes for all that these animals are worth. Eggs were surplus at home, for chicken we never had to hunt for the markets, and milk – pure and sweet was a home affair. We as children enjoyed playing with these animals – which were absolutely harmless, and we enjoyed to take care of them. The animal products were undoubtedly – useful. We grew vegetables too, at home, this formed a hobby for a good number of people. But now dangerous and harmful animals have replaced these naïve ones. The owner of German puppy gets ten packets of curd per day for the little one which might increase to twenty as he grows ,besides other things like bones and dog food which is quite a sum. I wonder in a place where humans don't have water to drink, should we feed curd to dogs?

Organic and natural is the slogan being raised up in the present day world, when synthetic and artificial has cast its dark shadow on the health and welfare of human beings. Cancer and dreadful ailments are believed to result from the consumption of the food that is not organic. With people in the West switching back to the traditional and home grown foods, what is stopping us from doing what we used to do once –grow

Cont'd on page