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## EDITORIAL

*All thanks for Almighty, the most Merciful and Exalted*

# Ultimate and Definite

What is it that you consider ultimate and definite for man in this world? Long life, good health, riches, esteem, progeny, relations, etc? Can the possession of any of these or of similar kinds be considered ultimate and definite for man? A minor contemplation and you will reach the conclusion that all these are probabilities - for after extreme course of action and efforts their acquirement is but doubtful. Is it possible to cherish certainty in any case? Among the events in this world, death is one and the only ultimate and definite phenomenon. Child or adult, woman or man, literate or illiterate, king or subject, sturdy or flimsy, perfect believer or staunch unbeliever, one and all shall have no refuge but to go through the phenomenon called death.

So, do you consider this phenomenon merely a discontinuation of breathing, stoppage of heartbeat and seizure of blood circulation? In case you are holding such a flawed conception of death, then the discussion in this matter is useless. But if you consider it a prelude to the next and the everlasting life, a door leading to another world vaster than the existing one, then don't you think it necessary and advisable to make preparations for it? Haven't the instructions with regard to living in peace in this eternal life reached you? Is it a waste of time to act or at least try to act upon those instructions?

You don't put your hand into a fire, plunge into a river or jump off a roof for you have complete belief of burning, drowning or inflicting severe injuries to yourself through them. Then why is it that you are so careless with regard to the event which is more certain than all the above, the incident which undoubtedly is to be faced. There is not even any

kind of remorse. Even more tragic is the fact that those concerned with and speaking on this issue are labeled unintelligent, apprehensive and insane. The reason for this is perhaps the fact that the books, the talks and even the hearts of the people that are regarded as well-acquainted, intellectual, privileged, etc., by you, lack the remembrance of this definite time. Probably, they consider the anxiety of death against their intellect, knowledge and culture. Sufferings, whatever, they surely have to endure; but, you should be concerned with your own affairs and condition. How much do you keep on racing your brain in search of livelihood? How much thinking is employed to increase income? With regard to the procedures related to health and vigour how much is exerted? What is not gathered beforehand for facing hot and cold season? For pomp and show what kind of plans are not executed? Which stone is left unturned for not fulfilling self-interest and living a comfortable life? But, do you ever think that answer will be sought about the unoffered prayers (salaah)? Inquiry will be made regarding the fasts omitted without any valid reason? Convicted one will be brought before those whose rights have been usurped? That accountability will be held with regard to the embezzlement of trusts? Involvements in the actions taken against the Muslim Ummah will be inquired about? Accountability - but very serious accountability, about everything, be it immorality, abuse, slander, lie, corruption, usury etc., will be held?

May Allah grant us, one and all, tawfeeq to keep in mind that sensitive and unavoidable hour; and steer us to make preparation thereof.

# Question Answer

## Question:

A friend at university has joined a new group that has recently been hosting programs on various issues. Hence he no more strictly follows any of the four Imaams (Imaam Abu Hanifah, Imaam Shaafi, Imaam Maalik and Imaam Ahmad bin Hambal Rahmatullahi Alaihim). He claims that in many aspects he directly follows the Qur'an and Hadith. He has also recently been performing his salaah somewhat differently. Please comment.

## Answer:

Many books have been written on this subject. You may enquire from the Ulama in your locality and read up these books for the details. A brief answer is presented here to help you understand the reality of your friend's claim. Your friend has abandoned strictly following any of the Imaams since he wants to follow the Qur'aan and Sunnah. This is due to the misconception, or due to misinformation, that if you strictly follow any of the Imaams, you are NOT following the Qur'aan and Sunnah. This is extremely far from the reality. The Imaams of fiqh have explained and codified the laws of the Qur'an and Sunnah in a manner that makes it easy for any person to understand them. They did not invent any Deen of their own.

## Parents

When your friend was a child, his parents taught him many things. They taught him about the Oneness of Allah, about His attributes, etc. They taught him about Rasullullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) and his way of life. He was taught how to make istinja, what to recite before and after eating and

many other etiquettes. Later he went to maktab where his Ustaad taught him how to perform wudhu, salaah and many acts of Deen. Until this day he has been learning from people. In all these years was he following his mother, father, Ustaad or the Qur'an and Sunnah? Likewise, your friend attends the lectures and seminars of the new group that he has joined and follows what he is told by the lecturers. Can it then be said that he follows the lectures, not the Qur'aan and Sunnah? Unfortunately your friend has abandoned strictly following any of the great Imaams who were brilliant experts in all the sciences of Deen. Instead he has opted to follow some present-day scholar whose knowledge is difficult to be compared with the knowledge of the Imaams. He has abandoned the expert jurists who lived in the golden era of Islam (Imaam Abu Hanifa (R.A.) — born in 80 AH, Imaam Maalik (R.A.) — born in 95 AH, Imaam Shafi (R.A.) — born in 150 AH and Imaam Ahmad bin Hanbal (R.A.) — born in 164 AH) and who acquired knowledge from the students of the Sahaaba (R.A.) and other luminaries of that era. He has instead followed someone born in the 1400's. If your friend's claim of directly following only the Qur'an and Sunnah is genuine (due to which he has forsaken strictly following any Imaam), tell him to explain to you how he performs wudhu and fulfils two rakaats of salaah. He should then substantiate every act by means of an aayat of the Qur'an or a Hadith. If he quotes a hadith, he must give full references. He should also state the category of each Hadith and why it belongs to that category. He should also explain why he regards the narrators of the Hadith as reliable. If there is any apparent contradiction

with any other hadith, he must explain why he has acted on one Hadith and not the other. If he cannot explain this detail only for wudhu and two rakaats of salaah, how will he explain the details about the rest of Deen? This however exposes the reality of the claim that in many aspects he is directly following the Qur'an and Hadith. He is merely following what somebody, who is very much lesser in knowledge and expertise than the great Imams, has told him. Such people often really follow the "Deen" of convenience and pick and choose what suits them. They do not really follow the Qur'an and Hadith.

### Two Categories

There are two categories of people: those who have a profound mastery of the Qur'an and Sunnah and all the related sciences (such as the Imaams of fiqh) and those who do not possess such knowledge. Allah declares in the Qur'an: "Ask the people of knowledge if you do not know." To date the Ummah has "asked" the Imaams of fiqh for guidance, by referring to the Ulama, and followed their expert explanations. By the grace of Allah they fulfilled their obligations of Deen correctly without any confusion. Your friend should not be misled by the exciting slogans and outward glitter and glamour.

May Allah save us from every deviation. Aameen.

### Question.

What is the meaning of the word Islam?

### Answer.

If you refer to Arabic language dictionaries you will find out that the meaning of the word Islam is: submission, humbling oneself, and obeying commands and heeding prohibitions without objection, sincerely worshipping Allaah alone, believing what He tells us and having faith in Him. The word Islam has become the name of the religion which was brought by Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

Why is this religion called Islam? For all the religions on earth are called by various names, either the name of a specific man or a specific nation. So Christianity takes its name from Christ; Buddhism takes its name from its founder, the Buddha; the Zoroastrians became well known by this name because their founder and standard-bearer was Zoroaster. Similarly, Judaism took its name from a tribe known as Yehudah (Judah), so it became known as Judaism. And so on. Except for Islam, for it is not attributed to any specific man or to any specific nation, rather its name refers to the meaning of the word Islam. What this name indicates is that the establishment and founding of this religion was not the work of one particular man and that it is not only for one particular nation to the exclusion of all others. Rather its aim is give the attribute implied by the word Islam to all the peoples of the earth. So everyone who acquires this attribute, whether he is from the past or the present, is a Muslim, and everyone who acquires this attribute in the future will also be a Muslim.

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*Abu Hurairah (RA) said: The Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasalam) said, "By the One in Whose Hand my soul is! If you do not commit sins, Allah would replace you with a people who would commit sins and seek forgiveness from Allah; and Allah will certainly forgive them."*

*[Muslim].*

# Lesson From The Qur'an

Commentary: Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani

## Sura Baqarah—Verse 240-246

وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذُرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا ۖ وَصِيَّةً  
لِأَزْوَاجِهِمْ مَتَاعًا إِلَى الْحَوْلِ غَيْرَ إِخْرَاجٍ ۚ فَإِنْ خَرَجْنَ  
فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي مَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِنَّ مِنْ  
مَعْرُوفٍ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ۚ

*Those among you who pass away and leave wives behind are (commanded) to make a will in favour of their wives to be maintained for one year without being expelled (from husband's home). Then, if they move out, there is no sin on you in what they have done for themselves according to the fair practice. Allah is Mighty, Wise.<sup>134</sup> [2:240]*

134. This verse was revealed at a time when neither the share of the wife in inheritance of her husband was determined, nor the period of 'iddah for a widow fixed. The husband in those days was ordered to make this will in her favour, so that she might receive her maintenance from the property of her husband and reside in his home for one full year. Later the 'iddah of the widow was reduced, by the verse 2:234 above, from one year to four months and ten days, and her share of inheritance was fixed by the verse 4:12 whereby she may arrange her maintenance and residence out of her share. Therefore, such a will is no more applicable.

وَاللَّمْطَلَّقَاتُ مَتَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۗ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ ۚ

*The divorced women deserve a benefit according to the fair practice<sup>135</sup>, being an obligation on the God-fearing. [2:241]*

135. The word 'benefit' in this verse is used in general terms. It includes maintenance dur-

ing 'Iddah (waiting period) and the dower, if not paid before. It also includes the 'gift' mentioned in verse 236 above. Moreover, giving such a gift, apart from the dower, is desirable in all cases of divorce.

كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ۚ

*This is how Allah makes His verses clear to you, so that you may understand. [2:242]*

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ  
حَدَرَ الْمَوْتِ ۖ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ مُوتُوا ۗ ثُمَّ أَحْيَاهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ  
اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا  
يَشْكُرُونَ ۚ

*Have you not seen those who left their homes, while they were in thousands, to escape death? So, Allah said to them, "Be dead." Then He raised them alive<sup>136</sup>. Surely, Allah is gracious to people, but most of the people are not grateful. [2:243]*

136. Next few verses are meant to persuade the Muslims to carry out Jihad. Since the main obstacle in this way may be the fear of death, this subject is started by explaining that life and death are subject to Allah's will and decree. If someone escapes the apparent cause of death, he may still die, if Allah so wills. On the other hand, if someone is in the jaws of death, he can still live long, if Allah so decides. Therefore, when Jihad is necessitated by Allah's command, one should not escape from it in fear of death. In order to establish this fact, the present verse has referred to an event in which some people left their homes in fear of death, but they faced

death by Allah's command. Then once dead with no hope to come back to life, they were raised alive, again by Allah's command. The verse has not given the details of this episode, but there are some reports that these people were inhabitants of a city struck by plague. When the epidemic spread all over the city, they left it in fear of death. But when they reached an open plain, all of them died together by Allah's command. Then a prophet, named in some reports as Hizqil (AS) (Ezekiel) passed by them and prayed for their life, and then Allah brought them to life. (Ibn Kathir)

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَعَلِمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

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**Fight in the way of Allah, and know that Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [2:244]**

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضِعَّهُ لَهُ  
أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْسُطُ ۗ وَإِلَيْهِ

تُرْجَعُونَ ۚ ۲۴۵

**Who is the one who would give Allah a good loan so that Allah multiplies it for him many times?<sup>137</sup> Allah withholds and extends, and to Him you are to be returned. [2:245]**

137. Since Jihad requires finance, this verse prompts the Muslims on spending their wealth for this cause. The expression: 'give Allah a good loan' is a metaphorical expression, because everything belongs to Allah, and he does not need any loan. But perhaps the expression has been used to hint that war is normally financed by raising loans from the people for which they expect some monetary return. The verse points out that financing Jihad is a loan too, but its return is much more attractive, because it will be given in multiplied form by blessing the lender with an eternal blissful life in Paradise. Further,

the verse is though revealed in the context of Jihad, the generality of its words includes every spending for a righteous cause.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَلَا مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَى إِذْ  
قَالُوا لِنَبِيِّ لَهُمْ ابْعَثْ لَنَا مَلِكًا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۗ  
قَالَ هَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ أَلَّا  
تُقَاتِلُوا ۗ قَالُوا وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ  
أُخْرِجْنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا وَأَبْنَاءِنَا ۗ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ  
الْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ

۲۴۶

**Did you not see a group from the children of Isrā'il (Israel), after (the time of) Mūsā when they said to their prophet:<sup>138</sup> "Appoint for us a king, so that we may fight in the way of Allah." He said: "Is it (not) likely, if fighting is enjoined upon you, that you would not fight." They said: "What is wrong with us that we would not fight while we have been driven away from our homes and our sons?" But, when fighting was enjoined upon them, they turned away, except a few of them, and Allah is Aware of the unjust. [2:246]**

138. According to some historical reports, this prophet was Samuel (AS). In those days, the prophet himself used to be the political ruler of his people. The Amalkites, a powerful nation, had occupied most parts of Palestine, and the Israelites had to fight against them to liberate the territory of Palestine. When Samuel (AS) got old, the Israelites demanded the prophet to appoint a king for them, so that they might wage a war against the Amalekites under his command. On their demand, Talut was appointed as their king. The details of this story are also mentioned in the Bible where Talut is named as 'Saul'. (1-Samuel, chapter 9 to 15)

# Lesson From Sahih al-Bukhari

Dr. Rafiq Ahmad

## The Book of Knowledge

باب الإِسْتِنْجَاءِ بِالْمَاءِ

### Chapter 15 : To wash the private parts with water after answering the call of nature.

#### Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Some people were of the opinion that to use water for Istinja (washing private parts) is not proper because they had the notion that water was too sacred to be used for such a purpose. Imam Bukhari (RA) clears the confusion by saying that to use water for Istinja is permissible.

#### Hadith No. 148

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو الْوَلِيدِ هِشَامُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الْمَلِكِ قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ عَنْ أَبِي مُعَاذٍ وَأَسْمُهُ عَطَاءُ بْنُ أَبِي مَيْمُونَةَ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَنَسَ بْنَ مَالِكٍ يَقُولُ كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا خَرَجَ لِحَاجَتِهِ أَجِيءُ أَنَا وَعَلَامٌ مَعَنَا إِذَاوَةٌ مِنْ مَاءٍ . يَعْنِي يَسْتَنْجِي بِهِ

#### Narrated Anas bin Malik (RA)

Whenever Allah's Apostle went to answer the call of nature, I along with another boy used to accompany him with a tumbler full of water. (Hisham commented, "So that he might wash his private parts with it.")

#### Comments

Allah revealed a verse in the Qur'an in praise of the people of Quba. The verse is:

فِيهِ رِجَالٌ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَتَطَهَّرُوا وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَهَّرِينَ

"In it are men who love to be purified; and Allah loveth those who make themselves pure". (9:108)

Quba is a place few kilometers from Madina. On the day of Hijrah Rasulullah

(Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) first stopped at Quba and stayed there for few days before leaving for Madina. In the above mentioned verse, Allah praised the cleanliness habits of the people of Quba. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) asked these people what methods they were adapting to get cleanliness. They told him that they take a bath for ritual ablution (Gusul) and use water for Istinja. So, this verse clearly mentions that Allah likes the use of water for Istinja. In this Hadith Hadhrat Anas (RA) says that he used to take water for Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) for Istinja purpose.

باب مَنْ حَمَلَ مَعَهُ الْمَاءَ لِيُطَهِّرَ بِهِ .

وَقَالَ أَبُو الدَّرْدَاءِ أَلَيْسَ فِيكُمْ صَاحِبُ التَّعَلُّينِ وَالطُّهُورِ وَالْوَسَادِ

### Chapter 16 : One who carried water with him for Tahaarah (purification).

And Abu Darda (RA) said: Is the carrier of shoes, water for Wudu, and pillow not amongst you.

#### Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Learned scholars say that by choosing this title Imam Bukhari (RA) wants to convey that it is permissible to take help from others for making Wudu.

Hadhrat Alqamah (RA), a famous student of Hadhrat Ibn Masood (RA) and one of the distinguished Taaba'ee says that once he went to Syria where in a Musjid he offered two Ra'akts of Salaah and after that invoked to Almighty Allah to bestow him with the company of some pious man (Wali). After

some time a man of Allah namely Abu Darda (RA) entered the Musjid and asked Alqamah wherefrom he was. Alqamah told him that he was from Kufah. Abu Darda (RA) then asked him, why he made such an invocation when a person of the status of Ibn Masood (RA) was there - who was very close to Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) to the extent that he used to carry his shoes, arrange things for Istinja, carry things like Miswaak and pillow. By quoting this incident Imam Bukhari (RA) wants to prove his point.

#### Hadith No. 149

حَدَّثَنَا سُلَيْمَانُ بْنُ حَرْبٍ قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ عَنْ أَبِي مُعَاذٍ هُوَ عَطَاءُ بْنُ أَبِي مَيْمُونَةَ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَنَسًا يَقُولُ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا خَرَجَ لِحَاجَتِهِ تَبِعْتُهُ أَنَا وَعُغْلَامٌ مِنَّا مَعَنَا إِدَاوَةٌ مِنْ مَاءٍ .

#### Narrated Anas (RA)

*Whenever Allah's Apostle went to answer the call of nature, I along with another boy from us used to go behind him with a tumbler full of water.*

#### Comments

When Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) came to Madina, he asked for a helper. Hadhrat Talha (RA) presented Hadhrat Anas (RA), who was a young boy at that time to Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). Hadhrat Anas (RA) served Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) for ten years.

باب حَمَلِ الْعَنْزَةِ مَعَ الْمَاءِ فِي الْإِسْتِنْجَاءِ .

#### Chapter 17 : To carry a spearheaded stick along with water for Istinja.

#### Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

In this chapter the word of "Anza" is extra.

#### Hadith No. 150

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ بَشَّارٍ قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ جَعْفَرٍ قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ عَنْ عَطَاءِ بْنِ أَبِي مَيْمُونَةَ سَمِعَ أَنَسَ بْنَ مَالِكٍ يَقُولُ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - يَدْخُلُ الْخَلَاءَ ، فَأَحْمِلُ أَنَا وَعُغْلَامٌ إِدَاوَةٌ مِنْ مَاءٍ ، وَعَنْزَةٌ ، يَسْتَنْجِي بِالْمَاءِ . تَابِعُهُ النَّصْرُ وَشَادَانُ عَنْ شُعْبَةَ . الْعَنْزَةُ عَصَا عَلَيْهِ رُجٌّ .

#### Narrated Anas bin Malik (RA)

*Whenever Allah's Apostle went to answer the call of nature, I along with another boy used to carry a tumbler full of water (for cleaning the private parts) and an 'Unza (spear-headed stick).*

#### Comments

Unza is a stick which is fitted with a pointed iron cap at its tip. Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) and Sahaaba (RA) used to carry it for different purposes, e.g., to dig out clay for Istinja, to keep harmful animals away when needed, to use it as a Sutrah (Sutrah means a stick or something which is fixed into the ground in front by a person who intends to offer Salaah in an open place. Since it is not permissible for anyone to cross in front of a person offering Salaah. By keeping Sutrah in front there is no problem for anyone to cross from the front). Moreover, it was also used as an indication for people not to cross beyond the point where it was fixed as someone is attending the call of nature at this place.

*The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Whoever teaches some knowledge will have the reward of the one who acts upon it, without that detracting from his reward in the slightest."*



## Advice

# Balance Sheet

The end of the financial year brings along a flurry of activity in the business world. Stocktaking, preparing of financials and other related aspects are given top priority. The crucial question at the end of the exercise is: "What am I worth?" If the balance sheet indicates huge assets and little or no liabilities, one is elated. Otherwise there is gloom and sadness. Indeed Halaal wealth in the possession of a pious person is a great blessing. Besides being a means of comfort and ease for him in this world, he will use this gift from Allah to earn the Hereafter. His wealth will not be wasted on sinful or futile things. Instead the orphans, widows and destitute will benefit from it. He will also spend it in the many avenues of uplifting Deen. Thus the wealth will become valuable when spent in the correct manner. However wealth itself does not contribute to how much a Muslim is "worth". His real worth is based on the wealth within him – not on what is outside. If the angel of death arrives NOW to take one away from this temporary abode, the millions on the balance sheet will be of no avail. It is the inner-wealth reflected on the balance sheet of one's book of deeds that will show how much one is really worth.

### Capital

The capital in the real balance sheet is the wealth of Imaan. How wealthy a person is in terms of Imaan is reflected in his obedience to the commands of his creator and refraining from sin. Thereafter the qualities of the heart and the values of a person will determine how much he is worth. Foremost among the qualities that make a person ex-

tremely "wealthy" is akhlaaq (good character). The worth of the one with good akhlaaq has been explained in many Ahadith. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) is reported to have said: "The believer with most perfect Imaan is the one with the best akhlaaq (Tirmizi)." In another narration it is reported that the one with good character will be among the most beloved to Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) and will be among the closest to him on the day of Qiyamah (Tirmizi). Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) also declared that on the day of Judgement nothing will be more weighty on the scales of good deeds than good akhlaaq (Tirmizi)." The details of good character have been explained in various Ahadith, the crux of which is the following: To join ties with those who sever relationship, to forgive those who oppress, to return ill-treatment with kindness, to talk with kind words, to be humble, not to harbour malice, etc. Such a person is worth very much. He will have a very impressive balance sheet on the day of Judgement.

### Prosperity of Heart

Another great wealth is contentment. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) has declared: "Owning much possessions does not make one wealthy. Indeed real wealth is the prosperity of the heart (i.e. having contentment) (Bukhari)." Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) is also reported to have said: "Indeed he is successful — the one who accepts Islam, is granted sufficient sustenance and Allah has blessed him with contentment upon that which he has been given." Therefore a Mu'min's balance sheet

will reflect great contentment among the fixed assets. Among the aspects that increase one's true worth are:

- \* Taqwa: The person of Taqwa is the most noble in the sight of Allah. Taqwa is achieved by refraining from all sin.
- \* Humility: The one who humbles himself for the sake of Allah, Allah will elevate him.
- \* Striving to uplift Deen: Such a person is among the most beloved to Allah.
- \* Generosity: Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) is reported to have said: "A generous person is close to Allah, close to Jannah, close to people and distant from hell (Tirmizi)."

Other major aspects of inner-wealth are sincerity, hayaa (modesty and shame), respect, patience, love, tolerance, simplicity, etc.

#### Love and Care

While the abovementioned qualities will be the only wealth that will count on the day of Judgement, even in this world people are loved and appreciated due to such values and qualities. Wealth is not everything. For instance many elderly people are showered with money and gifts by their children and others. Yet they are heart-broken. While they appreciate the gifts, what they need most is the inner-wealth – love. They need some really wealthy child or person — one whose heart is filled with the wealth of love and compassion — to care for them, spend time with them and show them true affection and love. Such a person with the wealth of love and compassion is worth more than all the billionaires of the world combined. While taking stock and drawing up the balance sheet to ascertain one's material wealth, let us take time to take stock and reflect on how much of inner-wealth we have acquired. If not, our real balance sheet will only reflect liabilities on the day when it will be too late to remedy the situation. May Allah grant us the true wealth and make us successful when our "stock" will be taken on the day of Judgement. Aameen.

#### Let Us Speak to Allah

*In this era of advanced technology we easily communicate with the entire world. Yet, when last did we communicate with the creator of the world? We do speak to mankind about our problems. When will we speak to our All - Hearing Allah, the only Being who can resolve our problems?*

*If we ask mankind of our needs, we are humiliated and are regarded as beggars. However, if we ask Allah for our needs, then we are honoured and we become the beloved of Allah. Our duty is to turn to Allah in Du`aa (supplication) over and over again. Allah in his divine wisdom will definitely answer our Du`as in unique ways. At times our minds are so anchored in wanting to see our Du`as answered in a certain way, that we completely fail to see and appreciate that our Du`as have been answered but in many other ways. Allah knows best when to give us, how to give us and how much to give us. All we need to do is to keep on asking Allah.*

# The Absence of Revivalists Outside Islam

*Sheikh Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi*

We find extremely few persons who have revived and renovated other religions. The absence of such teachers for hundreds or rather thousands of years in other religions is striking enough. There has hardly been any renovator who could pull down the innovations and deviations which had found their way into other religions, restore the original purity, give a call to shed the accretions, decry the foreign elements, rites and customs, wage a war against the inroads of materialistic and pleasure-seeking ideas and enlighten the hearts of his co-religionists by his faith, true spiritualism and a personal example of ennobling sacrifice for his cause.

Christianity can particularly be cited as a case in point. It deviated from its path in the middle of its first century and deteriorated from a monotheistic faith to a polytheistic cult – such an early retrogression is not to be found elsewhere. It became an admixture of the Greek and Buddhist religious thoughts, and, what is noteworthy, this happened through the hands of its greatest mentor and teacher, St. Paul (10-65 A.D.). The transformation was really from one world to another, changing its shape and content to such an extent that only the name and a few rites of the former could survive in the new religion. Ernest De Bunsen describes the mutilation undergone by Christianity in these words:

“The doctrinal system recorded in the new Testament is not that which Jesus Christ has solemnly preached by word and deed. Not in Jesus, but in Paul, the Jewish

and Christian dissenter, with his hidden wisdom, with his figurative interpretation of the Scriptures as being full of types and prophecies of future things, lies the principal reason for the existing dissension between Christians on the one side, and Jews and Mahomedans on the other. Following Stephen, the promulgator and developer of Essenic doctrines, Paul has brought the author of Christianity in connection with Buddhist traditions. Paul has laid the foundation to that amalgamation of antagonistic traditions which can be traced in the New Testament Scriptures, and which has presented to the World an essentially non-historical image of Christ. Not Jesus, but Paul and the later gnostics have framed the principal doctrines which during the eighteen centuries have been recognised as the foundation of Orthodox Christianity” (De Bunsen: p.128).

During all these years, and even today, Christendom has been treading the path shown by St. Paul. It could not produce a man who would have revolted against the antagonistic traditions which were made a part and parcel of Christianity by St. Paul. No body tried for centuries to bring back the religions of Jesus Christ to the point where the exalted teacher and his disciple had left it. At last Martin Luther (1488-1546) raised the banner of Reformation in Germany in the sixteenth century, but even his effort was limited to certain specific issues; the movement did not aim at bringing back the Christendom to the teachings of Jesus Christ nor did it represent a revolt against the wrong direction that

Christianity had been forced to adopt. This Christianity could not produce any revolutionary, and, at the same time, a successful movement for its reformation for about fifteen centuries. Christian scholars too admit the fact that no mentor or movement could manage to accomplish a reformation of Christianity during the first fifteen hundred years of its career.

J.B. Mullinger writes in his article on "Reformation" in Encyclopedia Britannica: "If, however, we endeavor to assign the causes which prevented the Reformation from being carried even to but partial success long prior to the 16th century, we can have no difficulty in deciding that foremost among them must be placed the manner in which the medieval mind was fettered by a servile regard for precedent. To the men of the Middle ages, whether educated or uneducated, no measure of reform seemed defensible which appeared in the light of innovation" (E.B.R.: Vol. XX, p.320).

The same writer continues at another place in the same article: "The complete failure of these successive efforts to bring about any comprehensive measure of church reform is a familiar fact in European history" (Ibid, p.321).

And again: "Not a few, and some very measurable, efforts had been made before the 16th century to ring about a reformation of doctrine, but these had almost invariably been promptly visited with the censure of the church" (Ibid, p. 321).

After Martin Luther, no other person raised a voice against the senseless doctrines of the church and papal supremacy, even to the limited extent that Luther did in the sixteenth century. Christianity thus continued its journey uninterrupted on the path it was forced to tread. At last, the Church lost the influence it wielded on the Christendom and gave place to crass materialism. The religion of the West today is nothing but materialism,

yet, Christianity has been unable to bring forth a single individual who could have combated the evils of materialism, brought back the West to the fountain-head of true religion, restored faith in true Christianity and upheld the moral and spiritual values against utilitarian, pleasure-seeking norms of the present-day sensate culture. Instead of accepting the challenge of the modern age and finding out solutions to the present problems within the religious view of life and the world, the West appears to have lost all hope in Christianity itself.

Almost the same story was repeated in the East also. Hinduism lost its way by asundering its relation with the Creator of the Universe, giving up its simplicity and depriving itself of the moral and spiritual vitality. It became more an impracticable and complicated system of speculative thought by losing the chord of unalloyed monotheism and equality of mankind; for, these are the two basic tenets on which any religion can flourish, with its roots deep into the soul of man and branches providing shade and solace to the human beings.

Upanishadic writers tried their level best to put a stop to this contamination by totally discarding the rituals that had gained a foothold into Hinduism, and replacing it by philosophical doctrines – a conceptual interpretation of the faith. These elucidations being grounded in pantheistic monism or attaining unity through plurality were acclaimed in the literary and intellectual circles but the masses, who were intellectually at a lower level and yearned for rituals and practical manifestation of the monistic doctrines, remained unimpressed by the idealism of the Upanishads. The result was that Hinduism gradually lost its vitality; dissatisfaction and incredulity gained ground and the revolt against the Brahmanic order found expression in Buddhism in the sixth century B.C.

Buddha founded a new religion (if it

can be so named, for Buddhism eliminated the concepts of Divinity, Hereafter and requital – the essential ingredients for any religion) which opposed the then prevalent caste system and Brahmanic ritual order, sought annihilation of human misery through suppression of all desires – the will-to-live and will-to-possess – and commanded moral behavior, right mental attitude, non-violence, kindness and social service. It rapidly spread to south-east Asia and a few other countries.

Buddhism, however, soon deviated from the teachings of its founder. Incorporating into its system the idol worship and ritualism against which Buddhism had started its career, there remained nothing to distinguish it from Hinduism except the numerous categories of gods and goddesses to which the latter owed allegiance. Buddhism was ever willing to adapt itself to the environment of local conditions where it spread; it was divided into numerous sects; incorporated superstitions, complicated ideas and concepts and degenerated into a cess-pool of moral corruption. Prof. Ishwar Topa observes in *Hindustani Tamaddun*: "...the Kingdom that was established under the patronage of Buddhism began to present a vast scene of idolatry. The atmosphere in the monasteries was changing and heretic innovations were being introduced one after another" (Dr. Ishwar Topa; Vol. I, pp.137-138).

The degeneration of Buddhism has been described thus by Jawahar Lal Nehru in the *Discovery of India*: "Brahmanism made of Buddha an avatar, a god. So did Buddhism. The Mahayana doctrine spread rapidly, but it lost in quality and distinctiveness what it gained in extent. The monasteries became rich centres of vested interests, and their discipline became lax. Magic and superstition crept into popular forms of worship. There was a progressive degeneration of Buddhism in India after the first millennium of its existence. Mrs. Rhys Davis points out its diseased

state during that period: 'Under the overpowering influence of these sickly imaginations the moral teachings of Gautama have been almost hid from view. The theories grew and flourished, each new step, each new hypothesis demanded another; until the while sky was filled with forgeries of the brain, and the nobler and simpler lessons of the founder of the religion were smothered beneath the glittering mass of metaphysical subtleties...' (Taken from Radhakrishnan's 'Indian Philosophy'). There were several bright periods subsequently and many remarkable men arose. But both Brahmanism and Buddhism deteriorated and degrading practices grew up in them. It became difficult to distinguish the two" (Nehru: pp. 141-142).

In none of the countries in which Buddhism had spread a person was born during the long period of its rule, who could reform the degenerated Buddhism, infuse the breath of new life into it and bring it back to the teachings of Gautama.

Hinduism gradually absorbed Buddhism into itself and finally Sankaracharya banished it almost totally from India in the eighth century by reviving the old Hindu faith. Hardly any trace of Buddhism was left in India; wherever it still survived, it was little more than a decadent, local cult of no importance. On the other hand, Sankaracharya, endowed with intelligence, courage and religious fervour succeeded in eliminating Buddhism from India but he could not or perhaps never intended to revive the ancient Hindu religion in its original and pristine purity by inculcating faith in the unity of the Supreme Being, direct relationship between man and God, equality and social justice. As a result, both the Indian religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, still survive with the sickly characteristics of their decadent state viz. superstitious beliefs and rituals, idolatry and caste system. V.S. Ghatge, the late Professor of Sanskrit in Elphinstone College, Bombay, writing on

Sankaracharya in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics says that 'the greatest object of Sankara's labours was the revival of the system of religion and philosophy taught in the Upanishads' (E.R.E.; p. 186). Sankara, succeeded in putting down the heterodox system and establishing the doctrine of pantheistic monism, as presented in the Upanishads and the Bhagwad Gita, but he 'did not attack or destroy idolatry' (E.R.E.; p. 189). Sankara, condemned all ritualism and Karama and at the same time defended the worship of popular gods, which was to him a 'symbolism rather than idolatry' (E.R.E.; p. 186). Sankara considered idolatry a necessity at one stage of religious growth which is either given up or suffered to remain from its harmlessness when the religious spirit is mature. Thus Sankara allowed idols as symbols of the great infinite for those who cannot rise themselves to the comprehension of the one, changeless, non-qualified Brahman' (Ibid).

In this way all the efforts made from the time of Sankaracharya down to Dayanand Saraswati and Mahatma Gandhi to reform the eastern religions proved fruitless to renovate Hinduism and Buddhism in a manner to make them compatible with revelation, religious urge of humanity and the requirements of changing times. These religions have, as a result of this stagnation, succumbed to materialism; the vast areas of human life and behaviour have drifted beyond their reach while they have themselves taken shelter behind temples and shrines, soulless rituals and traditions. Any number of obscurantist movements working for the revival of the ancient Indian languages and culture can be seen at work in the country today but none is capable of giving a soul-stirring call inviting people back to religion by reinterpreting the true content of religious and moral faith in the light of current needs.

No religion can maintain its vigour for long and offer a satisfying answer to the

questions of ever-changing life unless it can produce guides and standard-bearers who can infuse a breath of new life into its followers through their personal example of unflinching faith, moral and spiritual excellence, immaculate sincerity, heroic sacrifice, self-confidence, ardent zeal, intellectual eminence and erudite scholarship. Life always poses new problems, temptations of flesh are ever on its side, materialistic urge in man always impels him to take the ways of self-indulgence and licentiousness, and, at the same time, we have always had men who were ardent and zealous supporters of the epicurean view and affluent living, materialistic brilliance and worldly success. Therefore, unless a religion also gets indefatigable defenders, renovators and redeemers who can face the challenge of atheism and materialism, it cannot hope to remain a living force for its followers for long.

#### **Defence Against Heresy:**

History bears a testimony to the fact that there has never been a spell, however brief, during the past one and a half thousand years when the message of Islam was eclipsed or its teachings were engulfed by heresy, and the Islamic conscience became dormant enough to accept a contaminated faith. Whenever an effort was made from any quarter whatsoever to distort the tenets of Islam, pervert or falsify its teachings, or it was attacked by sensist-materialism, someone invariably came forward to accept the challenge and fight it out to the grief of Islam's adversary. History records many a powerful movement in its day, which posed a danger for Islam but now it is difficult to find out even the true impact of its thought. Only a few people know today what Qadriyah (Rationalists believing in free will), Jahmiyyah (Determinists), 'Itizal (Dissenters), creation of the Qur'an, Existentialist Monism, Deen-i-Elihu, etc., exactly mean, although these

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Character

# Western Influence and Removal of Hijab

By *Abdus Shakur Brooks*

*Imam Muhammad Zahid al-Kawthari: Concerning the Western Influence that Led to the Removal of the Hijab in Muslim Lands*

Imam Muhammad Zahid al-Kauthari (1371 A.H; Cairo), formerly the Deputy Grand Mufti of the Ottoman Empire, explained in his article on "Hijab al-Mar'ah" ("Women's Hijab", meaning to cover her body completely with loose clothing, not the modern misconception of the hijab as a "head scarf")

ولنلك النصوص الصريحة في وجوب احتجاب النساء تجد نساء المسلمين في مشارق الأرض ومغاربها في غاية المراعاة للحيجاب منذ قديم. في البلاد الحجازية واليمينية وبلاد فلسطين والشام وحلب والعراقين وبلاد المغرب الأقصى إلى المغرب الأدنى وصعيد مصر والسودان وبلاد جبرت والزليع والزنجبار وبلاد فارس والأفغان والسند والهند. بل كانت بلاد الوجه البحري بمصر وبلاد الرومللي والأنضول وبلاد الألبان قبل مدة في عداد البلدان التي تراعى فيها نساؤها

الاحتجاب البالغ. بل كانت بلاد الألبان تنور عندما تريد الحكومة تسجيل أسماء النساء، سبحانه من يغير ولا يتغير

Because of those clear-cut texts (nusus) prescribing the covering of women [that is, the ayats of the Qur'an and hadith], one finds the Muslim women in the East [of the Muslim lands] and in the West [of the Muslim lands] have been most dutiful in complying with the regulations of hijab since earliest times in the lands of Hejaz and Yeman, and in the lands of Palestine and Sham [that is, Syria and Lebanon] and Aleppo, and the Two Iraqs [Iraq of the Arabs and Iraq of the non-Arabs which is present-day Iran], and the

lands of the far Maghrib [Mauritania, Morocco, and Algeria] and the near Maghrib [Tunisia and Libya], and Upper Egypt and Sudan and the lands of Jabart [a territory between present-day Egypt and Sudan] and Zaila' [a territory in present-day Sudan] and Zanjabar and the lands of Persia and Afghanistan and Sind and Hind; indeed until a short while ago even the lands on the coast of Egypt and the lands of Rumalli [the name of all the Ottoman possessions in Europe including Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, and the Balkans] and Anatolia and the lands of Albania among those lands in which the women used to cover themselves completely; in fact, when the government tried to [take a census and] register the names of the women in Albania its citizens revolted.

Exalted is He beyond all defect and imperfection who changes things but Himself does not change! [This exclamation while affirming the incomparability of Allah also implies an expression of grief and dismay over the fall of those once noble and independent people into the dregs of blind and servile imitation.]

وليس بقليل بمصر من أدرك ما كانت عليه نساء مصر كلهن من ناحية الحجاب قبل عهد قاسم أمين—داعية السفور في عهد الاحتلال.

They are not few in Egypt who can remember how thoroughly the women in all of Egypt used to veil themselves before the

time of Qasim Amin (d. 1326)\*, the great propagandist for the removal covering during the colonial occupation of Egypt.

والغيرة على الحرميم رمز الإسلام الصحيح، ومن فقدتها من أبناء البلاد الإسلامية إنما فقدتها بعد اندماجها في أمم لا يغارون على نساتهم ولا يرون أي بأس في محاصرة زوجاتهم لرجال آخرين في مرأى منهم ومشهد.

A sense of honour (ghairah)\*\* for women is a true symbol of Islam and those who live in Muslim lands but lack this sense of honor became deprived of it only after becoming affiliated with nations that do not feel any indignity for their women and do not feel there is anything wrong with letting their women appear with heads uncovered before other men in their own presence and in their full sight.

وكان العلامة أحمد وفتيق باشا العثماني سريع الخاطر، حاضر الجواب، سبق أن تقلد كثيرا من الوظائف الديبلوماسية في عواصم أوروبا قبل أن يتولى الصدارة العظمى في أوائل سلطنة السلطان عبد الحميد الثاني، وقد سأله بعض عشرائه من رجال السياسة في أوربة في مجلس ياحدى تلك العواصم قائلا: لما تبقى نساء الشرق محتجبات في بيوتهن مدى حياتهن من غير أن يخالطن الرجال ويغشبن مجامعهم؟ مستكرا لتلك العادة المتوارثة في الشرق، فأجاب في الحال قائلا: لأنهن لا يرغبون في أن يلدنا من غير أزواجهن، وكان هذا الجواب كصب ماء بارد على رأس هذا السائل، فسكت على مضض كأنه ألقى الحجر

The great scholar and Ottoman statesman Ahmad Wafiq Basha was a quick-witted fellow and one never to be embarrassed for he was always ready with an answer. Before he became the prime minister in the beginning of the reign of Sultan Abd al-Hamid II, he held many diplomatic posts in the capitals of Europe. One time during an assembly in some capital of Europe one of his diplomatic colleagues asked him: "Why do the women in the east remain cover in their houses all their lives without ever mixing with men or attending their gatherings"? The questioner was denouncing the inherited tradition in the East. Ahmad Wafiq Basha replied instantly: "Because they do not wish

to give birth to children from other than their husbands." His answer was like a dousing of cold water on the head of that questioner; he shut up reluctantly as if a rock were put down his throat.

أيقظنا الله سبحانه من رقننا، وأشعرنا الاعتزاز بالعزة الإسلامية والشرق الإسلامية، وأبعدنا عن الاندماج في أمة غير أمتنا، وهدانا سبيل السداد.

May Allah, exalted is He, wake us from our slumber, and cause us to take pride in the glory of Islam and in the Islamic East, and may He keep us from becoming incorporated [culturally] in a nation other than our own, and may He guide us in the right way.

[\*] Qasim Muhammad Amin (1279-1326=1863-1908) was one of the early advocates of so-called women's liberation in Egypt. He studied in France and returned fully Westernized to Egypt in 1885 where he occupied a number of high governmental posts. He wrote a number of pernicious works that contributed enormously to the acculturation of Egyptians especially their women. He wrote three books: Tahrir al-Mar'ah and al-Mar'atu 'l-Jadidah and Kalimat Qasim Baig Amin.

Another one of the notorious propagandists was Taha Husain (1307-1393=1889-1973).

[\*\*] Ghairah with respect to women is usually translated as jealousy, but since "jealousy" in English has pejorative connotation, it is not a poor substitute. Ghairah is also used with respect to religion, and in implies that a person holds his religion in such honour that when he sees it violated he becomes indignant and outraged. The same with ghairah for women; a Muslim should hold them in honour and become indignant when he sees them being dishonoured or dishonouring themselves.



Belief

# To God we Belong, To Him is our Return

*Death remains a mysterious reality just as life itself is.*

*Dr. Shahid Athar*

Quran says "Everyone must taste death". In fact, belief in the ultimate reality is tied to the belief in the ultimate truth.

Quran says " How can you deny God, knowing that He gave you life, then caused you to die and to Him is your return"?

Death has always fascinated me. My first experience with death was when I was 10 years old and saw my elder sister, who was paralyzed because of a childhood injury, die from an epileptic seizure. In the last moment of her life, my mother tried to put some water in her mouth and the child in me was asking "What is the use? She is going to die anyway".

In 1962 I entered Medical School and was assigned to a dead body (cadaver) to dissect and learn anatomy. To me the mysteries of the human body, was "the book that lead me to my Creator". (My article on this is in the book " Health Concerns for Believers" by Kazi publications).

During my subsequent years as a medical student 1962-1967, then as a Physician in training 1967-1974 and in private practice 1974-present, I have seen fellow humans die in front of me. I became sad but their death had not affected me much personally.

After my sister's death, the next death that affected me was of my grandfa-

ther, who died of terminal lung cancer while I was a 3rd year medical student. I did my best to relieve his pain by removing the fluid from his lungs so that he could breathe better. As his breathing improved and he could speak, he thanked me and prayed for me. Men do not cry but as he was being laid into his grave, I and my father both cried.

Subsequently, there were 3 more deaths of persons close to me which occurred. All of them were back home about 20,000 miles away. I could not even get to their funerals. This was very painful.

In 1984, I got the sad news that my dear mother died suddenly without any known illness. Loss of mother was very hard on me. For weeks I cried and was in a state of shock. I used to remember when as a child when I would come home tired, I would lie down with my head on her lap and go to sleep. So when I found the white sari she had left here when she was visiting, I made a pillow out of it and slept on it for months. That was the best thing I could do to be close to my beloved mom.

In 1969 my father died too, again of few days of illness and I could not be there. I was not too close to him but after all he was my father and I was his son. The only other time I saw tears in his eyes was when I was leaving for the USA in 1969.

Two weeks ago (August of 2000),

again misfortune struck me as my dearest elder brother in Pakistan died suddenly of a massive heart attack. Death of a close sibling is hard enough and the feeling of such helplessness from a distance that you can not be there to see them before they are buried is very hard. But we Muslims are advised to say "To God we belong and to Him is our return". We are also told to "Seek help (from God) with patience and prayers, as God is with those who patiently persevere".

So death is inevitable for all human beings including myself. When Prophet of Islam was on his death bed, the angel of death in a human form, knocked on his door seeking permission to enter. His wife Ayesha, who did not know who he was, told the visitor to go away saying "Go away. Don't you know my husband is so sick and he can not talk to you"?

The Prophet who knew who was coming, told Ayesha, "Let him in. He is Izrael, the angel of death. He does not need anyone's permission to take that person's soul out".

So it does matter when one dies or where. What matters is in what state he was while dying. Was he in a state of faith or in a state of rejection of faith? Did he die doing something good or die committing a sin? Die he die in the company of pious people or wrong doers? We must not die before death. Death of faith is the death of the soul before death of the body.

A person's achievement in earthly life can not be measured by his wealth, degrees, speeches or writings, not even by his moral character judged by others, but by what he did for fellow human beings. Whether he was a good man or a bad man can be decided on the basis that if more people are sad that he died or more people are happy "Thank God he is dead".

If we want to be near our dead loved ones in the life here after, we must do acts

while we are still alive to meet those goals. I can not pray for my parents or my elder brother to be in Heaven, while I do acts which (unless forgiven by God), may take me to Hell. This is by logic.

Lastly a story told to me by a Muslim friend is very touching. As my friend was boarding a train in India, on his way to Hajj in Mecca, one of his Hindu friends, a doctor, came running to bid farewell to his friend and made a request. "Please bring me some zam zam, the holy water from Mecca". My friend was surprised and asked "you are a Hindu, what do you need Muslim holy water for"? The Hindu doctor replied " I use it for my dying Hindu patients as I have observed that when I put zam zam in their mouth while they are dying, they die peacefully".

Quran says "O you soul at Peace, return to thy Lord, well pleased and well pleasing. Return as My servant, return to My Heaven." (Surah Al Fajr)

This quote is meaningful to me at many levels and I want to share it with the reader.

*"In becoming forcibly and essentially aware of my mortality, and of what I wished and wanted for my life, however short it might be, priorities and omissions became strongly etched in a merciless light and what I most regretted were my silences. Of what had I ever been afraid? To question or to speak as I believed could have meant pain, or death. But we are all hurt in so many different ways, all the time, and pain will either change or end. Death on the other hand, is the final silence. And that might be coming quietly now, without regard for whether I had ever spoken what needed to be said or had only betrayed myself into small silences, while I planned someday to speak, or waited for someone else's words....I was going to die, if not sooner then later whether or not I had ever spoken myself. My silences had not protected me."*

--Audre Lorde

Contemplation

# Stop Brooding and Start Functioning

*Syed Iqbal Zaheer*

The question "why we are here" has worried mankind from the earliest times. We have dealt with this question earlier in this column several times over, and have answered variously. But the questions of this kind keep coming in; which is the reason why we call them "the perennial questions." There are several questions related to this Master Question. Mankind has no answer for them.

These questions are the strongest demonstration of human mind's limitations. Humans seem to be clever enough to ask these questions. But if a mind is clever enough to raise questions, it should be clever enough to answer them too. If it cannot, then, after all, it is not clever enough.

This is important to note; because behind these questions lie the assumption of self-importance. Man thinks he is great. He can make or break. He can do wonderful things. He pats himself for the things he does and pumps himself up like a frog. He is proud. If he is knocked down, another takes his place and begins to croak as high. If you gathered together a good many millions of the same class, the croaking can be deafening. "We are a great nation" they croak up together and strut before the cameras. (Remove the camera, and lo! they are stealing oil and raping women in prisons).

So, these questions originate with the arrogant ones. (Simpler people pick them up from them and pass them on to each other's agony). But the arrogant ones must

be dealt with disdainfully. The Prophet has referred to one of their by-products as "dung-beetles." They raise these questions out of pride. When they are told there are no answers to their questions, they say, "See. We were right. God does not exist." If it is suggested, "What if He exists?" they answer, "Then he should usher us – the great ones – into His Paradise!" Such is their arrogance.

So, the right answer would be to belittle the proud ones. They need to be told they are too tiny to ask such questions. Is that a fact? No. It is an understatement of a fact.

Take the example of a bacterium. It has a life cycle. It needs nourishment to live on. There are things harmful to it (unlawful). It avoids them. There are things beneficial to it (lawful). It finds them, feeds on them and completes its life cycle. When the time comes for it to go, it (takes a deep sigh and) gives up its ghost. Burial does not follow its death and nobody weeps for it. Those who deny God and sing songs of self-glory, are no better than an ameba: so wrote one of their wise ones, Bertrand Russell - or something close to it.

The bacterium-kind do not ask: why are we here? That is because they do not have a brain. Supposing they were given one; and one of them asked its proud fathers and family bards, thinkers and community leaders, artists and scientists, "Why am I here?" What is the answer it will get? Of course, several. But none would be the right answer. We

know why. Bacteria are too tiny to be asking and replying such big questions. With reference to them, these are absurd question. They have not been designed to ask such questions. Let alone understanding their role in the world of creation, they do not even know the world around them. Their universe is, perhaps, a few feet wide. And that little universe too, they have been denied the ability to understand.

So, what's the right answer for the bacterium? It is: "My friend! You haven't been using your little brain properly. Stop brooding, and start functioning."

But the comparison of bacterium with reference to its world, with that of the humans with reference to their world, is absurd. Why? Because a human is tinier with reference to the known universe, than a bacterium is when compared to its "few-feet-wide" world. The world around the humans is so large, they have no means to express how large it is. Traveling at the speed at which they do in space, about 10 km per second, they will need 135,000 years to reach the next star; which, by cosmic standards, is as close to the sun as two bacterium on the head of a pin. To cross their own Milky Way Galaxy, the humans will need 3,000,000,000 years (3 billion). And how many galaxies are there? Billions.

Is that all to the world that there is? No. It is the visible world. Are there others? Definitely there are. But they cannot be known, because they are out of range. A beam of light, traveling from there at the speed of 300,000 km. a second, will never reach us. Why? Because, the distance would have doubled up: before the beam could traverse the present distance – from 14 billion light years to 28 billion light years. The beam will keep traveling towards us, and the world will keep flying apart at a greater speed, to defeat its dream of ever landing upon us.

Is that all to the world that there is? No. We were so far talking of the visible world. Is there an invisible world? Yes, we live in one of the universes of a multiverse. How many universes could there be in this multiverse? Well, billions upon billions. But we shall never see the universes other than ours. Why? Because they are made up of more than four dimensions. We will never observe them even if we passed through one of them.

Is that all to the world that there is? Not at all. So far, we have been talking of real worlds. Is there any other kind of universe apart from the real universe? Yes, and they are known as the virtual universes or, the fake worlds, or, the simulated universes (terms used by cosmologists). How many? Well, infinite in number.

Writes Paul Davies, the much acclaimed physicist and cosmologist with several international awards to his credit, in a recent publication, "Our universe may be a fragment of a vast (probably infinite) and heterogeneous system called the multiverse. The other 'universes', or cosmic regions, may be observationally inaccessible to us. Their existence would be inferred from theory plus some indirect evidence."

This is the latest on (infinite number of) universes other than ours. They are inaccessible to us - thus spake the scientists.

Davies also writes: "The laws of physics and the initial state of the universe could vary from one 'universe' to another. What we have taken to be absolute laws might be more akin to local by-laws, with key features, including those relevant to life, which 'froze' out of the hot big bang in the first split second." And, "Some features of the more complicated laws we experience now – features that resulted from symmetry-breaking – might be random. Therefore they could be different in other regions." (The Goldilocks Enigma, Allan Lane publication, p. 215-16).

Here is another scientist, a professor

of physics and mathematics and a Pulitzer Prize finalist: "The basic idea rests upon the following possibility. Imagine that what we call the universe is actually one tiny part of a vastly larger cosmological expanse, one of an enormous number of island universes scattered across a grand cosmological archipelago."

And, "Linde... argues (that) the conditions for inflationary expansion may happen repeatedly in isolated regions peppered throughout the cosmos, which then undergo their own inflationary ballooning in size, evolving into new, separate universes. And in each of these universes, the process continues, with new universes sprouting from far-flung regions in the old, generating a never ending web of ballooning cosmic expanses.. And so we can imagine that physics varies from one universe to another." (Brian Greene, *The Elegant Universe*, Vintage Books, New York, p. 366-67)

This is the latest on laws governing the possibly infinite number of universes. They could be different in universes other than ours – an added reason why we will never observe those other universes.

Thus it can be seen that the universe in which the humans live is tinier in comparison to the multiverse, real or virtual, fake or simulated, than a microscopic bacterium is when compared to its "few-feet-wide" world. If the bacterium is denied the answer to the question why it happens to be in this world, why it comes to life, why it dies, where goes its soul when it dies, and so on, then humans are all the more disqualified from asking such questions. They are barred from asking these questions because of the very nature of their form and existence. If they find it hard to understand how they can be in what the physicists and cosmologists call as a simulated universe, how do they expect to get an answer for why they are here? The bacterium has every possibility of understanding its infi-

tesimally narrow world. Humans do not enjoy the same possibility.

Ironically, it is not the question of human brain capacity. It is the simple case of impossibility. Never ask a man a question about what he has never seen, heard, felt, or calculated. Never should man ask himself a question that he cannot, and will never be able to answer. Never let him ask questions such as, what was before the big-bang; why the big-bang at that moment, why not earlier, what is the nature of space that is appearing in our known world by billions of km square every second, where did the laws governing our world come from.. and so on. If he did, he will make a fool of himself.

As regards us Muslims, our attitude is that of resignation and submission. We too do not know who we are, where we are from, why we are what we are, where shall we go from here .. to the end. All that we know is that our great grandparents were in another world, in a place called Paradise, that they were removed for an error, and that we – as their progeny - are to prove our worth for re-entry. Thus, this life is a test, during which we are required to worship none but our Creator – Who does what He will; Who cannot be questioned for what He does, but we shall be questioned for what we do. Therefore, we better follow the Revelation to the point – to avoid all hassles. Our next point of stop will be a place called Barzakh, then on to the Field of Judgment, and then, hopefully, Paradise. This is all that we know, of course, in quite vague terms, but in complete certainty – thanks for the Revelation.

In a way we are luckier than a few billions, who do not know even as little as we know, and, unable to answer the questions to any degree, sometimes say this is virtual world, at others that it is a fake world, yet others that it is a simulated world, and so on. Every time you question them, they give you

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## Consumerism

# The Satisfaction of Gadgetry

By Deena Majeed

You have owned an iPhone 4 since it came out. You accessorized it with different covers, a wall-charger, and even a car-charger. Then in October 2011, the iPhone 4S emerges. Suddenly, you want the new iPhone, you need the new iPhone, you envision the new iPhone in your hands. So you upgrade, and you get rid of your (suddenly) old model. The newer version is minimum two hundred dollars with a two-year contract, you add on insurance (just in case), and a new cover or two.

You are content...until the iPhone 5 comes out in 2012, and then the cycle repeats.

This scenario is familiar to many Americans who like to keep up with the latest trends. It is a cycle of replacing and upgrading perfectly usable objects that we own, and it is a result of 'perceived obsolescence'. Perceived obsolescence is a concept that explains how we believe that the items we own, that are still usable, have suddenly become 'obsolete' (The Story of Stuff). They cannot be used anymore because there is a better, newer, and more functional version out there. Remember the first version of the iPhone? It has become so obsolete that the concept of buying and using one now is laughable.

However, perceived obsolescence applies to more than just iPhones; it applies to any material object that we buy. Down the line, we decide that we want to get rid of these objects because they are no longer trendy; this includes clothing, electronics, and

even home décor.

The Qur'an tells us how we have become so distracted with material objects:

*"Competition in [worldly] increase diverts you, until you visit the graveyards," (Qur'an 102:1-2).*

Do we wish to spend all of our lives racing to accumulate material goods and benefits that will never bring us true satisfaction? Although it is exciting to receive a new iPhone, how long until we get bored and decide that we want something better, newer, and more expensive? We spend countless hours per week working, only to spend a great percentage of our paycheck on things that we do not need.

As for the solution, are we supposed to shun all material aspects of this life and deem them haram (prohibited)? No, not necessarily. But we do need to realize that the problem is not in the practice of being consumers, but in the actual mindset of consuming. We need to learn how to alter our perspective and realize the difference between wanting something and needing something. Of course we all know the actual difference between wanting and needing, but the line between these two concepts becomes fuzzy when we desire the wrong things. We begin to believe that we actually need the new iPhone, video game console, or pair of jeans, even though we simply want it and in reality, our life would not crumble or fall apart without it.

As Yasmin Mogahed reminds us: "Remember that everything in this life is only

a glimpse. Love, beauty, happiness are only imperfect approximations. Only the dunya (worldly) version of these things. Seek the Real thing [...]"

The line between the 'real thing' and 'approximations', however, has become blurred. We have become so bombarded with advertisements that lure us into believing we want things that we do not even want. Men are convinced that if they buy a certain cologne they will look as handsome as the model wearing it, and women are convinced that if they buy a certain mascara they will have eyes as beautiful as the model's, even though both the male and female models in the advertisements have been heavily photoshopped. Many times we believe the advertisement, we fall for its promises, its deceptions, its lies, and we buy the cologne, the mascara, the jeans, the camera—anything and everything that is advertised these days. We buy the product, we may use it for a while, and eventually it becomes clutter that fills up our homes and our lives. Eventually our homes and our minds become so stuffed with clutter and things that we do not need that our values become inflated as well. We forget what is important and what is not.

Remember our main goal in this life: to serve Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala (exalted is He), and to reach jannah (heaven) in the real, everlasting life. Enjoy the beauties of this world because they are gifts from Allah (swt) but do not be led astray by them. The less stuff we have, the more grateful we will be for the things we do have.

Studies have shown that truly happy purchases are not material objects, but experiences that we create. These types of purchases create memories that will never be forgotten, that we can carry with us at all times, and that will never clutter up our shelves.

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represented, at one time or the other, very important schools of thought and, with the most powerful imperial powers of their day and some extremely learned and able persons at their back they had threatened to stifle Islam. Finally, however, it was Islam which gained ascendancy over these contending forces. These powerful movements are known today as simply different schools of thought and are to be found now in philosophical and dialectical treatises. This tradition of struggle against un-Islam, the spirit to preserve and renovate the pristine teachings of the faith and the effort to infuse people with a revolutionary spirit to re-assert the divine message are as old as Islam itself.

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happiness in this world and unimaginable rewards in the hereafter. Otherwise, a life without values is a valueless life!

The values and qualities described above are acquired by sincerely associating with the pious and taking their guidance in everything we do. Also, shut your eyes and ears to the "prophet" of materialism — advertising. Do not walk on the path of materialism by following trends, being obsessed with brands, worrying about image, etc.

May Allah fill our hearts with content-

*Cont'd from page 21*

mathematical equations that came out direct from super-computers. Thus they stumble around blindly, struggling in an archipelago of quagmire, managing to keep a smile on their faces, but in deep agony that leaves them fit for no true joy in life, except for what materials and minerals can afford.

We Muslims are luckier that at least we know a few landmarks of our future world, and how to get across to the promised everlasting bliss — of course, on good behavior. What we need to do is to stop brooding and get functioning.

Challenge

# Islam in the Modern World

“The Relevance of Islam in the Modern world” is what everyone is talking about. I often find myself in the middle of discussions questioning, ‘are the Islamic traditions (shariah) relevant to the problems faced by the modern world?’ The most argued point which springs up in every discussion is the dire and rather declining situation of the Muslim world in contrast with the progressive ‘Modern’ West. One may be justified in saying that the vast majority of the Muslims are not concerned with the problems of the modern world. No doubt, part of the reason for this is that, like most of the rest of world’s inhabitants, they are uninformed and short-sighted; in any case, they have the immediate worldly and spiritual concerns of everyday life to keep them occupied. But a profoundly positive attitude can also be discerned behind this ‘lack of concern.’ To the extent that Muslims are faithful to their own heritage and partially uninfluenced by recently manufactured ideologies, they are certain of Islam’s Truth and its ability to provide them with everything that is necessary for human life and hereafter.

May I also suggest that, today many people from all religions are not sure about what their own religions teach. So many compromises have been made with the ‘Modern World’, especially in the last few decades, that the boundary between the absolute and the relative, Truth and error, Goodness and evil, Beauty and ugliness has been totally obscured. Fundamental concepts such as ‘Truth’ and ‘Goodness’ have been held up to a doubting scrutiny that many ‘believers’ of these religions

no longer think they have any meaning. Modernism has been used as cover to introduce the principles of secularism into the minds of people. Secularism being the separation of life’s affair from reverence. A better definition would be the changing of religion from religion to a complete sham. Perhaps, this also answers the question, the clarity and lack of ambiguity in the basic tenets of Islam may help some people to reconsider the bases of their faith.

Anyway, in spite of the negative picture I may have drawn, the above description of most Muslims shows that the Islamic traditions are far from dead despite living in a time of immense skepticism. A time where humans rely on oft repeated ‘norms’ and ‘truths’ rather than look at the reality of our situation and the divine Truth. Skeptics may ask; how can a way of life that was implemented fourteen centuries ago be applicable today? Humans have ‘progressed’ and our lives have changed dramatically since then. Our tools of production, means of trading and modes of communication would be unrecognised by the desert Arab of the 6th Century CE.

So, what of Modernism? The utterances of illusionists are no longer ‘abracadabra’ and ‘hey presto’. The magic words are now; ‘new and improved’ and ‘best ever’. This modern, plastic disposable society is obsessed with what is new and what is modern. The spin used to sell us soft drinks is also used to sell us ideas about; life, culture, society and politics. Does new really mean better? Just because this is repeated to us over and over again ad nauseam, it does not mean that it is



true. The average speed of travel in Alfa Romeo t-spark on the grid-locked streets of London is no faster than horse-back in the Middle Ages. The main differences being a stereo system and one in seven children becoming asthmatics. This example may seem flippanant, but we should all be quicker to question modernity than we are to question Islam.

The complexities of human existence and communal living are bewildering. If we are to take stock of who we are and how we live, we will find that certain basics remain constant. We have certain organic needs and instincts that have never changed. The first man was in need of food, water and air to breath etc. All other human beings since have all had these necessities. Islam had various laws revealed concerning the intake of food. Because we have not done away with the need to eat those laws may still be lived by today. 20th Century living has not stopped Muslims from being mindful of Islamic dietary laws. Take for example:

*“O you who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the day of Jum’ah), hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allah, and leave off business (bai’a): That is best for you if you but knew! And when the Prayer is finished, then may you disperse through the land, and seek of the Bounty of Allah: and celebrate the Praises of Allah often (and without stint): that you may prosper.” [62:9]*

The law that Allah (swt) has laid down in this verse is that it is forbidden for the male mature Muslim to trade at the time of Friday prayers. The word bai’a (trading) is explicitly mentioned. However, it is not only trading that is forbidden during this period. To be more accurate, a Muslim may not busy himself during this time. ‘Busying oneself’ is still the same today and ever since the time of the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). ‘Busying oneself’ has never changed and never will change. To sit and watch television is still ‘busying one-

self’, to read the newspaper is still ‘busying oneself’. To cook, clean or crochet is still ‘busying oneself’. All of these are far removed from trading. Nevertheless, they are all forbidden at the time of Jum’ah.

The principle of studying the text of Islam and finding its application today is a whole science in its own right. But it is a science that Muslims should all have conviction and confidence in. These are principles which have not changed in essence since the time of the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). The fine details of these things have obviously changed but the essence and hence the rule is still apt, appropriate and applicable. Allah (swt) has blessed people with intelligence and knowledge to make them capable of bringing rules from the Qur’an and the Sunnah.

What sustains the strength of the Islamic Shariah is not only the authority of government. The citizens must have belief and have confidence in Islam. This confidence and belief not only helps them in this life and the hereafter as individuals, but helps to implement Islam as a whole unit. These are the political implications of believing in Islam as a complete way of life. Muslims should naturally have the strength to participate in the dialogue concerning problems of the modern world, presenting Islam as the ideological alternative to secular Capitalism.

The philosophy that ‘new is good’ is what instills in Capitalist nations an insatiable need for ‘newness’. The principles that fuel Capitalism, are the same principles that fuel consumerism. Muslims should consider consumerism, capitalism and secular philosophy inextricably linked. Moreover, we should consider them all alien to Islam, i.e. Kufr. We may be justified in asking; how is it that these ideas become so popular amongst Muslims? We must remember that these ideas were not adopted by in the Islamic lands over-night. They were slowly injected into the Ummah in a most subtle and devious way.

# The Source of One's Knowledge

(The progress of technology has resulted in many people accessing Islamic literature on their own without the guidance of anyone. This trend of self-study is increasing in our communities. The great Maaliki scholar, Imaam Shaatbi rahimahullah (d. 790 A.H.) discusses this topic in a very beautiful manner in his book *Al-Muwaafaqaat* - vol. 1, pgs. 82 - 88. The following is a summary of his detailed article.)

The most effective and beneficial method of acquiring knowledge is to obtain it from its true bearers who possess it truly and completely. This refers to such matters which require scrutiny and examination, therefore the presence of a teacher is necessary.

## Self Study:

People ask: "Is it possible to acquire knowledge without the medium of a teacher?" While it is undoubtedly possible in the literal sense, however the scholars are unanimous that by and large, learning under a teacher is necessary and self-study is practically impossible. They have also said: "Knowledge was in the hearts of men, then it moved to books; however its keys still lie in the hands of men (teachers)." This statement advocates the necessity of acquiring knowledge from qualified teachers. The proof of this is an authentic Hadeeth of Rasulullah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam): "Indeed Allah Ta`ala does not snatch away knowledge suddenly from the people. Instead He takes it by the demise of the `Ulama." Thus, qualified teachers are definitely the keys of knowledge and knowledge can only be acquired from

them. This also is something extremely clear and logical. Therefore, the following well known conditions have been laid down for every learned person, irrespective of which field he belongs to:

- That he be well-versed with the principles and elementary aspects of that field.
- He is able to explain the correct intended meaning adequately.
- He understands the implications of it.
- He has the ability to clear any doubt which arises regarding that field (knowledge).

When we examine the pious Imaams of Deen of the past in the light of these conditions, we find them possessing these qualities to the highest level.

## Who is an expert?

There are certain signs by means of which one can recognize an expert scholar of Deen:

- He practices on his knowledge and his actions conform to his words. If his actions contradict his words, then he is not worthy of being a teacher and of being followed.
- He was nurtured by the experts of that field, studying under them and holding firmly to them, until a time came when he became worthy of the same titles as them. This was in reality the noble practice of our pious predecessors.
- He follows in the footsteps of his teachers, and adopts their conduct and mannerisms as was the practice of the Sahaabah (RAm) in following Nabi (sallallahu alaihi wasal-

lam), and the Taabi`een in following the Sahaabah and this process continued from generation to generation. When this quality was ignored and overlooked, innovations began creeping into Deen, because choosing not to follow one's elders is due to some new factor, the root cause of which is the following of one's desires.

#### **Two reliable ways of acquiring knowledge:**

There are two reliable ways of acquiring knowledge from its authorities:

Acquisition directly from an Ustaadh. This is the safest and most effective method of the two, since Allah Ta`ala has placed a special effect between the teacher and student. Everyone who pursued knowledge will bear testimony to this. Often a student will read a ruling in a book, memorise it and repeat it but will not grasp it fully. However, once the teacher presents it to him in the lesson, he comprehends it instantly.

Studying the books of the different authors in that field. This is also beneficial with two conditions:

- He obtains sufficient understanding of the goals of that field, together with knowing the various terms used in that subject allowing him to research its books correctly. This can only be achieved through the first method i.e. learning under a qualified teacher. This is the meaning of the statement "Knowledge was in the hearts of men, then it moved to the books, however the keys to it are still in the hands of men." Books alone cannot give the seeker of knowledge any benefit without him accessing them via the scholars. This is the tried and tested method.
- He studies the works of the earlier reliable scholars of that science, because they are more firmly rooted and well grounded in their knowledge than the latter scholars.

*Courtesy: alhaadi*

# Happiness

Where is happiness? More than five billion people are searching for it. But where is it? If happiness was in the hand, then the one whose wrist is adorned with a designer watch worth hundreds of thousands of rands, or whose fingers have been ringed with priceless diamonds, or the one who counts huge bundles of his money everyday, would always be very happy. If happiness was in the eyes, then the one who lives in the most scenic of places, with his most luxurious, expensive and eye-catching possessions such as furniture, cars, clothing, etc., in front of him all the time, would forever be elated. If happiness was in the stomach, the person feasting on delicacies would have been continuously ecstatic, while the one eating simple basic food would have been very miserable. However, nobody has found happiness in possessions and objects. Happiness is in the heart. If the heart is happy, the joy of the heart permeates every part of the body, irrespective of whether the hand does not have a rand, or whether the stomach has only been filled with bread and water. The question is: How does the heart gain happiness?

#### **CONTENTMENT**

The foundation of happiness is Imaan. The pillars of this happiness are righteous actions and the qualities of Imaan. Among the foremost qualities of Imaan that bring happiness to the heart and fill one's life with peace and tranquillity is qana'ah (contentment). Rasulullah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) is reported to have said: "Verily true wealth is the contentment of the heart." In another narration contentment has been described as "the wealth that is never ex-

hausted.” Wahb bin Munabbah (R.A.) expressed this reality in the form of an anecdote. “Respect and wealth went out one day to search for a companion,” he said. “They met contentment and permanently stayed over with him.” The message is clear: Respect and true wealth is to be found in contentment. Otherwise one will be forever poor and miserable despite owning billions.

Contentment refers to being happy with what one has been blessed with. It entails living within one's means. Contentment does not bar one from possessing any comfort and luxury. Indeed, it is opposed to buying things merely to enhance one's “status,” or to avoid being regarded as “oldfashioned” by others. Contentment is the opposite of materialism. Therefore, if contentment offers peace and happiness, materialism promises unhappiness and misery.

#### **FAKE IMAGE**

The false promise of materialism is that happiness lies in accumulating possessions, chasing after material pursuits and presenting the “right image”. A simple example of this is the obsession with branded garments and other merchandise. Such is the obsession to have the “right” image that if one cannot afford the original branded item, a fake will also do — you must have the “right image” even if you have to fake it. Yet, has it really ever given anyone happiness? For those who only believe in “research,” extensive studies conducted by psychologists confirm that people who focus on wealth, possessions, image, fame and the like generally suffer the following problems to a far greater degree than non-materialistic people: Low psychological well-being, increased feelings of anger, difficulties with attention (ADD), prone to impulsive behavior, significantly higher levels of depression and anxiety, high levels of distress, feelings of emptiness, insecurity, lack of generosity, consumed by envy,

and are overall less satisfied with life than those who are not materialistic. (High Price of Materialism, Pg. 9 – 17)

While Islam has emphasised adopting simplicity, it has not forbidden the use of luxuries. Acquiring luxuries is mainly subject to the following conditions: \* One can afford it with halaal earnings \* It does not entail wastage \* It is not being acquired merely to follow the trend, or to boast and show off. Thus using luxuries is in itself not forbidden — materialism is forbidden.

Materialistic people make things and objects the source of happiness. “Things” will necessarily scratch, crack and break. Thus one's happiness will be in tatters every time something happens to the beloved items. Moreover, what is the “best” today is outdated tomorrow. As a result one feels unhappy until the new “best” is acquired. This continues until suddenly one is at the door of death.

On the contrary, one who is content remains happy. The content person keeps looking within himself to try and improve his inner-qualities. This brings increased happiness within him. The materialistic person tries to improve the outside to be happy. Such happiness is repeatedly shattered. Since this world and its glamour are all perishable, the happiness associated with it is bound to perish sooner or later.

#### **FOCUS ON VALUES**

The path to happiness is therefore contentment. This requires a change of mindset. The importance we have given to material pursuits, image, social status and wealth must be shifted to true Deeni values. The focus must be on Taqwa (Allah—consciousness), simplicity, contentment, generosity, caring and sharing, love and respect for parents and others, compassion, sympathy, etc. Striving to acquire such values and living a life filled with these qualities brings

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## Islamophobia

# We need to Accept the ‘Other’

***Extremists are setting the agenda on both sides of the divide. What happened to tolerance, liberalism, egalitarianism and rationalism?***

***Karen Armstrong***

A decade after 9/11, the West seems more bitterly divided from the Muslim world than ever. In Afghanistan, there's been a violent explosion of anti-Western sentiment after last month's Koran burning at a U.S. base and the slaughter of 17 Afghan civilians by an American soldier two weeks ago. But this hatred is not confined to distant parts of the globe. We're witnessing a surge of virulent Islamophobia in Europe, especially in the Netherlands and some parts of Scandinavia. And sadly, this seems to have crossed the Atlantic.

In 2002, a survey of Canadian Muslims by the Canadian Council on American Islamic Relations found that 56 per cent of respondents had experienced at least one anti-Muslim incident in the 12-month period since 9/11. Mosques or mosque construction sites in Ottawa, Montreal, Hamilton, Waterloo and Vancouver have been targeted by vandals. In January, anti-Islamic graffiti were spray-painted on the walls of the Outaouais Islamic Centre in Gatineau, Que. – the third such attack in four months.

These hate crimes are committed by a small minority, of course. But unfortunately, on both sides of the divide, extremists set the agenda. The news media, for example, inform us of terrorist attacks but don't give much coverage to those Muslim leaders

who regularly condemn them. Between 2001 and 2007, Gallup conducted a massive survey representing the views of more than 90 per cent of the world's Muslim population. When asked if the 9/11 attacks were justified, 93 per cent of respondents said they weren't – basing their arguments on religious grounds. This finding wasn't widely reported and could, therefore, make no impression on the widespread view that Islam is an inherently violent faith.

This belief is deeply engrained. It dates back to the Crusades, when Western Christians were fighting holy wars against Muslims in Syria and Palestine; their brutal ferocity stunned the people of the Near East. Even though Islam had a far better record of tolerance than Christianity at this time, European scholar-monks depicted Islam as a fanatical religion of the sword that was violently opposed to other faiths. They were, perhaps, projecting buried anxiety about their own behaviour onto their victims – Jesus, after all, had told his followers to love their enemies, not to exterminate them.

As Europeans fought their way out of the Dark Ages, Islam, a great world power that dwarfed Christendom for centuries, became their shadow self, arousing in them the same kind of complicated resentment as the United States inspires in some regions today

– an image of everything that they were not (or feared obscurely that they might be). This distorted image of Islam became one of the received ideas of the West.

During the 12th century, anti-Semitism also became a chronic disease in Europe. It seemed absurd to the Crusaders to travel to the Middle East to liberate Christ's tomb when the people who had killed Jesus – or so the Crusaders mistakenly believed – were alive and well on their very doorsteps. Those who couldn't go on Crusade would often do their bit by attacking Jewish communities at home. Jews were said to kill Christian children and use their blood to make matzo at Passover. This image of the Jew as child-slayer, representing an almost Oedipal fear of the parent faith, persisted well into the modern period and regularly inspired pogroms in Europe. Without a thousand years of Christian anti-Semitism in Europe, the Holocaust would have been impossible.

We now know what can happen when unexamined prejudice is allowed free rein. 9/11 was a terrible crime. But if it has stained the reputation of Islam, Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib have equally tainted the image of the West. Islamophobia is also a violation of essential Western values: tolerance, liberalism and egalitarianism. Founded on fear and ignorance, it also flies in the face of Western rationalism. We have created a global market in which, whether we like it or not, we're interconnected as never before. If we want a peaceful, stable and sustainable world, we have to learn to live with those we instinctively regard as "other."

*Karen Armstrong,*

*a historian of religion and founder of the*

# A Hand to Hold

*Sister Masumeh*

*As for him who gives and is dutiful (towards Allah) And believes in goodness, Surely We will ease his way unto a state of ease. (92:5-7)*

If you have ever stood at the bedside of an intensive critical care patient, you know the power of holding an outstretched hand. It doesn't seem to matter how long you stand there, gently holding the person's pale, cold hand—they will never let go. But you must, eventually. And when you finally do slip your hand away, if you have the courage to look into the patient's face, you witness the energy and mirth, the momentary release from the edge of pain, quickly drain away. They are—when you step away to say "Goodbye,"—again lapped by waves of physical anguish.

Touching a shoulder, patting a hand, comforting physical gestures seem to infuse suffering persons with patience. The mental refuge we discover in each others' kindness can be just as potent as any other form of care. Family and friendship should always be a part of treatment for illness or distress. Yet loneliness is often the only companion to crisis.

What we can do for each other, even in a simple gesture of holding a hand, uplifts, motivates, and rejuvenates. And it's what people remember for years afterward.

Think back on all the rough times in your own life. What do you remember most clearly? Is it the technical points, the twists and turns of fate? Or is it the people, the ones who hurt and the ones who helped?

If this introduction to community service sounds starry-eyed to you, then you would proba-

bly concur with my sophomore composition professor. After presenting my poetry reaction on individual duty to help, serve, and ameliorate, this professor sputtered, "Isn't that just a drop in the bucket?" I thought perhaps he was playing devil's advocate, asking me to defend and clarify my position. But he wasn't. He really believed that helping others simply does not change the world. "If you were that drop," I thought to myself, "you wouldn't be so indifferent."

While some people simply do not believe that help helps—when they are on the giving end—most folks just do not know where to begin. Somewhere within the depths of our souls, we would all love to save the world. But sometimes, the amount of work to be done, the severity of suffering around the globe, is overwhelming. We are stunned by the violence in Palestine, draught in Africa, poverty in India, political upheaval in Sri Lanka, joblessness around the corner. It is too much for any one person to tackle. And yet... There is so much we can do.

The Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "Every joint of a believer must perform a charity every day the sun rises." (Bukhari) He enumerated a few such acts, like removing a dangerous obstacle from the road, smiling, helping a person onto his or her riding animal. Charity—simple actions that show caring and helpfulness—is something we can all do, everyday.

There are many sayings of the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) exhorting his followers to charity. In one narration, he describes charity as a proof, (Muslim) presumably a proof of one's faith. In another narration, he says a woman who gives food in charity is rewarded, as is her husband (who paid for the food), and the grocer (who sold them the parcels) (Bukhari). Blessings spread to all involved, although the choice to give is made by only one. So start a wave!

The most logical and beneficial place

to start is your own home. Family is the best institution human beings have to protect individuals from harm, exploitation, and distress. Admittedly, it does not always work that way, however. Even social reformers and missionaries sometimes neglect the most basic duty to others—their family ties. It's easy to become too busy, in our producer-consumer environment. Too busy for a family dinner. Too busy to visit just because. Too concerned with friends, work, and other personal concerns to realize a family member is in need. It's at least equally easy to drop by and say hello; to bring home a bouquet or cook a special dinner; to put the newspaper aside and let some toddling fellow ride a fantastic parent/pony.

The Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) confirmed this in various statements and contexts. On one such occasion, he said, "Start giving first to your dependents." (Bukhari)

Who else is deserving of charity and kindness? Everyone! We do not need assurance that a beneficiary is proper and pious, or even truly in need, requisite to offering them service. Rather, we should be kind to whoever we encounter, and give freely to those who are in need, even if their own personal flaws and past mistakes plainly produced their current distress. The Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said:

A man said that he would give something in charity. He went out with his object of charity and unknowingly gave it to a thief. Next morning the people said that he had given his object of charity to a thief. (On hearing that) he said, "O Allah! All the praises are for you. I will give alms again." And so he again went out with his alms and (unknowingly) gave it to an adulteress. Next morning the people said that he had given his alms to an adulteress last night. The man said, "O Allah! All the praises are for you. (I gave my alms) to an adulteress. I will give

alms again." So he went out with his alms again and (unknowingly) gave it to a rich person. (The people) next morning said that he had given his alms to a wealthy person. He said, "O Allah! All the praises are for you. (I had given alms) to a thief, to an adulteress and to a wealthy man." Then someone came and said to him, "The alms which you gave to the thief, might make him abstain from stealing, and that given to the adulteress might make her abstain from illegal sexual intercourse (adultery), and that given to the wealthy man might make him take a lesson from it and spend his wealth which Allah has given him, in Allah's cause." [5]

When all else fails, and the day simply does not offer a better opportunity to be helpful and kind, at least we should not forget our own souls. The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said every step on the way to prayer is a charity. (Bukhari) You can and should give charity to yourself. Restraint from doing sins is kindness to your soul. And good deeds free your conscious and improve your disposition. Indeed, any act of charity ultimately benefits the giver the most. If you give money, God increases your wealth. If you give time, God blesses your day. If you give energy, your health is improved. Don't believe me? Try it and see.

Muslims believe in principles of charity. In Islam, giving is not only good and right, but it does not decrease your resources and rather it increases them and helps to purify them from any immoral contaminants. Muslims have always believed this. From the time of the Prophet's statements illuminating benefits of charity 1,400 years ago, Muslims have used charity not only to change to world, to help their souls, but to boost their worldly satisfaction and blessings.

It's rather obvious, in any case, that giving creates positive energy among people; and this eventually comes back around to the giver. We all want to live in a better world. We can all help make sure we do—every day.

### **ENERGY BOOSTER**

*Once Faatimah (RA) had requested Rasulullah (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) for a slave (servant) to assist her with all the difficult chores of the home. Rasulullah (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said to her and Ali (RA): "Should I not show you something better than what you asked for? When you retire to your bed, recite Subhanallah 33 times, Alhamdulillah 33 times and Allahu-Akbar 34 times. This is better for you than a servant" (Saheeh Bukhari #3705).*

*Faatimah (RA) was the beloved daughter of Rasulullah (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam). She is the leader of all the women of paradise. Despite all her virtue she never took it as below her dignity to carry out the domestic work. She used to grind the grain herself which caused corns on her hand. She carried water for the house in a leather bag which left a mark on her chest. She cleaned the house herself which made her clothes dirty (Sifatus Safwah vol. 1, pg. 310). Rasulullah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) taught her these tasbeehaat instead of providing her a servant to help her. The Scholars of hadeeth deduce from this that the recitation of these tasbeehaat before going to bed, apart from the spiritual benefit, will be a means of gaining physical strength which will make it easy for one to accomplish one's daily tasks.*

*From the time that Ali (RA) was given this prescription, he says that he never missed reciting them a single night, even on the night of a severe battle when he was the commander of the army (Saheeh Muslim #6917).*

*Let us also practice on this. Recite these tasbeehaat every night and derive the immense benefits in this world and the hereafter.*



**From a Sisters Desk**

# You Owe it to Women - So Return their Due

One of the essential elements of Haj and Umrah is a run/brisk walk between the mounts of Safah and Marwah – supplicating and remembering Allah. This act is a reminder for Muslims performing Haj and Umrah about the faith, courage and conviction of a woman caught in a place with no sign of habitation – protecting her faith, her honor, her child, looking and asking for mercy from her Lord – which she eventually gets. How Allah must have loved this act of hers to let it be repeated for all the believers who go for a pilgrimage to Mecca and how Allah quenched her thirst and that of her son's with the waters of Zam-Zam which has since then flown into veins of countless believers and purified their bodies and soles. All praise be to Allah who gives a subtle reminder to believers about the faith, dignity and the honor of a blessed woman!

Again, the story of mother of Jesus Christ who attained sainthood and withstood the challenges of her times, to bring forth her son Prophet Isa (AS) amongst her people who defended his mother while still an infant and proclaimed his Prophethood. Quran describes beautifully the desperation, the faith and fears of a lonely woman whom Allah wished to be the mother of a prophet, and poured His blessings and bounties on her. Quran reminds us in many verses about Hazrat Isa and his mother. All praise be to Allah who reminds the believers about the dignity and honor of a blessed woman!

Recounting, the tale of Bilquees who was overawed by the call of truth from Hazrat

Sulaiman, and gave up all in its response. Hazrat Aasiya, the believing wife of Pharaoh, Quran reiterates the role and the responsibility that blessed women have taken over the ages to defend their faith.

The blessed wife of Prophet (SAH), i.e. Hazrat Khadija got the honor of being the first one to accept Prophet Mohammad (SAW) as the messenger of Allah. What to talk about the blessed wife of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) Hazrat Ayesha who is not only the mother of believers, but is the mother of knowledge. All Muslim scholars, microscopists, macroscopists, analysers, interpreters, jurists and researchers owe their knowledge to this blessed woman. All the Ahadith narrated by her and explained by her give us a reminder about the role of this blessed woman in dissemination of Islamic thought and removal of misconceptions, if any. Allah vouched for her purity through Quran – defending her and removing all the doubts that had been put into the minds of believers by the enemies of Islam. The verses remind the believers about the dignity and honor of a blessed woman !

Hazrat Fatima who in spite of her status as Prophet (SAW's) daughter and Hazrat Ali's wife, lived a life of extraordinary simplicity and poise, is an example for humanity to follow. Hazrat Zainab who for her generous nature came to be known as "Mother of poor" is no less important.

The believing women who followed includes the likes of Rabia Basri, the mystic Sufi woman who is an inspiration for Sufis.

This ordinary slave girl reached a status desired by Wali's. Drenched her love for Allah – she inspired not only Walis of her time but for the times to come.

So, women were not only important disseminators, assimilators and propagators of faith but defenders as well. The first martyr in the name of Islam was a female named Sumaya.

Imamul-Aazam, Abu-Haneefa owes his name to his competent, inquisitive and thoughtful daughter who would assist her father in matters related to Shariah and Fiqh.

All thanks to Allah who made us Mulsims and made Islam our Deen, our beloved Prophet (SAW) fought for the rights of women, did away with pagan customs and secured their rights. Even his (SAW's) last sermon had instruction for all Muslims of all times to secure the rights of women.

What do I conclude when I say this all? This is a message to all those who are involved in teaching and propagation of Islam – let women too be the recipients of Islamic knowledge. They can not only utilize knowledge for their own betterment, but for the betterment of their families. And who knows there may be a revivifier hiding in a woman you consider ordinary. Give to them thus what you want to give to men. Don't invoke Allah's curse by depriving them from what is their due. Is that asking for too much?

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## Society

# Proliferation of Divorces

**Mufti Z Bayat**

The alarming explosion of Talaqs in our present times is a cause for great concern. The mention of the word Talaq which was at one time taboo in our communities has now become such a common and cheap word that in some marriages every argument features this word; either the husband threatens with it or the wife demands it. Forgotten is the grave warning of our Rasul (sallallahu-alayhi-wasallam) that Talaq causes the grand throne of Allah to shudder. This is an expression to convey the utter abhorrence of Talaq in Islam (unless it is extremely unavoidable).

### **CASUAL ATTITUDE**

The sanctity of Nikah and marriage has all but left the hearts of these people. Nikah has almost become like another of the hundreds of disposable

commodities in the market – disposable plates, cups, towels, lighters, etc. A casual and cavalier attitude has almost developed towards the institution of Nikah, an attitude that says if it doesn't work out, it doesn't matter, we'll live on - maybe try again. Some people have gone through a number of divorces in their lives without a care in the world.

### **FACTORS**

What has contributed towards this deplorable state of affairs? A number of factors could be responsible for this recent proliferation of talaqs which has resulted in so many broken homes and shattered families. Lack of proper Islamic education is one big factor. Lack of fear of Allah is another. Selfishness, hard-heartedness, stubbornness, callousness, an uncompromising attitude is another factor. Never overlook the devastating effect of western

culture and values in the home – it is poison for the Muslim marriage. Inability to handle the pressures of marriage and an escapist attitude is a major factor. Anger is another dangerous factor.

When a person loses control of his anger and flies into a towering rage, he can do the most drastic and foolish of things in the world. The fruits of anger are very bitter. Sayyidina Rasulullah (sallallahu-alayhi-wasallam) has mentioned: "The beginning of anger is madness and the end result is sorrow and regret." Whatever the cause maybe, in order to gain some temporary, imaginary victory, or to score a few points in one's favour, an extremely short-sighted decision is taken and the long term implications are totally ignored.

In almost all instances the short sightedness adopted in handling the situation by giving or demanding the Talaq results in much regret, misery, sorrow and heartache later on. Often the damage is too extensive to rescue or salvage the situation. At that time, a frantic effort is launched to obtain fatwas or rulings to reverse the devastating damage of Talaq, but to no avail. Even if a fatwa is obtained under false pretences or grounds, it cannot render lawful that which Allah has rendered unlawful and forbidden.

#### **PARENTS' ATTITUDES**

Nowadays, some parents and family elders too adopt an indifferent, casual attitude and hardly bring any pressure on the warring couple to pull together and resolve their differences. The sad reality is in some instances, they have actively promoted the process of disintegration of the marriage and encouraged the Talaq! At times, they simply shut the door on the any discussion or dialogue to address the problem. Sometimes, the pride of the parents or family comes even before the interest of the couple who inwardly are willing to reconcile but do not

have much say because of family pressures.

#### **WIDER COMMUNITY**

Then there is the wider Muslim community that sits by as spectators, as if watching some boxing or wrestling match. They are content to pass remarks and indulge in idle gossip on the sad state of affairs. This is a very dangerous attitude. The fire of divorces and marriage breakdown is spreading while people are watching idly. Heaven knows whose house will burn down next if the situation is not arrested in good time. The least that the general public can do when they hear about a marital dispute is to make fervent Dua that Allah must give Hidayat and understanding to the couple and save their marriage. To save marriages, Islam has actually permitted the speaking of "white" lies if that will bring about some degree of reconciliation in the couple. If the situation is left to spiral out of control, the fabric of our society will be rent asunder. Dozens of divorced women (and men) are not healthy for the well being of society. Something has to be done about the present situation.

#### **SOLUTIONS**

Just as the factors of Talaq are numerous, the solutions to the problem are also multi-faceted. Mass-scale educational programs on matrimonial matters is an absolute imperative. Through the pulpit and various fora and Islamic media, both print and electronic, a sustained educational campaign is to be launched. Spiritual programs that contribute towards Allah-consciousness and fear of accountability are absolutely imperative and need to be increased many fold. Attitudes and outlooks need to be changed. Rectification of character and conduct – Islahe-Nafs - is a crying need. Marriage counseling with an Islamic orientation must be increased dramatically. Pre-marital educational programs should become compulsory for all prospec-

tive couples - boys and girls. A decadent lifestyle and western values have to be shunned and spurned if a marriage is to work and thrive. Islamic values based on simplicity and humility and a sunnah way of life is a guarantee for a happy married life. With these concerted efforts, the tide will slowly turn, Insha-Allah. The rot will be remedied and a solid and firm family structure will result. This in turn will become the bedrock of solid communities, giving rise to a mighty Ummah. For those who are experiencing marital problems, please don't simply throw the towel in and walk out. Please be patient, forgive, forget and overlook, make duas, seek help and guidance, make one more attempt to make it work - this time it might work out with Allah's help!

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#### **COMFORT IN OLD AGE**

*A person once went to visit an elderly man. He was living in a beautiful palatial home. He had servants all around him to feed him, serve him and to see to his needs. Outwardly it seemed that he was living a dream life which every man desires. However, reality proved to be the completely opposite. With a very heavy heart he said, "All the worldly comforts that you see around me, have been given to me by my children. They are all qualified doctors. As they were growing up, all I gave them was the material world in the form of only secular education. Today as I am growing old, all they gave me in return is the material world as well, but in the form of comforts. However in this old age of mine, all I desire is to have my children and grandchildren around me. Of what use are these worldly comforts if I cannot speak to my own children or see my grandchildren?" Remember! It is only the Deen of Allah Ta'ala that if we will share with our children today, will allow them tomorrow to appreciate us in our old age*

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### **Lesson**

# **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 re-

turn 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 effort-less profit or earnings that come 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.

If we are to return to our roots; if we are to protect both our civilization, but also our ecosystem, then it is vital that we, as people of faith, once again assert the centrality to society of the moral economy.

Ann Pettifor is a fellow of the new economics foundation (nef) and co-author of 'The Green New Deal'.

Source: ToddsMurray.com

## Quotable Quotes

*To compel someone to adopt virtue never makes a virtuous man. Also forcing people to have faith never result in faithful hearts. It is freedom which is the base of virtue.*  
Shaikh Muhammad al-Ghazali

*"Bring anger and pride under your feet, turn them into a ladder and climb higher."*

Jalaal-ud-Deen  
Ar-Roomi

*"All humans are dead, except those who have knowledge. And all those who have knowledge are asleep, except those who do good deeds. And those who do good deeds are deceived, except those who are sincere. And those who are sincere are always in a state of worry."*

Imam ash-Shaafi`i

## The Ideal Prophet

# The Historic Aspect of Prophet Muhammad's Life

*Maulana Syed Sylaiman Nadvi (RA)*

The journals of the battles fought by the Prophet known as *Maghazi*, constitute the third important source for the biographies of the Prophet. Written mainly to record the events relating to expeditions and battles, these contain many interesting details not found elsewhere. The oldest books of *mozhazi* were written by 'Urwah b. Al-Zubair (d. 94/712), Muhammad b. Muslim b. Shihab al-Zuhn (d. 124/741), Musa b. 'Uqbah (d. 141/758), Ibn 'Is haq (d. 150/767), Ziyad al-Baka (d. 182/798) and Muhammad b. 'Umar al-Waqidi (d. 207/ 825).

Fourthly, the books of history associated with the life and times of the Prophet are an invaluable source for the biographers. The more reliable, as well as detailed ones, are the annals known as the '*Al-Tabaqat*' of Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/ 844), the celebrated *Tarikh ur-rusul Wal Muluk* by Muhammad b. Jarir Al-Tabari (d. 310/923) and two more works of *Al-Bukhari* entitled *Al-Tarikh al-Kabir* and *al-Tarikh al-Saghir*. To this category of early historical works also belong the annals written by Ibn Hibban and Ibn Abi Khuthaima (d. 99/717) of Baghdad.

The works describing the miracles and spiritual attainments of the Prophet, known as *Kutub-i-dala'il*, have been compiled by a number of scholars. The notable among these, which also form a source material for the Prophet's biographical accounts, are the two *Dala'il-un-Nubuwwat* by Ibn Qutaibah (d. 276/889) and Abu Is'haq Harabi (d. 255/868), the *Dala'il* of Imam Baihaqi (d. 430/1038), Abu Nua'im Isbahani (d. 430/1038), Al-Mustaghfari (d. 432/1040) and Abul Qasim Isma'il Isbahani

(d. 535/1140), and, finally, the *Khasais-ul-Kubra*, a more detailed dissertation by Imam Suyuti.

Yet another category of works containing a rich treasure of biographical data relating to the Prophet are the books known as *shama'il*, for these are exclusively meant to portray the morals, habits, manners and character of the holy Prophet of Islam. The first and the best known among these is the *As-Shama'il* of Muhammad b. Isa Tirmidhi (d. 279/892) on which scores of commentaries were later written by reputed scholars. Another scholarly and voluminous work is *Al-Shifa fi-Huquq al-Mustafa* written by Qadi 'Aiyaz. A commentary on it was written by Shahab Khafaji under the title of *Nasim-ur-Riyaz*'. Other treatises on the subject are *Shama'il un-Nabi* by Abul 'Abbas Mustaghfari (d. 432/1040) and *Shama'il un-Nur as-Sate'y* by Ibn al-Muqri (d. 253/876) and *Safar ul-Sa'adah* by Mujd-uddin Firozabadi (d. 817/1414).

Finally, there are the books purporting to be annals of Mecca and Madina which give, besides the chronicles of these cities, the conditions obtaining during the life-time of the Prophet and similar other details. These constitute the seventh source for the Prophet's biography. The oldest historical works of this nature are the *Akhbar-i-Mecca* by Al-Azraqi (d. 223/837) and *Akhbar-i-Madina* by 'Umar b. Shaiba (d. 262/875). Two more works of the same name are by Fakehi and Ibn Dhabala.

This brief sketch of the historical records and sources of the biographical works about the Prophet is sufficient to convince eve-

rybody, whether a friend or a foe, about the authentic character of this material. You would have noticed that the great traditionists of the past did not rely merely on the memories and oral reports but they also established study circles in the mosques and *madarasas* for the study of traditions and the *maghazi*. 'Asim b. 'Umar b. Qatadah (d. 121/ 737) was the grandson of one of the Prophet's companions, Qatadah Ansari. He wrote books on *maghazi* and *siyar* and also delivered lectures to a group of students in the mosque of Damascus in pursuance of an order given by Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz. Actually, the number of the Prophet's biographies written right from his own times to this day in different countries and languages would be several thousand. In Urdu alone there would be several hundred such monographs although its literary history does not go beyond two hundred years, at the most, and serious dissertations in this language actually came to be written only after the upheaval of 1857.

For it is a cardinal principle of the Muslims' faith to pay their regard to the illustrious Prophet, let us turn our attention to the endeavours made by the followers of other religions to study the life of Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). A number of Hindus, Sikhs, Brahmo Samajis and others in India have written the biographies of the holy Prophet. Europe has also had a long tradition, despite its hatred towards Islam, of the studies undertaken in this field, even though these were more often taken up for serving the needs of evangelism or for historical and literary purposes. *Al-Muqtabas*, a literary magazine of Damascus, published a list of European works on the life of the Prophet, some fifteen or sixteen years back, which listed thirteen hundred books. (The number should have at least been doubled during the past fifty years) Prof. D.S. Margoliouth, who was a teacher of Arabic in the Oxford University, had written a biography of the Prophet, which was published in the series of the Heroes of Nations in 1906. No exposition more inimical has ever

been brought out with a confessedly Jewish bias by any other biographer of the Prophet, at least in the English language, for the author has left no stone unturned to cull out something from the original sources to distort everything connected with the life and teaching of Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), yet he had to acknowledge in his introduction to the book that: "The biographers of the Prophet Mohammad form a long series which it is impossible to end, but in which it would be honourable to find a place." (Mohammad and Rise of Islam, New York 1906)

There is, also, a sympathetic Christian biographer John Devenport, who begins his biography of the Prophet entitled 'An Apology for Muhammad and the Qur'an' with an acknowledgement of the fact that of all the law-makers and conquerors there is not one events of whose life are more true and more detailed than those of the Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam).

R. Bosworth Smith, late Fellow of Trinity College of Oxford, delivered a series of lectures on 'Mohammad and Mohammadanism' under the auspices of the Royal Institution of Great Britain in February and March 1874. He says in his lectures which were later on enlarged and published under the same title: "And, what is true of religion generally is also true, unfortunately, of those three religions which I have called, for want of a better name, historical— and of their founders. We know all too little of the first and earliest laborers; too much, perhaps, of those who have entered into their labors. We know less of Zoroaster and Confucius than we do of Solon and Socrates; less of Moses and Buddha than we do of Ambrose and Augustine. We know indeed some fragments of a fragment of Christ's life: but who can lift the veil of the thirty years that prepared the way for the three? What we do know indeed has renovated a third of the world, and may yet renovate much more; an ideal of life at once remote and near; possible



and impossible, but how much we do not know! What do we know of his mother, of his home life, of his early friends, of his relation to them, of the gradual dawning, or, it may be, the sudden revelation, of his divine mission? How many questions about him occur to each of us which must always remain questions?

"But in Mohammadanism, everything is different; here instead of shadowy and the mysterious we have history. We know as much of Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) as we do even of Luther and Milton. The mythical, the legendary, the supernatural is almost wanting in the original Arab authorities, or at all events can easily be distinguished from what is historical. Nobody here is the dupe of himself or of others; there is the full light of day upon all that light can ever reach at all." [Mohammad and Mohammadanism, p.16, 18]

The Muslims have written innumerable biographies of their Prophet, and are still writing more of them. It would be no exaggeration to claim that each one of these is more detailed, more reliable and based on more authentic historical records than that of any other prophet or founder of religion written by his followers. This is a continuing process: each generation has studied afresh the original sources, traditions and ear-and-eye-witness reports, shed fresh light on the Prophet's life, and passed on the fruits of its labor to the succeeding generation. Muwatta, the first compilation of traditions was learnt by 400 persons from its author, Malik b. Anas, and his disciples included rulers as well as scholars, legists as well as litterateurs. Sixty thousand persons had attended the discourses of Al-Firabri, lecturing on the Sahih of his mentor, Al-Bukhari. Were similar arrangements ever made for propagating the teachings and biographical data of any other founder of religion? Was the biography of any other prophet transmitted, preserved and compiled with the same care? Who can claim this honor save Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam).

### Self Reformation

# The Essence of Mysticism

**Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah**

Through mysticism, Islam envisages a rectitude of beliefs, embellishment or beautification of the acts of devotion, taking the life of the Prophet as a model to be followed in all activities of life, the amelioration of personal conduct, and the accomplishment of duties imposed by Islam.

It has nothing to do with the power to know invisible things, with performing miracles, or imposing one's will on others by mysterious psychic means; not even with asceticism, mortification, seclusion, meditation and the consequent sensations (which may sometimes be means, yet not ends; or even with certain beliefs regarding the person of God (pantheism, etc); much less with what the charlatans assert, that a mystic is above the Islamic law and the necessary minimum duties imposed by it.

For want of a better term, one might use the word 'mysticism' which in Islam means the method of the best individual behaviour, i.e., the means by which one acquires control over one's own self, the sincerity, the realization of the constant presence of God in all one's acts and thoughts, seeking to love God more and more.

In the Islamic teachings, there are certain 'external' duties, such as prayer-service, fast, charity, abstaining from evil and wickedness, etc. There are also 'internal' duties, such as faith, gratitude to God, sincerity, and freedom from egoism. Mysticism is a training for this latter aspect of life. How-

ever, even the motivation of external duties are for the purification of the spirit, which is the only means of eternal salvation. In general, the mystic develops by his spiritual practices certain of his faculties and talents, which appear to the average person as miraculous; but the mystic does not seek them – he even despises them. To know invisible things, even if that becomes possible for certain persons by certain practices, is not desirable for the mystic, for these constitute the secrets of God and their premature divulgence is harmful to man in the long run. That is why the mystic does not utilize such powers even if he comes to acquire them; his aim remains always the purification of the spirit, in order to become more agreeable to the Lord. The perfect man is he who beautifies not only his outer but also his inner self, or his body and his heart.

For the external aspect, there is the Fiqh or body of Muslim law which consists of rules for one's entire outer life, such as cult, contractual relations, penalties, etc. It is however the internal aspect which is the true subject matter of mysticism. The acts of prayer-service belong to the realm of Fiqh, but sincerity and devotion are inner things, and belong to mysticism. Let us recall in this connection two verses of the Qur'an:

*"Successful indeed are the believers who are devout in their prayer-service" (23 : 1-2)*

, and

*"Lo the hypocrites. . . when they stand up to worship they perform it languidly and in ostentation so as to be observed by men" (4:142).*

The good and bad services of worship, indicated therein, give us a clue to the understanding of what Islam requires of its

adherents in all activities of life.

Islamic tradition reserves to the caliph or the head of the Muslim State not only politics (including administration of justice). but also cult, i.e., the outward practice of the religion, such as service of worship, fasting, pilgrimage. All this falls under the purview of Fiqh (Muslim law) developed by the different schools. In this realm, monopoly of power has been jealously imposed, although this concerns the rather less important part of our life. Sectarian differences exist among Muslims, since the death of the Prophet, as to who had the right to succeed to the Prophet in the exercise of the power regarding politics and cult. Let us leave the decision to God on the Day of Judgment, and let us occupy ourselves with our future and the defense against the enemies of God. As to the inner life, which alone determines the salvation in the everlasting Hereafter, in this sphere there are no jealousies – several persons could and did succeed the Prophet simultaneously. If the Naqshbandiyah Order of mystics seeks its authority from the Prophet through Abu Bakr, the Qadiriyyah and Suhrawardiyah orders for instance, do the same through 'Ali, and all this among the Sunnis to whom Abu Bakr alone was the immediate successor of the Prophet in the political field. This spiritual Realm, which unites Sunnis and Shi'as, is no vapid abstraction – it has its own full fledged administrative organization. The existence of abdal and autad or spiritual governors and administrators is known on the authority of the Prophet himself, as we read by as early an author as Ibn Sa'd. A monograph of Suyuti has collected all the traditions of the Prophet on the subject of qutb, abdal and autad.

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*Be Content with what Allah has given you and you will be the riches of people.*