

RADIANT REALITY

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“Does man
think that We will not
assemble his bones?

Yes. [We are] Able [even] to
proportion his
fingertips.”

Al-Qur'an 75; 3-4



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RADIANT REALITY

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This magazine is dedicated to the greatest and the last Prophet Sayyidna Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) on whom the succession of Prophethood ended and was sealed forever. Let us all follow him with utmost spirit.

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Contents

1. Question Answer	2
2. Lesson from the Qur'an: Root of Multiple Crimes	7
3. Lesson from Sahih al-Bukhari	9
4. Evolution and its Adversaries - II	12
5. Bringing Muslims Back to Science	16
6. Avoiding Extremes	18
7. Appreciation Skills	23
8. Between Hope and Despair	26
9. The Qurán in Translation	29
10. The Parable of Spider	34
11. Intimacy with Allah	36
12. Anger: Shaytan's Potent Weapon	39
13. Seerah: How He Taught	43
14. Holiday Message	45

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Question Answer

Question.

I have read that a person that reads excessive istighfaar, Allah will grant him rizq from unknown sources. My question is how many times is meant by excessive.

Answer.

A Hadith similar to what you have quoted has the words, “Whoever is constant in making Istighfaar (seeking forgiveness), Allah will grant him relief from every worry, a way out from every difficulty and provision from unimagined sources.” (Abu Dawud)

In explaining constancy of Istighfaar, the commentators of Hadith write, “It means to make Istighfaar whenever any wrongdoing is committed or it means that a person remains constantly involved in making Istighfaar because this is something everyone requires.” (Mirqaat Vol. 4 page 1621)

Hence, there is no specific amount that needs to be recited, rather it should be made a habitual practice.

Mufti Moosa

Question.

Please advise on the responsibilities of a father according to Islamic teachings. Does a father have to help out with a child or help take care of him physically?

Answer.

A father has the responsibility of playing an active role in his children’s live. His duties are not limited to financial support but include playing a positive role in development and upbringing of his children. He must take out time

to sit with them, talk to them, advise them and impart honest and moral values to them. It is his duty to teach them about Islam, good character and how to behave. It is his duty to be a positive role model for them. It is his duty to be loving and compassionate to them; to encourage them with kindness and to discipline them when required.

Children must know that they are valued and that they have parents who will take out time for them and be there for them in their time of need.

Your answer is yes, a father must help out with his children. When a person gets married and has children, they have acquired a great responsibility. They no longer have the liberty to be consumed with their own interests. They now have to give of themselves to their spouse and children.

Mufti Moosa

Question.

I was reading a hadith and i just want clarification if the hadith is valid and the Quran approves its statement or if it is not valid and proofed by the Quran. The hadith goes as: Men will decrease in number, and women will increase in number, so much so that fifty women will be looked after by one man.

Answer.

The Hadith in question is Sahih (rigorously authenticated) and is found in Sahih Bukhari. The full text is, “Anas (RA) narrates: I will narrate to you a hadith that none other than I will tell you about after it. I heard Allah’s Messenger (SAWS) saying: From among the signs of

the Hour are (the following): Religious knowledge will decrease. Ignorance will prevail. There will be prevalence of fornication. Women will increase in number and men will decrease in number, so much so that there will be one (male) caretaker for fifty women.”

The Hadith is not in conflict with the Qur’aan and hence there is no reason to doubt it. It is of the signs of the Last Days and speaks of a time to come when there will be such a disparity between the male and female population that one man would be responsible to see to the maintenance of fifty woman. Some commentators have mentioned the cause of this being the amount of men dying in battle due to the many wars that will be fought at the time. Also to note is that the Hadith does not mention one man marrying 50 woman. Rather, he will have to see to the maintenance of fifty woman. Even in today’s times, there are huge families in poverty stricken areas that rely on the earnings of one individual for their sustenance. At the time of the prophecy, such a situation will become commonplace.

Mufti Moosa

Question.

I have a very sensitive query, something that has been irritating my brains for a long time. One of the fundamental requirements is cleanliness now the question that has been in my mind is of a wheelchair. I sympathise with the people that are on wheelchair, it is not about them. The wheelchair goes everywhere. Today it is very common to see someone urinating on the pavement and this wheelchair comes into the Masjid. The question is, has the sanctity/cleanliness of the Masjid been compromised?

Answer.

The rulings regarding impurities is that only when one knows for sure that something is affected with impurity will the object be considered impure (napaak). Possibilities that it may

be impure are not considered.

Therefore, the wheelchair is considered clean (paak) unless one knows for certain that there is something impure on it. Also to note is that liquid impurity like urine, only transfers when wet. If it is dried on the ground and the wheelchair goes over it, there is no transfer of impurity.

Hence, if the wheelchair wheels are outwardly clean and are not sandy/muddy where the Masjid carpet will be soiled, then there is no issue in bringing it in the Masjid.

Mufti Moosa

Question.

(a) My cousin runs a shop of ladies dress. While he takes their measurements his hands touch their bodies. So, what does the Islamic ruling about this?

(b) Since tight-fitting dresses are not allowed in Islam so, what about stitching such kind of dresses. Also what is the decree about stitching blouse, wide collar ladies garments etc?

Answer.

(a) It is not permissible for a male tailor to take physical measurements of a female’s body. This is prohibited. He may employ a female to do this work which she should do in privacy. Based on the measurements taken, the tailor can then make the garment.

(b) It is permissible to sew the types of garments you have described. This is because there are places where it is permissible for a woman to wear these garments, for example, at home for her husband. If the person for whom the garment was sewn wears the garment at places which are prohibited, for example, public places or in front of strange (non-mahram) men, then the sin will be on her and not on the tailor.

Mufti Moosa

Question.

I made a promise to Allah that I will read both my four sunnahs before Asr and before

Esha. I have broken these promises many times and I still do because I don't read those sunnahs at all. For every Asr and Esha that passes, will I be getting sin for breaking a promise because of not reading or did I just get sin once? And also what is the kaffarah for breaking oaths/promises? I am 16 years old

Answer.

If you made the statement, "I promise to Allah, I will perform my four sunnahs before Asr and before Esha", it will constitute a valid Nazar-e-Mutlaq (general vow).

Therefore, if the Sunnah of Asr and Esha were not performed, it could be performed at any other time as it is a general vow.

N.B As this is a Nazar-e-Mutlaq (general vow), by fulfilling it once in one's lifetime, it now becomes fulfilled.

There is also no Kaffarah (compensation) for not fulfilling such a Nazar (vow). (Badaai-us-Sanaai' 5/82)

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

What is the ruling on visiting the graveyard on Eid day and Eid night? My family visits the graveyards on Eid Days and Eid nights and if any of us do not join them, my family and my father reprimands us as if we have committed a sin? What's the ruling?

Answer.

Visiting the graveyard on any day and at any time is considered Mustahab (preferable) and an act of great virtue. (Shaami 2/242).

To consider it compulsory or necessary to visit the graveyard on the days of Eid specifically, as in the enquired case, will be an act of Bidah (innovation) in Deen.

Hence, it will remain Mustahab (preferable) to visit the graveyard on any day and at any time including the days and nights of Eid. However, it should not be considered compulsory nor should one be frowned upon or reprimanded

for not doing so.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

I purchased a property but I am still not sure if I am going to keep it or sell it. I have been paying Zakaat on the property for a few years. I have a doubt if I should be paying Zakaat on it in the first place. Do I have to pay Zakaat on the property?

Answer.

In principle, Zakat is only compulsory on property which was purchased with the specific intention of reselling. In your case, you did not have a specific intention to resell the property upon purchasing it. Hence, you are not obliged to pay Zakat on the property.

Only when you have made up your mind to sell the property, you would be obliged to pay Zakat on the property according to your personal financial situation.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

I was adopted by my dad's sister. My stepdad is unemployed and below zakaat nisab. I support my step parents financially as I eat all my meals with step parents and stay in the same yard as them. Is it possible for me to support stepdad with zakaat for payments such as lights and water if I myself am deriving some benefit from these. I intend to continue supporting step parents financially as am currently doing but zakaat will be additional to lessen their own burden.

Answer.

It is permissible for adopted children to discharge their Zakaat by giving it to their adoptive parents and vice versa. More so, it is permissible for a nephew or niece to discharge their Zakaat by giving it to their uncles and aunts i.e. paternal and maternal uncles and aunts. This is subject to the condition that they are eligible recipients of Zakaat.

Note: Biological children cannot discharge their Zakaat by giving it to their parents and vice versa.

Hence, in the enquired situation, your Zakaat will be discharged by giving it to your adoptive parents/paternal uncle and aunt respectively if either of them is an eligible recipient of Zakaat. After the Zakaat is given to either of them and transferral of ownership takes place, it will be permissible for you to partake of meals made by them for you and to benefit from any financial support rendered by them to you. This is because the Zakaat discharged by you to them is regarded as Zakaat for them but after transferral of ownership takes place without any precondition and it is given to you by them, it is regarded to be Lillah for you.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

I just wanted to know if there is any special Salaah or Ibadah to do on the night of Mi'raj?

Answer.

There is no special type of Salaah or Ibadah prescribed for the night on which Mi'raj took place. There is no record that Nabi (SAWS) and the Sahabah (RA) prescribed any special type of Ibadah on this occasion nor did they affix any significance to the date on which Mi'raj took place.

After the demise of Rasulullah (SAWS), no one from amongst his companions is reported to have celebrated this night as an auspicious night.

This proves that the celebration of the 27th night of Rajab, being Lailatul-Mi'raj, has no basis in the Sunnah or in the practice of his noble companions. Had it been a commendable practice to celebrate this night, Rasulullah (SAWS) and his blessed companions would have given specific directions for it.

Therefore, it is not a Sunnah to celebrate Lailatul-mi'raj. We cannot declare any practice

as a Sunnah unless it is established through authentic sources that Nabi (SAWS) or his noble Companions have recognized it as such, otherwise it may become a Bid'ah about which Nabi (SAWS) has given stern warning, "Whoever innovates something in our religion which is not a part of it, it will be rejected." (Ibn Majah)

Mufti Suhail

Question.

We use the Athan software for the times of Salah in which there are different calculation methods due to which the times for Salah vary. The methods are by institutions located in different parts of the world like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan, France and US.

Should we stick to one calculation method or use one which is by the institution closest to our location?

Answer.

If one follows Hanafi Fiqh, it would be best to configure the application to use the 'University of Islamic Sciences, Karachi' setting.

The Asr calculation should be set to Hanafi and 3 minutes should be added to the Maghrib Salaah time as a safety margin.

This will ensure that the times shown will be correct for those who follow Hanafi Fiqh.

The 'University of Islamic Sciences, Karachi' settings are generally more precautionary (for example, with respect to twilight) and are therefore preferred.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

1. Can you name a pet Uwais, Usaid etc (keeping in mind that they are names of sahaba)?

2. If a muslim invites you to his home and you know that the meat is haram or mashkook then what should you do?

3. Can you donate money to build a masjid in a village where only barelwiyyat is preached and not taught?

4. Can you wear football shorts (above knees) with tight trousers beneath to conceal awrah?

Answer.

1) It is undesirable to name a pet after the names of Sahābah (RA).

2) How would you know that the meat of your Muslim host is Harām or doubtful? Did you see him buying Harām or doubtful meat? Who declared the meat Harām? Furthermore, if you know the Muslim has Harām or doubtful meat in his house, why would you accept his invite?

In principle, if a Muslim is ‘ādil, that is he is an upright & conscious Muslim and he has adequate knowledge of Halāl & Harām, you could rely on his ‘adālah (uprightness) and consume the meat in his house*. It is incorrect to have baseless doubts about the Halāl nature of his food. Such thoughts may fall in the category of bad/evil thoughts which is a sin. Rasulallah (SAWS) said,

...and refrain from assuming, because assuming is the worst type of lie...2

3) It is not permissible for one to donate money to build a Masjid when one is certain that Bid’ah and Bātil will be propagated.

4) The knees of a male are included in the ‘awrah (satr). It is not permissible to expose the knees. It is also detestable to wear such tight clothing that reveals the shape of ones ‘awrah.⁴

Mufti Bilal

Question.

Upon whom is Qurbaani waajib?

Answer.

Qurbaani is waajib upon a baaligh sane Muslim (who is not a musaafir) who possess-

es wealth to the value of nisaab (the minimum amount upon which zakaat is compulsory) during the days of Qurbaani. The days of Qurbaani are the 10th, 11th and 12th of Zil Hijjah.

Mufti Zakaria

Question.

1. Is the neck of a chicken also part of the impermissible spinal cord?

2. Can the spinal cord of a chicken be fed to animals, such as dogs?

3. Is only the spinal cord of a chicken impermissible? What about other animals such as ducks, rabbits, cattle etc.?

Answer.

1. The meat on the neck can be consumed, however the spinal cord in the neck cannot be consumed.

2. As a precaution, do not feed it to animals.

3. The spinal cord of all animals that are eaten is impermissible.

Mufti Zakaria

Question.

Please explain why certain scholars call themselves Hazrat? Is this not meant for only Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam)? Who bestowed this upon today’s Ulema?

Answer.

In the general usage the word Hazrat is considered a title of respect and honour. This title can be used for Ambiya, Sahaaba or pious servants. It’s usage is not confined to Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam). However, when used for Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) then additional respect is generally shown through putting the title of Rasulallah or Nabi-ullah and Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam together with the title Hazrat.

Mufti Zakaria

Root of Multiple Crimes

The fornicating woman and the fornicating man, flog each one of them with one hundred stripes. And no pity for them should withhold you from (complying with) Allah's religion, if you really believe in Allah and the Last Day. And a group of believers must witness their punishment. (24:2)

The Holy Qur'an and mutawatir ahadith on their own have fixed the punishments of four crimes. They are not left at the discretion of the judge or the ruler. These punishments are called Hudud in the terminology of Islamic jurisprudence. Apart from these, the punishment is not fixed for other crimes, and the ruler or the judge can award the punishment in accordance with the type of crime, the circumstances of the criminal and the background in which the crime is committed, in order to control the spread of crime as he feels best. Such punishments are known as penal laws in Islamic jurisprudence. Islamic Hududs are four in number:

- (1). Stealing
- (2). Levelling false accusation against chaste women.
- (3). Drinking liquor
- (4). Adultery

Each one of these crimes is very evil in its own right, and while disturbing the peace and tranquillity of the society contribute toward other ills of the world at large. However, the ill effects and consequences of adultery are so immense in their destruction of the human values that no other crime can perhaps compete with it.

(1) Molestation of someone's wife, daughter or sister is nothing but his destruction. For a no-

ble man it is not as bad to lose all his material wealth and belongings as to lose the chastity of his women folk. It is for this reason that often we come across such incidents that people whose women folk are molested get after the life of the molester without caring for their own lives. This passion for revenge passes on to the generations and results in the destruction of families after families.

(2) In a community where illicit sexual acts become rampant the family lineage is lost. When the sanctity of relationship with mother, daughter and sister is vanished, with whom the marriage is forbidden, then one can marry them as well, which is even a greater crime than adultery.

(3) If we analyze the causes of disorder and disturbance the world over, we will note that in most cases the root cause is woman and to a lesser degree the wealth. Only those rules can guarantee the worldly peace which safeguard the woman and wealth in a befitting manner and do not allow them to cross the appointed limits. It is not the intention to highlight here the ills and evils of adultery. The points mentioned above are enough for the human society to know the destructive ills of this act. This is why Islam has fixed the punishment of adultery as more severe than the punishments of all oth-

er crimes. The punishment has been described in the verse in the following words:

The fornicating woman and the fornicating man, flog each one of them with one hundred stripes - 24:2.

First the fornicating woman is mentioned and then the fornicating man. The punishment for both is the same. The common practice about injunctions is that mostly the command is conveyed by addressing the men-folk only and the women are included in that by implication. It is not regarded necessary that they be addressed separately. In the whole of Qur'an masculine gender is used for passing the injunctions through the phrase and women-folk are regarded as included in that. Perhaps the wisdom is that as Allah Ta'ala has ordained the women-folk to keep themselves covered, in the same way their mention is kept covert in the context of mankind. But here there was a possibility that some might have the confusion that all these injunctions relate to men only and the women are free from them. Therefore, in some specific verses the women-folk are also mentioned alongside separately like in the verse (33:33). Moreover, where both men and women are to be mentioned then the natural order is that first the men are mentioned and then women. In the case of punishment for stealing, the same order is maintained in the injunction - 'As for a man or woman who commits theft, cut off the hands of both' (5:38) where the male thief is mentioned first and then the female thief. But in the case of punishment for adultery only an incidental mention of women was not considered enough, instead a specific reference was regarded necessary. Secondly, mention of the women is given priority over men. There are many points of wisdom in this. First, the women are

regarded weaker sex and compassionate for their physique; if they were not mentioned specifically, one could have had the misgiving that perhaps the women are exempt from this punishment. The mention of woman is preceded because the act of adultery is so impudent that its commitment from her side could be carried out only by extreme fearlessness and carelessness, because the nature has bestowed in her character instinctive shyness and an urge to guard her chastity. The nature has provided many a things for the safety of women. Hence commitment of fornication from her side is more grave than from man. As against this, in the case of theft it is a bigger crime for men who are bestowed with strength by Allah Ta'ala, so that they earn their living from the bounty He has provided. The man is required to take advantage of Allah's bounty by working for the sustenance and not stealing for the living, as this is a great shame and sin for him. Since the women do not have the same circumstances, if they commit theft their crime will be of a lesser degree as compared to that of men.

(24:2) Meaning of the word *jald* is to hit with the whip, and it is derived from the word *jald* (leather). As the whip is normally made of leather, some commentators have suggested that by the use of word *jild* it is alluded that the strike of the whip should be so moderate that it should be felt only within the skin and not deeper into the flesh. The Holy Prophet (SAWS) had himself urged that the punishment of whipping be exercised with moderation, so that neither it is so hard that it tears off the flesh nor so mild that it does not hurt at all. On this point some commentators have reproduced ahadith of the Holy Prophet (SAWS) with their chain of narrators.

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

“Be conscious of Allah wherever you are, follow up a bad deed with a good deed it will wipe out the ill effects of the bad deed, and interact with people in a good manner.” (Tirmizi)

Lessons from Sahih Bukhari

Dr. Rafiq Ahmad

Chapter 54 : (To offer) Salaah in a church.

Umar said, “We do not enter your churches because of the statues and pictures in them.” Ibn Abbas used to pray in a church provided there were no statues in it.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Here Imam Bukhari wants to convey the permissibility of offering Salaah in a church provided that there is no statue or picture. On his visit to Syria, when Sayyiduna Umar was invited by the head priest—Constantine in the church, he rejected the invitation because of the pictures inside. (Eidhahul Bukhari)

Similar case has been reported about Sayyiduna Ibn Abbas who would offer Salaah in churches only if there were no pictures or statues inside.

Hadith No. 423

Narrated Aisha

Umm Salmah mentioned to the Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) a church which she had seen in Abyssinia called Mariya. She told him about the pictures she had seen in it and the Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, “Those are a people who, when a righteous slave or righteous man among them dies, build a place of worship over his grave and paint those pictures in it. They

are the worst of creatures in the sight of Allah.”

Comments

This hadith already stands discussed.

Chapter 55 : (Without Tarjamatul Baab)

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

In the earlier chapter Imam Bukhari mentioned the undesirability of offering Salaah in a church having statues or pictures inside. In the present chapter, he presents his disagreement over the issue of offering Salaah in a mosque with anything objectionable like graves etc., there.

Hadith No. 424

Narrated Aisha and Abdullah ibn Abbas

“When the Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was dying, he began pulling his khamisa (blanket) over his face but when he felt suffocated by it, he removed it from his face and at that point he said, ‘May the curse of Allah be upon the Jews and the Christians who took the graves of their Prophets as places of worship.’ He was warning against what they had done.

Hadith No. 425

Narrated by Abu Huraira

The Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "May Allah make war on the Jews who took the graves of their Prophets as places of worship."

Comments

During his terminal illness, Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) used to pull his blanket over his face, and when he felt suffocated, he would remove it and say, "May Allah curse the Jews and Christians for taking the graves of their prophets as places of worship". According to Sayyida Aisha, he would say so in order to warn his Ummah against indulging in such practices.

In the 2nd hadith narrated by Abu Huraira, only the Jews have been cursed, for they were the first who took the graves of their prophets as places of worship.

Chapter 56 : The saying of the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), "For me, the whole earth has been made as mosque and ritually clean."

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Here Imam Bukhari has concluded the discussion by saying that the whole earth has been decreed a mosque for the Ummah. The reasons for not offering Salaah at certain places are temporary, and once the hurdle ceases to exist the place will become permissible to pray on, for example, if the traces of an old graveyard cease to persist at a place, Salaah will be permissible there after proper evacuation.

Hadith No. 426

Narrated by Jaabir ibn Abdullah

"The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, 'I have been given five things which none of the Prophets before me was given: I have been helped to victory by terror flooding (my enemies') hearts up to a month's journey

away; for me, the whole earth has been made a mosque and ritually clean (for purification by tayammum) - wherever a man of my community finds himself when the time of prayer comes, he can pray; taking booty has been made lawful for me when it was not lawful for anyone before me; I have been sent to all mankind; and I have been granted intercession."

Comments

This hadith has been discussed earlier as well. The part of the hadith related to this particular chapter is the status of mosque given to the whole earth for Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) i.e., this Ummah can offer Salaah at any place unlike other religions who are bound to offer their prayers at specific places of worship.

Chapter 57 : The sleeping of a woman in the Masjid.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

The basic purpose of constructing a mosque is have a place of worship, but at times other specific activities like teaching, sleeping, etc., can also be undertaken there. Here in this chapter, Imam Bukhari wants to convey that women also are permitted to sleep in a mosque at the time of need.

Hadith No. 427

Narrated Aisha

"There was a black slave girl who belonged to an Arab tribe. They set her free and she stayed with them. She said, 'One of their girls once went out wearing a red leather jeweled scarf. She put it down or it fell off and a kite flew by it as it was lying there and, thinking it was meat, made off with it. They looked for it but could not find it and so they suspected me of taking it.' They began to search her and even searched her private parts. The girl went on, 'By Allah, I was standing

with them when the kite flew over and dropped it and it fell among them. I said, 'This is what you suspected me and accused me of and I am innocent of it. There it is.'

Comments

Once a black slave girl belonging to a certain Arab tribe was manumitted by Umm-ul-Mumineen Sayyida Aisha, but she stayed with them even after her freedom because of her attachment with the tribe. Once, one of the girls of the tribe lost a red leather jeweled scarf which, taking it as a piece of meat, was picked up by a kite. The people of the tribe suspected the manumitted girl of the theft and started searching her. They didn't even leave her private parts without searching for the thing. The girl, probably, invoked with a broken heart and the kite flew over and dropped the jeweled scarf among them. The poor girl said this was the thing for which you were labelling me a thief. After the incident she went to Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) and embraced Islam. She resided in a small hut adjacent and the part of which fell in the area of Masjid-i-Nabawi. She would often visit Sayyida Aisha and talk to her and reiterate the following words before talking about anything else:

"How strange was the day of jeweled scarf that Allah took me away from infidelity into the fold of Islam".

Lessons from the hadith

1. Islam abolished slavery from the world in the most beautiful manner. It exhorted its believers to free slaves voluntarily against the promise of good reward in the hereafter. Here you see how Sayyida Aisha got manumitted a slave girl just for the sake of Allah's pleasure. Unlike others it is the beauty of the religion of Islam that gives considerable importance to the human nature. Apart from the religion of Islam, it is clearly evident that the laws formulated are usually against the human nature and thus bound to fail; this can be witnessed day in and day out. For example, the communist philosophy commands the seizure of wealth from the rich and hand it over to the poor and needy, something which is not acceptable to the human nature. Nobody would like his wealth be taken away and given to somebody else. On the other hand, Islam motivates man to voluntarily and happily help the poor and needy by giving away Sadqah, Zakaah etc. The human nature is such that it feels happy and satisfied in helping the poor voluntarily and not forcibly.

2. Do not allege anyone of any wrong doing without possessing a strong proof.

3. Maintain cordial relations with neighbours even if they are poor; the way Sayyida Aisha used to behave with the poor girl.

The Best of Deeds

Sayyiduna Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (RA) reported, I asked, "O Messenger of Allah, which deed is best?" Rasulullah (SAWS) replied, "Salaah in its proper time." I asked, "What is next?" Rasulullah (SAWS) replied, "Good treatment of your parents." I asked, "What is next?" Rasulullah (SAWS) replied, "Jihaad in the path of Allah." (Bukhari)

Evolution and its Adversaries - II

The human cell is a miracle. To put it most mildly, the scene inside is simply amazing. There are millions of molecular machines inside engaged in such a hectic activity that to merely imagine it would leave one breathless, writes SYED IQBAL ZAHEER.

As stated in the last issue of this magazine, before we begin to understand why and how scientists have been, from the start, critics of the theory of evolution – we need to apprise ourselves with the basics of the nature of living beings, (what the biologists call as ‘organisms’), without which it might be hard to make out what exactly is going on.

To start with, the reader is invited to look into this little circle: o

Do you see a human cell within it? No?

If you cannot, we do not blame you for that; because a cell is not there.

Nonetheless, had there been a cell there, you couldn’t have seen it. In fact, had there been 100 cells there, you wouldn’t have seen them. “It has been estimated that about fifty million cells in our bodies die every second and are rapidly replaced by about the same number” (Aubrey Mulunski), but, have you seen any cell falling off your body? So small are they.

An average human cell measures 10-5 m; or, 0.05 mm. On an average, a thing of size 0.10 mm is visible to an unaided eye. A microscope has to be used to perceive an average human cell. But, for our purposes, a microscope will not do. We need to see inside a cell to discover

its contents. For that we need a microscope that can magnify the cell to a 1000 times. But that too is not enough, because with this microscope we observe a little ball within the cell called nucleus. To see what’s inside this nucleus, we need an Electron Microscope. When we examine the cell with this Microscope, we see another little ball within the nucleus. This little ball is called nucleolus. Thus equipped, when we peep into the cell, what is it we see?

Well, you see a miracle. To put it most mildly, the scene inside is simply amazing. There are millions of molecular machines inside engaged in such a hectic activity that to merely imagine it would leave one breathless.

Human body is made of organs (heart, brain, kidneys, etc.). Organs are made of tissues, flesh. They are made of cells, which are the smallest unit in a body. There are some 70 trillion cells in a body of average size. (There are more cells in your body than there are stars in 70 galaxies put together). Each organ has cells that are special to it. So, the heart is made of heart cells; the brain is made of brain cells, and so on. Some organs have more than one type of cell within them. Altogether, there are roughly 350 discrete cells in a human body (David S. Moore).

Although they are all different from each other, they share something common between them. They all have a tiny ball within them (as noted above: the nucleus) which contains a certain molecule called – for simplicity – the DNA (apart from other classes of molecules). And in every single cell of the 70 trillion cells of the body, the DNA is the same. To this we return later.

Roughly spherical, the cell contains within it smaller functioning parts called organelles, various other machineries, proteins, etc. For example, Mitochondria, Ribosomes, the Golgi apparatus, and so on, are organelles. Each of these organelles is in multiple numbers within the cell. For instance, there are around 4000 mitochondria in every cell; while ribosomes are in millions, up to 10 million in some cells. (Yes, within 0.05 mm). These organelles are made of molecules. Molecules are nothing but a collection of atoms. So, first we have atoms, then molecules, then proteins (a collection of molecules), then cells, then organs, and then biological beings – like us.

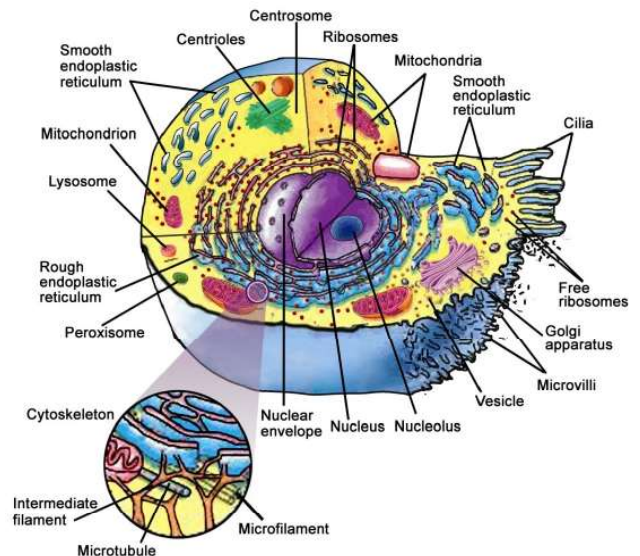
These organelles float in a fluid (semi-liquid) material filling the cell. This semi-liquid material is called cytoplasm. The little ball mentioned above (the nucleus) floats in this cytoplasm. As mentioned above, the nucleus contains another little ball called nucleolus. The cell is a unit because it is surrounded by a boundary. This boundary wall made of molecules is called the cell-membrane. Cells in a body are adjacent to each other, but do not intermingle with each other, because each has a boundary wall (the cell-membrane, or envelop) which protects the contents of the cell from spilling out. If they do, the cell will die. The cell-membrane (the boundary wall) has controlled pores (gates) for materials to come in and leave. Blood circulation brings in, or takes away the material sent out by the cells.

The little ball inside the cell known as the nucleus also has a boundary to preserve its enti-

ty. This boundary is known as the nuclear membrane. It has plenty of pores for selected material to enter in and leave out. And the same is true of the little ball within the nucleus called nucleolus. It has a membrane too.

So, in common parlance, an average cell is a little ball, within a ball, within a ball.

Here is an illustration of a cell. It has been simplified. Otherwise, it is almost impossible to show all its contents, unless the paper size is enlarged to a kilometer square. Another problem is that a cell is roughly spherical. So, to show all its contents on paper, we will have to cut it into segments of thickness 0.000001 mm. It is far easier to imagine what it is like, than to try and create a picture of it. Again, at any given moment there are millions of internal parts moving around. So, how are we to show the cell's parts in action? It is ironic that despite all the advances in science and technology, we live and die without knowing, and without the prospect of ever knowing, what we are made of.



In this simplified illustration, it is only three parts that are, at the moment, of our concern: the cytoplasm, the nucleus, and the nucleolus. With further reduction we could say we are only concerned with the contents of the nucleus. But then, a further reduction is possible. In this ar-

ticle we shall be dealing with the DNA strands most of the time. They contain what are known as the genes.

To avoid complications we shall not attempt to explain the functions of many, let alone all, machines and organelles. But perhaps the most common of them could be given a line or two.

Mitochondria



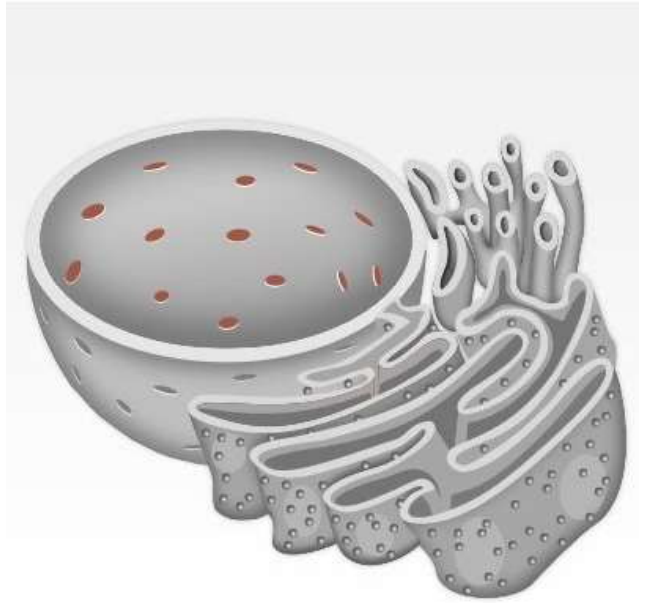
Mitochondria are the power houses. They supply the power needed for cell machineries to operate. These have their own little bundle of DNA consisting of some 37 genes, coded for enzymes that function within the mitochondria. Apart from the central DNA, encoding the entire human, it is mitochondria alone which has its own DNA. And, interestingly, mitochondria are inherited exclusively from the mother. During fertilization the mitochondria of the male sperm are left out. If at all they manage to penetrate the egg, they are destroyed inside. Thus, some of the DNA of the mitochondria could be traced back to Hawwa' (asws) – who knows.

Ribosomes

Ribosomes are the machinery in the cytoplasm at which messages are received from the DNA and assembling of proteins takes place with the help of what are known as amino acids – that are arranged in accordance with the message received from the nucleus in the form of mRNA.

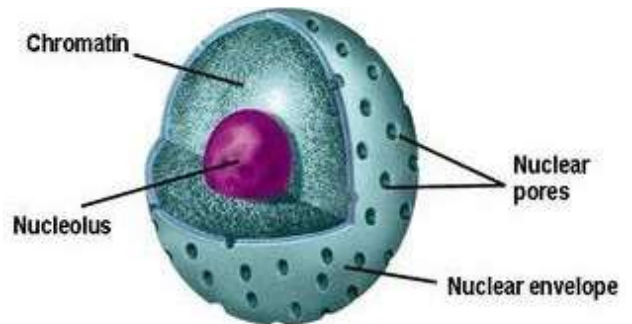


Endoplasmic Reticulum



Endoplasmic reticulum is involved in packaging and transport of proteins that arrive from the ribosome machinery. From here they are transported to the sites at which they are needed within the cell. The protein themselves carry the signals that ensure that the cargo is delivered to the right place.

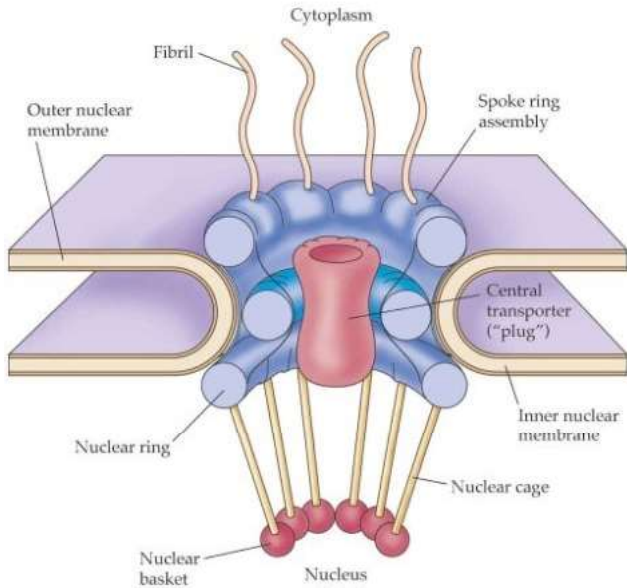
The Nucleus



Above: The nucleus, nucleolus and the pores in the nucleus wall.

The nucleus is the “strong-room” where the data for making a biological body is stored, in the form of DNA strands.

The Nuclear Pore



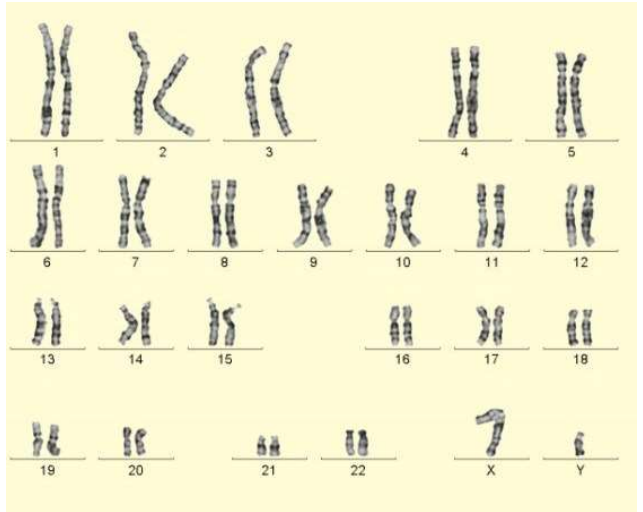
This is an interesting site (as if any other is not). The nucleus (which contains the data stored in it in the form of DNA), is closed from all sides with an envelope, except for some 3000 to 4000 little holes in its surrounding wall. These pores are closely guarded with valves (as illustrated above) opening and closing for protein escort-molecules, which only guarantee import and export of the right stuff into the nucleus from the cytoplasm and back. Nothing untoward can gain entry. Viruses gain access into the nucleus with the help of, as it is said, “counterfeit tickets.”

The Nucleolus

See illustration above. In this chamber sub-units of ribosomes and certain other proteins (tRNA) are made and then exported to outer shell of the cell, passing through the nucleus, but not landing there, but rather proceeding straight to the cytoplasm. The ribosomal units (parts) are combined into complete ribosomes in the cytoplasm. When complete, ribosomes make proteins.

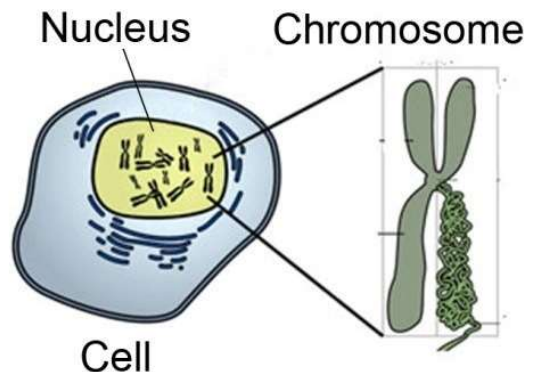
The DNA

As stated earlier, the nucleus contains a chemical component known as the DNA (we need not expand this short form). They are also known as chromosomes. There are 46 of these chromosomes in the nucleus of every cell of the human body. They exist as pairs and so there are 23 pairs of them. Half of them, i.e. 23 chromosome strands come from the male and the other half from the female.



The 23 pairs of the DNA molecule

They are stored in the nucleus of every one of the 70 trillion cells of a body. Of these 46 chromosomes, 23 come from the male parent (via the sperm) and 23 from the female parent (via the ovum, the egg). How the 23+23 combine to produce a unique individual, is decided at the time of fertilization, that is, the moment the sperm enters into the ovum.



(Courtesy: YMD-Oct-15)

Bringing Muslims Back to Science

Muhammad Ghilan

The most important rule in Islam is “judgment on anything is a branch of conceptualizing it”. To determine whether a belief can be accepted by a Muslim or not, this is the first and most often repeated principle. However, when it comes to matters scientific, this indispensable rule for correct judgment is paradoxically the most disregarded one.

Ever since the decline of the Islamic civilization and the end of its Golden Age, Muslims have ironically taken up superstitious and irrational thinking habits they had previously dropped when they originally accepted the Message of Prophet Muhammad. The ideas that the sun could eclipse for the death of someone, that certain numbers have magical powers, or that birds flying in a certain direction indicates an omen of some kind were among superstitious beliefs explicitly pointed out by Prophet Muhammad and in verses in the Quran for their irrationality. Unfortunately, it seems that Muslims have gone full circle. Out of the top 20 countries in overall science output, Turkey is the sole Muslim representative, barely sneaking in at number 19.

Overly simplistic explanations of this phenomenon have pointed to Al-Ghazali (c 1058-1111), one of the most influential Muslim theologians. His work, *The Incoherence of Philosophers*, is cited for its negative impact on Muslim thinking. This, however, is a grave mis-

representation of Al-Ghazali, his attack on contemporary philosophers, and the Islamic civilization as a whole.

Contrary to how it is popularly misconstrued, Al-Ghazali’s attack against the philosophers was not an attack against science. The *Incoherence* is viewed as one that defended Islamic theology from what was considered an unjustified encroachment of science onto it. It is worthy to note here that although Al-Ghazali aimed to refute the turning of science into theology, he acknowledged empirically valid claims as such and did not prescribe for Muslims to ignore them.

As for the Muslim scientific and intellectual decline being attributed to Al-Ghazali, this claim is overly speculative and one-dimensional. No civilization deserves to be called a civilization, if the works of a single individual, regardless of who it is, can bring it crashing down. The decline of a civilization is a complex process that is influenced by numerous factors. Oversimplification in this regard is disingenuous and can further a people’s stagnation because it prevents proper assessment of where the problems lie.

The problem Muslims have with regard to the relationship between science and religion today is in their reliance on people who are not professional scientists or theologians. It is not uncommon to see Muslims rely on profession-

al debaters to learn about science and the “Islamic” position on matters such as the theory of evolution. Furthermore, when they do direct their questions at scientists or theologians, most Muslim scientists and theologians do not respect the limits of their expertise and regularly speak of matters they know little about.

When Prophet Muhammad migrated to Medina, he moved from a business hub in Arabia to an agriculture-based society. He was not familiar with farming practices and upon observing how cross-pollination took place he voiced his wonder. Human intervention to manipulate outcomes in nature was counter-intuitive to him.

The companions misunderstood the Prophet’s wonder to be a religious decree not to cross-pollinate their palm trees. Upon realizing a very poor crop yield, they approached him to ask for a metaphysical reason. Prophet Muhammad’s response was, “You know the affairs of your worldly matters better”. In other words, the reasons for the poor crop yield are to be sought in physical practices.

It is a relatively modern phenomenon to see Muslims in mass turn Scriptural sources into scientific textbooks. In fact, a careful reading of traditional texts of Islamic theology would reveal to the reader that imposing a scientific interpretation on Scripture is a form of heresy. The consequences of such a practice will always be negative for Scripture not due to an inherent problem within it, but a problem with the reader.

What is desperately needed for modern Muslims is to come to terms with the fact that progress is not going to come from theological debates. Many spend their time in reproducing Christian apologetics as Muslim arguments, or attempting to “refute” that we evolved. What are currently perceived as conflicts between science and Islam are misguided constructs imposed by people who should not be engaged in these discussions in the first place.

It is ironic that Al-Ghazali, falsely accused for the decline of Islamic civilization by superseding religion over science, warned against bringing religious discourse where it does not belong. He compared religious discourse to medicine, only needed in certain contexts, and scientific discourse to food, always needed for sustenance. If Al-Ghazali were around today, he would assert that Muslim religious discourse on matters scientific is poisonous, killing the scientific aspirations of the religious, and the religious aspirations of the scientists.

There is no such thing as an “Islamic” position on the validity of a scientific theory. In fact, scientific theories have no concern with any religious or non-religious positions on them. Empirically unsubstantiated claims, even if they sound perfectly logical, are not fully accepted until they survive the rigor of experimentation. No amount of philosophical refutations or Scriptural references will change facts. Scientific progress is not based on its congruency with Scripture, or whether the scientist believes or disbelieves in God. It is based on resolving conflicts between hypotheses and experimental data.

It may be difficult to accept for many Muslims that questions in science are areas of inquiry where one is not allowed to appeal to God. But this is a product of how they have been cognitively conditioned with regards to this issue. Ironically, some of the most spiritually elated people are scientists who identify themselves as atheists. This is because they do not approach science assuming they have all the answers.

The universe is truly magnificent, and for a religious person to appreciate it as a Creation in the broad sense of the word, they have to negate their presumptions. If there is an Islamic position on science, it is that when you do not invoke God as an explanation that His magnificence unfolds in your quest to understanding His Creation.

Avoiding Extremes

Khalid Baig

Does Islam require --- or even permit ---- a coed masjid?

Without using the term ---for obvious reasons---- many people in the US are making suggestions that point in that direction. They begin by referring to real problems women face in some of the masjid where they are denied even minimal facilities to use the masjid but then take a “leap of faith” and go to the extreme position that men and women must be in the same physical space without any barriers and that both must have an equal share in administering the masjid. They call it the Prophetic example and the practice of this ummah over the centuries as a deviation from that Sunnah. They want to correct a historic wrong!

So let us take a careful and balanced look at the role of the masjid and that of our sisters in it according to Islamic teachings.

Does the Qur’an Require Masjid Attendance by Women?

The answer is no. Neither the Qur’an nor the Hadith make it a religious obligation for women to pray in a masjid. It is permitted, with conditions, as we shall see below. But it is never required.

Some people have tried to use the ayah from Surah al-Ahzab to imply a requirement. The ayah says:

“For the Muslim men and women,- for the believing men and women, for the devout men and women, for the truthful men and women, for the men and women who are patient and constant, for the men and women who humble themselves, for the men and women who give charity, for the men and women who fast, for the men and women who guard their chastity, and for the men and women who are exceedingly mindful of Allah—for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great rewards.”

[Al-Ahzab 33: 35]

What this very important ayah tells us is that women and men are equal in being servants of Allah and being responsible for whatever obligations have been placed on them. Allah’s forgiveness and great rewards are open to both men and women as they become sincere believers and devout worshipers, and as they develop qualities of humbleness, chastity, charity, and taqwa. It does not say that their obligations are the same or they work in a coed world.

Some people used this alleged quote from the Qur’an: “They (collaborate) to promote all that is good and oppose all that is evil.” [Al-Tawbah 9:71] to make their case. The word “collaborate” has been inserted to suggest that the Qur’an is praising men and women collaborat-

ing with each other in a coed campaign. If that is the idea, that is a blatant lie. For the word is not there and it is not implied. The Qur'an is simply asking men and women to command good and forbid evil in their own spheres. Here, for comparison, are three translations:

YUSUF ALI: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil.

PICKTHAL: they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

SHAKIR: they enjoin good and forbid evil.

None of them hints at the word "collaborate."

The Qur'an on Mixed Gatherings

To understand the Qur'an's view of mixed gatherings, we can turn to this verse: "O you who believe! Let not some men among you laugh at others: It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): Nor let some women laugh at others: It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former)" [Al-Hujarat, 49:11]. Here men have been admonished against laughing at other men and women from laughing at other women. But there is no mention of cross gender possibilities. Why? Because in Islam there is no concept of a mixed gathering. So the question of men laughing at women or vice versa simply does not arise.

Hadiths on Women's Prayers

Given below are some of the hadiths that address the issue of women's prayers.

A) Um Salama (RA), narrates that the Messenger of Allah (SAWS) said: "The best masjid for women is the innermost part of their houses." [Ahmad 6/297, Tabrani in Al-Kabeer, Ibn Khuzaima, Mustadrak Hakim 1/209].

B) Um Humayd, the wife of Abu Humayd As-Sa'di (RAA) narrates that she came to the Prophet (SAWS) and said: "O Messenger of Allah, I love to pray with you. He said, "I know that you love to pray with me, but your prayer in your bayt [e.g. bedroom] is better than your prayer in your hujra [e.g. living room], and your

prayer in your hujra is better than your prayer in your daar [e.g. courtyard], and your prayer in your daar is better than your prayer in your neighborhood masjid, and your prayer in your neighborhood masjid is better than your prayer in my masjid." The narrator says: "So she ordered and a masjid was constructed for her in the farthest and darkest corner of her house, and she continued to pray there until she died." [Ahmad 6/371, Ibn Khuzaima 3/95, Ibn Hibban 2214]

C) Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (RA) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (SAWS), said: "No woman prays a prayer more beloved to Allah, than that in the darkest part of her home." [At-Tabrani in Al-Kabeer. Also Ibn Khuzaimah 3/96]

D) Abdullah Ibn Umar (RA) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (SAWS), said: "The woman is worth hiding ('awrat) and when she leaves her home, the Shaytaan raises his glance to her, and she is never closer to Allah than when she is in the innermost part of her home." [Tabrani in Al-Awsat. For similar hadiths see Tirmidhi, Abwaab-ur-Ridaa' 1173; Ibn Khuzaima 3/93; Ibn Hibban 5570]

E) Abdullah Ibn Umar (RA) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (SAWS), said: "Do not prevent your women from (entering) the mosques, but their houses are better for them." [Abu Dawud Kitab-us-Salat. Bab Ma Jaa'a fi Khuroojin-nisaa-i ilal Masjid]

F) Abdullah Ibn Umar (RA) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (SAWS), said: "Do not prevent your women from (entering) the mosques of Allah." [Sahih Muslim. Kitab-us-Salat, Babu Khuroojin Nisaa'i ilal masjid iza lam utarattab. #668]

Imam Nawawi's Commentary on the Hadith prohibiting Stopping Women from Masjid

This last hadith has been used as a justification for an unmitigated and unconditional right of women to fully participate in the main hall of a masjid. But this is not how it has been understood by hadith scholars and Muslim jurists. In

his commentary of Sahih Muslim, Imam Nawa-wi writes:

“From this hadith and other hadiths like this it appears that women should not be prohibited from the masjid, but with conditions that the scholars have mentioned and which are deduced from hadiths and these are:

- 1) She should not wear any perfume.
- 3) She should not be wearing jingling jewelry
- 4) She should not be wearing fancy clothes.
- 5) She should not mix with the men.
- 6) She should not be young, through whom fitna can erupt
- 7) The path to the masjid should be safe (i.e. there should be no fear of any problem on her way to and from the masjid).

Stopping them from going to the masjid will be lightly discouraged (makruh tanzih) if she meets all the conditions listed here and has a husband or guardian. Stopping them will be haram when she meets all the conditions and does not have a husband or guardian.”

Women in the Masjid in the Time of the Prophet (SAWS)

Certainly there are authentic reports that tell us that women did attend the prayers at the masjid during the time of the Prophet (SAWS). But they do not support the overall picture being painted by the coed masjid campaigners. Regarding women’s prayers in the masjid, we get this account:

Aishah (RA) narrates that the Prophet (SAWS), used to pray Fajr at dusk and then the women would leave immediately without being recognized because of darkness and they would not recognize each other. [Bukhari, Kitab-ul-Azan Bab Sur’ati Insiraaf-inisaai min as-subh]

Another narration tells us:

Um Salamah (RA) reports that when the Prophet (SAWS), finished the prayer by saying salam, the women would stand up and leave while he was saying the salam. And he would

stay in his place for a little while before standing up. [Bukhari, Kitab-ul-Azan Bab Salat-un-Nisa khalf-ar-Rijal]. Other narrations tell us that men also stayed with the Prophet (SAWS) so the women could leave before men.

While both of these hadiths tell us that women were praying in the masjid, they also inform us that an overriding concern was that they should not be seen by men. The women left even as the Prophet (SAWS), was saying the salam. This act would be extremely rude if conducted by a man. Yet it was desirable for women, clearly pointing out that men and women are not the same. Further, all men stayed behind so the women could leave without encountering them. Needless to say, this is poles-apart from the mutual discussion, full participation, and collaboration being advocated.

Masjid Setting the Tone for the Islamic Society

There is something else worth reflecting upon here. Islam brought about a sea-change in the Jahilya society, including its ethics, morality, and cultural practices. The pre-Islamic Jahilya society was a coed society, just like the modern Jahilya society. Islam transformed it, introducing, among other things, the laws of hijab and segregation of men and women. Of course the masjid was the center of this cultural and moral revolution. It had to depict the new teachings in the purest way possible so they would be emulated everywhere. And it did. Women were fully covered, wore no perfume or jingling jewelry, stayed as far away from men as possible and left the masjid quickly after the salat so there would be no intermixing. Even on the way to and from the masjid, they would stay so far to the sides that they were practically scraping the walls of the buildings. (See Abu Dawud, Kitab-ul-Adab. Bab “Fi Mashyin nisaa-i ma’ar-rijaali fit-tareeq”)

Blocking the Means

Another thing to keep in mind is the

well-established Islamic juristic principle of *Sadd-udh-dharaai'*, or the principle of blocking the means to sin. In life often one thing leads to another. An act of sin is not an isolated event but is preceded by chains of other events, which facilitate it. Therefore, Islam does not just forbid the final act, but also the preceding acts that can lead to it. There are hundreds of laws in Islamic jurisprudence that are based on this important principle. Consider alcohol. All its problems arise from its consumption. But Islam banned not just consumption of alcohol, but also making it, storing it, selling it, offering it, and even eating at a table where it is being served. This is blocking the means. One only needs to look at the spectacular success that Islam had in prohibiting alcohol and keeping the lands of Islam dry compared to the miserable failure of other societies in achieving that goal to appreciate the wisdom of the Islamic teachings.

Islam's laws of hijab follow the same principle. Ultimately, it is the illicit extramarital relationships that are prohibited. But Islam does not limit itself to banning this final result. It also prohibits a number of other practices that could lead to this final sin. Again, the result speaks for itself. For centuries, Islam has provided an atmosphere of chastity and decency in its societies that remains unmatched by any other society. And this has been accomplished through the same laws of hijab and segregation of sexes that are under attack today.

Fuqaha on Women in the Masjid

We can gain further insight into this issue by looking at the positions of the schools of fiqh. This should dispel the myth that it is only some misguided Mullahs from the subcontinent that stand in the way of coed masajid.

Shafi'i Fiqh

Taken from the *Reliance of the Traveler*:

It is better for women to pray at home than at the mosque (A: whether they are young or

old). It is offensive for an attractive or young woman to come to the mosque to pray (O: or for her husband to permit her), though not offensive for women who are not young or attractive when this is unlikely to cause temptation. (N: the authors words here must be interpreted in the light of the following details: If a woman in going to a group prayer or elsewhere will definitely lead to temptation between the sexes, it is unlawful for her to go. If such temptation can be definitely prevented her going to attend group prayer remains sunnah, as is attested to by the hadiths that have reached us on the subject. If temptation is feared but not certain to occur, her going becomes offensive. Whether such temptation is likely to occur is something that differs with different times, places, and people. An old woman is not like a young one, nor a righteous society like one in which temptation between the sexes is the rule; nor is a special prayer place set aside for women in a mosque like a prayer place which they share with men. This is why A'isha (Allah be well pleased with her) said:

“Had the Prophet (SAWS), seen what women do now, he would have forbidden them the mosque as the women of Bani-Israel were forbidden.” (A hadith reported by Bukhari and Muslim)

Hanafi Fiqh

Translated from Al-Lubaab:

And it is offensive for young women to attend the congregation at all, because in that there is a fear of fitna (but there is no harm that old women attend Fajr, Maghrib, and Isha). And that is according to Imam Abu Hanifah. And according to them (Imam Abu Yusuf and Imam Muhammad) old women can go out in every salah, because there is no fear of fitna because they lack attractiveness. According to Jawharatun Nayyara, the offensiveness is in all salah because of the appearance of fisq in our time period. The bad people come more during Zuhr, Asr, and Jum'ah prayers while they are sleeping at the time

of Fajr and Isha and eating at the time of Maghrib.

The positions of the Maliki and Hambali schools are also similar.

Conclusion

As has been shown above, the case for a full and equal participation by men and women without barriers in the main hall of the masjid, therefore, has no foundation in the Shariah.

However, women may have genuine needs for using the masjid and they have been permitted to do so. It is the responsibility of the administrators of a masjid to see to it that these needs are met by providing them with a safe, protected, and private space. Where women are denied entry in the masjid, or where they are required to enter the main hall, the situation should be corrected.

The central argument of the proponents of the coed masjid is that segregation is exclusion. But it is not. No one would take the demand seriously that medical and engineering students at a university must share the same classroom to prove that they are not unequal. Their needs are different, and so are their spaces.

The prohibition of free mixing of men and women and their equal, unrestrained participation in public affairs is not something to be ashamed of. This has been meant to provide for chastity and purity of hearts and conduct and that has been its result. In contrast, houses of worship of other religions became horrible centers of corruption on this account precisely because their leaders chose to ignore this principle. And as we become lax in this area we are seeing similar unfortunate incidents in the masjid in the West as well.

While the advocates of the coed masjid claim that they are asserting the rights of women, they are in fact denying the right of a private space to both men and women. The masjid is the pivot for the Muslim community. It has to be the place that sets the standards for proper behavior. It is the responsibility of everyone to protect it from all corruption, including the one promoted in the name of reform.

Being Grateful

Towards the end of his life, Hazrat Moulana Ahmad Shah Saahib (ra) suffered some type of a sickness affecting his bladder. He passed urine by using a tube attached to a bottle, which he held in his hands. He even had to travel in this condition. Someone once asked him: “What is the cause of this sickness?”

“My evil actions,” he lamented.

Puzzled, the man asked: “What evil actions are you talking about?”

“For years on end, I was able to pass urine a few times in a day with ease and comfort. However, not once did this ungrateful tongue of mine ever express gratitude to Allah for this favour of His. Which action can be more evil than this? Allah has warned us of His punishment for ingratitude:

“And if you are ungrateful, indeed My punishment is severe.” (Surah Ebrahim, v7)

Appreciation Skills

Dr. Mamdouh Mohammed

When and how to show appreciation is an essential skill for successful leadership. Allah's Messenger (SAWS) said,

He who does not thank people does not thank Allah. (Tirmidhi)

Today's work environment of downsizing and multitasking has led to an increasingly impersonal work atmosphere. It has become a challenge and often a last priority on the busy to-do list for a leader to recognize and give approval to the work of his staff. This is however a critical aspect of a leader's job not only for the success and motivation of his staff but also for his own success as a leader.

What types of rewards are most satisfying, beneficial, and motivating to people? Are financial rewards or bonuses always the best form of appreciation? Although material rewards may seem the best, most research on performance appraisals and compensation reflects that there are many employees who actually prefer recognition and appreciation of their work from their leadership.

It is extremely important that a leader strive to impart a sense of genuine appreciation for a job well done. Even if there is no specific, identifiable end to a project or a measurable result, the leader should look for other aspects of the work or the worker to appreciate. For instance, he can extend his appreciation for an employee or a team member who is neat in appearance or diligent in performance.

Finding ways to show appreciation is not as easy a task as most new employees might think. For many people the act itself—of thanking someone—is often difficult. The leader may worry about appearing superficial or awkward in the delivery of the compliments. Despite the risks, it is important that a leader develops a sense of appreciation for others and make it a natural working habit as well as an inseparable part of life.

Recognition and approval from superiors and colleagues are major factors in personal motivation and superior job performance. Workers often rate their job satisfaction in part on work environment and relationship with their superiors. Although leaders must be able to function and often motivate themselves without much recognition or approval from others, even the best employee or well-paid team member may find it difficult to exert the effort required to accomplish a task without external recognition.

But how can a leader show appreciation to others? How does that appreciation translate into motivation? When is it the right time to bestow appreciation?

Human beings indeed are social creatures. Appreciation and recognition both verbal and non-verbal are therefore more powerful at times than financial compensation—however important the monetary appreciation is. A leader whose outlook is positive and who realizes the individual worth and dignity of each team member can be a source of reassurance and mo-

tivation.

Words of praise carry no material value but their impact can be endless. Such praise need not be planned. It may be better to speak from the heart than to appear as if one is delivering a rehearsed message. An unexpected “Thank you” or “I appreciate your efforts” can be pleasant interruptions in the usual work routine or meeting. Allah’s Messenger said,

A man speaks a good word, not realizing its worth, for which Allah records for him His good pleasure till the day he meets Him. A man also speaks an evil word not realizing its importance for which Allah records for him His displeasure till the day he meets Him.
(Tirmidhi)

A successful leader works hard to create an environment of mutual appreciation and recognition by personally greeting each member even at least with a smile. It is also important to develop personal ties between leaders and subordinates.

Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) used to assign personalized names to his Companions like: Abu Bakr the Testifier to the Truth, Umar the Criterion between Good and Bad (Al-Faruq), and Ali the Gate to Knowledge, Abu Ubaidah the Trustworthy of the Nation. What is unique about these titles is that they did not convey fame or position as much as they were reflective of the leader’s view of the positive characteristics of the individuals.

As well as spoken praise, written praise can also be a form of appreciation. Thank you notes, emails and letters of commendation can all be used as tools of appreciation. A brief handwritten note on the leader’s personal stationery, not only serves as a constant reminder, even after the moment has passed but can also provide a touch of personal attention that may not have been conveyed verbally.

Never underestimate the power of a simple smile in the midst of a hectic day. A light greeting and a firm handshake is equally powerful.

Showing gratitude is seldom discussed as a motivating factor—receiving only passing attention. In fact, it is quite common to observe increased effort exerted by workers after a motivational talk by the leader.

Increased effort may also be apparent after a break in the working routine for a staff appreciation meeting. A leader who works alongside his team experiencing its challenges and stresses first-hand can also provide motivation through his example and attitude.

Leaders must be sensitive to this link between appreciation and motivation. Every personal interaction with a team member must convey a sense of belonging, togetherness, and recognition of each particular member’s contribution to the overall results.

Personal attention does not have to be time consuming. As mentioned previously, it can be either verbal or non-verbal. The leader may make personal visits to the work site. He may organize an informal get-together and invite the members to share in a meal. Or he may choose to invite them to his home as a refreshing break from the usual work environment. And it definitely does not have to be planned; spontaneous activities can be motivational too.

Another aspect of showing gratitude is timing. When is the right time? Is there a right time? An oversimplified answer would be anytime is the right time. Even if the show of appreciation is past due—certainly better late than never—it is still important. However, for the successful leader the principle should be ‘the sooner the better.’ This principle can be derived from the saying of Allah’s Messenger,

Give the hireling his wages before his sweat dries. (Ibn Majah)

This act places great pressure on the leader to be aware of what is happening in his organization, to be able to exercise proper judgment when assessing situations, and to be aware of the impact of a well-timed compliment.

There may be times when a team member is

seeking financial compensation or is expecting a bonus or reward. The leader should exercise judgment so that he or she does not trivialize the situation by using a verbal or non-financial gesture of appreciation alone.

At other times, a team member's outstanding performance may have put him or her at odds with the rest of the team. Unless done wisely and as a way to promote motivation and good will within the entire team, a public show of appreciation for that individual member could be further detrimental to the team. Or, it could be a motivating factor as it awakens the competitive spirit in the other team members.

Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) held up a Companion's hand, noting the dry, cracked skin that was a result of hard labor. He shared his appreciation publicly, saying,

This was the type of hand that Allah and he loved.

The leader of any organization, large or small, is the one who sets the tone for the work environment. The attitudes and actions of the

leader will contribute to the success of the organization. The leader is a source of recognition, approval, and motivation for the team.

While no member should think that the leader has a bag of compliments from which he recycles the same gestures over and over again, all employees should feel that they know what to expect from their leader. An effective leader should be consistent in his style of leadership so that his employees feel secure while being able to incorporate the element of surprise and a sense of humor into the work environment.

When and how to show appreciation is an important leadership skill that needs to be developed and practiced. All team members deserve to be appreciated. It is their right. It gears them up to perform their best.

Everyone who is in a position of leadership has a duty to understand the needs of each employee and to be wise and sincere in meting out praise and compliments. Without this ability neither the leader nor the organization will succeed.

Courage and Firmness

Once Hazrat Moulana Maseehullah Khan Saaheb (ra) fell extremely ill. He could barely walk firmly. From his house to the majlis-khana, he had to stop twice to rest. After sitting down he explained to those who were present, "I am gone extremely weak, so weak that I can barely walk to the majlis-khana. I stopped twice to rest. With great difficulty I managed to perform my zuhr salaah. I've got numbness in my feet. The only reason I am telling you all of this is so that you may understand that for small petty reasons you should not leave out your work. One must remain firm upon the work one is appointed to do."

(Hazrat Moulana Maseehullah Khan Saaheb [ra] – A Brief Biography)

Between Hope & Despair

Despair, Pessimism and other forms of spiritual ailment have so overwhelmed some of us that we have become helpless, lost self-esteem, succumbed to feelings of defeatism and disappointment, and abandoned all attempt at making a difference in this life and for the next.

People of this sort have nothing for life and the living, save blame, accusations, suspicions, and insults. They forfeit all opportunities of learning, doing good, and engagement in beneficial labor.

Plagued with idleness, indolence, and failure, they lead a life fraught with worry, stress, and mental instability. Their behavior is sour, their temperament petulant, their efforts fruitless, and their worries snowball day by day. An Arab adage aptly captures their sorry situation:

Indolence wedded procrastination giving birth to regret. Wretchedness married languor siring deprivation. (Adab Al-Dunya wa'l-Din, 407).

How proud Satan is of this lot! And why shouldn't he be? They are part of his hosts, marching to his drumming. They are a weapon in his demonic arsenal, which he employs in spreading fatal spiritual diseases and debarring the slaves of Allah from rising up to their worldly and otherworldly responsibilities.

The Virus Spreads

Worse still, these destructive maladies have stolen into the hearts of some da'ies, or call-

ers unto Allah, and some students of ilm, leading them to believe that munkar (wrong) is too vast to be righted. Overwhelmed by these feelings, they have grown too enfeebled to shoulder the responsibility of reform, and so withdrawn into themselves and sunk into isolation.

It is as though these people had never heard Allah's words:

And do not despair of Allah's mercy. For, most surely, none despairs of Allah's mercy except the disbelieving people. [12:87]

or His words:

And who desponds of the mercy of his Lord but those who are astray [15:56];

or the Messenger's (SAWS) response when asked about major sins:

[Major sins are]: Associating false gods with Allah, despairing of Allah's spirit, and desponding of Allah's mercy. (Al-Bazzar)

The Prophetic Antidote Administered

The students and professors of 'ilm, and Muslims in general, should rise above despair. They should cast aside despondency. They should assume a proactive attitude. They should diligently seek to reform themselves and others—taking strength from patient endurance, from trust in the Lord of the Heavens and the Earth, from hopefulness, and hope in Allah's promise. Allah said:

Call to the path of your Lord, O Prophet, with

sound wisdom and fair admonition. And as to all people, argue gently with them in the fairest manner. Indeed, it is your Lord alone who knows best all those who have strayed from His straight path; and He knows best all those who are guided aright. Moreover, if you believers punish aggressors, then punish them with the like of that with which you have been afflicted by them. But if you remain patient, it is, most surely, better for those who are patient.

So be patient, O Prophet. Yet know that your patience shall not endure through adversity except with the help of Allah. Thus do not grieve over those of them who oppose you, nor be in any distress because of what they plot against you. [16:125-128]

And He said:

And thereby We made from them exemplary leaders, guiding their people by Our command—when they had endured patiently, and when they had certainty in the truth of Our revealed verses. [32:24]

He also said:

But as to those who strive for Us alone, against every evil, We shall, most surely, guide them upon Our pathways to salvation. For, indeed, Allah is, most surely, with those who excel in doing good. [29:69]

In the first days of the mission of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), Muslims encountered violent and relentless opposition from the polytheists of Makkah. Compelled by the immense torture that the Makkans were heaping upon their heads—and in a moment of human weakness to which not even the indestructible Companions I were immune—some of them went to the Prophet (SAWS) and implored him, saying:

Would that you petition Allah to grant us victory over our enemies! Would that you supplicate in our behalf! The Prophet (SAWS) responded with these words: By Allah! This affair (Islam) is bound to triumph such that

a man will travel from Ṣanāʾa (the capital of Yemen, to the west) to Hadramawt (a Yemeni region toward the east) fearing only Allah and the wolf for his sheep. That is Allah's promise.

But you are in haste. (Bukhari and Muslim)

As the above Hadith demonstrates, the Prophet (SAWS) exhorted his Companions I to persevere in faith with patience, steadfastness, and hope in Allah. It was the wont of the Prophet (SAWS) to give glad tidings, to refrain from spreading bad news, and to command others to do the same. When the Prophet (SAWS) sent Muadh ibn Jabal and Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari to Yemen, he advised them:

Make things easy for people, and do not make things difficult for people. Give glad tidings. Let not your behavior drive people away from Islam. Avoid dispute and be in agreement with one another. (Bukhari and Muslim)

In order for Muslims to carry out the divine command of doing good, enjoining justice, and combating injustice, they need a significant and persistent dose of encouragement and cheering. The torch of hope, helpfulness, and confidence needs to be kindled in their hearts such that these hearts become free from all traces of despair and despondence.

In a time when the outnumbered and overpowered followers of the Prophet (SAWS) were suffering tremendous persecution and oppression at the hands of their disbelieving fellow tribesmen, he gave his Companions I the good news of their God-promised victory over Chosroes' Persian Empire and Caesar's Roman Dominion.

The Prophet (SAWS) said:

Indeed, Allah has tilted earth before me, till I saw its eastern and western expanses. And, sure enough, my Ummah's dominion will cover those parts of the earth which Allah has shown me. Moreover, I was given the two treasure troves: The red [signifying the Roman Empire] and the white [signifying the Persian Empire].

(Muslim)

History tells us how his remarkable prophesy came true. Not long after the Prophet (SAWS) pronounced this singular vision, the Persian and Roman territories fell one after another into the hands of Muslims.

Hope Yet Springs

Now, when one observes the current condition of the Muslim Ummah, one is bound to see many pleasing things, much good news. Muslims are coming back to their religion. The numbers of Muslims who honor and hold fast to the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) is on the rise. The signposts of the Shari'ah are conspicuous. The lights of the Sunnah are brilliant. Boundaries of falsehood and heresy are clearly marked. All these things make one hopeful and fill one's heart with trust in Allah's succor:

Yet most surely, the help of Allah is ever near!

[2:214]

So, you da'ies who invite to the truth, and you students of knowledge who are the bearers of the prophetic heritage, let not despondence hold back your laboring for your Lord. Be steadfast. Endure in faith patiently. Keep marching down the path of learning, teaching, and guiding humankind from the darkness of ignorance, polytheism, sin, and heresy, to the white shores of peace, salvation, and bliss.

Thank Allah that goodness is ever-present in the Muslim Ummah. Processions of Muslim reformers will never cease. The Prophet (SAWS) said:

The example of my Ummah is like that of a rainy season. None knows whether its beginning or end will be good. (Ahmad and Tirmidhi)

He said also:

Allah will continue to raise from among the Muslim Ummah those whom He uses to uphold His religion. (Ahmad and Ibn Majah)

Also, on the authority of Thawban, who quoted the Prophet (SAWS) as saying:

There will ever be a contingent from among my Ummah who will continue to rally around the banner of truth, undaunted by the betrayals they meet, until they meet Allah in that state.

(Muslim)

With such glad tidings and heart-comforting words, no one should succumb to despair and despondency. Hopefulness strengthens hearts, reinforces resolve, and opens the gates of hope, work, sacrifice, and giving. The man of hope faces difficulties better, handles distress graciously, and persists in doing good and making a difference to the last moments of his life. The Prophet (SAWS) said:

If the Hour of Judgment comes and one of you has a sapling in his hand, let him plant it before he stands up, if he is so able. (Ahmad and Bukhari)

Subhan-Allah! Transcendent is the Glory of Allah! If we are commanded to continue benefiting humanity and enriching life even when besieged by the terrors of the final quaking of the earth at the Hour of Doom, what about before that!?

The reasonable, resolute reformer braces himself and prepares for whatever difficulties he may face in his journey to Allah. He works hard, sincerely, wisely, and knowingly, trusting in the certainty of Allah's aid. He is all hope that Allah will empower him to attain his noble goals.

The Prophet (SAWS) advised Ibn Abbas with these words:

Truly, with patience comes victory. Truly, with distress comes relief. (Ahmad)

Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim said:

Supremely noble feats invite troubles. Happiness is accessible only through a sea of hardship, which cannot be crossed save on the ships of tenacity and seriousness. (Mifta Dar Al-Sa'adah, 1:363)

The Qurán in Translation

Although the Qurán was sent down as “an Arabic recitation,” [1] the vast majority of Muslims do not believe that its language is of this world. Rather, “it is as though the poverty-stricken coagulation which is the language of mortal man were under the formidable pressure of the Heavenly Word broken into a thousand fragments.”[2] The Quran itself alludes to this awesome power:

Had We made this Quran descend upon a mountain, thou wouldst have seen it humbled, rent asunder by the fear of God. These are the parables We set forth for mankind, that haply they may reflect. [Surat Al-Hasr, 59:21]

From this perspective, translating the Quran into any language is a daunting task, for it entails conveying the absolute and infinite by means of the relative and finite.

Reflecting upon the inimitability of the Quran has led many to conclude that the nature of Quranic Arabic is among the greatest miracles of Islam. To those who say it is a human fabrication, the text says,

Then bring a surah like it . . . if you are truthful. [Surat Yunus, 10:38]

Another verse asserts that all of humanity could not produce its like:

Surely if mankind and jinn banded together to bring the like of this Quran, they would not bring the like thereof, even if they supported one another. [Surat Al-Isra', 17:88]

Those who have endeavored to translate the Quran realize this truth most acutely. As A. J. Arberry states in the introduction to *The Koran Interpreted*,

The rhetoric and rhythm of the Arabic of the Koran are so characteristic, so powerful, so highly emotive, that any version whatsoever is bound in the nature of things to be but a poor copy of the glittering splendour of the original. [3]

And in his introduction to *The Glorious Quran*, Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall states,

The Quran cannot be translated. That is the belief of the traditional Sheykhhs and of the present writer.[4]

Arabic Syntax

At the center of this Qur'anic inimitability is its continual thematic and linguistic alternation, which many scholars of the Arabic language consider to be among the Quran's “remarkable and exquisite subtleties.” [5] Through such alternation the Quran comes across as both static and dynamic, retaining the quality of the spoken word and the medium of the written. Such linguistic alternations (iltifat) can be difficult to translate, since they defy or transcend the norms of human speech.[6] Iltifat has been recognized as an attribute of eloquence (balaghah) in all forms of Arabic. But it figures far more prominently in the Quran than in poetry or prose. Its

most common form is the alternation between persons: from third to first, first to third, third to second, or second to third. An example can be found in Surat Ibrahim, 14:13:

So their Lord revealed unto them, “We shall surely destroy the wrongdoers.”

The shift in the Divine Voice from third-person singular to first-person plural brings the reality of Divine Justice into immediate relief: many people believe they face a distant reckoning from a transcendent Lord, though He is in fact immanently present and His Justice is immediate. In other verses this same technique brings into focus the omnipresence of God’s guiding Mercy. In this way the syntactical structure of many verses is believed to pull even the recalcitrant soul toward God by engendering the awareness that no matter how far a human being may be from God, God is nearer to him than his jugular vein. [Surat Qaf,50:16]

The best-known instance of iltifat is found in the opening surah of the Quran:

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, the Compassionate, the Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgment. Thee we worship and from Thee we seek help. Guide us upon the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast blessed, not of those who incur wrath, nor of those who are astray.

The first four verses (first two sentences) speak of God as a transcendent third person, whereas the next verses bring God into an immediate relationship with human beings. This sudden shift from Divine Transcendence to Divine Immanence is even more dramatic in Arabic. Although something of this and the many other instances of iltifat can be rendered in translation, even those who have mastered both languages have yet to render them in a manner that fully captures the dramatic effect this sudden shift in the original Arabic can have on readers or listeners.

Grammatical Structure

The iltifat, or alternation between tenses or persons, can be difficult for those reading a translation, but there are other difficulties as well. Foremost among these are the many grammatical structures in the Quran that are open to multiple interpretations that cannot be rendered in translation. A famous example is 21:107, which is translated by A. J. Arberry as follows:

We have not sent thee, save as a mercy unto all beings. [7]

Muhammad Abdel Haleem renders it:

It was only as a mercy that We sent you [the Prophet] to all people.[8]

In the The Study Quran it is translated,

And We sent thee not, save as a mercy unto the worlds.

But it could also be rendered,

We did not send thee, save out of mercy for the worlds.

These four variations reflect the manner in which the Arabic word rahmah, “mercy,” can be interpreted as modifying either the pronoun “you” or the verb “to send.” Both are valid grammatical readings, but the Arabic of the text allows readers to understand both that the sending of the Prophet was done out of mercy and that he himself is a mercy. Yet the translator must choose to limit the polyvalent Arabic text to a single meaning or render a dual translation that would convey both meanings. In such instances translation not only inhibits the language of the Quran, but also limits the multiple theological implications of the verse.

The polyvalence of Quranic Arabic can also be found in the possible referents for a single pronoun, a problem often discussed in the exegetical tradition. For example, the most common translation of 2:177 is roughly as follows:

It is not piety to turn your faces to the east and the west. Rather, piety is he who believes in God, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets; and who gives wealth,

despite loving it, to kinsfolk, orphans, the indigent, the traveler, beggars . . . (emphasis added)

This translation follows the predominant interpretation. The first-person masculine pronoun, which is rendered “it” in the preceding translation can, however, be interpreted as referring to God rather than to wealth. In which case it would be translated:

It is not piety to turn your faces to the east and the west. Rather, piety is he who believes in God, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets; and who gives wealth, *out of love for God*, to kinsfolk, orphans, the indigent, the traveler, beggars . . . (emphasis added)

The two translations differ in whether one reads the first-person singular pronoun in the Arabic phrase *‘ala hubbihi* (indicated by italics in each translation) as a reference to wealth or to God. Both readings are viable in the Arabic. In this way the Qur’anic text opens onto two directions, implying that one must give both despite the love of worldly wealth and out of love for God. Yet the translator into any European language must choose one option or provide a prolix translation that compromises the flow of the original. Not only do most such translations limit readers to a single interpretation; they also veil the manner in which the Quran, through the subtle placement of a single pronoun, alludes to the fact that true piety requires both love of God and overcoming attachment to the things of this world.

Qur’anic Terms

In addition to the syntactical and grammatical obstacles mentioned above, the translator of the Quran into any European language faces the challenge of finding equivalent words for central Qur’anic concepts. As the Quran is part of the Abrahamic tradition and presents itself as a continuation of the Torah, the Psalms, and the

Gospels, many concepts are similar. But other concepts are very different in nature. For example, both Christianity and Islam stress the importance of repentance. The word that conveys this concept in Arabic is *tawbah* and the verbal form is *tuba/yatubu*, the literal meaning of which is “to turn”; thus when one repents one is said to turn unto God, or *taba ila’Llah*. But this phrase also indicates that one has returned from sin to God, or sinfulness to godliness, which relates to the Qur’anic conception of the human being as inherently good, rather than stained by “original sin.”

The human side of *tawbah* can still be partially conveyed by the word “repentance.” However, the Quran also refers to God as having *tawbah* toward human beings, and there is no way to convey this reciprocity with a single word in English. Such reciprocity is evident in many verses, such as 5:39: Whosoever repents (*taba*) after his wrongdoing, and makes amends, God will relent (*yatubu*) unto him. In fact, the verb *taba/yatubu* refers to God more often than it does to human beings, since from a Qur’anic perspective it is only when God turns or relents to human beings that they are able to truly turn to Him in sincere repentance. Hence one of the Divine Names is *Al-Tawwab*, “the Turner” or “the Relenting.” The principality [centrality] of God’s *tawbah* is seen in 9:118, a literal translation of which reads,

Then He turned to them, that they would turn to Him. Truly God is the Turner, the Merciful.

One can see that translating God as “the Turner” fails to convey exactly what is meant and robs this central Qur’anic concept of its subtle majesty. Following the lead of previous translations, the translation in *The Study Quran* reads: Then He relented unto them, that they might repent. Truly God is Relenting, Merciful. This comes closer to the original meaning, but still sacrifices the reciprocity that grabs readers or listeners in Arabic and provides a visceral

awareness of the key Qur'anic concept that our ability to turn to God in repentance is entirely contingent upon God's turning to us with mercy and forgiveness.

The inadequacy of English equivalents for Arabic words may be most evident in the word *din*, usually translated "religion." The etymology of "religion" is very different from that of *din*. The two words thus convey different concepts. The etymology of "religion" has been debated for centuries. Some maintain, as did Cicero, that it comes from *relegere*, meaning, "to treat carefully." Others follow the fourth-century Christian apologist Lactantius, who maintains that it derives from *religare*, "to bind." As Lactantius writes, "We are tied to God and bound to Him (*religati*) by the bond of piety, and it is from this, and not, as Cicero holds, from careful consideration (*relegendo*), that religion has received its name." [9] Although the interpretation of Lactantius has prevailed in Christian circles, neither derivation is adequate for rendering *din*.

The Arabic root for *din* comes from the verb *dana/yadinu*, which means both "to owe a debt" and "to be obedient" or "to follow." [10] With regard to the former, *din* indicates that human beings are in debt to God, to whom they owe their entire existence. In relation to the latter, it connotes that human beings should submit to God's Power. [11] Thus 9:29, *wa la yadinuna din al-haqq*, is only partially translated when Pickthall renders it, "and [they] follow not the religion of truth," since it also implies that they "pay not the true debt." Likewise, 3:19 loses part of its meaning when translated, "Truly the religion (*din*) with God is Islam." On one hand, it implies that the debt (*din*) to God is submission (*islam*). On the other, it implies that obedience (*din*) to God is submission (*islam*). All three meanings are fully present in the Arabic, but cannot all be rendered in a single English translation. [12] Thus, although the Arabic word *din* and the English word "religion" both connote piety and voluntary submission to the Will

of God, they do so in different ways that have affected the overall interpretation of the word within each religious universe.

Conclusion

From an Islamic perspective, the subtleties of Qur'anic Arabic and its sudden thematic shifts lead to much consternation when read as the composition of mortals. It is thus believed that they can only be fully understood when read as the Discourse of the Eternal—the Divine Word being seen as pure substance and not as mere accident. From one perspective, it is in fact by assuming the appearance of accident that this substance is able to draw the soul out of accident and return it to pure substance. This understanding is best expressed by the philosopher Frithjof Schuon, who writes:

The Quran is, like the world, at the same time one and multiple. The world is a multiplicity which disperses and divides; the Quran is a multiplicity which draws together and leads to Unity. The multiplicity of the holy Book—the diversity of its words, sentences, pictures, and stories—fills the soul and then absorbs it and imperceptibly transposes it into the climate of serenity and immutability by a sort of divine "cunning." The soul, which is accustomed to the flux of phenomena, yields to this flux without resistance; it lives in phenomena and is by them divided and dispersed—even more than that, it actually becomes what it thinks and does. The revealed Discourse has the virtue that it accepts this tendency while at the same time reversing the movement thanks to the celestial nature of the content and the language, so that the fishes of the soul swim without distrust and with their habitual rhythm into the divine net. [13]

Such subtle transformations can be found in every dimension of the Quran, from its rapid transition between themes and topics, to the grammatical and syntactical nuances, only a few of which have been mentioned here. They are all woven into a sublime mosaic that, from an Is-

lamic perspective, cannot be fully rendered into a language other than the sacred language of Arabic, chosen by God. As such, Muslims maintain that the Quran will always defy any attempt to be conveyed by that which is relative, for it is meant to transmute the dispersion of fragmented human souls such that the relative comes to be a reflection of the Absolute.

From this perspective, the Quran cannot be translated on the linguistic plane. The only true translation of the Quran possible is of an existential order: only those who have assimilated the revelation or immersed themselves in its teachings so thoroughly that its meanings speak through their thoughts, words, and deeds can be said to represent an effective translation of the Noble Book. For Muslims of all sects and creeds, this is in fact the way of the Prophet Muhammad, for when asked about his character, his wife responded, The character of God's Prophet was the Quran. [14]

 * This article was excerpted from *The Study Quran*.

Notes:

[1] 12:2; 20:113; 39:28; 42:7; 43:3.

[2] Frithjof Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, trans. D. M. Matheson (London: Mandala, 1989), 44.

[3] A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 1:24.

[4] Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Glorious Quran* (Chicago: Kazi, 1994), iii.

[5] Ibn al-Athir, *Al-Jāmi al-kabir fi sina'at al-man'um min al-kalām wa-'l-man-thūr*, ed. M. Jawād and J. Sa'ūd (Iraq: n.p., 1956), 98.

[6] The most comprehensive examination of iltifāt in any European language is that of Muhammad Abdel Haleem in *Understanding the Quran: Themes and Style* (London: Tauris, 1999), 184–210.

[7] Arberry, *Koran Interpreted*, 2:26.

[8] M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, trans., *The Qur'an* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004), 208. Abdel Haleem adds a translation closer to that of Arberry in a note: "We sent you [the Prophet] only as a mercy to all people."

[9] Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 4:28.

[10] Some scholars have proposed that *dīn* is a loanword borrowed from the Persian word *den*, meaning "systemic religion." However, the variety of uses of *dīn* and words from the same root in the Quran and pre-Islamic poetry demonstrates that it has variegated meanings that are not all captured by the Persian word *den*.

[11] For a full discussion of the meaning of *dīn* in the Quran, see Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran* (Salem, NH: Ayer, 1987), chap. 8.

[12] The situation is further complicated by the way *dīn* is used in pre-Quranic poetry, where it implies "wont" or "custom." Thus one could say, "He followed the custom (*dīn*) of his people."

[13] Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, 50.

[14] Muslim ibn al-'ajjāj, *al-Sa'ī*, *Kitāb 'alāt al-musāfirin* (Book of the Prayer of Travelers), *hadīth* 18; Nisā'ī, *Sunan*, *Kitāb qiyām al-layl* (Book of the Night Vigil), *hadīth* 2.

Tale Carrier

Once a person was selling a slave. He informed the buyer that the slave had the bad habit of carrying tales. The buyer did not pay much attention to this and purchased the slave. After some time, the slave said to the master: "Your wife is having an affair and she wants to kill you." He then went to the master's wife and said: "Your husband does not love you anymore and he intends taking a second wife. Why don't you cut off a strand of his beard that is closer to his throat, then you can use that strand to enchant him into loving you alone." That night while the master pretended to be asleep, his wife came with a blade. He was convinced that she was about to kill him so he jumped up and killed her. When the wife's family members heard of what had transpired, they killed the husband. In this way a conflict and battle broke out between the two families which lasted for many years. (Ithaafus Saadatil Muttaqeen vol. 7, pg. 567)

Lessons:

1. Playing one spouse against the other or sowing discord between two people is a filthy habit which can have severe consequences.
2. One should not accept the reports of anyone and everyone. People have different agendas and they may implicate one in the process.
3. When a person entertains suspicions, he will look for the slightest clue to support it and then become convinced of the suspicion that he had, although there may be absolutely no reality to it.

The Parable of Spider

Atiya Islam

The word “Parable” comes from Greek and means “comparison”.

Parables are told in the Quran to illustrate a lesson from a religions point of view and to convey a moral wisdom. It is a teaching method that makes it easier to understand and to remember deep truths in an effective way. This kind of profound meaning can only be understood by those who seek true knowledge and attains it by the Grace of God.

One great comparison is mentioned in Surah 29, Al Ankabut - The Spider. To get an in-depth view, the chapter also narrates the stories of Qarun, Firaun and Haman from the period of Musa’s Prophet hood. These were all tyrant people who oppressed the Children of Israel and committed great sins.

The Story of Qarun is fully mentioned in Surah 28, Al Qasas - The Narration:

28:76. Qarun was doubtless, of the people of Moses; but he acted insolently towards them: such were the treasures We had bestowed on him that their very keys would have been a burden to a body of strong men, behold, his people said to him: “Exult not, for God loves not those who exult (in riches).

28:77. “But seek, with the (wealth) which God

has bestowed on thee, the Home of the Hereafter, nor forget thy portion in this world: but do thou good, as God has been good to thee, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: for God loves not those who do mischief.”

28:78. He said: “This has been given to me because of a certain knowledge which I have.” Did he not know that God had destroyed, before him, (whole) generations,- which were superior to him in strength and greater in the amount (of riches) they had collected? but the wicked are not called (immediately) to account for their sins.

28:79. So he went forth among his people in the (pride of his worldly) glitter. Said those whose aim is the Life of this World: “Oh! that we had the like of what Qarun has got! for he is truly a lord of mighty good fortune!”

28:80. But those who had been granted (true) knowledge said: “Alas for you! The reward of God (in the Hereafter) is best for those who believe and work righteousness: but this none shall attain, save those who steadfastly persevere (in good).”

28:81. Then We caused the earth to swallow up him and his house; and he had not (the least little) party to help him against God, nor could he

defend himself.

28:82. And those who had envied his position the day before began to say on the morrow: "Ah! it is indeed God Who enlarges the provision or restricts it, to any of His servants He pleases! had it not been that God was gracious to us, He could have caused the earth to swallow us up! Ah! those who reject God will assuredly never prosper."

28:83. That Home of the Hereafter We shall give to those who intend not high-handedness or mischief on earth: and the end is (best) for the righteous.

In Short, Qarun was a person who became so rich that the keys to his treasure were too heavy to carry even for strong men. Instead of giving thanks to God he became arrogant and thought of himself as better than anyone else. People told him how wrong he was and that he should spend some of his wealth in charity because it was initially given to him by God. But Qarun went on arguing that it was his intelligence and cleverness that had made him rich. The righteous didn't complain but the ones who loved worldly life wished they could be as fortunate as Qarun. God did punish Qarun in the end with an earthquake that swallowed him along with his treasures. A terrible end indeed for the wicked where his intelligence and cleverness couldn't help him at all.

Lets now go back to the parable and take a look at the construction of a Spiders web:

The spider makes a spider web by producing silk threads that is stuck to an end. The spider then carefully strengthens it with a second thread. This process is repeated and the spider continues to make a Y-shaped netting. When the first three radials of the web are constructed, more are added making sure that the distance is small enough and proportional. When the radials are complete the spider will fortify the center with five circular threads. Then a spiral of non-sticky thread is widely spread from inside out so that the spider can easily move around

it's own web. After the spider web is complete it will chew off the three initial threads and sit and wait. The spider waits near the web for a prey animal to become trapped. He senses the impact and struggle of a prey by vibrations transmitted through the web. The spider may also hide himself for the prey by holding one foot on a signal line from the hub and sense the vibration.

The comparison between the wicked man and the spider web:

29:40 Each one of them We seized for his crime: of them, against some We sent a violent tornado (with showers of stones); some were caught by a (mighty) Blast; some We caused the earth to swallow up; and some We drowned (in the waters): It was not God Who injured (or oppressed) them:" They injured (and oppressed) their own souls.

29:41 The parable of those who take protectors other than God is that of the spider, who builds (to itself) a house; but truly the flimsiest of houses is the spider's house;- if they but knew.

29:42 Verily God doth know of (every thing) whatever that they call upon besides Him: and He is Exalted (in power), Wise.

29:43 And such are the Parables We set forth for mankind, but only those understand them who have knowledge.

29:44 God created the heavens and the earth in true (proportions): verily in that is a Sign for those who believe.

The Spiders web is a great sign of God's creation. The structure exemplifies material and strength. The threads are very strongly built to catch a prey but in reality it is a weak house floating in the air. It can easily be destroyed by the mere fingertips of a man, by a large animal or by natural catastrophes. So is the parable of mankind. A man who relies on material resources and lives in glitz and glamour has nothing at all compared to the eternal reality. Their life is built on false hopes that can be broken very easily by God. Their so-called strength is actually a

Cont'd on page 44

Intimacy with Allah

Imam Ibn-ul-Qayyim al-Jawzi (ra)

The Souls of the Senses

Shaykha al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (ra) rendering apt judgment between opposing views on the issue-said that what the sense of hearing apprehends is more general and comprehensive, while what the sense of sight discerns is sounder and more perfect. Thus, the sense of hearing possesses generality and comprehensiveness, covering what is present and what is absent, and what is perceived and what is conceptualized, whereas the sense of sight [furnishes knowledge that] is perfect and sound.

It follows, then, that each of the five senses has a spirit and a soul, which is essentially its share of the heart. There are those whose hearts have no share of [these senses] any more than the wild beasts do. Hence, in this respect, such people and beasts are comparable. That is why Allah, the All-Powerful, compared these people to cattle-rather than worse. He said: (Or do you really think that most of them even listen or understand? In fact, they are like nothing but cattle. Rather, they are even further astray from Allah's way!) Surat Al-Furqan, 25:44.

For this reason, Allah has attributed to the disbelievers in His Revelation a deficiency in hearing, sight, and intellect, either because they fail to take advantage of these senses-this being as

good as lacking in them-or because the divine attribution of these senses pertains to the hearing, sight, and comprehension of the hearts-which will become evident to them when realities are unveiled [in the Hereafter], as [evidenced by] the statement that the dwellers of Hellfire shall make therein, as recorded in the Quran: (Moreover, they shall say: If only we had listened [to the Quran] or had used our reason [to discern its truth], we would not be among the Companions of the Flaming Fire.) Surat Al-Mulk, 67:10.

In addition, one of the interpretations of the statement of the All-High in the Quran: (Thus you [O Prophet] see them looking [blankly] at you, for they do not see.) Surat Al-A raf, 7:198 is as follows: That is, the disbelievers would look at the physical stature of the Prophet through their outwardly senses, but fail to see his prophetic stature and its significance through the inwardly senses, which is to say, through the eye of the heart.

Another interpretation is that the pronoun [they] is referring in this verse to idols, which leaves us to understand it in one of two ways: (1) They are looking metaphorically, for they have no eyes to see; or (2) "looking" (yanzuru) means 'facing/ as the Arabs say; "Your abode looks at mine," that is, 'faces' it [which would render the meaning of the verse: Thus you [O Prophet] see

[the idols] ‘facing you/ but they cannot see.]

The same is true of the sense of hearing, which the disbelievers in the Quran and the Prophet certainly possess-and through which the [divine] proof is established against them. Yet they are said to be lacking it in the sense of the hearing of the heart. For they would hear the Quran with their outwardly hearing, in the sense of cattle that hear nothing of the calling of the shepherd (but mere calls and cries. Deaf, dumb, and blind [in heart]-never shall they understand.) Surat Al-Baqarah, 2:171.

Had they sincerely listened to the Quran with the true soul- that is, the soul of the sense of hearing that resides in the heart-they would surely have had a blessed life that comes from the hearing that is attached to the heart. The deafness and muteness that ails them would have been cured, and they would have saved themselves from the Flaming Fire of Hell, separating from those lacking in hearing and reason.

The Hearing of the Heart

The occurrence of true hearing is the beginning of a blessed life, a life that is the most perfect kind of life in this world. By [this spiritual hearing] the heart obtains its nourishment and its balance, gaining strength and life, and attaining its blessing and its blossom. When it lacks sound nourishment, it turns to fulfilling its need with unwholesome and corrupt nourishment. Thus it fails to attain all its blessings, like the physical body that weakens when fed unwholesome food.

The heart being closer and better linked to physical hearing than to sight, the effect of what is heard transmits quicker to the heart than does what is seen, and the hearing of a beautiful, melodious, and apposite sound may lead one to swoon, which is not likely to occur upon seeing beautiful sights. A sound might have a great effect on the heart even without one’s noticing it-on account of heedlessness. But when one is alone or meditating, its effect is felt. The more a soul, or heart is isolated and cut off from the

physical body, the more it is affected by what it has previously heard.

If what is heard has a noble meaning and a melodious sound he heart receives a greater share of its meaning, and delights in it to the fullest, and the soul enjoys its share of the beauty and the melody of the voice and delights in it. Thereby, the enjoyment is doubled and the delight perfected, and a state of profound bliss is attained, transcending to the physical body and perhaps even to others nearby. This does not occur in this world save upon attaining perfection; nor does it occur save upon hearing the Divine Word.

Rapture at the Quran

This transport happens only when the soul is isolated from distractions and is prepared, and the heart encounters the soul of the meaning [of the Divine Speech] and embraces with its full being what is heard, exemplifying therein what the Quran says: (Indeed, in this [Quran] there is most surely a reminder for whomever has a [living] heart or lends [an attentive] ear, with [full] presence [of mind].) Surat Qaf, 50:37. The beauty of the voice of the reciter helps in this encounter so that it is as if one’s heart departs from this world altogether and enters another, and finds delight and a state that is found in nothing else. This state is akin to the state of the people of Paradise. What wonderful nourishment! How wholesome and nurturing!

This [state of bliss] in hearing the Quran is forbidden to hearts nourished on Satanic melody. Indeed, even if such a one finds the Qur’an delightful, it is because its melody may be similar [to the music that one is used to], not because of its special meanings. There is no blessing for the people of Paradise higher than their seeing of their beloved Lord, Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, with their own eyes and hearing His speech. ‘Abdul-lah the son of Imam Ahmad mentions in the book Al-Sunnah a report- concerning which I do not now recall whether it attributes to the

Prophet or not-which has it that “When people will hear the Quran on the Day of Resurrection from the All-Merciful, the Mighty and Glorious, it would be as if they had never heard it before.”

When the heart is filled with something, the distinction between the outward and the inward is mitigated so that the ear transmits to the heart what it finds fitting, even if the conveyed sound or the speaker does not intend such a meaning from it. Al-Qushayri said that he heard Abu ‘Abdullah Al-Sulami say: “I visited Abu Uthman Al-Maghribi. A man nearby was drawing water from a well using a pulley. -- He said to me: ‘Do you know O Abu Abd Al-Rahman what this pulley says?’ -- I said: ‘No.’ -- He said: ‘It says: “Allah. Allah.””

The examples of this are many. Once Abu Sulayman Al-Dimashqi passed by a peddler who was saying ‘Ya za‘tar barri’ (wild thyme), but he heard instead ‘isatara birri’ (Be generous. You shall see My bounty). This spiritual hearing follows the reality of the heart, union with which makes one imagine that he perceived [the very] meaning [by which his heart overwhelmed] regardless of the external sound.

The most perfect hearing, then, is that of one who hears from Allah His Speech-and it is the melody of the lovers and the Beloved. As mentioned in the hadith in Sahih Al-Bukhari that the Messenger of Allah & said, reporting from His Lord, the Blessed and the Exalted:

My servant draws near to me by nothing as much as [what] he does by fulfilling what I have required of him. And my servant continues to draw near to me by doing more than what I have required until I love him. When I love him, I become his hearing by which he hears, his sight by which he sees, his hand by which he strikes, and his leg by which he walks. By Me he. By Me he sees. By Me he strikes forth. And by Me he walks. (Bukhari)

“He is Sufficient for Me”

When Nabi Ebrahim (‘AS) left his wife Haajar (‘AS) with her infant child, Ismaa‘eel (AS), in the barren land of Makkah Mukarramah as per the command of Allah, his wife asked him: “O Ebrahim! Where are you going and leaving us behind in this valley in which there is neither company nor anything else?” Ebrahim (AS) did not look at her or reply to her. After repeating the question a few times she asked: “Has Allah commanded you to do this?” When he replied in the affirmative she exclaimed: “Then he will not allow us to perish.” (Saheeh Bukhaari) In some narrations these words also appear: “He is sufficient for me” and “I am pleased with Allah”. Thereafter her supplies were depleted and she ran between Safa and Marwah as a result of which Jibreel (‘AS) descended to unearth the well of Zamzam. When he asked her: “To who has your husband entrusted you?” she replied: “To Allah.” Then Jibreel (‘AS) exclaimed: “He has entrusted you to that Being Who is sufficient.” (Fathul Baari)

Lessons:

1. When our gaze is constantly fixed on Allah and we have deep conviction in Him, we will be prepared to make every sacrifice for His sake and we will not become victims of depression and despondency even in the most challenging of situations.
2. The hallmark in the life of Haajar (AS) which gave her that level of acceptance in the court of Allah was her submission to His commands. She did not look for any short-cuts, rephrase the words, re-interpret the meanings and alter the context of deen to suit her convenience. Doing this would be equal to putting the cart before the horse instead of the horse before the cart.

Anger: Shaytan's Potent Weapon

Sajida Fakhri

Almighty Allah created mankind pure in form and in a state of fitra. He was endowed with intelligence and with the noble and natural purpose of acknowledging and worshipping Allah. Man thus enjoys a certain nobility and honor over other creations of Allah. This freedom however comes with the trappings of responsibility, as human beings have been endowed with the profound inbuilt ability of doing both good and evil.

To persevere in the pure and sinless state in which he is born, man has to strive to ward off sin and evil and endeavor to remain on the path of Islam as laid down by the Quran and Sunnah. He should inculcate a strong sense of taqwa in order to be always conscious of Allah, and to avoid overstepping the limits laid down by Allah Almighty. This is no mean task – as man often succumbs to temptation and sin. Concurrent with the capacity of being wise, intelligent and profoundly judicious, he is also oftentimes foolish, weak and narrow minded. When confronted by trials and tribulations he exhibits hatred, jealousy, selfishness, lying, disobedience, sexual aberrations and a myriad of other sins.

While exhibiting a mix of feelings and emotions, a mu'min has to confront and combat—as the biggest challenge to his taqwa—the emotion of anger. Allah says in the Quran that in the tenure of our life on this earth, mankind will be tested by many difficulties and how he overcomes

these with his taqwa and iman will be a true test for him.

[But] do you think that you could enter paradise without having suffered like those [believers] who passed away before you? Misfortune and hardship befell them, and so shaken were they that the apostle, and the believers with him, would exclaim, "When will Allah's succor come?" Oh, verily, Allah's succor is [always] near! [Surat Al-Baqarah, 2:214]

But to be patient when faced by adversity, conflict, pain, and humiliation is perhaps the most difficult task for a virtuous Muslim. In such situations, it is always so easy to succumb to an all-enveloping rage and anger, till you can vent it in diverse forms, namely that of verbal, emotional and physical abuse. By the time the spell of anger has spent its course a lot of damage has been done – physically, psychologically, emotionally and socially. By surrendering to this anger, we are therefore, surrendering to Shaytan and assisting him and allowing him to use his mightiest weapon against us to destroy our lives.

Shaytan, after being banished from Paradise by Allah Almighty, proclaimed about the believers,

'Because You have thrown me out of the way, I will lie in wait for them on Your straight way. Then will I assault them from before them and

*behind them, from their right and their left.
You will find most of them to be ungrateful.'*

[Surat Al-A`raf]

Shaytan has always used the instrument of anger to attack mankind and to keep him misguided through his anger. Anger has been the root cause of countless crimes from time immemorial to the present day. All forms of abuse and cruelty (whether physical, emotional, verbal, and sexual), as well as wars, torture, rape, and other ills that have plagued societies through history and in the modern world have been perpetuated by anger.

It is no wonder then, that there are countless phrases and idioms associated with anger that have oblique references to, or are synonymous with, Shaytan and hell or hellfire. Some of them are:

Consumed with anger
Raging fury
Anger flared up
An inferno of anger
Fighting fire with fire
Adding fuel to fire
Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned
Fiery temper
Flushed with anger
To see red
Hot blooded

Writers and poets through time have coined some of these phrases and used them to express striations of anger in its myriad forms. Although anger is seemingly a natural emotion, the depth and degree of anger exhibited is of importance. Once expressed, anger has the capacity to eradicate and destroy relationships and friendships. It can have serious consequences because once a person becomes angry, he loses control over his better nature and says or does things, lashing out verbally and physically, resulting in ugly confrontations and doing things he may regret forever. Anger can also cause health problems, and in severe cases it may be a symptom of mental illness. Anger is like a poison which permeates everything, leading even to extreme actions like

bloodshed.

However, it is unnatural to say we should not exhibit any sort of anger, as this would be outside the capacity of a human being's nature. So the question arises: What is the permissible level of anger? How can we control that anger before it causes irreparable damage? A modicum of anger, annoyance and frustration is perhaps what will occur in almost all human beings. If it can wreak havoc in our lives, or if it is an anger that is uncontrollable or which consumes our better self, then it is the kind that should be controlled and rectified. For a good Muslim, controlling anger may be a momentous task and he must constantly be on the alert to curb it. Anger is the key to a host of evils and opening the door to anger will invite a multitude of devastating, volatile emotions.

Allah says in the Quran,
Those who spend (in Allah's cause) in prosperity and adversity, who repress their anger, and who pardon men, verily, Allah loves the Al Muhsinun (the good-doers). [Surat Al 'Imran, 3:134]

Hence the Quran places great importance not just on the curbing of anger but also in forgiveness, which can sometimes be extremely difficult in the face of immense animosity.

On the authority of Abu Hurarirah (a hadith states): 'A man said to the Prophet, "Give me advice." The Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) said, "Do not get angry." The man asked repeatedly and the Prophet answered each time, "Do not get angry." (Bukhari & Muslim)

As a person struggles to cope with anger at different stages in his life, this valuable, comprehensive and far reaching advice would apply to every Muslim. In fact, controlling one's anger is tantamount to being emotionally stable. Controlling anger can also be indicative of the strength of one's personality – after all, it is sometimes infants or toddlers who display unadulterated anger through their temper tantrums, so it is expected that by the time we reach adulthood, we have mastered the ability and the self-control to keep

our tempers reined in.

As adults, and important especially to us as Muslims, to be able to curb our tempers may be a mammoth task, as even older people sometimes find it difficult to keep negative emotions in check. Indication of this fact can be found in the following hadith:

The strong man is not the one who can overpower others in wrestling; rather the strong man is the one who controls himself when he gets angry. (Bukhari)

Closely related to the above are the words of another hadith,

The best of you are those who are slow to anger and swift to cool down ... beware of anger for it is a live coal in the heart of the descendants of Adam... (Tirmidhi)

So, as Muslims, how do we handle and control anger? Handling anger successfully depends on the person, situation and how he recognizes and combats the occasions that trigger it, so that there is a minimum recurrence of similar situations. Each episode of an angry outburst teaches him how he should further avoid or control future outbursts. If a Muslim gets angry, he should hold himself accountable for it (muhasaba) so that he will be able to exercise self-control and discipline if the situation arises again. This will involve mentally reflecting and analyzing what led up to it, what were the mistakes made and how to successfully overcome it in the future.

In our daily lives, the best way to control our anger would be to depart from the situation which is giving rise to the anger. It is not safe to constantly tamp down the anger as this may result in an emotional outburst later; doing constructive work at such a time helps. Suggested activities to help calm down –

- listen to the Quran
- work out or exercise
- go for a walk
- read

or spend quality time with close friends or relatives.

Such activities could help in channelizing negative energy into more positive outlets.

Prophet Mohammad (SAWS) has mentioned several Sunnah measures a Muslim can practice to restrain and contain his anger. One hadith of his states that we can ask Allah's assistance to counteract our anger,

I know a word the saying of which will cause him to relax, if he does say it. If he says, 'I seek refuge with Allah from Satan,' then all his anger will go away. (Bukhari, Abu Dawud)

Hence if these words were said by the Muslim with genuine faith and belief and he beseeches Allah to give him control over his anger, he will succeed in his endeavors, with Allah's help.

The Prophet (SAWS) also said,

If one of you gets angry and he is standing, he should sit down until his anger subsides. If it does not, then he should lie down. (Abu Dawud)

In these sublime words the mu'min is being guided to change his posture and demeanor so that he could control his acrimonious behavior.

Another hadith of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) states –

When you are angry, be silent. (Ahmad)

This is very simple and sound advice to follow as people often regret actions and words they have done and said when enraged and infuriated.

Furthermore, wudu is a purifying and cleansing procedure, obligatory not only before Salah but also recommended by Prophet Muhammad when a person is outraged.

When anyone of you gets angry let him perform ablution, because anger arises from fire. (Abu Dawud).

What better way can there be to cool and calm a person down, than through the extinguishing of the fire of anger—an attribute of Shaytan who himself was created from fire?

Fasting, too, is a shield and a protection which can shade us from the detrimental effects of rage.

So when one of you is fasting, he should nei-

ther indulge in obscene language, nor should he raise his voice in anger if someone attacks him or insults him. Let him say, “I am fasting.” (Muslim)

By avoiding a confrontation, a disgruntled person can very well curb his hostility and resentment. The person who wishes to confront him will be nonplussed and will receive no response to his bitterness. A definite end to a messy argument or fight!

Is anger always negative though? Are there any instances where a certain amount of subliminal anger is justified? Yes, there are a few occasions where this might be the case. If a person wishes to right a wrong—where he feels a definite injustice is being committed—a certain amount of anger may fuel him into setting the wrong aright. If lies and deceit are uttered in the name of religion, a Muslim may feel provoked to rectify the wrong that is taking place. However, anger should never be vented to further our own interests and ego. Even anger for the right cause does not give anyone the license to behave in a rude, insulting or cruel manner.

There should be some benefit in the rectification being expressed. If expressing annoyance leads to more harm than benefit, then it should be avoided. Advice can always be given in a courteous way, practicing good manners and preventing the matter from escalating into a full blown quarrel.

Eventually a Muslim must practice the best of behavior and the most moderate of manners in his dealings with his fellow Muslims, as we are ultimately answerable to Allah for our behavior and actions.

Be merciful to those on earth and the One above the heavens will have mercy upon you.
(Tirmidhi)

A sobering thought for all Muslims would be constantly to remind themselves that an account has to be given to Allah about how we used the supreme faculties and abilities He granted us so benevolently. By controlling our anger here on earth in our interaction with our fellow creatures,

we are showing mercy and patience in our characters – only then can we hope for eternal mercy and forgiveness from Allah Almighty in the hereafter.

For Abu Hurairah narrated that Allah’s Apostle (SAWS) said,

When Allah completed the creation, He wrote in His book which is with Him on His throne, “My Mercy outweighs My anger. (Bukhari)

These sublime words should be sufficient to make us endeavor to curb our negative emotions, especially that of anger. By restraining and restricting our anger, we are annihilating Shaytan’s weapon and giving a chance for our better selves to evolve and develop in a positive manner. Only then can we emerge as true Muslims emulating behavior that has been delineated in the texts of the Quran and Sunnah.

Carrying Stories

Nabi (SAWS) said: “No one from my companions should convey to me anything regarding anyone, for verily I like to come out to you in a condition that I have a clean heart.” (Sunan Abi Dawood) Our Nabi (SAWS) was cautious with regards to the stories reaching him regarding his companions. Today, let alone entertaining stories, many a time we are tempted to search and dig into the affairs of others. We need to remind ourselves that being human beings, our hearts are extremely sensitive. At times, all it takes is a single word and our heart turns away from a person and despises him/her, whereas the word may have been conveyed to us in the wrong manner and completely out of context.

How He Taught

Sheikh Abd Al-Wahhab al-Turayri

In Madinah, Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) used to set aside time every morning to teach his Companions. He was renowned for his eloquence and clarity of speech. He did not speak too quickly, and though his phrasing was precise, he did not speak slowly, or in fragments with lots of pauses. It was easy for everyone to follow what he said.

‘Aishah described his way of speaking as follows: “Allah’s Messenger did not ramble on the way you do these days. His speech was clear and precise. Those who listened to him easily remembered what he said.” [Sahih al-Bukhari (3568) and Sahih Muslim (2493)]

Almost every day, he would sit in the mosque in Madinah with his Companions gathered around him. He would often start a discussion by posing a question. Once, he asked: “Might I inform you of the gravest of major sins?” When his Companions replied in the affirmative, he said:

“The gravest of major sins are to associate partners in worship with Allah, to disrespect your parents, and to bear false witness.” [Sahih al-Bukhari (2654)]

Sometimes, he posed questions to open their eyes to some new idea or perspective that they had not thought of before. For instance, once he asked:

“Do you know what it means to be bankrupt?”

They replied that it means to possess neither money nor goods. He said:

With respect to my followers, the one who is bankrupt is one who is brought forth on the

day of judgment with prayers, fasts, and charity to his credit, but he had spoken ill of some people, falsely accused some people, misappropriated the wealth of others, and assaulted people or shed their blood. Those he had wronged will be compensated from his good deeds until he has no more to his credit. Then the remainder of those he had wronged will be compensated by having some of their sins placed on him. As a consequence, he is consigned to Hell. [Sahih Muslim (2581)]

Sometimes, he simply wanted to stimulate their minds. Once he asked: “Tell me which tree is like a Muslim. Its leaves do not scatter everywhere and it yields up its fruit on a regular basis.” His Companions suggested one desert tree after another, and each time the Prophet replied in the negative.

Then it occurred to ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Umar b. Al-Khattab that the tree in question might be the date palm. However, he was the youngest of the ten Companions in the Prophet’s company on that occasion, and his father ‘Umar as well as Abu Bakr were also present, so he felt shy to speak. Then the Prophet said: “It is the date palm.” [Sahih al-Bukhari (2209) and Sahih Muslim (2811)]

The Prophet would sometimes repeat a statement three times to emphasize its importance. For instance, once when enumerating the major sins, he came to the point where he said: “And beware of making false testimony; beware of bearing false witness.” He began repeating it over and over again, until his Companions started to utter:

“If he would only desist...” [Sahih al-Bukhari (2654)]

They were not saying this out of boredom, but out of anxiety and concern for the Prophet, because they could see how much it was affecting him.

Sometimes, the Prophet took his Companions by surprise with a question in order to bring the discussion to a surprising conclusion. For instance, once he asked: “Who among you is fasting today?” This question took them off guard, since he had not even hinted to them earlier that they should fast on this day. Had he done so, they would have all been fasting.

They all sat silently for a while. Then Abu Bakr spoke up:

“I am fasting, O Messenger of Allah.”

Then the Prophet asked:

“Who visited a sick person today?”

Again, they were all quite, until Abu Bakr again spoke up saying that he had done so. Then he asked two further questions:

“Who followed a funeral procession today?”
and

“Who fed a poor person?”

Each question was met with silence until Abū Bakr spoke up admitting that he had done so.

Finally the Prophet said:

“Anyone who carries out these four deeds in a single day will enter Paradise.” [Sahih Muslim]

Sometimes, the Prophet used drawings to illustrate his point. On one occasion, he drew a square on the ground. He then drew a straight line going through the middle of the square but emerging out of it at the top end. Then he drew other smaller lines coming from the edges of the square and pointing inwards towards the larger straight line. Then he asked his Companions:

“Do you know what this means?”

They replied: “Allah and His Messenger know best.”

He said:

The line going through the middle of the box

represents the human being. The other lines aiming towards it are the trials of life that come at him from all directions. If a person manages to avoid one of those trials, he will run into one of the others. The surrounding square is the lifespan that encompasses a person. The extension of the line outside the box represent his hopes. The person remains busy with those hopes, but the term of life comes to an end before they are fulfilled. [Sahih al-Bukhari (6417)]

The purpose of these daily gatherings in the mosque was to teach his Companions about Islam and provide them with moral lessons. However, it was not about lecturing or preaching. It is always a dynamic discussion; never a one-way exchange, and it was always thought-provoking.

Cont'd from page 35

spiritual weakness that will lead to destruction.

In light of the story of Qarun, there is an obligation that comes with wealth, if it is not spent God-consciously it can lead to corruption. The lesson here is that men puffed up with pride, wealth or any kind of other earthly advantages will have an ill-fate like that of Qarun. While those with spiritual strength; those who are righteous, humble and thankful will attain the mercy of God.

Cont'd from page 46

Thus, we behave as our beloved Prophet Muhammad, the servant and messenger of God, instructed and exemplified seeking only the pleasure of the very One Whom we —Jew, Christian and Muslim— worship as the One God who rules over all with Love and Mercy. Seek not the pleasure of mankind because they will never truly be pleased with you no matter what you do. Love and brotherhood in humanity are found in behaviors well beyond the realm of mere words. Ponder well. Let your attitude and behavior towards your Christian fellows speak louder than any bidding of “Merry Christmas” ever could.

Holiday Message

Shibli Zaman

There are those who love and there are those who hate. Of which were our pious predecessors and of which are you?

When the Muslims surrounded Jerusalem, the inhabitants said they would surrender the city only if the Muslim ruler himself —Omar, the second successor or “Caliph,” of the Prophet Muhammad (SAWS)— came to them. So Omar sojourned by camel from Damascus, Syria to Jerusalem in the Holy Land. As Omar approached the city, his servant became weary, so he ordered his servant to ride the steed while he walked it by the reins.

When they entered Jerusalem —records indicate it very well could have been Easter—the people of the city mistook the servant for the Caliph. When corrected, they couldn’t believe that this man in tattered and dirty clothes, leading on foot his servant who rode his steed, was the ruler of this new people who were conquering the Persian and Roman Empires, the greatest empires the world had ever seen, with such speed that had never been seen before. St. Sophronius, Christian Patriarch of Jerusalem, greeted Omar with a set of fresh regal clothes and insisted he wear them instead of the dirty rags he was wearing. According to the Greek chronicler Theophilus of Edessa (695-785CE), Omar refused saying, “It is not right for a man to take from another what God has not decreed for him, for God has given to each and every one of humanity from His Divine knowledge, and he who desires to receive something from his com-

panion exceeding that, does so against God.” Yet, the Christians of the city were outraged and Omar sensed that they found it humiliating to concede the city to someone who looked so base and common. So he compromised. Theophilus further records from Omar, “Because you request it of me, and have shown me such great honor, please lend me these clothes and I will wear them while you wash mine. When mine are returned, I will return these clothes to you.” Michael the Syrian, 12th Century Patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church, says about Omar, “He was certainly just and removed from greed, to the degree that from all the empire that the Arabs ruled, that is, from all the wealth and treasures of the Romans and Persians, he took nothing for himself. He did not change the simplicity of his habits, not even the piece of hide that was placed under him when he rode by camel and that he used for sitting on the ground or sleeping on.”

As the time approached for the Muslim noon prayer, Sophronius invited Omar to pray in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the holiest site in all of Christianity that contains the Golgotha, the Hill of Calvary where Christ was to be crucified, as well as the tomb where Christ was to be interred. Omar refused saying that he feared future generations of Muslims might seek to make it a Muslim holy site. So he prayed opposite the southern courtyard of the Church where, sure enough, they eventually built the Mosque of Omar that stands there to this day

facing the empty tomb of Jesus Christ.

Patriarch Eutychius of Alexandria of the Greek Orthodox Church (877-940CE) records:

“When the gate of the city was opened, Omar came in with his entourage and sat at the aetion of the Church of the Resurrection. When the time of prayer approached, Omar said to Patriarch Sophronius: ‘I want to pray.’ And he responded: ‘Commander of the faithful, pray in the place where you are now.’ And Omar said: ‘I do not want to pray here.’ The patriarch and then led him to the Church of Constantine [the Church of the Resurrection] where he spread a mat made of straw on the floor of the church. But Omar said: ‘I do not want to pray here either.’ He went out to the steps, which are at the gate on the eastern side of the Church of St. Constantine, and he prayed alone on the steps. Then he sat down and said to Patriarch Sophronius: ‘Patriarch, do you know why I did not pray inside the church?’ He answered: ‘I do not know, Commander of the Faithful.’ And Omar said to him: ‘If I had prayed inside the Church, you would be losing it and it would have gone from your hands because after my death the Muslims would seize it saying: Omar has prayed here. Give me a piece of pergamene to write for you a document.’”

Eutychius goes on to relate the terms written in that document protecting the Church and the churches surrounding it forbidding Muslims from congregating near its steps for their prayers.

While some Muslims bicker over whether they should bid their Christian fellows “Merry Christmas” or any other variety of holiday greetings throughout the year, I urge them to drop such vain harangues. Instead, reach into the psyche of Omar, inspired by the Prophet Muhammad whom he served and later succeeded, and how he treated the Christians who found themselves under his rule. Had he wished, he could have done away with the Christian and Jewish populations and history would have no less recorded him as yet another conqueror.

When the Christian Crusaders invaded Jerusalem 400 years later, they did slaughter the Muslims, Jews and even those Christians of sects they deemed heretical in a stadium as if it were sport. No man, woman, child or even babe in arms was spared. The year prior to that, in 1098, the Crusaders had actually cooked and eaten the Muslims of Ma`rrat al-Nu`man in Syria. It is said that babies were skewered on spits, broiled and eaten.

But that is not our way and any who adopt such ways in God’s name profane the very core of Islam. Omar chose the path of love, compassion, and mercy. He gave the Christians freedom and brought the Jews back to the Holy Land from whence they had been driven out just a decade before and successively in the centuries preceding that. The city’s Christians entrusted the keys to the Church of Holy Sepulchre into the hands of the Muslim family of Nusaybah. Today, a millennium and a half later, a member of that Muslim family unlocks the Church in the morning and locks it up at night. The Christians of Jerusalem would have it no other way.

Will the Christians love you when you deal with them thus? Some will. Some won’t. In spite of acknowledging the magnanimity of Omar related above, Theophanes the Confessor (760-818CE) refers to him as a devilish beast and mocks him for entering the city in dirty clothes. God even tells us in the Qur’an, “The Jews and Christians will never be fully satisfied with you until you follow their respective religions.” It should matter to you naught! Be good and seek no reward. We do not let the pleasure of people guide our actions. We do not behave well towards goodness nor do we mete ill with evil. Jesus is recorded in Islamic sources as saying:

“Virtuous action does not consist in doing good to someone who has done good to you—that is merely returning a favor. Virtuous action consists in doing good [even] to those who have wronged you.”

Cont’d on page 44

Appeal

'Radiant Reality' is the only Islamic monthly in English published from Srinagar since almost two decades now. It is only by the Grace of Almighty Allah and the blessed supplications of our esteemed readers that it continues to remain in print without fail. Apart from its regular subscribers, the magazine is distributed among the student community in and outside the state free of charge, whose cost is borne by some dedicated individuals. With unprecedented escalation in the cost of paper and printing, it is becoming somewhat difficult for us to meet the expences incurred. The esteemed readers are, therefore, requested to subscribe for the magazine and also encourage others for the purpose. Besides, those who would like to join us in spreading the message of Islam far and wide, may contribute by way of voluntary donation starting from at least Rs.100/- per month.

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