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RADIANT REALITY

Regd. No.: JKENG/2000/4174,
Published From Srinagar. Dec. 2014. Vol.15, No: 12.

Editor, Printer & Publisher: Mawlana Hamidullah Lone	Contents	
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EDITORIAL

All thanks for Almighty, the most Merciful and Exalted

This is love

And so there are some who spend their whole lives seeking. Sometimes giving, sometimes taking. Sometimes chasing. But often, just waiting. They believe that love is a place that you get to: a destination at the end of a long road. And they can't wait for that road to end at their destination. They are those hearts moved by the movement of hearts. Those hopeless romantics, the sucker for a love story, or any sincere expression of true devotion. For them, the search is almost a lifelong obsession of sorts. But, this tragic 'quest' can have its costs—and its' gifts.

The path of expectations and the 'falling in love with love' is a painful one, but it can bring its own lessons. Lessons about the nature of love, this world, people, and one's own heart, can pave this often painful path. Most of all, this path can bring its own lessons about the Creator of love.

Those who take this route will often reach the knowledge that the human love they seek was not the destination. Some form of that human love, can be a gift. It can be a means. But the moment you make it the End, you will fall. And you will live your whole life with the wrong focus. You will become willing to sacrifice the Goal for the sake of the means. You will give your life to reaching a 'destination' of worldly perfection that does not exist.

And the one who runs after a mirage, never gets there; but keeps running. And so too will you keep running, and be willing to lose sleep, cry, bleed, and sacrifice precious parts of yourself—at times, even your own

dignity. But you'll never reach what you're looking for in this life, because what you seek isn't a worldly destination. The type of perfection you seek cannot be found in the material world. It can only be found in God.

That image of human love that you seek is an illusion in the desert of life. So if that is what you seek, you'll keep chasing. But no matter how close you get to a mirage, you never touch it. You don't own an image. You can't hold a creation of your own mind.

Yet, you will give your whole life, still, to reaching this 'place'. You do this because in the fairy tale, that's where the story ends. It ends at the finding, the joining, the wedding. It is found at the oneness of two souls. And everyone around you will make you think that your path ends there: at the place where you meet your soul mate, your other half—at the point in the path where you get married. Then and only then, they tell you, will you ever finally be complete. This, of course, is a lie because completion cannot be found in anything other than God.

But the lesson you've been taught since the time you were little—from every story, every song, every movie, every ad, every well-meaning auntie—is that you aren't complete otherwise. And if—God forbid—you are one of the 'outcasts' who haven't gotten married, or have been divorced, you are considered deficient or incomplete in some way.

The lesson you're taught is that the story ends at the wedding, and then that's when Jannah (paradise) begins. That's when you'll be saved and completed and everything

that was once broken will be fixed. The only problem is, that's not where the story ends. That's where it begins. That's where the building starts: the building of a life, the building of your character, the building of sabr, patience, perseverance, and sacrifice. The building of selflessness. The building of love. And the building of your path back to Him.

But if the person you marry becomes your ultimate focus in life, your struggle has just begun. Now your spouse will become your greatest test. Until you remove that person from the place in your heart that only God should be, it will keep hurting. Ironically, your spouse will become the tool for this painful extraction process, until you learn that there are places in the human heart made only by—and for—God.

Among the other lessons you may learn along this path—after a long road of loss, gain, failure, success, and so many mistakes—is that there are at least 2 types of love. There will be some people you love because of what you get from them: what they give you, the way they make you feel. This is perhaps the majority of love—which is also what makes much of love so unstable. A person's capacity to give is inconstant and changing. Your response to what you are given is also inconstant and changing. So if you're chasing a feeling, you'll always be chasing. No feeling is ever constant. If love is dependent on this, it too becomes inconstant and changing. And just like everything in this world, the more you chase it, the more it will run away from you.

But, once in a while, people enter your life that you love—not for what they give you—but for what they are. The beauty you see in them is a reflection of the Creator, so you love them. Now suddenly it isn't about what you're getting, but rather what you can give. This is unselfish love. This second type of

love is the most rare. And if it is based in, and not competing with, the love of God, it will also bring about the most joy. To love in any other way is to need, to be dependent, to have expectations—all the ingredients for misery and disappointment.

So for all those, who have spent their life seeking, know that purity of any thing is found at the Source. If it is love that you seek, seek it through God. Every other stream, not based in His love, poisons the one who drinks from it. And the drinker will continue to drink, until the poison all but kills him. He will continue to die more and more inside, until he stops and finds the pure Source of water.

Once you begin to see everything beautiful as only a reflection of God's beauty, you will learn to love in the right way: for His sake. Everything and everyone you love will be for, through and because of Him. The foundation of such love is God. So what you hold onto will no longer be just an unstable feeling, a fleeting emotion. And what you chase will no longer be just a temporary high. What you hold, what you chase, what you love, will be God: the **only** thing stable and constant. Thereafter, everything else will be through Him. Everything you give or take or love or don't love, will be by Him. Not by your nafs. It will be for Him. Not for your nafs.

This means you will love what He loves and not love what He does not love. And when you do love, you will give to the creation—not for what you can get in return from them. You will love and you will give, but you will be sufficed from Him. And the one who is sufficed by God, is the richest and most generous of all lovers. Your love will be by Him, for Him, and because of Him. That is the liberation of the self from servitude to any created thing. And that is freedom. That is happiness.

That is love.

Question Answer

Question

Why did Hadhrat Ali (RA) not participate in the wars during the ruling of the first 3 Caliphs? If Hadhrat Ali had no differences with the first three Khalifas, why did he not participate in any battles that took place during their reigns, particularly when Jihaad against the Kuffaar is deemed a major duty upon the Muslims?

Answer

The assumption underlying the question is that since Sayyidunah Ali (Radhiallaahu Anhu) did not participate in the campaigns of the first 3 khulafa, it can only mean that he was averse to their rule, perhaps even to the point of not recognising the legitimacy of their rule.

However, this assumption can only be accepted if one is prepared to ignore the existence of several historical facts which glare at the objective observer from the pages of history. Some of these are given here:

1. While Sayyiduna 'Ali (Radhiallaahu Anhu) might not physically have joined the campaigns, he was at the side of the khalifah in Madinah as a valued and trusted advisor – a position that is by no means less important than being at the battlefield. This is a fact documented in both Sunni and Shi'i sources.

"Nahj al-Balaghah", for example, records the advice given by Sayyiduna 'Ali to Sayyiduna 'Umar on two occasions. The first one appears as Sermon no. 133 and carries the heading "In reply to 'Umar ibn al-Khattab who consulted him about taking part in the battle against Byzantine". The second is numbered Sermond 145 and appears under the caption "Spoken when 'Umar ibn al-Khattab consulted Amir al-Mu'minin about taking part in the battle of Persia". In both instances the advice given can clearly be seen to be aimed at the success of the campaigns.

2. It is also significant to note that although Sayyiduna 'Ali did not personally join the armies on their expeditions, he duly received his share of the spoils of war. Abu Ubayd has recorded that Sayyiduna 'Umar fixed Sayyiduna 'Ali's share at 5000 dirhams, and gave both his sons Hasan and Husayn a similar share of 5000. ("al-Amwal" p. 237) Another son of Sayyiduna 'Ali, namely Muhammad, was born to him from a woman from Banu Hanifah who was brought to Madinah as a war captive by Khalid ibn al-Walid after his expedition against her tribe that had turned apostate with Maysalamah. This woman was given to Sayyiduna 'Ali by Sayyiduna Abu Bakr. ("Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd" vol. 5 p. 67) and this Muhammad is known in history as Muhammad ibn al-

Hanafiyyah.

3. If Sayyiduna 'Ali's not joining the campaigns of the three khulafa means that he was averse to their rule, how is one to interpret the fact that Sayyiduna Hasan and Sayyiduna Husayn both took part in the conquest of Tabaristan during the rule of Sayyiduna 'Uthman under Sa'id ibn al-'As in 30 AH? (See "Tarikh at-Tabari" vol. 5 p. 103, "al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah" vol. 5 p. 237)

4. Furthermore, what is one to make of the fact that those of the Sahabah upon whom the Shi'ah took favourably as devotees of Sayyiduna 'Ali and the Ahl al-Bayt unreservedly took part in the campaigns of Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman? Here one may speak of the following by way of example:

SALMAN AL-FARISI took part in Sayyiduna 'Umar's Persian campaign and played a crucial role in the conquest of Mada'in ("al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah" vol. 5 pp. 135-140). He had also acted as governor of Mada'in for Sayyiduna 'Umar ("al-Isabah" vol. 3 p. 113) and used to actively encourage the military campaigns in Syria by narrating ahadith on the virtues of jihad ("Ansab al-Ashraf vol. 1 p. 488)

HUDHAYFAH IBN AL-YAMAN had played a leading role in the conquest of Iraq. Like Salman, he too had acted as governor for Sayyiduna 'Umar ("al-Isabah" vol. 1 p. 332), and later joined military expeditions during the reign of Sayyiduna 'Uthman. He is described by the Shi'i scholar, al-'Allamah Ibn Mutahhar al-Hilli, as "one of the four pillars amongst the companions of Amir al-Mu'minin." ("Jami' ar-Ruwat" vol. 1 p. 182)

BILAL AL-HABASHI joined the campaign in Syria, either during the time of Sayyiduna Abu Bakr or Sayyiduna 'Umar. He died in Syria during the reign of the latter Umar. ("al-Isabah" vol. 1 p. 171)*

'AMMAR IBN YASIR took part in the campaign against Musaylamah in the time of

Sayyiduna Abu Bakr. He fought valiantly, spurred on the Muslim forces, and lost his ear in this battle. Later, during the reign of Sayyiduna 'Umar, he accepted an appointment as the governor of Kufah under him. ("Tarikh al-Islam" vol. 2 p. 581}

ABU AYYUB AL-ANSARI is well known for his participation in several battles, not least amongst which was the expedition against Constantinople led by Yazid in the time of his father Mu'awiyah. Abu Ayyub was martyred during this expedition, and was buried under the walls of the city. ("al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah" vol. 5 p. 518)

5. Apart from the above considerations, one also needs to keep in mind the sort of relationship that existed between Sayyiduna 'Ali and the khulafa before him. This relationship is best expressed in the fact that he named 3 of his sons Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman. This is confirmed even by an avowedly Shi'i source such as Shaykh Mufid's "Kitab al-Irshad" (pp. 268-269); and the fact that he married Umm Kulthum, his daughter from Sayyidah Fatimah, to Sayyiduna 'Umar. (For a more detailed discussion of the marriage of Umm Kulthum, see <http://www.ansar.org/english/marriage.htm>)

All things considered, the assumption that Sayyiduna 'Ali did not take part in the campaigns of the three khulafa on account of his differences with them, diminishes into an incongruous aberration of ridiculous proportions.

S. Taha Karaan

Question

I have been brought up in a family where we do not celebrate birthdays nor do we have mixed gatherings and shake hands with any ghair mahrams.

Unfortunately, in my husband's family it is completely different. They celebrate birthdays, the gatherings are mixed affairs and the women even hug and even kiss some of their

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male relatives who are ghair mahrams. I was also once put in a situation where a male came and hugged me against my wishes.

I am recently getting worried that how do we bring our children up according to shariah whilst still respecting the family. This is mainly with regards to the issue of photographs.

Answer

We commend you on your spirit to adhere to the teachings of deen despite the odds being against you. Hereunder are some points which would insha-Allah be of assistance to you.

1. Circulate some articles among the family on the subject of celebrating birthdays. Do this via your husband or some other family person. One of the aspects to highlight is that a Muslim's date for everything is the Islamic date. The Gregorian date is merely out of necessity due to living in a society where the latter date is used for all official affairs. Hence IF there was any basis for celebrating birthdays, it would have been celebrated on the Islamic birthday.
2. Firstly, tell your husband to very respectfully and politely, but very clearly, make it known that no non-mahram is to even shake hands with you. He should clearly state that this is haraam. If you are ever caught in a situation where someone suddenly approaches, without saying a word, walk away before he comes close. Do not get into any confrontational argument, but do not compromise in this issue.
3. Do not be part of a mixed gathering. If somebody thinks negatively of you, it is their warped thinking. Remain steadfast and insha-Allah you will become the means of others also doing what is correct. However, do not get into any arguments. Just quietly do what is correct and politely refuse to be part of any haraam activity.

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4. With regards to the children, this is unfortunately a complicated situation and a challenge. However, the only way is to keep educating one's own children through ta'leem and tarbiyah as to what is correct and what is impermissible. Together with teaching them the above, also constantly teach them to always be respectful and polite.

May Allah keep you steadfast and make the conditions conducive for you to practise on deen with ease.

Uswatul Muslimah Panel of 'Ulama

Question

There is a certain sheikh who is saying that he is a Mahram for the elderly women and he will be the Mahram of those women who intend going for Hajj but do not have a Mahram to accompany them. Is this correct?

Answer

It is not permissible for a female to travel for Hajj without being accompanied by her Mahram or her husband. This so-called Sheikh cannot be a Mahram for a woman he is not related to by blood or by marriage and people should be weary of such a person. The words of the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) are clear: "It is not permissible for a woman to leave the home without the permission of her husband and it is not permissible for a woman to travel the journey of three days (the Safar distance which amounts to 78 kms or more) without being accompanied by a Mahram." (As-Sunan al-Kubra by Bayhaqi, Hadith #: 10420, Narrated by Ibn Umar)

Mufti Suhail

Question

A charity is organising a sisters' only fundraiser where they will participate in paint balling & raise funds for suffering people. If this is incorrect, which I assume it is, please list the reasons for impermissibility so that I can

advise the females of my family?

Answer

To participate in and raise funds for noble causes is indeed desirable and highly encouraged. Allah exhorts and praises the believing men and women who spend graciously in His cause. Shari'ah does not prevent one from undertaking such noble pursuits. However, we should be sensitive to and mindful of the manner in which collections are raised.

The ideal is to fund a project personally or solicit funds without having any personal benefits whatsoever. This is in keeping with the spirit of sincerity in donations. When Allah's Messenger Sallallahu 'Alayhi Wa Sallam encouraged the Sahabah (male companions) and sahabiyyat (female companions) to contribute towards a religious project, he did so by highlighting the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala, and the rewards in the hereafter. Hence, funds were contributed solely for the pleasure of Allah whilst keeping in mind the tremendous reward in the hereafter.

We are all aware of the hardship and suffering our brothers and sisters are undergoing through the whole world. We find it in appropriate that funds be solicited for their benefit by means of entertainment and recreation. How can we bear playing paintball in the name of collecting funds for the people when we should be grieving for them not even having shelter and basic needs of life? At a time when we are sharing their pain and grief, these feelings alone should inspire us to donate towards their cause. Furthermore, for women to leave their houses for such activities and such causes is highly inappropriate when there are alternate ways of donating the money.

Mufti Ebrahim

Question

Is it permissible for an elderly woman

to uncover her face before men who are not her mahrams?

Answer

It is permissible for an old woman to uncover her face before non-Mahram men. The rationale for this exception is that such a woman is not a means of Fitnah through the beauty or glow on her face. Accordingly, this ruling refers to such a woman who has lost the beauty and glow from her face. This is generally in women who are above the age of 60 years. However, if a woman is of such an age but is still attractive, then it is not permissible for her to uncover her face.

The term 'elderly woman' is rather broad and includes women who are relatively younger than old women. Such women may not expose their faces to non-Mahram men.

Mufti Ibrahim (Chk & App)

Question

A friend at campus often asks fellow students: "Are you a Muslim or a Hanafi/Shafi'ee?" How does one respond to such a question? Please advise.

Answer

The word "or" (in the context of the question) is used between two words of the same species. It is correct to ask someone whether his hunger gets satiated by "rice or bread" since both are food items. Likewise, if your friend asks someone whether he lives in Durban or South Africa, the question will be absurd. Only one who is ignorant of the fact that Durban is not a country, but a city in South Africa, can ask such a question.

Your friend's question implies that one can either be a Muslim or a Hanafi. Thus if someone says he is a Hanafi then, Allah forbid, he is not a Muslim!! It is the same as asking whether you live in Durban or South Africa, and that if you live in Durban, then you are not

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a South African???

Such questions stems from being ignorant of the fact that Imaam Abu Hanifah (ra) did not make his own deen. By means of the great expertise and in-depth knowledge that Allah had blessed him with, he deduced the laws of deen from the Quraan and hadeeth. His expertise and mastery was attested to by the likes of 'Abdullah bin Mubaarak (ra) who was one of the greatest Muhaddith of his time. Saheeh Bukhaari is filled with his narrations. Thus in the light of his vast knowledge and rare expertise, Imaam Abu Hanifa (ra) merely explained and expounded the laws of deen. The detailed proofs of these deductions from the Quraan and hadeeth are recorded in many books well known to the scholars of Islam.

Likewise, there were many other great Fuqahaa (jurists) such as Imaam Maalik (ra), Imaam Shaafi'ee (ra) and Imaam Ahmad bin Hambal (ra). Their codification of the laws of deen in the light of their expertise developed into the four mazhabs (schools of thought), all following the same primary sources of the Quraan and hadeeth. Thus those who follow the jurisprudence (laws and rulings deduced from the Quraan and hadeeth) codified by Imaam Abu Hanifah (ra) are referred to as Hanafi, while those who follow the jurisprudence of Imaam Shaafi'ee are called Shaafi'ee, etc. The identification of Hanafi, Shafi'ee, etc, is only made in relation to fiqh.

Freelancer

In this era there is a further need to identify oneself as a Hanafi, Shaafi'ee, Maaliki or Hambali. The need is to make it known that one is not a "freelancer" — someone who does not have the knowledge and expertise to deduce the laws of deen from their sources, yet claims to follow the Quraan and hadeeth directly. It is similar to a person who has barely stepped into high school, yet claims to be a

senior counsel in matters of law!

Uswatul Muslimah Panel of 'Ulama

Question

Is shaking hands with one or two hands sunnah?

Answer

It is Sunnah to greet with two hands (Musaafahah).

Abdullah ibn Masud Radhiyallahu Anhu relates: "Allah's Messenger Sallallahu Alayhi wa Sallam taught me the tashahhud as he taught me a surah (chapter) of the Qur'an while my hand was between both his hands."

Question

A couple of years ago a relative gave us a pet because they did not want it anymore, recently they are now demanding it back because his children need a pet. Is this correct? And do we have the right not to give it back?

Answer

If the pet was given to you, you are its rightful owner. Hence, if you wish to keep the pet, you may do so and if you wish to return the pet to its previous owners, you may also do so.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

Is auctioning to purchase a home or vehicle or selling any personal item of oneself through the form of auctioning permissible in Islam?

Answer.

The concept of auctioning is permissible in Islam.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

Does missing 3 consecutive jummah

salaah's render one a non muslim ?

Answer

If a person misses the Jumuah Salaah, it will not render him a non-Muslim.

However, it would have the effect hardening his heart and making him indifferent and unmindful of following the commandments of Allah and His Rasool Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

Some people say that they can't get married in month of Muharram and Safar. Can you please clarify if its right?

Answer

A person may get married at any time of the year. There is no prohibition of getting married in the month of Muharram and Safar. It has no basis in Shariah.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

In a Muslim house can the walls be decorated with pictures of near and dear ones? Is it a fact that the angels hesitate to enter the houses that have pictures all around? And is it absolutely prohibited in Islam to hung photos as decorative pieces? Please suggest and explain. Now a days most of the houses are decorated with photos, arts & pictures.

Answer

It is not permissible to decorate the walls of a house with animate pictures. However, it is permissible to decorate the walls of a house with inanimate pictures.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

I have a property and wish to sell half

share of it. The partner agrees but says he will pay a little at a time. It takes about 6 months to pay the full amount.

My question is this: when does he begin to be a partner? At the time of the agreement or upon fulfilling the first payment or upon completion of the total amount?

So when does he begin to receive his share of the rentals? Also sometimes it takes a lot of time, telephone calls and trips to and fro for collections of rent and repairs etc. Can I deduct these costs from the rentals before distribution?

Answer

According to Shari'ah a contract of sale is concluded with a proposal to sell or purchase and with an acceptance to purchase or sell in past or present tense. The immediate payment for the transaction is not a requirement for the validity of the transaction. As such, the partner shall receive his share from the moment he purchases the house even if he has not paid off the house in full.

Furthermore, it will not be feasible to deduct a portion of the income in order to compensate yourself for collecting rent. As an alternative, you may increase your profit ratio from the partnership through mutual consent with your partner. This amount may not be in lump sum, but instead, it must be based on a percentage of the profit.

M. Bilal Mohammad

The Smile

At my granddaughter's wedding, the announcer polled the guests to see who had been married longest. It turned out to be my husband and I. The announcer asked us, "What advice would you give to the newly-married couple?"
I said, "The three most important words in a marriage are, 'You're probably right.'"
Everyone then looked at my husband. He said, "She's probably right."

Lesson From The Qur'an

Sura Nisa - Verse 7-13

Note: Text in bold letters is the literal translation of the meaning of the Qur'an by M. Taqi Usmani and the normal text is the brief explanation compiled by Institute of Islamic Research, Darul Uloom Ilahiya.

Above, the prohibition to inflict harm to the orphans has been cited. One of the harms that orphans suffered during the period of ignorance was their deprivation of inheritance, which is being falsified by a universal law mentioned below; and in order to lay emphasis on this, a worldly condition is hypothecated in order to create concern regarding them, and further an assurance - regarding a matter in the Hereafter - given to inculcate fear. This is being said to discourage any attempt of inflicting harm to the orphans.

At the time of distributing the inheritance among the shareholders if such people having no claim on the inheritance but are needy also turn up, that they be taken into consideration is also being mentioned in the middle.

For men - minor or adult - **there is a definite share in what the parents of these men and the nearest of kin have left** at their death. **And for women** - minor or adult - **there is a definite share in what the parents of these women and the nearest of kin have left** at their death,

be it viz., the passed on share, **small or large** - it is from everything that a **determined share** will be given. [4:7]

And **if the distant relatives** who are not legal heirs, **and the orphans and the needy are present** expecting alms **at the time of distribution** of inheritance, **give them some of it** out of the share allotted to adults, **and speak to them in soft and fair words** if the estate is too small to allow free gifts etc. [4:8]

Those people receiving inheritance **should be fearful** in their behavior towards orphans **who, if they leave behind some helpless children, would remain anxious for them** of their welfare; similarly, with regard to children of other people they should show concern. **So, they should fear Allah** and refrain from hurting the orphans in word and deed **and say** to them **what is right** with a view to comfort them. [4:9]

Surely, those who unjustly devour the property of the orphans do nothing but as a result

devour fire of the Hell into their bellies, and this result won't take much time to construe but soon they shall enter a blazing Hell where it shall be perceived. [4:10]

Previously, there was a brief reference of the rightful people for inheritance. In the following verse, there is mention of four scenarios in which children will inherit property and also their amount of share: 1. There are number of males and females. 2. Only one female. 3. Two females. 4. More than two females.

Allah directs you concerning the division of inheritance among your children: for a male there is a share equal to that of two females i.e., every male shall have two shares, and female, one. **But, if they** i.e., the heirs **are only women** among the offspring of the deceased though **more than two, then they** shall all **get two-thirds** share in total **of what one** i.e., deceased **leaves behind**; the remaining one-third shall go to other heirs. **If she is one, she gets one-half** of the total estate; the remaining half shall go to other heirs.

Share of parents

As for his i.e., deceased's **parents** there are three ways they will inherit, 1, **for each of them, there is one-sixth of what he** i.e., deceased **leaves in case he has a child** either male or female, one or more, will inherit the rest along with other heirs. 2, **But, if he has no child and only his parents have inherited him, then his mother gets one-third** and the rest two-third shall go to his father. **If he has some brothers** or sisters, **his mother gets one-sixth** and the rest shall be inherited by his father, **all these shares shall be distributed after settling the will he might have made, or a debt.* You do not know** fully **who, out of your fathers and your sons, is closer to you in benefiting** you in this world or the next. Based on numer-

ous expediencies and reasons which you are unable to think of, **all this is determined by Allah. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise** so, remembering His infinite knowledge and Wisdom you need not to burden your brain as to who should and who should not inherit your estate. **[4:11]**

*The distribution of the inheritance shall succeed only after taking out deceased's funeral expenses and paying his debts if any - from his entire legacy, and also after fulfilling his *will* out of not more than one-third of the whole estate he has left.

Share of wives

For you there is one-half of what your wives leave behind, in case they have no child. But, if they have a child, either by yourselves or by your wives' former husbands, then **you get one-fourth of what they leave** - these are thus two situations in total and in both the cases the remaining estate shall be inherited by other heirs, but only **after settling the will they might have made, or a debt. For them** - the wives, whether one or more - **there is one-fourth,** to be shared equally among them, **of what you leave behind, in case you have no child. But, if you have a child** then they - the wives, whether one or more - shall **get one eighth of what you leave** - this also makes two situations in total and in both the cases the remaining estate shall be inherited by other heirs, but only **after settling the will you might have made, or a debt.**

Share of brother and sister of same mother

And if a man or a woman is Kalālah i.e. has no one alive either among predecessors (parents, grandparents etc.) or successors (children, grandchildren etc.), **and has a uterine brother or a uterine sister, then each one of them will get one-sixth. However, if they are more in number than that** i.e., one, then **they will be**

equal sharers in one-third irrespective whether they are males or females, and the remaining portion shall go to other heirs, but only **after settling the will that might have been made, or a debt, provided that the will must not be intended to harm anyone** of the heirs either in deed or in intention. 'In deed' - by bequeathing more the one-third of the total estate, though its implementation shall not take place without the consent of legal heirs; 'in intention' - by bequeathing within one-third only but with the aim that the legal heir suffers loss by getting less inheritance, though it shall get implemented but will be sinful. **This** - that has been mentioned so far - **is a direction from Allah** and, therefore, required to be followed in absolute terms. **Allah is All-Knowing** he who obeys and who disobeys, but does not punish the disobedient immediately because He is also **Forbearing**. [4:12]

The Triple Filter Test

During the golden Abbasid period, one of the scholars in Baghdad, the capital of Muslim caliphate at that time, was reputed to hold knowledge in high esteem. One day an acquaintance met the great scholar and said, "Do you know what I just heard about your friend?"

"Hold on a minute," the scholar replied. "Before telling me anything I'd like you to pass a little test. It's called the Triple Filter Test."

"Triple filter?"

"That's right," the scholar continued. "Before you talk to me about my friend it might be a good idea to take a moment and filter what you're going to say. That's why I call it the triple filter test. The first filter is Truth. Have you made absolutely sure that what you are about to tell me is true?"

"No," the man said, "actually I just heard about it and..."

"All right," said the scholar. "So you don't really know if it's true or not. Now let's try the second filter, the filter of Goodness. Is what you are about to tell me about my friend something good?"

"No, on the contrary..."

"So," the scholar continued, "you want to tell me something bad about him, but you're not certain it's true. You may still pass the test though, because there's one filter left: the filter of Usefulness. Is what you want to tell me about my friend going to be useful to me?"

"No, not really."

"Well," concluded the scholar, "if what you want to tell me is neither true nor good nor even useful, why tell it to me at all?"

"O You who believe! Avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is a sin, and do not spy nor let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? But you abhor it; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, surely Allah is Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful."

[Surah al-Hujurat 49:12]

Lesson From Sahih al-Bukhari

Dr. Rafiq Ahmad

The Book of Menses

Chapter 5 : Fondling a menstruating wife.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

The Qur'an says:
"Therefore, keep aloof from the women during the menstrual discharge and do not go near them".

In this verse the men are being directed not to go near their wives during menstrual periods. By establishing this title "Fondling a menstruating wife", Imam Bukhari (RA) wants to say that sexual intercourse is prohibited with a menstruating wife but there is no problem in fondling or touching her.

Hadith No. 294

Narrated 'Aisha (RA)

The Prophet and I used to take a bath from a single pot while we were Junub. During the menses, he used to order me to put on an Izar (dress worn below the waist) and used to fondle me. While in Itikaf, he used to bring his head near me and I would wash it while I used to be in my periods (menses).

Hadith No. 295

Narrated 'Abdur-Rahman bin Al-Aswad (RA)

(on the authority of his father) 'Aisha said: "Whenever Allah's Apostle wanted to fondle

anyone of us during her periods (menses), he used to order her to put on an Izar and start fondling her." 'Aisha added, "None of you could control his sexual desires as the Prophet could."

Hadith No. 296

Narrated Maimuna (RA)

When ever Allah's Apostle wanted to fondle any of his wives during the periods (menses), he used to ask her to wear an Izar.

Comments

'Mubashirat' means the touching of skin with the skin and the extreme form of touch takes place during the sexual intercourse. The scholars unanimously say that sexual intercourse is Haraam with a menstruating wife. The other forms of touching during the menstrual periods of a wife other than sexual intercourse is permissible.

Allaama Ayni says that there are three types of touching a menstruating wife, viz.,

1. Sexual Intercourse:- This is unanimously Haraam.
2. Touching (sexually) above the umbilicus and below the knees: All the four Imams say that it is permissible.

3. Touching (sexually) below the umbilicus and above the knees except per vaginal or per anal: The scholars are of different opinion in this case. Imam Abu Haniefah, Imam Shafa'ee and Imam Maalik say that it is not permissible. Imam Bukhari is also of the same opinion. Imam Ahmad says that it is permissible and he quotes in his argument the Hadith of Hadhrat Anas (RA) which says:

"Do everything (with a menstruating wife) except sexual intercourse. (Abu Dawood)

Hadhrat Ayesha (RA) says that no one can match Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) in controlling the sexual desire. This means that Raasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) had very very strong control over himself. So, if he (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) would fondle with his wife, he was confident enough that he would not cross the limits. Shah Waliullah Muhaddith Delhvi (RA) says that Hadhrat Ayesha believed that a man with weak control should avoid sleeping with a menstruating wife.

Chapter 6: Leaving of fast by a menstruating woman.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Imam Bukhari (RA) says that it is not permissible for a menstruating woman to fast. She is not supposed to offer Salaah as well, but here Imam Bukhari (RA) is mentioning only about fast. The reason is that for Salaah cleanliness is a pre-requisite and obligatory, since it is not found during menses, so such a woman is not eligible to offer Salaah. In case of fast, cleanliness is not a must, so a menstruating woman is eligible to fast but she has been told to postpone it during menses, may be on the physical grounds (Allah knows the best). In short, a menstruating woman is not eligible to offer Salaah, so she is not supposed to offer the Salaah relaxed on her during the menstru-

ating periods even after it ends (i.e., Qadha). Whereas, since she is eligible to fast, so she is supposed to observe the fast, relaxed on her during menses, after the month of Ramadhan during the days of her cleanliness.

Hadith No. 297

Narrated Abu Said Al-Khudri (RA)

Once Allah's Apostle went out to the Musalla (to offer the prayer) on Eid-al-Adha or Al-Fitr prayer. Then he passed by the women and said, "O women! Give alms, as I have seen that the majority of the dwellers of Hell-fire were you (women)." They asked, "Why is it so, O Allah's Apostle?" He replied, "You curse frequently and are ungrateful to your husbands. I have not seen anyone more deficient in intelligence and religion than you. A cautious sensible man could be led astray by some of you." The women asked, "O Allah's Apostle! What is deficient in our intelligence and religion?" He said, "Is not the evidence of two women equal to the witness of one man?" They replied in the affirmative. He said, "This is the deficiency in her intelligence. Isn't it true that a woman can neither pray nor fast during her menses?" The women replied in the affirmative. He said, "This is the deficiency in her religion."

To hold one's tongue is important for salvation

Once on an Eid day, Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) went to address the women folk after the Eid Salaah. He (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) told them that he had seen more women in the hellfire than men. One of the two main reasons that he gave for such a fate was that the women usually do not control their tongues and frequently use the word 'La'nat'. 'La'nat' means to get faraway from the Mercy of Allah Ta'ala. The best thing one can have is the nearness and pleasure of Allah and the worst thing one can

have is His displeasure and being thrown away from Him. That is why it has been strictly forbidden to curse someone with the word 'La'nat'.

Don't be thankless

A Hadith says:

"One who does not thank people, wont thank Allah".
(Tirmidhi, Ahmad)

If someone does good to you, it is a good humble etiquette to acknowledge him with good gesture or help and be thankful to him. Islam does not like thanklessness. Women folk usually remain thankless to their husbands. A man usually throughout his life tries to make his wife comfortable but if anytime she faces a slightest problem from his side, at once she starts showing her thanklessness by saying things like, "you have always troubled me; I have never seen any comfort from your side throughout my life, etc. Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) advised women not to do so, as this type of behaviour would lead them to hell-fire.

Women have been created weak physically as well as mentally

This thing is misinterpreted by the opponents of Islam and blown out of proportion. Islam does not say that a woman has been created inferior but it says that a woman has been created weak. This thing needs to be understood in the real sense of the word. The weakness of a woman is an anatomical and physiological fact which cannot be denied. The weight of a female brain is far less than the male one. Men are physically much stronger than the women. Emotionally also, the women are easily swayed away than men. It is said that if the power to divorce would have been given to women, they would have used it far more frequently than men.

Here, in this Hadith, Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) tells the women that the witness of two women is equal to that of a single man, which speaks of their weak decision making capability. Also, that they are exempted from Salaah and fast during their menstrual periods, which bespeaks of their physical weakness and weakness in Deen.

Quotable Quotes

The most beloved actions in the sight of Allah are the regular ones, even if they amount to little in quantity
(Bukhari, Muslim)

"There is no Islam without unity, no unity without leadership, & no leadership without obedience."

Umar (RA)

"One who has authority is like someone riding on a lion; he is envied for his position, but he knows his situation better."

Ali (RA)

"To get what you love, you must first be patient with what you hate."

Imam Al-Ghazali (ra)

"A true believer does not fear physical death, rather he fears the death of his heart."

Ibn al Qayyim (ra)

"Beware of whatever you need to apologise for."

Sh A Qadir Jeelani (ra)

"Whatever has passed of this life is just like a dream and whatever is left of it is just a hope."

Abu Hazim (ra)

"The whole world is in darkness except for sitting with the scholars."

Hasan al-Basri (ra)

"Know that if people are impressed with you, they are impressed with the beauty of Allah's covering of your sins."

Ibn Qayyim (ra)

There's nothing else which has any value in the Divine Presence."

Mawlana Rumi (ra)

"When the pious are mentioned, the mercy of Allah descends".

Sufyan Ibn Uyaynah (ra)

"You give little, when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself, that you truly give."

Khalil Gibran

"When you don't know what you ultimate

Between Doubt & False Certainty

Muhammad Ghilan

"[Prophet], they ask you about the Spirit. Say, 'The Spirit is part of my Lord's domain. You have only been given a little knowledge.' If We pleased, We could take away what We have revealed to you – then you would find no one to plead for you against Us." [17:85-86].

Imam Muhammad ibn Jarir Al-Tabari relates that these verses were revealed in response to a group of Jewish rabbis who were passing by the Beloved (S) whispering among each other, "If he really is the Messenger of God as he proclaimed, he would be able to tell us what the Spirit is." But the answer given in the verse was that they would not receive an answer, and a reminder of how little knowledge they and we had been given, which could also be taken away as well.

There is a lesson to be taken from these verses, which is to not assume that our proclamation of upholding the Truth means we know everything or that we have the answers to everything. It is a call towards intellectual and spiritual humility by recognizing our own state of ignorance. This is a difficult reality to confront, especially given the expectations people will have when they hear a Muslim declare Islam as the complete religion that provides total answers to all life's questions.

Such a declaration of completeness in

this way oversimplifies the complexity of Islam as a religion. Instead of seeing Islam as a source of exalted principles and parameters where the details can change according to advances in knowledge, as well as in response to differing times and places, it becomes a religion where individuals seek details they had assumed were transcendent. Thus, Islam is transformed in this way from a religion with a simple creed into a religion with a simpleton view of life.

A hallmark of extremists and those inclined towards a radical absolutist approach to all things religious, whether they be believers or not, is the absence of humility. They voice their opinions with absolute certainty and conflate that with having conviction and belief in their position. But what is belief if not for it having an element of faith? Faith is the acknowledgement of the Unseen. It is an embrace of one's limitations. Faith is not what many atheists claim to be: either a belief in the irrational or a belief without or against evidence. To the contrary, faith is the belief arising from accepting the evidence of one's ignorance. It will therefore be inextricably linked with the element of doubt.

Imam Muslim relates the story of the Companion Hanzhala ibn ar-Rabee' al-Usaydi (RA) who met Abu Bakr al-Sideeq (RA) one

time and was asked, "How are you Hanzhala?" He replied, "Hanzhala has become a hypocrite!" He then complained about the difference in spiritual states that he was experiencing. When he was with the Beloved (S) he was experiencing a state of certainty as if he was witnessing the Unseen realm directly. But away from him and busy with family and daily business affairs, he no longer experienced that certainty. Abu Bakr (RA) confessed he was also finding the same thing and they both went to tell the Beloved (S). His response was, "If you remained in the state as you are with me, the Angels would shake your hands in your homes and on the streets, but a time for this and a time for that."

The Companions' personal struggles were not limited to spiritual stations of certitude and belief. They also experienced doubts and their minds raised questions that tested their belief to a point that troubled them. It is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurairah (RA) that some of the Companions came to the Beloved (S) and said, "O Messenger of God, we find ourselves thinking things so grave we prefer to not have this life than to speak of them." The Beloved (S) replied, "Were you conscious of it? Then that is sincere faith."

The Arabic word *zhann* is the same word for both conjecture and certainty, and it is used to indicate both meanings in the Quran. However, in the context of believers, it is used to describe a state of knowledge that can only be attained through humility, which is a quality of those who recognize their human weakness and utter need in the first place. They are ones who "Seek help with steadfastness and prayer – though this is hard indeed for anyone but the humble, who know that they will meet their Lord and that it is to Him they will return." [2:45-46] This is in contrast to a type of people who disbelieved not because they had doubts about belief, but a false

sense of certainty in their assumptions, which led to their disbelief, "Most of them follow nothing but assumptions, but assumptions can be of no value at all against the Truth." [10:36]

Doubt has become a dirty word for many believers. However, it is in losing doubt, which in turn is a loss of faith, that one takes their first step towards dogmatism. It is a road that ends in elevating oneself to a Divine status. This is manifested in the way some declare themselves to be the "saved group", regardless whether it is because they are saved in the Next Life for the particular form of Islam they deem correct in contrast to others, or saved in this life because they have abandoned Islam or religion altogether and became "enlightened" through philosophy and modern science. That is why the Quran reminds us, "Do not assert your own goodness: He knows best who is mindful of Him." [53:32]

Doubt scares people. Hence, they seek to quell it by imposing upon others what they believe is the "authentic" or "correct" way. This is an attempt to avoid having to deal with asserting one's identity from within. It is a seeking for external validation through conformity. The irony of using external force to impose one's belief upon others is that it is a sign of an internal weakness and lack of confidence in those very beliefs being imposed.

In response to these impositions, many speak about the need for tolerance. However, tolerance does not indicate acceptance, but the contrary of it. Being in a state of tolerance means being patient. A tolerant person towards others is one who shows forbearance in the face of difficulty. It is a state of being silent through suffering. What we should seek is not tolerance of the other, but acceptance of them as they are, and the first step to doing so is to recognize our own doubts as existential to being human. We may not share the same doubts, but we share be-

ing in the state of doubt. How we handle being in this state is the reason why some of us practice exclusion while others practice inclusion.

As one's knowledge grows, their circle of certainty becomes smaller, but their foundation in their belief becomes stronger without being dogmatic. This is a matter of discerning constant principles from variable details. The most dogmatic are often the least informed. Those who reject the fundamental right of humans to differ and choose different paths are quite often the causes of discord and conflict. They espouse the most dangerous sense of conviction because it comes from a false sense of certainty, which can in extreme cases lead to actions of violence against others.

Doubt is not a station one stays in for perpetuity. But it is a station one must pass through before arriving at the station of Knowledge. More importantly, it is not a station one can leave solely through contemplation. To put it in the words of Hafiz:

Don't sit there thinking; go out and immerse yourself in God's sea.

Having only one hair wet with water will not put knowledge in that head.

In his autobiography Deliverance From Error, Imam Al-Ghazali speaks of how he was able to deal with his doubts. In spite of all his knowledge and investigations of all the different claims, he was unable to settle the matter except through applying the recipe prescribed by the Sufis. After reading all that can be read from their scholars, he recognized they were a "People of Stations, not a People of Statements." One could spend eternity reading. But it is all in vain if it leaves one in a spiritually idle state.

This is part of what Islam is about: the transformation of statements into stations through action. If one seeks to experience a Ghazalian transformation, they must first em-

brace their doubts as he did, then with humility dive into the ocean of Mercy to the Worlds in order to experience the Divine Presence that will cast all doubts out of their hearts. As Hafiz tells us:

*For those who see only God, their vision
Is pure, and not a doubt remains.
Even if our world is turned upside down and
blown over by the wind,
If you are doubtless, you won't lose a thing.
O Hafiz, if it is union with the Beloved that you
seek,
Be the dust at the Wise One's door, and speak!*

Cont'd from page 20

We may remember the day of Makkah Victory: The Prophet reentered the city after 10 long years of living in Madinah. Practically there was no opposition to him. The whole of Makkah lay at his feet as he marched in. His enemies stood in surrender awaiting his verdict, and he could very well have cried "havoc" or "let slip the dogs of war" as the triumphant commanders of those days used to do.

Instead, in a historic break from the old tradition, the Prophet gave amnesty to all his former enemies. He told them: "You may go. You are a free people."

Unfaltering loyalty to the cause of God is the virtue of prophets. Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was a brilliant example of a man committed to his divinely appointed mission. So it is no wonder that he stood firm against all opposition and finally succeeded in winning over the hearts and minds of millions.

For those who practice sabr in Islam, there is always the unfailing promise and prospect of a never-ending world of felicity.

The Prophet's Inexhaustible Patience

Shahul Hameed

One of the marvelous qualities of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was his infinite patience.

God was with Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), as He is always with those who patiently persevere: "God is certainly with those who patiently persevere." (Qur'an, 2:153)

The Qur'anic word used for patience is 'sabr' and there is no English equivalent for it.

We can convey the idea of sabr only by phrases such as endurance against afflictions, patience with delay, perseverance against hardships, steadfastness in the face of setbacks, courage against hostilities, self-restraint against provocations, will power against temptations, and equanimity or calmness of mind as regards fortunes and misfortunes.

The Prophet was a perfect model to his followers. His life was the shining example of a man of extraordinary endurance: His father died before his birth; his mother died when he was only 6 years old; and his grandfather who took up his guardianship also died soon. Then it was his uncle Abu Talib who protected him.

And when God appointed him His last Prophet, he was faced with the most brutal persecution and hostility from his own people.

But these harsh experiences of life did not make him a cynic; on the contrary, they perfected his faith in God, making him all the more strongly committed to his God-given mission.

During the 13 years of his life in Makkah as the messenger of God, he faced all forms of abuse, boycott, expulsion and threats of physical violence. Yet he never budged an inch away from his mission. Rather he was gentle, considerate and sympathetic even to his enemies.

During the early days of his preaching, the people of Makkah had approached him through his uncle Abu Talib and made very tempting offers to him, such as the leadership of the City of Makkah, the most beautiful girl in marriage, and wealth of immense proportions.

The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) spurned all these offers and said: "I swear by the name of God, O Uncle, that if they place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand in return for giving up this matter (calling people to Islam), I will never desist until either God makes it triumph or I perish defending it."

This steadfastness and constancy against temptations was unusual in an Arab of those days.

And imagine the day when the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) had to leave his home, his city, and his people and emigrate to another place! The Hijrah, as the emigration of the Prophet from Makkah to Madinah is known, was a great sacrifice and a painful decision for the Prophet at the time when he undertook it. But his personal comforts, likes, and dislikes had no value in the face of the immense task before him.

One remembers the time when he and his companion Abu Bakr were almost overcome by their pursuers in the Cave of Thawr. When Abu Bakr in dismay told the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) that they were only two persons against the enemy, he told him with unflinching faith in the Almighty not to grieve, as God was with them. God in the Qur'an admonishes the Muslims: "If you will not aid him [Prophet Muhammad], God certainly aided him when those who disbelieved expelled him, he being the second of the two, when they were both in the cave, when he said to his companion: Grieve not, surely God is with us. So God sent down His tranquility upon him, strengthened him with hosts that you did not see, and made lowest the word of those who disbelieved; and the word of God, that is the highest; and God is Mighty, Wise." (Qur'an, 9:40)

He taught his followers: "When you ask for anything, ask it from God, and if you seek help, seek the help of God. Know that if the people were to unite to do you some benefit, they could benefit you only with what God had recorded for you, and that if they were to unite to do you some injury, they could injure you only with what God had recorded for you. The pens are withdrawn and the pages are dry." (At-Tirmidhi, 1515)

The source of the Prophet's courageous determination in the face of all the traumatic experiences he suffered was his strong

faith in God and his dependence on Him. The Prophet's conviction that God was with him when he was struggling with adverse circumstances, is evident from this teaching: "Strange are the ways of a believer for there is good in every affair of his, and this is not the case with anyone else except in the case of a believer; for if he has an occasion to feel delight, he thanks (God); thus there is a good for him in it, and if he gets into trouble and shows resignation (and endures it patiently), there is a good for him in it." (Muslim, 2999)

The Prophet was always considerate and understanding, even toward those who were ignorant and arrogant towards him. Indeed his gentleness and patience with them earned their love and respect, as God says in the Qur'an:

"Thus it is due to mercy from God that you deal with them gently, and had you been rough and hard-hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you." (3:159)

An incident at the Prophet's mosque in Madinah demonstrates how lenient and kind the Prophet was to ignorant people. Abu Hurairah reports: "A bedouin urinated in the mosque and some people rushed to beat him. The Prophet said, 'Leave him alone and pour a bucket of water over it. You have been sent to make things easy and not to make them difficult' (Al-Bukhari, 6025)

Once a man approached the Prophet seeking advice, and the Prophet said: "Do not get angry." The man asked for advice several times and the Prophet replied every time, "Do not get angry." (Al-Bukhari, 48)

The questioner was probably one disposed to a quick temper, and so the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was stressing the need to control his anger. The Prophet also said: "He who is deprived of forbearance and gentleness is, in fact, deprived of all good." (Muslim, 638)

Cont'd on page 18

Is Religion Beyond Reason?

To step into the religion we require reason and once we are in, reason is put to its place.

Misbah Rafiq

Every time religion and philosophy is discussed together, it becomes difficult to precisely draw a line of demarcation between the two. Probably because both disciplines share somewhat similar subject matter. If ontological questions of Being and cosmological evidence of God is investigated by philosophy, religion too addresses these issues. But the essential difference lies in the sources of knowledge that are relied upon by philosophy and religion, while the former entirely relies on speculative reasoning the latter beautifully blends the faculties of senses and reason with that of the Divine Revelation in order to get a holistic perception of reality.

With respect to the religion of Islam, it's Holy Book, Al Qur'an exhorts man to use his senses at some places, his reason at others and yet at others it advises man to rely on divine revelation in order to recognise his Creator and live an enriching life. One of the examples from the holy Quran, wherein the appeal is made to the senses, are the ayaat from Surah Al-Ghashiyah- which are translated as follows: "So, do they not LOOK at the camels how they are created, and at the sky, how it is raised high, and at the mountains, how they are installed, and at the earth, how it is spread out?" (88:17-20). Another ayah from Surah Al

Ale-Imran asks man to think over his creation and the creation of the world, it says ان في خلق السموات و الارض واختلاف الليل والنهار لآيات لأولي الباب) Behold in the creation of the Heavens and the Earth and in the alternation of the Night and Day, certainly there are Signs for men of understanding, 3:190). So the Holy Qur'an instructs man to use his senses as well as to use his reason so that he can arrive at the conclusion of the existence of a true God, Allah Azza wa Jal.

Once this conclusion is arrived at by the aid of senses and reasoning, submission to the true religion of the true God teaches us that "reason is not absolute" - a dictum firmly held by the rationalists of modern era. It is because man inherently possesses a "limited" and a "flawed" intellect. I responsibly attribute the terms "limited" and "flawed" to the human intellect. For terming it limited, the discipline of cognitive psychology furnishes me with an explanation, its fundamental premise is - "humans are limited processors of information". That is to say that we, the humans, can deal with limited amount of information at a given point of time. Further for terming it flawed, again one of the established facts of cognitive psychology comes handy, it theorises that humans are incapable of considering vari-

ous dimensions simultaneously, say past, present and future. In psychology one manifestation of this limitation is called "planning fallacy" a strong tendency to believe that we can accomplish more in a given time than is possible, the reason for repeatedly committing this fallacy -----despite experiences that everything takes longer than we plan -----is that we have to consider past and future simultaneously which we are incapable of doing. With these inherent weaknesses it is not possible for humans to devise flawless ways of living their lives or to necessarily understand those flawless standards of living as proposed by the religion. Ibraheem (alaihi salaam)'s motivation to comply with Allah's command to sacrifice his son or his stepping into the blazing fire is inexplicable by the standards of reason. Yet we know what he did brought him only more and more good and no harm because he did not comply with the dictates of his reason rather submitted himself to the Deity who is known to be Al Aleem.

Yes man is inquisitive about ----his creation, it's purpose, his Creator and the rest of the creation surrounding him-----so he makes use of the aid of reason which is at his disposal but he is essentially incapable of knowing these things himself by the mere aid of his reason. It is evident from the numerous failed attempts carried out in philosophy wherein one speculation was replaced by the other, none being adequate as an explanation. If modernism upheld the sanctity of reason more than anything, post-modernism planted seeds of skepticism toward it.

However in the holy Quran, the Most Merciful Allah Azza wa Jal, in the very onset of His Divine speech (surah al-fatihah), beautifully caters to the inquisitiveness of human beings. He introduces humankind to their Creator, through the attributes of - *ar-Rahman ar-Rahim* the One who is abundantly and contin-

ually Merciful. Then He goes on to say '*Maaliki yaum-id-din*' - the Master of the Day of Judgment. So Allah Azza wa Jal gives us a balanced perception of a Merciful and a Just God. Furthermore in this Perfect Opening of His Speech, He states the goal of human beings, the path to achieve this goal and the distractions in this path. The goal being His worship, the path being the path of the prophets and the distractions being the ways of those who earned Allah's wrath and of those who were led astray. Therefore when Allah Azza wa Jal Himself answers these important questions, our attempts at experimenting with a limited reasoning are futile.

Moreover Allah Azza wa Jal with His great wisdom and eloquence in His speech subtly conveys that if we want to be benefitted through His guidance we better put our intellect in place. In surah al fatihah when we asked for guidance '*ihdin-as-siraat-al-mustiqeem*' (Guide us towards the Straight Path) Allah Azza wa Jal immediately answers our supplication in the very first verse of the next surah, He says, '*Alif Laam Meem, dhalik-al-kitaabu la raiba fiehi hud-al-lil-muttaqeem*' (Alif Laam Meem, that book----no doubt in it, guidance for the God -conscious). Imaam Razi, a great mufasir, commented that one of the reasons for getting huroof muqata'aat, the meaning of which only Allah knows, in the beginning of this verse which talks about Quran as a book of guidance, is that He wants to convey us that if we really want to be benefitted from this book, we should put our reason in place.

Let Not

"Do not let your difficulties fill you with anxiety; after all, it is only in the darkest nights that the stars shine more brilliantly".

Ali. Ibn Taaib (RA)

I'll Cross the Bridge When I Get There!

A few months back, the media carried the story of a Muslim woman who was the new 100m women's champion. The article also quoted her saying that she is working on improving on her times for future races.

I'm pretty sure that every Muslimah who values the dignity and honour of being gifted with the beautiful and noble deen of Islam, doesn't require an explanation on the impressibility of such an act. A Muslim woman throwing aside her modesty and shame for the sake of a measly medal and some cheap fame is indeed contemptible. However, the point to take of is that: An "outstanding performance" demands intense training and preparation.

In the case of an athlete, it would perhaps require dieting, controlled hydration, sleeping eight to ten hours a day, strenuous training for a minimum of twenty hours a week, preparing psychologically, consulting a nutritionist, exercise physiologist, sports medicine specialist, a coach, and much more....

In the same vein there are certain things in life require intense training and extraordinary preparation in order to achieve an "outstanding performance".

When the topic of parenting and motherhood is broached, the typical response of many a teenager is:

"Aha! Who cares about that? I'm only gonna marry at 24 and get my first child maybe at 29 and my second at 33. That I think

would be more than enough for me. The day I get to that bridge, I'll cross it".

Remember! All bridges and flyovers in life are not the same. While some bridges do not require planning to be easily crossed, there are many other that are quite challenging and demand thorough preparation. If we leap blindly, not only will we be hitting a rocky road, rather we'll also face the peril of plunging to a pitiable end.

Imagine an Olympic champion, not training for the entire year, waking up a few minutes before the race, rushing to the stadium with a "Red-Bull" in his hand and expecting to win the championship for a second time. *We'll call him nuts, crazy and goofy. Isn't it?*

The question we need to pose to ourselves is:

"Are we not perhaps 'nutlier', 'crazier' and 'goofier' by wishfully thinking that we can qualify as champions in life's 'major race' of 'motherhood' and 'rearing the leaders' of tomorrow without any preparation?"

"So....well...are you trying to tell me that I must start changing nappies and clean up vomit for now?" would be the next question.

Not at all! Those are the bridges that you would be able to cross when you get

there.

“Then what other preparation needs to be made for motherhood? Do you perhaps mean that I should start shopping for some body-growers, nappy bags and other essentials to lessen the financial burden on my hub-by-to-be?”

No! It’s much simpler than that – *Just be the person you want your child to be!*

You obviously don’t want the day to come when you’ll have to tell your teenage daughter:

“Darling! I don’t like you hanging around with friends in the mall on a Saturday night.”

Then she snaps back:

“But mummy....you also spend every Wednesday at the coffee shop in the same mall with your friends, Aunty Nasreen and Shireen.”

As the mother, you go on to advise her not to mix with boys at the beach front on a Sunday afternoon.

To this, she rudely fires back:

“Mummy! Aren’t there men watching you, when you work in the gym twice a week?”

Aha, just imagine the agonizing embarrassment if she then impulsively blows burning hot lava:

“But mum, I saw a picture of you posing with my friend, Tasneem’s daddy at your matric party. Don’t ruin on my parade! Don’t tell me how to live!” You had your ‘fun’, now it’s my turn.”

If this sounds embarrassing, try to imagine the embarrassment and humiliation we would be drowning in on the Day of Qiyaamah when the complete detailed ‘movie’ of our lives would be played in front of our parents, grand-parents, children, grand-children, and the entire world, especially our Beloved Nabi Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). Isn’t

he, who tolerated the divorce of his pure daughters, the martyrdom of his respected uncle, the shedding of his precious tears and the spilling of his priceless blood....all for our sake?

Chill...the game’s not over yet....you still have a chance....*Just become the person you’d like your child to be!*

History testifies to the justice of the 2nd Umar, also regarded by some as the 5th Caliph of Islam, Umar bin Abdul Azeez (ra). What was the secret ingredient that helped produce this great and *gentle-giant* of a leader?

The story goes like this: Once night while Ameerul Mu’mineen, Umar bin Khattab (ra) was patrolling the streets of Madeenah Munawwarah, he leaned against a wall and overheard a young girl and her mother.

“O my mother! Aren’t you aware of the law that Ameerul Mu’mineen has passed today, that water should not be added to milk as this is tantamount to deception?”

“O my daughter! Where can Umar see you? Just do as I’m saying” said the mother.

The daughter declared: *“O my beloved mother! I cannot be so ‘two-faced’ as to obey him in public and disobey him in private. It may be that Umar cannot see, but definitely the Rabb (Lord) of Umar is watching!”*

Umar (RA) as great as he was, was ‘blown-away’ by these sentiments which emanated from a heart that was brimming with the awareness and consciousness of Allah.

The next morning, after making inquiries about the family, Umar (ra) called his sons and said:

“If you father had a need for marriage he would have been the first to marry this girl. Which of you requires a wife? I foresee this girl giving birth to a warrior who will lead the Arabs”.

His son Aasim (Ra) responded: *“I don’t*

have a wife. Arrange that I be married to her.”

From this marriage a daughter was born, who in turn became the mother of Umar bin Abdul Azeez (ra), the great leader of Islam.

This wasn't a case of 'crossing the bridge when we get there". The production of this illustrious personality was the culmination of effort of two lengthy and eventful generations.

How apt is the beautiful saying that the nurturing of child begins the day the mother of that child is born. The nurturing of Umar bin Abdul Azeez (ra) began the day his mother was born! Indeed, her nurturing was undertaken with piety and Allah-consciousness. And, yes, she was an epitome of the love, recognition and nearness to Allah from a young tender age.

So if we desire our children to be the 'leaders' of tomorrow, productive for themselves and a blessing to others, we need to start preparing from *now*. The piety of the mother sows the seeds for the piety of the child who will in turn raise true servants of Allah.

Another significant lesson that shines

our from this incident is that when a young girl lives a life of piety and obedience to Allah, He will bless her with a good home and a bright future.

The 'girl' in this incident had no father. She and her mother 'battled' to make ends meet by selling milk. She was not a very high social standing, yet she received a proposal from the 'prince', apart from the fact that the 'king' himself would have married her, had he needed to.

So....becoming the person we would like our child to be., would indeed prepare us to cross two bridges....the 'bridge' of marriage as well as the 'bridge' of mother-hood.

Even if we don't live to cross these bridges, there is another bridge which we will inevitably face one day. It is thinner than a strand of hair and sharper than a sword suspended over the blazing fire of Jahannum.

Insha-Allah preparing in this manner to cross these worldly bridges will enable us to cross that bridge at a speed, faster than that of lightning, securing us entry into the gardens of bliss forever and ever and ever....

Source: uswatulmuslimah

If you Smile, Everyone will Smile

A courageous and an intelligent woman will always formulate ways and ideas to keep herself happy. She will carefully weed out the thorns from the roses. A woman who is pregnant is urged to try her best to remain happy and cheerful at all times. Irrespective of the adversity, she must avoid depression at all costs. She needs to be positive and optimistic during the challenging stages of pregnancy and her gaze needs to be towards Allah. A mother's thoughts, feelings and actions build and mould her child's future. A concerned mother will study the life of Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam), the lives of the Sahaabah (RA) and the lives of the pious. She will ponder and reflect over their blessed lives. This will in turn motivate her to bring alive their outstanding qualities in her life and her children's lives.

The Qur'an

A Clear Proof

Mawlana Muhammad Saleem

Indeed, We have sent down the Dhikr [the Qur'an], and indeed We are its guardian. (15:9)

In this verse Allah proclaims that it is He, and He alone, who has revealed the Glorious Qur'an to mankind, which means it is His Word. This claim is followed by a proof to validate it: that Allah Himself is its guardian and protector. When Allah protects something, nothing and no one can ever interfere with it, so the continual preservation of the Qur'an is a proof that it is the Word of Allah. There are many other proofs of the Divine origin of the Qur'an, including its i'jaz (inimitability) – the challenge to mankind to invent even a single verse to match the Qur'an in its perfection. However, the preservation of the Qur'an is a proof that even a child can understand.

Over 1,400 years have passed and it is still plain for everyone to see that not a single change has occurred in the Qur'an. To fulfil the promise of protecting the Qur'an, Allah has created a comprehensive system consisting of scribes who accurately copy the text; huffaz who accurately memorise its words; qurra who preserve its mode of recitation; and mufassirun, muhaddithun, fuqaha and 'ulama who protect its meaning and message.

Non-Muslim experts, while arguing over the authorship of the Qur'an, nevertheless acknowledge that despite the passage of over fourteen centuries it has not undergone

even the slightest alteration – not of a single letter or diacritical mark.

It is obvious that a very powerful being must be safeguarding the Qur'an for it to have been preserved over so many centuries.

The Protected Book

'Allamah Al-Qurtubi (ra) narrates an interesting story about the preservation of the Qur'an. Once a stranger attended one of the debates that the 'Abbasid Khalifah Ma'mun Ar-Rashid used to hold at his court. The man spoke eloquently during the debate, and afterwards Ma'mun summoned him. Sensing that he was not a Muslim he asked him whether he was a Jew. The man replied that he was. Ma'mun then invited him to embrace Islam and, as a test, offered him incentives for doing so. However, the man preferred to keep his religion, the religion of his forefathers.

A year later the same man attended the court of Ma'mun as a Muslim and spoke learnedly on Islamic jurisprudence. Afterwards, Ma'mun called him and asked him if he was the same man who had come the year before. He replied in the affirmative, and upon being asked how he had come to become a Muslim he told his story.

After he had left the debate the previous year he had decided to examine the different religions. Being a good calligrapher he made three copies of the Tawrat, making

some additions and omissions in the process.

He took the copies to the Jews and they bought them from him. He then made three copies of the Injil, again making some additions and omissions, and took them to the Christians, who bought them. Then he did exactly the same with the Qur'an and took the copies to the Muslims. They checked them and when they noticed the additions and omissions they discarded the copies and refused to buy them. "I realised then that this was a Protected Book, and that was how I came to embrace Islam," concluded the man.

Enthusiasm for Memorising the Qur'an

The preservation of the Qur'an is a great miracle, and the means Allah employs in its preservation are also amazing. Parents who encourage their children to memorise the entire Qur'an are aware of the rewards they and their children will receive for doing so, but the children themselves are not. If you were to ask the students of a typical tahfiz-al-Qur'an class what the rewards for memorising the Qur'an are, majority would not be able to reply. Despite this, the desire Allah places in their hearts to memorise the Qur'an is such that very few if any would dream of giving it up.

Wherever you go you will see that there are never enough tahfiz-al-Qur'an classes and that they are always oversubscribed! Just think, what power is there besides Allah that is keeping our children committed to memorising the Qur'an? There are countless other well-known good deeds that promise great rewards, yet people do not adhere to them with such commitment and dedication as to memorising the Qur'an. Allah Himself puts the love of memorising His Word into the hearts of young people!

Nowhere in the whole world will you

see classes full of children memorising a book that they do not understand. It is a miracle of the Qur'an that people are able to learn a whole foreign alphabet and how to read in the foreign language, without learning to understand the language; furthermore, then they memorise a whole book in that language, and then keep it memorised for the rest of their lives.

Remarkable Huffaz

Throughout history there are examples of people who memorised the Qur'an at a very young age and also in a very short time. Ibn Labban (ra) memorised the entire Qur'an in just one year, remarkable in itself, but even more amazing is that he completed his memorisation at the age of five! Hafiz Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani (ra) became a hafiz by the age of nine, and at the age of eleven led the Tarawih Salah in Al-Masjid Al-Haram. Imam Ash-Shafi'i (ra) memorised the Qur'an in just one month. When Imam Muhammad (ra) went to study under Imam Abu Hanifah (ra) he was asked whether he had memorised the entire Qur'an or not, for admission to his classes was conditional on being a hafiz. He replied that he had not, but his desire to acquire knowledge was so great that he returned after just one week and told Imam Abu Hanifah (ra) that he was now a hafiz!

Connect Yourself to the Qur'an

After learning something of the miraculous nature of the Glorious Qur'an, we need to take some practical steps to connect ourselves with it:

1. Reciting the Qur'an regularly. Recite one juz daily, or if that is not possible then half a juz or a quarter, but recite daily. If the remembrance of Allah in its various forms such as tasbih, tahmid, salat 'alan-Nabi, du'a etc. are compared to individual 'vitamins' beneficial to a

person's spiritual health, the Qur'an can be likened to a multivitamin, for it contains them all.

2. Attend tajwid classes in your locality in order to learn how to recite the Qur'an properly, which is one of the rights of the Qur'an.

3. Attend the Durus (lessons) of the Qur'an delivered by the 'ulama in your locality in order to understand the message of the Qur'an.

4. Practise upon the teachings of the Qur'an.

5. Propagate the teachings of the Qur'an.

6. Respect the people of the Qur'an, i.e. the huffaz and 'ulama. Refrain from disrespecting them and talking ill of them at all costs. 'Umar ibn 'Abd-al-'Aziz (ra) used to say, "Become an 'alim if you can. If you cannot then become a student of 'ilm. And if you cannot then have love for them [the 'ulama and students]. And if you cannot then do not have hatred for them."

May Allah grant us love for and affinity with the Qur'an, the ability to memorise it, recite it in the proper manner, understand it and act according to it. Amin.

Jannah in this World

Once Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) was seated with the Sabaabah (RA) when he said: "A man from the people of Jannah will appear before you now." Just then a man from the Ansaar came with his beard dripping of his left-over wudhu water. The same happened for three days consecutively.

When Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) left, 'Abdullah bin 'Amr (RA) followed this Ansaari man and said to him: "I had an argument with my father and vowed not to go home for three days. Will you allow me to spend these three days at your place?" The man agreed to this. 'Abdullah (RA) says that he spent those three nights with him (trying to ascertain what act of worship earned him this glad tiding) but he did not find him carrying out any extra acts of worship apart from the fact that he only heard him speaking good. After the three nights passed, 'Abdullah (RA) said to him: "O servant of Allah! I did not have any problem with my father. Rather the only reason for me spending these nights with you was to discover your special act of worship which has earned you the glad tiding I heard from Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam). However, I haven't seen you do any extra actions. Now please tell me what has taken you to such a position?" The man replied: "I don't do anything other than what you have seen." When 'Abdullah (RA) left, he called him back and said: "The only thing extra is that I do not harbour any ill-feelings in my heart for any believer and I am not jealous of anyone for the good that Allah blesses him with." 'Abdullah (RA) said: "This is the reason for you reaching this position and this is the thing that we are unable to do." (Musnad Ahmad)

Lesson: Most of our miseries today are linked to the ill-feelings we harbour for others. "Why does he have that kind of a car or house and I don't have the same? Why are his children so bright but my children are not?" We need to remember that "when we harbour ill-feelings, happiness docks elsewhere". This is such a grave sin that even on auspicious occasions, a person who harbours ill-feelings is not forgiven by Allah. On the other hand, the one who imitates the people of Jannah in keeping his heart clean will be from the people of Jannah.

Pitfalls of the Generation

Anton Kuratnik

We are a generation that cares. The progress of globalization, mass media, and the internet means that today, more than ever before, we can become aware of injustices, poverty, oppression, conflict, and tragedies around the world. This information makes us want to act. In her commencement speech at Harvard University, writer J.K. Rowling said that only through imagination can human beings empathize with each other. Indeed, few of us have experienced the oppression, suffering, hunger, and pain that we hear about daily in the news. Yet, through our imagination, we can empathize which makes us very eager to help.

So now, there is a plethora of Muslim non-profit groups and political and charity organizations who are all citing verses of the Qur'an and various hadith (sayings of the Prophet) to prove the importance of their work. So prevalent is this, that one can often meet individuals running these organizations who sincerely believe that it is their cause that is the most important; their cause that should receive all the attention and all the efforts of the Muslim ummah (community) at the expense of all other causes. Often times, these individuals will have plenty of scriptural evidence to back it all up.

The essence of the problem, in my

opinion, is the source of one's guidance. If emotions are guiding our actions, what will prevent us from doing wrong, making incorrect decisions, or even falling into sin? The Qur'an and the Sunna do not only tell us what to do; they also tell us how to do it.

My question is if the Qur'an and Sunna (practices of the Prophet) really are the reasons we are doing this work. Are we helping fight injustice in Palestine, AIDS in Africa, and homelessness in Canada because we are taught to do so by our faith? Or are we doing so because we have witnessed or have heard of these crises, felt an emotional attachment, and decided to get to work? Is it simply because helping others makes us feel good? These are questions to consider and ponder over, because only actions (whether they are charitable acts, activism, or prayer) done sincerely, for the sake of pleasing God, are the ones which will, ultimately, have any weight. Everything else, no matter for how noble a cause or reason, is pointless; if not in this world, then surely in the next.

That might be an unpopular statement because one may wonder why a Muslim can't simply help others because he or she cares; is the end result not the same? I believe a part of it has to do with emotions. Activism, in all its forms, is a very emotional process. I've met

plenty of activists who can become so passionate about their cause that they forget the etiquette of behavior that Muslims are required to follow. Would an individual conscious of the fact that one is doing an action for the sake of Allah SWT, easily forget simple points of Islamic etiquette?

The essence of the problem, in my opinion, is the source of one's guidance. If emotions are guiding our actions, what will prevent us from doing wrong, making incorrect decisions, or even falling into sin? The Qur'an and the Sunna do not only tell us what to do; they also tell us how to do it. They make it a point to tell us what to avoid. In activism in general (but in its political form, in particular), decisions aren't always easy. How will we make the right choices when our guiding principles are our feelings? Also, if we claim to be guided by Qur'an and Sunna, then how much of them do we really know? To those of us (including myself) involved in social justice: have we read up on how the Prophet (peace be upon him) strove to uphold it? (I'm not talking about the common ready-made quotes, but thorough research) To those of us engaged in political activism: have we read up on the Sunna of dealing with others? Do we know what the Fuqaha (Jurists) say on fighting injustice and dealing with those we disagree with? Often times, the answers of our scholars may surprise us.

The dangers of forgetting Qur'an and Sunna in activism are plentiful. One may become too strict which slows down the pace of one's work with unnecessary limitations. One may also become too liberal which would lead to disobeying God's command while trying to carry out the mission one claims is for God's sake. In fact, simply acting out of ignorance can be a sin in itself. So how can an individual, whose desire to serve God stems from reading His Book, fail to look into that same Book for guidance in one's own actions?

The problems of insincerity don't end there. How many of us are struggling to help others while forgetting about the rights of our families? How many of us disrespect and neglect our parents and spouses while maintaining that our activism is for the sake of God? These are all points to ponder upon and reflect.

This article is not meant to be an indictment of all, or even most, Muslim activists. It is simply a reminder, first and foremost, to myself. All of us struggle with sincerity and I strongly urge everyone to reflect: do we really do it for God? And if so, do we know enough about what we are doing? Take a few minutes to reflect. Remember, improper intentions are not a reason to leave any activity; that is a satanic ploy. Rather, continue on and ask God to correct one's heart.

God, alone, knows best.

The Basis of Everything is the Pleasure of Allah

On one occasion, Hazrat Moulana Ashraf Ali Thaanvi (ra) mentioned:

No matter how much a person worships Allah, or adopts taqwa and piety in his life, one cannot feel complacent at any time as one is unaware of one's true status and position in the sight of Allah. Since everything depends on the acceptance of Allah and His pleasure, who can be bold enough to make any type of claim (regarding his position and status by Allah)? Similarly, no person can be confident of his future (i.e. whether one will pass away with Imaan or not). Since the condition of man's heart is always changing and fluctuating and one does not know what the future holds for him, how can one feel confident of his future?

(Malfoozaat e Hakeemul Ummah)

The Story of Musa (AS) and the Guide

One day, Musa (AS) delivered such an impressive sermon that all who heard it were deeply moved. Someone in the congregation asked: "O Messenger of Allah, is there another man on earth more learned than you?" Musa (AS) replied: "No!", believing so, as Allah had given him the power of miracles and honored him with the Torah.

However, Allah revealed to Musa (AS) that no man could know all there is to know, nor would one messenger alone be the custodian of all knowledge. There would always be another who knew what others did not. Musa (AS) asked Allah: "O Allah, where is this man? I would like to meet him and learn from him." He also asked for a sign to this person's identity.

Allah instructed him to take a live fish in a water-filled vessel. The point at which the fish disappears, he would find the man he sought. Musa (AS) set out on his journey, accompanied by a young man who carried the vessel with the fish. They reached a place where two rivers met and decided to rest there. Instantly, Musa (AS) fell asleep.

While he was asleep, his companion saw the fish wriggle out of the vessel into the river and swim away. However, he forgot to relate this incident to Musa (AS). When he awoke, they continued their journey until they were exhausted and hungry. Musa (AS) asked for his morning meal. Only then did his com-

panion recall that the fish they had brought with them had gotten away. Hearing this, Musa (AS) exclaimed: "This is exactly what we are seeking!"

They quickly retraced their steps to the place where the rivers met and where the fish had jumped out. There they found a man, his face partly covered with a hood. One could tell by his aura that he was a saintly man. He was Al-Khidr, the guide.

Allah the Almighty narrates in the Quran:

And (remember) when Musa (AS) said to his servant: "I will not give up (traveling) until I reach the junction of the two seas or (until) I spend years and years in traveling."

But when they reached the junction of the two seas, they forgot their fish, and it took its way through the sea as in a tunnel. So when they had passed further on (beyond that fixed place), Musa (AS) said to his boy-servant: "Bring us our morning meal; truly, we have suffered much fatigue in this, our journey."

He said: "Do you remember when we rested on the rock? I indeed forgot the fish, none but Satan made me forget to remember it. It took its course into the sea in a strange (way)!" (Musa (AS)) said: "That is what we have been seeking." So they went back retracing their footsteps.

Then they found one of Our devotees, unto whom We had bestowed mercy from Us,

and whom We had taught knowledge from Us. Musa (AS) said to him (Khidr) "May I follow you so that you can teach me something of that knowledge (guidance and true path) which you have been taught (by Allah)?"

He (Khidr) said: "Verily! You will not be able to have patience with me! And how can you have patience about a thing which you know not?"

Musa (AS) said: "If Allah will, you will find me patient, and I will not disobey you in aught."

He (Khidr) said: "Then, if you follow me, ask me not about anything till I myself mention it to you."

So the two went off, until when they embarked on a boat and the man (Khidr) made a hole in it. Musa (AS) said: "Did you make a hole in it to drown its people? Verily, you have done Imra - a Munkar (evil, bad, dreadful) thing."

He (Khidr) said: "Did I not tell you, that you would not be able to have patience with me?"

(Musa (AS)) said: "Call me not to account for what I forgot, and be not hard upon me for my affair (with you)."

Then they both proceeded, till they met a boy, he (Khidr) killed him. Musa (AS) said: "Have you killed an innocent person who had killed none? Verily, you have done Nukra a great Munkar (prohibited, evil, dreadful) thing!"

(Khidr) said: "Did I not tell you that you can have no patience with me?"

(Musa (AS)) said: "If I ask you anything after this, keep me not in your company, you have received an excuse from me."

Then they both proceeded, till, when they came to the people of a town, they asked them for food, but they refused to entertain them. Then they found therein a wall about to collapse and he (Khidr) set it up straight. (Musa (AS)) said: "If you had wished, surely you could have taken wages for it!"

(Khidr) said: "This is the parting between me

and you, I will tell you the interpretation of (those) things over which you were unable to hold patience.

"As for the ship, it belonged to poor people working in the sea. So I wished to make a defective damage in it (Lit., "to cause a fault in it" - i.e., to make it temporarily unserviceable), as there was a king after them who seized every ship by force.

"And as for the boy, his parents were believers, and we feared lest he should oppress them by rebellion and disbelief. So we intended that their Lord should change him for them for one better in righteousness and near to mercy.

"And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the town; and there was under it a treasure belonging to them; and their father was a righteous man, and your Lord intended that they should attain their age of full strength and take out their treasure as a mercy from your Lord. And I did it not of my own accord. That is the interpretation of those (things) over which you could not hold patience.¹

The story of Musa (AS) and Al-Khidr is also told in a hadith.

Ubai Ibn Ka'b (RA) told us that the Prophet (Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)) said: Once Musa (AS) stood up and addressed Bani Israel. He was asked who was the most learned man amongst the people. He said: "I." Allah admonished him as he did not attribute absolute knowledge to Him (Allah). So, Allah said to him: "Yes, at the junction of the two seas there is a slave of Mine who is more learned than you." Musa (AS) said; "O my Lord! How can I meet him?" Allah said: "Take a fish and put it in a container and you will find him at the place where you will lose the fish."

Musa (AS) took a fish and put it in a container and proceeded along with his

(servant) boy, Joshua (Yusha Ibn Nun), till they reached the rock where they laid their heads (i.e. lay down). Musa (AS) slept, and the fish, moving out of the container, fell into the sea. It took its way into the sea (straight) as in a tunnel. Allah stopped the flow of water over the fish and it became like an arch (the Prophet pointed out his arch with his hands). They traveled the rest of the night, and the next day Musa (AS) said to his boy (servant): "Give us our food, for indeed, we have suffered much fatigue in this journey of ours." Musa (AS) did not feel tired till he crossed that place which Allah had ordered him to seek after. His boy (servant) said to him: "Do you know that when we were sitting near that rock, I forgot the fish, and none but Satan caused me to forget to tell (you) about it, and it took its course into the sea in an amazing way?" So there was a path for the fish and that astonished them. Musa (AS) said: "That was what we were seeking after."

So both of them retraced their footsteps till they reached the rock. There they saw a man lying covered with a garment. Musa (AS) greeted him, and he replied saying: "How do people greet each other in your land?" Musa (AS) said: "I am Musa (AS)." The man asked: "Musa (AS) of Bani Israel?" Musa (AS) said: "Yes, I have come to you so that you may teach me from those things which Allah has taught you." He said: "O Musa (AS)! I have some of the knowledge of Allah which Allah has taught me and which you do not know, while you have some of the knowledge of Allah which Allah has taught you and which I do not know." Musa (AS) asked: "May I follow you?" He said: "But you will not be able to remain patient with me, for how can you be patient about things which you will not be able to understand?" Musa (AS) said: "You will find me, if Allah so will, truly patient, and I will not disobey you in aught."

So both of them set out walking along the sea-shore. A boat passed by them, and they asked the crew of the boat to take them on board. The crew recognized Al-Khidr, so they took them on board without fare. When they were on board the boat, a sparrow came and stood on the edge of the boat and dipped its beak once or twice into the sea. Al-Khidr said to Musa (AS): "O Musa (AS)! My knowledge and your knowledge have not decreased Allah's knowledge except as much as this sparrow has decreased the water of the sea with its beak." Then suddenly Al-Khidr took an adze and pulled up a plank, and Musa (AS) did not notice it till he had pulled up a plank with the adze. Musa (AS) said to him: "What have you done? They took us on board charging us nothing; yet you have intentionally made a hole in their boat so as to drown its passengers. Verily, you have done a dreadful thing." Al-Khidr replied: "Did I not tell you that you would not be able to remain patient with me?" Musa (AS) replied: "Do not blame me for what I have forgotten, and do not be hard upon me for my fault." So the first excuse of Musa (AS) was that he had forgotten.

When they had left the sea, they passed by a boy playing with other boys. Al-Khidr took hold of the boy's head and plucked it with his hand like this. (Sufyan, the sub-narrator gestured with his fingertips as if he were plucking some fruit.) Musa (AS) said to him: "Have you killed an innocent person who has not killed any person? You have really done a horrible thing." Al-Khidr said: "Did I not tell you that you could not remain patient with me?" Musa (AS) said: "If I ask you about anything after this, don't accompany me, You have received an excuse from me."

Then both of them went on till they came to some people of a village, and they asked its inhabitants for food but they refused to entertain them as guests. Then they saw

therein a wall which was just going to collapse and Al Khidr repaired it just by touching it with his hands. (Sufyan, the sub-narrator, gestured with his hands, illustrating how Al-Khidr passed his hands over the wall upwards.) Musa (AS) said: "These are the people whom we have called on, but they neither gave us food, nor entertained us as guests, yet you have repaired their wall. If you had wished, you could have taken wages for it."

Al-Khidr (AS) said: "This is the parting between you and me, and I shall tell you the explanation of those things on which you could not remain patient."

The Prophet added: "We wish that Musa (AS) could have remained patient by virtue of which Allah might have told us more about their story." (Sufyan, the sub-narrator, said that the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said: "May Allah bestow His Mercy on Musa (AS)! If he had remained patient, we would have been told further about their case.")²

Notes:

1. Quran 18:60-82
2. Sahih Al-Bukhari

An Accepted Qurbaani – How?

When Sayyiduna Aadam and Hawwa ('alaibimas salaam) came to live in the world and started having children, it so happened that they had twins from every pregnancy, one of the two being a boy, while the other, a girl.

When the issue of marriage came, since there was no one other than brothers and sisters - and a brother cannot be married to his sister - Allah instructed that the boy born from one set of twins should marry the girl born from the other set of twins and vice-versa. But, the girl born with the first boy, Qaabil, was beautiful while the girl born set of twins with the second boy, Haabil, was unattractive. When the time of marriage came, the unattractive girl born with Haabil fell to the lot of Qaabil according to the law. This enraged Qaabil. He turned hostile to Haabil and started insisting that the girl born with him should be given to him in marriage.

Sayyiduna Aadam ('alaibis salaam) did not accept the demand. However, to remove the division between Haabil and Qaabil, he proposed that they should both offer their respective sacrifice for Allah. Whoever has his sacrifice accepted will be the one to have that girl. He was certain that the sacrifice to be accepted will be the sacrifice of the one who has the right to marry her, that is, the sacrifice of Haabil.

In that era, an open sign of a sacrifice being accepted was that a fire would come from the sky and consume the sacrifice; and the sacrifice which was not consumed by the fire was the sign of its non-acceptance.

Haabil owned a flock of sheep and goats. He happily offered the sacrifice of the best and healthiest he sheep possessed. Qaabil was a grain farmer. He offered a few poor quality grains as his sacrifice. As was customary with them, a fire came from the sky and ate up the sacrifice offered by Haabil while the sacrifice offered by Qaabil remained lying where it was, untouched. Qaabil was further enraged and said to his brother: "I will kill you." Haabil responded in a peaceful manner: "Allah only accepts from those who possess taqwa (Allah consciousness)." That is, if you had been conscious of Allah, practising taqwa and piety, your sacrifice too would have been accepted. Since you did not do so, the sacrifice was not accepted. Hence, why blame me for it?

(Tafseer Ibnī Katbeer vol. 2, pg. 43 and Ma'aariful Quraan vol. 3, pg. 112)

Lessons:

1. *If we desire that our qurbaani (sacrifice) be accepted in the Divine court, it is essential for us to adopt taqwa in every aspect of our lives, since the meat and blood does not reach Allah, rather it is the taqwa which is seen by Him.*
2. *When we see that Allah has given someone a particular blessing, we should regard our deprivation as a result of our own shortcomings and sins. Thus we should repent from our wrong ways instead of wishing and worrying about ways through which the other person could be made to lose the blessing that he is enjoying.*

The Obscenity of Two-Way Communication

While two-way communication with Allah is hair-raising audaciousness; one-way communication goes with conditions that only those who have truly surrendered themselves to their Lord's will could achieve. Even communication with the Lord on the Day of Judgment is tied up with a life of virtuousness, writes Syed Iqbal Zaheer.

We are often asked whether humans, in general, and Muslims in particular, can enjoy a two-way communication with their Lord. Many religions offer this. But Islam is not *any* religion. It has its basis in Revelation. But, little do people understand, or want to understand.

What leads some people to imagine the possibility of such a thing is that those who have been endowed with a soft spot in their hearts by their Lord, sense, even if quite weakly, some harmony with the timeless and the universal. Women, by default, being endowed with a softer heart, are more prone to such feelings. Consequently, they, men and women, begin to imagine, and even claim, that they are spiritual. Occasionally, feelings associated with the perennial are uppermost in their minds, but much subdued at most other times, or quite absent. Their main concern is with material possessions, and developments related to it.

"I feel very spiritual," says one of them. But since spiritualism is the opposite of materialism, both being non-accommodative of each other, while they themselves being what they are, day in and day out, ardent ma-

terialists, they fail to realize that their materialism denies them any spiritualism. They also fail to recognize that being spiritual is very different from feeling spiritual. They assume spiritualism for spiritual feelings. No human misses the latter in his life, and which, without proper connection with the Divine, is of little, or no, worth. The feeling has been placed as a knocker, to open the drunken eyes, and seek its realization, but which they never attempt, being so busy – overwhelmed, they say, pre-*textually* – with material existence.

They do not know that, let alone the unimaginable two-way communication with Allah, even one-way communication is not achievable without severe conditions having been met. For example, Prophetic traditions say that a man communicates with his Lord when he is in prayers. That, of course, is not two-way communication, but at least it is one way: Is it not enough that the Lord of the worlds listens to you? Think of it. Who are you after all?

But, does everyone who prays succeed in achieving one-way communication with his Lord? Far from that, one cannot be sure that

his prayer is, in the least – communication or no communication – accepted, in some degree or the other, to be rewarded in one degree or the other, in this life and the next. How many devotees are not there who weep in their prostrations but whose prayers are rejected?

Says a hadith: “Whoever gained some wealth through unlawful means, and wore a shirt out of it, will not have his prayers accepted until he gets rid of that shirt.” Can today’s Muslim, any Muslim, claim that his earnings are hundred percent lawful?

Another hadith says, “Whoever went to a fortune-teller and believed in what he said, will not have his prayers accepted for forty days.” Is not the Muslim society of today infested with fortune-tellers, soothsayers, spiritual healers, false Peers and Shuyukh making good money out of those who believe in them? And they are no few. Maybe some people do not physically go to the fortune-tellers, soothsayers, diviners, palmers, star-gazers and others of this class. But do they not believe in things told by them, and not spread their triumphant achievements stories in the society through gossip?

Not to talk of successful communication with Allah, many ahadith pronounce the rejection of prayers for several other conditions not met. One of them says, “Whoever drank wine and was intoxicated, will not have his forty days of prayers accepted. If he died in that state, he will enter the Fire.” Have Muslims begun to drink? Of course, some have. Indeed, some of them run hotels serving wine; and others in the West are surprised when they encounter a teetotaler.

Another hadith speaks of what could prevent a woman’s prayer acceptable, no matter how earnestly she prayed. It says, “Whichever woman went out to the mosque well-perfumed, will not have her prayer accepted until she goes back home and washes

herself.” Imagine now, not simply those who attract to themselves with their perfume, but those who go to Taraweeh prayers with faces uncovered, luring the eyes of the young and the old; do they imagine their prayers are rushed up to the heaven?

There is another tradition about women which denies them a kind look from their Lord. It says, “Allah does not look at a woman who is not grateful to her husband, although she cannot do without him.”

While on prayers, one might as well consider the following. The Prophet warned: “Allah does not look at a man’s prayer in which he does not straighten up his back between the deep bow and prostration.” But this is how today’s Muslims pray. They can hardly wait for a breath before they would rush to the next act in their prayers.

People think of Islam as they do any other religion. Islam is vastly tougher, greatly uncompromising. No religion dare reject the devotions of the devotees for any reason. If it did, they would reject that religion. Islam summarily rejects the devotions of the devotees for many reasons.

The Prophet said, “Incumbent upon you is Jihad, listening and obeying (the Amir), and migration (from the land of Kufr). And, he who broke away from the mainstream Muslim, by as much as the width of a bow, will not have his Prayers or fasts accepted. Indeed, they are the fuel of the Fire.”

A common practice of the contemporary Muslims is to devote the hours after sunset until late-night sleeping time as the time of relaxation: a hugely false idea and a greatly sinful practice. It comes directly from the Devil and flies in the face of a tradition reported from the Prophet. The relaxation turns out to be no more than hours before the TV which is dominated by pornographic advertisements, luring the onlookers more than the news reels,

or the entertainment programs, which themselves are filled with pornography. In sin the Muslims watch, and in sin they sleep. Islam rejects it forthrightly.

Let alone pornographic images, the Prophet has warned in a hadith that a nightly sit-out in which is recited erotic poetry, or that in praise of wine and women, prevents the acceptance of that night's prayer. Said the Prophet, "He who recited poetry after night prayers, will not have the prayers of that night accepted from him." Are the relaxation hours of today after nightfall any better than recitation of erotic poetry by the Jahiliyy Arab circled by his audience in the sands?

Many (so-called) Sufis, Yogi-type men, shortly-educated Peers, and others whose earnings depend upon themselves posing as spiritual men, confidently spread the notion that a two-way communication is possible with Allah. Actually, when they say that, they mean to include themselves and exclude the rest. (So, one of them invites the Prophet to attend a session led by him, sees him coming, whom he alone can see, when he comes! Rest of the idiots always miss to see him, which is not enough for them to open their eyes to the deceitful person's deceit). Two-way communication with Allah is simply outrageous. It was reserved for Prophets and Messengers. That will happen no more. That phase in human history is in the unrepeatably past. Presidents of the most murderous nations claim that they have been inspired by God to go on a bombing-spree! It is the Devil who whispers to them.

The inconceivability of two-way communication can be guessed from the explanation that the commentators have offered to verse 105 of Surah al-Nisa' which says, "Verily, We have sent down the Book to you with the truth so that you might judge between the people by what Allah has shown you." (4: 105). The commentators have said that the refer-

ence is to Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) alone. He alone judged by what Allah showed him as the undoubtable truth. As regards other mortals, neither can they claim to be "shown (or guided) by Allah" in reference to an affair, nor can they claim to be "certainly right" in their judgment. `Umar (RA) said: "Let not one of you say, 'I did this or that by what Allah showed me (as the right thing do);' because such a 'showing' by Allah was only to his Prophet. As for us, our opinions can both be right as well as wrong." And when someone told him that he (`Umar (RA)) should judge by what "Allah shows him," (i.e., shows `Umar (RA)), he reprimanded him and said that that was the prerogative of Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam).

And here we have, men as tall as mountains in jahal, claiming that a two-way communication is possible with Allah. A step down the ladder of jahal, some claim that what they say, or do, has Allah's approval, or acceptance. Perched a little higher up on the rungs of jahal-ladder, some claim – and, of course, make some fortune out of it, or earn good respect – that what they say has the Prophet's approval. Those who believe in them of the masses have no idea that the man claiming such nonsense is at a greater distance from the Prophet than the Andromeda Galaxy is from the earth.

To emphasise the difficulty in establishing one-way communication with Allah, without one submitting himself to Islam unreservedly, without any exception to rules and principles to be observed, throughout life, one might keep a few more of the Prophet's traditions before him. One of them says that the punishment of violators of the Islamic rules of life is not merely denial of communication with Allah in this world, but, denial of any communication on the Day of Judgment also. One of his narrative goes, "There are three at

whom Allah would not look at on the Day of Judgment, nor speak to them, neither purify them, but rather, theirs will be a painful chastisement: A man who swore on (the goodness of) his commodity falsely, saying that he paid more (for his commodity) that the buyer was paying; he who swore falsely in the afternoon (in order to devour another's property); and he who had extra water but refused it to a traveller."

A few others will miss to communicate with Allah on a Day when the greatest desire of the hearts would be to hear from Him, and be granted the Beatific Vision. The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "There are three with whom Allah will not speak on the Day of Standing: He who does not give anything, but would mention it as a favour done; he who sells his commodity with the help of a false oath; and he who dragged his trouser (out of pride)."

Another statement of the Prophet is in the same vein. He said, "Dragging the clothes applies to the lower garment as well as to shirts (i.e., too long to impress one's yogishness), and the turban, letting it down out of pride: Allah will not look at such of them on the Day of Judgment."

So, a touch of pride, and you are gone out of sight.

Thus, while two-way communication is hair-raising audaciousness; one-way communication goes with conditions that only those who have truly surrendered themselves to their Lord's will could achieve it. Even communication with the Lord on the Day of Judgment is tied up with a life of virtuousness. But the matter can get worse. Prophetic sayings promise that, let alone the above, some people will be denied even a kind look from their Lord. Said he: "There are three at whom Allah will not look at on the Day of Judgment: He who disobeyed and misbehaved with his parents; a

drunkard, and he who gave but reminded of it as a favour."

How many of the long-bearded, long-tongued devotees of the first row in mosque do the Muslims not boast off, who divide the Ummah in the name of Islam? The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) knew the rise of such a class. He said, "Three there are those upon whom Allah will not look at on the Day of Judgment, nor purify them, but rather they shall have a painful chastisement: A man who came to a people (who were on a unified status), then he split their unity, until they began to treat the illegal as legal and shed blood; and a tyrannous ruler."

Yet there are more of today's Muslim described by the Hadith than ever in their history. A statement goes in these words: "(If a man) took away another's property by wrongful means, he will be of those at whom Allah will not look, will not purify him, but rather, he will share a painful punishment."

There are others who will miss to be noticed on the Day of Judgment. Said the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), "There are three at whom Allah will not look on the Judgment-day: A sexual sinner who fell into it in his old age; a lying leader; and a proud desitute."

Another report from the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) is in the following words: "Three are there at whom Allah will not look at on the Day of Resurrection: He who disobeyed and misbehaved with his parents; he who bore out and authorized evil for his family; and a woman who behaved and imitated the males."

As if the list is getting too long for tired minds, another of the Prophet's (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) statement makes it harder that a one-way communication should happen. Indeed, it promises a full-scale fall into the oblivion. He said: "Three there are at whom Allah will not look: A free man who bought a free man; a free man who sold himself (into slavery); and a man who denied the wages of a hired man until his sweat was dry."

We have said in earlier lines that Islam is a difficult religion. It is made easy only to those who submit. Submit then, first, before you can achieve acceptance of your prayers

Wishing Good & Incurring Evil

Ali Unal

From one perspective, the Qur'an anatomizes the spirit or character of humankind. In human life, the periods of health and prosperity are greater in number and last much longer than those of illness and misfortune. Despite this, people complain greatly when some misfortune visits them; it is as if all their lives have passed in hardship and affliction, and they now feel as if the days of health and prosperity will never come again. Yet, when they are relieved of their misfortune or when they recover from an illness, they are exultant beyond all measure and, in self-glorification, forget to thank God, as if they had not suffered at all. One of the most important reasons why humans act in such a way is that they are unaware of the wisdom in, and Divine reasons for, illnesses and misfortunes, or health and prosperity.

God Almighty always wills good for humanity. In other words, He always gives us mercy, good, and grace. Even in misfortunes that arise as a result of unforgivable corruption or wrongdoing, there are many aspects of good for people, including for believers in particular. But human beings, by misusing their free will, either prevent that grace, good, and mercy from reaching them or transform these things into evil. Let us give an illustration here. Water is inherently a good thing - it quenches

our thirst and provides moisture for our crops. Yet, if we were to dive into the water without measuring its depth or considering whether there may be currents, or without knowing how to swim, then water becomes a means of evil. In the same way, fire can be made into an evil if we allow it to burn a finger because of ignorance or carelessness. Factors such as haste, thoughtlessness, ignorance, inexperience, or not taking due care can all transform something which is good for a person into an evil. Consequently, all the evils that befall humankind are caused by ourselves, by our mistakes and errors.

Here it might be argued that huge numbers of people are born into misfortune of one kind or another, having had no part in causing it - in any meaningful sense of causing (i.e. being responsible or answerable for) it. It may be that collectively, over a large span of generations, human beings cause all the misfortunes that beset some of them; but the fact is that many misfortunes are suffered individually by people who themselves, individually, did not earn them by their intentions or actions - some indeed suffer long before they attain the age of legal responsibility.

It is true that individuals have no part in causing the misfortune they are born into and which has been caused by earlier genera-

tions. However, the Divine Religion views the world and its misfortunes from the perspective of the afterlife, and we are here in the world to gain this eternal life. So God tests us here so that we acquire the state appropriate for this life. He tests us according to His blessings upon us. More blessings mean more responsibility. As God gives us more bounties and blessings, our responsibility grows. For example, almsgiving is compulsory for the wealthy, but not for the poor; while those who have the required power and equipment are required to go to war when necessary, while the disabled, blind, or sick do not have to bear arms in God's cause.

The Prophet Jesus (AS), says: "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell (Matthew, 5: 27-30). When viewed from this perspective, we cannot know what specific circumstances into which we are born are to our good, or to our harm. God knows, and we do not know. We cannot know if being rich or poor, or healthy or sick, or sound and disabled is better for us. And, the Qur'an tells us that it may be that we dislike a thing although it is good for us, and love a thing although it is bad for us. God knows but we know not (2: 216). This means that we cannot regard as misfortune any circumstances into which we are born.

Evil is destruction, and humans have a great capacity for destruction. Destruction is related to non-existence, and the non-existence of something is possible even if one component is missing. But all the good that comes to humanity is from God. Good relates to existence, and the existence of something is

not possible even if only one of the components does not exist. For example, a person can survive and be healthy on the condition that all the cells of his or her body - numbering more than 60 trillion - are healthy. If only one cell is deformed, it can lead to the death of a person. so the health of a body is dependent on the health of its components. Furthermore, for something to exist, time is required, while its destruction can take place within a minute. A lazy child, by igniting a match, can burn to ashes in an hour a building that it took ten persons a hundred days to build. What all this means is that human beings have little capacity to accomplish good. In order to obtain bread, which is a vital food for humans, a person needs soil, air, water, the sun, a seed of wheat which has the capacity to germinate and grow into wheat, and the ability and power to grow wheat, all of which are provided by God. so whatever good people have, it is from God, while whatever evil befalls them, it is from themselves.

It can be said that human free will works in the direction of evil, while it is God Who causes people to will good and enables them to do it. The human carnal soul always wills evil and to commit sins, but God always wills good and makes people succeed in willing good, provided that they refrain from characteristics such as haughtiness, wrong viewpoints, ill intentions, ill-disposition, evil suspicions, prejudices, wrong judgment, and subjection to carnal appetites. In order to help people refrain from such ills, God has sent Prophets and revealed Books, and He has established a special way of thinking, belief, and conduct in the name of religion.

As a consequence, people should know and acknowledge that whatever evil befalls them is because of their errors and sins, and therefore they should turn to God in repentance, mending their ways and correcting

their errors. They should neither fall into despair nor complain about others or Destiny. When they recover from an illness or are relieved of any misfortune, they should attribute this blessing to God alone, and accept that, like illnesses and misfortunes, health and prosperity are also a test for them. They should be thankful to God, without taking any credit for themselves, refraining from making errors or sinning. Both of these attitudes - turning to God in repentance and mending one's ways when visited by illness or misfortune, as well as thanking God in times of health and prosperity - require patience. Patience which is shown in resisting the temptations of the carnal soul and in avoiding sins, and which is displayed when enduring misfortunes without complaint, causes one to acquire piety; patience and perseverance in thanking and worshipping God elevates one to the rank of being loved by God.

Another point to mention here is that a person should attribute to themselves whatever misfortune or evil befalls them, but when another believer has been visited by misfortune, others should not think ill of them; ra-

ther they should take into consideration that God has caused this person to be able to attain a higher spiritual rank through misfortune or evil. The greatest of humankind, such as the Prophets and saints, did not remain immune from illnesses and other misfortunes. Misfortune is a cause of nearness to God, as God always keeps people pure by means of misfortune. As the Prophets and saints always thanked God in patience when a misfortune visited them, they were promoted to a higher rank as heroes of patience and thankfulness. The Messenger (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), declares: "Those who are most visited by misfortunes are the Prophets, then come others who are near to God, each according to his nearness." (at-Tirmidhi, "Zuhd," 57) A Companion came to the Messenger and said: "O Messenger of God, I love you very much." The Messenger replied: "Then be prepared for poverty" (at-Tirmidhi, "Zuhd," 36). When another one said that he loved God very much, the Messenger replied: "Then be prepared for misfortunes." That is why it is said: "Nearness to the Sultan is a burning fire." This is another subtle point that merits much reflection.

Hard Times

Rasulullah Sallallahu Alayhi wa Sallam has stated,

"Relief accompanies difficulties."

[Al-Arba'oon Lin-Nawawi]

It is the way of Allah - based on His infinite wisdom - to have mankind pass through stages in their lives. In general, people go through good times and they go through hard times. Naturally, it is when they go through hard times that they face the most psychological stress.

We should know that whatever hardship or difficulties we face will come to an end soon. It, therefore, behoves us to be patient and to have good expectations concerning Allah. Allah is the Most Merciful of those who are merciful, even more merciful than a mother towards her small infant. We should realize that the Merciful will not leave us in that situation for long if we are patient for the sake of Allah. If a person lives a life of ease only, it becomes simple for him to forget about Allah. If a person is rescued by Allah in his darkest hour, that person should never afterwards forget Allah and what Allah has done for him. Indeed, there should be a close bond forged that may not have existed had Allah not tried His servant.

Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution in Islam

Siraj Islam Mufti

Introduction

Humankind is besieged with all sorts of conflicts. But instead of dealing them through peaceful means, we are often faced with its Darwinian resolution - "The Might is Right" concept, that is, the powerful resort to force and impose their will on the weak. But while this mechanism may apply to others of God's creation, it does not work for Homo Sapiens: Because we are endowed with a moral sense, which overshadows all our behavior. This moral dilemma requires tackling the underlying problem adequately. And unless it is tackled properly, the conflict persists: It does not go away and comes back in myriad forms, becoming ever more pernicious.

This moral sense is strong in Islam. Islam means peace in all its forms and asks for justice in resolving all conflicts. So that the aggrieved party is satisfied with the result and being at peace works for peace with all concerned.

Islamic Peace Fundamentals

Islam literally means two basic concepts: First, Islam from the Arabic verb *salima/yaslemu* means to surrender or submit to God. And second, from its Arabic noun *salam* - from letters seen, lam, meem (or s, l, m) - it means

peace or to acquire peace. A daily example of this is provided by Muslims in their greetings of *Assalamu Alaykum*, meaning peace be with you.

According to the Qur'an, Islam is what all prophets and messengers of God, from Adam to Muhammad (S) and others in between (AS), preached and practiced. And that is what they asked from their people: That is to submit to one God and to work for peace. This was the message of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (AS).

Therefore, Islam advocates living in peace with God - the Creator and Lord of all that exists. As well as, seeking peace within our own selves, and living in peace with other human beings, and in peace with our surroundings and environment in its entirety.

All conflicts - whether they are interpersonal, or within the family and community, or national and international disturb this relationship of peace.

The Islamic principles of peacebuilding enunciated in the Qur'an also affirm that all of human beings have a common origin ("*nafsin wahidatin*"). In fact, this basic concept is enshrined in the very first words that a Muslim says when he/she is born or on accepting

Islam, commonly known as Shahada.

Along with this commonality, Islam confers 'dignity' and respect on a human simply by virtue of being a human. This, as the Qur'an says "We have conferred dignity on the progeny of Adam" (Al Isra 17:70). This dignity is bestowed by God on all humans regardless of their ethnicity, religion, tribe, or nationality.

Unity Within Diversity

Islam also recognizes great diversity within human beings. We come from different backgrounds and traditions. This richness is a gift from our Creator. It is very much apparent within the world-wide Islamic community. We witness it in the United States where there are Muslims from all parts of the world - no other country possesses this plurality of Muslim community. However, despite this diversity Muslims share a commonality of Islamic belief.

Such a diversity means we should live in peace within our community and with our fellow citizens. And not to live in any harmful relationship with each other. Thus American Muslims demonstrate a model community for the plurality that constitutes the United States of America.

The essential lesson from this plurality is to dialogue, collaborate and cooperate and develop a real healthy understanding of one another. This is the first essential step for living in peace and resolving any and all conflicts encountered, here and abroad.

Current Systems for Settling Disputes

There are great many similarities between Islamic and Western systems for settling disputes and building peace. Such as communicating with each other and engaging in dialogue - negotiating, compromising and resolving our differences peacefully, nationally and internationally. However, the West in pursuing the peace objective often ignores the

contributions of Muslim scholars and practitioners in addressing various international issues. Instead, efforts are directed at altering, modifying, and/or reforming the Islamic societies towards its specific hegemonic agenda.

Thus as a dominant world power, the West including the United States in its conflicts often imposes peace through coercive power politics, while the underlying causes of conflict remain unresolved. Such is the case now, for example, with regard to conflicts with Iran, and in what is going on in Mali, Africa, etc.

Of interest in this regard is an analysis on "Costing war and nonviolent alternatives" offered by Don Palmer and Helena Cornelius of the Conflict Resolution Network based in Australia. It asks their community to compare war costing before irrevocable decisions are made by government on their behalf, because finally it is the community that pays for it. That they should address two basic questions: 1. Are the costings presented realistic and transparent? 2. What is really in the country's best interests?

According to Noble Laureate Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes, the war in Iraq cost the USA three trillion dollars (these costs double with the war in Afghanistan). Most find it impossible to understand until one argues that it could make a considerable impact on global illiteracy and health for much less than funding these wars. Furthermore, this figure takes no account of the cost to the people of Iraq - with up to four million displaced, scores killed on a daily basis, and a third of population forced into poverty. And beyond this, the destruction of their irreplaceable cultural heritage. Add to it the cost for the ongoing war in Afghanistan with no end in sight, and it boggles the mind.

Palmer and Cornelius state that despite the enormity of task, it is not beyond

economists to estimate what a war might cost compared with the cost of its alternative strategies apart from the costs of hardware, munitions, consumable goods and wages. And including death benefits, cost to families who leave jobs and care for wounded soldiers and a myriad of other foreseeable and measurable contingencies. Also the war's long term effects on its people's lives and diminished quality of life for those with physical and mental disabilities.

Concluding their analysis, Palmer and Cornelius state that the life blood of democracy is an informed population, and on matters of this magnitude and seriousness of armed conflict it is highly desirable that the people are as fully informed as possible before their representatives make commitments which will have significant impact on them, their children and their nation far into the future.

Thus a response to the question "What if they held a war and no-one decided to come?" could take on a whole new meaning.

From their study Stiglitz and Bilmes conclude that "it seems clear that without the war, not only would America's standing in the world be higher, our economy would be stronger. The question today is: Can we learn from this costly mistake?"

Islamic Methodology for Conflict Resolution and Building Peace

As discussed above, the Islamic precepts are meant to maintain peaceful, healthy, meaningful relationships with God and with all of humanity. This relationship is disrupted by conflicts, whether interpersonal, communal, national or international. Its restoration is essential for the sake of fairness and justice. Peace-building efforts work towards preventing an escalation of conflict and establishing a durable and self-sustaining peace.

Peace is intimately tied with justice in its Islamic understanding. You cannot achieve one without the other. Legitimate grievances of the affected party must be addressed, if real and essential peace is to be achieved.

Here are some relevant verses from the Qur'an addressed to the Islamic community: "O You who believe! Stand out firmly for God, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety: and fear God. For God is well-acquainted with all you do" (Al Maidah 5:8).

And: "O You who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be against rich or poor: For God can best protect both. Follow not the lusts of your hearts, lest you swerve, and if distort justice or decline to do justice, verily God is well-acquainted with all that you do" (Al Nisa 4:135).

Towards this end Islamic scholars also emphasize promoting Islamic ethics in order to prevent, mediate, and resolve various conflicts. This must take place along with a personal transformation, developing spiritual awareness through Dhikr (constant remembering God and His Grace), praying, and fasting. As well as through acts of charity and love for other human beings.

One should exercise compassion and forgive others who have done him harm, and move away from greed, egocentricity, crass materialism, and harming others and work to live peacefully in cooperation with each other.

The Qur'an constantly uses the word Sulha in resolving all types of conflicts. It means seeking peace, reconciliation, compromise and settlement.

As such, during the early Islamic history Muslim jurists developed a number of legal structures and institutions, using a variety of

techniques to resolve conflicts amicably, and achieve peace. Among these are the following:

1. Appointment of a Justice of Peace (Qadi as Sulh) to oversee the processes of mediation, arbitration, and reconciliation to achieve settlement and peace.
2. Parties in conflict have the option of resolving their dispute through a Wasta or third-party mediator who would ensure that all parties were satisfied with the outcome.
3. Other practices could use tahkeem, or using intermediaries to represent the parties. These intermediaries should be able to represent the parties' position as clearly as possible to negotiate on their behalf, and guarantee that the parties receive a fair settlement.

A settlement could include a. Financial compensation, b. Service to the family, c. Service to the community, and d. Specific gestures of sympathy, or public demonstration of reconciliation.

These procedures and relevant struc-

tures need be revived and further developed utilizing all possible modern techniques. There are a number of organizations currently involved in conflict resolution. Others provide training for solving interpersonal problems and helping resolve issues within a family.

In order to resolve wider conflicts, it is essential that the peace-building efforts of civil-society organizations that already exist within the United States and in Muslim countries are adequately supported. This should go along with addressing the economic-political stagnation, and powerlessness of Muslim societies. As well as remedying the historical memories of violence and conflict from the times of Crusades and colonialism, past and present.

It is worth mentioning that within Islamic societies there exists a great diversity of traditions, cultures, and opinions that could be used to enrich the possibilities for pursuing peace-building efforts and resolving all existing conflicts.

How Can He See Her Face!

On one occasion a lady made a claim of five hundred gold coins against her husband in the court of Qaadhi Moosa bin Ishaaq, which the husband denied. The lawyer of the wife proved the claim by producing witnesses. However one of the witnesses insisted that he has to see her face (which was veiled) in order to give witness in her favour. Therefore he stood up to see her face and she stood up as well.

Witnessing this, the husband's self honour and dignity drove him to exclaim: "Why should a strange man's eyes be allowed to gaze at my wife? I personally confess in the presence of the judge that I do owe my wife five hundred gold coins as her mahr, but I will never allow my wife to reveal her face to a strange man." Hearing this self honour and dignity of her husband, the wife replied that I make those present as witness that I have gifted the entire amount to my husband.

The judge Moosa bin Ishaaq exclaimed that this should be included among the incidents of exemplary character. (Shu'abul Imaan)

Lesson: Subhanallah! Once upon a time this was the level of modesty and self dignity that the people of this Ummah possessed. Unfortunately, nowadays the situation is totally different, where a man would even insist on his wife to freely mix with his friends and to venture into the corporate world in order to live a 'better quality of life.'

The Infamous Gap between Islam and Modernity

Sohaib Baig

Egypt in 1826. It was about a quarter of a century since Napoleon's invasion. Egypt was under the control of Muhammad Pasha, an ambitious, power-hungry Albanian who sought to establish his own empire in these Ottoman lands. Caught in the tangle of European networks of power, he sought to enhance his own standing amongst them by putting Egypt on the path of modernization and industrialization. Like so many others since then, who have been and continue to be enthralled by European power, he aspired to learn and apply their secrets to power and sophistication.

It was thus perfectly logical for Muhammad Pasha to send groups of students to Paris in the 1820s, to study the sciences of Western civilization. Accompanying one of these batches in 1826, was Imam Rifa'ah Rafi' al-Tahtawi. Imam Tahtawi had been educated at Jami'at Al-Azhar in Cairo, and his role in this batch was primarily to provide religious guidance for the rest of the students. Nevertheless, his own thoughts and ideas began to evolve as he witnessed and participated in French culture. He kept a diary that was later published to much acclaim from the governing elite (whom Tahtawi had also praised). His dia-

ry was interestingly very "pro-Western" for the day, even if it still retained a somewhat critical approach. He criticized the moral debauchery that he saw amongst the French, but he remained mostly awe-inspired by the learning and the civil, political, and educational institutions that existed in France. Thus, he praised the modernization activities that Muhammad Pasha initiated in Egypt, including his efforts to industrialize and establish new, modern schools.

Once he returned, Tahtawi busied himself with heading many of these new schools and in translating French works into Arabic. This was unsurprising – obviously, the fastest way to learn from Europe would be to directly translate and teach its treasures. In his lifetime, he translated works ranging from military science to geography and from history to political science – showing not only his wide scope, but his near complete adulation of French intellectual works.

Tahtawi ultimately carved out an important legacy as a key pioneer of the Nahda - the Arab cultural and intellectual "renaissance" that saw many new "modernist" reinterpretations of Islam. Disoriented by the weakening political clout of the Muslims,

many of these thinkers focused on the issue they considered to be of utmost importance: of reconciling Islam and modernity, as if these were somehow two distinct, monolithic entities that had fought long battles. Tahtawi arguably precipitated many of these newfound campaigns and efforts.

Perhaps Tahtawi's story could have ended right there, but given our challenges today, it simply cannot. It is extremely striking how similar the concerns Tahtawi had are to our own concerns. Although Tahtawi lived in the 19th century, it is commonplace to still hear such rhetoric today regarding the need to progress and build bridges between Islam and modernity. Indeed, the student group which Tahtawi accompanied to Paris perhaps can be said to have been 19th century manifestations of the "we must learn the Western sciences to progress and modernize" paradigm that continues to thrive. Tahtawi himself then represented those who tried to apply an Islamic filter – the idea that Muslims must take the "good" and leave the "bad" of Western civilization in order to "progress and modernize."

The persistence of this rhetoric today poses an extremely important question: Why haven't Muslims succeeded in "advancing" or "modernizing" in these two centuries since Tahtawi? Why have the efforts of educators and intellectuals like Tahtawi failed to bring the Muslim world into a "modernized" state of being?

In reality, this "failure" simply testifies to the longevity and powerful grip of Western notions of progress and civilization. The persistence of this rhetoric today is not an accident or a mistake – it stems directly from the problematic nature of the quest to modernize itself. Few seemed to realize the very exercise of building a bridge itself can create its own ruptures, that it could perpetuate forever the fundamental differences between two arti-

cially separated entities. Even fewer seemed to have reevaluated the basic underpinnings of their visions. What made something modern and something un-modern – if they existed simultaneously, at the same time? Who decided what it meant to be advanced or civilized anyways? Why was "progress" or "advancement" even such a pressing concern? How had one culture established its own monopoly of what it meant to be advanced and modernized?

Thus, despite all his efforts to utilize and filter Western knowledge in the cause of Egypt or Islam, Tahtawi still remained entrapped by Western categories of understanding. At the core, he was still attempting to adapt Islam to Western notions of progress and modernity, without even probing the value of such notions in the first place. Much of his thought, from his emphasis on education as a means for the ideology of development, to his endorsement of parliamentary systems stemmed from a worldview which had not completely interrogated its Western underpinnings. It was Islam that was transformed – not Western learning. Thus, in reality, it was Islam he ultimately interrogated with a Western lens, as seen in the efforts to "open" the minds of those who remained opposed to Western education.

Tahtawi serves as an important reminder of the risks inherent in engaging within Western epistemologies, of the deep power-broking involved in importing Western sciences. Indeed, it is common nowadays to hear Muslims from almost all segments of society speak about the need to give the social sciences and humanities proper attention and importance. Muslims must go into history, psychology, political science, sociology, communications, international relations, marketing, fashion, film, gender studies, global studies, literature, English – into every study and disci-

pline that is in the Western academy. This, many argue, is not only how we will tap into the joys and fruits of Western learning, but how we will make Muslims up to par with the Western world in terms of culture and civilization.

In reality, we must question every single task that we set forth before ourselves – and we must question the tools and concepts that we use to judge them. To avoid making the mistakes that have been made countless times in the last few centuries, we must interrogate them and chart out their scope, to see if they lead like Tahtawi's did to a self-perpetuation of foreign categories of understanding, or if they lead to something more organic and integrative at the same time. In practical terms, we have to understand the deeper implications of what it means to be engaged in anthropology, in film studies, in women's studies, in media, in political science, in economics, in anything. We have to realize that every time we embrace these, we cross real epistemological zones and embrace different paradigms of conceiving and living life –

just as we did, with disastrous consequences (and still do) with science and its underlying scientism.

This is not to set up new walls or boundaries between what is Islamic and Western. This is only to suggest that we must be aware of the power-broking inherent in the act of "learning from" and in the purposes of "modernizing" and "catching up." Two centuries have not seen this process completed, not because this process somehow still needs more time, but because this process is precisely set upon concepts and categories which will forever sustain these imbalances. For too long, Muslims have been imprisoned by the idea that their Present is simply the West's Past, and that their Future can only lead to the West's Present. To actually fulfill Tahtawi's real vision, we must tap into the deep, rich bodies of knowledge produced by Muslims over the centuries, and unchain ourselves from Western hegemonizing categories of understanding. This is how we can produce a fresh and liberating engagement with Western traditions of knowledge.

Akhlaaq (Sublime Character) and Nisbat (Special Connection with Allah)

Shaikh Moulana Muhammad Zakariyya (rahmatullahi 'alaihi) mentioned:

Nisbat and akhlaaq (sublime character) are both distinct attributes. Each one is unique in its own way. As far as nisbat is concerned, it is a special connection one has with Allah. The more one strengthens one's relationship with Allah (through carrying out pious deeds), the stronger one's nisbat grows. On the contrary, if one falls short in this relationship (through committing sins), his nisbat with Allah weakens. On the other hand, akhlaaq (sublime character) relates to the beloved lifestyle of Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam). Emulating the mubaarak lifestyle of Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) and inculcating his mubaarak qualities is referred to as sublime character. At this juncture Hazrat Shaikh recited these couplets:

The colour of henna will only show its true effect once it permeates (i.e. the beauty of the sunnah will only show itself through a person's sublime character, when the sunnah permeates a person's heart and life). (Malfoozaate Hazrat Shaikh)