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EDITORIAL

All thanks for Almighty, the most Merciful and Exalted

The Here or the Hereafter!!!

How much do you prepare in case you have to undertake a journey to an unfamiliar place. The means of transport, time, cost, luggage, food facilities, comfort, weather conditions, stay, time, money etc. Aren't these and other types of queries encountered by every individual intending to make a journey to a place he has never visited before? Further, more the unfamiliarity with the place to be visited, more are the difficulties faced to solve the related issues.

But, the journey which is certain and definite for you than all, journey which no one can escape from, journey independent of one's intention or wish, journey which one has to take only once and without any prior notice, journey in which no relative, friend, employee etc., is allowed to accompany, journey wherein luggage, bedding, tiffin etc., are totally useless, journey for which one's personal interest or comfort won't be taken into consideration, journey not from one city to another, one state to another, or from one country to another but the journey which, in a twinkle of an eye, will take you from this world to the next. Have you ever contemplated the importance of this journey? Do you give thought to the

preparations of this journey? Do the hardships of this journey ever create fear in your heart? Do the comforts of this journey produce excitement in you?

Have you ever heard the statement of that best and most truthful traveller (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) that the person who befriends his meeting with Allah, Allah will also befriend meeting him; and the one who dislikes his meeting with Allah, Allah will also dislike meeting him. What is the impact of this statement on your heart? What did your intellect advise you? Which sort of way did your insight throw open before you? Is it wisdom: to keep this journey in oblivion or to remain mindful and prepare for it; to familiarise with it or increase the hurdles for your own selves; to comply, as per your capacity, with the guidance of this path's greatest guide and save yourself from the blazing hellfire or by resorting to negligence, antagonism and defiance lose the capability of enjoying the comfort of the ultimate destination; to consider the present life as a prelude of that higher life or remain busy in 'today's' luxuries and put the beliefs pertaining to 'tomorrow' onto the status of doubts and whims?

Benefits of Contemplating Death

Anas may Allaah be pleased with him narrated that the Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) passed by a group of people who were laughing and said: "Frequently remember the destroyer of pleasures." Then he, (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) added: "It is never mentioned during the time of need but would make one feel content, and never mentioned during prosperity but would make one feel restricted."

[Al-Munthiri, Al-Bazzaar].

Question Answer

Question

I am extremely perplexed and grieved concerning my present situation and Shaytan is also attacking me with various iman-endangering thoughts. Please can you answer my following question and put my mind at rest. I married a woman about 3 years ago. I went to see her and everything was done the Islamic way. i.e. I did mashwarah (consultation) and istikharah (and I saw good dreams and my heart felt content.) But despite the istikharah, etc... our marriage broke up after just a few weeks of living together, as it transpired that she was mentally unstable.

I married again this year, this time I was extra cautious and therefore did istikharah over a long period and begged Allah to guide me, as a result of which I saw many good dreams. I also had the dreams interpreted by a scholar who gave me the go-ahead. After that, I consulted with my superiors and they also gave me the go-ahead. But, again, this marriage has broken down in a short span of time.

Why is it that both my marriages have failed (through no fault of mine, I tried my best both times) even though I did istikharah and mashwarah both times and felt content at heart.

Please reply soon and put my mind at

rest, I am losing hope and Shaytan is playing with my mind and making me doubt the words of Allah and his Prophet. (na'uzu billah) Please reply soon. Jazakallah. A distressed brother in need.

Answer

Istikharah is a particular form of prayer and the preferred way of performing it is that a person offers two raka'ahs with the intention of istikharah, then recites the du'a for istikharah which may be found in all books of supplications. The other methods of istikharah which are suggested by some people are not necessarily preferred. So far as the effect of istikharah is concerned you must observe the following points:

First of all, know that istikharah is nothing more than a normal du'a in which a person prays to Allah Exalted to guide him to reach a right decision. It is not correct to presume that in response to an istikharah Allah gives an answer in the form of a dream. Similarly it is not necessary that a dream is seen after making an istikharah and even though a dream is seen by the relevant person it is not an absolute answer towards a particular direction because dream is not treated in Shari'ah as a binding proof of something. The expected result of istikharah is that the relevant person

himself makes a decision which is good for him in this world or in the Hereafter or in both. But just as the acceptance of other prayers depends on certain conditions the istikharah is subject to those conditions as well. If some of these conditions are lacking, it is not necessary that this prayer be granted

Second, to perform istikharah does not mean that a person abandons all other necessary enquiries. A person must carry out all efforts necessary to reach a correct decision even after making istikharah. If a person is content on istikharah only and does not make the required efforts to reach the correct decision he may fall into error.

Third, in this particular case the reason for breakup of marriages is not certainly known. It is possible that the marriage failed not because the decision to marry that woman was wrong but because the husband could not properly handle the marriage. In other words, it is possible that the decision to marry the woman was correct but the decision to divorce her was wrong.

Fourth, as mentioned in the first point in some rare cases istikharah does not prove to be fruitful in this world but it is certain to be fruitful in the world hereafter.

Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani

Question

- 1.If the Imam is beardless, will the musalli be sinful if they remain quiet? What should they be doing?
- 2.How the whole khilal process of the beard is done during wudu?
- 3.How many times should the khilal be done according to the Sunnah?
- 4.Is it makrooh tanzeehi or tahreemi or haraam to pluck the white or grey hair from the beard or hair?
- 5.Is transplantation of the beard permissible?

4. (Vol.15, Issue: 10)

Answer

1. It is wajib (compulsory) for a person to have a fist length beard. Therefore, it is impermissible to shave the beard or trim it less than the length of one's fist. As such, it is not permissible to appoint such a person as an Imam. If one prays behind such an Imam, the Salah will be Makruh Tahrimi (reprehensible). The congregation should therefore request the management of the Masjid to change the imam. If they are not willing to do so, then you should perform salah in another Masjid, where the Imam adheres to the Shari'ah. If that is not plausible to do, then one should still pray in congregation as Nabî Karim advised us to pray behind the Imam, whether he be pious or sinful. The sinful implications in this case will no longer rest with the congregation as they did whatever was plausible for them to do to address the situation.

2. Khilal is the simple procedure of utilizing the fingers of your right hand as a comb which you pass through your beard. You take a handful of water inside the palm of your right hand and apply it under the jawbone area as you pass your hand through the beard.

3. Khilal is only to be done once.

4. It is not permissible to pluck one's grey hair from the beard or head.

5. It is not permissible to undergo hair transplantation for the beard. This is irrespective whether the donor hair is your own or someone else's.

M. Khalil Sahib

Question

My mother passed away recently. How do we distribute her estate?

Answer

Whatever belonged to your mother at the time of her demise will form part of her estate. Before the distribution of the estate amongst the respective heirs, the following

expenses must be taken care of from the estate:

- a) The payment of funeral and burial expenses.
- b) Thereafter, the settling of debts.
- c) Thereafter, the awarding of bequests (Wasiyyah) to non-heirs or towards payment as compensation for unperformed Salaah, unpaid Zakaat, unfulfilled fasts etc. if the deceased had made such bequests. The bequeathed amount cannot exceed one third of the estate unless all the heirs are adults and willingly consent to this.

After settling the above, the net estate will be distributed amongst the heirs according to the Islamic Law of Succession and Inheritance and the share ratio will be dependent on the list of heirs surviving the deceased.

Mufti Suhail

Question

what is the ruling when your husband says he wants a divorce?
Do I sit in iddat? I'm a working lady do I have to give him my money also

Answer

Talaaq does not become effective by the husband merely saying that he wants a divorce as this is just an expression of his wish to divorce. As long as he does not issue the divorce, no Talaaq becomes effective.

There is no Iddah in this case since there is no divorce.

You do not have to provide any maintenance for your husband.

Mufti Suhail

Question

Can we sell material that will be used to make church clothing? We sell these plain white sheets that are multipurpose but some people buy it and make church clothes from it.

Answer

The Fuqahaa have mentioned that items that

have dual purposes (permissible and impermissible) are permissible to sell and the seller is not responsible for the misuse of the purchaser. For example, grapes have a dual purpose. A person may purchase grapes to eat it or may purchase it to press and make wine. It is permissible to sell the grapes and the seller will not be responsible for the misuse of the purchaser. Likewise, it is permissible to sell such material in question as it has multiple purposes. The seller will not be sinful if the purchaser uses the material to make clothing for the church.

Mufti Suhail

Question

We are winding up my father's estate and have found one of his accounts have accumulated interest. When distributing the shares, do we also include the interest as part of the shares or should it be taken out first and then distribute the shares.

Answer

The interest should be disposed of first. It does not form part of the estate in Shari'ah and hence is not to be distributed.

Mufti Suhail

Question

I want to know is it permissible to buy or sell raffle tickets for charity or otherwise?

Answer

Raffles are not permissible due to the element of gambling. A ticket is usually purchased for a sum of money and the result is unknown.

Mufti Suhail

Question

Is there any hadith relating "Dua" that it should be said " Ya Rab " 3 times in starting Dua After Namaz ?

Answer

There is no Hadith to advocate this practice. If someone does it, it will be permissible but it should not be considered a Sunnah practice.

Mufti Suhail

Question

A Nikah was performed but the Mahr was not given. Is the Nikah valid?

Answer

If the Nikah was performed in compliance to the fundamental requirements for Nikah to be valid, the Nikah will be valid even though the Mahr was not exchanged at the time of the Nikah. Although the Mahr is obligatory upon the marriage being concluded, it is not a condition for the validity of the Nikah. The husband remains obligated to provide the stipulated Mahr to his wife.

Mufti Suhail

Question

I know that the saliva of a dog is impure. If the dog licks me, does my Wudhu break?

Answer

The saliva of a dog is impure and a Muslim should remain free from impurities as much as possible. If the dog licks you, the soiled area becomes impure and it is necessary to wash. However, it will not cause your Wudhu to become invalid.

Mufti Suhail

Question

When one changes a baby's nappy and one gets some of the stool on your hand or clothes, how does this affect your wudhu?

Answer

Changing the child's nappy (diaper) does not invalidate the Wudhu even if some

impurity soils your hand or clothing. Your Wudhu remains valid and you need only wash the soiled area of your hands or clothing.

Mufti Suhail

Question

Is it permissible for a woman who has been divorced to go out and visit family and friends whilst she is in her Iddah?

Answer

A woman in Iddah is obligated to remain within the confines of the marital home till her Iddah is complete. It is not permissible for a woman who is in Iddah (due to divorce or the death of her husband) to leave the home without absolute need. She cannot go out to visit family and friends during this period.

It will only be permissible for her to emerge from her home if there is a genuine need, eg, medical necessity or some other necessity that compels her to leave the home. She should enquire from the Ulama on such occasions whether circumstances permit leaving the home during the Iddah period.

Mufti Suhail

Question

We were visited by our non-Muslim relatives. They mistakenly brought us products from forbidden (Haram) meat. This food was remained at our home. What should we do with this food – should we give it to non-Muslims or give pet?

Answer

It is not permissible to derive any benefit from Haraam meat nor is it permissible to feed anyone such meat. You cannot even feed a non-Muslim or an animal this meat. (al-Fatawa al-Hindiyyah, Vol: 5, Pg: 344)

You should discard this meat in the appropriate manner of disposal (e.g.; burying it in the ground).

Mufti Suhail

Lesson From The Qur'an

Surah Al-Imran - Verse 187-200

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.

Another evil act of the Jews viz., the breach of covenant and its repercussions are being mentioned in the following verses.

It is also worth mentioning that **when Allah took a pledge**, in the previously revealed books, **from those who were given the Book: "You shall make it known to people the whole truth of all that is in the book, and you shall not conceal anything of it in order to satisfy your worldly interests," they threw it away behind their backs, and acquired a small and insignificant worldly price for it. So, evil is what they acquire** for its result is nothing but fire. [3:187]

Do not think of those who are delighted with what they did i.e., the concealment of the truth, **and love to be praised and famed for what they never did** i.e., the dissemination of the truth, so -- **do not think they are secure from the worldly punishment**, not at all, they will be somewhat punished here. And **for them there is a painful punishment** in the Hereafter as well. [3:188]

Above the punishment to the People of the Book is mentioned, and since power and authority are pre-requisite for the execution of punishment, this is, therefore, referred to in the next verse.

To Allah belongs the absolute Kingdom of the heavens and the earth. Allah is powerful to do everything; therefore, there is no escape route from the punishment of such Omnipotent. [3:189]

The mention of Allah's absolute Kingdom in the foregone verse makes monotheism easy to understand. Now, in the forthcoming verses the virtuousness of those who conform to the demands of monotheism is mentioned.

Surely, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day with their periods shortening and lengthening, there are signs of Allah's Unity and of the perfection of His Knowledge and Power and other attributes, for the people of wisdom to infer the Creator's hand behind the working of this

whole workshop. [3:190]

And, people of wisdom are those **who remember Allah** in thought and in words - **standing and sitting, and lying on their sides** i.e., constantly and in all attitudes and postures, **and** - using their logical faculty - **ponder the creation of the heavens and the earth** to gain guidance and admonition; then they say, **“Our Lord, You have not created all this creation in vain** without some wise Plan and Purpose but with unlimited sagacity one of which is to infer from it the Creator’s existence. **We proclaim Your purity** in that You are above to have created anything in vain. **So, save** us from having wrong conceptions of Your acts, and acting against Your purpose for creation, and so deserving **the punishment of Fire** in the Hereafter. [3:191]

Our Lord! We seek Your refuge from the Fire, because **whomsoever You admit into the Fire** for eternity, **he is disgraced by You indeed, and for the unjust** who are offered the punishment of the eternal Fire, **there are no supporters** against it. [3:192]

Our Lord, the way we employed our logical faculty (*aqli-i-daleel*) to infer Your existence, similarly, when **we heard** - directly or through others - **a herald** viz., the Prophet, **calling towards Faith** by saying, O People: **‘Believe in your Lord.’** ...**We believed** and submitted to this traditional call (*naqli-i-daleel*) also.

Our Lord, we appeal to You to **forgive us, then, our sins** - major as well as minor - **and also write off our evil deeds, and** rectify our end also in the way that You **make us die only when we have joined the righteous** and are privileged with their fellowship and numbered in their company. [3:193]

Our Lord, just as we appealed for our safety

against the harms like Fire, disgrace, major and minor sins etc., similarly, for our betterment we invoke - **give us what You have promised us through Your messengers** i.e., Paradise and Your grace, **and** prior to giving us this reward **do not put us to disgrace on the Day of Judgement** like those who will first receive punishment and then enter the Paradise, but make us enter it from the very start. **Surely you do not go back on Your promise** but what makes us afraid is the fact that we may not lose the qualities that of true believers and virtuous souls for whom the promise stands; that is why we implore upon You to give us what the promise stands for i.e., make and keep us among those deserving the promise.” [3:194]

Now the acceptance of the prayers of those who took to Belief is mentioned.

So, their Lord - All-Gracious and Generous - **answered their prayer:** “My unchanging tradition is that **I do not allow the good labour of any worker from among you, male or female, to go to waste** and not give him/her its due. For both or you there exists a single policy and command because **you are similar to one another.** Therefore, these people when they prayed for the effects derived on attaining belief, I, according to My unchanging tradition, accepted their prayers, thus, if for believing only We - to this extent - bless, **so, those who,** willingly and not for sport, **emigrated, and were** oppressively **expelled from their homes, and** apart from that they **were tortured** manifold and together with belief tolerated all these hardships **in My way, and** more significantly they **fought** as well with the disbelievers for My pleasure, **and** even many of them **were killed** still they didn’t pull back till the end; why then shall not the blessings and fruitage be bestowed on such hard labour, rather, I

shall certainly write off their evil deeds which may have occurred and are related to My rights, **and shall certainly admit them into gardens** of Paradise **beneath** the mansions of **which rivers flow, as a reward** out of generosity **from Allah. It is Allah with Whom lies the beauty of the reward** which no power holds except Him. [3:195]

After mentioning the condition of the believers and their lofty ranks in the Hereafter, the next verse now puts forward the affair of the disbelievers and couples it with the advice that their luxurious life style should not deceive the believers.

O truth seeker! **The strutting of the disbelievers about the land** for seeking and enjoying the pleasure of this world **should not deceive you** into thinking that they are approved of Allah. [3:196]

It i.e., the luxury of this world, **is just a little enjoyment** as after death not even its name shall exist. **After that, their resort is eternal Hell; and it is an evil abode** prepared by the ungodly for themselves. [3:197]

But among those also who fear their Lord and have accepted Islam and act within the limits of piety - **for them there are Gardens** of Paradise **beneath** the mansions of **which rivers flow, where they will live forever - as hospitality from Allah. What is with Allah** of His eternal bliss **is best for the righteous** in quan-

tity as well as in permanence than the short-lived worldly prosperity. [3:198]

In the following verse a particular group from the People of the Book is being praised on their accepting Islam.

Surely, among the people of the Book there are those who believe in Allah unblended in hypocrisy or polytheism, **and in what has been sent down to you** i.e., Qur'an, **and what has been sent down to them** i.e., Torah and Injil, and they come **humbling themselves before Allah. They do not barter away the verses of Allah** by corrupting them **for paltry** worldly gains. **They have their reward with their Lord** for which they don't have to wait, for - **surely, Allah is swift at reckoning** and recompensing. [3:199]

Through a crux Allah ends this chapter with a comprehensive and meaningful guidance.

O you who believe, be patient in the face of troubles attending on acts of piety and afflictions that may overtake you, **compete with each other in patience** while fighting the disbelievers, **and guard your frontiers** with your bodies to face the enemy, and with your souls to face the inner foe, **and fear Allah** in not breaching the limits of Shariah, **so that you may be successful** - surely so in the Hereafter and at times dominating in this world too. [3:200]

Surah Al-Imran Completed

Lesson From Sahih al-Bukhari

Dr. Rafiq Ahmad

The Book of Menses

“And they ask you about menstruation. Say: It is a discomfort; therefore keep aloof from the women during the menstrual discharge and do not go near them until they have become clean; then when they have cleansed themselves, go in to them as Allah has commanded you; surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him), and He loves those who purify themselves”. (2:222)

As per the routine of Imam Bukhari (RA), he starts 5th book of Bukhari Sharief with a verse of al- Qur’an. In fact the chapters in this particular book are the explanations of this verse. The excellence of Imam Bukhari (RA) is that in addition to being a great scholar of Hadith, he is also a great scholar of the Holy Qur’an. He has widely used the verses of Qur’an in the titles of various chapters, famously known as the Tarjamatul Baab.

Shaan-i-Nuzool (revelatory context) of the verse

Nasaaee has quoted from Hadhrat Anas bin Maalik (RA) that the Jews had a routine that when any woman amongst them started to have her menstruation period, they neither ate nor drank with her, even they avoided to reside with her in the same room.

The Sahaaba asked Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) about this issue and it was in response to this question that this verse was revealed. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) then instructed the Sahaaba that they can eat and drink with such a woman and that there is no harm to reside with them and do anything with them except the sexual intercourse.

Definition of Menses

“Menses is that (monthly) blood which flows from the uterus of a woman in the healthy state without any disease”.

Chapter 1 : How did menstruation start?

And the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said: “This is a thing which Allah has destined for the daughters of Adam”. And some people (like Ibn Masood and Hadhrat Ayesha) said that the menses first came for Bani Isra’eel. Abu Abdullah (Imam Bukhari) said, “what the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said is more comprehensive”.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Imam Bukhari (RA) has raised a question as to how did the menses start? By doing

so he is pointing towards the difference of opinion which exists amongst the scholars about the beginning of menses of women. By quoting the Hadith of Rasulullah which says that the menses was destined to women by Allah right from the first woman i.e., Hadhrat Hawa (AS). There is a Hadith quoted in Musannaf Abdul Razzaq on the authority of Ibn Masood (RA) and Hadhrat Ayesha (RA), which says that the men and the women of Bani Isra'eel were offering Salaah together and these women used to peep at the men, then Allah made these women to suffer from menstruation and hence they were stopped to go near the Musjids.

Ibn Hajar Asqalaani (RA) explains these two Ahaadith apparently differing from each other. He says that menstruation in women started from the very beginning but the women of Bani-Isra'eel were punished with excessive menses.

Hadith No. 289

Narrated Al-Qasim (RA)

"Aisha said, "We set out with the sole intention of performing Hajj and when we reached Sarif, (a place six miles from Makkah) I got my menses. Allah's Apostle came to me while I was weeping. He said 'What is the matter with you? Have you got your menses?' I replied, 'Yes.' He said, 'This is a thing which Allah has ordained for the daughters of Adam. So do what all the pilgrims do with the exception of the Tawaaf (Circumambulation) round the Ka'ba." 'Aisha added, "Allah's Apostle sacrificed cows on behalf of his wives."

Comments

Hadhrat Ayesha (RA) says that once she along with Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) and Sahaaba went for Haj. She had made the intention (Niyah) of 'Ihraam' for Haj at Dhul-Haleefah. When they reached a place

called Sarif, she got menses. She became quite gloomy thinking that probably she would not be able to complete her Haj. Rasulullah told her that it was not like that, but a woman who has got menstruation can perform all the rituals of the Haj except Tawaaf (circumambulation) of Khana Ka'ba, because for this act one has to pass through Masjid-i-Haraam and it is not permissible for a woman with menses to enter a Musjid.

Chapter 2 : The washing of the husband's head and the combing of his hair by his wife during her menses.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

The purpose is same as already stated that people like Jews and fire worshippers used to isolate the woman during her menstruation period and would look down upon her. Islam has strongly condemned such ill treatment to woman. Islam gives great respect to women and here it is stressed that menses is a natural phenomenon, it does not make a woman degraded and hated one; she remains a respectable and lovable human being and should be given the same treatment as before.

Hadith No. 290

Narrated 'Aisha (RA)

"While in menses, I used to comb the hair of Allah's Apostle".

Hadith No. 291

Narrated 'Urwa (RA)

"A person asked me, "Can a woman in menses serve me? And can a Junub woman come close to me?" I replied, "All this is easy for me. All of them can serve me, and there is no harm for any other person to do the same. 'Aisha told me that she used to comb the hair of Allah's Apostle while she was in her menses, and he was in Itikaf (in the Musjid). He would bring his

head near her in her room and she would comb his hair, while she used to be in her menses”.

Comments

Hadhrat Urwah was asked if any service could be taken from a woman who is menstruating. The question was asked obviously for the same reason that the women were highly discriminated and looked down during their menses periods. This Hadith strongly rejects such a treatment towards women. Hadhrat Ayesha (RA) says that she even used to comb the hair of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) during her menstrual periods. This clearly shows that the women do not become untouchable during such period.

Chapter 3 : The recitation of Qur’an by a person lying in the lap of his wife during her menses.

Abu Wa’il (Shaqiq bin Salma) used to send his menstruating maid servant to bring the Qur’an from Abi Razin (Masood bin Maalik) by carrying it from the hanger (of its case).

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Here Imam Bukhari (RA) is addressing an issue whether a menstruating woman can lift the stand on which the Holy Qur’an is usually kept. As per Hanafite and Hambalite schools of thought, she can do so and Imam Bukhari also seems to be of the same opinion. Imam Bukhari also favours recitation of the Qur’an by a person lying in the lap of his wife during her menses.

Hadith No. 292

Narrated 'Aisha (RA)

“The Prophet used to lean on my lap and recite Qur’an while I was in menses”.

Chapter 4 : One who names postpartum period as menses (i.e., treat it the same way).

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Imam Bukhari (RA) wants to say that the postpartum periods and menses are treated in a similar way because Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) used the word Nifas (postpartum periods) for Haidh (menses).

Hadith No. 293

Narrated Ummi Salama (RA)

“While I was lying/sleeping with the Prophet under a single woolen sheet, I got the menses. I slipped away and put on the clothes for menses. He said, "Have you got "Nifas" (menses)?" I replied, "Yes." He then called me and made me to lie with him under the same sheet”.

Comments

Hadhrat Ummi Salma (RA) says that one day she was sleeping with Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) under the same blanket and she started to have her menstruation. She moved little apart from Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) thinking that she had become impure and therefore should not touch him. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) understood it and he called her back into the blanket thereby giving the impression that menstruation does not make a woman untouchable.

The Evil TV

Why should it be abandoned

Among the many useless and detrimental things, which have taken quite a firm place in our homes today, one very common is the television. As Muslims, if we have the slightest knowledge of Islam and even if we possess a meager Iman, we have to admit that the TV's effect in a Muslim life is extremely adverse. The uncontrollable flow of various programs through this device have nothing to improve our Iman (Faith) and A'amal (Good Deeds). Its major appeal covers only worldly affairs that has no single relation with our well-being - neither in this world nor in the after-life.

What are the major programs in TV? News, documentaries, educational programs, advertisements, forums, talk-shows, cinema, cultural shows, sports and cartoons. What do these mainly comprise? No doubt, a large portion comprises crime reports, open discussions and comments, music, fictions, romance and violence. Major parts cover shameless acts that directly spoil human-morality which are represented under the hood of various entertainment programs; these are nothing but the appeal and act of shaytan. Even cartoons, which are meant for children, contain highly offensive contents today which inputs unrealistic and vulgar thoughts into the soft child brains allowing to build up a nonsense foundation of understanding life's objective and aim.

Even if a documentary or educational program is completely free from outward destructive issues, it is not at all free from the inward malice. Except a few, most knowledge and value such programs inject into us do not qualify to be beneficial. Islam does not permit a Muslim to accept the views and beliefs which oppose the Creator's existence and doings. Documentaries and educational programs mostly oppose Allah to be the Creator, the Doer, the Sustainer and all in all. There is largely the representation of science and nature and the final appreciation is either attributed to some human being or the so-called mother nature - Allah is fully ignored. How can a Muslim say that such programs are still beneficial? If the lessons and conclusions of any discussion and program have nothing to do with connecting us to Allah even indirectly, rather playing a pivotal role to connect us with nature, science and worldly matters intensely, what good or benefit can they fetch in for us? Another common TV broadcast is the sports. Sports have largely attached many shameless things to it. Free mixing of men and women, the use of musical instruments, wasting the valuable time watching sports for long hours can never be considered positive. These are all directly opposite the teachings of Islam. Commercials and advertisements bear a great amount of haraam. Women are directly exposed as the

means to attract products and services through these. Obscene, vulgarity and shamelessness all flock together in most of the TV ads.

The two major points which any "Muslim common-sense" would dictate regarding this box to be a supplier of evil-doings are: 1. distorting the righteous values and knowledge 2. wasting off the invaluable time in completely unworthy matters.

The first point directly relates to our Iman, the most precious possession of a Muslim. If we distort our values and knowledge we sacrifice our sacred belief and faith (based on the Holy Qur'an and Hadith) in return of completely wrong understanding and misconception. The second point directly relates to the Muslim life's ultimate goal of life - worshipping Allah. When we engage ourselves on things which have nothing to do with obeying Allah, there is no form of worship present, we are definitely wasting our time.

Muslims who may be very strict and selective regarding TV programs are very very few in number. Even they cannot declare complete cleanliness of a TV's use. For instance, ask someone who is exclusively viewing an Islamic channel, how much Islam has s/he learnt through the TV? How much has s/he been successful to keep himself/herself safe from seeing sinful things? When evil threats are high, the positives should not be accepted; there is every chance that the negatives will overpower our nafs (lower self).

A Muslim's whole life encompasses the remembrance (Zikr) of Allah. Starting from all personal acts, interest, hobbies, household works, family and social issues, up to business, services and amusements whatsoever, are incorporated into a Muslim's life under the condition of halal, "permissible acts" decreed by Allah. Undertaking the halal in all these worldly activities by forgoing the haram

(forbidden) is also a form of remembrance (Zikr) of Allah. سبحانه و تعالیٰ. What form of remembrance (Zikr) of Allah سبحانه و تعالیٰ does the TV give us which comprises programs encapsulated with music, cinemas, violence and fictitious programs? Islam always regard these as filth and opposing to morality, above all our Iman.

One of the major problems of the Ummah today is, we come up with excuses and logical explanations derived on the premise of our own perception, knowledge and experience. Most of us cannot easily "make a way out" from the habit and wrongdoing we are into. Therefore, whenever there is some ruling or commandment from the Holy Qur'an and AHadith announced or reminded, which is contrary to our regular habit, we just cannot accept it easily! We come up with our logic and arguments. May Allah سبحانه و تعالیٰ Taala save us from being so debased and disgraced. Aameen.

One point is, not to abide by a ruling or commandment and another point is, besides not abiding by a ruling or commandment, taking a firm stance against it. The state of the second point will definitely take one out of the fold of Islam! Bearing the name of a Muslim and introducing oneself as a Muslim is just a ridicule in that case. If one does not abide by a ruling, s/he will not become kafir (disbeliever). However, if one does not admit that Allah's command is supreme in all regard and if s/he denies any of His commands, this will make him/her kafir! May Allah save every of us from such a state that snatches away the invaluable Iman! Aameen.

Source: islaminlife

The Obligatory Nature of Hajj

Shaykh Mawlana Muhammad Saleem Dhorat

The advent of the month of Shawwal brings with it the remembrance of Ibrahim 'alayhis salam and his memorable hajj. All over the world, those who are fortunate make preparations for this great spiritual experience. Hajj is from the five pillars of Islam and is fard upon every sane and mature believer who possesses the means to perform hajj. Allah ta'ala mentions in the Glorious Qur'an:

"...As a right of Allah, it is obligatory on the people to perform hajj of the House – on everyone who has the ability to manage (his) way to it." (3:97)

The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has said:

"Islam is founded on five (pillars): bearing witness that there is no deity except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing salah, paying zakah, performing hajj and fasting in the month of Ramadan." (Al-Bukhari)

In another hadith, he said: "O people! Indeed Allah, the Mighty, the Exalted has made hajj obligatory upon you; therefore perform hajj." (Ahmad)

Virtues of Hajj

The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has mentioned many virtues of hajj, encouraging the believers to fulfil this obliga-

tion:

"The performers of hajj and 'umrah are deputations of Allah. If they call Him, He answers them; and if they seek His forgiveness, He forgives them." (Ibn Majah)

"There is no reward for an accepted hajj except Jannah." (Al-Bukhari, Muslim)

"Whoever performs hajj for the sake of pleasing Allah, and therein utters no word of evil, nor commits any evil deed, shall return from it free from sin as the day on which his mother gave birth to him." (Al-Bukhari, Muslim)

The performer of hajj becomes so pure that even that person is forgiven for whom he seeks forgiveness. The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said:

"When you meet a Haji (on his way home), then greet him, shake hands with him and ask him to beg forgiveness of Allah on your behalf before he enters his home, for his prayer for forgiveness is accepted since he is forgiven by Allah." (Ahmad)

Warnings for Non-performance of Hajj

The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has also warned those who do not fulfil this obligation despite it becoming obligatory upon them:

"He who possesses enough provisions which will suffice for him to reach the House of Allah,

(Vol.15, Issue: 10) 15.

and he does not perform hajj, then there is no care whether he dies as a Jew or a Christian.” (At-Tirmidhi)

Hajj is fard upon every sane, adult and healthy Muslim, when he has sufficient wealth to enable him to travel to and from the Ka’bah. This will apply when the wealth required to take him is in excess of his needs (such as house, transport, clothing, etc.). He also needs to have sufficient wealth to leave behind for the needs of those who are dependent on him. Furthermore, the journey needs to be a safe one and a woman needs to be travelling with a mahram. As can be understood from the great virtues and stern warnings above, a person upon whom hajj is fard should endeavour to perform hajj at the earliest possible opportunity – this year. The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has said: *“The one who intends to go for hajj should hurry; for sometimes he can get ill, his conveyance can go missing or some other obstacle may arise (which will hinder him from travelling).” (Ahmad)*

Misconceptions and Lame Excuses

Many people delay the performance of hajj due to misconceptions which become lame excuses for not performing hajj. Insha’Allah, I wish to clarify a few of these misunderstandings, so that those who find themselves in these situations can repent and make preparations immediately.

Many people have enough wealth for them to go for hajj, but they wait to accrue enough wealth so that their spouse can also accompany them. If the husband has enough wealth then he should go for hajj immediately. And if the wife has enough wealth, and she has other maharim with whom she can go for hajj, then she should go immediately too. The Shari’ah does not give either permission to postpone the hajj and wait for the other.

Many people think that it is necessary that they make arrangements for their parents to perform hajj before they do. This too is incorrect in light of the Shari’ah. Undoubtedly, to make one’s parents perform hajj is a great virtue and honour; however, if hajj is not fard on them, but it is fard upon the children, then they should not concern themselves with their parents’ hajj at this moment and fulfil their own obligation. It is possible that in the children waiting for the parents - or in the case of the husband waiting for the wife or vice versa - the one upon whom hajj is fard passes away and is questioned by Allah ta’ala for its non-fulfilment.

Others delay embarking on the journey until certain worldly tasks have been completed. Remember! The targets of the world will never end. If it is one worldly target that is the excuse this year, then it will be another next year. The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has said:

“No servant leaves hajj for some worldly objective but that he will see the people returning from hajj before his worldly objective is fulfilled.” (At-Tabrani)

Therefore, one should put aside any worldly goals he has in mind and fulfil the obligation of Allah ta’ala first. It is also noteworthy to remember that it is from the ploys of Shaytan that he will never say, ‘Don’t perform hajj’, rather, he will make you defer its performance, year after year, until it’s too late.

Similarly, many delay their hajj because of this hadith: “He who performs forty salah in my masjid in such a way that he does not miss a single salah, then Allah prescribes his freedom from the Fire of Jahannam, freedom from punishment and freedom from hypocrisy.” (Ahmad) Many think that it is necessary to perform forty salah in Al-Masjid An-Nabawi, and some have the desire and greed for this virtue, so they delay their performance

of hajj as they cannot spare enough time or money to stay in Al-Madinah for the duration of forty salah. Hajj is for five days only, and it becomes fard upon that person who can only afford to go for the minimum time. The inability to travel to Al-Madinah will not be a valid excuse not to perform hajj. Of course, after reaching so close to the blessed city of Al-Madinah, one should endeavour to at least spend a day in the blessed city and visit Al-Masjid An-Nabawi, and present himself in the Court of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam).

Some believe that if their children have reached a marriageable age and are not yet married, then the parents cannot perform hajj until the children are married. This too has no basis whatsoever in the Shari'ah.

Some delay in travelling as they have small children at home. Once hajj becomes fard, they should seek suitable relatives, friends, etc. who can look after their children whilst they go for hajj; and they need not travel for long due to their circumstance and situation.

Some delay their hajj as they think it is better to perform it in their old age closer to their death! This is a fallacy as they have no guarantee for how long they will live, and this idea is in complete contrast to the command of the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) to perform hajj at the earliest opportunity.

Some delay performing the hajj as they only obtain a set number of days off work, and they postpone their journey hoping that they may get more days off next year and can spend more time in the Al-Haramayn. This too is not a valid Shar'i reason to postpone the hajj. They should go and spend whatever time they have available and absolve themselves of the obligation of hajj.

Some delay the hajj, as they cannot afford to buy gifts for people, thus deferring

their obligation until they have enough money that they can buy gifts for their loved and dear ones. This again is not a valid Shar'i excuse.

Some delay in going for hajj as they cannot afford the 'five star', 'deluxe' or 'golden' package. From a Shar'i point of view, as soon as they can afford the cheapest most basic package, hajj becomes fard upon them.

Others can afford a package, but as the package includes a hotel which is far from the Al-Haram, they are not able to read all five salah in Al-Haram. This does not justify delaying the hajj. Remember, as long as the five days of hajj are part of the package, hajj will be fard upon them.

Some do not go for hajj on the pretext that they are not yet ready to change their lives. Such a thought is from Shaytan. Do we think the same when it comes to reading salah or paying zakah? And if this is the case, then change your life, for it is obligatory anyway! Moreover, insha'Allah, through the barakah of hajj, the life will change for the better. Some go to the other extreme and have resolved to change their lives, but make comments such as, 'My Iman is not yet strong enough and I need to build on my Iman.' This thought too is from Shaytan. Hajj is a very important fundamental which helps to make one's Iman stronger.

Shaykh Mufti 'Abdur Rahim Lajpuri mentions with regards the permissible reasons for postponing hajj:

The following are reasons for which hajj may be postponed:

- Becoming bankrupt.
- Fear of a tyrannical leader.
- Being imprisoned.
- An unsafe journey.
- Illness because of which the person cannot travel.

Cont'd on page 28

Freedom of Expression?

Khalid Baig

With the latest in-your-face act of Facebook, the issue is once again attracting headlines. Should Muslims react? How should they react? Where do they stand on the philosophical issue underlying all this?

In the media the issue has been framed as a clash between two camps. One camp stands for freedom of expression. The other wants to curtail it. Needless to say the first camp is enlightened and virtuous. The other is a relic of the dark ages. The clash in other words is between a civilized and civilizing West and Islam that just refuses to be civilized.

Once you accept this framing of the whole issue, the outcome is already decided. Are you for freedom of expression or not? It is a loaded question, and just like the yes/no question, "Have you stopped beating your wife?" no matter how you answer it, you remain guilty.

Look at the typical Muslim response which begins, "We also believe in freedom of expression but..." It matters little what you say after that. It is obvious that you are trying to add exclusions and limitations to a basic moral value while the other side is asking for no such limits. It is not difficult to see which side will come out ahead.

But this predicament is a result of un-

critically accepting a false statement about the nature of the clash. For the real clash is not between those who are for and those who are against a freedom. Rather it is between two different freedoms. On the one hand is the freedom to insult. On the other is freedom from insult. Whether it was the Satanic Verses of the 1980s or the Cartoons of 2005 and their endless reproduction since then, if they stand for any freedom, it is freedom to insult. Pure and simple. Muslims, on the other hand, have stood for and demanded freedom from insult. Nothing more. Nothing less.

These are certainly opposing values. You can be for one or the other. And the question does arise, which one is a better value.

To see that let us imagine a society that truly believes in the first as a cherished moral value. It celebrates freedom to insult and guards it at all costs. Every member of it enjoys this freedom and practices it regularly. In a business everyone insults everyone else. The boss is insulting the employees, the employees are insulting the bosses. The salesmen are insulting the customers. The accountants are insulting the creditors. Everyone is enjoying the great freedom to insult. The same is true of the home. The parents are always insulting the children. The children are constantly insulting the parents. The spouses are inces-

santly insulting each other. And in doing so they all stand on the high moral ground because freedom to insult is such a fundamental freedom on which the society is built.

Actually contrary to the claims of the pundits if the Western society was truly built on this “cherished moral value,” it would have perished a long time ago — consumed by the fires of hatred and negativity generated by this freedom. No home, no neighborhood, no village, no business, no organization and no society can survive for long if it makes freedom to insult as a cornerstone of its freedoms. Clearly most who advocate this freedom do not practice it in their daily lives. But they are making an exception in the case of Islam and Muslims. The driving force behind this is not any great moral principle but a deep rooted hatred born of ignorance.

Software professionals sometimes use a term called beature. It stands for a bug turned into a feature. A bug is a defect in the software. A feature, on the other hand, is a desirable attribute. A beature is a defect that is presented (thanks to slick marketing) as a feature. Freedom to insult is also a beature. It is the growing sickness of Islamophobia in the West which is being presented as a high moral value, packaged by the slick marketing departments as freedom of expression.

Well, whether or not freedom to insult is a Western value, Islam has nothing to do with it. It lays emphasis on its exact opposite: the freedom from insult. It values human dignity, decency, and harmony in the society. The freedom of religion it ensures includes freedom from insults. While it does not shy away from academic discussion of its beliefs and

showing the falsehood of non-Islamic beliefs, it makes sure that the discussion remains civil. In those discussions it wants to engage the intellect of its opponents; in contrast those who itch to insult their opponents are interested in satisfying their vulgar emotions. Thus while its most important battle is against false gods it asks its followers to refrain from reviling them. (Qur’an, Al-anam, 6:108). It also reminds them to stay away from harsh speech. “Allah loves not the utterance of harsh speech save by one who has been wronged.” (Qur’an, Al-Nisa, 4:148). Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), who is being reviled by the scum of the world, taught Muslims to never let the low moral standards of their adversaries dictate theirs.

As a result of these teachings Muslims can never even imagine insulting any Prophet — from Adam to Moses to Jesus to Muhammad, peace be upon them all. Even when they ruled the world, Muslims treated the religious leaders of non-Muslim also with respect — even during battles. In the Baghdad court Jewish and Christian scholars engaged in open discussions with the Muslim savants. Needless to say they had not been attracted by the freedom to insult but its exact opposite. Freedom from insult is a fundamental value that assures peace and harmony. It leads to healthy societies. And Muslims are very proud of their impeccable record here.

What is true of a home or a village is also true of the world as it has become a global village. Now, more than ever before, the world needs the harmony and tolerance that can only be assured by the freedom from insults.

How the Quran Shapes the Brain

Mohamed Ghilan

"If it wasn't for their political problems and constant fighting between each other, the Muslims would have been on the moon by the 1400's" was the statement made by a non-Muslim professor in a 400-level undergraduate class on the history of science. It seems that the rate of discovery and advancement in science achieved by the Muslims was quite impressive and has yet to be replicated. What was it that they were doing that allowed for their fast progress?

The teacher in me immediately thinks about their education system, and the neuroscientist in me wants to examine the factors involved in shaping the brains of such a civilization. Interestingly, many Muslim religious scholars will say something about how the Muslims were the leaders when the Quran was the center of their education, and only when they abandoned the Quran that they lost their reign. The amazing thing about this is that while Muslim religious scholars are typically talking about spiritual and moral realities, there is actually a material reality to what they're saying, which takes place in the brain.

A quick disclaimer here: The list of all that is affected in the brain by the Quran and how that can influence other functions is quite exhaustive. But in the interest of keeping it short, I chose some major areas to present in

this article.

Before getting into the brain and how the Quran changes it, one should be familiar with how traditional Muslim education took place. In case you're wondering where I'm getting this from, it's from reading the biographies of major figures of scholarship in the traditional Muslim world such as Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sina, and others. This is also based on my personal experience and what I have been told by some of my teachers.

The very first thing taught to an aspiring student was the Quran, which had to be memorized completely. Unlike anything else encountered in spoken Arabic, Quran recitation is a very specific science. Local dialects of Arabic or different ways of pronunciation are not permitted when reciting the Quran. In fact, part of learning the Quran is learning what is called in Arabic taj'weed, which means elocution. The very first thing the student must do is replicate exactly how the teacher is reciting the verse. This refers to where individual letter sounds are being generated in the mouth and throat and where the tongue is to be placed exactly. Once this is done, the student writes the verse on a wooden board in the Othamni script, which follows different spelling rules than regular Arabic writing. The student then takes his

board and goes away to memorize the verse. A typical memorization session for a beginner starts with repeating one verse multiple times as it is read on the board to also memorize how it is spelled using the Othmani script. The next day the student reviews the verse several times before returning to the teacher to receive the following verse. After repeating it with the teacher to ensure exact replication of sound and pronunciation, the student writes the new verse and goes away to begin a new memorization session. The third day begins with reviewing the first verse one final time, followed by the second verse several times before going to receive the third verse. On the fourth day the first verse is not reviewed anymore as it would have taken hold in memory, and the second verse takes its place for being reviewed while the third verse is repeated several times before going to receive the fourth verse. At the end of the week is a complete review session for everything that was memorized in the previous days.

As the days pass the capacity for memorization increases and the student is able to take on several verses or even pages at a time instead of only one or two verses. The writing using Othmani spelling continues, as well as the review sessions. Eventually, the whole Quran having more than 6,200 verses is memorized word for word with their specific pronunciation and Othmani spelling. Now the hard task begins as the student works to review all the verses on a monthly basis so as to not forget them. This usually means taking the 30 parts of the Quran as it has been divided to facilitate memorization, and reviewing one part everyday until all 30 have been recited by the end of the month.

It should be mentioned here that the Quran has 10 different modes of recitation. This refers to the placement of diacritical marks on the words and how certain words

are pronounced. Some students take this task on and memorize the Quran in all the different modes of recitation, which requires a very careful attention to where the pronunciations are different so they're not confused with each other given how subtle they sometimes can be.

There are a couple of important qualities about the Quran that relates to how it sounds. Verses in the Quran rhyme and change rhythm often, which gives a pleasurable effect to the listener. Furthermore, as one recites, they're supposed to sing it rather than simply read it. In fact, the very practice of Taj'weed (elocution) forces the reciter into a singing tone as they enunciate the words of each verse.

A final note to bring up is in regards to the Arabic language and writing in Othmani script. Part of studying the different modes of recitation requires the student to write not only in an unusual spelling, but also to exclude the diacritical marks from the words. This would allow the student to learn the variations of recitation without having the diacritical marks visually interfere with their memorization of different modes of recitation. Moreover, the grammar of the Arabic requires the proper use of diacritical marks in pronunciation so as to not confuse things such as the subject and predicate. This means that the one learning the Quran must always keep track of how the words are enunciated so as to not alter the overall meaning of the verse.

How all of this relates to the brain is quite impressive. The brain is recognized to be a malleable organ that can change its connections and even its size of certain areas based on how active they become. Understanding how involved the brain is of someone learning the Quran using the traditional Muslim method can explain how they were able to achieve such success in their knowledge endeavors.

While learning the Quran, the careful attention to listening and pronunciation of verses stimulates an area of the brain located in the temporal lobe. The temporal lobe is also where the hippocampus is located, which is the memory consolidation center. It's also the brain region activated for processing of musical sounds such as the case when the Quran is recited. Moreover, it becomes involved when the student engages in handwriting exercises similar to the ones on the wooden board. Where this matters is that this is the part of the brain whose activity levels and capacities have been correlated with a person's aptitude for learning new information. The more activation this area receives, and the more involved this activation is such as the case with the Quran, the better and more efficient it becomes in its functions for learning and memory.

The parietal lobes are also quite heavily engaged as one learns the Quran. The left parietal lobe deals with reading, writing, and functions in speech. It's also the part whose activity is important for math and logic problems. The right parietal lobe handles speech tone, which is related to elocution. It's also responsible for visuospatial relationships and understanding facial expressions. The front part is responsible for the sense of touch discrimination and recognition, which is active during handwriting. The back part plays an important role in attention. Both lobes are also activated during skill learning tasks. Overall, having parietal lobes that have been well activated translates to better logic and math-solving skills, eloquence in general speech, better ability at reading emotional states from facial cues, improved attention, and enhanced capacity for understanding visuospatial relationships.

This last one can explain why Muslims were so good at astronomy.

Other brain regions the activity of Quran recitation strongly activate are the frontal lobes and the primary motor cortex. The frontal lobes activity deals with higher order functions, including working memory, memory retrieval, speech production and written-word recognition, sustained attention, planning, social behavior, in addition to others. For example, as the student is reading the Othmani script, his brain must quickly decide on the proper pronunciation of the word, which without the diacritical marks means it must be distinguished from other possibilities that include not only wrong words, but also wrong enunciation depending on the specific recitation he's using out of the 10 valid ones. The amazing thing about this is that the brain after practice will do these things without conscious control from the student. This trains the area of the brain responsible for inhibition, which is important for social interaction. Children with ADHD have been shown to have this area to be under-developed.

Given the Quran's content that for example includes descriptions of individuals and places, it activates the occipital lobes, which are involved in generating mental imagery. This brain region is also important in visual perception. Becoming active as a result of generating mental imagery indirectly improves visual perception capacities since the area activated is within the same region. The Quran is also rich in its content for history, parables, and logical arguments, all of which recruit different areas that become more efficient and better connected as they are continually activated due to the consistent review sessions.

Putting all this together, it's no wonder Muslims were able to make such vast contributions to human knowledge in a relatively short amount of time, historically speaking. After the aspiring student during the height of

Muslim rule has mastered the Quran, his education in other sciences began by the time he was in his early teenage years. Given the brain's malleable nature, the improved connections in one region indirectly affect and improve functions in adjacent locations. The process in studying the Quran over the previous years has trained his brain and enhanced its functions relating to visual perception, language, working memory, memory formation, processing of sounds, attention, skill learning, inhibition, as well as planning just to name a few. Now imagine what such an individual will be able to do when they tackle any subject. It makes sense how someone like Imam Al Ghazali can say he studied Greek philosophy on the side during his spare time and mastered it within 2 years.

What was the Muslims' secret for their exponential rise in scientific advancement and contribution to human knowledge? Literally, the Quran when it was the centre of their education system.

Deeds that are like Hajj in their reward

There are several deeds which Rasulallah Sallallahu Alayhi wa Sallam has equated to the reward of Hajj. Those who are not undertaking the Hajj journey, may reap the reward of Hajj by virtue of the following deeds:

1. Wudhu at home before attending Congregational Salaah:

Rasulallah Sallallahu Alayhi wa Sallam has stated: "One who purifies himself (makes Wudhu) and leaves his home to attend the Fardh Salaah in congregation, receives the reward of a Haji in the state of Ihram, and if he leaves for the Salaatud-Dhubaa (Chaast), he gets the reward of Umrah." (Abu Dawud)

2. Salaatul Isbraaq:

Rasulallah Sallallahu Alayhi wa Sallam has stated: "Whoever offers his Fajr Salaah in congregation, and then remains seated making the Zikr of Allah until (approximately 15 mins after) sunrise after which he offers two Rakaats of Salaah (Isbraaq), will receive the reward of one complete Hajj and one complete Umrah." (Sunan Tirmidhi)

3. Going to the Masjid to acquire Knowledge:

Rasulallah Sallallahu Alayhi wa Sallam has stated: "Whoever goes to the Masjid for the purpose of learning or teaching Knowledge, receives the reward of a Haji whose Hajj was perfect." (Tabarani)

4. Serving one's parents:

Sayyiduna Anas Radhiyallahu Anhu reports that a man came to Rasulallah Sallallahu Alayhi wa Sallam and said: "I wish to participate in Jihad, but I cannot afford it." Rasulallah Sallallahu Alayhi wa Sallam enquired if any of his parents were alive, to which he replied, "Yes! My mother is alive." Rasulallah Sallallahu Alayhi wa Sallam said: "Show Allah how you serve her. If you do so you will be like a Haji, a Mu'tamir (one performing Umrah) and a Mu-jaahid." (Targheeb)

The Delights of Paradise

Ibn al-Qayyim said, in regards to the description of the Paradise and the delights that it contains:

“And if you ask about its ground and its soil, then it is of musk and saffron.

And if you ask about its roof, then it is the Throne of the Most Merciful.

And if you ask about its rocks, then they are pearls and jewels.

And if you ask about its buildings, then they are made of bricks of gold and silver.

And if you ask about its trees, then it does not contain a single tree except that its trunk is made of gold and silver.

And if you ask about its fruits, then they are softer than butter and sweeter than honey.

And if you ask about its leaves, then they are softer than the softest cloth.

And if you ask about its rivers, then there are rivers of milk whose taste does not change, and rivers of wine that is delicious to those who drink it, and rivers of honey that is pure, and rivers of water that is fresh.

And if you ask about their food, then it is fruits from whatever they will choose, and the meat of whatever birds they desire.

And if you ask about their drink, then it is Tasneem¹, ginger, and Kaafoor².

And if you ask about their drinking cups, then they are crystal-clear and made of gold and silver.

And if you ask about its shade, then a fast rider would ride in the shade of one of its trees for a hundred years and not escape it.

And if you ask about its vastness, then the lowest of its people would have within his kingdom and walls and palaces and gardens the distance that would be travelled in a thousand years.

And if you ask about its tents and encampments, then one tent is like a concealed pearl that is sixty miles long.

And if you ask about its towers, then they are rooms above rooms in buildings that have rivers running underneath them.

And if you ask about how far it reaches into the sky, then look at the shining star that is visible, as well as those that are far in the heavens that the eyesight cannot possibly reach.

And if you ask about the clothing of its inhabitants, then they are of silk and gold.

And if you ask about its beds, then its blankets are of the finest silk laid out in the highest of its levels.

And if you ask about the faces of its inhabitants and their beauty, then they are like the image of the Moon.

And if you ask about their age, then they are young ones of 33 years in the image of Adam, the father of humanity.

And if you ask about what they will be hear-

ing, then it is the singing of their wives from among the Hoor al-'Ayn, and better than that are the voices of the Angels and the Prophets, and better than that is the Speech of the Lord of the Worlds.

And if you ask about their servants, then they are young boys of everlasting youth who resemble scattered pearls.

And if you ask about their brides and wives, then they are young and full-breasted and have had the liquid of youth flow through their limbs; the Sun runs along the beauty of her face if she shows it, light shines from between her teeth if she smiles; if you meet her love, then say whatever you want regarding the joining of two lights; he sees his face in the roundness of her cheek as if he is looking into a polished mirror, and he sees the brightness from behind her muscles and bones; if she were to be unleashed upon the World, she would fill what is between the Heavens and the Earth with a beautiful wind, and the mouths of the creation would glorify, praise, and exclaim greatness, and everything between the East and the West would be adorned for her, and every eye would be shut from everything but her, and the light of the Sun would be outshone just as the light of the Sun outshines the light of the stars, and everyone on the face of the Earth would believe in the Ever-Living, the One who Sustains and Protects all the exists.

And the covering on her head is better than the World and all that is in it, and she does not increase with age except in beauty; free from an umbilical cord, childbirth and menses, and pure of mucous, saliva, urine and other filthy things; her youth never fades, her clothing is never worn out, no garment can be created that matches her beauty, and no one who is with her can ever become bored; her attention is restricted to her husband, so she desires none but him, just as his attention is

restricted to her so she is the sole object of his desire, and he is with her in utmost safety and security, as none has touched her before of either humans or Jinn.

And if you ask about the Day of Increase (in reward) and the visit of the all-Mighty, all-Wise, and the sight of His Face – free from any resemblance or likeness to anything – as you see the Sun in the middle of the day and the full Moon on a cloudless night, then listen on the day that the caller will call: 'O People of Paradise! Your Lord – Blessed and Exalted – requests you to visit Him, so come to visit Him!' So they will say: 'We hear and obey!'

Until, when they finally reach the wide valley where they will all meet – and none of them will turn down the request of the caller – the Lord – Blessed and Exalted – will order His Chair to be brought there. Then, pulpits of light will emerge, as well as pulpits of pearls, gemstone, gold, and silver. The lowest of them in rank will sit on sheets of musk, and will not see what those who are on the chairs above them are given. When they are comfortable where they are sitting and are secure in their places, and the caller calls: 'O People of Paradise! You have an appointment with Allah in which He wishes to reward you!' So they will say: 'And what is that reward? Has He not already made our faces bright, made our scales heavy, entered us into Paradise, and pushed us away from the Fire?'

And when they are like that, all of a sudden a light shines that encompasses all of Paradise. So, they raise their heads, and, behold: the Compeller – Exalted is He, and Holy are His Names – has come to them from above them and majestified them and said: 'O People of Paradise! Peace be upon you!' So, this greeting will not be responded to with anything better than: 'O Allah! You are Peace, and from You is Peace! Blessed are You, O possessor of Majesty and Honor!' So the Lord –

Blessed and Exalted – will laugh to them and say: ‘O People of Paradise! Where are those who used to obey Me without having ever seen Me? This is the Day of Increase!’

So, they will all give the same response: ‘We are pleased, so be pleased with us!’ So, He will say: ‘O People of Paradise! If I were not pleased with you, I would not have made you inhabitants of My Paradise! So, ask of Me!’ So, they will all give the same response: ‘Show us your Face so that we may look at it!’ So, the Lord – Mighty and Majestic – will remove his covering and will majestify them and will cover them with His Light, which, if Allah – the Exalted – had not Willed not to burn them, would have burned them.

And there will not remain a single person in this gathering except that his Lord – the Exalted – will speak to him and say: ‘Do you remember the day that you did this and that?’ and He will remind him of some of his bad deeds in the Worldly life, so he will say: ‘O Lord! Will you not forgive me?’ So, He will say: ‘Of course! You have not reached this position of yours (in Paradise) except by my forgiveness.’

So, how sweet is this speech to the ears, and how cooled are the righteous eyes by the glance at His Noble Face in the Afterlife...

{Some faces that Day will be shining and radiant, looking at their Lord...} (al-Qiyaamah 75:22-23)

[from Haadi al-Arwaah ilaa Bilaad il-Afraah by Ibn al-Qayyim (ra)]

1. Tasneem is a fountain in Paradise.
2. Kafoor in translated as Camphor in most translations. Etymologists derive the word kafoor from the root word kfr.

Upbringing of children

Why is it that we don't find books on child upbringing (tarbiyatul awlaad) among the earlier authors?

It's because it was not taken as a subject then, a topic to write about. Tarbiyat (child training/ upbringing/ nurturing/ teaching etiquettes/ manners) was natural. Parents used to do it. It's similar to cooking. We don't find any cookery books among them either, because they didn't take it as a subject to write about. It was natural and girls learnt it in homes.

Today Ulama have to write such books, because we want the Ustaaz / Teacher to do everything. We have no time for our kids. We will have time for our friends and for our hobbies. We will be prepared to spend money on educating children. But in all cases we are handing them over to others, whereas we ourselves should be very cautious with regards to their tarbiyat. We need to take out at least half an hour a day for our kids. Start doing this and see the rewards at the end of the year.

Two things are most damaging for children's spiritual upbringing: 1. Haraam income 2. Bad company.

Many people are not careful about their income, while for bad company, people provide tv's (computers, smart phones) and so on in their kids bedrooms and they have all the bad company you can think of. Then how could you expect them to become Junaid Baghdadees, Imam Bukharees? Be very careful with regards to your children. Give them the best tarbiyat you can. Crying when its too late will not help!

May Allah give us the ability to nurture our children properly and to fulfil this duty which Allah has fixed upon us.

Signs of the times, the End Times

The Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him) foretold 72 signs that would appear near the Day of Doom:

1. People will leave prayer
2. People will usurp Ama'naat
3. Lying will become an art
4. There will be murders on the slightest of disagreements
5. Interest will become common
6. There will be very tall buildings
7. People will sell Religion for the world
8. People will treat relatives badly
9. Justice will become a rarity
10. Lies will be considered truth
11. Clothes will be of silk
12. Persecution will become common
13. Divorces will become common
14. Sudden deaths will increase
15. The usurper of Ama'naat will be considered honest and honourable
16. The keeper of Am'naat will be called an usurper of things given to him for safekeeping
17. Liars will be thought of as honest
18. Honest people will be thought of as liars
19. False accusations will become the norm
20. It will be hot in spite of rain
21. Instead of wishing for children, people will pray that they not have children
22. People from bad backgrounds and with bad upbringing will live a life of luxury (material, not peaceful)
23. Good people, when they try to practice, will be cut off from the world
24. Previously good people will also usurp Ama'naat
25. Leaders will become persecutors
26. Ulema and Qaris will commit adultery
27. People will wear clothes of animal skin
28. But their hearts will smell and will be dead
29. And will be bitter
30. Gold will become common
31. Demand for Silver will increase
32. Sin will increase
33. Peace will become rare
34. Ayaats from the Quran will be decorated and calligraphy will become common
35. Mosques will be decorated
36. And will have tall minars
37. But hearts will be empty
38. Alcoholic drinks will be consumed more than ever
39. Punishments ordered by the Shariah will be revoked and will no longer be implemented
40. Women will order their mothers around
41. People who are with naked feet, naked bodies and against religion will become kings
42. Women will trade along with men
43. Women will imitate men
44. Men will imitate women
45. People will swear by things other than Al-

lah and the Quran

46. Even Muslims will be prepared to give false testimony, without being incited to it
47. Only people one knows will be greeted with the salaam
48. The knowledge of the shariah will be used to earn worldly things
49. Acts which earn the Akhirah, will be used to earn the world
50. Assets belonging to the nation will be considered and treated as personal treasures by the rulers
51. Ama'naat will be considered ones personal asset
52. Zakaat will be considered a burden
53. The lowest and the worst man in the nation will become its leader
54. People will not obey their fathers
55. And will mistreat their mothers
56. And will not hold back from harming their friends
57. And will obey their wives
58. And the voices of men who commit adultery will be raised in mosques
59. Women who sing will be treated with great deference
60. Instruments of music will be kept with great care
61. Alcohol will be drunk on the highways
62. People will be proud of their acts of persecution
63. Justice will be sold in the courts
64. The number of men in the police force will increase
65. Instead of music, the Quran will be used to gain pleasure for its tune and style (qirat), not for what it preaches, its meaning or for rewards in the Akhirah
66. Animal fur will be used for clothes
67. The last of the Ummat will curse those before them. (clearly seen today in people who call the Prophet's companion's names)
68. Either Allah will send a Red Storm upon

you

69. Or Earthquakes
70. Or your faces will be changed
71. Or a rain of rocks from the skies. Asteroids, Meteors
72. Lies will become a habit of the rulers and the rich

The Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) also said:

1. Alcohol will be called Sherbat, and will be considered Halal
2. Interest will be called Trade, and will be considered Halal
3. Bribes will be called Gifts, and will be considered Halal
4. Women will have hair, like the hump of a camel. (This is the fashion of people today, yet they do not realise they will neither enter Paradise nor even smell its fragrance.)
5. Women will be naked in spite of wearing dresses. (This Hadith has baffled the Ulema for a very long time until now) The 3 kind of naked women are: (1) Those who wear see-through dresses (2) Those who wear tight dresses and (3) Those whose dresses are so short, that they expose the body.

Source: jamiat.org.za

Cont'd from page 17

- For a woman not to have a mahram or husband to accompany her.
- For a woman to be sitting in her 'iddah.

He further states that although these factors justify postponing hajj; however, it will be compulsory to proceed with the journey as soon as they no longer exist.

Therefore, it is my heartfelt plea to those upon whom hajj is fard, that they embark on this blessed journey this very year. They should have trust in Allah ta'ala for all their affairs and fulfil this obligation. May Allah ta'ala remove all difficulties and hurdles that anyone may have and make hajj easy for one and all. Amin.

A Reflection on Divine Love

Hamza Yusuf

Many Muslims believe that the idea, "God loves everyone," is simply wrong and incongruous with Islamic teachings. Verses abound in the Qur'an decrying those God does not love: liars, hypocrites, oppressors, the arrogant, boastful braggarts, and those who love praise for that which they have not done, among others. Reading these verses, it is easy to begin to resent such people and to believe that God does not love everyone. However, if we look closely at these people, we see elements of ourselves in them.

What is true of any man is true of all men; the only difference is in the degree to which it is true. Prophets and sanctified saints are the only exceptions to this universal truth. Jesus (AS), states, as recorded in al-Muwatta' of Imam Malik (d. 179/795):

"Do not, like lords, look upon the faults of others. Rather, like servants, look after your own faults. In truth, humanity is comprised of only two types of people: the afflicted and the sound. So show mercy to the afflicted, and praise God for well-being."

It is never the sinner that one should hate, but only the sin; for the essence of all humanity is a soul created in submission to its Creator. Whether that soul acknowledges this on a conscious level or not is a matter of grace,

and this understanding enables us to look at others with compassion. All people, everywhere and throughout time, suffer great tribulation at various points in their lives. At this very moment, hearts are breaking and lives are being shattered, women abused, children violated, and people dying while their loved ones are crying. Also at this very moment, other hearts are rejoicing, babies are being born, mothers are nurturing, smiles are given freely, charity is being distributed, and lovers are uniting. The airport is one of the great metaphors of our time: sad, happy, and indifferent faces are all to be seen there, as people part with loved ones, greet their beloveds, or simply wait to pick up or let off people they barely know. Sad, happy, and indifferent are the states that sum up our collective body of souls. In the next life, however, there is only bliss or wretchedness, joy or sorrow-no indifference.

According to a beautiful hadith, the Prophet (S) said that on the Last Day, when the last two souls are brought forth before God, they are both condemned to hell. As the angels escort them to their final fiery abode, one of them wistfully looks back. Thereupon, God commands the angels to bring him back and asks the man why he turned back. The man replies, "I was expecting something else

from you." God responds, commanding the angels, "Take him to My Garden."

It is our expectation of God that determines where we are. This points up the need for thinking well not only of God but also of God's creation, despite the fact that we are all messy, imperfect works in progress, struggling along in this journey.

We either surrender to God or to the substitutes for God, which are invariably hollow. But true love, which is the love of God, is the single most powerful force in the world. It is a love that "alters not when it alteration finds." It grows and never diminishes. If someone claims to have lost it, it can only be said that such a person did not have it to begin with. "It is the star to every wandering bark." And in loving God, one must paradoxically love all of God's creation, merely for the incontrovertible fact that everything is God's creation. God does love everything in that He brought everything into existence from an act of divine love, and those who love God purely, and with the penetrating inner eye of reality, can only be a mercy while in the world. This does not mean that we love the evil that emanates from moral agents. In fact, it is an act of faith to loathe what is loathsome to God. So when God says He does not love oppressors, it is their oppression that we must loath. In denying the humanity that is inherent in the oppressor, we miss the point and disallow the possibility that the door of God's mercy and love is open to everyone. If we truly believe that we love for everyone what we love for ourselves, then we should want everyone, no matter their state of being or their station in life, to enter that door of God's mercy and love, through repentance and contrition. Allowing for this possibility enables us to be a mercy, as the Prophet (S), was.

What follows is a profound explication of this truth by emir 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri (d.

1300/1883), perhaps the last exemplar of Islam on all the levels of prophetic character—as a teacher, warrior, statesman, father, and fully awakened master of the path of the prophets:

"They love God, and God loves them" (Qur'an, 5:54). You should know that the love the real has for creation is of various kinds. One type is the divine love for them before they came into existence; and another is the divine love after they were created. These two types are further categorized into two other types: one is the divine love of the elect, and the other is the divine love of the elite of the elect. As for the first [the divine love before creation], it permeates all of existence, despite the varieties of types, kinds, and characters. It is understood in the famous dictum known well to the folk of spirit, "I was a hidden treasure who loved to be known, so I created this creation to introduce Myself, and through it, they came to know Me." This love is the love that brought the world into existence: "I created humankind and sprites only to adore Me" (51:56). In other words, "to know Me." This is the very love we have mentioned; it is God's inclination to manifest His divine names and attributes, and this is an inclination of the essential divine nature, which is not colored with a name or an attribute, because the names do not manifest at this level of consideration. Then, this inclination of divine love for self-expression extended itself through all of the divine names and sought to manifest through the epiphanies of the divine traces as they had been previously hidden in the divine essence, consumed in the divine unity. But once God created them, they knew God as God desired to be known, given that the divine will is unassailable. Every type of creature knew God based upon the level of understanding and preparedness that God had bestowed upon it. As for the angels, each one is a type unto itself, and each has a station and rank,

just as all the rest of creation has types and ranks. None can either relinquish or surpass its rank, and their acceptance is predicated upon the degree of knowledge of God that they have. For without a doubt, they increased in their knowledge when Adam, peace be upon him, taught them the names, as the Exalted has taught us in the Qur'an. As for inanimate objects, beasts, and animals other than humans, they have a natural disposition that entails a divine knowledge that neither increases nor decreases. Each of them also has a station, and it cannot exceed its boundaries of knowledge. As for the human being, he or she has a primordial knowledge that [although lost upon entering the world] can undergo a renovation. Its renovation is based upon the condition of his or her outward state; I mean by this the state of the soul and intellect. For in reality, all of knowledge is concentrated in the individual's reality; it simply manifests from one time to another, based upon the divine will, because the human reality is contained in each person. And each human being, in that he or she is a human being, is open to the possibility of the rank of "perfected human." However, they will vary in the way their human perfection manifests itself in them.

As for the first type of divine love, which is that of the elect, this is reserved for only certain ones among God's servants. Examples of this are found in the Qur'an: "Surely God loves those who repent" (2:222). Also included among those God loves are those who purify themselves, the patient, the grateful, those who place their trust in God, those "who fight in ranks for the sake of God" (61:4), not to mention all the other beloveds God mentions in the Qur'an who have embodied certain qualities and characteristics that necessitate this special love from the Real, Exalted God. Nonetheless, it is a type of love that veils and [yet] allows for a transcendent under-

standing of God. Moreover, it is a love that is unobtainable for certain types of people, as mentioned in the verses, "God loves not oppressors," (3:57), and "God loves not those who cover truth with lies" (3:32). Despite that, they are still enveloped in the first type of divine love [that is, divine love before they came into existence].

As for the second type of special divine love, it is for the elect of the elite; it is indicated in the sacred hadith, "My servant continues to draw near unto Me through voluntary acts of devotion until I love him. And when I love him, I become the hearing with which he hears, the sight with which he sees, the hand with which he strikes, and the foot with which he walks. Were he to ask something of Me, I would assuredly grant it; were he to seek refuge in Me, I would grant it." In other words, the identity of the Real is revealed to him as the secret of his own outward and inward faculties. This type of divine love occurs with an epiphany upon the beloved, the fruit of which is manifest in this world due to the divine witnessing and vision that occurs in the imaginal realm; or it occurs with other things also, as an effusion of experiential knowledge through myriad gifts. As for the previous special type of love, it is still a veiled love, given that its possessor is still trapped in the illusion of otherness and duality. Hence, its fruits only manifest in the next world. For this reason, 'Ata' Allah (d.709/1309) says in his Aphorisms (al-Hikam), "The devoted servants and detached ones leave this world while their hearts are still filled with otherness."

This last love is attained only by those who possess the direct knowledge of God described in the sacred hadith above. Furthermore, it is only attained by one who has in his or her heart that universal love for all of creation that is understood in the verse, "My Mercy encompasses all things" (7:156). It is the

mercy that the Messenger of God (S) spoke of when he said, "you will not truly believe until you show mercy to one another."

To this, a companion responded, "But Messenger of God, all of us show mercy to others."

The Prophet (S) explained, "I am not speaking of the mercy one of you shows to his friend but of universal mercy-mercy to all of humanity."

Regarding the famous hadith, "None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself," Imam al-Nawawi (d. 676/1277) states in his commentary that this love includes all of humanity. He further elucidates that it is a love that goes against our very nature; it is angelic in nature, and it is only obtained by negating the ego.

This struggle with the ego-with our own vengeful soul-is one of the most difficult challenges we face. But in succeeding in this struggle, we are not only able to forgive: we are also able to strike, when the only appropri-

ate response is a strike-but with the hand of God, not with the hand of our own ego because it is an undeniable reality of the world that miscreants exist, that there are human demons whose evil must be thwarted. This is the essence of jihad: to take up the sword in order to remove the sword from the hands of those who wish to do evil in the world. However, the mujahid must be purified from his own ego so he can act as an agent of the divine in the world. This was the reality of the Prophet, God bless and grant him peace, on the battlefield, about whom God said, "And when you threw, you did not throw, but rather God threw" (8:17). It is only such people who are worthy of being the caliphs of God upon the earth. They are the ones God will empower to rule. And for those who do not possess these qualities but still have the love of God, God's greatest gift is to leave them powerless. God's privation is itself a gift, for He withholds not from want but from wisdom.

Source: Sandala

"I Can't Lose my Modesty!"

The son of Ummu Khallaad (RA) was martyred. When she heard about it she came to Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) to enquire about his position and reward. Despite being afflicted by the great tragedy of losing her son, her face was still covered with a niqaab (veil/purdah). A Sahaabi (RA) was quite astonished by this (level of composure) and he remarked: "You have come to enquire about your son (who was martyred) yet you (are so composed that you) have still covered your face (in this tragic moment)?"

She replied: "I may have lost my son, but I have not lost my modesty." (Sunan Abi Dawood #2488)

Lesson: What great words and what a great lesson! Losing her son was tolerable but removing her niqaab/purdah and exposing her face was intolerable. This was the modesty of the women of this Ummah!

Aaah! Where are those Ummu Khallaads, 'Aaishas and Faatimahs who were embodiments of modesty and personifications of shame? Alas! What has become the condition of the 'Aaishas and Faatimahs of today?

UMAR BIN 'ABD AL-'AZIZ (ra)

The Rule of Fifth Rightly Guided Caliph

One day Hadhrat 'Umar bin 'Abd Al-'Aziz (Ra) noticed something very strange while having a conversation with his daughters. Whenever any one of his daughters spoke to him she made sure she covered her mouth with her hand. When he inquired about the reason for their action he was told that they did not want to talk to him while their mouths emitted a bad odour as they had eaten a meal consisting of a raw onion and dal only since they had nothing else to eat.

When we talk about Hadhrat 'Umar bin 'Abd Al-'Aziz, we have to bear in mind that we are not talking about an ordinary hand-to-mouth man. Neither are we talking about a middle-class man, and for that matter, not even someone belonging to an elite group. Far more than that! We are actually talking about Khalifah 'Umar bin 'Abd Al-'Aziz, the Umayyad ruler of that time! The above mentioned incident takes place when he was a Khalifah whose empire stretched from the shores of the Atlantic to the highlands of Pamir in Central Asia!

Royal blood ran in his veins, and more so, in those of his daughters', as he was the nephew of the former Umayyad Khalifah 'Abd Al-Malik bin Marwan and the cousin of two subsequent Umayyad rulers Waleed and Sulaiman; while his wife Faatimah, the first lady of the time, was the daughter of 'Abd Al-Malik bin Marwan and a sister to the above

referred rulers Waleed and Sulaiman.

When he heard their reason for covering their mouths he started crying and said to his daughters in an apologetic tone, "...would it please you that you eat delightful and costly dishes while your father goes to Jahannam?" When the daughters heard this they too burst into tears.

'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz (26th Safar, 63 to 16th Rajab, 101 Hijrah – 2 November 682 to 31 January 720 AD) – was the celebrated Umayyad Khalifah who ruled from 99 to 101 Hijrah (718 to 720 AD), for a period less than three years. Ironically, it was during the time of his Khilaafat that, while he and his family members were almost starving, wealth flowed among the Muslims so much so that when the town-criers called on people throughout the Muslim domain to come and collect Zakāt, no one was found in need to respond. While he ruled the largest empire in his time, he personally did not possess enough money that he could perform Hajj.

The historians called him "Umar Thani" ('Umar the Second). Besides being the namesake of the Second Rashideen Khalifah, Hadhrat 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab Al-Farooq (RA), there is another spectacular reason why he was given this title. To know this reason we will have to turn back the pages of history till we arrive at the 'Golden Age' of Islam when

Hadhrat 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab Al-Farooq (RA) was the Khalifah.

As Allāh Ta'ala would have it, in the course of his Khilaafat, during one of his frequent disguised journeys to survey the condition of his people, 'Umar overheard a milkmaid refusing to obey her mother's orders to sell adulterated milk, for the reasons that Hadhrat 'Umar had strictly instructed his subjects not to add water to the milk. The mother reportedly told her daughter that Khalifah 'Umar was not looking at them at that time. The girl shot back that though Khalifah 'Umar was not looking at them, Allāh is always watching over everyone.

The next day he sent an officer to purchase milk from the girl and he learned that she had kept her resolve; the milk was unadulterated. 'Umar summoned the girl and her mother to his court and told them what he had heard. He offered to marry the girl to his son Aasim and she accepted. From this union was born a girl named Layla (or umm Aasim Layla) that would in due course become the mother of 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz.

The Umayyads had turned the Khilaafat into a family business, they lived in luxury and extravagance like kings and princes and they would use the wealth of the Ummah to satisfy their greedy desires. Before 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz acquired the Khilaafat he too was accustomed to an extremely lavish lifestyle as lived by the Ummayad household. However his appointment to the position of a Khalifah had a radical effect upon him and the weight that he now felt upon his shoulders made him change into something that would be spoken about for centuries to come.

He set up standards for austerity and simplicity following in the footsteps of 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab (RA). It is said that if ever there was a noble ruler after the Khulafaah-e-Rashideen (the Rightly Guided Caliphs), such a

man was 'Umar bin 'Abd Al-'Aziz. He had inherited a perfect blend of the virtuous qualities of the milkmaid who was married to 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab (RA)'s son, and those of 'Umar Al-Farooq himself, the one who had the eye to discern the noble and sterling qualities in the character of a poor milkmaid.

Upon his appointment the Khalifah's carriage was brought for him and he refused saying that his mule was sufficient for him. He disbanded 600 bodyguards meant for guarding his life, and moved out of the royal palace to live with his family in a small modest house comprising two rooms. He freed all his slaves and restored to their rightful owners the properties confiscated by the Umayyads.

He approached his wife Faatimah who had jewellery that was given to her by her father which no one had seen the like of and he said to her: 'Either you return this to the Bait ul Maal (the State treasury) or you permit me to separate from you because I cannot stand a situation wherein you and I remain in the same house while you have the jewellery.' This daughter of a Khalifah and a sister to two former monarchs responded to his call and returned the jewels. He then summoned the people of his household and took away from them their possessions and deposited them to the Bait ul Maal.

Some historians have given him the title of 'the Fifth of the Rashidun Khalifah'. The great Scholar Sufyan Ath-Thawri said that the Khulafaah numbered five: Abu Bakr, 'Umar, Uthmaan, 'Ali and 'Umar Ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz.

'Umar bin 'Abd Al-'Aziz was eventually poisoned by a servant who had been bribed by someone from within the House of the Umayyads. It is said in his final moments he was overheard saying: "Marhaba! Marhaba to the faces, which are neither of man nor Jinn."

He reportedly left behind only 17 di-

nars, with a will that stated that out of this amount the rent of the house in which he died and the price of the land in which he was to be buried should be paid.

‘Umar bin ‘Abd Al-‘Aziz was a Khalifah for only two years and four or five months. His short reign was like a merciful rain which brought universal blessings. One of its special features was that almost all Berbers in Northern Africa as well as the nobility of Sindh (India) embraced Islam of their own accord.

Some pearls of wisdom from the life of ‘Umar bin ‘Abd Al-‘Aziz (ra)

- He prohibited any insults upon ‘Ali (RA) and his family which had become widespread within the Friday Khutbah and instead he inserted the recitation of the Aayah 90 from Sura An-Nahl. Until today this Aayah is recited in nearly every Khutbah that is given every Friday in all four corners of the world.
- Jarrah Ibn Abdullāh, Governor of Khorasan, once wrote to the Umayyad Khalifah ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Aziz stating that the people of Khorasan were wild and rebellious, and nothing but the whip and the sword could control them. ‘Umar replied: “Your theory that nothing but the whip and the sword could control your people is absolute baseless. Truth and justice can control them; spread truth and justice in your reign”.
- A Tailor once visited ‘Umar and brought to him a Thawb (a Jubba or a Kanzu) worth 8 dirham and ‘Umar said: “It is nice but it is too luxurious for me.” So the man said: “I came to you when you were in Al-Madinah (as Wali) with a Thawb which was worth 5,000 dirham and you said to me: “It is nice although it is a bit too rough!”
- Muhammad Bin Mobad once happened to be in the Durbar (the state court) of the Roman Emperor of that time. He reports that he found the Emperor in a very pensive

mood and drooping spirits. On inquiring about the reasons, the Emperor replied, “I have got the news that a virtuous person has passed away. This is ‘Umar bin ‘Abd Al-‘Aziz... I am hardly surprised to see an average person renouncing the world and giving himself fully to the submission of Allāh. But I am certainly astonished about a person who had all the pleasures of the world at his feet and yet he shut his eyes against them and passed a life of piety and renunciation.”

- A female visitor once came to ‘Umar’s house seeking charity and saw a raggedly-dressed man patching holes in the building’s walls. Assuming that the man was a servant of the Khalifah, she asked Umar’s wife, “Don’t you fear God? Why don’t you veil in presence of this man?” The woman was shocked to learn that the ‘servant’ was in fact the Khalifah himself!
- During his short rule he received lesser salary than that received by his own subordinates.
- In spite of the fact that ‘Umar Bin ‘Abd Al-‘Aziz was a loving father, he never provided his children with luxuries and comforts. His daughter Aminah was his favourite child. Once he sent for her, but she could not come as she was not properly dressed. Her aunt came to know of it and she purchased necessary garments for his children.
- He never performed his private work in the light of a lamp which burned the State oil.
- After ‘Umar’s death, his wife Faatimah’s brother Yazid who succeeded him as Khalifah offered to return her jewellery to her. “I gave up these valuables during my husband’s lifetime; why should I take them back after his death”, she told him.
- It is said that that ‘Umar Ibn Al Khattaab used to speak of a dream where he saw one of his progeny becoming a leader that would fill the earth with justice and that he would

have a scar on his face. Now in the year 99 Hijrah his great grandson 'Umar bin 'Abd Al-'Aziz, who had been struck in his childhood by the animal that he was riding and that left a scar on his forehead, became the Khalifah. Allah knows best about the authenticity of this narration but there is no disagreement that 'Umar Ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz filled the earth with justice during the time of his Khilaafat.

- Some historians have said that the virtuous character of 'Umar bin 'Abd Al-'Aziz (Ra) reflected the Truthfulness of Hadhrat Abubakr Siddique (RA), Justice and Fairness of Hadhrat 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab (RA), Modesty and Chastity of Hadhrat Uthman ibn Affaan (RA) and Abstinence and Piety of Hadhrat 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (RA). However, it is very essential to constantly remind ourselves that the sublime and the supreme character of our Beloved Prophet Muhammad (Sallallāhu 'alaihi Wasallam) was the actual fountainhead of all these and many more noble qualities that the Sahābah (RAA) possessed.

*Compiled from various sources.
muslimvillage*

Respect – The Stairway to Progress

Imaam Abu Haneefah (ra) said: "I never stretched out my legs in the direction of my teacher Imaam Hammaad's (ra) house, out of respect for him. This is despite the fact that there were seven side streets between my house and his house. Every salaah that I offered after Imaam Hammaad passed away, I sought forgiveness for him together with my parents. I certainly seek forgiveness for all those under whom I studied or all those who taught me something."

Imaam Abu Yusuf (ra), the leading student of Imaam Abu Haneefah (ra), said: "I certainly supplicate for Imaam Abu Haneefah (ra) even before I supplicate for my parents. And I heard Imaam Abu Haneefah (ra) saying: 'I certainly supplicate for Imaam Hammaad (ra) together with my parents.'" (Risaalatul Mustarshideen pg. 203)

Lesson: *One of the many great values which are nowadays becoming extinct is respect. Among the many forms of respect is showing respect to those who impart deen to us and are a means of us becoming more committed to the commands of Allah Ta'ala. This includes the Aapa who taught us in the maktab, the Muallimah who tutored us thereafter, the Imaam of our local masjid, every Aalim of deen or scholar of the past. No matter what strides we make in life, we will always be indebted to these individuals. How irrational it is that today a person does some "research" on the internet, watches a few You-Tube videos and then considers himself to be eligible to challenge scholars who have spent decades in learning and imparting deen.*

The Economic Challenge for the Ummah

Condensed from a talk by Justice Mufti Taqi Usmani, delivered at the International Conference of the World Muslim Congress.

The nineteenth century was a century of political oppression whereby the powerful Western nations enslaved most of the Asian and African nations including a large number of Muslim countries. The present century, which is nearing its end, has witnessed the gradual independence of these countries from Western imperialism. However, despite our apparent success in achieving the goal of political liberty, we could not succeed in acquiring independence on intellectual, economic and strategic levels. That is why Muslim Ummah could not yet reap the fruits of its political freedom.

Now the Muslim world is looking toward the coming century with hope that it will bring for it total independence in the real sense so the Muslims may find their due place among the nations of the world and may be free to live according to the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam).

However, this hope cannot be realized through wishful dreams. We will have to work hard for our total freedom even more than we did for our political freedom. We need a total revision of our strategy, a well-considered plan, a collective resolution, and a revolutionary approach. In this paper, I would like to confine myself to two major issues.

1. Self-Imposed Dependence

It is common knowledge that Ummah's basic economic problem is the dependence of the Muslim countries on others. Most of the them are borrowing huge amounts from the rich Western countries. Some countries are incurring these heavy interest-bearing loans not only for the development projects, but also for their day-to-day expenses, and what is more serious, for the payment of interest accrued on their previous loans which keeps the size of their indebtedness ever-increasing through a vicious circle.

Dependency on foreign loans is the basic disease of our economy that has not only shattered our economic life, but has also devastated our self-determination and has forced us to submit to the demands of our creditors, sometimes, at the price of our collective interests. It is no secret that the creditors impose their own conditions before they advance a loan. These conditions keep us under a constant foreign pressure, often stop us from pursuing our own objectives and force us to follow the policies dictated by others. The evil consequences of dependence on foreign loans are too obvious to need any further elaboration. Islamic teachings consider "Indebtedness" as a detestable phenomenon, which should not be resorted to except in cas-

es of extreme necessity. The Prophet, Salla-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, even refused to offer the funeral prayer for a person who died before paying back his loan.

Moreover, the Muslim jurists have discussed whether it is lawful for the ruler of a Muslim State to accept the gifts offered by a non-Muslim. The answer: It is lawful only where the acceptance of gifts does not result in any kind of pressure against the interest of the Ummah. Islamic principles require that the Muslims should avoid incurring foreign debts, even if they face some hardships. But our present indebtedness was not created by lack of resources. In fact, the Muslims have never been so resource-rich. They own enormous natural resources. They occupy important strategic positions on the globe. They are joined together by a geographical chain from Morocco to Indonesia, broken only by India and Israel. They produce nearly 50% of the oil of the world. They are said to account for more than one third of the world's export of raw material. What is more, the cash they have invested in the western countries alone may be more than sufficient to set off their total liabilities.

According to a recent report of Islamic Development Bank, the total external debt of the IDB member countries in 1996 amounted to 618.8 billion dollars. The deposits and assets kept by the Muslims in the Western countries are said to be much more than this amount. Obviously, there is no authentic record of such deposits, because their owners do not disclose them. However, the economic experts have estimated them to be between 800 and 1000 billion dollars, out of which 250 billions are said to be taken back by the Arabs to their own countries after the Gulf War. Practically it means that we are borrowing a part of our own money at a high rate of interest.

Even if these estimated figures are

taken to be exaggerated, one can hardly deny the fact that had these huge amounts been kept and properly used within the Muslim world, the Ummah would have never resorted to incur the debt of more than six hundred billion dollars.

Our dependence on foreign loans is self-imposed for which we cannot blame anyone but ourselves. We did never probe in to the factors underlying the flight of our capital. We did never try to remove those factors and instill confidence in our own people. We could not deliver ourselves from the corrupt and oppressive system of taxation. We were not able to create a peaceful atmosphere for investment. We could not provide our countries with stable political system. We did not bother to create opportunities for the sound utilization of capital and, above all, we failed to mobilize the spirit of Islamic unity and to activate the strength of the Muslim Ummah as a whole.

The tragic situation cannot be corrected by expensive celebrations at the advent of the new century. We will have to take the challenge of time seriously. Our economic and political leadership will have to find ways and means to free ourselves from dependence on foreign countries. We already have the basic resources for that. All we need is to design new policies to utilize the wealth of the Ummah within the Muslim world, and to develop the concept of Islamic brotherhood and mutual understanding and cooperation.

The Quran says: "All the Muslims are brothers." Quranic injunctions and the Prophetic teachings require that the Muslim Ummah should act as a single body. The geographical barriers should not divide them into different nations with conflicting objectives. The political boundaries may only be tolerated for the internal administrative affairs of each country, but all the Muslim countries must

have a united face at least with reference to the common objectives of the Muslim Ummah vis-à-vis the rest of the world.

Gone are the days when technical know-how was the monopoly of a few Western countries. Now, the Muslim talent is capable of at least handling the immediate requirements of the Ummah. What we need is to seek this talent, and to put it to the service of this Ummah with a missionary zeal.

But all this requires the unified efforts from the leadership of our countries. This is the biggest challenge faced by them. They must meet it, not only for the betterment of the Ummah, but for their own survival. A great responsibility, in this respect, lies on the shoulders of OIC, which should take the initiative and create a Muslim talent pool to design new policies for the Ummah as a joint body.

2. Restructuring our Economic Systems

The twentieth century has witnessed the rise of communism, the conflict between capitalist and communist countries and lastly the fall of communism. The capitalist Western countries are celebrating the fall of communism as if it was an empirical evidence of their own victory, not only on a political front but also on ideological plane. The fact is, however, that communism was based on an emotional reaction against some evil consequences of the capitalist economy, specially, against the element of inequitable distribution of wealth, which has been experienced in the capitalist countries throughout the centuries. The failure of communism was not due to its justified criticism of the evils of capitalism. Rather it was caused by the inherent defects of the alternative system suggested by it. The capitalist economies still suffer from inequities in the distribution of wealth. There is still a large gap between the haves and the have-nots and 'poverty in the midst of plenty' is still

the major problem of their economy. These are the real problems created by capitalism and unless they are satisfactorily solved, it may give birth to another reaction that may be more aggressive than communism.

The world, therefore, is badly in need of a Third Economic System. The Muslim Ummah can work out this system based on the Islamic norms. The economic principles taught by the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) are quite capable of solving the major economic problems faced by the world today. While they allow private ownership and market economy, they also provide a well considered system of distributive justice, which may eliminate the inequities and bring about a system in which profit motive works with the collective interest of the society. The basic fault of communism was that, frustrated with the inequity of capitalism, it assailed the very institutions of private ownership and market forces and developed a utopian idea of planned economy which was unnatural, artificial and oppressive. The denial of individual liberty curtailed the zeal for production and the wide powers of the state left the destiny of the people in the hands of the ruling class.

It was neither private ownership nor the institution of market forces that was the basic cause of injustice in the capitalist system. The basic factor for creating inequities in the capitalist countries was the absence of a criterion to differentiate between just and unjust earnings. The instruments of interest, gambling, speculative transactions and the tools of exploiting immoral desires of the consumers to secure huge profits were allowed, which tend to create monopolies and in turn paralyze the forces of demand and supply or at least obstruct their operation. It is thus ironical that the capitalist theory on the one hand asserts the principles of *lassiez-faire* but, on the other,

by allowing the aforesaid instruments, interferes with their natural function and stops the market forces from playing their due role by creating monopolies that impose their arbitrary decisions on the bulk of the common people.

The system of interest favors the rich industrialists who benefit from the wealth of the common people who deposit their savings in the bank, and after making huge profits do not allow the common people to share these profits except to the extent of a fixed rate of interest that is again taken back by them as it is charged to the cost of production. At macro level, it means that these rich people always use the money of depositors for their own benefit and in reality pay nothing to them because the interest payments are always added to the cost of production. Similarly, gambling is a major instrument for concentrating the wealth of thousands of men in a few hands and for promoting the disastrous motive of greed for the unearned income. The speculative transactions are also a major source of disturbing the natural market operations and contribute to the inequities in the distribution of wealth.

Islam not only allows the market forces but also provides mechanism to keep them operative with their natural force without their being hindered by monopolies. It applies two types of controls on the economic activities.

First, it subjects the process of earning to certain divine injunctions, which clearly define the limits of halal and haram. These injunctions tend to prevent monopolies and curb the unjust and immoral earnings and commercial activities detrimental to the collective interest of the society. In the context of modern economic needs where the savings of the common people are activated to boost development, the use of the Islamic instru-

ments like musharakah and mudarabah, instead of interest, may make the common people directly share the fruits of development which may bring prosperity in a balanced manner reducing the gap between the rich and the poor.

Second, the institution of zakat, sadaqat, and certain other financial obligations provide that even the halal income is again distributed to the persons who could not earn enough due to insufficient market opportunities. Through the twin controls, the wealth is kept under constant circulation and the chances of its concentration are almost eliminated.

But our main tragedy is that the principles of Islamic economy are still in theoretical form for which no living example is available. The Muslim countries have not tried to structure their economy on Islamic basis. Most of them are still following the capitalist system and that too in a half-baked manner, which has made the economic atmosphere much worse than that of the developed capitalist countries. Unfortunately, despite having the clear cut Islamic injunctions, the inequities existing in Muslim countries are far more severe than in the Western world.

This tragic situation cannot last forever. If we are not prepared to mend our ways, some natural process of revolution is bound to find its way. If we want to avoid disastrous consequences of such revolution, we'll have to restructure our economic system on the basis of clear guidance provided by the Qur'an and Sunnah. Our success in setting an example for implementing the Islamic principles will be our best gift to the human fraternity at the advent of the new century. I hope that if the principles of Islamic economy are implemented sincerely, we'll find the world more receptive to them today than we experienced it in the past.

Growing Use of Digital Technology in the Muslim World

Professor A. R. Momin

Cont'd from previous issue

Saudi Arabia has experienced one of the fastest rates of growth in the use of digital technology in the Middle East. This is reflected in the Internet penetration, which now covers nearly 50% of the population, the growing use of social media and the rapid growth in e-commerce. Saudi Arabia has more than 3 million active Twitter users and is ranked as the fastest-growing Twitter nation in the world, with 50 million tweets per month. In addition, there are 6 million Facebook users and 90 million people who regularly view YouTube. Since Saudi Arabia has little social life or scope for political discussions, Twitter is widely used for sharing views and opinions on social and political issues, such as government policies and women's rights. Saudi Arabia has the second-largest e-commerce market in the Middle East after the UAE. In May 2014 a special website called Tawasul (communication) was launched on the orders of King Abdullah. Web users in the kingdom can now petition the king directly through this website. Every message on the website will be forwarded to the king. Saudi citizens can use the portal to lodge complaints against government departments or officials.

More than 70% of the adult population in Nigeria own a handset. In Egypt, the

penetration of the smartphone covers about 26% of the population. In Afghanistan, there are 18 million mobile phones, covering almost 60% of the population. Internet penetration in Afghanistan is expected to cover almost 50% of the population by 2015. Residents of Indonesia's capital Jakarta tweet more than those of any other city. A recent survey by Ipsos, a market research firm, found that some of the world's highest rates of smartphone penetration are to be found in the rich Muslim countries. In the UAE, for example, the rate is 61%.

The use of digital technology is rapidly spreading in Muslim diasporas around the world. The descendants of Palestinian refugees born and raised in foreign countries can now find, thanks to homepages on the Internet, the villages of their parents and grandparents as well as their extended kin. Family members create their own sites to find lost relatives or to display their family history. Historical pictures from before 1948, those of 1948 and the 1967 exodus are among the most downloaded and forwarded images. Computer technology thus enables them to establish links with their religious and cultural traditions and facilitates the recovery and reconstruction of their identity.

Overseas Iranians living in North America, Europe and Australia access several online Iranian newspapers and magazines. A popular online magazine is www.iranian.com, created in Washington D. C. in 1995, which provides updates on news and features relating to Iran. It also provides links to more than 150 other online Iranian media, including 39 daily newspapers, 72 magazines, 31 radio stations and 8 TV channels. Persian newspapers published from Iran appear online several hours before they are available in print in Tehran and other cities. Through the Internet, one can listen to Radio Payam, Tehran's local radio, as well as Radio Seda-e-Iran, a 24-hour Persian radio station located in Los Angeles. In Stockholm, local Iranian local radio stations download Persian programmes from the Internet and rebroadcast them for the local Iranian community. Interestingly, there is some collaboration between Radio Seda-e-Iran and the Persian section of Radio Israel. While Radio Israel broadcasts a selection of programmes of Radio Seda-e-Iran, the latter rebroadcasts the Persian programmes of Radio Israel in North America for the Jews of Iranian origin living there.

Al Jazeera, an independent television channel started in Qatar in 1996, has become enormously popular in the Arab world as well as in the Arab diaspora in North America, Latin America, Europe and Australia. The channel's audience exceeds 40 million. Al Jazeera launched a 24-hour news channel in Arabic and English in 2006. It is the first English-language news channel to be based in the Middle East and has over 70 bureaus in six continents. Al Jazeera English is watched by more than 130 million people in over 100 countries. The channel's principal broadcast centres are located at Doha, Washington, London and Kuala Lumpur. David Frost, a veteran English journalist, hosted the weekly pro-

gramme Frost over the World on Al Jazeera TV from 2006 to 2012.

Al Jazeera is playing a highly important role in rectifying the anomalies in the coverage of Muslims by the Western media by providing a credible picture of the political and social scenario in the Muslim world. Through its innovative features and interactive format, Al Jazeera has created a pan-Arab and pan-Islamic public space. It provided a credible picture of the uprisings in the Arab world in 2011-2012 and played an important role in galvanizing public opinion. Al Jazeera now competes with established global news channels like BBC, CNN International and CNBC. It has received a number of international awards in appreciation of its excellent reporting and coverage and its well-researched documentaries.

Digital Media in the Service of Islam

In the past few years the Internet has emerged as an important source of information on Islam and Muslims. The entire text of the Quran, including recitation and translations and commentaries into English, French and other languages, several collections of Hadith and Islamic law and legal edicts (fatawa) are now available online. An important aspect of the digitization of Islam is the preparation of CD-ROM discs containing 7,500 Hadith from the seven authoritative collections of Hadith, with translations of selected texts in ten languages. In 2000, more than 14,000 fatwas could be found on the Internet. The US-based IslamiCity has published more than 5000 fatwas on the Internet. A-Sunna Foundation of America runs a website <http://www.sunnah.org/fatwa> on the subject. One can get a fatwa online from efatwa.com, askimam.com and other sites. Online fatwas are available in English, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Malay, Urdu and Thai languages. Cairo's famed Al-Azhar University runs an "Islamic Hotline," where users can call or email a ques-

tion, which is answered within 48 hours.

Dr Yusuf al-Qaradawi hosts a hugely popular Arabic programme Al-Shariah wal-hayat (Shariah and Life) on Al-Jazeera television, which is watched by tens of millions of viewers across the Arab world. He also runs a website called IslamOnline, which he founded in 1997, where he offers his opinions and fatawa on a variety of issues. Dr Al-Qaradawi has 269,741 followers on Facebook.

A significant aspect of the digitization of Islam is the use of smartphone apps for Islamic requirements and needs, such as proximity to a mosque and accessibility to halal food. Salah 3D is an iPhone app designed to guide how one should offer prayers. Another app called Quran Majeed includes the text and audio versions of the Quran. The app has been downloaded more than three million times. Another smartphone app called Ramadan

Times announces the time to break the daily fast during the holy month. The app, created by a Pakistani company, sets the time for the beginning of the fast and for breaking it according to the location of the device. The Ramadan Daily Dua app, available for the iPhone and iPad, provide practical information during the fasting month. Nokia has devised an updated Ramadan application suite, which allows users to read the Quran, get prayer times and locate the nearest mosque. Islamic apps like iPray and iQuran offer a beeping reminder of prayer times and also indicate the direction of the Qibla from anywhere in the world. A number of Islamic apps for Android mobile and tablet PCs are available, including Quran Android, Al-Quran recitation and with English translation and authoritative collections of Hadith. Al-Khwarizmi is a trusted name in the development and marketing of Islamic apps.

Adopting a Respectful Attitude when Correcting an Elder

Once Hazrat Moulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (ra) mentioned:

On one occasion while I was seated in the masjid, it occurred to me that I required some small change. One person had some small change, therefore I handed over the notes to him and in return he gave me the change. Present nearby was one of my students, Moulana Muhammad Rashid Saheb. Witnessing this deal taking place in the masjid, he came up to me and asked me in an utmost respectful manner whether this deal falls under the ambit of a business transaction? At once I realized my mistake and thanked him for bringing it to my attention, and said that I did not realize that this was a business deal in sharee'ah (bay'us sarf) and thus impermissible to be transacted in the masjid. Thereafter I cancelled the deal by returning the small change to that person and took my money back. Subsequently, I asked that person to come out of the masjid and renew the transaction. Nevertheless, we went out of the masjid and I gave him the money while he gave me the change that I required. I was really pleased by the manner in which Moulana Muhammad Rashid Saheb conducted himself. It was necessary for him to inform me that the transaction is impermissible; however he expressed it with utmost respect by asking me whether it fell under the ambit of a sale or not.

Look in the Mirror

Sadullah Khan

Cars carry a message, "Objects in mirror are closer than they appear". We need a message on our personal mirrors that says, "Your image may not be as it appears; look within yourself for true reflection".

Who am I?

When I look in the mirror, who is that looking back? Am I who I appear to be? Do I try to mask the interior of my personhood by decorating the exterior with designer labels. Have I become so accustomed to give an impression of other than my true self that I have begun to believe and accept the false image I portray? Each one of us should seriously reflect on this.

The need for maturity and integrity

Integrity is about being yourself at your best, being honest, being honorable and being true to the noblest of universal values. Maturity entails taking responsibility for your own life, taking rational decisions that reflect the best that you can offer. The touchstone of maturity, however, is personal integrity; applying basic values to the decision-making process and thus living in a way that allows your personality to be consistently good. In reality,

integrity is about moral maturity; what it is to think and act in a way that reflects the full stature of a rational human being.

Life shaped by choices

Our lives are continually being shaped by the choices we make and the convictions and values that underlie them. In this sense, our lives are like works of art, in progress. We can take the material of life and either react to it in a passive way, always remaining life's victim, (hiding behind a mask); or take it and use it creatively, becoming the architect of one's life and a participant in shaping one's destiny and in designing one's true personality.

Reach your full potential The holy Prophet is reported to have said that Allah has prescribed goodness and excellence in all that you do. In relation to evolving human potential and developing personality, this statement motivates a person to utilize one's life skills in the most progressive and pro-active manner; demanding the demonstration of dignity with pride, courage with conviction, patience with perseverance, power with mercy, authority with justice, duty with commitment, principle with wisdom, freedom with discipline and honor with compassion.

Let your imprint be a heart-print

We may try to impress people by leaving behind a particular impression of our self or imprinting an image of some kind. We leave behind various kinds of imprints throughout our lives, imprints that makes distinct our uniqueness. Each one of us have swirly lines on the tips of our fingers that provide a map of our individuality called fingerprints. The footprints we leave behind temporarily indicate the direction from which we have come or in which we are going. Voiceprints are somewhat unique to individuals and can even be identified by little babies if the voice belongs to one close to the child.

All these prints are some form of physical manifestations of who you are. These can be obscured, wiped away or smudged; but there is another kind of print that is never wiped away; it is the imprint you leave when you positively affect the life of another person: heart-prints. Unlike your fingerprints, footprints and voiceprints, with heart-prints there are no lines, no sole marks and no sound wave peaks. What you witness is the impact and effect you can have on the lives of those you touch. You might see a smile in return for a greeting or a tear when sharing an emotion or feel the warmth of a hug in return for your consolation. Heart-prints leave indelible imprints, ones that sustain and enrich life for years to come.

True You

The only way to leave true heart-prints is to be uniquely you and to share with others the essence of who you are at your best; no masks, no charades; just the bona fide you, uniquely you, you-nique.

Respect – The Stairway to Progress

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Lesson: *One of the many great values which are nowadays becoming extinct is respect. Among the many forms of respect is showing respect to those who impart deen to us and are a means of us becoming more committed to the commands of Allah Ta'ala. This includes the Aapa who taught us in the maktab, the Muallimah who tutored us thereafter, the Imaam of our local masjid, every Aalim of deen or scholar of the past. No matter what strides we make in life, we will always be indebted to these individuals.*

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Blameworthy Morals

Hubb-e-Dunya

(Love for the World)

Mawlana Maseeh-Ullah Khan (RA)

Allah says:

"The worldly life is nothing but substance of deception."

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)

said:

"The world is the prison of the Mu'min and the paradise of the Kaafir."

All things which give pleasure here to the nafs without being of any merit in the Akhirah is termed dunya. We are afflicted with a number of spiritual ailments all having their origin in the love of the world. About this disease, hubb-e-dunya, Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said:

"Love of the world is the root of all evil."

If this root ailment is treated and cured, all other maladies flowing from it will also disappear. A man overwhelmed by hubb-e-dunya has no concern and time for the Akhirah. Such a person having no care for the Akhirah will not be bothered about righteous deeds nor will he abstain from evil. The one in whom there is hubb-e-dunya has very little fikr for the Deen. Increase in the degree of hubb-e-dunya brings about a corresponding decrease in fikr (concern) for the Deen. Total hubb-e-dunya entails total lack of fikr for the Deen. This is manifest in the kuffaar.

Dunya does not mean wealth and family. Dunya is the intentional and voluntary adoption of anything evil which causes one to become forgetful of Allah irrespective of what

that thing may be. Thus, acquisition of wealth and other material means is not evil, but hubb-e-dunya (love for such material objects) is evil. Wealth is like the water in the ocean and the heart of man is like the ship sailing in the ocean. Water, while it facilitates the movement of the ship can also bring about its sinking. As long as the water remains outside the ship, it aids its sailing. But entry of the water into the ship causes it to sink. Similar is the case of wealth. Wealth aids man as long as it remains outside his heart. However, if its love enters the heart it will bring about his destruction.

The Hadith states: *"Halaal wealth is a benefit to a pious man."*

He benefits because he (a pious man) spends his wealth in meritorious ways. On the contrary, if love of wealth captures the heart of man, he suppresses the rights of others. When the treasures of the Persian Empire were ushered into the presence of Hadhrat Umar (RA), he recited the Qur'aanic aayat:

"The love of pleasures has been adorned for mankind."

He then commented: "O Allah! It is evident that the desire for pleasure is inherent in us. Its total elimination is not the aim. But, we supplicate that wealth aids us in the attainment of Your Love."

The dunya (or the world) which has been criticized is like a serpent whose skin is

colourful and most beautiful. But its poison is fatal. Intelligent people maintain a distance from such danger and are not lured by the externally adorned skin. But a little child unaware of the danger of a snake is attracted by the external beauty and is prepared to grab hold of the snake. We are comparable to the little child. We are attracted to the world by its external beauty and adornment without being aware of its dangers. Men of intelligence and experience do not incline towards the world.

People are generally deceived and overwhelmed by the glitter of the world because they are not aware of its reality. Should the reality of the world be revealed, they would become utterly disillusioned and detest it. The Hadith states:

“If the value of the world was equal to that of the wing of a mosquito by Allah, He would not have allowed any kaafir even a drink of water from it.”

In the Eyes of Allah the world has no value. It is a detestable object. He therefore prefers it for His enemies. A man aware of the realities if fearful of an object detested by Allah. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) described the world in the following similitude:

“What relationship with the world have I? My similitude is like a traveller on a mount, halting in the shade of a tree (for a short while only to leave it again, and proceed along the so-journ).”

The traveller rests a while in the shade and then moves on again.

THE REMEDY

Remember maut (death) in abundance and do not involve yourself in distant and remote hopes. The pursuit of distant schemes and material enterprises should be shunned. In this way the love of the world will be eliminated from the heart.

This elimination is in fact the stage at

the end of Sulook (the Path along which the Mureed travels in his spiritual journey). One has, in fact, to become imbued with the spirit and quality spoken of in the following Hadith:

“Die before your death.”

This Hadith means that one has to inculcate the attribute of the dead in one even before death, and that attribute is the lack of worldly love. There are three ways by which one can attain proximity with Allah, These are explained in detail as follows.

1. Atwal (the longest way).
2. Ausat (the middle way).
3. Aqal wa Aqrab (the shortest and nearest way).

THE ATWAL WAY

This consists of observing in abundance Saum, Salaat, Qiraa't, Hajj, Jihaad' etc. This is the way of a class of Auliya known as the Akhyaar.

THE AUSAT WAY

In addition to the above acts of Ibaadat is engagement in Mujaahadah, Riyaadhat, elimination of Akhlaaq-e-Zameemah and the acquisition of Akhlaaq-e-Hameedah, The majority of men travelling along the Path of Sulook become Waasil (attain the goal of Divine Proximity) via this second way.

THE AQAL WA AQRAB WAY

This is the way of Ishq (Love). Riyaadhat (spiritual exercises) and mingling with people are suffocating to the Saalik (spiritual traveller) along this path. Thikr, Fikr, Shukr and Shauq are the intellectual occupations of the traveller plodding along the Path of Ishq. The traveller along this Road become Waasil by this method. Purification of the nafs and adornment of the heart and soul are realized by the method of Love. They have no interest in kashf (inspirational revelation of the Auliya) and karaamat (miracles of the Auliya). They are totally immersed in:

“Die before your death.”

This third way is the way of the class of Auliya known as the Shataariyah.

DYING BEFORE DEATH

At the time of death, the dying man possesses certain attributes, the inculcation of which is exhorted by the Hadith: “Die before your death.” These attributes which are in the perfect state in the dying man are:

Taubah (repentance), zuhd, (abstention), qanaa’at (contentment), tawak- kaul (trust in Allah), azlat (solitude), tawajjuh ilal-laah (attention directed to Allah), sabr (patience), ridhaa (pleased with Allah), thikr (remembrance of Allah) and muraaqabah (meditation).

One has to inculcate the above qualities which overtake a dying person to a high degree. Taubah, i.e. repentance to emerge from all evil as is the position at the time of maut; Zuhd, i.e. to shun the world and everything in it as is the case at maut; Tawakkul, i.e. to shun all abnormal worldly agencies as is the case at maut; Azlat, i.e. to sever all ties with creation as is the case at maut; Qanaa’at, i.e. abstention from lowly desires—to be contented—as is the case at maut; Tawajjuh ilal-laah, i.e. to rivet one’s attention towards only Allah as is the case at maut; Sabr, i.e. to shun pleasures as is the case at maut; Ridhaa, i.e. to abstain from pleasing the nafs, and to be pleased with Allah and to submit in entirety to Allah as is the case at maut. This is the conception of “Die before your death.”

One has to transform one’s condition so as to be imbued with the conception of “death before death”. In this earthly life, the body is on earth, but the rooh should be directed to the Akhirah, and be in communion with Allah. Possession of even the kingdom of the earth should not affect one’s heart. The heart at all times should be empty of the

world. The sign of this lofty state having settled over one is total abstention from everything branded as evil by the Shariah. The mind, tongue and the whole body have to be sealed from evil. The heart is to be emptied of all things other than Allah. It has to be adorned with Akhlaaq-e-Hameedah.

A man dwelling in this lofty state of purity and communion with Allah is always aloof from gatherings of futility. Whatever diverts the mind of the Seeker of Allah from the remembrance of Allah is futility and nonsensical. The Seeker refrains from association with men of baatil (falsehood and corruption). One who does not pursue the Path in quest of Allah, is in fact a man of baatil.

O beloved one! This then is the meaning of “die before your death” stated by Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). This is the way of Rasulullah (saws). This is the life which Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) desired for his Ummah.

Wash the Wounds Away

A man complained to ‘Abdullah bin Mubaarak (ra) of a boil on his knee since seven years. He said: “I have tried different treatments and consulted many doctors but nothing has helped.” ‘Abdullah bin Mubaarak (ra) replied: “Dig a well in a place where people are in need of water. I hope that as soon as water gushes out from there, the blood will stop oozing from your wound.” The man did so and was cured.

(Shu‘abul Imaan)

Lesson: While all types of sadaqah are effective in removing calamities and attracting the mercy of Allah, arranging water for those who are in need of it is one of the greatest forms of charity. Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) even advised doing this as a form of thawaab jaariyah for the deceased.