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The Intellect

Re-awakening to the
ideals of a Blessed Life

Al Quran
Surah Nisa – Part 8

Al Hadith
Elementary Obligations of Parents

The Awakening
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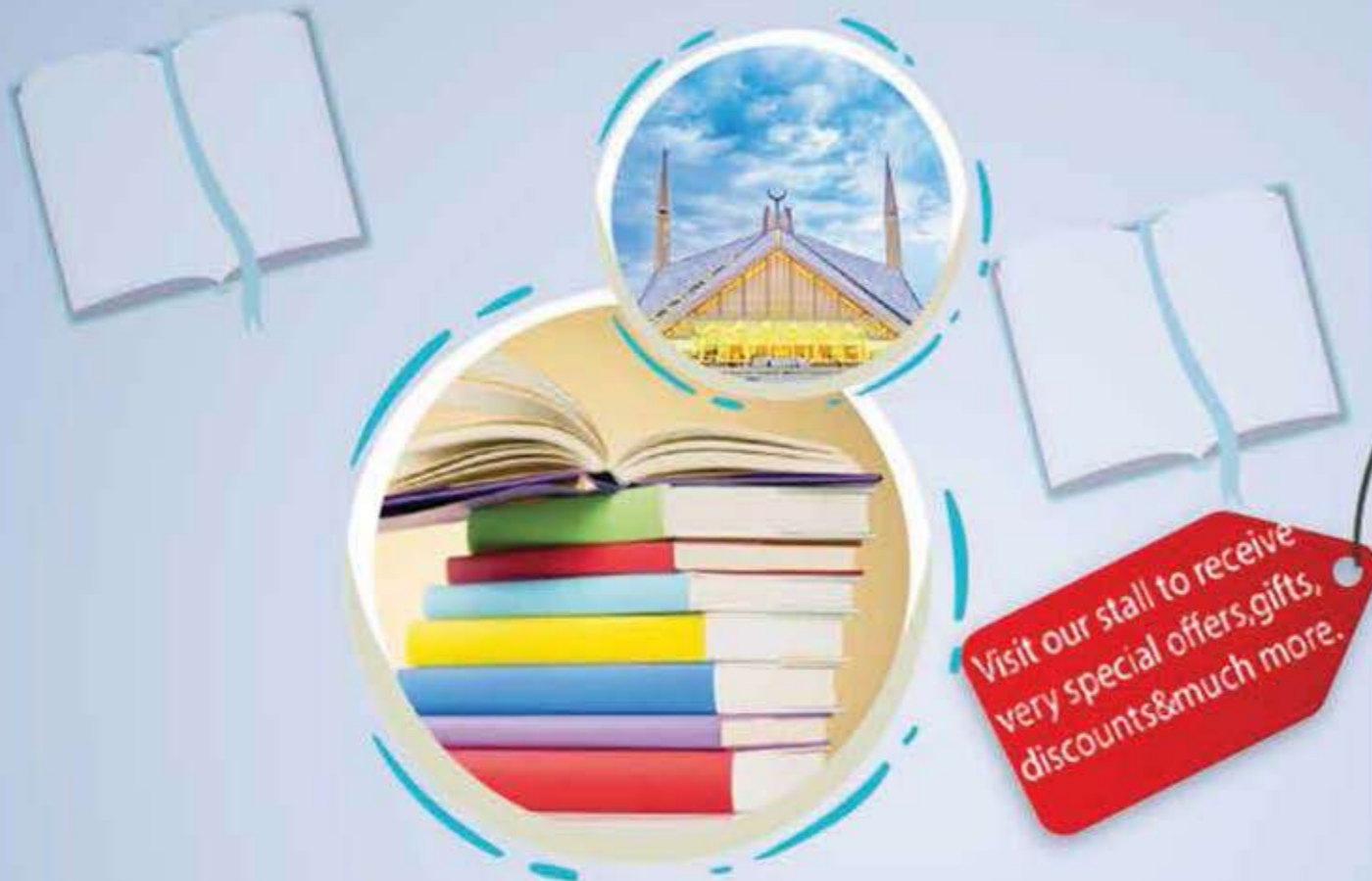
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Editorial

Dear Readers,
السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

Imagine: you have just been told that you only have a few months to live. How would you go about picking up the pieces of your life? How would you plan out your remaining days, once the initial shock wanes a bit, (if at all)? What would you prioritize as utmost important and what activity would you demote to the 'utterly useless' category?

Randy Pausch, 45, a computer scientist at Carnegie Mellon University, was told just that. He had a wife and three small children.

Randy's compelling book *The Last Lecture*, elucidates how he utilized his 'crucial bike rides' to dictate a book which serves as an inspiration and reminder for those who haven't been issued immediate death notices.

Mr. Salman Asif Siddiqui has reviewed this gripping narrative, forming part of this issue's *Books for All* section.

It is a perfect reminder for us – ones lost in the enchanting dazzles of this world.

The constant remembrance of Allah ﷻ, the feeling of His all-permeating presence, the internal compass that keeps telling one that He is watching, is a true gift for the seeker of the Path. To achieve this prize, one need not necessarily be an *aalim* (scholar) or an *aabid* (avid worshipper). In fact, even the uninitiated can surpass the intellectual on this course.

In one of his recent discourses, Mufti Taqi Usmani SB رحمته الله describes the case of their domestic help – an elderly lady with no formal education (religious or otherwise), no grooming and no tutoring. He says that the words of *Shukar* and *Hamd* of Allah ﷻ are said to be constantly and unabatedly reverberating on her lips...what an enviable trait; not easily achieved even by those who are consciously working towards this end!

In *Ma'ariful Quran*, there is an analogy that explains a kind of haughtiness and 'narrow-mindedness' that comes with the ascent of man on the ladder of 'worldly' success, be it in terms of pure academic / scholarly achievements or in terms of material gain. The purpose of the simile is to explain what the Qur'an really means by the term *UlulAlbab*.....does it refer to scientists who break new grounds in medical and physical sciences? Are they the astronauts who conquer new frontiers in outer space? Does it mean the philosophers and thinkers who attempt to help people navigate through life? Or is it those who apply their minds, their intellect in recognizing the signs of Allah ﷻ spread out around us?

So the analogy narrates that a man who lives in a jungle arrives at a railway station for the first time. He looks at the tiny red and green signals dictating the arrival and departure of a massive means of transportation and assumes the lights to be the "do-all / know-all" of this amazing system. When he expresses his awe, he is rebuked: "It is not the lights, stupid. It is actually the train driver who runs the show!"

But this observer is cut short as well: "It's not really the train driver who is behind this great feat of engineering. The main catalyst is the powerful engine of the train!"

Just then, a scientist quips in: "How do you suppose the engine runs? It is energy that is actually running the train!"

But where did its energy come from? Logic, science and philosophy sigh with weariness... The Prophets ﷺ were sent to untwine this entangled thread and lead man to the Most Beneficent One – the Creator of air, wind, earth, water and all energy sources. The *ululAlbab* are thus those who gain *Ma'arifa*, recognition, of their Lord ﷻ; and not those scientists, philosophers and academics who grapple in the dark when their intellect leads them to exciting discoveries, but not to their very Creator ﷻ.

This discussion leads us to our *Cover Story*, where the late Professor Syed Ali Ashraf begins by saying:

By Islamic education I mean that type of education which trains the sensibility of pupils in such a manner that in their attitude to life, in their actions and decisions and in their approach to all kinds of knowledge they are governed by the spiritual and deeply felt ethical values that Islam teaches them.

We are sure, *inshAllah*, that you would enjoy reading this pertinent piece, especially in the trying environment of today.

In the end, let us all supplicate:

اللَّهُمَّ سَلِّمْ لِي رَمَضَانَ وَسَلِّمْ رَمَضَانَ لِي وَسَلِّمْ لِي مُتَقَبِّلاً

O Allah! Safeguard me for the month of Ramadan, and safeguard the month of Ramadan for me and accept it from me.

Do please remember *The Intellect's* team in your special Ramadan *du'as*.

Wassalam,

Zawjah Farid

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The Meanings of the Quran

By Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani حفظہ الہی

Surah An-Nisa'
Translation with Arabic Text



وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَىٰ الرَّسُولِ رَأَيْتَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنْكَ صُدُودًا ﴿٦١﴾

61. When it is said to them, "Come to what ALLAH has revealed and to the Messenger," you will see the hypocrites turning away from you in aversion.

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ جَاءُوكَ يَخْلِعُونَ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ أَرْدُنَا إِلَّا إِحْسَانًا وَتَوْفِيقًا ﴿٦٢﴾

62. But, how (apologetic) they are when they suffer a calamity because of the acts of their won hands, and they come to you swearing by ALLAH, "We meant nothing but to promote good and bring about harmony."

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَعِظْهُمْ وَقُلْ لَهُمْ فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ قَوْلًا بَلِيغًا ﴿٦٣﴾

63. Those are the ones ALLAH knows what is in their hearts. So, ignore them, and give them good

counsel, and speak to them about themselves in appealing words.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلَوْ أَنْتُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ لَوَجَدُوا اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٦٤﴾

64. We did not send any Messenger but to be obeyed by the leave of ALLAH. Had they, after having wronged themselves, come to you and sought forgiveness from ALLAH, and had the Messenger prayed for their forgiveness, they would certainly have found ALLAH Most-Relenting, Very-Merciful.

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِي مَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ﴿٦٥﴾

65. So, never by your Lord! Never shall they become believes, unless they make you the judge in the disputes that arise between them, then find no discomfort in their hearts against what you have decided, and surrender to it in total submission.

وَلَوْ أَنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْ اقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ أَوْ اخْرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ مَا فَعَلُوهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ مِنْهُمْ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ فَعَلُوا مَا يُوعَظُونَ بِهِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَأَشَدَّ تَثْبِيتًا ﴿٦٦﴾

66. If we had prescribed for them that they should kill themselves or that they should migrate from their homeland, they would have not done it, except a few of them. (32) If they had done what they were advised to do, it would have been better for them, and more effective in marketing (them) firm.

وَإِذْ آلَ تَيْمِئَاتُ هُمْ مِنْ لَدُنَّا أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٦٧﴾

67. In that case, We would certainly have given them a great reward.

وَلَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا ﴿٦٨﴾

68. and we would certainly have led them to a straight path.

وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَالشَّاهِدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَٰئِكَ رَفِيقًا ﴿٦٩﴾

69. Those who obey ALLAH and the Messenger are with those whom ALLAH has blessed, namely, the prophets the Siddiqin, the shuhada (33) and the righteous. And excellent are they as companions.

ذَٰلِكَ الْقِصْلُ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ عَلِيمًا ﴿٧٠﴾

70. That grace is from ALLAH, and ALLAH is sufficient as being the One who knows.

Explanation

(32) On the basis of the incidents mentioned above (in note 31), some Jews taunted that those claiming to be Muslims do not obey their Prophet ﷺ, while the Jews were so obedient to their prophet that when he ordered them to kill themselves, they killed themselves. The verse says that if ALLAH orders these braggarts to do so now, they would not do it, except a few of them.

(33) Siddiq, lexically means 'very truthful'. In the Islamic terminology, it normally refers to those Companions of a prophet who excel all others in their submission to ALLAH and His Messenger. They enjoy the highest status of piety after the Prophets, like Sayyiduna Abu Bakar ؓ. Shuhada (plural of Shahid) means the persons who sacrifice their lives in the way of ALLAH. The word has not been translated here as 'martyr' which sometimes is taken as an equivalent of Shahid, because the word 'martyr' is also applied for the persons killed in ethnic or racial wars, while they may not be termed as Shuhada' according to the Islamic terminology.



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Elementary Obligations of Parents

Social commandments begin with the earth of the child, and, hence, we shall first present a discussion with the saying that are related to birth and indicate the duties of parents to the new-born child.

Calling of Azan in The Ear of A New-Born Child

(1366/1) Abu Rafi', the manumitted slaves of the Messenger of ALLAH ﷺ said: "I was the Messenger of ALLAH ﷺ calling azan in the ear of (his daughter), Fatimah." (Tirmizi and Abu Dawood)

Commentary: In it, only the chanting of azan in the ear of Sayyidina Hassan ؓ is mentioned, but in another Tradition quoted in Musnad Abu Ya'ali Musuli, on the authority of Sayyidina Husain ibn Ali ؓ, and reproduced in Kanzul Ummal, it is told that the Holy Prophet ﷺ prescribed the calling of azan in the right and iqamat in the left ear of (the new-born child), and, also, explained its propitiousness. He said that, on account of it, the child remains safe from infantile epilepsy.

As these Traditions go to show, the primary claim of a child on his family is that his ears, and through the ears, his head and heart are acquainted with the Name of ALLAH, and with His Oneness and the call of Faith and prayer. The best way to it, evidently, is the azan and iqamat are called its ears, as these impart the knowledge of the spirit and fundamental tenets of Islam in a most effective manner.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ has enjoined the calling of azan and iqamat in the ears of a Muslim child, at the time of its birth, and the offering of funeral

prayer when a Muslim dies and his body has been bathed and covered with a shroud and made ready for the burial. He has, thus, stressed that the life of a Muslim begins with Azan and ends with prayer, and ought to be spent in the way it is done while waiting and preparing for prayer after the Azan has been given. Besides, the foremost claim of a Muslim is that Azan is called in his ears at the time of his birth and the last is that funeral prayer (Salah) is offered over him when he passes away.

Tahnik

One of the manifestations of the deep devotion the Companions had for the Prophet ﷺ was that when a child was born in their family, they brought it to him so that he might bless it, and apply, on its palate, the pulp of a date etc., he had chewed himself and drop the saliva in its mouth which would have the effect of averting evil from the child and bringing it good fortune. It is called Tahnik in the Islamic parlance.

(1367/2) Sayyidina Ayshah ؓ said, "People used to bring their (new-born) children to the Prophet ﷺ, and he would bless them and perform (the ceremony of) think. (Muslim)

(1368/3) Asma ibnt Abu Bakar ؓ related that she was an expecting mother at the time of Migration. When she migrated and came to Madinah, Abdullah ibn Zubayr ؓ was born to her. She related "I took the child to the Prophet ﷺ and placed it on his lap. The Prophet ﷺ asked for a date. (and it was brought), he chewed it and dropped the saliva in its mouth, and, then, applied the chewed date on its palate, and blessed the child. It was the first child to be born



in Islam (in the home of an Emigrant, after the Migration)". (Bukhari an Muslim)

Commentary: In another version of the same incident, quoted in Bukhari, it is added that the Muslims felt very happy at the birth of Abdullah ibn Zubayr particularly because it had gone

round that the jews had cast a spell on the Muslims, and, now no children would be born to them. The birth of Sayyidina Abdullah ibn Zubayr gave a lie to it, and the enemies of Islam who had circulated the story were put to shame.

Several instance of Tahnik are found in the

standard collections of the Traditions. From these, we learn that when a child is born in a Muslim home it should be taken to a virtuous bondsman of the Lord to receive his blessing and have the Tahnik done. It is one of the Sunnat which have, now, sadly become extinct.

Aqiqah

In almost all the communities of the world, the birth of a child is considered a blessing and some ceremony is held to celebrate the event.

Besides being natural, it, also, serves a special purpose, and makes it known, in a most suitable and dignified manner, that the father has accepted the child as his own and there is no doubt or suspicion in his mind concerning it. It shuts the door to many a mischief that can arise in future. The custom of Aqiqah was observed among the Arabs, even during the Age of Perversion, for that very reason. The hair on the child's head, with which it was born, was cut a few days after the birth, and an animal was sacrificed as a mark of rejoicing which is a characteristic feature of Millate Ibrahimī (the community of the Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام) while the Practice, in principle, or, rather, exhorting his followers to observe it, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gave appropriate instructions, and himself set an example of how it was to be done.

(1369/4) It is related, on the authority of buraidah رضي الله عنه, "When, during the Age of Perversion, a child was born to the wife of anyone of us, we used to slaughter a goat and smear the head of the child with its blood. Later, after the dawn of Islam, our practice became, (on the advice of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم), that we sacrifice a goat of Aqiqah, on the seventh day day of the birth of a child, and shave the head of the infant, and apply saffron on it." (Abu dawood)

Note: In Razeen's version of the same Tradition, it is mentioned, further. "we, also, (give name to the child on the seventh day, along with Aqiqah."

(1370/5) It is related by Sayyidah Aysha رضي الله عنها "During the Age of Perversion, the custom was

that when people performed the Aqiqah of a new-born child, they dipped a piece of cotton-wool in the blood of the sacrificed animal, and when the head of the child was shaved, it was placed on its head. (Since it was an uncivilised custom), the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم remarked: "Do not apply blood on the child's head. Apply Khalooq in its place." (Sahih Ibn Hibben)

Commentary: In older days a preparation was used for scenting which included saffron, and it was called Khalooq.

From the aforementioned narratives of Sayyidina Buraidah رضي الله عنه and Sayyidah Aysha رضي الله عنها it appears that Aqiqah, also, was common among the Arabs during the Age of Ignorance. Since, as we have just mentioned, it served a useful purpose, in many ways, and, intrinsically, was also in keeping with the spirit of Islam, and perhaps like the rituals of the Hajj, it was among the remaining practice of Millate Ibrahimī. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم preserved the reality of Aqiqah but corrected the perverse practice that had got associated with it.

We, moreover, learn from Bayhaqi that the Aqiqah ceremony was, also, observed among the jews, but they sacrificed an animal only in case of a male child which, probably, was indicative of the lesser value that was, generally, placed on the girls in the per-Islamic times. The Prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم corrected it, too, and enjoined that the Aqiqah of the girls should, also, be performed like that of the boys. However, keeping in mind the natural difference between the two sexes which has been given a due regard in inheritance and law if evidence etc, as well, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم laid down that while one goat was to be sacrificed in the Aqiqah of a female child, two should be sacrificed in the Aqiqah of a male child provided that one's financial condition allowed it.



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The Concept of Total Annihilation (Fanaa) - an Example with Video Games

By Ridwan Ur Rahman (Student, Darul Ifta, Cardiff, Wales)

Approved by Mufti Ebrahim Desai عبد الرحمن

Question:

Asalamualaykum,

What do Scholars say on the concept of total annihilation of the self in Sufism? I know it is recognised in other traditions, but is this recognised in Islam?

Wassalaam

Answer:

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

As-salāmu ‘alaykum wa-rahmatullāhi wa-barakātuh.

Consider the following Hadith:

قال: ما الإحسان؟ قال: أن تعبد الله كأنك تراه، فإن لم تكن تراه فإنه يراك
صحیح البخاري (٥٠)

Translation: Jibrail Alayhis Salaam said: What is Ihsan. "He (Nabi ﷺ) replied, "It is that you should worship Allah as though you can see Him, for though you cannot see Him yet He sees you" (Sahih Al-Bukhari: 50).

Other scholars have translated this Hadith with the following words: It is that you should worship Allah as though you can see Him, if it is not possible for you to worship Allah in that manner, then worship Allah as though he can see you.

Mulla Ali Qari Explains the Hadith by stating: "The worship (of a person worshipping Allah with the quality of Ihsan) should be similar to the person who is seeing Allah, in terms of fear, hayaa, humility, concentration and devotion, respect, purity, loyalty."

The essence of worship is that we worship Allah with the Quality of Ihsan. Attaining the quality of complete Ihsan in one's worship requires many years of training and struggling against ones Nafs (desires), along with fulfilling the commands of Shariah.

Before one gains complete Ihsan, a person will go through many stages of concentration, such as no concentration at all, concentration with little devotion, concentration with awareness of one's surroundings. The *Mashaaikh* of Tasawwuf, who specialise in the states and stages of one's Nafs have termed these different stages for ease and understanding. One of these stages is what you have referred to as annihilation, also known as *Fanaa* in the terminology of the *Mashaaikh* of *Tasawwuf*.

Maulana Outbud Deen Dimishqi has explained *Fanaa* in his book 'Imdadus Sulook' with the following words:

"The essence of dhikr is total absorption in the remembrance of the Object of dhikr, i.e. Allah Ta'ala. If during the process of dhikr, the dhikr is remembered, then this too is a hijab (veil/barrier). The stage of annihilation is called *Fanaa* which means to be oblivious of one's nafs, limbs, senses and all external things. Everything has to be annihilated in Allah Ta'ala and whenever the *dhaakir* returns to his senses, he should find only Allah. If in this condition the *Saalik* is aware that he has become fully annihilated, then this awareness is a contamination of a sort.

The state of *Kamaal* (Perfection) is to become annihilated of even the state of annihilation, i.e. the *dhaakir* is totally oblivious of being annihilated (*fanaa*). This lofty state is the limit of *fanaa*. May Allah bestow this rank to us and to all *Taalibeen* (Searchers of Allah's Proximity).

The reciter of *Kalimah Tayyibah* should necessarily observe certain things. Minus these, there is no benefit:

1) He should understand what he is saying. "What am I negating and what am I affirming?" He should understand this. All things claiming divinity are negated, e.g. the *nafs*, *shaitaan*, desire and lust. Thus Allah Ta'ala says:

"What! Have you seen the one who has taken his

desires as his god?"

The *Zaat* of Allah Ta'ala is affirmed. This is the conception of the *dhikr* known as *Nafi-Ithbaat* (Negation and Affirmation).

2) At the time of *dhikr* keep the heart brimming with the glory and grandeur of Allah and understand that besides Allah there is no 'mahboob' (the Beloved) and *maqsood* (the Desired) ...

4) The recitation of *Kalimah Tayyibah* should be with honour and respect. If this is not observed, hardness of heart and denseness of mind will set in. Such a *Mureed* will not qualify for the *muhabbat* of the *Mashaaikh*. The *Doors of Qurb* (Divine Proximity) and *Mushaahadah* (Divine Perception) will not open for him. Even if someone has reached the loftiest realms of *Il-liyyeen* by virtue of his noble character, his disrespect for *Kalimah Tayyibah* will bring about his fall into the lowest depths of *Saafileen* (the low stages of degradation).

5) Absolute concentration. Focusing the mind with full determination on Allah Ta'ala."

A modern-day similarity of the above can be given to a youngster playing such video games which he plays for hours on end without stopping, to such an extent that he even forgets how many hours he had been playing for and how many hours he hadn't eaten for. Such youngsters are common within today's society. Consider the following news articles. One is regarding an 18-year-old teenager who played video games for 40 hours continuously and did not eat or sleep for two days.

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.za/entry/diablo-3-death-chuang-taiwan_n_1683036

The following news article is regarding a 32-year-old man who died after playing video games for three days continuously. <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/19/world/taiwan-gamer-death/index.html>

The news article also mentions the statement of the police that "gamers in the café continued as if nothing happened even when the police and paramedics arrived." A similar situation can be found in the following news article:

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2012/02/04/2003524636>

There are also examples of people who we see in our community who have a passion for certain activities (such as studying, reading, sports, etc) who become so engrossed in their activities that they become totally oblivious of their surroundings. These examples are a form of annihilation, although this annihilation is in worldly matters, which is of no benefit in the *Aakhirah*.

On the other hand, when a *Mu'min* makes an ardent effort on himself for many years, and worships Allah with total concentration and devotion, he also attains a higher level of concentration and devotion which has been termed by the Sufi *Mashaaikh* as *Fanaa*, wherein a person is oblivious of everything besides Allah. It is such a worship, which we should aspire to attain and make an effort for.

May Allah make us among his devoted servants and grant us His *Ridwaan* (pleasure). Aameen.

And Allah Ta'ala Knows Best!



The Reality of Trials

"And whatever of misfortune befalls you, it is because of what your hands have earned. And He pardons much."
(Surah Ash-Shura 42:30)

"...Only those who are patient shall receive their reward in full, without reckoning"
(Surah Az-Zumar 39:10)

Every human faces different kinds of situations. At times there is happiness, at times sadness; at times, one enjoys good health and at times suffers illnesses; at times there exist conducive conditions and at other times non-conducive ones; situations suit one at times and at other times they are unsuitable; every human comes across these varying states. No person in the whole world can claim that everything is happening exactly the way he wants, even if he has inestimable resources, countless assets and enormous stores of material. Humans do encounter different types of situations, but a Momin's state is a very fortunate, pleasing and amazing one - he enjoys all the time, he is privileged in a remarkable way.

A Momin's Incredible State

The Holy Prophet ﷺ says:

A Momin's case is amazing, if Allah blesses him with favours and he remains thankful for these favours, then too he succeeds in the Hereafter and if a misfortune or trial comes upon him and he remains patient over it, then too he succeeds in the Hereafter.

(Mishkat Al-Masabeeh, Bab-us-Sabr, Vol.2, Pg.452)

Who are the Unfortunate?

But Satan tries to deceive us at such times. When Allah ﷻ gives us something, Satan makes us negligent of it and when Allah ﷻ takes something from us, Satan makes us hopeless.

This is indeed a transaction of loss, that a person is neglectful of what Allah ﷻ has bestowed on him and this too is a contract of failure that when Allah ﷻ takes away something, he drifts towards pessimism and gets deprived of Allah's blessings. Becoming impatient in the face of a trial or misfortune will not help a person out of it, in fact, he will get deprived of any associated reward and recompense; the problem would also remain unsolved, and this unfortunate person would lose out on rewards as well, which is a trial bigger than the trial itself!

Ill-health and Problems are a Source of Reward (thawaab)

Every human in this world faces both kinds of situations. But, a person blessed with the vision of faith enjoys closeness to Allah ﷻ even in hours of trial.

Once Hazrat Ayesha ؓ was seated and a gush of wind snuffed out the light of a lamp placed beside her. The Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Hazrat Ayesha ؓ said:

O Prophet of Allah! These words that you said, these are recited at the time of a big mishap.

The Prophet ﷺ replied:

Ayesha! This too was a mishap, that you moved into darkness from light, your heart must have hurt, so I said these words. Allah ﷻ will give reward for this as well.

(Tafseer-e-Jallaleen, Surah Al-Baqarah, Vol.1, Pg.22)

A Momin is recompensed even if a thorn pricks him. All problems that he faces would lead to an elevation of his rank in the Hereafter.

A Momin's Case is Remarkable

A Hadith (saying) of the Prophet ﷺ implies that when a Momin cries out during sickness or trials, Allah ﷻ tells the Angels to write down *SubhaanAllah* (All praise is for Allah) in place of his moans; when his pain increases, and he shrieks due to its intensity, Allah ﷻ tells the Angels to start writing *la ilaaha illallah* (There is no God save Allah) in its place; when this person is unable to sit up due to the severity of his illness and remains on the bed, Allah ﷻ tells the Angels to keep writing rewards of *Sadaqah* (alms) for him and when he changes sides in discomfort, Allah ﷻ tells the Angels to write for him a reward equal to that of a *Mujahid* (one striving in Allah's way) who keeps attacking the enemy again and again.

(Sahih Muslim, Vol.2, Pg.318)

So my friends, a Momin's case is indeed remarkable!

The Amazing Style of Allah's Love

The Prophet ﷺ said an incredible thing:

When Allah ﷻ decides for someone's goodness, He hastens (the punishment of his bad deeds) and punishes him in this very world.

(Tirmidhi, Vol.2, Pg.75)

At another occasion he ﷺ said:

When Allah ﷻ loves someone, He involves him in a trial then, Allah blesses him with patience too.

(Ibn-Abi-Ad-Dunya, with reference to *Ahya-ul-Uloom*, Vol.4, Pg.176)

Reward of Patience during Trials

Many prophetic traditions relate that on the Day of Judgment when Allah ﷻ would begin the reckoning process, some people will bring forth numerous Prayers, *Nafil* (non-obligatory) fasts, *Nafil Sadqaat* and *Khairat* (alms and charity) but when their deeds will be put in the "balance", Allah ﷻ will call upon some other people and give them incalculable rewards, without keeping any count; when the former would see this, they would ask: *what are all these rewards for?* They will be told that *these were people who remained patient during trials*. Allah ﷻ has promised that He will bestow innumerable rewards on those who remain patient.

"Only those who are patient shall receive their reward in full, without reckoning."

(Surah Az-Zumr 39: 10)

Hazrat Abdullah Ibn-e-Salam ؓ says: in the plain of Resurrection Allah ﷻ will say, *where are those who have a right over Me?* (It is impossible for anyone to have a right over Allah ﷻ, but Allah takes some people's rights upon Himself as an expression of His kindness); no one will reply and then Allah ﷻ will announce again: *where are those who have a right over Me?* The Prophet ﷺ said: *these would be people who were put into some trial by Allah in the world; their tears flowed but they still remembered Allah ﷻ in their hour of trial*. So, Allah ﷻ would say: *these people have a right over Me and I will pay their right*; and the process of reckoning would still be in progress that the doors of Paradise would be opened for them.

It will be asked: *who are these?* it will be replied: *these are the people who praised and remembered Allah ﷻ both in bliss and trials; they didn't forget Allah ﷻ.*

(To be Continued)

The Last Lecture

Reviewed by Salman Asif Siddiqui

Book: *The Last Lecture*

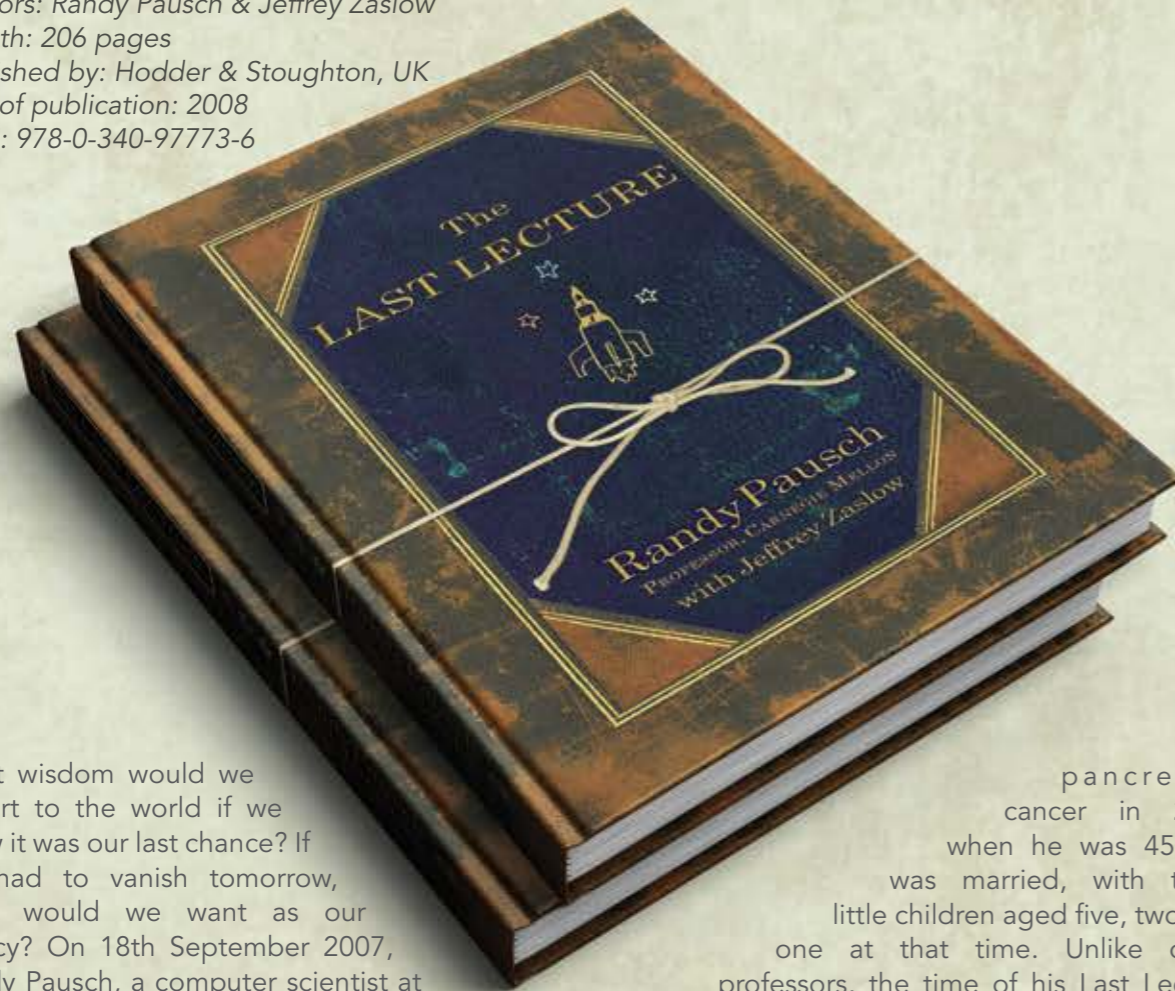
Authors: Randy Pausch & Jeffrey Zaslow

Length: 206 pages

Published by: Hodder & Stoughton, UK

Year of publication: 2008

ISBN: 978-0-340-97773-6



What wisdom would we impart to the world if we knew it was our last chance? If we had to vanish tomorrow, what would we want as our legacy? On 18th September 2007, Randy Pausch, a computer scientist at Carnegie Mellon University, delivered a lecture titled, 'Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams'. The lecture was a part of University's old tradition according to which professors at the end of their tenure are asked to consider their demise and ruminate on what matters most to them. These talks which are full of wisdom and invaluable lessons are generally regarded as 'The Last Lectures'.

But in the case of Randy, it was not the end of his tenure. He was diagnosed with terminal

pancreatic cancer in 2006 when he was 45. He was married, with three little children aged five, two and one at that time. Unlike other professors, the time of his Last Lecture came very early in his life.

Randy's last lecture at Carnegie Mellon was attended by an audience of over 400 colleagues and students. Right after its delivery, the lecture was uploaded on YouTube and University website. It became extremely popular in no time and viewed by millions of people across the globe. Later on, in April 2008, Randy authored a book, 'The Last Lecture', with the help of his friend, Jeffrey Zaslow, who was a journalist. The book is not the transcription of the lecture that

Randy delivered in Carnegie Mellon, but the story behind the lecture with some details of his life that were not given in his lecture. In Randy's words, the book is a way to continue what began on stage. The idea of writing this book was as exciting as the idea of preparing the lecture. Readers will find both the stories in the book.

With little time left in your life, it is not easy to commit to writing a book. Randy did not want to consume the little time he had for his three children and his wife by writing a book. But he was keen to compliment his widely celebrated lecture and preserve the lessons of his life in the form of a book. He, therefore, invented a way to do it. Based on one of his life principles which resonate throughout the book, "the brick walls are not there to stop us; they are there to let us show how badly we want something." Time limitation did not stop Randy from writing this beautiful book. He wrote it when he was served an advance notice of his death. He had three to four months left when he chose to record his legacy. Randy asked his friend, Jeffrey Zaslow, for collaboration and he willingly agreed. Randy utilized the time of his bike riding, which was a crucial exercise for his health in giving talks to Jeffrey on his cell-phone headset. On fifty-three long bike rides, fifty-three talks were delivered to Jeffrey who then spent countless hours to turn them into this masterpiece book.

Apart from a brief introduction in the beginning and an acknowledgement page in the end, the content of the book is organized in six parts. The first part of the book is titled 'The Last Lecture', which takes into account perhaps the most touching and emotional background of Randy's lecture that nobody in the audience could ever imagine without reading this part of the book. It discusses how he convinced his wife, Jai, about going for this last lecture, she not being very happy with this idea, as only a few months were left for them to spend together and plan for life after Randy.

The second part of the book titled, 'Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams', was the title of Randy's lecture. It was a strategic decision to

choose a title through which he was going to communicate to a range of known and unknown people, his students, colleagues, his kids, his loving wife, relatives, friends, parents, counselors, educators and patients of incurable diseases around the world. This part of the book outlines how Randy engineered a presentation that is a lasting inspiration and impact on the lives of millions of people.

Randy lived a life that was driven by his childhood dreams. He has clearly illustrated how dreams add meaning to life. He lived a very successful life by accomplishing all of his childhood dreams from being in zero gravity to playing in National Football League, authoring an article in World Book Encyclopedia, and to being a Disney Imagineer. The book contains stories of how passionately he pursued his dreams and how some extra ordinary people including his parents played their role in his life.

The other parts of the book are filled with meaningful anecdotes of varying experiences like cancer treatment, birth of children, difficult situations at job and other turning points in life. There is a chapter in the book that outlines the tips of time management, which are based on Randy's personal life.

In the last section titled 'Final Remarks', Randy has described unique qualities of his three kids. This description is extremely profound yet simple enough to state that even educational psychologists would marvel at his insight. His vision for his children can surely inspire other parents, too. Randy says, "It can be a very disruptive thing for parents to have specific dreams for their kids. ... A parent's job is to encourage kids to develop a joy for life and a great urge to follow their own dreams. ... So my dreams for my kids are very exact: I want them to find their own path to fulfillment. And given that I won't be there, I want to make this clear: Kids, don't try to figure out what I wanted you to become. I want you to become what you want to become."

Randy's writing indicates that he was an optimistic person. At one point he analyzed,

"Cancer has given me the time to have these vital conversations with Jai that wouldn't be possible if my fate were a heart attack or car accident." Besides, he has also expressed his deepest gratitude and regard for his wife.

In the end he points out the two head fakes of his talk. First, the talk was not about how to achieve your dreams but how to lead your life. Second, the talk was not just for those in the hall, it was for his three kids.

The book which is a kind of life story is a unique non-fiction filled with anecdotes and narratives. Organization of content is like that of a story board, which sustains readers' curiosity and attention up till the end. Language is simple but often symbolic containing great wisdom in short phrases. Nobody can remain unmoved by the

unique style, wit and intelligent humour that run throughout the book making the reading light, enjoyable and impactful. Randy calls himself a visual thinker and the book, too, offers a visual experience through a number of photographs.

Soon after its launch, the book became a New York Times best-seller and spent more than 85 weeks on The New York Times bestseller list. The book's first printing alone had 400,000 copies. It has been translated into 46 languages. There are now more than 5 million copies of the book in print.

Though Randy has lost his life to cancer in July 2008, but he will continue to inspire us all through his breathtaking book and lecture. This book is worth reading for anyone who cares about the meaning of life and its legacy.

- "The key question to keep asking is, are you spending your time on the right things? Because time is all you have."
- "Showing gratitude is one of the simplest yet most powerful things humans can do for each other."
- "Too many people go through life complaining about their problems. I've always believed that if you took one tenth the energy you put into complaining and applied it to solving the problem, you'd be surprised by how well things can work out."
- "Find the best in everybody. Just keep waiting no matter how long it takes. No one is all evil. Everybody has a good side, just keep waiting, it will come out."
- "The questions are always more important than the answers."
- "People are more important than things."

— Randy Pausch, 'The Last Lecture'



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Islamic Education for a Secular World

Prof. Syed Ali Ashraf

By Islamic education I mean that type of education which trains the sensibility of pupils in such a manner that in their attitude to life, in their actions and decisions and in their approach to all kinds of knowledge they are governed by the spiritual and deeply felt ethical values that Islam teaches them.

They are trained and mentally so disciplined that they want to acquire knowledge not merely to satisfy an intellectual curiosity or just for material worldly benefit but to grow up as a rational, righteous being and for their people's and for mankind's spiritual, moral and physical welfare.

This attitude is bred by a deep faith in God and a wholehearted acceptance of a God-given moral code. The permanence, necessity and significance of such a code for the natural development of a rational and spiritual being like man is experienced and understood by the application and the operation of those principles in nature, society and history.

A student who receives this type of education grows up as a harmonious, equable and righteous being with faith and trust in God's infinite Mercy and His Invincible justice and lives in harmony and not in conflict with nature.

He also believes that man is not just a creature of this earth but a spiritual being gifted with unestimated and inestimable power to control and govern the universe under the authority of God, a being whose life therefore extends beyond this world into a region where his own consciousness will fully reassert itself and make him realize the effect of his actions on his own being.

Thus, he gets pleasure in doing good, and he dislikes, or hates doing evil because he knows his good deeds do good to himself and his evil action does harm to himself.

It is obvious that this type of education cannot be imparted easily in a society which has lost its religious mooring. This is what has happened in the West. Though there are various religious groups in Europe and America carrying on their

missionary activities, neither the authorities in their society nor most of their intellectuals accept the religious code as an inevitable and unquestioned norm providing them with unwritten assumptions.

The Process of Dethroning

Since the Renaissance, this process of dethroning has been going on and in the twentieth century the intellectuals have succeeded in breaking loose from what they considered as their bondage. The result is that they have become disarrayed, each individual claiming his philosophy as the only correct guidance for himself and sometimes propounding that with missionary zeal for others.

When such an individual philosophy catches the mind of a powerful group it is turned into a dogma. Marxism is such an outcome. For the sake of security in a rootless society some people have accepted this new dogma and with religious fervor, and have turned their society into a dogma-controlled community.

This implies that religious groups are no longer dominating the social scene in the West and hence all branches of knowledge have no central, integrating force. That is why after the Second World War the Presidents of American universities met in Harvard University in 1957 and divided knowledge into three branches – humanities, natural sciences and social sciences – left out divinity, and decided on a core curriculum for all undergraduates who were asked to take at least one course from each of the three.

They thought that thus they would be able to build up in each student an all-round democratic personality. This means they thought that democracy provides a complete solution for the society. What about man's spiritual cravings? What about the relationship that exists between spiritual realisation and the essence of moral values? What about the integral relationship between moral values and human action in a social and cultural set-up? Can democracy take the place of religion?

These questions have not been answered nor can they be answered when society is suffering from rootlessness. The Muslim world has been invaded by this western civilization. This feeling of rootlessness has already entered Muslim society because our intellectuals are now educated in the West, being brain-washed and returning to their own countries after reading textbooks filled with ideas which contradict their traditional assumptions.

Even in their own countries the traditional system has been superseded by the modern system which has been borrowed from the West. As a result the textbooks and course and even the methods of teaching are creating doubts in the minds of students as to the fundamental tenets and assumptions of Islam instead of reinforcing faith in God and purifying the sensibility of confusions and contradictions.

It has to be realized that if the intellectuals of the Muslim world do not stem the tide now by positing Islamic concept in all branches of knowledge and change the methodology from unbridled questioning to the exploration of the significance of everything for the sake of understanding human life and external nature, the time is not far away when the tide will sweep away even the bed-rocks on which the structure of a Muslim society is based.

The Method

The method which traditionally Muslim society adopted and, in fact, any religion-based society always adopts and should adopt in order to preserve the society, is acceptance of values, experimental reality based on that acceptance and the application in active life of the realization of truth through that experience.

The method that modern education and modern civilization teach, is questioning without any accepted norm and collection of data on the basis of answers found or discovered. Thus, according to the latter, the society is disturbed by individual realization which is almost always conflicting, heterogeneous and goalless.

Muslim intellectuals are expected now to justify their methods and at the same time restate their traditional ideas in the context of the new, and formulate new concepts for new branches of knowledge by reasserting the spiritual realization of truth as enshrined in revelations from God.

That the revelation has within the source of all kinds of knowledge for the benefit of mankind has to be shown to modern man in order to convince him of the unending potentialities of Islam.

The Task

This job has now fallen to modern intellectuals because these intellectuals have taken the place of the older Ulama class. Instead of the older class, it is this new class which guides and governs the minds of younger generations. Therefore, educational reform is necessary. This is not just the reform of some methods and techniques. It is a reform of the basic concepts of sociology, economics, political science, psychology, history and a rewriting of textbooks on the basis of Islamic concepts. It is a gigantic task.

For the western and the entire secular World, this experiment will be extremely valuable if the Muslim world can show the efficacy of these concepts in the form of intellectual growth without any loss of the emotional stability that faith in God and a God-given code provides.

This may, thus, open the eyes of secularists and strike a responsive chord in their hearts. They many begin to think afresh of Man and his nature and also re-think the necessity of providing sustenance to human spirit.

(The article was first composed for The First World Conference on Muslim Education held in Makkah in 1977. Has been slightly edited for the purposes of space and clarity.)



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Two Weeks in the West

By Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani رحمۃ اللہ علیہ
Translated by Bint Akram

Procuring a house of your own is a significant problem for the Muslims living in the West. Generally, it is banks that provide loans to people for this purpose. However, those Muslims who remain to stay away from interest are creating institutions, which assist Muslims in buying interest-free accommodation. Such institutions are already working on small scale in places like Toronto, Texas, Los Angeles, etc. but now Muslims feel the need for such institutions to expand. My friend, Abdul Qadir Steven (formerly Thomas Steven), is specially working for this cause.

He also prints a monthly publication, *Journal of Islamic Finance*, which carries articles and news relating to Islam's economic and financial

aspects. In collaboration with the Samad Group, Ohio, and the Albarakah Group, Jeddah, has decided to develop an interest-free residential scheme for American Muslims. In order to deal with the legal aspects of this scheme, he has sought assistance of a famous legal firm in New York, CoDart Brothers. For advice and guidance on the *Shara'i* and legal aspects of this scheme, I was invited to attend a meeting at the office of CoDart Brothers. The participants of the meeting included Mr Peter and two of his associates from CoDart Brothers, my friends, Mr Abdul Qadir Steven, Dr Sualeh Malaika from Albarakah Group, and Mr Basheer Ahmad from the Samad Group. The meeting carried on for many hours, and ended with lunch, which was arranged for by Mr Peter in his office located in a tall tower opposite to the famous Empire State Building. Many distinguished legal personalities also joined us for lunch over there. Although the majority of the people present at this lunch comprised non-Muslims, but Mr Peter was kind enough to only include vegetables and fish in the menu. The drinks were also limited to Pepsi and fruit juices. While sitting down for lunch, Mr Peter introduced me to the people present, and asked

them to pose any questions they had regarding Islam to me. What followed was long session of questions, and the lunch transformed into an interesting dialogue.

Some people posed certain aggressive questions too, but it was a blessing of Allah ﷻ that I calmly went on to answer them. During one instance, following the line of questions, I took this opportunity to say something based on principle. I explained that since the current Western outlook towards life is secular, it becomes difficult for people to comprehend as to why should the economic, political and social aspects of life remain within the ambit of religion; how is it possible to make use of the fifteen-hundred-years old teachings in the twentieth and the twenty-first century. Speaking upon this subject, I tried to explain as to how human reason remains insufficient in order to tackle with all the problems of life; why exactly does it need the guidance of divine revelation. I further stated that the Western world today is busy rejoicing over the fall of Socialism and the Soviet Union, but the question remains that has the West been able to get rid of the ills of Capitalism, as the result of which Socialism came to rise? If those problems still exist, then the fall

of Soviet Union can be considered the downfall of Socialism as well, but it cannot be considered a victory for Capitalism. If Capitalism is not ready to make amends to its disorders, then some other reaction to it will come to fore.

As an answer to the queries of some participants, I explicated upon certain economic teachings of Islam, and also complained that whenever the question of implementing these teachings is raised, the West, instead of giving it a serious thought, starts harping upon the discourse of fundamentalism, and claims that the proponents of these teachings want to turn the clock back to conservative times. This hue and cry shuts all doors of understanding and dialogue. Participants listened to all that I had to say open-heartedly; some of them also termed the explication of Islamic teachings as being 'creative'. I said that if today's gathering results in a serious research of the facts, without being influenced by negative propaganda, on the part of the participants, it would not remain a futile activity without any benefit.

Next day after this meeting, Mr Steven visited me in my hotel, and congratulated me saying that the gathering left a very good impact upon all those who were present.



A New Challenge?

By Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ

Why is Islam Opposed to Factionalism?

Islam originally dealt a deadly blow to this spirit (of factionalism) and administered a clear warning to its followers against the dangerous possibilities it contained. Factionalism is the very anonym of a universal faith since the basic oneness of humanity cannot endure it, even for a brief while, in its presence. The negation of factionalism is an undisputed feature of the Islamic Shariah.

Anyone who has an awareness of the inner nature of Islam— in truth, of Religion— will have no hesitation in realising the truth of the assertion that Religion can have nothing to do with racial or national prejudices. It is beyond

dispute that a majority of the ills that are poisoning the atmosphere of the world today and dragging humanity to the verge of destruction are the direct result of national factionalism.

Naturally, therefore, a man who came to the world only to weld mankind into one whole, to bring it under the banner of a single Faith, to call into existence a new society based on the consciousness of God Almighty, the Nourisher of the World, and to give it peace in place of war, love in place of hatred, unity in place of division, could not but wage a relentless war against it till it became a thing of the past.

Waves of Nationalism in Islamic Countries

Thanks, however, to the political and cultural domination of the West, the Islamic World, which owes its very existence to the Prophet, has now wholeheartedly adopted the creed of nationalism as if it were a proven scientific truth from which there can be no escape. Almost all the different people who make up the family of Islam are today ardent admirers of factional prejudices, including even those pagan national practices which openly amount to idolatry. For some, pre-Islamic era of their history, which Islam emphatically condemns as pagan and steeped in ignorance, is being recalled as a thing of pride. Yet, for Islam, there is nothing more detestable than that. The Quran

declares the deliverance of Muslims from it as one of the choicest favours of God and calls upon them to be duly grateful to Him for that:

And remember Allah's favour unto you. How ye were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts so that ye became as brothers by His grace; and (how) ye were upon the brink of an abyss of fire. Nay, but Allah doth confer a favour on you, inasmuch as He hath led you to the faith, if ye are earnest. He it is Who sendeth down clear Revelations unto His slave, that He may bring you forth from darkness unto light; and lo! for you, Allah is full of Pity, Merciful.

The Muslim Standpoint

Such being the case, a Muslim should be filled with repugnance and disgust at the very thought of paganism— whether modern or ancient. Have you ever seen a person released from prison who does not look back at the period of his imprisonment with anguish and displeasure, or a man who, having been cured of a foul disease, does not shudder at the thought of his illness? Or, has there ever been a man who has not thanked God at the dawn of the day after having experienced a terrible nightmare during the night? Why, then, should it be different with paganism which is many times worse than any term in prison, an illness or a nightmare? Why should a person having been freed from it by the grace of the Almighty not tremble at the thought of it and offer earnest thanksgivings to his Maker for delivering him from a curse, which contains innumerable misfortunes both in this world and the next? A tradition of the Prophet ﷺ recorded by Bukhari says: "There are three things, and if they are present in any one he will taste (the joys of) faith: firstly, that God and the Prophet be dearer to him than anything else, secondly, that his love for any one (or anything) is only for the

sake of God, and, thirdly, that he dreads returning to the state of paganism like being thrown into the fire." Allah ﷻ, in denunciation of paganism, its rites, customs, practices and its Heroes, says:

And We made them patterns that invite unto the fire, and on the Day of Resurrection they will not be helped. And We made a curse to follow them in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be among the hateful.

Unto Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they did follow the command of Pharaoh, and the command and Pharaoh was no right guide. He will go before his people on the Day of Resurrection and will lead them to the Fire for watering place.

Ah, hapless is the watering-place (whither they are) led. A curse is made to follow them in the world and on the Day of Resurrection. Hapless is the gift (that will be) given (them).

As a result of being over-awed by Western philosophy and its peculiar mode of approach to life many Muslims in Islamic countries have begun to recall the pre-Islamic period of their national existence with pride and pleasure. They are being drawn, intellectually and emotionally, to the customs and practices of that period as a part of their national heritage. They want to resuscitate them and to give a place of honour and privilege to those kings, leaders and other noteworthy personalities of that period in their history as if it was a golden age which Islam snatched away from them. God bless our souls! What colossal ingratitude and lack of appreciation of the worth and value of Islam and the Prophet is this! It signifies that all dislike for paganism and idolatry and the contempt for their senseless practices has disappeared. It will be no wonder if, because of these follies, Muslims are totally deprived of their

Faith; the blessing of Islam is withdrawn from them and some heavenly curse is sent down in place of felicity. The Quran has warned:

And incline not toward those who do wrong lest the fire touch you, and ye have no protecting friends against Allah, and afterward ye would not be helped.

Besides nationalism, another calamity that is bringing ruin upon the Islamic World is the blind admiration for the material things of life enjoyed by its upper classes. People are ready to sacrifice all other considerations and values in the pursuit of these worldly ambitions. There is at work among them a strong tendency to prefer this material world to the Hereafter, and to avail themselves whole-heartedly of its pleasures. The appeasement of sensual appetites has become the chief object of their existence with the result that moral perversion, drinking, debauchery and other vices have freely crept into their lives and they have obtained, more or less a complete freedom from the moral obligations imposed by the Shari'ah. With a few exceptions, the ruling sections of Muslim countries everywhere presents a very similar picture.

This, in brief, is the moral and spiritual state of present-day Muslims. A wave of paganism is sweeping across the Muslim world and carrying away with it the glorious heritage of Islam. Never has Islam experienced a danger so powerful and so all-pervading. And the tragedy is that there are few who are willing to take stock of this dismal situation and fewer still to place all that they have at stake in order to combat it. We remember that when agnostic tendencies raised their head in Islam under the influence of Greek philosophy there sprang up a number of outstanding men who put them down with all the unique resources of their minds and hearts and with their social prestige. Similarly, when the *Batiniyah* and *Mulahada* atheists made their appearance, the crusaders of Islam jumped into the arena to take issue against them with both pen and speech. Thus, Islam, on account of these timely services, continued to command such a strong position intellectually and logically that it could beat off any storm that arose.

The Real Problem

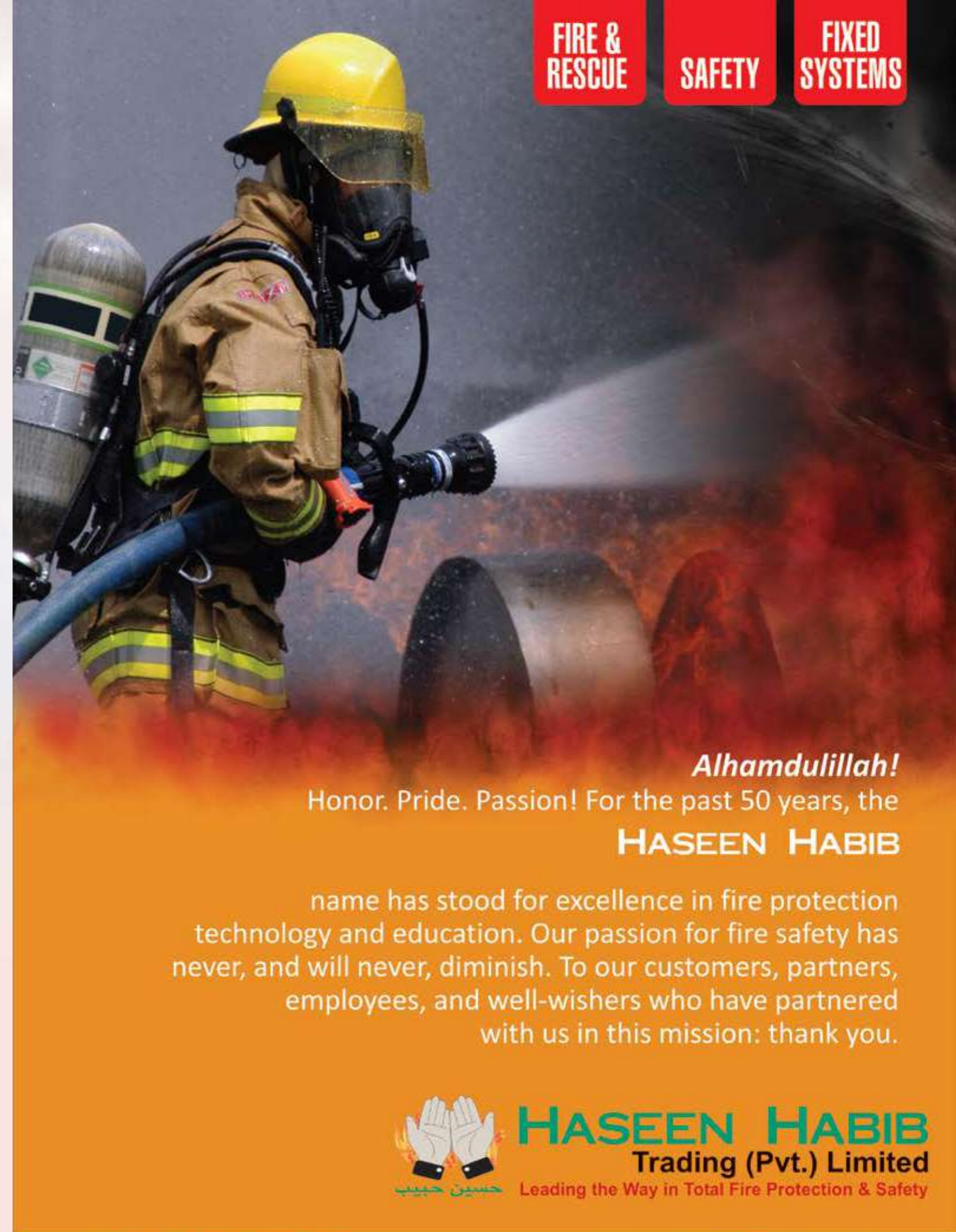
The real problem before Islam now is not that of moral degeneration or slackness in matters of prayer or other supererogatory observances, or

disregard of religious practices, or imitation of foreigners. These are important things, no doubt, but the real and foremost issue which has worked itself up like a mighty tidal wave and is striking directly at Islam's roots is one of belief and disbelief. This will determine whether Islam survives in the world or is cast away instead like an old garment. The battle that is being fought today in the Muslim World is between Western materialism and Islam, the last of the Messages from God. On one side there is agnosticism and on the other, Divine Law. I believe, this is the last struggle between Religion and irreligiosity, after which the world will swing full-scale towards one side or the other.

The *Jihad* of today, the greatest need of the present hour, is to repulse this storm of atheism, nay, to go ahead and make a direct assault at the very heart of it. The chief task of religious renovation in modern times lies in the revival of Faith among the young and educated classes of the *Ummah* with respect to the basic tenets of Islam, in its moral and spiritual scheme of things and in the Apostleship of the Prophet ﷺ. There can be no better deed or worship today than to release the educated youth of the intellectual and psychological confusion and frustration they are going through and to satisfy them mentally with regard to Islam. The basic characteristics of paganism that are fast embedding into their minds must be weeded out to make room for the spiritual truths of Islam.

For a full century the West has been preying on the hearts and minds of Muslims. It has played havoc with its scepticism, doubt and disbelief. Transcendental truths have been trampled upon by the materialistic concepts of Political Science and Economics. We have watched all this like mere spectators, heedless of what it was leading to. We sat pretty on what our ancestors had left behind and did not realise that it was essential to bring it into conformity with the changing patterns of time. Furthermore, we made no effort to really understand the thought-process the West had released. We never critically examined Western philosophy and its way of life. Our time was wasted in superficial discussions and, now, after the passage of a century, the time has come when the foundations of the Faith itself are in danger and a generation has come up which has very little real trust in the spiritual values of life.

- To be concluded in the next issue, insha'Allah



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Big Business, "Muslim Rap"

By Khalid Baig

When the pagan Makkan army was marching to Badr in 2 A.H., it included not only fighting men, weapons, camels, and horses, but also the means of inciting the fighters: singing-girls and musical instruments. At every rest stop along the way these cheerleaders plied their craft, spitting venom against the Muslims and promising their favors in the most enticing ways to those who would destroy them.

The army had been summoned to protect their trade caravan. When they learnt that the caravan had escaped and some of them wanted to turn back, Abu Jahl insisted on continuing: "No, I will not return to Makkah, until we have refreshed ourselves at Badr, and spent three days in feasting, drinking wine, and listening to the singing and playing of the singing-girls."

In the end, the unequal war in Badr did not turn out to be the picnic he had imagined. Abu Jahl was slain, as were many other prominent leaders of Makkah. The decisive victory at Badr by the ragtag Muslim army remains a constant source of inspiration and education. It changed the course of history, for if Muslims had been defeated, the magnificent Islamic civilization would not have seen the light of day and the jahilyah society would have continued uninterrupted.

At Badr Muslims drastically lacked the weapons of war. But it was the absence of a particular weapon of war that symbolizes the moral edge that gave them the victory. Unlike their adversaries the Muslim army did not include bands of singing-girls and musical instruments!

There is no doubt that such bands could and did stir up emotions. At Uhud, the chant of the singing girls was: "Move forward and we will embrace you. Turn back and we will abandon you." In countless pagan wars before and since, the promise has been the same. It works for the lowly beasts seeking the sensual pleasures of this world, fanning the fires of their basest emotions and bringing out the animal from within them. No wonder battlefields have historically showcased the worst of human behavior and character.

Islam came to rid the humanity of such decay. It produced soldiers who fought to establish justice and morality and sought nothing but the pleasure of Allah. Their weapons were piety, sincerity, fear of Allah, an unshakable commitment to right the wrong, and an unwavering willingness to sacrifice even their lives for it. Quite naturally it removed the filth of singing girls and musical instruments from its side of the war zone.

There were also other uses of music that Islam abolished in its revolutionary remaking of society.

While in other religions music and singing have been an integral part of worship, Islam's acts of worship do not require or permit music. What about the argument that "sacred music" can bring one to a state of ecstasy and union with God? Well, salat brings one closer to Allah. (There are historical accounts of earlier Muslims some of whom reached such a state of absorption that they could not feel even physical pain of surgery during salat.) It is very significant

that this closeness is achieved without any "sacred" music.

Music has also been a means of indoctrination and glorification. Trumpets were blown to announce the arrival of His Majesty and to make people bow to his pomp and glory. If this had been a legitimate use, then the person most deserving of this honor would have been no one other than the Prophet ﷺ. But to a world used to the courts of monarchs with musicians always ready to glorify them, he introduced a drastically different court. No pomp, no musicians, no music.

Historically music has also been associated with magic and superstitions. When faced with disasters or epidemics, pagan people resorted to dance and music to get rid of the evil spirits. The legend of the Pied Piper, popular in the West for centuries, attests to the belief in the magical powers of music. In Arabia singing girls called dajina (from dajana meaning cloudiness) sang to conjure rain when clouds gathered. Islam instead taught its followers to turn to Allah in salat ul istasqa to pray for rain.

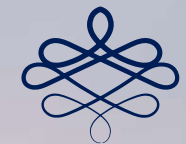
And of course music has also been used as a distraction and mindless entertainment. This is what Nadr ibn Harith did to keep people from paying attention to the Qur'an. He bought a singing girl and used her to "win the hearts and minds" of anyone who appeared to be leaning to Islam. He was condemned in Surah Luqman (31:6).

Islam did permit some singing and use of a simple instrument like duf (a small one-sided drum) for weddings or Eid celebrations. It permitted rajaz singing for jihad. These were exceptions to the general rule. Thus if we draw a graph of music activity in the Muslim world against time, we will find it to be at its lowest during the time of the Prophet ﷺ and the Khulafa Rashidoon. Its subsequent rise during the

Umayyad and Abbasid Khilafah was a result of external influences: Sassanid in Baghdad and the Byzantine in Damascus. The graph went down after the fall of Baghdad and remained low for centuries. Its latest rise came under the influence of the imperial West and began with the conquest of Egypt by Napoleon where Khadive Ismail (ruled 1863-1876), dedicated to Europeanizing Egypt, built the first opera house in Cairo. Throughout the Muslim world the colonial rulers used gramophone and then radio to spread music far and wide. Then came the television and a plethora of other gadgets, which have made it impossible to find a music-free space anywhere. Today music playing on cell phones even invades the sanctity of the most sacred of all places --- the house of Allah. What is more, many Muslims are convinced they are serving Allah as they try to spread Islam through music. I was struck the other day by stumbling on the following entry on BBC's website: "Muslim rap is big business with annual sales in excess of \$1.8bn in America alone." [6 May 2004].

To gain an insight into the colonial project, we can turn to Henry G. Farmer (1882-1965), the author of many books on Arabian music and the dean of the music-in-Islam-crusade. Here is one bit of "wisdom" from him: Islamic censure of listening to music was manufactured by the theologians of the Abbasid era who were jealous of the inordinate attention paid to music and musicians!

Those who are not convinced by this "scholarly" explanation need to do something to end the delusion and stop the profane noise.





By Dr Hafsa Siddiqui

The big wigs that nitpick
 In each others' hair
 The humans are suffering
 Do they care?
 Minting money
 That drips with blood
 Vociferous talks about
 The mother earth
 And global warming
 The immigration laws
 And the construction
 Of the Great Wall!
 Shield your eyes,
 From the real call
 Victims of war
 That have no shrouds
 Riddled with bullets
 Guns and ammo emptied out
 Bodies left asunder
 Souls that greet
 In Heaven, I wonder...

Struggle

By Dr Hafsa Siddiqui

Shy your eyes away from the mess
 That the Syrian children are in distress
 Click, like, and share,
 Never dare to real war wage
 Blood will be spilled on
 Children's cooks and clothes
 Rockets that their little bodies block
 And we will be complacent
 With religious talks
 'Never, ever let the jihad
 Of the heart stop!
 That will be sufficient
 For the salvation
 From the Benevolent.'
 The lip service talks
 And clicks.

The Hate Game!

Excerpted from 'Khazain-e-Quran'
by Maulana Hakeem Muhammad Akhtar رحمۃ اللہ علیہ
Contributed by Muhammad Haris

A kindergarten teacher decided to let her class play a game. The teacher told each child in the class to bring along a plastic bag containing few potatoes. Each potato would be named after a person the child hates; the number of potatoes that a child would put in his plastic bag would depend on the number of people he hates.

When the day came, every child brought some potatoes bearing the name of the person he/she hated. Some had two potatoes with them, some had three, while some had up to five potatoes! The teacher then told the children to carry with them the potatoes in the plastic bag wherever they went for the next one week.

Days passed by and the children started to complain of the unpleasant odour given out by the rotten potatoes. Besides, those having five potatoes also had to carry heavier bags.

After one week, the children were relieved because the game had finally ended. The teacher

then asked: "How did you feel while carrying the potatoes with you for the whole week?" The children let out their frustrations and started complaining of the trouble that they had to go through while having to carry the heavy and smelly potatoes wherever they went.

Then the teacher told them the hidden meaning behind the game.

The teacher said: "This is exactly the situation when you carry your hatred for somebody inside your heart. The stench of that hatred contaminates your heart and you carry it with you wherever you go. If you cannot tolerate the smell of rotten potatoes for just one week, can you imagine what it is like to have the stench of hatred in your heart for an entire lifetime?"

"Throw away any hatred for anyone from your heart so that you will not carry sins for a lifetime. Forgiving others is the best attitude to take up! Forgive and forget!"

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The Wonders of Bismillah!

Contributed by G. M. Suriya

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

- Bashir Hafi رضی اللہ عنہ, once saw a paper lying on the street with *Bismillah* written on it. He picked it up politely and respectfully. He had two silver coins in his pocket at the time and no more. He bought perfume with it and sprayed it over the paper, making it fragrant. Upon this, he heard Allah ﷻ in his dream, saying "O Bashir Hafi! I am pleased with the way you have revered My name, I would also illuminate your name, both in this *Dunya* and in the Hereafter.
- A Roman king wrote a letter to Sayyidna Umar رضی اللہ عنہ, requesting him to send some

medicine for treatment of his chronic headache. Sayyidna Umar رضی اللہ عنہ sent him a cap to wear on his head. Whenever the king wore the cap, the headache would vanish, and when he took it off, it would reappear. He was astonished at this experience. He, therefore, took the cap in his hand to check it closely and found out that *Bismillah* was written in it!

- Once, a pious person was delivering a lecture on the virtues and importance of *Bismillah*. Among the audience was a Jewish girl who was so impressed with the talk on Islam that she at once embraced it from the core of her

heart. She made it her habit to say *Bismillah* in the beginning of everything she used to do. When her father came to know of her new faith, he became furious and warned her to give up Islam, not knowing that when Islam enters someone's heart, it does not get out even with threats and tortures. Her father, being a minister, was very confused and ashamed of the fact that if this news spread, he would face a big humiliation before the king and the public. He, therefore, planned to defame the girl with a criminal scandal and then kill her. He gave her an official ring used for stamping governmental documents and asked her to keep it safely under her custody. As per her habit, she recited *Bismillah* while taking the ring from her father and kept it in her pocket.

While the girl was asleep at night, her father came, took out the ring from her pocket and threw it in the river. His sole objective was to make her fail in producing the official ring and to punish her as per the land's law. As Allah ﷻ willed, a fisherman came to her father, presenting him a fish. The father took the present and brought the fish home and delivered it to his daughter to prepare the meal. With *Bismillah*, she began cutting and cleaning the fish. During this process, the ring came out from its stomach. She was bewildered to see it and immediately put her hand into her pocket. The ring was missing! She was confused but recited *Bismillah* and put the ring back in her pocket, prepared the meal and served it to her family.

After the meal was over, her father asked her to return the ring. Saying *Bismillah*, she put her hand in the pocket and gave it back to her

father. He jumped up in surprise and asked his daughter to explain how she got it back when he had thrown it in the water. The girl, at first, thanked Allah ﷻ for preserving her name and then revealed the whole story. The father embraced Islam too!

- The jurist, Muhammad Zamani رضی اللہ عنہ once had a high fever and his teacher, Muhammad Wali bin Saeed came to him and gave him an amulet, specifically instructing him not to see it. The fever went off when this amulet was worn. Out of curiosity, Muhammad Zamani opened it and saw that *Bismillah* was written on it. He became a little skeptical and the fever reverted. He went to his teacher and repented over his weak belief on *Bismillah*. The teacher gave him another amulet and wore it for over a year and the fever never visited him. Once again, he opened the amulet and noticed that *Bismillah* was written over it. His reverence for it grew and remained for all time to come.
- Sayyidna Khalid رضی اللہ عنہ had besieged a caravan of infidels. They asked for a sign to believe that Islam is a true religion. Sayyidna Khalid رضی اللہ عنہ asked them to bring a poison and they brought it in a tumbler. He recited *Bismillah* and drank the whole of it. The poison did not work and all the infidels of the caravan became Muslims, affirming that the Islam is surely a true religion.

(Anwar-e-Madinah, March, 2014)

Transition to Secular Thought in Europe - Lessons for Muslims

By Dr. Asad Zaman

Introduction

A dramatic transition in ways of thinking took place in Europe between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century. Tawney (1930) describes this transition to secular ways of thinking as follows:

The theory of a hierarchy of values, embracing all human interests and activities in a system of which the apex is religion, is replaced by the conception of separate and parallel compartments, between which a due balance should be maintained, but which have no vital connection with each other.

An essential ingredient of secular thought is the idea that there are spheres of human life and intellectual effort which are not connected to religion. Islamic teachings match pre-modern European thought that religious considerations are of paramount importance in all spheres of life. In dramatic contrast, eighteenth century European thought treats social, political and economic thought without reference to religion or the spiritual aspirations of man. Tawney (1930) has documented this revolution in thought, and also provided the complex and subtle historical

details of how it came about in England.

Since then, secular thought has come to dominate the world, influencing the thinking of all across the globe. Religion has been virtually driven out of the public sphere. Removal of religious barriers against greed, hedonism and individualism has led to

- Social catastrophes: breakdown of families and community.
- Political calamities: immoral wars conducted for control of resources.
- Environmental disasters: pollution, global warming, destruction of species and forests, all for the sake of multinational profits
- Financial Crisis: ponzi schemes, large scale speculative gambling, and fraudulent practices encourage by putting greed above all social considerations.

More recently, the harmful effects of relegating spirituality and morality to a personal and private choice have become obvious for all to see. An effort is being made to reintroduce religion, spirituality and morality into debates and intellectual arenas from which they have been

long excluded.

Our goal in this article is to review some neglected and forgotten aspects of European history which led to this transition from religious based thought to secular ways of thinking. As Western education has become widespread throughout the Islamic world, some aspects of secular thinking have also become widely accepted by Muslims. Secular thought is clearly incompatible with Islam, which is a complete religion and provides guidance in all spheres of life. Maulana Syed Abul Hassan Ali Nadvi has highlighted the conflict between Islam and Modernity taking place all over the world in Islamic societies. Our object is not to present a comprehensive or balanced picture of this European history, which has been done by many authors, in many books, from many different angles. Instead, we will highlight certain ingredients which are especially important to Muslims in the struggle to resist the encroachment of secular thought into Islamic societies. In particular, we will put stress on those teachings of Islam which create barriers against replication of the European history of loss of faith.

The Corruption of the Christian Clergy

The chain of events leading to the modern secular world was set in motion by what Barbara Tuchman has called "the most momentous event in the history of Europe" in her book *The March of Folly*. This is the corruption of a sequence of Popes in the sixteenth century which led to the rise of the Protestants and the Reformation. The following quote about Pope Alexander VI, who purchased his Papal Office (a sin called simony often legislated against by the Roman Catholic Church without much effect), illustrates some aspects of this corrupt behavior:

The already corrupt Papacy reached perhaps its ultimate depths during the reign of Rodrigo Borgia, who was elected to the papacy in 1492 ... and who assumed the name Pope Alexander VI. (When) Borgia ... became pope, myth and legend quickly rose up around his family. Alexander VI had four acknowledged children, three males and one female. Alexander VI was himself known as a corrupt pope bent on his family's political and material success, to an even greater extent than Sixtus IV had been. It was no secret that Alexander VI's oldest son Cesare, was a murderer, and had killed many of his political opponents.

<http://www.pbs.org/empires/medici/medici/families.html>

Political power wielded by Popes led to countless actions more worthy of Machiavelli than of spiritual leaders, representatives of God on Earth. The famous saying "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely," was coined in response to wrongdoings of Popes. It is worth noting parenthetically that 1492 was laden with events which changed the course of history. This was the year the Muslims finally lost their last foothold in Spain, and also the year in which Columbus sailed to discover the Americas. All three of these events continue to have significant impacts to this day. Some of the effects of the corruption of the church have been listed below: Since the middle of the 15th century discontent with the state of the church was widespread:

- The wealth of the church had led to spiritual shallowness and demoralization of the clergy. In Germany, every 9th inhabitant was a member of the clergy. Though the church officially demanded for celibacy of the clergy, most clergymen had more or less clandestine relations with women. Once even an illegitimate son of a pope was elected as pope.

- High clerics (bishops, abbots, canons), often delegated their pastoral duties to uneducated vicars to have more time for a luxurious life or at best for studies.
- A tendency to transform the churches instruments of salvation into legalism and profit: the personal confession to a priest (with spiritual guidance) had been turned into a system of preaching torments of hell, imposing severe penitence and selling indulgence.
- Scholastic theology had become a sterile repetition of formulae and this also affected divine services for the population.

[<http://history-switzerland.geschichte-schweiz.ch/reformation-switzerland-calvin.html>]

Widespread discontent with the Catholic Church set the stage for the success of the revolt against it led by Martin Luther. Pope Leo X used the sale of indulgences to finance a massively luxurious rebuilding of Rome replete with statues and other artistic accompaniments. In particular, those who gave alms to his favorite project, the new St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, would have their sins forgiven. These "indulgences" exacted money from the simple-minded among the faithful by promising them perpetual happiness in this world and eternal glory in the next. The false doctrine and scandalous conduct of the "pardoners" were an immediate occasion of the Protestant Reformation. The aggressive marketing practices of Johann Tetzel in promoting this cause provoked Martin Luther to write his Ninety-Five Theses, protesting against what he saw as the purchase and sale of salvation. In Thesis 28, Luther objected to a saying attributed to Tetzel: "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs". The Ninety-Five Theses not only denounced such transactions as worldly but denied the Pope's right to grant pardons on God's behalf in the first place: the only thing indulgences guaranteed, Luther said, was an increase in profit and greed, because the pardon of the Church was in God's power alone. Luther was excommunicated, but his ideas became popular and led to the Reformation, a landmark event in European history.

From this first step in the process by which Europeans lost their faith in God, and abandoned their religion, we can derive several important

lessons, reinforcing the message of the Quran and Hadith.

Need for Separation of Religious and Temporal Leadership

Many Muslim authors have regretted the split between the religious and temporal leadership that occurred at the end of the golden period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. The example of the Catholic Church is a reminder that power corrupts, and it takes men of very high integrity to be able to resist this corruption. If temporal and spiritual leadership are combined within a man of insufficient integrity, this could cause damage to the faith of the people, with consequences tremendously worse than lack of temporal power in the hands of the religious. People without sufficient spiritual training who are given religious authority will inevitably exercise this authority for worldly gain. Descriptions of Fir'on and Qaroon show the corrupting effects of power and money. The temptation to sell faith for money is described in the Quran (3/187):

تَكْفُرُونَهُ وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا قَلِيلًا قَلِيلًا فَبُيِّنُوا مَا يَشْتَرُونَ فَنَبَذُوهُ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ وَأَشْرَوْا بِهِ تَمَنَّا


And Lo, God accepted a solemn pledge from those who were granted earlier revelation [when He bade them]: "Make it known unto mankind, and do not conceal it!" [143] But they cast this [pledge] behind their backs, and bartered it away for a trifling gain: and how evil was their bargain!

The cause of the crisis which eventually led to rejection of religion in Europe was the sale of indulgences to finance luxurious lifestyles and projects for reconstruction of Church buildings on a magnificent scale. Seen from a distance, the "sale of indulgences" seems like an obvious and gross violation of religious teachings. It is important for Muslims to realize that this is not true. The issue in question is very delicate. The Quran states (11:114) Lo! good deeds annul ill deeds.

إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ

There is a recommendation in Ahadeeth to do a good deed after doing a bad deed so as to remove its evil effects. Since spending in charity is a highly recommended good deed, it is a perfectly valid recommendation to a sinner that he should spend money on good to compensate for any sin (that he confesses to). As religious



authorities, we may be able to evaluate the different uses for charity and recommend one use, such as spending on *madrassahs* or perhaps a particular *madrassah*, as the best use of charity at this time. This is exactly the logic that was by Church authorities to justify raising money for spending on Church projects.

In accordance with the Hadith that "*Innamal A'mal bil niyyat*" – the value of actions depends on the intentions – a recommendation to spend can be judged only according to the intention with which it is made. The delicacy of such issues is brought home by Sayyidina Ali's  refusal to kill the man who had spit in his face, because his anger had mixed up a personal intention with a purely religious one. This is a warning for those who seek power and prestige for Muslims as a means to the spread of Islam. To do this, one must have enough self-knowledge and self-control to recognize the tricks of the Nafs and to resist them. Seeking power for oneself is not a recommended course of action, and as an Ummah we must find ways of giving power to those who have the extraordinary Taqwa displayed by Sayyidina Ali (RAU) to be able to differentiate between pure and impure intentions. How this is to be done is a question that we need to consider, but it is clear that western mechanisms of elections and democratic institutions do not take these considerations into account and cannot be adapted to our purposes.

Preferring Simple Lifestyles to Luxury

The immediate cause of the revolt against the Catholic Church was the sale of indulgences to finance luxurious construction. Today the Muslims are also engaged in the pursuit of luxurious lifestyles, even though this has been very harmful to us on many occasions in history. The Dolmabahçe Palace was built between the years 1843 and 1856 under the order of the Empire's 31st sultan, Sultan Abdülmecid, at a cost of five million Ottoman gold pounds, the equivalent of 35 tons of gold. Fourteen tons of gold in the form of gold leaf were used to gild the ceilings of the palace. Heavy interest based foreign loans were taken by the Khalifa for this enterprise. When these debts could not be repaid, Europeans demanded and obtained substantial amount of financial control over the Ottoman Empire. Details are provided in Blaisdell (1929) European


Financial Control in the Ottoman Empire. This was a very important element in the eventual demise of the Empire and the abolishment of the *Khilafat*.

Currently, the western media are promoting the pursuit of luxurious lifestyles as the object of life throughout the Islamic world. This poisonous message, which is infiltrating the minds of Muslims, is in stark contrast to the simplicity in lifestyle which is the ideal of Islam. The lifestyle of the Prophet , who is the perfect model for us all, was simple in the extreme. He rarely had a second pair of clothing, apart from the one he wore, which was patched in many places. He did not eat his full two times in a row, and months would pass without a fire in his kitchen. This simplicity was maintained throughout his life, even though he received huge gifts on many occasions, which he distributed to the poor and the needy. His example was followed by Sayyidina Abu-Bakr and Sayyidina Umar , who are unparalleled in their combination of worldly rule with extreme simplicity of lifestyle.

One important feature of simplicity is to live in a way so as to not provoke envy or jealousy. One of the reasons for which Qaroon was condemned was his parading his wealth to the envy of his nation. Muslims are commanded to dress and feed their slaves as equals. Those who have more than their neighbors are told to share their blessings or else consume the extra, concealing it from others so as to not cause envy. The Islamic spirit of moderation in consumption is perfectly expressed in the Quran (7:31):

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

O Children of Adam! Beautify yourselves for every act of worship, and eat and drink [freely], but do not waste: verily, He does not love the wasteful!

The prohibition of wastefulness (*Israf*) and unnecessary expenses (*Tabzeer*) together with the recommendations of spending money over and above our needs for the sake of Allah  would go a long way towards solving the problems of Islamic societies.

The Worst of all Creatures

European history shows the importance of good behavior by the religious leaders. Bad conduct of religious leaders damages the faith of the people. This brings out the importance of the following Hadith:

A certain Sahabi of the Nabi ﷺ asked him: "Who is the worst of all creatures?" He answered: "Don't ask me questions about bad things, but ask me questions about good things. The worst of all creatures are the guilty scholars" (i.e. those who do not practise what they say).

Corruption of their religious leaders was the first of a long sequence of events which eventually led to the loss of faith in God among the Europeans. In many areas of European history we see that the transition between the good and the evil is gradual, and takes place in a series of small steps, each one of which appears permissible, or only a minor change. This brings out the importance of vigilance, recommended in Ahadeeth which ask us to stay away from the boundaries between the *Haram* and the *Halal*.

In the past, madrassahs used to provide spiritual training in addition to intellectual and scholarly training. Nowadays this tradition has been abandoned by many and the spiritual training has been left up to the student, on his inclination and option. We need to bring back the spiritual training and make it an essential and central component of a religious education. Producing *Ulema* without taking any steps to ensure their training in the lines of *Zikr*, *Taqwa*, *Khushoo'*, *Ikhlāq* violates the spirit of Islamic teachings, since the central teaching of our Prophet ﷺ was along these lines. There are many active movements in the Islamic world which aim to develop faith or Eeman; in addition to traditional Sufi orders, the movement of Tableegh and Dawah, which is the largest grassroots movement in Islamic history. It is important to note that *Eeman* is the base, and that development of good conduct, etiquette, social relations, and spiritual development requires further training for which we will need to look back at our traditions and revive institutions and methods developed for this purpose by our ancestors. This is in accordance with the following passage from *Fazail-e-Amal*:

Says the Nabi ﷺ in another Hadith: "Knowledge is of two kinds: one, which remains on the tongue only and does not affect the heart and so is in fact an accusation from Allah; and the other which penetrates into the heart and revives the spirit: that is indeed useful."

What we mean to say is that a Muslim should not acquire only that knowledge which concerns the formalities, but also the spiritual knowledge, which would purify his heart and enlighten his brain; otherwise it would be a cause for questioning on the day of *Qiyamah* as to how far it was acted upon.

Of course schools and madrassahs are the secondary sources of education, especially when it comes to moral education. The primary education takes place at home. It is essential to impart moral training (*Tarbiyyah*) at homes to a much greater extent than is currently being done. To combat the flood of immorality being imparted by western media, it is essential for us to take steps to introduce the teachings of Quran and Hadith in every Muslim household on a regular basis. Special courses for newlyweds need to be designed to train them to bring up children in the right way. Many different Islamic groups have carried out many different experiments in trying to protect their children from the harmful effects of the current environments. We need to compare notes and evaluate different techniques to select good ones and compile instructions for those who are starting to worry about this problem. It will take concerted group effort to comply with the Quranic command (66:6):

O ye who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا

(To be continued, inshAllah.....)



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Beyond All Debacles

By Ateefah Sana-Ur-Rab

A gush swayed the rustling leaves from the tree; they danced a few steps ahead and landed curiously near a pair of worn-out leather shoes, ripped at the edges. Awaiting response from the familiar being lying on the side of one busy road, the tree glanced at the vicinity. Branded clothes, luxury cars and inhumane robots were to be seen everywhere. All heads were bent towards different sized rectangular devices in their palms, countless walked on the crowded pavement advancing to unknown destinations. Who had time to stop on his way to check the tree's sick friend? Empathy

had been the first to bid farewell to earth upon witnessing the destruction caused by individuals. The chase for money had long eradicated the roots of integrity for it had been stated, a path leading to nothing but failure.

Twenty four hours had elapsed and yet, there wasn't a single movement; which indicated that the beloved soul had successfully departed. Great sorrow hung over the tree as it memorized the very last sight of his dead friend being carried away from the cold concrete floor. "How could the most charming person be deprived of an opportunity to witness bright days?" Not a single phrase could be found to answer that question; the tree was too in denial to search for any!

"My life is meaningless. I don't know why God keeps me alive when there's nothing productive that I'll ever be able to do." The shadow of the old man talking to himself cast in front of the tree as the sun drowned; it too, was ashamed of what it had witnessed. The tree had begged to differ but unfortunately, it never had been granted a voice to share emotions and thoughts.

Despite everyone who resented the beggar's existence from the very first sight, the tree couldn't help but fall deeper in love as the weathers' chain continued to envelop the vicinity in its embraces. The desire to see its old friend happy escalated day by day and resulted in endless silent prayers at night.

"Why can't you see? You are not useless but extremely valuable. You possess what has almost become extinct. Why don't you realize?" The obscured words of the tree never reached the love of its life for they were never bestowed liberty. Helpless, the tree watched the sole human cry in despair and agony as his life's miseries became unbearable.

"I am betrothed to misfortune. That is why my struggles end up drowning in vain! Everything I've invested my life's work into has turned out to stab me in the back. Crinkly pieces of paper have become the case of my life as I've always been judged by it and is the reason behind me losing everything I wished for. The whole world is against me and has sworn to never let me live in peace!" mumbled the beggar. "No, that isn't the truth! You will see sunshine; all the storms will pass. Don't lose your hopes! That day will arrive. I promise it will!" Raindrops drenched new green leaves tenderly but weren't able to lessen the burden of one broken promise.

Then, spring arrived with full celebration. The dusty days were filled with birds chirping in ecstasy, flowers dancing to the wind and the sun shining with all its glory, up in the vast blanket of intimidating azure. Dark evenings altered into bright ones, the gloomy atmosphere was no more and somehow the weather had a good impact on the inhabitants as well.

Instead of frowns, smiles conquered countless lips and the tree couldn't help but rejoice when little children started coming to the park which had been left abandoned since long. They would play under the tree and soon, two swings were hung from the branches. The laughter that now surrounded the tree on a daily basis, forced loneliness to pack bags and leave.

"You often said that in your whole course of life, you weren't able to do anything. How horribly

wrong it was, to think of yourself as worthless. You had done it already; something that would provide comfort to others." A few tears fell to the ground disguised as leaves.

"You may have forgotten, my friend. But how could I? You were etched in my heart since the day your younger-self planted me here with your wobbly hands. How could I ever forget the one who always looked at me with immense love and admiration in his eyes? How could I ever forget the person who always rushed to save me in times of danger?" The tree glanced at the birds feeding their babies in the nests and then down, to see children playing and having fun.

"See? This is the result of your work. These birds wouldn't have been living here with happiness; children wouldn't have been enjoying their moments here if you hadn't planted me. What you did is worth everything because you did it; when every other child was busy figuring out how to build a sand castle."

There was nothing in the world that wasn't valuable, the tree believed. Every little effort held power which was to be discovered sooner or later. Things that were regarded as failures, if viewed from a different perspective, turned out to be worthwhile somehow. Because God never creates without purpose. Something that appears useless may have the most worth among all.

Our beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said;

"Planting a tree is (an act of) continuous charity." [Sahih Muslim, Hadith: 1552]

"If a Muslim plants a tree or grow grains and a bird, a person or an animal eats from it will be counted as a charity for him." [Bukhari, "al-Khars ve'l-Muzara", Muslim, "Musakaat", H. No: 12]



E-BAITUSSALAM
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ONE YEAR ON

By Zohra Noushin Ahmed

It has been one whole year since E-Baitussalam was successfully launched. The online portal has been a school for authentic Islamic learning for students of all ages and professions across the globe. Run by a team of 18 to 20 people dedicated to the cause of spreading comprehensive and authentic Islamic education to different parts of the globe, E-Baitussalam has been a huge success.

More than 26,000 students have joined in the numerous live sessions, taught by a team of highly professional teachers. The platform has had over 4000 account registrations and around 200 certificates for different courses have already been issued in the past one year alone.

"E-Baitussalam makes it so easy to learn about different Islamic topics and courses, because I don't have to worry about travelling or transport. I can just learn from wherever I am." – Bint-e-Ahmed, E-Baitussalam Student.

"I am truly inspired! We are definitely in need of such courses!" said Sadia Ahmed, a new E-Baitussalam student who was excited about being able to enroll in different Islamic short courses without the hassle of having to worry about transport or payment, since the studies are provided to students free of cost.

Every day, approximately 250 people actively use E-Baitussalam to gain an in-depth understanding of Islam. In an entire month, 2400 active users learn about various different topics that they can then apply in their daily lives to live the ideal Muslim life. Two certificate distribution ceremonies have already been held for the proud students of E-Baitussalam; with the second ceremony having taken place only recently in December of 2017, which was attended by more than 150 people and more than 100 certificates were given at that ceremony.

So far, more than 30 courses are available on the site, this includes those that have already been completed and currently in progress, including Namaz Course, Seerat-un Nabi ﷺ Course, Basic Arabic Language, Time Management, Tarjuma & Tafseer 30th Para, Food and Nutrition, Hadith Course, Cleanliness and Purity in Islam, a special course just for girls called Girls Galaxy and much more. Courses are available in both English and Urdu languages, so that students are free to choose whichever subject they wish to join.

Currently E-Baitussalam started an online Tajweed course in 3 different time slots: morning, afternoon and evening so that students all around the globe can join them according to their suitable time zone.

So what are you waiting for? Join us now and enroll in our new / upcoming courses! For more information, visit our website <http://baitussalam.org/learning> or our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/EBaitussalam/> You can also email the E-Baitussalam Team for further information at elarning@baitussalam.org.

Memoirs of Hazrat Mufti Taqi Usmani دوست بركاتہم

I always hesitate to refer to myself as 'Deobandi' in writing as the term smells of sectarianism. Further, some people have this misconception that Deobandi is some religious sect that has detoured from the mainstream direction of the Ummah. Whereas, in reality, the scholars associated with school of thought of the Dar ul Uloom, Deoband, have always been firm upon the beliefs of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah that is in consistency with the fourteen centuries old theological tradition of Islam. They have not created any new religious sect, but ardently support the same fundamental beliefs and deeds that the majority of Muslim Ummah believes in. In fact, with their wisdom and perseverance, they have always tried their best to prevent these beliefs from becoming tainted in any way. It is for this reason that some hostile people have tried to give an impression as if the 'Ulama of Deoband have created a new sect altogether. A book by Hakeem ul Islam, Hazrat Maulana Qari Muhammad Tayyab Sahab رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, titled, 'Ulama-e-Deoband ka deeni rukh aur maslaki mizaaj' (The Religious Way and the School of thought of the Scholars of Deoband) is a remarkable book on this topic, and in its preface, I have further explicated upon this very subject.

Here, however, what I wish to explain is that despite holding the Ulema of Deoband as my ideals in religious matters, I do not like saying that I am a 'Deobandi' with regards to my religious school of thought, as the term carries a tinge of sectarianism. I am, otherwise, a Deobandi by birth, and by Allah's ﷻ grace I am honoured to have been born in a town where Dar ul Uloom,

Deoband, yielded such mountains of knowledge, steadfastness and character the examples of which are hard to find in these end of times.

In Deoband, our grandfathers were famously known as 'Miyani Ji'. Miyani Ji was a title in those days about which our respected father (Mufti Shafi Usmani رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) had said:

"It appears that it was the teachers in the common centers of learning – where after the study of the Holy Qur'an, the study of Urdu, Persian and Mathematics was commonly imparted, and the standard of these studies was way better than that of the education in secondary schools today – found in villages, were referred to by the title of 'Miyani Ji'. These people embodied the essence of religious learning along with learning practical skill – Miyani Ji Noor Muhammad Saheb رحمۃ اللہ علیہ (the Shaykh of Hazrat Haji Imdad Ullah Muhajir Makki رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) gathered fame in metalwork, and Miyani Ji Munnay Shah Saheb رحمۃ اللہ علیہ scaled heights of spirituality".

My Respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ has also written the following:

"I have not been able to get hold of any reliable and uninterrupted family tree document, but Shari'ah does not consider it binding for proving the authenticity of a continuous chain in these matters; In fact, the word of mouth as it passes down through our elders is considered evidence enough; and I have always heard from my elders that we are the progeny of Hazrat Usman Ghani رضی اللہ عنہ (the details about our lineage can be found in my father's book, Mere Waalid Maajid)."

I was born on 5th Shawwal, 1342 AH. I saw this date of birth written down in my father's handbook. During those times, it was customary to keep record of important dates in accordance with the Hijra calendar, hence, my father didn't record the Gregorian date of my birth along with the hijri one. Later, however, after referring to several calendars, it was calculated that my date of birth was the 3rd of October 1943. I have also heard an incident from my respected mother and siblings that on the day that I was born, a snake fell off from the roof on the bed where I was laid down. Had it not been removed from the bed and killed, perhaps this world would have remained free from my ills.

Anyway, I got to spend only four years and seven months of my life (from October 1943 to May 1948) in the town of Deoband. There I spent only that part of my childhood in which a child has no knowledge of the world beyond that of his play, and later, when he grows up, he forgets everything related to that period of his life. But I remember many things of that Deoband of my childhood, as vividly as if I'm witnessing them right before my eyes.

Those were the times when the houses of Deoband had neither electricity, nor fans, neither taps with running water, nor oil or gas stoves. Instead of the electric lights, there were either candles or lanterns. In place of taps, water was kept in clay pots or steel vessels, and the services of a water-carrier (maashki) were often required in order to fill those vessels. The carrier would tie a big leather container to his waist, and deliver water from house to house. If a community or a locality was fashionable and affluent community, they would drill the earth, and install a big metal tap over there, which would be used to fill a bucket or a vessel by swiftly moving its handle up and down. Apart from providing water, one more benefit that this tap yielded was that it helped in exercising not only one's hands, but the entire body. As my age wasn't appropriate for this exercise, I used to feel happy merely by seeing others swing away with this handle. There used to be long-necked clay flasks (suraahi) in houses

for drinking water, which would finally become cool after surviving the hot winds of summer. Instead of the electric fans, there used to be hand-fans, which are truly missed today during a power outage.

When the intense heat of the summer would radiate itself from the walls of the houses, some water-carrier would sprinkle water onto the bricked floors; and then when the hand-fans would be used to direct wind towards oneself, the watered earth would start giving away the scent of the sand – all this would be done to get some coolness in the sweltering weather. In this weather,



when I would lay down with my mother on a charpai (a traditional woven bed), there would be no polluted barrier of petrol or deisel between myself and the endless stars in the sky. Not a single star would fade into oblivion due to the presence of any kind of light. I would keep on staring at the twinkling stars in the web of galaxy, and the milky way. As kids, we would refer to this milky way as a heavenly pathway created by Allah

for Angels. I would often drift off to sleep thinking about Angels bustling about on the milky way.

-To be Continued, Insha'Allah.



Had We Known...

Had Allah lifted the veil for his slave and shown him how He handles his affairs for him, and how Allah is more keen for the benefit of the slave than his own self, his heart would have melted out of the love for Allah and would have been torn to pieces out of thankfulness to Allah.

Therefore, if the pains of this world tire you, do not grieve. For it may be that Allah wishes to hear your voice by way of du'a. So pour out your desires in prostration and forget about it and know; that verily Allah does not forget it.

- Ibn al-Qayyim rahimahullah



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