

Vol 8 / Issue 4 / Jun-Jul 2018

# The Intellect

Re-awakening to the  
ideals of a Blessed Life

Al Quran  
Surah Nisa – Part 9

Al Hadith  
Ma'ariful Hadith

The Awakening  
The Reality of Trials

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# Editorial

Dear Readers,

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

There are many paths that lead to attaining Allah's ﷻ pleasure, most are thorny, some are long and some veiled from the seeker's sight. But there are certain essentials that mark all these courses.

*In Pursuit of Allah ﷻ*, our Cover Story outlines some of these prerequisites: an all-encompassing, all-overriding love for Allah ﷻ, a fixation to stick to the good along with a purposeful abhorrence of the bad, a broken heart and most importantly, the company of the followers of *Rijal-ul-Allah*.

The stream of *hidaya* (guidance) for mankind originates from not just *Kitab-ul-Allah* (the books sent down by Allah ﷻ, the Holy Qur'an being an epitome in the series), but also from the Prophets ﷺ sent forward to guide people in the teachings of the books; because no teaching can be correctly understood, internalized and practiced without a practical guide.

Mufti Taqi Usmani رحمته الله elucidates this in his *Islahi Khutbat* by drawing on some interesting examples from daily life. He says, there is a plethora of books on medicine in many languages in the world, but would any sane person be willing to risk his life by visiting a 'doctor' who has become one by only reading these medical books? Similarly, a carpenter who has learnt his skill by becoming an apprentice to an expert would be much more reliable than one who is self-taught. And along similar lines, we observe that the fry of fish begin to swim as soon as they exit their eggs in water but if a human being emulates the same by pushing a child into a pool without first teaching him how to swim, the result would be nothing short of a tragedy.

Thus, human beings require practical guides and models in life to emulate and follow; they need a good, pious, righteous company to stay the course, to remain steadfast in pursuit of Allah's ﷻ pleasure, (which is one's ultimate goal). And this need of fine company cannot be emphasized enough in our chaotic and tumultuous times.

A classic example of such contemporary confusion is pinpointed in *The Modern Mu'tazila in Ululbab*. The obsessive need to be like 'others' and to accept whatever information flows towards us from the West at face value is a societal bane.

It is common observation thus, that if in one year 'eggs' are declared to be the culprits behind high cholesterol levels, we rush to reduce their intake and if the next year another "study" proves the first one off the mark, we accept it blindly, because we trust the source, the West. There is negligible effort to study things on our own and even when there is, we consider it unreliable. On similar footings, if our religion guides us to a particular way of eating or a hygiene habit, our minds tend to constrict its benefits to the time and space of revelation; and if the same thing is "proved" elsewhere, we embrace it without a second





thought. The problem is, that if this same attitude is applied to our all-embracing religious beliefs and practices, God forbid, the ensuing disaster would be difficult to avert save through collective *Istighfar*.

The subject of 'seeking forgiveness' brings us to our inclusion in *Action Alerts.....Istighfar* – a pertinent reminder.

\*\*\*\*\*

A scholar was once staying in a rest house located in Islamabad's residential area. At 3 am, a fire broke out in the house and it took the fire brigade up to 9 o' clock in the morning to put out the blaze. *And for all these five, six hours, says the scholar, not a single neighbor come out to check whether someone needed help next door! What a pity.*

One prays that we are not amongst those who are oblivious to the plight and pain of others. On the flip side, let us also hope that we are not a part and parcel of those who get carried away in their festive moments (or otherwise), to the extent that they trample upon the rights of those residing around them. This theme continues in *A Sleepless Night in Reflections*.

It is thus very unfortunate, that we've forgotten the legacy of our elders in *deen*. Maulana Aziz ur Rehman رحمان, a scholar and *Mufti* in Deoband, used to bring groceries for the widows in his neighborhood. If they complained that he did not bring the correct supply or the correct amount, he would go back and forth to the market till the mistake was rectified. All this, when he held the honorific of *Mufti-e-Azam* of Dar-ul-Uloom Deoband and has ten volumes of *Fatawa* to his credit! *SubhanAllah*.

Let us peep into our souls.....are we even on the same planet?!

Wassalam,

Zawjah Farid





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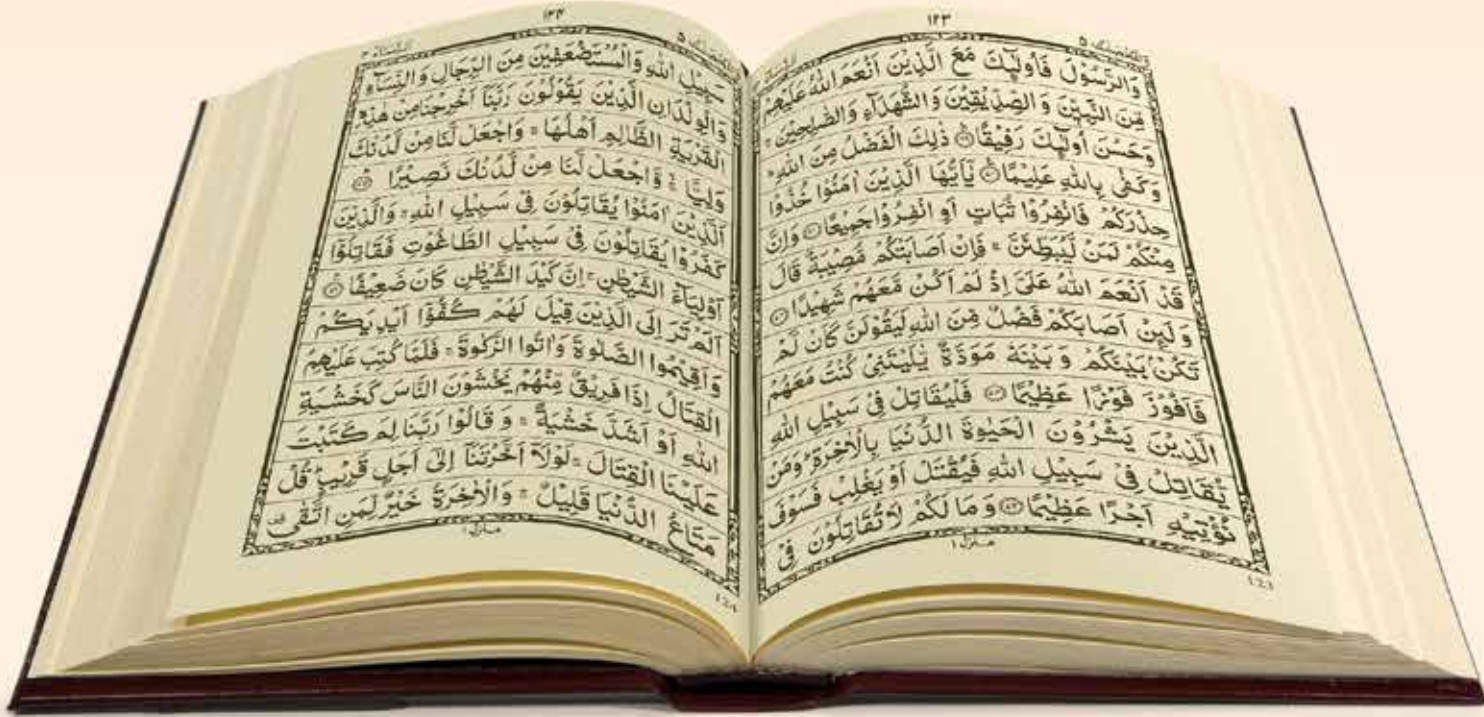


# The Meanings of the Quran

By Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani حفظه الله

## Surah An-Nisa'

Translation with Arabic Text



يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا خُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ فَانفِرُوا ثُبَاتٍ أَوِ انفِرُوا جَمِيعًا ﴿٧١﴾

71. O you who believe, be on your guard, and march in groups, or march all together.

وَإِنَّ مِنْكُمْ لَمَنْ لَيُبَطِّئَنَّ فَإِنْ أَصَابَكُمْ مِصِيبَةٌ قَالَ قَدْ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيَّ إِذْ لَمْ أَكُنْ مَعَهُمْ شَهِيدًا ﴿٧٢﴾

72. Among you there is one (34) who shall invariably fall back; then, if some calamity befalls you, he would say, "Allah has shown His favor to me, as I was not present with them."

وَلَئِنْ أَصَابَكُمْ فَضْلٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ لَيَقُولَنَّ كَأَنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُ مَوَدَّةٌ يَا لَيْتَنِي كُنْتُ مَعَهُمْ فَأَفُورٌ قَوْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٧٣﴾

73. And if some bounty comes to you from Allah, he will certainly say, as if there was no friendship between you and him "Oh, would that I had been with them; then I would have secured a handsome gain."

فَلْيُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يَشْرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ وَمَنْ يُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيُقْتَلْ أَوْ يَغْلِبْ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٧٤﴾

74. So, those who sell the worldly life for the Hereafter should fight in the way of Allah. Whoever fights in the way of Allah, then gets Killed or prevails, We shall give a great reward to him

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ الظَّالِمِ أَهْلُهَا وَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا وَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ نَصِيرًا ﴿٧٥﴾

75. What has happened to you that you do not fight in the way of Allah, and for the oppressed among men, women and children who say, "Our Lord, take us out from this town whose people are cruel, and make for us a supporter from Your own, and make for us a helper from your own."

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ الطَّاغُوتِ فَقَاتِلُوا أَوْلِيَاءَ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا ﴿٧٦﴾

76. The believers fight in the way of Allah, and the disbelievers fight in the way of Taghut. So, fight the friends of Satan. No doubt, the guile of Satan is feeble.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لِمَ كَتَبْتَ عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالَ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنَا إِلَى أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ قُلْ مَتَاعَ الدُّنْيَا قَلِيلٌ وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِمَنِ اتَّقَى وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا ﴿٧٧﴾

77. Have you not seen those to whom it was said , "Hold your hands (from fighting) and be steadfast in Salah and pay Zakah." However, when fighting is enjoined upon them, then surprisingly, a group from them starts fearing people, as one would fear Allah, or fearing even more. They say, "Our Lord , why have you enjoined fighting upon us? Would you have not spared us for a little more time?(35) Say, "The enjoyment of the world is but a little, and the Hereafter is far better for the one who fears Allah, and you shall not be wronged, even to the measure of a fiber.

أَيْنَمَا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِكُكُمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ مُشَيَّدَةٍ وَإِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ حَسَنَةٌ يَقُولُوا هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَإِنْ نَصَبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةً يَقُولُوا هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ قُلْ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ فَمَالِ هَؤُلَاءِ الْقَوْمِ لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ حَدِيثًا ﴿٧٨﴾

78. Wherever you will be Death will overtake you, even though you are in fortified castles. "If some good comes to them, (36) they say, "This is from Allah." But if some evil visits them, they say, "This is from you," All is from Allah. " So, what is wrong with these people , they do not seem to understand anything?

مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ وَأَرْسَلْنَاكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولًا وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا ﴿٧٩﴾

79. Whatever good comes to you , it is from Allah and whatever evil visits you , it comes from your own selves.(37) We have sent you to be a Messenger for the people. Allah is enough to be a witness.

مَنْ يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ وَمَنْ تَوَلَّى فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا ﴿٨٠﴾

80. Whoever obeys the Messenger obeys Allah, and whoever turns away, then, We did not send you to stand guard over them.

## Explanation

34. Reference here is to the hypocrites.

35. When the Muslims were being persecuted in Makkah , they asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ for permission to fight in their defense, but they were ordered to endure for hardships with patience, avoid fighting and attend to Salah & Zakah and other modes of worship , so that they develop spiritual qualities required for jihad. But when they migrated to Madinah, and jihad was enjoined upon them, some of them felt it difficult to leave the peaceful life they had just started after a long time of persecution and trial. The verse refers to such people.

36. This part of the verse refers to the Jews who were well off in Madinah before the Holy Prophet ﷺ migrated there. But when he came to Madinah, and the Jews rejected his call towards Islam, they suffered a decline in their income as punishment for their rejection.

At this point, they blamed the Holy Prophet ﷺ that their misfortune was caused by him. The present verse refutes them by saying that prosperity and misfortune both are by the will of Allah, and according to His wisdom.

37. The sense is that if someone acquires some good , it is merely a grace from Allah because if he is disobedient, he does not deserve any blessing from Allah, and if he is obedient, his obedience is always short of what he owed towards Allah. Therefore , Allah has no liability towards anyone. On the other hand, if someone faces a calamity or hardship, it is always attributable to some of his own misdeeds.

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# Ma'ariful Hadith

by Maulana Manzoor Ahmed Naumani رحمۃ اللہ علیہ

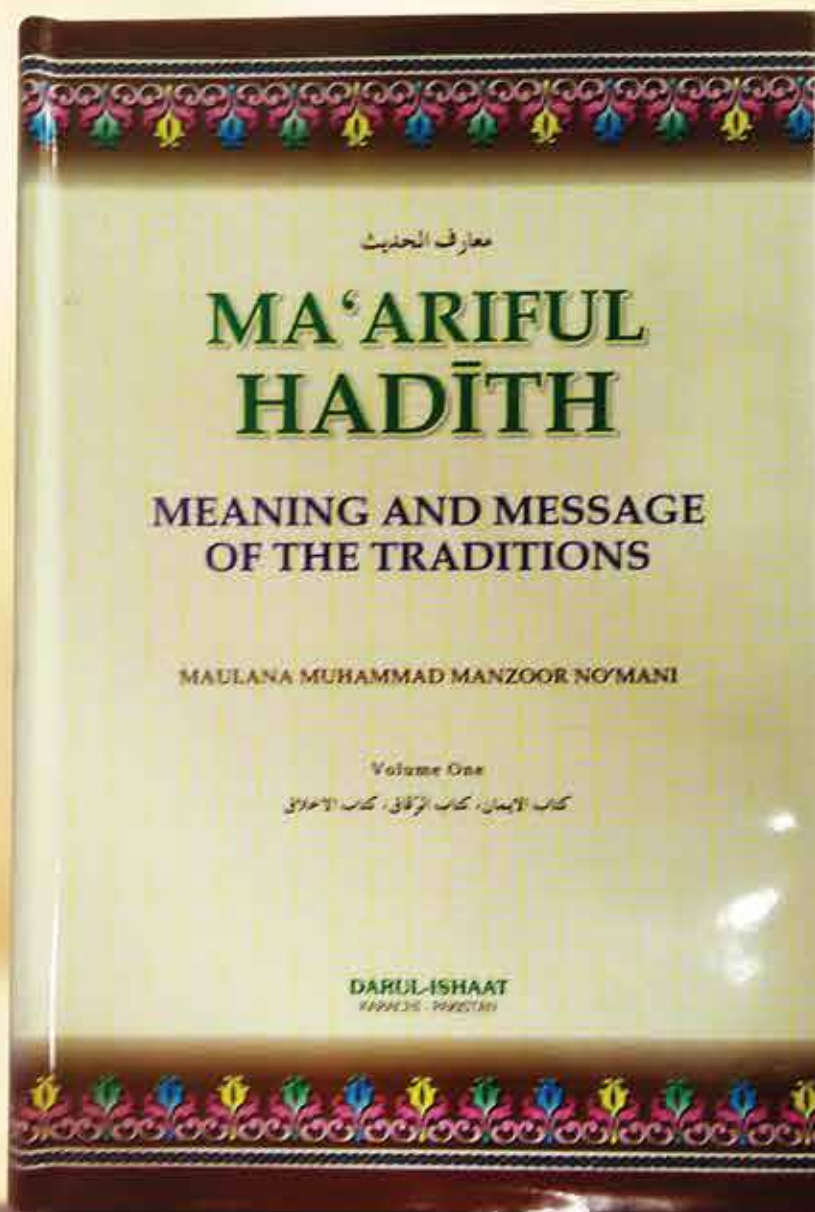
(10/10) It is related by A'mash Tabi'ee. on the authority of his teacher Abu Salih [not being certain whether he had related it on the authority of Abu Hurairah or Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri] that during the days of the Battle of Tabook when the stock of food had been used up completely and people were tormented with hunger, they said to the Prophet ﷺ, Messenger of Allah! If you allow, we may kill the water-carrying camels and eat their flesh as well as obtain oil from them." The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Yes: you may do it." Then, Umar came to him and said: "O Messenger of Allah! If you do that [i.e.. allow them to slaughter the camels], we will run short of transport [it, therefore not be done] In its place, tell them to bring whatever provisions are left with them, then pray to Allah for an increase in the supply of food. It is hoped that Allah will grant an increase in it." "Yes; you are right," the Prophet ﷺ replied. He, thereupon, sent for a bare piece of leather (on which food is laid out. When it was spread on the ground, the Prophet ﷺ ordered the men to bring what was left with them of the food stuffs. Thus, somebody came with a handful of Zurra, somebody with a handful of dates and somebody with a piece of bread till these articles were laid down, in a small quantity, on the piece of leather. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ, then prayed for an increase, and said to them, " Now, fill your vessels from it. "They all filled their vessels so that [in the army of about thirty thousand] not a single vessel remained empty. Every one ate to his heart's content and some of the food was still left. On that the Prophet ﷺ said, " I affirm that there is no deity save Allah and I am his Messenger. There is no bondsman who appears before Allah with these two affirmations made sincerely and

without a trace of reservation and yet is prevented from entering Paradise."

**Commentary:** The import of the above saying is obvious. The purpose of reproducing it here is related to its concluding part in which the Prophet ﷺ, after bearing testimony to the oneness of Allah and his own Messengership has declared that whoever affirms these two things honestly and truthfully, and dies in that state shall go to heaven.

Those who are acquainted a little with the mode of expression of the Qur'an and the prophetic traditions will be knowing that the testimony of Allah's Oneness and the Prophet's mission necessarily implies the acknowledgement of the religious call of the sacred Prophet ﷺ and the two affirmations by anyone is always taken to mean that he has accepted the Prophet's call and embraced the creed of Islam. This tradition, therefore, signifies no more and no less than this that whoever on the pronouncement of the formula of *la illaaha illAllah Muhammad-ur Rasool-ullah* (There is no deity save Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger Of Allah) accepts the religious call of the Prophet ﷺ and makes Islam his faith from the bottom of his heart and with full certainty and dies in that state will, doubtlessly, go to Heaven.

It logically follows that if a person makes a formal declaration of the formula of Faith but does not embrace Islam and continues to profess some other religion or acknowledges Divine Unity and Messengership but rejects the other principal tenets like belief in the Qur'an and the Hereafter, he shall not be worthy of the glad tidings contained in the above tradition.



In fact, in this saying the testimony of the Unity of Allah and the mission of the Prophet stands for the recognition of the religious call of the divine Messenger and acceptance of Islam as one's faith. The other traditions in which the tidings of the Paradise are given only on the affirmation of Divine Unity and the pronouncement of *La-ilaha-illal-lah* also convey the same meaning.

These are, in fact, the familiar and spiritual message of the Prophet ﷺ and the embracing of the faith of Islam.

This Tradition also shows, incidentally, that:-

(i) However great or important a man may be, even if he is a Messenger of Allah, if he expresses

his opinion on anything and a follower or servant of his, endowed with a sound judgement, feels that it is erroneous or harmful, he should not hesitate to place his considered view respectfully before him and the person of higher rank or position should, on his part think calmly over it, and, if it appears to be a better and wiser suggestion, accept it in preference to his own idea.

(ii) The granting of a supplication and, specially, the manifestation of the acceptance thereof in a supernatural manner is among the signs of

Allah ﷻ, and an exceptional indication of His favour that it is the source of promotion of inner happiness and tranquility among the believers is beyond dispute.



## *The States of the Heart*

The states of the heart, one should know the praiseworthy qualities which one must adopt, and the blameworthy qualities which one must avoid.

As for the praiseworthy traits, they include reliance on Allah, sincerity for Him, praise and thankfulness for His blessings, repentance from one's sins, fear, hope, abstinence, love, patience, pleasure with His decree, and the remembrance of death.

As for the blameworthy traits, they include greed for food and drink, and a dislike of hunger (given its many benefits such as the purity and softness of the heart, humiliation of the lower self, breaking lusts, and the departure of excessive sleep which prevents worship), eagerness for speech regarding what does not benefit one (the tongue has many faults, the most severe of which are backbiting, lying, and excessive joking and praise), anger, envy, stinginess, love of rank, love of the world, arrogance, pride, and showing off.

- From 'The Guidance for the Intelligent' by Shyakh Zayn ud Deen Malabari al Chishti رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهَا



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# Tasks and Secrets Associated with Fasting

By Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī and Ibn al-Jawzi  
Translated by Shaykh Musa Furber

Know that fasting contains a distinctive characteristic not found elsewhere. It is being ascribed to Allah Mighty and Majestic, where He (Transcendent is He) says, "Fasting is Mine, and I give reward for it." This ascription suffices as honor, just as the Ka'ba is ascribed to Allah Most High when He says, "And purify My house" (al-Hajj, 26).

Fasting has superiority because of two concepts. The first is that fasting is a secret and an internal action that no one sees, so showing-off does not enter it.

The second is that fasting subdues the enemies of Allah since the means that the enemies of Allah use is lusts, and lusts are strengthened through eating and drinking. As long as the ground of lusts remains fertile, Devils will frequent its pasture; by abandoning lusts one constricts for them those paths.

There are many reports concerning the merit of fasting, and they are well known.

## Recommended Measures Associated With Fasting

It is desirable to eat before beginning the fast, and that it be delayed [until close to beginning the fast]; that one hasten to break the fast, and that it be done with ripe date.

During Ramadan, it is desirable to be generous, do good works, and give much charity – out of following the Prophet ﷺ.

It is desirable to study the Quran, to make a [spiritual] retreat during Ramadan – especially during the last ten days – and to increase one's efforts.

Bukhari and Muslim included [a] narration from 'A'ishah (Allah be pleased with her) wherein she said, "When the [last] ten [days] entered, the Prophet ﷺ would tighten his waist-wrapper, stay up

at night, and wake up family."

The scholars have mentioned two aspects concerning "tighten his waist-wrapper." The first is that it means avoiding his wives. The second is that it is an allusion to diligence and preparation for works. They said that the reason for his efforts during the last ten nights was out of seeking the Night of Power (laylat al-qadr).

## Clarifying The Secrets Of Fasting And Its Etiquette

There are three ranks to fasting: (1) the fast of the masses, (2) the elect, and (3) the elite of the elect.

1) The fast of the masses is restraining one's stomach and genitals from achieving their lusts.

2) The fast of the elect is restraining one's glance, tongue, hands, legs, hearing, vision, and all other physical faculties from sins.

3) The fast of the elite of the elect is the heart fasting from base aspirations, and thoughts that take one away from Allah; and restraining the heart in totality from everything save Allah. (This type of fasting has explanations that come elsewhere.)

The etiquette of the fast of the elect includes lowering the gaze, protecting the tongue from unlawful or offensive speech which is hurtful, or [simply] offers no benefit, and guarding the remaining physical faculties.

One of the hadiths narrated in Bukhari is that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever has not left untruthful talk and acting upon it: Allah has no need of him putting aside his food and drink."

Its etiquette includes not filling up with food and drink at night, but rather eat portions since mankind fills no container [more evil] than his stomach – since whenever one eats his fill at the beginning of the night he will not be of use to

himself for the rest of the night. It is the same regarding eating one's fill before beginning the fast: he will be of no use to himself until near noon, since too much food leads to laziness and abatement. And besides: the whole purpose of fasting is missed by eating too much, since the point is that one taste hunger, and forgo what he desires.

### Voluntary Fasts

As for voluntary fasts: know that the desirability of fasting becomes emphatic during meritorious days.

Some of the meritorious days are once each year, such as fasting six days of Shawwal after Ramadan, the day of 'Arafah, 'Ashura', the first ten days of Dhi l-Hijja, and the month of Muharram.

Some of the meritorious days repeat each month, like [the first day at] the beginning of the month, the middle, and the end. Whoever fasts the beginning, middle, and end of the month has done right – other than it being best that one make the three days [if one fasts just three days each month] (the "White Days").

Some of the days repeat each week; they are Monday and Thursday.

The most superior voluntary fast is the fast of Dawud (peace be upon him): he would fast for one day, and breakfast for one day.

### Fasting thus combines three concepts:

1) That the nafs is given its share the day the fast is broken, and fulfils its devotion the day it fasts. By this, it combines between what it is entitled to and what is incumbent upon it; and this is fair.

2) That the day one eats is a day of thanks, and the day one fasts is a day of patience. And faith is two halves: thanks, and patience.

3) It is more difficult on the nafs regarding one's [spiritual] efforts [against the self], since every time the nafs begins yearning for one state, it is removed from it.

### Fasting Perpetually

As for fasting perpetually, one of the reports that Muslim included (but not Bukhari) is narrated from Qatada (Allah be pleased with him) that 'Omar (Allah be pleased with him) asked the Prophet ﷺ, "What of someone who fasts perpetually, all the time?" He ﷺ replied, "He has no fast, and no breaking fast," or: "he did not fast, and he did not break the fast." This hadith is interpreted to apply to someone who consecutively fasts [without breaking fast for] the days which are forbidden to fast. As for someone who breaks fast on the two days of Eid and the days of Tashriq [during Hajj]: there is no harm in this.

It was related from Hisham bin 'Urwah (Allah grant him mercy) that his father would consecutively fast, and 'A'ishah (Allah be pleased with her) would consecutively fast.

Anas bin Malik (Allah be pleased with him) said that Abu Talha consecutively fasted after the [death of the] Prophet ﷺ for forty years.

Know that whomever has been granted astuteness knows the purpose of fasting, and induces himself [to fast] to the extent that it does not debilitate him from superior deeds.

Ibn Mas'ud (Allah be pleased with him) fasted little. He would say, "If I fast, I become too weak to pray. And I prefer prayer over fasting."

Some of them would become too weak to recite Quran when they fasted, so they would increase the amount they broke fast in order to be able to recite.

Every person knows his condition and what is best for himself.

# The Reality of Trials

## Three Different Angles to Trials

There is no human in the world who doesn't face trials. Problems do arise, but, the fortunate ones mould the trial into a blessing for themselves, making it a source of success in the Hereafter and pleasing Allah ﷻ through their patience.

There are three different angles to every problem and trial that one faces in the world:

- The problem or trial is a punishment of sins
- The problem or trial serves as an atonement for sins
- The problem or trial is a means of elevation of the person's rank (in the Hereafter)

All problems that inflict men and women come from these very directions: that either it is a punishment of sins, an atonement of sins or a source of rank-elevation.

## How to Categorise Problems

There are ways of categorising problems too, so that one can recognise the angle through which a particular problem has approached us.

### First Sign

Once a problem or trial besets someone and if they do not refrain from sinning, and do not turn towards Allah ﷻ, continuing with their life as before or in a worse manner, then be sure that the problem is a punishment of sins from Allah.

If you have business problems; if you fall ill; your home gets robbed or you face any other kind of hardship, please do self-accountability and take stock of your state of affairs; you will then be able to assess the problem type.

### Second Sign

If in the hour of trial and problem, in the hour of sickness and loss, the servant turns towards

Allah ﷻ, repents and the course of his life alters, he pleads before Allah ﷻ then be sure that the problem or trial is becoming a source of atonement of his previous sins and a catalyst of change for his future life. Hence, such a problem, though seems like a problem, but is in fact, a blessing; such a hardship, though appears like hardship, but is in fact, a blessing; it gives the impression of a trial but will in fact be a source of elevation in one's rank.

## Trials through Blessings

Just like many a times blessings appear as blessings, but may in fact be an expression of Allah's wrath.

## A saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ implies:

Allah is opening the doors of blessings and the servant is increasing his disobedience of Allah and he is not arrested, chastised. So, this sinful servant assumes that this blessing is a wonderful one; though, in reality, it spells trouble, granted to him by Allah as a form of respite and delay

(Tanbeeh-ul-Ghafilteen, Pg.121)

Outwardly, in appearance, it seems like a favour, while, in fact, it signifies impending trouble.

At times, a trial appears like a problem, but in this hour of trial if one turns to Allah ﷻ, seeks forgiveness, lets go of sins, the problem then, in reality, becomes a blessing for him. This is a sign of Allah ﷻ forgiving his sins and favouring him with a chance to change the course of his life. These two forms come upon ordinary *Momins*.

## Allah's Favoured People Face More Trials

People whose lives are free from sins, Allah's favoured people, face the third form of trials; Prophets ﷺ. They face problems too, in fact, our Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

Prophets face most trials; then, the more a person's life closely mirrors that of Prophets', as much would he keep getting afflicted by trials.

(Tirmidhi, Book of Zuhd, Baab-Ma'aja Fil Sabr Aa'lal Balaa, Vol.2, Pg.65)

We must understand this point, because today, we are so engrossed in materialism that our hearts and minds have forgotten the standards of Allah's favour (appreciation) and rejection (repulsion); our minds are so impacted by materialism that we have lost knowledge of what signifies Allah's favour and what signifies His rejection.

Our standards have changed. Whoever is better off in the material sense, we consider him a favoured person and whoever keeps facing trials in following Allah's Deen (complete way of life), we portray him differently.

So these trials that are faced by Allah's favoured people are a source of elevation of their rank. Prophetic traditions relate that Allah ﷻ selects a high position for a particular person, but due to his weaknesses, he is unable to put into practice acts that would make him attain that position; then, Allah ﷻ brings a trial upon him and he remains patient during it. Thus, Allah blesses him in attaining that high position.

(Ahya-ul-Uloom, Vol.4, Pg.174)

So those people who lead sinless lives and still face trials, it implies that their grade keeps elevating.

We will surely face trials in this world, in fact, all sorts of trials: from other people, from our business point of view, through our families; at times one has to bear other people's comments. When one tries to follow Deen, he gets to hear adverse comments from many. Actually, those who possess more qualities make more people jealous.

### The Great Imam Abu Hanifa's Patience

Imam Abu Hanifa had been blessed with brilliance in all fields, so there were many who were jealous of him. Once a man came to him (at the time Abu Hanifa's father was dead and his mother was around 90 years old). This person tried to hurt him by making painful comments and said: 'your mother is a very beautiful woman. I want to send a proposal of marriage for her'. Imam Abu Hanifa understood his intent and replied: 'my mother is mature and intelligent, I cannot say anything without her consent; I will go and ask for her permission'. Abu Hanifa stood up

and had barely taken a few steps that the person felt some kind of pain in his stomach and died then and there.

(Aslaaf Kay Iman Afrooz Waqait, Pg.128)

Imam Abu Hanifa's patience took his life. When a person becomes patient, Allah ﷻ becomes his Helper.

### An Eye-opening Incident

A very stirring happening is related in books: an Allah's favoured person was going somewhere. While walking, muddy slime from his foot accidentally landed on a woman's clothes. Her husband, who was with her at the time, got very upset; he loved her a lot and because of her clothes getting spoilt, gave the sage a piece of his mind; he said all sorts of bad things and hurt him, but the old man kept quite and walked away. A little further, another person, out of respect, offered the old man something to drink. The sage remarked: 'O Allah! Your system is amazing: some beat us and through some You help us drink'.

In the meantime, when the couple who had hurt him reached home, the husband slipped while climbing up the stairs, fell down and died! The woman felt that maybe the old man had cursed them.

People went over to the old man, narrated the events and commented: *you cursed them for such a minor thing?* The sage replied: *'I didn't curse them. The fact is that the man really loved his wife and he couldn't allow her to be pained; Allah loves me. This person pained me, so Allah couldn't allow it either!'*

This is what Allah ﷻ refers to when He says: enmity with Allah's friends is like declaring war against Allah!

(Mishkat, Vol.1, Pg.197)

So what I am trying to instill is that when a person adopts patience, Allah ﷻ becomes his Helper. Allah stands with the patient ones.

"Truly, Allah is with the As-Sabirun (the patient)".  
(Surah Al-Baqarah 2: 153)

### Take Stock of Yourself During Trials

A human faces different kinds of situations in this world. Intelligence demands that we should first assess the situation to classify the form of the trial: whether it really is a problem or it is outwardly so. Then, self-accounting is foremost: if one's life is free from sins but still a problem arises, then, consider it a manifestation of Allah's Love.

# IN PURSUIT OF ALLAH وَتَعَالَى الْحَمْدُ

By Muhammad Areeb Nafeyuddin Siddiqui

Let's go back in time. Jinns, not humans, populate the Earth. Fast-forward many years, the Jinns' disobedience to Allah ﷻ heightens and the planet is in a state of total chaos. Allah ﷻ then decrees that the planet be cleansed from Jinns. The Angels, obedient as they are, carry out the purge, and all, save a small faction, of the Jinns are annihilated as stage is now set on the Earth to house a new creation: al-Insaan.

During this whole time, there was one Jinn, Iblis, who stood out from the rest. It is said that there is no place on either the land or the sea where he had not prostrated before Allah ﷻ. For this reason, he had a special status amongst the Jinn, so much so that he was allowed to sit with the angels, and was present when Allah ﷻ announced to the Angels His Plan of inhabiting the Earth with al-Insaan.

Now we all know the story of how, after creating Hazrat Adam ﷺ, Allah ﷻ ordered the Angels and Iblis to prostrate before him and the latter refused, and for this transgression, has been the accursed—al-Rajeem—ever since.

Now time for a story in contrast. We are in the early days of Islam and an Abyssinian slave of a Makkan chief Ummayah ibn Khalf, has embraced Islam. The master is tempestuous and has him dragged bare-backed on the hot sands of Makkah. A heavy stone is placed on his chest and he is forced to relinquish his faith, but to no avail, as the slave keeps calling out "Al-Ahad, Al-Ahad". Fifteen to twenty years down the lane, Rasulallah ﷺ comes up to him and asks, "O Bilal! What is it that you do that I have heard your footsteps ahead of me in Paradise?"

Any attempt at doing a comparative analysis of these two incidents brings us to the million-dollar question: what went wrong for Iblis during his downslide from having a status amongst the Angels to becoming the Satan, and on the other hand, what caused the status of that lowly Abyssinian slave to skyrocket to such heights?

In case of Iblis, was it a lack of *Ilm*, or knowledge? Well, definitely not. He had been sitting with Angels for quite a long time before the incident

occurred. Furthermore, he is shrewder than we can imagine. A master tactician, Iblis can switch from being a scholar to a saint when trying to mislead different groups of people—transformations one cannot expect from someone of inferior knowledge. The reason can't be a deficiency of *Ibaadah*, or worship, either. I stated earlier that Iblis worshipped Allah ﷻ extensively, and we find different narrations about how long had he been involved in worship before he became the Satan. Nor can it be a lack of 'Urf, or awareness of Allah's ﷻ attributes and His Nature. Had Iblis not been an 'Aarif, he would never have had the audacity to ask Allah ﷻ to grant him life until the Final Day so that he may mislead His people, and that too immediately after he had enraged Allah ﷻ with his transgression and had been anathematized by Him.

If you notice, all three traits that I mentioned (*Ilm*, *Ibaadah* and 'Urf) begin with the Arabic alphabet  $\epsilon$ . Even though Iblis was equipped with the aforementioned three  $\epsilon$ s, there was yet a fourth  $\epsilon$  which was the actual game changer. It was this fourth  $\epsilon$  which elevated the status of Hazrat Bilal  $\text{ؓ}$  to unimaginable heights, and it was the absence of the same which caused Iblis to plummet to unimaginable lows.

This last  $\epsilon$  stands for *Ishq*—love for Allah ﷻ.

Two months back I was asked by Ihsan Institute Karachi to conduct a session titled "A Match Made in Heaven: On Love for Allah ﷻ and Its Rewards". The topic is worded so to give an impression that loving Allah ﷻ is a really nice and high-yielding option. But as I prepared my session and researched the topic, I came to realize that loving Allah ﷻ isn't really an option; rather, it is a compulsion. And that's what the crux of the contrasting stories presented above is: if loving Allah ﷻ was an option and not a compulsion, Iblis wouldn't have become the Satan since Allah ﷻ does not punish His creations on things that are optional.

Having stated the importance of literally drenching oneself in the love of Allah ﷻ, it now

brings us to the question of how we can develop love for our Creator and our Lord. This is where the catch comes: loving Allah ﷻ, or to be more appropriate, developing the love for Allah ﷻ isn't as easy as it may sound, largely for the reason that Allah ﷻ is al-Ghuyyoor and it does not align with His Pride that His Love enters a heart housed in a body that sins and is contaminated with the love of anything He has prohibited.

This decontamination of the heart is the first and foremost prerequisite for developing the love for Allah ﷻ. And why shouldn't it be? When Allah ﷻ planned the Earth to be inhabited with al-Insaan, He cleansed the planet from the Jinn. So it is perfectly justified that when one wants Allah ﷻ to inhabit his heart, his heart should also be cleansed of all kinds of filth.

I mentioned in one of my previous articles that matters and discretionary routines pertaining to the heart are difficult to develop, and the only way to free the heart from the love of what has been prohibited, is to act according to how Allah ﷻ has ordered us. These acts, as Hazrat Maulana Shah Hakeem Muhammad Akhtar Sahab ﷺ explains them, are of two types: the "positive terminal deeds" and the "negative terminal deeds".

To explain this analogy, let me bring in some basic Physics here. Recall the chapter of electrical circuits that you definitely would've studied. In order for any circuit component to work, it must be connected to both, the positive and negative terminals of the battery. Disconnection at either terminal will cause the circuit not to work. Similarly, in order for our hearts to light up with the Nur of Allah ﷻ, we must do both, "positive terminal deeds" and "negative terminal deeds".

So what lies at each of the terminals? Well, if you take a generalized look at all that has been ordained by Allah ﷻ, you'll see a marked dichotomy. Either these are acts that we are supposed to do (like offering our prayers, giving charity and fasting): these lie on the positive terminal; or these are acts that we are not

supposed to do (like indulging in *haraam* relationships, lying, backbiting and cheating): these lie at the negative terminal. Once we are able to link the wires of our lives to these two terminals, we can hope that our hearts will light up with the Nur of Allah ﷻ.

Now let's talk about two highly potent catalysts that will play a pivotal role in facilitating us in attaining Allah's love. These are company of the *Saliheen* or the pious, and a broken heart.

The importance of a good company cannot be underscored at any cost. There is a reason why Rasulallah ﷺ said that making good friends is half of all intelligence (Mishkat, p. 420), and why the Qur'an enjoins the Believers to associate themselves with the *Sadiqeen*. I'll share some examples to reinforce my point.

1. Rasulallah ﷺ once visited a Jew's house whose young son was on his deathbed. Rasulallah ﷺ offered Islam to him at that point, and the father advised the son to embrace Islam. The boy died shortly afterwards. This boy, **without offering even a single prayer**, will be raised on the Day of Judgment with the Sahaabah ﷺ: the group of people about whom the Qur'an says, "Allah is satisfied with them". With this certification, this boy gets a status higher than any saint can ever acquire. The reason behind this exalted status is just the few minutes of Rasulallah's ﷺ blessed companionship that the boy received.
2. We all know the story of a man from Bani Israel who committed a hundred murders. When he decided to repent, he was advised by a scholar to migrate to another land, where pious people lived. Why was this done? The answer is that had he repented without emigrating, there were strong chances that under the influence of the sinful society that he lived in, he would revert back to his bad habits. Thus, he was advised to leave for the society of pious people, under whose influence, chances were that he would indulge in more good deeds and his *Imaan* would escalate.



3. Rasulallah's ﷺ wife Hazrat Umm-e-Habibah ؓ was initially married to Ubaidullah ibn Jahash. The couple converted to Islam in the early days and, to escape the hostilities in Makkah, migrated to Abyssinia. Here, the husband came under the influence of Christians, left Islam and embraced Christianity.

These examples, and especially the last one, clearly explain why the Prophet ﷺ said, "A man is on the religion of his best friend, so one should see who he befriends" (narrated by Hazrat Abu Hurairah ؓ). A quotation goes that a man is an average of the five people who he meets the most. So, if one hopes to become a lover of Allah ﷻ, he must stay in the company of the lovers of Allah ﷻ.

Once we begin our pursuit of Allah ﷻ and start acting according to how He has ordered us, we will encounter one serious difficulty. As we leave so many of our unlawful desires, relinquish so many bad habits, tear apart any *haraam* relationships we are involved in, and even change our company, the immediate effect of all this desire-crushing will be breaking of our hearts. One would feel rather like a drug addict who has been withdrawn from his drug. There will be craving, emotional pain and a feeling of dejection and emptiness, and these often derail the person from his track.

What many people don't realize at this stage is that this pain and this emptiness is actually the second catalyst which Allah ﷻ Himself provides us in His pursuit. Take a look at this Hadith-e-Qudsi:

انا عند المنكسرة قلوبهم

"I am close to their broken hearts."

As much as I want to, I cannot transfer the essence of the actual Arabic text into English, and that is why I was forced to mention the Arabic text as well. If someone does understand the language, he will realize the immense magnitude of love and affection. Hearts do not stay permanently in vacuum—if you feel empty, it is because room is being made for Allah ﷻ to

inhabit your heart. Putting it mathematically, the amount of emptiness is directly proportional to how much Allah ﷻ we have in our hearts and the amount of breaking is directly proportional to the love of Allah ﷻ one will experience.

This second catalyst also gives us a litmus test for checking out how well are we progressing in our pursuit. If the procedure doesn't hurt you, then maybe you aren't doing it honestly enough.

That's pretty much like a chemical reaction, isn't it? You have two reactants (a pure heart and the "positive" and "negative terminal" deeds), two catalysts (company of the *Saliheen* and a broken heart) and one end-product (Allah ﷻ in your heart).

Once the love is achieved, Allah ﷻ values it greatly. Not only will it manifest on the Day of Judgment, but Allah's love for His lovers is often reflected in the world as well. The internal satisfaction a lover of Allah ﷻ experiences cannot be described in words. The late Shaykh-ul-Hadith of Jamia Darul Uloom Karachi, Maulana Saubaan Mahmood Sahab ؓ once said that he met a lover of Allah ﷻ who was so deeply in love with the Almighty that he would actually feel sweetness on his tongue when he recited the Qur'an, so much so that when he used to recite the Qur'an while fasting, he would actually fear about the intactness of his fast. This incident was narrated to me by a very close student of his, Mufti Hassaan Kaleem Sahab (*Daamat Barakaatuhum*), who is currently a teacher at Darul Uloom. Mufti Sahab added on and said, "Ustaadji did not say this, but I knew him well enough to understand that he was talking about himself."

A quick reminder: this is just one not-so-ancient example of how Allah ﷻ internally satisfies His lovers in the world. We cannot even imagine the satisfaction He will bestow unto His lovers on the Day of Judgment.

Let's take a look at another worldly manifestation of the rewards Allah's lovers receive. On authority of Sahih al-Bukhari and Muslim, Hazrat Abu Hurairah ؓ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ

said, 'If Allah loves a person, He calls Jibreel saying, "I love so and so person; so O Jibreel, love him!" Jibreel then makes this announcement among the inhabitants of the Heavens, "Allah loves so and so person so you should love him as well." And so all the inhabitants of the Heaven love him, and then he is granted the pleasures of the people on Earth.'"

To see how Allah ﷻ brings true this Hadith, we need not go too far: the example of Brother Junaid Jamshed رحمته الله and the absolutely huge crowd that attended his funeral is in front of us. In my social groups I often make this point that had Brother Junaid died a singer, people would still have felt bad for his death. But for how long? A week, at maximum? Today, more than a year has passed since his tragic demise, yet whenever I am asked to recite a Junaid Jamshed nasheed, or I hear one, tears fill my eyes (there are tears in my eyes as I write this paragraph, as well), and I'm sure that I am not alone in this. Why is that so? The reason is that the love that we have for him is no ordinary love: it is love that Allah ﷻ has put in our hearts. Such love is not transient; it is there to stay. May Allah grant him the highest place in Jannah, *Aameen*.

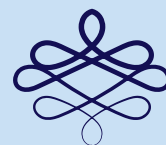
Let's now take a look at the best group of lovers of Allah ﷻ the world ever saw, and how Allah valued their love for Him in this world. It is this group that we call "Sahaabah", رضي الله عنهم. Such was their love for Allah ﷻ that He gave them all the certification of "Allah is satisfied with them and they are satisfied with Him" at not just one, but multiple places in the Qur'an. My focus right now is the specific group of Sahaabah رضي الله عنهم known as As'haab-us-Suffah. These were extremely poor companions of Rasulallah صلى الله عليه وسلم who sacrificed every single thing they had so that they could learn about Islam, worship Allah ﷻ day in and day out, and be in the company of Rasulallah صلى الله عليه وسلم. Such was their level of love that they left their houses and started living near Masjid-e-Nabawi. Ahadith describe that the only outfits they had were woolen garments, which were dirty and had a foul smell, and their hair were covered in dust. Hazrat Sahl ibn Haneef رضي الله عنه narrates that once

Rasulallah صلى الله عليه وسلم was in his house when this verse was revealed, "And keep yourself patient (by being) with those who call upon their Lord in the morning and the evening, seeking His countenance" (al-Kahf, v. 28). After this verse was revealed, Rasulallah صلى الله عليه وسلم went out of his house and searched these Sahaabah رضي الله عنهم. On finding them he said, "All praise by to Allah, who raised people in my *Ummah* whom I have been ordered to attend to and sit with."

*SubhanAllah!* Just imagine the huge protocol Allah ﷻ is giving to His lovers, so much so that His most beloved creation and His Prophet is being ordered to attend to them! This is how Allah ﷻ honors those who love Him.

I can go on writing endlessly about how appreciative Allah ﷻ is of our love towards Him and how He rewards His lovers in both, this world and in the Hereafter. Before I end this article, there is one very important point I must make. For any car to be called a good car, not only should it have the ability to pick up speed quickly, but it also should have excellent brakes. Assume that our destiny is Allah's Pleasure, this world is the road that we have to take and our life is our vehicle. But just like any other road, the road to Allah's Pleasure also has certain speed limits and check-posts. On this road, the check-posts ensure that our love for Allah ﷻ is channeled in the right direction, and is in accordance with the *Sunnah*. Any form of love that contradicts the *Sunnah* or is not in accordance with the *Sunnah* is unacceptable. Therefore, while the driving force of this vehicle is love for Allah ﷻ and we can expect to achieve Allah's Pleasure faster if we love Him more, our car cannot be called a good vehicle if it lacks the braking ability. This braking ability is the fear of Allah ﷻ. It is love without fear that leads to Bid'aat or innovations in *Deen*.

May Allah ﷻ grant us all the right blend of His love and fear, and may he grant us His Pleasure, *Aameen*.





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# Two Weeks in the West

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

After visiting America, I travelled to the famous West Indian island, Barbados. Some dear friends from Barbados had always insisted that I visit them whenever I was in the US or Canada, but I could never do so because of the lack of time. In this particular trip it seemed befitting to finally fulfill the promise to meet these friends. Hence, after having visited New York, I stayed in this beautiful island for a couple of days.

Barbados is one of those islands which are commonly known as the West Indies (known as *jazaair-e Gharb-ul Hind* in Urdu). It is said that when Christopher Columbus reached near these islands, he thought he had reached India. The misconception was later removed, but the islands came to be known as the West Indies. These are a number of islands that span, in a shape of a crescent, between the North and the South of America. Cuba, Jamaica, Haiti, Trinidad, Bahamas, and Barbados are some of these. Once all of these islands were ruled by European powers, but now all have become independent and enjoy the status of being separate countries.

Although Barbados is a very small island in terms of area and population, but it supersedes all other West Indian islands in terms of its natural beauty and development. The island spans over a small area of one hundred and sixty-six square

miles; the length from its north to south is only twenty-one miles, and width ranging from east to west is a mere fifteen miles. Its largest city and capital is Bridgetown; rest are small settlements spread all across the island. The approximate population of the entire island is two-hundred-and-fifty-thousand. And all of this population comprises settlers; people belonging to the native tribes of Barbados are now completely extinct. It is often said that European planters completely destroyed the seed of the native tribes. It is also said that these tribes were Cannibalistic. Now, we do not know if this information is popularised only to conceal the cruelty of Colonialism. In any case, most of the current population consists of Black people who were once brought in as slaves from South America or certain parts of Africa. Approximately ten percent of the population comprises White people, who remind one of the Western rulers of the area. The island was under the British rule upto 1958; from thereon upto 1965 it remained a part of the combined West Indies; finally, in 1966, it became an independent country. Despite its small size and population, the country has its own constitution, and is also a permanent member of the Commonwealth. It is an attractive place for the tourists because of its natural beauty. Since it is near to the equator, the weather here remains mild, and never becomes too cold. Hence, people from Europe and America often come here for a vacation in order to escape harsh winters. Tourism is one the most important means of revenue generation in this country.

During the English rule, some Indian nationals were brought over for jobs, and that was how Indian natives also got settled over here. Some Indians also came over, and settled for the purposes of trade and business. There are, hence, quite a large number of Indian people living here, out of which approximately one-thousand are Muslims. Although this number, which also includes women and children, is very small, it is indeed commendable as to how these people have maintained their Muslim identity. In fact, their religious zeal seems to be much more than that of many people who are residing in Muslim countries. There are two grand mosques in this small city of Bridgetown, where *azaan* is also called out. Both the mosques house madrassahs for imparting religious education to children. It is imperative for every Muslim child to spend two hours in the madrassah after school, where he is imparted with the basic Islamic teachings. A number of students have memorised the Qur'an too. There is not a single Barbadian Muslim who has not studied in these madrassahs. It is from here that they learn comprehensive Islamic teachings and beliefs, and then move on with their lives like true Muslims. I got the opportunity to visit one of these madrassahs where eighty to ninety students were studying. Children beautifully recited the Qur'an to me, and when I asked them about the prescribed Sunnah du'as for various

times, they recited those too. They also narrated the English translation of various Qur'anic verses and ahadith. Above all, they recited poems in Urdu! Their English accent reflected how difficult a task it must have been for them to have learnt all those words in Urdu. Their teachers explained that basic Urdu was taught to these students so that they remained connected with the Urdu literature.

Upon the insistence of the local Muslims, many religious gatherings were conducted during my stay in Barbados. Although the business activity was at its peak as the Christmas was nearing, the attendance of Muslims in these gatherings reflected their love and fervour for the deen. Two gatherings were specifically meant for women, who attended in large numbers with complete observance of *purdah*.

I remained in Barbados for five days, and it was very heartening to find out about the religious activities of the local Muslims. It was indeed surprising to see Muslims having such rooted beliefs in a place that was rife with all the ills that are part and parcel of the Western tourism; a place about which it was recorded that people there lived with each other without getting married, and hence, almost seventy percent of the non-Muslim population was born out of wedlock. Upon researching, it was found out that some '*Ulama* of the Dar ul Uloom, Deoband, had come there, and worked tirelessly to inculcate religious consciousness amongst the Muslim population. Even currently, many religious scholars from Dar ul Uloom, Deoband, Dabhel,



India, and Pakistan, are diligently working towards guiding people in terms of religion. The blessings of their sincere efforts are clearly visible in Barbados.

My hosts made me visit many places on the island. The coastline of Barbados is very beautiful. The water there is crystal clear and pure from any kind of sand or dust. Western tourists frequent Barbados only to enjoy these clear waters. Many expensive and grand hotels are located on these beaches. Some of these are considered to be the most expensive in the world. Daily rent of some of these hotels goes up to two-thousand dollars.

During my stay in Barbados, submarine ride was a novel experience for me. It is an almost one-and-a-half hour ride during which tourists are taken upon an interesting journey. My hosts explained that this ride took place in very few parts of the world, and hence we should not miss the chance to enjoy it. It is a small submarine which can accommodate up to twenty-eight people at one time. It goes around one-hundred-and-fifty feet deep into the water and lets you view the life beneath the sea. The moment our submarine submerged into the water, there was a totally different universe waiting to be witnessed. Apart from various kinds of fishes and sea animals, there were huge jungles, which housed unique kinds of plants and

trees. There were lush green mountains, the beauty of which is difficult to describe in words. There were rocks on these mountains, about which our guide told us that those were living beings. After a certain period of time they increased in their size. The pilot of the submarine then took us into that region underneath the sea where we could see a vast desert. He also made us see a ship that drowned twenty-five years ago and now lay in the depths of the sea. Its cabins were now an abode for fishes and sea animals, and its deck was now full of sea weeds. Hence, this one-and-a-half hour journey proved to be a novel and a memorable experience. The wonderful world of animals and plants that exists beneath the sea involuntarily makes one proclaim: *tabaarakAllahu Ahsan al Khaaliqeen* (Blessed is Allah, the best of Creators).

Another memorable thing about Barbados is the Harison Cave. It is a mile long cave situated at the foot of a tall mountain, and has gradually deepened (about one-hundred-and-eighty feet) underground. The cave is special in that the water seepage from the surfaces of its walls has caused stalactites and stalagmites formation. These are numerous icicles which keep on increasing in size. It is said that their size increases by a centimeter every ten years. There is a small train that helps the tourists journey through this cave and explore the wonders of it. *fatabarak Allah Ahsan al Khaliqeen* (Blessed is Allah, the best of Creators).

# Teacher and Student

Sayyidi wa sanadi Mufti Mohammed Taqi Usmani (Allah protect and preserve him) said, 'Allah opens 'Uloom for the teacher upon the eagerness and zeal of the student. Just like a baby cries and milk draws forth from the chest of the mother.

Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki (Allah have mercy upon him) once stated to his students, "Whatever you have achieved is through me, but if you did not have the burning desire in your souls I would not have had such inspirations and stimulus as well' (as quoted on ashrafiya.com).

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# Surviving Under Pressures

By Salman Asif Siddiqui

I often ask people if they had ever thought of committing suicide in their academic life, and a reasonable number of them say 'yes', even the ones, who had been high achiever students. According to a study done by National Institute of Mental Health, USA, suicide is the third leading cause of death in youngsters aged 15 to 24. Another study, conducted in Australian High Schools on students aged 12 to 14 years, revealed that students with low self-esteem, depressed mood, and perceptions of failure may be at increased risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviours. Our children live under enormous pressures these days. They are on a constant battle to survive against all odds. Almost every other child in this world undergoes a painful, psychologically uncomfortable and often dehumanizing experience in order to receive education. I believe there are at least three kinds of pressures that work upon them; academic pressure, parental pressure and peer pressure.

## How does Academic Pressure work?

The first kind of pressure that works upon our children is Academic Pressure. They are almost always burdened. They have to carry a bag filled with six to eight textbooks and notebooks for each subject. Homework is something that most of them do not enjoy and cannot escape from. These poor children cannot afford to be absent from class, even if they are not well. According to a survey, children aged between 11 and 14 do an average of three-hour homework, in order to survive and remain acceptable in their schooling systems. They carry a bag which is about 40% of their body weight. According to British Osteopathic Association: 'Children should never carry more than about 15% of their own body

weight. The long term effects from carrying heavy bags include strains on the neck and shoulder leading to headaches, fatigue and an early development of poor posture along with strain to arms and wrists.'

Majority of school going children hardly go for a morning or evening walk and do not experience the pleasant breeze and fresh oxygen, which is required for better brain functioning. Almost every second day is a test or some marked assignment. About 20% of their school days are allocated for exams. In between, there are such competitions as spelling bee and declamation contests requiring students to prepare five to six hours a day with immense pressure to win each of them. Tuitions are a routine, which they have to follow. And there are tests at tuitions, too. Students, who concentrate on their academics, look too serious, exhausted and often ignorant about what is happening in the world or in their families. They tend to forget themselves for the love or fear of exams. All that is important in their lives is to fulfill the academic demands at any cost. These poor children receive respect from society on the basis of their academic performance and not on the basis of their good intentions or great ideas.

It is generally believed that teachers can not contain more than two subjects, while students are able to accommodate the diverse and often unconnected pieces of knowledge from eight subjects. Many children face immense learning difficulties as they are not allowed to express their understanding in the language they know well. Classwork that is demanded on a particular pace with a particular level of perfection from every child becomes an instrument of torture. How



awful it is to offer a break of 20 minutes in a school day of six hours. Sometimes even this twenty minutes break is withdrawn from a child, who needs additional time for making up the academic work. If the school is located at a distance, then the travelling time in school transport adds to their miseries.

### **How does Parental Pressure work?**

Another pressure that badly affects children is Parental Pressure. I have heard many children saying, 'I wish I was born free.' Parents generally have very high and non-flexible expectations from their children. It has become hard for many parents to trust their children's abilities and intentions, when they fail to do well in exams. In a majority of cases, the relationship between parents and children relies on the grades the children receive in their exams, which is so very unfortunate.

Given the above mentioned facts, it appears that children in today's world are doing two jobs. They are employed at two places: school and home. They cannot take a day off at their will and are often not compensated for their work. They live a life where friendships, questioning, experimentation and wandering around are hardly appreciated. They are not encouraged for their natural curiosity and qualities of giving, sharing and frankness. Instead, they are chained to follow an agenda and a routine that is set for them without their consent. All children go through this, until they become able to exercise their own will and experience their independence. But many poor children are lost in this battle. Their creative spark is successfully extinguished by the collective efforts of parents and schools.

One of the ambitions of parents is to get their child admitted into a brand school. Under this vision, mothers start dreaming about some of the renowned schools already at the time of their pregnancies. Imagine the terrible pressure the poor child will be born with. She or he will be sent to preparation centres at the age of two years, in order to pass the entrance test of his/ her parents' dream school. Once the child is admitted, the

vicious never-ending cycle of academic stress, competitions and loads of homework is on the way.

Much of the conversation that takes place between parents and children is governed by the following questions or instructions: "What happened in your school today? How was your test today? What grade did you get in the last paper? What is the homework today? When is the next test? Change your school uniform. Offer your Salat. Have your lunch and, please, do it quickly. Get ready for tuition", etc.

Another form of parental pressure is their demand for discipline and maintaining a tidy and mess-free home. Girls in particular become a victim of this wish. In many families, the obsession to tame the children for manners and obedience in their early childhood supersedes any other wish of meaningful learning or relationship.

Many parents demand their children to choose a particular professional field, without considering the child's interests. A majority of parents make their children realize that they spend a lot of money on their education, and that children have to pay back through getting good grades. When children somehow fail to meet the demands of their parents, they feel bad about themselves and lose self-confidence.

### **How does Peer Pressure work?**

Peer Pressure plays a phenomenal role in the lives of children. Children want to be liked, accepted, and appreciated by their peers more than anyone else in the world. This peer consciousness causes some positive and negative influences on their personality. They learn from their peers and become interested in doing things, which are being liked by their peers. Mark Twain once put it beautifully in his witty style: "I have always paid the school master for the education of my kids, but these are the school boys who have taught him."

Sometimes good habits and trends are initiated and reinforced by groups of children. While at other times it is vice versa. A child being a part of his social group gets influenced by his or her

peers. At times, a child may not feel comfortable in adopting something from the peers. But the fear of being unpopular, disapproved and rejected by the social group surrounds the child and exerts immense pressure on him/ her.

Although many children experience some sort of peer pressure, they usually do not realize it. Peer pressure takes a child into a complex state of varied feelings ranging from fears and rage to hate, hope and jealousy. If a child is not confident enough, his/ her self image will be severely influenced by the kind of treatment he/ she receives from the peers. Sometimes, children stop pursuing their genuine natural interests, because they feel that they will be ridiculed for their interests. Often, many children tend to do things which are not of their choice but the desire of the group. Smoking is one such example, which a lot of boys and girls initiate, in order to look smart and cool. Sometimes, they smoke to seek additional appreciation from their peers. For some children, smoking becomes their social passport. Some children try to impress their peers through smoking or through any other activity, which is forbidden by the adults.

Peer pressure may be unspoken or unintentional. Sometimes a child may feel pressured not because peers are asking him to do a certain thing but the child himself feels that if he will not do a certain thing, he might be considered silly.

Nobody would like to be rejected by his/ her equals. When children fail to cope with peer pressures or, in other words, do not conform to group norms, they isolate themselves or restrict their interaction with few class fellows. Many do not create friendships; rather, they limit themselves to acquaintanceships. A reasonable number of children willingly or unwillingly adopt what is being desired by their peers and conform to group norms.

One of the major causes of negative peer pressure is comparison between children. Many teachers and parents do it continuously in subtle ways. Some do it rather explicitly. When we do not recognize children, as who they really are, and fail to own them unconditionally, they learn

to doubt themselves. Their confidence weakens and they become increasingly sensitive to the approval from their peers.

### **How can we reduce Academic Pressure?**

1. We need to believe that academics is not everything. A successful person is not the one who gets good grades, but a person who is well-rounded, happy and enjoys healthy body and mind with a vision to strive for.
2. Schools should reduce the number and size of exams and introduce alternatives to formal testing like portfolio development and mechanism of self-assessment. This will help to eradicate the tuition culture and children will have some free time for family and other meaningful activities.
3. Curriculum should be made child-friendly and flexible. There should be more opportunities of recreation and the academic process must capitalize on students' interests and experiences.
4. Early education process must be carried out in the language children are proficient in. Education must not demand a child to switch the medium of his/ her thinking.
5. If we cannot reduce the weight of school bags, at least we can replace them by trolley school bags, like it is done by children in Europe.

### **How can we reduce Parental Pressure?**

1. Children are born with countless interests. Identify and respect the interests of your children and facilitate them to pursue their interests.
2. Learn to trust children unconditionally. Accept your children for what they are. Help your children pursue their dreams, instead of forcing your own vision onto them.
3. Never equate your children's intelligence and creativity with their academic results. Grades tell us nothing about a child's talents or creative potentials. Appreciate your children for what they do enthusiastically.

4. Acknowledge the fact that your children are loaded with work, and that they need some time to relax. Keep an eye on yourself to ensure that you are not the reason for making your child feel burdened.
5. Instead of throwing questions on children and asking them to give a report of their day, wait and understand their situation and problems.
3. Eliminate all forms of individual competitions and never use individual comparison as a strategy for motivation. In fact, it is something that de-motivates them and above all, affects their relationship with their peers.
4. Engage with your child in open and meaningful discussions to prepare them for dealing with the issues they might face in society.

#### **How can we reduce Peer Pressure?**

1. Give children a positive, stress-free and emotionally comfortable environment. They are likely to interact with their peers in a congenial manner when they are relaxed.
2. Train children to realize why they feel how they feel. Help them recognize their different states of feelings. They will learn to be empathetic through your wise and friendly facilitation.
5. Make your child exceptionally confident and courageous. Confidence will enable a child to become who he or she really is, without feeling devalued or becoming dependent on the approval of peers.

*(Reproduced here with author's permission)*

## *The Advice of Adam* **عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ**

Hadhrat Aadam **عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ** bequeathed to his son, Hadhrat Sheeth **عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ** four advices. He stressed that Hadhrat Sheeth **عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ** should deliver this wasiyyat to his sons as well. The following are the four advices:

- (1) Never have confidence in the world and its life. Allah did not approve of my confidence in Jannat, hence I had to leave.
- (2) Before doing anything, reflect well on its consequences. If I had done this, I would not have been put to shame in Jannat.
- (3) If your heart is agitated by something, do not do it. When I was about to eat of the forbidden fruit, my heart agitated, but I did not heed it.
- (4) Before doing anything consult with people of wisdom. If I had consulted the Angels, I would not have suffered shame.

# A New Challenge?

By Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ

## The Call of Faith

The crying need of the hour is to call Muslims back to Faith. The rallying cry of this new religious endeavour should be: "Let us re-create Faith in Islam." But mere slogan-raising will get us nothing. We have to think of a way through which to approach the inner selves of the ruling sections of the contemporary Muslim World so that they can be brought back to Islam.

Today, Islam needs workers who are ready to dedicate their entire resources and abilities, their learning, their time, their money, and their energy to its cause; people who do not pay heed to the attractions of worldly advancement. They must be wholly free from malice, bearing no grudge against anyone. They should serve, but take no service from others; give and not take. Their conduct, of course, should be different from that of political workers who are motivated mainly by lust for power. Sincerity should be their habit, and freedom from every kind of self-seeking vanity and prejudice, their chief mark of distinction.

Furthermore, we require such academies which may produce a literature forceful

and inspiring enough to bring the educated youth back to Islam in its wider sense, emancipating them from the bondage of Western ideology which they have thoughtlessly accepted mainly under the stress of the times— a literature that can lay down the foundations of Islam anew in their minds and provide healthy, wholesome food for their souls. For this task, many devoted scholars are needed in every nook and corner of the Muslim World, scholars, who will not leave the intellectual front of the battle till the last shot is fired.

For my part, I want to state clearly that I have never been one of those, who believe in the separation of Religion from politics, or one who seeks to interpret Religion (Islam) in a way that it may fit into every pattern of life. Nor do I belong to that category of theologians, who include politics among the 'condemned tribe of the Qur'an'. I am second to none in my desire to see the development of proper political consciousness and leadership among Muslims everywhere.

I believe that a theocratic society cannot be established without the ascendancy of Religion and this resting on a political structure must be based on the precepts of Islam. The question, however, is one of precedence, of first things first, and of the exigencies of time. So far, our time and our energies have been directed towards political activities. This was done primarily on the assumption that the condition of the Ummah was sound so far as Faith was concerned. Leadership was in the hands of the Muslims themselves and the ruling classes were alive to their responsibilities towards Islam and

eager to bring about its victory in the world. But now the state of affairs is just the reverse. The Ummah has suffered a serious degeneration both morally and spiritually without even being actually aware of it. Speaking in a general way, its educated and privileged sections have almost been weaned away from the Faith by Western ideas and they are, so to speak, openly in revolt against the basic ideology of Islam, thinking that what they have borrowed from the West represents the sine qua non of truth and progress and that unless society is reorganized in the light of material concepts there can be no hope for the future. They are pushing forward the Western way of life with all the enthusiasm of new converts, and, in the process, bringing the whole of the Muslim Ummah very close to atheism. It is a different matter that some of them want to hurry through the process while others believe in a more graduated course. The modes of their approach are also different. But so far as their destination is concerned, it is the same with all of them.

### **Two Divergent Groups among the Theologians**

With regard to this section, our theological class— if the term be correct for there is no clerical or priestly class in Islam— is divided into two divergent groups. One of them is emphatically opposed to worldly pursuits and does not want any truck with those who do, but it is also completely unconcerned with the question as to what causes and factors are responsible for producing such atheistic tendencies among the privileged Muslim classes. It abhors having any contact with them and does little by way of purging them of their erroneous beliefs. The other group associates with them to the full and seeks advantages in terms of worldly gain as a result of its association. It pays no attention to their spiritual redemption. Hence, this group has no call to give or religious pride to display. It seems to have abandoned those sections to their fate and has no solicitude for correction and reformation.

There is, unfortunately, no group among our religious leaders which can devote itself to the reformation of the Muslim upper classes thinking

that they are merely the victims of a disease from which recovery is not impossible— a group which may carry the message of religious reclamation with tolerance and wisdom, and discharge among them the obligation of selfless service. As a result of this handicap, the Westernised ruling section of our society gets no opportunity to come closer to Religion and to the religious atmosphere. The result is that they spend their lives in ignorance and disrupt of Faith, and the distrust is further strengthened by the conduct of that group among the ecclesiastics, which comes forward as its rival in the political field or fights against it for political power with Religion as the major instrument of its action. Such religious leaders help only to make their secular counterpart more suspicious of Religion, for it is natural for man to dislike those who compete with him for a thing which he holds dear. This regardless of whether it belongs to the realm of wealth or of power and prestige or of pleasure and self-indulgence.

The cure for the ills of the Muslim World lies in our capacity to produce a band of dedicated workers who can go beyond any personal considerations, and have no worldly aspirations for themselves. Their entire endeavour should be directed towards loosening the intellectual and psychological knots of by ruling classes of society. This can be achieved by establishing personal contact with the elite, then bringing forth effective religious literature for them, and by reforming them through example – piety, sanctity of character, earnestness of purpose, sincerity, selflessness and Prophet-like moral conduct.

### **The Verdict of History**

History records that it is men of this class and caliber who have rendered genuine service to Islam during all its phases. The credit for changing the course of Umayyad rule and bringing Umar ibn Abdul Aziz to the Caliphate belongs to this very class of men functioning under the inspired leadership of Raj'a ibn Haywah. In India too, the revolution of an identical nature that was wrought during the time of the Mughals owed its origin to a similar band

of devoted servants of the Ummah. A powerful Emperor like Akbar had resolved, so it seemed to all intents and purposes, to cast the sub-continent in the mould of paganism, in opposition to Islam, after it had remained for four hundred years under the benign shadow of Muslim rule. But by virtue of the determined action of an inspired man of Faith, and his illustrious successors the land was won back for Islam— and more firmly than before. Each of Akbar's, successors proved to be better than his predecessor till there came Aurangzeb on the throne whose reign constitutes a glorious chapter in the annals of Islam and religious renovation. History, as you know, is always ready to repeat itself— it never tires of this process— the only thing is that there may be some force strong enough to turn its tide, and the only force which can bring back the golden era of Islam is the earnestness, the sagacity and the missionary zeal we have just spoken of.

### The Crisis and the Action Needed

We should face the current crisis with wisdom, courage and fortitude. A woeful tragedy of moral, cultural and intellectual apostasy has struck Islam. It should be the object of serious concern to all those who have any solicitude for Islam. Today, the leading sections of Muslim society almost everywhere are on the verge of dissolution of Faith. They have already discarded, in the main, the moral obligations imposed by the Shariah, their mental outlook has become

wholly materialistic and, in politics, they are enthusiastically pursuing what must be described as the course of irreligion. There are many among them who do not believe in Islam as a creed and an ideology. And the Muslim masses, although they possess all the seeds of goodness and virtue and constitute, innately, the most virtuous segments of humanity, are under the influence and overlordship of these sections due to their educational and economic backwardness. If the present situation continues, its apostasy will infiltrate the masses, and destroy the Faith of simpleminded Muslim peasants and artisans. It has been so in the West and it will happen here in the East if events are allowed to take their course and if the All-Powerful Will of Providence does not intervene.

There is not a day to be wasted. The World of Islam is threatened with a most dangerous wave of apostasy. This wave is a revolt against the moral and social values that are the most precious treasures of Islam. If these treasures are lost, which are a sacred heritage from the Prophet handed down from generation to generation and for whose protection the soldiers of Islam bore enormous hardships and went through the severest of trials, the World of Islam will also be there no more.

Shall we awake to this great reality, to this mighty threat of the times? Or shall we not?

# Wealth

Hadhrat Shaqeeq Balkhi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ said:

"Wealth has three disadvantages:

A heart full of worry  
Hardness of heart

A difficult and fearful Reckoning (in *Qiyaamah*)."  
This is generally the condition of those wealthy people whose goal in life is the *dunya*. On the other hand, Rasulullah ﷺ said: "Halaal wealth is excellent for a pious man."

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# Lessons from the Birds

By Dr Hafsa Siddiqui

Have you not seen  
The birds flying in a flock?  
Held in mid-air  
Soaring on the air currents,  
By Al-Rehman?  
Have you not seen  
That when one is tired  
And flies low...  
Leaving his position  
Of the leader of the flock,  
He glides back  
To fly in  
Another's tutelage?  
But doesn't give up.  
The air pressure decreases  
As does the strength.  
Taking turns  
To migrate to a favourable place;  
Their destination.  
But they don't give up.  
They remain;  
A flock.  
A team.  
A pack.  
So, when your brother is hurt or dismayed  
Pull up your socks  
And be there.  
For one good deed  
From you is all it takes.  
A few kind words  
To help him get back up.  
A du'a  
To raise his ranks.  
A shoulder  
Onto which he can momentarily rest.  
Perhaps, this little deed will be the one  
That puts you in Paradise.  
And let you hear the words  
*"Razi Allahu 'Anhu wa Razu 'Anhu"*



# A Mischievous Person becomes a Friend of Allah ﷻ

Contributed by G. M. Surriya

The people of Bani Israel were tired of a mischievous and sinful person, who had been causing havoc in their territories. Finally, after trying all else, they forced him to live in exile.

He used to wander aimlessly from one place to another and during this period, his provisions depleted and he fell sick. There was no one to console or comfort him. The loneliness, illness and starvation led him to deathbed. When a person is completely surrounded by immense hardships, he obviously remembers Allah ﷻ ...so did this sinful being: he began imploring Allah ﷻ .

*O Allah, if You forgive, Your forgiving does not reduce Your dignity and if You punish, Your punishment does not enhance Your dignity. O Allah, if You forgive me, Your kingdom would not shrink and if You punish me, Your kingdom would not expand. Otherwise, I would not ask Thee for my forgiveness. O Allah, I have spent my whole life in Your disobedience and until now, I have done no good deed to show you. O my Rabb, no one is with me at this moment to listen to me and to console me; nor is there a supporter to support me in this grave hour. O Allah, Do forgive me because I have heard that You are the most forgiving and most Merciful.*

While he was talking to Allah ﷻ , he breathed his last. Immediately, Allah ﷻ revealed to Musa ﷺ: O Musa, one of my friends has died in a jungle, arrange for his funeral bath and salah and announce publicly that whosoever would perform funeral salah for him, he would also be forgiven.

Upon hearing this decree, people rushed towards the jungle to find out who this special

person, this friend of Allah ﷻ was for whom Allah ﷻ promised forgiveness for all those who performed his funeral salah.

When they reached the spot, they found that it was the dead body of the very person they had expelled! They turned to Musa ﷺ and exclaimed: is this mischievous one Allah's friend, one we could not bear to live amongst us?!

Musa ﷺ, therefore spoke to Allah ﷻ : O Allah, he was a sinner in our eyes, whom we had expelled. Tell us what good did he do that he became Your friend?

Allah ﷻ said: O Musa, He was in fact a disobedient person and none of you was wrong to say so. He was dying disgracefully and miserably, totally alone in this jungle. He had no friend to look after him, to hear his call or to answer it. Then, he called upon me in desperation. Tell me, could I have left him alone in such a state when he had diverted all his attention towards Me in full repentance? How could it be possible for Me to turn down his call for help. By My Honour! If he had made *du'a* for forgiveness of the whole of mankind, I would have forgiven all of them!

This is the Mercy and Benevolence of our Lord ﷻ . *SubhanAllah!*

# إِسْتِغْفَارٌ

## *Istighfar: Seeking Forgiveness from*

# ALLAH وَتَعَالَى الْمَلَأُ

By Khalid Baig

"Truly, Allah loves those who repent, and He loves those who cleanse themselves."  
[Al-Baqarah 2:222].

"O Allah! Make me among those who, when they commit an act of virtue, feel good, and when they commit a mistake, they seek forgiveness."  
[Ibn Majah]

*Tauba* (repentance) and *istighfar* (seeking forgiveness from Allah) are among the most meritorious acts of virtue for the believers. *Tauba* means feeling remorse for our actions or omissions. *Istighfar* means expressing that remorse in words and begging Allah ﷻ for forgiveness.

The act for which we perform *tauba* and *istighfar* is not necessarily a sin, or an act of disobedience to Allah; it also includes our shortcomings. As we realize Allah's immense favors to us, all of our thankfulness and devotion clearly appears to be inadequate. As we realize the grandeur of Allah,

Most High, our acts of worship and obedience clearly are seen to be insufficient. The higher a person is on the scale of *taqwa*, piety and God consciousness, the greater is this sense of inadequacy. Consequently the greater is his practice of *istighfar*.

That is why all the Prophets ﷺ preached and practiced *tauba* and *istighfar*. We do not have to invent any sins - inherited or personal - to explain their repentance. In fact all the Prophets ﷺ were free of sin, as Allah ﷻ appointed them as role models for humanity and Allah ﷻ did not send defective role models.

The leader of all the Prophets was Prophet Muhammad ﷺ a fact which was also symbolized in his leading of all the Prophets in *Salat* (prayer) in Jerusalem during *Isra*. And what did the Prayer Leader ﷺ of the Prophets used to do after every prayer? He used to say "*astaghfirullah*" (I seek Allah's forgiveness) three times! This is the *istighfar* that comes out of the highest level of

God consciousness! He taught us to perform istighfar profusely, as he himself practiced. The Companions رضي الله عنهم have reported that he used to do istighfar hundreds of times during the course of a day.

Istighfar is also a means of enhancing that consciousness of Allah ﷻ and strengthening our relationship with Him. We turn to no one except Allah ﷻ in repentance. We confess our deepest errors, shortcomings, failures, and sins to Him and Him alone. (In contrast, Christianity made a fatal mistake when it instituted confession to priests. As Martin Luther (1537) observed, "What torture, rascality, and idolatry such confession has produced is more than can be related.") We seek His forgiveness, knowing that He alone has knowledge about all our deeds and thoughts and He alone can forgive us and save us from the consequences of our actions. Istighfar, thus, is a most intimate conversation with Allah ﷻ. And during that conversation we are at our humblest. We can see why tauba and istighfar are the essence of our servitude and submission to Allah ﷻ!

We need istighfar to constantly purify and cleanse our heart. We are not born in sin, but we are born in weakness. We are prone to fall prey to the many temptations that are part of our test in this life. And when we do fall and commit a sin, it produces a dark spot in our heart. A famous hadith, reported by Abu Huraira رضي الله عنه, describes this process. When a person shows remorse and repents, that dark spot is removed. Otherwise it will stay there and grow with each additional sin. A time may come when his heart is full of darkness because of un-repenting sins. We can see this gradual darkness of the heart as people advance in their sinful behavior. In the beginning they have a lot of inhibitions. They commit the wrong hesitatingly and feel bad about it. If they do not turn back, they get used to it, so it just feels normal. Then a stage comes when vice becomes virtue and virtue vice. They defend and advocate evil and shun good.

Today, unfortunately, we see so many examples of this all around us. In the "everything goes" post-modern world, good and evil do not mean anything anymore. Then there is a whole crop of

misguided psychologists who are ready to assure you that the only guilt you should feel is for feeling guilty in the first place! Is it any wonder that in the English language the word sin is now normally used to describe things that are delicious, attractive, fun, and highly desirable? That this darkness of the heart should be considered enlightenment only completes the inversion.

But there is hope for those who seek hope. No matter how corrupt we might have become, we can always make a U-turn. We can repent and seek forgiveness from our Beneficent and Merciful Creator Who is always ready to forgive those who turn to Him in sincerity. "O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah. For Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." [Az-Zumr, 39:53] Further a hadith declares: "When a person has repented from a sin, it is as if he had never committed that sin."

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has taught us many words of repentance and it is good if we learn, understand, and use them. Of these one has been mentioned as *Syed-ul-istighfar*. A hadith explains its extra ordinary significance: "If a believer says this with complete faith and sincerity in the morning and dies before that evening, he will enter paradise. If he says it during the night and dies before the morning, he will enter paradise." This powerful *du'a* is our daily pledge of allegiance. We will do well to memorize it in Arabic and never let a day or night go by without saying it with full consciousness: "O Allah! You are my Lord. There is no God except You. You created me and I am Your slave. To the best of my ability, I will abide by my covenant and pledge to You. I seek Your protection from the evil of my own creation. I acknowledge Your favors to me and I admit my sins. So please forgive me for no one can forgive sins except You."





# *A Sleepless Night*

By Ateefah Sana Ur Rab

She profoundly stared in front, not so aware of anyone's presence lingering behind. One frail hand touched the cold railing and then it was gone. Her silhouette unpredictably moved to and fro and I couldn't stop myself from wondering what went inside that mind. The clock had struck long ago and children were tucked into the mattress. Adults had too, somehow, called it a day and returned to bed. Yet, she was there sitting and wide awake.

I looked at the window, trying to figure out if there was some magical parade going on outside that she seemed to watch with quite a lot of interest. To my dismay, I could find no circus or comedy act being performed in our lawn that, in daylight, was usually a meeting place for the birds dwelling in the vicinity. There might have been someone outside but I knew better that it was not the case. All doors were locked.

The very next breath of mine hitched in the middle as realization struck like lightning. What if there really was someone lurking in the dark premises of our house? A few incidents of robbery and theft had taken place in our neighbourhood recently. Fortunately or unfortunately, those happenings had alleviated my trust in guards so much that it was similar to finding a needle in a haystack. I glanced to the side and at the sleeping figure of my grandmother's caretaker. Contemplating for a short while, I decided to search first. If I felt the situation to be dangerous, I would wake her up.

Creeping out of the bedroom successfully without being noticed, I tiptoed into the adjacent room from where I could easily measure the situation's gravity. Reading Sherlock Holmes and having a soft spot for mystery/thriller, I cannot say that I wasn't thrilled at that particular moment. Fear, however, overpowered any

feeling of ecstasy that might have been present when I played the role of an amateur detective.

Within a short span of eight minutes, I had peeked through almost every window of the house and speculated that the coast was clear. Feeling victory and relief wash over, I headed back to my grandmother's room. To my amazement, she was still enjoying the view. Curiosity got the best of me and in seconds, I was standing beside her. She turned, realizing that it was none other than her granddaughter and smiled.

'What are you looking at?' I asked, gesturing towards the window in front of her bed.

'Why haven't you slept?' I could not tell for sure if she had unintentionally ignored that question.

I gave a slight shrug to my shoulders. 'I don't usually sleep early.'

Another smile spread across her lips.

'Why are you sitting alone by yourself? Why haven't you slept?'

The smile disappeared into thin air and she let out a sigh. 'I couldn't sleep.'

'But why not?'

'The noise, ...' She left the sentence incomplete but her answer definitely wasn't.

This time, I was the one who sighed uncontrollably. It had become a norm that I could not break; the use of loudspeakers at night. Though I had always managed to somehow disregard what happened in one of the nearby houses and busy myself, I could not shoo away the feeling of helplessness at that moment. It was late and my sick grandmother needed to rest. It was essential for her health in old age.

I bid her goodnight and left while speculating if it really was a 'good' night for her. I wondered how many people similar to my grandmother, were tossing and turning in their beds, unable to sleep with the loudspeakers' noise echoing in our neighbourhood. Who knew if someone was

struggling with studying whilst preparing for an exam to be held the next day? What if there was someone suffering from Sonophobia in one of the houses? What about someone who was having a severe migraine?

Question after question swirled inside my head and no answer popped up even though I spent a long time brainstorming. That night, I went to sleep, with an aim to settle things in a couple of days.

The following morning, I sat down to have a talk with my parents first. I narrated to them what had occurred last night over breakfast. 'We can have a friendly chat and see where it leads to, can't we?' I insisted.

Dad took a sip of tea and gave a solemn nod. 'Don't get your hopes too high, though.' He said. Yet, I failed to implement his advice. I was sure that soon the matter would be resolved. How awfully wrong I had been, I did not know.

I was positive that the family would understand and not take offence. You must have concluded by now, what actually happened. The matter, if it had been any closer to a solution, now stood far and out of reach. I could not grasp why lowering the volume became such a large issue. All we had done, was to politely ask with due respect. There had been no use of slang words or anything that could make them angry and yet, that was exactly what happened. Instead of trying to understand our situation, they had gone off, like a fire alarm. Long story short, the trip to their house was useless and soon, added more sleeplessness to my grandmother's nights.

I could not hide from the reality which brought the feeling of hopelessness and helplessness. Dad felt quite the same. He could not see his mother like that. But he was in a position where nothing could be done. The least we wanted at that time was a feud. So, from our side, the matter was laid to rest with heavy hearts.

Years later and many months after the death of my grandmother, I was having tea one day with my parents in the evening. Upon noticing the beginning of a very familiar sound in the vicinity,

I sighed. 'I have an exam tomorrow.'

'You know they won't listen. It's been four years already. Just try your best.' Mom replied.

'It is really hard to study with so much background noise —' I was cut short.

'Mother couldn't sleep back then. She used to sit and pray for the decrease in volume to be able to sleep.' Dad entered our short conversation, his thoughtful eyes reflecting his trip down the memory lane.

'We can't do anything about it. It is best to stay silent and ignore. No one cares about what we feel or go through.' I whispered to myself and focused on the opened packet of biscuits.

That day, I understood something that in the past I could not. When I had gone to my grandmother's room wondering why she hadn't slept, from the corner of my eye, I had seen her hands joined together. At that time, it wasn't any kind of coincidence. It was her, praying to Allah ﷻ to ease all the difficulties that stood in her way, blocking access to a peaceful sleep.

'You granted her wish, didn't you? Freed her from sickness, sorrow and pain, and put her into

a deep tranquil sleep.' With tears threatening to spill, a ghost of a smile appeared on my lips. 'Allah ﷻ, you're indeed the best of planners.'

May Allah ﷻ make us into good Muslims and good neighbours; so that we be rewarded for taking care of our fellow beings, and may Allah ﷻ keep us from doing anything that puts us among the 'questionable' on the day of Aakhirah. Ameen!

"Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbour, the neighbour farther away, the companion at your side, the traveller, and those whom your right hands possess. Indeed, Allah does not like those who are self-deluding and boastful." (Qur'an, 4:36)

The Messenger of Allah, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

*"Jibril kept recommending me to treat my neighbour well until I thought that he would tell me to make him one of my heirs." (Bukhari: 6014)*

## Ikhlaas (Sincerity)

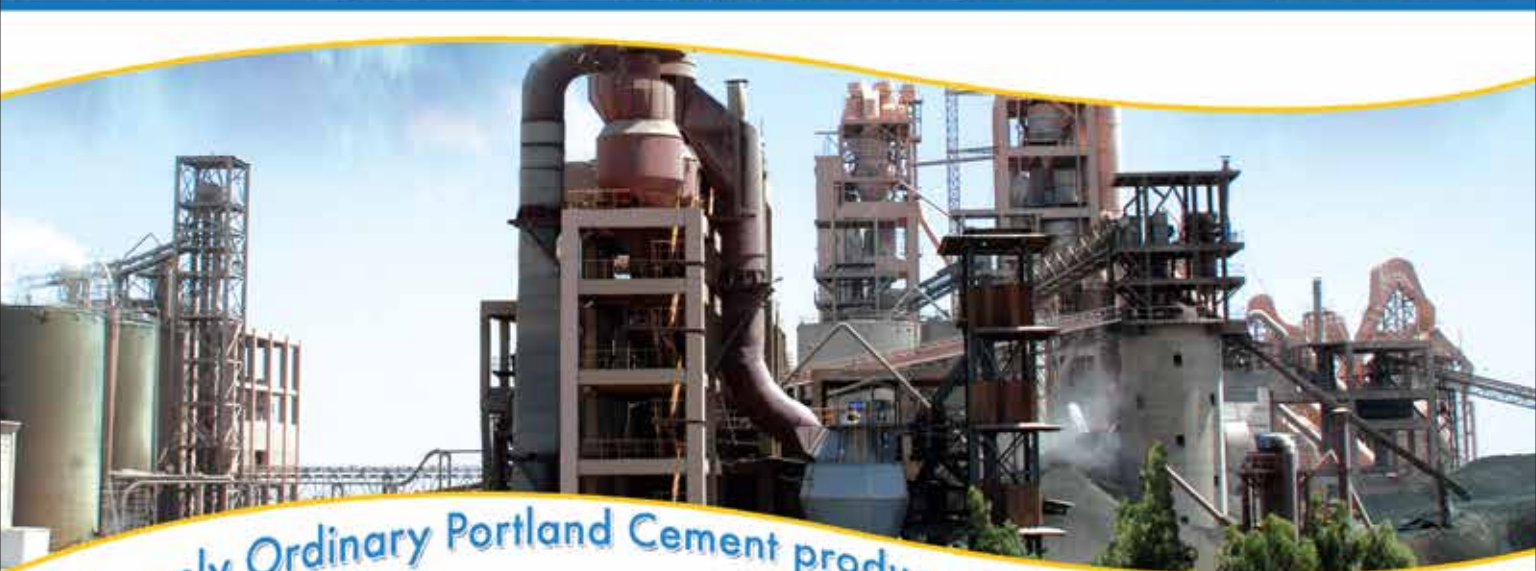
Someone asked Yahya bin Muaaz رضى الله عنه:

"When does a man become a *mukhlis* (a man of sincerity)."

He replied:

"When his attitude becomes like that of an infant, neither caring for praise nor criticism."

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# The Modern Mu'tazila

By Dr. Asad Zaman

*In the name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful*

## Introduction

The Shock-and-Awe of Western Knowledge, created by their global conquest, colonization, and apparent success, has created a deep sense of inferiority among the Muslims today. This is what I have called the Second Crisis of Knowledge in the Islamic Civilization.

This crisis is all encompassing, and requires a massive and multi-dimensional effort on many different fronts to counter-act and cure. Some aspects are discussed here. The purpose is to develop and articulate an Islamic World-View, to counteract the poisons of a Eurocentric worldview which we all imbibe during the course of a Western education.

## The Second Crisis of Knowledge in the Islamic Civilization

There is universal agreement that the teachings of Islam created a revolution in history. The Quran emphasizes the importance of the final message of God, the greatest Gift of God to humanity, in several verses; for example:

*This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion*

The message of Quran, planted in the hearts of men, transformed ignorant and backwards Arabs into the leaders of the world. The civilization that they created dominated the

Earth for a thousand years. The Enlightenment Quran (by Ziad Al-Marsafy) documents how Islamic teachings, acquired via the re-conquest of Andalus, ended the Dark Ages of Europe. Thomas Jefferson's Quran (by Denise Spielberg) describes the deep influence of the Quran on Jefferson, and on the shaping of the Constitution of the USA. A large amount of recent research shows both the strong influence of Islamic ideas on shaping modern civilization, and also, the suppression of this fact in standard Eurocentric accounts of human history.

The burning question of central importance is: Does this message have the same value today as it did 1400 years ago? Can it create a revolution within the hearts of men, and can it turn the tides of history, like it did once before?

The European answer is a clear and definite NO – The message of Islam was perfect for its own time, but is now seriously obsolete and out-of-date.

The position of the Modern Mu'tazila is similar to that of the Europeans. They argue that if Islam had solutions to offer to our modern problems, then we would not see the *Ummah* in the desperate conditions that we find it today. They argue that all that was good and perfect in the teachings of Islam has already been incorporated into the Western corpus of knowledge. Furthermore, the West has made substantial progress and advances, while we have slid back into ignorance, and today our salvation lies in following them. We Muslims are living in the Dark Ages of *Jahilliya* again, and the



only path to our enlightenment lies in learning from the West.

The problem of the Modern Mu'tazila (MM), like that of the Ancient Mu'tazila, is that they have become deeply impressed by a corpus of knowledge alien to Islam. The MM have accepted the knowledge claims made by West, that their knowledge is JTB – Justified, True, Belief. It is objective, factual, based on solid reasons, and undeniable. Once this is accepted, then at all points where Islam conflicts with Western knowledge claims, Islamic teachings have to be modified to match them. The MM cannot accept claims that Islamic teachings conflict with Western knowledge, since that would mean that Islamic teachings are wrong. Thus, their energies are spent in harmonizing the two bodies of knowledge. This is the explicit goal of many groups of Muslims seeking to align Western and Eastern Knowledge. In particular, the project of "Islamization of knowledge" is partially based on these ideas.

The idea that the Knowledge of the West on par with, or superior to, the Quran in terms of providing solutions to the problems facing the Muslim Ummah today, is what I have called the Second Crisis of Knowledge in the Islamic Civilization. As per Hadeeth, Islam came as a stranger, and will become a stranger; the original teachings of Islam are strange and unfamiliar to most Muslims today. HOWEVER, most Muslims and especially the MM, believe the OPPOSITE: that we are already very familiar with these teachings, and, since they do not find anything in these teachings which matches the brilliance of the West, they consider these teachings to be obsolete and out-of-date, not relevant to our contemporary problems, except in a marginal way.

Allama Iqbal, Poet Laureate of the Islamic Civilization, has expressed this problem facing the Ummah as follows:

*My eyes were not dazzled by the brilliance of the West – (Kheera na kar ska mujhay, Jalwa' Danishe Farang) They were protected by the dust of Medina & Najaf – (Surma hay mairy ankha ka, Khak-e-Medina o Najaf)*

Although Iqbal was protected from it, the rest of the Ummah was not. The superficial dazzle of Western knowledge has blinded them to the depths of wisdom hidden in the Quran. This puts in the Ummah into Double Darkness, termed *Jahl-e-Murakkab* (or compound ignorance). Not only are the teachings of Islam strange and unfamiliar, but the Ummah believes that they already know these teachings – so that have no incentive to try and learn them; that would be useless *Tahseel-e-Hasil* (acquisition of that which is already owned). Ignorance can be cured by learning, but there is no cure for *Jahl-e-Murakkab*, since people will not make effort to learn that which they believe they already know.

In fact, the teachings of Islam are just as revolutionary, fresh, original, and unfamiliar to the world today as they were 1400 years ago. They have the same potential today to change the tides of history. They are indeed complete and perfect, sufficient for our guidance today. HOWEVER, MM believe them to be seriously incomplete, since they think our guidance today requires heavy supplementation of Islamic teachings by the latest Western knowledge. MM also believe them to be imperfect and in need of updating – For instance, Islam allows polygamy, slavery, brutal punishments, and prohibits interest. In these areas, and many others, they feel we can improve on the original teachings of Islam.

The claim that teachings of the Quran are sufficient for our guidance today, baffles, frustrates and severely angers and annoys the Modern Mu'tazila. This is because they believe that it is precisely this type of sentimental attachment to the past, and a refusal to face the realities of the modern world, which led to the decline of Muslims. Furthermore, to remain engaged with contemplation of the Quran and the faded glories of the ancient Muslims, in face of the pressing need to modernize and catch-up, making up for lost centuries, is a beyond-hopeless ostrich-strategy, doomed to failure.

The Quran warns us not be deceived by the apparent success of the non-Muslims. Even though the West has been tremendously

successful on the front of material wealth and power, they have been spectacularly unsuccessful on the front of human development. The Final Message of Allah ﷻ, brought to mankind by our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, teaches us how human beings can achieve the full potential buried within the hearts of all humans. It tells us that we all have the capacity to rise above the angels, as well as the capacity to be lower than the beasts. It teaches us the spiritual, mental and emotional practices required to transform the seeds of humanity within our hearts into the tree of *Eeman*, which is solidly planted in the ground and has branches reaching out to the skies. This message — how to develop our human potential — is contained nowhere within the teachings of the West. By learning physics, chemistry and mathematics, we can acquire power over the external world, but we cannot acquire self-control, discipline and spiritual progress. Islam teaches us how to use the material world to make spiritual progress,

while the West teaches us the reverse — how to damage our souls, in order to achieve material gains. Man is the greatest creation of Allah ﷻ, and the spectacular progress of Islam occurred when our civilization learned to cultivate and nurture the potential of human beings to be fully human. Decline occurred when we lost this skill, and the associated institutional structures. Today, our progress again depends on learning to be human beings, which only Islam can teach us. If we can learn to do this, we can show the world the way out of the current morass, where greed for riches has led to destruction of millions of lives of humans and animals, destructions of treasures of environmental resources, and brought the planetary ecology to the brink of collapse.

May Allah T'aala help us to accomplish the mission that the Ummah was created for, which was to guide all of Mankind towards good, and to prevent them from evil. *Ameen*.

## My Need

Something missing in my heart tonight  
Has made my eyes so soft.

My voice  
So tender

My need of God  
Absolutely  
Clear.

- Hafiz-e Shiraz



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# Face to Face with a Syrian Refugee

Abu Muhammad, Abu Saad & Ahmed Katchi

A trip to observe and witness the Syrian crisis would not have been complete without meeting a Syrian refugee in Turkey and hearing his side of the story. Incidentally, and all by a stroke of luck, we ran into Muhammed, a Syrian refugee working as a manager in the hotel we were staying in. Being accompanied by representatives of Turkish Diyanet Foundation meant we were trusted upon immediately by our interviewee and what started as a casual 10-minute chat quickly turned into a full-blown interview.

Us: Which part of Syria has suffered the most during the current crisis?

M: Homs, about 50% flattened. Aleppo, even more than 50%. And some other smaller cities near Damascus, like Douma. Unfortunately, nobody knows the true facts. It is all word-of-mouth communication. The government or the international agencies do not or will not let the true facts come out for various reasons. Initially it was only the South, but in the last three years the North has also suffered.

Us: When and how did you arrive in Turkey?

M: In 2015. It has been three years. We used to live in Palmyra on the outskirts of Homs. We crossed the border illegally through the hilly terrain when the fighting got too much to bear and we worried for safety of our children. It was twelve of us. Me, my family, my brother's family and my sister's family.

Us: Why weren't you caught?

M: Oh, we were! By the Turkish authorities. But due to on-going crisis in Syria and excellent relations between the Syrians and Turkish people we were not sent back. This town of Reyhanli is so close to Syria and has many Arabic speaking people making it easy to fit in.

Us: Then why was your crossing so covert?

M: Turkish people are kind but our governments do not like each other, especially due to the war. I should mention we had to pay \$500 as KHACHA (a one-time unofficial payment) to the authorities for each one of us. So that is \$6000 for all twelve of us. We were not very rich in Syria, so we sold all our valuables, jewelry etc. to save our children and our future.

Us: So you live in Reyhanli city now?

M: Yes. It is now fourteen of us and we all live in the same apartment. I have a job, and so does my brother and my sister's husband and we all contribute to the household rent and expenses to make ends meet. I earn Turkish Lira 1900 per month and am the only one with a stable job. Reyhanli is a small city and work opportunities are limited. But Alhamdulillah, we are managing.

Us: Do you feel or get a negative reaction from the Turkish people with so many Syrians coming into their country?

M: I am not sure about other cities in Turkey but Reyhanli and Antakya there is no problem. Many people speak Arabic here. Being small cities also helps. People trust each other. Many people have their roots in Syria and the inverse is also true. It is common occurrence in border towns where movement of people is not restricted.

Us: Why don't other members of your extended family also leave Syria?

M: They do not have the money. The whole immigration expense for my family was \$20,000. Not everybody has that much money in Syria.

Us: You have a decent job and living. What about people in the refugee camps?

M: Their first problem is weather. Too cold, rainy or too hot and they are in trouble. Food is sponsored by international donor agencies and distributed by Turkish Diyanet Foundation. Local people and private agencies also donate directly. The camps can easily be reached. There is one close by in Haji Pasha nearby in addition to many unorganized camps or settlements of 40-50 families living in tents under the trees. You can spot them if you start walking into the field away from the roads. So anyone can go and donate. And don't think everyone who lives in a refugee camp is poor. Many live by choice. Some people are used to free food and service. They can live in a dirty home. Others sell vegetable and polish shoes on the street, so they don't earn enough to rent a clean place of their own and must live in the camps. Not all five fingers are the same size.

Us: You are working. What about your children? Do they go to school?

M: My children are still too young. But my nephew and niece who live with us go to school here in the city. The Turkish people are open and hospitable and happily accept our children in schools knowing they are Syrians. Schools are also free so there really is no reason why we should not send our children to school. The Turkish government's policy of free education not only applies to citizens of the country but also to Syrian refugees. The idea is to integrate the refugees in the society, not to alienate them otherwise their children will be manipulated and will be involved in illegal activities.

Us: What about health?

M: Again, the same treatment as the Turkish people. I have had two young additions to my family while living in Syria here. Facilities are good, and we are not discriminated

against. Most of the costs are subsidized and paid by the government. Only a small portion of the cost is paid by us.

Us: Is there any citizenship program offered by the Turkish government? And if there is would you opt in?

M: Yes, the Turkish government is granting citizenships to Syrians, but preference is given to graduates, like doctors and engineers. It takes a few months. I have also applied. The best part is it is not like western asylum program and we are free to go back to Syria when conditions normalize.

Us: Why do you want Turkish nationality? Do you feel you are not treated equally here?

M: You get more freedom. You can move about anywhere in Turkey, do any job and even travel abroad on Turkish passport. Nobody will allow a Syrian to enter their country. We are treated more or less equally to the locals as we are not illegal or without status here.

Us: Can you visit your family in Syria if you want to?

M: We can use the ID given to us by the Turkish government to travel to Syria and back during special occasions when Turkish government opens up the border. Apart from this, being holders of ID, we can rent homes, buy cars etc. The only thing we cannot do is vote! Apart from that we get the same treatment as Turkish citizens.

Us: Do you have any plans to go back?

M: I hope one day I will go back. I really want to. You are here for 2 days and then you will start missing your family and your land. I still have my extended family and my land in Syria. I want to look at my home again, like I left it.

Us: Do you have any hopes of this crisis ending?

M: I have many hopes. Many, or should I say, most, are unrealistic. I hope to see my home in the same condition I left it. But I know it is not realistic. But we continue to hope. Why not?

Us: Thank you for the open discussion Mr. Mohammed. We also hope and wish the best for you

# Where Survival Becomes the Only Activity

Abu Muhammad, Abu Saad & Ahmed Katchi

Our journey started from our hotel in Reyhanli, approximately 10 KM from the Syrian border. Turkish Diyanet Foundation representatives first drove us to the border check-post at Cilvegozu where we had to pass through three layers of security and passport checks, all controlled by the Turkish authorities, before we set foot in Syria.

There was no border control on the Syrian side and we were told that though we were in Syria, the area is not manned by Syrian authorities and Turkish Diyanet Foundation staff are free to carry out welfare activities in the area for the refugees.

En route to our first refugee camp we made a brief stop at a warehouse managed by Baitusalam Welfare Trust which had stocks of pharmaceutical, surgical and food items. We were told that Turkish Diyanet Foundation distributes these items as and when the need is felt.

After travelling for 15 KM in the Syrian territory, our first major stop were the refugee camps in the border village of *Atimah*, approx. 50 KM North of Idlib and 60 KM West of Aleppo. Immediately we could identify the many avenues our welfare organization could contribute to improve the conditions in the camp. This included

1. Providing more sturdy and weather-proof shelters
2. Covered sanitation facilities
3. Building schooling and health facilities for the people in the shelter

From atop a nearby hill, the settlement gave a view similar to the Haji camps in Mina, just not that big. It was difficult to absorb and accept that this temporary *city* will remain a residing place for thousands till time unknown.

Our hosts then drove us 4 KM east to the village of Qah where we visited Sultan Abdul Hamid School,

which is entirely run and sponsored by Baitussalam Welfare Trust. Pleased at seeing representatives of Baitussalam Welfare Trust, the students gladly demonstrated what they had learnt in this six-room temporary building which was their school. Primary education and quran recitation are part of the syllabi. Beyond the apparent looks however, the questions blaring from their mesmerized looks and moist eyes left us without answers. We could not decipher if they were asking "*why are you here?*" or "*why are we here?*"

The school desperately needed a weather-proof permanent structure to ensure that these children can continue to receive education till they are able to return to their home cities. In the end, we felt juice packs and chocolates were due and distributed the same among the children.

Our next stop was 11 KM South to the village of Ad-Dana. Here Baitusalam Welfare Trust maintains and manages a warehouse of clothes and shoes. These goods are donated by the people of Pakistan but distributed among the refugee camps on the basis of need by TDF. Just a few days ago, we were told and showed that a wall of this warehouse was damaged by a blast nearby in the thick of the night. What such a settlement and such a store poses a threat to any person or organization was beyond understanding.

We were then taken to another refugee camp near *Salahaddin* village in *Babsqah* region. Though this one was smaller, with 100-125 tents, we were told Baitussalam Welfare Trust is planning to build a school here too, in association with TDF.

Our last stop before heading back to Turkey was the Aisha camp for widows also in *Babsqah* region. This camp was only for widows and children. It was entirely made from tents with no

covered sanitation facilities. We decided to exhaust our stock of juices and food items here by distributing them among the children in the camp.

While Turkey has promised a safe environment with work opportunities for over 3 million refugees to date, many Syrians are now staying in their own country. The reason for this is that recently



Turkish authorities have become more restrictive in permitting Syrians to enter their country due to threats from terrorist outfits and individuals. The 2015 Suruç bombing which resulted in 32 deaths and the 2017 Istanbul shooting are some of the examples. The focus has therefore shifted to rehabilitation of refugees and displaced people in safe areas within Syria.

Braving harsh living conditions, the threat to their lives are plenty and means of sustenance scant. Yet the displaced people in many refugee camps of *Atimah*, *Qah*, *Salahuddin* and others hope one day they will be able to return to their native cities as far as Palmyra and Homs, where survival will not be their only activity and focus.



# Memoirs of Hazrat Mufti Taqi Usmani رحمۃ اللہ علیہ

Translation by Bint Zahid

I wish to begin with the recollection of various events from my childhood but for that it is necessary to first give a brief sketch of the people in my house at that time:

My respected father, Hazrat Mufti Muhammad Shafi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ requires no introduction, as I am recognised because of him and not vice versa(1); whatever I am is because of his relationship with me. If Allah ﷻ has bestowed me with any good then it is due to the *faiz* (blessings) of my father only; and if there is any shortcoming (in me) then it is because of not having fully benefitted from his company. In short, whoever I am, I am his.

الرسياہ دلم، داغ لاله زار توام  
وگشت وجه بنیم، کل سبار توام

*'If my heart has a stain the stain is of your love;*

*but if cheerful I am, I am the rose of your spring.'*

Thus, his mention will recurrently appear in my memoirs.

Since the time I opened my eyes in this world, I always found my father busy in doing two things: Although by that time he had already resigned as the head Mufti and teacher at Darul Uloom, Deoband, many students who specifically wanted to seek guidance for him in their studies would come to our home and study under his guidance. This is what nowadays we refer to as coaching or tuitions, which has nowadays become a big source of earning. On the contrary, the teacher-student relationship in deeni madaris is such that a student for whom the regular studies of the madrassah do not suffice (and require added attention), teachers do not feel constricted to teach them privately. In fact, they do this whole-heartedly, and above all, it is against the norm of the madaris to charge fees for their services to students, irrespective of the



economic condition of the teachers. Hence, our respected father رحمته الله used to passionately teach such students either at our home or in the masjid.

The name of our locality's masjid was 'Adeeni Masjid' (2). However, in the everyday language people would refer to it as 'Deeni Masjid'. In the beginning, our grandfather, Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Yaseen Sahab رحمته الله was its custodian (3), but later on, our father رحمته الله was given this responsibility, and he would often give *dars* there too.

Second, I would always find my father, whenever at home, busy in writing; so much so, that during summer nights, he would continue to write under the light of the lanterns with a wooden pen (kilk), dipping it in ink over and over again. These were the times when fountain pens were still not in use. Further, adjacent to the *Baithak* (a drawing room) was a small room, that we all called as *hujra*, which our father had assigned for his prayers. That was the place where he worshipped and from where the sound of his *dhikr* and *tilawat* would resonate.

In those times of childhood, how could I have discerned my father's distinction in the field of knowledge and piety (in the real sense, I still remain unable to recognise it fully!), yet, in my little universe, he was the biggest center of love and respect. He also absolutely loved me. Almost all my elder brothers, along with receiving our father's love had had their share of scoldings too, but when it came to me, I had only seen his love and nothing else.

Once, around the age of twelve, I had gone to visit my elder brother in Lahore along with my mother. At that time father, in his letter to my brother, wrote, "It is difficult for me to spend days with Muhammad Taqi."

During our days in Deoband, I recall only one of his visits to Madras, during which it was tremendously difficult for me to stay away from him. When he was scheduled for return, I had convinced my brothers that I would also go with them to the railway station to receive our respected father. The chief excitement was

that of welcoming him, but there were two more things which excited me about going to the station. One, it was only on a *taanga* (traditional horsecart) that people in those days could go to the station. In our locality, there was a Hindu *taange wala*, famously known with the name of Phaggo, whose services were booked in advance for such purposes. He was booked for taking all of us to the station. In those days, horsecarts were rarely used because the nearby distances were covered either on foot or in a *palki/doli* along with our mother. It was seldom that we would go long distances for which a *taanga* would be required. Hence, it was natural to feel happy about enjoying a *taanga* ride to the station. Further, going to the station was an enjoyable activity in itself as it was something that took place only very rarely.

However, at the eleventh hour, I do not remember how my hand got burnt and I was restricted to stay at home for treatment. This deprived me of my chance to visit the station. The memory of this particular yearning has stayed with me till date. Nonetheless, the exciting scene of Hazrat Walid Sahab's return is also an unforgettable memory: the moment he entered the house, instead of attending to anything or anyone else, he instantly called out for me and lifted me up in his arms. In the light of the lantern, the memory of the image of his dark, thick beard and a face lightened up with joy and love is still alive in my mind just as if he is right there before my eyes at the moment.

- (1) *Alhamdulillah*, a detailed account of these has been narrated in my book, '*mere waalid mere shaykh*' (My father, my mentor), and monthly *Albalagh* had also published a 'Mufti-e-Azam Special Issue' in which, amongst many articles, there is a biography from the pen of my respected brother, Hazrat Mufti Muhammad Rafi Usmani رحمته الله, which later also got published as a separate book. It has the mention of our family and predecessors too.
- (2) Adeeni in Persian means Friday and Adeeni meant a masjid where Friday prayers were held.
- (3) Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Yaseen Sahab رحمته الله was

born one year before the foundation of Deoband was laid in 1282 Hijri and thus shared almost the same age as that of Deoband. I remember hearing from my father that Hazrat Maulana Yaseen Sahab would often say that he had witnessed those times of Deoband when from its Sheikh-ul-Hadith to its watchman, everyone was a *sahib-e-nisbat* wali-ullah. Our honourable grandfather was a distinct *mureed* (disciple) of Hazrat Maulana Rasheed Ahmad Sahab Gangohi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ and a classmate of Hakeem ul ummat

Hazrat Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi Sahab رحمۃ اللہ علیہ. All through his life, he served Deoband, teaching Persian and Mathematics and generations of Deoband enjoy the honour of having studied under him. His narratives have been written in detail by our respected father in his booklet, '*mere waalid maajid*' (My Esteemed Father).

*Continued In'sha'Allah...*

## Neither Less nor More than This!

Narrated Talha bin 'Ubaidullah:

A man from Najd with unkempt hair came to Allah's Apostle and we heard his loud voice but could not understand what he was saying, till he came near and then we came to know that he was asking about Islam. Allah's Apostle said, "You have to offer prayers perfectly five times in a day and night (24 hours)." The man asked, "Is there any more (praying)?" Allah's Apostle replied, "No, but if you want to offer the Nawafil prayers (you can)." Allah's Apostle further said to him: "You have to observe fasts during the month of Ramadan, an." The man asked, "Is there any more fasting?" Allah's Apostle replied, "No, but if you want to observe the Nawafil fasts (you can.)" Then Allah's Apostle further said to him, "You have to pay the Zakat (obligatory charity)." The man asked, "Is there any thing other than the Zakat for me to pay?" Allah's Apostle replied, "No, unless you want to give alms of your own." And then that man retreated saying, "By Allah! I will neither do less nor more than this." Allah's Apostle said, "If what he said is true, then he will be successful (i.e. he will be granted Paradise)."

- Sahih Al-Bukhari

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