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**THE TRUTH**  
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**RADIANT REALITY**

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*The Excellence of the Remembrance of Allah*

*Allah, the Exalted, says:*

*"And the remembering (praising) of (you by) Allah (in front of the angels) is greater indeed [than your remembering (praising) of Allah in prayers]" (29:45)*

*"Therefore remember Me (by praying, glorifying). I will remember you." (2:152)*

*"And remember your Rubb by your tongue and within yourself, humbly and with fear and without loudness in words, in the mornings and in the afternoons, and be not of those who are neglectful." (7:205)*

*"And remember Allah much, that you may be successful." (62:10)*

*"Verily, the Muslims (those who submit to Allah in Islam) men and women... (up to)... And the men and the women who remember Allah much with their hearts and tongues. Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward (i.e., Jannah)." (33:35)*

*"O you who believe! Remember Allah with much remembrance. And glorify His Praises morning and afternoon [the early morning (Fajr) and `Asr prayers]." (33:41,42)*

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**This journal is dedicated to the Greatest and the Last Prophet**

# **Hadhrat Muhammad**

**(Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)**

**on whom the Prophethood got ended and sealed forever.**

**May Allah Ta'ala enlighten entire humanity with**

**the Divine Attributes with which He sent**

**Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)**

**to this world.**

**Only way to salvation for the mankind is in**

**following the blessed teachings of**

**Hadhrat Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam).**

**..... Let us all follow him with utmost spirit.**

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## EDITORIAL

*All thanks for Almighty, the most Merciful and Exalted.*

### Business around the grave

The calico-covered corpse is gently lowered into the grave. Loving hands of sons and brothers receive the body of their loved one and place it in the narrow pit. The strips of plank are placed firmly next to each other. The last plank is placed leaving a dark and lonely grave under it. Spades are grabbed and heaps of sand come crashing down from all directions. However, all around the grave, business goes on as usual.

While the most stark reminder of death is right in front of the eyes, the latest car on the market, the rupee/dollar exchange and other gossip continues among many of those present. While they patiently wait for the 'fatihah' to commence, the time is passed by idle gossip. Carrying the janaza on our shoulders and witnessing the deceased being lowered into the grave also does not remind us of our own death. What then will remind us of that moment (which could be extremely soon) when we will breathe our last?

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) is reported to have said: "Remember excessively that which severs all pleasures — **DEATH.**" The best reminder of death is the graveyard itself. Hence Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has greatly encouraged that one should regularly visit the graveyard. While this Sunnah of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) is unfortunately rarely practised, at least we get an opportunity to visit the graveyard when attending a funeral. However, this occasion of remembering death is also

wasted gossiping.

The condition of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) when attending a funeral is clearly described in the following Hadith of Bara' (R.A.). He says: "Once we went with Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) to attend the funeral and burial of a person. When we reached there, Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) sat by the side of a grave and wept so profusely that the ground became wet with his tears. He then said: "Prepare yourself for (your entry in) the grave." (Targheeb)

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has also instructed us as to what we should be doing when attending a janazah. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) once said to the Sahaba (R.A.) when they had buried a person: "Seek forgiveness for your brother and beseech Allah Ta'ala to keep him firm for verily he will be questioned now" (*Mishkaat p.26*)

Thus the rare occasions when we visit the graveyard should serve as a reminder of our own death. Those few moments among the graves should not be wasted in idle gossip and worldly talk. While the burial is in progress, one should engage oneself in silently reciting whatever one is able to of the Qur'an with the intention of passing the rewards to the deceased. This would be of immense benefit to oneself as well as the deceased. May Allah Ta'ala enable us to remember our death often, **especially while in the graveyard.** Aameen.

# From a Sister's Desk

*This column is not meant for mere reading, but it is meant to knock at the doors of your conscience, if the article has knocked, don't just sit and ponder but the time demands action right now!*

## BIGGER FAMILIES—OUR NEED

'We had fun as three' commented a non-Muslim colleague of mine when my second daughter was. 'Big families give a sense of security in this insecure world' she went on to add. I was hearing these words from an extremely focused, professional who possessed all ingredients to be labeled 'modern'. She was overtly or covertly a supporter of large families and was advising surprisingly? 'a Muslim' to have a large family.

I remember being a component of a large family (by today's standards) comprising of four sisters and a brother. Resources were limited there was never a dearth. Allah helped the family tide over the worst times together and we too had lots of fun—TOGETHER.

Muslims are being ridiculed for not supporting 'two child/one child' norm in a country like India in which population explosion has posed a serious threat. But statistics are there to help. The growth rate and birth rate of Muslims is less than other communities in spite of the fact that Muslims usually do not go by the birth control measures adopted by other communities in India. So, where is the control?

There are communities in India which are on the brink of extinction e.g., Parsis. Sometimes back the respectable members of this community assembled to urge the community not to support one or two child norm and go for larger families. These are the comments from the most modern Indian.

The paradox is that if Muslims assemble to pass such resolutions harsh criticism will emerge from the 'pseudo intellectuals' of Muslim community not to talk about the hype and drama that will be made out of these resolutions by media and press.

Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Egypt etc., have the lowest birth

rates which proves beyond doubt that population control is under Allah's control only. And if man by mistake takes a charge, he creates a mess which is apparent in the form of failed population control measures in India and China.

Our viewpoint is clear—If Allah is the provider why do we become avoiders? No abortions, no female foeticides and no cribbing about our limited resources. Allah's universe is vast and there is space and food for everyone—provided we heed to Him.

Children are a blessing, an enjoyment, an entertainment and obviously an investment into this life and Akhirah. Let Allah take care of population control and its so called explosion—It is a great deed to bring a Muslim to this world, to nourish him and to teach him so that he carries forward the torch of Islam.

Yes criticisms will flow, Laloo Yadav became India's top man with nine children—should Muslims lag behind where they have been asked to lead from front?

Problems are there related to health, education and social security but those are to be solved by mutual help. Other communities i.e., Christians who introduced family planning methods are realizing the importance of large families, no wonder Pope has advised Christians to refrain from adopting family planning measures and strongly condemned abortions labeling them as 'anti-Christian'. Are Muslims hearing?

It is a time to go for bigger families and come out of the choking nuclei that we have built for ourselves to the vast orbits which are ready to embrace us. In it lies our good not because I say but Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has advocated it.

# Question & Answer

**Question.** I am afflicted with the deadly maladies of pride, vanity and anger, etc. Please advise me with the remedy for these ailments.

**Answer.** Always keep in mind your origin and what will be your end. Consider that fact that you were born from an impure droplet. Impure blood nourished you and became part of your body while you were in the womb of your mother. When you were born, what was your condition? You could not distinguish anything. You could not even express your needs. In every aspect you were dependent on others.

Gradually you grew up while going through various conditions. Even at this moment you are carrying much impurities and filth within you. How much impurities and filth do you not expel daily? Moreover, what great bounties Allah Ta'ala has blessed you with for which you cannot ever thank him.

Your ending in this world is with death. When you reach the grave, you will become food for the ants. Your body will burst in the grave. Terrible difficulties could affect one (an evildoer) in the grave. If one is afflicted by punishment, there is nobody in the grave to plead to. Allah forbid, if the angels of punishment are appointed over one in the grave, what will become one's condition?

Sit in solitude and ponder deeply over these realities. Insha-Allah the maladies of pride, vanity, wrongful anger, etc. will be eliminated. (Maktoobaat

**Question.** Whenever I notice anybody doing something against the Shariah, such as swearing, etc., I immediately begin despising the person. My nafs then says to me: "You are much better than him. Others beside you are all despicable." Please advise me with the remedy for these ailments.

**Answer.** To despise a person upon observing him committing a sin is itself a serious crime (only the sin should be despised —

never despise the person). At such a time one should consider his own sins. He should address himself thus: "There are numerous vices in me which I am fully aware of. How absolutely despicable I have become due to these sins! On the day of Qiyamah, I will be questioned about my own sins, not about the vices of others. Allah Ta'ala says: "You are not responsible for what I (Rasulullah Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) do and I am not responsible for what you do." To despise anyone is a sin on its own — and a very serious one too. It is NOT a trivial matter. Allah Ta'ala will question me on the day of Judgement: "If my servants committed any wrong, what right did you have to despise them?" (What will I then answer?)"

Ponder this regularly. Insha-Allah, you will benefit from it.

**Question.** Please show me the way of refraining from all sins. I also wish to know how one should develop the enthusiasm for performing Ibaadat, rid oneself from all evils and be inclined to do good.

**Answer.** ...Sit in solitude and perform mu-raqabah (meditate) over the following aayah:

*"Alam ya'lam bi an-nal laha yaraa"*

(Translation — Does he not know that verily Allah is watching).

Sit and meditate over this as long as possible. Thereafter, while you are busy in your work, every little while recite this aayah and ponder over its meaning. Allah Ta'ala will grant you much benefit by it. Read about the lives of the pious and narrate them to others as well. Sit in the company of the pious. Time permitting go in Jamaat for 40 days. When one has a good environment, one's actions and character also improve. ...May Allah Ta'ala grant you progress in serving His Deen and bless you with sincerity and steadfastness. Aameen.

# Lesson From The Qur'an

Commentary: Mawlânâ Mufti Mohammad Shafî Sahib (RA)

## Verses 114-115

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**And who is more cruel than the one who prevents the mosques of Allah from His name being recited therein, and strives for their destruction? It was not for such men to enter them except in awe. For them there is disgrace in this world, and for them, in the other world, there is a mighty punishment. To Allah belongs the East and the West. So, whichever way you turn, there is the Face of Allah. Indeed, Allah is all-Embracing, all-Knowing.**

In order to understand these two verses, one should keep in mind three different incidents connected with the three groups hostile to Islam, all of which were, in one way or another, guilty of preventing people from worshipping Allah in mosques and of laying them waste.

When Allah changed the Qiblah - that is to say, commanded the Muslims to turn towards the Ka'bah in their *Salah*, and not towards the *Baytul-Maqdis* —, the Jews raised all kinds of objections to it, and tried to produce in the minds of the Muslims doubts and misgiving which, had they taken root, would have led to the denial of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) and to the giving up of prescribed *Salah*, thus laying waste the mosque of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam).

The Romans had once invaded Jerusalem, and the ignorant among them had polluted the *Baytul-Maqdis*, which naturally prevented people from performing *Salah* in

this mosque. The Christians in a way looked upon the Romans as their ancestors; moreover, the humiliation of the Jews was in itself pleasing to them. Thus, in refusing to condemn this misdeed of the Romans, the Christians too were being indirectly responsible for laying waste the mosque.

At the time of the peace of *Hudaybiyyah*, the *mushrikin* (associators) did not allow the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) to enter Makkah and to perform the Hajj. So, this group too was guilty of the same sin.

According to the blessed Companion 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbas, Verse 114 refers to the second of these three incidents - the commentator Ibn Jarir too accepts this view. But the commentator Ibn Kathir follows Ibn Zayd in preferring the third as being the occasion on which this verse was revealed. The Holy Qur'an, however, speaks in general terms of "the mosques of Allah" so as to lay down a regular and permanent law, for all the peoples, covering all the possible cases of desecrating mosques and of hindering the "remembrance" ( ( of Allah in any way and thus laying them waste - it denounces those who are capable of such a misdeed as being "unjust" or "cruel", and threatens them with humiliation in this world and dire punishment in the other, for the dignity of a mosque requires that one should enter it in a spirit of lowliness and respect, and with the fear of Allah in one's heart.

The prediction of the Holy Qur'an came true. The groups which had been trying to lay waste the mosques were soon humiliated, and came under the Muslim rule. They are, of course, to meet a dire punishment in the other world for being disbelievers, but the punishment will be all the more severe on account of this additional sin.

The earlier verses have told us how each of these groups claimed to be on the right path. The present verse, in referring to

their desecration of mosques, refutes this claim as being a shameless pretension on the part of those whose behaviour itself gives them the lie.

As for Verse 115, let us recall that the idolaters compelled the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) to migrate from Makkah to Madinah, and thus separated him from the Ka'bah (the incident is, of course, known as the *Hijrah*). For some sixteen or seventeen months after that, the Muslims had to, under the commandment of Allah, turn towards the *Baytul-Maqdis* (at Jerusalem) while offering *Salah*. But the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) felt a deep longing for turning towards the Ka'bah, and from time to time he would look upwards, waiting for the Archangel Jibra'il to come with a new commandment in this respect. Finally, such a commandment did come, and Allah changed the orientation (Qiblah). Speaking of this modification, the Holy Qur'an says:

( )

***We do see how you raise your face again and again towards the sky. So, We are going to give you the orientation which you desire. Therefore, turn your face towards the Holy Mosque at Makkah, and all of you too, wheresoever you may be, turn towards it." (2:144)***

This new commandment naturally made the Muslims very happy, but the Jews, in their habitual malice, made it an occasion for taunting them and accusing them of going against the way of the earlier prophets.

Thus, there are two facets to Verse 115. On the one hand, it is an answer to the objection raised by the Jews; on the other hand, it brings comfort to the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) and to the

blessed Companions. The verse points out that had Allah been limited to any one direction, a fixed and permanent orientation would have been necessary for worshipping Him, but that, being infinite and beyond all possible limitations and qualifications, He is the Lord of the East and the West and of all conceivable directions — He is everywhere, and surrounds everything. Wheresoever a man turns, he shall find Allah "facing" him — that is to say, ready to accept his prayers and to shower His bounties on him. Consequently, neither does the *Baytul-Maqdis* nor the Ka'bah enjoy an inherent or inalienable superiority; either of them can acquire a position of privilege only through divine ordination. All that matters is to obey the commandment of Allah, which alone can make one worthy of receiving His grace. In order to win His pleasure, one has to orient oneself according to what He Himself has determined. If, in spite of being infinite and free from all limitations, Allah has yet fixed a particular orientation, it is because He is Omniscient, and knows what is the best in a certain situation and for a certain people.

Although it is not possible for man to comprehend fully the wisdom which is inherently present in each and every divine commandment, yet the fixing of a definite orientation for *Salah* has a very obvious *raison d'etre*. Whichever way one turns, one would, no doubt, find Allah "facing" him; but if one has to choose a direction every time one starts to pray, it would only mean a dispersion of one's attention. And when several men are offering their prayers jointly it would really be odd if each one of them adopts a different orientation. So, a fixed orientation for all helps the individual and the groups both in acquiring the necessary concentration of mind and the sense of a joint purpose.

This explanation satisfactorily dispels the objection often raised by certain antagonists who accuse the Muslims of being "the worshippers of the Ka'bah." If, by way of self-justification, they should still assert that they too keep the idols in front of them while meditating or worshipping for the same purpose of attaining a state of concen-



tration, the claim does in no way reinforce their accusation against the Muslims. Moreover, an impartial investigation into the respective attitudes and frames of minds would easily show how genuine the Muslims are in their claim to be worshipping no one but Allah, and how dubious the position of the others is in this respect. Even if we accept the claim that idols or icons are no more than a means to an end, one would, in employing idols as a "support", still be required to produce a relevant injunction from a Shari'ah which has not been abrogated as yet. Today, the Muslims alone possess such a Shari'ah.

Before we proceed, we must sound a note of caution. Verse 115 says that whichever way one turns, one would find "the face of Allah", and that Allah being "All-Embracing" surrounds everything. Wisdom lies in not trying to investigate unnecessarily into the meanings of these or similar statements. For, just as it is not at all possible for a creature to comprehend fully the "Being" (*Dhat*) of Allah, it is equally impossible to comprehend the essential reality of the "Attributes" (*Sifat*). All that man is required to do is to have a general faith in the Realities of the Divine Order - there is no obligation for him to look into the particularities of this sphere which is totally beyond human reach.

#### **Injunctions and related considerations**

Verse 114 lays down, or helps us to infer, some very important injunctions :-

(1) All the mosques in the world are equally worthy of respect. Just as it is a great sin to desecrate in any way the *Baytul-Maqdis*, or the mosque attached to the Ka'bah (*Al-Masjid al-Haram*) or the mosque of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), the same prohibition holds good with regard to all other mosques. These three mosques, no doubt, enjoy a superior position, and special respect is to be paid to them. The reward for offering prayers once in *Al-Masjid al-Haram* is equal to that of praying a hundred thousand times elsewhere; the reward for praying in the mosque of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) and in the *Baytul-Maqdis* equals that of praying fifty

thousand times. To make a long journey for the purpose of praying in any one of these three mosques is a meritorious act which makes one worthy of receiving a special *barakah*. On the other hand, the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has forbidden it that one should make a long journey in order to offer one's prayers in a mosque other than these three, believing it to be a meritorious act.

#### **The sanctity of the Mosque**

It is forbidden to prevent people, in any form or manner possible, from offering their prayers or "remembering" Allah in a mosque. An obvious form of such interference is not to allow someone to enter a mosque or to offer his prayers or to read the Holy Qur'an there. A less explicit form is to produce some kind of a noise in the mosque itself or play music nearby, and thus to disturb people in their prayers or in their "remembrance" *ذکر* of Allah. Similarly, if one starts reciting the Holy Qur'an or "remembering" Allah loudly so as to disturb the people who are offering supererogatory prayers (*Nawafil*) or themselves reading the Holy Qur'an or silently "remembering" Allah (*Dhikr*), one is being guilty of the same sin. Therefore, the *Fuqaha'* (masters of Islamic jurisprudence) have forbidden this practice. But, if people are not present in the mosque, one may recite the Holy Qur'an or make "*dhikr*" in a loud voice. On the basis of this principle we can also see that it is forbidden to beg or to collect donations even for a religious purpose while people are engaged in their prayers or in "*dhikr*."

All the possible forms of laying waste a mosque are forbidden. This includes not only demolishing and destroying a mosque, but also producing conditions which result in a mosque being laid waste or deserted. For, laying waste a mosque implies that few, or only a few people should come there for offering their prayers. A mosque can be said to be flourishing, not on the score of the beauty of its architecture or of its ornamentation, but only when it is full of men who come to pray and to "remember" Allah.

Says the Holy Qur'an:

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*Only those do populate the mosques of Allah who believe in Allah and in the Day of Judgment, who are steadfast in Salah and pay the Zakah, and do not fear anyone but Allah" (9:18).*

So, the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has foretold that when the Day of Judgment comes close, the mosques of the Muslims would be beautifully designed and decorated and be apparently full of people, but they would in reality be deserted, for a few people would go there for the purpose of offering their prayers. We are also reminded of what the fourth *Khalifah* and the blessed Companion 'Ali (RA) has said. There are, according to him, six deeds which be-hove a man --three of them pertain to the state when one is living at home, and the other three to the state when one is on a journey. The first three are --to read the Holy Qur'an, to populate the mosques, and to bring together a number of friends who wish to serve Allah and His faith. The other three are -- to spend out of what one has over one's needy companions of the way, to be polite to everyone, and to be cheerful with one's co-travellers so long as one does not go beyond the limits allowed by the Shari'ah. What he means by "populating" the mosques is that one should enter them in a spirit of humility and with the fear of Allah in one's heart, and then engage oneself in prayers or in reciting the Holy Qur'an or in making "*dhikr*." In opposition to this, the laying waste of mosques would mean that few, or only a few people should offer their prayers in them, or that a set of circumstances is allowed to develop which makes it difficult for those who are present to acquire the proper attitude of humility.

If Verse 114 was revealed on the occasion of the Peace of *Hudaybiyyah* when the *mushrikin* (associators) of Makkah had

prevented the Muslims from entering *Al-Masjid al-Haram*, then it is quite obvious that laying waste a mosque does not merely mean demolishing it, but also that it is not being allowed to be used for the purpose for which it was built -- that is, for *Salah* and for the *Dhikr* (remembrance) of Allah.

As for Verse 115, we have already pointed out that Allah not being limited to any particular direction or place, the Muslims do not, in turning towards the Ka'bah, at all mean to worship it, but that this particular orientation has been fixed on account of certain other considerations. We have also noted that for sixteen or seventeen months after the *Hijrah*, the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) and the blessed Companions were made to turn towards the *Baytul-Maqdis* in their prayers under divine commandment. This was, so to say, a practical demonstration of the truth that one can find Allah in every direction, and that Allah's attention encompasses all possible directions and dimensions simultaneously. A further and permanent demonstration of the same truth is provided by the injunction with regard to supererogatory prayers (*Nawafil*). That is to say, if one wishes to offer such prayers while travelling on a horse or a camel etc., it is not necessary for him even to turn towards the Qiblah, for he is allowed to keep his face towards the direction in which his horse is moving, and to offer his supererogatory prayers through the gestures of his head and arms. In fact, according to certain commentators, Verse 115 lays down just this rule with regard to supererogatory prayers. But one must bear in mind that this injunction applies only to that form of travel which involves animals like a horse or a camel that makes it difficult for one to turn towards the Qiblah. But in other forms of travel (e.g., in a train or a ship or an aeroplane) where it is not difficult to turn towards the Qiblah, one has to adopt the proper orientation even in offering supererogatory prayers. However, should the train or the aeroplane change its direction while one is still praying and there is no room for readjusting one's orientation

*Contd on page 31*

# Lesson From The Bukhari Sharief

Dr. Rafiq Ahmad

And Abu Abdullah said, "and after becoming a chief". قال أبو عبد الله : و بعد أن تسوّدوا

Here Abu Abdullah means Imam Bukhari himself and he adds to the saying of Hadhrat Umar (RA) - "Learn knowledge before becoming leader or chief" that one should not stop learning even after becoming a chief or leader.

## Chapter 15 : To envy knowledge and wisdom.

And Umar said, "learn knowledge before becoming a leader or chief". Abu Abdullah (Imam Bukhari) said "and also after becoming chief". And indeed Sahaaba learned knowledge in their old age.

### Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab Envyng knowledge and understanding of Deen الاغتياب في العلم و الحكمة

To be jealous of someone is forbidden and very bad but to envy someone for his good habits or achievements is not only good but also recommended. Here Imam Bukhari says that if there is something to be worth envying, it is the knowledge and understanding of *Deen* (i.e., the religion of Islam).

And Umar said, "Learn knowledge before becoming a leader or chief". و قال عمر : تفقّهُوا قبل ان تسوّدوا

It is a wonderful piece of advice from Hadhrat Umar (RA) that one should first learn knowledge then only accept an official post or any other responsibility. Imam Shaafa'ee says:

*when some young person sits on some responsible post , he remains deprived of large part of knowledge).*

If someone becomes a chief at a young age then he feels shy in learning from juniors.

And indeed Sahaaba learnt knowledge in old age). و قد تعلم أصحاب النبي في كبر سنهم

This is another important thing which one should remember that the age should be no bar to learn. We have with us the example of Sahaaba who acquired/learnt knowledge when most of them were elderly. After embracing Islam, the Sahaaba remained busy with Jihad etc. and they got free time only in old age and they continued learning in that old age as well.

### Hadith No. 72

### Narrated 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud (RA)

The Prophet said, "Do not wish to be like anyone except in two cases. (The first is) a person, whom Allah has given wealth and he spends it righteously; (the second is) the one whom Allah has given wisdom

(the Holy Qur'an) and he acts according to it and teaches it to others."

### Comments

Good things are worth envying, but there are so many good things and people differ to a large extent in their judgment about what is more good and what is less good.

This Hadith tells us that if there is anything really and extremely good and useful, that is the spending of wealth in the way of Allah and secondly the learning and teaching of the Qur'an. The generosity and openhandedness is the attribute of Allah, so Allah likes that person very much who possesses this attribute. Spending wealth in the name of Allah is most burdensome for one's baser self or Nafs.

The greatest treasure on the face of earth is the treasure of the Qur'an.

### Is envying permissible only in these two things?

No, it is permissible in all good things, here only these two things are mentioned in order to convey their great significance.

for learning.

One should not hesitate to learn even after becoming a leader or chief as Musa (AS) went to learn from Khadir (AS) after the former had been conferred with prophethood.

Hadhrat Sheikh-ul-Hind (RA) says that here Imam Bukhari (RA) actually wants to explain the saying of Hdhrat Umar i.e., "Learn before becoming a chief". Imam Bukhari (RA) says that one should continue learning even after becoming a chief as is evident from the act of Musa (AS) after becoming the Prophet.

Hadhrat Shah Waliullah Delhvi (RA) says that by this chapter Imam Bukhari (RA) wants to exhort for taking pains in the way of acquiring knowledge. Some people say that it proves the permissibility of undertaking a voyage by sea for acquiring knowledge.

### Hadith No. 73

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(66 : )

### Chapter 16 : What has been said about the journey of Musa (AS) (when he sailed) in the sea to meet Khadir (AS).

And the statement of Allah: "Shall I follow you on condition that you should teach me right knowledge of what you have been taught?"

### Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Various purposes that have been described by Ulema are:

One should exert to achieve that thing which is enviable, like acquiring of knowledge.

It is preferable to undertake journey

Huraira , which says ,

*(Indeed he was named Khadir because whenever he sat on dry grass it used to turn green).*

#### **Narrated Ibn 'Abbas (RA)**

*That he differed with Hur bin Qais bin Hisn Al-Fazari regarding the companion of (the Prophet) Moses. Ibn 'Abbas said that he was Khadir. Meanwhile, Ubai bin Ka'b passed by them and Ibn 'Abbas called him, saying "My friend (Hur) and I have differed regarding Moses' companion whom Moses, asked the way to meet. Have you heard the Prophet mentioning something about him? He said, "Yes. I heard Allah's Apostle saying, "While Moses was sitting in the company of some Israelites, a man came and asked him. "Do you know anyone who is more learned than you? Moses replied: "No." So Allah sent the Divine Inspiration to Moses: 'Yes, Our slave Khadir (is more learned than you.)' Moses asked (Allah) how to meet him (Khadir). So Allah made the fish as a sign for him and he was told that when the fish was lost, he should return (to the place where he had lost it) and there he would meet him (Al-Khadir). So Moses went on looking for the sign of the fish in the sea. The servant-boy of Moses said to him:*

*Do you remember when we betook ourselves to the rock, I indeed forgot the fish, none but Satan made me forget to remember it. On that Moses said: 'That is what we have been seeking? (18.64) So they went back retracing their foot-steps, and found Khadir. (And) what happened further to them is narrated in the Holy Qur'an by Allah. (18.54 up to 18.82)*

#### **Comments**

##### **Hadhrat Khadir (AS)**

Khadir is a surname and not the name. It means "green". Imam Bukhari has quoted a Hadith on the authority of Abu

#### **Was Khadir (AS) a prophet ?**

There has been a lot of debate whether Khadir(AS) was a prophet or not. Imam Qurtubi says that the majority of Ulema are of the opinion that Khadir (AS) was a prophet, he says that the verse of the Qur'an quoted here also indicates that he was a prophet because it is not permissible for a prophet to learn from one who is not a prophet. However, there is a group of Ulema who are of the opinion that he was not a prophet but was a wali (holy man).

#### **Is Khadir (AS) still alive?**

This point is also quite debatable amongst the Ulema whether Khadir (AS) is alive or not. Imam Nawwawi and many others, particularly the Sufis or mystics believe that he is still alive. There are so many things famous about the meetings of Khadir (AS) with different people. On the other hand many people including Imam Bukhari believe that he is not alive. The latter group substantiate their view by quoting a Hadith which has been quoted by Imam Muslim on the authority of Ibn Umar in which Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) once after offering Isha Salaah said:

*"Do you see your this night ?, there will be no one alive (from those who are alive today ) on the face of earth after one hundred years from now."(Muslim)*

From this Hadith, these people infer that this statement included Khadir (AS) as well, so he must have also died after that century. Others say that it is also possible that Khadir (AS) was not included in this statement, either because he was not that time on the face of earth but was in sea or he was excluded like Iblees and Hadhrat Eisa (AS).

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**Chapter 17 : Saying of the Prophet  
(Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), "O Allah!  
Teach him the knowledge of the Book  
(Al-Qur'an).**

**Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab**

In the previous chapter, Ibn Abbas's level of understanding the Deen was mentioned, here Imam Bukhari wants to say that this excellence of Ibn Abbas was due to the Dua of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). Secondly it also shows the excellence of both the knowledge as well as the person of Ibn Abbas. Thirdly it also shows that this excellence is not earned but one gets it by the grace of Allah .

**Hadith No. 74**

**Narrated Ibn 'Abbas (RA)**

*"Once the Prophet embraced me and said,  
"O Allah! Bestow on him the knowledge of  
the Book (Qur'an)."*

**Comments**

**When did Ibn Abbas (RA) get this Dua?**

This incident is reported in Bukhari (Kitab-ut-Taharah), Muslim and other books of Hadith with different words. It is said that this incident took place when Ibn Abbas, who that time was very young (minor), spent a night in the house of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). When Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) started offering Salaah, Ibn Abbas joined Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) in his Salaah and stood behind him, Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) caught hold of him and got him forward, Ibn Abbas again went back. After finishing the Salaah, Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) asked

him as to why didn't he stand parallel to him in Salaah? Ibn Abbas replied,

" "

*"Does it behoove to anyone that he would offer Salaah parallel to you when you are the Apostle of Allah."*

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) became very happy with this answer of Ibn Abbas and made the above mentioned Dua in his favour. Second reason, which is more famously reported in connection with this Hadith is that once Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) went to attend the call of nature, Ibn Abbas saw this and he anticipated that once Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) would come out from there he would need water for ablution. So, he (Ibn Abbas) placed water for Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) in anticipation. When Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) came out after attending the call of nature, he saw water there. He (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was very happy and enquired who kept that water there. He (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was told that it was kept by Ibn Abbas, who was a young boy that time. Seeing this extraordinary wit of Ibn Abbas Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) made the above mentioned Dua for him. This Dua for Ibn Abbas by Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has come with different words, quoted in different narrations, viz.,:

**What is meant by Al-Kitab, Fiqh and Hikmah?**

Ibn Hajr says that al-Kitab here means the Qur'an and Hikmah means the Sunnah. Some say that it (this Dua) means the understanding of the Qur'an. Some say that it means the fear of Allah or intelligence or understanding of Allah (SWT). Ibn Hajr says that that the most appropriate meaning here seems "the understanding of the Qur'an".

# BEWARE OF THE EMERGENCE OF A EUROPEAN OR AMERICAN ISLAM

*Shaykh Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi [ra]*

*This speech was delivered at the Islamic Centre of New Jersey on June 4, 1977. Introducing the speaker, the Egyptian scholar, Dr. Sulaiman Duniya eulogised the services of Indian Muslims to the Arabic language and Islamic sciences and said that non-Arab Muslims had taken an equal part in the propagation and presentation of Islam with the Arabs, if not greater. He also stressed the universal character of Islam, claiming that it transcended geographical and political boundaries.*

Friends and Brothers, It is my good fortune to meet you at this great Islamic Centre, This is my first visit to North America. Before it, I used to read and hear about this land and the progress Islam was making in it. I had, also, some knowledge of the religious inclination and solicitude of the Muslims who had taken up residence here. But I did not imagine that I would be meeting so many of my religious brethren in this far-off country or witnessing such a keen interest and enthusiasm for Islam.

On coming here I realised that Islam was trying to obtain a foothold in the United States which enjoyed the position of leadership in the contemporary world owing, largely, to its phenomenal advances in the fields of science and industry. By the grace of God, Islam has made its debut in this part of the world and is making a steady headway, and, God willing, the day is not far when an Islamic society will be established here.

It is, of course, a good augury for Islam and a matter of joy for the Muslims, but I, also, have some misgivings by reason of what little knowledge I possess of history. The establishment of an Islamic society so far away from the centres of Islamic faith and civilisation is open to grave risks and can lead to catastrophic consequences. Dr.

Sulaiman Duniya, from whose writings I, too, have profited, has very aptly remarked that Islam is not exclusive to any country. I wholly agree that Islam is not a territorial faith, yet, it also needs a distinctive environment, a congenial climate, and a predisposition that may transcend personal, cultural and intellectual standards and give forth, as one would say, the aroma of Islam. It requires an Islamic homeland for it is neither a mystical doctrine nor a philosophy nor a collection of soulless beliefs and rituals, but a real, living and all-embracing faith.

Islam, at once, is comprehensive of Idea and Action, Morality and Monetary Dealings, and Emotion and Intellect. In the same way, it, also, is a special kind of natural inclination and a peculiar state of mind. It embraces all the manifold aspects of human personality-spiritual and material, moral and physical, emotional and intellectual, and personal and social. It casts a man into a new mould. Whoever embraces Islam with an open heart believing it to be the chosen faith of the Lord and the Last of the Divine Messages will get cast into the mould of Islam. He will be transformed so radically as if he had been born anew because Islam is a complete and eternal plan of life which comprehends all the aspects of change and revolution and perfection and beauty. Islam is not a wooden dogma or a traditional religion, but a faith that permeates through the inmost recesses of the heart and soul.

If the true image of Islam is present before the mind's eye, it would be evident that it is not something that can, simply, be transmitted through the written or spoken word or seen in the books, but a typical way of thought and a distinctive state of feeling. Hence it passes judgement about the goodness and badness desirability and undesirability of things. as is related about the holy

Prophet that he liked or disliked many things. He, for example, liked to begin every good act with the right hand so much so that he started combing his hair from the right side or when he wore the shoes, he began with the right foot. Similarly, there were many things that gave him pleasure or made him annoyed and uncomfortable. Islam, in fact, is an Apostolic of empyreal way of life that has come down from the heaven of heavens and the Divine Messengers have been its bearers and custodians, and they have left it behind as their legacy.

This is why, God had described Islam as Sibghatuillah (Colour of Allah). Were it only a body of doctrines or a code of conduct it would not have been called Sibghat which denotes a mark, 'a colouring', and a distinguishing feature'. This can be possible only when Islam draws a clear line of demarcation between one man and another, between one life, character and temperament, and another life, character and temperament, and brings out clearly the difference among the standards of things and values of life. The criterion of Islam is quite different from the criterion of Infidelity. Hence, you will find warnings in the compilations of the Traditions and Sunnah of the Prophet against the Age of Ignorance and its practices. For instance, sometimes, it is said about a thing that it is a practice of the Age of Ignorance, and, sometimes, that is very much like the zealotry and arrogance of those days. It is set forth in the Quran;

**(O ye women); Bedizen not yourselves with the bedizenment of the Time of Ignorance. (XXXIII : 33)**

But why ? The Age of Ignorance having ended long ago, for what purpose did the Quran call upon men to shun it? It was because Ignorance was a definite way of life and had its own values and standards for judging the goodness and badness, lawfulness and unlawfulness of things, and it was a way of life which the Lord viewed with disfavour. It is mentioned in the Traditions that God looked at the earth and was displeased with the Arabs and non-Arabs who dwelt on it except for a few People of the

Scripture".

The Almighty disliked Ignorance; He cursed it, and declared it undesirable for the bondmen. Hence, it was said: Bedizen not yourselves with the bedizenment of the Time of Ignorance. And, also:

**When the unbelievers got up in their hearts heat and cant : the heat and cant of Ignorance. (-XLVIII : 26)**

Whenever the sacred Prophet noticed a trait of Ignorance in a Muslim, he took exception to it, saying: 'You are still under the influence of Ignorance'. For instance, when he saw an illustrious Companion like Abu Zarr Ghifari ill-treating his slave and beating him up, the Prophet observed : "The inclination towards Ignorance has not yet gone out of you". The worthy Companion, on his part, was so deeply affected by the rebuke that he, at once, started treating his slave like an equal, and gave him to eat and wear what he ate and wore himself.

Had Islam not been possessing a distinctive character and temperament, the Lord would not have used the word, Colour, in respect of it.

**The Colour of Allah : and who is better than Allah at Colouring. (II: 138)**

Exhorting, further, the bondmen to follow the Apostles, the Lord proclaimed, giving out a long and lustrous list of Divine Messengers:

And We bestowed upon him Issac and Jacob; each of them We guided; and Noah did We guide aforetime; and of his seed (We guided) David and Solomon and Job and Joseph and Moses and Aaron. Thus do We reward the good.

And Zacariah and John and Jesus and Elias. Each one (of them) was of the righteous.

**And Ishmael and Elisha and Jonah and Lot. Each one of them did We prefer above (Our) creatures, with some of their forefathers and their offspring and their brethren; and We chose them and guided them unto a Straight Path. Such is the guidance of Allah wherewith He guideth whom He will of His bondmen. But if they set up (for worship) aught be-**



**side Him, all that they did would have been in vain. (-VI : 85-89)**

**And, again : Those are they whom Allah guideth, so follow their guidance. (-VI : 91)**

Afterwards, the Lord determined that the command was exclusively with regard to the Prophet Mohammad whose life was a perfect model for mankind and an ideal example. The following words were thus, addressed to the Believers through the holy Prophet :

**Say, (O Mohammad, to mankind); If you love Allah, follow me; Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. (-III: 31)**

Islam is more sensitive than any other faith. It is enough for a man to call himself a Christian, and, after it, he can adopt whatever social, cultural or intellectual standards he likes. A friend of mine once said to an educated Hindu gentleman. "My brother, if a Muslim is asked who is a Muslim, he unhesitatingly replies that whoever recites and believes in the holy Kalima of Laa ilaaha Iliallaah, Mohammadur rasuluilaah (There is no deity save One God. and Mohammad is His Apostle) is a Muslim. This affirmation sums up the whole of Islam. Now, what will your answer be if the same question was put to you concerning a Hindu ? I do not want a long and exhaustive reply because there are enough books in my library by the help of which one can understand the Brahmin or Vedantic philosophy. I have only a few minutes to spare and I want you to explain Hinduism quickly". My friend related that the Hindu gentleman paused for a while, and, then, said : "A Hindu can believe or refuse to believe in anything. If a person calls himself a Hindu, he is a Hindu, and, after it, it does not matter what he believes in or rejects. He remains a Hindu".

But it is not the same with Islam. As I have said, it is a highly sensitive faith and is more quickly affected by things that are inimical to it than any other religion. Its limits are marked out very clearly. It leaves no one in doubt about itself In concrete, well-defined and clear-cut terms it makes it

known that this is Islam and this is Infidelity; this is Islam and this is Ignorance; this is lawful and this is forbidden; and this is where Islam ends and Infidelity and Apostasy begin. Such an explicit concept of Apostasy, perhaps, does not exist in any other faith. In Islam, to be an Apostate is a mortal sin, the very thought of which makes the hair stand on end. It is stated in a Tradition that ,the sign of perfection in faith is that the idea of going back to Apostasy, after a man has embraced Islam, is as repugnant to him as being thrown into the fire."

When such is the disposition of Islam, the responsibility of the Muslims who are settled in Europe or America becomes much greater. Had Islam, like the other faiths, been only a body of beliefs and practices, it would have been different, but if it is a Colour and a programme of life, and stands, also, for a state of feeling and awareness, and is much more sensitive than the other religions as well, and calls for a fundamental change in the values and ideals of things, the matter becomes far more complex. We can, therefore, not rest content with reading books and treatises, however, weighty they may be. Books, of course, are necessary but we cannot cultivate the Islamic spirit wholly through them, nor develop the Islamic mood and temperament. Our real need is an Islamic region, an Islamic Colouring and an Islamic environment in which we can see, hear and feel Islam directly. Personal contacts; social intercourse and the adoption of the Islamic mode of living are its essential conditions. We should go to places where the Islamic way of life and Islamic society are present in any measure and we can have some experience of Islam as a living force.

For this reason, the company of Muslims and truthful Believers is necessary to the extent that God felt the need to tell the sacred Prophet, whose life was a model of perfection, to seek the company of pious and warmly devoted bondman.

**Restrain thyself along with those who cry unto their Lord at morn and evening seeking His countenance; and let not**

**thine eyes overlook them, desiring the pomp of the life of the world; and obey not whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance, who followeth his own Just and whose case hath been abandoned. (-XVIII : 28)**

When such was the case with the sacred Apostle we can imagine how important it would be for common Muslims like us to spend some time with the truthful and the pure in heart.

**Oh ye who believe! Be careful of your duty to Allah, and be with the truthful. (-IX : 119)**

The Islamic society here being in the initial stages of evolution, we must not neglect our duty towards it. I am confident that, by the grace of God, this infant society will not only endure but, also, flourish and attain maturity and the means and opportunities of training and discipline will be available to it which are nothing but faith and belief, study and investigation, learning and culture, and good company and exertion. Those who make sincere efforts for the glory of the Divine Faith, for them the Lord opens the doors of wisdom, faith and discernment that are beyond human imagination.

**And for those who strive in Us, We surely guide them to Our paths, and lo, Allah is with the good. (-XXIX : 69)**

Such, in brief, are the responsibilities you owe to the society you have founded in this country. It would never have come into existence had you not migrated to America and taken up residence here. Now, with it, you should, also, take pains to assure that it develops into an ideal Islamic society and does not remain confined to the ideological sphere alone because, as we know, Islam is not merely a social, political or economic concept, but before all this, it is an indivisible and indissoluble creed that permeates the whole existence. It is a state of mind and a design of life. The Islam of the holy Companions possessed all these attributes. They were Muslims by all standards, spiritual, moral and practical, and criterion for all things. Hence, it was said by

Abdullah bin Masud that what the Muslims consider good is good, also, in the judgement of God". According to the authorities, the word Muslims' here denotes the Companions. It will, thus, mean that what the Companions hold to be good is good also in the sight of the Lord and what they, collectively, regard bad is bad.

Islam and the Quran demand of the Muslims to be the criterion of truth and virtue. They should possess a genuine Islamic disposition so that the Americans, here, can see distinctly the difference between their own society which is being driven mercilessly by Materialism and the Islamic society that is pure, healthy and dignified—a society which spends its nights in prayer and repentance and days in seeking honest sustenance and rendering selfless service to mankind.

The creation of such a society will, positively, lead to the victory of Islam. On seeing it, the American will exclaim that the real joy of living is in the Islamic society and not in his own, and advance towards it instinctively and curse the stinking environment in which he has been brought up.

I fear the day, in America as elsewhere, when we will withdraw into our shells and get entangled in the labyrinth of study and research, and our connecting links with the real fountain-head of Islam and with the Islamic centres will be broken where, in spite of all drawbacks, Islam is, still, alive, and the springs of Islamic warmth and eagerness will dry up within us. It will be, then, that the American Islam, European Islam, and the Japanese, Iranian, Indian and Pakistani Islams will emerge, making it impossible to distinguish one from the other. They will be as different from each other as an American is from an Asian, or a Japanese from an Afghan, and Islamic societies will appear whose mental attitudes and natural inclinations and values will be widely apart.

We should take up the challenge and get ready to meet the threat now when the things have not gone far and the Islamic leaders, are, to some extent, active and effective. The wisdom behind the obligatori-

ness of the Haj Pilgrimage and the congregation of the Muslims, with all their different social, cultural and linguistic characteristics, at a particular place and at a particular time, is that nothing about Faith remained vague or unclear and stock was taken, at the same time, of the Muslims of the world and their Islamic lineaments and local innovations and un-Islamic influences they might have accepted owing to the negligence and apathy of the Ulema or as a result of living together, for a considerable length of time, with other peoples and communities could be ascertained and plans evolved for their eradication. As Shah Waliullah has admirably put it, "Had the Haj not been there, the Islamic faith and the Muslims of the East and the West would have been the victims of change and alteration, like the other religions, and it would not have been discovered for ages."

So, brothers, beware of the emergence of a local or territorial Islam and the establishment of Islamic societies that are devoid of the spirit of Islam and built upon foundations that are not genuinely Islamic.

Believe me, it is not a figment of my imagination. I attach the highest importance to it, and, I am sure, when you will go home and think over it you will appreciate the gravity and magnitude of the danger I have indicated.

*Abu Hurairah (RA) said: The Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "Do you know what is backbiting?" The Companions said: "Allah and His Messenger know better." Thereupon he said, "Backbiting is talking about your (Muslim) brother in a manner which he dislikes." It was said to him: "What if my (Muslim) brother is as I say." He said, "If he is actually as you say, then that is backbiting; but if that is not in him, that is slandering." [Muslim].*

## Islam: Friend or Foe?

By M H Faruqi

Islam's message is plain and profound. It starts as a seed and blossoms into a garden. Seven years after Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) had been charged with the duty to convey the message, the Makkans banished and confined him and his kith and kin of the Banu Hashim clan to the Valley of Abi Talib. The message had been spreading, despite all opposition and oppression, and, therefore, the oligarchs of Makkah had decided on a policy of boycott and isolation. It was assumed that while the people outside would hear no more of Islam, those under siege would recant. In any case, they hoped, the message would die a natural death.

The besieged had to subsist by eating leaves and roots of desert plants or boiled or roasted hide. The wail of hungry infants could be heard outside the Valley, but the sanction-keepers were unmoved. The blockade lasted around three years. However, if anyone happened to stray by, Prophet Muhammad (S) was inviting them to were not so visible but seemed implicit and inevitable. The Arabs were by now so well familiar with the Kalima, the basic statement of Islam, that the listener had no difficulty in relating the two words La Ilaha to its complete form - There is no deity but Allah.

The Qur'an tells us that God is Kind and Beneficent, Just and Merciful, Lord and Provider, Sovereign and Law-Giver, Wise and True. He is Original. He is Eternal. He does not retire or sleep. He has no partners or kin. He is All-Knowing and All-Seeing. No one can escape His reckoning and He will punish or reward each one according to his deeds. His justice is blended with mercy. His mercy is blended with justice.

Every child that is born, is born a Muslim, with a clean slate. It is not condemned at birth. Muslim means one who submits, submits to God, of his own volition. The test, therefore, lies in the future, when the child has grown up and has the ability to act any way he or she likes, to obey or not to obey. God does not impose Himself. People are free to believe or not to believe. And many do not. They invent their own deities and worship their own desires. Naturally there are consequences to both belief and unbelief. No system of law or discipline treats those who abide by the law and those who do not in the same manner. It cannot be otherwise.

There is, therefore, the Akhirah, the Hereafter. Nothing is as sure as death, and it is only logical that people are judged at the end of the Day and rewarded or punished accordingly. The best reward is the Pleasure of Allah and the worst punishment is His Displeasure. But Humans are also very much bone and flesh. The rewards and punishment are, therefore, tangible too: Heaven and Hell.

It is a long journey from Here to the Hereafter. You have to have your bearings right, the right sense of destination, the right navigational equipment, and an inbuilt system of correcting the course and raising an alarm, in case one begins to go dangerously astray. You need to have your limits (Hudood) defined which you may transgress only at your peril, because otherwise you may be endangering the whole society. You need a very powerful social vehicle to carry you through a long, arduous and not unoften hazardous journey.

**A powerful vehicle needs a very powerful brake too.**

Islam is, therefore, not just maxims and precepts, about being nice and good; it is also about social and personal discipline, a system of law and punishment without which maxims and precepts could become meaningless outside a small and limited area of individual morality.

But an Islamic society is not gov-

erned by laws alone. Just as the lock on the door is fixed only for the thief or someone who may otherwise feel encouraged to steal, laws in Islam are directed at the wicked fringe, or the weaker ones who may feel tempted to break the law and once having done so with impunity, may find it difficult to get out of the vicious circle. The aim is to keep the wicked fringe as much narrowed down as possible, to punish the actual guilty, deter the potential breakers of law, and protect society and its economic, social and moral fibre.

One knows what happens otherwise: a geometric progression of crime, which neither the courts and nor the prisons are able to cope with. We also need to reckon the sheer economic cost of laissez faire morality!

The contemporary focus on the Islamic state, by Muslims who want to regain their lost freedom and by those who are somehow afraid of Islamic state and Islamic Shari'ah, tends to convey a fallacious impression of a polity that is saddled with a plethora of laws. It is not true. The number of laws that would govern an Islamic state are very very few as compared to those hundreds and thousands we find otherwise. It would be an instructive exercise if someone was to count the number of Islamic laws that used to govern the former Ottoman caliphate and compare them, for example, with the number of laws on the statute book of the then British Empire.

Islamic laws are based on conscience and conviction and not on legislation and imposition and there is little scope for conflict between the interest of the individual and the state. No one is above the law and everyone is governed by the same law.

The Islamic society is a self-regulating society. You don't have to abide by a law because someone is watching and you don't mind breaking it if you feel you can do so with impunity. An individual is answerable in his own cognition. Whether under watch or not, the person knows for sure that he or she is answerable before God. There is no way one can escape His

notice, His Pleasure or Displeasure.

Yet one is human. A person may forget or relax. A Muslim, therefore, takes time off from the necessary routines of life to bow his or her head in prayer before God, five times in a day. These prayers are as much a continuous reminder of one's close relationship with God, with His Grace and His Mercies as with the sense of inescapable accountability before Him. It is also an act of thankfulness.

Worship in Islam - praying five times a day, fasting in the month of Ramadan, giving one-fortieth of your wealth every year in Zakah, Hajj once in a lifetime, if you can afford it - are all meant to keep fresh and active one's consciousness of God. The implications of this consciousness are as much personal as social.

The ability to relate directly, without any intermediary, to God while in prayer, the joys of month-long hunger, the life-long sacrifice of a part of one's wealth every year, and the physical hardships, monetary costs and emotional discipline involved in Hajj, bring both personal fulfilment and social enrichment. You come to know the taste of hunger. You find you become richer by giving. And how pleasant it is to discover that no matter the color of your skin, the land of your birth, rich or poor, you are an equal member of the human fraternity. This equality does not diminish, it elevates you.

Islam also has its own economic "equation." Giving Zakah adds to prosperity, taking interest makes everyone poor. By banning interest absolutely, Islam denies money any right to grow by itself and puts a true premium on labour and production. It is intriguing that during all this past century or so characterised by talks of socialism, whether democratic, Marxist or Christian, of all the rhetoric against capitalism and monopoly, no one has cared to bother about the worst of all monopolies: the wealth of the nations entrusted to banks for growth and safe-keeping.

How can a piece of metal or paper grow by itself except by taking someone else's money, by siphoning into the wealth

produced by others, by manipulating the market, by offering - other people's capital - to borrowers of their choice irrespective of its wider social implications, by imposing its control of money over the needs of others, and by creating false money simply by giving borrowers the right to draw money which in most cases meant no more than a paper transaction between the various branches of the lending bank or banks? The monetary system allows a few dozen money holders to do all this and leaves us to complain about an uncontrollable spiral of inflation. Governments may come and go, inflation goes on.

The Qur'an calls taking or giving interest as tantamount to war against God and His Messenger Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam". However, it is doubtful if such an economic law would appeal to anyone who thinks of God as Someone of even less authority and interest in the affairs of His subjects than a constitutional monarch, and who does not think that God is All-Knowing and All-Wise, Just and Merciful, Sovereign and Law-Giver.

Islam also sets a real challenge by providing us with an enemy, a real one, so that one doesn't have to create or invent one. The enemy is Satan! It has no powers over humans, but it has been given the ability and freedom to confuse and to seduce. The humans too have their freedom to succumb or to spurn. A real drama requires a real villain, and you cannot prove your love without being able to reject the seductions of the villain.

Islam invites us all to face our common and real foe, the foe that cannot be wished away. All our future depends on how we deal with the real enemy.

*M H Faruqi is editor of the Muslim news-magazine, Impact International, London. This article appears in the November 2001 issue of Impact International, London.*

# Understanding Television

By Khalid Baig

## What Can Be Done?

*(Author's Request: Please turn off your television set as you read this article.)*

Television has spread like a wild fire in the world, including the Muslim world. It seems to have overcome the limitations of space and time.

Consider place. In Saudi Arabia, one can find the imprints of Hollywood only a few yards away from the Haram, the most sacred of all sanctuaries of Islam. Videocassettes are easily available at stores. A hotel attendant, at a walking distance from the Haram al-Sharif in Makkah can be found busy watching English movies on the television in his office even as the prayers are going on. At the Jeddah airport, the Umrah pilgrims can watch a European beauty contest courtesy of an Egyptian TV channel being broadcast to the airport television sets.

Consider time. Ramadan is the most sacred month in the Islamic calendar, a period of time that is to be devoted to direct acts of worship of Allah. Yet, during Ramadan, believers around the world can be found glued to their television sets when they should be busy making dua, doing dhikr and tilawa or offering nafl prayers.

Or consider the time of suffering. Hardly a day goes by when we do not get the news of pain and suffering from different countries, or a dozen other hot spots around the globe. Yet, between all the suffering and grieving that accompanies the tragedy, the dish antennas on the rooftops have been flourishing. In the past at times of catastrophes people would turn to Allah, would stop going to the cinema houses, and would repent from sins, even though temporarily. Today, there is an ever-increasing appetite for the television fun. This is also true in the lands closest to the areas of suffering.

Throughout the world religious, moral and social values have been drastically undermined by this great "technological gift" of the century. And entire nations seem to be helplessly "enjoying" the invasion. When people are doing nothing, they watch television. When they are doing something else, they still have television in the background. The device has contributed to the addition of a new space in the architecture of the private home: the TV lounge. It is a space where perfect strangers come to pedal nudity, immorality, and hedonism. This is the space, which increasingly controls the entire house.

It is fashionable to complain about "excessive" sex and violence on television. Even those who make money from this enterprise willingly do that. CNN tycoon Ted Turner said in July 93 before a U.S. Congressional subcommittee: "I don't need experts to tell me that the amount of violence on television today and its increasingly graphic portrayal can be harmful to children. Television violence is the single most significant factor contributing to violence in America." And a poll released in February 95 in the U.S. by Children Now, whose directors include TV producers and Warner Brothers Chairman, reported that most children believe that what they see on television encourages fornication, disrespect for parents, telling lies, and aggressive behavior.

The most significant thing here is that what the TV industry wants us to discuss (and we willingly follow) is what is ON television, not television itself. Everyone will wholeheartedly agree with the problems with TV programs and offer all kinds of advice. (Watch the programs with your children. Tell them what is wrong. Be critical. Be creative.) Irrational and meaningless as it is, this exercise will nonetheless soothe

your irritation. In the meantime, keep on watching. It is fun. It is also unavoidable.

In about two decades, this "wonderful" technical development has played havoc with societies around the globe. But what is even more unprecedented is the ambivalence with which these societies face this greatest of all invasions. Underlying this is a strongly held belief that television is a neutral tool that can be used with equal facility for good or evil. Unfortunately, this position has been taken without any critical examination of the facts. It is about time that we approached the subject with an open mind.

### Neutral Tool?

Is technology ever neutral? "[Every technology] has within its physical form a predisposition toward being used in certain ways and not others," writes Niel Postman, chair of the department of Communication Arts at New York University. "Only those who know nothing of the history of technology believe that a technology is entirely neutral." (*Amusing Ourselves to Death*, 1985).

What about television? It reflects the idea that serious discourse can be carried out through pictures instead of words. As Postman explains: "The single most important fact about television is that people watch it, which is why it is called 'television.' And what they watch, and like to watch, are moving pictures\_\_ millions of them, of short duration and dynamic variety. It is in the nature of the medium that it must suppress the content of ideas in order to accommodate the requirements of visual interest."

Words and pictures do not occupy the same universe of discourse. A piece of writing requires one to go beyond the shape of the letters to read them. It requires thought to understand what is being said. Television does not require reflection, in fact it does not even permit it. That is why little children can spend hours in front of the mini screen. Television can titillate, it cannot teach. It can bring images into our heart, not ideas into our mind. It appeals to the emo-

tions, not the intellect.

But isn't a picture worth a thousand words? Is it? It is important to note that this claim itself is made in words. A picture cannot make any claims. For reason, arguments, claims, and judgment belong in the universe of words not pictures. That is why advertisers love pictures. Consider an ad for, say, Coca-Cola, that just shows young people singing, dancing, having fun, and enjoying the drink. The audiences make the connection between happiness and Coke. This ad cannot be refuted. It makes no claim, so there is nothing to refute.

### Medium Is The Message

The above explains Marshal McLuhan's famous aphorism. The inherent, built in biases of a medium allow certain types of messages and not others. The communication is conditioned by the medium. It is enhanced or distorted by it. The medium is the message. And when the medium is TV, the message is Entertainment. As Postman notes: "Entertainment is the supra ideology of all discourse on television." Whether it is news, science, religion, or education, if it is happening on TV, it must follow the dictates of entertainment.

In fact, a new term has been coined indicating a blend of education and entertainment: Edutainment. It smells like the language problem of a TV baby. But remember that it is already being used by the serious press. Which suggests that edutainment will produce even more edutainment!

### Like A Drug

Actually, TV is not just another kind of entertainment either. As a project by the National Institute of Mental Health in the U.S. involving 1200 subjects in nine studies over a 13 year period found in 1990, television is like a drug. The researchers asked the subjects, ages 10 to 82, to note down their activities and moods every time a beeper was activated, which was done randomly. The researchers found that when people sit down to watch TV, particularly for long periods, they tend to be in low moods.

The longer they watch, the less able they are to concentrate. As time goes on, they grow sadder, lonelier, more irritable, and more hostile. Although people are relaxed when the television set is on, when they turn it off, they are less relaxed than before they began, "much like a drug that makes people feel better while they are doing it but worse afterward." And just like a drug the weaker segments of the society are its greatest target. Thus in the U.S. blacks tend to watch more TV than whites. And now thanks to satellite TV transmissions over which the poor countries have no control, the rest of the world is being turned into the U.S. black under class.

### Islamic Work And Television

Can this dangerous drug be somehow converted into a medicine? Not too long ago, a young professional in the U.S. approached prominent Muslim scholar and Deputy Chairman of the Jeddah based Islamic Fiqh Council of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), Justice Taqi Usmani to inquire about his profession. He produced computer graphics for the television and motion picture industry. This is the age of the media, and the only effective way to spread Islam today is through television and movies, he argued. If we do not learn the trade how shall we be able to produce such programs and if we don't who will, he inquired. Yet, some people had told him that it was not a good profession.

"I have given a lot of anxious thought to this issue," replied Justice Usmani in his characteristic measured tone, weighing every word. "And I have reached the conclusion that the cause of Islam cannot be served through television, especially under the current circumstances. You should seek another line of work."

Frankly, there are lot of enthusiasts who may be totally bewildered by this answer for it challenges both conventional wisdom as well as some dearly held dreams. They may even consider anyone making this suggestion as belonging to the Flat Earth Society: backward, anti-progress,

ignorant of today's realities. Let us grant them their day in court and look at their case objectively.

The enthusiasts have shown interest in three primary areas. The first deals with propagation of Islam. There are lots of sincere Muslims putting lot of hope in a yet-to-be-released video that will attract the people of the world to Islam by the thousands. They are simply confusing Dawah with propaganda! Dawah means inviting people to the Straight Path by relaying the True Message to them without any distortion. It is a very serious message and requires a serious medium to deliver it. The message is for their own benefit and what they do with it is their own business. Our job is done once we have communicated the message correctly. Our job is not to manipulate people into submission to Allah any more than it is to coerce them into it. A Dawah worker is a teacher, a propagandist is a manipulator. Television is a good tool for manipulating, not for teaching.

The second area deals with the education ("edutainment") of children. Many videos have already been produced for this purpose. In one program from a popular series of such videos, a puppet named Adam drives a skateboard to the mosque. Scenes of Adam doing his antics are mixed with the videos of real children praying. But there is no doubt that Adam is the hero of this story. Here is a clear case of the medium distorting the message. The children who learn to pray this way may learn the mechanics of Salat, but they would have paid a terrible price for it. The idea of Salat will be associated in their mind with the images of puppets, skateboards, and the idea of fun. Missing will be the spiritual dimension of prayer, the solemnness and grace of this pillar of Islam. Such videos are very popular as they help assuage the guilt feelings of parents over their failure to control the TV in the first place.

To be fair there is a useful role for these videos but it is not normally perceived. Doctors use nicotine patches to help their patients stop smoking. Nicotine is not a



medicine, but it becomes therapeutic under the circumstances. Similarly, the TV addicts may be helped by such videos to get over their addiction. It might work if that is the goal. But this is very different from the view that here is a Brave New Way of teaching Islam. The children and their parents must realize that ultimately they have to learn their religion the old fashioned way: read books, listen to lectures, work hard.

The third type of videos are used by relief organizations showing the terrible situation of Muslims around the globe. The intentions are noble, the results look great. But someone must ask the hard question: Why should the Muslims need disaster pornography before they can come to the help of their brothers and sisters? What are the implications of this practice for both present and future?

There are, of course, cases where the TV is being used against its grain, where the only video is that of a talking head. Such Islamic programs in Egypt or Saudi Arabia, as elsewhere, may not contain all the dangers cited above, solely because there the TV is being used just as an expensive radio. The problem is such programs will not be able to withstand the onslaught of CNN or MTV, of dazzling colors and dynamic pictures. The question remains how long can you use a tool against its grain?

The simple fact is that no one buys a TV and VCR because they desperately wanted to learn about Islam and it was the best way of doing it. The TV lounge is not a study room and all the Islamic videos in the world are not going to make it one. It is a peace of Hollywood. The rest is camouflage or self-deception. The earlier we get out of it, the better.

### What Can Be Done?

Television is powerful. It is everywhere. Is there anything that us mortals can do about it? The answer is yes. Things can be done at individual, as well as collective levels. At the individual level, try using the ON/OFF switch. It takes some effort and will

power, but the device can be turned off. The key is to involve the entire family. Those nervous about the idea may rest assured that there is no known disease linked to lack of exposure to TV! Also those who have tried it know that it becomes easier with time. Community Organizations and Islamic Schools can help by educating the people about the perils of watching TV, countering the social pressures, and providing healthy alternatives.

### Ramadan: The TV Free Month.

Our best chance of kicking the television habit comes in Ramadan every year. It is the time of year when every Muslim who has any trace of Iman in his or her heart, is naturally inclined toward doing good and staying away from evil. And it should be like that. Did not the Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, curse the Muslim who finds Ramadan but does not use it to seek forgiveness for his previous sins? If we cannot leave sins or vain activities during Ramadan, when can we? We not only have the strongest moral and religious reasons to do so, it is also easy because the regular activities of Ramadan leave little time to be wasted in front of television.

Muslim organizations and communities will do a great service by launching a campaign to declare Ramadan as the TV free month. Urge all the Muslims in your community to turn it off for at least one month. And who knows, after one month many may decide to stay away from it because of the personal insights they got through the experience.

Of course, if you are convinced, do not wait until the next Ramadan. Start today

*Abdullah bin `Amr bin Al-`as (RA) reported: A man asked the Messenger of Allah (PBUH): "Which act in Islam is the best?" He (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) replied, "To give food, and to greet everyone, whether you know or you do not." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim].*

# O Travelers to the Haram

*Mawlana Muhammad Wali Raazi*

O guests of the Most Merciful! O fortunate ones! O travelers to the Haram! Congratulations on being invited by the Lord of the worlds! Be glad that He has invited you to His House! Not only that, but He has given you the provisions for travel and lodging. And not only that, but He has also filled your hearts with such love of Him and His House that today you leave your homes, your cities, your countries and embark on this journey solely for the pleasure of your Lord. Had this desire not been there then you would have never planned to undertake this journey.

How many a millionaire are there who travel throughout Switzerland, England, America, and so on - who spend their children's vacations over there - but never receive this invitation: Come, visit Our House! Live in Our city! Act according to the Sunnats of Our beloved servants! Run between the hills of Safa and Marwa just as a wife of a prophet and a mother of a prophet did! We love this running of yours. Hurl rocks against Satan just as Our Prophet Ibrahim (alayhi salam) did! Perform sacrifice just as a loyal servant of Ours laid his son and ran the knife over his throat because of Our Command! But we had prohibited the knife from even scratching the throat. Our servant did as he was told and the knife did as it was commanded (i.e. it did not cut); both acted under our command. Those who claim to love Us - We test them to see whether their claim is true.

Hazrat Thanwi Rahmatullahi alayhi has written that when Prophet Ibrahim, alayhi salam, got tired running the knife, he said to the knife: Why don't you cut? The knife responded: You have been commanded to cut, and I have been ordered not to cut; do your job, I am doing mine. Then a ram was sent from the heavens and the test was complete.

We were pleased with this act of

Our friend - now you also imitate him. We have provided you with animals - otherwise where would you have wandered in search for animals? We have also provided their food - otherwise where would you find food for them in this dry, arid land? Now the animals are there, the knife is ready, just run the knife and your work is done! Then, We will do Our work: We will accept this sacrifice just as We accepted the sacrifice of Our friend and We will endow you with such rewards as never could even occur to you in your thoughts.

This is Our city and Our House. Come here as a devotee; if you are not a devotee, then take on the appearance of a devotee! Be content in whatever condition We keep you in. Here there are crowds of devotees. You will be pushed and shoved; your hair will fill with dirt and dust, and your feet will tire from walking. Be it pushing or shoving, dirt and dust, or difficulties in Our alleys - Our devotees are proud of such difficulties and consider them as the treasures of their lives.

Whoever thinks of these hardships and pains as calamities should not come. He should stay at his home. But those who come as devotees - We will wipe out their sins and return them to their homes as if they were just born today. This is a bathing of bodies and souls rotten and spoiled due to sins - washing these sins will require rubbing. Without rubbing how is cleanliness obtained?

O travelers to the Haram! Hajj is no small blessing. This is a great act of worship - very different from all the other forms of worship. All sorts of outward and inward worships are combined in this. Money is spent in the path of Allah and great effort is exerted; it is a purification of the soul of the highest degree; it contains spiritual exercises; there is patience and gratitude, love and ma'rifah. It is a witnessing of the favors

of the Almighty and of the acceptance of duas. There is both outward and inward closeness. In a hadith, Rasoolullah addressed those performing Hajj and Umrah - and today you are his addressees:

Sayyidna Abu Hurairah Radi-Allahu anhu narrates that Rasoolullah said: (translation) The travelers of Hajj and Umrah are Allah's special guests; if they supplicate to Allah, He accepts their supplications and if they seek forgiveness, He forgives them. (Hisn-e-Hasin, Ibn Majah and Nasai)

O travelers to the Haram! Years of spiritual exercise and training may not yield the benefits that can be obtained from this, if only we understand them and have a will to seek them. O guests of Allah! I will not discuss with you the merits of Hajj, because if you did not know its merits than you would have never made this blessed intention (to go to Hajj). Neither will I mention its rites and rulings, because you can get all of this from books and training sessions for Hajj. Rather I want to point out something else.

You are going to the great Court of the King of kings. When a person is a guest of a king then he learns the manners of the court long before he goes there. Then when he reaches there, he monitors every deed of his making sure that it does not result in disrespect.

O travelers to the Haram! I wish to share with you an extremely beneficial recipe-one that you will neither find in books nor in lectures. I know that pilgrims are subject to numerous difficulties and hardships. In this journey, there are many trying moments, no, rather many trying hours and days. Sometimes there is the immigration obstacle. There are the difficulties in finding lodging and in getting to the Haram. There are the hardships encountered in Tawaf and Sa'ee. But, my brothers! To achieve any big goal, you must undertake hardships. Those who are mentally prepared for this are the successful ones.

The recipe that I am presenting is called "tafweed", which means entrusting your matters, i.e. entrusting your intentions and desires to Allah. The opposite of this is

"tajweez" which means relying on your own plans and actions.

Tajweez is the root of all of our worries in our normal course of affairs and especially during the journey to Hajj. On the other hand, tafweed results in complete contentment. The person who in his difficulties leaves matters into the hands of Allah finds that Allah shows him ways out of his difficulties. When you reach the court of the King, then entrust your matters to the King. If he makes you sleep on the floor, then sleep happily on the floor. And if he makes you sit on the throne then sit on the throne remembering that you are in the court of the King. He has invited you here to honor you.

*Never lose sight of the true Beloved for even a blink of the eye*

*Lest the king glance at you with mercy and you be unaware.*

Many people return from Hajj and tell stories about the unmannerly behavior of the people there and magnify the difficulties they encountered there. One time I received a letter from an old man who said that: while you give people good tidings of Jannah, I went to Hajj but found no trace of the fear of God in the people therein. Then the man mentioned his difficulties in such words and talked about other pilgrims and the Saudi people in such a way that I felt sorrow over the way he mentioned this.

We are not going there to have a picnic. When millions of people gather in a city of three or four hundred thousand, then due to the crowd there will be pushing and shoving. The paths will be narrow and difficult. So undertake this journey as an ardent devotee. Whoever is ardent in the love of someone finds enjoyment in the difficulties he encounters on the way and contentment in these worries.

One time I went with my respected father Hazrat Mufti Muhammad Shafi Rahmatullah alayhi for Umrah in Ramadan. We were sitting in the Haram in front of the Rukn Yamani. The crowd was immense. People were jumping our shoulders. One Sudanese man jumped my shoulder and his leg hurt my neck. It slipped from my mouth,

These people are! I saw that my father's face had changed color and there were signs of anger. He stayed silent for a while and then said: Would you rather that these shoves strike another person who is sitting somewhere else desperately wishing to be here and enduring them, but could not get here? This was around 1974. This statement of my father changed my world completely. Now I wished to encounter more of these shoves.

Now some useful advice that Insha-Allah will be of benefit:

There are two types of actions during Hajj: *wajibaat*, obligatory duties, which must be performed and *Mustahibbat*, virtuous actions that are not required by Shariah. If you can do the *Mustahibbat* without incurring sin then that is a favor of Allah, otherwise you do not need to worry about them. For example, kissing the Black Stone has great blessings. But if in order to get this blessing you must push and shove and fight or mix with women then this blessing is of no use. If you sin in order to obtain that blessing than you have actually incurred a loss.

Women coming into the rows of men disrupt both their salats and the salat of their neighbors. Women should come early enough to the Haram to pray in the women's sections. Otherwise, it is better for them to pray in their residence.

Praying forty salats with congrega-

tion in the two Harams is a very virtuous act, but it is not obligatory. Those who are far from the Haram or are sick or weak should not tire themselves hoping to achieve this blessing.

If a king commands someone in his court to ask him for something, asking him for lowly things is disrespectful. So, ask Him for forgiveness and His pleasure. Along with that also ask Him for your worldly needs, because that is too His command; had it not been His command, it would have been disrespectful.

It is not obligatory on those who are residing far from the Haram to offer every salat with congregation in the Haram. Rather, they should pray in a mosque close to their place of residence and plan according to their convenience.

Abstain to the utmost from hurting other servants of Allah. Doing so is a greater act of worship.

While living in Makkah, the most meritorious act of worship is Tawaf, so do as many Tawafs as possible.

May you enjoy being the guests of Allah and return to your homes with His pleasure and forgiveness. Amin. If you can remember then please do a favor by making dua for the forgiveness of this helpless servant.

*Translated from Urdu by Muneeb Baig.*

Mu`adh bin Jabal (RA) reported: The Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "He whose last words are: `La ilaha illallah' (There is no true god except Allah) will enter Jannah." [Abu Dawud].

**Commentary:** *This Hadith says that if a man's tongue spontaneously starts uttering the basic testification of Islam: "None has the right to be worshipped but Allah" just before his death, he will undoubtedly enter Jannah. However, it is not definite whether he will go to Jannah in the first phase or will be admitted to it in the second phase after undergoing a purification process. This depends on the Will of Allah. Yet, admission to Jannah is subjected to his thorough understanding of monotheism and its conditions, that is to say, a complete abstinence from a polytheistic conduct of life. Otherwise, Jannah is likely to be denied to many of the so-called Muslims overtly indulging in polytheism.*

# All Eyes on Me

By Hafsa bint Sayeed al Awlaqi

I would never have thought a piece of cloth could cause so much fuss. But Jack Straw decides to pull a publicity stunt, Holland does away with the Human Right's Act, and the next thing you know, pictures of veiled women are plastered across the front pages of almost every newspaper in England. According to Mr. Straw, those of us who choose to wear the niqaab make "better, positive relations" between communities "more difficult".<sup>1</sup>

I first wore the niqaab three years ago in my sixth-form college. Out of approximately 400 students, there were only a handful of Muslims. And I was the only 'niqaabi'. I began wearing the veil halfway through my AS year, so my teachers and peers had seen me without it. Those who knew me respected my choice; I remember my head of sixth form just smiled when she saw me for the first time in niqaab.

A friend of mine asked me why I was wearing it, I said it was too complex an issue to discuss during break time and a string of emails followed. A year 10 boy asked me if I was wearing it because I was married, prompting a laugh from me.

I was in a rush to get to class so I said "no" and turned to carry on down the corridor. But as I did so, I heard the girl sitting next to him whisper: 'Would you want your wife to dress like that?!

I felt compelled to turn back and explain myself. I got in trouble for missing half the lesson, but I'd say it was well worth it if I left those two youngsters with a better view of Muslim women in general.

I find it peculiar that Jack Straw chose to pinpoint veiled Muslim women as those who hinder community cohesion. Would language not be the greatest barrier? Why didn't he comment on those who can't speak English and yet are leaders of their

local Muslim community? Or the parents who don't know if their child is mistranslating and making things up at the parent-teacher meeting at school because they can't speak English?

If Mr. Straw had mentioned language as a factor affecting community cohesion, or even the increasing ghettoisation of certain communities (he need not look far from home), I would have wholeheartedly agreed. But instead he chose veiled Muslim women, who make up a tiny minority of Muslims across the UK.

Most Muslim women who choose to wear the niqaab do so due to an accepted interpretation of the Islamic sources of law; they feel it is a compulsory religious requirement. Another opinion does exist, according to which women may leave their face uncovered. But one thing's for sure:

Jack Straw is the last person to be telling Muslim women which interpretation he would prefer them to follow - what qualifications does he have to say the niqaab isn't necessary; isn't that for a Muslim woman to decide on her own? Even non-Muslim women would consider it unacceptable for an MP to suggest what they wear to his surgery. It's a basic human right for people to wear what they want, whatever happened to freedom of expression and freedom of religious practice?

The Rt. Hon. Jack Straw said that he "felt uncomfortable talking to someone... who [he] could not see" <sup>2</sup>. Some may feel uncomfortable talking to people who have tattoos or a tongue piercing.

If only we could all go around making requests for others to remove certain pieces of clothing or jewellery which made us feel uncomfortable, but alas, I fear it would make life a whole lot more complicated - wouldn't it be easier and more har-

monious to accept one another for who we are, and overcome our own prejudices to accommodate each other?

This sentiment is perfectly expressed by Timothy Garton Ash in a Guardian article: "The most tiresome argument in this whole debate is that the niqaab makes white, middle-class English people feel "uncomfortable" or "threatened". Well, I want to say, what a load of whingeing wusses. Threatened by drunken football hooligans or muggers - that I can understand. But threatened by a woman quietly going about her business in a veil?" 3

Mr. Straw also noted that the niqaab is "such a visible statement of separation and of difference"4 and what do you know, Tony Blair decided to chip in too, saying the niqaab was a "mark of separation"5.

Couldn't one say the same about Rastafarian hats, Sikh turbans, nuns' habits, Buddhists' robes, gothic attire etc? As these are not the norm, they inevitably make a person stand out. But I would say this is simply the beauty of British multiculturalism - the colours of many different cultures together make the British landscape a whole lot more interesting.

Unfortunately Jack Straw's eagerness for the limelight resulted in racists across the country acting like they had a free reign to insult Muslim women. In the week following Mr. Straw's comments, I was verbally abused regarding my niqaab on four separate occasions.

My reaction was at first shock, and then sadness that it had to come to this. A friend of mine who also wears the face veil mentioned that she is so fed up with the racism she has to put up with, that she has considered removing the niqaab, but the only thing that stopped her from doing so was her refusal to give in to the racists.

I am not questioning Jack Straw's right to express his opinion - of course everyone has the right to express their opinion, but words are not something to be thrown around without caution.

MPs and people in the spotlight have to be especially responsible with

words because everything they say has an impact on the rest of us. So in my list of things which hinder community cohesion, it looks like I'm going to have to put 'irresponsible MPs' right there at the top.

Holland added fuel to the fire when it announced its proposal to ban the niqaab in public places. Not so surprisingly, this ban is likely to be in breach of Dutch religious freedom laws. Here are some of the arguments we've heard over the past few months regarding the niqaab:

### **The niqaab is a hindrance to communication because it's hard to hear what a niqaabi is saying.**

You've gotta be kidding me! The face veil does not muffle my voice or any other niqaabis' voice. Contrary to insulting opinions it is not a mouth gag. Some people are genuinely quiet, you won't hear them regardless of whether they've got a piece of cloth in front of their mouth or not.

And trust me, those of us who want to be heard, will be. Besides, the eyes are the window to the soul, as the proverb goes. A person's emotions can definitely be seen through their eyes, and one's body language and tone of voice also play a big part in communication.

I know of Oxbridge graduates who wear the niqaab, one is currently a practicing lawyer; I doubt she would have got to where she is now if people found it so difficult to communicate with her. In my opinion this is the most ridiculous argument outta the lot.

### **It's a security issue**

Women have been wearing the niqaab for a good few decades in the UK and they have never posed a security risk, so what's the issue? How many niqaabis have refused to take their veils off when asked by security guards? At most, they'd ask to be checked by a female.

Most niqaabis are very willing to reveal their face for ID purposes, it is allowed in these situations, just as it is allowed in court if you attend as a witness. If

anything I'd think they were getting a bit lax on security if they didn't bother checking that I am who I say I am.

Besides, if one was to say the niqaab is a security risk, well then so are trannies. Even if they pull out their ID card, the pic won't match the woman standing before you. What are they gonna do, start stripping their wig, make-up and clothes off to get down to the real man beneath?

It could be argued that they're more of a security risk than women in veils, but no one is complaining about them: live and let live as they say.

**We are imposing our 'culture' on others. If we want to follow our culture, we should go 'home'**

But this IS my home, I was born here! And what on Earth is 'British' culture anyway? My parents are Indian, if I go back there, do you want me to take the curry and tea with me? Some of the things we now consider 'British' were adopted from the cultures of our old colonies.

We've always been accepting of other cultures, so why the sudden change? By wearing a niqaab, I am simply expressing a religious belief, a right given to me in this country - I do not expect all women to follow my dress code. All I ask for is a bit of tolerance in this 'free' society of ours.

**Non-Muslims can't wear what they want in Muslim countries**

I would say 'so-called' Muslim countries. Unfortunately many of them are very far from the true Islam. But people who complain about not having the right to dress the way they wish in a Muslim country completely miss the point. Yes, that's not at all fair, but we're talking about the UK here, a country which boasts about its free and tolerant society, where people are now saying it should be against the law to wear something.

It's ridiculous. To ban someone from wearing the niqaab makes us just as oppressive as the Middle Eastern regimes we claim to have the moral high ground

over.

**It is a symbol of oppression and subjugation**

Deary me. This argument must go back to Adam and Eve, that's how old it is! Women who wear just the headscarf were once called 'oppressed' till they came out and made their voices heard.

It's the same with the niqaab. Anyone who was to meet an educated young girl who happens to wear the niqaab would know that there is so much more to her than just the veil. It is a conscious decision made out of subjugation to God, NOT to man.

As other countries in Europe move to ban the niqaab and limit our religious rights and freedom of expression, as a Muslim I appeal to the Ummah to remain united on this issue - regardless of the way you view niqaab, the fact remains that it holds a place in Islamic history and in Islamic law.

And as a British citizen I appeal to my country's sense of multiculturalism and diversity - let's keep it alive; continue having such discussions whilst accepting each other for who we are.

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*Contd frfom page 10*

accordingly, one can go on and finish the prayers in the same state.

Similarly, if one does not know the direction of the Qiblah, nor can correctly determine it on account of the darkness of the night or for some other valid reason, nor can find someone to provide correct information, the same rule would apply in this case too. In such a situation, one is allowed to follow one's conjecture, and to turn in the direction which seems to be the most likely. The direction one chooses would serve as the Qiblah. If, having finished one's prayers, one discovers that the choice of this particular direction was wrong, even then one's prayers would remain acceptable, and one would not have to repeat them.

# What to do at the time of Natural Catastrophes

*Shaykh Muhammad Saleem Dhorat*

Everyone is aware of the devastation caused by the recent earthquake in the Indian Ocean. According to reports over 125,000 people have lost their lives, hundreds of thousands have lost their relatives, entire communities have been wiped out and countless buildings and properties have been destroyed. Over a million people have been left homeless, having lost everything they once owned, now living under open skies with nothing to eat and cover themselves with. And the death toll may rise further as the spread of disease is very likely to occur if adequate assistance is not provided in time.

When such calamities strike, one often ponders over one's role and responsibility, as a human being and as a Muslim. It is unfortunate that for most of us, it takes such calamities to make us reflect on the Power and lofty Attributes of Allah ta'aalaa. Rather than expressing shallow sorrow and a momentary shock, there are a few points that we need to reflect and act upon, so that events like these can cause us to become better Muslims for the rest of our lives:

## **1. Allah ta'aalaa is the Hākim (The Supreme Ruler) and the Hakeem (The Most Wise)**

First of all, one has to reaffirm in one's mind and heart that whatever happens, whether good or bad in appearance, is according to the Wish of Allah ta'aalaa. Allah ta'aalaa is Hākim i.e. He has Power over everything. Every single particle in the whole universe is under His Control. The turning of the leaf in the air while it is falling from the tree, to the up turning and shaking of the earth itself, as in the case of an earthquake, everything is in His Absolute Control. The commands, wishes and controls of

everyone else are subjugated to His Command and Governance. The varied circumstances that one observes or experiences in one's life are also in His total Control.

There are many incidents and events in a person's life, during which one hopes for a positive outcome through worldly means e.g. when a relative is seriously ill we can hope for recovery by consulting a specialist, along with our belief that only that will happen which Allah ta'aalaa has ordained. Nevertheless we take the help of worldly means to satisfy ourselves and try to rectify the situation to the best of our ability.

However, when faced with natural disasters like storms, earthquakes and floods, there is no hope of any worldly means which we can employ to circumvent, overcome or prevent re-occurrence of such situations. Such natural disasters are entirely in the Control of Almighty Allah and we are forced to acknowledge that. Indeed as Muslims we should never have disregarded and ignored the Absolute Power of Allah ta'aalaa and it should have been reflected upon in our day to day actions and deeds.

However, it is comforting to know that Allah ta'aalaa is not only the Hākim (The Supreme Commander) but He is also the Hakeem (The Most Wise). Allah ta'aalaa's Governance of the universe is unlike that of worldly rulers. His Control and Governance is full of Supreme Wisdom and Divine Justice. Hence even in calamities, such as this earthquake, there is the hidden Wisdom of the Almighty, which may not be apparent to our physical eyes.

## **2. Turn Towards Allah ta'aalaa in Repentance**

Every person, during such times should turn towards Allah ta'aalaa with



humbleness, faith and genuine repentance. According to the Sharee'ah, common and open disobedience of Allah ta'aalaa is one of the many reasons for the cause of calamities like earthquakes. When the land is overloaded with the disobedience of Allah ta'aalaa, earthquakes from beneath and violent storms from above are commonplace. There are quite a few scientific explanations for earthquakes and tsunamis, however the underlying facts point towards 'how' they happen and not 'why' they happen. The answer to 'why' and 'when' and even to 'how', in reality, remains with Allah ta'aalaa. An answer to 'why' has been revealed in the Qur'ān:

*(Corruption and) Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned, that He (Allah) may give them a taste of some of their deeds in order that they may turn back (from evil). (30:41)*

Incidents like these are, as it were, 'wakeup' alarm calls from Allah ta'aalaa. Allah ta'aalaa in His Infinite Mercy is jolting us through such incidents, so that we may mend our ways and reflect on our transgressions and as a result rectify ourselves before it is too late. Allah ta'aalaa has revealed to his beloved Prophet sallallahu alayhi wasallam, that as long as this Ummah continues to repent for their wrongdoings, He will not punish them through calamities. Incidents like these should not be viewed with some momentary sympathy or investigated out of curiosity, but treated strictly as a reminder to wake up and reflect on our lives of disobedience. The very Allah who has the Power to cause an earthquake in the watery depths of the Indian Ocean also has the Power to cause any other catastrophe here, in this very city, in the very vicinity of our homes.

Hence it is absolutely essential for Muslims, not just from the affected regions, but from all over the world, to turn towards Allah ta'aalaa. They must direct all their attention towards Him and reflect on their lives to find out where the Commands of Allah ta'aalaa are being violated, then sincerely repent and resolve to adorn their fu-

ture lives with taqwā, abstain from the disobedience of Allah ta'aalaa, and observe His Commands.

### 3. Pray for the Afflicted

Our beloved Prophet sallallahu alayhi wasallam has commanded us to support and help the victims of calamities, whether they be Muslims or otherwise. The best and the most valuable support and help is to make du'ā i.e. sincere prayers for the wellbeing of the victims. Du'ā is a very powerful and potent means, which is available to each and every one of us, the one with worldly resources as well as the one without. Hence one should sincerely pray for the well being of the victims. One should pray that Allah ta'aalaa gives them strength, patience and comfort and that He protects and guides them through these critical times and provides rapid recovery from their physical, mental and spiritual wounds. Only Allah ta'aalaa has the ability to provide the things asked for in the above prayers. No amount of worldly means will provide for the loss that has been suffered by the victims. It is difficult to comprehend or empathise with the situation of the victims. Scores of them have death hovering over their heads while their dead family members lie beside them. Thousands of dead bodies lie in the water piled up like logs unable to receive a proper burial. Thousands of people have lost their sons and daughters and thousands of young children have become orphans. Only prayers will help those people. So take out some time from listening to the news, reading newspaper reports and chatting about the events and bow down to Allah ta'aalaa, and pray sincerely and earnestly (after making repentance) for the victims of the calamity. The victims certainly deserve our prayers, to say the least. It is their right over the entire Muslim community.

It is also worth mentioning that it will be a gross transgression for anyone to forget their own deeds and start judging the victims, claiming their misdeeds to be the reason for the calamity. We are in no posi-

tion to do that. Besides, this will be tantamount to trying to guess the 'Hikmah' (Wisdom) of Allah! Therefore we should refrain from uttering such words.

#### 4. Donate Generously

For people far from the afflicted region, the next best thing that they can do to help and support is to provide financial and material help. The victims have lost everything, their homes and the shelter above their heads, their entire belongings and their livelihoods. There is an immediate need to provide shelter (as a protection from the cold nights), food and clothing. There is also a dire need to provide them with medication and other medical accessories and supply them with clean water and sanitation. Alhamdulillah, Allah ta'aalaa has given us abundantly, more than we need. We do not have to sacrifice our daily food or clothing in order to donate towards the cause. I request all my brothers and sisters to reflect upon the material blessings that Allah ta'aalaa has bestowed upon us, despite our not being deserving of them, and donate generously for the victims of this calamity. There are people out there, among the victims, who, until yesterday, were the patrons of or contributors towards charities themselves, and had donated profusely. Now, having lost everything, they are in need of charity themselves. Allah ta'aalaa will inshā'allah look favourably upon our generosity and remove future calamities awaiting to befall us. The Prophet sallallahu alayhi wasallam has mentioned:

*Truly sadaqah extinguishes the Wrath of Allah and saves from an evil death.*  
(Tirmidhi)

So, as human beings, and more so as Muslims, we should not let this suffering continue without providing help and support according to our individual capabilities. Do not wait for your Zakāh to become due to make a donation. The need of the situation demands that we donate everything that is in our possession, even if that means undergoing hardships ourselves. However, since Allah ta'aalaa has blessed us with

adequate wealth we know that we can donate sufficiently without having to undergo such troubles. We should spend abundantly and generously, as generously as Allah ta'aalaa has provided for us. Remember, whatever we will spend, we will do so from that which Allah ta'aalaa has given us. It is His Money we will be spending to relieve His Creation. The Prophet sallallahu alayhi wasallam said:

*All creatures are the dependants of Allah. The most beloved to Allah from all Creation is he who treats His dependants the best.*  
(Bayhaqi)

Therefore give as much as you can. This is not a time to wait for someone to come and knock at your door. Go out looking for reliable organizations and charities with correct channels, so that your money reaches the genuine victims and fulfills their needs.

May Allah ta'aalaa give us the guidance to learn a lesson from such calamities and grant us the resolve to change our lives for the better. May Allah ta'aalaa also give us the tawfeeq to pray for the victims and to donate generously. Ameen.

#### Guidance

*Sahl bin Sa'd (RA) reported: The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said to `Ali (May Allah be pleased with him), "By Allah, if a single person is guided by Allah through you, it will be better for you than a whole lot of red camels." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim].*

**Commentary:** *"Better for you than red camels" is an allegory for every thing that is better than anything else. Red camels used to be precious in Arabia, and their reference here is to highlight the value of guidance. Thus, this Hadith brings into prominence the importance of calling people towards Allah. But before calling others to the path of Allah, one must himself know it, and for this purpose, the knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith is essential because one cannot provide any guidance in this respect without this knowledge.*

# The Road to the Muslim Holocaust

*Ghali Hassan*

We are being challenged by Islam these years - globally as well as locally. It is a challenge we have to take seriously. We have let this issue float about for too long because we are tolerant and lazy. We have to show our opposition to Islam and we have to, at times, run the risk of having unflattering labels placed on us because there are some things for which we should display no tolerance. And when we are tolerant, we must know whether it is because of convenience or conviction". Queen Margrethe II of Denmark, 15 April 2005.

Tolerance is a falsehood often pronounced with difficulty in all of Western societies. Small countries such as Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, and Norway are leading the pack in the war on Muslims at home, and may be on the road to encouraging a new Holocaust against humanity

While these countries are part of the US-led coalition, which is responsible for the mass murder of Iraqis, they have also introduced discriminate and draconian immigration laws which are specifically directed against Muslims fleeing war and economic hardship. The pretexts are always the phantom of the "War on Terror".

Historically, Muslims have been at the receiving end of Western-Christian violence for centuries. Following the 9/11 attack on the USA, Western Europe joined the US in its anti-Muslim crusade: "We are all Americans now" united against Muslims. Although, 9/11 still a mystery, it is used to legitimise a new form of Western-Christian fascism. Media pundits such as Christopher Hitchens and Daniele Pipes, who support the anti-Muslim ideology are springing up like mushrooms all over the Western world. Using the cliché of "free speech", they are fuelling a vicious and violent

war against Muslims around the world.

The recent blasphemous images of Prophet Mohammed are nothing more than a campaign which promotes racism and violence.

Islam is a peaceful religion, and Muslims are not "terrorists". The insult to Prophet Mohammed, who is revered by over a billion people around the world, has nothing to do with "free speech". Had the Danish cartoonist shown instead George Bush and Tony Blair slaughtering hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqi women and children, he would have had lost his job by now and would be condemned by the same people who are barking about "free speech". Would any newspaper in Europe dare to discuss Europe's strict censorship laws of discussing the Holocaust?

Barely a month ago, in early January 2006, Flemming Rose, the "cultural" editor of the Danish Jyllands-Posten (J-P), the newspaper that published the blasphemous cartoons, told Dan Bilefsky of the International Herald Tribune, that, "he would not publish a cartoon of Ariel Sharon strangling a Palestinian baby, since that could be construed as 'racist'". In the past, J-P has also refused to run drawings lampooning Jesus Christ submitted in April 2003 by Danish illustrator Christoffer Zieler, because they were "offensive, not funny". Zieler was also advised by the editor, Jens Kaiser: "I don't think Jyllands-Posten's readers will enjoy the drawings. As a matter of fact, I think that they will provoke an outcry. Therefore, I will not use them". (The Guardian, 06/02/2006). It is "free speech" only if Westerners agree, otherwise, it is "offensive" or "anti-Semitism".

The Danish Far Right Party (Dansk Folkeparti) is the country's third biggest party

and underpins a hard line centre-right coalition government claimed that Muslims are secretly planning to takeover Denmark. Although Muslims make about 2 per cent of the Danish population, one in four Danes have been brainwashed by their opportunist monarchs, politicians and the media to seriously believe that there will one day be "more Muslims" in Denmark than non-Muslims.

The 2005 report of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) on 'Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in the EU' found that attacks on Muslims have markedly increased recently. Muslims in Sweden, Denmark and Austria are encountering difficult barriers. In Sweden, Muslims are advised to change their names to "Swedish-sounding ones" to increase their chance of employment. According to the report, 64 per cent of Muslims interviewed in Britain said that they were "unfairly targeted by counter-terrorism policies". In Denmark and Austria, the report reveals, Muslim women wearing headscarves are less likely to find work or pursue education. In Sweden, rightwing parties warn of a "Muslim invasion". Other Europeans such as Belgium, Holland, France, Italy and Spain are also contaminated with far right groups and anti-Muslims parties.

In Belgium, the country which has one of the "most vicious and inhuman of all colonial histories", the far right Party (The Vlaams Blok or Belang) dominate local politics, with an agenda to repatriate all people of colour to their countries of origin. One of its prominent leaders, Filip Dewinter, told the BBC recently; "When I see Muslim culture I think that our culture is superior. Our values, our way of life are superior and we have to say so. I don't think the way of life of Muslims is compatible with our way of life". Muslim is our enemy, is the new European anti-Semitism motto.

In the "liberal-minded" Netherlands, famous for its brutal and violent colonial history, racism is becoming part of Dutch values. Muslims have become targets of religiously motivated attacks. After the killing of an anti-Muslim fanatic and unknown Dutch film

maker, Theo van Gogh, allegedly by a Dutch Muslim of African origin, after making the obscene film about Islam, the Netherlands erupted in anti-Muslim racism. The death of a Muslims-hater is used to justify much uglier crimes. Islamic schools and Mosques were bombed and set on fire. Muslim women were attacked throughout Holland. The rightwing Dutch government is embarking on anti-Muslim legislation to crack down on immigration and closedown "suspected" Mosques, and give police power to arrest people of Muslim faith. Although Muslims make up about one million (6%) of the Dutch population, former EU Commissioner Frits Bolkestein, said recently; "The most common first name registered at birth these days in Amsterdam is Mohammed. This, they say, is the Kurope-to-be".

In France, the situation is not much different. The French can be proud of their well-known anti-Muslims and anti-Arahs hatred. President Jacques Chirac has adopted Jean Marie Le Pen extremist and anti-Muslims policy, which, has increased violence against Muslims and denying Muslim women the right to education' and employment. According to the IMF report, the French Front National (an offshoot of fascism), stated publicly that France's Muslims "share an allegiance to a wider community of believers that threatens national sovereignty". Even Muslims, who were born in France, have no standing in the ideals of Liberte, Egalite', Fraternite, and the plague is spreading to neighbouring countries.

The new German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, compared Islam with the "rise of fascism". The East German politician who was selected to solve Germany's unemployment and other social ills seems to find the war on Muslims a much easier issue.

Thousands of Muslims have been arrested and screened by German police only because of "their profiles have matched basic criteria, including an affiliation with Islam", reveals the IHF report. The German state of Baden-Wurttemberg has enacted what is called the "Muslim test", in which

Muslim applicants for citizenship are asked about their views on September 11, gay relationships and whether their teenage daughters are allowed to attend swimming classes. Can you imagine all Germans (in Baden-Wurttemberg) have exactly the same opinion on all three? "I am afraid we have not learned from our history. My main fear is that what we did to Jews we may now do to Muslims. The next holocaust would be against Muslims", Dr. Wolfram Richter, professor of economics at the University of Dortmund told Ziauddin Sardar of New Statesman magazine in Britain. It has always been easier to use crimes in order to commit even greater crimes.

Finally, in Australia, the draconian "antiterror" laws are designed specifically to victimise Muslims. Indeed, young Muslim men have been thrown in Guantanamo-like prisons not because they committed crimes, but because they are Muslims. Some companies have closed their employment's doors to Muslim Australians and migrants from Muslim backgrounds. In addition, the army of commentators in the Australian media - one of the most controlled in the world - are accusing the police of "softly" treating Australians of the Middle Eastern backgrounds. This deliberate falsehood is designed not only to discredit the Police, but also to increase injustice and violence against Muslims.

The IHF report's director, Aaron Rhodes warned that; "these developments threaten to undermine positive efforts at integration and further increase the vulnerability of Muslims to human rights violations and marginalisation". Hence the IHF report recommends that all EU governments "enhance efforts to prosecute and punish discriminatory and violent acts". However, the warning may fall on deaf ears. As Sardar writes; "Even among individuals with more relaxed attitudes to interracial relationships, racism is unashamed and upfront". The governments may be pouring fuel on fire, a To clarify one thing A that seemed to be I missed by most Westerners, Muslims are not ignorant of Western cul-

tures, or Christianity, which is never part of Western civilisation anyway, Jesus wasn't born in Denmark or Norway. The fact, that many Muslims are studying in Western and American universities and many Muslims adopted segments of Western popular culture is proof of Muslims acceptability. This misunderstanding of Muslim societies, which suffered greatly under Western imperialism, is embedded in the West's ignorance and imagined superiority, which continue today.

As vassals of U.S. imperialism, these small European nations such as Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands are using their deceptive position of "neutral countries" to commit gross crimes around the world. From Palestine to Iraq and Afghanistan, their armies are complicit in U.S. war crimes against defenceless peoples. In addition, they are participants in U.S. "War on Terror" and in U.S. "rendition" policy - the policy of kidnapping and covertly delivering an individual or individuals for interrogation and torture in undisclosed location or country.

For example, Norway is credited with the Oslo "Peace Process", the "fig-leaf for the ongoing colonization of the West Bank and Gaza Strip", and the destruction of Palestine. Indeed, the Oslo "Peace Process" allowed Israel to confiscate over 50 per cent of the West Bank and constructed dozens of Jewish-only colonies for Talmudic extremist fanatics.

The Netherlands, is leading the way in "building democracy" and terrorising the people of Afghanistan. Denmark with 530 soldiers is part of the so-called "coalition of the willing", the group of vassals that participated in the illegal and criminal invasion of Iraq. Indeed, Danish soldiers are complicit in the sadistic torture and abuse of Iraqi prisoners and detainees.

This brings us to how the Jewish Holocaust - as an example of Christian Europe brutality - was initiated. Of course, anti-Semitism (anti-Jews and anti-Arabs hatred) was widespread in Christian Europe centuries prior to Nazi Germany. However, modern anti-Semitism was initiated in

1879 by William Marr, the German who founded the "League for Anti-Semitism". Marr's racist views (Europe's biological racism) were that Jews constituted a distinct racial group which was both physically and morally inferior, and therefore must be exterminated. With the rise of European racism against minorities in the 19th century, European Jews were targeted, as Muslims are targeted today. Differences between Jews and other European citizens manufactured and used as pretext to justify crimes against Jews. Jews were accused of "taking over" the world and so on.

Adolf Hitler's election on 30 January 1930, was based on his ideology of "one people ['master race' or *Übermenschen*], one empire, and one leader". Hitler's election paved the way for one of the greatest criminal acts in human history. Marr's European biological racism continued during the rule of Nazism and became the vehicle for genocide. Jews, Gypsies, Czechs, Poles, the mentally and physically handicapped, homosexuals and others not belonging to the "master race" were targeted for extermination. Jews were specifically targeted. Bombings of synagogues, blasphemous cartoons depicting Jews, and anti-Jews posters were wide spread all over Europe.

During the occupation of Europe by the Wehrmacht (German forces), in France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Norway etc. the locals were rounding up Jews, Gypsies and other folk much faster than the Nazis could handle them. And if this wasn't enough, the so-called "neutral" countries such as Switzerland were sending fleeing refugees back to the Nazis - as they do now with Muslims in daylight - and looking after the Third Reich money in their own bank.

Do Western Europeans want to repeat history's biggest crime against humanity? It is the duty of every civilized citizen to point a finger at any form of racism and violence against minorities. Our duty is to reject opportunist monarchs, politicians, the media, celebrities and anyone trying to manipulate the public and breed racism and violence.

(Courtesy : *Al-Harmony*, Jan-Mar 2007)

# Saviours of Islamic Spirit

*S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi (RA)*

## Tartars—The Scourge of Allah

### Folly of Khwarism Shah

The immediate cause which paved the way for this calamity was that Chenghiz Khan sent a message to Khwarism Shah that since each of them headed a vast empire it would be in their interest to encourage trade between their subjects. He wanted that the traders should be allowed to move freely between the two realms, purchasing and selling their goods without any undue restriction. Khwarism Shah agreed to the proposal of Chenghiz Khan and traders began to ply freely between the two kingdoms. The interchange of traders, however, was soon followed by an act of folly which has been graphically described by Harold Lamb whose accounts agree with those left by Muslim historians. He says :

"But the Mongol's experiment with trade came to an abrupt end. A caravan of several hundred merchants from Karakorum was seized by one, Inaljuk - governor of Otrar, a frontier citadel belonging to the Shah. Inaljuk reported to his master that spies were among the merchants—which may very well have been the case.

"Mohammed Shah, without considering the matter overmuch, sent to his governor an order to slay the merchants, and all of them, accordingly, were put to death. This, in due time, was reported to Chenghiz Khan who dispatched envoys at once to the Shah to protest. And Mohammed saw fit to slay the chief of the envoys and burn off the beards of the others.

"When the survivors of his embassy returned to Chengiz Khan, the master of the Gobi went apart to a mountain to meditate upon the matter. The slaying of a Mongol

envoy could not go unpunished; tradition required revenge for the wrong inflicted.

"There cannot be two suns in the heavens," the Khan said, "or two Kha Khans upon the earth.":

### **The Tartaric Invasion**

Thus the storm burst in 616 A. H. Bukhara was first razed to the ground, and its inhabitants put to the sword. Samarkand was reduced to ashes and its entire population passed under the sword. Other important and populous cities like Ray, Hamadan, Zanjan, Qazwin, Marv, Nishapur met the same fate. The forces of Khwarism Shah, the most powerful Muslim sovereign of his day, were simply swept away by the tempest of the Mongol arms; Khwarism Shah was himself hunted from place to place by the Tartars with ruthless pertinacity. Muhammad Khwarism Shah ultimately took refuge in an unknown island in the Caspian Sea, where he died broken-hearted, alone and abandoned.

Khwarism Shah had already dismembered the independent Islamic Kingdoms of Iran and Turkistan and, therefore, none had remained in the east to check the onslaught of the Mongols after his defeat. The Muslims were so seized with the terror of the Mongols that often a lonely Tartar attacked a hundred of them but none had the heart to defend himself—everyone of them was killed by the Tartar without being opposed by a single Muslim. Once a Mongol woman, dressed as a man, plundered a house and killed all its inmates excepting a captive. It was only after this that the captive somehow came to know that the marauder was a woman, and then he could muster his courage to kill her. It often happened that a Mongol caught hold of a Muslim and asked him to wait till he brought a sabre to slaughter him, and this poor man did not have the courage to run away in the absence of the Mongol.

"The scourge of God" was the greatest of calamities before which almost the entire world of Islam was swept away as by a torrent; it left the Muslims astounded

and terror-stricken. The Mongols came to be regarded so invincible that an Arabic proverb gained currency which meant that if anybody tells you that the Tartars have suffered a defeat, don't believe him. Death and destruction was a foregone conclusion for all the lands through which the Tartar hordes passed; palaces, mosques and mausoleums were all levelled to the ground and trampled into dust. Historians are normally prone to be objective in their assessment of the past events but even such a cool and temperate historian as Ibn al-Athir could not help shedding his tears over the havoc and ruin caused by the savage ardour of the Mongols for rapine and slaughter. Speaking of these events in a harrowing strain Ibn al-Athir says :

"These events are so frightful and heart-rending that for several years I was in a fix whether I should narrate these happenings or not. I have, however, penned these facts most reluctantly. In truth and reality, it is not easy to recount the tale of carnage and atrocities perpetrated on the Muslims, nor can one bear with equanimity the abasement to which they were subjected. I only wish that my mother had not given me birth! Oh, would that I had died before I had to relate this tale of woe! Some of my friends had insisted that I should record these events but I was still irresolute. Later, it dawned on me that it was of no profit to forego the task. The invasion of the Tartars was one of the greatest of calamities and the most terrible of visitations of which there is no parallel in the annals of the world. This calamity fell on all nations, but on the Muslims more than all. If one were to claim that the world, since God created it to the present times, was never so afflicted, one would speak truthfully, for, history records no other event which approaches it, and perhaps the world may not see its like again except the calamity of Gog and Magog till the dawn of the Doomsday. The Tartars put to the sword all men, women and children, cut open the bellies of the pregnant women and trampled the babies to death. Verily, unto God do we belong and unto Him shall

we return. There is no power, no might but from Allah, the Most High, the Great.

"This was an affliction which overwhelmed the entire world; like a severe torrent it suddenly swept over all the lands."

The author of Mirsad ul-Abad, who belonged to Hamadan and was born at Ray, and was thus an eye-witness to the Mongol invasion, has left the following harrowing account:

"The year 617 A. H. shall ever remain conspicuous in the annals of the world, for the hordes of heathen Tartars gained ascendancy over the Muslims in that year. The way they ravaged the countries, killed the people and plundered and burnt the cities has a parallel neither in the days of Ignorance nor thereafter.....It is enough to mention that in Ray, where I was born and lived, in Turkistan and in the lands extending from Rum to Syria more than seven hundred thousand persons were either put to sword or made captives. The calamity befalling Islam and its adherents is beyond description and the holocaust is rather too well-known to require any detailed enumeration. God forbid, none of the monarchs and sovereigns of Islam felt the urge to defend the honour of Islam; nor were they alive to their duty of coming to the rescue of their subjects although they were like a shepherd unto their own people, and that they would have to render an account in regard to their safety on the Day of Judgment. It was their duty to have strained every nerve to strengthen Islam and defend the faith as God has ordered: Go forth, light-armed and heavy-armed, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the way of Allah. They should have sacrificed everything they had—their lives, riches, dominions—for the honour of Islam. This would have given heart to others and fired a frenzy of enthusiasm among the Muslims, which would have contained and turned back the onslaught of the heathens.

"But now nothing remains except to seek the refuge of God. Whatever of Islam is still visible is exposed to the danger of being completely effaced leaving no trace of

it whatsoever."

Not the Muslims alone, but the entire civilized world trembled before the savage Tartar hordes. Their atrocities had caused a flutter even in those far off corners of the then world where Tartars could have hardly been expected to carry their arms.

Edward Gibbon writes in his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* :

"The Latin world was darkened by this cloud of savage hostility; a Russian fugitive carried the alarm to Sweden; and the remote nations of the Baltic and the ocean trembled at the approach of the Tartars, whom their fear and ignorance were inclined to separate from the human species." The maddening frenzy for death and destruction aroused by Chenghiz Khan amongst the Mongols and the significance of this upsurge has been well summed up by the authors of the Cambridge Medieval History:

"Unchecked by human valour, they were able to overcome the terrors of vast deserts, the barriers of mountains and seas, the severities of climate, and the ravages of famine and pestilence. No dangers could appal them, no stronghold could resist them, no prayer for mercy could move them.....We are confronted with a new power in history, with a force that was to bring to an abrupt end as a *deus ex machina*, many dramas that would otherwise have ended in a deadlock, or would have dragged on an interminable course." Harold Lamb continues on the impact of Chenghiz Khan:

"This 'new power in history'—the ability of one man to alter human civilization—began with Chenghiz Khan and ended with his grandson Kubilai, when the Mongol empire tended to break up. It has not reappeared since."

### **Sack of Baghdad**

At last in 656 A. H. the myriads of savages and heathens advanced towards Baghdad, killing every man that came in their way, setting fire to every habitation and



trampling into dust whatever they could not possess. The metropolis of Islam, celebrated throughout the world as the centre of civilization, learning and crafts was reduced to ashes; the sack of Baghdad is too harrowing and lengthy to be detailed here. The accounts given by the contemporary historians include some eye-witness accounts of the carnage and atrocities committed by the Mongols. Ibn al-Athir writes :

"The horrors of rapine and slaughter lasted forty days; and, after the carnage was over, the most populous and beautiful city of the world was so devastated that only a few people could be seen here and there. All the streets and markets were strewn with dead bodies; heaps of corpses were to be found like small mounds from place to place. After the rains the dead bodies began to rot giving out a disagreeable smell of the putrid flesh and then a deadly pestilence ravaged the town which spread as far as the land of Syria. Innumerable people died as a result of this epidemic. The ravages of a terrible famine and pestilence and the rising prices reigned over the city thereafter."

Taj ud-din Ibn al-Subki gives his own account of the barbarous acts of Mongols:

"Halaku received the Caliph (al-Mustasim) in a tent while Ibn Alqami invited the doctors of religion and other notables of the city to be a witness to the agreement between Halaku and the Caliph. When they had repaired to the Mongol camp, all were passed under the sword. They were called one by one in a tent and beheaded until none amongst the chiefs and counsellors of the Caliph remained alive. It was commonly believed that if the blood of the Caliph fell on the ground, some great calamity would overtake the world. Halaku was, therefore, hesitant but Nasir ud-din Tusi intervened to suggest that the problem could easily be solved. The Caliph should be killed, he suggested, in a way that his blood did not fall on the ground. The Caliph was accordingly rolled in a carpet and then beaten to death." The general massacre continued in Bagh-

dad for more than a month. Only those could save themselves who were able to find a hiding place. Halaku then ordered, it is related, to count the dead, who numbered eighteen hundred thousand.

Christians were asked to take bacon and wine publicly. Although it was the month of Ramadhan, the Muslims of Baghdad were compelled to participate in these drinking bouts. Wine was sprinkled in the mosques and the call for prayer was prohibited. Nothing so despicable had happened since the foundations of Baghdad were laid: the city had come under the heathen rule for the first time and had never before undergone such a humiliation.

In spite of all its vices and weaknesses, Baghdad was the metropolis of Islam; a centre of learning, arts and crafts as well as a city of mosques and shrines, saints and preachers. Its destruction made the heart of every Muslim bleed; the heart-rending account of its ruin was rendered by many poets into songs of mourning. Sadi of Shiraz who had lived in Baghdad during his student days and had seen the city in its hey-day of glory, has described the fall of Baghdad in a language that shows his depth of misery.

*"For it has seen the kingdom of Mustasim destroyed,*

*The heaven would be justified if it sheds the rain-tears of blood.*

*If you will rise on. the Day of Judgement, O Muhammad,*

*Rise now to see the most severe affliction.*

*The blood of beauties slaughtered in the castle,*

*Overflows the gates of the palace.*

*And our tears stain our garments.*

*Beware of the turn of time and its vicissitudes.*

*For who knew the glorious would come to such an abrupt end.*

*Lo ! you had seen the glory of the house of Caliphs,*

*Where the Caesars and Khakans bowed low in obeisance,*

*The blood of the progeny of Muhammad's uncle,*

*Is shed on the very earth where the Sul-  
tans placed their heads.  
Coloured with blood, the waters of the Tigris  
will turn the ground red,  
If it flows to irrigate the desert oasis of  
Bat'ha.  
Defaced by the calamity it has had to suffer,  
Wrinkles of waves are seen on the face of  
the Tigris.  
No elegy is really befitting the elevated  
souls,  
Whose minimum reward is the bliss of God  
in Paradise;  
I am shedding my tears only in sympathy,  
For Muslims they were, and I hold them  
dear."*

From Baghdad, the Mongol hordes marched on to Haleb (Aleppo), sacked the city and turned to Damascus. They captured Damascus in Jamadi al-Ula, 658 A.H. The Christian inhabitants of the city came out with presents to greet the conquerors. Ibn Kathir who belonged to Damascus, has portrayed the joy of Christians and the helplessness of the Muslims in these words:

"The Christians came back by the Gate of Toma, carrying the cross over their heads and shouting slogans. They were praising Christianity and openly disparaging Islam and the Muslims, They had flasks of wine from which they sprinkled the liquor in front of the mosques and on the faces of Muslims they happened to pass by ordering the Muslims to pay homage to their emblem. Muslims could not restrain themselves for long and gathered in large numbers and pushed them back to the Cathedral of Mary where a Christian clergy delivered a speech praising Christianity and denigrating Islam and its followers." Thereafter Ibn Kathir continues his description on the authority of Zail ul Mirata.

"The Christians then entered the mosque with wine in their hands. They intended to pull down a number of mosques in case the reign of Tartars continued for sometime more. Ulema, Qadis and other Muslim notables repaired to the citadel of the Tartar governor El Siyan to make a

complaint about the excesses of the Christians but they were turned out by him. El Siyan, however, gave a hearing to the Christians: Verily, unto God do we belong and unto Him, shall we return."

After the fall of Syria, the Mongols wanted to carry their arms to Egypt which was the only Muslim country still out of their reach. The Sultan of Egypt, al-Malik al-Muzaffar Saif ud-din Qataz knew that his country would be the next target of the Mongols; and also, that it would be difficult to hold off those savages if they were allowed to make adequate preparations for invading his lands. He, therefore, decided to attack the Mongols in Syria before they were able to consolidate their power. The forces of Egypt accordingly met the Mongols at Ain Jalut, a town below Nazareth in Palestine, on the 25th of Ramadhan, 658 A.M., under the command of Baibers who afterwards became the sovereign of Egypt, Unlike previous battles the Muslims met the Mongols in a hotly contested battle and drove back the stream of savage hordes. The Egyptians pursued the defeated Mongols, slaughtering and capturing a large number of them, east-ward beyond the Euphrates. Al-Suyuti writes in Tarikh ul-Khulfa

"The Muslims were, by the grace of God, victorious and they inflicted a grievous defeat on the Tartars. A large number of Tartars were put to the sword. The retreating Tartars were so disheartened that people easily caught hold of them and despoiled them of their possessions." Sultan Baibers defeated the Tartars in many a fierce battles after the battle of Ain Jalut and thus disproved the proverb that the Tartars were invincible.

*"Envy is permitted only in two  
cases: A man whom Allah gives  
wealth, and he disposes of it right-  
fully, and a man to whom Allah  
gives knowledge which he applies  
and teaches it."  
[Al-Bukhari and Muslim].*

## **Imagine Your Death!**

Imagine yourself after you pass away  
Imagine your grave through night and through day  
Wishing that you did not do as they say  
Wishing that you had got up and had prayed.

Imagine, my friends, the day that you died  
Imagine all of the tears that they cried  
Remember how it felt when your body was tied  
Remember how it felt in the grave which you lied.

Imagine the day you'll be called to account  
Imagine the sum to which your life will amount  
Think for a moment of the deeds which you mount  
Think for a moment how much they will count.

What will they say of you when you are dead?  
What will they say, what will be said?  
Will they speak of all the poor who you fed?  
Will they remember all the Qu'ran that you read?

Think not of them, but of Allah, Lord of mankind and jinn  
Think of Allah when tempted to sin  
Think of the paradise which you will dwell in  
Don't wait till later to think what might have been.

## The Aadaab Of Khidmat (Service To Others)

Some persons do not prefer accepting service from others. The one who wishes to render service to such persons should not insist on doing so. The one who is served is perplexed and inconvenienced by such service. The attitude of a person can be understood either by his explicit refusal or by some other indication.

Upon accomplishing a duty which someone has requested of you, inform him after it has been done. In most cases, he will be waiting in expectation.

Rendering physical service to one's shaykh on the first occasion of meeting him is very irksome to him. **Should one be eager to render service to the shaykh**, one should first establish an informal and friendly relationship.

While there is comfort in **Khidmat**, there are three conditions to it (**Khidmat**):

•**Sincerity**: The motive of rendering the service must be nothing other than **Muhabbat** (affection). **Most people utilize Khidmat as a medium for the attainment of motives.**

•**Congeniality**: The hearts of the **Khaadim** (the one who renders the service) and the **Makhdoom** (the one who is being served) should be at one. There should be congeniality (**Munaasabat**) between them. They should not be strangers.

•**Ability**: The **Khaadim** should know how to render the service he is to undertake.

Service rendered to Muslims in **Makkah Mu'azzamah** should be regarded as a worship and good fortune, provided there is no **Shar'ee** prohibition involved in rendering the service.

Respect and honour people according to their rank.

As far as possible aid a person in need. **If you are unable to assist**, intercede on his behalf so that someone else may render the assistance. However, when interceding establish whether your intercession will not inconvenience the person.

By assisting orphans one will be blessed with the companionship of **Rasoolullaah** sallallahu alayhi wasallam in Jannah .

Those who earn and see to the needs of widows and needy relatives, obtain the **thawaab** (reward) of jihad.

Aiding the **Mazloom** (one against whom injustice or oppression is committed) is very necessary. Sympathy for the **Zaalim** (oppressor) is to prevent him from committing injustices.

The service of giving people water to drink is an act of great **thawaab**. **Rendering this act in a place where water is available in abundance is the equivalent of emancipating a slave.** Where water is less, the thawaab of rendering this act is the equivalent of resurrecting to life a dead person.

By assisting someone with insignificant items, e.g. some salt for the food, the thawaab is as if one has prepared the food.

Serve your parents even though they happen to be non-Muslims. Obey parents in all things lawful in the Sharee'ah. (In the process of serving and obeying non-Muslim parents, the laws of the Sharee'ah should not be violated. If for example, one's non-Muslim father dies and one's mother wishes one to participate in the funeral service, such obedience and service will not be permissible. In short, service and obedience to parents should be within the confines of Islaam).

Meeting with and rendering service to the friends of one's parents after their death are also acts which are regarded in Islaam as service to parents.

If one's parents had died while they were displeased with one, then one should always make **du'aa** and **Istighfaar** for them. It is hoped that **Allah** will ensure that they become happy with their children. (Thus the relationship will be restored on the Day of Qiyaamah ).

**Be kind and render service to relatives even though they may be unkind to you.**

Service to neighbours occupies a very important place in Islaam. Be kind to them. Tolerate their indiscreetness and disturbances. **Do not do anything which will upset them or annoy them.** If they are in need, tend to them as best as you can.