2023 - 2024 Issue 2

# AN-NUSRAT

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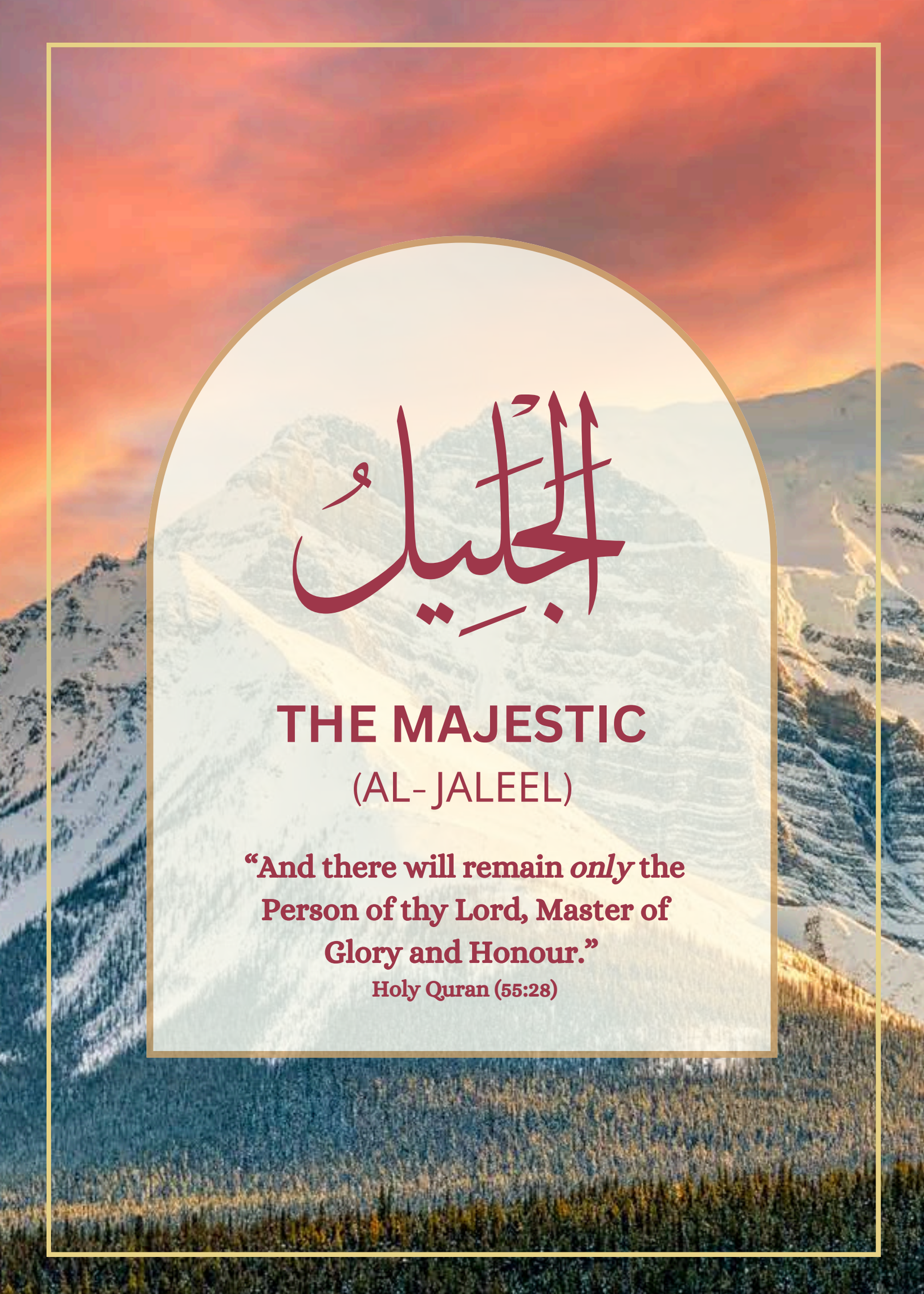
*Jihad From the Sword to the Pen*


الجليل
THE MAJESTIC
(AL- JALEEL)
“And there will remain *only* the Person of thy Lord, Master of Glory and Honour.”
Holy Quran (55:28)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

# AN-NUSRAT

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَّا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهٗ لَا شَرِيْكَ لَهٗ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهٗ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ۔

I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah. He is One and has no partner. And I bear witness that Muhammad (sa) is His servant and His Messenger.
I affirm that I shall always be ready to sacrifice my life, property, time and children for the cause of faith and nation. I shall always adhere to truth and shall always be prepared to make every sacrifice for the perpetuation of the Ahmadiyya Khilafat, Insh'Allah.

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# Guidance from the Holy Quran

اِنَّمَا الۡمُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوۡلِهٖ ثُمَّ لَمۡ يَرۡتَابُوۡا وَجٰهَدُوۡا
بِاَمۡوَالِهِمۡ وَاَنۡفُسِهِمۡ فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الصّٰدِقُوۡنَ ﴿۱۶﴾

**“The believers are only those who *truly* believe in Allah and His Messenger, and then doubt not, but strive with their possessions and their persons in the cause of Allah. It is they who are truthful.” (49:16)**

**https://www.alislam.org/quran/app/49:16**

# Hadith
# Sayings of the Holy Prophet (sa)

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ، قَالَ رَسُولُ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَيُوشِكَنَّ أَنْ يَنْزِلَ فِيكُمُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ حَكَمًا عَدْلًا فَيَكْسِرَ الصَّلِيبَ وَيَقْتُلَ الْخِنْزِيرَ وَيَضَعَ الْحَرْبَ وَيُفِيضَ الْمَالَ حَتّٰى لَا يَقْبَلَهُ أَحَدٌ حَتّٰى تَكُونَ السَّجْدَةُ الْوَاحِدَةُ خَيْرًا مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَمَا فِيهَا۔

**Narrated Abu Huraira:**

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "By Him in Whose Hands my soul is, surely (Jesus,) the son of Mary will soon descend amongst you and will judge mankind justly (as a Just Ruler); he will break the Cross and kill the pigs and there will be no Jizya (i.e. taxation taken from non Muslims). Money will be in abundance so that nobody will accept it, and a single prostration to Allah (in prayer) will be better than the whole world and whatever is in it."

(4.159) (See Fath-ul-Bari, Bukhari, Page 302 Vol 7)

# Malfuzat - Sayings and Discourses of the Promised Messiah (as)

## Jihad in the Present Age

There was another factor underpinning the practice of earlier times and it was to exhibit bravery, which in that era was deemed to be the most commendable and cherished quality one could possess. In the present day, war has become a science where even a person who sits at a distance can fire a canon or a gun. However, in those days, a truly courageous man was one who stood firmly under the shadow of swords. However, the art of war in this age is nothing but a mask for cowards. Now, courage amounts to nothing and those who possess advanced weapons of war and modern canons, and who are trained in their use prevail in war. The purpose and objective of war in earlier times was so that the hidden quality of bravery within the believers could come to light. And as God Almighty had willed, He manifested this quality of the believers to the world most magnificently. This is no longer required because now war has taken on the form of skill, strategy and tactic. Advanced weaponry and intricate strategies have mixed this precious and honourable merit to dust. In the early period of Islam, defensive wars and physical battles were also necessary because those who preached the message of Islam were countered, not with reason and argumentation, but by the sword. And so, left with no other choice, the Muslims were forced to respond to the sword in kind. But now Islam is not countered with the sword, rather, it is criticised by the pen and through argumentation. Hence the reason that in this day and age God Almighty desires for us to use the pen to accomplish that which was previously done so by the sword—so that the opponents may be defeated through written argumentation. Therefore, it is inappropriate for anyone to respond to the pen by the sword.

گر حفظِ مراتب نکنی زندیقی

"If you are not considerate of rank, you shall lose your faith."

Malfuzat, Volume 1, Edition 2022, p.57-58, Edition 2018. https://www.alislam.org/library/books/Malfuzat-1.pdf4).

## Dearest readers,

Assalamo Alaikum Warahmatullah-i-Wabarakatuhu,

Jihad is a term that has been stained with many negative connotations. Often erroneously translated in the West as a “holy war”, Jihad in Islam primarily refers to the human struggle to promote what is right and prevent what is wrong.

This issue aims at exploring all the practical and philosophical manifestations of the term in all its intricacies. It will first and foremost allow the readers to travel back into the era of the Holy Prophet (sa) and get a hold of the conditions and rules of the wars fought in his time which are far from the grotesque allegations commonly held against Islam.

It was equally important, as editors, to address the modern modalities of the concept of Jihad in the light of the writings of the Promised Messiah (as). His contributions to the cause of Islam are crucial, not only to read the current state of the world, but also to determine Islam’s future.

Please remember our magazine is online now and available to view on Lajna.org.uk. We humbly welcome any comments and suggestions which can be sent to secretary Isha’at UK.

We hope these articles also inspire our readers to write their own articles so that we are able to publish them in future issues.

Jazak’Allah

Mahrukh Arif-Tayyeb

Editor An-Nusrat English

# The Team

Under the supervision of
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# Defensive Wars in Islam

## Rules & Regulations

*Madeeha Mubarak Cheema*

Amidst the distressing events of Palestinians being forcibly displaced from their homes, the imperative to understand the concept of Jihad becomes increasingly urgent. In a world where the term 'Jihad' often carries negative connotations, it is crucial to discern the nuanced reality of the 'Jihad of the sword' and its link with self-defence.

Rooted in the Holy Quran's injunction that **'There should be no compulsion in religion' (Quran 2:257)** [1], Islam emphasises the principle of free will in matters of faith.[8] However, within the framework of defensive Jihad, Islam recognises the need to engage in war in specific situations. This exploration unfolds across four fundamental and valid reasons contextualising why Muslims may be permitted to engage in combat. These reasons will encompass the safeguarding of religious sites, protecting women, children, and the environment during conflicts as well as ensuring the preservation of basic necessities.

Finally, within these discussions, a dedicated section sheds light on Muslims' exemplary treatment of prisoners of war, underscoring a significant commitment to compassion and ethical conduct. This emphasises that defensive wars are only fought in response to unavoidable situations.

### Four key reasons guiding Muslims in defensive wars[5]

The Holy Quran states that:

**"Permission *to fight* is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged — and Allah indeed has power to help them- Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said, 'Our Lord is Allah'—And if Allah did not repel some men by**

**means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft commemorated. And Allah will surely help one who helps Him. Allah is indeed Powerful, Mighty-" (Quran 22:40-41).**[1]

This establishes the defensive stance of war in Islam, conferring upon Muslims the right to protect themselves against aggression and injustice. In these situations, the Holy Prophet (sa) provided exemplary contexts of how Jihad was deemed necessary. Hazrat Mirza Bashir Ahmad (ra) has laid out four reasons for the occurrence of defensive war/Jihad.[2]

1. To Establish Religious Freedom:

Defensive war is permitted to ensure that people have the freedom to practise their religion without oppression. When a group or nation is persecuted solely for their religious beliefs and is prevented from practising their faith, they are allowed to defend themselves to preserve religious freedom.

2. To Defend Against Aggression:

Defensive war is justified when a community or nation is attacked by aggressors. Islam permits fighting in self-defense to protect oneself, one's family, and one's community from harm and destruction.

3. To Protect the Places of Worship:

Defensive war is allowed to protect sacred places of worship (such as mosques, churches, synagogues, and temples) from being destroyed or desecrated. The Quran specifically mentions the protection of places of worship as a reason for defensive war.

4. To Establish Peace and Justice:

Defensive war is also justified when it is necessary to restore peace and justice. If a situation arises where injustice is being committed on a large scale, and there is no other way to stop the oppression and restore peace, a defensive war may be undertaken to establish justice and peace.

## Rules of safeguarding religious sites

The protection of sacred sites holds a paramount position in Islam, aligning closely with the fourth reason articulated by Hazrat Mirza Bashir Ahmad (ra) – the imperative to establish peace. Surah Al-Hajj, verse 41, mentioned above, not only underscores the broad scope of safeguarding religious places but also emphasises the unjust expulsion

from homes - a punishment inflicted solely due to monotheistic beliefs – affirming Muslims' deep devotion to "**Our Lord is Allah"**.

The Quran, in its explanation of repelling aggression, highlights the interconnected nature of diverse religious spaces including cloisters, churches, synagogues and mosques. Islam employs inclusive language, stressing not only the protection of its own places of worship but also extending this principled stance to those of different faiths. This commitment to religious liberty and harmony is deeply ingrained in Islam.

The Quran, in defining the rules governing the defence of religious places, utilises deliberate and inclusive language that invites closer examination. By explicitly mentioning synagogues and churches alongside mosques, the Quran articulates a vision of universal protection and makes us ponder on the profound significance of embracing diverse places of worship. This reflection goes beyond a defensive stance, it indicates a steadfast commitment to safeguarding religious diversity.

## Rules of Protecting Vulnerable Groups

Islam mandates the protection of non-combatants, particularly women and children, during times of conflict.This commitment to safeguarding vulnerable groups is deeply ingrained in Islamic principles extending even to the pre-Islamic Arabian era characterised by abhorrent practices such as the ritual burial of infant girls, as addressed in the Quranic verse 81:9[(2)(7)]The verse unequivocally objects to such cruelty towards females. It also raises ethical concerns about the killing of innocent children, highlighting that even though such practices may not have been widespread, Allah acknowledges that crimes were indeed perpetrated against innocent and defenceless members of society.

In the context of warfare, there is a meticulous duty upon Muslims to take care of women and children. A number of Hadith underscored this obligation instructing Muslims engaged in Jihad to refrain from harming women or children and urging them to establish peace and treat people with benevolence. It states: **"O ye Muslims! go forth in the name of Allah and perform Jihad with the intention of protecting religion. (...) do not kill women and children, nor religious recluses; and do not kill the elderly. Create peace in the land, and treat the people with benevolence, for surely, Allah loves the benevolent" - Sunan Abī Dāwūd (2614)**[(5)].

This Hadith not only prohibits violence but also provides a comprehensive ethical framework guiding conduct during conflict.

By safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of vulnerable populations, Islam emphasises the importance of compassion and ethical behaviour in times of war. Historically, in early Islamic wars, the Holy Prophet (sa) exemplified this principle by excluding small children under the age of fifteen years old from fighting, ensuring their safety by sending them back to their family, during military inspections. This practice demonstrates that children were considered among the vulnerable individuals deserving protection from the hazards of armed conflict.[5]

It is worth noting that although some women did participate in defensive wars, their main involvement was not in combat but instead in invaluable support roles. These roles which involved supporting troops with food provision services, nursing duties, fetching water, or other occasional non-combat tasks.

Such directives not only underscored the Holy Prophet's (sa) commitment towards preserving the sanctity of human life but also to maintaining societal harmony, echoing Islam's broader principle of fostering peace in every society. Protecting society's most vulnerable and future-building individuals during times of conflict is certainly an embodiment truly unique to Islam.

## Defensive Jihad and the Protection of Environment

Islam's rules for defensive warfare go beyond the preservation of human lives; they even encompass the preservation of nature. The Holy Quran, Chapter 18, verse 8 states:

**"Verily, We have made all that is on the earth as an ornament for it, that We may try them as to which of them is best in conduct."[1]**

Warfare inherently involves destruction; thus, Islam teaches that war should be waged with the least possible damage to life and property. Additionally, the Holy Prophet (sa) instructed that even during battles, trees should not be felled, crops should not be destroyed, and animals should not be killed.[8] Moreover, inhabited places were not to be ruined, and civilians, including non-combatants, were not to be harmed.

It meant that a person's home or workplace could not be destroyed because that became a matter of injustice. This ethical framework aimed to reduce the environmental impact of conflicts and ensure that the Earth's resources were preserved, even in times of war.

By preserving the environment during warfare, Islam acknowledges that any negative

impact would be detrimental in the long term. Upholding these rules not only benefits humanity but also promotes the wellness of the Earth.

## Provision of Basic Necessities in Defensive Wars

Food and essential provisions to survive are a fundamental human right. Islamic defensive warfare operates under principles that extend beyond the protection of life and property, but also the welfare of the overall population, to guarantee they are never deprived of necessities. Islamic teachings offer profound wisdom, consistently guiding on how to protect Muslims in the long term.

Relating back to the Hadith that was previously mentioned, we must reflect on how frequently Muslims find themselves amidst an abundance of resources, yet the Holy Prophet's (sa) words echo the importance of carefulness in wastage, even in times of abundance. In the context of defensive wars, these teachings take on a personal hue. Where resources are scarce, the Holy Prophet's (sa) guidance serves as an inspiration - to tread lightly on the Earth.

This ethical stance is also indicated in another Hadith of Sahih Bukhari, to **"not spoil the cultivated fields and gardens, and do not slaughter the cattle."**[11] Such teachings impose high moral expectations on Muslims during wartime, as preserving the Earth ultimately safeguards the wellness of the population.

## Muslims and their Fine Treatment to Prisoners of War

Another point worth mentioning is that the Holy Prophet's (sa) compassion transcended mere prohibition. This is arguably the clearest example of the treatment of prisoners during wartime. His treatment of captives or prisoners during conflicts demonstrated remarkable compassion and forgiveness, most captives were pardoned, with minimal restrictions on their freedom. In these temporary periods of restraint, the Holy Prophet (sa) issued strict rules to ensure the ease and comfort of the prisoners. Subsequently, his companions, deeply influenced by these regulations, displayed acts of unparalleled compassion towards the captives.

A prisoner from the Battle of Badr, named Abu 'Aziz bin 'Umair relates, that: **"Due to the exhortation of the Holy Prophet (sa), the Ansar would give me baked bread, but they themselves, would subsist on dates, etc. Many a time, it would so happen that even if they managed to procure a small piece of bread, they would give it to me, and would not eat it themselves. If I would ever return it to them in embarrassment, they would insist that I have it."** They not only provided cooked food to their captives but also selflessly gave them their shirts to replace the ones that they had on. Thus, all people were treated gently and with kindness.[5]

Grounded in the Holy Quran and illuminated by the compassionate teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (sa), these principles extend beyond mere defence in warfare. They represent more than just a set of rules; they embody a blend of compassion and enduring guidance for humanity to safeguard life, diversity, and our shared planet.

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# The Israel-Palestine Crisis

## AND THE NEED FOR THE PROMISED MESSIAH (AS)

*Nadia Ghauri*

**"There is such a wound in our hearts, which gets deeper and more painful by the day. Our hearts continue to bleed with every passing moment. Here, I am talking about the extremely inhumane atrocities being carried out against the Muslim world at the hands of Israel."**[1]

Though expressed over 40 years ago by Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (ra), these words still capture the heartache we feel while watching events unfold in Palestine. The violence in Gaza has crossed all moral and legal limits. At the time of writing, 85% of the Gazan population has been internally displaced[2] and Palestinian fatalities exceed 27,800.[3]

The Muslim world's response to the crisis has been feeble at best. The Ummah is deeply fractured, its internal divisions emphasising just how much we need to unite behind the Promised Messiah's (as) Jamaat. Understanding the historical and spiritual contexts of the current crisis will help us find its solution and the role we can play as Ahmadi Muslims.

**A Historical Overview**

*The following is a simple timeline of key events shaping the Israel-Palestine crisis to help understand the background of the current war.*

**1897 - 1920s: Zionism,** founded by Theodor Herzl, emerges in response to antisemitism in Europe, calling for the creation of an independent Jewish homeland

in Palestine.[4] The movement's settler-colonialist logic aims to rid Palestine of its native people, or at least their political power.[5] The indigenous Arabs, however, have been living in Palestine for thousands of years. In 1917, Arabs make up 90% of the country's population while the Jews represent 10% and own just 2% of the land.[6]

**1922:** Following World War I, the League of Nations gives Britain a Mandate[7] over Palestine, a power abused to enable a Jewish-majority state to be established. Britain plays a key role in Israel's creation, denying Palestinians multiple rights and allowing Zionists to immigrate and displace locals over the following three decades.[8]

**1936 – 1939:** With continued foreign rule and Zionist expansion, tensions boil over during **the Arab Revolt.** This involves many protests and strikes, brutally crushed by the British forces and armed Zionist militias.[9]

**1947 - 1949:** This period is known as the **Nakba ('catastrophe')**. Having issued the **Balfour Declaration**, the British confirm their support for a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine.

When Britain passes on Palestine's fate to the recently formed UN, the latter proposes partitioning Palestine into two states, one Arab and one Jewish. This inflames further violence and hostilities. After Britain withdraws its Mandate, Zionist leaders proclaim the **Establishment of Israel in 1948.** Neighbouring Arab states invade Israel, but Israel is victorious. Its forces capture significant territory; more than the Partition plan allocated.[10]

During **the Nakba**, 13,000 Palestinians are killed and 750,000 expelled from their homes, becoming refugees.[11] The Gaza Strip and the West Bank come under Egypt and Jordan's control, while Jerusalem is divided up.

Palestinians who manage to stay on their land in Israel are put under martial rule and have since been oppressed by Israeli authorities. The West Bank and Gaza are recognised by most of the international community as the "Palestinian territories", despite the Palestinians never having had full control over them.[12]

**1967:** During the **Six-Day War**, Israel captures the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula.[13] This causes another wave of Palestinian refugees. Israeli oppression and the Zionist settlement project continues.

**1980:** Israel formally annexes East Jerusalem. Its expanding settlements are considered illegal by most of the international community.[14]

**1987:** The Palestinians protest in the first **Intifada** ('uprising').[15]

**1990s:** Following the **Oslo Accords**, the Palestinian Authority is established, a quasi-government which has little power.[16] Further negotiations fail. The overwhelming majority of the West Bank is blocked off for Israeli settlements and controlled by Israel.[17] Barbed wire is set up around Gaza.[18]

**2000-2005:** Second Intifada begins. Israel deploys its military to quash protests and builds a separating wall between the West Bank and Israel.[19]

**2005:** Israel withdraws troops and settlers from Gaza.[20]

**2006-2007:** Infighting and international intervention lead to the Palestinian territories rupturing; the PA loses control over Gaza to Hamas in 2007 but continues to control the West Bank.[21] As a result, Israel enforces a suffocating blockade on Gaza, this has led Gaza to be known as an "open-air prison."

Since 2007, Israel has executed four large-scale military assaults on Gaza, not including ongoing operations.[22] Due to the blockade's effects, Hamas and other groups in Gaza intermittently launch rockets into Israel. These outbreaks lead to disproportionate Palestinian casualties. Every few years Israel executes military assaults against the Gaza Strip, a strategy it describes as "mowing the lawn."[23]

**2009-2014:** Israeli continues illegally settling in the West Bank, involving bouts of violence, regular displacement, and property demolition. Gaza remains blockaded.[24]

**2014-2023:** Sporadic but vain efforts towards peace-making and mediation. Numerous Human Rights groups have declared Israel as an apartheid state.[25] The Palestinians, both within the territories and abroad, continue their struggle for liberation and call for self-determination. UN resolutions have been unsuccessful.

**October 7th, 2023:** Hamas launches a one-day attack on Israel, Israel subsequently declares war on Hamas and begins bombing Palestine.

## What does the Holy Quran say about the Land of Palestine?

Beyond history and geopolitics, knowledge of Palestine's religious history as presented in holy scriptures, provides a deeper understanding of what is happening. We learn lessons of avoiding transgression, and ultimately, the key to re-establishing peace in Palestine.

In Surah Al-Anbiya, the Holy Quran mentions some exhortations in the Zabur (Book of David):

> **106. "And already have We written in the Book *of David*, after the exhortation, that My righteous servants shall inherit the land."**
> **107. "Herein, surely, is a message for a people who worship *God*."**
> **108. "And We have sent thee not but as a mercy for all peoples."**
> **(21:106-108)**

After these exhortations from the Zabur's Book of Psalms,[26] as explained in Hazrat Musleh Maud's (ra) Tafsir-e-Kabir, God declares that the inheritors of the Holy Land will be *ibadi salihin*, i.e. His righteous servants. This signifies that the land is destined for those who act righteously and worship God.[27]

Regarding this Quranic prophecy, the Promised Messiah (as) explains how it is clear that,

**"...Al-ard[28] which refers to the land of (Greater) Syria,[29] will always be inherited by the righteous people, and as of now, it is in the possession of Muslims.**

**Allah the Almighty has not used the word *yamlikha*[30] (in the aforementioned verse) but in fact said yarithuha. This manifestly shows that the true heirs (of Palestine) will always be Muslims, and if it goes into the hands of some else at some point, such a possession would be similar to a scenario in which the mortgagee gives temporary control of their property to the mortgagor. This is the glory of Divine revelation (and it shall surely come to pass)."**[31]

This was penned at a time when Muslims had dominance in the Holy Land, hence, "It is in the possession of Muslims." Since then, the land has been taken over by the State of Israel, but the reassuring words of the Promised Messiah (as) indicate that this is a temporary state.

Moreover, Tafsir-e-Kabir draws attention to how the 'mercy' (verse 108) represented by the Holy Prophet (sa), transcends time, encompassing periods before and after the occupation of the land. This implies that Divine Mercy can and will bring about triumph for the Muslims.[32]

AMIRHADI MANAVI | UNSPLASH

## Two Warnings

While we may be reassured that the horrors presently engulfing Palestine will come to an end, we must recognise its conditionality. How will Palestine be reclaimed? The answer is not through weapons and warfare, but **righteousness**.

The importance of being '*ibadi salihin*' is also reflected in the lessons learned from the Israelites' transgressions, as mentioned in the Quran in the following verses of Chapter 17, Surah Bani Isra'il:

**5. "And We revealed to the children of Israel in the Book, *saying*, 'You will surely do mischief in the land twice, and you will surely become excessively overbearing."**

**6. "So when the time for the first of the two warnings came, We sent against you some servants of Ours possessed of great might in war, and they penetrated the *innermost parts of your* houses, and it was a warning that was bound to be carried out."**

**7. "Then We gave you back the power against them, and aided you with wealth and children, and made you larger in numbers."**

Verse 5 outlines how God Almighty had revealed to Moses (as) (as written in the Old Testament) that the Israelites would twice disobey and defy divine commandments in Palestine and as such, experience two catastrophes.

1. The first punishment for the Israelites' transgression was when God sent His servants against them, who entered their houses. This befell the Jews after Prophet David (as), when they had spiritually deteriorated and succumbed to sinfulness. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded Palestine, killed Jerusalem's inhabitants, and burned the Holy Temple of Solomon and other important buildings. Thereafter, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for roughly a century.[33]

Following this destruction and the exile of the Jews, God restored their power and aided them with wealth, children, and strength in numbers, as explained in verse 7. The Jews were later able to return to Palestine with the help of the Persian King Cyrus.[34]

2. When the Jews relapsed into evil ways a second time, they again incurred a divine punishment. They persecuted Prophet Jesus (as) and attempted to thwart his divinely-ordained mission. This is referred to in the next verses of the Surah:

> **8. "Now, if you do well, you will do well for your own souls and if you do evil, it will *only go* against them. So when the time for the latter warning came, *We raised a people against you* to cover your faces with grief, and to enter the Mosque as they entered it the first time, and to destroy all that they conquered with utter destruction."**
>
> **9. "It may be that your Lord will *now* have mercy on you but if you return *to your previous state*, We *too* will return, and We have made Hell a prison for the disbelievers."**

The punishment referred to is when Roman general Titus' led his forces into Jerusalem in AD 70, causing wide-scale devastation and destroying the Temple of Solomon.[35]

Here it is worth reflecting that following the second punishment, the Holy Quran does not state that the Jews were to become inheritors of the land. Second-time round, the Jews were not to regain the land but eventually would be shown God's 'mercy', i.e. their humiliation would be removed, and they would be able to live in relative peace. This did occur under Christian rule[36] when the Emperor Constantine I became Christian, and there was a revived interest in Judaea and Jerusalem from a Christian perspective[37]. Regarding the conversion of the Emperor, Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) states,

> **"...he started to accept Moses (as), David (as) and similarly all prophets who had come...the Christian kingdom showed respect for the Jewish prophets and the Torah as well, (they) even considered the Torah to be their holy book. Meaning God had mercy on them. Although the Jews did not get the government, it went into the hands of Christians."[38]**

The Prophecy also refers to the subsequent Muslim rule during Hazrat Umar's (ra) Khilafat, during which inhabitants were shown unmatched kindness and the Temple was greatly respected. An additional interpretation of verse 9 is that the means of being readmitted to Allah's Mercy and Grace is Islam[39] .By accepting Islam, the Jews could rise once again to their former greatness and glory and thus avail a fresh opportunity to reap God's blessings. However, if they reject it, God's Wrath will descend once again.[40]

Interestingly, there is a parallel message for Muslims. They too have been warned that if, like the Jews, they do not give up their evil ways, they will also be punished.

The first punishment, when Muslims began to drift in their practices, was the barbaric ransacking of Baghdad by Hulagu Khan and his troops.[41] The second punishment is represented by the current conflict, which has been evolving over the past century.[42] Thus, this is a stark reminder to the Muslim Ummah to reform their ways, embrace piety and accept the Messiah (as) of the Age.

Muslim-majority nations have, on multiple occasions, failed to solve the issue of Palestine. But the solution, as laid out in the Holy Quran, lies within spiritual, not physical, force.

## The Need for the Promised Messiah(as) and Mahdi

As righteousness is the real weapon for ending this conflict, it is critical to spiritually revive and unify the Muslim world through the Promised Messiah's (as) advent and his spiritual successors, the Khulafa. Following the creation of Israel, the Second Khalifa (ra) stressed that Muslim unity was and would remain the only solution to Palestine's plight.[43]

The Promised Messiah (as) himself explained the significance of his advent:

**"In this age, the world is brimming with disagreements. The Jews say one thing, whereas the Christians profess another and aside from this, the ummah of Muhammad (sa) is mired in internal conflicts (...) Therefore, in conformity with the established practice of Allah, it was essential that a hakam (arbiter) should have come to settle all of these disputes. Hence, that very hakam was bestowed the titles 'the Promised Messiah' and 'the Blessed Mahdi', meaning that he was deemed to be the Messiah on account of resolving external disputes and he was proclaimed the destined Mahdi on account of settling the internal conflicts."[44]**

Considering the Palestinian crisis, Huzoor (aba) has warned that the lack of unity and consensus within the Muslim world has emboldened non-Muslims to do whatever they want against Muslims, and this has been one reason why Israel has been killing innocent Palestinians.[45] Muslim nations must take heed and reform their actions. They should recognise that the acute need for the Messiah was fulfilled through the blessed personage of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as).

Huzoor (aba) states,

**"They (Muslims) should unite and raise a resounding voice for the fulfilment of the requirements of justice and fulfilling the rights of the oppressed, wherever they may be. If they unite as one, then there will also be strength in their voice.**

**Otherwise, these Muslim governments will be responsible for the loss of innocent Muslim lives. These powers should always remember the guidance of the Holy Prophet (sa), that both the oppressors and the oppressed must be helped." (46)**

May Allah the Almighty guide all to the Ahmadiyya Jamaat, may He shower His mercy on the Palestinians, and may He bring an end to the inhumane atrocities being carried out. Ameen.

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# Jihad and Terrorism

*Zoya Danayal*

The concept of Jihad is commonly misunderstood in today's society. Jihad's philosophy and true nature are complex and delicate; the lack of understanding has caused people of this age to fall into grave error.

To our great shame, we have to admit that as a result of these dangerous errors, we have allowed opponents of Islam an opportunity to raise telling objections against a religion as pure and holy as Islam, a religion that is a mirror of the laws near to nature and which discloses the greatness of the living God, Allah the Almighty.

It should be understood that the word 'Jihad' is derived from the Arabic root 'juhd', which means 'to strive' and is therefore used figuratively for religious wars. It seems that the word 'yudh', which is commonly used by Hindus to mean war, is, in reality, a corruption of the word Jihad.

Jihad means exerting one's utmost power to contend with an object of disapprobation. There are three kinds of Jihad: the Jihad against oneself, which in Islamic idiom is called the Greatest Jihad (Jihad-e-Akbar); the Jihad waged against Satan and satanic teachings and designs – the Great Jihad (Jihad-e-Kabeer); and the Jihad waged against the enemy of the freedom of conscience, which is called the Lesser Jihad (Jihad-e-Asghar). [(1)]

However, the question yet to be answered is

## *Why did Islam needed Jihad in the first place?*

It is quite clear that from its very birth, Islam faced great difficulties, and all nations became its enemy. The Holy Prophet (sa) had to confront great hardships. Quite a number of his dear ones and most loyal followers became the victims of the arrows and spears of the enemies – the cruel disbelievers. These followers of the Holy Prophet (sa) were shamelessly tortured, and they included men as well as women. The limit was reached when the enemies planned to put the Holy Prophet's (sa) life to an end. He was chased. The men who followed him were promised a great reward. The Holy Prophet (sa) had to hide in a cave. The chasers left no stone unturned to get hold of him, but as God had willed it, the Holy Prophet (sa) could not be noticed by the chasers despite being within their sight. Thus, he was miraculously saved by God. When the Muslims were inhumanely tortured and turned out of Mecca, and many Muslims had become martyrs, it was then that God commanded them to fight back; this was most certainly a defensive measure. It was at this point that God told the Muslims to use the sword to fight those who had initiated war against them.

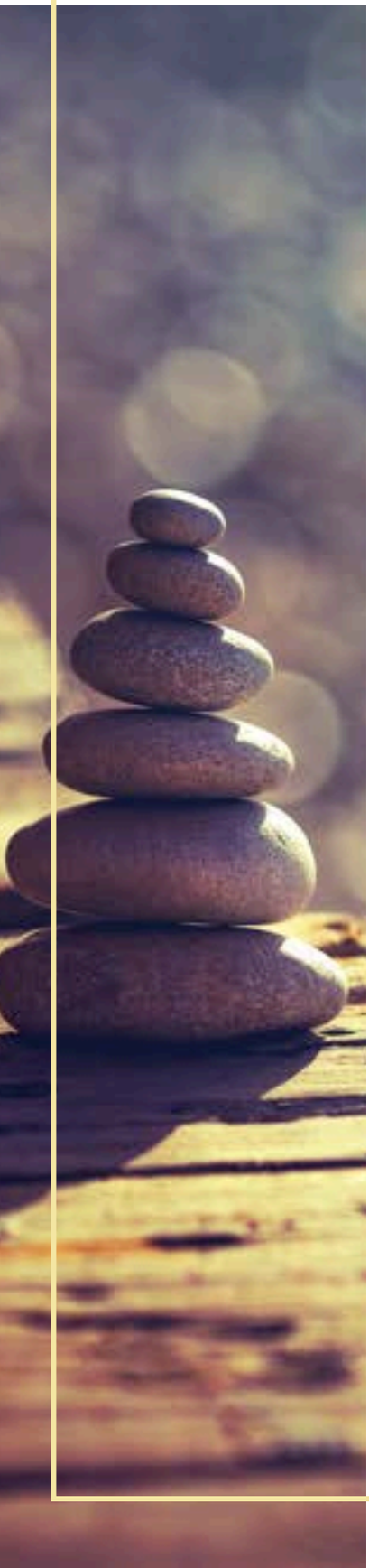
Simply by looking at this from any angle, you will find that the Muslims were oppressed. Had God Almighty not permitted them, even in these circumstances, to take up the sword against the oppressors, they would have been wiped out; would that have been justified? The bigoted people are accusing them up to this day of having recourse to the sword. However, no worldly or religious law could tenably demand that they should get themselves annihilated instead of defending themselves.

Now, times have changed. Islam is being attacked with the pen. That is why the pen must be used to refute these attacks. God Almighty says in the Holy Quran that you should prepare to defend yourself with the same kind of weapons that the opponents use.

Think of the preparations that some of the opponents of Islam are making today. They are not lining up armies. They are publishing magazines and books. Therefore, we should also pick up our pens and answer their attacks with magazines and books. It is not expedient that the prescription (treatment) and the sickness should be at variance. If the treatment does not conform with the illness, the consequence is bound to be unprofitable and harmful.

Islam means the religion of peace. A person following Islam will find that noble teachings surround them, through complete submission to Allah, and fulfilling one's obligations to His creation; thereby achieving peace with oneself; between man and man; and between man and the rest of Allah's creation.

Today, many parts of the world views Islam as an aggressive and terrorist religion. Often, the killing of innocent people, suicidal bombings, and terrorist activities are carried out by people who claim to be Muslims.



In reality, the rebellious actions of these ignorant people have nothing to do with Islam. Instead, the real responsibility for these malicious and rebellious acts lies with the so-called scholars of Islam, who, after the age of prophethood and Khilafat, were gravely mistaken in understanding the issue of Jihad and considered the unjustified killing of human beings by the sword a religious duty. Due to the distortion of their hearts, these people have wrongly interpreted some of the *Mutashabihat* (complex and multifaceted) verses of the Holy Quran – they have equated Islamic Jihad to rebellion and associated self-concocted imprudent beliefs to Islam.

In the Holy Quran, God begins to deal with the issue of terrorism by teaching Muslims never to become terrorists in the first place. Two of the first revealed verses of our Holy Book say: 'al-Fitnatu ashad-du minal qatl' – meaning that in the sight of Allah, 'persecution, or making people constantly fear for their lives, is much worse than killing'. And also: 'lâ ikrâha fid-dîn' – 'there shall be no compulsion in religion'; that is to say, no one has the right to force others into complying with their demands or to compel others to follow their thinking. [1]

Islam advocates the following three steps against terrorism:[1]

1. To give an excellent moral upbringing to all Muslims so that they become upright, just, moral, kind and loving people, thereby ensuring that they never disrupt the peace of others.
2. Whenever the peace is disrupted, reason and argue with the evil-doers and sincerely pray for them to make them change their ways.
3. If all reasoning fails, join forces with all good people to combat the mischief mongers until peace has been restored, but always keeping the dictates of justice in view.

Allah repeatedly warns the believers that they should never abandon Him, the source of all goodness. The believers are repeatedly reminded that they will lose Allah Almighty's love and favour if they ever go against Quranic teaching.

Islam strongly emphasises that believers are made into highly moral, excellently behaved people by inculcating lofty human values that can turn them into people who sincerely love humankind without distinction of religion, race, or social status. It also reminds us that error and falsehood are to be hated and detested. According to Islam, however, people who hold on to error are never to be hated. That is why the motto of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is 'Love For All, Hatred For None'.

The only Jihad permitted in Islam is the war of the oppressed against the oppressor,[2] the war waged to protect the peace of all people, irrespective of their religion or creed. Tactics used today, such as suicide bombing, etc., are absolutely out of the question for the faithful followers of Islam.

'And spend for the cause of Allah, and cast not yourselves into ruin with your own hands, and do good; surely, Allah loves those who do good' (2:196).[3] This verse alone is sufficient enough to prevent Muslims from crashing aeroplanes into buildings or sending suicide bombers to blow up innocent civilians; as we know, such events make headlines today.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) said, 'Charity is incumbent upon every human limb every day on which the sun rises. To bring about reconciliation between two contestants is charity. Helping a person mount his animal or load his baggage onto it is charity. A good word is charity. Every step taken towards the mosque for prayer is charity. To remove anything from the street that causes inconvenience is charity.' [1]

In conclusion, we should make peace with the world and combat the objections we are confronted with in a manner that pleases Allah the Almighty and grants us His blessings.

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# THE ULTIMATE JIHAD

# The Battle Against The Ego

*Rabah Nasir*

A recent article in “The Wall Street Journal” described a Michigan city as “America’s Jihad Capital”, due to the city’s significant Muslim population and immense support for Gaza, amid the ongoing conflict between Palestine and Israel.[1] The term “Jihad” has been transformed into a noun used to label “extremist" groups, often associated with Arab or Muslim communities.

Originally, “Jihad” derives from the Arabic word “Jahada”, meaning “struggle” or “strive”.[2] However, in today’s contemporary discourse, this term carries multiple connotations, many of which diverge far from the actual definition. Jihad has become one of those terms, that everyone seems to understand even without knowing Arabic, due to its heightened misrepresentation in the Western media. It is clear, however, that most do not know the actual definition of Jihad or its types. In Islam, Jihad is a term used to describe the struggle for the sake of Allah. This can be categorized into three main types, all aiming for the same purpose: to restore peace, both internally and externally.

What the majority of the world knows is Jihad-e-Asghar, the Jihad of defensive battle. There are certain rules and conditions that need to be met for this Jihad to be considered acceptable in the eyes of Allah. Notably, it needs to be a defensive battle, not offensive, and Muslims must have faced oppression due to their beliefs. The most important point to realise is that this type of Jihad is of the lower order.[2]

Another form of Jihad is Jihad-E-Kabir, which strives to propagate the true teachings of the Holy Quran with respect and tolerance towards individuals’ beliefs. This type of Jihad is known as the great or major Jihad.[2]

Jihad-E-Akbar (greater) is the highest-order Jihad, signifying its utmost importance among all others. Unlike Jihad-E-Asghar, the latter two are incumbent on every muslim

throughout their life span. Despite its indisputable importance, Jihad-E-Akbar seems to be the least well-known and understood in the Western world, but one could argue, also in the Muslim Ummah.[2]

The Greater Jihad is the battle against one's egos and passions. It is the Jihad for self-reformation and the fight against worldly temptations and rapacity. While it may be the most easily defined among Jihad and lacks a prescribed list of prohibitions like Jihad-E-Asghar, it is undeniably the most challenging to attain. Hence, it is regarded as the Jihad of the highest order (Akbar). It encompasses virtuous thoughts and deeds aimed at fostering an individual's and society's reformation. This Jihad involves striving to overcome one's weaknesses, temptations, and shortcomings to align oneself with the teachings of Islam and to attain closeness to Allah.[3]

The Holy Quran states, **"Strive with your property and your persons in the cause of Allah" (9:41)** [4]. This verse embodies what Jihad-E-Akbar means. To be selfless for the sake of Allah is to engage in self-reform. This entails letting go of all worldly attractions, including wealth, property, internal carnal desires, and egotistical attitudes, to attain solely His pleasure and love. The Holy Prophet (sa) once said ***"Strive against your carnal desires as much as you strive against your visible enemies," (Al-Mufradat Fee Ghareeb al-Quran).***[3] The Holy Prophet (sa) emphasises that self-control holds equal importance in the eyes of Allah as struggling against enemies. This reiterates the extensive significance of the Greater Jihad, particularly when compared to the Lesser Jihad.

Reformation needs to occur both internally and externally; it must take place within oneself, but also extend to the people around us. One Hadith narrates, ***"It is not the best Jihad for a man to strike with his sword in the cause of Allah, rather, true Jihad is achieved through the caring and loving services a man renders to his parents and children. And whoever lives with himself, restricting it from harming the rest of mankind, then such has actually involved in the practice of true Jihad," (Al-Fath al-Kabir).***[3] This Hadith sheds light on how we can further achieve Jihad-E-Akbar beyond personal struggle. It teaches us that showing kindness and love towards other people is as pleasing to Him as our love towards Him is.

The Holy Prophet (sa) has narrated multiple hadith which illuminate the importance of Jihad-E-Akbar. Infamously, after returning from a battle, he said: ***"We are returning from the lesser Jihad to the greater Jihad."*** [2] Once again, this clarifies for the Muslim Ummah the significance of the greater Jihad, especially in contrast to the lesser Jihad. Lesser Jihad is and should not be a daily endeavour for a Muslim believer; rather, it should only be undertaken when there is a need for the physical defence of Islam. Once that battle concludes, so does Jihad-E-Asghar. On the other hand, Jihad-E-Akbar is an ongoing effort that never ceases, as it entails constant

striving for improvement.

Jihad-e-Asghar was the need of the time of the Holy Prophet (sa), thus it was embarked upon. After the coming of the Promised Messiah (as), he made it clear on numerous occasions that the era of Jihad with a sword was over. Our Jamaat now keenly focuses on the other two Jihads and has been making efforts accordingly to achieve it.

Attaining Jihad-e-Akbar is crucial for every Ahmadi, particularly upon taking Bai'at. The Promised Messiah (as) emphasised the importance, stating ***"In order to achieve such thinking and such a state, the person taking Bai'at has to first adopt meekness and humility and has to distance themselves from their ego and selfishness."*** [(5)] Following the pledge of Bai'at, one must abandon egoism and self-centeredness in order to advance spiritually. A Bai'at stained with conceit holds no value whatsoever.

To further work on the greater Jihad, Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh) initiated the Waqfe Nau program, through which thousands of parents pledged their children to serve the Jamaat, a commitment that persists to this day. It is one of the many ways the Jamaat, works towards the Ultimate Jihad.[(6)]

To foster peace, Hazrat Ameer-ul-Mominin (aba) has conducted lectures and speeches worldwide, aiming to exemplify the true essence of Islam and initiate reforms across all aspects of life. During his tour of Japan in November 2015, Huzoor-e-Aqdas (aba) delivered a keynote address at the inauguration of Baitul Ahad. During the speech, Huzoor explained the meaning of Jihad in the modern era, saying ***"We believe that in this era, true Jihad is not the Jihad of the sword but is the Jihad of self-struggle towards betterment. It is the Jihad of developing righteous changes within ourselves."*** Beloved Huzoor provided a clear and concise definition of Jihad in today's context, resonating with individuals of diverse backgrounds and ages, from Japanese university students to Brazilian guests. His words transcended cultural and linguistic barriers, leaving a profound impact on all who heard them. One lady by the name of Mrs Uzuki said, ***"The Khalifa said that this era is not a time for Jihad of the Sword but is a time for a Jihad of Love and this message has had a huge impact upon me".*** [(7)]

During the era of the Holy Prophet (sa), the advent of the Promised Messiah (as), and under the leadership of the Khulafa-e-Ahmadiyyat, unwavering submission to the Almighty remains the Greatest Jihad. In this context, if a mayor in any state within the US or elsewhere in the world designates a city as the capital of Jihad, it becomes necessary for us Ahmadi Muslims to abide by this declaration and demonstrate its validity through our actions.

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# History of Islamic Calligraphy

*Sirah Ahmed*

The word calligraphy derives from the two ancient Greek words ‘kallos’, meaning beauty and, ‘graphein’, meaning writing.[1] In a religion where images are often limited to avoid idolatry, calligraphy was a form of art appreciated for its beautiful illustration of God’s word. Islamic calligraphy began as means of preservation for the Quran. The practice of writing the holy word soon became seen as an act of devotion to God. The tradition of calligraphy in the Middle East predates Islam. Yet the dawn of Islam brought significant expansion, development, and use of calligraphy in the region, creating the unique art form of Islamic calligraphy. In 2022, UNESCO added Arabic calligraphy to the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list, demonstrating the significant place that calligraphy holds in the Middle East.

The two widely used forms of Islamic calligraphy were the Kufic script that emerged from the southern Iraqi city of Kufa and Naksh. The geometric and angular nature of the Kufic script made it easier to write on rougher textures like papyrus and was often used as decoration and in formal situations. Naksh was a cursive script used in informal circumstances, often used to transcribe books and is most similar to the modern Arabic script. Most scripts evolved from the format of these two calligraphies and were adapted to the new resources available and differing tastes.

The history of Islamic calligraphy and the history of Islam are inextricably linked. As Islam spread, so did the use of the Arabic script and the practice of Islamic calligraphy. The Arabic script was adapted to fit modern Persian, Turkish, the Berber languages of North Africa, the Iranian languages of Pashto and Kurdish, and Urdu. All of these languages developed new styles of Islamic calligraphy like Maghrebi (North Africa, Islamic Spain and Portugal), Diwani (Ottoman Turks), Nasta’liq (Iran and South Asia) and Sini (China)[2].Under the patronage of Muslim rulers, many influential calligraphers emerged who created distinct styles. Islamic calligraphy evolved from simple Quranic

verses into poems, aphorisms and praise for rulers.[3] Calligraphers were encouraged to use the best writing materials to write the word of God because calligraphy created a physical form of God's word.

The Abbasid Caliphate in modern-day Iran from 750-1258 is recognised as the Islamic Golden Age and produced many poems praising the Abbasid leaders. In the tenth century, Ibn Muqla codified six styles of calligraphy in Baghdad that continued to be refined over the following two centuries.[4] Varying styles continued to emerge throughout the Islamic world including the Ottoman Empire which many considered the second Islamic Golden Age. An oft-used Turkish phrase is, 'The Quran was revealed in Mecca, best recited in Egypt and best written in Istanbul'. The saying captures the pride taken in Ottoman calligraphy and its role in its production. Islamic calligraphy produced during the Ottoman Empire was a cursive style of writing that was difficult to read and write due to its highly stylised design but was very effective in safekeeping documents. The Ottomans also produced exceptional pieces of zoomorphic calligraphy, in which they would draw Islamic calligraphy in the shape of animals like peacocks, lions, and storks. This style is also present in Urdu and Persian calligraphy, with their own script used in the animal images.

Chinese Islamic calligraphy is a particularly unique phenomenon that jointly expresses the skills of traditional Chinese and Islamic calligraphy despite living far from the Islamic world. Chinese manuscripts claim that the first Muslims arrived in the south of China in Guangzhou in 627 CE during the Tang dynasty. The oldest remaining mosque in China, Huaisheng Mosque, was founded in the same year. The mosque was rebuilt multiple times since its founding and continues to blend traditional Chinese architecture with Arabic style. Though multiple styles of Chinese Islamic calligraphy have developed, the most prominent is the Sini style.[5] This script refers to the long, flowing calligraphy with thick brushstrokes that are reminiscent of the Thuluth cursive script from Ottoman Turkey and Central Asia. In the rest of the Islamic world, calligraphy is written with a pen; the use of a brush in Chinese Islamic calligraphy is unique and demonstrates the marriage between the two identities. Mi Guangjiang is considered the most accomplished Chinese Islamic calligrapher. To promote and preserve the tradition of Chinese Islamic calligraphy, Guangjiang established the Chinese House for the Arts of Islamic Arabic Calligraphy in Zhengzhou, Henan Province in 2009.[6]

The institute also teaches Chinese Islamic calligraphy and works with museums and universities worldwide to promote an understanding of the traditional Islamic arts in China.

Over the past fourteen centuries since the Quran was revealed, countless forms of calligraphy have emerged from the continually evolving identities of Muslims worldwide. Traditional Islamic calligraphy struggled to find a new place in the modern world yet refashioned itself through typography and new abstract forms. In the mid-20th century, an art movement emerged from the tradition of Islamic calligraphy, huroufiyah, known as, 'the letter movement'. This movement shifted away from the strict rules of Islamic calligraphy. Some artists drew from the 20th-century Cubist and Abstract Expressionism movements and created more playful forms of art using new mediums like neon, glass, wire, and more.[7] Inspired by graffiti, others created a new genre of art called 'calligraffiti'. Calligraffiti is utilised as a form of political dissidence and artistic expression spreading throughout the Middle East and beyond. Characterised by its paradoxical nature, calligraffiti is both traditional and modern, beautiful and provocative. A pioneer of the new art is eL Seed, a French Tunisian artist whose most famous and controversial work appeared on the minaret of Jara Mosque in Gabes, Tunisia.[8]

Inspired by a Quranic verse that called for understanding and tolerance, the work was created in response to the growing ultra-conservative Islamist groups taking hold since the 2011 revolution in Tunisia. In 2006 the British Museum held an exhibit with 90 huroufiyah artists displaying their artwork, giving legitimacy to this new form of Islamic calligraphy. For many artists, this new form of calligraphy embraces ideas of diversity and inclusivity, reflecting their identities which are often a blend of East and West. While traditional Islamic calligraphers have expressed concern over this new form of Islamic calligraphy, the new movement has continued to attract admiration. With an increasingly connected world and diverse identities, many find a connection in the styles of Islamic calligraphy that reflect that diversity and abstractness.

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# The Age of the Promised Messiah (as) and the Power of the Pen:

## How the Jamaat has historically used publication and writing as a means of Jihad.

*Naghma Arif*

***"The treasures that lay buried for thousands of years,***
***Today I give them away if I find anyone who seeks them."*** [1]

What is the potential of literature? How has the medium of literature been used to advocate the message of truth? How do we see the impact of nineteenth century literature today?

The Holy Prophet (sa) said that the Promised Messiah (as) who would grace us in the latter days would "stop the (religious) wars and distribute wealth in such abundance that nobody will accept it." [2] Interestingly, this 'wealth' does not stand for material wealth but rather it stands for the profound spiritual wealth which would be distributed throughout the literary sphere to revive the magnificent teachings of Islam. The prominent signs of the Latter Days have been beautifully described within the Holy Quran in Surah At-Takwir. The Promised Messiah (as) explained that the phrase, "**And when books are spread abroad,**" refers to the concept of publication and the printing press . Thus, it is understood that the Latter Days would be the age of knowledge and information, whereby literature and publication would be utilised to spread the truth of Islam.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) established the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in 1889. He was a scholarly man who wrote more than eighty books. He engaged in many debates with religious leaders about spiritual, eschatological, and religious issues and discourses. His teachings were disseminated through different mediums such as books, leaflets, debates and lectures. Written in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu, his work accommodated a plethora of people, which helped to ignite social cohesion and strengthened the understanding of his message. His literature was *sui generis* (of its own kind), constituting his immense love for Allah and the Holy Prophet (sa) as well as providing spiritual opulence.

A renowned scholar, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad has stated regarding Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) that:

***"He was a monument of great intellectual wonders; his insight was revolutionary and his voice was charged with the call of Judgement. His fingers moved the strings of reformation (...) and (he) awakened the sleeping souls of the world with his thunderous calls."***[4]

As mentioned by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) spent his life, 'awakening the sleeping souls of the world.' But what does this mean? It is integral to contextualise the socio-political realities of nineteenth century South Asia to grasp the necessity of the literature of the Promised Messiah (as). He wrote at a time when the socio-political landscape was channelling hate against Muslims and the teachings of Islam. At one instance, he wrote: "Islam is a pure and flawless religion. However, it has been attacked in such a manner that there are hundreds of thousands of books written which are filled with vile abuse against the Holy Prophet (sa)".[5] He further elaborates on the notion that **"*the case of the Muslims is that it seems as if they are lifeless and have become like corpses. In times like these, if God Almighty also remains silent, then one can only imagine what would be the outcome".***[6]

Thus, this time period saw a surge in religious and social discourses, which thereby necessitated the literary work of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) in order to revive the peaceful and intellectual teachings of Islam. This revival constituted revolutionary debates about Islam and various religions. It provided deep insights into the teachings of Islam and also closely examined classical sources, such as the Quran and Ahadith to provide proofs of the truth. In doing so, people were given the spiritual light of Islam which awakened their sleeping souls.

One of the main concepts that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) urged was the notion of Jihad with the pen. He stated that, "Islam is being attacked by the pen, and thus, it is necessary to respond to (those attacks) by the pen."[7] Thus, 'Jihad with the sword' had come to an end, and a new era, accompanied by new weapons, such as the pen, had begun.

But how do we use this new weapon? Jihad by the pen, utilises the printing press and various technologies to promote Islam and communicate its message to the world. Rather than resorting to violence to defend Islam, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) urged that Jihad with the pen meant that we must turn towards the Holy Quran and avoid all forms of violence. He emphasised that it is through this that peace would be spread throughout the Earth. This is illustrated throughout the abundance of books he wrote during his lifetime. He intensively used the Quran and Ahadith to challenge and dismantle the misrepresentations of Jihad and Islam. This not only showed the truth of

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) in being the Promised Messiah who would appear among the Muslims as prophesied in the Latter days, but it opened the door of spiritual progress for Muslims during a time when it was very much needed. His words and wisdom called out to those who were ready to hear him, and those who accepted his words were spiritually elevated amid those who were spiritually dead. To this day, his insights remain revolutionary, and we can continue to use his literature to dismantle misrepresentations about Islam.

How did the Promised Messiah (as) use the medium of literature to resist? As previously mentioned, he wrote more than eighty books, each addressing pertinent topics. For example, *Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya* was written for the scholars of the late nineteenth century, which refuted baseless allegations against Islam as well as providing extensive insight into the teachings of Allah and the Holy Prophet (sa). It contains three hundred strong proofs that conclusively and convincingly reflect the truth of Islam, so much so that it was entirely impossible to challenge his claims within the book. Though its content is heavy, it is through this book that we openly see the strength and glory of the pen in its most powerful form. *Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya* had a great impact and intrigued many people towards the Promised Messiah (as), such as Hazrat Hakeem Noor-ud-Deen (ra) of Bhera (Khalifatul Masih I), one of the most eminent scholars of India at that time. This serves as a perfect example of how influential his works were.

Furthermore, *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*, which was originally written as an address for a World Religious Conference, received such a positive response that it was published as a book several times. It covered topics such as the physical, moral, and spiritual conditions of man, life after death and our ultimate aim in this life. This seminal piece has become one of the best books known in Ahmadiyya literature and continues to be actively shared among people today. It propagated the message of Islam and preached significant philosophical elements of the religion that the whole world can still benefit from. These are just some of the examples of the literature published by the Promised Messiah (as), but they all signify that there is perennial power in the written word.

The Promised Messiah's (as) work held great power which meant he received strong responses from opponents. What is noteworthy is that he would never back down from any opposition; instead, he faced them straight on. His own responses would hold divine power, so much so that people were afraid to retaliate against the work of his pen. The Church Family – a paper of the Anglican Church wrote that, "*We should make no attempt to refute the literature published under the auspices of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, for he will create such a volume of literature against Christianity as will destroy the authority of the Bible altogether.*"[8]

This illustrates the physical and spiritual power of the pen; people refrained from responding to his work, afraid of being undermined by his literary arsenal.

The tradition of publication did not stop at Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's (as) demise. Instead, it continued and expanded in scope. The first Khalifa, Hazrat Hakeem Noor-ud-Deen (ra) took firm steps to ensure the spread of the message of Ahmadiyya. He established a public library in Qadian, provided funding for the library, and contributed several volumes from his own collection. The newspapers, Al Haq and Al Fazl were later launched, as well as the Nur newspaper which preached to the Sikh society. [9] Ultimately, this signified that Jamaat Ahmadiyya, indulged in true Jihad and continues to strive in the way of God even now. Thus, in the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat today, books are constantly published for the propagation of Islam and the Tarbiyyat of Muslims. For example, *Nazarat* and Press were established for in house publication. Moreso, the Raqeem Press was established to print books and the Quran, while the *Wakalat Ishaat* focuses on writing books. *Wakalat Tasneef* oversee translating books into English and *Wakalat Tarseel* are in charge of circulating and sending books to countries. We have also established a presence on television, online databases, and archives to wage Jihad of the pen in the media.

Ultimately, the power of the written word, reasoning and gaining intellect, during this age has been sharpened. We should think back to the first verse revealed to the Holy Prophet (sa), which was '*Iqra*' meaning 'read'.[10] Thus, one of the first things that Allah the Exalted gave importance to was the written word. Therefore, this notion of Jihad with the pen should not be considered lightly. Instead, we must continue to gain knowledge, because "*Knowledge is power, and power produces courage. One who does not have knowledge, gets surprised at a question from the opponent*." [11]

Literature has thus become an active participant in the expansion of the Ahmadiyya Jamaat, as it is the medium through which conception of spiritual truth, reality and peace has been established and continues to do so.

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# Our Jihad As Lajna:
## How Can We Bring About a Revolution in Society as Nation Builders

*Dr Bushra Anas*

In the realm of societal evolution, the role of Ahmadi women emerges as a dynamic force, reminiscent of the biological phenomenon known as binary fission*.[1]

According to my perspective, this process of binary fission is extremely similar to the role of parents in the upbringing of children where the parent cell loses its identity to raise the next generation. The role of mothers is a perfect example to describe this scenario.

Islam, being a proactive and dynamic way of life, has put great emphasis in establishing peace and tranquillity. Islam has empowered woman more than any other religion in the world and has established the rights of women almost 1,400 years ago, based upon their role in society and keeping their best interests at heart. Certainly, the rights afforded by Islam are based on wisdom and human nature.

A woman plays a fundamental and key role when she becomes a mother. Since mothers have a very valued and dignified role in Islam, their contribution is acknowledged and applauded. Once a man asked the Holy Prophet (sa) about the status of mothers to which he replied:

***"Paradise lies under the feet of mothers."***[2]

The first and foremost duty of a mother is to raise and educate her children, whether boys or girls, in a pious manner, so that they grow to excel and become exemplary assets for the whole of mankind. Moreover, it is important to note that Islam does not confine women to the home, nor does it restrict them from fulfilling their potential. Rather, they can pursue their professional aspirations in-line with serving humanity, which is the true essence of Islam. Thus, women who have the capacity to become doctors, teachers or to pursue other professions which are of benefit to humanity are promoted by Islam.

In a world that often measures success by professional achievements, the woman who willingly sacrifices her career to embrace the role of a housewife is a 'silent heroine'

whose contributions deserve profound respect and appreciation. Unfortunately, the term 'housewife' has been burdened with stereotypes and lacks the acknowledgment it truly merits.

For me, as a doctor and a mother of four, the synergy between these two roles has not only been achievable but has also enriched in both aspects of my life. Firstly, the medical profession has provided me with skills and perspectives that enhance my abilities as a mother. The empathy, patience, and communication skills developed through years of patient care are invaluable in fostering a nurturing and understanding environment at home. As a mother, I've learned the importance of patience and understanding, qualities that are paramount in delivering compassionate healthcare. Moreover, the fulfilment derived from both roles contributes to my overall sense of accomplishment and purpose. The challenges of the medical field are met with the joy and fulfilment found in the journey of motherhood, creating a holistic and enriching life experience.

Islam has always championed the rights of women to learning. It is categorically stated that every girl should be provided education and a means to better and improve her living standards. To fulfil this commitment, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has designed and set up multiple programmes and schemes to promote and support the education of women. The prime example is Nusrat Jahan School and College in Rabwah, which served as the headquarters of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, before relocating to London. These centres of learning have proved to be exceptional educational platforms for women who cannot afford to travel to bigger cities to study. These programmes also ensure that women are able to maintain high standards not only in secular knowledge but also in religious teachings. According to recent statistics, the literacy rate of Ahmadi Muslim girls in the developing world is at least 99%, compared to the 46.4%[(3)] the average literacy rate in Pakistan.

Islam has given women true freedom, liberty, and enlightenment. In fact, a prime example of such freedom and independence is the inclusion of women in the structural organisation, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association, or the Lajna Ima'illah. It stands as an organisation crafted by women, for women.

Lajna, representing the female members of a community, embark on a multifaceted Jihad that encompasses education, healthcare, and social upliftment. The organisation has a robust system of planning and implementing the objectives of its formation starting from national, regional, and local levels. Education stands as the cornerstone of societal progress, and Lajna, recognising this, ardently advocate for and engage in educational initiatives. Through *Taleem* and *Tarbiyat* programmes, as well as Quran classes, the primary purpose is to provide spiritual training to Lajna,

especially to mothers. By empowering women with knowledge and skills, Lajna contribute to a more informed and enlightened society, laying the foundation for a prosperous society.

Another cornerstone of our Jihad is community service. Lajna members are at the forefront of initiatives that address societal issues such as poverty, healthcare, and gender equality. Engaging in fundraising initiatives, we channel funds towards charitable causes. Lajna actively donate food items to women's shelters and to the homeless, while also contributing funds to support food banks. The healthcare department provides useful information about health and hygiene and promotes games like volleyball and netball.

Furthermore, Lajna's impact on economic empowerment cannot be overstated. Through skill development programmes and entrepreneurship initiatives, they contribute to the economic growth of the community. As these women become self-reliant, they uplift not only themselves but also the entire nation, creating a ripple effect of progress and prosperity.

As women, it is not only a challenge but also our responsibility to utilise our rights in the most productive manner, as this will unlock the doors to a revolution in society. Ahmadi women, as nation builders, possess the capabilities to revolutionise society. Through education, leadership, community engagement, advocacy for women's rights, cultural diplomacy, entrepreneurship, and mentorship, they contribute to the multifaceted process of building a stronger, more inclusive, and prosperous nation. By embracing these roles, Ahmadi women become key architects of positive change, leaving a legacy that resonates in the collective progress of their society and the nation as a whole.

*In binary fission, the fully-grown parent cell splits into two halves, producing two new daughter cells. An organism duplicates its genetic material, or deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), and then divides into two parts with each new organism receiving one copy of the DNA.

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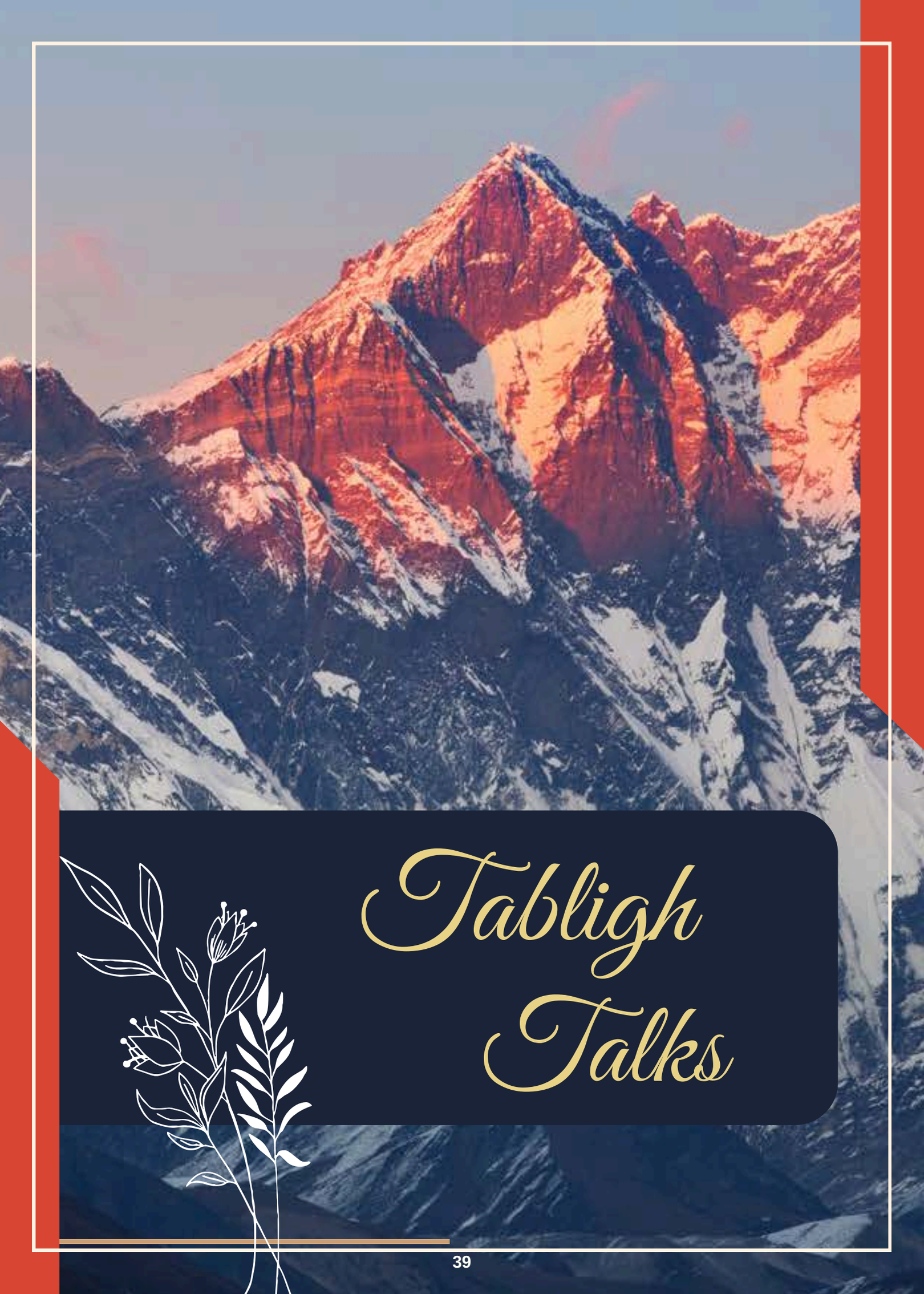


# Tabligh Talks

# "KILL THEM WHEREVER YOU MEET THEM"

(2:192)

*Dr Tallat Farah Ahmed*

In recent times, many have sought to attack and defame Islam and the Holy Quran, and globally many Muslims report feeling disrespected by those in the West. Significant percentages of several Western countries share this sentiment. Those defending Islam attribute the reason for West's perceived threat by Islam to the fact that Islam fulfils the needs of the time and people are turning towards Islam after examining the teachings of the Holy Quran. Although this could explain, to some extent, the hostility towards Islam, a significant contributory factor to criticism of Islam is the extremism and violence perpetrated by Muslims because of the wrong interpretation and misunderstanding of Islamic teachings and Quranic guidance.

The inability to correctly interpret and understand the Quranic teachings has not only led to misguided extremism practised by some Muslims but also given ammunition to those vilifying Islam and The Holy Quran to make misleading accusations that The Holy Quran incites to violence and aggression. Added to this is the lack of true understanding of the textual context of Quran by the supposed Muslim scholars and hence their inability to refute these patently false allegations.

At this perilous time in history, we are guided by the teachings of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi (as) who most vociferously defended the Holy Quran through his writings and discourses. He corrected many misconceptions that had crept into the understanding of the Holy Quran over the centuries. He proved that allegations against The Holy Quran of teaching violence and extremism were not only baseless, but its entirety teaches peaceful coexistence of humanity, freedom of religion, conscience, racial and economic equality and recognises human diversity. Underlying freedom of religion is Islam's guarantee of justice.

The Promised Messiah (as) also established that the concept of Jihad as practised by some in the Islamic world today has no basis in the Holy Quran and neither do any such examples exist in the life of the Holy Prophet of Islam (sa). In fact, the Holy Quran rejects any intimidation and force in matters of religion by pronouncing there should be no compulsion in religion (Quran 2:257).

After the Promised Messiah (as), his successors, the Khulafa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community took up the defence of Islam and The Holy Quran with vigour and tremendous success. Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra), the 2nd successor of Promised Messiah (as) commenting on objections to the Holy Quran said,

**“To criticize is an easy exercise. Those who refuse to accept the truth, limit their attacks to such criticism and never present any solid arguments. They criticise the Holy Quran but never present any other teaching that could be compared to the one in the Holy Qur’an, let alone be superior to it.”**

The divinely inspired commentaries of the Quran by Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) build upon the divinely inspired insights of the Promised Messiah (as) bringing a fresh perspective on Quran’s versatility and meaning and forcefully responding to criticisms against it.

One of the Quranic verses often handpicked by critics of Islam to claim that Islam preaches violence towards non-believers is **“Kill them wherever you meet them”** (2:192). The misleading reference to this verse is quoted out of context, to create a false association between the Holy Quran and bloodshed, and is a gross distortion of the originally intended meaning. This has been vigorously refuted by Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) in his five volume commentary. When the preceding (2:191) and following (2:192) verses are read, it becomes clear that Islam treats war only as a tool of self-defence and as Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) explained that such a war is allowed only against those who first take up arms against Muslims as the words الذين يقاتلونكم (those who fight against you), indicate. Furthermore, he explained that the verse clearly states that Muslims should bring the war to an end as soon as the enemy desists from fighting, for in this case further fighting is not permissible, as the words التعتدوا i.e. **“do not transgress; surely Allah loves not the transgressors”**, clearly prove. What a just and noble teaching and how beautifully expressed.

When verse 2:192 is read with reference to existential, historical, and textual context of preceding verses on Pilgrimage, the obstacles that were being placed in the way of Muslims by disbelievers who were persecuting and oppressing them and even prevented them from approaching their Qiblah in Mecca come to one's mind. The Quran, therefore, naturally turns to the subject of religious wars. The preceding verses contain the gist of the conditions which should regulate a religious war and which were made binding on Muslims. The conditions mentioned were that such a war should only be with the object of removing obstacles placed in the way of God and His religion and is allowed only against those who take up arms against Muslims as the words الذين يقاتلونكم (those who fight against you) indicate. Moreover, women, children and old men, who do not take part in the war against Islam are spared, and the war should be ended as soon as the enemy desists from fighting.

In addition, the verse 2:192 which relates to when a war has started and it is evident that the pronoun "them" clearly refers to those who fight against Muslims, as mentioned in the previous verse and does not apply to all disbelievers, for it only says, **"kill them"** and not **"kill the disbelievers"**. Clearly, the verse calls upon Muslims to fight against only those disbelievers who take up arms against them. This verse certainly does not call upon Muslims to slay every disbeliever indiscriminately. Sadly, the opponents of Islam as well as some of the supposed Islamic scholars have wrongly interpreted this verse to denote random killing of all non-Muslims and this verse affords a remarkable instance of the way in which the plain words of the Quran are generally distorted and misrepresented.

By abandoning any bias and prejudice it will be evident that in verse 2:192 permission to fight those disbelievers is being given who do not desist and who continue to raise arms against Muslims. Further along in this verse (2:192), the clause, persecution is worse than killing, provides an argument in support of defensive war. The Muslims were being persecuted relentlessly by disbelievers to force them to turn away from their faith and to achieve this objective they were also creating disorder in the land. In these circumstances it was wise and certainly well-advised to put a stop to the disorder by fighting against the aggressors rather than allowing disorder to continue and therefore leading to a war.

Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) has also beautifully explained the different connotations of the word **"fitna"** in this verse (2:192). He says,

**"The words فتنة (persecution) and قتل (killing) may be interpreted in another way also. فتنة means, "persecution or war waged against a people with a view to turning them from their faith", and قتل means, "an ordinary secular war". Now the verse points out that a war of religious persecution is worse than an ordinary war; for, firstly, worldly interests are nothing as compared with matters of faith; and secondly, wars caused by religious differences**

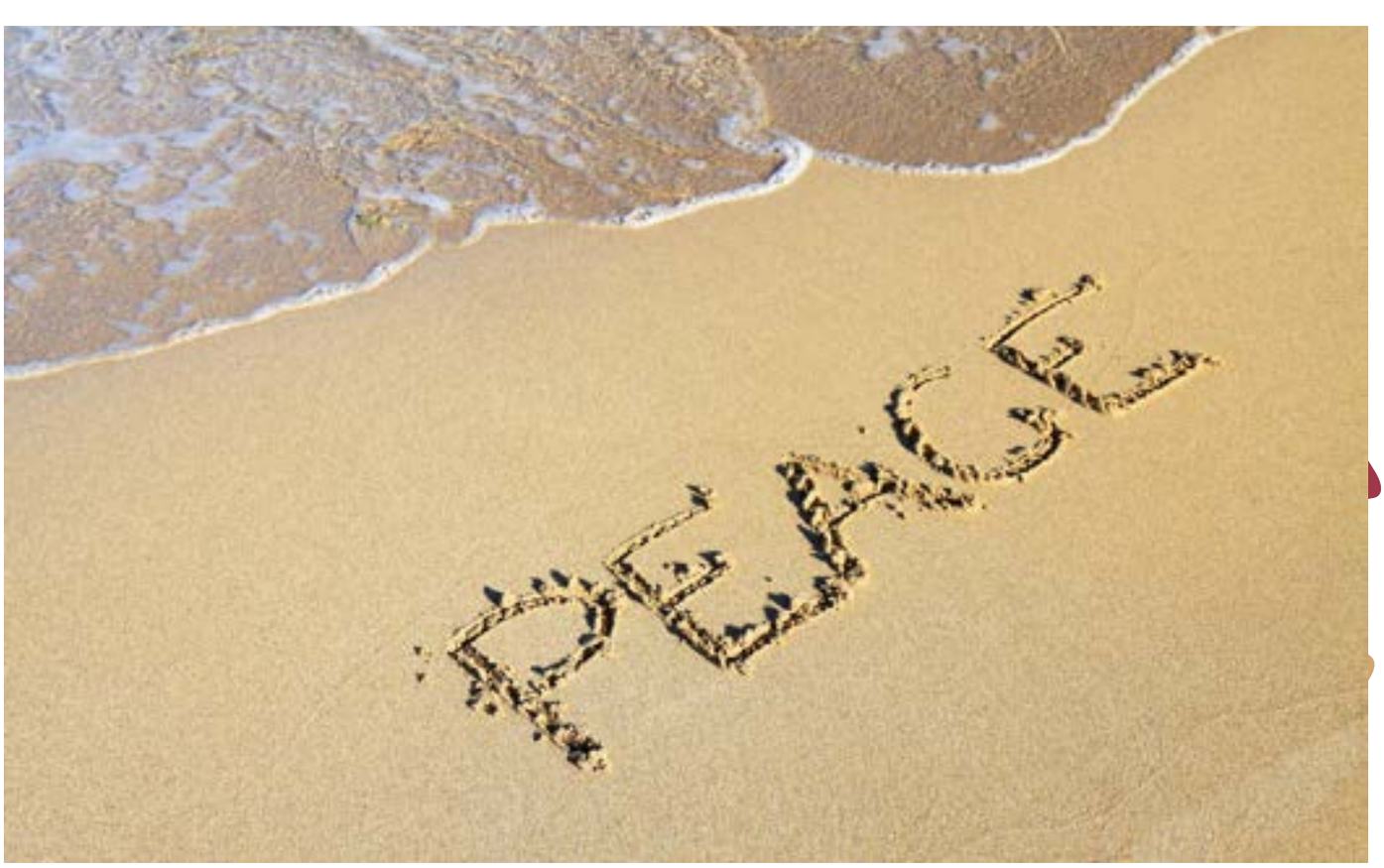
**are more bitter and cruel, and seldom come to an end."**

**(Five Volume Commentary Vol.1 p311)**

Lastly, it is imperative for us to learn and understand the Holy Quran with contextual and historic references to its verses, so that the terrible portrayal of Islam in the West by opponents, and the concept of Jihad that is practised by those in the Islamic world today, which have no basis in the Holy Quran can be refuted and disproved. His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba), Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, in the most decisive terms has obliterated the allegations against the Quran, the Holy Prophet (sa) and Islam through his comprehensive speeches, and challenged the rhetoric of opponents of Islam, reiterating that Quranic teachings are beyond any reproach and that whilst enemies may try their utmost, they can never create its equal.

He also elucidated that Muslims should react to such disdainful enmity by peacefully presenting the beauties of the Holy Quran through their words and deeds, so that the world itself condemns the perpetrators.

Currently, it is the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community that has risen to the challenge of responding to the groundless criticism and rampant attacks against the Holy Quran, through its message of peace and by illuminating the compelling logic and unparalleled wisdom of the true teachings of the Holy Quran. It is imperative that the beauties of the Holy Quran become evident to the world, as this offers the only way forward to the resolution of mankind's problems. As Ahmadi Muslims it is incumbent on us to expound the unrivalled peaceful teachings of the Holy Quran to the world and to remove misconceptions about it, as this is the only guarantee of establishing world peace.



Faith Inspiring

# The Journey from Atheism to Islam Ahmadiyyat

## I NEVER FITTED IN GROWING UP

*Anonymous*

I was perceived as the problem child. Always questioning. Always challenging. I could never just take instructions and conform. It was a frustrating way of life. And in my teenage years I paid a heavy price too, for being the way I was. A punishment I did not deserve but one I endured with grace and dignity.

To disconnect from everyone and everything and follow a path based on what I felt in my heart was the only option I had left in life. So, for years I went through the motion of learning to recite the Quran, without ever understanding what I was reading. I gave up raising my hand to ask questions at the Islamic school a long time ago.

**"How dare she challenge the existence of God?"**

**"How dare she challenge why we do what we do?"**

**"How dare she be disrespectful in class?"**

I was seven years old.

What they failed to see was that I was an inquisitive child, asking valid questions, to help embed what I was being taught. But the constant berating, and the constant threat of going to hell dare I question anything, pushed me away from Allah to the point He was no longer the focal point in my life.

Dare I say I no longer believed in Him.

After all, I did not ask to be born. And if He imposed a way of life that would lead us all to hell over the slightest of errors, then He was not a God I wanted to worship or believe in. And so, a life of simply following my intuition guided me into my forties. I had managed to escape a difficult marriage in that time. I had managed to raise two children by myself. I was holding down a job which helped pay the bills and keep a roof over our heads. I was always arrogant in the knowledge that I was in control of my own destiny.

Until one day, I wasn't.

One winter morning, I could not get out of bed. The fatigue was debilitating. I struggled to keep my eyes open, and I went back to sleep. I slept for six days straight and I was alarmed by the extreme tiredness. After several assessments, including psychological assessments, it was determined I had suffered a nervous breakdown.

Within a couple of weeks of my diagnosis, I had lost all basic functions, including my ability to speak. Mute and scared, I started a journey of healing from all the traumas life had thrown at me, which had started during my childhood right up to just months before my breakdown.

One by one, I had to 'dig up' and 'put to rest' every ghost that had come up to surface at once. It was an immense task, and I often wondered if the depression would prove fatal before I'd had the chance to heal.

It was during my journey of healing that I came across a practising Muslim. They commented on my lovely Islamic nature, and feeling baffled I looked up what that meant. Happy, kind, eagerness to help others, righteous, courageous. I was all these things, and more.

I also came to learn the Quran was revealed over 23 years. Not a matter of weeks as I had always assumed. In that moment I realised I lacked knowledge. Knowledge that I used to seek when I was young, but lost interest in while I was still a little girl. The search of Islamic knowledge, led me to the Ahmadiyya community. The persecution caught my attention.

**“What is it about this community that is such a threat to others?"** I wondered.

It was then that I discovered their principles, their values, and their way of life. I now understood why they were such a target. Afterall, the righteous are a threat to those that love this life and everything worldly. I was in awe of the Ahmadis. Their bravery was spine chilling. In that moment, I wanted to believe in the Almighty. To read of people giving up their lives for the truth, I felt immense gratitude towards them. They paved the way for the rest of us, and I did not want their death to be in vain. For the first time in my life, I was ready to accept the truth.

The very next day, I went to my local mosque to pray namaz as a true believer. And whilst I sat in a state of reflection afterwards, I felt a breeze. Despite all doors and windows being closed, and despite me sat in the far corner of the room, I felt a breeze. It swept down my neck and across my left shoulder.

The incident left me baffled more than anything, and when I retold the event to my sister, she pointed out the angels that sit on our shoulders who list our good deeds and list our bad deeds. It would seem my offer of prayer was sincere. My return to Allah was sincere. For it seems all bad deeds were wiped away, and I was given another chance at life.

I knew then in my heart I was about to embark on a spiritual journey that was going to change me forever, but in what ways it would change me I was not sure of. But a journey I knew I wanted, and needed, to take.

A few weeks later I visited Baitul Futuh, and I instantly fell in love. With the place of worship, with the people. But most of all with Allah Himself. For over forty years I navigated life using just my instinct. But here I did not need to just rely on instinct alone. I had found my people.

And suddenly, I fitted in perfectly.

The warm welcome I received lifted my spirits. The love that was shown to me made me feel wanted. The closeness I felt to Allah took my breath away. The decision to convert was an easy decision for me that day. In the absence of guidance in my life, for the first time I felt guided.

My instinct led me to Ahmadiyya. My belief in Allah that day was unwavering. I felt invincible. I felt protected. I felt loved. Allah did love me after all, because all my sufferings and hardships were leading me to Him.

And here I was. Armoured with my faith, I fought the disease that had consumed every aspect of my life. Bit by bit I reclaimed every aspect of my life, and within four months,

I was back on my feet. With the help of my faith, I came to terms with my past. With the help of my faith, I forgave those that had hurt me. With the help of my faith, I had clarity on where I wanted to go in life.

My faith healed me. Re-connecting with Allah completed me. And becoming an Ahmadi gave me a family, a sense of belonging. In June, I took part in the New Ahmadi retreat. The following month, I took my Bai'at, and I have attended several events since, including meeting Apa Jan.

l am focused on increasing my knowledge and strengthening my Iman and to offer my daily prayers on time. I am focused on building relationships with my Ahmadi sisters, participating in regular meetings, and contribute towards our community, both financially and physically.

I also pray that I get to meet Huzoor (aba) one day, Insh'Allah. Little does he know how Ahmadiyya has had such a profound effect on me.

I am looking forward to a life with meaning and direction. And I thank Allah for all His blessings and all His grace. And I thank Allah for protecting me, always.

I was never in control of my own destiny. My path had already been written. And in that knowledge, I rest easy, knowing what will be, will be.

PSYCHOLOGY CORNER

# Anger Management

*Dr Shahnaz Ahmad*

**The Holy Quran states: "Those who spend in prosperity and adversity, and those who suppress anger and pardon men; and Allah loves those who do good" (Aal-e-`Imran: 135)**

Anger is an emotion that stems from feeling undermined, hurt, demeaned or unfairly dealt with, which may then make you want to get back at the person, be unpleasant towards them, or hurt them back.

Everyone gets angry at times. You might find yourself being angry in response to a delayed flight, a political event or in disagreement with another person. While anger is a normal human emotion, misplaced or uncontrolled expression of anger can be problematic.

Uncontrolled anger looks different from person to person. Some people are quietly seething in response while others cannot help but continue to dwell on events that made them angry. Yet others have quick tempers and may exhibit aggressive or violent behaviour.

Nevertheless, uncontrolled anger can be very dysfunctional, and people who experience it often don't realize how it may be affecting them or their relationship with others.

People often fail to see the long-term consequences of uncontrolled anger. These consequences can include health effects such as raised blood pressure and increased risk of heart disease, as well as social disharmony among family members, friends, and co-workers.

**Anger in children**

Anger can lead to behavioural problems in children of all ages. The signs to look out for are: if the child continues to behave badly for long periods like days or weeks, is repeatedly being disobedient, cheeky or aggressive, if their behaviour is out of the ordinary, and consistently breaks the rules accepted in their home and school. These signs are likely to reflect more than ordinary mischief or adolescent rebelliousness. This sort of behaviour can

affect a child's development and can interfere with their ability to lead a normal life.

In younger children where the disruptive and aggressive behaviours are regularly happening within the family home, they may be diagnosed as having **'oppositional defiant disorder'**. When behaviour is significantly and consistently affected through the growing up years, it is usually called a **'conduct disorder'**. Children with a conduct disorder may get involved in more violent physical fights, and may steal or lie, without any sign of remorse or guilt when they are found out. They refuse to follow rules and may start to break the law. They may start to stay out all night and play truant from school during the day. Teenagers with conduct disorder may also take risks with their health and safety by taking illegal drugs.

Wisdom requires exercise of anger management while parenting the children. At times, parenting can become stressful and frustrating, situations can easily spin out of control if not handled with patience. At such times, we need to swallow our pride, exercise self-control, and refrain from threats and verbal or physical abuse of children.

The Promised Messiah (as) said:
"***An individual with self-respect and self-control, who is also forbearing and dignified, has the right to correct a child to a certain extent or guide the child. But a wrathful and hot-headed person who is easily provoked is not fit to be a guardian of children.***"

(Malfuzat, vol. 2, p. 4)

Regarding the corporal punishment, the Promised Messiah (as) said:

"***Beating of children is an act which can be termed as a sort of polytheism (shirk). It means that the ill-tempered person makes himself a partner of God in giving guidance and sustaining the creatures. I wish that, instead of punishing children, parents would resort to prayer, and would make it a habit to supplicate earnestly for their children as the supplications of the parents for their children are particularly accepted by God.***"

The Promised Messiah (as) said:
"***I pray for my children and require them to follow a broad set of rules of behaviour and no more. Beyond this I put my full trust in Allah Almighty with the confidence that the seed of good fortune inherent in each of them will flourish at its proper time.***"

(Malfuzat, vol. 2, p. 4-5)

## Anger in adults

For adults, the following are some of the signs that should alert us that we may have an anger problem:

- You feel angry a lot of the time.
- You're nursing a grudge or thinking about getting revenge.
- You have been or think about being aggressive or violent when angry.
- Your friends or family members have said they think you have an anger problem or have distanced themselves from you because of your angry behaviour.
- You have regular strong disagreements with your colleagues.

- There are households or establishments where you're no longer welcome because of your history of anger outbursts.

**Clinical interventions**

Several research studies have explored the effectiveness of therapies for treating anger. Several large analyses of the published research suggest that approximately 75% of people receiving anger management therapy improved as a result.

Most of the research on anger treatment has focused on cognitive-behaviour therapy (CBT). In CBT, patients learn to identify unhelpful or negative thought patterns and change inaccurate beliefs. We can learn to employ these techniques with the help of a family member or friend, by helping us identify our negative thoughts and then working on replacing these negative thoughts with alternatives that are positive and more constructive and consequently prevent us from becoming angry.

One CBT-based anger treatment is known as Stress Inoculation. This method involves role-play, exposing the person to imaginary incidents that would provoke anger, providing opportunities to self-monitor their anger and practise coping methods. This is best practised in an organised therapeutic setting, although with some careful planning a family can organise such role play between themselves.

Though there has been less research on other methods for treating anger, several appear to show promise. These include:

- **Family therapy** helps family members resolve conflict and improve communication. It may be helpful in addressing anger problems directed at a spouse and/or children/parents. In hospitals, this is usually facilitated by a trained family therapist, in an informal setting this technique can be employed by a family creating a protected communication time between themselves, openly but calmly discussing major disagreements, and recognising how it may be better to resolve the disagreements rather than showing reactionary angry behaviour. With some practice, this task that can initially feel quite challenging, can become easier for the families.

- **Psychodynamic therapy** is an approach in which therapists help people use self-reflection to focus on

the psychological roots of their emotional problems including anger. Even though psychodynamic therapy usually requires facilitation from a trained therapist, Islamic principles of self-reflection and self-discipline, in other words Jihad-e-Akbar, can be very useful in this respect.

**Ten self-help strategies for anger management:**

1. **Think before you speak -** In the heat of the moment, it's easy to say something you'll later regret. Take a few moments to collect your thoughts before saying anything. Also allow others involved in the situation to do the same.
2. **Once you're calm, express your concerns -** As soon as you're thinking clearly, express your frustration in an assertive but non-confrontational way. State your concerns clearly and directly, without hurting others or trying to control them.
3. **Get some exercise -** Physical activity has shown in scientific studies to help reduce mental stress thus preventing one from becoming angry. If you feel your anger escalating, go for a brisk walk or run. Or spend some time doing other enjoyable physical activities.
4. **Take a timeout -** Timeouts aren't just for kids. Give yourself short breaks during times of the day that tend to be stressful. A few moments of quiet time might help you feel better prepared to handle what's ahead without getting irritated or angry.
5. **Identify possible solutions -** Instead of focusing on what is making you angry, focus on resolving the issue at hand. Is it your child's untidy room making you upset? Close the door. Is your husband usually late for dinner from work? Schedule meals later in the evening or agree to eat on your own a few times a week. Also, understand that some things are simply out of your control. Try to be realistic about what you can and cannot change. Remind yourself that anger won't fix anything and might only make things worse.
6. **Stick with 'I' statements -** Criticising or placing blame might only increase tension. Instead, use "I" statements to describe the problem. Be respectful and specific. For example, say, "I'm upset that you left the table without offering to help with the dishes" instead of "You never do any housework."
7. **Don't hold a grudge -** Forgiveness is a powerful tool. If you allow anger and other negative feelings to crowd out positive feelings, you might find yourself swallowed up by your own bitterness or sense of injustice. Forgiving someone who angered you might help you both learn from the situation and may also strengthen your relationship.
8. **Use humour to release tension -** Lightening up can help diffuse tension. Use humour to help you face what's making you angry and any unrealistic expectations you have for how things should go. Avoid sarcasm, as it can hurt feelings and make things worse.

9 **Practice relaxation skills -** When you realise you are losing your temper, start using relaxation skills. Practice deep-breathing exercises, imagine a relaxing scene, or repeat a calming word or phrase, such as "Take it easy." You might also listen to music, write about your feelings in a notebook or do a few yoga exercises — whatever it takes to make you feel relaxed.

10. **Know when to seek help -** Learning to control anger can be a challenge. Seek help for anger issues if your anger seems to repeatedly go out of control, causes you to do things you regret, or hurts those around you.

The following are some quotes about anger management from an Islamic perspective, taken from the Friday sermons and speeches of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba):

**31 Dec 2004**

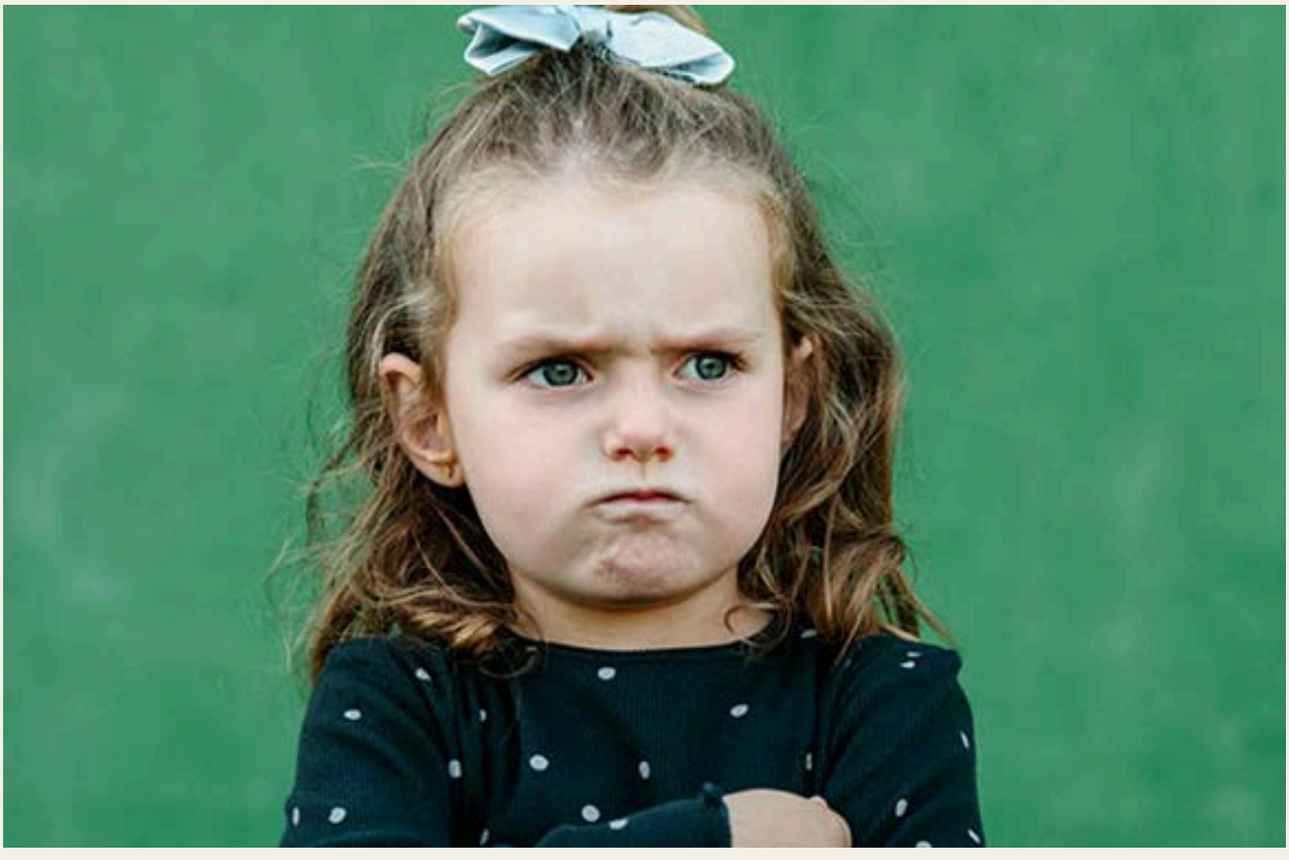
The officeholders have an immense responsibility towards the Community in general. They ought to consider themselves foremost in adapting the Quranic injunction of suppressing anger and pardoning others (3:135). They need to inculcate absolute humility and not show any sign of irritability or arrogance, reforming others through counsel.

**1 June 2012**

The Promised Messiah (as) said that repressing anger was the height of valour and the Holy Prophet (sa) said that a champion is one who controls his temper at times of anger. Indeed, one can only be just and fair if one can control one's temper.

**12 April 2013**

A special quality of officeholders is that they should be able to control their anger



Sometimes annoyance must be expressed for reformation in Jamaat matters, but officeholders should be able to suppress anger.

**10 October 2014**

Huzoor (aba) said: The Promised Messiah (as) said that excessive anger leads one to lose their faith. He also said that the beauty of Islam is in high morals, suppressing needless anger, and promoting forgiveness.

Owing to their nature some people do get inflamed easily. However, if they show remorse and redress the hurt they have caused, then God states the door to repentance is always open. God gives hope of forgiveness to those who may have shown anger under the influence of some passion but are later mortified and try and redress the situation. As for those who are not embarrassed and regretful even after coming to their senses, none of their excuses will work before God. Huzoor (aba) said we need to self-reflect a lot. It is human nature to feel anger at times, but God has commanded true believers to keep their emotions in check.

The Promised Messiah (as) said: 'Remember wisdom and anger completely repel each other. And whoever is patient and displays a model of even-mindedness is given a light which freshly illuminates his senses and then light goes on to create light. Since anger and fury darkens the heart and the mind, darkness goes on to create further darkness!' He also said: 'Remember a person who is harsh and is short-tempered can never utter words of wisdom and discernment. The heart which leaps into fury and is enraged when faced with opposing side is deprived of wisdom. And the mouth that recklessly utters foulness is deprived of perspicacity. Anger and wisdom do not go together. A short-tempered person is foolish and dull of perception. He does not ever triumph in any field. Anger is half frenzy and when it flares up it can turn into proper frenzy.'

Huzoor (aba) said the sphere of the forgiveness of the Muhammadan Messiah is worldwide and thus we too need to widen our scope of compassion. If we wish to utter words of wisdom and discernment and take the mission of the Promised Messiah (as) forward, we need to shun harshness and anger in our daily life. Anger should only be channelled properly for reformation and not pushed to a state of frenzy. Reckless anger and fury lead to a frenzied state and moderation is required to control emotions.

**MKA Ijtema address 2009**

His Holiness (aba) observed that young people often have problems with anger management, and this is reflected in their behaviour not only with the outside world but also with their wives and children. He said that if a Muslim truly believed in God, then he should treat others with respect and tolerance because in fact those qualities form part of a belief in God.

**Virtual Mulaqat Finland Khuddam and Atfal, 10 Feb 2023**

One of the Khuddam asked His Holiness (aba) how to control one's anger. Huzoor (aba) replied: "The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) has said that if you feel angry then sit down

and if your anger persists, then lie down and wash your face with cool water. So, when you are angry, repent and drink cool water and according to the saying of the Holy Prophet (sa), sit down rather than being fiery and emotional, so that your anger may subside. Other than that, there are occasions where a person becomes cross at someone, and their anger is justified. However, even then a person should not lose control of his senses. That anger which is justified should only ever be exhibited for the sake of reforming someone and it should soon subside and should not be kept in one's heart. It should not be that it becomes a habit and that you become irritated at even small things so that other people feel tense around you and want to avoid your company."

**Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) excelled most people in her personal strength of self-control and forbearance.**

Hazrat Amman Jan's (ra) never admonished anyone or got angry with them. If she needed to say anything she would say it with great wisdom. In the house with servants, other ladies... if ever any unpleasant incident occurred, she would patiently overlook the episode.

Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) guided the Lajna never to argue with one's husband whilst he is in an angry mood. Even if one's opinions/actions are justified, a dignified wife will express this after her husband's rage has subsided. This leads to a more harmonious household and wins the pleasure of Allah Almighty. She further said, never be disrespectful or abusive to people that are in one's employment.

Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) guided her eldest daughter that she should always wish good for others and never harbour a grudge or take revenge, even if ill-treated. She reassured her that on such people Allah Almighty bestows goodness Himself.

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# Health Matters

## 'Fasting Till Fit and Fresh: How Ramadan Can Unlock Your Potential'

*Review of Religions*

Ramadan is a month of reflection, prayer, and fasting for Muslims all over the world. As a parent, I was recently asked by my son if there are any health benefits alongside the spiritual benefits of Ramadan fasting. Intrigued by his question, I searched for scientific evidence to support this claim. I was amazed to discover that there's a growing body of research on the health benefits of fasting beyond religious practice.

In this article, I will explore scientific studies that provide evidence for fasting's health benefits and discuss how you can apply these findings beyond the month of Ramadan to improve your health and wellness.

So, whether you're a Muslim observing Ramadan, or someone interested in exploring the benefits of fasting, read on to learn more about the surprising boosts to your health that fasting can bring.

**Weight Loss and Improved Metabolic Health**

Several studies have shown that fasting can lead to weight loss and improve metabolic health. A randomised controlled trial conducted by Krista A. Varady et al. found that alternate day fasting (ADF) resulted in significant weight loss and improved metabolic markers in non-obese adults. A review article by Rafael de Cabo and Mark P. Mattson, neuroscientists at the National Institute on Aging and Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, summarised the evidence supporting the health benefits of intermittent fasting, including improved glucose regulation and reduced inflammation.

Similarly, a study conducted by the Imperial College London Diabetes Centre (ICLDC) and published in the journal Nutrients examined the effects of fasting during Ramadan on energy metabolism and overall health. The study suggests that time-restricted feeding during Ramadan, when carried out mindfully with attention paid to food type, quantity, and physical activity levels, may offer potential health benefits such as weight reduction.

In summary, research suggests that fasting in various forms has the potential to reduce body weight (3-7% on average), body fat (3-5.5 kg on average), total cholesterol (10-21%), and triglycerides (14-42%) in individuals across a range of weight categories, including normal-weight, overweight, and obese.

**Protection Against Age-Related Diseases**

Fasting has also been shown to protect against age-related diseases. In a study conducted by Sebastian Brandhorst et al., a fasting-mimicking diet (FMD) improved markers of ageing, diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular disease risk in healthy humans. Research published in journal Nature Aging by Longo et al., summarised the evidence supporting the protective effects of intermittent fasting against age-related diseases. A small study suggests that prolonged fasting (PF) may help reduce some of the negative effects that chemotherapy can have on the human body.

Shutterstock

# Extract of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra): the Spiritual Benefits of Ramadan.

AL FAZL, 8 JULY 1949

The Holy Quran has presented the following wisdom behind fasting:

## 1. Remembrance of Allah

لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللّٰهَ عَلٰى مَا هَدٰكُمْ

"That you may exalt Allah for His having guided you."
(Surah al-Baqarah, Ch.2: V.186)

This means that one of the benefits of [fasting] is that you will definitely be able to remember Allah the Almighty in these days because neither will you be occupied by eating and drinking all day long, nor you will be distracted by constant work.

## 2. Being grateful

لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ

"That you might be grateful."
(Surah al-Baqarah, Ch.2: V.186)

The second benefit is that by feeling the pain of hunger in this way [by fasting], a strong sense of gratitude will be produced in your heart. This is because humans naturally do not value a blessing as long as they have it. Its value is felt when it is taken from you.

Many people with eyes never think that eyes are a great blessing, but when one goes blind, they understand the real worth of eyes that they are a great blessing from Allah the Almighty.

In the same way, when a person remains hungry during fasting and feels the pangs of hunger, they realise what comforts God has given them and that they should spend their comfortable lives doing good and beneficial works and not in vain and useless practices.

لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ

"That you may become righteous."
(Surah al-Baqarah, Ch.2: V.184)

The word تَتَّقُوْنَ has been used in the Holy Quran to give three meanings. Firstly, in the sense of evading melancholies. Secondly, in the sense of saving oneself from sin and thirdly, in the sense of attaining higher levels of spirituality. Hence, through this word, Allah the Almighty has described three wisdoms of fasting.

## 3. The spirit of helping the poor

The first wisdom is that a person is saved from suffering through fasting. It seems surprising that fasting saves one from suffering because a person undergoes even more pain by fasting. However, when pondering over this fact, we come to know that fasting actually teaches a person two lessons that protects him nationally.

The first lesson is that rich people who eat the best food throughout the year do not even realise the sufferings of their poor brothers who go through starvation. They have never felt the suffering of hunger nor can they estimate the severity of starvation. However, under the commandment of Islam, highly affluent people have to fast and then they recognise the pain of hunger and accurately assess the condition of their poor brothers and their sympathy is aroused in their hearts. This results in the progress and protection of the nation and the safety of the nation is in fact the welfare of every individual.

## 4. The practice of bearing hardships

Also, Islam does not want people to be lazy, careless and not to possess the habit of enduring hardships, but it wants them to be able to bear all kinds of difficulties in times of need. Every year, fasting produces this strength in Muslims and those who obey this command will never perish by indulging in luxury and laxity.

## 5. Protection from sins

The second matter that fasting saves man from sins is established from the fact that sin is in reality the inclination towards material pleasures, and it is observed naturally that when a person develops a habit, they cannot give it up. However, when they find the strength to leave it at their own will, then that desire does not overwhelm them. When a person, for the sake of God, gives up all the pleasures that sometimes lead them to sin and make a habit of controlling their inner self for an entire month, the inevitable result of this practice is that they can easily overcome those evils which lead them to sin.

## 6. The strength of beseeching prayers and their impact

Fasting helps to establish piety in such a way that in the days [of Ramadan], since one has to get up at night to eat, they get an opportunity to do more ibadat [worship] and say a lot of prayers.

Secondly, when a person gives up his comfort for God Almighty, then Allah draws them to Himself and strengthens their soul.

(Compiled by Abdul Hameed Asif Sahib. Translated by Al Hakam from the original Urdu in the 8 July 1949 issue of Al Fazl)

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# Book Recommendation

## Hazrat Umme Ummaarah (ra)
by Nafisa Bashir

The Holy Prophet (sa) was bestowed with extremely devoted, selfless and passionate companions. They assisted their Master Muhammad (sa), defended him, protected him, followed him and above all loved him unconditionally. One such companion was Hazrat Umme Ummaarah (ra) who became the symbol of bravery and heroism for the generations to come.

This book is an attempt to commemorate the life of one of the bravest ladies in Islam. Hazrat Umme Ummaarah (ra) is known for protecting Prophet Muhammad (sa) in the Battle of Uhud and was immensely praised by the Holy Prophet (sa) for her unparalleled valour. She fought in all battles in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (sa). After his death she took part in the battle of Yamama against the false claimant of prophethood. May Allah raise her status in Heaven, Ameen.

**Anon, (n.d.). Hazrat Umme Ummaarah. [online] Available at: https://www.alislam.org/book/hazrat-umme-ummaarah/**

# Imaan Stories

## Short Stories with Islamic Morals

# Control Your Temper (Anger)

There once was a little boy who had a very bad temper. His father decided to hand him a bag of nails and said that every time the boy lost his temper, he had to hammer a nail into the fence.

On the first day, the boy hammered 37 nails into that fence.

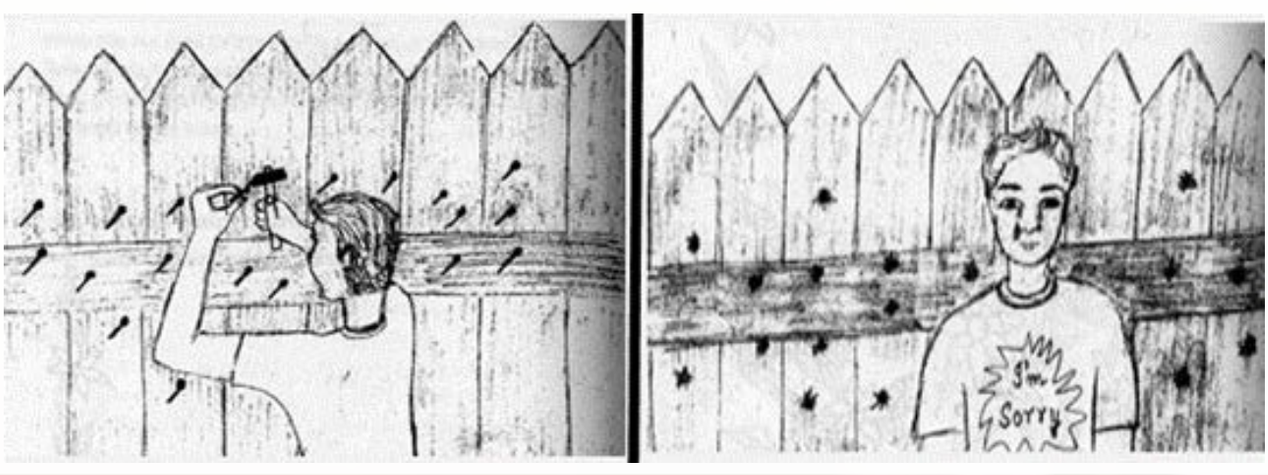
The boy gradually began to control his temper over the next few weeks, and the number of nails he was hammering into the fence slowly decreased.

He discovered it was easier to control his temper than to hammer those nails into the fence.

Finally, the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father the news, and the father suggested that the boy should now pull out a nail every day he kept his temper under control.

The days passed, and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone. The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence.

The father said: "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say 'I'm sorry', the wound is still there."



# Moral of the story

**Control your anger, and don't say things to people in the heat of the moment, that you may regret.**

The Holy Quran teaches us that Allah loves those who suppress their anger and seek Allah's protection from it. In Chapter 3, verses 135-136 Allah says:

**"Those who spend in prosperity and adversity, and those who suppress anger and pardon men; and Allah loves those who do good.**

**And those who, when they commit a foul deed or wrong themselves, remember Allah and implore forgiveness for their sins — and who can forgive sins except Allah? — and do not persist knowingly in what they have done."**

Hence, once should always strive to suppress anger and shun arrogance. This verse comes as a gentle reminder that although Allah may accept our shortcomings and forgive us for our sins when we ask for repentance, He does not like when we persist in the sin.

# Lajna and Nasirat National Volleyball and Netball Tournament Report

Supporting yells, hopeful cheers, chants of encouragement and the thumping of volleyballs are just a few of the many sounds you would have heard echoing throughout the Baitul Futuh Mosque on the 17th of February.

These resonant sounds cannot be classified as just a soundtrack to Lajna members playing a game of volleyball; rather they present themselves as an exhibition of teamwork, camaraderie, and undeniable perseverance; all through the efforts of Lajna Ima'illah UK.

This year, by the Grace of Allah the Almighty, Lajna Ima'illah UK were granted the privilege of holding the 2024 National Volleyball Tournament. In previous years, Lajna Ima'illah UK have been hosts to the International and European Volleyball Tournaments, however, this time, the game was brought closer to home.

The competing teams were divided region by region, with a place on the team only being allocated following a chain of trying practices and try outs. These had been taking place for weeks prior to the tournament in halls and spaces local to each region. A total of 11 teams were created and took part in the tournament, these are as follows: Ayesha, Baitul Futuh, Baitun Noor, East, Islamabad, London, Middlesex, Midlands, North East, North West, and South region.

The matchday begun with all players stood lined up in their respective teams which followed a recitation of the Holy Quran and a taking of the pledge, conducted by National Sadr Sahiba UK. Proceeding this, the rules and regulations of the game were shared, along with other housekeeping announcements. Finally, National Sadr Sahiba UK led all members into a silent prayer which initiated the gameplay.

The first four teams to play (Baitun Noor, North East, Midlands and Middlesex) were given the opportunity to warm up before representing their regions. Spectators made their way to Court A in support of Baitun Noor versus North East, and Court B to observe Midlands versus Middlesex.

The squeaking of eager shoes marking their positions on the court, paired with a deafening thump of a volleyball against a well-trained hand, marked the beginning of the tournament. Both teams battled through an intense engagement, heartily setting the tone for the remainder of the day. By the end of both matches, Baitun Noor had secured a 2:0 win, and so too did Middlesex.

The second game speedily came into frame with Court A accommodating Ayesha versus South region, and Court B hosting Baitul Futuh versus East region. By this point, the game energy had spread, and the crowd lulled loudly in support of their teams. A special mention should also be appointed to the referees of the game who were able to provide an accurate and fair outcome of each game, and for those games mentioned above the outcomes are as follows: 2:0 was awarded to both Ayesha and Baitul Futuh region.

The final set of qualifying games were swiftly called onto the court with North West contending against Islamabad region on Court A, and Middlesex playing their second game of the day against London region on Court B. On this occasion, it was recorded that both Islamabad and London regions surfaced victorious with an identical score of 2:0.

This marked the end of all qualifying matches. All teams were given regular breaks before and after matches, and slots had been allocated for Namaz and lunch breaks. It should also be highlighted that accommodation had been prepared for those regions who had travelled from afar.

All qualified teams (London, Baitun Noor, Ayesha, and Baitul Futuh) took their final group huddles, discussed their final team tactics, and shared some final words of encouragement before the semi-finals began.

The first semi-final match, welcomed onto the court London region and Baitun Noor region for a place in the finals, with London region coming out on top. The second, and last, semi-final match introduced the Ayesha region and Baitul Futuh teams to each other for the first time that day- however Ayesha region impressively took the win.

The 11 teams had now been narrowed down to two: Ayesha region and London region, and the finals of the Lajna Ima'illah National Volleyball Tournament UK was merely a whistle blow away. After a valiant effort from both teams, an astounding display of support from the crowds, and a thoughtful assessment from the referees, Ayesha region was declared the winner of Lajna Ima'illah National Volleyball Tournament UK 2024. Mash'Allah!

Of course, a match for third place was also called for between Baitun Noor and Baitul Futuh, and for this, Baitul Futuh emerged successful.

Yet, as is the beauty of our community, no grudges nor any dislike was held against any of the players, and all teams came together to celebrate this eventful display of performance and co-operation. A prize ceremony was also held at the end of the tournament to further reinforce this and celebrate the meaningful efforts of all players, duty holders, and spectators who participated in this year's tournament.

By now, the supporting yells had turned into heartfelt congratulations, the hopeful cheers now consisted of thoughtful reflections of the day, chants of encouragement transformed into goodbyes between distant regions, and the thumping of volleyballs had become silent, all packed away and ready for next year's tournament; Insh'Allah.

# National Taleem and Tarbiyat Class
## – London Regions

*Presented is a transcript of the speed delivered by respected National Sadr Lajna, UK.*

***My dear Sisters and Nasirat,***

*Assalamo alaikum*

What I am going to talk about this afternoon is something that is fundamental to our practise of Islam, and so has been mentioned in some of the previous sessions. I'm going to talk about *Taqwa* or in English, righteousness. In the Holy Quran more emphasis has been laid on virtue and righteousness than on any other commandment. And as we heard yesterday there are 700 commandments in the Holy Quran. A simple search on the Open Quran website returned 272 appearances of the word *Taqwa* or righteousness.

The Quran emphasises righteousness as the best provision for a Muslim, as mentioned in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:198).

> **"(...) And whatever good you do, Allah knows it. And furnish yourselves with *necessary* provisions, and surely, the best provision is righteousness. And fear Me *alone*, O men of understanding."**

The term *Taqwa* is often translated as God-consciousness or fear of God. The fear of Allah is not about living in constant dread but a fear of losing the love of God. Yesterday's session explained this beautifully. This fear becomes a driving force behind righteous actions, as a person does everything in their power to please and obey Allah in every aspect of life.

Once the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) explained *Taqwa* with simple imagery. He said: "A man, who is passing through a thick forest of thorny bushes, tries to protect himself from the thorns all around him. He endeavours to keep off the thorny bushes from him. Sometimes, he moves to this side and sometimes to the other to guard himself from the probable injury that he might otherwise suffer from the thorns. This action and carefulness on the part of this man in the thorny forest to protect himself from the thorny bushes and trees is *Taqwa*...."

This explanation of *Taqwa* can really help us understand the concept of *Taqwa*, it means that we stay alert to the dangers present in everyday life. There are thorns on the path through life, things out there to try to hold us back when we're not concentrating, things that will hurt us if we're not conscious and careful. So *Taqwa* is a way of life, an approach to every aspect of daily life, the foremost concern in every action or decision we make.

In that internal dialogue we have, the constant calibration of our choices, shall I do this or that? Is this a good idea? Should I take this course of action?

Everyday we are trying to avoid being caught up in the thorns of sin, or even minor behaviours which do not help to beautify our soul such as rudeness and incivility, impatience, misplaced anger towards our families.

While fear can be associated with negative emotions and stress, it can, in certain situations, serve as a performance enhancer, and make us do better. This is particularly true when fear is moderate and serves as a motivating force rather than an overwhelming obstacle. An influential study conducted a hundred years ago by two Harvard psychologists, demonstrated that moderate levels of anxiety improve performance. So this shows that some fear can help motivate us to do better.

There are two types of motivators: internal and external. Internal motivation, or intrinsic motivation, stems from personal desires, values, and internal rewards. It's when you do something because you find it inherently fulfilling, enjoyable, or aligned with your goals and values.

External motivation comes from outside influences and involves seeking rewards, recognition, or avoiding punishments. This could be anything from praise, good grades, or even material rewards like money or gifts.

The writings of the Promised Messiah(as) addresses both external and intrinsic reward when developing the love of God, I quote something from Malfuzat. He says:

> ***'In order to become a true believer it is necessary to develop such a nature where love and obedience to God is not based on hope and fear of some reward or punishment. Rather, it should be an innate part of his character. Then this love will itself form a paradise, and this in reality is the true paradise, otherwise none can enter heaven until he adopts this way. This is why I say to you, i.e. those who associate yourselves with me, to tread this path as it is the true path to paradise."***
>
> *(Malfuzat, Vol. III, pp. 181-183, 1985 UK).*

*Taqwa* has been compared to material objects to help us understand it and its importance, for example:

*Taqwa* is said to be like a shield, a protection against the evil in this world against moral and spiritual dangers. *Taqwa*, can also be considered as a form of spiritual immunization, it helps believers guard themselves against the challenges and temptations that may come their way in the future. It's a constant awareness of God's presence in our lives.

Taqwa has also been likened to clothing, as you can read here in Chapter 7, verse 27 of the Holy Quran:

> **"O children of Adam! We have indeed sent down to you raiment to cover your shame, and to be an elegant dress; but the raiment of righteousness — that is the best. That is *one* of the Signs of Allah, that they may remember."**

The reference to clothes providing protection is metaphorical and is often used in religious and spiritual contexts. Clothes protect you from the external environment, from the cold, from the rain, from the scorching heat. Clothing provides a barrier against contaminants, dirt, and pollutants. Clothes contribute to personal hygiene and preventing the transfer of harmful substances to the body. Clothes can be flattering, provide decoration, even hide small imperfections.

The Promised Messiah (as) wrote:

> **"... righteousness bestows the strength to resist all vice and urges progress towards all good. Righteousness is in all circumstances a charm that guarantees security and is a citadel for safeguarding against all harm. A righteous person can avoid many vain and harmful contentions that often lead other people to ruin."**

(Ayyam-us-Sulh, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 14, p. 342)

So the question becomes How do we develop *Taqwa*/ righteousness/fear of losing the love of God? The Holy Quran 2:178 states:

> **"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East or the West, but *truly* righteous is he who believes in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets, and spends his money for love of Him, on the kindred and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and those who ask *for charity*, and for *ransoming* the captives; and who observes Prayer and pays the Zakat; and those who fulfil their promise when they have made one, and the patient in poverty and afflictions and *the steadfast* in time of war; it is these who have proved truthful and it is these who are the God-fearing."**

It is a beautiful reminder that righteousness goes beyond mere rituals. True righteousness lies in sincere faith, belief in the Hereafter, and a commitment to the fundamental tenets of Islam with a significant emphasis on a person's responsibilities to every member of society. It's a holistic way of life.

True belief and faith in God is not just something that you develop in adulthood, even for you Nasirat the development starts from now, your understanding of faith and understanding of God. Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) said that he was 11 when he started to think about why he believed in God and when he was reassured of the existence of God after thinking on the subject he experienced a moment of immense joy, an hour of great happiness. He said: "Just as a child is delighted to find its mother, I was overjoyed to discover my Creator. My faith, which was based only on things that I had heard, transformed to faith that was understood."
The Promised Messiah (as) says:

> ***The spiritual beauty of man is to walk along all the finer ways of righteousness. They are the attractive features of spiritual beauty. It is obvious that to be mindful of the trusts of God Almighty, and to fulfil all the covenants of faith, and to employ all faculties and limbs, both overt, like eyes and ears and hands and feet and others like them, and those that are covert, like the mind and other faculties and qualities, on their proper occasions and to restrain them from coming into action on improper occasions, and to be warned against the subtle attacks of vice and to be mindful of the rights of one's fellow beings, is the way of perfecting one's spiritual beauty.***
>
> (Brahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Part V, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 21, pp. 209-210)

One is naturally attracted to apparent worldly desires, whereas the fruits of spirituality are hidden. The Promised Messiah (as) urged the community to extinguish any love for worldly desires, and work towards attaining righteousness, just as children practise writing. First, they write crooked but keep practising and eventually their writing becomes neat and clear. So too should one strive in improving in righteousness. When Allah sees that effort is being made in this regard, He then makes them fruitful. Then do one's desires subside, like the throwing of water upon a fire.

Once on the path of righteousness, an individual gains a sense of spiritual fulfilment and contentment. As the individual experiences the rewards of living in accordance with Taqwa, there's a natural inclination to continue on this path. The positive reinforcement of spiritual well-being encourages further acts of worship, ethical behaviour, and seeking the pleasure of Allah.

The Promised Messiah (as) has said, 'To become truly righteous it is necessary that a person abandoning utterly such outstanding vices as adultery, theft, trespass, hypocrisy, self-esteem, scorn of fellow beings, miserliness, should eschew all low morals and should make progress in high moral values. He should behave towards his fellow beings with politeness, courtesy and sympathy and should cultivate true fidelity and sincerity towards God Almighty. He should constantly seek occasions of beneficent service. He who combines all these qualities in himself is alone righteous. The possession of any one of these qualities would not entitle a person to be accounted righteous unless he possesses collectively all of them.

It is only these concerning whom it is said:

وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾

And no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.
(Chap 2: Verse 63)

What more would they need? God Almighty becomes their guardian as it is said:

وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿١٩٧﴾

And He protects the righteous.
(Chap 7: v 197)

(Malfuzat, vol. IV, pp. 400-401)

The passage highlights that true righteousness is not just about avoiding wrongdoing but actively progressing in high moral values. This includes politeness, courtesy, sympathy, fidelity, and sincerity towards God Almighty. It's about consciously embodying these values in our interactions and relationships.

It also states that possessing any one of these qualities is not enough for true righteousness. The emphasis on the collective possession of these qualities underscores the holistic nature of righteousness. It's not merely a checklist but a comprehensive way of being. Each quality complements the others, creating a harmonious and virtuous individual. True righteousness is about embodying these qualities collectively, not in isolation.

Seeking occasions of beneficent service is a proactive step in contributing positively to the well-being of others. It aligns with the idea of selfless giving and kindness, which are integral to high moral values. Righteousness is not just about personal conduct but extends to how one positively impacts the lives of others.

When Allah guides us towards certain behaviours or actions, there is inevitably abundant blessing to be gained by following Allah's commands.

**"And he who fears Allah — He will make for him a way out. And will provide for him from where he expects not."**

(At-Talaq, 65:3-4).

***In Hadith it is stated that God Almighty becomes their hands with which they grasp, and becomes their eyes with which they see, and becomes their ears with which they hear and becomes their feet with which they walk.***

***In another Hadith it is stated that God has proclaimed that he who bears enmity towards a friend of Mine should become ready to contend with Me.***

***Still another Hadith declares that when anyone attacks a friend of God, He pounces upon him with the fierceness with which a tigress pounces upon one who seeks to deprive it of its young.***

(Malfuzat, vol. IV, pp. 400-401)

The Hadith emphasizes the special status and protection granted by God to His friends, or those who are close to Him. The Hadith conveys that those who have a close and sincere relationship with God, often referred to as His "friends" or "awliya," enjoy a special divine protection. God takes a particular interest in safeguarding His devoted servants who have earned His favour through their piety, love, and submission.

So actually one who fears losing the love of Allah need not fear as God will be by his side always.

The Promised Messiah(as) has written:

'***Righteousness means that one must be mindful even of the smallest details of the Divine trusts and covenants and also of all the trusts and covenants of one's fellow beings, as far as it may be possible. That is, one must try to fulfil, to the best of one's ability, all the requirements in their minutest details.***

(Brahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Part V, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 21, pp. 209-210)

I want to narrate an incident from the companion of the Holy Prophet (sa), Abdullah bin Mas'ud which gives an indication of the degree of care to walk the finer ways of righteousness.

Abdullah bin Mas'ud once went to see his friend, Abu Umair. However, he was not at home. So he conveyed his greetings to his wife and requested some water to drink. There was no water available in the house so she sent a female servant to bring water from the neighbours, but she did not return till very late. Umar's wife scolded their female servant saying she was extremely lazy and cursed her. Having heard her, Hazrat Abdullah returned home thirsty. The following day he met Abu Umair and he asked him why he returned home so quickly without drinking water. He answered:

***"When your wife cursed the servant, the saying of the Holy Prophet (sa) came to mind that whoever is cursed but is innocent, the curse is reverted to the one who cursed. So I thought that if the servant was innocent then the curse would revert to me without cause."***

(Sira Al-Sahaba, Vol. 2, p. 223, Dar-ul-Isha'at, Karachi)

Therefore, it is better to go without drinking. So this was the level of fear of God these people possessed that if there was even a remotest chance of God Almighty being upset with them for any reason, they would abstain and stay away from it. (https://www.alislam.org/articles/abdullah-bin-masud/).

The Promised Messiah(as) has also said that we must speak with *Taqwa* in mind and through seeking the help of God. God Almighty states that He takes responsibility for those who are mindful of their tongue. Words can be very powerful, so much so that simply declaring something which has been forbidden by God to be lawful, can determine someone to be outside the pale of Islam entirely. If we are not mindful of our tongues, then we stray away from the path of *Taqwa*.

We can all recall a time when something was said which was hurtful, a causal comment or something designed to inflict pain. We need to keep *Taqwa* in mind every time we speak.

True righteousness is accompanied by a light, as God the Glorious,

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ فُرْقَانًا وَّيُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ

***

وَيَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ نُوْرًا تَمْشُوْنَ بِهٖ

**"O ye who believe! if you fear Allah, He will grant you a distinction and will remove your evils from you and will forgive you (...)" ;**

**"(...) And will provide for you a light wherein you will walk"**

(Surah Al – Anfal 8:30, Surah Al Hadid 57:29)

He will single you out from among your detractors with marked distinction. That is, you shall be blessed with a light which will accompany you wherever you go. That is to say, that that light would illumine all their actions and words and faculties and senses. Their intellect would be illumined and there would be light in all that they utter. There would be light in their eyes and in their ears and in their tongues and in their speech and in all their movements. The ways along which they walk would be lit up. All their ways, the ways of their faculties and their senses will be filled with light, and they will walk altogether in light.

(A'ina-e-Kamalat-e-Islam, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 5, pp. 177-178)

The passage paints a vivid picture of the transformative power of steadfastness in righteousness. It envisions a state where individuals, dedicated to pleasing Allah, are marked with divine distinction and blessed with spiritual illumination that permeates every aspect of their existence. The metaphor of light serves as a powerful symbol of guidance, purity, and divine favour bestowed upon those who choose the path of righteousness.

There is a special significance of righteousness within the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. This is because on one occasion, while drawing the attention of the Jamaat towards righteousness, the Promised Messiah (as) stated,

***"The field of righteousness is empty, hence I have been commissioned in order to establish righteousness." This is the reason for the Promised Messiah(as) being sent by God. "Righteousness should be practised instead of raising the sword."***

***Rather, if you desire to spread the faith and propagate it, then the first step is to develop righteousness within yourself. Everything happens gradually once righteousness is established."***

So as Ahmadi Muslims we have a duty to attain the highest level of *Taqwa*.

The Promised Messiah (as) explained that true righteousness is to abstain from all evils, in fact not even drawing near to them. Not only must one strive with their efforts in this cause, but these efforts must also be accompanied by prayers. Mere efforts or mere prayer are not enough, both must join together.

This is the same philosophy presented at the very beginning of the Holy Quran,

**'Thee Alone do we worship and Thee Alone do we implore for help."**

Thus, utilising the faculties given to us by God, one must strive to make every effort. Then after having done so, one must pray to God, that they have done all they could and now turn to Him for His Divine help.

The prescribed prayers, the night prayers and other forms of worship such as pilgrimage and fasting, help in the growth of Taqwa in individuals, as Allah says in the Holy Quran:

**"O ye who believe! fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous."**

**(Al-Baqarah 2:184)**

The blessed month of Ramadan will begin in just over a week. This month carries the opportunity for accelerated spiritual progress and to attain *Taqwa* (righteousness). During this month we can increase in worship, focus on Tahajjud prayers and recitation of the Quran and pay closer attention to fulfilling the rights to humanity. This is the month of blessings in which there is the *Lailatul Qadr* (Night of Decree) which is better than a thousand months. Anyone who discharges an obligatory action in this month is like the one who discharges seventy of them in other months. Anyone who does a good deed during Ramadan is like the one who discharges an obligatory ritual in other months.

We have been taught this prayer in the Quran to gain righteousness:

رَبَّنَآ اِنَّنَا سَمِعۡنَا مُنَادِيًا يُّنَادِيۡ لِلۡاِيۡمَانِ اَنۡ اٰمِنُوۡا بِرَبِّكُمۡ فَاٰمَنَّا ۟ۖ
رَبَّنَا فَاغۡفِرۡ لَنَا ذُنُوۡبَنَا وَكَفِّرۡ عَنَّا سَيِّاٰتِنَا وَتَوَفَّنَا مَعَ الۡاَبۡرَارِ ۚ﴿۱۹۴﴾

**"Our Lord, we have heard a Crier calling *us* unto faith, 'Believe ye in your Lord,' and we have believed. Our Lord, forgive us, therefore, our errors and remove from us our evils, and in death number us with the righteous."**

**(Aal-e-Imran 3:194)**

In the Friday Sermon of 24th April 2020 Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba) spoke about how *Taqwa* is the solution to hardships in the current world. In the globalised world contentment is a rare state and appears difficult to achieve. Contentment is being happy with what we have and not looking at others and being envious of other people's things. Huzoor (aba) explained that those who are righteous are content with what they have, as opposed to those who live in mansions and drive expensive cars, yet contentment eludes them. So they don't feel content or satisfied.

Some people are well-versed in religious knowledge as compared with others. Some people excel others in certain pious traits, and everyone works in accordance with their capabilities. It is the responsibility of the people that are at a higher state to carry the weaker ones along with them.

The Promised Messiah (as) says,

> ***"It should be our practice that we assist our weaker brethren and become a support for them. What a great calamity it would be if there were two brothers, one from among them knew how to swim but the other did not; would it not be the responsibility of the former to save his brother from drowning, or would he let him drown? It would be incumbent upon him to save him from death. That is why the following has been mentioned in the Holy Quran:***
>
> تَعَاوَنُوْا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوٰى
>
> And help one another in righteousness and piety."
> (Al-Ma'idah, 5:3)
>
> (Friday Sermon, 13 April 2018 by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V(aba)

I pray that we are able to follow this Quranic injunction and all of the guidance we have heard today from the Holy Quran, The Holy Prophet (sa), The Promised Messiah (as) and Khulafa. *Taqwa* should remain the main consideration in every step we take, every word we speak, every interaction we have and our every thought. Only then will we be able to live our lives according to the commandments of Allah and be able to protect ourselves and our children from every type of harm. Only then will we have contentment and happiness in this world and Insh'Allah in the Hereafter. May Allah always enable us all to excel in righteousness. Ameen.