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AN-NUSRAT

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اللَّيْم

Al-Haleem

Among Allah's attributes one is Al Haleem (The Forbearing). When the word Haleem is used for Allah it connotes One Who forgives, Who does not promptly chastise the disobedient, One Who is not frustrated due to disobedience as well as One Who covers the faults of others. Thus, the Divine attribute of Al Haleem encompasses many other qualities of Allah.

Forbearance connotes compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, kindness and suppressing anger. All these qualities are essential for the betterment of society as well as for spirituality and should be adopted by each Ahmadi.

The most supreme reflection of the Divine attribute of Al Haleem was the Holy Prophet Muhammed (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and in this age the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace), who acted in the footsteps and in subservience to his master.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

AN NUSRAT

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ۔

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 (saw) 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, InshAllah.

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GUIDANCE FROM THE HOLY QURAN



الَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبِيرَ الْأَثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ إِلَّا اللَّيْمَ ط إِنَّ رَبَّكَ وَاسِعُ الْبَغْفِرَةِ ط هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ إِذْ
أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَإِذْ أَنْتُمْ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ ؕ فَلَا تَزَكُّوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ط هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِبَيْنِ أَلْفِ ۙ

‘Those who shun the grave sins and immoral actions except minor faults—verily, thy Lord is Master of vast forgiveness. He knows you full well *from the time* when He created you from the earth, and when you were embryos in the bellies of your mothers. So, ascribe not purity to yourselves. He knows him best who is *truly* righteous.’¹

In his Friday sermon (22nd May 2009) Huzoor (may Allah be his Helper) expounded on this verse saying:

‘The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said that one should never claim to be pure and clean. Allah states ‘do not call yourself purified’, He alone knows who is the righteous. Purification is conditional to *taqwa* and *taqwa* is to avoid all kind of evils for the

pleasure of God, to abide by all His commandments and to avoid all that He has forbidden. God has repeatedly stated that it is He Who purifies people and knows whose heart is truly righteous. He knows the state of our hearts, is aware of what we make evident and what we conceal, He can never be deceived in any way at all. A famous Hadith relates that actions are judged by motives. God, Who knows what is in our hearts has full knowledge of the motive behind whatever man does. Apparent worship of God, fasting and even multiple Hajj, when performed with any ill motive is not worthy of acceptance in the sight of God. Not only are all such virtues erased in such a situation, rather they cause one's destruction.

While drawing our attention through warnings, God also refers to His extensive mercy and gives us hope of forgiveness. His warnings are also for our own benefit – to enable us to tread the straight path. Indeed, He knows the state of hearts, is aware of one's capability and capacity, therefore He gives us the glad-tiding that if we abide by *taqwa*, keep our motives clear, then He will envelop any oversights of ours in the swathe of His forgiveness.'

Referring to the Quranic verse cited at the beginning Huzoor (may Allah be his Helper) said, it gives the glad-tiding of forgiveness with reference to God's expansive mercy and states His all-encompassing knowledge. Huzoor (may Allah be his Helper) explained that millions of years before man was created God put in place arrangements to sustain human life. He is aware of and has knowledge of us since then, of what nature was He to give us, what capacities He was to grant us etc. This is a deep subject which is expounded in other Quranic verses. God's knowledge about us is so extensive that let alone encompassing it we have no knowledge of it. With the passage of time and scientific developments man has come to know of certain facts about creation but most of these are only known to those who have exclusive knowledge of the sciences. However, God had absolute knowledge of everything from the beginning of time. Moving down on the scale of knowledge there is the nurturing of the foetus in the womb. Many have knowledge of this nowadays. There is sufficient development in the field of medicine that enables people even in the developing world to have some awareness of this through ultrasound scans. Some even find out if they are expecting a girl or a boy. God states that He has full knowledge of this stage of one's development as well and is aware of exactly with which capacities one is born. Despite being the Knower of the unseen, He presented man with the choice of good and bad deeds. Good deeds are those which are undertaken purely to attain His pleasure. God warns that even when doing virtuous acts, one may develop feelings of self-absorption. Therefore, it is not up to one to claim that he or she does 'good works'. Rather than feel self-satisfied about any virtue, each good work should enhance one in humility and *taqwa*. One cannot give oneself the testimonial of abiding by *taqwa*, nor can another person attest on one's behalf. Only God knows who is the most righteous.²

References

1. <http://www.alislam.org/quran/app/53:33>
2. <https://www.alislam.org/friday-sermon/2009-05-22.html>

HADITH

If the heart is good all the other limbs get well

Narrated by Hadrat Nu'mān bin Bashīr, Allāh be pleased with him: I heard the Prophet of Allāh (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him) say,

“In the body is a piece of flesh, when it gets well, the whole body gets well and when it becomes unhealthy, the whole body gets unhealthy and hark! That piece is the heart.” (Bukhārī)

عَنِ النَّعْمَانِ بْنِ بَشِيرٍ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ إِنَّ فِي الْجَسَدِ مُضْغَةً إِذَا صَلَحَتْ صَلَحَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ وَإِذَا فَسَدَتْ فَسَدَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ أَلَا وَهِيَ الْقَلْبُ۔ (بخاری)

Explanatory Note

In this Hadīth, a charming philosophy, aimed at reforming one's self has been explained. It says that the heart is the fountainhead of all the actions of man. If the heart of a man entertains good and pure thoughts, all his deeds will necessarily be directed towards the path of virtue. But if the heart has dirty and offensive ideas, the deeds must necessarily follow the path of vice, for the feelings entertained by the heart are like seeds and action is the tree that grows out of the seed. Therefore, for the purpose of reformation, one must first worry about the heart. If leaders of a community and the press infuse in the minds of the masses the feelings of virtue, and the college and school teachers similarly touch the hearts of the students, as also the parents those of their children, and instill in them the love of God, of the Prophet and of the faith, and feelings of welfare for the community, and the spirit of service and sacrifice and truthfulness, and sow in them the seeds of honesty, then there is little occasion to worry for good deeds on their part. The purity of mind will itself stimulate the growth of the tree of virtue. But if the heart is sick, the plant of good deeds will not grow and if it grew at all, it would wither away soon. The Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, the Promised Messiah (peace of Allāh be on him) has said in this connection:

“Righteousness is the root of all virtue. If this root is firm all is safe.”

The truth is that [the] human heart is the central repository of righteousness, the fountainhead and source of all virtuous deeds. If the heart is in good shape, the activity of the hands and the feet and the tongue and the eyes also becomes healthy. But if the heart is filthy then all the deeds of man smell of stench and filth. Even the seemingly good deeds of such a person are but lifeless imitations or hypocritical advertisements devoid of any reality. It is thus the duty of every reformer to concentrate on the cure of the heart first for the heart is like the root and no dirty root would grow into a holy tree.

https://www.alislam.org/library/books/Forty_Gems_of_Beauty.pdf

Taqwa and acceptance of prayers



So far as the acceptance of the prayer is concerned it is conditioned with certain factors. Some of these conditions have to be fulfilled by the one who is to pray, while the others have to be fulfilled by the one who is asking someone to pray for him. As for the one who is asking someone to pray for him, he should keep in mind the fear of God and he should understand fully that it is not necessary that God should accept all the prayers; he should be peace-loving and a true worshipper of God. He should try to win the pleasure of God through Taqwa and Truthfulness. If he does that, then of course, the door for the acceptance of the prayer is open for him. If he attracts the wrath of God and creates an atmosphere of discord with Him, his evil deeds and mischiefs will become stumbling blocks in the way of the acceptance of the prayer. That being the case, my friends should try all they can not to let my prayers go to waste and they should create no hurdle in the way of the acceptance of prayers; they should not do anything undesirable. They should become Muttaqi, for, it is Taqwa that can be called the compendium of the Shariat. Had we to express the Shariat in a nut shell, we would say it is Taqwa.

<https://www.alislam.org/library/books/So-Said-the-Promised-Messiah.pdf> p.15

WRITINGS OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH (PEACE BE UPON HIM)

EDITORIAL



Dear readers. Assalamo Alaikum

In this issue, our focus for Qur'an, Hadith and writings of the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) is the importance of Taqwa (righteousness). There is no doubt that if our every action and thought is steered with Taqwa in our hearts, we will be successful not only in this world, but also in the Hereafter. We have included the inspirational guidance of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) on this topic. We hope that on reading this address, we are able to reflect and make an effort to improve our level of Taqwa through knowledge of our faith, and through prayer for guidance.

We hope our readers enjoy our thought provoking articles on 'Palliative care in Islam' and 'Is Islam out of touch with the modern world' written by our talented Lajna. The moving account of a 'Qur'an journey' which documents one person's journey through many hardships and eventually finding contentment in love for the Holy Qur'an is a lovely read.

For our Health matters page, we have highlighted diabetes and have included tips on symptoms, causes and getting a diagnosis. Our physical and spiritual health is discussed in the article, 'You are what you eat' which throws light on the link between food and our holistic well-being.

We are surrounded by writing, whether it's in books, posters or signs, but have you ever wondered where the written word began? The article on 'The history of writing' is a truly fascinating insight into how writing evolved throughout history.

By popular demand, we have included a delicious recipe and an inspiring moral story which can be read, not only by our Lajna, but our younger readers as well.

Please continue to send us your articles and any suggestions. Our magazine would not be possible without the talents and efforts of our Lajna writers.

Qanita Qureshi

Under the supervision of
PRESIDENT LAJNA IMA'ILLAH, UK

Dr. Fariha Khan
SECRETARY ISHA'AT

Mrs. Lubna Sohail

EDITOR

Qanita Qureshi

SUB-EDITORS

Seema Khalil
Nabeela Shah
Amber Rashid Zafar

PROOF-READERS

Maryam Khalil
Kunval Qureshi
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Anusha Ahmad
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Seema Khalil
Yasmeen Ahmad
Farida Ahmed

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THE TEAM



Address by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V
(may Allah strengthen his hand) **to Lajna on the second**
day of Jalsa Salana UK 2010 in
Hadeeqa-tul-Mahdi (Alton)

Address by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah assist him with His mighty help) to Lajna on the Second Day of Jalsa Salana UK 2010

After reciting Tashahhud, Ta'awwuz and Surah Fatihah, Hudhur (may Allah strengthen his hands) said:

“When Taqwa (righteousness) disappears and ceases to exist in the world, when evils spread and selfishness is rampant, then at such a time, as an act of benevolence on His people, Allah the Exalted sends His Messengers and Prophets, so that, having received direct guidance from Allah the Exalted, they may make people recognise the objective of their creation. We witness this from the time of Hadhrat Adam (on whom be peace) to that of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and up until this era with the advent of his Truthful Devotee. Divine scriptures and the history of mankind inform us that advent of Prophets took place in similar circumstances, who, under Divine guidance, initiated a process of spiritual teaching in order to improve the deteriorated condition of their people. Pious natured people accepted these Prophets of God and treaded on the path of Taqwa; and by attaining the pleasure of Allah the Exalted, enhanced their life in this world and the Hereafter.

However, by rejecting these Prophets sent by Allah the Exalted, a number of people became the cause of the decline and destruction of their nations. In any case, before the advent of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), the dominion of prophethood was limited to national and regional levels, but at the time of the advent of the perfect man and the Khatamul Anbiya (Seal of all the Prophets), the division of national and regional boundaries came to an end. His advent was for the whole of mankind. The recitation of the Holy Qur'an that you just heard also mentions this very subject. In one verse by stating

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ' O mankind',

the entire mankind is addressed, that your survival is in accepting this Prophet and following the teaching revealed to him. This teaching alone can enhance your world and the Hereafter. After stating

‘النَّاسُ mankind’,

Allah the Exalted, in order to expand this subject further, states that:

O all those people who live in this world in different nations and tribes, remember that although your tribes and nations are a means of your identity, they are not a verification of your superiority or greatness.

Indeed, your Taqwa and practice alone can make you entitled to the pleasure of Allah the Exalted. Whosoever is righteous and in order to attain Taqwa, it is essential to believe in the Prophet who has been sent for the whole of mankind. About whom Allah declared, and asked the Holy Prophet to declare:

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا

‘Say, O’ mankind! Truly I am a Messenger to you all from Allah...’ (Ch.7:159)

It is also essential to completely comply with this Prophet and to perfectly obey him. In order to achieve the standard in Taqwa that gains nearness to Allah the Exalted, it is essential to follow this Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Otherwise, neither one’s family background, wealth, progeny, high status, grouping, nation nor government can make one entitled to the pleasure of Allah the Exalted. If anything can save a person from the reckoning of Allah the Exalted, in this world and the Hereafter, it is Taqwa. And now, since the perfect Shariah (religious law) revealed to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) will remain established until the Day of Judgement, and no new teaching or Shariah can appear in the world, and because this perfect Shariah has also absorbed the qualities of the all previous Shari’ahs; hence there is no way left for man but to follow this. Thus, we are fortunate who believe in this last and perfect Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and believe in his Shariah, which is a source of salvation for the world.

However, it is incumbent upon one who claims to have belief, and believes in Allah the Exalted that, after such an assertion, one should mould one’s life according to these teachings and try to completely implement the teachings of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). One should obey his commandments as well as read, listen, understand and try to put in practice the Qur’anic knowledge and wisdom that the True and Ardent Devotee of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) expounded for us under Divine guidance and which are in accordance with the prophecies of the Holy Qur’an and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

These factors take one towards and raise the standards of Taqwa and differentiate between a believer and a non-believer. Because after accepting the Imam of the Age, to follow his directives is also included in the obedience of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). For this reason, it is extremely important to obey his (as) words. He was sent as the Hakam (arbiter) and 'Adl (one who establishes justice). Then, for those of us who are Ahmadi Muslims, the commandment is not only to raise the standard of our Taqwa and put the blessed model of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) into practice; rather, by stating ..

‘قُلْ Say’

the principal addressee of whom is indeed the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), who is commanded to tell the world that he was sent as a Messenger for all the people of the world.

Hence, the standards of Taqwa are those alone that are set and taught by him and are explained by Allah the Exalted in teachings revealed to him. The survival of humanity now rests in adopting these ways of achieving Taqwa. However, with this declaration of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), it is assigned as the responsibility of those who believe in the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that, after believing and reading the word

‘قُلْ Say’

in the Holy Qur'an, it is obligatory for them to inform the world that our dearest master, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), is the most beloved of Allah the Exalted and no one as beloved to Allah the Exalted as him can be born until the Day of Judgement. For this reason, come into the refuge of this beloved master as it is not possible to attain Taqwa anywhere else; it is impossible to attain the approval of Allah the Exalted without this. While we will be inviting the world to this message to follow Taqwa, how compelling it must be for us to that we apply this teaching to our lives and on ourselves. Otherwise our claim of belief and Islam will be worthless and will have no value.

What is Taqwa? We use this word often. Some may know its meanings while others may only understand its surface meanings. Taqwa is to abstain from evil while keeping fear of Allah the Exalted in ones heart and treading the path of righteousness in accordance with Allah's commandment. Someone has defined Taqwa as protecting oneself from minor and major sins as if walking carefully through a path lined by thorny bushes, or protects their clothing carefully lest a thorn catches on part of one's clothing and tears it or the clothing gets frayed. Women are especially particular about taking care of clothes. If clothes are damaged or one's time is wasted due to clothing getting entangled it can be quite stressful. At other times, when thorny bushes catch on clothes they go through them and injure one and when one tries to pick the spikes out of one's clothes for protection, he also hurts his hand.

Therefore, a person exercises extreme caution while passing through such pathways. In short, minor carelessness can lead to many troubles for a person walking on such a path. Thus, it is vigilance against minor and major sins that is obligatory on every believing man and believing woman. In particular, an Ahmadi Muslim who claims to have come in the protection of the Imam of the Time and thus found shelter needs to make an utmost effort to remain within this sanctuary. Thus, be it an Ahmadi man or be it an Ahmadi woman, it is everyone's duty to do everything possible to stay within this haven to remain safe from Satan and be of those who attain the approval of Allah the Exalted. Whenever one attempts to step outside of Taqwa, or attempts to do something outside of Taqwa, one knowingly breaks one's sphere of refuge and walks out of it. When one knowingly walks out, one deprives oneself of the blessings that Allah the Exalted has promised for people who connect and stay connected with Allah the Exalted and His Prophet. Thus, continued efforts and prayers are required to tread on the path of virtues and to remain steadfast on Taqwa. With this, while we will make ourselves recipients of the approval of Allah the Exalted, we will also be fulfilling our duties towards Tabligh.

Just as I also mentioned in my speech yesterday, the attention that I am bringing home to you is that there are some objectives for which we attend Jalsa. The most important of these objectives is to progress in Taqwa and bring about a pious change within ourselves. I often draw your attention to the point that the purpose of our gathering for Jalsa, Ijtimas and attendance at other Lajna events is not merely to get together in one place; where we can talk and catch up with each other, have some leisure time and meet old, long-lost friends. Rather, a true believing woman, a true Muslim woman endeavours to act upon and make everything that she listens to during Jalsa a part of her life; not only make it part of her own life, but also try and duly fulfil the responsibility of bringing up children that has been placed on an Ahmadi Muslim woman; that she undertakes pious training of her children and endeavours that they develop a bond with Allah the Exalted; watches over their worship so that by the time they grow up, worship of One God is ingrained in them; that she keeps drawing their attention to acts of virtue so that by the time they reach maturity, all their actions become good deeds, and they do not keep wrong company or become involved in wrong acts.

In addition, as an Ahmadi, every man and woman is an ambassador of Ahmadiyyat, that is, true Islam and is a Daen Illallah (caller to Allah), in particular, women, who also have to protect their next generation. This should always be kept in view. For this reason, her actions are not limited to her own self but are also meant as a source of guidance for others. They are to be a source of presenting the picture of Islam to others. Thus, never let any act of yours be a cause for others to stumble. So, for every believing Ahmadi man and woman, an Ahmadi Muslim man and woman, there is a great need to evaluate their condition all the time.

This world is a path of thorny bushes. Extreme caution is needed at every step in order to protect your clothing from getting entangled, torn and have your nakedness exposed. The liberal education of today has led one group to the wrong paths and customs. On the one hand, these women talk about being Ahmadi and on the other hand they do not even try to make a concerted effort to defend themselves from materialistic encroachments. As I said,

a protective sphere around us that we feel is given to us by being in the Community of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace), they try to break that sphere which has been granted to us with the blessings and grace of Allah the Exalted. On the one hand we say we believe, that is, we affirm that the teaching that was revealed to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah upon him) was the final and perfect teaching and deviating from it takes one away from Allah the Exalted; while on the other hand, we make its incorrect interpretations and are distancing from it. That is, while we declare our heart-felt confirmation, doubts are also developing in our hearts. Or, if doubts are not developing, the hold of Satan is increasing or Satan is trying to overcome one. It cannot be that on one hand, one declares love for Allah the Exalted, claims to have Taqwa and on the other hand falls in the lap of Satan by not following the teachings.

After heartfelt confirmation of perfect belief, and after ascertaining its maturation in the heart, its verbal expression is very necessary, as is putting it in practice. Thus, a believer does not become a true believer until there is verbal and practical demonstration of each of his or her words and deeds. Progress in faith does not take place until resoluteness of belief is accompanied by an effort to transform each and every action in accordance with the teachings that one believes in and all the commandments are followed with perfect obedience.

The first and foremost duty of a believing man and believing woman is to comprehend the purpose of their creation. Allah the Exalted states about this:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٧﴾

‘And I have not created the Jinn and the men but that they may worship Me’ (Ch.51:57)

So who are these servants alluded to in the verse? These are the true servants who, having believed in their God Who has created them, are absolutely obedient to Him. They worship Him as is the due of His worship, as I also explained yesterday. These days everyone claims to be the servant of God but how many are there who actually strive to achieve perfect submission and make an effort to attain the purpose of their creation? Allah the Exalted has said that I have created you so that you can become My people. This clearly shows that in the eyes of Allah the Exalted some of those who have apparently believed are not His true servants. As I said, Allah the Exalted wishes to make those who claim to believe in Him, perfectly obedient. The servants of Allah the Exalted need to stand in front to Him in a state of submission just as a servant stands in front of his master. Although as human beings we desire that our employees, our subordinates and our youngsters listen to us but we hardly think about the commandments of Allah the Exalted, Who is the Lord of all the worlds, that we should put His commandments in practice to the letter. To honour the dues of devotion to God, the first commandment is to worship Allah the Exalted. If we evaluate ourselves then we will see that a number of men and women in our Jama’at, a figure that cannot be deemed insignificant, do not constantly guard their Salat (Prayers) or see to the regularity of Salat of their children.

The events in the mosques in Pakistan have focussed attention of one group of people towards this and attention has been drawn to Salat from within and outside Pakistan. May Allah the Exalted make this awareness permanent. Even in these circumstances there are some people, including men, who have not turned their attention towards Allah the Exalted as it should be turned. They can't get away from pursuing their heart's desires, their hobbies and running after their rights. Some women just abandon Salat or offer Salat as Qadha; or Salat is offered without due attention, as if unburdening oneself. If the dues of devotion to Allah the Exalted are to be paid then foremost is that you safeguard your own Salat and that of your children. Once attention is drawn to Salat, materialism, amusements and fulfilling self-seeking desires will lessen by itself.

It is the grace of Allah the Exalted that He has also granted our Community many believing women who enhance in sincerity, who try to pay the dues of devotion to God and who give every kind of sacrifice for the sake of the Community. In the difficult circumstances of Pakistan, women from various places there, not just one area, speak of presenting themselves for sacrifices to their office-holders and also write to me. Indeed, incidents have taken place in various cities where, due to the situation, women have been asked not to attend Friday Prayers in mosques. Women write that allow us too to go to the mosques. Their words are full of pathos, saying if Allah the Exalted Wills more sacrifices from the Community, they too wish to be among those who attain the status of martyrdom. They send their adolescent children to guard the mosques and for observance of Salat. By the grace of Allah the Exalted there is also a large group who are progressing in their virtues. Thus, we have such mothers, such believing women who also pay the dues of devotion to Allah the Exalted and are eager to attain the pinnacle of sacrifices and who make an effort to this effect. But there are also some, from families of religious background, from whom it is expected that their religious condition should be much better. However, financial prosperity and wealth has distanced them from their obligation of devotion to God. When the circumstances of such women reach me, while they are a source of pain, they are also a cause for concern. Due to the connection of their elders, one prays for them that may Allah the Exalted amend their condition; Allah the Exalted give them sense.

There is an important aspect which is the distinction of a believing woman and without which Taqwa is not possible and Allah the Exalted has given it specific significance among the commandments to women. If a woman attains correct insight and perception of this quality, understands its depth, not only will many societal problems be solved, she will also become a recipient of Paradise in this world and the Hereafter. Allah the Exalted states in Surah Al Nisa:

حُفِّظَتْ لِلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ

‘...guard the secrets of their husbands with Allah’s protection...’ (Ch.4:35)

That is to safeguard in a manner that Allah the Exalted has commanded. In today's liberal society, it is not safeguarding in private which has given rise to wrong kind of freedom and lack of modesty.

If every woman understands what her responsibilities are and that she does not have to undertake them lest her husband or father or brother finds out and reprimands her in any way; rather, the sense of responsibility to undertake these obligations should be ever present in heart and should be strengthened because the One God is Knower of the unseen, Who watches over every action of ours, Whose eyes are on His creation at all times. Everyone's actions are like an open book in front of Him. Thus, as long as this realisation remains, no woman can do any such action which would take her away from Taqwa. As a wife she would be perfectly sincere with her husband, and would be the guardian of her husband's home, and rather than waste his wealth, she would spend it correctly. Many women follow Taqwa and with Taqwa they also adopt sense. In spite of low income, they keep something from what their husbands give them and regularly save it and at difficult times give it to their husbands and the husbands have no idea that they had been saving. Thus, they protect the husband's wealth in private, or if they have a need, they inform them and use the money. They watch over their children properly. This watching over is not done just because it is the husband's children, rather because of a greater reason, that the children are a trust of the nation and a trust of the Jama'at (Community). In addition, they befriend women of high morals. A sincere wife never makes wrong kinds of friends who may lead her to erroneous ways to squeeze out as much money as possible from the husband, who advise to freely go places without the husband; telling her that after all she too has a right to freedom; who advise her to maintain relations with whomsoever she likes on whatsoever basis. Neither can women who give such advice be those who safeguard in private nor can be those who befriend such women and put their advice in practice.

Similarly, a daughter should safeguard her sanctity and modesty and chastity. She should protect her honour and not keep any such friendships or move in any such circles or commit any such act that she would have to hide from her parents. She should always be mindful that Knower of the Unseen God is watching her. She can hide any friendship with the wrong sort of girls and boys from her parents, but not from Allah the Exalted, Who watches every single action all the time. Likewise, a woman has a station with reference to various relations. If in each of her capacity, she considers what her responsibilities are, what her duties are and what rights others have over her and if she does not fulfil them she may come under the reckoning of Knower of the unseen God – many ills that are associated with women in society and anxiety in many families that is created due to actions of women, losing of many children, which is caused due to absence of care or carelessness or wrong upbringing or excessive pampering, would never materialise. However, all these matters and correct perception of the unseen can only be had by a believing woman; a materialistic person cannot have it; a woman devoid of Taqwa cannot have it.

Therefore, an Ahmadi woman who claims to accept the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) and declares that she will try her very best to implement the teachings of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) on herself, but does not

Safeguard the dues of her responsibility in private, may be of those who incur God's displeasure.

Some may wonder why there is specific instruction to women to safeguard in private, but why men are not similarly commanded. It has been seen that men too do not safeguard the boundaries set by Allah due to freedom. They too are, at times, insincere to wives in private. When Allah the Exalted commanded women regarding safeguard or drew their attention to it, He initiated the matter by stating:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ

'Men are guardians...' (Ch.4:35)

That is, men are made guardians. Theirs is the foremost obligation to abide by the commandments of Shariah and not commit any such act that can lead to the allegation that they do not abide by Taqwa. Generally, men influence women. A pious man will have a pious influence on woman and men who do wrong things will have a bad effect on women. This is why men are made guardians first and told that if they abide by Taqwa, women too will tread on the path of Taqwa, apart from exceptions, in which case some chastisement has been set.

Generally, wives of pious men tend to follow piety alone. By making men the guardians they have been made responsible for everything in the first instance and it has been stated: O women, when your men are firm on piety, it is your duty to also advance in piety; adopt obedience and fulfil your responsibilities, not just publicly or openly, but also in private. The Unseen God is watching over you, thus if you claim to be a believing woman, fulfil the responsibility that Shariah has laid on you. Do not forget your station and your responsibilities in the flow of freedom and in the flow of attaining your rights. Thus a believing woman should be perfectly obedient to the commandments of Shariah and be righteous, publicly as well as privately.

Enjoining men and women, Allah the Exalted states:

اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ

'...Avoid too frequent indulgence in suspicion...' (Ch.49:13)

Avoid many suspicions because suspicions that are based on thinking ill of others become a source of creating disorder in society. This is why the commandment is to investigate before forming any sort of opinion because sometimes the tendency is to think ill of others without any factual basis and make accusations. Due to personal differences an effort is made to put someone down in the eyes of the Nizam-e-Jama'at (administrative system of the Community) and the Khalifa of the time. Some situations come to light. A while back I nominated a Sadr Lajna of a country. Her administrative capabilities were scorned and complaints were made which were proved completely incorrect. Let alone this, some extremely incorrect accusations were also made about

her sister, which was not just thinking ill of another but was also slander on a decent woman. May Allah the Exalted give sense to such women.

Then, it is indeed the commandment of Allah the Exalted and I frequently stress on it that it is extremely important for the sanctity and modesty of women that they restrain their eyes and lower their gaze, that they do not display their beauty and embellishments and draw their head-covers over their bosoms. Some non-Ahmadi religious scholars perhaps wish to bring the young generation under their influence or are fearful that if asked to put this commandment in practice, the young Muslims will probably move away from religion completely. In their interpretation of these commandments, they do not consider Purdah necessary, although all the aspects that I have just mentioned and which are stated in Surah Al Nur, i.e. modesty, not displaying beauty, restraining of eyes are for the protection of women and give the commandment of Purdah.

In the verse before this, men too are commanded to restrain their eyes, only for the reason to preserve a woman's sanctity, and the commandment for women is to safeguard their modesty and sanctity. Anyhow, a non-Ahmadi Muslim may fear that adherence to these commandments may cause distance from religion, but such supposition cannot be made about an Ahmadi woman. For this the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) as well as Khulafa have always been drawing women's attention to dress code and Purdah. Although, in reaction to the current anti-Purdah movement in the West, some women have made Burqas that indeed appear intimidating. As a result the authorities of some countries have to take note and check them out at certain places; but this is a reactionary move. As I understand the situation, the laws introduced in France etc. are directed against such Burqa, and are not against the ordinary Hijab. The worrying point is that a Muslim country, probably Syria, has also banned Purdah or Hijab from its universities. May Allah the Exalted take mercy on the state of these Muslim countries! This action is clearly due to fear of the West and under the influence of manipulations of Dajjal (anti-Christ).

However, the commandments of Allah the Exalted neither enjoin too much nor do they enjoin too little, neither lean one way nor the other. This is the main point. Even now it is seen in non-Ahmadi Muslim girls and women, perhaps some Ahmadi girls may be included in this, who wear short tops with jeans which expose their bodies while wearing Hijab on the head. This type of Purdah is not the Islamic commandment. Perhaps it is a reaction of the girls to defy certain Western Laws that they put on the Hijab. From this they have no concern with the spirit of Purdah, so this reaction is also wrong. As I said earlier, the commandments of Allah the Exalted are to lower one's gaze; men and women should not exchange glances uninhibitedly. They should have a sense of modesty. Secondly, one's beauty should be covered; one's dress should be such that it does not display the body shape, and thirdly, in order to conceal one's beauty the chest, head, neck and the front should be covered. The Burqa one wears should be loose. Those who do not cover their face and wear makeup also come in the category of showing off their beauty. Similarly those who display their hair also come in the category of showing off their beauty because they knowingly show their hair off as their beauty, assuming that this displays their charm. Therefore, covering the head, covering

the face at least in a manner that it is not overtly displayed and wearing of suitable clothing is the minimum Purdah, and the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) has advised that thus should be the minimum standard. He states:

‘Many people urge the adoption of permissiveness like that prevalent in Europe, but this would be most unwise. Such unbridled freedom of sexes is the root of all immorality. Look at the moral situation in countries that have adopted this freedom. If freedom of sexes has helped increased their chastity and virtue, we will readily confess that we were mistaken.’ (‘Malfuzat’, vol.7, p.134 - ‘Essence of Islam’, vol. 3, p.329)

Thus, freedom too has some boundaries. When clothes are displayed in the name of freedom, when too much attention is given to fashion trends, one is also drawn towards slackness in Purdah. I receive some complaints from Pakistan, in particular from Rabwah, that now new, fashionable designs are being introduced in Burqas as well which expose the body shape of women when they are walking. For this, Taqwa requires that one must maintain one’s boundaries within those set by Allah the Exalted and His Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him).

As I said in the beginning, Prophets of God bring the commandments of Allah the Exalted to reform the world and take it closer to Allah the Exalted. In the current age, as a favour on us, Allah the Exalted has sent the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace). We should adopt the ways to which he has guided us. Effort should be made to practise in accordance to what will sustain our life in this world and the Hereafter. We should honour the due of being a believing woman. Try and espouse in accordance with the standard of Taqwa. And as I have just said, and always say, the responsibility of an Ahmadi woman is greater. She should spend her life with Taqwa because on her lies the responsibility of the upbringing of the next generation of the Community. This is a trust that has been given to you, discharge this trust. May Allah the Exalted enable all of you to do so. Please pray now – let us pray.”



PALLIATIVE CARE IN ISLAM



BY MEERAL MASHOOD - LEAMINGTON SPA

COVID-19 is the current hot topic; you cannot go more than 5 minutes without encountering media coverage or a conversation that does not revolve around the virus, the vaccine, the current lockdown rules, or speculation over how all of us cannot wait to resume life.

I have been privileged enough to be able to continue to work in a variety of medical fields during the pandemic, ranging from ICU all the way to local GP practices. Throughout my experience, I began to understand the importance and role of palliative care, especially in these unprecedented times where many people have unexpectedly had to face coming near to the end of their lives due to COVID-19.

Firstly, what is palliative care? Palliative care is a broad term that covers the care and treatment you receive near the end of your life; it could be the last days, weeks or even year of your life. Formally, a person is

considered to be ‘palliative’ when they are expected to pass away within the next 12 months. Key principles of palliative care include:

- Relief of symptoms that can be distressing to patients and family like pain, vomiting, agitation etc.¹
- Providing support, whether it be mental, physical or spiritual, to patients and their family.¹
- Giving patients and their families, the time and space to express wishes towards how they would like the events to unfold in the future (in medical terms, this is known as ‘autonomy’ – this means patients have the right to make choices about their own care)

Working in a local GP practice with a predominance of ethnic minorities, especially Muslims, I began to contemplate the Islamic view.



‘I’m sick’ or ‘I’m not feeling too great’ are phrases we hear all too commonly and they are the crux of medicine – without sickness, medicine would just not exist. In medicine, we look at illness as something that must be cured or alleviated; we trial a multitude of medications and investigations until we get to the bottom of the ‘problem’. If we cannot get to the bottom of a case or, in some situations, where there is no solution or ‘magic medicine’, we feel defeated, disappointed and downbeat. However, in Islam, sickness, when patiently endured by a believer, can be seen as a way of increasing a person’s spirituality and relationship with Allah.

Whenever we fall ill, regardless of the input from modern medicine, we will always turn towards Allah through prayers for guidance, for support, and ultimately for a cure because ‘it is He who restores me to health’.² Additionally, pain, hardship, illness, and stress are all considered to raise a believer ‘one degree in status or erase a

sin’.^{3,4} This allows us to gain an insight into why illness is considered to be a trial in Islam, as it can be easy to lose faith during such hardship. However, if tolerated with prayer and patience, illness enables us to both cleanse our soul, and grow closer to Allah during the process. In palliative care, we see people who remain terminally ill and many, in my experience, do ask for prayers and leave much of the outcome to Allah. The hardship many face during the end of life could be seen as a way of cleansing the soul to allow believers to transcend to a higher level in Paradise or evade the Hellfire.

Established above, we can see that pain, when borne with patience and prayer, is a way of becoming closer and deepening your relationship with Allah. Furthermore, regardless of the pain an individual feels, Islam denies its believers the ability to end their lives prematurely, as life is seen as a sacred gift from Allah, and it is only His decision when and how it will end. These ideas are similar to those seen in the medical management of palliative patients where euthanasia (the act of ending one’s life prematurely) is unacceptable in the UK. Additionally, pain relief plays a key role, and many patients are on high doses of opioids such as morphine to tolerate excruciating pain and ease their breathing. Islam permits the use of pain relief in end-of-life care because it does not support the undue suffering of its followers. Furthermore, mild-moderate pain relief can provide patients with the mental clarity and relief to engage in prayer and other tasks that heighten spirituality.⁵

Another key aspect of palliative care is having discussions around ‘escalation of

care'. There are a multitude of ways in which we can care for a patient and provide treatment. The discussions we

(CPR = cardiopulmonary resuscitation – involves rigorous chest compressions and invasive airway management). All these questions are approached methodically with the palliative care team and the patient is allowed to make the decisions prior to the situations, to ensure that they have a respectful and peaceful death.

In Islamic culture, it is well accepted that the family care for their sick relatives because it is seen as a blessing to care for the sick: 'Whoever relieves the hardship of a believer in this world, Allah will relieve his hardship on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever helps ease one in difficulty, Allah will make it easy for him in this world and in the Hereafter'.⁶ This supports the medical perspective of palliative care, as we try to do our best to make patients comfortable, whilst avoiding aggressive treatments that would prove to be more distressing than alleviating.

have with palliative patients are focused on certain situations and what they would want; it does not mean we do not treat them, rather it asks patients how aggressive a treatment they would prefer. For example, let's say we have a palliative 89-year-old woman with end stage cancer who gets a chest infection in the winter. The GP, or her palliative care team, will give her antibiotics and see if she improves. Depending on her frailty and chances of survival in worsening situations, we then discuss whether she would want to go into hospital for further treatment with intravenous antibiotics (through a drip) and if she were to become even sicker, would she want to go to ITU or would she prefer to go home or stay on the ward ; would she want to be put on invasive ventilation or, if her heart were to stop, would she want to have CPR



One of the many names of Allah include Al Jabbar which directly translates to ‘The Subduer’. The principles and ideas held in this name of Allah coincide beautifully with the principles of palliative care in modern medicine. Al Jabbar, as explained by Hazrat Ali (may Allah be pleased with him), describes Allah to be the ‘One who corrects everything broken, and the One who creates provision for the constraint’. Allah is praised for His effortless correction of ailments, however, when modern medicine attempts to emulate this, we can never achieve the level of perfection that Allah can achieve; scars, side effects and complications are common amongst the medical field. In palliative care, we have exhausted all possibilities of ‘curing’ the patient, rather we aim to ‘subdue’ their symptoms and ease their suffering. However, only Al Jabbar can fulfil the needs of His people and provide them with the ultimate relief. He does this because He is the Most Merciful, the Most Forgiving and the kindest to His believers as seen in His attributes Al Rahman (The Gracious) and Al Rahim (The Merciful).^{7,8,9}



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MY QURAN JOURNEY

By Farzana Ammar Almisky

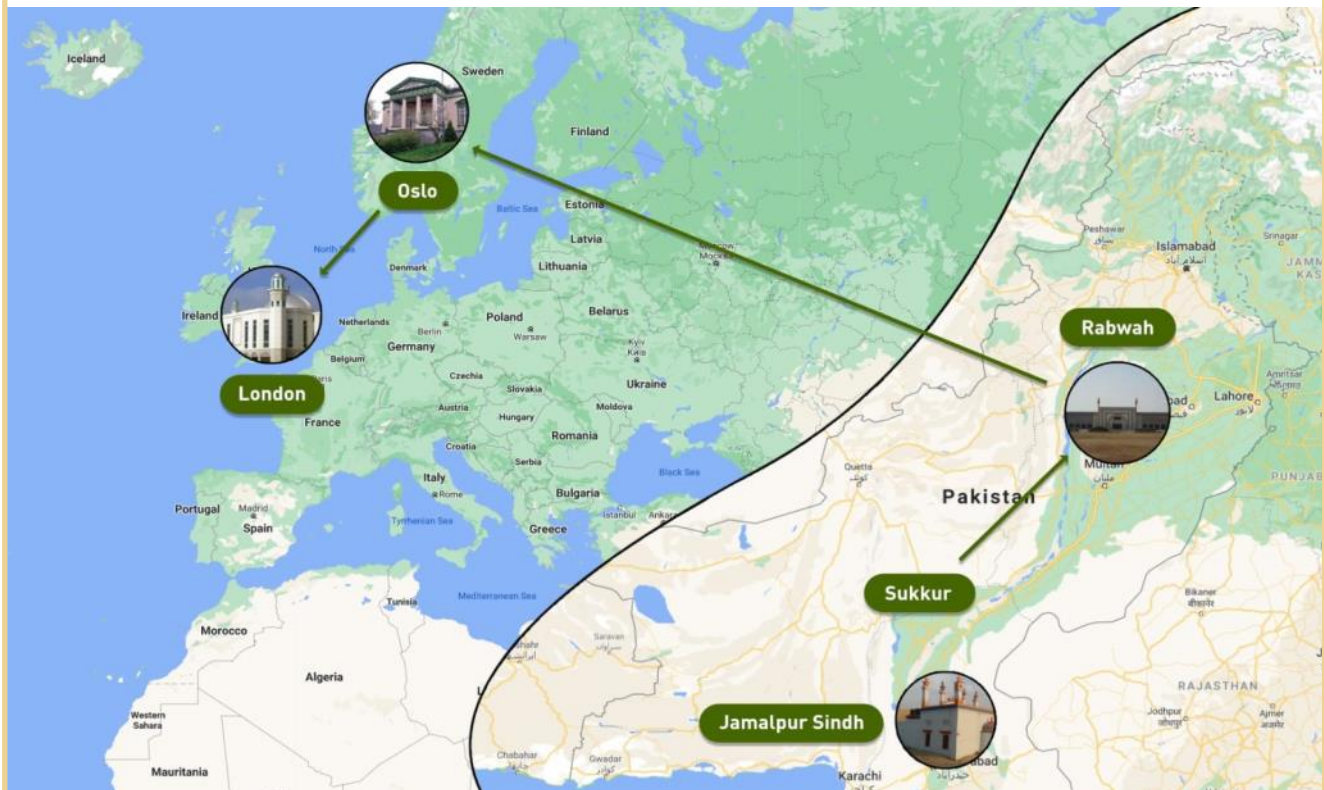
TRANSLATED BY MINA ORCHARD

AN-Noor is The Light; One of the names of The Holy Qur'an. My Qur'an journey has been permeated with such light. This Noor is a spiritual guidance, being a manifestation of God's Grace.

My Qur'an journey began at the age of 5, when my parents sent me from Goth Jamaalpur, a village in the District of Khairpur, in the Province of Sindh to Rabwah, in the Punjab. Here I was fortunate to learn Qaida Yassarnal Qur'an from Qari Muhammad Aashiq Sahib.

However, a decade later, in 1985, the safety and security of Rabwah was replaced by the hostility of Sukker, Sindh, where I attended College. Here, there had always been myths circulating about Ahmadis, or as they called us: 'Qadianis' For example, it was a commonly held view that: "The Qadianis' Qur'an is different".

Our family had to make this move, following my father's appointment by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (may Allah have mercy on him), as Ameer of the Province of Sukker, many prominent members of our community, had been martyred



during those years. In fact, my father later found out that a bounty had been placed on his head.

To protect the vulnerable, the Jama'at had organised a van with a driver for all Ahmadi school children to be safely transported to and from their respective schools. The ever-present Anti-Ahmadi propaganda made it a very difficult time for the Jama'at. The light appeared to be dimming.

Despite the obvious dangers, I don't recall ever feeling fearful - perhaps it was the rural outdoor life which had toughened me up, or maybe it was my youth. By contrast, I remember very clearly, the nervousness I felt when, encouraged by my father when I participated in the 1986 Sukker Province inter-collegiate Tilawat competition.

I was not confident to compete in Qur'an recitation, having hitherto tested my oratory skills only in Nazm and Speech. But it was in this hostile atmosphere, that a pathway was lit in front of me, as if to beckon: "This way!" In the darkness, the light shows up brightest.

On the day of the competition, despite intense stage fright, once I'd started to recite God's words, a feeling of peace came over me. Having spent just one week in preparation, by the Grace of Allah, I came top in my college, achieving 2nd place in the whole of the province. I can honestly say that I was not expecting to hear my name, as the winners were being announced.

Overjoyed, at the result, I felt that this was a vindication of my identity as a practising Muslim. You see, my motivation for entering the Qur'an competition, was to dispel the negative views many people had about Ahmadi Muslims. This was silent Tabligh: to dispel misconceptions through actions, rather than words. I wanted to shine a light on the honour we bestow on the Qur'an by reading and following it.

The 'big reveal' (i.e. disclosing my religious identity), happened during a Political Science class. I was listening, with growing frustration, as our teacher was explaining (and justifying) the 1974 re-classification of Ahmadi Muslims as 'non-Muslims'. It seemed as if the prejudice and ignorance of the city streets was now being taught in academia. I had to say something: So, in a lecture hall, packed full of students, having listened to an entire lesson on our so-called beliefs, I put my hand up. The unsuspecting teacher allowed me speak. To her embarrassed surprise, I calmly stated that all that she had just relayed to the class was untrue. And there and then, I declared myself an Ahmadi.

To those present, this was a shock, to say the least. Due to my active participation in Tilawat and other religious events at the college, they knew that I understood my Islamic obligations. So, despite the moniker given to me by others, they could see that I was a practising Muslim. They were forced to re-think their prejudiced stereo-types, as they came face to face with a real 'Qadiani'. Now I had come out of the shadows and into the light.

But despite my revelation, some college friends were in complete denial. Classmates even came up to me, assuming that my declaration, in the lecture hall, was a joke. They couldn't believe that an Ahmadi could excel in Tilawat. After all, this was an Islamic practice! It was almost incomprehensible that I could be 'one of them'. Allah had given me a unique opportunity to disprove the false allegations levelled against



us. Actions certainly speak louder than words.

However, eventually I saw a transformation in the hearts of my friends. They no longer believed in the myths perpetuated about Ahmadis. Having known me for two years, they realised that we were practising Muslims. Some of them even got a ride home with us in our van. Noor can reach the darkest of places.

By the early 1990s, I was back in Rabwah, where Qur'an classes for Lajna had begun, under the instructions of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (may Allah have mercy on him). At the start of this Tajweed course, we pledged to complete all of the lessons, in order to teach The Holy Qur'an, wherever our lives took us. The path ahead was illuminated, but I could not have ever imagined that it was leading to Scandinavia.

In 1993 I got married and moved to Norway, where my Qur'an journey continued, with one particular incident which is etched in my memory: I was honoured to recite the Qur'an in the presence of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (may Allah have mercy on him) in Oslo. There and then, Huzoor instructed me to teach the Qur'an to everyone: it was now my duty. This memorable event took place in Noor Mosque.

For the next decade I was continuously teaching Qur'an, fulfilling the promise made in Rabwah and complying with the wishes of our Khalifa. This was indeed a privilege and a blessing, filling my life with light.

Having been blessed with motherhood in 1996, my life seemed to be complete: a loving family; an active role in the community; looking forward to building our new home, in the outskirts of Oslo. It appeared as if the road ahead was clearly lit and easy to follow.

Then my life turned upside down: During the construction of the new build, my husband tragically passed away (inna lillahi wa inna ilaihi raji'un).

This was a most shocking incident, but I had been receiving a spiritual forewarning of events: For some time, I had been seeing very clear dreams intimating that my

husband's new home was ready, but it was not in this world; That would mean that he was intended to leave his earthly abode. However, I chose not to accept the interpretation of these dreams. Like my college friends, who refused to believe the truth of my Ahmadiyyat, I was now myself in denial of the truth pertaining to my husband's destiny. Sometimes we turn away from the light, which is showing us the path ahead.

But that morning, as I took our son to the doctor, on the advice of my husband, when I watched him leaving for the building site, I felt it would be for the last time. A few hours later, his friend rang and gave me the news that I had been dreading. It was as if all the lights in the entire world went out.

The sudden death of my husband and father of our two young children, left me heartbroken and it is an understatement to say that it changed everything. There is light at the end of the tunnel, as the saying goes. But at that time, it seemed like a very long and extremely dark tunnel stretching endlessly ahead. Nevertheless, Noor was always there, even if I could not clearly see it. It was now physically leading me in a different direction.

For a whole year, prior to my husband's demise, despite the fact that we were literally building a new life in Norway, I kept repeatedly seeing England in my dreams. I couldn't understand why I was dreaming of having a white-washed home, near to the large mosque in London, when we were planning our future in Oslo. I saw in one dream that I am standing on the roof of the mosque and staring out at the panoramic view. The lush and beautiful greenery which spread out before me, made me think of Qadian; but I knew in the dream that this mosque was in London. Allah was shining a light on my destiny, though at the time, I was unable to see the whole picture.

But now, suddenly widowed at thirty two, this Noor helped me to realise my future path. Guided by these previous dreams, my two children and I left Norway to settle in London, where, by June 2004, we were living near the newly built Baitul Futuh Mosque.



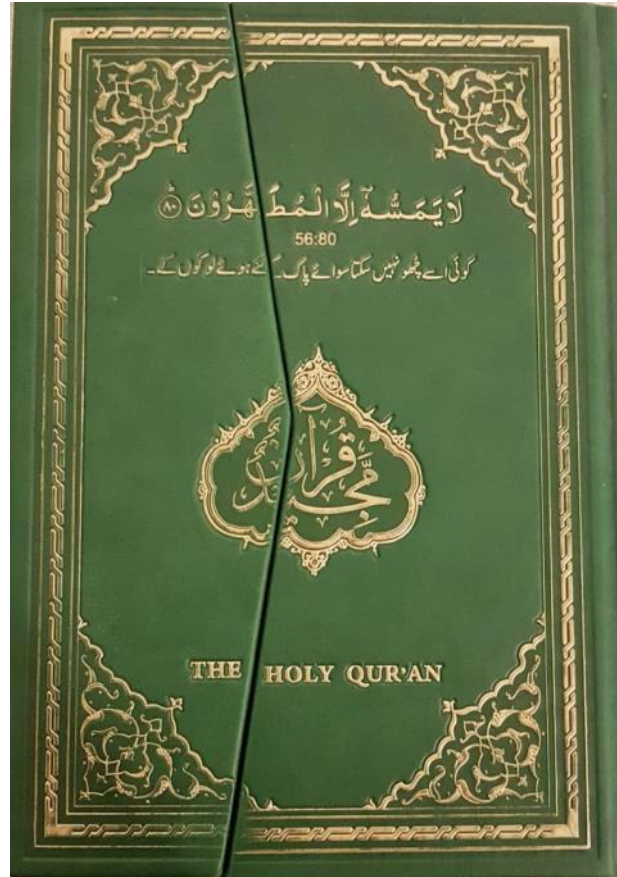
The following year, I started Lajna Qur'an classes at the mosque, catering for mothers, like myself, who had young children. And like them, I too wanted to increase in my knowledge: and so, it was around this time, that I attended the National Talim-ul Qur'an Class. On our Qur'an journey we never stop learning and are always students. Both of these courses took place in, where else, but Noor Hall!

In 2006, my life took an unexpected turn, when I married a man from Syria. This marriage, had been the result of many dreams. Following the death of my first husband, I had been vehemently against re-marrying. But I was seeing a particular Arab gentleman in my dreams. Yet again, I did not want to accept my fate, which was at odds with my nafs. However, when the proposal of marriage came, I realised that we shared the same ideals and my prospective husband was planning to devote his life to serving Ahmadiyyat. Everything just seemed to fit and events synchronised to lead us to marriage, which took place in Damascus. Now, I had a travelling companion on my epic journey. Allah's plan may be different from our own, but it is always better.

Rather than a solitary teacher, now with my husband, I was part of a team. Together, we taught at a Ramadan class for children, in Nasir Hall at the Mosque. It was quite overwhelming to see so many students gathered to learn Qur'an. How could such a high demand be met?

Over the following years we were able to teach children within our home and I started teaching Lajna, who could be trained as teachers. We were also blessed with the opportunity to prepare reciters for MTA Waqfe-Nau classes with Huzoor (may Allah be his Helper). Life was ablaze with the Noor of the Qur'an.

Alongside this, during the Ramadan of 2010, I taught Lajna, with the specific aim of training them as teachers. This was in response to stories we were hearing, of our children enrolling with non-Ahmadi tutors. Ahmadi children were going outside the Jama'at for Quran lessons because there were not enough teachers within their own community. There was a pressing need for our own Qur'an teachers and I wanted to prepare them, in order that the high demand from students could be met. The Jama'at was providing classes for this purpose, however, mothers of young children could not attend these weekend events. So, I embarked on training these ladies during the week, while their children were at school. The path was lighting up before me.



After the birth of my third child, I started to focus more on Lajna, who could now attend weekday classes in my home. In 2013, some of these Lajna were able to cut their teaching teeth at Morden Primary School. The name of this class, run every Sunday for local children, was Noor Tuition Centre.

A little later, our Regional Qur'an Co-ordinator suggested that instead of my home, Lajna classes be conducted at the mosque. In Ramadan 2015, over 50 ladies arrived at Baitul Futuh Mosque for our Lajna Tajweed Class. On the very first day I held up an Urdu book entitled "700 Ehkaam Khuda Wandī"¹. The message being: Recite the Qur'an in a beautiful manner; then understand its 700 divine commandments, in order to follow them. It is An-Noor, The Light for our lives.

Eventually, our Lajna teachers, also started classes over conference call and Skype. This widened the cohort, with online learning bridging geographical distances. By the Grace of Allah, many of the Lajna who attended these various classes, are now teaching at ITQA (International Talim-ul Qur'an Academy). In fact, Hafiz Fazli Rabbi Sahib, provided us with much support, for which we are very grateful.

My Qur'an Journey has taken me to many places physically and spiritually. It has provided me with opportunities to be of service to the Jama'at and meet many different people along the way. The Qur'an has been the light of my life.

Noor, or light, is a blessing we can take for granted. Be it the brightness of daylight, or the flickering flame of a candle. Our life's path can be bathed in spiritual Noor, ensuring a safe journey along the illumined road ahead.

In writing this article, I have realised that, *Noor-Ullah* (the Light of Allah), has enabled me, to fulfil the oath, which I took in Rabwah in 1991: to teach the Holy Qur'an wherever life takes me. And this journey is still continuing, Alhamdulillah. All praise is due to Allah, who has, through His Grace and Mercy, always shone a light on the path ahead.

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DIABETES

The Symptoms



Pre-diabetes

Many more people have blood sugar levels above the normal range, but not high enough to be diagnosed as having diabetes.

It's very important for diabetes to be diagnosed as early as possible because it will get progressively worse if left untreated.

When to see a doctor

If you experience the main symptoms of diabetes, which include:

- feeling very thirsty
- peeing more frequently than usual, particularly at night
- feeling very tired
- weight loss and loss of muscle bulk
- itching around the private parts,, or frequent episodes of thrush
- cuts or wounds that heal slowly
- blurred vision

Type 1 diabetes can develop quickly over weeks or even days.

Many people have type 2 diabetes for years without realising because the early symptoms tend to be general.

Diabetes

Diabetes is a lifelong condition that causes a person's blood sugar level to become too high.

There are 2 main types of diabetes:

- type 1 diabetes – where the body's immune system attacks and destroys the cells that produce insulin
- type 2 diabetes – where the body does not produce enough insulin, or the body's cells do not react to insulin

Type 2 diabetes is far more common than type 1. In the UK, around 90% of all adults with diabetes have type 2.

During pregnancy, some women have such high levels of blood glucose that their body is unable to produce enough insulin to absorb it all. This is known as gestational diabetes.



Causes of diabetes

The amount of sugar in the blood is controlled by a hormone called insulin, which is produced by the pancreas (a gland behind the stomach).

When food is digested and enters your bloodstream, insulin moves glucose out of the blood and into cells, where it's broken down to produce energy.

However, if you have diabetes, your body is unable to break down glucose into energy. This is because there's either not enough insulin to move the glucose, or the insulin produced does not work properly.

There are no lifestyle changes you can make to lower your risk of type 1 diabetes.

You can help manage type 2 diabetes through healthy eating, regular exercise and achieving a healthy body weight.

Living with diabetes

If you're diagnosed with diabetes, you'll need to eat healthily,

Take regular exercise and carry out regular blood tests to ensure your blood glucose levels stay balanced.

You can use the [BMI healthy weight calculator](#) to check whether you're a healthy weight.

You can find apps and tools to help you manage your diabetes and have a healthier lifestyle in the [NHS Apps Library](#).

People diagnosed with type 1 diabetes

also require regular insulin injections for the rest of their life.

As type 2 diabetes is a progressive condition, medicine may eventually be required, usually in the form of tablets.

Diabetic eye screening

Everyone with diabetes aged 12 or over should be invited to have their eyes screened once a year.

If you have diabetes, your eyes are at risk from diabetic retinopathy, a condition that can lead to sight loss if it's not treated.

Screening, which involves a 30-minute check to examine the back of the eyes, is a way of detecting the condition early so it can be treated more effectively.



1. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diabetes/>

The HISTORY of WRITING

By Sirah Ahmed - Scotland



THE oldest fictional story in the world is the “Epic of Gilgamesh”, a poem from c.2100 BCE, full of adventure that centres on the Sumerian king, Gilgamesh. Over twelve clay tablets worth of text, Gilgamesh goes on adventures slaying monsters and meeting gods in a quest for immortality that ultimately ends in tragedy. Over the next 1000 years, the Babylonians continued to add and edit the story, which ultimately created the twelve tablets that we recognise today as the Epic of Gilgamesh. Storytelling is a key part of societal evolution, teaching us valuable lessons about how to survive, empathise and live happy fulfilling lives.

A notable feature of the Epic of Gilgamesh is the eleventh tablet which details a story of a flood that grants one of Gilgamesh’s ancestors immortality, this theme of a great flood is shared with the story of creation in Genesis. The Epic of Atrahasis, also from the Mesopotamia region, is another story of a great flood in which the main character builds a large boat filled with his family and animals and is saved from the flood.¹ Much of the archaeological evidence suggest that the Old Testament was written after Atrahasis and Gilgamesh, yet were likely shared their inspiration from the same devastating flood in the Mesopotamian region. Each of these stories can be seen as the human endeavor to find the reason for such a devastating flood, with actions of the Divine being the general answer. These stories highlight the human desire for knowledge and the battle of our moralities.

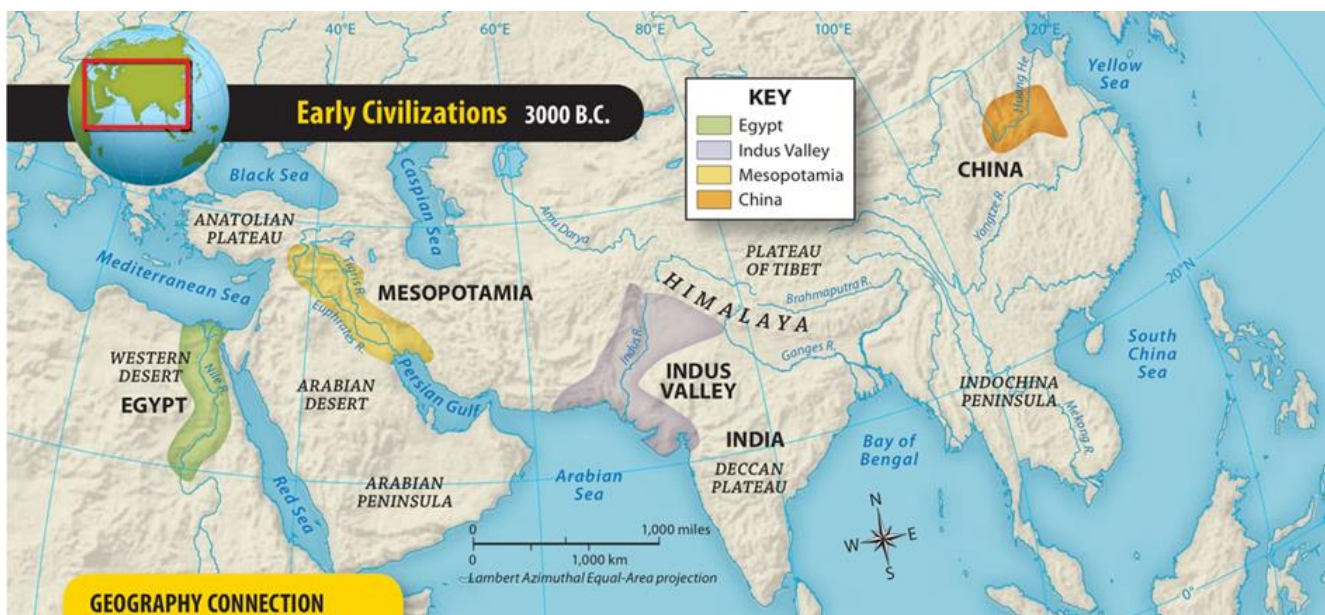


Neo-Assyrian clay tablet. Epic of Gilgamesh. Tablet 11: Story of the Flood. Known as the "Flood Tablet" From the Library of Ashurbanipal. 7th century BC.

Writing is arguably the most important technological advancement for mankind, yet is continuously underestimated in its importance. While human beings are generally born with the ability to communicate verbally and through gestures, writing is a learnt skill that must be taught to each generation. Abraham Lincoln described the art of writing as ***‘the great invention of the world...enabling us to converse with the dead, the absent, and the unborn, at all distances of time and space.’***² Lincoln understood the significance of writing in its ability for words to reverberate through time and space, creating change where it goes. The Epic of Gilgamesh continues to influence writers and provides us with an insight into the values of the past. Unlike speech which disappears from the moment the sound leaves our lips, writing is the permanent markings that last.

It is important to understand what we mean when we talk about writing. There is not a clear definition of what can be classified as a writing system, however, ***The World's Writing Systems*** defines it as permanent marks used to represent an utterance.³ An alternative definition is writing as a system of graphic or tactile marks representing the units of a specific language. The inexact criteria for defining a writing system demonstrate the complexity academics face in determining whether the marks of early civilisations can be defined as writing systems.

Earlier scholars believed that writing was invented in Mesopotamia, modern-day Iraq influencing the surrounding areas until it spread globally. However, more evidence has emerged to suggest that writing has been invented multiple times across different civilizations. There is a general agreement amongst academics that the three earliest writing systems were from China, Mesoamerica and Mesopotamia. Nonetheless, there is continuing research in the writing systems of the Indus Valley, modern-day Pakistan and North-East India, and the Polynesian Islands amongst other areas.



The earliest forms of writing were written symbols called pictographs and they were largely created to communicate accountancy information. This form of writing emerged as a response to an expanding economy. In Mesopotamia, the city of Uruk, Sumer by

3200 BCE was the largest settlement in Southern Mesopotamia, often recognised for its architecture, culture and technological advancement.⁴ The exceptionally fertile land of the region created a flourishing local economy with increasing numbers of crops, livestock, raw materials and products entering and leaving the region. The ability for farmers and traders to use a written system to communicate with each other and maintain a financial record eased the burden of an increasingly complex trade system. Clay tablets from Uruk show simple pictographs that were used to allocate and manage workers' rations.



Harappa seal from the Indus valley.

<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/harappa-seal-from-the-indus-valley>

This early method of recording and communicating information persisted as production continued to increase and the economy continued to expand and Uruk gained prominence in the region, today commonly known as **'the first city'**.

*Mesopotamia capitals
between 2500 - 500 BC
(Sayre. 2013.15)*



The pictographs soon developed into cuneiform signs. Cuneiforms developed from Sumerian pictographs and were a logosyllabic writing script, this meant that cuneiforms combined the pictographs that were previously being used while emphasizing the phonetic sounds of the symbols, to create a new writing system. Some academics argue that the Sumerian cuneiforms influenced the Egyptian development of hieroglyphics which similarly uses a logosyllabic script. The cuneiform script influenced the societies on the periphery of Mesopotamia like Crete, which continued to evolve the script eventually producing Ancient Greek and Latin, and ultimately producing the European languages that we recognise today. The evidence that we have from Mesopotamia and the surrounding regions allows us to create this evolutionary timeline of writing systems, that we are unable to do for other regions.



Cuneiform tablet: administrative account with entries concerning malt and barley groats ca. 3100–2900 B.C.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/327385>

Despite other regions also developing writing systems independently, the lack of preservation has left academics unable to create a more comprehensive understanding of the origins and evolution of writing systems in other areas. The earliest evidence of writing available in Mesoamerica is from the Mayan civilization in 250 BC, however, academics largely agree that the writing systems began far before this time.⁵ Similarly, despite having some evidence of early forms of writing from the Indus Valley, there isn't enough evidence to suggest that there was a comprehensive writing system and scholars are still attempting to decipher the Indus script.⁶ The earliest writing found in China was written on animal bones and was largely prophecies and divinations written by the Emperor as a message from the Gods.

Imitation of oracle bone of tortoise plastron of the late Shang dynasty (c.1200-1050 BC) from the Yinxu site. China.

<https://www.nms.ac.uk/explore-our-collections/stories/world-cultures/oracle-bones/>



The vast geographical region of China meant that similar writing systems were emerging at the same time in differing locations until ultimately they merged. While most of the previously referred writing scripts have evolved into new types, the Chinese logosyllabic script has remained the same style. With over 2000 characters, Chinese characters represent both an image and a phonetic sound. This continuity is rare and not shared by other civilizations.⁷ Similar to the Mesoamerican writing systems, it is believed that the writing systems of China preceded the earliest evidence that has been found in the region. This large lack of evidence has resulted in the origins and evolution of writing systems being largely confined to Mesopotamia and Europe.

Comparative evolution of Cuneiform, Egyptian and Chinese characters

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Comparative_evolution_of_Cuneiform,_Egyptian_and_Chinese_characters.jpg



Ultimately, civilisation is defined by writing. While writing emerged in response to expanding economies, communication needs and stories, our writing systems continue to evolve and change per our needs. The continuing emergence of new computer coding languages and the ability for computers to communicate with each other demonstrates this ever-evolving nature of writing systems. Writing has manifested itself through numerous ways including science, literature and the press. Beyond the contents of our words, writing has become an art form in itself with the art of calligraphy. Each of these expressions of writing exhibit a side of humanity and human ingenuity. Steven Roger Fischer described writing as the ‘gauge of the human condition’, which is exemplified in the creation of the Epics of Gilgamesh and Atrahasis.⁸ Despite Gilgamesh being from over 4,000 years ago it continues to speak to us today, that is the power of writing. The longevity of these stories demonstrates that the peak of writing’s evolution lies in the human ability to transcribe and share stories. These tales show that while civilisations rise and fall, our aspirations and flaws remain largely the same, connecting us to the past and the future.

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you are what you Eat



By Sabah Ahmad - Sutton

'You are what you eat' is a popular phrase touted by virtually every fitness and health guru in the market. For all intents and purposes, it sounds quite straight forward; eat well and you will be well. However, this advice is apparently not so easy to digest given the super high occurrence of obesity, diabetes and eating disorders, particularly over the last few decades! Not only have we, as a society, failed to act on such guidelines but there is also the sneaking suspicion that we were healthier without them! So, what does it really mean? How can we learn to apply it to our lives and are we really what we eat?

The human body is made up of many ingredients, a whopping 99% of which are the elements oxygen, hydrogen, carbon and nitrogen. Of these, 60% of the human body is made of water and this makes perfect sense because we can survive 8-21 days without food but only 3 without water; in fact without water no life would exist. Scientists may have realised this in the latter part of the last millennium but God had already revealed this to the Holy Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) 1400 years ago;



'And we made from water every living thing' ¹ (21:31).

Then, out of His love for His creation, God ensures fresh water on Earth, pretty much signposting its vitality to the human diet. We know now that water affects mood, digestion, energy levels- it basically sets the base for physical and mental health.

So what about the other elements, how should we be consuming them? Luckily for humans, we do not have to drink carbon lattes and nitrogen on toast. Instead, God has provided us with delicious food resources, for example:



**"and the date-palm and cornfields whose fruits are of diverse kinds, and the olive and the pomegranate, alike and unlike." ²
(6 :142)**

as well as many other food resources, from which the human body absorbs and metabolizes everything that it needs to survive: vitamins, minerals, proteins, fats, water and carbohydrates. If our diets comprise everything that God has naturally provided- fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes and beans and small quantities of meat and dairy- all our nutritional requirements are met. As with water, God has provided us with everything we need.

So how does this materialize into what we eat and WHO we are? In the Holy Quran Allah says



“Eat of the things that are pure”³ (23:52) and 'Ye men, eat of what is lawful and good in the Earth'⁴ (2:169)

Lawful or Halal refers to dietary restrictions prescribed by Allah but what does pure mean and why is the food we eat so important that Allah has chosen to guide us about it through the Holy Quran? The Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) has illuminated this for us in his book ‘The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam’ where he talks about the direct correlation between what we eat and how it effects our moral behaviour;



‘according to the Holy Quran the natural state of man has a very strong relationship with his moral and spiritual states, so much so that even a person’s manner of eating and drinking affects his moral and spiritual states’.⁵

Taking this further we must also mention about the very specific teaching about the prohibition of eating the flesh of swine: in this too the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) has succinctly explained why humans should avoid the meat of a pig completely-



‘Everyone knows that it eats filth and is utterly shameless. Thus, the reason for the prohibition of its flesh is obvious, as by the law of nature its flesh would have a foul effect on the body and the soul of one who eats it’..⁶

Pure also refers to the quality of our food; after a century of research into nutrition, food and the environment; it is only in the last few decades that modern science has begun to truly understand the impact of food on our health, the effect of environmental factors on our food and how food quality affects health. Thus, if we eat chicken raised on chemicals to accelerate growth, then we are in danger of ingesting the chemicals. If we eat fruit that has been doused in chemical preservatives without washing it, those chemicals may enter our blood, and if we eat grains treated with an excess of chemicals our morning box of cereal may also have traces of toxins.

So, when God guides us to eat things that are pure, He is really giving us a fully comprehensible guide; do not over consume food which is unnatural or impure, for example over processed and poor-quality meat. (Packed with fat and additives)

Similarly, no food is so good for the body that we should eat it with abandon and God has illuminated this for us too;



“Eat of the fruit of each when it bears fruit, but pay His due on the day of harvest and exceed not the bounds. Surely, Allah loves not those who exceed the bounds” (6:142).⁷

This happens when you eat seasonally, eating of the tree when it bears its fruit, and eating a small amount so you do not cause a burden on the land. God is saying hundreds of years before scientists, that everything needs to be eaten in moderation, a message also given by the Holy Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when he said that we should fill our stomachs one third with food, one third with drink and leave the final third free.⁸

Also eating foods that naturally occur is the same as seasonal eating and helps to avoid toxic preservatives keeping them for months. We know now that the problem with ‘impure food’, or food riddled with chemicals and toxins, is that they are carcinogenic and, with over 166,000 people dying of cancer in the UK every year⁹ it proves that what we eat will directly cause harm or nourish our body and again that is why we should eat everything in moderation. This also highlights that what you eat will affect HOW you are, what you are.

Many factors have ramifications on our food and subsequently on our health. Geography and socio-politics can have a major effect on the food we have access to and can afford. In wealthy countries, fads and super diets come and go; sadly, they are far more detrimental to mental and physical health than sticking to the simple diet of food that God has provided in moderate portions. The last decade has seen such a huge shift to a plant-based diet; that at times you may have thought that the benefits of eating dates were discovered by middle class westerners (along with turmeric). Yet, Salman ibn Aamir Dhabi, on whom be



peace, relates that the Holy Prophet, (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), said:



“If any among you keep a fast, he should end it with a date or else with water for it is pure.” (Abu Daud and Tirmidhi) ¹⁰

In fact, some of the diets that have sprung up to combat the highly processed Western diet have actually helped to contribute to a society that is sicker and less nourished than before the days of buckwheat pancakes and chickpea water chocolate mousse! They are so extreme in their adherence to their ideology be it completely vegan/protein/raw, that for any average human trying to apply them in their own lives they are put off at the onset by the long, expensive ingredients and equipment needed. Furthermore, they can often cause anxiety because not many people can maintain such strict eating habits. Whatever food feels intuitive to you, should be eaten in moderation and balance; no meat at all will leave you lacking in vitamin B, for children certainly dairy is the most practical and healthy solution to getting their body what it needs and a vegan kiev is just as processed as a chicken one. As explained by the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him)



‘people who refrain altogether from eating meat gradually suffer a decline of the faculty of bravery’ but also ‘those who are given to a diet consisting mainly of meat and eat very little of greens suffer a decline of meekness and humility’. ¹¹

This is not to say that we should not heed nutritional information but find facts that are based around real evidence, and be prepared to make adjustments; as society educates itself over food we change our choices and that's the privilege of being able to increase our knowledge as humans. We are what we eat and we are able to eat to change how we are and, at times, who we are. Food has the capacity to help make us what we want to be; healthy and happy servants of Allah!

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Prawn Toast snacks

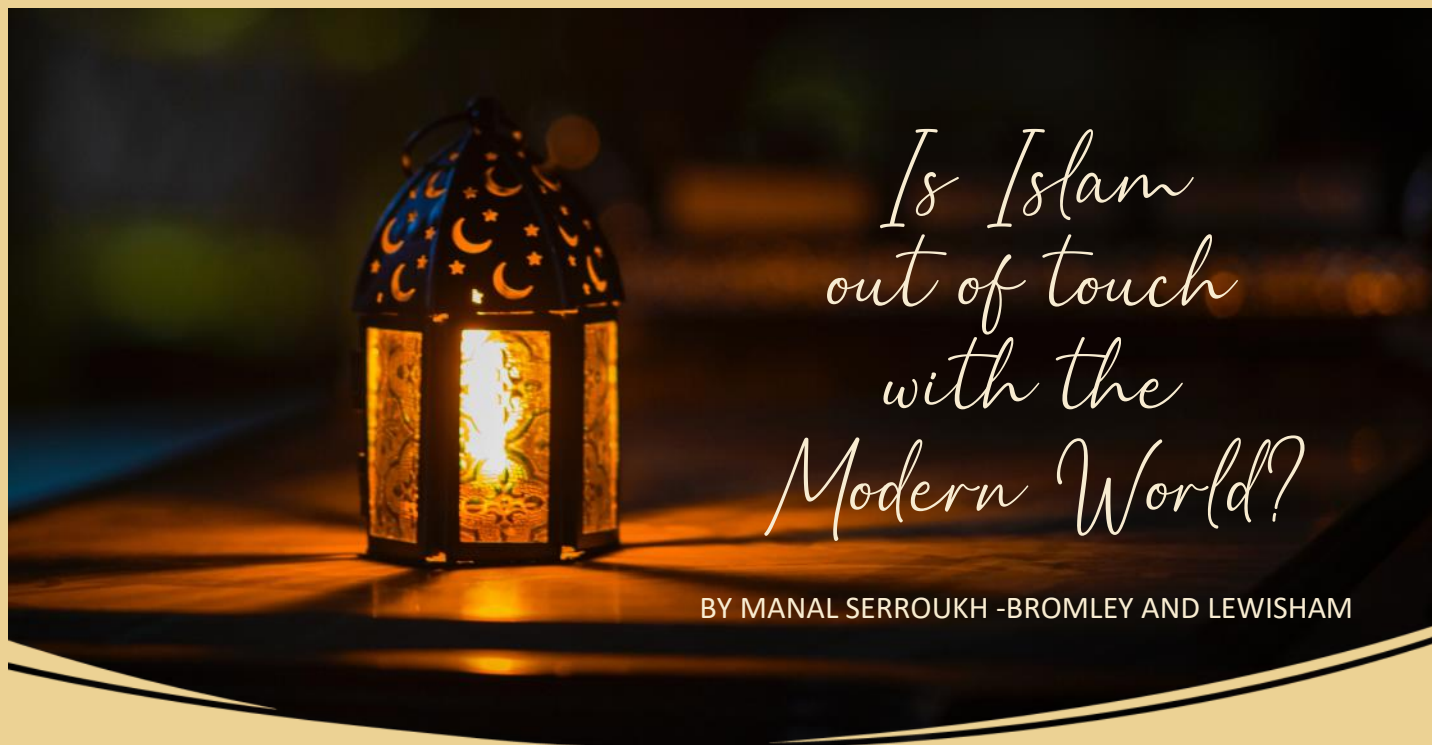
BY SALMA NAVEED AMINI
BRADFORD SOUTH

Method

1. In a food processor, add the prawns, spring onion, egg white, ginger, garlic clove, soy sauce, white pepper and salt. Blitz till it becomes a paste.
2. Slice your bread from corner to corner making 4 equal triangles for each slice of bread. Leave the crust on.
3. Take your first triangle and spread the paste on one side of the triangle covering it liberally.
4. Then, in a plate, spread out the sesame seeds and place the bread, paste down, onto the sesame seeds covering this side evenly.
5. Once all the triangles have been dipped in the sesame seeds, place them in a plate ready to fry.
6. In a deep frying pan or wok, heat the oil and then reduce to medium heat. Add the triangles to the oil in batches of three, paste side down.
7. Fry them for 1-2 mins max or until golden brown. Then flip them over and fry for 30-45 seconds. Once fried, take them out and place them on some kitchen roll to drain any excess oil.
8. Finally, serve your prawn toast on their own or with sweet chilli dip.

Ingredients

1. 120g prawns
2. 1 spring onion
3. 1 small egg white (lightly beaten)
4. 1/2 tsp crushed ginger
5. 1 garlic clove
6. 1 tsp light soy sauce
7. 1/2 tsp white pepper (if unavailable use black pepper)
8. 1/4 tsp salt
9. 8 tbsp sesame seeds
10. 2-3 slices of thick white bread
11. Sesame oil for frying (if unavailable use vegetable oil)



Is Islam out of touch with the Modern World?

BY MANAL SERROUKH -BROMLEY AND LEWISHAM

In these current times, we often hear individuals argue that Islam is an ‘out-dated’ religion, which preaches archaic teachings that are no longer suited or beneficial to current society. We see that this ideology has become significantly prominent in western society, as current social norms are often perceived as opposing Islamic teachings.

However, this perception only comes about due to a lack of understanding of the teachings of Islam, as well as a lack of understanding of the reasoning and wisdom behind this beautiful religion. We know that all wisdom belongs to Allah and He is the only Being with full knowledge behind each teaching of Islam. But by His Grace, we are taught a fraction of His knowledge as a mercy for us so that we are able to more easily abide by the laws of Islam as well as make sense of them to a deeper extent. We learn that while these rules have layers of wisdom and benefits which have social and moral benefit, they also enable us to excel spiritually and increase our faith as servants of Allah. This is critical for us as Muslims, as this is our main goal. We are able to use the knowledge as a tool to attain nearness to Allah, our Creator.

Since the beginning of time, man has been bestowed with guidance and instructions from Allah the Almighty and these instructions will continue to be relevant till the end of time. Allah has finalised the way of life for man through Islam. In the past, He sent down the laws and guidance through each prophet that had been appointed at that time according to the situation and understanding that man had at that point of creation to abide by. For example, with Hazrat Musa (peace be upon him), he was instructed by Allah to preach to the Israelites not to kill, steal, commit adultery etc. Similarly, Hazrat Isa (peace be upon him) taught the tribes of Israel to “turn the other cheek” and “love thy neighbour”. Each prophet came to a certain group of people with teachings from Allah, suited for those communities.

However, in the case of the Holy Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and Islam - Allah has specifically said:

“This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as religion.”

(Holy Qur’an (5:4) ¹

Thus, it is clearly indicated by the Lord of the Worlds, that Islam itself has been perfected by Him and finalised. When we acknowledge this powerful yet short line in the Quran, we come to see that there will never be a need for updating the ways of Islam. Unlike other prophets, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has a higher status because he was able to teach the final way of life to the Ummah. There will never be a new commandment nor a new law for the righteous to follow. Even while some may argue that Islam should be updated; a religion that has been sent to man by Allah Himself who created human beings and knows every aspect of human nature, cannot have any unnecessary teachings or “out of touch” instructions. It is crucial that we uphold His teachings no matter how much man progresses or evolves in this ever-changing world. No law can be added to Islam nor taken away, regardless of the time we are living in.

The Holy Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) himself was named the ‘Khatam’(Seal)² of the prophets because after him there will be no new law bearing prophet - which again indicates to us that Islam has been completely perfected and there will never be a need for redirection or modification to the Islamic ways or laws from a prophet of Allah, let alone a common man or society in general.

Instead, it is very clearly suggested in the Holy Qur’an that any prophets that come after the Holy Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) will act as reformers and their task will be to guide the Muslim Ummah back to the true teachings of Islam whenever it starts to waver or lose its way. By Allah’s grace, this of course has been fulfilled by the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad whose advent had been foretold by the Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

To further answer the question of whether or not Islam is out of touch with the modern world, we should start by first contemplating which aspects of Islam are considered ‘out of touch’. Let us look at two Islamic injunctions that repeatedly come under scrutiny by the modern world. One is the wearing of the Hijab and the emphasis on Modesty and the other is Segregation.

Modesty

It is argued that the concept of modesty in Islam is an out-dated practice and a woman should not have to cover up for a man's sake. However, what many fail to realise, is that modesty in Islam is something which elevates the status of women. It does not diminish or reduce the worth of a woman. Moreover, it is crucial to understand that a woman in Islam does not wear a Hijab because a male member instructed her to, rather these women act on modesty as it is a command from their Creator. In the Guardian newspaper this point was highlighted in an article by Jessica Shepherd.

“It is often implied that girls and women are forced to wear the veil or other clothing that envelops the body by their fathers, male relatives or by the old men at the mosque. My own research suggests that largely this is not the case. Muslim girls normally make an autonomous decision to wear the hijab.³”

When one learns about the reasoning behind the injunction for wearing the hijab, one becomes enlightened to its' benefits and beauty, and can learn that the hijab does not demean or debase a Muslim woman in any way, to the contrary the hijab gives dignity and true liberation. Modern society has come to a point, where indecency and exposing one's beauty is considered the norm and has become a source of validation in a world where competing in looks and external beauty is valued more than inner beauty? Islam lays emphasis on the beauty within which comes through purity and spirituality.

Modesty is shown to improve the behaviour of the one acting on it, what we wear on the outside, impacts us internally - whether it be spiritually, emotionally or psychologically. This is even accepted in western culture; people are encouraged to dress smartly for interviews and wear uniforms in educational environments, as it has a psychological impact on their behaviour. So, by following the commandment to show modesty and cover ourselves as prescribed by Allah, we know that this has a positive impact on our spiritual self. The act of immodesty however, is detrimental for one's soul, as it encourages



immorality. This has a negative impact on an individual's mindset and lifestyle. Immodesty and immorality have far reaching consequences not only at an individual level but for society at large.

Interestingly, this topic is also spoken about by the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) in his book "The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam". He highlights the different spiritual levels of man. "The Holy Quran has indicated three separate sources of these three states." The Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) beautifully elaborates how each state is influenced by certain behaviours and in turn are expressed by the individual.⁵ The first state is referred to as "The self that incites to evil", and is known as 'Nafsi Ammarah' in the Holy Quran. The Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) explains this state as man's natural state, so long as he is not guided by reason and understanding but follows his natural inclinations in eating, drinking, sleeping, waking, anger and provocation, like an animal." The second state is 'Nafsi Lawwamah' or 'The reproving self', which is ultimately described as the state of decent morality. For example, practicing compassion, self-respect and controlling your emotions and desire. This is the state which distinguishes man's moral lifestyle from an animalistic one, and is the minimum standard we should be reaching. However, the third state is the highest level a man can ascend to spiritually. This is referred to in the Holy Qur'an as "Nafsi Mutma'innah"; 'The soul at rest'. This spiritual state is 'when the soul that has found comfort in God. It undergoes a great transformation in this life and is bestowed a sort of paradise while still in this world.'. This principle is highlighted in the Holy Quran,⁶ "***He who purifies his soul of earthly passions shall be saved and shall not suffer ruin, but he who is overcome by his earthly passions should despair of life.***"

This shows that our actions have a direct impact on our spiritual state, this is not only explained in the Holy Quran, but many scientific studies have also accepted this fact. It can be understood that one's habits and lifestyle will ultimately lead us to one of the three spiritual states. Those who may wish to dress in a modest manner, and refrain from indecent behaviour and thoughts when interacting with the opposite gender, will begin to tread the path of the 'soul at rest', and become closer to their Creator. On the other hand, practising indecent and shameful acts may lead one's soul towards the state of 'Nafsi Ammarah', the self that incites to evil, where the desires can spiral out of control.

The Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) explains this saying:

"They become moral qualities when they are exercised or become capable of being exercised on their proper occasions, under the control of reason."⁷

Thus, when the Modern world looks at Islam's emphasis on modesty and chastity as 'outdated' they are extremely naive in their thinking and do not understand the negative consequences. The tangled web of social ills, whether its abuse, neglected children, promiscuity, the breakdown of family values and broken homes can all lead back to this lack of modesty. Islam is not outdated when it comes to this injunction to the contrary it is forward thinking and reaches the deep roots of the social ills that the modern world faces.

Segregation

Another teaching some perceive as out of touch to modern society is the practice of segregation between men and women. We know as Muslims, that men and women should not mix freely for unnecessary reasons i.e., friendships, community groups or any socialising environment. But first and foremost, it is critical to understand why this is encouraged in Islam and why Allah has commanded us to follow this instruction. When looking at the psychology as well as biology of both genders, it is clear that there is a natural level of attraction between both sexes. If both men and women were left to act freely on this desire and completely disregarded the need to act appropriately with the opposite gender, society would become very immoral and indecent and we most definitely can see this happening in modern and western society. Adultery (zina) is quite common in the western world. This impacts families, children and society as a whole. This immoral



behaviour is completely against Islamic teachings. By Allah's grace we are being protected from a list of negative impacts which fall upon the ones acting in this manner. While some argue that free-mixing alone is not harmful, we must acknowledge that free-mixing is most definitely a prime factor which

leads to the inappropriate behaviour that follows. While this natural desire is

instilled in the minds of a man, Allah still instructed both genders to act modestly and lower their gaze. To do this effectively, free-mixing is prohibited, as it would be difficult to constantly act appropriately in the presence of the opposite gender at all times. Allah knows His creation and understands it's needs and weaknesses. Thus, by following His commandments, we safeguard ourselves from the greater sins which can lead to irreversible damage to ourselves and others.

To further illustrate the reasoning for gender segregation and expand on the fact that this

injunction is not out of touch with the Modern World we can see how Islam encourages appropriate behaviour between men and women in society and discourages inappropriate speech and behaviour between the two. Society as a whole must understand that this is not something which holds back individuals from progressing in society. Men and women are still permitted to work in the same environment in a respectful manner, thus there is no set back to this instruction. Ironically the ‘Me too’⁸ campaign was a prime example of the problems and complexities that arise because of free-mixing. If we educate ourselves as to the reasoning for this instruction (to segregate), we see that in reality there is no setback or disadvantage in following any of Allah’s commandments and practicing Muslims are completely able to partake in modern society without being out of touch. To the contrary the ‘Me too’ campaign further highlighted the beauty and wisdom of this commandment of Allah.

I have only touched on two aspects that we are often questioned about or are criticised by modern thinking. It is true that the perception is that Islam and its teachings are different to the traditions of modern society. Does this however mean that Islam is an out-dated religion? No. Does it mean that Islam needs updating in any way? Most definitely not. Does this mean that Islam is completely suitable for all ages and societies until the end times? Yes! All of the questions people have about Islam and its teachings are answered in the Holy Quran by Allah Himself, as well as in Ahadith. Knowledge is key, in order to answer all opposing ideas about Islam. Knowledge gives us strength in our convictions and enables us to counter any argument put to us about our faith. Allah’s wisdom is vast beyond comprehension. By His mercy He has enlightened us with the teachings of Islam in subtle and powerful ways, as a means for us to attain nearness to Him and understand the depth of Islam and Allah’s commandments.

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The Two Travellers

By Yasmeen Ahmad - Leeds

There was once a traveller who was walking from a village in the mountains to a village in the valley.

As he walked along, he saw an old man sitting on a rock, so he stopped and said to him, "I'm on my way to the village in the valley, can you tell me what it's like?"

The old man looked up and asked the man where he had come from.

The man responded, "I have come from the village in the mountains."

"What was that like?" the old man asked.

"Terrible!" the man exclaimed. "No one spoke my language, I had to sleep on a dirt floor in one of their houses, they fed me some sort of stew that had yak or dog or both in it, and the weather was atrocious."

"Then I think that you will find that the village in the valley is much the same," was the reply.

A few hours later another traveller passed by and he said to the old man, "I am on my way to the village in the valley, can you tell me what it's like?"

"Where have you come from?" enquired the old man.

"I have come from the village in the mountains."

"And what was that like?"

"It was wonderful!" the man replied. "No one spoke my language so we had to communicate using our hands and facial expressions. I had to sleep on the dirt floor which was a new experience. They fed me a strange stew - I had no idea what was in it, but just experiencing how the locals lived was amazing, and the weather was freezing cold, which meant that I really got a taste of the local conditions. It was one of the best experiences of my life."

"Then I think that you'll find that the village in the valley is much the same," was the response.'

The attitude of both the travellers was the deciding factor in their experiences. A positive mindset has the power to make our life experiences rich and fulfilling. A negative mindset, on the other hand, leads us to misery and unhappiness.

Our life experiences are less about what happens to us but more about how we respond. Life is full of challenges and if we face them with patience and steadfastness and turn to Allah we will always find solace. In the Holy Qur'an we read:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالشَّرَاتِ ط وَبِئْسَ الْعَابِرِينَ

'And We will try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives, and fruits; but give glad tidings to the patient, Who, when a misfortune overtakes them, say, 'Surely, to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return.' ²

Being positive is one of the best paths to happiness. If you wake up and look at everything with a negative outlook, it will have an adverse effect on your day; however, if you look at life in a positive manner, you may be able to see the good in things. This is closely associated with the concept of shukr (gratefulness) which is heavily emphasised in Islam. Allah says:

لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ

“ If you are grateful, I will, surely, bestow more favours on you.” ³

An immediate result of gratefulness is that we realise the enormity of God's blessings no matter what the situation, and are saved from taking things for granted.

Islam gives us a positive mindset. The Islamic teaching of fulfilling our duties to our Creator and fulfilling our duties to His Creation, lead to an outlook that sees hope and purpose in all our daily pursuits. There is a reason for our existence and there is goodness in all Allah has created. The key to a positive mindset and attitude is accepting Allah's will and fulfilling our obligations to Him.

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HOW TO WRITE a good article

✓ Do's

- Consider how interesting your material is - is the article engaging, informative and interesting?
- Structure articles with a beginning, middle and end and make sure the article flows.
- Pay attention to word choice, tone and sentence structure.
- Reference all direct and indirect quotes.
- Proofread your article before submitting.
- Check, check and recheck.

Don'ts ✗

- Try to cover too much in one article - it's better to go in depth into one subject.
- Include large sections of copy and pasted material.
- Go off on tangents - stay focussed on your subject matter.
- Plagiarise
- Add too many quotes. It ruins the flow of the reading.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Word limit is approx 500- 700 words
- Type articles if in English - 12pt font, Arial
- Handwritten articles will be accepted for Urdu. If typed 14pt Jameel noori nastaleeq
- Submit articles as a word document or share on google drive
- Remember to include your name and Majlis

SPELLINGS AND SALUTATIONS

The Holy Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)

The Promised Messiah (peace be upon him)

Where razi Allaho would be used (may Allah be pleased with him/her)

Where rahamullah would be used (may Allah have mercy on him)

Hazrat Khalifat-ul Masih V (may Allah be his helper)

Huzoor/Hazrat

REFERENCES

References should include name of author, name of book, page number and edition/publisher or alternatively a web address can be used.

Quranic references are usually taken from the Holy Quran translated by Hazrat Maulawi Sher Ali (ra)

Religious references are generally taken from other reliable Jama'at sources such as Review of Religions or alislam.org