

# THE MUSLIM STANDARD

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## BEYOND THE REPUBLICAN TRAPPINGS

The Government of Trinidad & Tobago has fulfilled its decision to transform the nation from a Monarchy to a Republic. The seal of approval and authority, the power of independent decision making, now no longer resides with a far-away Queen but has been transferred to the President-elect of the country.

This transition is supposed to be historic, in the sense that it represents, constitutionally that is, an end to some 'vestiges' of colonialism (in the form of oaths, titles) which were implanted here during 180 years of British occupation and overlordship. The question which immediately comes to mind is how long again would it take us to remove the 'other' marks of colonialism which have become part and parcel of our personalities and life-styles.

It is only natural that an occasion such as this would elicit a great variety of responses. Prominent members of the community have expressed elation at the changeover, hoping also that it would mean increased prosperity and a rise in the standard of living. The silent majority, on the other hand, while appreciative of the end to the shameful imperial connection, entertain doubts and fears about the Republic—basing their opinions on the experience of the neighbouring republics of the Caribbean.

In order to rectify this situation and thereby create a unified and favourable reaction to the Republic, an extensive series of interviews were conducted by the media involving prominent lawyers and politicians. In these interviews some aspects of the Republic and the constitution were discussed in an attempt to allay the fears and educate the people. Yet, with all the questions asked the fundamental ones were neglected and as a result of this they remain both unasked and unanswered:

1. Would the Republic guarantee in word and deed freedom, dignity and social justice for all its citizens?
2. Would it ensure an end to all those social evils—unemployment, prostitution, oppression, poverty, corruption, the wastage of public funds which despoil and ruin the very fabric of the society?
3. Would it forbid dictatorship and ensure the protection of the people from power-hungry tyrants who try to play God?
4. Are there provisions in the constitution whereby the wielders of political power are made to realise that they are accountable to God and to a lesser extent the people whom they serve?

These are some of the basic questions to which we should focus our

attention when dealing with the Republic and not the superficial change of name, titles, oaths, position etc. If the Republic is unable to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, then the transformation will not only prove meaningless but a futile experiment in political sovereignty. Thereafter, a condition will arise in the country when it will be asked, Where do we go from here?

Dr. Williams, in his capacity as Prime Minister of the country, was asked a similar question by a reporter, although not quite in the same context. He seemed unable to envisage a system of government, and ultimately a way of life, beyond the scope of the Republic.

To him the best way of life lies in perfecting the Republic with its democratic system of government and its guarantee of fundamental rights. This is at best a politician's ideal where the political and governing framework offers a safe vehicle for each group in the population to pursue its own goals. The Republic then is limited. By its

very nature of being a political vehicle it can neither change our way of life nor offer us that brave New Society so vaunted in other quarters. We are back then precisely to the period just after 1970 where, faced with a faltering



economy and social revolution, politicians offered us a plethora of ideas for National Reconstruction and for our national well-being, both material and non-material. It is instructive that all these ideals have stopped at the material, the republican idea being the supreme expression of this way out. So here we are in 1976, republicans, fragmented, divisible and certainly not under God. What then of the New Society which each individual consciously or unconsciously knows we are capable of forging and which, in a real sense, involves the transformation of each individual and as a corollary the transformation of the entire society. Is this New Society a chimera?

We offer as evidence of the transforming power of Islam as this new and complete way of life, its energizing effect on the oppressed sub-cultural groups of American blacks who before their acceptance of Islam internalised the inferiority and degradation meted out to them by a racist oppressive society. We offer again as evidence of this transforming power of Islam the dignity of tribal Africans coming into the fold of Islam and the complete transformation of tribal Arab societies 1,400 years ago into a formidable State under God.

A complete way of life as an ideal for every society comes from its recognition that man in his every facet of life—political, economic, social, cultural, religious—must be governed by the natural principles of living laid down for him by his Maker.

This Republic then as a vehicle for political life and social and economic activity must, in an Islamic context, reflect these principles of living, of justice and equality which come from a complete surrender to the will of God.

Political and economic life is supposed to aid the individual in the pursuit of this complete surrender. The transformation of the individual brings about the transformation of society which in turn supports the dignity of the individual.

Our Republican trappings therefore serve as little use if these trappings cover the same worn-out institutions which so many of our citizens feel so far removed from and which offer little hope of a better life.

## A Monument to Evil

The recent riots in Soweto and Alexandra, in which 176 Blacks were killed, 1,139 injured and 12,998 arrested, are more serious than the mere protests against the imposition of a State language upon a people. It would be far more sensible and realistic to say that they are the manifestations of the boiling point being reached by a subjected, brutalised and almost demoralized people who have become fed-up with the hypocrisy and useless chatter of the self-proclaimed 'guardians of democracy, freedom and human rights'.

The plight of the black people of Southern Africa for decades has been brought to the attention of the whole world. Accounts of the brutality and oppressiveness of apartheid are innumerable. It is known that Blacks are forbidden to own land, to walk freely in areas designated as 'white', to assemble in any place without 'white supervision or to have any relationship with 'Whites' outside that of servant/master. It is known too that Blacks are paid the lowest wages and given the most menial jobs, are subjected to police harassment anytime and anywhere; that they are housed in barbed-wire fenced 'towns' complete with 'White' guards equipped with guns and ordered to kill anyone found outside the walls without a 'pass' after a certain time. Curfews are imposed on Blacks from dusk to dawn and the most common recreational facility is the beer hall. These are just some of the problems that Blacks have to deal with.

Even though the situation is fully known at world-wide governmental levels, the 'champions of democracy, fundamental human rights and freedom'—USA and Britain—choose to hold talks and discussions in search of a 'peaceful solution' to these problems. Yet, during the Angola war, America and Britain were prepared to use force, if necessary, to prevent Cuba from going to the aid of the MPLA which was fighting to liberate the country from the clutches of Portuguese oppression.

America, in particular, in its capacity as 'protector' of the world, has shown its ability to confront allegedly 'inhuman' regimes by armed might or to remove them by more devious means. However, in the case of Smith and Vorster, it is plain that these regimes are condoned by the Western powers because they serve Western interests. Irrespective of the oppression or the indignities which they inflict upon the mass of humanity in Southern Africa; irrespective of the mass genocide which these regimes perpetrate upon the indigenous people of the area, these regimes will continue to exist and be supported by the 'guardians of democracy, freedom and human rights'. The enslaved peoples of Southern Africa stand as a monument to the evils of the domination of one human being by another and an indictment against the claims of America and the western world to be the protectors of human rights and freedom.

**ISLAM - A NEW LIFE AHEAD**

# A Core of Dedicated Workers

The Islamic Party in North America was organized on January 1, 1972, at Masjid-ul-Ummah (The Community Mosque), Washington, D.C.

The objective was not to quickly amass a large group of people nominally committed to Islam, but rather to develop a core of dedicated workers as a vanguard to spearhead a life-long struggle in the cause of Allah.

The real objective of Islam is the emancipation of man from the slavery of man, nation from the bondage of nation, humanity from the yoke of humanity, and to turn the whole of mankind into one free brotherhood consisting of the servants of the one God, Allah.

The Islamic conception of freedom is that mankind should be subject to none but Allah Who is their Creator. He alone is their rightful and legal Sovereign. None except Him can legitimately claim lawful rule over mankind, and no creature has the right to flout the authority of his Maker. According to Islam, submission to any law opposed to it or to any other philosophy or way of life is as idolatrous as bowing before idols of clay.

Today man has carved out so many deities in the secular sphere—nation, language, colour, economic class, political concepts, etc. Islam aims at breaking off these shackles. It wants to restore dignity to the masses by making them subject to none but the Law of Allah. This was the mission of all the messengers of Allah and this is the mission which the Islamic Party is carrying on to the best of its ability and resources.

Every movement has its own methods and techniques for bringing about the kind of changes it wants in society. The Islamic movement also has its own methodology for establishing the Islamic nation.

When we study the Qur'an and history of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) we find

a particular strategy of preaching, teaching, organizing, and building that was part of the Divine Method. The stage of learning the 'theory' of Islam was never separate from the stage of practical organization and work. The Islamic beliefs took shape as a living, active community and movement struggling against the *jahili* (ignorant) society while also removing the influence of *jahili* society from its members.

The Islamic Party (with Allah's Help) is seeking to establish a viable physical expression of Islam — to strike the proper balance between rhetoric (theory) and actual practice, so that people may not only hear about Islam, but actually see it at work.

The major thrust of the Party's efforts is occurring at the national headquarters in Washington, D.C. From cities throughout the country committed workers have migrated with their families to consolidate their energies and resources at The Community Mosque Complex.

As capital of the United States, Washington, D.C. receives constant attention from the American public. The Party intends to use this to full advantage in its efforts to capture the attention of the masses.

A proper understanding of Islam and a disciplined character are the first requirements of a Party worker. The Jamaat conducts an intensive ideological training and character - building program. In addition to learning the fundamentals of

Islam, the workers carefully study Qur'an, Hadith, the history of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and the writings of leaders in the international Islamic movement such as Shahid Sayyid Qutb and Maulana S. Abdul A'la Mawdudi. These studies are not for mere intellectual purposes, but to assist us in living a full, active and responsible life while sustain-

ing the Islamic effort in a new environment.

The Party places heavy emphasis on Da'wah (propagation), inviting mankind to the message and mission of Islam. Through the distribution of literature, public lectures, radio programs, and personal contacts, it presents the Islamic way of life and movement to the masses.

Closely related to the Da'wah is the work of 'Islamic Party Publications'. Presently, the major work in this department is production of *Al-Islam* — The Islamic Movement Journal, an internationally distributed publication that explains to the masses Islamic solutions to problems of political corruption, economic exploitation, and social, moral, and spiritual degeneration that are so rampant in contemporary society. Among our other publications are booklets and leaflets on various aspects of Islam. This department also co-ordinates the translation of significant works not available in English.

The Party provides a number of services for the general Muslim community. Facilities are made available for Ramadan, 'Id, and special events. A book fund is in operation to send Muslim inmates free literature. Fresh Halal meat is provided at reasonable cost. Counselling services are available for domestic, personal, and other problems related to living in an un-Islamic society. An annual 'Feed The Hungry Month' project is conducted during Ramadan to emphasize Islamic concern for the indigent of the Muslim and non-Muslim community.

The children of Jamaat members are regarded as the future workers for Islam. To protect them from the un-Islamic influences of the public school system and to give them the proper educational training, the Party maintains its own day school.

The Islamic Party has instituted its own economic mechanisms to provide financial resources for the movement and economic security for the workers. Funds from 'Nation Security and Development Bank' are primarily used for the maintenance and

development of the Jama'at's physical facilities. The 'Survival for Islamic Work Scheme' is a co-operative effort that secures the welfare of full-time Party workers and their families. Under this program the Party presently operates several businesses: a cab association, a bakery, a grocery store, a bookstore, a restaurant/carry out, a garment factory, a farm, a building repair company, and several housing units.

As a self-supporting body the Islamic Party is able to avoid the influence of governments and special interest groups.

The constitutional principles which form the organizational framework of the Islamic Party are those of the Holy Qur'an, and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The day-to-day work of the Party is organized into various departments, while overall administration and direction is provided by the Amir, two deputy Amirs, and a consultative body. The Jama'at's membership is divided into functional units for Da'wah, internal communication, leadership training, and general efficiency.

The Party stresses the importance of the woman's role inside the home. Within Islamic guidelines, however, there is also room for her involvement in other areas. Women in the Jama'at are organized into a special branch whose work is complementary to that of the men. Their study sessions and service projects are directed by three co-ordinators who are responsible to the Amir.

Membership in the Islamic Party is based on individual commitment. The Party demands of members nothing more than what Islam demands of every Muslim. It presents Islam in its entirety before every person and asks him/her to accept the faith with full understanding and consciousness, to understand its obligations and to fulfill them conscientiously, to expel from one's thoughts, words, and deeds everything that is against the Law and spirit of the faith, and to give a practical testimony to the truth that is Islam.

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# ISLAM

## THE BASIC TRUTHS

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### ISLAM

Muhammad was sent to invite people to God and teach them how to perform the task for which they were created, namely to worship Him. Many of the people whom he addressed had a hazy idea about God: they believed in God, but they also associated other lesser gods with Him. Some others were downright atheists or naturalists. Their creed was, 'we live and we die and nothing causes our death except time.'

The Qur'an asks such people: 'Were they created out of nothing? Or were they the creation (of themselves). Or did they create the heavens and earth'. In other words the Qur'an states that for everything — like man — that has a beginning in time, there are only three ways of explaining how it came to be:

Either it is created, or made, or caused by nothing at all i.e. it came out of nothing.

Or it is the creator of itself.

Or it has a creator, cause, or maker outside itself.

Obviously it is inconceivable for something to come out of, or be made of nothing at all, and since it is even more inconceivable that it should bring itself into being, then the only conclusion is that it must have a creator outside itself.

### ATHEISM IS UNTENABLE

Atheism is therefore untenable, if it means the denial of any maker or cause whatsoever. Admitting that this is so, why should that cause or maker or creator be the God to whom Muhammad was inviting people? Why shouldn't it be one of the many other gods in whom people believe, or why shouldn't it be more possibly the matter of the materialists? Almost the whole of the Qur'an is addressed to this question.

In a nutshell the answer is that, to explain the coming into being of temporal things, the creator (or cause or maker) for which we are looking, must (logically must) have the attributes of the God to whom Muhammad invites us. How so?

The creator must be of a different nature from the things created because if he is of the same nature as they are, he will have to be temporal and therefore need a maker. It follows that nothing is like Him. If the maker is not temporal,

then he must be eternal. But if he is eternal, he cannot be caused, and if nothing caused him to come into existence, nothing outside him causes him to continue to exist, which means that he must be self sufficient. And if he does not depend on anything for the continuance of his existence, then that existence can have no end. The creator is therefore eternal and everlasting: 'He is the first and the last'.

He is self sufficient or self subsistent — al-Qay-Yum. The creator does not create only in the sense of bringing things into being, he also preserves them and takes them out of existence and is the ultimate cause of whatever happens to them.

*God is the creator of everything, He is guardian over everything. Unto Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth. No creature is there crawling on the earth, but its provision rests on God. He knows its lodging-place and its repository.*

If the creator is eternal and everlasting, then his attributes must also be eternal and everlasting. He should not lose an attribute which he had nor acquire a new one. But if so, then his attributes are absolute. Can there be more than one creator with such absolute attributes? Can there be for example two absolutely powerful creators? A moment's thought shows that it cannot be so.

If a maker is absolutely powerful it follows that he is absolutely free to do whatever he likes. But if another maker with similar powers exists and they differ over the making of something, then either one of them overcomes the other, in which case the latter will not be absolutely powerful; or, they neutralize each other, in which case they will both be limited in power. And even if we assume that they agree on everything, still they cannot both be absolutely powerful because, for one of them at least, the execution of his intention shall not depend solely on his power, but on the condition — though a passive one — that the other does not interfere.

The Qur'an summarises this argument in the following verses: 'God has not taken to Himself any son, nor is there any god with Him: For then each God would have taken off that he created and some of them would have risen up over others'.



And 'Why, were there gods in earth and heaven other than God, they (heaven and earth) would surely go to ruin'.

The fact that the creator is one in person and attributes is the corner-stone of the Islamic edifice.

There are two ways in which causes produce their effects. Either they produce them naturally or intentionally. The maker which has the attributes enumerated above cannot be a natural cause, because if things of this world flow from it naturally and spontaneously, they cannot be but of the same nature as it is. And if, like all natural causes it causes only under certain conditions, then its power is limited. It follows that it must be a wilful agent. But intention implies knowledge

### ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

and both imply life. So, that maker must be a living knowing agent with a will that is absolutely free. Thus God according to the Qur'an does everything with intention and for a purpose: 'Surely thy Lord accomplishes what He desires'. 'He is aware of every detail of his creation. He knows what is in land and sea; not a leaf falls, but He knows it. Not a grain in the earth's shadows, not a thing fresh or withered, but it is in a Book Manifest. It is He who recalls you by night, and He knows what you work by day'.

God is a living being with all that this implies: 'There is no God but He, the living, the everlasting. Slumber seizes Him not, neither sleep; to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. Who is there that shall intercede with Him save by His leave? He knows what lies before them and what is after them, and they comprehend not anything of His knowledge save such as He wills. His throne comprises the heavens and earth; the preserving of them oppresses Him not; He is the All-high, the All-glorious'.

God is not only willing and powerful, He is also just, in that He does not punish a sinner for more than his crime. He is merciful and His mercy, in the words of the Prophet 'overcomes his punishment'. So He does not punish us for whatever we do, but forgives and erases our sins, and magnifies and multiplies our good deeds.

These, and many others which can be arrived at in a similar way, are the attributes which the true creator must possess. Any other being or object which is alleged to be a god or an ultimate cause and which lacks at least some of them cannot in actual fact be what it is believed to be.

Having shown clearly what the true God should be like, the Qur'an goes on to show why there cannot be any god but He, and recalls the falsity of all alleged gods.

To the worshippers of heavenly bodies it relates as a reminder the story of Abraham: 'When night outspread over him he saw a star and said, "This is my Lord". But when it set he said, "I love not the setters". When he saw the moon rising, he said, "This is my Lord". But when it set he said, "If my Lord does not guide me I shall surely be of the people gone astray". When he saw the sun rising, he said, "This is my Lord; this is greater". But when it set he said, "O my people, surely I am quit of that you associate. I have turned my face to Him who originated the heavens and the earth; a man of pure faith, I am not of the idolaters". The Qur'an also refutes the belief in the divine nature of human beings: 'The Jews say, "Ezra is the son of God". The Christians say, "The Messiah is the son of

God". That is the utterance of their mouths, conforming with the unbelievers before them. God assail them! How they are perverted'. The Qur'an states that if everything is created by God then it must be His subordinate and cannot, therefore be His son. 'And they say, "The All merciful has taken unto Himself a son! You have indeed advanced something hideous! . . . The heavens behoves not the All-merciful to take a son"'.

It then goes on to explain to Christians the real nature of Jesus: 'Truly, the likeness of Jesus, in God's sight is as Adam's likeness; He created him of dust, then said He unto him 'Be', and he was'.

To be a Muslim i.e. to surrender oneself to God it is thus necessary to believe in the oneness of God in the sense of His being the only creator, preserver, nourisher, etc. But this belief later on called *tawhid ar-rubu-biy-ya* is not enough. In fact many of the idolaters did know and believe that it is the Supreme God alone who can do all this. But that was not enough to make them Muslims. To *tauhid ar-rububiy-ya* one must add *tawhid al'uluhiy-ya* i.e. one must acknowledge the fact that it is God alone who deserves to be worshipped, and therefore abstain from directing any of his act of worship to someone or something else.

Having known the true God, man should acknowledge what he knows i.e. believe and have faith in Him, and not allow any ulterior motives to induce him to deny a fact which he knows to be true.

When faith enters a person's heart, it causes therein certain mental states, which result in certain actions, both of which are the proof of true faith. The Prophet said, 'Faith is that which resides firmly in the heart and which is proved by deeds'.

Foremost among those mental states is the feeling of gratitude towards God, which could be said to be the essence of *ibada* (worshipping or serving God).

This feeling of gratitude is so important that a non-believer is called 'Kafir', which means 'one who denies a truth' and also 'one who is ungrateful'. The Qur'an says that the main motive underlying one's denial of the existence of God is his vanity. Such a person thinks that it does not befit him to be created and governed by a being whom he must thus acknowledge to be greater than himself and to whom he must be grateful.

A believer loves and is grateful to God for the bounties He bestows upon him, but being aware of the fact that his good deeds whether mental or physical are far from being commensurate with Divine favours, he is always anxious lest God should punish him, here or in the hereafter. He therefore fears Him, surrenders himself to Him and serves Him with great humility. One cannot be in such a mental state, without being almost all the time mindful of God. Remembering God is thus the life-force of faith, without which it fades and might even wither away.

The Qur'an therefore prescribes and describes, in great detail ways and means of helping man to remember God and keep his faith alive. All Qur'anic and Prophetic injunctions and prohibitions which extend to all aspects of human life — acts of worship and personal conduct and behaviour, social relations, political order, etc. etc. — are designed to put man in a state which is conducive to God's remembrance.

The details of this Islamic way of life were expounded in



Madina, but the main principles of this new order were already laid down in the Meccan period.

The other pillars of the faith are belief in life after death, in God's angels, His books, His messengers and His 'qadar'. The arguments for all these are almost entirely based on the assumption that the addressee believes in God.

### RESURRECTION

The Qur'anic arguments about the fact of another life after death are intended to show that it is possible and also desirable that there should be such a life, and that without believing in it our belief in the true God cannot be complete.

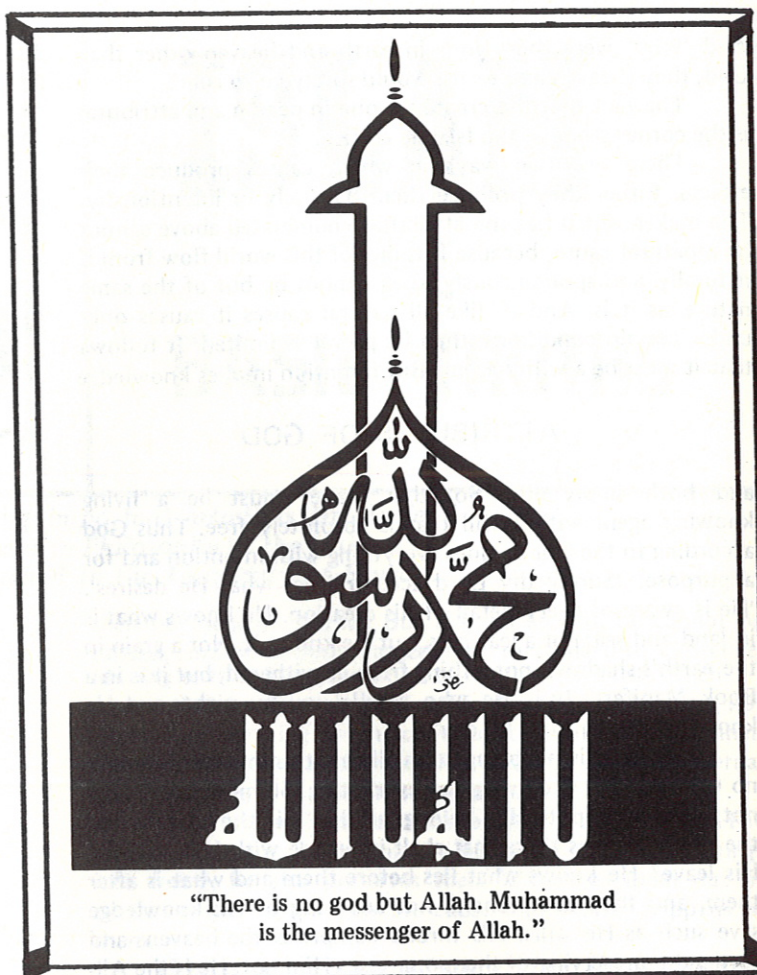
Many of the people whom the Prophet addressed in Mecca did believe in a supreme God, but many of them thought that it was impossible for their dead and decayed bodies to be resurrected. They therefore mocked and laughed at the Prophet when he told them about it. The Qur'anic reply was that there was no reason for such astonishment and mockery because resurrection is not only logical but a physical possibility for the following reason:

If it is God who created man in the first place, why should it be impossible for Him to re-create him when he dies. Resurrection should be easier than original creation.

Why is resurrection desirable? Simply because without it, God would not be the Just and Wise and merciful God that He is. God created men and made them responsible for their actions, some behaved well and others committed wrongs. If there is no future life in which the virtuous are rewarded and the vicious are reprimanded, there would be no justice and the creation of men in that way and the sending of Prophets to them would be to no purpose at all. But this kind of behaviour is not expected of a man known to be rational and just, let alone the Perfect Creator. The Qur'an says: 'What, does man reckon he shall be left to roam at will?' 'What, did you think that we created you only for sport and that you would not be returned to Us?'

Is the real and only motive for denying the life after death the one expressed by the arguments which the deniers put forward and to which the Qur'an replied? By no means, says, the Qur'an. The real motive is often a psychological one. Those who do evil do not wish to be punished and it is this wishful thinking that leads them to deny the reality of a time when such punishment shall take place. 'What, does man reckon we shall not gather his bones? Nay, but man desires to continue on as a libertine, asking, 'When shall be the Day of Resurrection?'. A question that naturally arises in connection with reward and punishment in the hereafter is 'Do we do what is good because it is good or for fear of punishment and expectation of reward? The answer to this depends on whether God enjoins us to do an act because of this divine injunction? And it seems to me to be very clear that the goodness of an act is logically prior to its being an object of divine order. Otherwise it would be a tautology to say 'God enjoins what is good' because it would only mean God enjoins what He enjoins.

The answer to our original question then is that we do what is good because it is good. But since to give good for good is itself good, there is no contradiction in saying that one does good because God, whom He loves and in whom He puts his trust tells him to do it, and because he expects to be rewarded by God for doing it.



According to the Qur'an God created man in an original nature — called *fitra* — which possesses what we might call a moral sense, which enables man to recognize without any external aid certain acts, like telling the truth and being grateful, as good, and by reason of which he is inclined to do good once he comes to know it. True religion is built on the basis of this original human nature. It strengthens it and brings to fruition the seeds of virtue that reside in it. That is why Islam is said in the Qur'an to be *fitrat-al-lah* and why the Prophet says that he is sent only to perfect good conduct. The Qur'an praises those in whom this moral sense is sharp and condemns those in whom it has become so blunt that the ugliness of vice becomes in their eyes the model of beauty.

So a Muslim does good because it is endeared to him, and eschews vice because it is detestable to him. But since a Muslim surrenders himself to God and loves and fears Him, and since God loves virtue and enjoins it and hates vice and forbids it, he does the former and avoids the latter in obedience to his Lord. And since those who do good shall — in the hereafter — live a life of bliss, the highest type of which would be the state of being near to God and enjoy his sight, while those who lead an evil life shall suffer all kinds of chastisement the most terri

chastisement the most terrible of which would be the state of being deprived from that sight, a Muslim would be wise to always have that future and eternal life in mind and endeavour to do here all kinds of work that would help to elevate his position there.



## ANGELS

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Angels are beings of a different kind than man. While man is created from soil they are created from light. And thus human beings — except prophets — cannot see them in their original nature, but may see them if they take a material form. Our knowledge of them is therefore almost entirely based on what God and His prophets tell us about them. But why should we bother to know about them? Because they play a big role in our affairs. To know about them could perhaps be said to be useful to us in the same manner as knowledge of the working of natural causes and other people's behaviour is useful.

We are told that these almost innumerable beings who are endowed with great power are created in such a way that they always obey and never go against Divine commands, and continuously serve and never tire of serving the Lord.

But in spite of this they are, as a species, in a lower degree than the humans, and this is symbolized in the fact that when Adam was created they were ordered to prostrate themselves before him as a sign of greeting and respect.

Here are some of their activities in connection with human beings:

They convey God's messages to his chosen prophets.

This great honour is assigned mainly to their leader Gabriel (or Jibril as the name is pronounced in Arabic), a noble messenger. They attend to and watch over us. They keep a record of our good and bad deeds, and never a word we mention passes without being registered by them either for or against us. They play a role in the causation and happening of seemingly purely natural phenomena, like wind and rain, and death. And to them is assigned the role of helping the believers to the extent of fighting on their side in times of war and of praying for them.

## REVEALED BOOKS

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A Muslim believes that the Qur'an is the word of God. But it is not the only word. God sent many prophets before Muhammad and He spoke to them as He spoke to him. So a Muslim also believes, in fact he would not be a Muslim if he does not believe in these earlier books, like the Torah and the Gospel, since the true believers are those who believe in what has been sent down to thee (Muhammad) and what has been sent down before thee.

God created humans so that they may serve Him. Being a servant of God thus constitutes the essence of one's humanness. But you cannot attain true humanity and acquire peace of mind unless you realize the purpose for which you were created. But how can you do this?

God being merciful and just has helped in many ways. He granted us, as we said before, an originally good nature that is inclined to know and serve Him. He granted us a mind that possesses a moral sense and has the ability to reason. He made the whole universe a natural book full of signs that lead a thinking person to God. But to make things more specific, to give him more detailed knowledge of God, and to show him in a more detailed manner how to serve Him, He has been since the creation of mankind — sending down to them — through prophets chosen from among them verbal messages. Hence

their description in the Qur'an as guidance, light, signs, reminders, etc.

All these books advocated basically the same message, "And we sent never a Messenger before thee except that we revealed to him, saying, 'There is no God but I; so serve Me'. And the religion which they all expounded is Islam i.e. surrender to God. The true religion with God is Islam. Thus Noah (X:70) Abraham, Jacob and his sons, the Apostles etc. were all Muslims.

If the religion of all prophets is the same in its essence and basic foundation, not so are the ways of life based upon it. One last important point about books is that with the exception of the Qur'an they have not been preserved intact, but have either been completely lost or else suffered distortion and corruption. As to the Qur'an, God has decreed that it shall never be subjected to such distortion, but shall be preserved by Him.

## PROPHETS

\* \* \*

Messengers are men chosen by God to have the honour of conveying His message to other men and women. Being such a Messenger is not a position that one attains by any consciously designed effort. It is a grace from God, but God grants this grace to those who are deserving of it. Messengers are not, then, like the rank and file of us. True, they are men but they are men of an extremely high moral, spiritual and intellectual standard that qualifies them — in the eyes of God — to be the bearers of his light to the world. When God chooses any of them, He supports him with a clear 'sign' that proves the truth of his claim, and distinguishes him from false prophets, sorcerers and soothsayers. None of them betrays the message or falls short of being exemplary in practising what he preaches.

Asked about the Prophet's conduct one of his wives said 'it was the Qur'an', meaning that he embodied all the ideals to which the Qur'an called.

Two related points about messengers which the Qur'an stresses, and which therefore deserve some elaboration are the humanity of prophets and the nature of their task.

Despite the vast spiritual, moral and intellectual difference between them and ordinary men, and despite the special relation with God that they enjoy, prophets are nonetheless humans with all that this term implies. They beget and are begotten; they eat and drink and go about in market places; they sleep and they die, they forget and they err. Their knowledge is limited; and can tell only that part of the future which God reveals to them. They cannot intercede with God on behalf of any person except with His permission, and it is not left to them to cause people to go in the right path. In short, they have no part to play in the running of the affairs of the universe.

A Prophet whose humanity is specially emphasized is Jesus. He was created in the same manner as Adam was created, from soil, he is the son of Mary not of God; he and his mother used to eat food; he is indeed the word of God but since he is a human being in the full sense of the word, this should not be interpreted to mean that there is a Divine element in him. He is the word of God only in the sense that God said 'Be' and he was. But in that sense everything is the word of God and Jesus was especially so called because he



came more directly as a result of this word. Jesus is thus a loyal servant of God who never claimed that he was in any sense Divine.

Messengers are entrusted, we said, with the task of conveying God's word to other people. But this is not as simple as it looks. It implies many things which are not at first sight clear, and which the Qur'an therefore expounds and elaborates.

The most important point of which all Messengers are reminded, and which is very easy to forget or be heedless to, is that since their duty is only to convey the message, they are not responsible for people's response to it, once they have made it clear to them. God has given men the power to understand the difference between truth and falsehood, especially in matters religious once this has been explained to them. He has also given them the ability, by reason of their free will either to accept or reject it. And since it is only God who knows what goes on in peoples' minds, it is only He who can judge who is worthy of being guided and who deserves to be left groping in the darkness, and then treats them accordingly. A Prophet has no such power, and cannot, therefore, guide whom he likes.

'Thou art only a reminder, thou art not charged to oversee them'.

### FREE WILL

The original meaning of the word *Qadar* is; 'specified measure or amount whether of quantities or qualities'. It has many other usages which branch out from this core. Thus *yuqad-dir* means, among other things, to measure or decide the quantity, quality, position etc. of something before you actually make it. And it is this latter sense which interests us here.

'God is the creator of everything, but whatever He creates, He creates with *qadar*, i.e. He knows before creating it, that He is going to create it and that it shall be of such and such magnitude, quality or nature etc. and specifies the time of its coming into being and passing away, and the place of its occurrence. If so, then one who believes in the true God should believe that there are no accidents in nature. If something disagreeable happens to him, he should say: God *qad-dara* (ordained it), and He did what He willed and not waste himself over wishing that it did not occur, or worrying why it should occur. If on the other hand something agreeable happens to him he should not boast of it, but thank God for it.

'No affliction befalls in the earth or in yourselves, but it is in a Book, before We create it; that is easy for God; that you may not grieve for what escapes you, nor rejoice (vaingloriously) in what has been given to you, God loves not any man proud and boastful'.

If God *yuqad-dir* (pre-destines, pre-determines etc.) everything, that includes our so called free actions, then in what way can they be said to be free, and how are we responsible for them? This question occasioned the appearance, at a very early history of Islam, of two extreme theological schools. One of them, called the *Qadariya* asserts man's free will and responsibility at the expense of God's foreknowledge, by denying the latter, and claiming that God knows our 'free' actions only after we have performed

them. The other, called the *Jabriya* does just the opposite and claims that there is no difference between the motions of inanimate things and our movements in performing so called free action, and that when we use intentional language we speak only metaphorically.

But there is no need to go to such extremes, since it is not difficult to reconcile Divine *Qadar* and human responsibility. God decreed to create man as a free agent, but He knows (and how can He not know?) before creating every man how he is going to use his free will. What, for instance, his reaction would be when a Prophet clarifies God's Message to him. This foreknowledge and its being recorded in a 'Book' is called *Qadar*. 'But if we are free to use our will', a *Qadari* might say, 'We may use it in ways that contradict God's will, and in that case we would still be right in claiming that not everything is willed or decreed by God. The Qur'an answers this question by reminding us that it was God who willed that we shall be wilful, and it is He who allows us to use our will.

'Surely, this is a Reminder; so he who wills, takes unto his Lord a way. But you will not unless God wills'. 'If so', says a *Jabri*, 'He could have prevented us from doing evil'. Yes indeed He could. But He willed that people shall be free especially in regard to matters of belief and disbelief. And men would not be so free if whenever any of them wills to do evil God prevents him from doing it and compels him to do good.

'If our actions are willed by God' someone might say, 'then they are in fact His actions'. This objection is based on a confusion. God wills what we will in the sense of granting us the will to choose and enabling us to execute that will i.e. He creates all that makes it possible for us to do it. Otherwise it would be in order to say, when we drink or eat or sleep for instance, that God performed these actions. God creates them, He does not do or perform them. Another objection, based on another confusion, is that if God allows us to evil, then He approves of it and likes it. But to will something in the sense of giving a person the permission and power to do it is one thing; and to approve of his action and commend it, is quite another. Not everything that God wills He likes. He has, as we have just read in the Qur'an, granted man the choice between belief and disbelief, but He does not, of course, like men to disbelieve.

These in resume, are the basic truths to which the Prophet Muhammad invited mankind. The best proof — besides the foregoing arguments of their being truths, is the good effect which they produce in our internal state, and thus the outward behaviour.

Since our attitude to our fellow human beings is very much connected with our attitude towards God, belief in God with its outcome of feelings towards the Divine is bound to produce in one's heart feelings towards others that are appropriate to it. And since our outward behaviour regarding God and other humans is generated, when it is honest, by our beliefs about and feelings towards them, it is only to be expected of true religion to call for a code of behaviour that is both a natural outcome of its beliefs. The internal state to which Muhammad invited men is called '*Iman*' (faith or belief). The external behaviour based on it is called Islam.

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## THE ISLAMIC TRUST OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

### *'In the form of a Service Bureau'*

The Islamic Trust is a registered charity which was set up in 1975 to provide certain essential services to the Muslim community and to the society as a whole.

Although the present Muslim community in Trinidad seems, on the face of it to be fairly well-organised—with a number of mosques, some primary and secondary schools, evening and weekend madrasahs etc—there are many glaring gaps that exist. In an attempt to fill some of these gaps, mainly relating to the field of Islamic da'wah and education, the Trust was set up.

According to the chairman of the Trust, Brother Zabar Baksh, 'The Islamic Trust is not an Organisation as we have come to know them in Trinidad and Tobago. It is not an Organisation which is concerned to attract membership etc. but rather more in the form of a Service Bureau and its services are available to all within Islam and outside Islam, in Trinidad and outside Trinidad. Its services are intended to strengthen the whole community and act as a cementing force. Its aim is to cooperate in all that is GOOD and this we will do with everyone irrespective of his or her organisational affinities. Our guiding principle in this respect will be the Qur'anic ayah (verse),

'Cooperate on the basis of righteousness (al-birr) and piety (at-taqwa) and do not co-operate in sin and transgression.'

The Trust is not setting out, therefore, to work independently as a new organisation and will be concerned to work in harmony with anyone pursuing Islamic objectives.'

The Chairman's statement is in keeping with the basic objects of the Trust as expressed in the Trust Declaration, namely:

- a. to work for the advancement of Islam through the promotion of knowledge;
- b. to support similar work undertaken by either individuals or organisations in Trinidad and Tobago and elsewhere in any part of the world.

Among the many areas of work which sorely need attention, the areas of Islamic education and da'wah are being stressed. A number of activities have been started in this respect:

1. The teaching of Arabic—the reading and writing of the script and the structure and vocabulary of the language, with the emphasis on the Qur'an throughout. The director of the Trust, who assumed full-time duties with the Trust since March 1976, has been conducting an Arabic session at the Nur-e-Islam mosque since May 1975. From an initial class of over 50 persons, this activity is being extended to other centres and mosques.

During this current summer vacation, an intensive Arabic programme was organised for the North, South and Central Trinidad. Close to 200 people would have completed the courses by the end of August. According to one Imam, the classes have introduced a 'new era' in the teaching of Arabic and Islam in Trinidad. It is hoped to follow these courses by a one-year introductory course in Arabic as a language.

2. In October 1975, the Trust began the publication of 'The Muslim Standard'—a monthly 12-page paper—which aimed at 'establishing obedience to the authority of God and adherence to the example of His messenger, Muhammad, upon whom be peace; projecting Muslim standards of thought and conduct as the solution to problems and encouraging dialogue for the advancement of all. This paper started, and continues, with very limited resources but it received a warm even enthusiastic response from many quarters and also some opposition from others. It is hoped that the paper will encourage people to read and react positively and intelligently to the issues that affect them and not see Islam as something merely confined to the mosques and certain special occasions.

3. The setting up of a reference library and a book service to make available Islamic literature to the nation as a whole. Premises to house these services are now under construction in San Juan. These facilities should soon be available, in sha Allah.

4. The conducting of lectures and training programmes. Some individuals associated with the Trust conduct Islamic classes at secondary schools, visit youth camps, engage in 'rap sessions' on the 'blocks' and so on. These are sorely neglected areas as is the need for personal

counselling etc.

5. Some work has been done in the area of syllabus preparation but this remains to be completed.

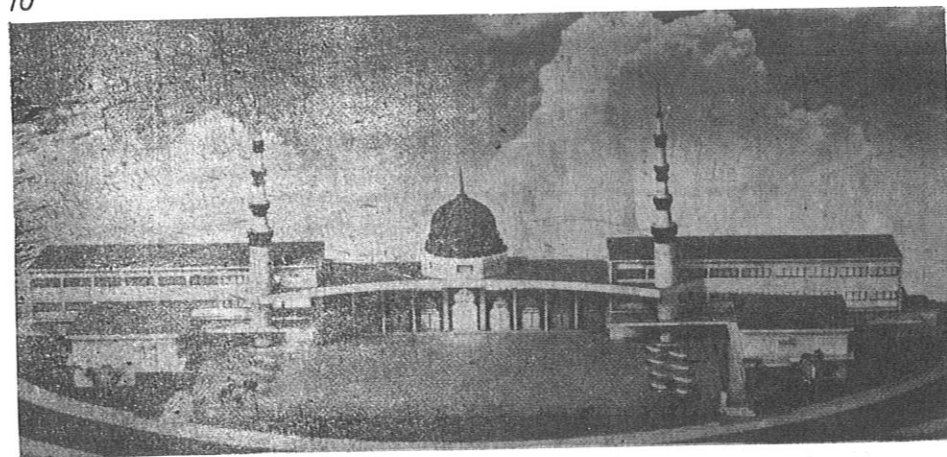
In addition to the above, a series of pamphlets on various aspects of Islam is being planned together with tracts of an acceptable standard that would have an appeal to the new generation of Muslims and others who are becoming more 'educated'.

The provision of the above-mentioned services is only a means to an end. The basic concern of the Trust is not with projects but with people. Those associated with the Trust firmly believe that Islam can play a major and redeeming role in solving the many problems of the area—problems of immorality, of rampant drunkenness, of racism and other forms of injustice etc. These problems are rapidly affecting the Muslim community itself and need to be tackled urgently, first of all by making people aware of the problems. The stage is a crucial one and with the right type of efforts and support could, with Allah's help, lead to a rapid advance of Islam in the Caribbean.

Al hamdu lillah, a start has been made. The little that has been done so far, has been made possible through the efforts of a few 'committed' persons from a wide cross-section of Trinidad society including many new-comers to Islam. For the work really to reach the 'take-off' stage, in sha Allah, the Trust needs as much encouragement and support as possible. The Muslim community has a lot of talent and resources which are being under-utilized or wrongly utilized or even suppressed. Whether it be skills relating to writing, speaking, teaching, organising or whether it be finance for specific projects or books for the reference library etc, there are a variety of ways in which people can assist.

The Trust accordingly invites all concerned persons to participate in what is a very important and urgent area of Islamic da'wah (propagation). It looks forward, in sha Allah, to effective encouragement and support, fi sabilillah. "And those who strive in Our (way), We shall certainly guide them on Our paths."





## The Decline of the Islamic Missionaries Guild

An important turn of events in local Muslim history has been taking place over the past year or so and it has gone largely unnoticed—the whittling down of the once important and internationally acclaimed Islamic Missionaries' Guild of the Caribbean and South America with its Headquarters in Trinidad.

The Guild's Headquarters on an eight-acre site on Mucurapo Road in Port of Spain was once the hub of much activity—classes, lectures, bookstore, mosque, family get-togethers etc—albeit in makeshift and somewhat unkempt surroundings.

But there were ambitious plans to erect a huge complex—mosque, hostels, library, bookshop, and even the nucleus of an Islamic institution or University for the training of Muslim workers and scholars for the whole of the Caribbean and South America. And it was not just 'pie-in-the-sky' stuff—because the finance for the project was raised and by all counts, should still be available.

Now the place is completely deserted. No one goes or is allowed to go there anymore. The incumbent 'imam' or 'shaykh' has been shifted in a rather undignified manner to a little booth in a travel agent's doorway in Port of Spain.

The reasons for this state of affairs are among the most complex to unravel. They involve politics, business, inter-organisational rivalries, the structuring of the organisation itself (it is registered under the Companies' Act), leadership woes etc. The story is by no means over and deserves further study. The malaise has not only affected the Trinidad sector but other areas as well. The Annual

Convention to have been held in Curacao has been postponed—no reason given. It certainly shows that all is not well and that if any mending is to be done it would be supremely difficult.

But while the rapid decline continues, one thought at least should be uppermost. The Guild, while it existed, did perform an important function in Islamic propagation in Trinidad and elsewhere in the Caribbean. It was the instrument through which many people came to the straight path of Islam. Now that it is virtually no more here, there is a vacuum which needs to be filled. There is on the one hand the need for the brothers and sisters who frequented the Guild's Headquarters not to drift away but play their positive parts in the Muslim community as a whole.

Also, the duty and pioneering effort in Islamic propagation made by the Guild needs to be stressed and carried forward. Perhaps, the main body of the ASJA which throughout this past fifteen years or so displayed an unrelenting hostility to the Guild can attempt to take up this challenge. The benefits would be immense but of course many of its mental attitudes would have to be drastically refashioned and some even discarded altogether.

### APOLOGY

The Islamic Trust apologises to subscribers & readers of The Muslim Standard for the late appearance of the July issue. The next issue should be out early, in sha Allah.

## ASJA Undermines Itself

The decision by the ASJA Executive not to allow the teaching and learning of Arabic at the ASJA Boys' College in San Fernando betrayed not merely a negative attitude but a pathetic and childish one, to say the least.

The two-week intensive course in the reading and writing of the Arabic script in San Fernando was being sponsored by the Islamic Trust in co-operation with the Religious and Social Services Committee of the ASJA itself. The Chairman of the ASJA Education Board had also agreed to the holding of the sessions at the College. The Principal of the College had also agreed. So when the negative decision of the ASJA Executive came, many concluded that the ASJA, like the ruling PNM, was essentially a one-man show. If an Islamic principle was being enforced, one could certainly not have any quarrel with a one-man show. But when a ruling is destructive of Islamic principles, it ought not to be enforced. One is therefore justified in asking, 'Where is the SHURA, the Islamic principle of mutual consultation in the ASJA?

And this is certainly not the first decision of its kind. The ASJA Executive and its affiliates have had a history behind them of banning of Islamic activities stretching over decades. One only needs to cite recent events to prove the point:

- the banning of the Executive of the T&TMYO (youth arm of ASJA itself) from holding an Islamic training programme at the ASJA Girls' College in San Fernando and the mosque in the compounds ostensibly on the grounds that sleeping in mosques was not allowed.

- the banning of the Muslim Standard because of the stand it had taken over a Bhagawat speech by Mr. Kamaluddin Mohammed, thus supporting the latter's anti-Islamic views;

- the banning by the Jama Executive Committee of meetings, talks and discussions at the mosque;

- the banning by the Tacarigua (ASJA) Executive of any activity in the mosque after 8.30 in order to prevent a group of brothers from studying the



Qur'an at that time;

the banning of more than one 'orthodox' imam and scholar from preaching in mosques. S H Pasha was one of those banned and it is interesting to note that an article he wrote 'You Must Know This Man' was this year published in the Trinidad Guardian by the ASJA itself. And so on.

The policy of banning is often accompanied by campaigns of vilification and denigration. The policy of banning shows a measure of bankruptcy in the ASJA leadership. It shows by the feverish desire to control everything perhaps a certain feeling of insecurity as well. The ASJA needs to be re-assured that no one is out to usurp or undermine its position as the 'chief representative' of the Muslim community in Trinidad although there is a widespread dissatisfaction with the ASJA and the high-handed manner in which affairs are sometimes conducted. THE ASJA, by these methods and these negative stands, is undermining its own credibility. The main question should be: What is the Islamic justification for not allowing the teaching of the language of the Qur'an in an ASJA institution? The answer can only be, 'None, whatsoever.' The ASJA leadership must be acting on considerations other than purely Islamic ones. ASJA is thus abusing its position and its authority.

We live at a time when every opportunity should be used to encourage people to come to mosques and use Muslim institutions and facilities, and of course use them in a befitting manner. There is so much work which needs to be done if only to catch up on the backlog and to arrest the widespread drift away from Islam and Islamic principles. Cooperation on the basis of goodness is necessary and the totality of our resources—human and material—needs to be mobilized.

We may note that the response of the Proprietor and Principal of St. Thomas Aquinas High School in San Fernando was cordial and helpful to the highest when approached to use his school as an alternative venue.

## The Game Goes On

It was chaos at Piarco International Airport on Sunday night, 1 August. The national hero, Trinidad's first-ever Olympic gold medallist, was returning. Genuine adulation there was no doubt on the part of the huge crowds. But a lot of other people wanted to get in on the act for their own benefits. Like the people pushing Crawford jerseys and posters at the Airport's entrance and sometimes insulting people who didn't buy. (Incidentally, if we are concerned about national dignity, then that Airport needs drastic attention. You don't have vendors squatting on the doorways of international airports). Or like the PM himself putting his election hat on a \$50 million stadium peg since reduced to \$30 million. It really had little to do with sport. For people's memories that are not too short, the PM's tongue-lashing against

local athletes last year cannot be easily forgotten.

The PM aside, Crawford's achievement in the 100 metres was no mean one even though the principled withdrawal by many nations left the Olympics rather truncated. His achievement was essentially a personal one. It had little to do with national dignity. And what is national dignity anyway?

Also, in all the hysteria, naturally enough, not much mention was made of the failure of Crawford's muscles in the 200 metres. Mentioning this is not to slight Crawford in the least. It should just make us stop and think of the frailty and destructibility of the human form (and of all created things for that matter) and that the bodies which we pride and prune would one day falter and perish.

## Words We Can Do Without

In a local magistrate's court a woman was recently rebuked harshly for using obscene language. Her punishment was more than what is normally administered to men. The magistrate recognised that 'cussing' was rampant among men but felt that the habit should be curtailed among women who had a more direct responsibility for the up-bringing of children.

Here in Trinidad, it often seems that vices obscure virtues and that the use of obscene language provides the mainstay of the vocabulary of many. But have you ever noticed the type of people who are charged with such offences? The majority of cases surround the illiterate or the 'lower class' citizen involved in some 'bacchanal'.

But have you ever noticed in your place of employ, in big business places, in supposedly respectable and well-reputed

firms that 'cussing' is the norm? Possibly you might not have recognised it because it has become so commonplace—a necessity almost—in everybody's vocabulary. It is no longer surprising too to find scholars and those of 'high learning' making excessive use of obscenities in the name of art. There is no care, no inhibition, no embarrassment among men and women—only a wanton disregard for elders and young ones. Cussing is taken as a mark of self-confidence, proof that you are a grown up person and so free to say and do as you like. We even hear the upholders of man-made law and order making maximum use of the foul words both on and off duty but we seldom if ever see such people in court on such charges.

How do we deal with this futile, embarrassing, evil misuse of the God-given power of speech? Surely if you regard your lips as something special in kissing your family, in saying kind words to friends and passers-by, in communicating with your Creator, then certainly those same lips should not, must not be used for telling lies, cussing etc. Obscenity, let us agree, is a 'necessity' we could all do without.

*The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, upon whom be peace,*  
has said:

**There is no obedience to a created thing if it involves  
disobedience to the Creator.**



## Preparing for a great role

The coming of the month of Ramadan is anxiously awaited by Muslims especially those of us who may have grown somewhat careless of our duties and obligations and whose hearts have become somewhat rusty. Ramadan provides the great opportunity for reviving the consciousness of our position and role as human beings, as a course rectifier for getting back on the straight path or as a polisher to remove all the accumulation of dross and dirt from our sullied souls.

God says in the Qur'an: "O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you even as it was prescribed for those before you so that you may attain taqwa." (The word taqwa in Arabic has a rich and deep significance; basically it means caution or care—as an instrument to ward off danger or disobedience. It connotes also, efforts to fulfil all Divine obligations, and more than that, voluntary acts of piety as well. It has been variously translated as fear of God, God-consciousness, piety and righteousness.

Commenting on the above verse, the late Sayyid Qutb wrote: "Fasting is a field of activity whereby a definite and determined will is established and whereby man is attached to his Lord through complete obedience and willing submission. So too does it serve as an instrument for rising above all the needs of the body, bearing their pressure and weight—out of preference for God's pleasure and good rewards. All these factors are necessary for the training and preparing of souls to bear the hardships of a road covered with obstacles and thorns, at the sides of which desires and inclinations are strewn about, and along which are thousands of temptations beckoning its travellers..."

But while the fasting of Ramadan prepares us for our roles as human beings, to be better able to appreciate the bounties of God, to increase our endurance and our resolve to struggle in the path of God, to strengthen our concern for fellow human beings, it is also a month for which we have to prepare ourselves.

Every important act, and in particular every great act of worship requires some preparation. In the case of the five daily prayers, for example, we need to prepare ourselves in advance by ensuring that we are in a state of purity and by getting into the correct mental framework—by reading the Qur'an for sometime before for instance—in order that Prayer would be meaningful and not merely a series of mechanical movements. In the case of the Pilgrimage too, obviously we need to make preparations well in advance—not only for the physical necessities of the journey but also steeping ourselves in the Islamic ethic long before. Otherwise it would be just a tripping experience from which little is gained. On the larger plane of course our entire life in this world is a continuous worship and a preparation for the life hereafter.

There is no ready-made, instant formula for attaining to the rewards which these great acts of worship promise. In essence, we get out of them what we put into them. We need to put in faith, effort and concentration into them all and into life as a whole.

In the case of Ramadan in particular, the noble Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace, who is our guide and exemplar, prepared for the coming of Ramadan by fasting most of the two previous months, Rajab and Sha'baan. Let us use the remaining days ahead before Ramadan to prepare ourselves for the great role ahead.

# اللغة العربية

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