

# THE MUSLIM STANDARD

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## GLORY BE TO GOD



سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ

As we look around our environments, we see that every family has a head; every school has a principal; every city or town has a mayor and every nation has a head of state. Moreover, we know beyond doubt that every product is the work of a certain producer, and that every beautiful art is the creation of some great artist. All this is obvious, yet it does not satisfy the hunger for knowledge and the curiosity of man about the great things in the world. One often wonders at the beauties of nature with its scenic charms and marvels; the almost endless horizons in the sky and their far-reaching expansions; the ceaseless succession of day and night in the most disciplinary manner; the course of the sun, the moon and the great stars; the world of animate and inanimate objects, the continuous process of the reproduction of man, generation after generation. One often wonders because one would like to know the maker and maintainer of all these things with which we live and which we enjoy.

Can we find an explanation of the great Universe? Is there any convincing interpretation of the secret of existence? We realize that no family can function properly without a responsible head, that no city can prosperously exist without sound administration, and that no state can survive without a chief of some kind. We also realize that nothing comes into being on its own. Moreover, we observe that the Universe exists and functions in the most orderly manner, and that it has survived for hundreds of thousands of years. Can we, then, say that all this is accidental and haphazard? Or can we attribute the existence of man and the whole world to mere chance?

If man were to come into being by accident or by sheer chance, his entire life would be based on chance, and his whole existence would be meaningless. But no sensible man can conceive of his life at the mercy of fluctuating chance. Every reasonable human being tries to make his life as meaningful as possible and set for himself a model of conduct according to



some design. Individuals, groups and nations do plan their course of action, and every careful plan produces some desired effects. The fact of the matter is that man does engage in planning of one sort or another, and can appreciate the merits of good planning.

Yet man represents only a very small portion of the great Universe. And if he can make plans and appreciate the merits of planning, then his own existence and the survival of the Universe must also be based on a planned policy. This means that there is a Designing Will behind our material existence, and that there is a Unique Mind in the world to bring things into being and keep them moving in order. The marvellous wonders of our world and the secrets of life are too great to be the product of random accident or mere chance.

In the world, then, there must be a Great Force in action to keep everything in order. In beautiful nature there must be a Great Artist who creates the most charming pieces of art and produces everything for a special purpose in life. This Force is the strongest of all forces, and this artist is the greatest of all artists. The true believers and deeply enlightened people recognise this Artist and call Him Allah or God. They call Him God because He is the Creator and the Chief architect of the world, the Originator of life and the Provider of all things in existence.

He is not a man because no man can create or make another man. He is not an animal, nor is He a plant. He is neither an idol nor is He a statue of any kind because none of these things can make itself or create anything else. He is not a machine. He is neither the sun nor is He the moon or any other planet, because these things are controlled by a great system, and are themselves made by someone else. He is different from all these things, because He is the Maker and Keeper of them all. And we know that the maker of anything must be different from and greater than the things which he makes. We also know that nothing can come to life on its own, and that the marvellous world did not create itself or come into existence by accident. The continuous changes in the world prove that it is made, and everything which is made must have a maker of some sort.

The Maker and Sustainer of the world, the Creator and Provider of man, the Acting Force and Effective Power in nature are all one and the same, and that

is known to be Allah or God. This is the secret of all secrets and the Most Supreme of all beings. The Glorious Qur'an, the true existing Book of God, says:

"It is God Who has made the night for you, that you may rest therein, and the day to see. Verily God is full of Grace and Bounty to men. Yet most men give no thanks. Such is God, your Lord, the Creator of all things. There is no god but He; why then do you turn away from Him? Thus are turned away those who deny the Signs of God. It is God Who has made for you the earth as a resting place and the sky as a shelter, and has given you shape and made your shapes beautiful, and has provided for you sustenance of things good and pure. Such is God your Lord. So glory to God, the Lord of the worlds! He is the Living One. There is no god but He. Call upon Him giving Him sincere devotion. Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds." (40:61-65)

"It is God Who has subjected the sea to you, that ships may sail through it by His command, that you seek of His Bounty and that you may be grateful. And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth. Behold! In that there are signs indeed for those who reflect." (45:12-13)

The Supreme Master of the whole world and the Creator of everything is Allah (God). Because He is so Great and different from the other beings, man can know Him only by reflection and through meditation. He exists at all times, and His great power is in action everywhere in the world. Man has to believe in His existence because everything in the world proves that He exists. Belief in God and His great power alone can provide mankind with the best possible explanation of many mysterious things in life. This is the safest way to true knowledge and spiritual insight, the right path to good behaviour and sound morals, the surest guide to happiness and prosperity.

Once man believes that God exists, he must know His attributes and names. Every perfection and absolute goodness belong to Him, and no defect or wrong applies to Him. In specific terms, one should know and believe the following:

1. God is only One, has no partner or son, and neither begets nor is He begotten. He is eternally besought by all and has no beginning or end, and none is equal to Him. (112:1-5)

2. He is the Merciful and the Compassionate, the Guardian and the True Guide, the Just and the Supreme Lord, the Creator and the Watchful, the First and the Last, the Knowing and the Wise, the Hearing and the Aware, the Witness and the Glorious, the Able and the Powerful.

3. He is the Loving and the Provider, the Generous and the Benevolent, the Rich and the Independent, the Forgiving and the Clement, the Patient and the Appreciative, the Unique and the Protector, the Judge and the Source of Peace.

Each one of these names and attributes of God is mentioned in various places in the Holy Qur'an. We all enjoy the care and mercy of God Who is so Loving and Kind to His creation. If we try to count His favours upon us, we cannot, because they are countless.

God is High and Supreme, but He is very near to the pious people; He answers their prayers and helps them. He loves the people who love Him and forgives their sins. He grants them peace and happiness, knowledge and success, life and protection. He welcomes all those who want to be at peace with Him and never rejects any of them. He teaches man to be good, to do the right and to keep away from the wrong. Because He is so Good and Loving, He recommends and accepts only the good and right things. The door of His mercy is open all the time to any who want to please Him and gain His support and protection. (2:186; 50:16)

The love of God for His creatures is immense and beyond human imagination. We cannot measure or count His favours. He creates us and takes good care of us, not only from the time of our birth onward, but even long before that. He makes us in the best form of creation and gives all the senses we need for our growth. He helps us when we cannot help ourselves, and provides for us and for our dependents. He creates in man the mind to understand, the soul and conscience to be good and to do the good, the feelings and sentiments to be kind and loving.

By his mercy, we gain true knowledge and see the real light. Because He is Merciful, He creates us in the most beautiful shape and creates for us the sun and the moon, the land and the sea, the earth and the skies, the plants and the animals. He creates all these things and many others for our benefit and use. He makes

things that are of service to us in this life and gives man dignity and intelligence, honour and respect because man is the best of all created things and is God's vicegerent on earth. The mercy of God helps us to remove fears and doubts. The mercy of God gives us hope and peace, courage and confidence. It enables us to remedy our griefs and sorrows, to overcome our difficulties and obtain success and happiness. Indeed, the mercy of God relieves the distressed, cheers the afflicted, consoles the sick, strengthens the desperate, aids the needy and answers the sincere prayers. In short, the mercy of God is active everywhere all the time in every aspect of our lives. Some people may fail to recognise it, but it is there and we can feel it with our hearts and appreciate it with our minds and souls.

The Loving Merciful God never forgets us or lets us down or ignores our sincere calls upon Him. By His Mercy and Love, He has shown us the right way and sent to us messengers and teachers, books and revelations — all are meant for our help and guidance. The Last Messenger from God is Muhammad, and the most genuine existing book of God is the Qur'an. From the traditions of Muhammad and the teachings of the Qur'an, we learn about the forgiving God. If a person commits a sin or does something wrong, then he is violating the

Law of God, committing a grave offence against God and abusing his own dignity and existence. But if he is sincere and wishes to repent, if he regrets his wrong deeds and wants to turn to God, if he faithfully seeks pardon from God, if he is honest in his attempts to approach God, then God will certainly accept him and forgive him. Even those who reject God and His Oneness are assured of forgiveness would they realise their erroneous attitudes and resolve to come back to God. In this connection, the Qur'an says:

"God forgives not that partners should be set up with Him, but he forgives anything else, to whom He pleases. To set up partners with God is to devise a sin most heinous indeed." (4:48)

"Say: O My servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of God, for God forgives all sins. Indeed He is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful. Turn you to your Lord (in repentance) and submit to Him, before the penalty comes on you—after that you shall not be helped. And follow the best of the courses revealed to you from your Lord, before the penalty comes on you—of a sudden while you perceive not." (39:53–54).

In return for all these great favours and kindnesses, God does not need anything from us, because He is the Self-sufficient and the Independent. He does not ask us to pay Him back, for we cannot reward Him or value His immeasurable favours and mercy. What He commands us to do, however, is only to be good, to be thankful and appreciative, to follow His recommendations and enforce His Law, to be the proper manifestation of His goodness and excellent attributes, to be His honest agents and true representatives on earth.

He does not want to enslave us, because He is the One Who grants us dignity and honour. He does not wish to subjugate us, because He is the One Who emancipates us from fear and superstitions. He does not desire to humiliate us because He is the One Who creates us and exalts our ranks above all other beings. So whatever rules and prescriptions He passes onto us, they are designed for our own benefit and good. They are meant to help us to enjoy our lives with one another in peace and kindness, in brotherhood and co-operation. They are destined to make us attain His most pleasant fellowship and adopt the surest approach to eternal happiness.

Excerpted from ISLAM IN FOCUS

## Alla'hu Akbar

by Don T. Frazer

I awoke in the still of the early morn  
And gave thanks  
For the safe passage of the night.  
"But," the cool sand at my forehead whispered,  
"God is greatest."

I prayed for strength for the journey,  
For courage,  
And for knowledge of the way to go.  
But the now rising sun assured me, "Fear not,  
God is greatest."

At midmorning rest I gave thanks  
That no animal had faltered,  
No life had been lost.  
But the clear, cloudless sky above answered,  
"God is greatest."

In the smothering heat of high noon,  
With my breath like a flame in my throat,  
I gave thanks at the oasis well.  
But even as life flow'd back, I heard the water say,  
"God is greatest."

At setting sun—and journey's end,  
For riches quite beyond belief,  
I gave thanks.  
But the soft evening breeze reminded me,  
"God is greatest."

Thus, as I lay in my bed that night  
And gave thanks  
For wife, for friends—and for all Thy many gifts,  
Even the moonlight on my blanket chided me,  
"God is greatest."

Earlier still, the next day I awoke,  
Determined to learn why the elements spoke.  
For knowledge is good—in a sense—divine.  
But my heart within me doth ever opine,  
"God is greatest."

So what can it be, that guards and protects  
Each step of each day's journey?  
And the answer came like a clarion call,  
" 'Tis love—between the seeker and the Sought,  
And God is greatest."

As the politicians geared for the Local Government elections, a large cross-section of the society was otherwise entangled. Both sides of the coin were featured in a public debate on: 'to legalise or not to legalise abortion.'

The issue was publicly opened by the R. C. archbishop who adopted an adamant stand against any form of abortion. He was supported by the P.M. who (perhaps in the wake of developments in India) iterated that he was on the side of anyone against legalisation of abortion. The president of the Government instigated FPA was more out-spoken. He was in favour of therapeutic abortion being made available to women under certain circumstances such as rape, incest or where the life and mental health of the mother may be at stake. He felt that such a move would be a means to reducing the figure of 25,000 'back-room' abortions. But, reflecting on the contraceptive and promiscuous mentality now predominant at all levels of the society, such reasoning remains unjustified.

Many people reflected personal concern and highlighted arguments both for and against. Some of these arguments were:

\*In a society where men and women shun the responsibility of rearing and educating their children, abortion is permissible if only to avoid an unwanted child.

\* Some expressed the view that since the use of contraceptives was already sanctioned, legalising of abortion would be a natural step as abortion was only a higher form of birth control.

\*Others felt that legalising of abortion in special circumstances would be a means of exploitation by unscrupulous doctors to perform abortions under any circumstances.

\*One individual stated that the reason why most women would welcome any such move is because they want to maintain that youthful look, to shun their responsibility and generally to boast that they are free, single and disengaged.

Others would welcome such a move as they would be in a better position to cover up their shame. Morals are already falling and would escalate out of proportion should there be any legislation in favour of abortion.

In a random survey it was found that knowledge concerning abortions was easily available. Reasons given for having

## THE QUESTION OF ABORTION

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had abortion were in most cases trivial and in nearly all cases accompanied by a guilty feeling. The greatest deterrent against pregnancy was social stigma and the moral standards being upheld. There were cases of young girls dying, women afterwards unable to become pregnant for more than about two weeks, and general feelings of depression from other "successful" women.

The following are two cases uncovered.

**Case 1: An unmarried woman from a middle class family pregnant for an employed man.**

"We went to the Doctor and he confirmed that I was three months pregnant. I started to cry because I knew that I had to face my Mom. Notice I said my Mom and not my Dad who always said: 'I give my children freedom but, if ever they brought a belly into my house—it is outside!'" The Doctor asked what did we intend to do. When we did not answer, he told us to go home and talk it over and come back and tell him.

My fiance and I confronted my Mom and told her what had happened. She said that she had suspected such to be the case. Well, we spoke it over and decided that I could not have the baby. I say I because my fiance wanted it whole heartedly. But, I knew that I could not keep it, though deep down inside I wanted it just as much as he did.

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Finally, my mother also agreed that I just could not have the baby. We returned to the Doctor and told him of our decision. He understood and told us that the person who will be doing the job charges by the number of months pregnant. As it was three months in my case I paid about \$150.00—\$200.00.

Finally, the dreadful day arrived. I was frightened and I believed so was my fiance. Up to when we arrived there, he was still hesitant to go in. In a way I was also but I pushed it away and so we went in. I met a nice lady who spoke very calmly to me and told me to relax and not to be scared. So I relaxed on the bed. She then inserted a long thin tube into me and I felt a gush of hot liquid go up. Then she said "You may get up now". I said, "Finished already" I was surprised, so quickly everything was through.

By the time I reached home which was half an hour after, I looked at my legs and found them red. Well, I knew it had started to work, whatever it was. After that everything was just terrible. I caught cold, sweat, ague and I did not have any appetite. I began to think that if I had kept my baby I would not have been in this agony. But, it was already too late.

That night I took castor oil and I had it with my tummy. It started about midnight and I spent half that night in the 'john'. I was told that when you are in the beginning of pregnancy your baby is in pieces. Well I felt something came out and I imagined that was it. After that I had the same pain and I felt maybe there was still something in there. But, as it did not come out I began thinking that I was wrong. Everything started to get better and I began to take 'things' to give me back my strength. Everything was alright or so I thought.

Then about two weeks after I started to bleed, but it was a sort of blackish red business. I went back to the doctor and he told me that there was still something inside of me and that I had to have a D.N.C. which is a scrape. I got scared. On that day I prayed (right through this experience I prayed and so did my Mom) harder this time because this was an operation. We paid the doctor another \$200-\$250.00 which was for the



Nursing Home and to pay the anaesthetist. They told me not to be scared and finally, I knew nothing. When I woke up, I knew that everything was alright this time.

Sometimes I think about it and I know that my fiance does also. When we are both playing with my nephew our eyes meet and they seem to say "This could have been our Baby." But these things happen sometimes for the better though sometimes I wish that it did not happen at all. I hope that when I am really ready to have my baby the good Lord will bless us with one.

### Case 2; A married woman

Two months after having my first-child and not having seen my periods I went to my doctor. He gave me some tablets for a six-day pregnancy test and advised me to visit the family planning clinic as I would be exposed to a better test. Before the end of the six-day test I went to the clinic and was told that I was not pregnant. I was given a course of birth control pills and at the end of the course four days after my monthly periods would begin. The pills finished and I waited in vain for my periods.

I revisited my doctor and told him all that had happened. After checking he found that I was pregnant. Immediately I became scared. Not of another baby but, of the effect of the month's supply of birth control pills on the unborn baby. I discussed it with my husband and my doctor who informed me reluctantly of another doctor who performed abortions.

This doctor had no scruples about performing abortions in fact as I entered the examining room he said "I know you are pregnant, do you want it or not?" He then gave me two tablets and told me not to eat anything after ten o'clock, return tomorrow at eight o'clock and walk with \$250. The following day I was given an injection and told to lie down. A hot liquid was then pumped into my womb. I was given two more tablets to take in the event of unbearable pain and told that everything should be over in twenty-four hours.

That night I suffered intense pain and spent hours in the toilet. At one stage the pain scared me so much that I called my doctor in the

middle of the night. He told me to call the abortionist who told me to take another tablet and everything would be over shortly. A couple of hours later the pain and heavy bleeding subsided and I felt alright.

Since then I have been living with a guilty feeling but could see no way out except having a mentally and physically retarded child.

### MEDICAL VIEW

Medical opinion is almost unanimous in asserting that abortion is highly dangerous for the general health of the women. Dr. Frederick J. Tansig sums up the essence of medical opinion:

When pregnancy is prematurely interrupted by what we term abortion, the human race suffers loss and damage in three ways;

First, an infinite number of human beings are destroyed before their birth; secondly, abortion carries with it a considerable death rate among expectant mothers; and finally, abortion leaves in its wake a high incidence of pathological conditions some of which interfere with the further possibility of reproduction.

Dr. Oswald Schwarz had this to say on the consequences of the frequent use of contraceptives:

"What need does the sexual instinct reveal and help to satisfy? That it is something to do with propagation is obvious....."

It is a well proved biological law that every organ of your body wants to function to do its job, and if it is prevented trouble arises.

A large part of a woman's body is organised for gestation, and if she is denied the fulfilment of her physical and mental organisation she withers."

Other eminent doctors have interpreted this "withering" to mean that a number of attendant disorders arise such as low blood pressure, insomnia, nervous instability, depressions, weakening of the heart and brain, hysteria, falling of the womb, and even insanity. This is the obvious result of tampering with the natural laws that the Creator has established for the smooth operation of His creation.

### MUSLIM VIEWPOINT

Islam is a religion of the "middle course" and although being totally against the widespread use of birth control, recognizes the need, in individual cases and on the advice of expert med-

ical opinion, to permit the limited use of contraceptives and even abortion. e.g.

In case where the birth of a child may seriously impair the health of the mother.

The instructions found in the Qur'an are clear and without ambiguity.

"And do not kill your children for fear of poverty! We (God) shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily the killing of them is a great sin."

(17:31)

"Surely lost are they who slay their offspring foolishly and without knowledge and have forbidden that which God have provided for them: a fabrication against God. Surely they have strayed and have not become guided ones."

(6:141)

These simple verses abolish the fear of economic scarcity and the contraceptive mentality as well as emphasise that children are a bounty from God and their killing is in fact a denial of His bounty.

Islam ordains marriage as the only lawful means of sexual intercourse and further states that the purpose of marriage is procreation and the fostering of love and affection together with the promotion of culture and civilisation.

"And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find consolation in them and He has ordained between you, love and compassion"

(30:21)

In consideration of the apprehension displayed that population growth causes scarcity and poverty the Qur'an states:

"And We (God) have provided therein (earth) means of subsistence for you (mankind) and for those (other creatures) whose sustenance you are not responsible."

(15:20)

"There is not a moving creature on the earth but its sustenance depends on God." (11:6)

"Glorify the name of your Guardian - Lord Most High, Who has created, and further given order and proportion. Who has ordained laws and granted guidance." (87:1-3)

The essence of these verses is that God the Creator of Existence is also the Provider and Sustainer of All. He is not engaged in creating without any scheme or programme - unmindful of whether the earth can sustain His creatures, but has in fact established a balance in His creation. The test is now in the hands of man to realise that the only way of retaining this balance in creation is to pattern his life along the standards and limits laid down by the Creator.

## HONOUR & NOBILITY IN SOCIETY

Among the many virtues which Islam has always fostered, propagated, and stood for their promulgation and promotion in human society, are racial harmony, human equality and the brotherhood of man. The Qur'an constantly reminds us that taqwa (righteousness or God-consciousness) is the sole criteria of human dignity and greatness. Nobility, according to the Qur'an does not lie in the colour of one's skin, or the bones of one's ancestors, or in the material achievements which one has made. The Qur'an declares:

Truly the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most righteous among you. (Atqakum). 49:13.

Taqwa must be understood as the constant working of faith in one's life. It is a generic quality which activates one's life under a true consciousness of divine presence, under which one moves and stands and deals with other beings. This consciousness may vary from time to time and hence those people of taqwa (or the Muttaqin) are not a sect, nor an order like religious orders, nor a particular class in the society; but these are the individuals who through their true abidance by Islamic virtues acquire the pleasure of God, which in turn confers upon them a place of dignity and honour and love among men. The Prophet, peace be upon him, explained this by saying, "When God loves someone, He calls Jibra'il (Gabriel) and says that He loves that person so let you also hold him beloved. Jibra'il, then, loves him and proclaims among the inhabitants of heaven, 'Behold, God loves that person so ye also hold him beloved!' So the people of heaven love him and then honour and acceptance is placed for him on earth." The Hadith, thus, gives the order of things like honour and nobility in human society. Nobility on earth follows divine acceptance in heaven and not vice versa. Any acceptance or nobility which does not proceed from the consciousness of divine presence or through the spirit of taqwa is not true nobility and greatness in the sight of God, and hence it is devoid of Islamic recognition.

Human progeny also proceeded from one man, as is the Qur'anic view. Existentially (whatever may be its ontology) it implies that all men are equal. The Qur'an states:

Mankind! Be conscious of your Sustainer, who created you out of one living entity and out of it created its mate, and out of the two spread abroad a multitude of men and women. 4:1.

Human brotherhood is thus, a real one. We all trace our ancestry back to the one and the same father. The Qur'an, however does not deny that there are differences in human beings regarding their colour, language, race, and country. It, in fact, affirms and recognizes these differences. But in the Qur'an these differences say something of the greatness of God rather than of the greatness or superiority of one's colour, or language, or race, or nation over the other. The Qur'an announces:

"And among His signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours; truly in that are signs for those who know." 30:22

And again

"Mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other." 49:13.

Quranically speaking, it is not the difference of colour, for that is the creation of God, but it is colour prejudice which is demonic. The evil does not lie in the differences of race, nation, or tribes, because human beings are so made and appointed by God; but it is racialism, tribalism, and nationalism which are the sources of evil.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, in his speech during the Farewell Pilgrimage declared:

"People descend from Adam, and Adam was made out of dust. There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab, neither for a white-man over a black-man, except the superiority gained through righteousness.

This equality and brotherhood manifest themselves daily on a local level in Muslim prayers where, with no difference of race, colour, wealth, or poverty all Muslims stand together in the mosques facing the Ka'bah, and they are also manifested on an international level annually when Muslims (those who can afford to) go for Hajj (Pilgrimage) from all over the world.

It is related that once a companion of the Prophet called despidingly another Companion named Bilal, "Son of a black woman!" The Prophet on hearing this became angry and replied, "Do you condemn him because of the blackness of his mother. You are certainly a man of ignorance (al-jahiliyyah)."

On the day of the conquest of Mecca the Prophet commanded this same Bilal to go up to the roof of the Kabah and proclaim the victory of Islam. Bilal being a Negro who was once a slave, the Prophet's choice of him for this purpose is something not insignificant. It must have meant a great deal to the nobility of Mecca which had always chosen the most noble and high ranking family for the service of the Kabah.

This spirit of racial harmony reminiscent of the spirit of the Prophet, peace be upon him, has always remained alive in the hearts of the Muslims. They always, when following the true spirit of Islam, stood against racialism. They struggled against it even in the hearts of their enemies. It is related that when Muslim armies entered Egypt under the command of 'Amr bin al-'As and besieged the fortress of Babylon, the king Maqawqis expressed his desire to negotiate with the 'Muslims'. 'Amr chose 'Ubadah bin Samit to head the delegation sent for negotiation with Maqawqis. 'Ubadah it is said, was a man eight feet tall and of very black skin. The king was too scared to face this giant, he shouted, "Take away this black man from my sight and find someone else to talk with me!" All the members of the delegation stood firm, and replied to the Christian king with one accord, "He is the best among us, and so he is chosen by our commander to head our delegation; we cannot disobey him." The idea of his black skin might never have occurred to them, since to them value lay only in one's character and not in the colour of one's skin.

In the end it must be said that not only is it that Islam succeeded in bringing racial harmony among the people with whom it came into contact; but also it is true that much of the success of Islam in various parts of the world goes to the credit of this Islamic virtue. It is the duty of the Muslims to understand that their survival and the survival of the world, depends on the propagation and promotion of this Islamic virtue.

by Muzammil H. Siddiqi



The Khutbah (sermon) before Friday prayer (Salatul Jumu'ah) is considered by most jurists as obligatory (wajib), but a few regard it as only desirable (man dub). However, they agree that it was regularly conducted by the Prophet, peace be upon him. In performing the Khutbah, as in all forms of 'ibadah, (worship) the practice of the Prophet is the model that Muslims have to copy. That is why it is necessary to know how he used to deliver the Khutbah.

After climbing the mimbar (pulpit), the Prophet, peace be on him, would greet the congregation and sit down facing them. Then he would get up to give the Khutbah after the second adhan was announced. This adhan (call to prayer) could be said inside the prayer room. When the Khutbah starts, it is essential that the congregation should keep completely silent and listen carefully. Any talk among the audience is considered as nonsense (laghw). However, the preacher could interrupt his khutbah to give an instruction or make a remark, as the Prophet himself had done, when he got down from the pulpit to answer a query, and on another occasion, to look after his grandson.

The Prophet, peace and blessings of God be on him, used to have a light pause during which he would sit down and get up again to continue the Khutbah. When we speak about two khutbahs, we are referring to the one before the pause and the one after it. It is desirable that a member of the congregation silently recites a du'a (supplication) during this pause.

As it is desirable that any speech should begin with the praise (al hamd) of God, it is more so in the case of both khutbahs. It is also desirable that each of the two khutbahs include the shahadah, (testimony of faith), Salat (prayer) upon the Prophet, and some form of Istighfar (asking forgiveness of God). The following is a known beginning of the Prophet's khutbah:

*"Al hamdu lillahi nasta'inuhu wa nastaghfiruhu wa na'udhu bil-lahi min shururi anfusina. Man yahdi Allahu fala mudilla lahu, wa man yudlil fala hadiya la hu. Wa ash hadu an la ilaha ila Allah wa ash hadu anna Muhammadan 'abduhu wa rasuluhu arsalahu bil haqqi bashiran bayn yadayi al sa'ah. Man yuti' Allaha ta'ala wa rasuluhu faqad rashad, wa man ya'si hima fa inahu la yaduru ila nafsahu wa la yadru Allaha shay'an."*

(Praise-be to Allah. We ask His help and we seek His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil of ourselves. Whoever Allah guides, there is none to mislead him. And whoever Allah leads astray, there is none to guide him. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and His messenger. Allah sent him with the Truth as a bearer of good tidings for the last Hour (Day of Judgment). Whoever obeys Allah the Exalted and His messenger is indeed on the right path, and whoever disobeys them certainly does harm to himself only and does not injure God in any way.)

## THE FRIDAY KHUTBAH

There are other forms of introductions used by the Prophet and reported in the books of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence). However, the introduction is not the essential part of the khutbah. The substance of the khutbah should be educative on the essentials of faith, in order to strengthen it, and to influence the people towards good behaviour. This is the whole purpose of the khutbah. It may be conveyed in any language understood by the congregation and in any form that reaches their hearts. Unfortunately, many Imams in the Muslim world are fond of reciting a beautifully-phrased khutbah written some centuries ago. Some of them never get tired of repeating a few selections of khutbahs all their lives. Apart from a drowsy audience, what response can one expect from such a talk? How different was the attitude of the Prophet!

The reporters of the Sirah (biography of the Prophet) have said that when the Prophet gave the khutbah, his eyes would turn reddish, he would raise his voice and he would become angry like a warner bringing news of an invading army. This was not due to any form of exhibitionism. It was a natural outcome of a strong consciousness of the transitory nature of this life, unwavering conviction in the promise of God and deep concern for the human condition and salvation. The prophet would ask the community to do one thing and not another. If he noticed someone in need, he would ask

them to help him, if there was adrought, he would make du'a (supplication) for rain. In short, the Prophet's khutbahs dealt with matters that were relevant and of immediate concern to the community.

The sirah writers argue that the khutbah of the Prophet was short and precise. It is considered a sign of 'ilm (religious knowledge) on the part of the Imam to make a short khutbah and a long prayer. Nowadays the practice seems to be the opposite! It is desirable to quote from the Qur'an whenever possible in the Khutbah.

The Arabic language is by no means necessary for the khutbah. In fact, it is absurd to preach in Arabic when most of the congregation would not understand. Of course, the Prophet always delivered khutbah in Arabic, but that was because all his listeners spoke Arabic. Nevertheless, it might be desirable to give the short introduction that includes praise of God, testimony of faith and prayer upon the Prophet, in Arabic. That is because they are quotations from the Prophet (like the one given) and because most Muslims do understand them in the original language.

Although it is desirable that the Imam who leads the prayer should deliver the khutbah, it is sanctioned that the preacher could be different from the Imam. Originally, it was the Muslim ruler himself who would lead the prayer and deliver the khutbah. As the leader of the society, he was in a position to know best the needs of the community. In Islam, there is no dichotomy (partition) between worldly and religious affairs. In most Muslim countries, if not all, the present rulers are not very keen to follow the Sunnah (way, practice) of the Prophet and his best-guided caliphs (successors) in this respect.

The conclusion one therefore draws from the practice of the Prophet is that the content of the khutbah should mainly be about the essentials of faith (imaan), that it should be relevant to the prevailing circumstances and in a language which everybody understands. While the basic facts of faith are immutable, the arguments supporting them are not. In preparing these arguments, one should take into consideration the standard of knowledge prevailing in the community at the time. However, the decisive factor remains the sincerity of the speaker and his conviction of what he preaches.

*By Al-Tayeb Zein Al-Abidin*

# WHEN THE VICTORY COMES...

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
 إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ  
 وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ  
 اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا  
 فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ  
 إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا

*"When the victory from Allah and the Conquest come and you see people entering the religion of Allah in large numbers, then celebrate the praises of your Lord and seek His forgiveness. Lo! He is ever ready to show mercy."*

(An-Nasr Ch. 110.)

This small surah brings the good news to Allah's Messenger, on whom be peace, concerning the advent of victory, the Conquest, and the people's collective acceptance of Allah's religion. It instructs him to turn towards his Lord in a devoted adoration and humble request for His forgiveness.

This surah presents the nature and the righteousness of Islam and its ideology, how high it ascends with humanity and how dignified, devoted, faithful and free it wants humanity to be.

Imam Ahmad reported— "Aisha said that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, used to repeat at the end of any of his undertakings, "Exalted and praised be to Allah, whose forgiveness I ask, I seek refuge in Him." He also said— "My Lord told me I would see a sign in my Ummah (nation). He ordered me to praise Him, the Forgiving, and ask His pardon when I do see this sign. Indeed, I have seen this sign in, "When the victory and Conquest come....." (An-Nasr. 110)

Ibn Katheer said in his commentary-

"The Conquest is unanimously agreed to be referring to the conquest of Mecca which the Arab tribes were awaiting before accepting Islam. Within a period of two years after the conquest of Mecca, the whole Arabian peninsula was dominated by Islam.

Ibn Abbas said- "This surah was a sign from Allah to His Messenger indicating the approach of the end of his life, meaning when the victory from Allah and the Conquest come, your end is near, so extol the praises of your Lord and seek His forgiveness."

The Messenger, peace be upon him, witnessing his Lord's sign, realized that he had fulfilled his mission on this earth and that it was time to leave it.

Ibn Abbas also said- "When this surah was revealed, the Messenger of Allah, on whom be peace, called upon Fatimah, his daughter and said- "My death has been disclosed to me."

She was seen to start crying, then to smile. She explained that she cried when she heard the news of her father's impending death, but then smiled when her father had said, "Be restrained because you will be the first of my family to join me and would be the next celebrated woman in al-Jannah (Paradise) after Mary, the daughter of Imran."

## INJUNCTIONS FOR ALL TIMES

The beginning of the first verse presents a specific concept and system regarding what goes on in this universe and the events that operate in this life. It also shows the actual role of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, and his followers, in the onward march of Islam and to what extent it depends on their efforts.

"When the victory granted by Allah" denotes that it is Allah's victory and Allah is the One Who brings it about in His own good time, and in the form which He decides and for the purpose which He determines.

The prophet and his companions have nothing to do with it at all. They contribute nothing towards bringing it about

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and they obtain no personal gain from it. It is Allah's own affair and He can accomplish it with and without them. It suffices them that Allah does it through them, appoints them as its guards and entrusts it to them.

This is all they acquire from the victory of Allah, the Conquest and the people's entering Allah's religion in large numbers.

The duty of the Messenger and his companions, whom Allah chose and gave the privilege of achieving His victory through their hands, was to turn unto Him in praise, expressing gratitude and seeking forgiveness. Gratitude and praise are for His being so generous as to have chosen them to cater for His religion.

Gratitude and praise are for the mercy and favour He bestowed on all humanity by making His religion victorious and also for the Conquest of Mecca and the collective acceptance of Islam.

The forgiveness of Allah is sought for the various unrevealed, defective feelings such as vanity which sometimes creeps into one's heart at the overwhelming moment of victory attained after a long struggle.

Human beings can hardly prevent this happening and therefore Allah's forgiveness is to be sought.

The seeking of forgiveness is also for what might have been insinuated into one's heart during the long, rigorous, severe and cruel struggle and for petulance resulting from the belatedness of victory or the effects of convulsive despair as the Quran brings out:

"Or do you think that you shall enter the Garden (of Bliss) without such (trials) As came to those who passed away Before you? They encountered suffering and adversity, and were shaken in spirit and even the Apostle and those of faith who were with him cried; "When (will come) the help of Allah? Ah! Verily, the help of Allah is (always) near."

The Qur'an Al Baqarah 2:214

The forgiveness of Allah is necessary also for one's shortcomings in praising and thanking Allah whose favours upon one are perpetual and infinite.

"If you would count up the favours of Allah, never would you be able to number them; For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

(The Qur'an An Nahl 16:18)



# Need For Detailed Planning

The last fifty years witnessed the "jungle-like" settlement of St. James emerging as a striving commercial and residential centre. Amidst all this activity in the "city that never sleeps" one building remained unchanged.

Built in 1927, the mosque with dome and minarets beckons towards some unknown and distinguished past. Dedicated by the late Haji Gokool Meah, an immigrant, it reflects a message of sacrifice on the part of a few souls.

A few weeks ago a celebration was held marking the "golden Jubilee" of this mosque. The highlight of which

was the feature address delivered by Imam Hameed Rajab, Secretary-General of ASJA.

There were also reports on the present activities of the mosque - Jama'at Committee, Youth Group, and Makhtab. These reports revealed the need for more systematic and detailed planning in guiding the community along a path of greater involvement in the society.

The address by Imam Rajab, instead of emphasising the history of the mosque, quite appropriately dealt with the functioning of a Jama'at. He said that a mosque is not "a beautiful structure without a Jama'at." and a "jama't is alive only if worshippers come to the mosque." The basis of his speech was taken from the book "Come let us change this world"-selected writings by Sayyid Abul-ala Maududi.

Some quotations used from this book are very relevant not only to this Jama'at but to the whole community.

"Every individual who is in the Jama'at should be a true well-wisher not only of the Jama'at as a whole but also of each of the individuals in it separately. Ill-feeling against the group, or the harbouring of any grudges, hate, jealousy or suspicion, or the desire to hurt others, are the worst of crimes, which Allah and His Prophet have condemned as "incompatible with true Faith.

"The bond which unites the members of the Jama'at is the belief in Allah Almighty and the first demand which this belief makes on us is that our friendship or enmity, our love or hate, our likes or dislikes should all be for the sake of Allah alone. We must co-operate with each other in obedience to Allah but not in disobedience.

"The greatest favour any believer can do to another is to warn him the moment he sees him departing from the straight path and stop him when he is committing an offence against his own self.....

"Back-biting, name - calling, and suspicion, are diseases which can ruin the healthy atmosphere within a Jama'at and which we should do our best to avoid.

"Mutual consultation is the essence of party organisation. This should never be lost sight of. Whoever is entrusted with any responsibility should consult with his co-workers and it is the duty of whoever is consulted to give his honest, frank opinion".

Finally, the closing remarks made by one speaker need to be seriously considered. "As the donor of this mosque fifty years ago had the foresight to build a masjid, I hope, and In Sha Allah, pray that the leaders in this community today would have the foresight to plan properly for the future generations and for Islam."

Seeking forgiveness of Allah at the moment of triumph arouses in the self-esteemed, self conceited heart the feeling of impotence and imperfection. All these factors guarantee that no tyranny would afflict the conquered. The victorious is made to realize that it is Allah who has appointed him for a predetermined purpose and consequently the triumph and the conquest as well as the religion all belong to Allah, to Whom all things ultimately return.

This is the lofty, dignified ideal the Quran exhorts the human self to toil towards and attain. It is an ideal in which man's exaltation is in neglecting his own pride, and where his soul's freedom is in his subservience to Allah.

The result is the total release of human

souls from their egoistic shackles as their only ambition is to attain Allah's pleasure.

Succeeding this will be a Jihad (striving) to sustain righteousness, implement truth and provide a rightly-guided, unblemished, constructive, just and upright leadership devoted to Allah.

In contrast, man's effort to liberate himself while tied up to his ego, shackled by his worldly zest or overpowered by his cravings turn out to be absolutely in vain unless he sets himself free from his self and lets his loyalty to Allah override everything else particularly at the moment of triumph. Such a standard of behaviour, which Allah wants humanity to aspire towards and to attain, was the characteristic feature of the Prophets at all times. So it was with Prophet Yunus

(Joseph), so it was with Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) and so indeed it was with Muhammad, peace be upon them all.

In the moment of triumph during the Conquest of Mecca, Muhammad, upon whom be peace, entered the city on his camel's back with his head bowed down.

He forgot the joy of victory and thankfully bowed his head seeking his Lord's forgiveness, though he had just conquered Mecca, the town whose people had openly and heavily persecuted him.

The humility, thankfulness and seeking of forgiveness was the practice also, of his companions after him, may Allah be pleased with them all.

-Adapted from Fi Zilal Al Qur'an by Sayyid Qutb.

Food is a necessity and also a source of pleasure, but it can lead to problems if not regulated properly. Thus, overeating is a problem of some concern in present day affluent society, especially because of the possibility that heart trouble may be related to it.

Overeating is not a novelty of the modern age. Man has always been tempted to overeat and over-respond to his desires. However, in most religious systems, overeating was identified with lust, luxury and sometimes with evil or savagery. Today, scientific and technological progress has provided so many comforts that people have become less active, leading to an increased likelihood of obesity as a result of greater food consumption than is required by the energy consumption of the individual. Excessive food intake accounts for most obesity, although not all obese people consume large amounts of food.

#### CAUSES OF OVEREATING

**IGNORANCE:** Public awareness is minimal concerning the role of dietetics in organising personal diets. Thus, it is common that overweight individuals are tempted to use commercially advertised products to reduce weight rather than consult a dietician. Since most of these products and mechanical reducing aids are useless, some of them even dangerous, most people give them up after trying them for a while, and go back to their old pattern of overeating.

Unbalanced diets in which there is an excess intake of high caloric value foods are the most common cause of obesity.

**POVERTY:** In poor countries, relatively healthy people tend to gain weight since fattening foods are cheapest to buy. The poor are always threatened by hunger and, at every chance, they eat as much as possible. This is particularly so where there is no strong faith in God, no confidence in other people and no co-operative community.

**EATING FOR PLEASURE:** Modern man in an industrial society works very hard most of the day to earn a living and derives his major or often only, pleasure from eating and drinking. A filling meal, satisfaction of his physical needs and a good night's rest get him through the day and night with the least effort. Strengthened, he can continue working hard to

## THE PROBLEM OF OVER-EATING

*Adapted from  
Rabatat Al-Alam Al-Islami  
(Muslim World League, Mecca)*

make more money to buy more food. He often lives to eat rather than eats to live, a pattern of behaviour typical of all materialistic societies.

**PROMOTION SCHEMES:** All the information media are financed by commercial advertisements. The easiest and most direct way to attract customer's is to call upon their desires and stimulate their appetites. Food, being a daily necessity, takes a good share of the advertising industry.

**COMPENSATORY EATING:** There are many people who overeat instead of facing their problems or becoming depressed or neurotic, or who attempt to overcome the minor stresses of life by overeating, smoking, drinking, taking drugs or biting their nails. Compensatory eating is also observed in children lacking parental love.

Some adults overeat because they want to have large bodies to compensate for feelings of inferiority. Women in some communities overeat in order to increase the measurements of certain parts of their bodies, motivated by the ideal of the perfect, beautiful female. Since the motivation for bodily beautification in many situations is the result of inferiority feelings, and modification of the size of one part of the body through overeating cannot be achieved without affecting the rest, obsessional eating and

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obesity is the ultimate outcome.

**EATING UNDER STRESS:** Most people who overeat under stress, do not seek relaxing pleasure in food. They do it as a physical self-punishment. Some people overeat to transform emotional and mental strains into physical symptoms which are curable and can take the mind off many incurable mental pressures. Previously people often stopped eating when they were emotionally shocked in order to end their lives, as can be seen from many early poems and stories. In today's open societies, emotional shock leads to the opposite reaction, overeating and obesity. This is a typical reaction of a person whose mate has lost interest. One takes care of one's appearance in order to please one's mate. Thus overeating and becoming fat is a type of carelessness indicating dissatisfaction. This is especially true of married women. Continuous failure with the opposite sex may also lead to persistent overeating.

It is more convenient and less painful to blame one's undesirability in such curable, physical appearances than on other serious personal defects. This is a common reaction, especially among aging single people.

**DUE TO ANXIETY:** Anxiety also leads to overeating. The atheist suffering from the conflict between truth and the attachment to superstitions and distorted beliefs, is in a state of extreme anxiety accompanying the fear of death, doubt concerning what will be next and the feeling of emptiness and loss in a meaningless life. The Prophet Muhammad said, *'The believer drinks in one intestine, but the unbeliever drinks in seven.'*

**DEPRESSIONS:** There is actual danger in persisting in attempts at strict dieting without awareness of the specific needs of each case and the background of each individual. Many people placed on diets complain of symptoms of weakness, nervousness, irritability and fatigue as well as emotional disorders and insomnia.

#### ENVIRONMENT AND CONDITIONS:

The eating behaviour of the obese is almost unrelated to the internal state, but generally, eating control is initiated and terminated by external stimuli such as smell, taste, sight, and other



people's reaction toward food. However, in normal individuals the internal state as well as the external factors also affects their behaviour, especially in the absence of physiological hunger.

## ISLAMIC REGULATIONS

**Moderation and Sharing:** Fourteen centuries ago, Islam laid down the basis of dietary regulations as well as the limits within which man can satisfy his physical needs and desires without endangering his life and mental health. Islam motivated people to seek the good of the Hereafter as well as of the world in a balanced way. It taught man to enjoy the pleasures of life, in a moderate way, not becoming a slave to his desires and not losing sight of his ultimate goal.

Eating to sustain life, becoming healthy and physically fit for the purpose of serving God and propagating His message is an Islamic ordinance. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) prohibited Muslims from undertaking fasts, which might endanger their lives or health, even though fasting is considered an act of worship. Abdullah ibn al-As told of God's messenger saying to him, "Have I not been informed Abdullah, that you fast during the day and get up at night for prayer?" When he replied that it was so, he said to him, Do not do it. Fast and break your fast, get up for prayer and sleep, for you have a duty to your body, your eye, your wife and your visitors. May he who observes a perpetual fast never fast!

Fasting three days a month is equivalent to a perpetual fast. Fast three days every month and recite the Qur'an every day.

This was in the case of voluntary fasting. Muslims are also permitted to break the ordained fast of Ramadan when there is a danger to health.

On the other hand, the Muslim is advised to avoid extremes and to choose a moderate course in all affairs, including eating habits. Thus the Qur'an says: "*O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer; eat and drink, but waste not in excess For God loves not the wasters.*" (Al 'Araf 7: 31)

*"Eat of the good things we have provided for your sustenance, but*

*commit no excess therein."*  
(*Taba 20:81*)

Islam also encourages the individual to be contented with little and to avoid greed, hence it perpetuates the feeling of contentment which induces happiness. On many occasions the Prophet demonstrated to his followers the pleasures of sharing as opposed to the over-enjoyment of the good things of life. Jabir reported that he heard the Prophet say: 'One person's food is enough for two, two persons' food is enough for four, and four persons' food is enough for eight.' (Muslim)

**EATING TOGETHER:** Eating together induces harmony and understanding among people. People are usually more relaxed when eating in company. Their minds are less absorbed in their daily activities and much freer of worries, thus they are better able to communicate with each other.

The Prophet called Muslims' attention to the importance of eating together by saying: "Eat together and not separately for the blessing is associated with the company." This does not mean eating in banquets or parties, however.

Overeating involves mostly people who eat alone. They are often unable to sit down to their food with a clear mind. Their physical behaviour is very much affected by their state of mind. It is hard to obtain satisfaction from food while the mind is straying, inducing the nervous system to malfunction.

**FINAL REMARKS:** Excluding adults who were obese as children, men and women are more likely to gain weight during certain periods of their lives. The nature of modern life makes every individual a potential for obesity.

The absence of faith makes the new generation more susceptible to obesity than older generations. Islam has chosen a moderate way of regulating food intake. Overeating is often the result of the domination of the desire for food over personal will power. In many cases, overeating is a response to psychological factors. Thus, adequate control of weight is not necessarily achieved by curbing the appetite or imposing a strict diet. A drastic change in the mental and spiritual state of an obese individual is the only solution which will not lead to side effects or setbacks.

**In these times  
people must have standards**

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ  
ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَى وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَ  
قَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ  
اللَّهِ أَتْقَاهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

Lo! We have created you male and female  
And have made you nations and tribes  
That you may know one another  
Lo! the Noblest of you in the sight of God is  
The best in Conduct.  
Lo! God is Knower, Aware.

The Qura'n (Chapter 49:13).