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SEX, SOCIETY & MORALITY

Morality has become for so many people the only immoral thing. Once you defend or criticise any action or behaviour on a moral basis, you run the risk of being branded as unscientific, irrational, and intolerant. Morality according to such a view is at best something that is completely irrelevant to the material and spiritual well-being of individuals and societies; at worst it is the one handicap that is blocking the way of healthy progress of individuals and societies. And this is moreso especially as far as sexual morality is concerned. For such people the best attitude towards any kind of sexual behaviour is: stop talking nonsense about its being moral or immoral since these descriptions are mere expressions of the speaker's subjective and irrational attitude. And since any form of sexual behaviour is as good as the other, the best civilized, scientific and tolerant attitude is to let any one choose the form which happens to be the one he likes and not to impose on him the form which happens to be the choice of another individual or groups of individuals even if the latter were in the majority.

Suffice it to say that while the idea of planning is gaining grounds in nearly every aspect of society, laissez-faire has established itself as the best policy in matters sexual.

Is morality, and in particular sexual morality, such a superfluous and highly relative matter that changes, without any harmful consequences, from place to place, from age to age, and from one individual to the other? It is my belief that this is a grossly mistaken view but I do not want to enter here into a direct defence of morality. In fact, I think that the best policy here is not to talk about

'morality' at all, but about the harmful or useful consequences of adopting one or the other of the many possible forms of sexual behaviour. And I hope that the criteria I use for identifying a certain consequence as useful or harmful will be acceptable to everyone irrespective of whether he is religious or atheist, a defender of morality or a staunch enemy of such a concept.

We shall see however that the choice we finally settle on is the behaviour we call moral. And it is called moral, and enjoined by God, not for any mysterious unknowable quality which they have but for reasons similar to the ones which I shall mention. As Muslims we believe that God enjoins us to do only what is good for us and avoid only what is bad or harmful for us.

There seems to be four main types of sexual relations of which we either have a society of pure homosexuals, an entirely promiscuous society, a society in which no sexual relation exists except between husband and wife or a laissez-faire society in which all these forms are tolerated. Are there any rational and objective basis on which we can choose among these types of society?

Let us start with the easiest one to rule out. If men continue to be moral then a society of pure homosexuals is a self-defeating one, since it severs the enjoyment of sex from its reproductive function. An entirely promiscuous society seems to many to be the best, and in the long run the inevitable form of sexual relations. In such a society sex, it was thought, ceases to be a problem, since here we shall for the first time combine complete freedom with the deepest enjoyment as well as the reproduction of children. This is a mere dream in which

one does not see the facts as they are but as one wants them to be. Here are some of the difficulties that beset such a society.

Far from being the natural or ultimately the inevitable, and even if man is viewed as a mere animal, this is a dream which shall never be realised. This is because 'the human being is basically and biologically a pair-forming species. As the emotional relationship develops between a pair of potential mates it is aided and abetted by the sexual activities they share. The pair formation function of sexual behaviour is so important for our species that nowhere outside the pairing phase do sexual activities regularly reach such a high intensity.'

The facts are therefore against those who argue that man is basically promiscuous, 'it is true that in many cultures economic considerations have led to gross distortion of the pairforming pattern, but even where this pattern's interference with officially planned 'pseudobonds' has been most vigorously suppressed, with savage penalties and punishments, it has always shown signs of reasserting itself.

From ancient times, young lovers who have known that the law may demand no less than their lives if they are caught, have nevertheless found themselves driven to take the risk. Such is the power of this fundamental biological mechanism."

As a dream, a promiscuous society is one where everyone chooses whoever he likes at whatever time he prefers. As a reality it is a society in which sexual deprivation becomes the main problem. If it is true that human beings tend naturally towards forming sexual pairs then if x and y are such a pair and if z likes y he cannot have her(or him)

because y is already tied to x and because even if y agrees x is sure to interfere. But why it can be asked, should z want y in particular? Why not any other 'free' person. Well, sincerely because such is human nature. Man is not indiscriminately attracted by every woman that happens to be passing by.

The young and the beautiful are universally more attractive than the ugly and the old. And then there are the personal tastes of voice, form, culture, gesture etc., And if a person fails to find the mate of his liking, then even if he is physically satisfied, he is emotionally deprived.

In such a society people are sure to be obsessed with sex; the search for the younger, the more beautiful, the what not becomes a full-time job. If time a valuable asset then much of it is unnecessarily wasted in such a society.

And this leads inevitably and naturally to the commercialization of this human need, a commercialization which through advertisements, pictures, specialized magazines, the employment of sexually attractive girls, and a hundred other satanic devices, yet increase the obsession with sex.

And the natural outcome of this is a distortion of human values. I do not mean by this any thing metaphysical or mysterious. I only mean that in such a society a person's worth will depend on the accident of his being in a certain age or having a beautiful body. Girls are re-

warded, socially and materially and even 'crowned' not for anything they achieved but for a thing they had at their hour of birth. By implication the less beautiful girls are punished for no fault of theirs. What a cruel society!

A promiscuous society is definitely a cruel one. Even in a normal society, the feeling that one is getting older is somewhat annoying.

If many criminal tendencies both among the young and the old are discovered to have their origins in broken homes and unstable families, what is going to be the fate of the army of parentsless children which a promiscuous society produces? I cannot go here into the detailed problems of the mass bringing-up of children.

These then are some examples of the consequences of living in an entirely promiscuous society. Contemplating them one might say: well no one ever seriously advocated this kind of society. All we stand for is a society where every individual or group of individuals shall have the freedom to lead the kind of sexual life which they prefer. In such a mixed society married people will live side by side with promiscuous individuals and homosexuals, each appreciating and respecting the ideas and choices of the others and tolerating their behaviour. But this will not do either.

Firstly because the bad consequences of homosexuality (with the details of which I have not concerned myself)

and promiscuity, will not be eradicated by having those who practise them living among married people. All the complications will be there but on a narrower scale.

Secondly, if the consequences are admitted to be harmful why then encourage and not lessen the factors responsible for them. And the unfortunate fact is that tolerating homosexuality and promiscuity means encouraging them and pushing more and more people to practise them so much so that the inevitable result will be a promiscuous and homosexual society with a minority of "eccentric" married people, who shall not however be tolerated as the example of Lut's people shows.

"And Lut! (Remember) when he said unto his folk: Will ye commit abomination such as no creature ever did before."

"Lo! ye come with lust unto men instead of women. Nay, but ye are wanton folk. And the answer of his people was only that they said (one to another): Turn them out of your township. They are folk, forsooth, who keep pure."

(Surah VII:80-82)

By elimination then, and also by implication, the society with the least evil and most good is a society of married people who do not tolerate, but do their best to eradicate all the causes of homosexuality and promiscuity.

J. Idris

In Regard of Women

Islam encourages us to be very careful about the position of women in society, and to take them on equal terms, in regard to their duties, rights and merits. This was even at times when women were treated badly and some held them in contempt.

See what the Qur'an says:

"And for women are rights over men similar to those for men over women."

There is absolutely no difference between men and women in relation to God, both are responsible for their actions and both will be rewarded according to his or her merits.

Let us see what God's Messenger has said about women:

"The most perfect among the faithful is one whose moral character is the best, and the best among you are those who are kindest to the women."

"The world and all things in it are valuable; but the most valuable thing in the world is a virtuous woman."

"God enjoins you to treat women well, for they are your mothers, daughters and aunts."

"The rights of women are sacred. See that women are maintained in the rights assigned to them."

Those sayings were said in a time when women were mistreated, taken advantage of, disrespected, and whose rights were barely accessible.

Islam has encouraged Muslims to give women their rights, to treat them kindly and well and it has elevated the status of women where it should be.

If she happens to be your mother or your sister, aunt or niece, she ought to be well respected and loved, well cared for and appreciated.

A good woman, of decency and virtue, is a great thing in itself. It then becomes a mutual endeavour each side helping, appreciating and respecting the other.

A Good Muslim Will Remember:

1. The rights of women are sacred in Islam.
2. A virtuous, good and decent woman is most valuable.
3. A woman is sensitive, be it emotionally or otherwise. So we should recognise that.
4. The responsibility is mutual, and the woman should also do her share in the welfare of the family, as do the men.

Research Papers for Scientific Programme

The tenth Annual Convention of the Islamic Medical Association of the United States and Canada will be held from 21-23 October 1977 in Orlando, Florida.

This convention is a unique opportunity for Muslim physicians and paramedical professionals to get together in a carefully planned programme to incorporate scientific sessions and social events in an atmosphere of Islamic brotherhood.

The scientific program will be divided into two parts. One part, which is the general program, will include the "I.M.A. Forum" sessions and sessions on "Medical Manpower and Brain Drain." The other part of the scientific program will consist of two symposiums, one on 'Smoking' and one on 'Breast Feeding', and will be held parallel to the general program sessions.

The program is as follows:

1. The "I.M.A. Forum" sessions are for the presentation of any basic science or clinical research topics.
2. The session on "Medical manpower and Brain Drain" will include:
Proper utilisation of Available Medical Manpower. Planning for a Future Generation of Muslim Physicians.
Role of Muslim Women Physicians & Problems They Face.
3. The session on "International and Local Islamic Medical Activities" will include:
Responsibility of I.M.A. toward Muslim Communities and the North American Society.
Responsibility of I.M.A. toward Non-Ethical Medical Practices the world over.
Research Projects Relevant to the Muslim World.
4. The "Symposium on Smoking" will be include:
History and Development of the Smoking Habit, Pharmacologic and Biologic Effects of Smoking as an Addiction.
Ecologic Aspects of Smoking.
Socio-Economic Aspects of Smoking.
Ethical and Philosophical Thoughts on Smoking.
Islamic viewpoint on Smoking.
5. The "Symposium on Breast Feeding" will include:
History of Breast Feeding.
Biochemical Characteristics of Human Milk.
Physical Effects of Breast Feeding on Mother and Baby.
Socio-Economic Aspects of Breast Feeding.

Ethical and Philosophical Thoughts on Breast Feeding.

Islamic Viewpoint on Breast Feeding.
6. Luncheon speeches may treat general subjects such as Immorality or Violence in Contemporary Society.

Papers are invited for the scientific program and should be designed to be presented in about 10-15 minutes. Abstracts should be received on or before May 31st. An abstract should in some way reflect the expected conclusion of the author. The complete manuscript of papers accepted must be received by August 31st.

For further information, contact:

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Towards an Equitable World Order

The International Economic Conference organised by the Islamic Council of Europe will be held from 4-9 July 1977 at the Commonwealth Institute, Kensington, High Street, London W8.

The theme of the conference is 'The Muslim World and the Future Economic Order'. In explaining the theme, the Islamic Council stated:

The present debate between the developed and the developing countries of the world is entering a decisive stage. The next few years will show whether the new international economic order will represent a global association evolved peacefully on the basis of justice and equality of opportunity, or convert the tensions arising from an inequitable and oppressive arrangement into violent and destructive conflict.

The Muslim World, which shares common experience and common aspirations with the Third World, cannot remain idle in this situation. It has a contribution to make and a role to play. The purpose of this Conference is to identify that role.

The Conference represents an endeavour to articulate the hopes and aspirations of the Muslim world in relation to the new economic order. The success of this endeavour will depend on the ability of the Muslims to put their own house in order. The Conference will undertake an objective review of

NEWS-SPOT

the present economic policies, plans and institutions in the Muslim countries. It will try to focus attention on the promotion of an egalitarian economic order aiming to realise the Islamic principles of equality, justice and moderation. The Islamic concept of a world economic order will be presented, and specific areas within that concept will be examined.

The deliberations of the Conference will be conducted in the light of the message of the Quran and Sunnah (traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), with a view to charting out for man a complete way of life which is just, moderate and humane.

The Islamic Council of Europe hopes that the Conference will provide an opportunity for constructive discussion and contribute towards the establishment of an equitable world order.

Conference on Muslim Minorities

Trinidad and Tobago was chosen to host the South-Western Hemisphere Conference of the World Muslim League towards the end of September this year.

The decision was taken by representatives of the World League in conference at Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

This was disclosed by Haji Shaffick S.M. Rahaman, President - General of the Mnjuman Sunnat-ul-Jammat iation (ASJA) and permanent representative of the Muslim World League (MWL) in the Caribbean and Central and South America.

It is expected that the conference will be held at the Chaguaramas Convention Centre over six days, and that a top government official will deliver the feature address at the opening.

Delegates are expected from Saudi Arabia and other Middle East Countries, as well as Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, and Guyana and United States and Canada. Also attending the conference will be the Secretary - General of the MWL, Muhammad Al Harkaan, Minister of Justice and Chief Justice of Saudi Arabia.

Haji Rahaman said the conference would deal mainly with the message of the Mosque and Islam, and the problems faced by Muslim minorities, not only in this region, but in other parts of the world.

Organisations interested in taking part could contact Haji Rahaman by writing to Box 97, San Fernando or telephone 65-78560.

More on the conference in the next issue in Shaa' Allah.

EXERCISING THE HUMAN WILL

What makes a human being 'tick'? Every minute of the day he does something. What motivates him to act? Is it because the majority of people is doing it? Or is it the 'new craze', or he wishes to be different, or his physical impulses drive him; or is it because he exercises his will on the basis of reason and Divine Guidance?

A person acts everyday and in this process, he may ponder over what he does. He may decide what to do, when to do it, how much effort to expend and what may be the effects on himself and others. In short, he exercises his will. Unlike animals, which act instinctively without a will of their own, a human being is created with a mind, or will. The will is always in the process of choosing—to accept or reject, to obey or disobey, to rise above the level of angels or sink lower than the level of beasts.

It is necessary to exercise the will. The crux of the matter is—Are we, as human beings, exercising our wills the way we ought to or are we 'doing our own thing'?

Looking at the present conditions of society, one observes a record number of road deaths and accidents, an increase in murder, suicide, corruption and crime in general a lowering of respect for parents and teachers; a gluttonous display of eating and drinking (including pork, alcohol and narcotics); the unrestricted display of people's private parts, the soaring illegitimate birthrate, to name a few problems, can one say that the human will is being exercised in the proper manner?

To bring about a change for the better, the human will can best be exercised when it is trained to act on the basis of knowledge and understanding and a commitment to both. The most important decision the human will has to make concerns the recognition of the source of everything—God. Is there a God? Is He one only or 'three in one' or an indefinite number? What is He like? Is He responsible for giving us food, clothes, shelter,

children, salaries, health, sickness, etc? How powerful is He? How should we relate with Him?

Is a person prepared to believe that God is some remote being and that others, human beings like himself, are responsible for whatever position he is now in when God Himself has said in the Quran:—"God! The Everlasting, the Supporter of the whole Universe; there is no god but He. He does neither slumber nor sleep. Whatsoever is in the Heavens and in the earth is His. Who is there that can intercede with Him except by His own permission? He knows what is before the people and also what is hidden from them. And they cannot comprehend anything of His knowledge save whatever He Himself pleases to reveal. His Kingdom spreads over the heavens and the earth and the guarding of these does not weary Him. He Alone is the Supreme and the Exalted..."? (Q. 2:255, Meaning of the Quran- Maudoodi)

Another important matter the will has to decide upon is that of Prophethood and Divine Guidance—Has God sent Guidance to us? How did He communicate it? Did He deposit it on a mountain, or reveal it through prophets in different stages? Who were the prophets? Is there any more to come? Are there any now? Where can a person find Divine Guidance now?

Is a person prepared to accept what parents, teachers and priests offer as Divine Guidance without questioning the authenticity of it although God Himself said about Divine Guidance —: "This Qur'an is not such as can be produced by other than God; on the contrary, it is a confirmation of revelations that went before it and a fuller explanation of the Book wherein there is no doubt, from the Lord of the Worlds. Or do they say, 'He forged it'? Say, 'Bring, then, a chapter unto it and call to your aid anyone you can, besides God, if it be you speak the truth'."

About Prophethood, He says:—"We have sent unto you (O men) an Apostle, to be a witness concerning you, even as We sent

an Apostle to Pharaoh." (Q.73:15) "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Apostle of God and the Seal of all the Prophets: and God has Full Knowledge of all things" (Q. 33:40)

The third important question the will has to decide upon is that of Life after Death — When a person dies, what will become of him? Will he be raised in the future to account for his deeds done in this life? To whom will he be accountable? What will be the outcome of his good and bad deeds?

Belief or disbelief in the Hereafter will determine the attitude and behaviour of a person in this world. The lifestyle of many people today reflects a belief, not in the life Hereafter, but of 'eat today and die tomorrow', as if when they die that is all there is to it. Is a person prepared to live like that indefinitely or take heed of the claim of God Himself when He said —: "It is God Who gives you life then gives you death, then He will gather you together for the Day of Judgment about which there is no doubt."?

(Q. 45:26) Also—"The Day that He assembles you (all) for a Day of Assembly, —that will be a Day of mutual loss and gain (among you)." "And those who believe in God and work righteousness—He will remove from them their ills, and He will admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever: that will be the supreme achievement. But those who reject Faith and treat Our Signs as falsehoods, they will be companions of the Fire, to dwell therein forever: And evil is that goal..."? (Q. 64:9-10)

The problems we face can be solved when people spend some time and effort in researching and discussing the above information and acting upon the knowledge they gain. Now is the time to act. It is a challenge to all of us to search for the natural way of submission to the commands of God; the way which will help us to solve our present problems and gain success in the Hereafter.

Now, more than ever before, we may claim to have mastered our environment. We live in huge concrete buildings which rake the sky, we fly through the air faster than the birds, we walk in the dim reaches of outer space, we trample on the hallowed surface of the moon and scar the landscape of Mars for our scientific experiments; submarines have exploded the superstitious myths of Jules Verne's "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea", we carry on intimate conversations with friends millions of miles away by telephone, we even have nuclear weapons which are capable of mass genocide. Yet, in the midst of all these achievements, where do we stand?

Present-day scientific advances have certainly given us devices which our ancestors probably never thought possible. No doubt they braved many dangers on their long journeys in their uncomfortable animal-drawn carts and wagons, but these adventures are dwarfed by the perils which we face today in our snug, motorised steel capsules which zoom down our highways and streets, endangering human lives and causing distress to more and more families every day. While the ancients faced the horrid dangers of wild animals and robbers, we are constantly menaced by carbon monoxide poisoning and multiple smash-ups, hijackers and sky-jackers. While it is a laudable achievement to soar through the skies or walk in space, the resultant ecological damage has robbed us of pure air and familiar weather.

Our concern with industrialisation has produced nuclear-powered plants which pollute our streams and rivers and seas, contaminate our fishes, poison our food-crops and reduce us to over-fed, under-nourished morons. Our commitment to computerised living, smoke filled factories, push-button gadgets, instant foods, (canned meals) and leisure-living in general has produced an apathy within us which stultifies any desire to change the evils with which our society abounds. Superficially, we live in a 'utopian' society which contains so many labour-saving devices that few of us know what physical exercise really is. In fact, the increasing mechanisation of our societies has directly contributed to the establishment of fly-by-night health studios which advertise and capitalise

upon the necessity and benefits of the same physical exertion which we invented the devices to remove.

But these are just minor disadvantages of our "progressive" materialistic

MAN'S DESTINY

by M Sayyid

evolution. The real and major disadvantages are manifested in the moral sphere of the societies. Our pre-occupation with science and industrialisation, space exploration and easy living has been at the expense of our moral consciousness and its cost in terms of human life and suffering continues to increase with no immediate let-up in sight as long as we engage in our mindless pursuit of the ultimate sensual experience. Today, our appreciation of our children is in direct proportion to their drain on our purses and their effect on our budgets. Family planning is just another pseudonym for selfish preoccupation and promiscuity, abortion substitutes for child murder, pornography passes for literature, sexual perversion is part and parcel of our new-found permissive "morality", usury forms the basis of our economic structure, justice ^{is relative to our economic status} (liars and scamps) run our political systems and make laws for us, charity comes with a percentage of interest and fear is the key to our international relationships. The destiny of the human race lies in the hands of a few agnostic, selfish and treacherous (politicians) ^{people} who control other nations by armed might and economic strangulation.

The real core of these problems, the root of this rotten state of affairs, is our lack of responsibility towards our Creator, our disavowal of His existence and our increasing disbelief in the message of the prophets. So obsessed are we with science and scientific proofs that we have failed to observe that all our achievements have been made possible by the use of the things put here for us by the Creator of the Universe. We have overlooked the fact that the planet Earth is but a tiny fragment of the cosmos and that every law promulgated, every

discovery made by our scientists is part of, or on account of, the flawless system of laws which govern this Universe. What our scientists are actually doing is realising the existing laws and making them recognisable to us; they are, therefore, simply confirming the power and majesty of God, Exalted be He, and proving the truth of the divine messengers.

Today, it is these same scientific proofs and discoveries which we are using to justify our disbelief in the revelations of the prophets and to cushion our consciences from the impact of our misdeeds. We spout scientific terminology to support our claims to irresponsibility of action, we use God-given knowledge to philosophise and rationalise in our bid to confuse our souls and release our consciences from the pinpricks of fear of Divine retribution, as if that will save us. We use rhetoric to "prove" that Heaven and Hell are but figments of the imagination and that nothing exists beyond the physical pleasures, rewards and sufferings of this present life. Yet the very presence of trees and plants, the elements of nature, the multitudes of invisible and microscopic life forms which constantly influence our lives and upon which we depend for our livelihood attest to the hollowness of our claims and the futility of our follies. We rarely consider how the nutrients which we gluttonously enjoy came into existence; we enjoy the beauties of the earth, the sunlight, the moonlight, the days and nights, the flowers and fruits, every little thing from which we can derive pleasure, and yet we turn away from the Provider of them all in blind obedience to our desires.

To us today, dazzled by our fantastic display of materialistic progress, engulfed by our luxuries, dehumanised by our constant pursuit of pleasure, enslaved and weakened by our labour-saving devices, de-brained by our commuters and stupefied by our television sets, the concept of the Day of Reckoning, the destruction of the earth, the Resurrection and the Retribution at the hands of God seem so hazy, so distant, that they are not worth worrying about. Despite all our materialistic progress, we are still unhappy in our minds, we are still searching through our smut-covered world and polluted atmosphere for the ultimate peace which we so desire. We have not found it on the physical plane.

Definitions

1. **Halal:** that which the Legislator has permitted to be done-lawful
2. **Haram:** that which the Legislator strictly and specifically forbade in such a way that doing it would bring punishment in the hereafter and possibly a penalty in this life as well- unlawful.
3. **Makrouh:** that which is not favoured.

Islam established a number of principles which constitutes a solid base for differentiating between *Halal* and *Haram*.

The basic principles are:

1. The rule is that everything is Halal unless explicitly forbidden.
2. Only Allah has the right to legislate for man.
3. Prohibiting Halal and permitting Haram is synonymous with Shirk.
4. Haram is always associated with what is bad and harmful.
5. There is always a better substitute in Halal for that which is made Haram.
6. Anything that leads to Haram is considered Haram.
7. It is Haram to declare something Halal when it is manifestly Haram.
8. Good intentions do not justify committing Haram.
9. One should guard himself against matters that are on the borderline between Halal and Haram (Mushtabahat).
10. In extreme circumstances, Haram is permissible within certain limits.

1. The rule is that everything is Halal unless explicitly forbidden.

As long as there is no authentic statement from the Quran or the Sunnah of the Prophet, peace be upon him, that a particular thing is forbidden, then it is considered Halal. Muslim scholars found authority for this principle in these clear verses of the Quran:

"And He has subjected to you what is in the heavens and what is in the earth, all together from Him." (Al-Jathiah 13)
"Have you not seen how God has subjected to you whatsoever is in the heavens and earth, and He has lavished on you His blessings, inward and outward."

(Luqman:20).

If Allah has created things and harnessed them for man's use, then it cannot be true that Allah would deprive him by making them unlawful. He has made un-

lawful certain things for good reasons, with great wisdom. Therefore the forbidden area in the Islamic Shariah is considerably small. This is explained in the saying of the Prophet:

'The lawful is what Allah has made lawful in His Book and the unlawful is that which He made unlawful. What He has left out is a mercy from Him, so accept Allah's mercy. Surely Allah would not forget a thing'. Then the Prophet peace be upon him, read from the Quran: "And the Lord is never forgetful" (Mariam 64).

2. Only Allah has the right to legislate for man:

Islam declares the legislating authority is that of Allah only, thus taking it away from the people whatever status they enjoy, whether they be priests or kings. Nobody is allowed to forbid something that Allah has permitted. If he did so he would be exceeding the limit set by Allah and claiming to himself what is a divine attribute of Allah. Moreover those who accept and follow this man-made legislation will also be held responsible. Concerning the Mushriks (those who seek partners with God) the Quran says: ".....or have they associates who have laid down for them as religion that for which God gave not leave ? " (Al-Shura 21.). The Quran also blames the people of the Book for handing the legislative authority to their priests.

"They have taken their rabbis and their monks as Lords apart from God, and the Messiah, Mary's son- and they were commanded to serve but One God; there is no God but He; Glory be to Him above that they associate." (Al-Taubah 31).

It is narrated that Ibn Hatim, who was Christian before becoming Muslim, once heard the Prophet, peace be upon him, reading that verse in Sura Al-Taubah. Ibn Hatim exclaimed; "Messenger of Allah, but they (the Christians) have not worshipped their rabbis and monks ?" The Prophet, peace be upon him, replied, "Yes they have. They forbade them what is lawful and allowed them what is forbidden and the people followed them. This is how they worshipped them."

The Quran also blames the idolators for forbidding and allowing things without Allah's leave:

"Say: Have you considered the provision God has sent down for you, and you have made some of it unlawful and some

lawful ?" Say: "Has God given you leave or so you forge against God ?"

From these verses and traditions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, Muslim scholars were aware that only Allah has the right to legislate either in His Book, or through His Prophet, peace be upon him. They also understood that their task in Fiqh was to be no more than to clarify to the people Allah's judgement regarding Halal and Haram. Early Muslim scholars used to be very cautious in passing judgement concerning Halal and

LAWFUL AND HALAL &

Haram. We should learn from them and never call something Haram unless we have definite authority for saying so.

3. Forbidding halal and allowing Haram is synonymous with Shirk, (Associating partners with God)

Islam fought against those who forbade what is good and lawful, as this carried the danger of making life difficult and deprived man from Allah's mercy. Islam does not approve of this attitude and the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "I have been sent (by Allah) with the true and easy religion".

The Qur'an strongly condemned the pagans of Arabia for their *Shirk* and forbidding lawful things like cattle. They used to declare *Haram* to eat some animal or to ride on them or to prevent them from water and pasture for various baseless reasons. The Qur'an condemns this attitude when it declares: "God has not appointed cattle dedicated to idols, such as Bahira, Sa'iba, Wasila Hami; but the unbelievers forge against God falsehood, and most of them have no understanding, And when it is said to them, 'come now to what God has sent down, and the Messenger, they say: 'Enough for us what we have found our fathers doing'. What, even if their fathers had no knowledge of naught and were not guided?" (Al-Ma'ida 104).

In Sura Al-A'araf there is another similar verse indicating broadly what Allah has truly forbidden: Say: 'Who has forbidden the ornament of God which He brought forth for His servants and the good things of His providing?' Say, these, on the day of resurrection, shall be exclusively for those who believed in this present life, so We distinguish the signs for a people who know! Say, 'My Lord has only forbidden indecencies the inward and the outward, and sin, and unjust insolence, and that you associate with

D UNLAWFUL HARAM

Yusuf Kerdawi

God that for which He never sent down authority and that you say concerning God such as you know not". (Al-Aaraf 32, 33).

4. Haram is associated with the bad and harmful.

Having created man and bestowed upon him immeasurable blessings, Allah has the right to declare what is permitted and what is forbidden. He also has the right to command man with whatever acts of worship He desires. Man, being the creation and the subject of Allah, has to obey Allah, however, being the most merciful and compassionate, allowed only good things and forbade bad things for the benefit of man himself.

It is true that Allah forbade the Jews some of the good things but this was as a penalty due to their transgression and exceeding Allah's limits as explained in this verse in Sura Al-Nisa: "And for the evil doing of those Jewry, We have forbidden them certain good things that were permitted to them and for their barring from God's way. And for taking usury, that they were prohibited, and We have prepared for the unbelievers among them a painful chastisement."

When Allah sent His last apostle with the message of Islam, it was a sign of His mercy that He lifted this hardship which was only a temporary punishment for a stubborn people. This is the

essence of Islam as prophesied in the Torah and the Gospel, as the Qur'an says: "I shall prescribe it (Allah's mercy) for those who are God-fearing and pay the Alms and those who indeed believe in Our signs, those who follow the Messenger, the prophet of the common folk, whom they find written down for them in the Torah and the Gospel, binding them to honour, making lawful for them the good things and making unlawful for them the corrupt things and relieving them of their loads and the fetters that were upon them" (Al-Aaraf :156, 157).

In Islam man could seek for forgiveness from Allah in number of ways rather than forbidding themselves what is good and pure. It includes sincere repentance which abolishes sin, the good deeds that compensate for the bad deeds and giving charity. There is also the hardship and difficulties with which Allah tests the believers.

It is thus well established in Islam that what is purely useful or its usefulness excels its harm is Halal and what is harmful or its harm excels its usefulness as Haram. As a step towards forbidding alcohol and gambling Allah states in the Qur'an:

"They will question you concerning wine and arrow-shuffling, say: 'in both is heinous sin, and uses for men, but the sin in them is more heinous than the usefulness'" (Al-Baqarah 219)

A general definition of what is Halal is that what is good by the standard of moderate person without any bias to certain habit. Allah said: They will question thee what is permitted to them, say: "The good things are permitted to you...." (Al-Maida 4)

It is not essential that the Muslims should know in detail all the reasons as to why a certain thing is forbidden, as that which is unknown today may be clear tomorrow. The believers would always say: we hear and we obey" An example of this is that the Prophet, peace be upon him, warned the Muslims from three bad things that would raise both the anger of Allah, and the peoples'. These concerning answering nature's call in running water, public roads and in the shade. The early Muslims understood these as bad behaviour, indecent and of bad taste. In our days we are aware how dangerous these are to the public health as they contribute to the spread of many diseases. As our knowledge increases so is our understanding of the merits of Islamic teachings regarding Halal and Haram and in fact, all aspects of the Islamic Shariah.

5. In Halal, there is better substitute for Haram.

One of the merits of Islam is that it shows mercy towards people in that whenever it forbids something it provides a better substitute to replace it. Islam forbids usury but allows profitable business.

Islam forbids gambling, but allows winning prizes in contests of shooting racing, wrestling.

Islam forbids adultery but urges the Muslims to get married as soon as they can support a family.

Islam forbids drinking alcohol but allows all other good and healthy drinks.

Islam forbids what is bad in food but allows what is good and nourishing.

The same principle can be traced all through the teachings of Islam. Whenever there is an apparent difficulty in one direction there is much relief in another. Allah does not wish any hardship to His people, on the contrary He guides them towards good:

"God desires to make clear to you, and to guide you in the institutions of those before you, and to turn towards you; God is All-knowing, All-wise; and God desires to turn towards you, but those who follow their lusts desire you to swerve you away mightily. God desires to lighten things for you, for man was created a weakling". (Al-Nisa, 26, 28).

6. Whatever leads to Haram is also Haram.

Whenever Islam forbids something, it also forbids all the means that could lead to it. While forbidding adultery for example, Islam also forbids all the circumstances that might possibly lead to it such as irresponsible intermingling of the sexes, permissive literature and pornography. It also commands Muslims to lower their gazes and dress decently.

Judging by this, Muslim scholars concluded that whatever could lead towards Haram would also be Haram. Similarly in committing Haram, sin will not be limited to the direct doer alone but would extend to include all those who have participated in it one way or another.

The penalty would be shared among them in proportion to their participation or contribution. For example, the Prophet, peace be upon him, condemned those who drink alcohol, those who made it, those who carry it, those who sell it, and so on.

continued on page 9

THE ESSENCE OF FAITH

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يَكْذِبُ بِالَّذِينَ
 قَدْ لَكَ الَّذِي يَدْعُ الْيَتِيمَ
 وَلَا يَحْضُ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْيَسِيرِينَ
 قَوْلُ الْإِصْلَاحِ
 الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ
 الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَءُونَ
 وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ

"Have you seen him who gives the lie to the Deen? It is he who repels the orphan (with harshness). And encourages not the feeding of the needy. So, woe to the performers of Prayer. Who are neglectful of their Prayer. Who (put on) false appearance, but refuse (to indulge in) the barest acts of charity."
The Quran. Chapter 107.

The first three verses of this surah were revealed in Mecca and the rest in Medina. This surah as a whole is one interwoven entity, equally oriented towards a definite objective, aiming at establishing one of the greatest aspects of Faith. The subject is related to the phenomenon of hypocrisy and make-belief which were unheard of among the Muslim community in Mecca.

This surah of seven short verses deals with an important and vital issue which could very well change the common meanings normally understood from the terms Iman (belief) and Kufr (disbelief). Moreover, it brings forth the fundamental truth intrinsic in the nature of Faith, the enormous benefit in it for all humanity and the abundant blessing that Allah intended for mankind when He sent His last Message to them.

Islam is not a way of life built on ost-

entation and superficiality. The apparent aspects of the different acts of worship are, according to Islam meaningless unless they are motivated by sincerity and devotion to Allah. These produce effects within the individual's heart which then cause him to act uprightly and which are reflected in a social behaviour which elevates man's life on this earth.

Islam is not a loose, fragmentary, disjointed system from which one can pick and choose at leisure. On the contrary it is a complete way of life with acts of worship, rites, and individual and collective obligations that are mutually complimentary.

Together they lead to a goal of which mankind is the sole beneficiary, a goal at which hearts are purified, life is ennobled, cooperation for the common good and progress is rife, a goal wherein abounds the blessings of Allah.

A man can profess to be a Muslim, that is, he accepts this religion and all its principles. He may further observe Prayer and other acts of worship and yet be lacking in the essence of Iman and sincerity of belief. In fact he may be very far from these. For, these qualities have certain signs to indicate their existence and firm establishment in the heart. Unless they are clearly apparent and manifest, Iman is altogether non-existent regardless of all verbal assertions and ostensible devotion.

This surah asserts unequivocally the essence of Iman, which, once firmly rooted in one's heart and mind will immediately begin to operate and manifest itself in individual acts.

"Have you seen him who gives the lie to the Deen? That is, he who repels the orphan and encourages not the feeding of the needy."

This surah starts with a question addressed to all who can "see", generating suspense, and holding their attention in order to make them discover the target and subject of the surah. Ah! who is this creature who denies the Deen (of Islam) and whom the Quran so identifies? Hence the answer: "It is he who repels

THE MUSLIM STANDARD, JUNE 1977

the orphan and encourages not the feeding of the needy."

This definition of the disbeliever may sound surprising when compared with the traditional definition of Iman. But this is the core of the whole matter. Indeed the one who denies the Deen is he who wickedly repels the orphan, humiliating him and hurting his feelings, and who does not care for the feeding of the needy or their welfare. For if the truth of Islam has in any degree touched his heart, he would commit no such acts.

True belief in Islam is not a spoken word but an overall change of the individual's heart, motivating him to benevolence and goodwill for all his fellow beings that are in need of care and protection. Allah does not want mere words from His servants but demands deeds to support the spoken word which, otherwise are weightless and valueless. No presentation can even be stronger than these three verses in affirming this fact which represents most aptly the spirit and nature of Faith.

"Woe to the performers of prayer who are neglectful of their Prayer."

These verses contain Allah's invocation against, or a threat of destruction to those who offer Prayer but are careless about it. Who exactly are such? They are those "Who put on false appearance, but refuse to indulge in the barest acts of charity," those who perform Prayer but do not aptly meet its requirements.

They execute its mechanical aspects and pronounce its verbal formulae but their hearts are never alive to Prayer nor are they nourished by it. The essence and purpose of Prayer are never present in their souls. They offer Prayer only to deceive others and not out of devotion to Allah. Hence they are inattentive in Prayer while outwardly performing it.

What is required in Islam is to institute Prayer and not merely execute its movements. This can only be achieved by recognising its significance and its role, and by making the pleasure of Allah its sole aim.

Thus Prayer leaves no result in those who are neglectful and inattentive of it. Consequently, they refuse to be kind or helpful to their fellow beings and deny the slightest charity to any of the servants of God. Had they really instituted Prayer and appreciated its significance, no

Halal & Haram (cont'd)

In taking usury also, both the borrower and the lender would share that sin.

7. Declaring a thing Halal when it is Haram, is also Haram.

While restricting the ways that could lead to Haram, Islam also makes it Haram to commit Haram through hideous and indirect ways. The Prophet, peace be upon him said: Do not do what the Jews have done; Do not commit what Allah has made Haram, with silliest of tricks'. This is because the Jews were ordered not to fish on Saturdays. To get around this, they used to prepare their fishing gear on Friday and put it into the sea so that fish would fall into it on Saturday for them to catch on Sunday. Though this might seem in order for the one who wishes to get around the forbidden act, yet it is Haram in Islam's view. What was meant by Allah's order was to refrain from catching fish on Saturday whether directly or indirectly. Among other new tricks is giving misleading names to Haram objects, for example the different names given to alcohol, taking usury and illegal relations between sexes.

such action would have come from them. This is the core of true and sincere worship which Allah accepts.

From all this we gather the purpose behind what Allah demands of His servants when He instructs them to believe in, and worship Him.

He seeks no benefit thereof for Himself, as He is All-Affluent, but all He cares for is their own welfare and prosperity, purification of their hearts, and happiness in their lives.

Allah wishes their lives to be elevated, exalted, based on pure motives and characterised by mutual compassion, benevolence, love, brotherhood and purity of hearts and behaviour.

To where then, to where is humanity driving itself? Away from this abundance and mercy? Away from this wonderful, sublime path? How can mankind debate himself to living in the wilderness of a wretched and gloomy ignorance when it beholds sparkling light before its very eyes at the cross-roads where it now stands.

—Adapted from *Fi Zilal Al Qur'an*
by Sayyid Qutb

8. Good intentions do not justify committing Haram.

Islam appreciates the individual's intentions in all its directives and teachings. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "The outcome of deeds depend on the intentions and every person will have what he has intended to do".

With good intentions, performance of mundane practices that are Halal become an act of obedience to Allah and bring His pleasure. Regarding Haram, however, the case is different. Whatever good intentions the doer might have and how noble his objectives could be, Islam does not accept Haram methods to be used as a means for achieving good ends. This is because Islam emphasises both the means and the ends to be noble and never accepts the principle of "ends justify the means". Thus earning money through dealing in usury, gambling or any other illegal means to spend on building mosques or other charitable objects is not acceptable to Islam.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, once said: Allah is good, He accepts only the good, and Allah has commanded the believers with what He commanded His Messengers, saying "O, Messenger, eat of the good things and do righteousness; surely I know the things you do". (Al-Muminoon 51).

And Allah also said: Believers, eat of the good things wherewith We provide you". The Prophet, peace be upon him, then mentioned the example of a man travelling long distance (for Hajj) his face and hair stained with dust, stretches his hands in his prayers asking favours from Allah while his food is Haram and his clothes are bought from Haram money. How could it be that Allah listens to his prayers?

9. One should guard against things on the borderline between Halal and Haram. (Musthabahat).

On the borderline between the Halal and Haram, there lies an area which could bring some confusion. This could be due to various ways of interpreting a rule or due to differences in authority concerning it. Islam recommends Muslims to keep away from these "Musthabahat" to guard himself from committing actual Haram. This principle originates from the following tradition of the Prophet, peace be upon him: "What is Halal is clear and what is Haram

is clear. Midway between them are things which many people do not know whether they are Halal or Haram. He who keeps away from them will protect his religion and will be saved. He who approaches them will be very near to Haram, like a herdsman wandering near Hima (the place set by the king to be used by his cattle only), who could soon fall into this protected area. Surely for every king there is such a protected area and God's is what He declared forbidden"

10. What is Haram is Haram for everybody.

In Islam, what is Haram is Haram for all the people and likewise what is Halal is Halal for all the people. There is no privileges enjoyed by a certain caste or group enabling them to do whatever they like, be they kings or monks. Theft for example is Haram, whether the thief or his victim be Muslim or non-Muslim. The thief will face the charge and pay the penalty whatever his status. This is what the Prophet, peace be upon him, meant when he said, "By God, had Fatima committed theft I would have cut off her hand".

11. In case of constraint, Haram is permissible within certain limits.

Islam does not ignore the fact that man is weak in certain trying circumstances and could endanger his life. It is therefore allowed for a Muslim under extreme pressure to take off what is normally Haram, to enable him to survive. Allah mentioned in the Qur'an immediately after enumerating types of food:

"Yet whoso is constrained, not desiring nor transgressing, no sin shall be on him; God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate". (Al-Baqarah 173)

It is important to notice that the verse defines he who is constrained as being one also not desiring to commit Haram for its sake and without going beyond the limits of his need. A Muslim should never commit Haram unless he is forced to and then he does the minimum that would justify his urgent need. The spirit of Islam is that it desires things to be easy for the Muslims:

"God desires ease for you, and desires not hardship for you". (Al-Baqarah 185)
"God desires to lighten things for you, for man was created a weakling". (Al-Nisa 28).

Adapted from 'The Muslim

TOWARDS ITS LOGICAL PEAK

TRINIDAD NATURALIST, a bi-monthly magazine, edited by Stephen Mohammed, published by S.M. Publications, T.T. — \$3.00.

Out of the deteriorating environmental conditions in Trinidad and Tobago due to governmental indifference, industrial and commercial shortsightedness, and individual negligence was born the "*Trinidad Naturalist*" magazine.

'Dedicated to the preservation and conservation of our natural heritage' as it proclaims on its first page. The magazine sees itself, in the words of its editor in the first issue, 'as watchdogs of the environment' and would like "to assume that social responsibility in helping to alert our public to the dangers of pollution, and the intolerable burdens that would result from lack of foresight and controls....'

The editor continues - "We will continue to feature articles and discussions, interviews and information on our wildlife- plant or animal- in an effort towards conservation" In a nutshell, the aim of the magazine is primarily to educate the public to the dangers of environmental pollution and secondly to disseminate information on wildlife. Although the first issue reflects this order of emphasis the subsequent issues lay more emphasis on wildlife and less on environmental pollution.

The aims of the magazine are certainly commendable and the effort fills a gap that should have long since been occupied by some governmental agency.

The publishers are to be congratulated on the quality of the magazine both in its contents and presentation. It is generously illustrated with

photographs and drawings. The photographs on wildlife in particular are superb.

The magazine must also be commended for attracting contributions of knowledgeable articles on pollution and wildlife from persons who are acknowledged authorities in their fields.

The school's programme now being organised by the magazine is a bold and positive step which demonstrates the publishers' sincerity of purpose. This programme includes a sanitation competition for primary schools and an animal examination for secondary schools based on information published in the magazine.

Although the magazine consistently emphasises the dangers posed to wild life by environmental pollution, it seems to have neglected to bring home to the public the dangers posed to human life also, directly and indirectly. This point is very important in order to maximise on the educative roll the magazine seeks to achieve. You can arrest and maintain the interest of the public by showing how human beings are an integral part of the ecological cycle— when any part of nature suffers other parts will also feel the effects.

The magazine's aim carried to its logical peak should be to increase awareness and concern of the general public to the point where people are prepared to act individually and collectively to ensure that mankind, in his quest for more comfort in life, does not intercept and destroy the ecological cycles so important to his own existence.

This can only be achieved by educating people to understand the

unity found in all of creation and the interdependence of every part- whether animate or inanimate. Man must not view himself as separate from the rest of creation, but as part of it and must seek to exist in harmony with it.

What is needed is a total re-orientation in the life-style now prevalent among people. Environmentalists have only recently arisen to prominence in the 'developed' countries due to the materialistic outlook and philosophy of life followed by these countries. In the race for ease and comfort and the quick million, and the race after the ever rising cost of living, man has lost sight of the purpose of his existence, concern for himself, others and the forces of nature.

There is need for a way of life which focuses the purpose of man in direct relation with the will of his Creator from which his aim in life, his values and his standards can be patterned for every aspect of his existence. It is only from understanding and developing his relationship with his Creator can man hope to maintain the ecological cycles found throughout creation.

Maybe it is time we heed this call which went out almost fourteen hundred years ago:

"O ye people! Worship your Guardian Lord who created you and those who came before you that you may have the chance to learn righteousness; Who has made the earth your couch and the heavens your canopy and sent down rain from the heavens and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance; then set not rivals unto God when you know the truth".

REVIEW by A. Wahhab

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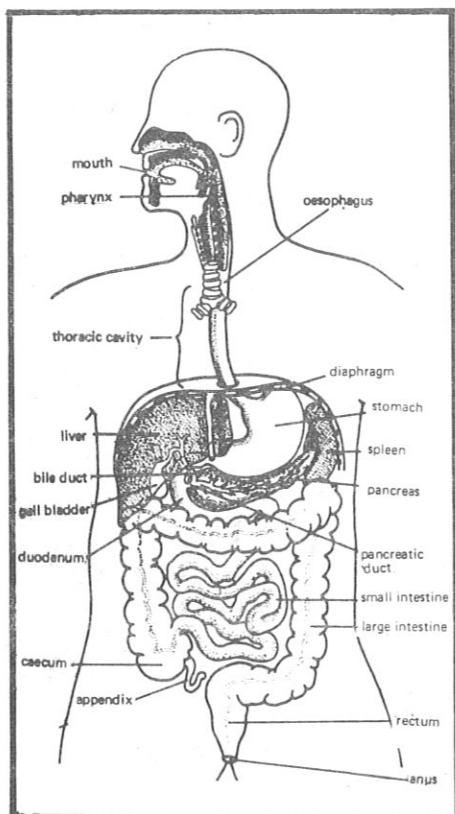
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A Trip With Alcohol

Alcohol is an irritant of the delicate linings of throat and food pipe. It burns as it goes down.

Alcohol has an irritating effect on the stomach's protective lining, resulting in gastric or duodenal ulcers. This condition, if it becomes acute, can cause peritonitis, or perforation of the stomach wall. In the small intestine alcohol blocks absorption of such substances as thiamine, folic acid, xylose, fat, vitamin1, vitamin B12 and amino acids.



Ninety-five per cent of the alcohol taken into the body is absorbed into the bloodstream through the lining of the stomach and duodenum. Once in the bloodstream, alcohol quickly goes to every cell and tissue in the body. Alcohol causes the red blood cells to clump together in sticky wads, slowing circulation and depriving tissues of oxygen. It also causes anaemia by reducing the production of red cells. Alcohol slows the ability of white cells to engulf and destroy bacteria and degenerates the clotting ability of blood

platelets.

Alcohol irritates the cells of the pancreas, causing them to swell, thus blocking the flow of digestive enzymes. The chemicals, unable to enter the small intestine, begin to digest the pancreas, leading to acute haemorrhagic pancreatitis. One out of five patients who develop this disease dies during the first attack. Pancreatitis can destroy the pancreas and create a lack of insulin thus resulting in diabetes.

Alcohol inflames the cells of the liver, causing them to swell, blocking the tiny canal to the small intestines. This prevents the bile from being filtered properly through the liver. Jaundice develops turning the whites of the eyes and the skin yellow.

Each drink of alcohol increases the number of liver cells destroyed, eventually causing cirrhosis of the liver. This disease is eight times more frequent among alcoholics than among non-alcoholics.

Alcohol causes inflammation of the heart muscle. It has a toxic effect on the heart and causes increased amounts of fat to collect, thus disrupting its normal metabolism.

Alcohol inflames the lining of the urinary bladder, making it unable to stretch properly. In the kidneys alcohol causes an increased loss of fluids through its irritating effect.

The most dramatic and noticed effect of alcohol is on the brain. It depresses the brain centres, producing progressively incoordination, confusion, disorientation, stupor, anaesthesia, coma, and death. Alcohol kills brain cells, and any brain damage is permanent. The brain cannot grow new cells. Drinking over a period of time causes loss of memory, and learning ability.

"Satan's plan is to excite enmity and hatred between you, with intoxicants and gambling Will you not then abstain?"

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لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ۝

Justice and Kindness,
Giving To Kinsfolk,
AND FORBIDS

Lewdness, Abomination, Wickedness.
He Exhorts You
In Order That You May Take Heed.

The Qur'an (Chapter 16:90)

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