

# THE MUSLIM STANDARD

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The affirmation of faith in Islam is deceptively simple, almost too simple to convey the fact that it is the key to the most revolutionary system of change which anyone can possibly imagine. "I testify that there is no god (none worthy of worship) except Allah, Who is alone and has no partner, and I also testify that Prophet Muhammad Mustafa is His last and Final Messenger".

the following questions:

What am I?  
Where did I come from?  
What do I have to do here?  
Why was I given all these various powers?

And from all conflicting theories, and philosophical bunkum which passes for "knowledge" in these god-less systems, he

receives no convincing answer, not even a clue. He refuses to accept the baseless conjecture that he is a metamorphosed ape and he admits that for a long time he has claimed to be a human being without knowing what it was. He realises that without knowing what he is, he cannot be himself; without knowing his real value, he cannot fully appreciate his real worth; without knowledge of his purpose, he

## FREEDOM THROUGH FAITH

Simple as it seems, it demands true grit to be uttered, for by its proclamation a person signifies that from that moment onward, nobody will make laws for him which run contrary to those of his Creator and that his sole example in all walks of life is the Holy Prophet Muhammad. He is also stating his recognition of his being a human being with inalienable rights to be on the face of the earth, his desire to find out and fulfil his purpose of life, his rejection of the laws made by men to unjustly oppress others and, consequently, his rejection of the systems of life based upon these laws, and his willingness to live his own life. Such a person, by merely stating "I testify that none is worthy of being worshipped but the One Who created all things", realises the very essence of the human value. He realises that there is more to being a human being than just moving around after the faceless crowds, accepting any and everything handed down by the rulers, wasting precious time in senseless play or destroying his beautiful body by surrendering to his own greedy, irrational impulses.

Instead, he chooses to use the single most precious instrument given to him for charting the course of his life - his brain. He chooses to think before he acts to observe the panorama of life, the baseless foundation of irresponsible living, the nature of the universe and his own miraculous reality. He asks himself some of



الله أكبر

La ilaha illallah  
Muhammadur Rasulallah  
There is no god but Allah and  
Muhammad is the messenger  
of Allah

cannot live his own life as he ought; but most of all, he is convinced that only the Being Who created him can give him his real sense of value and the only sound reason for living. It is with such a conviction and in such a state of mind he turns to his Creator for guidance and says: "I testify that there is none worthy of worship but You my Creator!"

From then on, he depends upon his Lord for the interpretation of the words 'man' and 'human being'. From casual observation of people, he is aware that there is a difference between just being 'man' and being 'human'. Contrary to all his previous teachings, Allah tells him in the Qur'an, that the species known as 'man' is an integrated but dispensable part of His vast creation; gifted with the ability and powers to make use of all the forces around himself for his own benefit, that 'man' is the prize of all creation placed here on earth for a short time to make use of the things he finds here in the manner prescribed by Allah as a test and preparation for a more lasting, enjoyable position in the Divine Plan of Existence. He becomes aware that, while 'man' is a mere part of the Creation, possessing the potential to be an agent of the Creator, the 'human being' is a member of the species who makes full use of that potential and works as he was made to function, completely obedient to the will of his Lord and Master.

With this novel information about



himself, comes a certain consciousness which spurs him on to greater efforts of self-discovery. Realising that he is the possessor of the potential to be an agent of the Supreme Creator, he naturally wishes to tap that potential and obtain his true human status. For the first time he obtains a direction in which to go; a lofty purpose for which to live; all he needs now is the knowledge of how to fulfil his purpose. It is on the successful completion of that task that his whole fate hangs - self-fulfilment and the receipt of Divine pleasure and reward. To transgress the commands of his Lord would mean self-negation, failure, abject misery and Divine Wrath. Before this new man stands the whole universe and all its forces for him to use in the accomplishment of his task, but the knowledge of how to use them resides in the pages of the Qur'an, the last revealed Book of Revelation.

The budding human knows by now that the knowledge that he had possessed is quite insufficient for the task which now awaits him and that he must re-educate himself about everything. He turns to the Qur'an for the wisdom which he needs to go forward on his journey of self-realisation and fulfilment. The Qur'an assures him that the knowledge which he is receiving is the true and proper knowledge which he needs for the reconstruction of his life and the fulfilment of his purpose. As Allah says: "In this book there is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah..." He needs no other reassurance for the first real glance of his real worth had come from within the pages of this Book and he knows that it is only here that he can find the rest of the knowledge which he needs. Within the pages of the Qur'an, he finds the answers to the most disturbing questions - questions which are unanswered by the most 'brilliant' non-Muslim thinkers of the world. He is further encouraged by the Qur'an to think and ponder over the signs of Allah in the Creation and to seek knowledge from everything and to trust in the Beneficence of his Merciful Lord. He receives principles upon which to base his life and is strongly encouraged to practise them. Should he fall short of his duty, he is reminded that his Creator is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful and that He forgives everything He so pleases. Under these exhortations, the Muslim pushes ahead, on and

on, towards freedom.

As if the new reasons for living were not enough, the Most Merciful and Compassionate Creator surrounds the believer with sturdy group of companions, all heading in the same direction, all striving towards the goal of self-realisation. The sole basis of their association, of their relationship, is the belief in the meeting with their Lord and the truth of His claim in the Qur'an that Muhammad is His Apostle sent to teach all Mankind the way to Divine acceptance and righteousness. This is the major bond that unites the believers in the Unity and Absoluteness of Allah. Simple as this proclamation may be, the bond of love it produces is strong enough and wide enough to break down and utterly destroy all forms of racism and class consciousness, along with their attendant evils, and construct a society wherein all races and classes live together in peace and harmony. The believer and his companions try to purify their speech, their dress, their habits, their lifestyles and even their very thoughts. The Muslim is quick to forgive and overlook the faults of his companions because he knows that Allah, his Creator and Lord, is also the Lord of each and everyone, irrespective of their beliefs or life-styles.

The purifying effect of the testimony forever working in his heart, the Muslim becomes radically different from all other people, not only in words, but also in thoughts and deeds. Unlike before, in the days of ignorance, when he would betray his best friend, even to the extent of defiling his wife and stealing his property, he now recognises the inviolability of every man's trust, life, honour and property. He no longer strangles his debtor with exorbitant interest rates; he refuses to deal in usury because Allah has enjoined upon him to give it up and to desire for every man what he likes for himself. His conduct with women is worthy of mention because it shows the height to which his once-bankrupt moral conscience is developed. He no longer exploits them, nor does he ridicule them; rather he encourages women to respect themselves and to be modest. His dealings with them are highly respectable and never lewd. Whereas today's 'Men' debase women, the Muslim honours, respects and tries to uplift them because he realises that they, too, are possessors of the potential to be agents of Allah and not

man's enemy. He now recognises that they are his companions and helpers with equal right to exist on the face of the earth.

The believer shows a different approach to business matters also. He is urged to deal justly with all men. Rather than be governed by selfish profit motives like a ruthless exploiter, he acts as a man performing a service to his fellow men. He has no inclination to "Rip-off" his customers because he knows that Allah alone can grant increase of wealth and property. He does not resort to lies and deception because he knows that his business transactions are under the watchful gaze of Allah, the Master of the Day of Reckoning, Who will question him about every deed. Even in times of adversity, he is spared the great anxiety, the nervous tensions and the despair which so often accompany the unbeliever; should he fail in his commerce, he knows that it is a test from Allah or a punishment for an evil deed and he turns to Allah to seek forgiveness for his transgression and begs new direction. He does not rush foolishly to commit suicide as so many non-Muslims do. Even in his distress, no word of indecency will anyone hear. Such is the all-pervading power inherent in the testimony of the Unity and Absoluteness of Allah, the One, The Omnipotent.

With such a rewarding ideology to aid his development, the budding human being is also given a helping hand at every turn. He is surrounded by others who are as concerned about him as he is about himself, in some cases, even more so. They are all heading in the same direction propping up each other as they go along. Before him stands the guidance of the Qur'an, vividly exemplified by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him whom he becomes as if personally acquainted. All around him are the people anxious to help him; within his heart and mind dwell peace and contentment, ahead of him lie the hope of Allah's Mercy, His pleasure and the Ultimate Goal-Paradise. He can never lose heart nor be in despair, because Allah beckons him on with the words: "Those who believed and those who suffered exile and fought and strove and struggled in the path of Allah - They have the hope of the Mercy of Allah and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." These words serve to renew his determination to achieve self-perfection and the memory of the frustration of living an

ignorant, empty, purposeless life, helps to strengthen his resolve to better himself and gain the pleasure of Allah. He may make mistakes, become confused, succumb to the attacks of Satan, but he is always optimistic that one day he will achieve the satisfaction of hearing his name called from the hallowed portals of Paradise by his Lord, inviting him in these words: "O soul at peace, return unto thy Lord, well-pleased, well-pleasing! Enter thou among My servants! Enter thou My Paradise!" Just these words alone, the mere thought that Allah would call out to him, grant him a place in Paradise, is enough to steel him for the hazards and obstacles which he must face on earth.

To enable him to realise how close he is to the Mercy of his Lord, and to convince him of his ability to approach Allah the Muslim has been given the institution of Salah (prayer). He is asked to perform certain rituals five times a day, at least, whether he is in company or alone, in order to denote his submission to his Lord. Far from being a cumbersome barrier to the enjoyment of life, Salah is the means by which he is able to extract joy from sorrow, pleasure from frustration and gain from loss. In his daily affairs, he is sure to make mistakes, forget his true purpose sometimes and succumb to the whispers of Satan. When he recovers from his lapses, he is filled with regret and shame and it is through the medium of Salah that he can reassure himself of his submission to Allah and seek Allah's forgiveness for his shortcomings, weaknesses and transgressions. Thus he becomes comforted in mind, new hope replaces the fear of retribution in his heart and he begins anew to remodel his life. He is also able to seek the help of Allah in his everyday affairs and plead for protection against evil influences which may assail him. Every Salah, therefore, becomes an opportunity for reawakening the sense of responsibility to his Creator, accountability for his actions and awareness of purpose for his existence. No wonder why the Prophet, Peace be upon him, once remarked: "In Salah lies the coolness of my eyes and the contentment of my heart."

He has been ordered to fast by Allah, for a period of one month every year, during the month of Ramadan. Irrespective of his form of labour or his social status, he steadfastly abstains from eating and drinking, lewd thinking and evil

actions and any form of indecency for a period of about thirteen hours a day, every day. This is because he knows that Allah is the Knower of what is best in all matters, even of health and welfare. By observing the fast, he establishes firm and indisputable control over his desires and passions, while allowing his overworked digestive organs to relax and recover their strength to function properly. He also becomes aware that Allah, The Wise, is teaching him that he has a built-in resistance system against pollution of his body by consumption of filthy foods. He is actually testing his mettle for the times of hardships which will surely confront him during his protracted battle for autonomy and Paradise. The situation may arise when he may have to choose to go hungry or to pollute his system with unwholesome foods; aided by the knowledge that he can endure hunger, the Muslim would rather starve until such time as he can find good food. He will be able to resist temptation to do evil if he can abstain from the lawful things upon command of his Lord. The state of mind engendered by the fast sharpens his sense of responsibility, which may have become dulled by self-indulgence, alerts him to transgressions of Allah's laws, makes him forever conscious of his soul and its needs and renews his flagging determination to better himself. It brings him into a closer feeling on direct contact with Allah, refreshes him both spiritually and physically and strengthens him for his struggle for perfection and Paradise.

The many and varied aspects of the purifying effect of the testimony of Islamic Faith are too numerous to be contained within the pages of any given volume, except the Qur'an, whose Author is fully able to do all things. What can be said, however, is that it inaugurates a new life pattern for Mankind, one of unified independence, not of man from man, but of man from the lowly clutches of his own passions and desires, from group pressure and approval, from arbitrary law-makers and their enforcers and from all things which tend to dehumanise him.

The testimony instigates a radical revolution, one that takes place in the core of man's being and is ultimately manifested in the society in which he lives. It is a slow and rigorous battle, eternally protracted, which concentrates the unlimited potential within human souls to effect a permanent overthrow of evil impulses

which feed the desires of tyrants and satanic agents. It encourages in the heart the desire to correct the evils in the society, not for fame or self-glory, but for the love of Allah and the reward of Paradise. In the final analysis, the declaration of faith in Allah is nothing less than the first step towards being oneself, being a free, thinking, self-motivated and responsible individual coming to grips with reality in the light of the following reminder of the Qur'an:

*"Whoever submits his whole self to Allah and is a doer of good, he has grasped indeed the most trustworthy handhold; and with Allah rests the end and decision of all affairs."*

Muhammad Sayyid

## Seven Lucky People

On the Resurrection Day these 'Seven' will be According to Hadith under God's canopy. The first is the Ruler whose rule is just Between him and his people there is sacred trust.

The second is a man whom a damsel lures To sensual gratification, but he secures His sanctity and dares say in addition "Excuse me, dear sister, I'm afraid of perdition."

The third is one who makes friends For God's sake, not for his ends.

The fourth in a Mosque his prayers he says And feels happiest while there he stays.

The fifth is one who spends his youth In Allah's worship, in piety and truth.

The sixth gives alms- but does not make a show With his right hand, his left one does not know.

The seventh is the one who remembers God And makes Jihaad for the sake of his Lord. His life, his wealth, his all he gives,

To establish the authority of Allah he lives. My friend, if you are among the lucky seven, May you be rewarded with Allah's Heaven.

M. Jamal-ud-din (Pakistan)

## PERSONAL CLEANLINESS

## PERFORMANCE OF WUDU - "ABLUTION"

*This article is the second in a series of articles on personal cleanliness by Dr M. Khan. The third and final part on 'Use of the toilet' and 'Bathing' will appear in the next issue.*

*Washing the hands*

The hands are used for multifarious purposes and become dirty very quickly. Washing the hands regularly therefore is a must and the practice of *wudu* ensures that this is done. Attention must also be paid to the nails of the fingers. Dust accumulated under the nails is difficult to get rid off. Surgeons when washing up for operations devote much time to brushing the tips of the fingers. Washing the hands is as essential in tropical countries as it is in non-tropical but industrialised countries. Muslims because of the habit of eating with their hands—which incidentally has much to recommend it as against the use of knife and fork—are used to washing their hands before eating. The Prophet of God also taught Muslims to wash their hands after rising from sleep. This principle of hygiene is perhaps not even appreciated even by teachers of hygiene.

*Rinsing the mouth*

Muslims can make *wudu* five times a day and each time they rinse the mouth three times. They also rinse the mouth after each meal or after eating anything ... between meals. Thus they rinse their mouth nearly eight times in sixteen hours—that is, roughly every two hours. By rinsing in the manner prescribed, any food or particle accumulating in the interdental spaces are washed away. The regular rinsing of the mouth is recommended in the prevention and treatment of diseases of the teeth, gums and the mouth. In addition to rinsing the mouth, Muslims have a tradition based on the practice of the Prophet—peace be upon him—of cleaning their teeth with *miswak* which is the forerunner of the present-day toothbrush. Muslims also have the

practice of cleaning the interdental spaces with wooden pins. This is highly desirable with the type of food eaten which makes full use of the teeth. It is no doubt the result of such meticulous care of the teeth that caries of the teeth is uncommon in Muslim countries. Children in some poor countries may suffer from obvious bone diseases but have beautiful teeth.

*Douching the nose*

The Prophet—peace be upon him—instructs Muslims to clean their noses by douching after rising from sleep and every time they make *wudu*. An ordinary face wash only cleans the outer part of the nose. Douching the nose is the only way to clean it from inside. This helps to wash away the dried secretion inside the nose stuck to the lining. The inner lining of the soft part of the nose is the skin which has hair follicles. These hairs trap the dust particles going inside and the secretion blowing out through the nose. They can thus become coated with the nasal secretion and dust. Rubbing the inside of the nose with the little finger—which is ideally situated opposite the thumb—is the only way of making sure that the area is cleaned. Muslims also regularly trim the hair inside the nose.

Cleaning the nose in the manner of the Prophet is thus very useful in preventing the infection of nose sinuses (cavities inside the bones of the face), boils in the hairy part of the nose and nose bleeding. Also the lining of the nose has a tendency to get dry in hot and in cold, humid countries. In this respect douching is useful to wet the nasal lining: cold water run into the nose, like cold air shrinks the lining of the nose. It is the safest form of shrinking agent for blocked noses.

A clean and free nose does smell better than a blocked one. Keeping the nose clean also prevents the infection of the ears and throat. The use of the handkerchief to blow the nose instead of cleaning the nose with water is not hygienic. The dirty handkerchief is carried in the pocket and while perhaps the handkerchief is changed the next day, the pocket is not! It is better to carry disposable tissues. Blowing the nose proper-

ly and thus keeping it clean is often considered antisocial. Even people who instruct others to blow their noses do not do it themselves in company—so great is the social pressure.

*Washing the face*

In this process the part of the face from the forehead to the chin between the two ears is washed. The important part in this area, apart from the nose and mouth, is the eyes. The face, being one of the exposed parts is liable to get dust laden. Washing the face cleans it and gives a relaxed feeling, keeping away the feeling of tiredness. Keeping the face clean is helpful in preventing certain skin diseases.

The eyes are always washed along with the face but especial effort is to be made to clean the inner corner of the eye with the index finger as the hand is carried from forehead to the eyes. The inner corner of the eye is the region where secretion often accumulates. Secretion left in this region not only gives an impression of untidiness but is also a source of infection. In washing the eyes, the lids, the eye lashes, the conjunctiva (the transparent covering of the globe for the passage of tears) are washed. Washing these structures is essential in preventing and treating certain diseases and indirectly and in some respects directly helps in maintaining sight. Washing the eyes especially with cold water shrinks the inner lining of the lids and removes itching and soreness.

In desert and dusty atmospheres, the washing of the eyes is extremely essential. It is equally essential in the industrialised societies with dirty atmospheres and artificial lighting which often produces much harmful glare.

*Head*

The skin of the head (scalp) is covered with hair which, with the industrial dust in the air, becomes dust laden. Incidentally, covering the head not only prevents it becoming dirty but also protects it from extremes of temperatures. As custom has it, the majority of people in industrialised societies remain bare-headed. In some countries people are not



allowed to swim in a public pool without a head cap.

A scaly condition of scalp—polyriasis Capita (dandruff) is very common in the West not only in the westerners but also in the easterners who adopt western culture. Predisposing conditions are skin, application of chemicals to the hair and emotional factors. It is desirable to avoid application of chemical creams. Pure, natural oils like coconut oil as used in the east are more to be recommended. In the circumstances it would be correct to assume that rubbing the scalp with wet hands five times a day should be beneficial to the maintenance of a clean and healthy-feeling scalp. Also recommended in this regard, incidentally, are adequate diet and rest.

### Ears

Without the conception of *wudu*, the ears would be left out from the process of washing the face. In making *wudu*, the ears are cleaned by force of habit. The outer ear or pinna is not a uniform surface but has deep grooves due to the structure of underlying cartilage. These deep grooves are the ideal place for dust to accumulate. The only way to clean the ear is to run the moist index finger through these grooves. The outer orifice of the outer ear can ideally be cleaned by a moist index finger. The part of the ear most likely to be forgotten is the back of the pinna. There is a deep groove here and again it is an ideal place for dirt to accumulate. The deeper part of the outer canal can be cleaned satisfactorily only by an ear specialist. But one can attempt to clean it by winding cotton wool on a match stick. Cleaning the outer ear in the above manner prevents its being infected. I saw fewer cases of infections of outer ear during my two years stay in Saudi Arabia where the treatment is free and the atmosphere dusty, than I have seen during my practice in England. The custom of carrying a perfume laden cotton wool in the ear in Muslim countries is certainly the only way of carrying it without xxxxxxxx further. I think it has the advantage of masking the smell of any discharge from the deeper part of the outer ear canal.

### Neck

People living in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow and other industrial towns know how much the collar of the shirt gets dirty in a single day. In

addition to accumulating dirt, the neck perspires under the collar. Cleaning the neck five times a day keeps it clean and prevents the collar being dirty and keeps away the perspiration.

### The Feet

Most of the day the feet are covered with socks and remain inside a tight shoe. The spaces between the toes perspire and the perspiration does not evaporate. Thus the skin between the toes become moist and is liable to become infected. A condition known as athlete's foot—epidemic mycophytosis—is very common among the sock users in humid climates. The predisposing factors are humidity non-permeable socks, orthopaedic defects and unsuitable footwear. When the feet are washed special attention should be given to cleaning the spaces between the toes and in cold and humid climates, to dry up the skin before putting on the socks.

Taking off the shoe and socks and washing the feet gives a very relaxed and refreshed feeling. It also removes the smelly perspiration and therefore the smell of the socks. Also, one of the reasons that people are not so regular in cutting the nails of the toes is that they do not see the nails most of the time. The saying, 'out of sight, out of mind' holds true in this regard. Washing the feet is a useful reminder to attend to the nails.

From above it can be seen that in *wudu* the part of the body which perspire most and give rise to offensive odour are cleaned. The cavities of the body like the mouth and the nose which are rich in bacteria are cleaned. *Wudu* thus prevents infection of these parts and prevents body odour. It gives the confident feeling which the manufacturers of deodorants advertise—without any cost. It has the additional advantage over deodorants that it removes the cause of body odour instead of masking it. And if perfume is used in addition to this, as is the Islamic custom, one can imagine the fragrance of Muslim societies.

*Wudu* is also an excellent prescription for relaxing the tight garments, although tight garments are not recommended for the Muslim man or woman. In the process of making *wudu*, the tie, tight trousers, and tight socks are loosened or removed for sometime. The act by itself gives a feeling of relief. Washing the face and feet, and blowing the nose and cleaning the mouth is very refreshing.

It requires five specialists—Ear-nose-throat, eye, dental surgeon, chiropodist and general surgeon—to give the complete picture of personal hygiene. Even they cannot co-ordinate and integrate it in the simple, practical and effective way which the Prophet, following Allah's instructions, set for the daily routine of a Muslim's life. And this was 1400 years ago, long before many peoples even began to concern themselves with these matters.

There may be other secrets for mankind in the Muslim principles which will be discovered with the advance in scientific knowledge, but for myself as a Muslim and incidentally as an ENT surgeon the present facts are enough to convince me of the genuineness of the Prophetic mission of Muhammad and the unparalleled nature of his work. Of course this assertion does not reflect the idea of using scientific knowledge as the criterion of good and bad, or right and wrong. It is only an exercise in trying to understand the ways of Allah. For the Muslim's belief in religious principles is not conditional on being proved or disproved scientifically. In fact, scientific observations cannot be used as a criterion for they are ever changing.

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It is indeed natural that fasting should be ordained on the nation (ummah) which was commanded to pursue JIHAD for the cause of Allah - that may be established this path of Allah on earth, be guardians of it over mankind and propound it to all people.

Fasting is a field of activity whereby a definite and determined will is established and whereby man is attached to his Lord through complete obedience and willing submission. So too does it serve as instrument for rising above all the needs of the body, bearing their pressure and weight - out of preference for Allah's pleasure and good rewards.

All these factors are necessary for the training and preparing of souls to bear the hardships of a road covered with obstacles and thorns, at the sides of which desires and inclinations are strewn about, and along which are thousands of temptations beckoning its travellers.

As time passes, more become known of the beneficial effects of fasting to the functioning of bodies. But I am not inclined to relate the Divine obligations and instructions, particularly in matters of worship, to what is apparent of material and physical benefits. For, the genuine wisdom behind these obligations is the preparation of the human being to play his role in this life and moulding him for the perfection he is destined to attain in the life hereafter. Still, I do not like to dismiss what may be discovered through observations or science by way of implementing these instructions and fulfilling these obligations. I am inclined towards the noted and well understood fact that Divine planning took into consideration the existence of man as a whole in whatever is imposed on him and in whatever he is directed towards. But the wisdom behind the Divine instructions is not related to what human knowledge may prove, for the sphere of human knowledge is limited. It is finite and cannot rise to the full comprehension of the wisdom of Allah in all that gives shape to human beings or to the universe in general.

*"O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you even as it was prescribed for those before you so that you may attain TAQWA; for a prescribed number of days. But if any of you are ill or on a journey he shall fast a corresponding number of days, he who can put up*

*with it (with difficulty) can atone for it by feeding a needy person. And who does good of his own free will, goodness will occur to him. But if you fast, it is better for you if you but know.*

*"The month of Ramadan is that wherein the Qur'an was revealed as a guide to mankind and as Clear Signs of guidance and judgement (between good and evil). Therefore whoever of you witnesses that month, let him fast. But he who is ill or on a journey, he shall fast the corresponding number of days. Allah wants ease for you. He does not want hardship for you. Therefore, complete the prescribed period of fasting to its full and glorify Allah for the guidance He has bestowed on you so that you may be grateful."*

(Al-Baqarah II : 183-185)

Allah, praised be Him, knows that the human soul needs help, impetus and persuasion in order to respond to obligations and fulfil them. Whatever wisdom and benefit lie in these obligations, the human soul needs to be first convinced of them and be prepared to fulfil them. Hence, the obligation starts with this beloved call to the believers, reminding of their essential nature. Then it explains to them that fasting is an old obligation on believers in Allah in every religion and that its first aim is to prepare their hearts for attaining Taqwa, purity, sensitivity and fear of Allah.

*"O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you even as it was prescribed for those before you so that you may attain Taqwa."*

Thus stands out the great objective of fasting. It is Taqwa. It is this Taqwa that (which) is awakened in the human heart when this obligation is fulfilled in obedience to Allah, and for the sake of gaining His pleasure. Taqwa guards such hearts against destroying the fast by disobedience even that which occurs in the imagination. Those whom the Qur'an addresses know very well the importance of Taqwa in the sight of Allah and its weight on His scales. It is a goal to which

their souls aspire. Fasting is one of the means and a way leading to Taqwa. The text therefore, raises it in front of their eyes as a bright objective to which they may direct themselves by way of fasting ".....that you may attain Taqwa."

Then the text goes on to state that fasting is limited to a number of days. It is not obligatory for the whole life and it does not last for ever. Nevertheless, exempted from this obligation are the ill, until they recover, and the travellers, until they settle down. This is to lighten the obligation and make it easy for them.

## FAST PREP FOR A GR

*"The fast is to be observed for a prescribed number of days. But if anyone of you is ill or on a journey, he shall fast a corresponding number of days."*

Taken as it is, the text concerning illness and travelling is general, without restrictions. Any illness and any travelling therefore, is enough to exempt one from fasting, provided that the sick person makes up for it when he recovers and the traveller when he settles down. This is the proper understanding of this general Qur'anic statement, and is in line with the Islamic standpoint of relieving hardships and preventing harm. This law is not based on the gravity of the illness or the hardships of travelling, but on any illness and travelling as such, for Allah wants ease for man, not hardship. We do not know the Divine wisdom in its totality for basing this exemption on illness and travelling without exception. There may be in both cases some consideration which are known to Allah but unknown to human beings. And there may be some other kinds of afflictions which are not instantly apparent or are never apparent to human thinking. So long as Allah has not stated the reason for this law, we need not try to explain it. We need only obey what is stated even if its wisdom is



concealed from us. For certainly, there is wisdom behind them and it is not necessary that we should know it.

*"He who can put up with it (with difficulty) can atone for it by feeding a needy person."*

At the beginning, fasting was very hard for the Muslims. It was made obligatory in the second year after the Hijrah (Emigration), a short while before Jihad was ordained. Hence, relief was granted to those who could only fast with great

Qur'an was revealed in the month of Ramadhan. The Qur'an is the eternal Book of this Ummah. It is the Book which brought this Ummah out of the darkness into light and was responsible for its rise. It replaced its fear with security, established it in the world and endowed it with treasured values that made an Ummah out of it. Before this, it was nothing without this treasured values, it is not an Ummah and will have no place on earth and no mention on High. The least that could be expected then is that everyone should thank Allah for His Grace of revealing the Qur'an by responding to the command of fasting the month - the month in which the Qur'an was revealed.

*"The month of Ramadhan is that wherein the Qur'an was revealed as a guide to mankind and he shall fast the corresponding number of days."*

As has been explained earlier, this is the verse terminating the relief by atonement for the healthy and settled person. It does not terminate it for the elderly. "Whoever of you witnesses that month, let him fast it," that is, he who is in residence and not travelling, or he who observed (witnessed) the sighting of the moon. The same applies to those who are certain, by any other means, that the moon has been sighted. On both, fasting is compulsory throughout Ramadhan. But since this statement is general, a repetition of the exemption for the ill person and the traveller is provided: "But he who is ill or on a journey shall fast a corresponding number of days. Then there comes a third encouragement to discharge this obligation and the concession is given: "Allah wants ease for you. He does not want hardship for you."

This is the great rule in all obligations of this religion. They are all easy and involve no hardship. This rule inspires the appreciating heart with the ease and simplicity with which life must be taken. It impresses on the soul of the Muslim a unique brand of tolerance which is free from affection and complication. It is the tolerance which is free from affection and complication. It is the tolerance that makes the fulfilment of all duties and obligations and all the activity of a serious life as easy as the running of water or the growth of a tree which goes higher and higher in confidence, satisfaction and contentment. Along with this, there is the permanent feeling of the Grace of

Allah and His desire to comfort and not burden His believing servants.

The sick and the traveller are required to fast on some other days to make up for the full period of one month. Thus, they do not lose their reward: "Therefore, you shall complete the prescribed period of fasting to the full." For fasting is a Grace for which man must be thankful and must glorify his Lord: "That you may glorify Allah for the guidance He has bestowed on you, and that you may be grateful."

This is one of the aims of this obligation, that is, the believers should realise the value of the guidance of Allah has made available for them. This they feel in their own souls in the period of fasting more than at any other times. For, in this period, their hearts are turned away from thinking of disobedience, their organs are barred from committing sins and they feel Allah's Guidance to be actually tangible. Then, they must glorify Allah for His Guidance and thank Him for His Grace. Their hearts must turn to Him in this act of obedience, as He told them at the beginning of His words on fasting: "So that you may attain taqwa." Thus, manifest becomes the Grace of Allah in this obligation which seems hard and difficult on bodies and soul. Clear also becomes its objective of training and preparing this Ummah for the greatest role which it has been called out to fulfil - struggling to establish the authority of Allah on earth.

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

## ESSENTIAL POINTS ABOUT FASTING

1. Fasting in the month of Ramadan is obligatory on every Muslim who is not a minor or insane. *(O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you .....)*
2. FASTING is abstaining from food, drink and sex from dawn (approximately 1½ hours before sunrise to sunset) WITH THE INTENTION of fasting.
3. INTENTION is an essential requirement for fasting. "I intend to fast tomorrow in the month of Ramadan." It is not essential to speak out or utter

## NG : RING EAT ROLE

difficulty. This is the significance of "putting up with" which connotes the exertion of maximum efforts. Allah grants this relief from fasting in return for feeding a needy person. Allah urges on Muslims the idea of feeding needy people either voluntarily not in atonement, or in the form of exceeding the prescribed limit of atonement. "He who does good of his own free will, goodness will accrue to him."

Then Allah urges them to choose fasting in spite of hardship (that is, apart from travelling or sickness): "But if you fast it is better for you if you but know." In this case fasting has unlimited benefits. Obvious among these are the training of the will, the strengthening of the capacity to bear hardships, and worshipping Allah in preference to having rest and comforts. All these factors are essential for Islamic upbringing. Another obvious benefit of fasting is its good effects on health, to those who are not ill, even if the fasting person feels some exertion.

Then there comes another encouragement for the healthy and settled person to fulfil this obligation, namely, the fact that it is fasting in the month of Ramadan in which the Qur'an was revealed. This means either that the commencement of Revelation was in Ramadan or that the greater part of the



these words, however, intention should be made daily preferably before the break of dawn of each day of fasting. The Prophet, Peace be upon him, said, "He who does not, before dawn, express his intention of fasting is not credited with it." (Tirmidhi, Abu Daud, Nisai & Darimi). If someone has forgotten, however, it is permissible to make intention until before noon to avoid invalidating his fast.

4. SAHOOR: Anas (R) reported Allah's messenger as saying, "Take a meal a little before dawn, for there is a blessing in taking a meal at that time." (Bukhari and Muslim). If you do not feel like eating take a little water to act on this Sunnah of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and share the blessings. The Prophet, peace be upon him, in another tradition is reported having said, "when anyone of you hears the summons to prayers while he has a vessel in his hand, he should not lay it down till he finishes his drink (Abu Huraira: Abu Daud transmitted)

5. BREAKING FAST: When the sun has set, break the fast with the following words:-

*(O'Allah I keep fast for Your sake and believed in You and put in You my trust and break my fast with food "provided by You.")*

Muadh B. Zuhra reported that when the Prophet broke his fast he said, "(O Allah, for Thee I have fasted and with Thy provision I have broken the fast." (Abu Daud). In several authentically transmitted traditions, the Prophet, peace be upon him, has emphasized to break the fast soon after sunset and avoid delay.

6. It is permissible that you do not fast in Ramadan if "you are sick or on a journey." The same permission is applicable to a woman who is pregnant or nursing if fasting would affect the health of mother or baby in some serious way. Sickness implies real pain or suffering. For journey, the distance is the same for which we offer Qasr in Salat; Three marches of 48 miles have been specified by jurists. It is permissible to break the fast on the day journey is undertaken.

7. A menstruating woman should not fast. She should complete her fast later for the number of days missed.

8. If by mistake, unmindful of fasting, one does something that makes a fast void under ordinary circumstances (eats or drinks for example), his fast is not nullified. Vomiting in any quantity, without deliberately trying to do so, does not invalidate the fast. Use of cosmetics including hair oil is permissible. Use of tooth paste is allowed but should preferably be avoided (Makrooh). Any amount of tooth paste swallowed will invalidate the fast.

9. If fast gets invalidated accidentally, for some reason on a particular day, eating and drinking subsequently are not permissible. It is essential to pass the remaining part of the day like fasting.

10. KAFFARA - If one deliberately breaks the fast, he must fast for sixty consecutive days. Any interruption, however genuine excepting menstruation will obligate one to start the 60 day cycle all over again. If someone is unable to fast for health reason, he must feed sixty persons or spend in charity an amount equivalent to feeding 60 persons.

11. FIDYA - If someone is continuously sick or too old to be able to fast, he should feed or spend in charity an amount equivalent to feeding one person a day for each day of fasting missed.

Later on, however, if he regains health and strength to be able to fast; he must complete the fast for the number of days missed.

12. ITIKAF: This is confining or secluding oneself for private devotions in a mosque starting the evening (a little before sunset) on the 20th day of Ramadan, till the sighting of the Eid moon. Going out of the mosque during itikaf is not permitted except for necessary purposes (toilet, bath or eating and drinking if food or drink is not made available within the mosque). For a woman the place of itikaf is the corner in her home which she has fixed for her daily prayers. If menstruation begins, itikaf should be abandoned. Aisha reported that the Prophet, peace be upon him, used to engage in private devotions in the mosque during the last ten nights of Ramadan till Allah took him, and then his wives followed this practice after his death (Bukhari and Muslim).

14. LAILAT AL-QADR: This is the Night of Power; a night better than a thousand months (Sura Qadr). About it our Prophet, peace be upon him, as reported by Aisha (R) said, "Seek Lailat al-Qadr on an odd number night among the last ten in Ramadan" (Bukhari).

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## The Moon for Ramadan and Eid

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In the Islamic Calendar, the commencement of the lunar month is decided by the condition that the moon should be visible to the eye. There are two main criteria for the visibility of the moon.

- (i) The moon should set after the sunset
- and (ii) The moon should be old enough to be sufficiently bright to be visible to the eye.

It is worthwhile to examine the suggestion by some that the lunar month should commence at the time of the birth of the New Moon.

The New Moon is strictly defined as the situation when the sun, the moon and the earth are exactly in line with each other. In this case it is impossible to observe the moon as it appears as a dark disc.

One could argue that since the timing of the New Moon is precisely calculated in advance, the New Moon might be adopted as the criterion for the onsetting of the lunar month. There are, however, valid reasons for retaining the traditional criterion of the visibility of the crescent. The first is the requirement of both Qur'an and the Sunnah in this regard. The other deals with the time of the birth of

## BEWARE OF USURY!

Usury is lending money and charging an interest rate, usually high. It is something that used to be and still is in use all over the world. Islam has prohibited such a practice, since many people can stand to be hurt, especially those who can least afford it. Islam discourages he who wants to capitalize on others and he who makes his money without working for it.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

*"Those who devour usury will not stand except as stands someone whom the evil one has caused him a touch of madness..."*  
Qur'an : 2-275

*"O you who believe! Fear Allah, and give up what remains of your demand for usury, if you are indeed Believers."*

*Qur'an : 2-278*

*"God will deprive usury of all blessings, but will increase*

*for deeds of charity for He loves not those who are ungrateful and wicked..."*  
*Qur'an : 2-276*

So the practice of usury is condemned, and Allah has deprived His blessings on such undertakings.

Muhammad, peace be upon him, said:

*"The taker of usury and the giver of it, and the writer of its papers and the witness to it, are equal in sin."*

*"A time will come over people when none will remain who will not devour usury. If he does not devour it, its vapour will overtake him."*

Charging a high rate of interest will make it very expensive for the very one who needs the money badly. Such a person is usually needy already.

the New Moon. The latter can happen any time during the twenty-four hours of the day and it is difficult to assign a fixed interval between the moment of the birth of the New Moon and the start of the first day of the Islamic Lunar month and an ambiguity persists in ascertaining the latter. On the other hand, the crescent is always seen just a short while after the sunset and the next day is then the first day of the Islamic Lunar Month.

Moreover, since the New Moon cannot at all be seen, one has to entirely rely on the calculations to ascertain its onsetting; thus implying the necessity of a centralised decision-making authority and a comprehensive network of communications down to the remotest village. Although the same holds true for relying on the calculations of the timings of rising and setting phenomena, the latter, however, are subject to visual verification by even remotest localities. In the case of failure of communications, the visual observation is the sole guide.

In certain climatic conditions, the visual observation of the crescent is very unreliable, if not impossible. The only other alternative is to

have the knowledge of the timings when the moon should be visible if the weather conditions permit.

The moon should be watched on the 29th of Shaaban; if it is seen, Ramadan should start: otherwise Shaaban should be completed for 30 days. One should note that there is no necessity to see it on 30th Shaaban. Even if it is impossible to be seen, Ramadan should start.

The Prophet Muhammad, Peace be upon him, said: "Calculate Shaaban in order to start the fast precisely." This suggests a very simple and elementary way of starting fasting by watching Shaaban (continuously, probably) to know its age precisely. One can judge it well with the naked eyes at the middle of the month by observing the full moon.

The maximum difference then between any two persons over the world will be only one day. Doing this, the difference in starting fasting will be, at the most, one day and not more.

Hence all are asked to watch the moon of Shaaban for precise starting of Ramadan as the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, ordered.

If usury is allowed, it will help keep the needy in poor condition and it will help those who have the money, to become richer. Thus, through usury, the rich will become richer, and the poor will become poorer. Islam encourages better distribution of wealth, that is why Islam is against usury.

In this country there are many loan institutions that live on usury and we better be careful.

### A GOOD MUSLIM WILL REMEMBER

1. Usury is forbidden (Haram).
2. Usury makes the poor poorer and the rich richer.
3. Allah will deprive the usurer from His blessings.
4. It certainly is better to lend your friend the money without charging him any interest.

The Believers are those who spend in the way of Allah of what He has given them in the form of wealth, life, health, knowledge, experience and so on.



## **COMMENT**

# **CAPITAL PUNISHMENT**

## **To Abolish or Retain!**

What makes a person kill another human-being? Is it because of some mental illness or social injustices in the community or succumbing to the evil temptations of the devil? What-ever it may be, should his life be forfeited or not? Should the means taken against him solely be one of punishment or should it also be a deterrent for potential murderers? These are some of the points raised in discussing the topic in the air these days — 'Capital Punishment' — to Abolish or Retain!

The twelve man committee for the Abolition of the Death Penalty has intensified its campaign and has gone so far as to open a register calling on the public to sign it in favour of its stand. The committee summarised the decisions of a one-day conference held by the Caribbean Conference of Churches and the Trinidad and Tobago Commission of Human Rights.

Two of the points decided on were "That the death penalty is cruel and inhumane" and "that it is a violation of the sacredness of human life." They fail to realise that it is much more cruel, inhumane and violent for a murderer to lie in wait, ambush, assault and take the life of another human being. Also that one who kills someone wilfully commits a disgraceful act. It goes without saying, that it is a very grave sin. God has given us lives to preserve and to respect, not to take unjustly. To say that no man must die even if he commits murder is to make no distinction between depravity and decency. God said, "...if any person killed another person (unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land) it would be as if he killed the whole people." Qur'an — 5:35.

To say that "there is no satisfactory evidence to prove that Capital Punishment acts as a deterrent" is misleading. In the U.S.A. "In the first three years of the 60's, 145 persons were executed. During these same three years the number of people who died violently at the hands of criminals actually declined and the

murder rate per 100,000 population also declined. Beginning in 1963 the number of legal executions began to drop, until in 1968 there was none at all. In each of those years murders increased sharply both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the population." (Al-Islam)

Also for Capital Punishment to have maximum value as a deterrent a murderer sentenced should be promptly and publicly executed. By having the public witness the punishment, potential murderers would see clearly the gravity of the consequences and restrain themselves.

To say that — "The administration is capable of error and that the death penalty can render irretrievable miscarriage of justice" — should not be a reason to abolish it as there is no guarantee that innocent people wouldn't be penalised with life imprisonment or other forms of punishment. This point raised by the

committee emphasises that the administration should realise that there is need to improve its methods of dealing with convicted persons. What happens now is that the murderer's destiny lies in the ability or inability of his defence attorney. Actually it should be on the extent of his responsibility and the evidence available. All evidence should be examined and re-examined and all efforts for justice and certainly exhausted before sentence is pronounced.

To say that — "The Death Penalty .... does create unavoidable hardships and suffering for the family of the executed persons" — could be true at present but if the murderers think of the victims' families, then their own families wouldn't end up in such a plight. Actually people in need of assistance are the responsibility of the State and the wealthy and they should help the needy families.

One wonders what these same people who are calling for the Abolition of Capital Punishment, would do if someone murdered their offspring or a relative. The greatest gift we have on earth is the honour of being created and being alive and the greatest disgrace is to destroy a human life by committing murder.

## **ANTI - CORRUPTION DRIVE**

## **Questions Unanswered!**

The much publicised Government 'Anti-Corruption Drive' has been greeted with mixed reactions from the general public. Some claim that this is long overdue since this cancerous disease of corruption has undoubtedly grown out of proportion.

Others claim that this Drive is only a 'sham' created to deceive the people, to justify the appointment of the Attorney General and prove the validity and effectiveness of the present regime for so far only 'bait' has been caught while 'big fishes' remain free.

However, in the midst of all the publicity and furore much has remained unmasked and unanswered. For example—

What is the Government's conception of corruption? Is it limited solely to stealing and bribery or does it also include fraud, deception, distortion of facts, slander, pornography, prostitution, black marketing, homo sexuality, lesbianism etc.?

What is the duration of the present Anti-Corruption Drive? Is it timebound or is it to become a permanent part of Government's Policy that in order to secure rights, order and justice, all elements of corruption must be eradicated?

How does the Government intend to eradicate corruption? Is it to be attained solely by legislation and prosecution or are there preliminary measures involved? If so, what are the preliminary measures?

Is mere fining a strong enough deterrent against corruption or are there sterner penalties involved?

Has the Government undertaken any investigation and research in order to discover the root cause of Corruption so that it can effectively deal with this problem?

What machinery has the Government established in order to deal with the wide problem of Corruption? Can we sincerely expect that justice will be meted out seeing that according to the De

Labastide report, some Dispensers of Justice' are themselves corrupted?

What has the Government achieved so far since the "Anti-Corruption Drive" has been initiated?

These are some of the questions that are provoking the minds of the people. It is only natural that their demands are answered promptly.

## LETTERS

### Muslims in Dominica

Dear Brother,

Assalaamu Alaikum Wa Rahmatullah.

All praise is due to Allah and Allah's peace and blessings be on His noble Prophet Muhammad, Peace be upon him, and on the true believers.

I received your letter some time ago, but could not reply because of pressure of school work (end of year exams). It is good to see that certain groups of Muslims still have the propagation of Islam at heart. We here in Dominica, have appreciated the monthly copies of the Muslim Standard: Jaza Kallahu Khairan.

Since the introduction of Islam here about 2 years ago, about eighteen brothers and sisters have embraced and re-entered the fold of Islam. But since then, a few brothers have had to seek sustenance elsewhere and have gone to the French islands, Barbados and England.

This is due to the economic depression affecting the island. The four sisters who have embraced are all married (Alhamdulillah). The community however has from the beginning been a poor one. Only two of us have a steady means of income, the others mainly dealing with subsistence agriculture. Presently, we have no established place of worship in the town. This has seriously kept back the propagation of Islam. Many times, in order to read our Fajr and Isha Salat in Jamaat, we had to pray on stones. But we always get consolation from the fact that the Sahabahs, May Allah bless them, went through more than that and we know that Allah's help is always near.

One of the priorities of the community here, therefore, is an established place of worship, where we can say our Salat in Jamaat and hold Jumua prayers and where any visiting Muslims can stay. At present, this is beyond our means.

The community also needs a recognised man of religion. We are aware that a scholar is a fard (compulsory) in a community. So many questions are left unanswered. Some brothers have expressed the desire to study Islam, but all areas of checking on scholarships have ended in frustration. The most help we have received so far from other communities is in the area of literature (Alhamdulillah). But we need more than books. It is really disheartening to see the desbelievers helping their poorer communities so much and the Muslims (the upholders of Allah's religion) check little or no interest in each other.

Still we continue to strive in deen (Allah's way). One of our brothers has memorised over 40 Surahs of the Qur'an already (Subhanallah). It would be good if he could go and study Islam. We would like some information about the conference of the World Muslim League in Trinidad and the prospects of our attendance at this conference. Please let us know as soon as possible. Please convey our Salaams to the brothers associated with the Islamic Trust.

May Allah grant us the strength to help each other in establishing His deen.

Yours in Islam,  
Sulaiman Abdus Sabur,  
for Muslim Community,  
Dominica.

The Editorial Committee of the Muslim Standard would like to see more persons writing and making use themselves of the columns of the paper. A person may choose to send a letter for publication or an item of news, he or she may deal with aspects of Trinidad and West Indian life or anything of interest and importance to Muslims in particular and the wider society and the Islamization process in general. That should give ample scope!

The next issue of the Muslim Standard  
will be published for Eid-ul-Fitr.

In these times  
people must have standards

THE BEST STANDARD  
THE MUSLIM STANDARD

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## RIGHTEOUS CONDUCT

Whatever is given to you (here) is (only) a convenience of this life. But that which is with Allah is better and more lasting.

(IT IS)

- \* For those who believe and put their trust in their Lord;
- \* Those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, when they are angry even then forgive;
- \* Those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer;
- \* Who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation;
- \* Who spend out of what We bestow on them for sustenance;
- \* And those who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves.

The recompense for an injury is an injury equal to it (in degree), but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah, for Allah loves not those who do wrong. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong (done) to them, against such (persons) there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress men with wrong doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice. For such (oppressors and transgressors) there will be a penalty grievous. But if any show patience and forgive, that would truly be an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs

*Qur'an (42:36-43)*

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