

Challenges
of the

CONTEMPORARY MUSLIMS

*An Exposition on their Nature,
Effects and Solutions*

SAHAABAH
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**Hauwa Bako &
Abu Bilaal Abdulrazag bn Bello**



IN THE NAME OF ALLÂH
THE ENTIRELY MERCIFUL, THE ESPECIALLY MERCIFUL



CHALLENGES
Of The
CONTEMPORARY MUSLIMS

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Hauwa Bako
and
Abu Bilaal Abdulrazaq bn Bello bn Oare

Reviewed by
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To our late parents:

Zam'atu A. Bako
and
Mariam A. Saliu

"O Allâh, forgive and have mercy upon them, excuse them and pardon them, and make honourable their reception.

Expand their entry, and cleanse them with water, snow and hail, and purify them of their sins as a white robe is purified of filth.

Exchange their homes for better homes, and their families for better families, and their spouses for better spouses.

Admit them into the Garden, protect them from the punishment of the grave and the torment of the Fire."

O Allâh, Your servants and the children of Your maidservant are in need of Your mercy and You are in no need of their punishment.

If they were righteous then increase their reward, and if they were sinful then overlook their sins."

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All praise is due to Allâh, the Uncaused Cause of all that exist. We acknowledge His profound grace upon us for giving us the enablement to synergize and co-author this book. We cannot thank or praise Him enough; He is as He has praised Himself.

As the Prophet, blessings and peace of Allâh be upon him says:

﴿He who does not show gratitude to men does not show gratitude to Allâh.﴾¹

Therefore, we want to seize this propitious medium to express our heartfelt gratitude to all those who contributed in one way or the other, moral or financial, to the successful completion of this book.

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¹ Abu Dawud & others

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May Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) ceaselessly shower His mercy on us all and establish our hearts and feet firm on the path of True Guidance. And may He illuminate the lives of the Muslims with this humble effort and keep our intentions for writing this book pure and sincere till the end of time.

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Foreword

By Ustadh Nurudeen Asunogie

Religion ought to reconcile man with his Maker. However, man seems to be basking in the opportunistic employment of religion for the gratification of hoggish proclivity. Perhaps ignorance, reinforced by the pursuit of vanity, has made him behave this way. The implications of this, however, are legion, but suffice to say that it has made us implacable adversaries of ourselves. Man, regardless of what his physical advancement may seem, is a pathologically miserable being. His pursuit of illusion at the expense of reality has made matters all the more convoluted for him. Man, indeed, is at a precipice.

In this book, the authors have demonstrated a profound appreciation for the very vexed issues that have held man manacled. They have brought to the fore that misunderstanding of Islâm and the principles that drive it are responsible for our present untoward state of affairs. To address this serious cancer, the authors discussed a number of burning issues. The treatment of our children was discussed in very deep details. The family, which remains the nucleus of our society, has unfortunately received the most barren and lame attention from us. The thinking today is that if you take the kids to the most expensive schools, get them raiments that make them imperious, and get them to drive to school in the biggest of cars from mansions and villas, then our duty towards them is discharged. How weird is this kind of thinking! Our kids have deep knowledge of things that are vain but are ignorant of more important things. Their knowledge of Allâh is smattering, yet this fact does not trouble the parents, insofar as they pursue programmes in life from which they hope to gain status and station. Indeed, our kids are made to be disdainful of their Lord. This ugly reality has been so captured in this book.

The authors have also discussed other equally contemporary matters which points out very clearly that leadership, both of the secular and spiritual realms, has failed, and this failure has manifested itself in the

sordid manner with which we deal with ourselves today. Under the varnish of doing God's biddings, human lives are wasted with impunity.

All of these issues have been discussed by the authors in the simplest language. The work is penetrating and easy to follow. It is a product of deep research and love of the authors for Allâh and His creatures. It is therefore my pleasure to recommend this as a must read to everyone still desirous of saving humanity from destruction.

Nurudeen Danesi Asunogie

National Orientation Agency

Benin City

Nigeria

28th Rabi' Al-Thani, 1433AH (21st March, 2012)

Foreword

By Professor Abdulrazaq Kilani

The Muslim ummah globally is currently undergoing a spiritual somersault due to cultural and ideological diffusion. It is understood from cultural methodological paradigm that no group of people is immune from the other. Whenever there is a culture contact, one culture influences the other. The Muslim world which hitherto prides herself as a model for others in terms of a divinely provided creed (*'aqeedah*) is indeed struggling to get its youths on the right track of spiritual development. Many factors are indeed responsible. The dominant factor today is globalization and its attendant consequences in all spheres of human endeavour.

Man, indeed, is the most important occupant of the universe among the creatures of Allâh and he has been greatly honoured by Allâh². The life of man is an infinitesimal fraction in eternity. Man is blessed with guidance from Allâh on how to manage his affairs. The guidance from Allâh underscores the fact that mankind needs religion and religious beliefs to enable him communicate with the Almighty Creator. There is no doubt that the search for global peace and prosperity is the concern of everybody today in view of the progress made in Science and Technology, advancement in medicine, and the increase in the number of billionaires around the world.

Islâm does not cater for the individual and neglect its role in the society, and it does not separate spiritual from mundane life. Islâm, rather, confers on mankind the status of vicegerency (*Khilafah*)³, and the *Khilafah* confers social, moral and political responsibility on a Muslim to eschew evil (*munkar*) and establish goodness (*ma'ruf*) and justice

² Sûrah al-Israa (The Journey by Night) 17:70

³ Sûrah al-An'aam (The Cattle) 6:165

(*adl*). We currently face sex war in the upsurge of rape cases involving adults and children and incest is becoming a norm of regular family life in most communities due to uncontrolled exposure to internet and television movies. We are also witnessing sexual revolution in the name of gay/homosexuality, and a new definition of marriage is being advanced in most parts of the world in the name of freedom and civil union. Celibacy has brought the greatest scandal to the Catholic Church, and the Muslim institution of limited polygyny has become ‘serial monogamy’. It is becoming a norm now to celebrate marriage and within some months the same marriage is dissolved. Islâm has encouraged and praised the institution of marriage⁴ and has rejected sexual perversion that leads to corruption of the land in the name of freedom.

The youth represent an important group in any community and Islâm has also placed great emphasis on their total wellbeing. These youths are vulnerable to many challenges of growth and development. They are very desperate to know the answers to questions like “Who am I?” and “Why am I here?” Most of them favour interaction with friends and this explains why their concern about knowing the world takes priority over school or education. Most of the time, they try to establish a sense of total independence – trying many things like cultism, cigarette, alcohol, sex, partying, hanging out with friends, and they also confront hard moral and ethical questions. The Qur’ân advises everyone to make righteous companions⁵. The environment where these youths are raised focuses on individuality, fulfilling desires, enjoyment and fun. The assault on the psyche of the youths by the media and casino culture of modern time creates inferiority complex, thereby creating doubt about their faith, shame to associate with Muslims or even develop an Islâmic

⁴ See Sûrah an-Nisaa (The Women) 4:3 and Sûrah an-Noor (The Light) 24:32

⁵ Sûrah at-Tawbah (The Repentance) 9:119

identity. What should be mentioned here is that inferiority complex is self-inflicted as Roosevelt (1884-1862) said: “No one can make you feel inferior without your consent”, and in the words of Allâh in the Glorious Qur’ân: “Honour belongs to Allâh and His Messenger, and to the Believers; but the Hypocrites know not”⁶.

The challenges facing the Muslims as encapsulated in this book demonstrate that we need to address vigorously the three components of Knowledge in Islâm which are: *ta'mil* – willing submission with the heart and soul to Islâm⁷, *ta'zim* – loving regard for the greatness of Islâm, and *adaab* which means respect for Islâmic values. We must be ready to invest in human capital development by establishing foundation (*waqf*) for scholarship in all fields of human endeavour. There is no doubt that the high level of corruption in the society is pushing some overzealous youths to actions that are inimical to the welfare of the ummah. The authors of the book before us have provided in a lucid manner some of the challenges of the contemporary Muslim *ummah*. The strength of the authors in their style of writing is the avoidance of arguments and counter arguments that are discernible in most books that present such themes. I pray Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) to accept this modest effort as an act of worship.

Abdulrazaq Kilani (FCAI)

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Port Harcourt, Rivers State

1st Jummadal Ulâa, 1433AH (24th March, 2012)

⁶ Sûrah al-Munaafiqoon (The Hypocrites) 63:8

⁷ Sûrah al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:208

Preface

Writing on a topic as broad in scope and meaning as the challenges of the contemporary Muslims is in itself challenging. One is tempted to jettison the project on realization of its enormity. However, due to its importance and relevance in the present time, and bearing in mind the fact that success often comes to those who dare to act and seldom goes to the timid who are ever afraid of the consequences, we had to dare to undertake this onerous task, relying and depending solely on Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*). Our objective of writing this book is predicated upon the need to awaken the sleeping amongst the *ummah* and to alert the generality of the Muslims to the reality of the various challenges staring them in the face. The majority of these challenges are often disguised in the garbs of modernity, civilization and technological advancement; hence they may be quite obscure and unnoticeable, especially to the undiscerning and uninquiring minds.

In this book, we have tried to highlight the challenges of the present-day Muslims as well as proffer practicable solutions based on the Qur'ân and *sunnah*, and *the qiyâs* (intellectual inferences) of the erudite scholars. Where there may be difference of opinion among the scholars on a few of the issues relating to Islâmic jurisprudence, we have endeavoured to adopt the opinion which conforms most with the spirit and letter of Islâm, based on irrefutable evidences from the Qur'ân and *sunnah*, and without recourse to prejudice.

Essentially, we have dealt with the topics in this book more from a practical approach than a mere academic or theoretical approach in order to make it as result oriented as possible. Therefore, we have given logical explanations from happenings in our everyday life where necessary, using very simple, lucid and succinct terms, such that a

reader can easily read through and ingest its content with full comprehension without realizing that he or she has just cracked some of the hardest nuts in Islâm.

In all, however, we do not lay claims to perfection, for we are no better than the dust on the feet of a scholar. Therefore, for whatever shortcomings that may be contained in this work, we ask Allâh, the Forgiving and Merciful, to pardon us and make those shortcomings not have any impression in the hearts and minds of the readers, nor count against us on the Day of Judgement. And for the few things which we may have gotten right in this book, we ask Him, the bestower of bounties without measure, to bless them, make them sources of guidance to the Muslims as well as the non-Muslims, and make them count for us in manifolds on the Day of the Balanced Scale.

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12th Rabi' Al-Awwal, 1433 AH (4th February, 2012)

Introduction

﴿ In the Name of Allah, The Entirely Merciful, The Especially Merciful ﴾

The present-day believer in Islâmic monotheism is more or less similar to his forefathers. This is because of the rightful conservative nature of Islâm which is as old as man and has been in existence since creation, and which only accepts innovations and novelties only as they conform to its basic doctrines and principles.

All the prophets sent to mankind preached the same message – to renounce all false deities, to enjoin good and forbid evil, to believe in the unique oneness of Allâh, the Creator, and to submit totally to Him through prayers and other acts of worship. Before the revelation of the Qur’ân, several Holy books like the Torah (*Taurah*), Psalms (*Zabur*) and the Gospel (*Injil*) were revealed to other prophets to serve as guidance for man. The former, however, is the last and final revelation to mankind. Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta’ala*) says:

⇒ Verily, We have sent the revelation to you (O Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*)) as We sent the revelation to Nuh (Noah) and the prophets after him...﴿8﴾.

Today’s Muslims are faced with enormous challenges that are unnoticeably becoming a significant part of their lifestyle. These challenges include the spread of social vices, and the proliferation of prejudiced and deviant scholars who promote sectarianism, disunity and confusion amongst the believers, the promotion of the satanic idea of “freethinking” and exaggerated “freewill”, even among the underage – which contributes to the growth and spread of atheism, disrespect of

⁸ Sûrah an-Nisâ (The Women) 4:163

authority (religious and parental), and rebellion, to mention but a few. These ideologies are usually spread through diversions orchestrated by the enemies of the religion, using such instrumentalities as television programs, fashion, music and games; and by advancing the fear of poverty among people, which in turn encourages greed, embezzlement, selfishness and graft.

The vast majority of Muslims are being fatally overwhelmed by these challenges which have eaten deep into their hearts like a canker, to such an extent that they now welcome and adopt strange ideologies without demand for moral justification, explanation or proof. The resultant effect is the birth of an *ummah*⁹ characterized by Muslims who fall short of the true definition of a Muslim in letter and in spirit. This has led to a generational depletion in the practice of the ideals of Islâm and the rapid emergence of heretics and innovators amongst the Muslims.

⁹ Muslim nation or community

Interrelationships

The individual and society are correlates. In other words, there is no such thing as a society without individuals nor is there an individual who does not belong to a society. Therefore, every society is made up of individuals, who may either be Muslims or non-Muslims. The Glorious Qur'ân adequately addresses the way a Muslim should relate with other individuals in the society (Muslims and non-Muslims alike), as one of its central aims is to establish a viable social order on earth that will be just, egalitarian and ethically based.

Relationship with Fellow Muslims

⇒ The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: So, make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear Allâh, that ye may receive Mercy. ﴿١٠﴾¹⁰

﴿A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim. He neither oppresses him nor humiliates him nor looks down upon him... It is evil enough for a Muslim to hold his brother Muslim in contempt. All things of a Muslim are inviolable for another Muslim: his blood, his property and his honour. ¹¹﴾

¹⁰ Sûrah al-Hujurât (The Dwellings) 49:10

¹¹ Recorded by Imâm Muslim

The above Hadith¹² of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), as well as the preceding verse of the Qur'ân automatically places the responsibility of safeguarding, preserving and defending the life, wealth, faith, image and chastity of fellow believers by any means necessary on each and every Muslim. It clearly expresses the paramount right of a Muslim to love, kind and preferential treatment, as well as the sacredness of his blood, property and honour.

The Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) also said:

﴿A Muslim is one from whose hands and tongue other Muslims are safe while a *mu'min* (believer) is one with whom people trust their lives and properties. ¹³﴾

This significant connection between believers is a vital aspect of Islâm. It defines the behaviour and feelings of the Muslims towards other Muslims and their involvement with one another especially with regards to their daily interaction. According to a Hadith narrated by Anas Ibn Malik (may Allâh be pleased with him), the Messenger of Allâh (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿No one of you shall become a true believer until he desires for his brother what he desires for himself. ¹⁴﴾

As a mark of principle, the welfare of your family and neighbours, ranging from health and reputation to physical and psychological wellbeing, should always be considered. Various *ahadith* have been reported in this regard, some of which are:

¹² Hadith, here, refers to whatever is authentically transmitted from Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) of his actions, sayings, tacit approvals, or physical characteristics.

¹³ Timidhi

¹⁴ Bukhârî & Muslim

﴿Do not consider anything insignificant out of the good things, even if it is that you meet your brother with a cheerful countenance.^{15﴾}

﴿Let whosoever believes in Allâh and in the Last Day either speak good or be silent. Let whosoever believes in Allâh and the Last Day honour his neighbour. And let whosoever believes in Allâh and the Last Day honour his guest.^{16﴾}

﴿He who sleeps with full stomach while his neighbour is hungry is not one of us.﴾”

These injunctions oblige the virtues of kindness, generosity and love on the believers as necessary requirements for attaining Allâh’s compassion and His Paradise.

Relationship with the Non-Muslims

As we mentioned earlier, we live among non-Muslims and interact with them almost on a daily basis, as Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta’ala*) has not created separate worlds for Muslims and non-Muslims. Therefore, it is important for us to know and understand the nature of the Muslim/Non-Muslim relationship and its goals and guidelines, according to Islâm.

As a general principle, Muslims are expected to interact with everyone responsibly, sincerely, and meaningfully, regardless of their religious beliefs or persuasions. Islâm’s emphasis on fairness and good treatment to all human beings without discrimination is very clear. It does not

¹⁵ Muslim

¹⁶ Bukhârî & Muslim

permit injustice in the treatment of other people on the basis of religion, tribe, race, sex or nationality.

The Islâmic goal behind our relationship with the non-Muslims is to freely and clearly convey the message of Islâm to them, to ensure the freedom of religious beliefs, and to establish justice on earth within the system of Islâm. Our relationship with the non-Muslims, be it on personal or state level, should be to achieve this goal. And it is essential to know that the establishment of this goal is a divine obligation prescribed by Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) upon us, and for which He holds this *ummah* responsible and accountable. Says He, the Exalted in Might and Majesty:

⇒ Thus We have made you (Muslims), a just (and the best) nation, that you will be witnesses over mankind, and the Messenger (Muhammad) will be a witness over you... ﴿١٧﴾¹⁷

⇒ You (Muslims) are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind, you enjoin what is right, and you forbid what is wrong, and you believe in Allâh... ﴿١٨﴾¹⁸

Indeed, we the *ummah* of Muhammad are honoured by Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) by choosing us as the best and the fittest to perform this obligation.

Non-Muslims Living in an Islâmic State (*Ahl Adh-Dhimmah*)

When Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) settled down in Madinah, he succeeded to get most of its inhabitants, including Jews, Christians and pagan Arabs to enter into some form of a social treaty. And he, blessings and peace of Allâh be upon him, instructed the Muslims as follows:

¹⁷ Sûrah al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:143

¹⁸ Sûrah Aal-'Imrân (The Family of 'Imrân) 3:110

﴿Whoever hurts a non-Muslim citizen of a Muslim state hurts me, and he who hurts me annoys Allâh. ¹⁹﴾

He (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) also said:

﴿Whoever persecutes a non-Muslim citizen of a Muslim state or demands work from him beyond his capacity or takes something from him with evil intentions, I shall be a complainant against him on the day of Resurrection. ²⁰﴾

The Islâmic law guarantees freedom for the Muslims as well as for the non-Muslims and gives all citizens the fundamental human rights and considers their life and property sacred. Muslims and non-Muslims alike have the right to live in peace and harmony hence the Islâmic constitution ensures justice for all, and not for a few, selected on the basis of their religion, whatsoever.

The life of the Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) and the lives of his companions are full of great examples that promote good relationships with non-Muslims. According to the Islâmic history, Muslims have maintained good relations with non-Muslims for many centuries, dealing with them in good manners. As a result, they were able to conquer nations and lands, even without the strength of weapons and large armies. In fact, some lands were conquered without a single soldier, but by Muslim merchants who carried goods and good manners, as was the case with Indonesia and Malaysia, which boast the largest Muslim populations in the world today. By their excellent manners and impeccable disposition, they opened the minds and hearts of the people who came their way or transacted with them, and ultimately attracted them into Islâm in multitudes.

¹⁹ Al-Bukhâri

²⁰ Al-Mawardi

However, there are two broad classifications of non-Muslims according to the Qur'ân – those that are friendly and sympathetic to Islâm and the Muslims, and those that are hostile and antagonistic. The hostile ones do not want to hear anything about Islâm and they seek to stifle the Muslims and extinguish the light of Islâm. On the other hand, the friendly, even though they may not agree with the teachings of Islâm, show no hostility or hatred towards it. Some of them are sympathetic to the faith and they allow the Muslims practice their religion freely without despising or abhorring them.

Relating with the Non-Muslims who are Friendly

As for the non-Muslims who are friendly and the sympathetic, Islâm enjoins us to treat them with kindness and peacefully coexist with them, even though they differ with us on the fundamentals of our religion. We are allowed to greet them, shake hands with them, hug them, exchange visits with them in their homes and places of worship (for the sake of *da'wah* but not for participating in their religious rights like service of songs for the dead, carols, or marriage ceremonies), and welcome them in our homes and our Mosques. Perchance, they may see the beauty of Islâm in our attitude, character and disposition, and be encouraged to embrace our faith. Almighty Allâh says in the Glorious Qur'ân as regards them:

⇒ Allâh does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion nor drove you out of your homes. Verily, Allâh loves those who deal with equity. ﴿٢١﴾

This verse of the Qur'ân clearly implies that peace, tolerance, compassion, and good relationships are the normal, and original state between Muslims and Non-Muslims. Animosity and war, on the other

²¹ Sûrah al-Mumtahanah (The Woman to be examined) 60:8

hand, are the exceptions to this original state. When these exceptions do not exist, then what is expected is the original state of peaceful coexistence, based upon the best of morals and justice.

The great scholar from Egypt Sayyid Qutb (*rahimahu-llâh*), in explaining this verse in his famous exegesis of the Qur'ân titled "*Fee thilil-Qur'ân* (In the shade of the Qur'ân)", says:

"Islâm is a *Dîn* of peace and a conviction of love. It is a system that has compassion to all people. It gathers all people (Muslims and non-Muslims) under the banner of Allâh like brethren in accord and love. There is no obstacle that prevents this from happening except an aggression from its enemies against it and its people. If those enemies show peace, then Islâm does not want animosity or to start it. Even when the enemies still show animosity, Islâm always looks for ways to bring the relationship to normalcy through great conduct and justice."

He continues:

"Islâm makes peace as the normal relationship between Muslims and Non-Muslims. This relationship is not distracted except with an aggression that must be dealt with, a breaching of truce, an obstacle in the face of delivering the message of Islâm, shackling the freedom of religion. Other than that, the relationship is a relationship of peace, love, and justice for all people."²²

Caution!

In relating with the non-Muslims, we must not be pleased with their disbelief nor make them pleased with it either. That we are allowed to peacefully coexist with them does not mean they are rightly guided; therefore, we must not exert any effort to make them satisfied with their

²² In the Shade of The Qur'ân, 6:3544

disbelief nor spare any effort to help them come out of their disbelief. Even as we are commanded to be just with them, we must not give them support against a Muslim when that is done unjustly. We must not imitate them in their rituals, or in what is considered specifically from their own characteristics like clothing, hairdos, etc..., as the Prophet (*sall-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿Whoever imitates a people is one of them﴾²³

We must not congratulate them on their festive holidays or their rituals as that is tantamount to giving credence and acceptance to their practices, and we must not participate or give them gifts on such days.

Finally, we must not partake in sinful acts with them, nor attend any gathering or event with them where there is blasphemy against Allāh, His Prophet, or His Book.

We conclude by reiterating that our interaction with the non-Muslims is expected to afford them the opportunity of experiencing the pristine purity of Islām and its beautiful teachings like love, selflessness, trustworthiness, kindness, unmatched generosity, sincere devotion to worship, etc. Almighty Allāh says:

⇒ Invite to the way of your Lord (i.e., Islām) with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better. ﴿﴾²⁴

Relating with Non-Muslims Who are Hostile

²³ Narrated by Abu Dawood, 3512; Classified as saheeh by al-Albaani.

²⁴ Sûrah an-Nahl (The Bees) 16:125

As for the non-Muslims who are hostile to Islâm and the Muslims, they show disdain to Allâh, His Messengers and His book, therefore we are not allowed to befriend them nor have any intimate relationship with them. About them, Almighty Allâh says:

⇒ It is only as regards those who fought against you on account of religion, and have driven you out of your homes, and helped to drive you out, that Allâh forbids you to befriend them. And whosoever will befriend them, then such are the *Zâlimûn* (wrong doers – those who disobey Allâh). ﴿٢٥﴾

And in another chapter of the Qur'ân He (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) says:

⇒ O you who believe! Take not as (your) *Bitânah* (advisors, consultants, protectors, helpers, friends) those outside your religion since they will not fail to do their best to corrupt you. They desire to harm you severely. Hatred has already appeared from their mouths, but what their breasts conceal is far worse. Indeed, We have made plain to you the Ayât (proofs, verses, evidences) if you understand. ﴿٢٦﴾

It is clear from the above verses that the hostile non-Muslims are characterized by enmity or ill-will towards the Muslims. Therefore, befriending them would mean placing oneself in the line of fire or exposing oneself to danger. It would also mean taking the enemies of Allâh as allies, whereas Allâh says:

⇒ O you who believe! Take not My enemies and your enemies as friends, showing affection towards them, while they have disbelieved in what has come to you of the truth, and have driven out the Messenger (Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*)) and yourselves (from your homeland) because you believe in Allâh,

²⁵ Sûrah al-Mumtahanah (The Woman to be examined) 60:9

²⁶ Sûrah Âl-'Imrân - (The Family of 'Imrân) 3:118

your Lord! ...And whosoever of you (Muslims) does that, then indeed he has gone (far) astray from the Straight Path. ﴿٢٧﴾

Replying the Greetings of the Non-Muslims

In our relationship with the non-Muslims, sometimes we find them greeting us with the Islâmic greeting, i.e., by saying *assalâm alaykum* (peace be unto you). This makes many Muslims uncomfortable and reluctant to reply to their greetings. However, experience shows that such reaction does Islâm a great disservice, as it paints an unfriendly image of the Muslims and puts off those who have soft spot for the religion.

We learn from the Qur'ân, the teachings of our noble Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), and the classical works of our pious scholars that it is permissible for a Muslim to greet anyone with the greeting of Islâm regardless of his religion, race, or ethnicity. And that if a non-Muslim greets a Muslim using the greeting of Islâm (*as-salâmu 'alaykum*), then he is required to reply to the greeting.

To clarify this issue, we quote here a fairly comprehensive reply of Sheikh Faysal Mawlawi, deputy chairman of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, on the question of the permissibility of responding to the non-Muslims in like manner when they greet the Muslims in the Islâmic way:

“1. It is possible for a non-Muslim to use the greeting *as-salâmu 'alaykum wa rahmatu-llâhi wa barakâtuh*, but he or she would not receive a reward for it as a Muslim would. This is because this greeting is part of Prophet Muhammad's *Sunnah* in which non-Muslims do not believe.

²⁷ Sûrah al-Mumtahanah (The Woman to be examined) 60:1

2. It is permissible for a Muslim to greet a non-Muslim using the word *salâm* (peace). This view has been attributed to Ibn `Abbas, Ibn Mas`ud, Ibn Muhayriz, `Umar Ibn `Abd Al-`Aziz, Sufyan Ibn `Uyaynah, Ash-Shu`abi, Al-Awza`i, and At-Tabari. Moreover, this opinion was chosen by Rashid Rida in his *Tafsir Al-Manar* and Ash-Shanqiti in his *Adwaa' Al-Bayan*.

We also support this view, on the basis of the following Qur'ânic verses that adopt and recommend the greeting of *salâm* (peace) without restriction:

⇒ O you who believe, enter not houses other than your own without first announcing your presence and invoking peace upon the folk thereof. ﴿٢٨﴾²⁸

⇒ And when they hear Al-Laghw (dirty, false, evil vain talk), they withdraw from it and say: "To us our deeds, and to you your deeds. Peace be to you. We seek not (the way of) the ignorant". ﴿٢٩﴾²⁹

⇒ When the foolish address them, they answer, "Peace". ﴿٣٠﴾³⁰

⇒ And he (Prophet Muhammad) says, "O my Lord! Lo! Those are a folk who believe not." Then bear with them (O Muhammad) and say, "Peace." But they will come to know. ﴿٣١﴾³¹

⇒ He [Prophet Ibrahim] said, "Peace be unto you! I shall ask forgiveness of my Lord for you." Lo! He is ever gracious unto me. ﴿٣٢﴾³²

²⁸ Sûrah an-Nûr (The Light) 24:27

²⁹ Sûrah al-Qasas (The Narration) 28:55

³⁰ Sûrah al-Furqân (The Criterion) 25:63

³¹ Sûrah az-Zukhruf (The Gold Adornments) 43:88-89

³² Sûrah Maryam (Mary (Mother of Jesus)) 19:47

Furthermore, there are a number of authentic *ahadith* that also recommend peace without restriction; that is to say, they recommend it toward all people (Muslims and non-Muslims alike). The Prophet, peace and blessings of Allâh be upon him, said:

﴿Spread peace.》³³

﴿Greet those whom you know and those whom you do not know.》³⁴

﴿When Allâh created Adam, He said (to Adam), 'Go and greet that group of angels sitting there and listen to what they will say in reply to you, for that will be your greeting and the greeting of your offspring.' Adam (went and) said, 'As-salâmu `alaykum (peace be upon you).' They replied, 'As-salâmu `alayka wa rahmatullâh (peace and Allâh's mercy be on you).'》³⁵

However, there is another reliable Hadith on which the majority of scholars depend in supporting a different viewpoint: That it is legally detestable (*makruh*) or even prohibited (*haram*) for a Muslim to greet a non-Muslim with "As-salâmu `alaykum." In this Hadith, the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu `alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿Do not initiate (greeting) Jews and Christians with *salâm*.》³⁶

This Hadith was connected to an existing state of war at the time. This can be supported by other versions of the Hadith, which are

³³ At-Tirmidhi, who said it is *hasan sahih* (agreeable and authentic) and by Ibn Hibban in his *Sahih*.

³⁴ Al-Bukhâri and Muslim

³⁵ Al-Bukhâri and Muslim

³⁶ Muslim

also authentic, such as the version according to which the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿We are going early (in the morning) to (fight) Jews, so do not start (greeting) them.﴾³⁷

That was on the occasion when the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allâh be upon him) invaded Banu Qurayzah (who were Jews).

According to another version narrated by Ahmad, the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿Verily, I shall leave tomorrow to (fight) Jews, so do not start (greeting) them.﴾³⁸

Moreover, in his book, *Fath Al-Bari*, Al-'Asqalani quoted a narration of Al-Bukhâri (recorded in Al-Bukhâri's *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*) and which was also narrated by An-Nasâ'i. It reads: The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

﴿Verily, I shall leave tomorrow to (fight) the Jews, so do not start (greeting) them with *salâm*.﴾

The difference between the two versions is "the" before "Jews" in the second one.

This opinion, which is adopted by a large number of scholars, and which says that it is permissible to greet a non-Muslim using the word '*salâm*' (or its translation), is confirmed for those who live outside Islâmic lands but in countries which are in a state of peace (with Muslims).

³⁷ Narrated by Ahmad and At-Tabarani with a trustworthy chain of narrators

³⁸ This version is authentic, as mentioned in *Al-Fath Ar-Rabbani*.

It can be regarded as a form of covenant with the people with whom a Muslim lives whether he or she is a citizen or only a resident. This is because the Muslim, in this case, is supposed to practice *da`wah* with them (as every Muslim should do), and initiating a greeting is one of the morals of preachers.

3. If, however, a non-Muslim greets a Muslim with the word ‘*salâm*’ (or its translation - peace), it becomes necessary to answer him, because Almighty Allâh says:

⇒ When you are greeted with a greeting, greet in return with what is better than it, or (at least) return it equally. ﴿٣٩﴾

Note that the command in the above verse is general (i.e., it does not pertain only to the Muslims). In it we are taught that it is “recommended” to give a “better” reply when greeted, and that it is “obligatory” to at least “return” it (by reciprocating with an equal greeting), but not less. Returning a greeting requires an equal greeting, as maintained by Ibn Al-Qayyim in ‘*Ahkam Ahl Adh-Dhimma*’.”

With this brighter understanding on the Islâmic position of greeting or replying to the greeting of a non-Muslim, we do hope that more brothers and sisters will be enlightened and better equipped for propagating Islâm. Further readings can be done on this all-important subject in the books of *Tafsir* (exegesis of the Qur’ân) where one can find elaborated explanations and commentaries on the verses mentioned above, especially Al-Qurtubi’s *Tafsir* and Rashid Rida’s *Al-Manar*. One may also refer to books containing commentaries on Hadiths, especially: *Fath Al-Bari*, which explains Sahih Al-Bukhâri, An-Nawawi’s Commentaries on Sahih Muslim, *Al-Fath Ar-Rabbani*

³⁹ Sûrah an-Nisâ (The Women) 4:86.

It should be noted that Allâh’s command in this verse is general, not specific to the Muslims. Therefore, it applies to the Muslims as well as the non-Muslims.

which explains Imâm Ahmad's *Musnad*, and Ibn Al-Qayyim's *Ahkam Ahl Adh-Dhimmah*.

Denying the Non-Muslims Access to the Qur'ân

In the course of our interactions and social relations with the non-Muslims, they get inquisitive and ask for copies of the Qur'ân to read, to criticise, or to just possess. However, the reaction of the Muslims to such requests is usually a blunt refusal, either on the basis that they are impure or that it is prohibited to allow non-Muslims touch the Qur'ân, even when it is clear that their guidance is intended thereof, and one is reasonably confident that they will not disrespect it. This kind of behaviour is founded on sheer ignorance, and rather than preserve the sanctity of the Qur'ân, it does Islâm a great disservice. Also, the way and manner with which the Muslims prevent the non-Muslims from having access to copies of the Qur'ân makes them see Islâm as a secrete cult of some sort that has so much to hide from the general public.

On the contrary, the Qur'ân was revealed for the Muslims as well as the non-Muslims, and there abound numerous evidences from both the Qur'ân itself and the *ahadith* that prove the permissibility of non-Muslims handling copies of the Qur'ân. One of such evidences is found in the second chapter of the Qur'ân, wherein Allâh says:

⇒ The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur'ân, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the Criterion (between right and wrong). ﴿٤٠﴾

If the Muslims refuse the non-Muslims to read the Qur'ân, then how can they possibly access the message Allâh has for them as contained therein?

⁴⁰ Sûrah al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:185

Regarding making ablution a prerequisite for touching the Qur'ân, there are various schools of thought. Some disallow touching the Qur'ân without ablution, some allow it unconditionally, and some others allow it but with conditions. Those who disallow touching the Qur'ân without ablution usually cite the verse in Sûrah Waqî'ah wherein Allâh says:

⇒ This is indeed an honourable recitation (the Noble Qur'ân). In a Book well-guarded (with Allâh in the heaven, i.e., *Al-Lauh Al-Mahfûz*). Which (that Book with Allâh) none can touch but the purified. ﴿٤١﴾

However, the 'purified' mentioned in this verse does not refer to the Muslims, who as human beings are generally fallible and amongst whom there are some hypocrites, but the Angels. In Imâm ibn Katheer's exegesis of the Qur'ân, he stated:

"Al-'Awfî reported from Ibn 'Abbas about the verse, "Which none touches but the pure ones." that 'the pure ones' means the angels. Ibn Jarir narrated from Qatadah about the verse: "None can touch it, with Allâh, except the pure ones". (saying) "However, in this life, the impure Zoroastrian and the filthy hypocrites touch it." And Abu Al-'Aliyah said about the verse: "It does not refer to you, because you are sinners! ""⁴²

Therefore, to prohibit touching of the Qur'ân without ablution on the strength of this verse is a misinterpretation.

One other evidence that is often put forward by those who are proponents of restricting the non-Muslims from handling the Qur'ân is that Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'âla*) described them as impure in the following verse:

⁴¹ Sûrah al-Waqî'ah (The Event) 56: 77-80

⁴² *Tafsîr* Ibn katheer

⇒ Verily, the *Mushrikûn* (polytheists, pagans, idolaters, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allâh and in the Message of Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu alayhi wa sallam*)) are *Najasun* (impure). ﴿٥٣﴾⁴³

And they also refer to an incident in which Fatima, the sister of 'Umar (Allâh be pleased with them both) instructed him (Umar) to purify himself before she would allow him to touch the sheets that had portions of the Qur'ân inscribed upon them.

We refute them by saying that impurity is of two types - spiritual and physical. Spiritual impurity has to do with the disbelief in Allâh's Oneness and in His Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*); while physical impurity refers to the lack of personal hygiene (i.e., being filthy as regards urine, stools, blood, etc.). But the word "*Najas*" is used only for those persons who have spiritual impurity.

And as for Fatima's action, she was at that time a new revert to Islâm, learning the Qur'ân in hiding. She may not have been as vast in the sciences of Islâmîc jurisprudence at that time; therefore, deriving an Islâmîc ruling from her action may not be valid. More so, merely performing ablution does not turn a polytheist into a Muslim nor does it purify him. So, her insistence on having Umar perform ablution before touching the sheets containing the verses of the Qur'ân did not really make him satisfy the condition of purity which she intended.

According to the great scholar, Ibn Hazm, there is no prerequisite for touching the Qur'ân. That is to say, one does not have to be a Muslim, an Arab, or in a state of ablution, before he is permitted to touch the Qur'ân. However, all scholars agree that being in a state of ablution is preferable, as a mark of reverence for the Qur'ân.

⁴³ Sûrah at-Tawbah (The Repentance) 9:28

Moreover, a major argument we put forward to support the permissibility of the non-Muslims to handle the Qur'ân is that Allâh challenges them (the non-Muslims) with regards to the authenticity of the Qur'ân. For example, Allâh says:

⇒ Do they not ponder upon the Qur'ân carefully? Had it been from other than Allâh, they would surely have found therein many a contradiction. ﴿٤٤﴾

This challenge is given to those who do not believe in the Qur'ân (the non-Muslims); to study the book carefully and realize that it contains no discrepancy or contradiction – a sure proof that it could not have emanated from any one than Allâh, the Infallible. The question now is: “How does a non-Muslim study the Qur'ân to ponder upon it without handling or touching it?” Allâh could not have challenged the non-Muslims to ponder upon the Qur'ân and see that there are no contradictions therein if it was prohibited for them to touch it. The similitude of such challenge would have been like that of a man who challenges another man to search his house for any incriminating evidence, while the latter is prohibited from entering his house or does not have access to it.

Further evidence is that Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allâh be upon him, wrote letters containing verses of the Qur'ân to non-Muslims, inviting them to accept Islâm for their salvation. It is important to remind ourselves here that even a single verse of the Qur'ân is considered Qur'ân – it does not become less sacrosanct or sanctified. Therefore, for the Prophet to have used verses of the Qur'ân in his letters to the non-Muslims, then it means it is permissible for them to handle the Qur'ân. It is, however, not out of place to advice them to handle it with respect. But if we prevent them altogether from having access to Allâh's words, then surely Allâh will question us about it on the day of Reckoning.

⁴⁴ Sûrah an-Nisâ (The Women) 4:82

Preventing the Non-Muslims from Visiting our Places of Worship

There is a growing inquiry and curiosity among the non-Muslims about what goes on in the Mosque and how the Muslims worship. However, over the years, our Mosques have been literally made into no go areas for the non-Muslims, despite the fact that there is not a single textual evidence or inference from the Qur'ân and *sunnah* that prohibit non-Muslims from entering the Mosques.

Just like they are allowed to touch our Holy Book, the Qur'ân, the non-Muslims are allowed to enter the Mosques, as long as their entering is justifiable and causes no threat or harm to the Muslims. This presents an excellent avenue and means of exposing them to the teachings and practices of Islâm, and to explain thoroughly to them everything about Islâm, Muslims, Islâmic history, culture and civilization. This is especially important in this age when the majority of the non-Muslims know very little or nothing about the teachings of Islâm, other than the things they heard and read from the antagonists of the religion.

Allâh, the Almighty and All-Wise, says:

⇒ If one amongst the Pagans ask thee for asylum, grant it to him, so that he may hear the word of Allâh, and then escort him to where he can be secure. That is because they are men without knowledge. ﴿٤٥﴾

We can reasonably infer from this verse that when, for legitimate purposes, non-Muslims visit Muslims and Muslim lands, both in times of war and peace, they are to be granted absolute protection and be treated with respect. At the same time, they are to be exposed to the truth and light of Islâm as much as possible, and to be provided with

⁴⁵ Sûrah at-Tawbah (The Repentance) 9:6

enough opportunities to hear, understand and witness the powerful impact of the Word of Allâh (the Qur'ân) on the lives of the Muslims.

Furthermore, it provides a great opportunity of elucidating and dispelling the numerous misconceptions and misinterpretations about Islâm and Muslims. This is against the backdrop of the fact that there is an organized effort to demonize and spread misinformation about Islâm and Muslims, and to stereotype them as everything but good. For instance, some of the non-Muslims have been brain-washed and programmed from childhood to believe that Muslims are anti-Christ, that we worship Prophet Muhammad, and that we are diabolic. Some have even been told worse things like: Muslims drink blood, bow to the effigy of Muhammad as Catholics bow to the effigy of Mary, and many other unthinkable things. Therefore, allowing them access to our places of worship to see for themselves our practices will go a long way to disabuse their minds against us and our religion. After all, seeing, they say, is believing.

Our Mosques should be more welcoming to visitors, and we should encourage people to visit us, regardless of their persuasions. And in doing this, we are expected to be hospitable and tolerant with their shortcomings. As an example, let us recall an incident from the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), as reported by Abu Hurarah:

﴿A Bedouin once urinated in the Mosque. The people rushed to punish him, but the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) ordered them: "Leave him alone and pour a bucket of water or tumbler of water (over the place where he has urinated). Your mission is to make things easy and not to make them difficult."﴾⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Sahih Al-Bukhâri Volume 8, Book 73, Number 149.

After stopping his companions from unleashing any form of harsh treatment on the man, the Prophet (*sall-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) gently enlightened him that what he was doing was unacceptable. This story is a classical example of the contrast between the attitude of some well-intentioned Muslims who want to correct the wrong immediately and by any means and the approach of the Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) of kindness, gentleness, and wisdom.

Our visitors may make mistakes or violate some of the etiquettes of entering a Mosque. But we should also remember that even Muslims make such mistakes too. We cannot teach them all those details the very first time they visit us, or we will lose any further contact with them. There is the story of a divorce that took place because the wife who newly reverted to Islām could not stand all the “rules and regulations” imposed on her by her new Muslim husband. Also, there is another story of a friendly American who entered a Mosque in Phoenix, Arizona, inquiring how one might become a Muslim. The brothers in the Mosque told him the first thing he had to do was close his interest-bearing bank accounts and give up his credit cards. He politely turned around and went out, lost to Islām forever. Attracting people to our religion requires great patience, wisdom and systematization. Unfortunately, many Muslims have indeed lost these crucial requisites of *da'wah*.

As a recommendation, when non-Muslims visit the Mosque, a guide should be assigned to welcome them warmly and politely and oversee their activities. He should politely and accurately explain to them about the Mosque and what it stands for, the basic etiquettes of entering a Mosque, and about any other thing Islāmic which may be relevant to them. Literatures, pamphlets and other informative reading materials in various languages should be made available and given to the visitors as per their needs and interests, free of charge. The management of the Mosques should strive to spur the curiosity and interest of the visitors, leaving them with no query or need of theirs unfulfilled or unattended.

Merely explaining the ethics and etiquettes of visiting a Mosque, for example, which is always bound to trigger a host of questions, furnishes visiting non-Muslims with lots of information and truths about Islâm and Muslims.

The role of the Mosque as an institution, a community center, and a symbol of Islâm and the Muslims, is paramount and will always be so. Therefore, not exposing the non-Muslims to the light and guidance of Islâm by preventing them from coming near the Mosques is a serious minus amongst Muslims.

The only exception to the non-Muslims in terms of visiting our places of worship is the Sacred House of Allâh in the Holy city of Makkah, about which Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) says:

⇒ O ye who believe! Truly the Pagans are unclean; so, let them not, after this year of theirs, approach the Sacred Mosque... ﴿٤٧﴾

It is our religious duty to reach out to people of other religions and make ourselves reachable to them too in order to educate them about us and our teachings, beliefs and practices. Non-Muslims visiting our Mosques may be one great leap in demystifying Islâm in the minds of many. We must bear in mind that for a non-Muslim to desire to visit a Mosque and see what goes on in it, then he or she has a soft spot or at least tolerance for Islâm. A staunch *kâfir* (infidel) will definitely not want to have anything to do around a kilometer radius of a Mosque.

Eating the Food of the People of the Book and Marrying their Women

Not only are we allowed to interrelate with the non-Muslims in general, but we are also allowed to eat the food of the *ahl-alkitâb* (people of the book) among them – except (of course) if it is for their religious festival

⁴⁷ Sûrah at-Tawbah (The Repentance) 9:28

– and to marry the chaste women among them. Regarding this, Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'âla*) says:

⇒...The food of the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) is lawful to you and yours is lawful to them. Lawful to you in marriage are chaste women from the believers and chaste women from those who were given the Scripture (Jews and Christians) before your time when you have given their due *Mahr*⁴⁸, desiring chastity (i.e., taking them in legal wedlock) not committing illegal sexual intercourse, nor taking them as girlfriends. ﴿٥٩﴾⁴⁹

It is important to clarify here that the food of the people of the book which is lawful to us is only that which is lawful according to their own religious scriptures. Therefore, if they offer us food which is prohibited in their scriptures (e.g., pork), we are not permitted to consume it.

With regards to marrying the people of the book (Jews and Christians), it affords us the opportunity of calling them to Islâm with wisdom and beautiful preaching. However, it is advisable to see this permission as an allowance rather than a preference.

As for the non-Muslim women who are not from among the *ahl-al-kitâb*, Allâh prohibited us from marrying their women. He, the All-Knowing and All-Wise, says:

⇒Do not marry unbelieving women (idolaters), until they believe. A slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman, even though she allures you. ﴿٦٠﴾⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Bridal-money given by the husband to his wife at the time of marriage

⁴⁹ Sûrah al-Mâ'idah (The Table spread with Food) 5:5

⁵⁰ Sûrah al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:221

Muslim women, however, are not allowed under any circumstance to marry non-Muslim men, be they from among the people of the book or not. This prohibition is derived from the following verses of the Qur'ân:

⇒ O you who believe! When believing women come to you as emigrants, examine them; Allâh knows best as to their Faith, then if you ascertain that they are true believers send them not back to the disbelievers. They are not lawful (wives) for the disbelievers nor are the disbelievers lawful (husbands) for them. ﴿٥١﴾

⇒ ...And give not (your daughters) in marriage to unbelievers until they believe (in Allâh Alone): and verily, a believing slave is better than a (free) unbeliever, even though he pleases you. ﴿٥٢﴾

⇒ ...And never will Allâh grant to the disbelievers a way (to triumph) over the believers. ﴿٥٣﴾

⁵¹ Sûrah al-Mumtahanah (The Woman to be examined) 60:10

⁵² Sûrah al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:221

⁵³ Sûrah an-Nisâ (The Women) 4:141

Inferiority Complex

Inferiority complex refers to the sense of personal inferiority arising from a conflict between the desire to be noticed and the fear of being humiliated. It is the sense of feeling inferior to others in standing, ranking, and status; or the feeling which arises from the inability to meet certain standards, or some prescribed norms set by individuals, peers, society, or environment. Persons with inferiority complex are usually characterized by low self-esteem, self-withdrawal, lack of self-confidence, hopelessness, aggressive social behaviour, and lack of self-worth. This is because their thoughts and feelings are manipulated to make them lose confidence in their self-worth, merits, potentials and abilities, and to make them see themselves as societal misfits, and that, directly or indirectly, affects their interrelationship with other members of the society.

Effects of Inferiority Complex on the Muslims

The greatest favour Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'âla*) has bestowed upon us is that He has made us Muslims submitting totally to His Will through the Divine Religion of Islâm. Nothing else could be greater than this – be it wealth, children, fame, or status – as confirmed in the Glorious Qur'ân wherein Allâh says:

⇒ This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islâm as your religion. ﴿٥٤﴾

The import of the above verse is that having Islâm is something every Muslim should cherish and be proud of. It is worth much more than gold and diamond. But unfortunately, due to inferiority complex and the quest for societal approval, most Muslims are apologetic about Islâm and its teachings. Therefore, much to the embarrassment of the *Ummah*, many Muslims find it difficult to display their Islâmic identities while they find no qualms in flaunting the identities of their schools, associations, and socio-cultural organizations. In a bid to embrace Western values and culture, they regard the teachings and practices of Islâm, such as the Islâmic mode of purification after relieving oneself, eating, dressing, greeting, polygamy etc., as primitive and obsolete. Some Muslims find it embarrassing to practice Islâmic etiquettes. For example, the Islâmic greeting (i.e. to say *assalâm alaykum* – peace be unto you) is now replied with answers like “How are you?” and “What’s up?”, instead of the ideal reply of *wa ‘alaikum assalâm* (and peace be unto you too). Eating habits have changed from the Islâmic way to the so-called gentle-man’s way where people eat with both hands using multiple cutleries, negating the command of the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) which says:

﴿None of you should eat with his left hand nor drink with his left hand. Shaytan eats and drinks with his left hand.﴾⁵⁵

No wonder people eat these days but are ironically hungry. Also, the overemphasis on the use of tissue papers has led many Muslims to completely disregard the use of water, which is the best means of

⁵⁴ Sûrah al-Mâ'idah (The Table spread with Food) 5:3

⁵⁵ Al-Bukhâri in Al-Adab Al-Mufrad

purification, and sands and stones, which are also recommended alternatives.

This growing inferiority complex makes some Muslims to always try to define Islâm by what it is not instead of what it is. So, for example, where a person is supposed to say Islâm is a peaceful religion, he says Islâm is not a violent religion. And where he is supposed to say Islâm is a good religion he says Islâm is not a bad religion. It is like a person who sees a cup filled to half its capacity as half empty instead of half full. That apologetic attitude is one of the main reasons why the Muslims are always at the receiving end of the onslaught of the enemies of Islâm.

However, a careful analysis shows that to substitute Islâmic etiquettes, norms and values with those of the West or any other civilization, is like trading gold for charcoal. A testimony to this fact is the growing acceptance of Islâmic values such as extensive breastfeeding for a period of two years, washing the hands before and after eating, interest-free banking, etc., by modern civilizations. These values, though only recently being adopted by modern civilizations, have existed in Islâm for well over fourteen hundred years. Moreover, the term civilization, which means to be culturally or socially advanced, has been grossly misunderstood. It is now used to refer to the base culture of the West which is closely connected with the decline in morality and neglect of the application of the basic norms of religion.

Developing a Positive Self-Image

How do you see yourself? How do you feel about yourself? When you think of yourself, what are the thoughts that come to your mind? And when you look into the mirror what do you see? Do you have any self-worth or self-value? As a Muslim, where do you get your self-worth from? These are crucial questions begging for answers from the Muslims, who are at the receiving end of the ideological and psychological warfare unleashed by the enemies of Islâm through the

use of the media, schools and other institutions and propaganda machines.

The great prolific writer, Sayid Qutb, wrote in his foreward to the book “Islâm and the world”:

“The teaching of Islâm is essentially a teaching for leadership. One of its most important characteristics is that it teaches its followers how to acquire self-confidence without any taint of conceit and egotism; breathes into him the fervour of faith and conviction, free of all self-deceptions, and, by weaning him from all dependence on others, instills in him complete trust in Allâh with a faith that never falters or grows weak.”⁵⁶

The Islâmîc society is witnessing a remarkable social and cultural change which has generated psychological dislocations amongst many people. This has influenced the thinking faculties of the individuals and other aspects of their lives. It also affects their relationship with Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta’ala*) and with fellow Muslims. Religion is being relegated to a level of insignificance and reduced to one among many other forms of cultural expressions, thereby threatening its values, including the interpersonal relationship it cultivates among its adherents. The problem is further compounded by the ignorance of the Muslims, who acquire just a smattering Islâmîc education and so much secular knowledge which conflicts with the fundamentals of Islâm, and as a result makes them confused between the right and the fallacious.

Importance of having Positive Self-Image

A person with self-confidence and positive self-image is difficult to corrupt or influence, because he does not just go with the flow or follow the bandwagon. He is not the type that just says yes or bows down to

⁵⁶ See the foreword to “Islâm and the world” by Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

fear or intimidation. This explains why such persons are usually the targets of tyrants. Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'âla*) mentions in the Qur'ân:

⇒...Verily, kings, when they enter a town (country), they despoil it and make the most honourable amongst its people the lowest. And thus they do. ﴿٥٧﴾

The above verse of the Qur'ân teaches us that tyrants perceive the people with dignity, self-respect and self-confidence as problematic, as they are the only ones capable of staging rebellion to their tyranny, and so they try to bring them down.

In effect, looking down upon oneself has very negative consequences, as it adversely impacts one's psyche and lifestyle. A person who does not have self-respect does not go anywhere in life. As a matter of fact, the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) forbade us from showing any form of disrespect to our selves or to look down upon ourselves. Abu Hurayrah (*radhiy-Allâhu 'anhu*), the eminent companion of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) narrated:

﴿The Prophet came across me in one of the streets of Medina and at that time I was *Junub* (ritually impure due to sexual intercourse or semen discharge). So, I slipped away from him and went to take a bath. On my return the Prophet said, "O Abu Hurairah! Where have you been?" I replied, "I was *Junub* (impure), so I disliked to sit in your company." The Prophet said, "Subhân-Allâh! A believer never becomes impure."⁵⁷﴾

The above Hadith teaches us that Abu Hurayrah tried to avoid the company of the Prophet because, in his opinion, he was unworthy due to ceremonial impurity (*janabah*). However, rather than get praises

⁵⁷ Sûrah an-Naml (The Ants) 27:34

⁵⁸ Sahih Al-Bukhâri, Book 5, Hadith 281

from the Prophet for trying to show him respect by staying away from his company due to *janabah*, he got scolded for looking down on himself.

On another occasion, the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿Let not any one of you belittle himself.﴾⁵⁹

And he (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) also said:

﴿Let not one of you say about himself ‘O I am a donkey or a pig’.﴾

What Influences Self-Image

A number of factors, including friends, school, parents, media, environment and peer pressure influence and shape our self-image. As for the parents, sometimes, how you see your child and what you say to them really affects their self-image. If you keep telling your child that he is foolish, stupid, or dumb, it goes a long way to shape how the child feels about himself. This is because adult approval is a very important morale booster to children, especially when they fall within the age of six. At that age they always want to show their works and achievements to their parents and their elder ones, seeking their good remarks and commendations.

As for friends, most people die in order to be admitted into the circle of their friends or peers. As a result, they adopt evil habits like smoking, drinking and womanizing. They do things the way they see their peers do, strive to be like them and literally forget to be themselves. Such people, because of their dual or multiple identities, usually suffer psychotic disorders characterized by distortions of reality and

⁵⁹ Ibn Mâjah

disturbances of thought and language. They are someone when they are in the company of non-Muslims and someone else when they are in the company of Muslims. Likewise, they are someone when they are in the company of males and someone else when they are in the company of females.

A Muslim must be choosy about the people he relates with, as part of showing self-respect is by choosing the kind of people you hang around with. Therefore, a Muslim should not be companions to criminals, rogues, looters of public treasury, and other anti-social elements. The Prophet (*sall-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿A man follows the religion of his friend; so, each one should consider whom he makes his friend.﴾⁶⁰

And Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta'ala*) says:

⇒ And (remember) the Day when the *Zâlim* (wrong doer, oppressor, polytheist) will bite at his hands, he will say: "Oh! Would that I had taken a path with the Messenger (Muhammad (*sall-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*)). Ah! Woe to me! Would that I had never taken so-and-so as a *Khalîl* (an intimate friend)! He indeed led me astray from the Reminder (this Qur'ân) after it had come to me. And *Shaitân* (Satan) is to man ever a deserter in the hour of need.﴾⁶¹

A Muslim keeps the company of those who remind him of the hereafter and who serve as ladder for him to climb to Paradise. In the words of the Prophet (*sall-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*):

⁶⁰ Abu Dawud, Book 41, Number 4815

⁶¹ Sûrah al-Furqân (The Criterion) 25:27-29

﴿A Muslim is a mirror to his brother Muslim.﴾⁶²

A mirror politely points out your faults and gives you compliments for what you have got right and helps you become a better, more complete person. This is exactly what the Muslims should be to each other. Therefore, ensure you hang around with people who improve your self-image psychology, not those who fool you, or make you feel less important.

Where Should a Muslim Get His Self-Worth From?

As a Muslim, your self-worth emanates from within; therefore no one can make you feel inferior without your consent. Some people get their self-worth from the television – it tells them the size of waist they should have, the bodyweight they should maintain, controls their thoughts, and sets the standards for them which they strive to attain even if it means starving themselves. Also, the media tries to create an image of the Muslims as a people who are violent, blood thirsty, primitive, and barbaric. So, in response, many Muslims who feel they cannot do anything about the media projection of Islâm tend to be apologetic. For example, a person may learn that the Prophet had nine wives and his response will be ‘O my God! What do we tell people now? Why did he marry so many wives?’ But, in reality, who set the people as reference point? Who made the media the judge? How can the ever-changing Western culture be the criterion for deciding what is right or wrong?

Where we come from does not define who we are. Our self-worth is not determined by our positions or possessions, rather it comes from the realization of our position among the creation of Allâh and our God-consciousness. It is strengthened by our firm belief in Allâh, His Angels, His revealed books, His messengers, the Last Day, and divine

⁶² Abu Dawud

predestination. That is why if you look into the history of the companions of the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) you will see so much 'izza (dignity) in them even though they were not in the strata of the high and affluent in the society. Allâh, The Exalted in Majesty, says:

⇒ ... Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allâh is (he who is) the most righteous of you [i.e. he is one of the *Muttaqûn*⁶³ (the pious)]. ﴿٦٤﴾⁶⁴

And Abu Hurayrah, may Allâh be pleased with him, narrated that the Messenger of Allâh (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿Allâh does not look at your figures, nor at your attire but He looks at your hearts and accomplishments.﴾⁶⁵

Most people derive comfort only as they are accepted by the society; and as a result, they are just not comfortable with whom they are. Some are not comfortable with the way they were created so they misappropriate funds that would ordinarily have been used for charity and other projects of great religious significance for cosmetic surgeries. Some others prefer to be of the opposite sex so the males among them dress like females and vice versa. Likewise, some others change their Islâmic names and identities. So, a person named Bilaal, for instance, may prefer to be called Billy, while a person named Abdulkabir may prefer to be called KB, all in order to fit into the new world order.

Also, many people are made to believe that their acceptability in the society depends on their physical looks and how well they are able to

⁶³ *Muttaqûn* refers to the pious believers of Islâmic Monotheism who fear Allâh much, love Him much, abstain from all kinds of sins and evil deeds which He has forbidden, and perform all kinds of good deeds which He has ordained.

⁶⁴ Sûrah al-Hujurât (The Dwellings) 49:13

⁶⁵ Reported by Imâm Muslim

make statements with their bodies. But if that is correct, then what happens to the millions of people who are not good-looking? And what becomes the fate of the numerosity of people who looked good in the past but changed due to illness, aging, accident, or other forms of mishap? Should such people stop feeling good about themselves because they no longer fit into the criteria set for them by the society? Of course, we learn from the Hadith that Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) is beautiful, and He loves beauty. But to say that the only people entitled to feel good about themselves are the beautiful ones will be a great form of oppression on those who may not be so beautiful or good looking, and that may cause them great depression.

Every human being is a son of Adam, blessings and peace be upon him, and Allâh says:

⇒...indeed We have honoured the Children of Adam, and We have carried them on land and sea, and have provided them with *At-Tayyibât* (lawful good things), and have preferred them to many of those whom We have created with a marked preferment. ﴿٦٦﴾

And ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar (*radhiy-Allâhu ‘anhu*) relates that he saw the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) circumambulating the *ka’bah*⁶⁷ and saying:

﴿How good you are and how good is your very air. How great you are and how great is your sanctity. I swear by Him in whose hands is Muhammad’s soul, the sanctity of a believer is greater to Allâh than yours is – that goes for his wealth, his blood, and that we should think nothing but what is good about him.﴾⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Sûrah al-Isrâ (The Journey by Night) 17:70

⁶⁷ The sacred house of Allâh at Makkah

⁶⁸ Sunan Ibn Mâjah (3932)

The Prophet (*sall-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) also said:

﴿The loss of the entire world is more trivial to Allāh than the murder of a Muslim.⁶⁹﴾

This means that Allāh would rather have the *ka'bah* and the rest of the world destroyed than a Muslim wrongfully killed.

These references from the Qur'ân and Hadith highlight the importance and value of a Muslim in the sight of Allāh. Therefore, as stated earlier, our self-worth and self-value generally comes from our relationship with Allāh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*). He, the Exalted in Majesty, says in a Hadithul-Qudsi⁷⁰:

﴿Indeed, I am as My servant presumes Me to be, and I am with him when he makes mention of Me. So, if he makes mention of Me to himself I make mention of him to Myself. And if he makes mention of Me amongst a company, I make mention of him amongst a company greater than it. And if he draws near to Me the span of a hand, I draw near to him the span of an arm. And if he draws near to Me the span of an arm, I draw near to him the span of two outstretched arms. And if he takes a step towards Me, I hastily step towards him.⁷¹﴾

Bearing the foregoing Hadith in mind, how could a person whom Allāh finds worthy of mentioning to Himself or even in an assembly feel worthless or valueless, or consider himself a nobody? If you make your

⁶⁹ Sunan At-Tirmidhi (1395) and Sunan An-Nasâ'I (3987)

⁷⁰ Meaning: Sacred Hadith. It refers to Allāh's statements quoted by Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) which are not part of the Qur'ân. Unlike the Qur'ân, the *Hadithul-qudsi* is not recited in the *salawat* (prayers).

⁷¹ Al-Bukhâri 8/171 and Muslim 4/2061

self-worth dependent on the approval of others, then what happens if they do not approve?

Disunity among the Muslims

We, as Muslims and as an *ummah*, have so many foundations upon which we can be united. We believe in one God (i.e. Almighty Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*)), we believe in the Prophet (i.e. Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*)), we read and believe in the same revealed book (i.e. the Qur'ân), we have one unique greeting (i.e. the *Salâm*), we fast together in the same month (i.e. *Ramadhan*), and we face one *Qibla* in our prayers (i.e. the *ka'bah*). These, among many others, are obvious grounds on which we can be united.

More so, the value and importance of uniting the Muslims around the world is a common knowledge among the Muslims. Indeed, delivering lengthy speeches about the unity of the Muslim *ummah* does not tire our leaders, Imâms and scholars.

But despite the fact that there are good and solid bases on which the Muslims can be united; and despite the fact that the need for and importance of uniting the Muslims is a much talked about subject, the Muslims are getting more and more divided by the day. This means that there are some things which we are doing wrong which we have to take urgent and practical steps to correct; or some things which we are supposed to be doing but which we are negligent and lethargic about. In truth, disunity and infighting are among the greatest problems which the Muslims face today, and which divides the Islâmic world into smaller and weaker fragments. It is our duty to purify our society of this disease.

The division within the Muslim nation is multidimensional – Muslims are divided based upon languages, ethnicity, regional preferences, and, above all, sectarian beliefs. There are a lot of brothers and sisters making great efforts for preserving and spreading the *dīn*. Similarly, there are many Muslim organizations spread around the world that are doing great works in the path of Allāh. But the efforts exerted by these individuals and organizations for the sake of the *dīn* are not yielding maximum results due to the fact that their resources, efforts and objectives are not harmonized – no thanks to the disunity that thrives among them.

Causes of Disunity and Disputes among the Muslims

As it is often said, knowing the problem is half the solution. Therefore, in order to get the solution to the disunity spreading among the Muslims like a malignant cancer, it is important to know its causes. The causes of disunity among the contemporary Muslims include, but are not limited to:

1. Deviation from the right path – Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta'āla*) says:

⇒ And verily, this is my straight path, so follow it, and follow not (other) paths, for they will separate you away from His path. This He has ordained for you that you may become pious. ﴿٦٧﴾⁷²

From this verse, we learn that there is one straight path ordained by Allāh; and many other scattered paths (whatever their names, banners or labels may be) which belong to Satan. And whenever the Muslims follow the path of Satan, they will scatter and fall into disputes and division. This is what we see in the present situation nowadays of our *ummah*. Muslims have ignored the unique and right way that used to hold them united. They followed, instead of it, the path of Satan, which

⁷² Sûrah al-An'âm (The Cattle) 6:153

made their nation disintegrate into small parts and groups – each of them claiming superiority over the others.

2. Abandoning or dismantling the Islâmic shari'ah – Muslims are required to implement the rules of Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) as a whole integrated system, and not break it into pieces to choose some rules and leave others. Implementing the shari'ah in part creates too much divergence and causes the Muslims to tear apart. A good number of Muslims would consider the partial implementation of the *shari'ah* as in itself an act of breaking the *shari'ah* and would definitely not be comfortable with it. Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) says:

⇒ ...they have abandoned a good part of the message that was sent to them. So we planted amongst them enmity and hatred till the Day of Resurrection. ﴿٧٣﴾

3. Selfish Transgression (Envy) – In an authentic Hadith, the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) emphasized that envy and hatred are the main reasons for division of this *ummah* as well as to the previous one. Says He (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*):

﴿Among you spread the disease of previous nations, it is the envy and hatred. It is what I call the shaver which wipes out your *dîn* the same way the shaver shaves hair.﴾⁷⁴

Envy, one of the harmful diseases of the heart, spreads between Muslims, dividing their hearts and making them hate one another. This is what is referred to as selfish transgression between themselves. And in this kind of sick and infected society, unity and love never prevail.

Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) says:

⁷³ Sûrah al-Mâ'idah (The Table spread with Food) 5:14

⁷⁴ Ahmad and At-Tirmithi

⇒ And they did not divide till the knowledge had come to them, through selfish transgression between themselves. ﴿75﴾

4. Missing the mercy of Allâh – Allâh, the Most Merciful of all who show mercy, says in the Qur'ân:

⇒ And if your Lord had so willed, He could surely have made mankind one *Ummah* [nation or community (following one religion, i.e., Islâm)], but they will not cease to disagree. Except him on whom your Lord has bestowed His Mercy... ﴿76﴾

The above verse implies that people's disputes are a sign of missing the mercy of Allâh, because Allâh might shield His mercy from people when they do not deserve it. In another verse of the Qur'ân, Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) says:

⇒ The believers, men and women, are protectors and allies of one another, they enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil; they offer their prayers perfectly: and give the *zakat* and obey Allâh and His Messenger. Allâh will have His mercy on them. Surely Allâh is All-Mighty, All-Wise. ﴿77﴾

The above verse enumerates the characteristics of the people who deserve the mercy of Allâh, and whose hearts Allâh will join in love and mercy. But as for those who do not protect one another, who do not enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and who do not establish regular prayers and give charity, they will be undeserving of Allâh's mercy.

⁷⁵ Sûrah ash-Shûrâ (The Consultation) 42:14

⁷⁶ Sûrah Hood ((Prophet) Hûd) 11:118

⁷⁷ Sûrah at-Tawbah (The Repentance) 9:71

In a Hadith emphasizing this concept, the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿The first sign of corruption of the people of the children of Israel was when a man met another and found him doing wrong, he just told him fear Allâh and stop your wrongdoing, then the same man met him the next day and saw him in the same situation, but this did not prevent him from being his companion with whom he ate, drank, and lived. For this reason, Allâh divided their hearts". Then he recited:

⇒ Those among the Children of Israel who disbelieved were cursed by the tongue of David and Jesus, son of Mary. That was because they disobeyed and were transgressing beyond bound. They used to not forbid one another from the wrong, which they committed. Vile indeed was what they used to do. ﴿78

And then the Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said: "I swear by Allâh you have to forbid what is wrong and enjoin what is good and to stop the aggressor from his aggression and to force him to follow the truth or Allâh will divide your heart, then He will curse you as He did to the children of Israel before you. ﴿79

5. Insisting on following one's own principles and understanding - In almost all conflicts between Muslim individuals, groups, or organizations, a careful analysis shows that the causes of the conflicts are that every sect, organization, government, Imâm, or leader has its or his "own" principles, understanding, and interpretation of the Qur'ân and Hadith, upon which they desire to unite the entire Muslims. Therefore, they struggle for control and power in order to implement their own individualistic or sectarian beliefs and policies. They talk a

⁷⁸ Sûrah al-Mâ'idah (The Table spread with Food) 5:78-79

⁷⁹ Abu-Dawud and At-Tirmithi

lot about unity but they want this unity based upon their own conditions.

6. Intolerance towards one another – One of the characteristics of the *ummah* today, is our aggressive attitude towards each other, coupled with the habit of seeking faults in the Muslims around us, while turning blind eyes to our own faults. We find it very difficult to agree upon one solution or objective because each of us has already accepted or devised a ruling different from a number of others.

7. Infighting – Religious groups and sects, rather than come together and face the common enemy of the Muslims which obviously is from without, dissipate time and resources searching for enemies within and branding them with names like *kaafir*, *mushrik*, *bid'atee*, *zindiq*⁸⁰, etc. How could we ever achieve unity in this way?

Disunity among the Muslim Groups and Organizations

Today, almost every Muslim is a member of an Islâmic group, organization or school of thought, with each group engaging other groups in bitter rivalry. With the passage of time, the Muslims created these numerous organizations with their own distinct agenda. Some of them were created in order to conflict with already existing ones. And part of the objectives of some of these groups is to eliminate those who disagree with their own interpretation of Islâm. Instead of bringing the Muslims together, these groups and organizations have been more inclined towards imposing their thoughts on the rest of the *ummah* because they believe their thoughts to be the only correct ones.

The quality of humbleness and mutual tolerance that was the hallmark of the great Imâms of jurisprudence (Abu Haneefah, Malik, Shafe'i, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal) is conspicuously missing among the various

⁸⁰ See the glossary of Islâmic terms at the end of the book for the meanings of these terms.

Muslim groups and schools of thought today. They are quick at pointing out the mistakes of others, but it is very rare to find them acknowledge their own fallibility or admit to their own errors. We need to try to bridge the gaps that exist within the *ummah* based on knowledge, tolerance and open-mindedness. At the same time, we need to look more at ourselves than others in order to truly adopt the practice of self-criticism and correction.

When Allâh's Messenger (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), was asked whose Islâm is the best, he replied:

﴿One who avoids harming the Muslims with his tongue and hands.⁸¹﴾

The Messenger of Allâh (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) also said, as reported by the eminent *sahâbee*, Abu Hurairah:

﴿The servant who conceals the faults of others in this world, Allâh will conceal his faults on the Day of Resurrection.⁸²﴾

And finally, Abu Hamzah Anas bin Mâlik (*radhiy-Allâhu 'anhu*), who was the servant of the Messenger of Allâh, reported that the Messenger of Allâh (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿None of you truly believes (in Allâh and in His religion) until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.⁸³﴾

Recommendations for Building a United and Virile Ummah

⁸¹ Bukhâri

⁸² Muslim

⁸³ Bukhâri

Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) says in *Sûrah Al-Imrân*:

⇒ O you who believe! Fear Allâh as He should be feared and die not except in a state of Islâm. And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of Allâh (i.e. this Qur'ân), and be not divided among yourselves, and remember Allâh's Favour on you, for you were enemies one to another but He joined your hearts together, so that, by His Grace, you became brethren (in Islâmic Faith), and you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus, Allâh makes His Signs clear to you, that you may be guided. ﴿٨٤﴾⁸⁴

And in the same *Sûrah*, He (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) also says:

⇒ And do not be as those who divided and differed among themselves after the clear proofs had come to them. It is they for whom there is an awful torment. ﴿٨٥﴾⁸⁵

In these verses, Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) indicates that the ideal Muslim *ummah* is founded upon two important bases – *taqwa* (fear and consciousness of Allâh) and unity. When Muslims have *taqwa* of Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*), they will avoid doing anything which is not pleasing to Him. And also, they will fulfill their duty towards Him and towards other people. And when they are united, they will be strong and successful, and Allâh's mercy will be with them, because disunity and division are characteristics of the disbelievers, whose end is failure and disarray.

Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said to the Muslims in his farewell sermon:

⁸⁴ *Sûrah Aal-'Imrân* (The Family of 'Imrân) 3: 102-103

⁸⁵ *Sûrah Aal-'Imrân* (The Family of 'Imrân) 3:105

﴿After my death, do not turn into *kuffar* (infidels) fighting and killing each other.⁸⁶﴾

Dear readers, bearing in mind the aforementioned verses of the Qur'ân and Hadith of the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), we recommend the following for building a strong and united *ummah* that will be the pride of every Muslim:

- Whenever we discuss a disputed matter, we should endeavour to acquire in-depth knowledge of all sides of the matter and try as much as possible to be civilized, open-minded, accommodating, and kind to other Muslims who may not share our own point of view. We should be positive and respectful towards other Muslims regardless of differences of opinions, and we must ensure that we preach and spread only Islâm, in its pristine purity, and not sectarian beliefs.
- We must realize that Allâh describes the Muslims (i.e., the followers of Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) – including those who wrong themselves, those who are foremost in good deeds, and those who are at the middle course – as His chosen servants. Says He (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) in the Glorious Qur'ân:

⇒ Then We have given the Book (the Qur'ân) for inheritance to such of Our servants as We have chosen (the followers of Muhammad (*sal-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*)). Then of them are some who wrong their own selves, and of them are some who follow a middle course, and of them are some who are, by Allâh's Leave, foremost in good deeds. That is indeed the highest Grace.⁸⁷ ﴿

⁸⁶ Muslim

⁸⁷ Sûrah Fâtir (The Originator of Creation) 35:32

Therefore, what rights do we have, as servants of Allâh, to expel or delist other servants of Allâh from His service simply because we feel they are not good enough?

- Muslims must desist from spreading hate for other Muslims who disagree with them as long as they are following the interpretation of the Qur'ân and Hadith from an authentic scholar of Islâm. If a dispute arises on the interpretation of a verse of the Qur'ân or a Hadith, or about any issue at all, then the consensus of the scholars of Islâm should be followed. And where the scholars are split on the issue, then one can follow whoever among them whose opinion he finds preferable, while respecting the other scholars and their opinions.

- Imâms of mosques and scholars of Islâm, on their part, must desist from interpreting verses of the Qur'ân from their own opinions and preferences. They should rather be objective and follow the consensus of Islâmic scholars. Prophet Muhammad (*sal-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) assured us that among the blessings of Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) upon this *ummah* is that the *ummah* will never be united upon an error. This underscores the importance of following the consensus of the scholars.

- The Imâms must realize that they have a crucial role to play in uniting the Muslims, and try to bring them together. Their Friday sermons should dwell more on the common issues and teachings, and they must try as much as possible to stay away from the disputed issues. Sometimes, dwelling on disputed issues amplifies division and disunity.

- Muslims must adopt the ways which increase the love of Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*), His Prophet (peace be upon him) and His book (the Qur'ân), and must love, respect and follow the Messenger of Allâh (*sal-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) as his noble companions did.

- Muslims should not follow those Imâms and scholars who ignore their own innovations in Islâm but keep the Muslims busy in small disputes. Due priority should be given to the major issues like defending the *ummah* against the common enemies who are killing our brethren and assassinating our scholars, establishing lawful businesses or other regular sources of income to build virile Islâmic institutions (like schools, hospitals, *masaajid*) and to cater for the outrageous number of poor and indigent Muslims around the world, organizing *da'wah* to the non-Muslims as well as to the prisons, hospitals and orphanages; rather than wasting time on minor and trivial issues.

- We, Muslims, must know that we follow our *Imâms* and scholars not because of our personal love for or affiliation with them, but because they are following the Messenger of Allâh (*sal-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*). Therefore, whenever they undermine the Messenger of Allâh and cease to follow him, we cease to follow them too. There is no room for blind-following in Islâm and no scholar or leader has a “final authority” in Islâm.

- Finally, we should realize that working towards the unity of the Muslim *ummah* is our individual and collective duty. It needs all our efforts, without any exception, starting from purging ourselves and our communities from all causative agents of division and disunity, like malice, envy, intolerance, backbiting, slander, etc. We must work seriously against disunity because its dangers are serious. Among its harmful effects is that it weakens the *ummah* and opens the door to our enemies, and eventually leads to destruction and devastation of the Muslims. Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) clearly warns us of the devastating consequences of disunity thus:

⇒ And those who disbelieve are allies of one another, (and) if you (Muslims) do not do so [i.e., become allies, as one united block under one Khalîfah (a chief Muslim ruler for the whole

Muslim world)], there will be tumult and oppression on the earth, and great mischief and corruption. ﴿٥٨﴾⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Sûrah al-Anfâl (The Spoils of War) 8:73

The Media – Weapons of Mass Distraction

Far more devastating on the Muslims than the weapons of mass destruction unleashed by the enemies of Islâm and the forerunners of the *dajjal*⁸⁹ are the weapons of mass distraction (i.e. the media). The media serve as agents of socialization and routes of mass communication. They also serve as links between individuals and groups. With the help of the media, e.g., the television, radio, newspapers, magazines, internet, and the telecommunication networks, information is instantly passed over a long distance in the shortest possible time. The use of these media has experienced a quantum leap as a result of technological advancement. Consequently, accessing information has been made so easy, thereby exposing the people to the good, the bad and the ugly. The electronic media, precisely the television and the internet, have practically gone beyond the mandate of assisting the individuals, families, and society in general through the provision of visual aid and education. It has taken upon itself to appeal to the destructive and disintegrative instincts of people, promote greed, insatiable thirst for self-gratification, religious degradation, and moral laxity. All these it achieves through deceit, falsification, and misrepresentation, and has contributed colossally in nurturing individuals that are egocentric, self-serving, and of low moral standards. The billboards, newspapers and magazines that are meant to advertise commodities and services are used to provoke lustful desires and encourage modernized adultery by displaying pictures of nude

⁸⁹ Literally means "liar" or "deceiver". Used to refer to the false messiah (Antichrist).

women in the name of fashion and modelling. The telecommunication companies, as well as others, have gone a long way in teaching and spreading gambling and its related offences. In fact, the negative impact of the media is now felt by almost every individual.

The Spread of Unlawful Entertainment – The Effects of Television Programs, Movies, and Music

In order to comprehend this topic, it is important to know the purpose of entertainment. Some people are of the opinion that it is a source of amusement, others say it helps people rest and relax, and yet a whole lot believe it is a source of distraction from the worrisome routine of daily life. In all, a commonly expected outcome of being entertained is for the heart to find some rest. However, the Qur'ân clearly informs us that the way for the heart to find true rest is by remembering Allâh. It says in its thirteenth chapter:

⇒ ...verily, in the remembrance of Allâh do hearts find rest. ﴿٩٠﴾

Among the minuses associated with television programmes, movies, and music are that, on the most part, the language, the images, the lyrics, and the rhythms that emanate from them are all reflective of an outlook on life that is diametrically opposed to Islâmic teachings. And even after the images are gone, the programs have come to an end and the rhythms have faded away, the influence lingers on. Though, there may be some good in all of them, but to what extent do the movies and songs encourage the remembrance of Allâh? To what extent do they increase ones *Imân* (faith) and understanding of Islâm?

As it were, not only does the television serve as a window to the outside world, but for many parents it also serves as a full-time baby-sitter for their kids. Parents subject kids to scenes of violence, indecent acts or straight-out fantasies just to get them off their backs. Television teaches

⁹⁰ Sûrah ar-Ra'd (The Thunder) 13:28

children that fun is always associated with sins, and at the same time tries to convince the viewers that what they are seeing is the social norm. A good example is the so-called love scene that forms such a crucial element in movies and television shows these days. They paint the picture that somehow sex equates with love, and that it is a social attitude.

Many television programs and shows focus heavily on parent/child conflict and often attempt to paint this sort of behaviour as a 'normal' part of growing up. Typically, the solution to these conflicts, as usually depicted by the shows, is either to fight back or to abscond from the home. In either case it teaches the children how to respond to conflicts in ways that can best be described as inappropriate and unsanctioned in Islâm. In other words, it teaches rebellion to parental authority.

The television seems to define a standard for success, what qualities the viewers should see as admirable, and what behaviours they should see as normal. It shows expensive houses, lavishly decorated with all the embellishments of this world, and these are inculcated into the minds of the viewers as the success ideals. People who may not be strong of faith adopt these television generated standards as theirs. They start to equate success with owning an expensive car or living in a magnificent mansion. They forget about the Paradise that Allâh has promised the believers and, instead, try to create a 'paradise' right here on earth. This is one of the major threats to the spiritual edification of the contemporary Muslims. Therefore, as Muslims, we are expected to use the light of Islâm as a benchmark for determining the truth from falsehood.

No doubt, there is need for constructive, moral entertainment and strict personal involvement in the selection and censorship of the types of entertainment people are served within or outside the home. This is very critical since the children, and humans generally, are easily influenced by what they see or hear. Therefore, Muslims must agitate for responsible Television programming and decent media coverage

devoid of obscenities and the celebration of outrageous events. They should create alternative means of entertainment which combines education, recreation and social activities, and is guided by the immaculate principles of Islâm.

Character Assassination and False Representation of the Muslims

In order to kill a dog, they say, you have to give it a bad name. This is the working principle of the enemies of Islâm, who control the world media, and one of their formidable strategies for laying siege on Islâm and the Muslims. They brand every Muslim who tries to live by the pristine teachings of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) as terrorists and publicly declare countries that seek to implement the Islâmic *shari'ah* on a governmental level as terrorist bases. By so doing, the world opinion is manipulated against the Muslims, and Islâm is seen as a religion that promotes unprovoked violence.

Historically, nevertheless, two thousand years ago, the first act of what we now call terrorism was perpetrated by a radical offshoot of the zealot's, an ancient Jewish sect in Judea in the first century who fought to death against the Romans and who killed or persecuted Jews who collaborated with the Romans. The world thereafter witnessed attacks carried out by certain groups in Italy (the Fascists), Germany (the Nazi's), Ireland, and the Soviet Union (totalitarians). These acts were in no way linked to any religion, even though the culprits belonged to one religion or another. The questions, therefore, in the minds of many are: Why is every act of terrorism in the present day linked to Islâm and Muslims? Does the Qur'ân and the *sunnah* propagate terrorism? Is Islâm actually a religion of violence, spread by the sword?

These questions are often hurled at Muslims, either directly or indirectly, during any discussion on religion or world affairs. But the simple answer to these questions is that they are all allegations of the

Western propagandist media, intended to assassinate the character of the Muslims and ruin the reputation of Islâm. In all these, their intention is clear – to check the spread of Islâm, which they consider to be the most formidable threat to their civilization. Allâh, the Almighty and All-Wise, says:

⇒ They intend to put out the Light of Allâh (i.e. the religion of Islâm, the Qur'ân, and Prophet Muhammad (*sal-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*)) with their mouths. But Allâh will bring His Light to perfection even though the disbelievers hate (it). ﴿٩١﴾

Contrary to the media onslaught, Islâm, which is derived from the words, '*salaam*' and '*salima*', which means peace and wholeness, is a religion whose fundamentals teach its followers to maintain and promote peace throughout the world. It is neither spread by the sword nor any other means of coercion, as true Islâm entails conviction of the heart, declaration by the tongue and implementation with the limbs. Unless these three are complete and intact, then ones Islâm is defective. Allâh declares in the Qur'ân:

⇒ There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the Right Path has become distinct from the wrong path. Whoever disbelieves in *Tâghûr*⁹² (false deities) and believes in Allâh, then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break. And Allâh is All-Hearer, All-Knower. ﴿٩٣﴾

A soothing and appropriate reply to these adversaries who brand Islâm

⁹¹ Sûrah as-Saff - (The Row or the Rank) 61:8

⁹² The word *Tâghûr* covers a wide range of meanings: It means anything worshipped other than the Real God (Allâh), i.e., all the false deities. It may be satan, devils, idols, stones, sun, stars, angels, human beings, who were falsely worshipped and taken as Tâghûr. Likewise, saints, graves, rulers and leaders that are falsely worshipped and wrongly followed. But the one who does not accept to be worshipped, will not be considered as a Tâghûr.

⁹³ Sûrah al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:256

as a violent religion that was spread by the sword is given by the noted historian De Lacy O'Leary in the book "Islâm at the crossroad", wherein he says:

"History makes it clear however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islâm at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myth that historians have ever repeated."⁹⁴

Rather than what the enemies of Islâm imagine, the sword by which Islâm is spread, as it is put by Dr. Zakir Naik, the renowned scholar from India, is that of the Intellect. That is, the sword that conquers the hearts and minds of people through the use of wisdom and beautiful preaching, as a fulfillment of Allâh's command which says:

⇒ Invite (all) to the way of your Lord (i.e., Islâm) with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious. Truly, your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His path, and He is the Best Knower of those who are guided. ﴿٩٥﴾

The Spread of Pornography

Pornography refers to creative activities such as movies, magazines, writings, photographs, or portrayals that are sexually explicit and intended to arouse sexual excitement. They emphasize sexual competition and aggressiveness, and promote transgression and the expression of sexual fantasies.

Pornography is addictive and many people are under this spell, and it is currently corrupting individuals, homes and societies. Because of its widespread influence, pornography has turned into a billion-dollar

⁹⁴ Islâm at the cross road, Page 8

⁹⁵ Sûrah an-Nahl (The Bees) 16:125

industry worldwide. However, one of the most important aspects of Islâm, being a religion that guides and instills discipline, is that it teaches subjugation of passion, i.e., self-control and self-discipline. That is to say, a person is taught to be in charge of his passion, desires, and emotions, and not the other way round. Therefore, as Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) has created in every human being sexual desires, Islâm encourages us to enjoy it by seeking its fulfillment only through the proper channel, i.e. by being in an ethical marital relationship, but not to abuse it by gratifying it through anything else like masturbation or by looking into other people's nudity. Allâh the Almighty says in the Qur'ân:

⇒ ...And those who guard their chastity (i.e., private parts, from illegal sexual acts). Except from their wives or (the slaves) that their right hands possess, – for then, they are free from blame. But whoever seeks beyond that, then those are the transgressors. ﴿٩٦﴾

The media today bombard the society with so much sexual content. There is hardly any home video or movie that does not contain scenes of sex and nudity, and a lot of people (including children) are exposed to these contents. In fact, it has become so widespread that people now see it as normal whereas it does great harm to them and their families. However, in Islâm, good is good no matter how unpopular it may be, and conversely, evil is evil no matter how widespread and widely accepted it may be. Therefore, there is a great need to insulate the Muslims from this evil which is corrupting individuals and families, depleting moral virtues and ideals, and devaluing social commitments and responsibilities.

Some married couples argue that they watch pornographic videos in order to enhance their sexual performance with their spouses, but this

⁹⁶ Sûrah al-Mu'minûn (The Believers) 23:5-7. See also Sûrah al-Ma'aarij (The Ways of Ascent) 70:29-31

argument lacks credibility. A healthy sexual relationship between husband and wife is not developed or enhanced in any way by watching pornography. On the contrary, it reduces the sexual enjoyment between partners as it deadens their natural sexual impulses, desensitizes their natural stimulants, and makes them used to the damaging images they see on the screens which are usually more cosmetic than real. Therefore, when people do not find their spouses as arousing as the people they see in porn movies, they tend to derive less sexual enjoyment from them. Also, in Islâm, whatever is prohibited in large quantities is also prohibited in small quantities. It is like alcohol about which the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿Of that which intoxicates in a large amount, a small amount is prohibited.⁹⁷﴾

Therefore, because of the potential of one becoming addicted to porn, there is really no amount of it which is safe, no matter how small it may be.

In his famous book *Al-halaal wal haraam fil Islâm*, Dr. Yusuf Al-Qardhawi wrote:

“Looking at the ‘*awrah* (nudity) of another person must be avoided. The Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) forbade that any person should look at the ‘*awrah* of another, whether of the same or opposite sex, and whether with or without desire, saying:

﴿A man should not look at the ‘*awrah* of another man, nor a woman of another woman, nor should a man go under one cloth with another man, nor a woman with another woman.⁹⁸﴾

⁹⁷ Reported by Ahmad Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi

⁹⁸ Reported by Muslim Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi

There are also those who argue that in watching erotic pictures and videos, they do not harm anyone else but themselves. Actually, this is not a good argument because harm done to one's self is harm done to one's family and the society, as it takes away from your potentials which your family and the society ought to benefit from. Moreover, watching pornographic images means leaking and misdirecting one's energy, so it literally involves harming someone else. The addiction to pornography is far more serious than the addiction to crack cocaine and the logic is simple: the body can easily be cleansed and detoxicated from crack cocaine but getting rid of the lasting imprints of pornographic images from the mind is next to impossible. Therefore, as we said earlier, the Muslims must adhere strictly to the teachings of Islâm which emphasizes subjugation of passion. We must be in control of our passion rather than been guided by our passion, lusts and desires. Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) says:

⇒ Have you (O Muhammad (*sal-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*)) seen him who has taken as his god his own vain desire? Would you then be a disposer of his affairs or a watcher over him? ﴿٩٩﴾

Dangers of the Internet

Every means of mass communication has great benefits as we well as evils and the internet is not left out. As one of the weapons of mass distraction unleashed by the enemies of Islâm on the Muslims, the internet provides a negative propaganda about the Muslims, an avenue for sapping precious time, as well as an easy access to sexually explicit contents which corrupts the individuals and the society at large. A great deal of danger lurks behind the use of the Internet (especially for children) in the home, and as opposed to sticking our heads in the ground like ostriches, it is time we had an honest assessment of the facts and figures associated with the use of the Internet and it being a

⁹⁹ Sûrah al-Furqân (The Criterion) 25:43

tool for Satan. What follows is an edited excerpt from an article posted on www.kalamullah.com on the dangers of the internet:

Easy access to pornography

With the help of a few clicks, pornographic content spreads rampantly across the Internet, carried over an innumerable number of web sites, through explicit images in spam, and through advertisements on search engines. Various statistics show children increasingly being exposed to pornographic content. The content can involve despicable and disgusting acts, sometimes even involving children. The annual revenue of the worldwide pornographic industry is over £60 billion – that's more than even Hollywood. According to a study by the London School of Economics, six out of every ten children in the UK were regularly being exposed to pornography – that is the majority of children.

Approximately ninety percent of children aged eight to sixteen have seen pornography on the Internet. There are many ways in which children are being exposed to this evil material. Anybody with an email account would know that they are constantly bombarded by emails explicitly advertising pornography or indirectly (by showing one thing and upon clicking re-directing to an explicit site).

There are many game sites on the internet which allow harmless games to be played but advertise sexually explicit websites. According to the Top Ten Reviews report, at least twenty-six names of cartoon characters were linked to porn sites, thus exposing children to adult content on the Web.

Uncomfortable Statistics

1. Eighty-nine percent of youth in chat rooms receive sexual solicitations.
2. Seventy-three percent of those exposures happened while searching or surfing the Internet and twenty-seven percent while opening e-mail or clicking on links in e-mails or instant messages.
3. Sixty-seven percent happened while using the Internet at home; fifteen percent at school; three percent in libraries; and the rest at other homes, such as friends', and elsewhere.
4. Most of the images were of nudity, thirty-two percent showed a sexual act.
5. Web searches and search engines were the most common route to exposures (forty-seven percent).
6. In twenty-six percent of the surfing incidents, the children surveyed were "mouse-trapped" into another dirty site while trying to get out of the one they were in.

Internet – Tool of the Devil

The Devil, who is our open and clear enemy, is using the Internet to corrupt the Believers and their children's morals, *Îmân* (faith) and dignity. Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) says in the Qur'ân,

⇒ Satan threatens you with poverty and orders you to commit *Fahshâ*; whereas Allâh promises you forgiveness from Himself and bounty, and Allâh is All-Sufficient for His creatures' needs, All-Knower. ﴿١٠٠﴾

What Does 'Fahshâ' Mean?

¹⁰⁰ Sûrah al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:268

Linguistically *fahshâ* means, ‘an excess or enormity, a thing excessively and enormously foul, evil, immoral, lewd, obscene, a sin or a crime which is excessively foul; adultery or fornication.’

One finds that the Internet is the marketplace for people indulging in *fahshâ* and all the steps that lead to it – accumulating major sins in the sight of their Creator, Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta’ala*). The Satan has openly declared war on the children of Âdam (due to his jealousy) and his primary aim is to drag as many of them as possible to the Hell-Fire with him – May Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta’ala*) protect us and our children (Âmîn).

Psychological Effects

Repeated and long-term exposure to pornographic materials is severely traumatic and damaging to one’s *îmân* (faith) and leads to all sorts of psychological and behavioural problems. One must realize that you cannot delete from the memories of individuals what they have seen of these images or videos. These ‘evil seeds’ are planted into the hearts, resulting in producing individuals who are corrupt, sexually perverted, promiscuous, immoral, and psychologically inept, who continue to battle with their sins.

Recommendations for safeguarding the children from the dangers of the internet

Parents must take active responsibility to ensure that their homes are safe from the influence of *fahshâ* – especially from the Internet. We recommend the following:

1. Do not have access to the internet anywhere in the house except in the main living or dining room with the computer monitor facing outwards – i.e., towards the rest of the room.
2. Children do not need to have email addresses or accounts on Facebook, Twitter, MSN, Yahoo etc. Supervise access to YouTube.
3. Do not allow them to use chatrooms.
4. Only allow access to the internet while they are being supervised (or in groups of responsible children).
5. Setup bookmarks for your children and only allow them to visit these ‘approved’ sites – do not give them the opportunity to type in the address box.
6. Putting a physical block on adult sites - this can be done by adjusting the settings in your internet explorer.
7. Install internet protection software for children – available free online.
8. Ensure that the history of the pages visited cannot be deleted.

The article was concluded with a warning, thus:

“Please do not turn a blind eye to the dangers that the Internet poses to our future – our children. Doing so would be tantamount to incompetence and irresponsibility on the part of the Parents. Is it logical that we would ever hand our children a 500-page encyclopedia, that has 50 pages of explicit material and then expect our children never to stumble upon them? The astute parent would remove the 50 pages and then hand the book over or sit by their side and make sure nothing other than beneficial information is looked at.”

Even though the above recommendations are specifically for protecting the children, they also work for the adults who are addicted to

pornography. Above all, it is recommended to make *du'a* (supplications) to Allâh, the Lord of the Worlds, for guidance and protection from the *fahshâ* (immorality) and *fitnah* (trials and tribulations) that surround us, and from the evil machinations of Satan and his representatives.

Social Utility Networking

In recent times, no other medium has been able to accelerate the process of globalization faster than the social utility networks such as Myspace, Friendster, Facebook, Twitter and the likes. The aim behind the founding of these sites, they claim, was to create virtual communities on the Internet to enable people get to know one another and build social relationships. Like in most other parts of the world, these sites are widely accepted in the Arab and Muslim world, and they are available in many languages.

The proliferation of these social networking sites is perhaps one of the most effective tools by which Satan distracts people from their moral responsibilities and from the worship of Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*). The number of users of these sites runs into tens and hundreds of millions, and the number is constantly increasing. In July 2010, Facebook boasted of having no less than 500 million users while Twitter and Myspace had 192 million and 66 million users respectively. These figures give credence to the fact that through technology, people in different parts of the world are able to communicate without leaving their locations. The implication of this is that information, ideas, and ideologies are spread with an unprecedented speed. And because of the preponderance of iniquitous people over godly people in the world today, it is the harmful ideas and ideologies that are mostly passed on with these technologies.

Security Implications of Using Social Networking Sites

Many people see the social networking sites as their first exposure to having a personal website, and because of this, they become so naïve that they expose so much of themselves to strangers on the Internet. They post information that could be remotely embarrassing or even incriminating, oblivious of the fact that social networking sites, just like other websites, can be hacked and that way, information (which may sometimes be classified) can be easily obtained. In fact, nearly anyone can see your site who wants to. This means any information you post is exposed to the entire world, and when such information falls into the hands of criminal elements, the consequences could be very costly.

While some networks like Myspace allow you to set your profile page to private, there are still ways for unapproved people to get a hold of your site and information. The enemies of Islâm and the Muslims can pretty well take advantage of the porosity of the internet security and hack into vital information of our notable figures, organizations and institutions, and the consequences of that could be very devastating.

Effects of Social Networking Sites on Children

One of the grave challenges posed by social networking sites is the inability of its subscribers (mostly children and teenagers) to discern vices from values. Consequently, they swallow everything they get from these media – hook, line, and sinker. This affects not only their morals and cultures, but their consciousness. A 2008 panel known as the Internet Safety Technical Taskforce in Harvard University concluded that technological fixes such as age verification and scans were relatively ineffective means of protecting children. As a result, a seven-year-old who knows how to use a computer could easily use social networks, enter chatrooms and become exposed to topics such as sex, nudity, violence and the likes, as well as being exposed to online

sexual predators. Children can be particularly vulnerable because their brains are still developing and very impressionable.

Moral Implications of Using Social Networking Sites

Millions of people spend scarce resources and productive time searching for and chatting with friends, mostly of the opposite sex. These friends are usually selected based on their profiles posted on their sites, and in most cases these profiles are false. Some people deliberately give false information of themselves in order to assume an exaggerated personality, while others actually post information describing who they think they are or who they intend to be, but not really who they are.

Also, the use of social networking sites serves as a means of establishing sinful relationships between men and women, which may cause the destruction of a stable family. It has helped to revive illicit relationships between lovers and has led to betrayal of marital commitments and divorce. A team from the National Centre for Social and Criminological Research in Egypt prepared a study on Facebook which took several weeks, from which it noted serious consequences of using the site. Among other things, it noted:

“Many visitors to the website (Facebook) succeeded in finding their first love and former relationships, and rebuilt destructive relationships outside the family, which is threatening marriages and Muslim family life.”

This sad situation does not happen at once but takes a sequential process. For example, a married woman who uses any of the social networking sites may meet a friend she had previously had a relationship with or to whom she was earlier betrothed to but could not marry due to some reasons. She starts a conversation with him and they both express joy at their reunion. Thereafter they start exchanging conversations on a regular basis, reminding themselves of their fond

memories of the past. In that way, one thing leads to another, and before they realize it, something which started as a harmless on-line conversation metamorphoses into an extra-marital relationship.

Sheikh Abdul-Hamid Al-Atrash, former head of the fatwa committee at Cairo's Al-Azhar University, issued a religious decree saying that increased use of social networking sites have resulted in the rise of moral corruption. The edict followed a study carried out by the Egyptian National Center mentioned above which found that one in every five cases of divorce in Egypt came about when one partner discovered that the other was having a relationship through the social networking sites, especially, Facebook. The Sheikh described it as an instrument that destroys the family because it encourages spouses to have relations with other people, thereby breaking the Islâmic shari'ah. He says while one or other of the spouses is at work, the other is chatting on-line with someone else, wasting time, flouting the Shari'ah, and endangering the Muslim family.

Time Wasting Through Social Networking

An undisputable fact about social networking sites is that valuable time – which could have been put into judicious uses like learning Islâm, developing oneself morally and academically, engaging in hospital and prison visitations, and waging *jihâd* in the path of Allâh, is wasted chatting with friends and indulging in trivial talks. Whereas Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'âla*) says:

⇒ By (the Token of) Time (through the ages), Verily, man is in loss, except those who believe (in Islâmic Monotheism) and do righteous good deeds, and recommend one another to the truth, and recommend one another to patience. ﴿١٠١﴾

¹⁰¹ Sûrah al-'Asr (The Time) 103:1-3

The wise Muslim should realize that his lifespan is limited and that he will not live on earth forever. He is going to meet his Lord Who will ask him about his time and how he spent it, and about his life and his deeds. The great scholar of Islâm, Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allâh have mercy on him) said:

“A man’s time is in fact his life, and his eternal life, whether it is eternal bliss or eternal suffering, is based on how he spent it. Time is passing quickly; whatever time he spends for the sake of Allâh and by the help of Allâh, this is his true life; any other time is not counted as part of his life, even if he spends it doing what animals do. So if he spends his time in heedlessness, idle entertainment and false wishes..., then his death is better than his life”¹⁰².

How to Make Advantageous Use of Social Networking Sites

Visiting the social networking websites may not be forbidden per se; as it cannot be denied that there are a number of benefits in them which are attained by wise people who are keen to guide others to goodness. Among the benefits of the social networking websites is that they can be used to call people to the path of Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta’âla*). Personal pages can be created for some Islâmic scholars, in which large number of high-quality Islâmic materials (articles, books, videos, etc.) on various Islâmic subjects can be posted, and through which they can offer advice to people and answer their questions.

They could also be used as means of global campaigns to alert the Muslims of global Islâmic events that are suppressed and ignored by the *kâfir* media, or to support oppressed people.

Finally, they can be used to facilitate communication between friends and relatives, especially those who live far apart from one another.

¹⁰² Al-Jawaab al-Kaafi, P. 109

Communication has a good impact in maintaining bonds (including ties of kinship) and encouraging one another to remain steadfast in Islâm.

Our advice to our brothers and sisters is that in the social networking sites there are benefits as well as harms. But in the way it is mostly used today, the harm far outweighs the benefits. Therefore, if the Muslims must use these sites, then they must ensure they use it only in the path of Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*). It is important to remember that the Islâmic guidelines for interacting with the opposite sex apply even in the cyberspace. Therefore they must interact with modesty and limit conversations to only that which is necessary and beneficial.

Improper Dress Code and Moral Decadence

"The way you dress is the way you will be addressed"

Dress has been defined as the total arrangement of all outwardly detectable modifications of the body itself and all material objects added to it. In other words, dress includes not only clothing, which refers to any covering for the human body that is worn, but all accessories, hairstyles, and any other alterations made to the body, temporary or otherwise.

In addition to the obvious function of providing protection and warmth, dress serves many other purposes, most of them having to do with communicating our identity to others. It provides protection for people against many things that might injure the uncovered human body and acts as a shield from the elements (such as rain, snow, wind, sun and unfavorable weather conditions). The promotion of modesty, enhancement of beauty and status, and identification with one's social group, are also other purposes of clothing.

Generally speaking, the wearing of clothing is exclusively a human characteristic and is a feature of nearly all human societies. According to archaeologists and anthropologists, the earliest clothing likely consisted of fur, leather, hides and skins, leaves, or grass that were draped, wrapped, or tied around the body. Man, having realized his state of nakedness and exposure to weather elements, graduated from the use of these simple materials for clothing to the use of more

sophisticated materials such as processed cotton, polyester, silk and other synthetic fabrics, in order to achieve better covering and protection.

However, the unfortunate reality today is that the dress code amongst most people and cultures is reversing to the primitive age when man was completely naked; or to the initial stage of gradual awareness when it was sufficient to barely cover the genitals and leave every other part of the body exposed.

The Spread of Western Dress Code

By the early years of the twenty-first century, Western clothing and styles had, to some extent, become international. This was achieved through colonialism and cultural dissemination through the mass media, and by donating used clothing from Western countries to people in poor countries by charity organizations.

Most of the Western styled dresses are usually tailored to fit the body in such a way that it reveals the exact contours of the body or exaggerate its features. Padding and/or constriction of the body were combined with the techniques of tailoring to restructure the body lineation. For example, corseting, shoulder padding, and even hip-padding have all been used in this century to accentuate body features and are deemed necessary according to modern fashion.

The Islâmic Dress Code

The Islâmic dress code promotes modesty and seeks to minimize vice and immorality in the society. One of the ways it does so is by requiring modest dress. Islâm sets the standards of decency for both men and women.

In most Western countries there are laws defining what is “decent” and allowable as the minimum standard for dressing. This usually amounts

to the male having to cover his genitals and the female having to cover both her genitals and her breasts. If this minimum requirement is not met, the most a person can be charged with is ‘indecent exposure’.

Islâm, on the other hand, prescribes a more decent and civilized minimum dress code for both males and females, with both sexes expected to dress simply, modestly, and with dignity. In the following sub-topics, we shall discuss the minimum requirements for both the Muslim male and the Muslim female, in their dress code and attitude.

The Muslim Male

Most writers and preachers usually concentrate on the females when discussing dress code and modesty. As a result, there are many who think that Islâm has little or no stipulations for the males. The fact is that the exaltation to modesty in Islâm is general and applies to both males and females. In the Qur’ân, Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta’ala*) commanded the males, even before addressing the females, thus:

⇒ Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and protect their private parts. ﴿١٠٣﴾

An ideal Muslim man must always be covered in loose and unrevealing clothing from at least his navel to his knee. This is the absolute minimum covering required. He must never, for example, go out in public wearing a short bathing suit. His dressing should not follow the pattern of the non-Muslims, nor resemble them in their mannerisms like sagging the trousers, and wearing tattoos and dreadlocks, and he must not wear clothes that are meant for women.

Also, the Muslim man is not expected to be caught in the web of fashion as is the trend today. Most males crave for brand names in their choice of dresses rather than for ideals. And most of these brand names are

¹⁰³ Sûrah an-Nûr (The Light) 24:30

used to celebrate or immortalize people who are very distant from Allâh in their behaviour and lifestyle. Some of them are homosexuals, smokers, alcoholics, and gangsters. It does not behove a Muslim to wear the shirt or trousers or even shoes named after so-called “models” who possess such evil qualities. Rather than put on the raiment that instills the feeling of haughtiness and pride, it is better to adopt the raiment of piety. Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) says:

⇒ O Children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover your private parts, and as an adornment; and the raiment of righteousness, that is better. ﴿١٠٤﴾

The Muslim Female

Sadly, from the inside (the character) to the outside (dressing and appearance), the trend among most females today is taking a nosedive – no thanks to the Western idea of civilization which has little or no regards for modesty, bashfulness, and ethical responsibility. By the day, the dress code of the “modern” females increasingly becomes less than adequate as their clothes neither cover their bodies nor dignify them, nor protect them from harsh weathers.

The Muslim woman, however, must be distinct from every other woman in her character, disposition, and appearance. She occupies a special place among women and must not be seen to be a part of the moral decadence that is prevalent in our society today. Rather, she must be seen to be a model of virtues and morals. In addressing the believing women, Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) says:

⇒ And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts) and not to show off their adornment except that which is apparent, and to draw their veils all over

¹⁰⁴ Sûrah al-A'râf (The Heights (or The Wall with Elevations)) 7:26

Juyûbihinna (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms) and not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husband's fathers, or their sons, or their husband's sons, or their brothers or their brother's sons, or their sister's sons, or their (Muslim) women (i.e. their sisters in Islâm), or the (female) slaves whom their right hands possess, or old male servants who lack vigour, or small children who have no sense of feminine sex. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And all of you beg Allâh to forgive you all, O believers, that you may be successful. ﴿١٠٥﴾

Further, in addressing the wives of our noble Prophet, who are the role models of the believing women, Allâh says:

⇒ O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other women. If you keep your duty (to Allâh), then be not soft in speech, lest he in whose heart is a disease (of hypocrisy, or evil desire for adultery) should be moved with desire. But speak in an honourable manner.

And stay in your houses, and do not display yourselves like that of the times of ignorance, and perform As-Salât (the prayers), and give Zakât (obligatory charity) and obey Allâh and His Messenger (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*). Allâh wishes only to remove Ar-Rijs (evil deeds and sins) from you, O members of the family (of the Prophet), and to purify you with a thorough purification. ﴿١٠٦﴾

The eminent scholar from Egypt, Dr. Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, wrote the following beautiful passage on the dress of the Muslim woman in his famous book *Al-Halaal Wal-Haram Fil-Islâm* (The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islâm):

¹⁰⁵ Sûrah an-Nûr (The Light) 24:31

¹⁰⁶ Sûrah al-Ahzâb (The Confederates) 33:32-33

“Islâm makes it *harâm* for women to wear clothes which fail to cover the body, and which are transparent, revealing what is underneath. It is likewise *harâm* to wear tightly fitting clothes which delineate the parts of the body, especially those parts which are sexually attractive. Abu Hurairah narrated that the Messenger of Allâh (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿I will not be a witness for two types of people who are destined for the fire: people with whips, like the tails of cows, who beat the people (i.e., tyrannical rulers who are the enemies of their own people), and women who, although clothed, are yet naked, seducing and being seduced, their hair styled like the tilted humps of camels. These will not enter the Garden, nor will its fragrance even reach them, although its fragrance reaches a very great distance.¹⁰⁷﴾

The Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) described such women as being clothed, yet naked, since their clothing, being transparent and fine, does not do the job of concealing the body but is rather intended to reveal it. Such is the dress of the women of our time. The Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) likened their hair-style to the hump of a special breed of Camel (*bakht*) which has very large humps, because they put up their hair in a beehive shape from the middle of their heads. It is as if the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) were looking beyond the centuries to the present age, when dressing the hair of women and styling it in variety of shapes has become a profession dominated by men who charge high prices for their works. And this is not all. Many women, not satisfied with what Allâh gave them in the form of natural hair, buy wigs made of artificial hair to add to their own in order to increase its body, beauty and

¹⁰⁷ Reported by Muslim

luster, imagining that this renders them better looking and sexually more attractive.”¹⁰⁸

Still quoting freely and copiously from the work of our great scholar, Dr. Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, the correct Islâmic behaviour required of Muslim women which keeps them from wantonly displaying their attractions is characterized by the following:

- A. Lowering the gaze: Indeed, the most precious ornament of a woman is Modesty, and the best expression of Modesty is in the lowering of the gaze, as Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'âla*) says: “...And tell the believing women that they should lower their gazes... (24:31)
- B. Not intermingling with men in such a way that their bodies come in contact or that men touch them, as happens so often today in movie theaters, university classrooms, auditoriums, buses, streetcars, and the like.
- C. The Muslim woman walks and talks in a dignified and business-like manner, avoiding flirtatiousness in her facial expressions and movements.
- D. She does not draw men’s attention to her concealed adornment by the use of perfume or by jingling or toying with her ornaments or other such things. Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'âla*) says “They should not strike their feet in order to make known what they hide of their adornment... (24:31)
- E. Her clothing must conform to the standards laid down by the Islâmic *shari’ah*, which are as follows:

¹⁰⁸ Islâmic Book Trust, Kuala Lumpur: The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islâm, Revised edition 2009, pg 85 – 86.

1. Her dress must cover her entire body with the exception of “that which is apparent”, which according to the most preferable interpretation, refers to the face and hands.
2. It must not be transparent, revealing what is underneath it.
3. Her dress must not be too tight so as to define the parts of her body, especially its curves, even though it may not be transparent.
4. She must not wear clothes which are specifically for men. The Prophet (*sall-Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) cursed women who try to resemble men and men who resemble women, and prohibited women from wearing men’s clothing and vice versa.
5. In her choice of clothing, she must not imitate non-Muslims, whether they are Jews, Christians, or pagans, for Islām disapproves of conformity to non-Islâmic modes and desires its followers to develop their own distinctive characteristics in appearance, as well as in beliefs and attitudes. The Prophet (*sall-Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) said: “Whoever imitates a people is one of them.”¹⁰⁹

Non-Muslims Perception of the Islâmic Dress Code for Females

Some people among the non-Muslims assume that the covering of a Muslim woman is meant to show her inferiority to men. This could not be further from the truth, as the primary reason why Muslim women cover themselves is that it is a command from Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta’ala*). That is to say, obeying this dress code is a form of obedience to Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta’ala*). Besides that, a woman who dresses in accordance with the Islâmic dress code commands respect, and through her modesty rejects sexual servitude. The message that she spreads in the society with her Islâmic dressing is: “Respect me for who I am. I am not a sex object.” It is funny how so many people castigate the woman who covers herself, while no one says anything to the woman who

¹⁰⁹ Narrated by Abu Dawood, 3512; Classified as saheeh by al-Albaani.

exposes herself. If a woman is free to show her body, then why is she not free to cover it?

Islâm teaches that the consequences of immodesty fall not only on the individual but also upon the society. These consequences are significant and cannot be ignored. To make women into sex objects for the pleasure of men is not liberation, but a dehumanizing form of oppression rejected by Islâm. In fact, from the Islâmic point of view, Western women, who claim to be “liberated”, and who most often worry about their looks, figure, and youthfulness for the pleasure of others, are actually trapped in a form of slavery. The liberation of the Muslim woman is that she is recognized by the content of her character rather than by the display of her physical attributes.

The wisdom behind the Islâmic dress code is to minimize sexual enticement and degradation in society as much as possible for both men and women. Islâm forbids any sex appeal and physical allurements outside of marriage.

Hayâ, a Cure to Moral Decadence

Hayâ is an Islâmic term that refers to shyness, bashfulness, and modesty.

Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿Every religion has a particular characteristic. And the characteristic of Islâm is *hayâ*.¹¹⁰﴾

He (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) also said, as reported by Abu Mas'ud 'Uqbah bin 'Amr al-Ansari al-Badri (*radhiy-Allâhu 'anhu*):

¹¹⁰ Ibn Mâjah

﴿Among the things that people have found from the words of the previous prophets was: ‘If you feel no shame, then do as you wish’.¹¹¹﴾

The above prophetic exhortations appertain to every Muslim, irrespective of gender. Islâm came to fight all despicable actions, eradicate all sins (outwardly and inwardly), and establish a society of cleanliness, chastity, modesty, virtue, honour and purity (of heart, soul, speech and action). At the head of all virtuous manners is *hayâ*, and it is one of the fundamental instruments by which modesty is promoted in Islâm.

Islâm introduced and established many regulations based on the principle of *hayâ* to protect Muslims from the evils of immorality. Among these regulations is the Islâmic dress code for men and women, the ban on the free mixing/socializing of men and women, and the teachings on relations between the sexes.

These laws reflect the value of *hayâ* in Islâm and the need for it to regulate the affairs of people, including their character and appearance. They also serve to shield Muslims with modesty and dignity and cut off all causes of immorality, lewdness and deviation at the very root. It is only then that true success can be achieved, as Allâh says:

⇒ Successful indeed are the believers: Those who offer their prayers with all solemnity and full submissiveness... And those who guard their chastity. ﴿¹¹²

Hayâ is a quality instilled in man to deter us from fully indulging in our desires, by creating in us the feeling of rejection for every disgraceful matter, and serves as a deterrent from committing sinful deeds. It is

¹¹¹ Al-Bukhâri

¹¹² Sûrah al-Mu'minoon (The Believers) 23:1-5

among the most important factors that leads us to perform righteous deeds and guides us to perfect our character.

It can be referred to as your moral conscience. He who does as he pleases has a heart that is truly dead and possesses no shame or self-dignity whatsoever. Whoever possesses *hayâ* will be troubled even when indulging in a wrong action in private, for his *hayâ* is very much alive and so is his heart.

Sadly today, many Muslims are far removed from the concept and practice of *hayâ* that Islâm guides to. This has led to a decline of morality to levels previously unimaginable. Indecency is made attractive, and some Muslims have become the carriers and messengers of this filthy malady.

The shocking symptoms of this are glaringly evident – children born out of wedlock, spread of sexually transmitted diseases, abuse of women and children, rape, pornography, and general competition in evil deeds.

Shameful and disgraceful acts are committed without any restraint or fear of Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*). Men and women rush to sins like thirsty animals rush to a watering place to satiate their thirst – ignoring or rejecting the reality that, by so doing, they are filling their bellies with the fire of hell.

This is certainly not where the Muslims should be. Surely the world is in desperate need of morality to put a stop to the decadence and chaos that is so prevalent. This morality cannot be relative to a people, place or time as many are fooled into believing. Rather, it has to be constant, universal and capable of guaranteeing true protection.

In the words of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*):

﴿Hayâ does not produce but goodness. ¹¹³﴾

﴿Hayâ and *îmân* (faith) are two companions that go together. If one of them is lifted, the other is also lifted. ¹¹⁴﴾

﴿Al-Hayâ is part of *îmân* (faith). ¹¹⁵﴾

No doubt, the only solution to the moral decadence that has become prevalent in the world today is to return to Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) and submit totally to Him rather than to our own vain desires. Bringing about this revolutionary change is a responsibility the Muslims owe the world in order to make it a better place for us, our progeny, and generations to come. The path of Allâh is the path of righteousness and morality. And the only religion on the surface of the earth that still has morality in its agenda is Islâm. All other religions have been carried away by their reprehensible acquisitiveness and insatiable desire for wealth and other glitters of this worldly life. But Islâm remains conservative; operating like a thermostat, which regulates the condition of the environment, and not like a thermometer, which is regulated by the condition of the environment.

Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) says in the Glorious Qur'ân, the last of the revealed scriptures:

⇒ Verily! Allâh commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all indecent deeds (lewdness) evil, and rebellion. He exhorts you that you may receive admonition. ﴿¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Al-Bukhâri and Muslim

¹¹⁴ Al Hâkim

¹¹⁵ Muslim

¹¹⁶ Sûrah an-Nahl (The Bees) 16:90

Missing the Virtue of Patience

⇒ *O you who believe! Seek help in patience and prayer. Truly, Allāh is with the patient.* ¹¹⁷

Patience is the ability to endure, persevere, tolerate, and withstand delay, wrong, anxiety, hardship, trials, poverty, calamity, exertion, pain, grief, etc., despite difficulties and setbacks without complaining or lamenting, and with persistence over time. The converse of this is impatience. Patience is of Allāh, as one of His names is As-Sabur (The Patient), while impatience is of Satan the devil.

According to the illustrious scholar of Islām, Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah, there are three spheres of patience, namely: patience in fulfilling the religious obligations and in doing righteous deeds, patience in abstaining from evil and prohibited acts, and patience in enduring hardship without complaints. This all-important virtue is clearly in scarcity among the contemporary Muslims, and the resultant effect is laxity or total negligence in the performance of religious duties, failure in abstaining from religious prohibitions, and inability to withstand hardship.

¹¹⁷ Sûrah al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:153

Patience in Fulfilling Religious Obligations and Doing Righteous Deeds

Islâm is built upon knowledge of the truth and the implementation of that knowledge. Seeking this knowledge requires patience and its implementation also requires patience. Therefore, the first level of patience is endurance and constancy in fulfilling religious obligations and in doing acts of righteousness.

Belief requires absolute endurance through hope in and fear of Allâh and entrusting every aspect of life to Him. Putting into practice the five pillars of Islâm also requires patience and constancy. Regular and constant prayers cannot be performed without some degree of endurance. This is because the five established prayers must be performed at fixed times and regularly too. The call to prayer brings all activities, business transactions, handwork, study, etc. to a halt. *Zakât* emphasizes the need to share, give and care for the poor and less privileged, irrespective of race, tribe, or social status. It bridges the gap between the haves and the have-nots in the society, giving the latter a sense of belonging. Hajj places the task upon every Muslim sufficiently wealthy, to carry out certain religious rights at a fixed time and specific place.

With regards to this type of patience, Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) commands His servants in the Noble Qur'ân thus:

⇒ Lord of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, so worship Him (Alone) and be constant and patient in His worship. ﴿١١٨﴾

¹¹⁸ Sûrah Maryam (Mary (Mother of Jesus)) 19:65

⇒ And enjoin prayers on your family and be patient in offering them. ﴿١١٩﴾

Also, in striving against the enemy, Allâh enjoins patience. He, the Supreme in Might, says:

⇒ If a good befalls you, it grieves them, but if some evil overtakes you, they rejoice at it. But if you remain patient and righteous, not the least harm will their cunning do to you. Surely, Allâh surrounds all that they do. ﴿١٢٠﴾

Likewise, in dealing with people, a great deal of patience is required. Hence, Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'âla*) gave the following address to Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) in the Glorious Qur'ân:

⇒ And keep yourself (O Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*)) patiently with those who call on their Lord (your companions). ﴿١٢١﴾

The prophet, himself, blessings and peace of Allâh be upon him, said:

﴿It is better for you to mix yourself around people who may harm you, and to be patient with them, than to isolate yourself from them, and to not practice patience from their harm.﴾

Patience in Abstaining from Evil and Prohibited Acts

This sphere of patience requires a great struggle against one's desires and takes much forbearance in refraining from the evil influences of

¹¹⁹ Sûrah Taa Haa 20:132

¹²⁰ Sûrah Aal-'Imrân (The Family of 'Imrân) 3:120

¹²¹ Sûrah al-Kahf (The Cave) 18: 28

Satan, both from among men and *Jinn*¹²². It is the ability to restrain one's self from evil even though it may be alluring.

Therefore, Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'âla*) will give great rewards on the Day of Judgment to those who patiently abstained from evil. A good example of refraining from sin, even when it is alluring, is found in the story of prophet Yusuf, blessings and peace of Allâh be upon him. He patiently refrained from the evil lure of the beautiful and influential wife of the King of Egypt, choosing incarceration for several years rather than committing an evil act. And Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), in describing the seven categories of people who will be sheltered under the shade of Allâh's throne on the day when there will be no other shade, but His shade mentions:

﴿...a man whom an extremely beautiful woman seduces (for illicit sexual relation), but he rejects this offer, saying: I fear Allâh (in that which you are inviting me to).¹²³﴾

Expressing undue hostility and aggression is also another form of impatience. The inability to control one's anger, rage or selfish desire, over certain things or issues threatens faith. In situations like this, Satan finds himself in absolute control of the activities of the fellow and makes him perform actions he would eventually regret.

Abu Hurairah, may Allâh be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allâh said:

﴿The strong man is not one who is good at wrestling, but one who controls himself in a fit of rage.¹²⁴﴾

¹²² Spirit beings

¹²³ Recorded by Bukhâri and Muslim

¹²⁴ Al-Bukhâri

Patience in The Face of Hardship

To be classified among *as-sabirûn* (the patient ones), one must develop the ability to endure hardship without complaints. One must not complain because among the articles of faith in Islâm, according to a Hadith reported by Umar bin al-Khattab (*radhiy-Allâhu 'anhu*) is:

﴿...to believe in Qadar (predestination), both the good thereof and the bad thereof. ¹²⁵﴾

And Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) says:

⇒ No calamity befalls, but by the Leave [i.e., Decision and Qadar (Divine Preordainments)] of Allâh. ﴿¹²⁶

The encouragement to be patient in the face of hardship should not be misconstrued as a permission or a justification to just sit around and do nothing to help out of the hardship. Rather, a Muslim is encouraged to be patient, and at the same time do everything Islâmically permissible to ease his hardship.

Know, dear reader, that Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) predestined hardship for man by His infinite Wisdom, and He (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) will reward the believer for his patience during hardship, by erasing his sins and lifting him up to higher levels of Paradise. This is because the courage to forbear in the face of adversity is a sign of perfection of faith. Says He, The Exalted in Majesty, in the Noble Qur'ân:

⇒ Be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give

¹²⁵ Recorded by Muslim

¹²⁶ Sûrah at-Taghaabun (Mutual Loss and Gain) 64:11

glad tidings to those who patiently persevere, Who say, when afflicted with calamity: "To Allâh We belong, and to Him is our return": - They are those on whom (Descend) blessings from Allâh, and Mercy, and they are the ones that receive guidance. ﴿١٢٧﴾

⇒ And We shall try you until We test those among you who strive their utmost and persevere in patience; and We shall try your reported (mettle). ﴿١٢٨﴾

Also, Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿How wonderful is the situation of a believer; there is good for him in everything, and this is not the case with anyone except a believer. If prosperity attends him, he expresses gratitude to Allâh and that is good for him; and if adversity befalls him, he endures it patiently and that is better for him.﴾¹²⁹

The radical ideology in today's world that propagates the "get rich at all costs" syndrome and belies the belief in destiny has increased the level of impatience in most Islâmic societies. A great percentage of the Muslims now have extremely inordinate ambitions, and as a result find unconvincing justification to partake in unholy activities such as modern and euphemized forms of gambling presented in the guise of lotteries, games and raffle draws, all in order to acquire wealth. Poverty or affliction is regarded by many as a curse or a misfortune, whereas that may not always be the case.

Abu Hurairah (may Allâh be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allâh (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

¹²⁷ Sûrah al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:155-157

¹²⁸ Sûrah Muhammad (Prophet Muhammad) 47:31

¹²⁹ Recorded by Muslim

﴿He whom Allâh intends good for, he makes him to suffer from some affliction.﴾¹³⁰

Patience in the Lives of the Prophets and Messengers

The messengers of Allâh, blessings and peace be on them all, needed great patience in order to fulfill their obligations of conveying the message of Allâh to mankind and establishing it on the earth. Without patience, the fulfillment of their missions would have been impossible. For this reason, Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) commanded Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), saying:

⇒ Therefore, patiently persevere (O Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*)) as did the Messengers of strong will. ﴿﴾¹³¹

According to the Qur'ân, all the prophets and messengers of Allâh sent to mankind exercised a great deal of patience, even when they were confronted with great trials and tribulations. The Messenger of Allâh (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, as narrated by Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas (*radhiy-Allâhu 'anhu*):

﴿The people most severely tested are the Prophets, then the righteous, then the next best and the next best. A man will be tested in accordance with the degree of his religious commitment, the stronger his religious commitment, the stronger his test.﴾¹³²

A good example of a prophet who was thoroughly tested with regards to his faith, wellbeing and possessions, as mentioned in the Qur'ân, was

¹³⁰ Al-Bukhâri

¹³¹ Sûrah al-Ahqâf (The Curved Sand-Hills) 46:35

¹³² Tirmidhi, 2398

Prophet Ayyub, upon him be peace. He was struck with trials, affecting his wealth, children and physical health. He had plenty of livestock, cattle and crops, many children and beautiful houses, and he was tested in these things, losing everything he had. Then he was tested with regard to his body, and he was left alone on the edge of the city and there was no one who treated him with compassion apart from his wife, who took care of him. It was said that it reached the stage where she was in need, so she started to serve people (to earn money) for his sake.¹³³

In the face of these trials, Prophet Ayyub said: “I praise You, the Lord of lords, Who bestowed His kindness upon me and gave me wealth and children, and there was no corner of my heart that was not filled with attachment to these worldly things, then You took all of that away from me and You emptied my heart, and there is nothing to stand between me and You. If my enemy, Satan, knew of this, he would be jealous of me”. When Satan heard of this, he became upset. And Ayyub, upon him be peace, said: “O Lord, You gave me wealth and children, and there was no one standing at my door complaining of some wrong I had done to him. You know that I used to have a bed prepared for me, but I forsook it and said to myself: ‘You were not created to lie on a comfortable bed’. I only forsook that for Your sake.”¹³⁴

In reward for Ayyub’s patience and perseverance, Allâh says:

⇒ So, We answered his call, and We removed the distress that was on him, and We restored his family to him (that he had lost) and the like thereof along with them as a mercy from Ourselves and a Reminder for all those who worship Us. ﴿١٣٥﴾¹³⁵

¹³³ See *Tafsîr* ibn Katheer

¹³⁴ This was recorded by Ibn Abi Hatim

¹³⁵ Sûrah al-Anbiyaa (The Prophets) 21:84

Allâh made him an example lest those who are beset by trials think that Allâh does that to them because He does not care for them, and so that they may take him as an example of patience in accepting the decrees of Allâh and bearing the trials with which He tests His servants as He wills.

Prophet Yusuf's story, as mentioned earlier, is also a good reference of great endurance and perseverance. He was forcefully separated from his family, and even though he resisted the seduction of the king's wife to commit illegal sexual intercourse, he was wrongfully imprisoned and based on false accusation. But Allâh, in His own way, brought him out of imprisonment and elevated him to the lofty position of overseeing the public treasury.

Prophet Nuh, blessings and peace of Allâh be upon him, preached for nine hundred and fifty years but was faced with the challenge of convincing a society that was filled with disbelief, immorality and tyrannical leadership, yet endured despite all the forces of opposition and hostility set against him.

The Messenger of Allâh, Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), was not an exception. He suffered rejection, oppression, transgression, and intimidation from the unbelievers but conquered because he was patient. Despite all the difficulties and challenges they faced, the fruit of their labour was success, as clearly stated in the Glorious Qur'ân, wherein Allâh says:

⇒ Verily along with every hardship is relief. ﴿١٣٦﴾

Therefore, for their patience and perseverance in the face of trials and adversities, Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) alleviated their hardships and promised them great rewards in the hereafter.

¹³⁶ Sûrah ash-Sharh (The Opening Forth) 94:5

Importance and Benefits of Patience:

The virtue and weapon called patience is the first key to discovering and learning how to solve most problems. It transforms us into humbler, generous, kind and helpful servants of Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*). Patience grooms the character of the individual by teaching him lessons of munificence, kindness, nobility, contentment, fortitude, and steadfastness. It suppresses proclivity to evil deeds like greed, aggression, and oppression.

Patience keeps you from getting bored during serious activities that require continuous energy and time. It prevents you from rushing on tasks that require much time, devotion and sedateness. That way, it adorns the acts of worship and makes them easier and enjoyable. For example, a person who observes his prayers with patience and full submissiveness – perfecting its standing, bowing, prostration, and recitations – enjoys the prayer and experiences the sweetness of faith and devotion. But a person who rushes over his prayers in a bid to have it done with or “gotten rid of”, finds it a heavy burden and mere boring gymnastics.

Patience controls you during times of anger and fear and prevents you from committing wrong verbal or physical acts. Patience controls you from greed and selfishness, and from following your own desires. Patience prepares you to withstand physical or psychological hardship when it is required, and it is a proof of the completion and perfection of faith. Patience leads to the love of Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) and the people, and it will be a cause of salvation from hellfire and admittance to paradise.

What more can we say of patience? Overall, we have learned that it is the key to success in this life and the hereafter. When the heart of a Muslim is sickened with inadequacy of this important virtue, life

becomes uneasy for him; because he would then find it difficult to bear the conditions he would find himself in. Therefore, we should try hard to practice patience in our lives, and we should know that patience is attainable through practice and conscious efforts, and by keeping the company of those who practice and adopt patience and abstaining from the company of the impatient ones.

Allâh, The Almighty and All-Wise, says:

⇒ By (the Token of) Time (through the ages), Verily, man is in loss, except those who believe (in Islâmic Monotheism) and do righteous good deeds, and recommend one another to the truth, and recommend one another to patience. ﴿١٣٧﴾¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Sûrah al-'Asr (The Time) 103:1-3

Ribâ (Usury)

With the present insatiable quest for wealth and the glitters of this worldly life, *Ribâ* (interest, usury) has become a norm in the society both on individual and governmental bases, despite the fact that all religions and mythologies have prohibited, restricted, discouraged, disliked, or degraded *Ribâ* in one way or the other since the inception of human interaction. All three major revealed religions i.e., Islâm, Christianity, and Judaism strongly condemned and prohibited *Ribâ* in its original versions. Later, the Christians and Jews abandoned this prohibition, and that led to the economic anarchy of the present era commonly referred to as the great economic melt down.

The Definition of Ribâ

In one word, the closest approximation to the meaning of the term *Ribâ* in the English language is interest or usury. However, in the Islâmic terminology, *Ribâ* could be defined as a loan with the condition that the borrower will return to the lender more than or better than the quantity or quality borrowed, or a forced "increase of value" in "the medium of exchange" that is loaned or swapped. In other words, *Ribâ* is an effortless profit or that profit which comes free from compensation or that extra earning obtained that is free of exchange.

Islâm encourages people to earn their living in lawful ways and consume only that which is lawful. Therefore, all dealings and earnings have to be in compliance with the conditions set by the *shari'ah*, and

Ribâ is amongst those conditions which all dealings and earnings must be free from.

Evidences from the Qur'ân and Hadith on the Prohibition of *Ribâ*

There are copious number of verses in the Qur'ân where *Ribâ* is expressly and unequivocally prohibited. For example, in the second chapter of the Qur'ân (*Sûrah Al-Baqarah*), Allâh, the Exalted in Majesty, says:

⇒ Those who eat *Ribâ* (interest) will not stand (on the Day of Resurrection) except like the standing of a person beaten by Satan, leading him to insanity. That is because they say: "Trading is only like *Ribâ*," whereas Allâh has permitted trading and forbidden *Ribâ*. So, whosoever receives an admonition from his Lord and stops eating *Ribâ*, shall not be punished for the past; his case is for Allâh (to judge); but whoever returns (to *Ribâ*), such are the dwellers of the Fire – they will abide therein forever. Allâh will deprive *Ribâ* (interest/usury) of all blessing, but will give increase for deeds of charity... ﴿١٣٨﴾

Later in the same chapter, He (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) says:

⇒ O you who believe! Fear Allâh and give up what remains of your demand for *Ribâ* (interest/usury), if you are indeed believers. If you do not, take notice of war from Allâh and His Messenger. But if you repent, you shall have your capital sums. Deal not unjustly, and you shall not be dealt with unjustly. ﴿١٣٩﴾

Also, in the third chapter of the Qur'ân (*Sûrah Âl-Imrân*) Allâh says:

¹³⁸ *Sûrah al-Baqarah* (The Cow) 2:275-276

¹³⁹ *Sûrah al-Baqarah* (The Cow) 2:278-279

⇒ O you who believe! Eat not *Ribâ* doubled and multiplied, but fear Allâh that you may be successful. ﴿١٤٠﴾

In the fourth chapter of the Qur'ân (*Sûrah An-Nisâ*), He (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) says:

⇒ That they took *Ribâ* (Interest/usury), though they were forbidden; and that they devoured men's substance wrongfully; - we have prepared for those among them who reject faith a grievous punishment. ﴿١٤١﴾

Finally, in the thirtieth chapter of the Qur'ân (*Sûrah Ar-Rûm*), Allâh admonishes those who indulge in *Ribâ* saying:

⇒ That which you lay out for increase (*Ribâ*) through the property of (other) people, will have no increase with Allâh. But that which you lay out for charity, seeking the Countenance of Allâh, (will increase): it is these who will get a recompense multiplied. ﴿١٤٢﴾

There are also numerous prophetic statements of our beloved Prophet (Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*)) which explicitly prohibit the dealing in or consumption of *Ribâ*. The following are a few examples:

Abdullah bin Mas'ud (May Allâh be pleased with him) reported:

﴿The Messenger of Allâh (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) cursed the one who accepts *Ribâ* (Interest/Usury) and the one who pays it. ١٤٣﴾

¹⁴⁰ Sûrah Aal-'Imrân (The Family of 'Imrân) 3:130

¹⁴¹ Sûrah an-Nisaa (The Women) 4:161

¹⁴² Sûrah ar-Rûm (The Romans) 30:39

¹⁴³ Muslim

The narration in At-Tirmidhi on this Hadith adds:

﴿And the one who records it, and the two persons who stand witness to it.﴾

The Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) was also reported to have said on another occasion:

﴿*Ribâ* (Usury) has seventy-three doors, the least of them is compatible with committing adultery with one's own mother. The most heinous part of *Ribâ* is to transgress by defaming another Muslim.¹⁴⁴﴾

Also, in a Hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah (May Allâh be pleased with him), the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) classified *Ribâ* among the seven major sins. In the Hadith, he (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) was quoted to have said:

﴿Keep away from the seven fatalities." It was asked: "What are they, O Messenger of Allâh?" He (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) replied, "Associating anything with Allâh in worship (i.e., committing an act of Shirk), sorcery, killing of one whom Allâh has declared inviolable without a just cause, devouring the property of an orphan, the eating of *Ribâ* (Interest, usury), fleeing from the battlefield and accusing chaste believing women, who never even think of anything touching their chastity.¹⁴⁵﴾

And finally, in his farewell message, he (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) reminded the Muslims thus:

¹⁴⁴ Ibn Mâjah and Al-Hakim

¹⁴⁵ Bukhâri and Muslim

﴿Allâh has forbidden you to take interest; therefore, all interest obligations shall henceforth be waived.﴾

These clear and unequivocal references from the Qur'ân and Hadith, leave no one in doubt as to the fact that dealing in Riba is unlawful and there could not be any blessing in it. Rather, Allâh has declared war on those who refuse to give up this great evil, and His beloved Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) has cursed such people.

The Wisdom Behind the Prohibition of Ribâ

In order to understand the wisdom behind the prohibition of interest, let us present a factual example from existing interest-based banking methodology that is valid and current, which can be well understood by a common person. One should consider the following facts before going through the example:

- Only Banks create money.
- The created money is then supplied in to the economy only in the form of loan at some specified interest.
- There are no other institutions that create money other than banks.

As all the banks are creating money and supplying into the economy on interest (and without any doubt all of them are practicing the same technique), so let us consider in our example that there is only one bank that creates some money and supply into the economy.

Suppose Bank XYZ creates one hundred thousand dirhams and supplies it at an interest rate of ten percent per annum to several entrepreneurs and governmental units active in the economy. The bank takes substantial collateral or guarantee as security for its money from each borrower; and remember that there is no other source through which money can be available in the economy.

It is very simple and clear that at the end of the first year, a combined sum of a hundred and ten thousand dirhams is due on all borrowers to repay to the loaning bank. But the money available in the economy (which was created by the bank) is only a hundred thousand dirhams. So from where would the extra ten thousand dirhams, which is supposed to be the difference in the borrowers' intake and total repayment amount, come? NOWHERE! The fact is that the extra ten thousand dirhams does not exist in the economy.

Look at the scene again: the bank is the only supplier of money, it created and supplied one hundred thousand dirhams into the economy and that became the total money available in the economy. But as per loan agreements, the borrowers collectively had to pay back one hundred and ten thousand dirhams. How is that possible? If this is not criminality, then criminality has no definition.

As a matter of fact, the money creator (the central bank) has designed a mechanism that would force few of the borrowers each year to default so that they could forfeit the security assets and enable the bank gain wealth by foul play. So, what will happen is that at least one or more of the borrowers would default on their loan(s) and would loose their personal assets (collateral) or belonging that they had put as security to the bank for the repayment.

This is an eye-opening example for those who previously had no idea about the mechanism of banks and how they operate and cause artificial shortage (scarcity) of money in the societies. This is happening everywhere in this world – from the largest to the smallest country on this beautiful planet. This artificial scarcity of money is the root cause of poverty and economic downturn.

Suppose just One Gram of Gold (i.e., one millionth of a metric ton) was loaned at an interest rate of two percent per annum at the time of the first Hijri year (Islâmic calender), then after 1422 Islâmic years, the

quantity of gold required to repay that loan would have been 1,696,071.847 metric tons of gold, whereas the total gold reserve of the world known as at 1422 AH (explored or unexplored) was less than 160,000 tons. So, where would the extra gold come from? That is how senseless and unnatural the Riba system is. The excess is fake, criminal and unrealistic.

Thus, from the above analysis, it is clear that *Ribâ* was prohibited in order to prevent the creation of "extra liability/demand" which in reality exists only in figures but not physically. This artificial "extra liability/demand" creates scarcity of the produce (money, gold, silver, or other medium of exchange) in the society and unjust accumulation of the produce in few hands. This explains why less than four hundred individuals own more than fifty percent of the total wealth of the world today, and the situation is worsening by the day. This is unfair and against nature, so Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'âla*) prohibited *Ribâ* (interest, usury) very strictly in order to prevent this criminal action. Islâm is a practical Religion that takes nature into cognizance; therefore, it prohibits anything unnatural and declares it unlawful.

Widespread Indulgence in Ribâ among Today's Muslims

It is very sad indeed that in emulating the Western societies, Muslims have also founded their economies on the system of interest. The Westernized rulers of the Muslim countries are not making any effort to emancipate their countries from this curse, nor do the citizens of these countries show enough passion and quest for an alternative Islâmic economic system. In fact, a large majority of them relish this evil system called *Ribâ* and even propagate it. They enlist with cooperative societies in their places of work and elsewhere that are interest based without minding the consequences. They take loans from banks on interest bases to build magnificent edifices and buy posh cars and still classify it under *dharurah* (dire necessity).

One major reason for this widespread indulgence in *Ribâ* among the Muslims is that the Muslims of today tend to be very lax with matters of *halâl* and *harâm*. It is this laxity and heedlessness that has led them to indulge in interest and other usurious transactions, even though they are aware of its serious prohibition and its harmful effect on the individual and the society. They do almost anything as long as there is a momentary benefit derivable from it. While in some cases, they are oblivious of the illegality and gravity of their actions, in many other cases, they are fully aware of the impermissibility of their actions and their grievousness in the sight of Allâh, yet they continue to luxuriate in it and pay no heed. When they are given beneficial reminders and wise exhortations by their Muslim brothers and sisters, they respond with mockery and scorn, and show serious unconcern. Their answers, at best, are usually, “Allâh will understand” and “Allâh is Forgiving and Merciful”. With these two common phrases, they legitimize their wrong actions and continue to wallow in sin, expecting that on the Day of Judgement, “Allâh will understand” and that He will pardon them simply because He is “Forgiving and Merciful”. We remind them of Allâh’s words concerning the heedless, as contained in the twenty-first chapter of the Qur’ân:


⇒ Closer and closer to mankind comes their Reckoning: yet they heed not, and they turn away. Never comes (aught) to them of a renewed Message from their Lord, but they listen to it as in jest, - Their hearts toying as with trifles... ﴿١٤٦﴾

No doubt, *Ribâ* is a grievous sin in the sight of Allâh, and indulgence in it does not befit a Muslim. One may only resort to borrowing on interest basis when there is the risk of losing life or limb and there is no other alternative means of raising fund. It is really not worth destroying the eternal life of the hereafter, just so that we may have a few more comforts in this life which can come to an end any moment. We must realize that while it is true that Allâh is Forgiving and

¹⁴⁶ Sûrah al-Anbiyâ (The Prophets) 21:1-2

Merciful, it is also true that Allâh is stern in punishment to those who are unrepentant and obstinate in sin. Therefore, we must fear Allâh as He should be feared, take seriously His commandments, and treat as lawful what he has declared lawful, and treat as unlawful what He has declared unlawful.

Social Factors

 Social factors refer to the all-encompassing influences or contributions, either positive or negative, of certain elements and agents with regards to the welfare, behaviour, interaction and organization of a group of people that share a common interest.

The positive elements or agents are affirmative, irrefutable, and beneficial to the human society while the negative factors are undesirable, detestable and vicious. For the purpose of this book, we shall be dwelling on the latter, which includes such vices as drug abuse, wars, crime, violence and political strife.

Drug Abuse

This is the deliberate use of illegal drugs and related substances such as heroine, tobacco, cocaine, alcohol; or the excessive use of prescribed drugs like analgesics and cough syrups which with time results in drug dependence and addiction. Drug abuse is a serious evil which opens the way to other evils like suicide, violence (domestic or otherwise), sexual harassment, child and women abuse, to mention but a few. Islâm prohibits the use of any substance that will affect the sanity of a believer. Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'âla*) says in the Glorious Qur'ân:

⇒ O you who believe! Intoxicants and gambling, (dedication of) stones, and (divination by) arrows, are an abomination, - of

Satan's handwork: eschew such (abomination), that you may prosper. ﴿١٤٧﴾

Suicide

Secondary to alcoholism and excessive drug dependence is suicide, i.e., intentional or self-inflicted death, which is usually resorted to due to extreme emotional pain and distress. Though scientists are of the view that it can be genetic (hereditary) due to predisposition to certain psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia or lower levels of a brain chemical known as “serotonin” in people with impulsive aggressiveness, the sociologists, on the other hand, are of the opinion that it is caused by some cultural values, lack of effective strategies to cope with stress, social and economic conditions. Whereas, psychological theories have proven that unconscious emotions like revenge, hatred, depression, hopelessness, guilt and a deliberate cry for attention, are the paramount causes. Whatever the case, suicide is strongly forbidden in Islâm.

Euthanasia, or ‘mercy killing’ as it is commonly referred to, which involves terminating a person’s life in order to release him or her from an incurable disease, intolerable suffering or humiliating death, is also not permitted in Islâm. Only Allâh, The Almighty and All-Wise, grants mercy at the time of death and relieves or terminates suffering at His unquestionable Will. As Muslims, we are not allowed to wish for death. The longer a person lives, the better for him. If he is righteous, then he would have more opportunity of drawing closer to Allâh, and if he is evil, he will have ample opportunity to be penitent and turn away from sin.

The Prophet (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) said:

¹⁴⁷ Sûrah al-Mâ‘idah (The Table spread with Food) 5:90

﴿None of you should make request for death because of the trouble in which he is involved, but if there is no other help to it, then say; O Allâh! keep me alive as long as there is goodness in life for me and bring death when it is best for me. ¹⁴⁸﴾

Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) emphatically prohibited suicide in the Glorious Qur'ân, where he says:

⇒...And do not kill yourselves (nor kill one another). Surely, Allâh is Most Merciful to you. ﴿¹⁴⁹﴾

There are also a number of references from the *ahadith* of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) on the prohibition of suicide. Among them are the following:

Narrated Thâbit bin Ad-Dahhâk (*radhiy-Allâhu 'anhu*): The Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿...whoever commits suicide with a piece of iron, will be punished with the same piece of iron in the Hell-fire. ¹⁵⁰﴾

Narrated Jundub: The Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿A man was inflicted with wounds, and he committed suicide, and so Allâh said: 'My slave has caused death on himself hurriedly, so I forbid Paradise for him. ¹⁵¹﴾

¹⁴⁸ Al-Bukhâri

¹⁴⁹ Sûrah an-Nisâ (The Women) 4:29

¹⁵⁰ Sahih Al-Bukhâri, 2/1363

¹⁵¹ Sahih Al-Bukhâri, 2/1364

Narrated Abu Hurairah (*radhi-y-Allâhu 'anhu*): The Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿He who commits suicide by throttling, shall keep on throttling himself in the Hell-fire; and he who commits suicide by stabbing himself, shall keep on stabbing himself in the Hell-fire (forever).

152 ﴿

And finally, The Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿If somebody commits suicide with anything in this world, he will be tortured with that very thing on the Day of Resurrection.

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Crimes and Violence

Crime could be defined as an action prohibited by law or a failure to act as required by law. It also refers to an activity that involves breaking the law, or an act considered morally wrong, or a shameful, unwise, or regrettable act. Every society, religion or organization has laid down rules and regulations which must be adhered to for the success of the society. Most crimes punishable under civil law are also punishable under Islâmic law but the reverse is not always the case. Adultery is an example of a crime punishable in Islâm but not under civil law, especially in countries that are said to be ‘developed’. This is because Islâmic law is divine and the books on guidance are purely based on revelation (the Qur’ân), actions and sayings of the Prophet (the Hadith), and the rightly guided scholars (Islâmic jurists); while civil law is strictly based on the rules and regulations of a group of people or nation based on no divine revelation, but on their own whimsical ideas, and

¹⁵² Sahih Al-Bukhâri, 2/1365

¹⁵³ Al-Bukhâri Book #73, Hadith #73

based on their customs and traditions. To a large extent, however, they decide what is right or wrong based on their desires.

The law-abiding citizens or followers find it difficult to practice the do's of the society in which they are in whenever they discover that the law makers are themselves the law breakers. Therefore, leadership by example, justice and equity are the backbone of the success of any society.

As for violence, generally speaking, it involves the extreme use of physical, destructive, uncontrollable and unjustifiable force to cause harm, injury or damage. Domestic violence, which refers to the emotional and physical abuse of a spouse, child or other members of one's family, is the commonest type. Though regarded as an antisocial personality disorder, other causes like low income (or lack of job satisfaction), unemployment, cultural values, growing up in a violent family, alcohol and substance abuse are contributing factors. Irrespective of the precipitating agent, violence and crimes are condemnable in Islâm. According to a Hadith recorded by Tirmidhi, the Messenger of Allâh (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) was reported to have said:

﴿The most perfect believer with respect to faith is he who is best in manners. ¹⁵⁴﴾

Public violence, which in most cases is an expression of anger or disagreement, is characterized by riots, mob actions, and destruction of lives and property. This happens to be one of the most vicious forms of violence and it is highly discouraged by the religion of Islâm. Such unleashing of ferocity, whether against Muslims or non-Muslims, is usually misconceived as *jihâd*, which means to struggle or to fight in Allâh's cause. Allâh clearly instructs in the Qur'ân that He does not

¹⁵⁴ Tirmidhi

love the aggressors. And as for the non-believers, He clearly states that hostility should not be shown to those of them that have not chased the believers out of their houses, oppressed or transgressed against them. On the contrary, these days, Muslims tend to fight against the non-Muslims for very flimsy and invalid reasons like political party differences, etc. in the name of *jihâd*. And when it is time for the real *jihâd* they give numerous excuses why they cannot partake in it.

The scene that makes the heart of a true believer weep is when believers fight one another in the cause of sectarianism, tribalism, racism or other worldly reasons. This is perpetrated by perverted scholars and religious bigots who tend to incite inequity amongst the believers and infuse enmity and hatred in their hearts against one another. The Glorious Qur'ân says:

⇒ Verily, those who conceal the clear proofs, evidences and guidance, which We have sent down, after we have made it clear to the people in the book, they are the ones cursed by Allâh and cursed by the cursers. ﴿١٥٥﴾

⇒ O you who believe! Stand out firmly for Allâh as just witnesses: and let not the enmity or hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety; and fear Allâh. Verily, Allâh is well-acquainted with what you do. ﴿١٥٦﴾

Political Strife

As regrettable as it is, Muslims are enmeshed in bitter conflicts and rivalries especially with regards to partisan politics, leadership, government, and power tussle. This strife rears its ugly head in both civil and religious platforms, and it is usually characterized by the emergence of opposition groups who rebel against the policies and

¹⁵⁵ Sûrah al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:159

¹⁵⁶ Sûrah al-Mâ'idah (The Table spread with Food) 5:8

principles of the leading authorities. Their tactics usually involve deliberate creation and exploitation of fear in the leaders and the led through the use of violence (murder, kidnapping, bombing, assassination, arson, etc.). The cause of these actions could be grievances borne out of historical and cultural antecedence, ethnic or sectarian discrimination, political oppression and persecution, perceived inequities, economic exploitations, exclusion from the mainstream of events, or any combination of these.

Unfortunately, some of these acts are state sponsored (i.e., aided by national governments) in the form of covert (secret) warfare, and they are usually intended to further their own political goals. The agents of the state wage cold wars by using terrorist surrogates (stand-ins) as hired guns, offering them incentives, and protecting them using the various state apparatuses, including the media and security agencies – unmindful of the fact that Allâh knows what they reveal and conceal, and that we will stand as witnesses against ourselves on the day of reckoning. Allâh the Almighty and All-Wise states in the Qur’ân:

⇒Nay! Man will be a witness against himself, Even though he were to put up his excuses (to cover his evil deeds). ﴿١٥٧﴾

⇒How (will it be) then, when We bring from each nation a witness and We bring you (O Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*!)) as a witness against these people? ﴿١٥٨﴾

Wars

Our discussion here centers on the waging of armed conflicts or hostilities between groups, communities, nations, tribes, or sects. In most cases, such conflicts are precipitated by arguments, misunderstandings, misconceptions, discrimination, oppression,

¹⁵⁷ Sûrah al-Qiyâmah (The Resurrection) 75:14-15

¹⁵⁸ Sûrah an-Nisâ (The Women) 4:41

transgression, vengeance, selfishness etc., and they, in most cases, involve physical battles (land, air and sea) and media confrontation.

Also, the ill-treatment of others based solely on race, ethnicity, sect or religion, or their membership of certain groups is traceable in history to be one of the major causes of wars.

Wars, more often than not, leave long-lasting effects on the participants and the victims, such as depression, homelessness, devastating orphanage, and exposes people to sexual harassment, malnutrition, famine, diseases, genetic mutations, and disabilities. Moreover, precious time, energy and resources (financial and human) are usually involved in the prosecution of these wars. Though one party may emerge victorious at the end of every war, both parties (winners or losers) usually feel the impact. Islâm, being a religion of peace does not support unnecessary aggression, except for legitimate reasons like defending the borders of Islâm or repelling the aggressors.

Marriage

The Arabic word for Marriage is *zawaj*. However, the Islâmic terminology commonly used to refer to marriage is *nikah*, which literally means “intercourse”. It is used to refer to the marriage agreement because in Islâm marriage is seen as the lawful means to sexual intercourse. Therefore, marriage, being the lawful means by which people fulfill their natural instincts of love, affinity, and affection for the opposite sex, saves the society from promiscuity and immorality, and eliminates delinquents and illegitimate children from the society by guaranteeing every born child a responsible ancestry and fosterage.

In order to facilitate marriage and discourage promiscuity, Islâm has legislated some basic requirements and has stipulated four major conditions to be met in order to contract a lawful marriage. These conditions are:

- Ijaab wa qabul (proposal and acceptance)
- The presence or approval of the *wali* (Parent or guardian).
- The *mahr* (bridal gift)
- The presence of at least two male Muslim trustworthy witnesses.

If these four conditions are met, and the basic requirements of *niyyah*¹⁵⁹, *dīn*¹⁶⁰, chastity, attainment of puberty, sanity, and eligibility are satisfied, then the marriage can be successfully contracted.

Unfortunately, however, so many other conditions, mostly irrelevant, have been placed on marriage, making it difficult to achieve, especially for the poor and less privileged. Many of these superfluous conditions are actually more of barriers, blockades and impediments, than conditions. By the day, more emphasis is placed on materialism than on religion, to such an extent that when a young lady introduces the man to whom she intends to get married to her parents or guardians, the most likely question he'll be asked first is, "Young man, what do you do for a living". They ask this question not really because they want to be sure that their prospective son-in-law has a lawful source of income and can maintain their daughter, but because they want to know how much they stand to benefit for themselves out of the union. This is because, most parents/guardians consider marrying out their children/wards as securing a lifetime meal ticket. They see it as a poverty eradication program sponsored by the groom.

Marriage as a Financial Burden?

Marriage is fast losing its lustre among young men, as it is seen as a financial burden rather than a beneficial institution worthy of entering. Most men now consider a wife to be more of a liability than an asset. Also, the rather elaborate demands from most families prior to and during marriages and the anticipation of an expensive life after the wedding reception scare many men away from nuptial commitment. In some places, a man in his twenties dare not think of marriage during his early years of employment, even if he boasts an academic

¹⁵⁹ Intention

¹⁶⁰ *Dīn* is an Arabic term for faith or religion. Usually in the sense of Islām, it is the religious system and way of life taught by Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*).

achievement, unless he has rich parents to foot the bill. His headache is compounded if his betrothed is also a graduate, as (in most places today) the more educated a woman is, the higher the price placed on her by her family. However, if the graduate gets a job in a money-spinning industry, then after a considerable number of years of working, he may have enough financial impetus to afford the luxury of taking a wife. The unfortunate consequence of these anomalies is that nowadays men are staying single for much longer than their fathers did, while young hapless spinsters are getting more eagerly desirous and increasingly frustrated as they helplessly watch their golden age wither away - losing their freshness, vigor and vitality to the passage of time.

The Panacea to the Phobia for Marriage

Islâm teaches us that our sustenance does not depend on our jobs but on Allâh the Sustainer of the universe, and that if we fear Allâh and put our trust in Him totally and sincerely, He will provide for us as he provides for the birds. Allâh, Exalted be His Majesty, says:

⇒ And I (Allâh) created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me (Alone). I seek not any provision from them (i.e. provision for themselves or for My creatures) nor do I ask that they should feed Me (i.e. feed themselves or My creatures). Verily, Allâh is the All-Provider, Owner of Power, the Most Strong. ﴿١٦١﴾

⇒ And whosoever fears Allâh and keeps his duty to Him, He will make a way for him to get out (from every difficulty). And He will provide him from (sources) he never could imagine. And whosoever puts his trust in Allâh, then He will suffice him. Verily, Allâh will accomplish his purpose. Indeed, Allâh has set a measure for all things. ﴿١٦٢﴾

¹⁶¹ Sûrah adh-Dhaariyaat (The Winds that Scatter) 51:56-58

¹⁶² Sûrah at-Talaaq (The Divorce) 65:2-3

Likewise, Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said in a very beautiful Hadith narrated by Umar (May Allâh be pleased with him):

﴿If you were to put your trust wholeheartedly on Allâh with due reliance, He would certainly provide for you as He provides for the birds who go forth hungry and return with full belly. They go out with empty stomach and return filled. ¹⁶³﴾

These and many other teachings of Islâm embolden the Muslims and insulate them from Western permissiveness and the fear of the unknown. But unfortunately, the fear of hunger and poverty, and the mutual rivalry to acquire wealth has eroded the faith in and reliance on Allâh from the hearts of many Muslims. As a result, parent's who passed through hard times usually think that the best way to secure a comfortable future for their children is to marry them to people of affluence. Little or no attention is given to the *sunnah* of our noble Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) which stipulates very simple requirements for marriage. Rather, they relegate the *sunnah* of the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) and substitute it with a deluge of *bid'ah* (cursed innovations) in the name of custom and tradition. Under the *bid'ah* systems, the intending groom is furnished with a long list of items to present like jewelries, boxes, clothes, shoes, handbags, foodstuffs, drinks, and specific sums of moneys - to mention but a few. In most cases, the list also includes items for the girl's parents and other relatives, near and far. All these are separate from the large sums of money which the would-be groom is made to pay as the *mahr* for the would-be bride, which in most cases runs into tens of thousands for the average individuals and millions for the affluent. It suffices to mention here the story of a companion of Prophet Muhammad who had absolutely nothing except for the portions of the Qur'ân which he

¹⁶³ At-Tirmidhi

memorized, yet the Prophet (*sall-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) married a woman to him, and he took his wife home that same day. The story, as Narrated by Sahl bin Sad, goes thus:

❦ A woman came to Allāh's Apostle and said, "O Allāh's Apostle! I have come to you to present myself to you (for marriage)." Allāh's Apostle glanced at her. He looked at her carefully and fixed his glance on her and then lowered his head. When the lady saw that he did not say anything, she sat down. A man from his companions got up and said, "O Allāh's Apostle! If you are not in need of her, then marry her to me." The Prophet said, "Have you got anything to offer." The man said, "No, by Allāh, O Allāh's Apostle!" The Prophet said (to him), "Go to your family and try to find something." So, the man went and returned, saying, "No, by Allāh, O Allāh's Apostle! I have not found anything." The Prophet said, "Go again and look for something, even if it were an iron ring." He went and returned, saying, "No, by Allāh, O Allāh's Apostle! I could not find even an iron ring, but this is my *Izar* (waist sheet)." He had no *Rida* (upper garment). He added, "I give half of it to her." Allāh's Apostle said: "what will she do with your *Izar*? If you wear it, she will have nothing over herself thereof (i.e., she will be naked); and if she wears it, then you will have nothing over yourself thereof". So, the man sat for a long period and then got up (to leave). When Allāh's Apostle saw him leaving, he ordered that he be called back. When he came, the Prophet asked (him), "How much of the Qur'ân do you know (by heart)?" The man replied, I know such *sûrah* and such *sûrah* and such *sûrah*¹⁶⁴, "naming the *sûrahs*. The Prophet said, "Can you recite it by heart?" He said, "Yes." The Prophet said, "Go, I let you marry her for what you know of the Qur'ân (as her *mahr*¹⁶⁵).¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ A *Sûrah* is a chapter of the Qur'ân.

¹⁶⁵ In Islâm, *mahr* is an amount of money or a gift given by the groom to the bride at the time of marriage (*nikah*) which she can use as she wishes.

¹⁶⁶ Sahih al-Bukhâri Book #62, Hadith #58

Even though the *sahaabi* literally had nothing, he married the woman and took her home that same day, relying totally on Allâh and knowing fully well that his sustenance and that of his wife, as well as every other creature, lies with Him, the Almighty.

Imposing Prohibitive Conditions on Marriage

It is saddening how parents watch their children age in their houses, yet impose stiff conditions on them for marriage, not minding the fact that these children are saturated with all of the feelings resulting from the urge to gratify sexual impulses. If they don't disapprove of their children's choices of spouse on the grounds of race, colour, tribe, family ancestry, social status, or physical qualities like height, complexion, looks, and facial marks, they forbid them totally from getting married until certain requirements like possessing an academic qualification or completing their academic career. In some cases where the intending groom or bride has an elder sibling who is yet to secure a spouse, their parents insist that they must "wait for their turns" by allowing their elder siblings marry first. Where this is not the case, they cite an agelong vendetta, the cause of which no one living can tell, and disapprove of their children's chosen spouses.

What sense does it make for a parent or guardian to reject the choice of his son or daughter who has reached maturity, or probably in his or her late twenties or early thirties, based on any of these frivolous conditions mentioned above? Through what means do they expect them to gratify their sexual urge, knowing that it cannot be fully suppressed.

These conditions and restrictions discourage, marriage and the resultant effect is that it creates an alarming number of unmarried Muslim men and women, who may become overwhelmed by their concupiscence and find an easy means to vent it. There are a number

of sisters whose parents have frustrated their sincere and genuine efforts to seek the fulfillment of their sexual desires in marriage for flimsy excuses, until they got pregnant for their next-door neighbours or their family friends. There are also a sizeable number of brothers who face similar challenges: they make frantic efforts to get married and lead a responsible life, but their parents frustrate their efforts until they end up finding solace through unlawful means. Sometimes, the only reason why some parents prevent their sons from taking wives for themselves is because they fear that their attention would be diverted from them, and as such they would not be receiving as much financial support as they used to get from them. But the question is why should you help the devil against your own child for selfish reasons? It is better to allow your children marry and face the vicissitudes of life than to force them into conditions that will make them bear you illegitimate grand children. Their sustenance and your sustenance lie only with Allâh.

Allâh, Exalted be His Majesty, says:

⇒ Marry those among you who are single, or the virtuous ones among yourselves, male or female: If they be poor, Allâh will enrich them out of His bounty... ﴿١٦٧﴾

And the Prophet, Allâh's blessings and peace be upon him, said:

﴿If one comes to you seeking marriage, and you are satisfied with his *dīn* (religion) and character, marry him; otherwise, a *fitnah* (harm) and great destruction will become rampant on the earth.﴾¹⁶⁸

He (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) also said:

¹⁶⁷ Sûrah an-Nûr (The Light) 24:32

¹⁶⁸ Recorded by Tirmidhi, Ibn Mâjah and others.

﴿There are three individuals that it is a right upon Allâh to help them: a fighter for Allâh's Cause, a *mukâtib* (i.e., a slave who makes a contract with his master to purchase his freedom) who wants to pay himself off, and one who seeks marriage for the purpose of preserving his chastity.^{169﴾}

Going by the teachings of our beloved Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), spouses are chosen based on one of four criteria: wealth, social status, beauty and religion. He, Allâh's blessings and peace be upon him, advised us to choose our spouses based on their religious qualities in order that we may be successful.

Parents and guardians, however, based on the aforementioned Hadith, may disapprove of the proposed spouses of their children or wards on religious grounds. That is to say, if the proposed spouses presented to them by their children or wards are not eligible judging by the principles of Islâm, then they do not have to approve such proposals. For instance, if a Muslim sister presents a non-Muslim man to her parents for marriage, then definitely such proposal cannot be approved of, as Muslim women are prohibited from marrying non-Muslim men. Allâh, the All-Knowing and All-Wise, says concerning the believing women:

⇒ ...They are not lawful (wives) for the disbelievers nor are the disbelievers lawful (husbands) for them... ﴿¹⁷⁰

Also, if a man claims and appears to be a Muslim is known to indulge in soothsaying or other forms of *shirk* (polytheism), then marriage to such person may not be approved, based on the Islâmic ruling on soothsaying and soothsayers.

¹⁶⁹ Recorded by Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Nasâi and others.

¹⁷⁰ Sûrah al-Mumtahanah (The Woman to be examined) 60:10

On the whole, it is better and advisable for parents to scrutinize their children's chosen life partners on the basis of religion than on materialism and other ephemeral things.

Divorce

Marriage in Islâm is a very important bond that guarantees the continuity of man and in it Allâh has placed love and mercy as part of His signs for those who reflect. The importance of marriage is further emphasized in a Hadith in which the Prophet (*sall-Allâh 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

«Indeed, I marry women. So, whoever goes against my Sunnah (prophetic tradition), then he is not from me. ¹⁷¹»

In marriage, there is tranquility, love, mercy, and the lawful fulfillment of sexual desire. However, no matter how much the spouses strive, there are bound to be differences in marital relationships. But because of the sanctity and importance of Marriage, every effort must be made to bring about peaceful and amicable reconciliation among couples whenever there is a discord between them. However, when all such efforts at reconciliation have proved abortive due to some obvious reasons like incompatibility, apostasy, irreconcilable differences, sexual immorality, etc., and it becomes clear that the rift cannot be resolved except through separation of the two parties, then, as a last resort, Islâm reluctantly allows divorce in an honourable fashion. Reluctantly, because the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

¹⁷¹ Sahih Al-Bukhâri Book #62, Hadith #1

﴿Among lawful things, divorce is most hated by Allâh.¹⁷²﴾

In other words, divorce is detested by Allâh, but He, in His infinite Wisdom, has made it lawful only under unavoidable circumstances, when living together becomes an unbearable torture and it becomes difficult for the two parties to observe the limits of Allâh and to fulfill their marital responsibilities.

Unfortunately, today, this allowance is taken for granted by most people. They break up the marital bond with such nonchalance that one wonders whether the institution of marriage meant anything to them when they were wining and dining their wedding guests. They see marriage as a loose and tenuous relationship between men and women, similar to a commercial transaction, which can be terminated for the most trivial reasons. Men tend to divorce women without following the prescription of the Islâmic *shari'ah*, without lawful necessities, and without first exhausting every means of reconciliation and conflict resolution. This nonchalant attitude has led to a colossal scale of divorce within the Muslim communities. In general, many people no longer see marriage as sacred.

Some of the common but unwarranted causes of divorce today are as follows:

Marital Misconduct

Misbehaviour or misconduct in marriage creates a lacuna between the husband and the wife which widens into a gulf and eventually leads to divorce. Therefore, every form of marital misconduct, be it battery, unfaithfulness, disrespect, neglect of responsibilities, ill-treatment, boycott of marital bed for unjustifiable reasons, etc., is conducive and is an inducement to divorce, and as such must be eschewed. Marriage

¹⁷² Reported by Abu Dawud

is the bedrock of the society; therefore, anything that is injurious to it must be shunned in order to save the society. Differences between spouses must be properly managed, in order to make and sustain a successful marriage.

Lack of Mutual Tolerance between Husband and Wife

Mankind, as Allâh says in the Qur'ân was created out of imperfection. Every human being has got shortcomings and weaknesses. Therefore, couples must learn to tolerate the shortcomings of one another by using their positives to cover up their negatives. There is no such thing as a perfect man or a perfect woman anywhere. Therefore, if a man divorces his wife because of a particular shortcoming he perceives from her, he may end up marrying another woman who may be okay in that aspect but wanting in every other aspect. For example, a woman may not be hardworking in the home, leaving the household chores undone almost on a daily basis, but she may be extremely respectful and dutiful to her husband, and childbearing. So, if a man divorces such a woman just because she is lazy with the house chores, he may end up with an alternative who may be very hardworking, leaving nothing of the house chores undone, but very haughty and disrespectful to him, and sterile. What may be a virtue in a clock may be sheer incompetence in a barometer, therefore, in the words of the Prophet (*sall- Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*):

﴿Let not a believing man dislike a believing woman. If something in her is displeasing to him, another trait may be pleasing.﴾¹⁷³

And Allâh, the Glorified and Exalted, says:

¹⁷³ Muslim

⇒ ...and live with them honourably. If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing through which Allâh brings a great deal of good. ﴿174﴾

It must be noted that while the men are required by Islâm to be tolerant and patient with what they dislike in their wives, the women are required to strive to please their husbands to the best of their ability, and to do anything humanly possible within their purview and within the confines of Islâm to avoid the anger of their husbands. A Hadith of the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) states that:

﴿There are three (persons) whose salat does not rise even a single span above their heads: a man leading a congregational salat while the people hate him, a woman passing the night while her husband is angry with her, and two quarrelling brothers.﴾¹⁷⁵

Desire for Multiple Sexual partners

Many men marry women only because of their sexual appeal. Therefore, when they no longer find their wives as sexually attractive and appealing as they used to be – which may be due to advancement in age, childbirth, or sickness – they no longer find any good in them. They pick on them for the minutest of mistakes and frustrate them till they eventually divorce them, all in order to pave way for them to get a more sexually appealing partner. The reality is that the new partner soon becomes affected by the same conditions the first one experienced, and she is made to suffer the same fate. The Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said about such people:

﴿I do not like the tasters, men and women.﴾¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Sûrah an-Nisâ (The Women) 4: 19

¹⁷⁵ Reported by Ibn Mâjah and Ibn Hibban in his sahih

¹⁷⁶ Reported by Al-Tabarani and Al-Darqutni

and,

﴿Allâh does not like the tasters, men and women.¹⁷⁷﴾

This problem is rampant in the *ummah* today and it jeopardizes the safety, social and psychological security, and wellbeing of our women and children. Such act of changing women just for the purpose of tasting a variety of sexual partners is immoral and evil, and it incurs the wrath of Allâh. Even though this act is most common among the men, a few women behave like that too. They abandon their husbands only in order to be free to run after other men. A shameful and despicable act indeed it is.

The Islâmic Limits for the Regulation of Divorce

Islâm places a great deal of restrictions and obstacles on divorce in order to discourage it and make it, as it were, but a last resort to resolving irreconcilable and unbearable differences between couples.

First and foremost, before divorce can be lawful and resorted to, there must be a genuine and lawful necessity for it, and all avenues for reconciliation must have been exhausted to no avail. Divorcing incessantly without satisfying the above condition paints a picture which depicts the Muslims as a people who divorce at will and at the slightest provocation.

Also, when divorce becomes inevitable, it is not permissible for the Muslim to implement it any time and any how he pleases; he must wait for a suitable time and it must be done following certain specific guiding principles. According to the *shari'ah*, the suitable time for divorce is when the woman is clean following her menstrual period or

¹⁷⁷ Al-Tabarani

the period of puerperal discharge following childbirth and before her husband resumes sexual relations with her, or when she is pregnant, and her husband is aware of her pregnancy.

The reasons for these time limits are simple and logical. They are in order to give room for the husband to reconsider his stand and allow for reconciliation, as during menstruation or the period of puerperal discharge, sexual intercourse is prohibited, a reason which may cause the man to develop frustration due to sexual starvation and nervous tension and may therefore tempt him to entertain the idea of divorce. He is therefore advised to wait until his wife is clean and sexually approachable, and to divorce her then if he is truly bent on divorce, before the resumption of sexual relations.

It is mentioned in the *Tafsīr* of ibn Katheer that:

ﷺ Abdullah bin `Umar divorced his wife, during the lifetime of Allāh's Messenger, while she was menstruating. `Umar bin Al-Khattab mentioned that to Allāh's Messenger. Allāh's Messenger became angry and said, "Order him to take her back and keep her until she is clean from her menses, and then to wait until she gets her next period and becomes clean again. Then, if he wishes to divorce her, he can divorce her when she is clean from her menses, before he has sexual intercourse with her. This is the `Iddah which Allāh the Exalted and Most Honored has fixed.

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Just as it is prohibited to divorce a woman during menstruation, it is also prohibited to divorce a woman when she is pure and sexually approachable, if the husband has had sexual intercourse with her following the termination of her last menstrual period. Islām imposes this condition on the man because it is possible that the woman may

¹⁷⁸ Al-Bukhārī and Muslim

have become pregnant from the intercourse and that may encourage the man to change his mind knowing that the woman is carrying his child, desiring to keep the marriage at least for the sake of the child.

As a requirement, a waiting period of three months must be observed by the woman following a first or second pronouncement of divorce. During this period, the Islâmic shari'ah requires that the divorced woman remains in her husband's house, receiving full maintenance from him. Allâh, the Glorified and Exalted, says:

⇒ Prophet (*sal-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*)! When you divorce women, divorce them at their *'Iddah* (prescribed periods) and count (accurately) their *'Iddah* (periods). And fear Allâh your Lord (O Muslims). And turn them not out of their (husband's) homes nor shall they (themselves) leave, except in case they are guilty of some open illegal sexual intercourse. And those are the set limits of Allâh. And whosoever transgresses the set limits of Allâh, then indeed he has wronged himself. ﴿١٧٩﴾

This creates an avenue for reconciliation, as the mutual sympathy and love between them may be rekindled, while if she is pregnant, the passing of months will make her pregnancy obvious, which may be a further inducement to the man to change his mind. In any case, ample time is at their disposal to reconsider the whole situation, and it is hoped that with the healing effect of time, feelings of antipathy may give way to affection and reconciliation, and the revitalization of the bond may occur. If then they must separate, it should be done with dignity and kindness, without mutual abuse, injury, recrimination, or infringement of rights. Allâh, the All-Wise, says:

⇒ ...either take them back in a good manner or part with them in a good manner. ﴿١٨٠﴾

¹⁷⁹ Sûrah at-Talaaq (The Divorce) 65: 1

¹⁸⁰ Sûrah at-Talaaq (The Divorce) 65:2

⇒ ...either you retain her on reasonable terms or release her with kindness. ﴿١٨١﴾

⇒ And for divorced women, maintenance (should be provided) on reasonable (scale). This is a duty on Al-Muttaqûn (the pious). ﴿١٨٢﴾

Divorcing a Woman Thrice in a Row

A common practice among many Muslims today is to pronounce divorce on their wives thrice in one session and consider it as three divorces, seeking to evade the protocols laid down by the *shari'ah* in order to get rid of the woman as quickly as possible. Such Muslims are rebels against Allâh's law and are deviating from the straight path of Islâm. Their action is tantamount to jesting with the law of Allâh.

Once the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) was informed about a man who had pronounced three divorces at one time on his wife, and he got up in anger saying:

﴿Is sport being made of the Book of Allâh while I am (yet) among you?﴾¹⁸³

Ibn 'Abbas, the great companion of the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) also reported a Hadith in which he said:

﴿Rukâna divorced his wife thrice in a single session, and was greatly saddened in his longing for her. The messenger of Allâh

¹⁸¹ Sûrah al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:229

¹⁸² Sûrah al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:241

¹⁸³ Reported by Al-Nasâi

asked him, ‘How did you divorce her?’ He said, ‘I divorced her thrice in a single session.’ He (the Prophet), ‘that is a single divorce. Bring her back by revocation.’¹⁸⁴ ﴿

When a Muslim divorces his wife and she completes her *‘iddah*, each of the couple is allowed to marry someone else or remarry each other if they so desire, with a renewed marriage contract. However, this allowance can only be used twice, and after the third divorce, the woman is obligated to remarry another man, and may only return to her previous husband if the new husband divorces her. However, contrary to the common practice of the present day, it is not allowed for the new husband to marry the woman and divorce her simply to make her *halaal* for her previous husband.

¹⁸⁴ See the Book of Talaq in *Bidayat al-Mujtahid wa Nihayat al-Muqtasid* by Ibn Rushd.

Funeral Rites

The funeral of a deceased fellow is one of the rights incumbent upon the Muslims, and one of the Islâmic injunctions the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said must not be delayed. In his words, as reported by Abu Hurayrah:

﴿Three things must not be delayed: The prayer when its time has reached,... and the burial of a deceased Muslim.﴾

And, He (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) also said:

﴿Six are the rights of a Muslim over another Muslim... When you meet him, offer him greetings; when he invites you to a feast accept it. When he seeks your counsel give him, and when he sneezes and says: "All praise is due to Allâh," you say *Yarhamuk Allâh* (may Allâh show mercy to you); and when he falls ill visit him; and when he dies follow his bier.¹⁸⁵﴾

With the above commandments, funeral in Islâm is considered an act of worship and not a platform for pomp and show, as it is being practiced today. And as with every other act of worship, Islâm has stipulated the ways of conducting funeral rites, of which any other thing added to it is tantamount to *bid'ah* (cursed innovation), and the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

¹⁸⁵ Sahih Muslim Book 26, Hadith 5379

﴿Every *bid'ah* is a misguidance...¹⁸⁶﴾

The Muslim community is currently witnessing a very ugly phenomenon, where people sell their properties and even go borrowing to give their deceased Muslim relatives “befitting” burials. Consequently, funeral ceremonies in most places today can hardly be differentiated from marriage ceremonies, as all the attendees, usually gorgeously dressed, are usually found busy feasting and partying, instead of seizing the opportunity to engage in sober reflection over the ephemeral nature of this life and the certainty of the hereafter.

Transporting Corpses from One Locality to Another For Burial

A common practice found among most people nowadays is that when a person dies, his corpse is transported over vast distances to his home town or country for burial, even when there is no condition, like government restrictions or regulations, which necessitates that. This practice is not permissible, because it contradicts the Prophet’s (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) order to hasten the burial and it also necessitates unnecessary additional expenses. Islâm legislates that the dead should be buried in the same area where they died. It does not matter whether or not the family can afford the extra cost, as waste and extravagance contradict the spirit of Islâm. Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta’ala*) says:

⇒ Verily, the spendthrifts are brothers of the devils, and the Devil (Satan) is ever ungrateful to his Lord. ﴿¹⁸⁷

⇒ And (also) those who spend of their substance to be seen of men, and believe not in Allâh and the Last Day (they are the

¹⁸⁶ Abu Dawud and At-Tirmidhi, who says it is an authentic hadith

¹⁸⁷ Sûrah al-Isrâ (The Journey by Night) 17:27

friends of Satan), and whoever takes Satan as an intimate; then what a dreadful intimate he has! ﴿١٨٨﴾

Furthermore, the Prophet, blessings and peace of Allâh be upon him, specifically forbade his followers from transferring dead bodies from the locality in which they died. With regard to this, Jaabir ibn ‘Abdullaah said:

﴿On the day of the Battle of Uhud, the dead were being carried (back to Madeenah) for burial in al-Baqee’, when the Prophet’s announcer called out: Allâh’s Messenger orders you to bury the dead where they die.” This (announcement came) after my mother had already tied my father and uncle to the sides of her camel, in order to bury them in al-Baqee’. However, she returned them to where they were killed (for burial).﴾¹⁸⁹

To further emphasise the prohibition of transporting the dead to another country or locality for burial, Imâm an-Nawawee in his book, *al-Athkâr*, said:

“If the dead person requests in his will that his body be transported to another country, it should not be fulfilled, because transporting the dead to another locality is prohibited according to the authentic position held by most scholars.”¹⁹⁰

In some cases, families and friends spend huge sums of money transporting the corpse of their dead and giving them flamboyant funerals, without considering the payment of their outstanding debts, which according to the Islâmic injunction must all be repaid from the wealth he or she left behind, even if it consumes all of the inheritance. And if the dead person was without wealth or the inheritance was not

¹⁸⁸ Sûrah an-Nisâ (The Women) 4:38

¹⁸⁹ Collected by the Four Sunans

¹⁹⁰ Saheeh Kitaab al-Athkaar, Vol.1, P.433

sufficient to cover all of his or her debts, the state will be responsible to repay the remainder, if the dead person had made serious efforts to pay it. They organize red-carpet ceremonies where they do all sorts of detestable things like playing music, singing and dancing, without considering the up-keep of the orphans and widows left behind by the deceased.

Excessive Crying and Mourning

The loss of a dear one usually brings sadness, rage, and pain and it is a natural thing to shed tears at such occasions. Therefore, Islâm, being a practical religion, allows those present and the relatives of the deceased to cry for a period of three days but not more. ‘Abdullaah ibn Ja‘far reported that the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) delayed coming to visit Ja‘far’s family for three days after his death, then he came to them and said:

﴿Do not cry for your brother after today.¹⁹¹﴾

Women are allowed to avoid all forms of beautification as a sign of mourning for their husbands, children or relatives. This does not contradict the recommendations for patience, as long as the mourning does not exceed three days for her child or relative and four months and ten days for her husband.

But excessive mourning is not allowed in Islâm as it is a trait of the people of ignorance, and it implies dissatisfaction with Allâh’s decree. As such, unneeded gathering is not allowed at the home of the deceased person, as it is commonly practiced today. Such gathering places an unnecessary burden on the heavily laden bereaved to provide food and drink for the sympathizers, which contradicts the Prophet’s explicit

¹⁹¹Sunan Abu Dawud, vol.3, p.1165, no.4180 and Mishkat Al-Masabih, vol.2, P. 934.

instruction to relatives, friends and neighbours to send food to the bereaved family. Imâm ash-Shâfi‘ee said:

﴿I dislike gatherings, even if there is no wailing or crying. For it only renews the (family’s feelings of) sorrow and puts burdens on their food supplies.¹⁹²﴾

And ‘Abdullaah ibn Ja‘far said: “When the announcement of Ja‘far’s death came, the Messenger of Allâh (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿Prepare food for Ja‘far’s family, for something has happened to them which is distracting them (from their needs).¹⁹³﴾

Death Anniversary Celebration – A Common Innovation

A common innovation among the Muslims today with regards to funeral rites is to observe, commemorate or celebrate, by organizing gatherings, the 1st, 3rd, 7th, 20th, and 40th anniversary of the deceased. This practice is an innovation. It has no basis in the Qur’ân or sunnah of our beloved Prophet, nor in the traditions of our pious Muslim predecessors. In the lifetime of the Prophet, blessings and peace of Allâh be upon him, he lost a lot of dear ones including his wife Khadija, his uncle Hamza, and his son Ibrahim. But he never organized such gatherings, whatsoever, for any of them. And He (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*), said:

﴿Whosoever introduces into this affair of ours (i.e. into Islâm) something that does not belong to it, it is to be rejected.¹⁹⁴﴾

¹⁹² Al-Umm, vol.1, p.248, quoted in Ahkâmul-Janâ’iz, P.167.

¹⁹³ Collected by At-Tirmitheh, Aboo Dâwood and Ibn Mâjah

¹⁹⁴ Al-Bukhâri & Muslim

Apathy for Religious Knowledge

⇒ And He taught Adam all the names (of everything), then He showed them to the angels and said, "Tell Me the names of these if you are truthful. They (angels) said: Glorified are You, we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Verily, it is You, the All-Knower, the All-Wise. ﴿١٩٥﴾

Man's awareness, cognizance, discernment, sagacity, ideas, principles, familiarity, and understanding gained through experience or study, makes him a distinct creature. His depth of knowledge and his inherent ability to use his intellect assists him in decision making and in choosing a lifestyle.

Acquisition of knowledge, formal or informal, teaches him the science of comparison and helps him to clearly differentiate the good from the evil. This ability to reason and rationalize will stand against him on the day of reckoning. Allâh, the Exalted and Most High, says:

⇒ And they (the disbelievers) will say: "Had we but listened or used our intelligence, we would not have been among the dwellers of the blazing Fire!" ﴿١٩٦﴾

According to Islâmic philosophers, three main types of knowledge exist, viz: knowledge by certainty of reasoning, sight, and touch. This

¹⁹⁵ Sûrah al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:31-32

¹⁹⁶ Sûrah al-Mulk (The Dominion) 67:10

explains why the insane and physically challenged are given some kind of consideration in the religion of Islâm. The sane, as well as the physically and psychologically unchallenged, may have no excuse for acting ignorantly when they have been given all the necessary facilities to seek knowledge.

Disturbing spate of religious ignorance among the Muslims

The appalling level of religious ignorance among the Muslims of today is a major cause for concern. A lot of Muslims do not know the reason why they are Muslims and what is expected of them as Muslims. Even among those who may be termed as practicing Muslims, they can hardly fathom explanations for their actions. They may be keeping their beards which, of course, is in line with the *sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) but they may not be able to explain to an inquirer the reason why they do so and the wisdom behind it. This is largely due to the fact that they neither read Islâmic books/literatures nor attend Islâmic programs (lectures, symposiums, workshops, conferences, etc.). They neither learn Islâmic *adabs* (mannerisms) nor *ahkam* (rulings), and they are seriously wanting in Islâmic jurisprudential issues. When they are faced with confusing situations that require Islâmic judgements, they follow the practice upon which they found the people or use their own logical reasoning, which in most cases is whimsical and laden with ignorance.

The noble, Prophet, blessings and peace of Allâh be upon him said:

﴿Verily, Allâh the Exalted abhors those who are knowledgeable of the life of this world, but ignorant of the Hereafter.﴾¹⁹⁷

He, the Prophet, and his companions, aware of the consequences of ignorance in the society coupled with the fear of what the next

¹⁹⁷ Jaami' as-Sagheer, 1856: Graded as saheeh by al-Albâni

generation of Muslims will be, made all efforts to spread and teach the religion to as many people as they could. The rich history of Islâm is filled with such great personalities of high learning who are meant to serve as role models to us, and whom we should not just know by their names but also by their sayings and deeds. Good examples of them are Imâm Muhammad ibn Ismail ibn Ibrahim (popularly known as Imâm Bukhâri), Sheikhul-Islâm Ibn Taymiyyah, the great Islâmîc philosopher and scientist Abu'l Waleed Muhammad Ibn Rushd, the great Imâm Abu Hameed Ibn Muhammad Al-Ghazâli, and the renowned Islâmîc jurist Al-Qadhi 'Iyâdh Al-Yahsubi.

Preference for Western Education

There is a growing preference for the Western styled educational system among most people in the world today, Muslims inclusive. However, a close look at the Western educational system reveals an appalling degree of defects. These defects are so many and destructive as to call for alternative Islâmîc educational systems. Let us consider a few instances:

1. Under the Western educational system, children are sent by their parents to schools with good intentions of obtaining sound education and a chance for a better life, but they end up being placed in environments where mixing of sexes is the norm through the placement of children in multi-gender classes and sporting teams. In the absence of close and proper Islâmîc guidance, these children grow up to see and accept such behaviour as normal. This leads them, in a way, to considering the Islâmîc requirement of segregation of sexes as “old fashioned” or “backward”. After years in such environments, it is no surprise that we see so many young Muslims with “boyfriends” and “girlfriends”.

2. As early as in elementary schools in the West, young children drink alcohol, use illicit drugs, and practice sex. This is because they are taught “unlimited freedom” even at such tender ages. The

unfortunate reality is that the Muslim countries are no more safe havens in this respect, as they have been subliminally overtaken by the Western influence.

3. Under the Western idea of sex education, children are taught that being promiscuous is a “natural part of growing up”. They are supplied with contraceptive devices, thereby giving them tacit approval to commit illicit sexual acts. They are also taught that homosexuality and lesbianism is found in the genes and that, as such, it is a perfectly “normal” behaviour.

4. Under the Western system of education, the children are classically conditioned to view the non-muslim historians, scientists, celebrities and super stars as the only people worthy of respect or admiration. It is rare that mention is ever made of the great contributions made to the modern world from Islâm in any field. It is even less common that the names of the great Muslim researchers and scholars are mentioned. This deliberate act leaves the Muslim children with a sense of inferiority, as they deem it shameful to be identified as Muslims.

5. Finally, the Western educational system inculcates in the students and pupils, Western assumptions on the nature and purpose of existence. They have institutionalized their own versions of the purpose of creation, the “evolution of life”, and the existence of God, which are quite different from the teachings of Islâm.

Even with these obvious flaws in the Western styled educational system, the undisputed reality today is that too much interest is being given to it in many parts of the Muslim world, whereas little or no concern is given to the acquisition of religious knowledge. Many people today, Muslims as well as non-Muslims, are made to believe that only through acquiring “Western education” could daily sustenance be met, and real success achieved. This has heightened the quest for certificates and credentials irrespective of their costs, and not

actually the knowledge itself. But Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'âla*) says in the Glorious Qur'ân:

⇒ Who is he that can provide for you if He (Allâh) should withhold His provision? Nay, but they continue to be in pride, and (they) flee (from the truth). ﴿١٩٨﴾

It is widely known that our present educational system has trivialized religious devotion and relativized moral rectitude. The overall effect of this is a widespread moral debasement which leaves the youth of today without the proper guidance to pursue the right course when faced with a moral dilemma, thereby making them susceptible to various agents of misguidance. Yet there seem not to be enough effort from the Muslims towards reforming and restructuring the educational curriculum so as to include universally desirable values that will produce well rounded, balanced and useful individuals.

This pathetic situation becomes more irksome on realizing that our educational institutions, especially at the tertiary level, that were supposed to be foundations for breeding people of high mental and moral standards, have become centers of immorality of the highest order. This is so because emphasis has been on mental education while the moral aspect, which is more important, has been completely ignored. But of what use is the knowledge that is not built on a foundation of integrity, morality, decency and uprightness? This ugly phenomenon translates into decay of the moral fabrics of the society, because the products of these institutions form the working class and leaders of today. And having become addicts of immorality on campus, they carry these traits to their homes, vocations, and occupations, thereby corrupting the entire society.

This negative trend in the educational system is one of the many challenges the Muslims of our time have to grapple with, especially in

¹⁹⁸ Sûrah al-Mulk (The Dominion) 67:21

places where such trend is predominant, as it takes a lot to live above board in such challenging conditions. It is a truism that when evil thrives unabated, then it gradually becomes a norm and people become subliminally conditioned to accept it as good.

A carefully thought-out reform in the educational system from one based on Western glorification to one of religious and moral foundation remains the only solution to this problem. Proper Islâmic education, with due priority, should be given to our children and wards to counter the perversion and corruption fed to them in schools. It should be presented in such a way as to engender a feeling of satisfaction with Islâm and disgust for secular systems. The Islâmic educational system should, to a reasonable extent, cover Islâmic history and law in order to offset the false information passed in History and legal studies.

May Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'âla*) grant us the zeal to search for beneficial knowledge no matter what it will take us and to know the true message of the Religion of Islâm.

The Youth

The Arabic word for youth is *shabâb*. By dictionary definition, it is used to refer to a young person (especially a young man or boy), or the time of life between childhood and maturity. The youth are usually characterized by freshness and vitality. In the contemporary world, they are at the receiving end of almost all the challenges facing the present-day Muslims. They are constantly faced, inter alia, with challenges like inferiority complex, extremism, alienation, lack of faith, Westernization, identity crisis, and social vices.

A close examination of today's youth clearly divides them into three categories – the rightly guided, the deviated and perverted, and the confused (between good and evil). Whatever the category they fall within, the youth experience practically the same challenges in the society, such as peer pressure, identity crisis, inferiority complex or lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem, hopelessness, confusion concerning moral issues, ambiguity in distinguishing the right from the wrong, debilitating culture and tradition, negative impact of the media, materialism and worldliness, and other social and societal factors such as drug abuse, wars, crimes, diseases, violence, and so forth. Some of these challenges have been discussed in fair details in the preceding chapters of this book.

The ability to face and surmount these challenges varies with personalities, and if achieved makes one an ideal and balanced Muslim individual, exhibiting a high spiritual life informed by absolute moral

values and behaviour; an individual whose mode of life gives a mirror image of the Islâmic code of conduct.

Peer pressure

The youths experience peer pressure when their moral values clash with the actions, practices or behaviour of other youths around them, either at school or in a neighbourhood. There are positive and negative peer pressures. Positive peer pressure is the influence of good Muslim friends who help strengthen ones *Imân* (faith) and protect one from committing sins, while negative peer pressure usually comes from those who do not submit their will to the Creator (non-Muslims), or from youths who may be Muslims but do not practice the moral and ethical teachings of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*. Peer pressure, therefore, is a two-way street. But the negative peer pressure is usually stronger in influence and severity, and is responsible, to a large extent, for youths indulging in smoking, alcoholism, attending nightclubs, using hard drugs, having illicit sexual relationships, disregarding the proper Islâmic dress code in order to look like everyone else, ditching school, lying, seeking "popularity" at the expense of righteousness, cheating, being rude/disobedient to parents, etc.

Peer pressure is at the core of 'what it means'; to exist among a group of friends. With non-Muslim friends (and regrettably even some Muslim friends), the pressure may come in the form of a simple offer to drive to the mall with several other boys and girls in one car, or to pair up in conversation with someone of the opposite gender, sneaking out for movies, attending parties or to just try a sip of beer. More than once, the pressure to do drugs, smoke, or drink befalls the average teenager. And also, the pressure to fit in and be "cool" always competes with the need to be righteous.

Negative peer pressure, even in a small circle of friends, usually happens because the majority agrees on doing something that contradicts the moral value of the minority. It is exactly what the

Qur'ân describes. Allâh reminds us that the majority of the people in this life will not be believers and accordingly would not and cannot follow the great moral values presented in the scriptures. Says He, (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*):

⇒ And most of mankind will not believe even if you desire it eagerly. ﴿٢١٩﴾

Peer pressure may include ridicule, alienation, and making jest of the believers for their righteous behaviour and choices. Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) says:

⇒ Those in sin used to laugh at those who believed, And whenever they passed by them, used to wink at each other (in mockery); And when they returned to their own people, they would return jesting... ﴿٢٢٠﴾

However, Allâh, The Exalted, assures us again and again that the last laugh will be for the believers. Says He (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*):

⇒ The life of this world is alluring to those who reject faith, and they scoff at those who believe. But the righteous will be above them on the Day of Resurrection; for Allâh bestows His abundance without measure on whom He will. ﴿٢٢١﴾

⇒ But on this Day (The Last Day) the Believers will laugh at the Unbelievers: On Thrones (of Dignity) they will command (a sight) (of all things). ﴿٢٢٢﴾

¹⁹⁹ Sûrah Yoosuf ((Prophet) Joseph) 12:103

²⁰⁰ Sûrah al-Mutaffifeen (Those Who deal in Fraud) 83:29-31

²⁰¹ Sûrah al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:212

²⁰² Sûrah al-Mutaffifeen (Those Who deal in Fraud) 83:34-35

Most of the youth that become victims of peer pressure are troubled with a feeling of insecurity; they lack or suffer inadequacy of self-confidence, they are ignorant of their religion, and they have a weak faith that is unconscious of the moral values taught in the scriptures. On the contrary, a true Muslim who submits his will to Allâh and is armed with knowledge and understanding of his/her religion, is self-confident, and stands tall and proud of being on Allâh's side, bearing in mind that:

⇒ Verily, it is the party of Allâh that will be the successful. ﴿٢٠٣﴾

As righteous, practicing Muslims, Allâh expects us to proudly follow and uphold the teachings of the Qur'ân and Sunnah, and be proud of our values, faith and beliefs, even in the face of peer pressure, intimidation or reproach.

⇒ O ye who believe! if any from among you turns back from his Faith, soon will Allâh produce a people whom He will love as they will love Him, - lowly with the believers, mighty against the rejecters, fighting in the way of Allâh, and never afraid of the reproaches of such as find fault. That is the grace of Allâh, which He will bestow on whom He pleaseth. And Allâh encompasseth all, and He knoweth all things. ﴿٢٠٤﴾

Managing peer pressure

Though dealing with peer pressure may not be easy, it is also not impossible. Therefore, you must teach yourself how to minimize the negative effects of peer pressure. The following are some useful recommendations:

²⁰³ Sûrah al-Mujaadilah (The Woman who disputes) 58:22

²⁰⁴ Sûrah al-Maa'idah (The Table spread with Food) 5:54

1. Be critical of your friends and the company you keep, as befriending the right people is an essential requirement for staying on the straight path and avoiding unnecessary peer pressure. Take a moment to reflect on your friends and their personalities. Do you ever feel uncomfortable because of their habits, their character, their suggestions, or their outlook on life? This is not asking you to judge your friends; it's simply asking you to gauge the level of influence they have on you. Through pious and righteous friends, you will be safe from a lot of temptations and your *īman* will be strengthened. Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta'āla*) exhorts us in the Qur'ān thus:

⇒ O ye who believe! Fear Allāh and be with those who are true (in word and deed). ﴿٢٠٥﴾

2. Do not ever feel that you are missing out or living a boring life just because you do not give in to peer pressure. Accepting the bad behaviour prohibited in the Qur'ān will end you in more misery than the temporary and momentary pleasure that it starts with in the beginning.

3. Fortify yourself with knowledge about your religion by studying the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*). Through knowledge, you will have a better understanding of Islām, learn what behaviour is pleasing to Allāh and what kind of lifestyle is discouraged in Islām, and develop awareness about the risks of unrighteous behaviours that are encouraged by the people around you. Such fortification will help you to resist the temptation of peer pressure and to always stand for what is right, moral and just.

²⁰⁵ Sûrah at-Tawbah (The Repentance) 9:119

4. Remember Allâh whenever peer pressure befalls you. When Allâh is with us, we can resist anything, as Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) did when the wife of his master seduced him.

⇒ And she, in whose house he was, sought to seduce him (to do an evil act), and she closed the doors and said: "Come on, O you." He said: "Allâh forbid!... Verily, the wrongdoers will never be successful." ﴿٢٠٦﴾

5. As a youth holding to your faith and all its beautiful moral values, be assured that Allâh will be your supporter and that He will help you as He did help Prophet Yusuf.

⇒ Nay, Allâh is your protector, and He is the best of helpers. ﴿٢٠٧﴾

6. Finally, know that peer pressure and *īmân* are inversely related. The more we give into peer pressure, the weaker our *īmân* becomes. Take a pause and think about that for a moment.

Identity Crisis

Perhaps the most critical challenge facing Muslim youth is the development of a strong Islâmic identity. Though there are so many young brothers and sisters who profess Islâm as their religion and way of life, this question of an Islâmic identity still leaves much to be desired.

First, it is necessary to define what is meant by the term "Islâmic identity." Is it mere fulfillment of the five pillars of Islâm? Is it limited to clothes? Is it all about growing beards or wearing of *hijâb* (veil)? Is it about speaking the Arabic language? Is it a tangible, visible feature

²⁰⁶ Sûrah Yoosuf ((Prophet) Joseph) 12:23

²⁰⁷ Sûrah Aal-'Imrân (The Family of 'Imrân) 3:150

or an internal construct? Indeed, the correct answer is that Islâmic identity encompasses all of these and much more.

The Islâmic Identity is taken to mean the way of life of the Muslims, a comprehensive set of beliefs, practices and ideologies as derived from the Qur'ân and the immaculate example of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*). Islâmic identity is that which distinguishes us from non-Muslims. Robust Islâmic Identity is also what distinguishes between good and weak Muslims. The Islâmic identity is our priceless possession. It is the only identification that matters on the Day of Judgement. It is our faith, our religion, our moral values, and our whole life, put together. This identity is the one that makes us recognize Allâh as the One and Only Lord of this Universe. It makes us wake up from our sleep before sunrise and pray to Allâh. It makes us kind, sincere, responsible, and thoughtful when we deal with people. It forbids us to tell lies, cheat, steal, gamble, or engage in any immoral behaviour. And above all, it is what makes us realize and understand that Islâm is the only way of life that leads to eternal salvation.

Many individuals spend time teaching people the DO's and DON'Ts of Islâm, without making conscious and targeted efforts at inculcating in them the importance of having an Islâmic identity. This explains why we see Muslims compromise the powerful moral and ethical teachings of our role model, Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), and surrender to less important values and ideals. It also explains why, both on individual and communal levels, many who have learnt the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*, at least to an appreciable level, still act without recourse to these two main sources of guidance.

Therefore, the challenges remain: How can the Muslims develop, maintain and model their Islâmic identity? This phenomenon adversely affects the propagation of Islâm (*da'wah*), for how can the Muslims take Islâm to the non-Muslims unless they are confident of its teachings? And how will the non-Muslims give up their beliefs and

lifestyle for the Islâmic beliefs and way of life, if the Muslims present themselves as backward, unorganized, confused and, most of all, unaware of and uncomfortable with their own beliefs and way of life.

If the young generation remains steadfast with the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), then, undoubtedly, the whole world will come to the respect and admiration of Islâm and the Muslims. Though there may be discrimination, prejudice and even alienation along the way, but our perseverance and steadfastness, not our compromise, will establish and confirm our superiority, and will ultimately earn us Allâh's reward. Our Islâmic identity, more than anything else, will send a strong signal to the non-Muslims that we prosper because and not in spite of our beliefs in Islâm. On the whole, we all need to develop and maintain strong Islâmic Identities, if we want success in this life and in the hereafter.

Lack of Proper Planning/Strategizing

The youth, in their quest for change, coupled with their exuberance and ebullience, fail to adequately plan or strategize. Whenever they decide on a matter, they jump into its execution, armed with no plan or strategy, but with their mere sincere intentions. But reality has proven over time that merely having a good intention is not enough to achieve the desired changes in our society. In the words of Dr. Yusuf Qardhawi:

“Corrupt realities cannot be changed by immature strategies based only upon good wishes and intentions.”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ See Dr. Yusuf Qardhawi's book, “Islâmic Awakening between Rejection and Extremism”. Issues of Islâmic Thought series No. 2. New English edition revised and edited by A. S. Al-Ashaikh-Ali and Mohamed B. E. Wasfy. American Trust Publication and The International Institute of Islâmic Thought.

Too Many Diversions

Another major challenge facing the Muslim youths is the steady increase in the diversions in our present-day societies. It is reported that Sheikh ‘Abdullah Faisal once held a conference and over two thousand people were in attendance. The Sheikh held a similar conference a few weeks later and only five hundred persons (or thereabout) attended. When he tried to find out the reason behind the poor turnout, he discovered there was a soccer match going on, which diverted the people’s attention.

Similarly, if you visit a Muslim community that has not tasted “modern technology” like electricity, Television, Satellite, internet, etc., you will easily find the youth actively involved in Islâmic activities. But as soon as these “diversions” reach them, they become carried away, and only the old and the infant are left behind the *imâms* in the *Masâjid*. Too many diversions keep people away from the Truth. They become addicted to these diversions, so much so that they have very little or no time to learn their *dīn*.

Extremism

Literally, extremism means being situated at the farthest possible point from the center. Figuratively, it indicates a similar remoteness in religion and thought, as well as behaviour. Due to the natural exuberance among the youth, there is always a tendency to go to the extremes on issues. This accounts for why too many people are found today misrepresenting Islâm by taking the Qur’ân and Hadith out of context in an attempt to reproduce a Bedouin society, or neglecting the Qur’ân and Hadith to conform to modern society.

Islâm, however, recommends moderation and balance in everything: in belief, worship, conduct, and legislation. It calls upon Muslims to exercise moderation and to reject and oppose all kinds of extremism. Moderation, or balance, is not only a general characteristic of Islâm,

but it is one of its fundamental hallmarks. Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'âla*) says in the Qur'ân:

⇒ Thus have we made of you an *Ummah* (nation) justly balanced, that you might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves... ﴿٢٠٩﴾²⁰⁹

And Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

﴿Beware of excessiveness in religion. [People] before you have perished as a result of (such) excessiveness.﴾²¹⁰

He (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) also said:

﴿"Do not overburden yourselves, lest you perish. People (before you) overburdened themselves and perished. Their remains are found in hermitages and monasteries.﴾²¹¹

Defects of Religious Extremism

The warnings against extremism and excessiveness are necessary because of the serious defects inherent in such tendencies.

The first defect is that excessiveness is too disagreeable for ordinary human nature to endure or tolerate. Even if a few human beings could put up with excessiveness for a short time, the majority would not be able to do so. Allâh's legislation addresses the whole of humanity, not a special group who may have a unique capacity for endurance. This is why the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) was once angry with his eminent companion, Mu'adh ibn Jabal, because the latter led the people

²⁰⁹ Sûrah al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:143

²¹⁰ Reported by Ahmad, Nasâi and Ibn Mâjah

²¹¹ Muslim and Abu Dawud

one day in *salâh* (prayer) and so prolonged it that one of the people went to the Prophet and complained. The Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said to Mu'adh: "O Mu'adh! Are you putting the people on trial?" and repeated it thrice.²¹²

Umar ibn al Khattab (*radhiy-Allâhu 'anhû*) also emphasized this by saying:

"Do not make Allâh hateful to His servants by leading people in *salâh* and so prolonging it that they come to hate what they are doing."

The second defect is that excessiveness is short-lived. Since man's capacity for endurance and perseverance is naturally limited, and since man can easily become bored, he cannot endure any excessive practice for long. Even if he puts up with it for a while he will soon be overcome by fatigue, physically and spiritually, and will eventually give up even the little he can naturally do, or he may even take a different course altogether substituting excessiveness with complete negligence and laxity.

Our beloved Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) advised us with regards to excessiveness, saying:

﴿Do those deeds, which you can endure, as Allâh will not get tired (of giving rewards) till you get bored and tired (of performing good deeds)... and the most beloved deed to Allâh is the one which is done regularly even if it were little. ²¹³﴾

The third defect is that excessive practice jeopardizes other rights and obligations. A sage once said in this respect:

²¹² Al-Bukhâri

²¹³ Al-Bukhâri and Muslim

"Every extravagance is somehow bound to be associated with a lost right."

When the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) knew that 'Abd Allâh ibn `Amr ibn Al-`as was so absorbed in worship that he even neglected his duty toward his wife, he said to him:

﴿O 'Abd-Allâh! Have I not been correctly informed that you fast daily and offer worship throughout the night?﴾ 'Abd Allâh replied, "Yes, O Messenger of Allâh!" The Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) then said: "Do not do that, but fast and then break your fast, offer worship during the night but also sleep. Your body has a right on you, your wife has a right on you, and your guest has a right on you..."²¹⁴

Manifestations of Extremism

The first indication of extremism includes bigotry and intolerance, which make a person obstinately devoted to his own opinions and prejudices, as well as rigidity, which deprives him of clarity of vision regarding the interests of other human beings, the purposes of *shari'ah*, or the circumstances of the time. A bigot never comes to terms with others; thus, bigotry is one of the clearest manifestations of extremism. An extremist seems to address people in this way: "I have the right to speak, your duty is to listen. I have the right to lead, your duty is to follow. My opinion is right and cannot be wrong. Your opinion is wrong and can never be right."

The second characteristic of extremism manifests itself in a perpetual commitment to excessiveness, and in attempts to force others to do

²¹⁴ See Al-Imam An-Nawawee's *Riyadh-us-Saliheen*, Chapter 14 (Moderation in worship).

likewise, despite the existence of good reasons for facilitation and the fact that Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) has not ordained it. A person motivated by piety and caution may, if he so wishes, choose a hard-line opinion in some matters and on certain occasions. But this should not become so habitual that he rejects facilitation when he needs it. Such an attitude is not in keeping with the teachings of the Qur'ân or *Sunnah* as is clear from the following verse:

⇒ Allâh intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties. ﴿٢١٥﴾²¹⁵

And the saying of the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*):

﴿Facilitate (matters to people) and do not make (things) difficult.﴾²¹⁶

It is also reported in this regard that whenever the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) was given a choice between two options, he always chose the easier unless it was a sin.²¹⁷

The third characteristic of extremism is the out-of-time and out-of-place religious excessiveness and overburdening of others, i.e., when applying Islâmic principles to people in non-Muslim countries or to people who have only recently reverted to Islâm, as well as to newly committed Muslims. With all these, emphasis should not be put on either minor or controversial issues, but on fundamentals. Efforts should be made to correct their concepts and understanding of Islâm before anything else. Once the correct beliefs are firmly established, then one can begin to explain the five pillars of Islâm and gradually to emphasize those aspects which make a Muslim's belief and practice

²¹⁵ Sûrah al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:185

²¹⁶ Al-Bukhâri and Muslim

²¹⁷ Al-Bukhâri

compatible, and his entire life an embodiment of what is pleasing to Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*).

This fact was recognized by the Prophet himself when he sent Muadh (*radhiy-Allahu 'anh*) to Yemen. He told him:

﴿You are going to (meet) people of a (divine) scripture, and when you reach them call them to witness that there is no god but Allâh and that Muhammad is His Messenger. And if they obey you in that, then tell them that Allâh has enjoined on them five prayers (*salawat*) to be performed every day and night. And if they obey you in that, then tell them that Allâh has enjoined upon them charity (*zakah*) to be taken from the rich amongst them and given to the poor amongst them.﴾²¹⁸

Notice the gradation in the Prophet's advice to Mu'adh (*radhiy-Allahu 'anh*). This clearly points out that it would be more worthwhile in our contemporary materialistic societies to make our paramount concern the call to monotheism and the worship of Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*), to remind people of the hereafter, of the noble Islâmic values, and to warn them of the heinous acts in which the materially-developed countries have been totally immersed. The norms of behaviour and the act of relieving ills and changing for the better in religious practices are governed by time as well as place, and should be introduced only after the most necessary and fundamental tenets have been firmly established.

The fourth characteristic of extremism manifests itself in harshness in the treatment of people, roughness in the manner of approach, and crudeness in calling people to Islâm, all of which are contrary to the teachings of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*. Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) commands us to call to His teachings with wisdom, not with

²¹⁸ Al-Bukhârî

foolishness; with amicability, not with harsh words. Says He (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*):

⇒ Invite (all) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious. ﴿٢١٩﴾

The Qur'ân also addressed the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), defining his relationship with his companions:

⇒ It is part of the mercy of Allâh that you (Muhammad) deal justly with them. If you were severe and harsh-hearted they would have broken away from about you. ﴿٢٢٠﴾

Optimism in dealing with fellow Muslims

Muslim youths are strongly advised to liberate themselves from the fetters of pessimism and despair and assume innocence and goodness in fellow Muslims. However, this optimism requires a conscious recognition of several important conditions:

Firstly: Human beings are not angels. They have not been created from light but molded from clay. They, like their father Adam before them, are all fallible. Recognition of our human fallibility and susceptibility to temptation will enable us not only to tolerate and to cherish a sympathetic understanding of the faults and blemishes of others but will move us to remind them to have faith and hope in Allâh's mercy and to warn them of Allâh's anger and of His punishment.

Secondly: It is imperative to understand that no one but Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) knows what goes on in the innermost depths of a person.

²¹⁹ Sûrah an-Nahl (The Bees) 16:125

²²⁰ Sûrah Aal-'Imrân (The Family of 'Imrân) 3:159

Therefore we are obliged to judge people in accordance with what they profess – i.e. what is apparent to us. If a person, for instance, testifies that "there is no god but Allâh, and that Muhammad is His Messenger," we should treat him as a Muslim. This is in keeping with the Prophet's *Sunnah*, and it is the reason why he (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) would not punish the hypocrites, although he was sure they were plotting against him.

Thirdly: It is important to reiterate that people's shortcomings or weaknesses is not a sign that they are condemned, as long as the love of Allâh and his Messenger still resides in their hearts. The following will, *inshaa-Allâh*, illustrate this point: A Qurayshi adolescent once came upon the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) and asked permission to fornicate. The Prophet's companions were so outraged by the young man's request that they rushed to punish him, but the Prophet's attitude was totally different. Calm and composed he asked the young man to come closer to him and asked: "Would you approve of it (fornication) for your mother?" The young man replied: "No" The Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said: "(Other) people also would not approve of it for their mothers." Then the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) repeatedly asked the young man whether he would approve of it for his daughter, sister, or aunt? Each time the man answered "No," and each time the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) added that "(Other) people would not approve of it for theirs." He then held the young man's hand and said: "May Allâh forgive his (the young man's) sins, purify his heart, and fortify him (against such desires)."²²¹

The Prophet's sympathetic attitude to the young man clearly indicates a gesture of good-will and a conviction in that inborn goodness of man which outweighs the elements of evil which could only be transient. So he compassionately and patiently discussed the issue with him until he was able to convince him of its wrongness.

²²¹ Recorded by Ahmad

Another example goes thus: during the lifetime of the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) there was an alcoholic who was repeatedly brought to the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) and was repeatedly punished, yet still persisted. One day when he was brought again on the same charge and was lashed, a man from among the people said: "May Allâh curse him! How frequently has he been brought (to the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) to be punished)?" The Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said: "Do not curse him. By Allâh I know he loves Allâh and His Messenger."²²²

Of course, if the man does not have love for Allâh and his messenger, he will not subject himself to be judged by the laws of Allâh, let alone being punished for violating them.

Choosing a Career

Career refers to a particular occupation or profession for which an individual is trained or groomed over a period of time. Proper choice of career is an important requisite in achieving one's goal, objective or ambition. A good intention equipped with rich information and a fecund reasoning is required to decide from a vast range of options what career is best and most appropriate, with a desire to achieve success in this life as well as the hereafter. Due to its importance, absolute care, together with appropriate guidance and counseling, must be taken before this important process is concluded. It requires taking into consideration one's talent, zeal, flair, determination, as well as physical and mental fitness and ability. It also requires taking into consideration the needs of the Muslims and the society at large. For example, the present Muslim world is in dire need of female practitioners in the fields of medicine and education. A lot of our mothers, sisters and daughters are forced by circumstances to take-off

²²² Al-Bukhârî

their veils to be examined by male medical practitioners, which is an avoidable embarrassment. And with regards to education, our females are exposed to the intimidation and harassment of male teachers and lecturers in most secondary and tertiary institutions. Therefore, it is expected that more Muslims, in the service of the *dīn*²²³, delve into these fields. Other areas where the Muslim professionals are in great need include banking, finance, and economics. This is not to encourage Muslims to participate in the usurious financial and socio-economic systems of the present world, but to humanly empower the *ummah* to set up Islāmic alternative financial systems where the Muslims can invest their resources, instead of leaving them in the hands of the antagonists of Islām, who would not spare any effort to freeze the assets of the Muslims should there be any conflict between the Muslims and the non-Muslims.

It is important to advise Muslims not to delve into any career just for making a living, as not all careers are lawful for Muslims. For example, the Muslims have no business in the brewery industry so it would be completely out of place to seek a career therein.

In all, one has to have a pure and sincere intention for the sake of Allāh in choosing a career, in order to make it a source of reward for him from Allāh.

May Allāh help us to do for a living, those things that will be of benefit to us, our families and the entire Muslim nation, as well as draw us to His love and the love of those whom He loves. Āmīn !

Inspirational Youths from Among the Prophets

²²³ *Dīn* is an Arabic term for faith or religion. Usually in the sense of Islām, it is the religious system and way of life taught by Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*).

The Qur'ân and the Islâmic history presents numerous examples of outstanding youths, a good example of which is the personality of Abraham, blessings and peace be upon him, whose account in the Qur'ân is one of great inspiration, enlightenment, and uniqueness. It is that of a young man who rebelled against his people's decadent traditions and defied the dominant and prevailing cultures of his society.²²⁴

Prophet Ibrahim's stance against the evils that held sway in the society during his time created a stair of hatred against him in the hearts of the forces of evil. However, due to his sincerity and reliance on Allâh, Allâh shielded him from the harm of his adversaries. Consequently, the fire in which Prophet Ibrahim was thrown, rather than be a place of excruciating pain and anguish for him, became a place of coolness, comfort and peace for him, by the leave of Allâh. Says Allâh, the Almighty and All-Wise:

⇒ We (Allâh) said: "O fire! Be you coolness and safety for Ibrâhîm (Abraham)!" And they wanted to harm him, but We made them the worst losers. And We rescued him and Lût (Lot) to the land which We have blessed for the 'âlamîn (mankind and jinn). ﴿٢٢٥﴾²²⁵

It is important to note that Prophet Ibrahim embarked on this revolutionary mission against the evil practices of the people of his time at an early age of sixteen, according to the *mufasssireen* (Qur'ânic exegetes).

Another good example is Prophet Ibrahim's son, Ismâ'il (blessings and peace be upon them both), who exhibited a high level of sincerity, submission, and sacrifice for Allâh's sake by accepting with determination and certainty to be sacrificed when his father consulted

²²⁴ See Sûrah al-Anbiyâ (The Prophets) 21:51-68

²²⁵ Sûrah al-Anbiyâ (The Prophets) 21:69-71

him upon having a vision to that effect. His words to his father, as contained in the Glorious Qur'ân, were:

⇒ O my father! Do that which you are commanded, *Insha Allâh* (if Allâh wills), you shall find me of the patient. ﴿٢٢٦﴾

Also, as seen in the story of Prophet Musa, blessings and peace be upon him, against the backdrop of Pharaoh's despotism, those who dared to defy him and declare their faith in the God of Musa were the youths.

⇒ But none believed in Mûsâ (Moses) except (some) offspring of his people, because of the fear of *Fir'aun* (Pharaoh) and their chiefs, lest he should persecute them; and verily, *Fir'aun* (Pharaoh) was an arrogant tyrant on the earth, he was indeed one of the *Musrifûn* (polytheists, sinners and transgressors, those who give up the truth and follow the evil, and commit all kinds of great sins). ﴿٢٢٧﴾

Prophet Yusuf, Yunus and Isa represent historical examples of prophecy at very tender ages due to their possession of outstanding qualities like honesty, selflessness, patience and persistence.

The story of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) is not in any way different. This is because the vanguard of his mission was mainly the youth, as the eldest of those who first believed in him was Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, who was only thirty-five years old. Most had not reached the age of twenty, while some such as Ali Ibn Abi Talib were as young as ten.

The Prophet, Allâh's blessings and peace be upon him, was supported largely by the young and poor and rejected by the old and rich, for the latter are most at times powers of conservatism while the former are usually forces of change and revival. This was obvious even after his

²²⁶ Sûrah as-Saaffaat (Those Ranged in Ranks) 37:102

²²⁷ Sûrah Yoonus ((Prophet) Jonah) 10:83

life, when the leader of the Muslim army Usâmah ibn Zayd, who was only sixteen years old, distinguished himself amongst the people of his time.

15

Parents and Guardians

⇒ *O you who believe! Ward off yourselves and your families against a Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who disobey not (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allâh, but do that which they are commanded.* ﴿٢٢٨﴾²²⁸

⇒ *And know that your possessions and your children are but a trial and that surely, with Allâh is a mighty reward.* ﴿٢٢٩﴾²²⁹

Anny a time, parents and guardians give unending excuses with regards to the upbringing of their children and wards. Embarrassingly, some parents and guardians can give little or no account of the activities of their children. What then will such parents say in their graves?

The phrase “I am a busy parent” is often repeated like a mantra as a reason for negligence on their part. However, the life and times of the companions of Prophet Muhammad (sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) and the succeeding generation of pious and rightly guided believers shows that they were the busiest of people. They toiled the land for daily

²²⁸ Sûrah at-Tahreem (The Prohibition) 66:6

²²⁹ Sûrah al-Anfâl (The Spoils of War) 8:28

sustenance, travelled long distances on foot or caravans for their business transactions, prepared for and participated in religious battles, yet took time out to spread the word of Allâh and teach their wives and offspring the religion of Allâh.

Lessons from Luqman Al-Hakim

Parents and guardians should use the story of Luqman as narrated in the Qur'ân as a blueprint for providing their children and wards with the correct Islâmic upbringing. The Glorious Qur'ân recounts a comprehensive advice of Luqman to his son as follows:

⇒ And (remember) when Luqmân said to his son when he was advising him: "O my son! Join not in worship others with Allâh. Verily, joining others in worship with Allâh is a great Zûlm (wrong) indeed.

And We have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in travail upon travail, and his weaning is in two years – give thanks to Me and to your parents. To Me is the final destination.

But if they (both) strive with you to make you join in worship with Me others that of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not; but behave with them in the world kindly, and follow the path of him who turns to Me in repentance and in obedience. Then to Me will be your return, and I shall tell you what you used to do.

O my son! If it be (anything) equal to the weight of a grain of mustard seed, and though it be in a rock, or in the heavens or in the earth, Allâh will bring it forth. Verily, Allâh is Subtle (in bringing out that grain), Well-Acquainted (with its place).

O my son! Establish regular prayer, enjoin what is just, and forbid what is wrong: and bear with patient constancy

whatever betide you for this is firmness (of purpose) in (the conduct of) affairs.

And turn not your face away from men with pride, nor walk in insolence through the earth. Verily, Allâh likes not any arrogant boaster.

And be moderate (or show no insolence) in your walking, and lower your voice. Verily, the harshest of all voices is the braying of the asses. ﴿٢٣٠﴾

Luqman was a man whom Allâh endowed with great wisdom and understanding. He possessed great knowledge and had an amazing ability to convey it to others. He was choosy with words and whenever he spoke to anyone he placed his words and statements in their appropriate places and at their appropriate times. This is evident in his advice to his son as detailed in the above passage from the Qur'ân.

Educating the Muslim Children

Parents and guardians must recognize that they have a serious challenge on their hands to ensure that today's children, who are the leaders of tomorrow, are given the best of education and upbringing. Leaving the youth uneducated and without proper grooming is like having a time-bomb waiting to explode. Western colonizers of Muslim countries knew the pivotal role education played in establishing Islâm in the minds of the Muslims, hence when they could not totally deprive the Muslims of education, they decided to secularize the schools and the educational curricula and teach Islâm only from a historic context and perspective, and at the end of the school day when the student's concentration is at its lowest. Therefore, conscious and concerted efforts of the Muslim parents and guardians must be made towards monitoring what the Muslim children are taught in school. More attention should be given to preparing the future of the Muslims by

²³⁰ Sûrah Luqmaan ((Prophet) Luqmân) 31:13 - 19

laying more emphasis on critical thinking and problem solving. The future leaders should be adequately groomed so as to reduce the number of imitators and conformists among believers.

Parents and guardians should make use of every available means and resources, including books, mass media, and the internet media to inculcate in their children knowledge, wisdom, discipline and morals. Parental non-involvement and absence of suitable alternatives leave permanent negative effects on the morality of the child.

Care for the Orphans

The Arabic word for orphan is *yateem*. By Islâmic legal definition, an orphan is a child under the age of discernment whose father has died or has been killed. The orphans represent one of the fastest growing segments of the world Muslim population. Obviously, since these children do not have the capacity to provide for themselves, it is imperative that someone acts as their guardian and takes charge of their affairs until they come of age and are able to maintain themselves.

From the days of pre-Islâmic ignorance till date, young orphans have been oppressed and maltreated. Adults with bad intentions and evil hearts have taken advantage of them with no restraint, stripping them off their inherited wealth unlawfully, because they have no one to look after and protect their interests. Orphans have been utterly abused, forced into child labour, trafficked into slavery, and some of the girls among them have been married and not given their dowry.

Today, children in the Muslim world are being orphaned, in the true sense of the word, due to the widespread violence that is being perpetrated in Muslim lands. Whether through ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, occupation of Palestine and Afghanistan, or invasion of Iraq, Muslim children are losing their fathers and mothers, and are left with few or no places at all to turn. As a result, a large degree of the children's basic necessities is neglected.

For instance, the Muslim orphans suffer poor health because they have no access to basic health care. They are stricken with a host of maladies due to lack of food and medicine. And, sadly, many have become severely ill, or have died from minor infections and diseases that are either preventable or treatable under normal circumstances.

It is a responsibility of immense importance on the *Ummah* as a whole to take a closer look at the situation of Muslim orphans, investigate the reality concerning their plight, and find out ways and opportunities to better their lot.

Exhortations from the Qur'ân and Sunnah on just and kind treatment of orphans

Islâm, being a religion that teaches equality among humans and compassion for the weak and less fortunate, totally disapproves of the maltreatment and injustices done to orphans. The copious references in the Qur'ân and Sunnah that call for showing kindness and just treatment toward orphans are sufficient proofs testifying to this fact. In the Glorious Qur'ân, Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'âla*) says:

⇒ And they ask you concerning the orphans. Say: 'The best thing to do is what is for their good. And if you mix their affairs with yours, they are your brothers. And Allâh knows one who means mischief from one who means good. ﴿٢٣١﴾

⇒ And give unto orphans their property, and do not exchange your (bad) things for (their) good ones; and devour not their substance (by mixing it up) with your own. For this is indeed a great sin. ﴿٢٣٢﴾

²³¹ Sûrah al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:220

²³² Sûrah al-Nisâ (The Women) 4:2

⇒ Verily, those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans, they eat up only fire into their bellies, and they will be burnt in the blazing Fire! ﴿٢٣٣﴾

Also, Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) dispraises the one who turns away the orphans, describing such act as the way of those who do not believe in the Day of Judgement. He (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) says:

⇒ Have you seen the one who denies the Recompense (Doomsday)? That is, he who repulses the orphan (harshly), and urges not the feeding of the indigent. ﴿٢٣٤﴾

But to those who show kindness to the orphans by giving them food, seeking no reward for their action but the countenance and pleasure of the One who bestowed them with means, Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) says:

⇒ And they give food, in spite of their love for it, to the poor, the orphan, and the captive. Saying, 'We feed you for the sake of Allâh alone. No reward do we ask of you, nor thanks.' ﴿٢٣٥﴾

Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) once being an orphan himself, held a special place in his heart for them, and urged the Muslims to care for and accord them fair and kind treatment. He, blessings and peace of Allâh be upon him, was reported by Sahl ibn Sa'd to have said:

﴿The one who takes care of an orphan shall be together with me in Paradise like these two.﴾ (By way of illustration, he raised his forefinger and middle finger and put them together.²³⁶)

²³³ Sûrah al-Nisâ (The Women) 4:9-10

²³⁴ Sûrah al-Mâ'oôn (The Small Kindnesses) 107:1-3

²³⁵ Sûrah al-Insân (Man) 76:8

²³⁶ Bukhâri

So, it is established without doubt, that it is a duty to treat orphans with justice and not to turn them away when they are in need. The exhortations to deal justly and kindly with orphans extend beyond individuals to charity organizations set up to assist orphans and the needy in the society. It is most unfortunate that some of these Islâmic organizations stop at nothing to embezzle the wealth entrusted to them for the welfare and upkeep of the orphans, or in some cases misappropriate the funds.

The Needs of the Orphans

In order to adequately and effectively respond to the needs of the orphans, it is important to first know what they are. This is, of course, very essential, as the situations of the orphans vary from location to location. The following are among the most important needs of the orphans that demand serious attention:

Emotional and Psychological Needs

Many children complain of ailments that are later found to be psychosomatic (i.e., resulting from neurosis, which is a mental or personality disturbance not attributable to any known neurological or organic dysfunction in nature). They tell horror stories of witnessing their entire family being slaughtered before their eyes. The effect of this kind of trauma manifests itself in the form of insomnia (chronic sleeplessness), chronic headaches, etc. Other orphans suffer from prolonged bereavement, loneliness, and separation anxiety.

Educational Needs

Often, the families of orphans are preoccupied with securing shelter, food, clothing, and other basic necessities, while the normal activities of life are put on hold. As a result, orphans may lose months or even years of education, causing them to suffer seriously in all forms of

learning. This trend is detrimental and dangerous to the future of the Muslim *Ummah*.

If these two important needs are met, a great deal of problem would have been solved and the *umma* at large will be better for it.

Enrolling Muslim Children in the Schools of the non-Muslims

The rights and respect due to parents is a commonly heard topic of discussion in Islâm because it is often the parents who are speaking. Yet how often do we hear about the rights of children? Indeed, they have many rights that even predate their birth; like the right to legitimate parentage, and the God-given right that their future mother or father choose a spouse that will teach them about Allâh and be an excellent example for them.

Among the paramount rights of the children, which unfortunately is given less attention today, is the right to Islâmic education. Allâh, Exalted be His Majesty, says:

⇒ O you who believe! Ward off yourselves and your families against a Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones... ﴿٢٣٧﴾

In the above verse of the Qur'ân, Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) commands us to save ourselves from Hellfire. But the command does not end there; it extends to our families. We must save them also from Hellfire using every resource we have at our disposal. And the best armour we can use to protect them is knowledge of what Allâh and His Messenger require from them, for as the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

²³⁷ Sûrah at-Tahreem (The Prohibition) 66:6

﴿Whoever Allâh wishes good for, he bestows upon him the understanding of the religion. ²³⁸﴾

Therefore, one can conveniently say that one of the major challenges of the *ummah* today is the enrolment of Muslim children in the schools of the non-Muslims, knowing the many contradictions to the Islâmic *shari'ah* that are found in such schools and the effects they have on our children. This anomaly, in some cases, results from unawareness on the part of the parents, and in some other cases, it is a function of laxity, indifference and lack of seriousness on the part of the parents.

It is said that about ninety percent of everything a child learns, he learns it within the first five years of his or her life. If that is not enough cause for concern, then let us be reminded that the children at that fragile age are ever so keen to please the adults in their lives, especially the ones they see day after day. It is a survival skill that Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) created in humans, for had they not had this desire to please the “teacher”, they most likely would not develop intellectually.

But this keenness and desire to seek adult approval becomes misdirected and counterproductive when the one whose approval is sought is a non-Muslim, someone who does not know anything about our relationship with, and obligation to, Allâh and His Messenger. It is like putting our children on the lap of a person who will destroy them spiritually and morally and paying for it.

Evidently, it is not permissible for the Muslims to school their children in the educational institutions of the non-Muslims, especially when these institutions teach things that are foreign to the Religion, like the beliefs of the Christians or the Jews, or other impermissible things. The situation is worse-off when one puts his children in the schools of the non-Muslims while there is an Islâmic school in the city, than when

²³⁸ Al-Bukhâri and Muslim

there is no Islâmic alternative. Even though it is true that there are many Muslims who have been educated in non-Muslim schools and by non-Muslim teachers and emerged successful, it is also true that many Muslims have been lost to other religions through that process, and many others who were not totally lost came out adulterated in their beliefs and sympathetic to a lot of ideas and ideologies that are alien to Islâm.

Not only is it prohibited to educate the Muslim children in the schools of the non-Muslims, but it is also prohibited for the Muslims to educate their children in schools where innovations or things that are in contradiction to the *Sunnah* are taught. The scholars of Islâm prevent students of knowledge from reading the books of the innovators, so how can it be permissible for little children to study in schools where innovations are taught, especially when they are not able to distinguish between *Sunnah* and *bid'ah*?

May Allâh guide us in the choice of educators and instructors for our precious sprouts.

The Physically Challenged

The physically challenged are those individuals that are unable to perform some particular activities due to some incapacitating conditions. That is to say, they find it difficult to perform certain basic tasks of life as a result of some form of physical impediments. These impediments include, among others:

1. Blindness: loss of visual faculty or visual impairment such as myopia, severe cataract and colour blindness.
2. Deafness: hearing difficulty or related hearing impairments due to complete or partial inability to hear with one or both ears.
3. Lameness: loss of or inability to use one or both limbs. It may be due to illnesses like degenerated muscular dystrophy, paralysis or accidents.

4. Dumbness: loss of speech as a result of injury, illness or heredity.

Regardless of the type of disability they suffer, the physically challenged usually possess some hidden talent, knowledge or skill, which can be developed for the good of themselves and the society at large. In other words, they too have their roles to play as members of the society, and we have the responsibility of paving the way for them to achieve that.

People with disabilities have rights like every other member of the society, which include the right to basic food, shelter, clothing, education and employment. They also have the right to vote and be voted for, to care and be cared for, as well as the right of integration into the larger society without discrimination or intimidation. This is because they too are humans and, as such, are entitled to the rights every other human enjoys. During the early days of Islâm, an incident took place in which the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) was busy with a few Quraysh dignitaries, explaining to them the Islâmic message, when Ibn Umm Maktûm, a poor blind man, interrupted him. Unaware that the Prophet was busy, the blind man asked him repeatedly to teach him some verses from the Qur'ân. The Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) was not very pleased at this interruption, so he frowned and turned away from him. However, Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'ala*) disapproved the Prophet's action, saying:

⇒ He frowned and turned away when the blind man came to him. How could you tell? He might have sought to purify himself. He might have been reminded and the reminder might have profited him. But to the one who considered himself self-sufficient you were all attention. Yet the fault would not be yours if he remained uncleansed. ﴿٢٣٩﴾

²³⁹ Sûrah 'Abasa (He frowned) 80: 1-7

With the above verses, which clearly lay down the values and principles upon which an ideal Islâmic society is founded and state the true nature of the message of Islâm, Allâh criticized the Prophet's action against Umm Maktum, as it was discriminatory and against the principle of equality. Therefore, the able and the disabled, the rich and the poor, as well as the challenged and the unchallenged all have equal right to care, attention and fair treatment.

Saddening as it is, the Muslims of today seem to neglect the physically challenged amongst the *ummah*. No one seems to have any consideration for them. This negligence, in so many ways, causes this group of Muslims a strong feeling of alienation, depression, discrimination, and a great deal of stress. Often times, the best we give them is a token out of what they deserve in the form of charity, with so much publicity that one will assume that all their problems are solved by the paltry sums we give them. Little or no efforts are made to provide them with learning facilities like special library resources (including Qur'ân, Hadith and other literatures in Braille for the sightless, audiobooks, and other learning aids), preschool and childcare services, vocational or skills acquisition centres, lectures, and symposiums, and other Islâmic learning aids and schools that are specifically designed to alleviate and accommodate the shortcomings of the physically challenged.

Apart from providing the physically challenged with educational materials and learning facilities that befit their physical conditions, it is a responsibility of the *ummah*, especially on a governmental basis, to provide them with amenities that alleviate their incapacitation. This includes providing them with special transport systems as well as taking them into consideration in the construction of public buildings, especially with a view to easing their entrance and egress. This responsibility also includes providing them with gainful employments to fend for themselves and their families, as well as tap from their talents for the overall good of the economy and the nation at large.

Indeed, caring for the physically challenged Muslims stretches beyond merely giving them occasional alms. It includes everything that will make them participate in the day-to-day life activities like every other human being with ease. Striving to achieve this is, of course, a form of *Jihâd*, the reward of which is the highest station in Paradise.

Conclusion

The challenges of the contemporary Muslims are indeed numerous, serious and hydra-headed. They encompass the spiritual and the existential life of the Muslims. They confront the old and the young, the males and the females, the leaders and the followers, as well as the learned and the unlettered. Yet they are not insurmountable.

We cannot claim to have done justice to the topic. Perhaps, we have only succeeded in highlighting and proffering solutions to some of the most serious of the challenges of our era in order to inform and guide ourselves and other Muslim brothers and sisters. It is essential to note, however, that these challenges are but tests and trials on the path of righteousness which a believer must successfully pass through to confirm his or her firmness in faith. In other words, by these tests, Allâh (*subhânahu wa ta'âla*) distinguishes the firm believers who strive in His Cause from the weak ones, as He (*subhânahu wa ta'âla*) says:

⇒ Do people think that they will be left alone because they say: "We believe," and will not be tested. We did test those before them. And Allâh will certainly make known those who are true, and will certainly make known those who are false. ﴿٢٤٠﴾

⇒ And surely, We shall try you until We test those among you who strive their utmost and persevere in patience; and We shall try your reported (mettle). ﴿٢٤١﴾

We do hope that the little we have shared in this book will go a long way, by Allâh's leave, to make the Muslims aware of and keep guard

²⁴⁰ Sûrah al-'Ankabût (The Spider) 29:2-3

²⁴¹ Sûrah Muhammad ((Prophet) Muhammad) 47:31

against the bottlenecks and pitfalls that lie in wait on the path to eternal felicitation in this time and in this sinful and tumultuous world. Indeed Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) was right when he said:

﴿This world is a prison for the believers and a paradise for the infidels.﴾²⁴²

O Allâh, the Almighty! Protect us and guide us to Your Love and Mercy...

Do not deprive us from beholding Your beauty...

Accept our good deeds and overlook our evil deeds...

Fill our hearts with Certainty of faith...

Establish our hearts and feet firm on this religion of Yours...

Forgive us and the generality of Muslims, past and present...

O Lord of mankind, *jinn* and all that exists, send Your blessings upon Prophet Muhammad, The Trust-worthy and Truthful, in every time and place...

Indeed, there is no deity worthy of worship but You.

Wallâhu a'lam wa bihi tawfeeq

Subhânaka Rabbana Ma 'Abadnâka Haqqa 'Ibâdati

Subhânak-Allâhumma wa bihamdik, nash-hadu an-laa ilaaha illa anta, nastaghfiruka wa natoobu ilaik!

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²⁴² Sahih Muslim Kitaab Az-Zuhd

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Glossary of Islâmic Terms

AH	<i>Anno hegirae</i> . The Islâmic calendar starts counting years starting from the time when Prophet Muhammad had to leave Makkah and go to Madeenah, an event known as the Hijra: July 16, 622.
Ahl al-Kitâb (أهل الكتاب)	Literally "People of the Book". It is used to refer to the followers of pre-Islâmic monotheistic religions with scriptures of divine origin which were mentioned in the Qur'ân (i.e. Jews and Christians).
Allâh (الله)	The Arabic name of God.
Āmīn (آمين)	Amen, a supplication meaning, "O God, accept our invocation!".
As-Salāmu 'Alaykum (السلام عليكم)	The Islâmic greeting; literally "Peace be upon you"; In addition, <i>wa-Raḥmatullāhi wa-Barakātuhu</i> (ورحمة الله وبركاته) means "and the Mercy of God and His blessing". The response to this greeting is <i>wa-'Alaykum us-Salām wa-Raḥmatullāhi wa-Barakātuhu</i> (و عليكم السلام ورحمة الله وبركاته) -- "And on you be the Peace and Mercy of God and His Blessing".
Bid'ah (بدعة)	Innovation in religion, i.e. inventing new methods of worship. Such innovations are sinful as they are prohibited in Islâm.
Dajjal (دجال)	Literally means "liar" or "deceiver". Used to refer to the Antichrist.
Da'wah (الدعوة)	The call to Islâm, proselytizing.
Ahl ad-Dhimma (ذمّي)	"Protected person"; Jews and Christians (and sometimes others, such as Buddhists, Sikhs, Hindus, and Zoroastrians), living in an Islâmic state whose right to practice their religion is tolerated under Islâmic law.
Dīn (الدين)	(Literally 'religion') the way of life based on Islâmic revelation; the sum total of a Muslim's faith and practice. Dīn is often used to mean the faith and religion of Islâm.
Dua (دعاء)	Prayer, supplication
Fitnah (pl. fitan) (فتنة)	<i>Trial</i> or <i>tribulation</i> ; also refers to any period of disorder, such as a civil war, or the period of time before the end of the world or any civil strife.
Furqān (فرقان)	The criterion (of right and wrong, true and false); for example, the Qur'ân as Furqān.
Ghusl (غسل)	Full ablution of the whole body (see wudu). Ghusl janaba is the mandatory shower after having sexual discharge.

Hadith (حديث) <i>ḥadīth</i> plural ahādīth	Literally "speech"; Hadith, as used in this book, refers to whatever is transmitted from Prophet Muhammad (<i>sall-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam</i>) of his actions, sayings, tacit approvals, or physical characteristics.
Hajj (الحج) <i>hajj</i>	Pilgrimage to Mecca. It is the fifth Pillar of Islām
Halāl (حلال)	Lawful, permitted, good, beneficial, praiseworthy, honourable.
Harām (حرام)	Forbidden. An individual is rewarded for keeping away from harām out of obedience, rather than out of fear, shyness or the inability to do it.
‘Ibādah (عبادة)	Submission, worship, but not limited to ritual: all expressions of servitude to Allāh, including the pursuit of knowledge, living a pious life, helping, charity, and humility, can be considered ibādah.
Imām (إمام)	Literally, leader; e.g. a man who <i>leads</i> a community or <i>leads</i> the prayer.
Imān (إيمان)	Personal faith
Insha-Allāh (إن شاء الله)	God willing.
Islām (الإسلام)	"Submission to God". The Arabic root word for Islām means submission, obedience, peace, and purity.
Janabah (جنابة)	A state of spiritual impurity that occur due to sexual intercourse or ejaculation and necessitates major ritual ablution (<i>ghusl</i>),
Jihād (جهاد)	Struggle. Any earnest striving in the way of Allāh, involving personal, physical, for righteousness and against wrong-doing;
Jinn (جن)	Spirit beings created from fire
Ka'bah (الكعبة)	The cube-shaped sacred house of Allāh in Makkah towards which Muslims pray.
Kāfir (كافر) <i>kāfir</i> sing.; كُفَّار <i>kuffār</i> pl.)	From the word kafara - "to hide." Those who deliberately hide the truth; unbelievers, truth-concealers; one who is ungrateful. Plural: Kāfirūn.
Lā ilāha ill-Allāh (لا إله إلا الله)	"There is none worthy of worship other than Allāh." The most important expression in Islām. It is part of the first pillar of Islām. Also is the message of all the Prophets, such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad.
Mu'min (مؤمن)	A Muslim who observes the commandments of the Qur'ān.
Mushrik	One who associates others in worship with Allāh; a polytheist.
Muslim (مسلم)	A follower of the religion of Islām. One who submits his or her will to Allāh alone.
Nikāh (النكاح)	The matrimonial contract between a bride and bridegroom within Islāmic marriage.
Prophet [Nabī (نبي)]	A person who has had messages from Allāh. In the Islāmic context, a Nabi is a man sent by God to give guidance to man,

	but not given scripture. For example, the prophet Abraham was a Nabi. This is in contrast to Rasul, or Messenger.
Qadar	Predestination.
Qiblah	The direction Muslims face during prayer
Qiyās (القياس)	Analogy - foundation of legal reasoning and fiqh
Qur'ān (القرآن)	The word Qur'ān means recitation. The Qur'ān is the literal word of Allāh and the culmination of His revelation to mankind, revealed to Prophet Muhammad in piecemeal over a period of twenty-three years, starting from 610 CE in the cave of Hira by the angel Jibril.
Radhiy-Allāhu 'anhu	May Allāh be pleased with him. Variants are <i>anha</i> (her) and <i>anhum</i> (them).
Ramadhan	Month of fasting when the Qur'ān was first revealed
Messenger [Rasul (رسول)]	Unlike prophets (Nabi), messengers are given scripture. Moses, David, Jesus and Mohammed are messengers. All messengers are prophets, but not all prophets are messengers as not all of them are given scriptures.
Ribâ (ربا)	Interest, the charging and paying of which is forbidden by in Islām.
Salām (سلام)	Peace
Sall-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam (صلى الله عليه وسلم)	"May Allāh bless him and grant him peace." The expression should be used after stating Prophet Muhammad's name.
Sheikh (شيخ)	A spiritual master, Muslim clergy
Sharī'ah (الشريعة)	"The path to a watering hole"; the eternal ethical code and moral code based on the Qur'ān and Sunnah; basis of fiqh
Subhanahu wa ta'ala	Expression used following written name or vocalization of <i>Allāh</i> in Arabic meaning highly praised and glorified is He.
Subhân-Allāh	Glory be to Allāh. An expression used by Muslims to express strong feelings of joy or relief.
Sunnah (السنة)	The "path" or "example" of the Prophet Muhammad, i.e., what the Prophet did or said or agreed to during his life. He is the best human moral example, the best man to follow.
Sūrah (سورة)	Chapter; the Qur'ān is composed of 114 surahs
Tafsīr (تفسير)	Exegesis of the Qur'ān
Talaq (الطلاق)	Divorce
Taqwa (تقوى)	Righteousness; goodness; Piety: Taqwa is taken from the verb Ittaqu, which means Avoiding. It is piety obtained by fearing the punishment of Allāh.
Ummah (الأمة)	(literally 'nation') the global community of all Muslim believers
Wa 'Alaykum as-Salaam (و عليكم السلام)	And upon you be peace.
Wali (ولي)	Friend, protector, guardian, supporter, helper

Wudhu` (الوضوء)	Ablution for ritual purification from minor impurities before prayer.
Zakât (زكاة)	Compulsory alms tax. It is the fourth Pillar of Islâm.
Zindiq (زندیق)	Heretic, atheist