

“Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation,  
and argue with people in the best manner.” (Holy Quran, 16:125)

# *The Light*

## AND

### ISLAMIC REVIEW

Exponent of Islam and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement  
for over ninety years

**July - December 2020**

In the spirit of the above-cited verse, this periodical attempts to dispel  
misunderstandings about the religion of Islam and endeavors to  
facilitate inter-faith dialogue based on reason and rationality.

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احمدیہ انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاہور

◆ Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc., U.S.A. ◆

**The Light** was founded in 1921 as the organ of the AHMADIYYA ANJUMAN ISHA'AT ISLAM (Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam) of Lahore, Pakistan. **The Islamic Review** was published in England from 1913 for over 50 years, and in the U.S.A. from 1980 to 1991. The present periodical represents the beliefs of the worldwide branches of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore.

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The main objective of the A.A.I.L. is to present the true, original message of Islam to the whole world — Islam as it is found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, obscured today by grave misconceptions and wrong popular notions.

Islam seeks to attract the **hearts and minds** of people towards the truth, by means of reasoning and the natural beauty of its principles.

**Hazrat** Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), our Founder, arose to remind the world that Islam is:

**International:** It recognizes prophets being raised among all nations and requires Muslims to believe in them all. Truth and goodness can be found in all religions. God treats all human beings equally, regardless of race, nationality or religion.

**Peaceful:** Allows use of force only in unavoidable self-defence. Teaches Muslims to live peacefully under any rule which accords them freedom of religion.

**Tolerant:** Gives full freedom to everyone to hold and practise any creed or religion. Requires us to tolerate differences of belief and opinion.

**Rational:** In all matters, it urges use of human reason and knowledge. Blind following is condemned and independence of thought is granted.

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Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad taught that **no** prophet, old or new, is to arise after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, **Mujaddids** will be raised by God to revive and rekindle the light of Islam.

#### About ourselves

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore has branches in many countries including:

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#### History:

**1889:** **Hazrat** Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founds the Ahmadiyya Movement.

**1901:** Movement given name **Ahmadiyya** after Holy Prophet Muhammad's other famous name **Ahmad**.

**1905:** Hazrat Mirza appoints central body (Anjuman) to manage the Movement.

**1908:** Death of Hazrat Mirza. Succeeded by Maulana Nur-ud-Din as Head.

**1914:** Death of Maulana Nur-ud-Din. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam founded at Lahore as continuation of the original Anjuman. Maulana Muhammad Ali elected as Head.

**1951:** Death of Maulana Muhammad Ali after fifty years of glorious service to the cause of Islam. Maulana Sadr-ud-Din (d. 1981) becomes Head.

**1981–1996:** Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan, an eminent medical doctor and religious scholar, led the Movement, at a time of intense persecution.

**1996–2002:** Prof. Dr Asghar Hameed, a distinguished retired University Professor of Mathematics, and learned Islamic scholar, served as Head.

**2002:** Prof. Dr Abdul Karim Saeed Pasha elected Head.

## The DNA of American Islam

### *The Impact of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Thought through the Woking Muslim Mission in Reforming Muslim Thought in the USA*

By Dr. Patrick Bowen

[This article comprises a paper delivered by Dr. Patrick Bowen at the Lahore Ahmadiyya Convention in Woking, England in August 2019. Dr. Bowen is a religious studies scholar who specializes in the history of religious conversion in the West. He published a three-volume book titled “History of Conversion to Islam in the United States” and particularly focused on the services rendered by the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement in the establishment of Islam in the USA for his Ph.D. thesis. Dr. Bowen presented at the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society (USA) annual convention in 2017, a recording of which is available at: [youtube.com/watch?v=08cJetN4W\\_0&list=PL41IVBGtc\\_2RzoIrPISk5obDtoQp-Ooxi&index=2&t=372s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08cJetN4W_0&list=PL41IVBGtc_2RzoIrPISk5obDtoQp-Ooxi&index=2&t=372s).]

I would like to start my speech by offering my gratitude to your community. Not only am I grateful for the opportunity to speak about an aspect of American Muslim history for which I took great pleasure in discovering, but I have also been very much looking forward to visiting Woking and seeing with my own eyes the city that played such an important role in the development of Islam in the West. And I have felt this way for two reasons.

First is that, when I was a young graduate student just beginning to learn about the early history of Islamic movements in the United States, the Woking Muslim Mission was actually one of the very first — if not the first — international communities that I read about. From my perspective at the time, Woking seemed to be at or near ground zero of the modern movement of Islamic conversions in the West, which burst onto the American religious landscape in the 1920s with the sudden wave of conversions of thousands of African Americans. Since it was my desire to write about this history, I immediately began including the Woking Mission in my research papers and articles. Despite — but really because of my young eagerness to join in the scholarly conversation, I did not at first notice that my American word processing programs did not recognize the word Woking and were frequently auto-“correcting” it to the word “Working”. After a series of patient but clearly irritated teachers and editors pointed this error out to me, I became so deeply embarrassed that the name, and spelling, of Woking became permanently etched in my mind. To this day, in fact, I cannot even

write the word “Working” without double checking it. So, perhaps at a deep subconscious level, I have travelled over four thousand miles just to try to heal this old emotional trauma from my student days.

But there is another, much more serious and significant reason that I was happy to receive the invitation to this celebration. In some sense this also goes back to my early grad school days, but to a point just after the whole Woking-Working fiasco. At that time, as I continued reading about and doing new research on the development of the history of Islam in the US, Woking faded in importance for me. For the vast majority of scholars on Islam in America, the Woking Mission is at best — when it is mentioned at all — included merely as a piece of trivia and is quickly passed over, even in discussions of American Muslim converts. In my own research, where I of course started with the most cited and most easily accessible questions and source material, I initially found very little that would go against the tendency that had been displayed by previous scholars. And as I have learned over the years, there is some justification for that tendency. Woking was certainly not as central to the American Muslim movement as I had believed in my earliest, naive days. The British links to American conversions in the interwar period were indeed significant, but they were far more complex — in fact Woking's own relationship with Americans was much more complex, as we will see shortly — than I could have originally comprehended. Nevertheless, although it took several years and a very winding road of research, on which I chased down hundreds of other questions and resources concerning the development of American conversion to Islam, I gained a new, much more profound appreciation for the Woking Mission's role in the history of Islam in the West.

Although Woking itself was not directly responsible for many American conversions, the publications it produced played a key role in both the dissemination of the knowledge of Islam in America and in the community-building efforts of early American Muslim organizers. This role was subtle, and therefore was understandably missed by my predecessors who were not shining their intellectual flashlights in the same historical shadows as I have been. What I've learned, though, is that this role has left an indelible imprint on American Islamic thought. To use a different metaphor, the Woking Mission is part of the American Muslim DNA. Now, admittedly for some people this fact is not at all interesting. But for a historian, especially one whose research into the broader history of non-Christian religions in the West has demonstrated to him that such DNA-shaping phenomena are both rare and special, I am genuinely excited to visit the birthplace of this particular historical phenomenon, and to be able to share

this little-known, but deeply important history with the very community that produced it.

Now, in discussing this history, I'd like to start by addressing a topic that even I failed to bring fully to light when I wrote my first two books on the history of conversion to Islam in the United States. This topic is Woking's earliest direct connections with Americans. In January 1922, Woking's international magazine, the *Islamic Review*, published a short list of recent converts to Islam, and included in it were two Americans. A Christian reverend, one J.D.W. Ross, who had taken the Muslim name Saifur-Rahman, and one Sadr-ud-Din, whose Christian name was listed as Stewart A. Broad, Jr. The latter's last name may have been a typo, for just a few months later, the *Review* published a piece by an American convert named S.A. Board, with the 'R' as the fourth letter, rather than the second. Now Mr. Board's writing, which was notably included in Woking's important 1961 compilation of conversion narratives, *Islam Our Choice*, revealed that he was an African American who had first learned about Islam in 1920, and by 1921 he was a convert who was linked to the Woking community. This is very much a noteworthy event, for it was really only in 1920 and 1921 that African Americans had started embracing Islam in any significant numbers, and this is probably one of the earliest conversion narratives of such an individual, which places the Woking Mission at the beginning of this incredibly important religious transformation in the modern West. I think it is also worth pointing out that almost thirty years later, in 1949, Mr. Board had another letter published in the *Islamic Review* in which he affirms that after all those years, and despite the prejudice he received from other African Americans who were Christian, he was still a Muslim, and still linked with the Woking community.

What is also noteworthy about Mr. Board's 1922 letter is that he indicated that his interest in Islam was first piqued when he read, not the *Islamic Review*, but a different British publication, the *African Times and Orient Review*. That magazine was published by Duse Muhammad Ali, a prominent British Muslim of African descent, who himself was affiliated with the Woking Mission, and had a personal, if sometimes contentious relationship with Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. Mr. Ali, interestingly, would soon have a more direct role in the spread of Islam among African Americans. In late 1921 he moved to the United States and by the next year he was an influential figure in the massively popular black nationalist movement led by Marcus Garvey. It was in fact largely because Garvey's influential movement, starting after Mr. Ali had joined it, began promoting Islamic themes that Islam was able to take stable hold in the African American community. Indeed, Muslim mis-

sionaries from other groups intentionally exploited this link between Garvey and Islam. And this link, at its core, was an Ahmadi message — one that had been transmitted to Mr. Ali, Mr. Garvey, and to the tens of thousands of black Americans who heard their message: That true Islam does not permit racism and that it has no sectarian divides. Racism and religious factionalism were both issues that had greatly disturbed and harmed African Americans, and for the thousands who embraced Islam in the 1920s — a number previously unparalleled in US history — those two concepts that were promoted by the Woking Mission were central to their choice to embrace Islam. Therefore, in the examples of Woking's subtle, behind-the-scenes part in the American Islamic DNA, this is one of its most important.

In any case, as I've said, the Woking Mission's efforts among African Americans were greatly overshadowed by those of other Muslim communities. And while the later work they did do is important, its outcomes would appear in only subtle ways over the next few decades, until the 1950s, when those outcomes became much more pronounced, as we will see shortly.

For now, though, I would like to focus on the Woking Mission's impact on the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. It was during this period that the Mission made an enormous effort to distribute the *Islamic Review* to American individuals, schools and libraries. If one examines the magazine's letters to the editor from that period, it will become clear that Americans rich and poor, from college professors to unemployed library dwellers, were grateful to find and receive Woking's flagship publication. Missives poured in from readers who were eager to learn about Islam at a time when hardly a word — let alone an unprejudiced word — could be found about the religion in an accessible source. The timing of all this was fortuitous, for this was a period when American culture was going through a transition. The First World War had awoken Americans to the larger world beyond their country's borders, and the slow but steady growth of Asian-majority religions on US soil had begun eroding old ideas about the unquestioned supremacy of Christianity. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad himself had made small inroads in America years before, and the vestiges of those efforts were still transforming American minds, often in subtle ways, as we will come back to. But it needs to be clear that, in this period, which was before the time of portable audio recordings, Americans who were interested in Islam obtained their information largely through the written word. This was the era that saw the first widespread creation of religious — not just Christian — book clubs, wherein readers could obtain famous holy books, commentaries, and historical works from many non-

Christian religions. Works dealing with Islam were still fairly limited, though, and it was largely Woking's publications that helped fill that void. Not only with its magazine, but also with its publication of Maulvi Muhammad Ali's translation of the Holy Quran, which contains the English next to the Arabic — an incredibly useful tool for those who sought to learn the text's language. In terms of quantity, quality, and consistency, no American Muslim organization produced anything like the publications that the Woking Mission had out at that time. If an average American in the 1930s and 1940s wandered into a library wanting to read a publication about Islam by a Muslim, it was more likely than not that he or she would be picking up something from Woking. It was in this way that the core teachings of Woking's message, especially those that would stand out to Americans, such as those around racism and sectarianism, received wide circulation in the country.

Beyond this more diffuse intellectual impact, however, was one of the most surprising, if little-known, developments in the history of American Islam. Since no other Muslim magazine had as broad a reach and impact as the Review, its letters to the editor section became one of the most likely resources for American Muslims and potential converts to learn about Muslims in other parts of the country, which in turn helped bring together various American Muslim convert-focused organizations. The earliest example of this is the case of the white converts in Los Angeles, California, who read about each other in the magazine's 1931 and 1932 issues. By the summer of the latter year, white Muslims in the region who had met each other through the journal began to organize. Then, in the following year, a small, but nationally-focused Muslim organization named the American Islamic Association, which had both immigrants and converts as leaders, used the Islamic Review to recruit the West Coast converts into its East Coast-based network.

The American Islamic Association had been indirectly linked to the Woking mosque since the former's founding in 1930. The group had been initially organized as an American branch of the Western Islamic Association, which itself had been established by the British convert Dr. Khalid Sheldrake, an early member of the Woking Mission. In the 1930s, the American group's members had not just letters, but also full articles and advertisements for their writings appear in the Islamic Review. The magazine thus became the group's first and only reliable medium for regular communication with a geographically dispersed American audience. Importantly, some members of this audience, like the members of the American Islamic Association, had previously been exposed to a wide variety of Islamic and Sufi practices. The American group, via Sheldrake's (and thus

Woking's) influence, had already committed itself to the principles of anti-racism and anti-sectarianism, but the Review's own emphasis on these matters helped facilitate these various Muslims' interactions and eased potential sectarian tensions. In the end, were it not for the Woking mission connecting the Americans who were scattered across the country, the American Islamic Association probably would never have become the first truly national convert-based Muslim organization in the United States.

The emergence of this American Muslim network would become linked with another important organizational development in US Muslim history. Although the links with the Woking Mission were not as direct here, the broader Lahore movement did play a more involved part, and Woking could be said to have helped lay the foundation, so I think it is worth briefly recounting.

By the mid-1930s, the Lahore movement's headquarters not only were in communication with the leaders of the American Islamic Association — communication that presumably had been facilitated by the Woking Mission — but also had an active missionary for their community working in the United States. An African American convert, Saeed Ahmad, who had probably been involved with a number of different Islamic groups prior to aligning with Lahore, had started convincing several Muslims in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania region — which was a key hub of Islam in the African American community — to align with the Lahore movement and advocate for non-sectarianism. It is still unclear whether or not Woking's publications played a role in this project, but the results, nevertheless, were significant: The Lahore movement had established a strong foothold in one of America's largest communities of Muslim converts, and its message of non-racism and non-sectarianism began to radiate throughout that community's national network of influence. Meanwhile, although the formal American Islamic Association ceased functioning, its own network of white and immigrant Muslims stayed alive and continued to gain new members, often by way of the Islamic Review. The most notable of these was Nadira Osman from New York, a convert who embraced Islam after reading the works of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and learning of his connections with Alexander Russell Webb, a prominent nineteenth-century white convert who also had communicated with the Ahmadi founder. Soon, Miss Osman was publishing writings in the Review and by the 1940s she and former members of the American Islamic Association were connecting with each other, organizing new Islamic institutions, and interacting with Lahore-influenced African Americans in several regions of the country. During the war, some members of that community were also involved when African

Americans with Lahori connections attempted to create the first truly multiracial and national mainstream Islamic organization, the Uniting Islamic Societies of America. Again, emphasis in this group reflected Lahore's — and Woking's — philosophy of non-racism and non-sectarianism. In fact, when certain members challenged this philosophy in the organization, the unifying Lahore view won out. Although the institution had dissolved before 1950, it solidified connections and left an important model and organizational legacies for American Muslims in the ensuing years.

In the late 1940s, the Lahore movement in America received yet another burst of energy when its Indian heads sent an official representative to America's West Coast. Mr Bashir Ahmad Minto soon arrived in San Francisco, California where he incorporated the Moslem Society of the USA and quickly went to work, sending out hundreds of advertisements and letters to local and national periodicals, giving dozens of lectures across the state, distributing Islamic publications to all who were interested, raising money to purchase a building, and corresponding and meeting with hundreds of Muslims and potential converts. With these efforts, he had established the first robust Lahore Ahmadi mission in America, and as a result he had begun winning over to Islam a new class of Americans: college-educated whites. In previous periods, the vast majority of American converts to Islam had not attended college. In most cases, although these people tended to be interested in intellectual subjects like history and philosophy, they had not formally attended a post-secondary institution. But Mr Minto's approach to promoting Islam was able to bring in the college-trained, and at one school, the well-respected University of Chicago, one of Mr Minto's converts established a college Islamic association, one of the first of its kind in the country. Despite these new developments, however, the earlier Lahore connections with Americans were not forgotten, and after Mr Minto left in the mid-1950s, a former member of the American Islamic Association, Muharrem Nadji, was appointed to be the new official representative of the Lahore movement in America.

Mr Minto's efforts may have contributed to another broader development taking place in American Islam in the 1950s, but this development's effects can actually be better observed in the pages of Woking's Islamic Review. Postwar America, which was now receiving thousands of Muslim students and immigrants, witnessed an unprecedented surge in Muslim conversion and organization-forming. And since, just as in previous periods, there was still no widely-popular American-based Islamic periodical, the Review became the closest alternative to that for American Muslims. Letters and occasionally articles from non-Muslim readers still had

a very real presence in the magazine, but what was perhaps its most notable feature was the increase in letters from Muslims of a wide variety of ethnicities, for converts and immigrants alike. One can also observe in its pages that both prominent and small American Muslim communities from across the country were eager to communicate with Woking and with the other readers of the magazine. In addition, mentions of new American converts were becoming almost frequent, and one can see in the Review's letters the strong belief that Islam would be an escape from the racism that had traumatized life for so many Americans.

The largest concentration of new converts seems to have come from the metropolitan area around eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey, on America's East Coast. These particular individuals, notably, were not like most of the other American converts in the Review, who were only occasionally communicating with the Woking Mission, while maintaining stronger commitments to American groups. On the contrary, if one reads from that period the Lahore publication *The Light*, there is strong evidence in it that these East Coast converts were often directly and primarily tied to Woking. In fact, it seems that during the 1950s, the Woking Mission was one of the first Muslim groups to make significant inroads among the African American prison population, all while preaching its anti-racist and anti-sectarian message.

This discussion of African American Muslims brings me to the last important piece of history in this story: Woking's connection with the non-orthodox African American group known as the Nation of Islam. In 1958, Woking's imam, Khan Ghulam Rabbani Khan, visited the United States and met with various Muslims, including members of the Nation of Islam. Impressed with the group's disciplined, business-oriented lifestyle and its condemnation of white racism, the imam wrote several paragraphs praising the group in *The Light*. This led to receiving letters of thanks from multiple Nation Muslims, including its leader, Elijah Muhammad, whose missive appeared in the *Islamic Review* in early 1959. Subsequent to this, a prominent American orthodox Muslim wrote to the Review to point out the Nation's many severe divergences from orthodox Islam and, as a result, Woking's imam publicly rejected any affiliation with the group. Now, while it is true that the Nation of Islam's teachings were radically unorthodox, the group did revere the Quran, and had used since its early days Maulvi Muhammad Ali's translation. In fact, despite the reality that orthodox Islamic knowledge never dominated the unorthodox teachings in the movement, it was precisely in the late 1950s when the Nation was more consistently encouraging its members to study Arabic, the Quran, and orthodox Islam generally.

It may have been for this reason that the imam believed the group was functioning under a more or less orthodox philosophy.

In any case, the 1960s soon came and everything changed. The Nation of Islam quickly emerged as a mass movement, totally altering and dominating the American Muslim convert landscape, and at the same time American and Saudi Muslim institutions became the dominant forces shaping orthodox Islam in the country — and all of these communities started producing magazines and newspapers that rapidly beat out the *Islamic Review* in the American Muslim market. The Woking Mission's American efforts, for their own part, also began to fade, and even some of its most active American affiliates, such as the former members of the American Islamic Association, were now dying off.

But as I stated at the beginning of this speech, the Woking Muslim Mission is indeed part of the American Muslim DNA. To understand this, we must keep looking at what came next, after the era of the decline and disappearance of the direct Woking influence. First and perhaps most well-known is the transformation of the Nation of Islam and some of its leaders, to align more with orthodox Islam. As I have implied, the Woking-published Quran translation used by Nation members served as the foundation for the movement's increased interest in orthodoxy. When its prominent spokesman Malcolm X famously embraced orthodox Islam in 1964, it was after years of exposure. When, eleven years later, the son of the Nation of Islam's leader, Warith Deen Muhammad, took the helm and began to steer the group towards orthodoxy, as many of you know he was under the influence of a Lahore Ahmadi, Mr Muhammad Abdullah, and again, the Maulvi Muhammad Ali Quran translation was a model for Quranic education. And, finally, when the non-orthodox teachings were later revived by Louis Farrakhan, the new Nation of Islam continued to use, and uses to this day, that same Quran translation.

The Woking Mission's legacy can also be seen in the organizations and philosophies of several other Muslim communities and movements that exist to this day. The rise of the Nation of Islam and new orthodox groups in the 1960s did not completely wipe away the older movements, even if it muted their influence for a time. And because those communities and individuals from the early days were able to survive and in some cases join up with the new organizations, they had considerable wisdom to share and therefore influenced new generations of Muslims. The anti-racist and anti-sectarian philosophy transmitted from Woking had thus been embedded in American Islam's DNA since its earliest surge in the 1920s, and can still be observed nearly a century later. ■

## Islamic Teachings on the Prohibition of Intoxicants

By Mr. Omar Raja

[The author, Mr. Omar Raja, is a member of the U.S. branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. In this article, Mr. Raja comprehensively addresses the issue of prohibition of intoxicants in Islam. In doing so, he disproves the notion adopted by some that the Holy Quran made allowances for the moderate consumption of alcohol. He also provides an in-depth analysis on the gradual teachings contained in the Holy Quran that led to the complete and final prohibition of intoxicants.]

### Introduction

There are some Muslims bent on arguing that the consumption of intoxicants (i.e., wine and alcohol) are allowable if done in either in moderation or for mere social pleasure. How can that be when the Holy Prophet Muhammad himself, the one whom perfectly imbued the Quranic principles, shunned it completely? It is recorded that when someone attempted to give him a drink that had become fermented, he said without hesitation and in unwavering terms:

Throw it to this wall, for this is a drink of the one who does not believe in Allah and the Last Day. (Report in Sunan Ibn Majah, <https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah/30/39>)

While it is true that its consumption was not forbidden from the very beginning amongst the nascent Muslim community, it should be taken into consideration that the Quran was revealed to the Holy Prophet over the duration of twenty three years, so the laws could not have all been revealed at once. Moreover, gradual steps had to be taken toward the reform of a nation addicted to wine before a complete prohibition could be affected.

One of the very first verses revealed to the Holy Prophet was the command to “shun uncleanness” (74:5), and when the final prohibition came against the consumption of intoxicants, it was revealed that their consumption was indeed an uncleanness and had to be shunned in order to succeed. Yet there are those that would argue that this *shunning* wasn't the same as a *forbidding*, and as such will argue that the Holy Quran doesn't forcefully condemn its consumption nor apply the term *haraam* (*forbidden*) to an intoxicant. Other points brought up are that the Quran speaks of intoxicants in approving terms, acknowledges its benefits and speaks of it as beverage to be awarded to the believers in paradise. This paper will consider each of these points and show why the conclusions reached by some Muslims in support of alcohol consumption are without foundation and tenuous at best.

### Arabic Words for Intoxicants: *Khamr* and *Sakar*

The Arabic words defined as an intoxicant and used in one form or another in the Quran are *khamr* and *sakar*; the former is derived from the verb *khamara*, meaning ‘to cover’ and therefore applies to “any intoxicating thing that clouds or obscures (lit., covers) the intellect.” As such, it can thus be applied to wine, alcohol, or any other type of intoxicating substance or drink (see entries for root word *khamr* in Edward William Lane’s Arabic-English Lexicon). As for the word *sakar*, the verbal and noun forms of its Arabic root may be applied to mean one whom is not only intoxicated with drink but even one whom is intoxicated with sleep, grief, agitation, shock or is overcome by any sort of mental distraction (see entries for root word *sakar* in Edward William Lane’s Arabic-English Lexicon).

### Intoxicants Mentioned in Disapproving Terms

In a particular late Makkan verse, the subject of intoxication was first raised where a differentiation was made between *intoxicants* and *goodly provision*. Contrasting these two, Allah says:

And surely there is a lesson for you in the cattle: We give you to drink of what is in their bellies — from between the *faeces and the blood — pure milk*, agreeable to the drinkers. And of the fruits of the palms and the grapes, you obtain from them *intoxicants (sakaran) and goodly provision (wariz’qan hasanan)*. There is surely a sign in this for a people who ponder (i.e., those whom use their reason and intellect). (Quran 16:66-67)

Some will argue that verse 67 speaks approvingly of intoxicants, but does it really? They should consider that in the previous verse a small illustration is given of how things in natural form serve to man’s benefit. Reflecting on the remarkable phenomenon in the formation of milk, we see that though it is extracted from a seemingly impure process inside the animal, yet by the grace and creative power of God, it yields, in stark contrast, something wholesome and of nutritional value which benefits man. However, a corruption at the hands of man, of what is already goodly provision that nature provides in the form of the best fruits can result in something that is not good, i.e., harmful, intoxicating drinks. Therein lies the great lesson for those whom reflect.

### Application: The Forbidden Tree

The same concept of corruption can be applied to all facets of life when something that is unforbidden or intended to be used in a good way is instead used in a forbidden, dishonest or harmful way such as when our wealth is gambled away or used illegally to acquire property, when our charity is followed with reproach or injury, or when technology is used to spy on others. There can also be corruption in the choices we make

when our powers to exercise discretion are negatively influenced and lead to bad consequences. Take for example, the story of Adam and Eve. Though they were told they could derive benefit from all the goodly provisions the world had to offer, (“eat plenteous food wherever you wish”), they were warned against approaching a certain “tree” of evil.

Do not go near this tree or you would be from among the unjust. (7:19)

Consequently, after they lent themselves to bad counsel from their so-called well-wishers and friends, they slipped from their peaceful and happy state. When they came to realize their mistake, they searched for a way to cover their fault. God rebuked them:

Did I not forbid (*anha*) you that tree, and say to you that the devil is surely your open enemy? (7:22).

Approaching that “tree” was tantamount to following the footsteps of the devil, or in other words, being incited by someone to follow the wrong course of action. These were the kinds of moral and spiritual lessons that prepared the followers of the Holy Prophet to take permanent steps towards real reform.

### “Great Sin” or Harm Trumps its Benefits

During the early Madinan period, the Holy Prophet received the following revelation, the first real kind of prohibition towards the consumption of intoxicants and gambling (“games of chance”), with the reasoning that their harm far outweighed their perceived benefit:

They ask you about intoxicants (*khamri*) and games of chance. Say: In both of them is a **great sin** (*ith’mun kabīrun*) and (some) advantage for people, and their **sin** (*wa-ith’muhumā*) **is greater than their advantage**. (2:219)

Here the Quran again opened up the doors for discussion, and this time it went further and asked man to reflect on how any advantage perceived to be found, not only in the consumption of alcohol, but also in gambling one’s wealth away, was trumped by its “great sin” or great harm to oneself and others. This wisdom of these verses to be reflected upon and in what was an implied prohibition helped set the stage before a complete and final prohibition could be brought about. Surely something that had “great sin” in it and where the harm trumped the perceived benefit could not have remained lawful.

Another example of perceiving benefit in something which was truly detrimental to oneself was the worship of idols. As the Quran says:

He calls on him (i.e., the idols) **whose harm is**

**nearer than his benefit.** Certainly an evil guardian and an evil associate! (22:13).

Of course, as the worship of idols went against the very nature of Islam and the declaration of *la ilaha illa-Allah* (“there is no god but God”), it was forbidden outright from the very beginning. Addressing the idolaters, Muslims were exhorted to say early on: “I do not worship what you worship, ... nor shall I (ever) worship what you worship” (109:2,4). Elsewhere, the Quran also states:

Say: I am **forbidden (*nuhūtu*) to serve those whom you call upon besides Allah.** (6:56, 40:66)

Say: Come! I will recite what your Lord has **forbidden (*ḥarrama*) to you: Set up no partner with Him ...** (6:151)

**Do not** be of those who **set up partners with Allah.** (10:105)

**Shun the uncleanness of the idols and shun false words.** (22:30)

Surely **Allah forgives not that a partner should be set up with Him**, and forgives all besides that to whom He pleases. And **whoever sets up a partner with Allah, he devises indeed a great sin.** (4:48)

So, clearly different ways have been employed in the Quran to denounce idol worship and to signify their forbiddance. When the Quran says, “do not” set up partners with God or to “shun” the uncleanness of idols, no one doubts that the Quran has forbidden idolatry. If there be any doubt, then it may be noted that 40:66 of the Quran that says, “Say: I am forbidden to serve those whom you call upon besides Allah,” was revealed during the middle Makkan period, *earlier* than the verse that says to “shun the uncleanness of idols,” revealed during the late period of Makkah. Can there be any doubt then that the command to “shun” idols does not equate to their complete forbiddance? Also, I may add that the beginning part of 40:66 that forbids the worship of idols is also found in 6:56, a late Makkan verse.

### What is Sin?

As the Quran speaks of “great sin” to be found in intoxicants and gambling, let us consider what sin is. It can be deduced from the Quran that it sin is in one sense an evil or an obscenity that brings harm upon one’s soul (see Quran 3:135, 4:10-111). As such, the believers are enjoined to “**shun the great sins and indecencies (*wal-fawāḥisha*)**” (Quran 42:37). If “great sins” are to be shunned, then this would imply that alcohol and games of chance were to be shunned. Also, it should be noted that according to the style of the Quran, the command to “shun” sin and indecency equates to its forbiddance as elsewhere in the Quran (in Makkan revelations) we read that God “forbids” sin and indecency:

He (God) **forbids (*yanhā*) indecency (*fahshāi*) and evil and rebellion.** (16:90)

Say: My Lord **forbids (*ḥarrama*) only indecencies (*fawāḥisha*)**, such of them as are apparent and such as are concealed, and **sin** and unjust rebellion. (7:33)

Say: Come! I will recite what your Lord has **forbidden (*ḥarrama*) to you: Associate naught with Him ... and draw not nigh to indecencies**, open or secret, nor kill the soul which Allah has made sacred except in the course of justice (6:151)

Elsewhere in a Madinan revelation, Allah says: “**Shun the great things (*kabāira*) which are forbidden (*tun’hawna*)**” (4:31). Therefore every willful act of indecency and sin and has been forbidden by Allah. Those whom took to heart the exhortations of the Quran in the time of the Holy Prophet and reflected upon the implications of drinking gave it up which was necessary before all others would follow suit at a later stage when the final prohibition came about. Further, it may be said that indecency and sin is tantamount to following the footsteps of the devil and keeping distant from God. Elsewhere, the Quran says the devil is the one whom in fact commands indecency and evil:

O you who believe, **do not** follow the footsteps of the devil (*shayṭān*). And whoever follows the footsteps of **the devil (*shayṭān*)**, **surely he commands indecency and evil.** (24:21)

### Purifying Effect of Prayer

Conversely, **prayer** which is the means for seeking nearness to Allah and purification of the soul, **keeps one away from indecency and evil.** The Quran says:

Surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil; and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest (force). (29:45)

Of course performance of prayers must be done with full attention and concentration of mind in order to achieve the goal of prayer. In this connection, it was revealed to the Holy Prophet:

O you who believe, do not go near prayer when you are **intoxicated (*sukārā*) till you know what you say ...** (4:43)

At the time of the Holy Prophet, not going to prayer while intoxicated in the alcoholic sense, during the five prescribed times would have no doubt curbed its consumption for those whom were addicted to it and set the stage for the final prohibition. Unfortunately, some will argue that this is evidence that alcohol consumption is allowable to this day as long as not done during prayer! But as mentioned earlier, the verbal and noun forms of

the Arabic root for the term *sakr* have a wide significance. As applied to this verse, the term *sukara*, can also mean another kind of state in which we are not in complete control of our senses, such as in state of frenzy or extreme sleep deprivation that can give the impression of alcoholic intoxication. This is supported in the Quran in connection with the “shock of the Hour,” when God’s judgment descends upon man, and “**you will see people as intoxicated (*sukārā*), yet they will not be intoxicated (*sukārā*)** (22:2)! So according to the Quran it’s quite possible to be intoxicated in a sense that is altogether different from alcoholic intoxication. Either way, praying while under the influence of intoxication or any sort of mental distraction, hinders the great goal of its purifying effect upon the soul as well as standing firm in the face of temptation.

### Devil Commands Sin, Shirk and Uncleaness

So while fully turning to God in prayer “keeps one away from indecency and evil” (24:21), it is the devil on the other hand who “commands” it (2:169). The devil is commonly referred to as *shaitan* in the Quran, a term which represents any evil that incites one to a wrong and sinful course of action. Naturally, every prophet of God had come then with the universal message to “**serve Allah and shun the devil**” (16:36) because anything of the devil is a turning away from God and goodwill. The devil is thus referred to as the one who “excites vain desires,” so much so that man “alters Allah’s creation,” (4:119), “invites his party to be companions of the burning Fire” (35:6) and causes man to follow his low desires:

Say: Shall we call, besides Allah, on that which profits us not nor harms us ... Like one whom the **devils cause to follow his low desires.** (6:71)

Further, according to the Quran, following one’s own low desire is in fact a form of *shirk* (associating partners with God):

Have you seen him who takes **his low desire for his god?** (25:43)

It can be said that those whom have become so consumed in the blind love of greed, wealth, war, power, their anger, etc., are slaves to their own desires. In effect, those objects of desire or love man becomes so consumed with, becomes their ‘god,’ (i.e., inner idols of the heart) as though they have submitted to those desires, and are thus guilty of *shirk* (i.e., the associating of partners with God in the broadest sense), the root of all sin. *Shirk* is so demoralizing that it is naturally regarded as the gravest of sins (4:48). Moreover, the devil, which represents all powers of evil and low desires, leads man toward this downward path of *shirk*. On the other hand, the belief in the Unity of God, exem-

plified in the declaration, *la ilaha illallah* (“*there is no god but God*”), stands for the negation of every type of idol in the broadest sense and signifies that nothing deserves to be made the object of love and worship except the one true Beloved (God).

### Eat the Lawful and Good Things

Interestingly, the devil is also mentioned in connection with food when Allah commands:

O men, **eat the lawful and good things** from what is in the earth, and **follow not the footsteps of the devil.** Surely he is an open enemy to you (2:168).

What does food have to do with the devil? This may mean while we can benefit from all the lawful and goodly provisions on this earth, we shouldn’t take an unlawful or illegal route in acquiring these things, i.e., the path of evil or the devil. Elsewhere the Quran says “eat of the good things and do good” (23:52). Just as we ought to eat good, clean, wholesome food for our physical benefit, similarly we should take care of our souls and do good deeds unto ourselves and others for our moral and spiritual benefit. It is quite fitting then that the Holy Prophet has been described in the Quran as the Messenger and Prophet whom came to not only “enjoin good,” and make lawful the good (*tayyib*) things,” but also to “forbid evil (*wayanhāhum anil munkari*)” and “prohibit the impure things (*wa yuharrimu ‘alaihimul khabaaa’itha*)” (see Quran 7:157).

As mentioned earlier, one of the first revelations to the Holy Prophet had commanded him and his followers to shun uncleanness (74:5). However, this command to shun uncleanness was not limited to the physical self as *uncleanness* has also been described in the Quran in one place as a characterization of those in “whose hearts is a disease” (9:125). Promotion of physical cleanness, in terms of hygiene, diet and clothing, were necessary steps needed to aid in the advancement of the moral and spiritual self. The connection between the physical, moral and spiritual states of a person is the subject of another discussion but suffice to say anything termed *unclean* or *filthy* in the Quran has been forbidden. For example, it is well known that the Quran prohibits the consumption of the swine of flesh, referring to its consumption as, in fact, *unclean* (see Quran 6:145).

### Intoxicants are and Uncleaness & Devil’s Work, Must Shun to Succeed

Appropriately, in the verses leading up to the final prohibition of intoxicants, again we are reminded of taking due caution in consuming the “lawful” and “good” foods on this earth:

O you who believe, do not forbid the good things (*tayyib*) which Allah has made lawful for you, nor

exceed the limits. Surely Allah does not love those who exceed the limits. And eat of the lawful (*halal*) and good (things) (*tayyib*) that Allah has given you, and keep your duty to Allah, in Whom you believe. (Quran 5:87-88)

These verses are then followed soon after with a decisive prohibition of intoxicants in the strongest of terms, classing them alongside idolatrous and superstitious practices, as well as equating them with uncleanness and the devil's work:

**O you who believe, intoxicants (*l-khamru*) and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up (as idols) and (dividing by) arrows are only an uncleanness (*rij'sun*), the devil's work; so shun it (*fa-ij'tanibūhu*) that you may succeed. The devil desires only to create enmity and hatred among you by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you back from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. Will you then keep back? (*muntahūna*)?** (Quran 5:90-91).

Commenting on verse 90, Maulana Muhammad Ali explains:

This verse totally prohibits all intoxicants and games of chance; and besides, by classing them with sacrifices to stones set up for idols and dividing by arrows, subjects them to the prohibition of 5:3.

And what is the prohibition of 5:3? It reads as follows:

**Forbidden (*hurrimat*) to you** is that which dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of swine, and that on which any other name than that of Allah has been invoked, and the strangled (animal), and that beaten to death, and that killed by a fall, and that killed by goring with the horn, and that which wild beasts have eaten — except what you slaughter; **and (forbidden to you is) that which is sacrificed on stones set up (for idols), and (it is forbidden) that you seek to divide by arrows;** that is a transgression. ... (5:3).

Thus the statement, “*shun it so you may succeed*” mentioned in chapter 5, verse 90 in connection to the “(sacrificing to) stones set up (as idols) and (dividing by) arrows” and read subject to what has been stated in 5:3 with these same references of what is “**forbidden to you**”, makes it unequivocally clear that this is an all-encompassing command to shun these *forbidden* practices altogether. As gambling and the use of intoxicants is mentioned alongside these practices as something that must shunned in order to succeed in 5:90, it is also unequivocally clear then that they are also subject to the prohibition of 5:3. Would those Muslims that believe

that this “shunning” of intoxicants is not absolute also argue that it is permissible to participate in idolatrous and superstitious practices on some occasions and not on others? How convenient it is that some Muslims will read these verses and accept the part about shunning of idolatrous practices to mean forbidden, yet at the time, will still go on believing that this shunning doesn't equally apply to the consumption of intoxicants. If there be any doubt, then it may be noted that the Arabic word using for “shunning” intoxicants is the same word used in Quran when stated elsewhere to “**shun (*fa-ij'tanibū*) the uncleanness of the idols**” (22:30) or to “**shun (*wa-ij'tanibū*) the devil**” (16:36).

Additionally, these verses stand in stark contrast to what is mentioned a few verses earlier in the command to consume what is *halal* (lawful) and *tayyib* (clean, good, pure, healthy, wholesome). Also, the Quran doesn't just say intoxicants are prohibited; it first appeals to man's intellect and providing a host of reason's for why intoxicants should be shunned altogether. The following points are made:

They are an **uncleanness** (in every respect), classed alongside gambling and idolatrous practices (‘sacrificing stones set up for idols’).

They are the **works of the devil**, i.e., those that commit to evil and are bent upon following their low desires.

Its shunning correlates to man's **success** (in the physical, mental, moral, intellectual and spiritual sense). The use of intoxicants leads to hatred and enmity (as opposed to doing good to oneself and others).

They keep one back from prayer and the remembrance of God (the means to draw nearer to God and the means for purification of the soul).

They stir “enmity and hatred” and keep oneself distant from God and prayer which is opposed to the very essence of Islam which is to make peace with oneself and everyone around us through God's remembrance.

After stating all this, Allah says “**will you then keep back?**” (*muntahūna*) which may also be translated “**will you not abstain?**” To keep back from something or to abstain from something clearly conveys the significance of forbidding it to oneself. The root word for *muntahūna* is *naha* which has the meaning of “to prevent, forbid, chide away, prohibit, make one stop from, restrain” (Dictionary of the Quran by Abdul Mannan Omar, p. 580) has been used in its various forms about 56 times in the Quran, including 6:56 and 40:66 which says, as mentioned earlier:

Say: I am **forbidden** (*nuhūtu*) to serve those whom you call upon besides Allah. (6:56, 40:66).

See the entry for *nhy* in the Arabic-English Lexicon by Edward William Lane and a full list of references for its usage in the Quran at this link. Obviously, that which we are commanded to abstain from is because it is harmful to us and thus forbidden. Elsewhere, we read: **“whatever he (Muhammad) forbids you (*nahā-kum*), abstain (from it) (*anhu fantahoo*)” (59:7)**, where the root word for “forbid” and “abstain” are both *naha*.

In the history of Islam, we find that when this final prohibition of intoxicants condemned its consumption in the strongest of terms by equating it with idolatrous practices and the devil’s work, it left no doubt in the minds of the followers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad that they were indeed forbidden. It is recorded in a hadith that when Hazrat Umar heard these words, “will you not abstain?,” in the verses recited to him with regard to the prohibition of intoxicants in 5:91, he said: **“we abstain, we abstain.”** (Report in Musnad Ahmad, <https://sunnah.com/ahmad/2/279>) In other reports it is recorded that when the Holy Prophet ordered a companion to announce the prohibition of intoxicants to all others, wine was immediately spilled and then seen flowing through the streets of Medina (see reports in Bukhari, <https://sunnah.com/bukhari/65/142>, <https://sunnah.com/bukhari/46/2>). There can be no doubt then Islam disallowed intoxicants. The real reform of a nation that was addicted to it had required gradual steps to be taken before a complete and final prohibition could be affected.

### “Rivers of Wine” in Paradise

I will now take up the reference to the “rivers of wine” in paradise mentioned in the Quran which some Muslims will advance as evidence of permissibility of alcoholic consumption for recreational pleasure in this life. A careful study of the Quran reveals and confirms that the descriptions of paradise mentioned therein are wholly allegorical. The Quran itself cautions that there are verses within the Book itself that are decisive, while other verses are of an allegorical nature and may be thus be subject to various interpretations:

He it is Who has revealed the Book to you; some of its verses are decisive (*muhkam*) — they are the basis of the Book — and others are allegorical (*mutashābih*). Then those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part of it which is allegorical, seeking to mislead, and seeking to give it (their own) interpretation. And none knows its interpretation except Allah, and those firmly rooted in knowledge. They say: We believe in it, it is all from our Lord. And none are mindful except those who have understanding. (Quran 3:7).

Maulana Muhammad Ali has given the following explanation of this verse in his book, *Maseeh Maood*, translated into English under the title of *The Promised Messiah*:

The summary and essence of this verse is that there are two kinds of statements in the Quran, viz. *muhkam* (firmly constructed, unambiguous) and *mutashābih* (dissimilar, less clear or allegorical). *Muhkam* means a statement for the interpretation of which one does not have to look elsewhere for its interpretation. *Mutashābih* is that which is verified by other verses and the full meaning cannot be comprehended without reference to them. Here, a principle has been laid down that, following and interpreting the allegorical (*mutashābih*) verses on their own without any reference to the clear and decisive verses, is the work of those in whose hearts there is perversity (*zaigh*) which leads them to deviate from the right way of belief and conduct. Thus, to single out one statement of the Quran and cling to it in spite of what is positively and definitely mentioned elsewhere in the text, causes mischief. In this way, some verses would contradict other verses of the Quran. This is what is meant by the expression *ibtigha al-fitnah*, that is, seeking to draw men away from the religion of God by suggesting doubts and difficulties and making the allegorical verses contradict the decisive ones. ...

Verses which are less clear should be interpreted according to the verses which are unambiguous and free from all obscurity. It is the principle of interpretation enunciated by the Quran itself that **allegorical verses should be interpreted in the light of decisive verses**: a verse should not be interpreted in such a way as to contradict other verses.

We do find a decisive verse in the Quran with respect to paradise that states no one can possibly conceive of their blessings:

No soul knows what refreshment of the eyes is hidden for them: a reward for what they did. (32:17).

The Holy Prophet explained this very verse, stating:

Allah said, ‘I have prepared for My pious worshippers such things as no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of, and nobody has ever thought of.’ <https://sunnah.com/bukhari/65/302>

It is clear then that any description of paradise given in the Quran cannot be taken literally and they must be interpreted in light of the decisive verse mentioned above. Take for example, the 25th verse in chapter 2:

And give good news to those who believe and do good deeds, that for them are Gardens in which rivers flow. Whenever they are given a portion of the fruit thereof, they will say: This is what was given to us before; and they are given *the like of it (mutashabih)* ...

What are the Gardens, rivers and fruit spoken of here? It is no accident that the Quran has used the Arabic word *mutashabih* to indicate that the descriptions mentioned here are all of a non-literal or allegorical nature. Elsewhere the Quran likens every good deed to a good tree that bears fruit (14:24); in other words, their effect yields something good, pure and wholesome which in of itself brings delight. So the fruit promised to the believers for which they are reminded of in the words, “*this is what was given to us before,*” must refer to the *spiritual fruits* of their own good deeds.

This allegorical nature of the descriptions for paradise is confirmed in the very verse that mentions the “rivers of wine,” as the Holy Quran refers to the blessings of paradise in terms of a parable:

A **parable** of the Garden which the dutiful are promised: Therein are rivers of water not altering for the worse, and rivers of milk whereof the taste changes not, and rivers of wine delicious to the drinkers, and rivers of honey clarified; and for them therein are all fruits and protection from their Lord. (Are these) like those who abide in the Fire and who are made to drink boiling water, so it rends their bowels asunder? (47:15)

Clearly, these descriptions mentioned in the verse are expressed in parabolic language as indicated in the beginning part of the verse that says, “A parable of the Garden which the dutiful are promised.” Hence it would be a mistake to take the descriptions of water, honey, milk and wine literally. In the earlier verse, it is mentioned that “those who believe and do good,” are given “Gardens in which rivers flow,” which is an oft mentioned description of the believers in paradise (2:25, 4:57, 4:122, 10:9, 14:23, 22:14, 22:23, 29:58, 47:12, 85:11). If Gardens represent faith (“those who believe”), then the rivers represent our good deeds (“those who do good”); or it may be even true in the reverse that the Gardens represent our good works and the rivers represent our faith. In the former, it is analogous to saying that just as a garden cannot flourish without water, neither can our faith flourish without good action; good deeds give life to our faith; what good is faith if you don’t do good?

But we could also say that our faith compels us to do good; that the driving force of our good deeds (our gardens) is based on our deep rooted and ever flowing faith

(our rivers) in God and the desire to imbue God’s qualities and therefore do good to all. In this sense, the Garden of trees and fruits would represent the fruit of our good deeds and the rivers would correspond to our ever flowing faith in God, the true source, which is the driving force that allows the Garden to yield the best sustenance and fruit. Thus the heaven we make for ourselves will be based on our faith and good deeds of this life, and while life gives us the opportunity to mold our heaven, tasted spiritually in this very life, into something rich and beautiful in the next, the true nature of these blessings will only be revealed to us in their full resplendence after our death.

So there can be no question that the ‘wine’ of this world will bear no comparison to the ‘wine’ of the next world. To make matters even clearer, the ‘drink’ of the next world is in fact described in the exact opposite way to the wine of this world. It ‘does not intoxicate or deprive of reason,’ (37:47), is ‘pure’ (76:21), and is ‘without sin’ (52:24). This clear contrast between the physical wine of this world and the spiritual wine of the hereafter proves that the former is forbidden and that the latter is of a different nature altogether. It is clear that the spiritual wine of God in the Hereafter in contrast to the physical wine of this world, is pure and purifying, not sinful, and does not have the harmful intoxicating effects of the physical wine of this world.

Explaining the significance of the spiritual representations of the next life, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has written in his book, *Islaamee Usool Kee Filaasofee*, translated into English under the title of *The Teachings of Islam*, the following:

It appears clearly that the promised paradise is only a representation of boundless oceans of all these things. The water of life which the righteous man drinks spiritually in this world shall there appear manifestly as a river; the spiritual milk which sustains his spiritual growth in this life will become manifest in the next; the wine of the love of God with which he remains in a blissful state in this world shall assume the shape of a river flowing with wine, and the honey of the sweetness of faith, which he spiritually tastes here, will flow in paradise in palpable rivers. The spiritual state of every person will, on that day, become visible to all in his gardens and rivers, and God also will reveal Himself to the righteous in His full glory on that day. In short, the spiritual states will no more remain hidden but will manifest themselves palpably.

So it may be said that the rivers — *rivers of water, rivers of honey, rivers of milk and rivers of wine* – represent different spiritual aspects of our faith or goodness

of our lives we tasted on earth spiritually in drawing closer to God, and in the spiritual sense, we may venture to think of these blessings in the following ways:

**Rivers of Water** signifies the *spiritual life* we gained on earth through our worship of the Living God and acting upon our faith to do good.

**Rivers of Honey** signifies the *spiritual sweetness* of our faith we derived pleasure from here on earth by way of charitable giving and good works.

**Rivers of Milk** signifies our *spiritual growth* we aspired to achieve by nourishing our souls with spiritual food by way of various devotional acts.

**Rivers of Wine** signifies our *spiritual love for the Divine*, a path in which we strove hard to intoxicate our souls with Divine consciousness and submit ourselves entirely to His will; the path that aspired to seek His goodly pleasure, love Him completely with our entire self and imbue within ourselves His Divine qualities (of Beneficence, Love, Mercy, Compassion, Peace, etc.). As Jalalud-Din Rumi said, “drink the wine of the Beloved (God)” and “Union (with God) is the pure wine.” Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad similarly said, “Drink the wine of His love, and be totally inebriated with it.” (Barahin Ahmadiyya). Notably, in the “symbolic language of love” found in Sufi poetry, wine “represents the divine love that intoxicates the soul.” (*Rumi: In the Arms of the Beloved* by Jonathan Star, Introduction, p. xii).

Hence, all these spiritual states tasted in this very life (i.e., the spiritual water, spiritual honey, spiritual milk and spiritual wine, etc.), will be unfolded to us in a new, superior and everlasting way in the hereafter. We may even think of the physical wine of this world as akin to being consumed in the physical love of this world because that takes one away from the remembrance of God and leads to a downward path of where we become slaves to our lower base desires and fall into the trap of becoming intoxicated with the temptations or temporary pleasures of this life. On the other hand, spiritual wine, in contrast to the physical wine of this world, is akin to the spiritual love and pleasure we derive from having God-consciousness because that is the ‘drink,’ so to speak, that intoxicates us with His love and the higher values of life. As we seek in this very life to gain God’s pleasure and draw closer to Him (i.e., seek the spiritual wine or love for God’s presence in our lives from which we derive great pleasure), the greatest blessing (“grand achievement”) of the next life will indeed be God’s goodly pleasure (see Quran 9:72, 89:27-30).

Interestingly, the Bible too has made a contrast between the wine of this world that corrupts (see Proverbs, 4:17,

20:1, 23:31-32), and the drink of spiritual blessings. For example, Isaiah 55:1 speaks of a ‘thirst’ that can never be quenched by the material pleasures of this world; rather those who ‘thirst’ for God and ‘eat what is good’ receive His spiritual drink (i.e., water, wine and milk); a drink that brings true satisfaction to the soul. It was due to a misunderstanding of these contrasts and the use of figurative language, among other reasons, that certain groups of Jews and Christians equated the wine mentioned positively as a heavenly spiritual blessing in the Bible as evidence for intoxicants being allowable for recreational pleasure on earth.

### Medicinal Application of Intoxicants

Lastly, some Muslims will also argue that alcohol has always been allowed for medicinal purposes and therefore this is evidence that these “benefits” (applied to 2:219 of the Quran) extend generally to its moderate consumption for recreational pleasure. But by that same token, would they also conclude that eating the flesh of swine, which they acknowledge as forbidden and termed ‘*unclean*’ (6:145) in the Quran, is also allowed in moderation for social pleasure because science may tell us there are in fact some benefits to eating the flesh of swine? They should consider that Quran states that the only exception of an unlawful food becoming permissible to consume is in an emergency situation, when one is “driven to necessity” or “compelled by hunger, not inclining to willfully sin” (2:173, 5:3, 6:119, 145, 16:115); the same concept can be applied to its permissibility in the application of medicine in a limited way as required by the necessity of the situation and not for mere social pleasure.

I may note that there was a study published in September 2018 in the reputed international medical journal, *The Lancet*, which analyzed data with regard to 2016 global alcohol consumption and health risk. Interestingly, a CNN article quotes Dr. Emmanuela Gakidou, a senior author of the study and professor at the University of Washington’s Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, as stating that “the most surprising finding was that even small amounts of alcohol use contribute to health loss globally.” Also while acknowledging that low levels of alcohol consumption did yield some protective benefits for Type 2 diabetes and ischemic heart disease, she nonetheless cautioned that “those benefits are outweighed by the overall adverse health impact of alcohol, even at moderate levels.”

In the same article, CNN records the following statement by Jeremy Pearson, associate medical director at the British Heart Foundation: “While there may be a slight benefit to heart and circulatory health from modest drinking, many studies have shown that the overall health risks of drinking alcohol outweigh any benefits.”

The conclusions reached by these medical professionals' echoes what the Quran has said; that the "great sin" or harm of alcohol consumption outweighs any benefit. And while the global study acknowledged certain health benefits, it nonetheless concluded that "the safest level of drinking is none." (p. 1026). Incredibly, nearly 3 million deaths, according to the study, had been attributed globally to alcohol use in 2016.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, there can be no doubt that the Quran effected a gradual prohibition to rid the Holy Prophet's society of this great evil in his own lifetime and categorically condemned the consumption of intoxicants in the strongest possible terms by not only classing it alongside idolatrous and superstitious practices, but by also equating it with the devil's work and an uncleanness, which was to be shunned altogether in order to succeed. Could there be any greater condemnation? Those that suggest otherwise are bent upon following their low desires and do themselves and their religion a great disservice; they undermine the great and noble goal that Islam aspires for its followers. As the Quran says, successful indeed are those who purify themselves. This purification is to be taken in the broadest sense. Hence, the greatest aspiration of Islam for its followers is to inspire hearts and minds towards a path that draws them ever closer to God; a path that does not intoxicate oneself with alcohol or wine but the path which intoxicates oneself with the love for the Divine. Hence the path of the successful is a path of amity, purity, intellectuality and dignity; a path that leads a person toward physical, moral, mental, intellectual and spiritual advancement in all aspects of his or her life; a path that ultimately leads to a heaven both here on earth and the hereafter.

### Addendum

When the final command was revealed prohibiting the consumption of intoxicants, it naturally followed that to gain profit therefrom was also forbidden. As mentioned, the teaching contained in the Holy Quran to "shun" intoxicants was to be taken in the most comprehensive sense. This is why the Holy Prophet said:

"Verily He Who has forbidden its drinking has forbidden its sale also" (Report in Muslim, <https://sunnah.com/muslim/22/83>).

Elsewhere he is also reported to have said:

"Allah has cursed wine, its drinker, its server, its seller, its buyer, its presser, the one for whom it is pressed, the one who conveys it, and the one to whom it is conveyed" (Report in Abu Dawud, <https://sunnah.com/abudawud/27/6>).

With such clear teachings from the Holy Quran and supportive evidence from the Hadith, it is astonishing that anyone could state that Islam had not settled the matter conclusively against the prohibition of intoxicants. In an attempt to slander the Holy Prophet, it happens there are some anti-Islamic websites which falsely assert that that Holy Prophet, God forbid, consumed wine, based on a deceptive mistranslation of the Arabic word *nabidh* found in various reports in Hadith. Lane's Arabic-English Lexicon defines *nabidh* as "a kind of beverage, made of dates and of raisins, that is must; and of honey; i.e. mead; and of what and of barley ... which one throws into a vessel or skin of water, and leaves it until it ferments and becomes intoxicating, **or not so long as to become intoxicating.**" In the time of the Holy Prophet, *nabidh* was simply a sweetened drink made of a mixture of one or more of these ingredients and of course, like any fruit drink, it had the potential to become intoxicating should it have gone through a process of fermentation.

Some of the reports mentioned on these websites refer to the Hadith compilation of Muslim from the chapter entitled, *Book of Drinks*. Interestingly, some of the various section headers include: (1) "The prohibition of *Khamr*, which may be made from the juice of grapes, dried dates, unripe dates, raisins and other things that intoxicate" and (2) "The permissibility of *Nabidh so long as it has not become strong and has not become intoxicating.*" It becomes quite evident that when reading these reports as a whole we find the Holy Prophet practiced such great care and caution so as not to not drink anything of an intoxicating nature. As I said in the beginning of this discussion, it is recorded that when someone did attempt to give him a drink that had become fermented, he said "Throw it to this wall, for this is a drink of the one who does not believe in Allah and the Last Day." (Report in Sunan Ibn Majah, <https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah/30/39>) ■

## CALL FOR PAPERS!

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welcomes submissions of articles for publication. Preferably, articles should be between 5-10 pages long, single-spaced, in *Microsoft Word* format and submitted via e-mail. Authors from all faiths and denominations are welcome, the subject matter of the paper, though, must be substantively related to Islam. Please contact the Editorial Board for more information on Editorial Guidelines.

(See page 2 for contact information)

## The Opioid Crisis – an Islamic Response

By Dr. Mohammad Ahmad  
and Mrs. Lubna Ahmad

[Produced here are two articles, one by Dr. Mohammed Ahmad and the other by Mrs. Lubna Ahmad, presented during one of a five-part webinar series, Opioid Crisis in America, made possible through the collaboration of Ohio Mental Health Department and the Horizon Prison Initiative Program. Dr. Ahmad and Mrs. Ahmad provided an Islamic perspective on the solution to this crisis rooted in the teachings of the Holy Quran. Dr. Ahmad spoke of the different stages of recovery mentioned in the Holy Quran for one suffering from addiction, while Mrs. Ahmad delved into how the Islamic institution of prayer provides a spiritual pathway in the recovery process for a patient struggling to overcome addiction.]

### A Community Response: Mind, Body and Spirit

By Dr. Mohammad Ahmad

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Asalaamo alaikum, May the Author of Peace (God) be with you!

#### Introduction

Addiction is a Pandemic affecting the mind body and soul. Its domain extends from the poppy fields of Afghanistan to the streets of Brooklyn and everything in between. One of the many gifts of the Great Creator is the essence of goodness we all receive from Him that becomes our very own soul as we mold it.

Recently, I have been doing some soul searching myself and asking; am I affected by this great pandemic directly or indirectly? What is the color of my soul? Is it affected by the color of my God or the teachers of righteousness I look up to? Who is my real god? Is it the glitter of gold, my stock market account, my own ego, my device or my drug of choice? Can my soul appreciate the damage humankind is doing to our planet? Is my soul feeling the pain from these fires of desire or the harm inflicted by my beloved idols that I hide in the dark recesses of my heart? Is my soul so inebriated that it feels no pain? What should be my course and recourse under these circumstances? For this, I beseech Allah, the Great Creator, Evolver and Sustainer of the world who has the most beautiful names.

Fifteen hundred years ago, Holy Prophet Muhammad was asked; could alcohol be used as medicine? Holy

Prophet's response was that it is not medicine (*dawaa*) but a disease (*da*). He also said that, "Of which a large quantity intoxicates, even a small quantity is prohibited." It is also called the mother of all evils, and I quote "... By Allah, faith and addiction to wine cannot be combined. One of them will eventually expel the other."

The Holy Quran recognizes this and offers a remedy for it. It recognizes alcohol usage as a prototype for all intoxicants. The disease of addiction affects the mind, body and soul, judgment is impaired, there is physical dependence and low self-esteem. All of these human faculties are inter-connected and require a holistic approach of management as suggested in the earlier presentations.

#### In Light of the Holy Quran

I will discuss the spiritual aspect of this management in light of the Holy Quran. In the Holy Quran, God speaks in the first person to the reader. Religion in Islam is called *Madhab* meaning the path one walks on or a way of life. To recognize this path one has to abstain completely from the intoxicant or detrimental habit and submit sincerely to Divine guidance.

#### Three Phases of Recovery

The Holy Quran recognizes three stages or phases of recovery from addiction. It appeals to our intellect to make the right choice and informs us how and why sobriety and development of self-esteem is essential to overcome addiction. It also highlights the path of recovery. I want to share with you verses of the Holy Quran that describe these three stages of recovery.

#### First Phase: Appeal to Higher Self and Intellect. (Recognition)

"And of the fruits of the palms and the grapes, you obtain from them intoxicants and good provision. There is surely a sign in this for a people who ponder." Holy Quran Ch.16:67

A sign is something that can be observed. In this case the wholesome quality of fruit such as grapes and palms is pointed out. At the same time attention is drawn to the harmful nature of man's handiwork.

#### Second Phase: Awareness of adverse Consequences

The Holy Quran states:

"They ask thee about intoxicants (*khamr*) and games of chance. Say: In both of them is a great wrongdoing (*ism*) and (some) advantage for men, and their intentional wrongdoing is greater than their advantage. And they ask thee as to what they should spend. Say: What you can spare. Thus does Allah make clear to you the messages that you may ponder" Ch.2: 219.

Use of intoxicants and gambling or games of chance, are therefore choices we make that result in unwholesome consequences.

The question was asked by companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad when this verse was revealed; a time when a small group of Muslims were preparing for defensive battle against a very powerful enemy. It was customary for the pre-Islamic Arabs to boost their fighting spirits with alcohol and finance their wars with money collected through gambling. Muslims are now informed there may be some advantage to these practices, but the disadvantages are far greater. The reckless bravado under the influence of alcohol is not true courage, and leads to butchery, so commonly observed under these circumstances. True courage is generated only by facing the hour of crisis without the help of intoxicants. This is what leads to spiritual development. Spending or sacrifice of wealth is also essential to face this scourge of humanity and human values.

### **Third Phase: *Mindfulness or God Consciousness and complete Abstinence***

Regarding this, the Holy Quran states:

“O you who believe, go not near prayer when you are intoxicated until you know what you say”  
Ch.4:43.

This verse makes it more difficult, in fact impossible for those who submit to God’s command, to continue use of intoxicants. Obligatory prayers preferably in a congregational setting are the most effective tool for this. The greatest distraction from this state of God consciousness is worship of our basic desires of power, procreation and provision.

The Holy Quran also says:

“Have you seen him who takes his low desires for his god?” Ch.25:43

“O you who believe, intoxicants and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (dividing by) arrows are only an uncleanness, the devil’s work; so shun it that you may succeed. The devil (Satan) wants only to create enmity and hatred among you by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you back from the remembrance of God and from prayer. Will you then keep back?” Ch.5:90,91.

Worship of desires has overtaken the worship of stone idols today. The devil is the essential motive force and energy behind these desires. If we control this energy we stay alive and ascend, otherwise the fire of desire consumes our soul and society. It smothers the human spirit with uncleanness or low self-esteem making it

despair of God’s Mercy, Love and the Spirit of goodness within. We are advised to shun the devices of the devil in order to succeed. Together, by serving His creation we can remember the Great Creator. We can remember him by caring, sharing, feeling the pain of our neighbors and neighbors in the global community.

God asks all of humanity the question: *Will you then keep back from My remembrance?*

Thank you and may the Author of Peace be with you!

\* \* \*

## **Prayer as a Beneficial Tool in “Recovery from Intoxicants”**

**By Mrs. Lubna Ahmad**

### **Introduction**

Divine connection and human connection overcome feelings of isolation, rejection and hopelessness. By Divine connection, I refer to a persons’ soul striving get closer to God, achieved primarily through prayer; and by human connection, I refer to the caregivers’ and/or support group’s genuine desire to aid the person whom is seeking to reform and recover from addiction. Both are essential to meet the emotional needs of a patient suffering from the disease of addiction.

This presentation seeks to address the following questions:

How does the institution of prayer in Islam offer direction, in terms of duties and responsibilities of the caregiver and the patient in recovery?

How do these teachings play a role in impacting the relationship between Divine connection and human connection in the steps to recovery?

As a preliminary it may be mentioned that the religion of Islam is inclusive, not exclusive. It connects with the truths of all scriptures, prophets and spiritualities. The Holy Quran reminds us that, “human kind is a single nation”, (Ch.2:213) emphasizing the value of universal connectivity and empathy. It also says men and women have all been “created of a single soul” (Ch.4:1).

Regarding the creation of man and the human soul, Almighty God says:

“... I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit (*Ruh*)” (Ch.15:29).

The Divine spirit is not the animal soul, but the spirit of Allah, that gives man perfection. It is the source or seed of goodness given as a trust (*amanat*) to all human beings at birth. The spirit lays dormant, till one waters

it with right guidance and good deeds. All the weeds, or those factors that inhibit the growth of the spirit are removed and a beautiful plant, soul (*Nafs*) or personality thus emerges. Islam teaches how to maintain a balance between the worldly aspiration and spiritual striving. Man has been given spiritual guidance as well as freedom of will to make personal choices. The spiritual path becomes easier and more fruitful upon restraining of one's animal desires and complete submission to the Divine Being. Worship (*ibaaadat*) of the One Supreme God, with obedience, humility and service, thus, opens pathways for shaping the human soul.

### **Prayer as a Means to Connect to the Divine in Mind, Body and Soul**

The best form of worship in Islam is prayer (*salah*) because that is the tool that allows us to connect with Allah, the Higher Power, in mind, body and soul; and to continue the striving (*jahada*) towards goodness; Almighty Allah being the Source of all goodness. Prayer is sustenance for the soul as food is for the body. It is not just a ritual but a tool for spiritual development. Just as the body needs to stay nourished with food at regular intervals, so is spiritual food needed to keep the soul alive.

Prayer service in Islam begins with the call for prayer, with these profound words—*Allah hu Akbar*, Allah is the Greatest; Come to prayer; Come to success. The Arabic word for success is *falah*, which means to till the soil. Just as the farmer ploughs the soil, loosens it to bring the nutrients to the surface, the supplicant connects with his or her hidden source of goodness and unfolds its potential through good actions.

The supplicant prepares for the prayer service, by performing ablution; that is ritual washing of the hands, arms, face, ears and feet, remembering the name of Allah. It is thus an act of physical and spiritual cleansing, emphasizing the mind, body and soul connection. Injunctions in this regard are found in the Holy Quran in Ch.5:6; Ch. 7:31; Ch.74:4.

A prescribed format for the five obligatory prayers from the Holy Quran is recited in Arabic. Specific positions and gestures are adopted to promote unity and harmony, in both individual and congregational prayers. The supplicant stands, bows, sits and prostrates before the Divine Being; prostration, being the universal gesture of animal submission and humility. True spiritual awakening occurs when one is aware of one's state of helplessness and humbleness, especially in times of difficulty and distress. This is referenced in the Quranic verse, "Who are humble in their prayers" (Ch.23:2).

Alignment of the mind, body and soul in prayer enables the supplicant to connect with the Divine Being, the

firmest handle never to break. The impact of tranquility received is deeper and lasting, as the supplicant reaches out to God, Who is All-Knowing and Ever-Present.

### **Spiritual Impact of Prayer on Patient and Caregiver**

In terms of the caregiver-patient connection, the institution of prayer in Islam offers every opportunity to foster a spiritually healthy connection between the two; a connection based on trust, respect, love, mutual understanding and full resignation to a Higher Power. The following points may be taken into consideration:

Praying five times a day, generates a spirit of unity, equality, regularity and punctuality. It gives structure, purpose and value of time in life. The Holy Quran specifies those who put in effort to keep up all prayers consistently, "Who are constant at their prayer" (Ch.70:23). The recovery of the patient suffering from the disease of chemical dependency needs a regular regimen of spiritual direction to stay on course.

Prayer develops a sense of mindfulness by focusing on its meaning and putting it into practice. The Holy Quran makes it very clear in the following words:

"So woe to the praying ones, who are unmindful of their prayer! Who do good to be seen, and refrain from acts of kindness!" Ch.107:4-7.

A sense of mutual respect and kindness is thus generated in the hearts of all parties concerned. Moral integrity and good decision-making skills are both essential qualities of a caregiver. A caregiver-patient connection of trust is established through a non-judgmental approach. Like a parent, the caregiver holds the hand of the helpless patient and offers support and compassion. A pathway to recovery is shown through guidance and gentle persuasion, to the patient whose decision-making ability is impaired.

Prayer brings about recognition and appreciation of the Divine attributes and a desire to emulate them in our dealings with others, on a human level. A feeling of self-worth and a new meaning to the purpose of one's life is thus generated for the patient as well as the caregiver.

The first chapter of the Holy Quran *Al-Fatihah*, is repeated over thirty-two times, in the five obligatory prayers. It speaks of the four main attributes of Allah, and opens the doors for the spiritual wayfarer to reflect on them. Almighty God, Allah, is the proper name in Arabic, applied to the *Being Who exists necessarily by Himself, comprising all the attributes of perfection*. He is also capable of dispensing those attributes with perfection to the rest of His creation. Almighty Allah, is the *Rabb*, or Lord of the worlds, Who nurtures and guides

His creation from the lowest to the highest level, both in the physical and spiritual realms. If possible, the caregiver also is to nurture the patient, by intervention and removal from an unsafe environment to path of recovery. Almighty God, Allah is the Beneficent (*Rahman*) and the Merciful (*Raheem*). He gives to all of His creation, temporal and spiritual blessings without its asking, and rewards manifold, when we utilize them properly. The caregiver too extends love, respect and compassion, to the patient in the same manner. The supplicant seeks Divine assistance and repentance with the intent to change for the better.

Prayer develops a sense of accountability before Almighty God, Who is “Ever-Present” (Ch.57:4), “The Hearing, the Seeing” (Ch. 17:1). This realization enables purification of the heart, by suppression of evil tendencies and striving towards good. An awareness of the detriment of any behavior harmful to the body and soul is thus aroused.

Prayer develops humility and creates a sense of serenity within, enabling the caregiver to remain pleasant, avoid anger and help the patient to persevere in recovery. The caregiver’s connection with the Higher Power also plays a big role, in how he or she maintains serenity. Giving assurance and building self-esteem of the patient, is the first step in recovery.

Prayer provides the strength to overcome grief and hardships. It instills a firm conviction in Almighty God as a Living Force in one’s life; making Him one’s anchor and support. This can be very reassuring to both the caregiver and patient, to have faith in the positive outcome of their mutual struggle. Having faith that Almighty God “answers the prayer of the supplicant” Ch.2:186.

### **Holistic Approach**

In conclusion, the spiritual nourishment received from prayer provides the patient and caregiver, a sense of higher purpose; a higher purpose which will aid in recovery process from beginning to end as well as the will to succeed. How the disease of addiction and the recovery process is handled varies from person to person. What works well for one may not necessarily work for another. It is for this reason a holistic approach tailored to the individual needs of the patient may be adopted. Cultural considerations, in conjunction with religious considerations are to be put into place. Sociological, psychological, faith and spirituality support groups, medical intervention, AA meetings, Twelve Steps Program, are all important as ‘human connection’ tools for recovery and rehabilitation. However, ongoing striving of the recovering patient, include:

Complete abstinence from mood altering substances and habits.

Reliability, availability, affordability and sustainability of a support system.

Full resignation to a ‘Higher Power’, whatever the concept that maybe to the individual.

Divine connection and human connection are both needed to aid in the recovery process for addiction; though there are limitations with human connection, Divine connection, or our yearning and striving to a ‘Higher Power,’ by means of prayer, is cost free and available 24/7.

Thank you for your participation. ■

## **Lessons on the Quran**

### **Chapter 27 (Al Naml), Section 5 (The Faithful will be Exalted)**

and

### **Chapter 32 (Al Sajdah), Section 1 (The Adoration)**

**By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.**

*[Lahore Ahmadiyya members in various locations gather each week for a Quran study group via Skype. The study group commenced with lessons from Sura Fatihah and continued with a subsequent section of the Quran each week. Members take turns presenting on a particular section and discussion from all participants follow. This article comprises two lessons presented to the study group by the Editor, one based on Section 5 of Chapter 27 of the Holy Quran and other based on Section 1 of Chapter 32 of the Holy Quran. A common theme presented in both lessons is the appreciation of metaphorical interpretations illustrating the three stages (or levels) of faith that can be discerned from various verses.]*

### **Chapter 27 (Al Naml) Section 5 (The Faithful will be Exalted)**

#### **Introduction**

We will be discussing Section 5 of Chapter 27 (Al Naml) today, which Maulana Muhammad Ali has titled “The Faithful will be Exalted.”

A primary theme in this chapter concerns the prophecy of the ultimate triumph of Prophet Muhammad at a time in which the Muslim community was under severe persecution. And a parallel theme in this chapter is about belief in the existence of God and, in particular, the process by which certainty of faith is established. And this parallel theme seems to culminate in this section

with the question “is there a God with Allah?” being repeatedly posed to the reader.

This theme about “certainty of faith” is presented in the first section with the story of Prophet Moses and his encounter with the fire. In this narrative, there are three phases mentioned:

- Prophet Moses *believing* there was a fire,
- Prophet Moses approaching and *witnessing* the fire, and
- Prophet Moses being as it were *in* the fire when hearing the voice of God.

According to the spiritual tradition of Islam (as found in Sufi teachings), this story is understood as an allegory for the three stages or levels of faith. The first stage is the **conceptual or theoretical stage**, and that is characterized by Prophet Moses believing there was a fire. The second stage is that of **knowledge through observable evidence**, and that is characterized by Prophet Moses seeing or witnessing the fire. And the third stage is the **experiential stage**, where one develops certainty not through logic and reason alone but by feeling or experiencing something – and this is characterized by Prophet Moses being as it were *in* the fire.

And this lesson on the three stages of faith perhaps can be seen illustrated in different ways in the subsequent sections. For example, when the story of Prophet Solomon and his engagements with the Queen of Sheba is discussed, we also see three distinct stages of the Queen of Sheba’s acceptance of belief in the One True God:

Her first contact is reading the letter from Prophet Solomon, which stated “in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful”. Her acknowledgement of the letter (which she states is an “honorable letter”) and her willingness to continue to engage with Prophet Solomon can be viewed as representing the **conceptual or theoretical** stage – sort of belief through acceptance of the idea or notion of something.

The second incident in this narrative concerns the Queen of Sheba’s throne, which Prophet Solomon altered in a way that got rid of the idolatrous elements that appeared on it. And this appears to correspond with the second stage of faith, in which **knowledge** of details about the true nature of God become apparent – like when one understands the truth on a logical or rational level.

And the third aspect of the story concerns the Queen of Sheba actually *entering* the palace and walking on a glass floor that was over a river. And

this seems to correspond with the third stage, where one **experiences** the complete transparency of faith, as if through a clear glass, where there are no obstacles in the way of *seeing* the Divine in the spiritual sense. And this *entering* into the presence of the Divine produces that ultimate certainty of faith which surpasses faith based on logic or arguments alone.

And I believe these 3 stages of faith can be illustrated in a sense in the section we will be discussing today as well, which will be discussed later. With this background, I’ll start with verse 59.

#### Verse 59

“Say: Praise be to Allah and peace on His servants whom He has chosen! Is Allah better, or what they associate (with Him)?”

We are first presented with the phrase “alhamdulillah” (“praise be to Allah”). And, as we all know, the significance of this phrase is more than simply praising God like we would when showing simple appreciation for something. The word *hamd* means “having so much love and admiration for a thing that you want to incorporate it into your own being”. And the word *Allah* is literally defined as “that Being Who exists necessarily by Himself (meaning He is One) and is the possessor of all attributes of perfection.” So, the term *alhamdulillah* contains the very goal or purpose of life – it signifies the desire to learn and appreciate the perfect attributes of God so that one may incorporate them into one’s own being and become more “God-like” in their essence. And the lesson is that one cannot truly reach the level of union with God or love of God until one has knowledge of what God entails. And, as we will see, the rest of the section provides examples and illustrations for the reader to contemplate on and be able to acquire that knowledge.

Relatedly, I recently read an English translation of a portion of *Malfuzat* (vol.2, pp. 226-243) which deals with a conversation that Hazrat Mirza Sahib was having with a non-Muslim visitor to Qadian (and this is from March 1901). The conversation was not about this section of the Quran or any specific part of the Quran, but the points that he makes in his discussion with this visitor (who was seeking knowledge about God and spiritual matters) provides valuable explanation for the issues addressed in this section. I thought I would read portions of this conversation as we go along to highlight some of the lessons on spirituality that he presents.

The first part I will read deals with Hazrat Mirza Sahib speaking about “knowledge of God” and I think it explains the underlying significance of the term “alhamdulillah” very well. He states:

I must however say, that the first thing a person who actively seeks God must do is to check and rectify his beliefs. He should ascertain (for himself) what sort of God it is that he is trying to find. Is the God that he is seeking really the Creator and the Master of the world? **Is he a God that possesses all good attributes and is pure from all deficiencies and negative characteristics?** ... For example, the Christians state that the Messiah son of Mary is God even though he was born from the womb of a woman in the same way as any other human being is born, and he ate and drank and had all the attendant human needs including those of ridding the body of waste matter. Now, this much is possible that someone should love him, but human wisdom can never suggest that such a weak human being may also be God or that gods are given birth by women. When the first step is on the ground of falsehood, what hope can there be of the second step being on the ground of truth? Rays of light fall upon the heart as a result of believing in a living God who is the **possessor of all perfect attributes**. Where is this to be found with a belief in (the divinity of) a mortal being and the worship of an image of weakness and feebleness?

...  
It is not our concern, nor are we arguing that someone should say ‘Allah’, or ‘God’, or ‘Preamaishar’. Our concern is just this: what does he understand about the deity that he calls upon? I say that you can call him whatever name you like but you should say what he is. **You should define the characteristics you have attributed to him. It is the issue of the attributes of the divine being that is the major issue which should be given serious consideration.**

...  
The path that a beginner should adopt in the realm of spiritual knowledge is that he should, first, acquire familiarity with the (nature of) God’s being and then he should gain familiarity with **God’s attributes**, familiarity with which would take him to the level of **certainty about God**. It is then that he will be informed about God’s being and about his perfect attributes and at that point his soul will speak from within that it has found God and is fully satisfied. When there is such faith in God that it reaches the **level of certainty** and a person feels that he has **‘seen’ God** and has acquired a familiarity with God’s attributes, at that stage a person develops a hatred for sin.

In addition to identifying who God is in this verse, we are also presented with reference to God’s “chosen ser-

vants”, who are the prophets and the saints (the *auliya* and *muhaddathoon*). And, including reference to these holy personalities along with declaration in belief in Allah serves 2 purposes: 1) it alludes to the universal fact that knowledge about God is transmitted through holy personalities who also serve as role models for people, and 2) it establishes the distinction between God and these holy personalities – that no matter how great the status of these holy personalities may be and however much they may reflect the divine attributes in their lives, they are not the Divine; it thereby serves as a reminder not to confuse the messenger with the Divine, that these holy personalities are “sent” by God and are only His “servants”.

And in the same conversation from that portion of *Malfuzat* that I read, Hazrat Mirza Sahib explains the integral role that being connected with a righteous person plays in developing knowledge of and closeness to God. He writes:

Remember, patience is the (required) condition for self-reform. Then the second thing to remember is that the purification of morals and of the soul cannot take place without **close contact with a person who is pure**. The first door that opens, opens because of the removal of filth. However, there still remain those impurities which have a connection (with one’s inner self). In the **company of a pure person**, these inner impurities find an antidote and begin to be gradually removed.

And Hazrat Mirza Sahib continues later in this talk by stating:

After there has been a correction of beliefs, the second stage is to progress in the **knowledge of God** by **staying in the company of righteous persons** and by asking God, through prayer, for the ability to see the path of truth. As the ability to see the truth and the knowledge of God increases, so will there be the development of love (of God). It should be remembered that without the **true knowledge of God**, there can be no **progress in love (of God)**. You see, man does not love tin or iron as much as he loves copper, and he does not hold copper as dear as he does silver, and gold is even more of an object of desire. Jewels and diamonds are considered to be yet more desirable. What is the reason for this? It is this that man receives **knowledge** about metals which results in an increase in his desire for some of them relative to others. In short, the truth is that the cause of progress in love and for the increase in the value of and the desire for love is **knowledge**. Before a person can desire the pleasure and enjoyment (of God’s love), it is necessary that he attains knowledge (of God’s attributes).

Hazrat Mirza Sahib's lessons help us understand the point made in this verse: the need to gain knowledge about God, which entails acquiring an understanding about the nature of God and the perfect attributes that God alone possesses. And the verse ends with a question to the reader: "Is Allah better, or what they associate with Him?". The following verses now provide illustrations of what God actually is and how God is different from those that people associate with Him.

Going back to the three stages of faith – the first being the conceptual or theoretical stage, the second being the observable or rational stage, and the third being the experiential stage – there appears to be an illustration of which in this section as well. This verse (verse 59) may be an illustration of the first phase; basically, proclaiming belief in God in theory or on a conceptual level. And, the next two verses (verses 60 and 61) seem to illustrate the second phase – where evidence or observable facts are provided to develop knowledge of the defining characteristics of God (that distinguishes the One True God from those that are associated with Him). And this is done by pointing to God's unique role of being Creator and Controller of the physical world.

#### Verse 60

"Or, Who created the heavens and the earth, and sends down for you water from the cloud? Then We cause to grow thereby beautiful gardens — it is not possible for you to make the trees thereof to grow. Is there a god with Allah? Nay, they are a people who deviate!"

Here we are presented with arguments showing the uniqueness of the One True God. And the primary distinguishing characteristic of God is that He is the Creator, as opposed to a creation (so God cannot be a person who is born, or an object that is formed either by a person or by nature).

And the point is further established by explaining that God creates all the elements in the physical world. And this seems to be a rebuttal to an argument that because humans also create things, God is not unique. Today humans clone animals, for example, and this to some equates to humans becoming like God, in that they are creating life. However, the point is made here that humans cannot create something out of nothing, they only use what God has created to make things. And the example is given that humans may think they are creating trees (by planting seeds in the soil) but they could not make them without using the other elements created by God. For instance, without the soil and rainfall (or some other source of water) and sunlight, man is unable to make the trees grow. And although man may cultivate the seed to make a tree, man did not create the elements or properties contained within that seed so that it is able

to grow into a tree or garden. Rather, man simply uses the elements that God has already created and applies the laws that God has already formulated.

And after providing this illustration for contemplation and mediation, the reader is presented the question: "Is there a god with Allah?"

#### Verse 61

"Or, Who made the earth a resting-place, and made in it rivers, and raised on it mountains, and placed between the two seas a barrier? Is there a god with Allah? Nay, most of them know not!"

This verse suggests that God is not only the Creator, but also the Controller of everything; that, He doesn't simply create and then let His creation fend for itself, but rather part of the distinctive nature of His being a Creator is that he also provides what is necessary for His creation to progress. And the example is given here of how the earth is made habitable for man. It is a "resting place" – despite the earth spinning in orbit, we are grounded and are provided conditions that make our living practicable on earth (unlike in other parts of the universe).

And further attention is drawn to how the structure of the earth provides for habitable living in the form of rivers of water and the stability that mountains provide. And it is interesting that rivers and mountains are mentioned together here because they are interconnected. Just as rivers provide freshwater, mountains collect and channel and store the majority of the world's freshwater and are essential to the earth's water cycle. And mountains also serve essential functions for regulating the global climate and other ecological cycles of the planet.

So, after alluding to the importance of gaining knowledge of the "attributes" of God in the first verse in this section, the next 2 verses seem to provide examples of the primary attribute of God, that of God's *Rabbubiyyat* – that the One True God is *Rabb* in that He creates out of nothing and also provides the necessary conditions for His creation to be fostered and nourished so that it may progress to its capacity of perfection. And after offering this lesson for reflection, the reader is again questioned: "Is there a god with Allah?"

This verse also mentions the "two seas and a barrier between them." It apparently refers to where the freshwater from rivers and the saltwater from the seas meet, and how one can actually see what appears to be an actual barrier between the two, with there being two distinct colors of water. But, as Maulana Muhammad Ali explains elsewhere, there is a deeper significance about the two lives that a person can lead in this world: a sweet life of faith and goodness, and a bitter life of faithlessness and wickedness. And it seems to signify

that alongside the material world exists the spiritual realm, both existing side by side. And after providing examples of God's existence from the material world, the next verse now deals with evidence of His existence from the spiritual realm.

#### Verse 62

“Or, Who answers the distressed one when he calls upon Him and removes the evil, and will make you successors in the earth? Is there a god with Allah? Little is it that you mind!”

Here we are provided with the evidence of the existence of God, not in the grand examples of His creation and regulation of nature, but in His connection with the soul of man. And in particular, the example refers to the time of man's weakness, when in distress, how God makes Himself manifest to man by providing assistance and support.

Maulana Muhammad Ali explains the reference here is to the Muslims who were being persecuted, and a prophecy is given that they will be made successors (or rulers) in the earth. And the lesson is that God has power to come to the aid of the Muslims and make them rulers over their persecutors, just as he has power to create the heavens and the earth. And it is suggestive of God being a *living entity*, that not only created things in the past, but whose support and intervention is attainable right now.

And if we are to think in terms of the three stages of faith in God, this lesson seems to correlate with the third stage, that of experiencing the Divine. It signifies not simply a *conceptual* belief in God, or the *rationalization* of the existence of God based on observable evidence or logical arguments, but rather the *experiencing* of the presence of God at times of utter darkness. It seems to refer to the stage of ultimate certainty of faith, where there is no separation between the soul of man and God. And the lesson is that this ultimate realization of the presence of God is attained in times of distress, when man sincerely seeks the assistance of God because he or she truly believes that only God can provide the help needed. And it is this concept that is reflected in the popular quote from Maulana Rumi, where he states: “The wound is where the light enters you.” Another way I understand this concept is that it is only in the cave of utter darkness that one can truly appreciate the sight of light; light when shown outside during the day does not hold the same value.

In the same conversation recorded in *Malfuzat* from which I read earlier, Hazrat Mirza Sahib explains that it is in times of extreme difficulty and trials that man, through perseverance, is able to attain this intimate knowledge of God and experience a union with the Divine. He writes:

“Matters upon which a true knowledge of God can be based are that if a person is tried in the path of God again and again and is thrown into the **river of difficulties and tribulations**, even then he should not be perturbed and should keep moving forward. After this, he is made aware of the **knowledge of God** and it is this that is a true pleasure and a true bounty. At such a time there is a deeply felt emotion but this emotion is not temporary, rather, it is filled with joy and pleasure and the soul flows towards God like a **spring of pure water**.”

This description by Hazrat Mirza Sahib of the soul flowing towards God like a “spring of pure water” presents a beautiful contrast with the mention of the creation of “rivers” in this section – that just as God is capable of creating rivers in the material world, he is able to create springs of pure water within the soul of man in the spiritual realm.

And I think another lesson that may be suggested is that attaining this stage of connecting with God – so that faith is no longer just a theory or a logical argument but rather the union of one's soul with God – is what truly makes man a “successor” on earth. That, controlling the material world is not the purpose of life, but rather the true purpose of life is conquering the ego or the selfish desires within (which may seem as impossible as moving mountains), and attaining this high spiritual state is what makes man a true representative of God on earth.

And again, after being presented with this lesson for reflection and contemplation, the reader is questioned: “Is there a god with Allah?”

#### Verse 63

“Or, Who guides you in the darkness of the land and the sea, and Who sends the winds as good news before His mercy? Is there a god with Allah? Exalted be Allah above what they associate (with Him)!”

This verse, like in verse 61, mentions how God not only creates, but also provides for His creation. Elsewhere in the Quran we are told that the stars and other heavenly bodies that were created provide guidance to man when traveling in the earth. And just as rivers and mountains provide life sustaining fresh water for man, the winds created by God provide the “good news” of movement of clouds and anticipated rainfall.

In terms of the attainment of the third stage of faith, this verse suggests that when this stage is attained, man is provided guidance from God. And this guidance in the form of “good news” (or *bushra*) is given by God communicating with the person and providing direct guidance through inspiration into the heart or through actual words of revelation. And one way in which this guid-

ance is characterized is the descent of the “holy spirit”. In the same conversation recorded in *Malfuzat*, Hazrat Mirza Sahib talks about the stage of when true faith is established, and how in this stage the “holy spirit” descends upon the person; he writes:

The first stage of safeguarding against the bad deeds is acquired through the manifestation of *Jalali* attributes (or awe-inspiring attributes) of God because he is the enemy of those who indulge in base and shameless acts. The second stage is granted through the manifestation of God’s *Jamali* attributes, i.e. attributes of beneficence and beauty. The ultimate, however, is that nothing can be achieved unless one is granted **strength and power from God** in the form of what, according to Islamic terminology, is known as *ruh ul qudus* (**the holy spirit**). It is a force which is granted by God and with its descent comes **inner peace and tranquility** and there develops a **natural love and attraction for goodness**. The person endowed with the “holy spirit” runs to perform good deeds with pleasure and enjoyment whereas others see it is as a heavy burden. Just as a child enjoys eating something delicious, so too when a person develops a relationship with God and the holy spirit descends upon him, the performance of good deeds for such a person becomes like drinking a sweet and delicious drink. The beauty that exists within goodness begins to become apparent to him and he runs helplessly towards good deeds and the thought of bad deeds makes him shudder.

And again, after providing a lesson for contemplation and reflection, the reader is asked: “Is there a God with Allah?”

#### Verse 64

“Or, Who originates the creation, then reproduces it, and Who gives you sustenance from the heaven and the earth? Is there a god with Allah? Say: Bring your proof, if you are truthful.”

The reference to “originating” the creation and then “reproducing” it, I believe, can be understood in several ways:

It can be understood as referring to God not only creating everything but also providing for the essential elements for the reproduction of that creation. For example, God not only creates trees, but creates within seeds from the tree the capacity for being reproduced. Similarly, in animals, God creates the faculties for reproduction, both physical and in terms of natural desire for procreation.

It can also be understood as referring to the creation of life in this world and the resurrection that

takes place after we die. So the point being made is that just as God created the material world, he has power to bring it to life again in the spiritual realm after it no longer exists.

Another way to understand it is that it refers to the two births of man in this very life – the physical birth and the spiritual birth. That each person is born with a soul, and that through the sustenance provided by God, this soul can have a spiritual birth. So, it may be understood as a spiritual analogy of the point made about the seed. Just as the seed is created and contains the capacity to grow into a tree or a garden, so too does the soul that is created have the capacity to grow into the state of a spiritual garden. And the reference to “sustenance from the heaven and the earth” may refer to the fact that for both the physical creation (like the seed) or the spiritual creation (like the soul), both require sustenance from God in order to reproduce into the new state. For the seed, water and sunlight and cultivation is required from the earthly elements. And for the soul, guidance in the form of revelation and the example of the “chosen servants” is required from the heavenly blessings.

And yet another way to appreciate the reference to originating the creation and reproducing it is to apply it to the stages of faith. That when one reaches the ultimate point of spiritual development whereby they become one with God in the spiritual sense (and they become among his “chosen servants”), their light then brightens the souls of others and their spiritual qualities are then reproduced in those with whom they come in contact. So, just like God creates the seed, if it is cultivated properly using the proper elements provided for by God, it can grow into a tree which will then produce many more seeds. Similarly, when a soul that is created by God is nourished with the guidance provided by God and it attains the high spiritual stage of becoming one with Allah, the attributes that such a person manifests are planted in the souls of others and are thereby reproduced in other people’s lives. We see this in the example of the prophets, in particular in the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, where his spiritual light was able to produce spiritual life in an entire nation. We also see this in the life of Hazrat Mirza Sahib, and how he produced so many people who become renowned around the world for their high spiritual status and their contributions to the better understanding of Islamic spirituality. For example, Maulana Muhammad Ali states in the Preface of his Quran translation and commentary: “I have drunk deep at the fountain of knowledge given by

the mujaddid of the age, HMGA of Qadian.” And in somewhat more contemporary times, we see this in the life of someone like Janji (Dr. Saeed Ahmad Khan Sahib), whose spiritual light inspired people to devote their lives to the cause of this Jamaat and in furthering its mission.

And again, after providing a lesson for contemplation and reflection, the reader is asked: “Is there a God with Allah?”, and a challenge is made to present proof substantiating any belief to the contrary.

#### Verse 65 and Verse 66

“Say: No one in the heavens and the earth knows the unseen but Allah; and they know not when they will be raised.

Nay, their knowledge reaches not the Hereafter. Nay, they are in doubt about it. Nay, they are blind to it.”

Here we are told that no one knows the “unseen” or “when they will be raised”. And Maulana Muhammad Ali explains that the point being made is that human knowledge has limits; that, the “unseen” refers to the hereafter and man cannot ascertain what life after death entails based on human knowledge, but that it is through revelation from God (the “good news” given to man) that man is able to appreciate that life exists beyond this material world and that there will be a spiritual resurrection after we die.

Along the same lines, I think the “unseen” can also refer to the soul of man. The soul is hidden from the physical world. We cannot see the soul because it does not have physical properties. So, just as the disbelievers fail to believe in the Hereafter because they cannot see it, so too are they equally blind to the existence of the soul within them. So, they are oblivious to the fact that their knowledge of the physical world remains in this life, and it is only the knowledge about the soul’s connection with the Divine that is what is manifested in the Hereafter.

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## Chapter 32 (Al Sajdah) Section 1 (The Adoration)

### Introduction

We will be beginning a new chapter, *Al Sajdah* (The Adoration, or The Prostration) today. This chapter takes its name from verse 15 of this chapter, where the faithful are spoken of as falling in adoration or in prostration when the divine messages are recited to them.

There are several hadith which mention the importance given to this chapter by the Holy Prophet. In one hadith it is reported that he would read *Surah Al Sajdah* and *Surah Al Mulk* every night before going to sleep. In

another hadith it is reported that the Holy Prophet would often recite *Surah Al Sajdah* and *Surah Al Insan* during the *fajr* prayers on Fridays.

The first section of this chapter, which we will be discussing today, deals with a prophecy about the establishment of Islam during the Holy Prophet’s life and shortly thereafter, and what the future would hold after that early establishment. And, it seems an underlying theme in this section is the lesson on Almighty Allah’s attribute of “Rabbubiyat”: that everything progresses in stages, and that this is the manner in which God conducts affairs. And this attribute of *Rabbubiyat* is illustrated in this section in three ways:

- In reference to the creation of the heavens and the earth,
- In reference to the establishment of Islam, and
- In reference to the evolution of man.

### Verses 1 through 3

“I, Allah, am the Best Knower.

The revelation of the Book, there is no doubt in it, is from the Lord of the worlds.

Or do they say: He has forged it? Nay, it is the Truth from thy Lord that thou mayest warn a people to whom no warner has come before thee that they may walk aright.”

This chapter is one of the 29 chapters that begins with *Alif Lam Mim* in its first verse, which Maulana Muhammad Ali translates as “I, Allah, am the Best Knower.” And this phrase is pretty self-explanatory – it suggests that Almighty God is “omniscient”, that He knows all things, the past and the future, what is manifest and what is hidden. And it is suggestive of the fact that knowledge of all things is within the domain of God, unlike any other being. And that is because God is the Creator. Common sense dictates that *The Being* that creates should have knowledge of its creation. For instance, we sometimes read poems or listen to lyrics of a song and debate what the author intended by certain words. Obviously, the author is the person who knows for certain what was intended. And, the point is further made that God’s knowledge extends to everything because He is not only the *Creator* but also the *Sustainer* and *Controller* of all creation. That, His creation is constantly being guided by certain natural laws and principles that cause creation to progress in definitive ways.

Similarly, in verse 2, we are told that there is no doubt in the revelation of the Quran, which is from the “Lord of all the worlds: (the *Rabb-ul-al-ameen*). The point being, if Almighty Allah is the *Rabb* (the creator and

controller and sustainer of all of creation), then His revelation is certainly true, as it is from that being that has knowledge of everything.

It is noteworthy that this is a Meccan surah, and the revelation of the Quran is referred to as a “Book”, which shows that throughout the revelation, even in its earliest times, it was always intended that the revelations to the Holy Prophet would comprise a completed set in the form of a book. And the reference even in the earliest *surahs* of the Quran being a “book” is also a prophecy of sorts, that these revelations would be preserved in a book form to be read and recited by people in future times.

In verse 3, the allegation that the revelation is actually from Prophet Muhammad, as opposed to God, is addressed. And the response given is that this is a message of truth from God, and that it is a message only to benefit the spiritual condition of the people to whom it is sent (that is, it is not something that would benefit the Holy Prophet personally, as if he would have some motive to make it up). And this response is contextualized by referencing the universal divine scheme of prophethood and revelation. It references that the Quran is being revealed to a person from a people who had not had a warner among them before. It seems to suggest to the deniers of the Holy Prophet and the sceptics that this is no different than the revelation given to other prophets of the past and the scriptures of people of previous religions. Basically, it seems to be a declaration to the people: “it is now your time”.

#### Verse 4

“Allah is He Who created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six periods, and He is established on the Throne of Power. You have not besides Him a guardian or an intercessor. Will you not then mind?”

Here, we are presented with the first illustration of Almighty Allah’s *Rabbubiyyat*. The “six periods” refers to the six stages in the process of the creation of the material world in which we live. It evidences the notion of evolution in that the world was not created in the sense that God simply willed it and it appeared, but rather it was a process that entailed different periods or stages. Based on scientific knowledge today, we know this process actually took billions of years.

In footnote to 41:10, Maulana Muhammad Ali outlines the six stages of creation as it pertains to the earth; he writes:

The making of the earth in two days and the making on it of the mountains, rivers and of plant and animal life in four days is really one continuous process, there being six days or six stages in all. The first stage is the throwing off of the cosmic

matter called the earth; the second stage is the cooling of its surface; the third is the making of the mountains; the fourth is that of blessing it by waters and making in it rivers; the fifth and the sixth stages are spoken of as the ordaining of foods, being, in the first place, the growth of plant life and, in the second, the growth of animal life, culminating in the creation of man. That the creation in six days does not refer to the time actually taken in making the heavens and the earths, which is still going on, is noted even by the earlier commentators.

With regard to the “Throne of Power”, Maulana Muhammad Ali explains elsewhere in his commentary that this is not a chair like a king sits in, but rather is a metaphor for the “power and control over creation”. And that is why each time this term is used it is in the context of addressing the creation of the heavens and the earth. It intends to have the reader appreciate that God not only creates, but has divine control over His creation by establishing law and order to which the universe is made to submit. So, the “Throne of Power” is symbolic of the notion that God is in constant control over His creation (or, as it is stated elsewhere in the Quran, He “regulates the affair”).

And then it is noted that only in Almighty Allah can one find a true “guardian” and “intercessor”. Again, that is because God is the Creator and Controller of all; hence, it is only to Him that we may find guidance in how to achieve the purpose for which we have been created. Now, one may point out that the Holy Prophet is also referred to as an “intercessor” in the Quran. And that is because the Holy Prophet, and all prophets for that matter, are indeed intercessors due to their delivering God’s message; and, by themselves submitting to God completely, they became a practical example for others for how to achieve this intercession. As stated elsewhere in the Quran: “*There is no intercessor except after His permission*” (10:3). So, it appears the notion of “intercession” can be understood in two contexts:

The intercession between man and his ultimate purpose in life. Here, God is the obvious intercessor for all creation in this regard, as He is the creator and controller of all.

The intercession between man and his relationship to God. This intercession is facilitated by the Holy Prophet (or the previous prophets during their times), as prophets are *commissioned* by Almighty Allah to be a guide and role model for people to achieve closeness to God.

And this distinction may be a subtle point in reference to the previous verse, regarding the allegation that the

revelation of the Quran is from the Prophet Muhammad and not from God. By clarifying that Almighty Allah is the true and only “intercessor”, it confirms that the message contained in this revelation is not based on Prophet Muhammad’s thoughts or desires, but is from that Being that is the Controller of all (including humans like the Holy Prophet) and is only being revealed to the Holy Prophet who is commissioned by Almighty Allah to deliver the message.

#### Verse 5 and Verse 6

“He orders the Affair from the heaven to the earth; then it will ascend to Him in a day the measure of which is a thousand years as you count.

Such is the Knower of the unseen and the seen, the Mighty, the Merciful,”

These verses present the prophecy about the establishment of Islam, its progress over the following three centuries, its subsequent decline over the next thousand years, and then its final triumph. So, it is another illustration of Almighty Allah’s *Rabbubiyyat* – that the establishment of Islam will also progress in periods or stages, and that it is not something that will be done overnight.

MMAli explains this beautifully in his commentary; he writes:

*Al-Amr* or *the Affair* is the Affair of Islam, and its ordering or regulation from heaven to earth means that it comes from heaven and will be established firmly on earth. Then we are told that it will ascend to God in a day, the measure of which is a thousand years according to human reckoning, which means that it will receive a set-back for a thousand years. As regards the period of its firmness, we are told in a hadith that it will retain its purity for three centuries: “The best of the generations is my generation, then those who follow them, then those who follow them, then after them will come people who will pride themselves in abundance of wealth and love plumpness: (Tr. 31:39). According to another hadith: “There will come a people in which there is no good” (KU. VI 2068). That there is a prophecy here is shown by the next verse, which says, *Such is the Knower of the unseen and the seen*. Thus we have here a prophecy not the least indication that Islam would be established in the earth; it was the middle of the Makkan period, when the cause of Islam was utterly hopeless. At that time the Prophet was told that Islam would be firmly established at first. That the cause would go on advancing for three centuries is made clear by the Prophet’s saying. After that the cause of Islam would be chequered

and it would have its set-backs, which would continue for a thousand years. The limitation of the period of chequering shows clearly that, after that, the advancement of Islam will again be as unhampered as it was in its early stages in the time of the Prophet and after him.

#### Verses 7 through 9

“Who made beautiful everything that He created, and He began the creation of man from dust.

Then He made his progeny of an extract, of worthless water.

Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit, and gave you ears and eyes and hearts; little it is that you give thanks!”

With regard to the reference to Almighty Allah creating everything “beautiful” in verse 7, I believe this suggests that there is purpose in everything that is created. That, all of creation can be viewed as a system that operates because of the purpose of each individual part, whether it be the creation of the sun or the creation of an individual atom, and by realizing this process by which all parts of creation play an integral role to make the system work, makes one realize the beauty of God’s creation.

And I think the lesson to be gained is that we, then, should always try to look for the beauty in everything, especially when dealing with other people. That despite the circumstances, it is always good to see what beneficial part or role this person must be playing in the grand scheme of things that makes God’s creation beautiful. And, that may simply be acknowledging that a person is a trial for you, that provides an opportunity for you to progress and become better in some way. And if that is the case, a negative circumstance can be transformed into a positive lesson of self-betterment. And for one to do that is certainly difficult but truly something of beauty.

In the remaining parts of these two verses, we are provided the third illustration of Almighty Allah’s *Rabbubiyyat*, which pertains to the creation and progress of man. And it does so by alluding to both the *physical evolution* and the *spiritual development* of man.

Verse 7 references how man is created from dust (meaning, out of the earth). So, we are provided insight into the origins of man evolving from the basic elements from which all life evolved. Hence, it is alluding to the fact that man too, like all life, evolved and was not simply made separately or fashioned in some way independent of the evolution of all life on earth. And verse 8 then states: “Then He made his progeny of an extract,

of worthless water.” This now refers to the law of procreation and reproduction, and explains how man spread on earth.

Verse 9 then goes on to state that “then” God made man “complete”. This, to me, seems to be a reference now to modern humans. That what was previously being alluded to is that there were many species of prehistoric man prior to modern humans. That the creation of man “began” from the dust of the earth and our species evolved from the male agency of previous species of man. Our species (the modern human race) “completed” the evolution of man. And a distinguishing characteristic of modern man from his predecessors was that God “breathed into him of His spirit”. That, modern man is a spiritual being. So, although prehistoric species of man and modern man developed from the earth and spread through the same laws of reproduction, and had many similar physical features and almost identical DNA, what distinguishes modern man is its connection with God, and this is due to the spirit of God being blown into him. And this is what makes man “complete.”

And the reference to Almighty Allah giving man “ears and eyes and hearts” *after* being made complete and breathing into Him of His spirit, then, has a spiritual significance. Prehistoric man too had the physical features of modern humans (they too had ears and eyes and hearts). But because modern man had a “soul”, he had a connection with God and this connection is illustrated here by using ears, eyes and hearts as metaphors for the process by which one develops a closeness to God.

Just like we are familiar with the reference to the “deaf, dumb and blind” in the Quran (in this world and the hereafter) signifying those who are spiritually unaware or deficient, so too in the spiritual tradition of Islam the ears, eyes and heart signify the different levels of faith in God: the *ears* refer to having faith based on hearing the truth from another, the *eyes* refer to having a higher level of faith by seeing or witnessing the truth for one’s self, and the *heart* refers to the highest level of faith where one firmly believes and accepts the truth wholeheartedly without any reservation from one’s core. It is similar to the story of Prophet Moses and the burning bush and the three levels of faith that it symbolizes: inferring there is a fire from the smoke is the first stage, then seeing the fire was the second stage, and being as it were in the fire or one with the fire was the highest and final stage.

So, this significance to the spiritual meaning of the *ears*, *eyes* and *heart* is actually another illustration of Almighty Allah’s *Rabbubiyat*: the lesson being that there is evolution in the spiritual development of man as well. As children, we believed because we are told to do

so (we believe because of our *ears*). As we grow older, we believe because of our life experiences and the application of our intellect (we believe because of our *eyes*). And those highly spiritual persons, they progress to believing because it becomes part of their very being due to developing a strong connection with God, where there is no longer any separation between man and the Divine (they believe because of their *hearts*). These are stages by which one progresses in the evolutionary development of the soul, and this is the distinguishing characteristic between modern humans and its ancestor species.

#### Verse 10 and Verse 11

“And they say: When we are lost in the earth, shall we then be in a new creation? Nay, they are disbelievers in the meeting with their Lord.

Say: The angel of death, who is given charge of you, will cause you to die, then to your Lord you will be returned.”

Here, a response is given to those who deny the hereafter (which in essence, is a denial of God, denial of life having any divine purpose and denial of there being accountability for one’s actions in this life). And we are reminded that indeed life on this earth is limited and that it is only one stage or phase in the eternal existence.

So the section ends with the lesson, that if God can create the heavens and the earth out of nothing, can create man from the simple dust of the earth, can cause the reproduction of man from what appears to be worthless water, and can create the species of modern man from the evolution of his prehistoric ancestors, why then should one be mystified by and deny belief in God creating another stage of existence for the spiritual progress of man after we die (and our physical remains are buried in the earth). It seems the previous verses basically walked the reader through the evidence (illustrated in different ways) that points to the undeniable conclusion that there is no satisfactory reason to not believe there is life after death and, if that is the case, how important it is then to live a life in accordance with the guidance provided by the Being who created all existence, past and future, manifest and hidden. ■

## A Tribute to Maulana Hafiz Sher Muhammad

*(On the 35th Anniversary of the Ahmadiyya Case in South Africa wherein he played a leading role as the expert witness)*

By Ebrahim Mohamed

President Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam  
Lahore (South Africa)

*[Mr. Ebrahim Mohamed is the President of the South Africa branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. In this article, Mr. Mohamed presents a moving tribute to Maulana Hafiz Sher Mohamed, who was the expert witness testifying in support of the Lahore Ahmadiyya position on Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's claims and positions in the renowned "Ahmadiyya Case" in South Africa. This article was produced in commemoration of the 35th anniversary of the decision in the case affirming Lahore Ahmadis to be Muslims and entitled to all rights as persons belonging to the faith of Islam.]*

On November 20, 1985, exactly 35 years ago, the judgment in the Ahmadiyya Case that played out in South Africa was issued. With the grace of Almighty Allah and the selfless efforts of Maulana Hafiz Sher Muhammad, the judgment was given in favour of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, South Africa represented by Ismael Peck who was confirmed to be a Muslim. The voluminous evidence produced by Hafiz Saheb restored the truth, honour and dignity of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. This evidence is now a permanent court record and has been preserved in the book *The Ahmadiyya Case* compiled by Dr Zahid Aziz and thus accessible to all for many generations to come.

Maulana Hafiz Sher Muhammad of blessed memory came to South Africa in 1983 to represent the Lahore Ahmadiyya Anjuman as an expert witness in the Ahmadiyya Case. Because several High Court judges and government officials and clerics from Pakistan were listed as being seconded to come to South Africa to assist the local clerics who had by then already garnered the support of all the local ulema bodies in the country, the Ahmadiyya Case hit the headlines in South Africa and other parts of the world. The name Maulana Hafiz Sher Muhammad, brave and valiant defender of the dignity and honour of the Mujaddid of the Age, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, soon became the buzz amongst religious scholars, academics, and the media here in South Africa and abroad. We could not help sensing a Divine Hand at play that pointed to a mission far greater than the court case itself. It was indeed

Providence that restored the Maulana's health that gave him the strength and made it possible for him to travel to distant South Africa to carry out his mission to the best of his ability, a feat we now all know he achieved *par excellence*.

In fact, when we look back at the career of this noble soldier of Islam, we see such providential intervention steering the young Sher Muhammad in a very specific direction towards the Mujaddid of the Age. Maulana Hafiz Sher Muhammad hails from the little town of Khushab, situated at the foothills of a mountainous range in the Punjab Province of Pakistan. His ancestors were seriously engaged in imparting religious instructions to the Muslims residing in that area. They were from the Ahle Hadith, Deoband School. They built their own mosque and were highly respected in the area for their learning and piety. Sher Muhammad started memorizing the Holy Quran from the early age of four years. He was schooled in religious matters by his father and grandparents in their mosque. When he used to visit the local shop as a child, he always used to see the shopkeeper reading books. Out of sheer youthful curiosity he enquired from the shopkeeper what he was reading. The shopkeeper, an Ahmadi Muslim of the Qadian Jamaat, told him it was from the writings of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi. When he was about twelve years old, he asked the shopkeeper to lend him some of the books to read. The shopkeeper refused, but offered him a space at the back of the shop where he could read the books. On reading these books, Sher Muhammad became convinced that the traditional belief that the prophet Jesus was alive in the heavens and will return to earth was not true according to arguments presented by the Promised Messiah from the Holy Quran. It is said he convinced his grandfather and his father of this. At the age of fifteen, Sher Muhammad passed the Maulvi Fazal examination in Arabic and literature at the Punjab University. He then went to study at the Dar al Uloom in Lahore where he completed the Darsi Nizami course. At the time this was considered the highest course to study in religion and religious philosophy that qualifies a person to teach post graduate students. Now, well schooled in Islamic studies of the highest available rank, he kept studying the works of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and was soon convinced of his claims as Mujaddid of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century Hijra, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi; but was still uncertain about 'prophethood' as expounded by his Qadiani friends. He once attended their Jalsa in Qadian. Not satisfied by their explanations of prophethood, Hafiz Saheb told his friend, the shopkeeper, that he will not join their Jamaat till someone gives him a satisfactory explanation for the word *nabi* and the doctrine of *nubuwwat* as followed by them.

On his way back from Qadian, Hafiz Saheb was waiting for a connecting train at the Lahore railway station where it just so happened that he met a Lahori Ahmadi from his village whom he knew who was also waiting for the same train with his family. On his enquiry as to what he was doing there, Hafiz Sahib told him the story of his visit to Qadian. That gentleman advised him to go seek an explanation of his queries from Maulana Muhammad Ali. Both postponed their homeward journeys and went to see Maulana Muhammad Ali at Muslim Town, Lahore. On Hafiz Sahib's enquiry, Maulana Muhammad Ali explained in detail the concept around *nubuwwat*, the finality of prophethood and the context in which H M G Ahmad used the word in relation to himself. In a few minutes the whole matter became crystal clear to him. With this clarity of mind, he retired to the guest house for the evening. During the night he lay awake thinking about the logic and rationale of Maulana Muhammad Ali's explanation and by the next morning he had made up his mind what to do. That day, without anyone making any suggestions to him, he took the pledge at the hands of Maulana Muhammad Ali and joined the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore. He returned to Khushab and announced it to his family members and friends.

Hafiz Saheb served under Maulana Muhammad Ali and held many roles in the Anjuman as editor and author of several booklets and articles. He served as a missionary in Fiji for several years. In the end he served as the vice-president of the Central Anjuman before returning to his Maker, *Inna lil lahi wa inna ilayhi rajioon!*

Maulana Hafiz Sher Muhammad arrived in South Africa in 1983. Despite huge logistical problems, he managed to bring with him a large amount of books and journals needed for the compilation of the monumental theological evidence. As soon as people came to hear of his presence in Cape Town, he received many visitors. Despite the enormity of the task that lay ahead, he never turned a visitor away and would welcome them with a pleasant smile accompanied by warm, jovial comments. Our greatest disappointment was the language divide. None of us knew any Urdu and could not communicate freely with him and we had so many questions to ask him. A good friend of the Jamaat that knew a bit of Urdu came to our rescue in the initial stages. It was much better when later Dr Zahid Aziz arrived as the official interpreter. Everywhere Hafiz Saheb went he was a veritable beacon of light and knowledge. He removed many misconceptions and doubts people had about Islam, the Ahmadiyya Movement, and its Founder. He exuded an excellent blend of knowledge, confidence, humility and sainthood and everyone that met him simply loved his company and talks.

However preparing for the trial was an arduous task that involved many late nights and often working throughout the night. Hafiz Sher Muhammad had a unique yet a very effective style that he adopted in his defence of H M G Ahmad. His approach was to directly explain the writings of Mirza Saheb according to Mirza's own interpretations and not rely on some self-styled third party interpretations taken out of context that caused so much misunderstandings and confusion. This gave him the advantage over his learned opponents in the South Africa Case, none of whom it later emerged had studied all if any of the actual original works of Mirza Saheb. Hafiz Saheb's extensive knowledge even transcended what was contained in the standard works of the Anjuman. He proved that the writings of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad encompassed all branches of Islamic theology, philosophy and metaphysics. Thus the challenges presented by the South Africa Case, no doubt brought out the best in Hafez Saheb that most probably would have been lost to the world. His prized evidence has been captured in an encyclopaedic book entitled *The Ahmadiyya Case* compiled by Dr Zahid Aziz for all to see; especially invaluable for religious and legal scholars.

Due to the tireless efforts of Hafiz Saheb, the world now has clarity at their finger tips of contentious issues with regard to specific Islamic doctrines that have come into international spotlight with the rise of an extremist culture in the form of terror groups such as ISIS and others we are all too familiar with. At last we have a clear, unambiguous definition of who is a Muslim and the true meaning of Jihad - that it does not mean aggressive, unprovoked violence with the aim to convert or punish!

After months preparing for the trial, the clerics on the morning when the trial started decided to throw in the towel and walked away in a state of self-inflicted, abject humiliation, on the grounds of a belated *fatwa* (legal opinion) that a secular court cannot determine who is a Muslim. A few years later they dismissed the validity of their own *fatwa* in a second case as we will see. However, although now not required by the Court to do so, Hafiz Saheb nevertheless decided to deliver his full evidence, for the record, in the Supreme Court of Cape Town, South Africa that now also served as an ideal open public forum for anyone to come and listen to his explanations of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's writings – that he did NOT lay claim to actual prophethood, period.

In the end, the Court ruled against the clerical body and others. Justice J. Williamson had the following to say about Maulana Hafiz Sher Muhammad:

**‘In my estimation the witness is a man of great learning and integrity. He gave evidence before me for some six days and created an extremely favourable impression. I accept his evidence**

**without hesitation.’ – Judgment, November 20, 1985, Case 10058/82, in favour of the Ahmadiyya Movement.**

In a second case, a local Sunni Sheikh, Muhammad Jassiem brought a charge of defamation against the same clerical body and its president Sheikh Nazim Mohamed. Sheikh Jassiem was defamed because he refused to debar Ahmadis from attending his mosque. This time the defendants, contrary to their own *fatwa* produced in the first Case, approached a secular Court to determine whether Jassiem who refused to call Ahmadis kafir was a Muslim. This time they brought an expert witness namely Professor Ghazi from Pakistan to testify on their behalf against the teachings of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Professor Ghazi was from the International University of Islamabad, Pakistan. And was later appointed as judge of the Shariat Appellate Court and still later became Federal Minister of Religious Affairs of Pakistan.

Maulana Hafiz Sher Muhammad was again approached to defend the beliefs of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad though no Ahmadi was a direct party to the case nor was the Court required to determine whether Ahmadis were Muslims or not. He was pitted against the best the opposition could present. On this occasion he gave extensive evidence from July to September 1987 under hostile cross-examination. In the end the Judge determined that it was not necessary to rule whether Jassiem was a Muslim or not as it was a clear cut case of defamation that he was subjected to by the head of the clerical body and for which he was awarded damages. However, in summing up the two expert witnesses the Judge had the following to say:

‘As a witness **Professor Ghazi** has the disadvantage that he correctly concedes that where the government of the day supports an idea – that idea flourishes...Of possible interpretations put on Mirza’s words and actions, he always chose the worst...his evidence was often illogical inferences, unjustified.’

‘**Sher Muhammad** who had to break down prejudice perhaps, not any identifiable opponent, impressed as more reasonable and tolerant (being interested in the spiritual advancement of Islam rather the Ahmedism as such) than Ghazi whose interest lie in politics rather than spirituality...’ – page 94 of Trial Court Judgment Case 1438/86.

If we now compare the respected Judge’s assessment of M H Sher Muhammad’s testimony with the following words of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad who said:

‘Our religion is the same Islam. It is not new. These are the same prayers, the same fasts, the same pilgrimage, and the same zakaat. But there is

this difference that these duties had by now assumed outward forms only, without any true spirit in them; we want to infuse in them the spirit of sincerity.’ – (*Ruhani Khaza’in*, no. 2, vol. ix, p.312)

**...we see the great moral victory Maulana Hafiz Sher Muhammad achieved.**

Thus we say, Maulana Hafiz Sher Muhammad, Dear Sir, you have been an Excellent Ambassador of the true spirit of Islam as revived by the Mujaddid of the Age, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in such a way that you deservedly attracted the admiration of an unbiased judge and will continue to draw the admiration of all honest, fair-minded people around the world. We applaud you, Hafiz Saheb. You deserve a post-humous standing ovation.

May Almighty Allah, the Best of Judges, reward you abundantly! May your life’s work be an everlasting charity and nourishment for your soul, Ameen! ■

## A Shining Star of Islam Has Set

### *Jumma Khutba (Sermon) on the Death of Quaid-i-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah*

**By Maulana Muhammad Ali  
(Translated by Dr. Mohammad Ahmad)**

[This article comprises a Jumma Khutba (Friday congregations prayer sermon) by Maulana Muhammad Ali from September 17, 1948, which was translated from Urdu into English by Dr. Mohammad Ahmad. This Khutba was delivered on the first Jumma after the death of Quaid-i-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of the State of Pakistan. In this sermon, Maulana Muhammad Ali praises the character and work of Muhammad Ali Jinnah and explains that it was his firm belief in God that permitted him to overcome great difficulties and achieve so much success. He further exhorts his fellow countrymen to model the firm belief exhibited by Muhammad Ali Jinnah so as to make Pakistan an ideal Islamic republic.]

I bear witness that none deserves to be served besides Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the servant and messenger of Allah. After this, I seek the protection of Allah from the accursed devil. In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Who, when a misfortune befalls them, say: Surely we are Allah’s, and to Him we shall return. (2:156)

Allah has guided Muslims in all times of difficulty. The death of the Holy Prophet Muhammad was a time of unprecedented grief for the Muslim community. Hazrat Abu Bakr consoled them with these words from the Holy Quran:

And Muhammad is but a messenger — messengers have already passed away before him. If then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels?... (3:144)

These words contain a reference to incidents at the battle of Uhud. Rumor was rife that the Holy Prophet had been martyred on the battlefield. His followers' amazing strength of belief is reflected in the words of one such companion: "If Muhammad has been killed, his Lord has not been killed, so keep on fighting for the cause he fought for." With these words on his tongue, he plunged fearlessly, sword in hand, into the enemy ranks.

When the Holy Prophet actually passed away, some people thought he was still alive. Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddiq went to the Holy Prophet's apartment to confirm the death, then returned to the mosque and addressed the congregation in these words: "Listen to what I say. If any of you worshipped Muhammad, then he has passed away. If you worshipped Allah, then He is ever-living and death does not overtake Him."

Hazrat Abu Bakr had more love for the Holy Prophet than anyone else. He, however, clearly conveyed the message that even such a great man, whose kingdom extended over both religious and worldly domains, was not God. His death should not cause Muslims to cease doing what had been entrusted to them.

After the death of the Holy Prophet, Muslims had such firm faith in his message that they rallied to suppress a tide of rebellion that arose in Arabia. They also simultaneously defended against, and defeated, the forces of two major powers of the time, the Romans and Persians, who crossed their borders from two different directions. As a result of this firm resolve, they sapped the strength of both and the Roman and Persian empires were forever vanquished. Moreover, as a result of this firm commitment to their faith, they were able to spread Islam from China in the east, to Spain in the west, within a century.

Today, there is no one who equals our brother, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Within a short span of seven years, he overcame dangerous enemies and successfully built a sovereign Muslim state. His will and determination were as strong and unmovable as a mountain. Recall that the Congress party said that they opposed the division of India at all costs. Gandhi-ji said that India was indivisible, and the British, who were in power at the time, had a similar opinion. Even a substantial number of Muslims supported this view. Quaid-i-

Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah disagreed and said that this division was inevitable, and in time, all submitted before his firm resolve. His body was thin and frail, but the source of such strength and achievements is the heart, not the body. His heart was so committed and his resolve so firm, all those in opposition had to give in to it.

Remember that even after the death of such an eminent personality, if Muslims remain steadfast, it will not be a loss for the cause of Islam but rather a means of progress. It is obvious that Muhammad Ali Jinnah had a firm belief in God. As a result, opposition to his aims collapsed like a house of straw. He travelled fearlessly, without any bodyguards, among the same Hindu extremists who killed their great benefactor, Gandhi-ji. Gandhi was murdered because he stated that the Muslims should be permitted to remain. God has called Quaid-i-Azam back to reward him for his noble work. However, He did so only after the opponents to Partition had fully exerted themselves, both before and after the creation of Pakistan.

Few other human beings have met with such great success in their lives. Regarding them, the Holy Quran states:

That is Allah's grace; He grants it to whom He pleases. And Allah is the Lord of mighty grace. (62:4)

Quaid-i-Azam did his work and has gone before God. Today, he is respected not only by his friends, but also by opponents who acknowledge his iron determination. This resolve was a result of his firm belief in God. In this moment of grief, Muslims should once more recall the words of Hazrat Abu Bakr: "If you worshipped Allah, then He is Ever-living and death does not overtake Him."

If Muslims' hearts have firm belief in God, their efforts will make Pakistan an ideal Islamic republic. The world of Islam is looking for a model of governance, and such a model can only be created by people who have strong belief in their hearts. Remember, however, that those whose footsteps falter due to the desire for wealth or personal pleasure lack true faith in God. Faith, when it enters a heart, makes it firm like a mountain. The individual with this kind of belief is not enslaved to his desires. It does not require an epic struggle to achieve this, only a commitment from the heart. In a matter of a few moments, the person who makes such a commitment reaches a high level of spirituality. If, however, by choice he remains stuck in the muddy waters of low morality, God does not pull him out. I am making this appeal, in particular, to the leaders of this nation.

I have been asked why we are deprived of God's favors. It is because we who call ourselves Ahmadis have not

lived up to the ten conditions of the pledge we made to a pure soul (i.e. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement), namely the pledge of keeping our religion above the world! This is the truth. We give a few pennies in Allah's way and think that we have put Him under an obligation. We were called to rise to a level of commitment whereby the sacrifice of all we have would have meant nothing to us. There is no doubt that the *Imam* of this age, your spiritual mentor, called you to something that was above all worldly pursuits. He called for you to share the Word of God in the world. Anybody who seeks a position of honor, or thinks himself above others, or has the notion that his services for religion are incomparable, cannot proclaim God's message to the world.

Even more difficult to comprehend is our lack of understanding that sharing the name of God in the world is precisely why our organization exists. Some are worried about how this organization can gain ownership of industry or business. Others are concerned about ways and means to acquire political power. Still others think that honor lies in building schools and colleges. We have strayed far from the humble disposition needed to spread the name of God. We have lost our foothold on the mountain of strength that we were placed upon. Very few of us remain concerned about sharing the true message of Islam with the world and illuminating the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Allah, through His grace, has opened up ways for us, but our eyes keep turning in a direction He has prohibited:

And strain not thine eyes toward that with which  
We have provided different classes of them, (of)  
the splendor of this world's life... (20:131)

Spreading the truth is like planting seeds. Continue sowing seeds and working hard. Bringing them to fruition is the work of God. This is the most difficult task in the world. In order to accomplish it, we need a greater faith in God than what we need for our worldly undertakings.

Here in Quetta, we said funeral prayers in absentia (*ghaibana Janaza*) for Quaid-i-Azam on Sunday after our Quran lesson. I hope that this was done by all member organizations, and that additional prayers for the elevation of his spiritual status were also offered. If this has yet to be done in any of our organizations, whether in Pakistan or India, it should be now. Along with beseeching Allah to grant special spiritual grace to Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, we should also request Him to inspire such firm belief in the hearts of Muslims that it helps them overcome all difficulties. ■

## Fact Sheet: Permissible War in Islam

By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

[Reproduced below is a Fact Sheet prepared by the Editor for a 13-week course titled "Islam and Christianity" offered by the King Avenue United Methodist Church in Columbus, Ohio. The Editor was a co-facilitator of the weekly classes, which followed the 13 chapters contained in the book "Christianity and Islam: So much in common, so far apart" by Ronn Kerr. The Fact Sheet was part of the course material for the week in which war, from a Christian and Muslim perspective, was the focus.]

Far from the popular notion that Islam advocates war, Muslims are required to do good to others so that peace may be established on earth. In particular, the Arabic word "**jihad**", which many people believe to be synonymous with the term "holy war", simply means "**striving hard**". It implies an exertion on one's part to the best of his or her ability for the purpose of improving a condition. And its primary significance is the striving against one's inner passions, to bring about reform within one's self and to improve the conditions of others in society. So, for example:

- A laborer determined to work hard and make sacrifices to support his or her family is a type of *jihad*.
- A parent striving to raise his or her children properly so that they will exhibit good moral values when they grow up is a type of *jihad*.
- A student struggling to earn a degree so that he or she may contribute to the betterment of society in a particular field is a type of *jihad*.
- In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad once said: "The most excellent *jihad* is to say a word of *truth* before an unjust ruler".

There is no doubt, though, that the Quran contains verses dealing with war. Although "peace" is the goal in Islam, "war" is permissible under certain limited circumstances as an *exception* and only a means to the end; war is permissible only for purposes of trying to maintain peace. In fact, the well-known Just War Theory, accepted by all western nations in some form or the other, is strikingly similar to the concept of permissible war in Islam. Just as the Just War Theory attempts to reconcile the feelings of moral abhorrence towards war with an acknowledgment that war may sometimes be necessary, so too does Islam balance these conflicting interests.

The Quran provides clear guidance as to the proper *conditions* under which war may be permissible or justified; it states:

Permission (to fight) is given to those on whom war is made, because they are oppressed. (22:39)

The Quran, therefore, permits Muslims to engage in war only in **self-defense**; that is, when being “oppressed” by others. And what does “oppression” mean? Well, the Quran does not leave this important question unanswered; in the very next verse it explains:

Those who are driven from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is God. And if God did not repel some people by others, cloisters, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which God’s name is much remembered, would have been pulled down. (22:40)

So the type of “oppression” that justifies military conflict in Islam is when the rights to life and liberty are appropriated and freedom of religion (for all) is annexed. The Quran permits fighting in order to establish peace and order and halt the unlawful deprivation of rights (in particular, religious freedom).

Clearly, this is a polar opposite to the propaganda of extremists who claim the Quran instructs Muslims to fight others in order to compel them to follow Islam or in order to establish a so-called “Islamic State”. There is simply nothing extreme about the Islamic position on war; neither does it sanction it without strict conditions, nor does it require a wholesale prohibition under every possible circumstance. Rather, a balanced and practical approach is provided.

Every student of Islamic history knows Prophet Muhammad and his companions were subjected to the severest forms of persecution in Mecca from the faith’s inception. But they bore it all with patience. Over a hundred of them had to flee for their lives to Abyssinia, but persecution persisted. Ultimately, the entire Muslim population left their homes in Mecca and took refuge in Medina. Even this did not stop the hostilities against them; the Meccans were intent on exterminating this new religion which was an obvious threat to their hegemony. History bears testimony to the fact that it was at this juncture only, in defense of the very existence of their lives and of their faith, the Quran permitted the Muslims to fight back as a last resort to save themselves from annihilation.

In addition, Islam also places strict limitations on the parameters of war. The conflict must be **proportional**, never in excess of what is required to establish peace and order. The Quran states:

And fight in the way of God against those who fight against you, but **be not aggressive**. Surely God does not love the aggressors. (2:190)

And if they (i.e. the oppressing force) incline to peace, **you must also incline to it**, and trust in God ... (8:61)

Once the opposing party agrees to peace, war must cease; aggression against the opposing side is discounted as sinful. These verses make it quite plain that the provision for war in Islam is simply to establish peace and never to be the basis for aggression against others.

Finally, in Islam, the practice of war is not only limited in terms of when it may be commenced and when it must cease, but also by specific **rules of conduct** during war. Prophet Muhammad emphasized the humane treatment of members of the opposing group and forbade the killing of civilians. It is reported that he also said that during war no harm should come upon:

- “the elderly, any child or any woman” (Abu Dawud)
- “the monks in monasteries” (Musnad of Ibn Hanbal)
- “people in places of worship” (Musnad of Ibn Hanbal)
- “trees or crops” (Musnad of Ibn Hanbal)

As a result, *only* the opposing military force, those actually engaged in fighting, were to be fought against. It was also this magnanimous treatment of the “enemy” which won over many soldiers and subjects of opposing forces in the early days of Islam. ■

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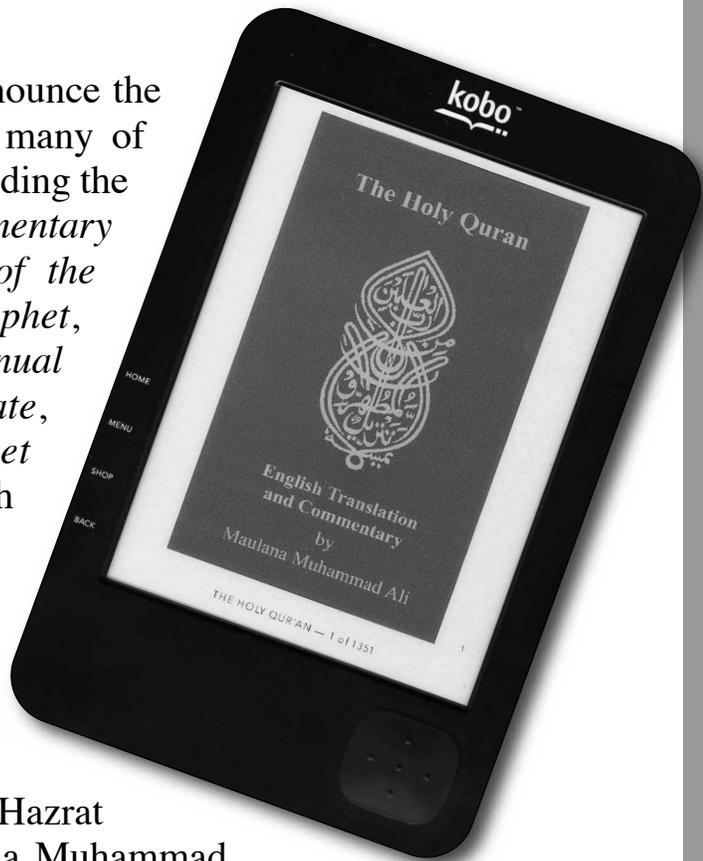
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(81:10)

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