

The Intellect

Al Quran
Surah Al-A'raf – Part 2

Al Hadith
Do not be Envious of the
Prosperity of an Evil Doer

The Awakening
Managing our Homes – Part 3
Maulana Abdus Sattar حفظه الله

*Odyssey
of the Spirit
(Part 3 of 3)*

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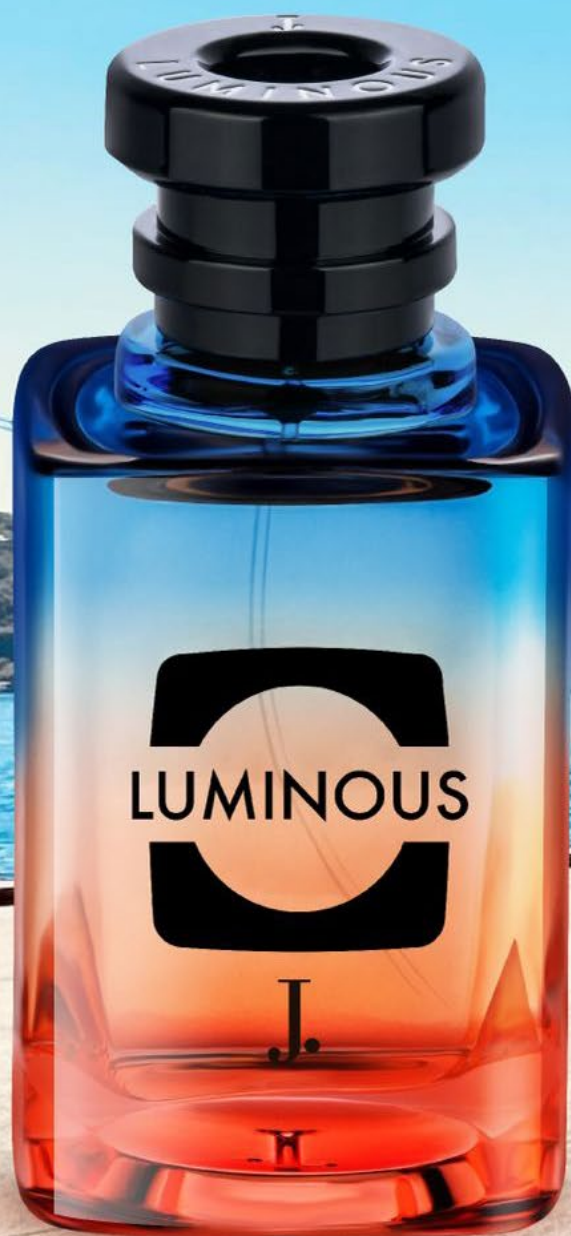


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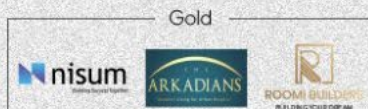
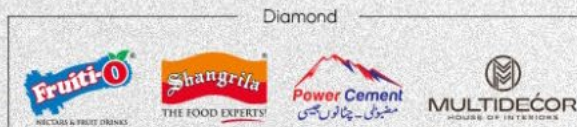


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Editorial

Dear Readers,

السلام عليكم و رحمة الله و بركاته

Imam Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah writes in his famous book "Inner Dimensions of the Prayer":

"It is imperative for you to know that Salah is without any doubt the domain of tranquility for devotees, the enjoyment of the souls of monotheists, the garden of the worshippers, the essence of enjoyment of the humble ones, the test of the sincere ones and the scale measuring the mettle of those embarking the right path...."

... Due to the sterility and poverty [of indolence, disaffection, idleness, etc.] that the hearts and souls endure time and time after, the invitation is renewed five times a day. However the Mercy of Allah necessitated that a gap of time pass between each invitation so the invitee is constantly calling for the rain from the One in whose Hand is the water to quench the hearts, and beseeching the clouds of His Mercy to have their water descend upon his heart in order that the trees of Iman and the harvest of Ihsan, growing from this divine Mercy, do not dry out...

... Indeed, the drought of hearts is heedlessness, but as long as the 'abd (of Allah) is indulged in the remembrance of Allah and constantly turning to Him, the rains of Mercy will shower his heart abundantly..."

The essence of this beautiful description is reflected in the piece featured in *Action Alerts*, which talks about the impact of Salah on depression.

These days, in the wake of immense *Fitn* (strife) around us, we see every second person to be disturbed and 'depressed'.

Allah ﷻ says in the Holy Qur'an:

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ

And seek help through patience and prayer

We also know that whenever the Prophet ﷺ was worried about something, his first recourse was to Salah.

It's quite amazing then, that we hardly take full advantage of this indispensable tool for tranquility and peace, that is not only incumbent upon us in the form of *Fard* prayers but also readily available for us to make use of in the form of *Nafil* Salah.

In our Cover Story section, the engaging *Odyssey of the Spirit* concludes, leaving a lasting impression on our minds, with all its twist and turns, especially with regards to the elusive ship to Bombay!

In the prevalent capitalist system, our identity often becomes intertwined with our roles as workers and consumers, reducing the complexity of who we are to what we produce and what we can afford to buy. The constant pressure to succeed, compete, and commodify our skills can strip away individuality, replacing it with standardized goals like wealth, status, and productivity. Creativity, relationships, and personal growth are frequently sidelined in favor of efficiency and profit. As a result, we may begin to see ourselves—and others—not as unique human beings, but as economic units whose value is determined by market performance, leading to a profound loss of authentic self and community.

To understand the resultant loss of our identity, turn to *UlulAlbab*, where Dr. Asad Zaman asks us to “Learn who you are” in a very convincing manner.

Since the past two years, each time I sit down to pen the Editorial, I hope for it to be the last time we lament and our hearts tear about the horrors in Gaza. But alas! Things get from bad to worse...

Tears aren't drying and our anger isn't receding; it is difficult for us to watch the atrocities play out in Palestine, sitting at a safe, faraway distance, what to say about those actually bearing the brunt of it!

اللهم انصر اخواننا و اخواتنا في فلسطين و خلصهم من آلامهم و مصاعبهم، آمين ثم آمين يا رب العالمين

Du'as,

Zawjah Farid

The Meanings of the Quran

Surah Al-A'raf Part 2 (The Heights)



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

فَوَسْوَسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وُورِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِنْ سَوْآتِهِمَا وَقَالَ مَا نَهَاكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَا مَلَكَينِ أَوْ تَكُونَا مِنَ الْخَالِدِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

Then Satan whispered to them, so that he might expose to them their shame that was hidden from them; and said, "Your Lord has not prohibited this tree for you, but to avoid your becoming angels or your becoming eternal." ⁵ [20]

وَقَاسَمَهُمَا إِنِّي لَكُمَا لَمِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

He declared to them on oath, "I am one of your well-wishers." [21]

فَدَلَاهُمَا يَغْرُورٍ فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْآتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ ۖ وَنَادَاهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا أَلَمْ أَنْهَكُمَا عَنْ تِلْكَ الشَّجَرَةِ وَأَقُلَّ لَكُمَا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمَا عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

Thus, he cast both of them down by deception. When they tasted (the fruit of) the tree, their shame was exposed to them, and they began to patch together some leaves of Paradise upon themselves, and their Lord called them, "Did I not forbid you from that tree? Did I not tell you that Satan is your declared enemy?" ⁶ [22]

قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

They said, "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and do not bless us with mercy, we shall, indeed, be among the losers." ⁷ [23]

قَالَ اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٢٤﴾

He said, "Go down, some of you enemies of some; and for you on the earth there will be a dwelling place and enjoyment for a time." [24]

قَالَ فِيهَا تَحْيَوْنَ وَفِيهَا تَمُوتُونَ وَمِنْهَا تُخْرَجُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

(Further) He said, "There you shall live and there you shall die, and from there you shall be raised again." [25]

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ قَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُؤَارِي سَوْآتَكُمْ وَرِيشًا وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

O children of 'Adam, We have sent down to you the dress that covers your shame and provides adornment. As for the dress of Taqwa (piety), that is the best. ⁸ That is one of the signs of Allah, so that they may learn a lesson. [26]

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ لَا يَفْتِنَنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ كَمَا أَخْرَجَ أَبَوَيْكُم مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ يَنْزِعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسَهُمَا لِيُرِيَهُمَا سَوْآتِهِمَا ۚ إِنَّهُ يَرََاكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيلُهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

O children of 'Adam, "Do not let Satan put you in trouble the way he had your parents expelled from Paradise, having their dress removed from them, so that he could show them their shame. Indeed, he sees you he and his company from where you do not see them. Surely, We have made the devils friends to those who do not believe. [27]

وَإِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهَا آبَاءَنَا وَاللَّهُ أَمَرَنَا بِهَا قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ ۖ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

When they do a shameful act, they say, "We have found our fathers doing it, and Allah has ordered us to do so." Say, "Allah never orders anything shameful. Do you say about Allah what you do not know?" [28]

قُلْ أَمَرَ رَبِّي بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ وَأَقِيمُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ عِندَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ ۚ كَمَا بَدَأَكُمْ تَعُودُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

Say, "My Lord has ordered me to do justice." ⁹ Set your faces aright on each occasion of prostration, and pray to Him with pure faith in Him. Just as He has originated you, so you will be raised again. [29]

فَرِيقًا هَدَىٰ وَفَرِيقًا حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الضَّلَالَةُ إِنَّهُمْ اتَّخَذُوا الشَّيَاطِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

He has led a group to guidance; and established for another group is misguidance. Indeed, they have taken the devils for their friends, instead of Allah, and they think that they are on the right path. [30]

Explanatory Notes

- 5) The story of 'Adam, Hawwa' and Iblis has already been mentioned in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:34 to 39) See the relevant notes on these verses. The present verse mentions how Iblis (Satan) was able to persuade them to eat from the prohibited tree. The gist of his argument was that the tree was banned for 'Adam and Hawwa' at the initial stage because they were not strong enough to bear its consequences, otherwise it was useful for them to eat from it, as to do so would make them immortal like the angels. Now that substantial time has elapsed and they have acquired the ability to eat from it, the basic reason for prohibition is no longer applicable to them.
- 6) The nature of the tree was such that, after eating from it, their private parts were somehow uncovered. As soon as they realized this, they felt shy and tried to cover themselves with leaves. This shows that nudity and lewdness are contrary to the natural instincts of a human being, and it is a requirement of his very nature that he should feel ashamed. This aspect of the story has been highlighted here as a prologue to verses 26 to 31 that condemn the nudity practiced by the pagan Arabs.
- 7) These are the words referred to by the Qur'an in Surah Al-Baqarah: "Then Adam learned certain words (to pray with) from his Lord; so, Allah accepted his repentance." (2:37)
- 8) These verses emphasize that the first and foremost obligation of a human being is to cover the shameful parts of his body. This is the first purpose for which Allah has created the 'dress', the second purpose being 'adornment'. The pagan Arabs used to be obscene in various aspects of their life, and worst of all, most of their tribes used to undress themselves while making tawaf (circumambulation) around the House of Allah. It is pointed out by these verses at all those activities that lead men or women to nudity are initiated by Satan, and that one should beware of his temptations. At the same time, the verse reminds us that garments are an adornment only for the body, whereas spiritual beauty depends on piety. Thus the word 'dress' is used for taqwa in its figurative sense. (See note 52 in Surah 3 for the meaning and nuance of the term: taqwa)
- 9) The original Arabic word used here is: qist which is normally translated as 'justice', but it also implies moderation in every matter, far from both extremes of excessiveness and deficiency. Without prejudice to the generality of the term, in the present context it includes moderation in the matter of one's dress. One should neither neglect the requirement of covering the body and using dress as an adornment, nor should one take the beauty of dress as an objective in life and neglect the divine injunctions relating to it or to other obligations.

(Al-Qur'an to be continued *In sha' Allah...*)

Do not be Envious of the Prosperity of an Evil Doer

Excerpted from Maulana Manzoor Naumani's رحمۃ اللہ علیہ Ma'arif ul Hadith

(216/76) Abu Hurayrah رضی اللہ عنہ relates that the Messenger ﷺ of Allah said: "You should never be envious of an evil-doer [an infidel or a pervert] because of a blessing or prosperity. You do not know what suffering he is going to endure after death. At Allah's ﷻ place [i.e., in the Hereafter] there is a killer for him that will not die." The narrator, Abdullah ibn Abi Maryam who related it, on the authority of Abu Hurayrah, says, "by 'killer the Prophet ﷺ meant the fire of Hell (i.e., the evil-doer is going to live in Hell forever. Hence, to be envious of such a man is nothing but foolishness and ignorance) (Baghwi).

Commentary: Often when a truthful believer, who is spending his days in pain and poverty, sees some wicked and godless person surrounded with comfort and luxuries, the devil puts various doubts into his heart, or, at least, he begins to feel envious of their happy circumstances. But, in reality, it is the height of ingratitude (of these godless people) to Allah ﷻ. The Prophet ﷺ, in this hadith, has warned us that no believing person should grudge the short-lived happiness and prosperity of those who are devoid of the blessing of Faith and pious deeds because, after all, they are going to undergo the torment of fire in the Hereafter. If the bitter end which awaits these unfortunate men could be known beforehand, all the material comfort and physical pleasures they are enjoying will appear to be no better than the special consideration that is shown to those who are sentenced to death a few days before their execution. This is the nature of the prosperity and bodily enjoyment of the rebels against Allah ﷻ in the sight of the bondsmen who are blessed with faith in the Hereafter, as related by the Prophet ﷺ. Such people are not to be viewed with envy for their wealth and comfort. The God-fearing should, instead, remain thankful to Allah ﷻ that He ﷻ saved them from the frightful chastisement that is in store for the impudent slaves of the flesh.

This writer has known many a faithful bondsmen who, upon seeing the godless men of this world, spontaneously recited the supplication of gratitude and thankfulness that the Prophet ﷺ used to recite when he saw anyone in distress:

"Praise be to He Who has saved me from that with which He hath afflicted thee, and made me better than many of His creatures."

The Use of Amulets (*Ta'wiz*) in Islam

By Mufti Muhammad ibn Adam دامت برکاتہم

Question

What is the ruling on wearing an amulet (*ta'wiz*)? People have the belief that wearing a string around the neck will protect them, when surely only Allah ﷻ protects. Please tell me the ruling on wearing this, for many people say that it is shirk.

Answer

In the name of Allah, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful,

Hanging or wearing of amulets (*ta'wiz*) is normally permissible for protection or healing provided certain conditions are met:

- 1) That they consist of the names of Allah Almighty or his attributes;
- 2) That they are in Arabic;
- 3) That they do not consist of anything that is disbelief (*kufr*);
- 4) The user does not believe the words have any affect in themselves, but are empowered to do so by Allah Most High.

It is narrated from Amr ibn Shu'ayb, from his father, from his grandfather (Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-Aas (Allah be pleased with them all), that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) used to teach them (the Sahabas) for fearful situations the following words:

"I seek refuge in Allah's perfect words from His wrath, the evil of his servants, the whispered insinuations of devils, and that they come to me"

Abd Allah ibn Amr used to teach these words to those of his sons who had reached the age of reason, and used to write them and hang them upon those who had not reached the age of reason (narrated by Abu Dawud & Tirmidhi, and Tirmidhi classed it as an authentic narration).

In the *Musannaf* of Imam Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shayba, the permissibility of hanging *Ta'wizes* is reported from many of the Companions and early Muslims (*Salat*), including: Sa'id ibn al-Musayyab, Ata', Mujahid, Abd Allah ibn Amr, Ibn Sirin, Ubaydullah ibn Abd Allah ibn Umar, and others (Allah be well pleased with them all). [See: al-Musannaf, 5.439].

Due to the above, most of the scholars have declared the using of amulets (*ta'wiz*) permissible as long as the above conditions are met. It is similar to using medication which is permissible and not against the concept of reliance in Allah (*tawakkul*) or monotheism, Tawhid. However, it is not permissible to regard the *Ta'wiz* to be effective in itself, just as it is not permissible to regard medicines to be effective in themselves.

As for that which is reported from some, including Ibn Mas'ud (Allah be pleased with him), that hanging Ta'wizes is shirk, this is understood to mean those Ta'wizes that resemble the one's used in the days of ignorance (*jahiliyya*), or if used thinking that it is the ta'wiz itself that cures or protects, not Allah, or if it contains impermissible invocations or one's whose meaning is not known.

The great Hanafi Jurist, Imam Ibn Abidin (Allah have mercy on him) states:

"Using of Ta'wizes will not be permissible if they are written in a non-Arabic language in that its meaning is not known. They may consist of black magic, disbelief or impermissible invocations. However, if they consist of Qur'anic verses or prescribed supplications (duas), then there is nothing wrong with using them (Radd al-Muhtar).

Imam Ibn Taymiyya (Allah have mercy on him) writes in his Fatawa:

"It is permissible for an ill or troubled person, that certain verses from the Qur'an are written with pure ink, then it is washed and given to the ill to drink. Ibn Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) is reported to have mentioned a certain Dua that should be written and placed close to the woman who is experiencing hard labour at the time of giving birth.

Sayyiduna Ali (Allah be pleased with him) says: This Dua should be written and tied to the arm of the woman. We have experienced that there is nothing more amazing than this" (*Fatawa Ibn Taymiyya*, 19/65).

Imam Ibn Taymiyya's student Imam Ibn al-Qayyim also narrates the permissibility of using Ta'wizes from a number of salafs including the great Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Allah have mercy on him). Thereafter Ibn al-Qayyim himself quotes various Ta'wizes (*Zad al-Ma'ad*, 3/180).

In view of the foregoing, it becomes clear that generally using of Ta'wizes is not something that is impermissible or Shirk. However, it is necessary that the above mentioned

conditions are met.

Today we have people who are victims of immoderation. There are some people who declare all types of Ta'wizes to be Shirk and Kufr. Others, on the other hand, think Ta'wizes to be everything. Both these types of understandings are incorrect.

Using of Ta'wizes is permissible, but with moderation. Normally it is better to recite the Duas which are prescribed for every problem and illness, and along with that resort to medical treatment. However, if Ta'wizes are used sometimes, then it is permissible.

If there is a fear that a person will begin to think the Ta'wiz to be effective in it self, then he should not be given the Ta'wiz. This will be the decision of the person who is giving the Ta'wiz, and not for us to decide for him.

There are many people who never make Dua and are neglectful of the Shariah injunctions, but always depend on Ta'wizes. For such people, it is better not to give them Ta'wizes, rather to direct them to the straight path.

Once, a sister asked me to mention to her a Dua or write something for her in order to get married to someone she desired, and she also mentioned that her Duas were not being answered. I asked: "Do you cover yourself when you emerge out of your home?" "no," was the reply. I said: "Do you perform your Salat (Prayers)?" Again, "no" was the reply. I said: "From tomorrow, you make this special Dua after the Fajr Salat, and you carry on performing this for 6 months, and Insha Allah your Dua will be accepted. Also a very Important Ta'wiz is that you recite a certain Dua and blow on your scarf and wear that scarf when emerging out of your home"!

In conclusion, generally it is permissible to use amulets (ta'wizes) in compliance with the conditions mentioned above. However, if there is something that is impermissible, then it will not be allowed.

And Allah Knows Best

Managing our Homes – Part 3

Excerpted from the discourses of Maulana Abdus Sattar حفظہ اللہ

The establishment of four things

There are four things that we must give birth to and encourage in our homes.

First and foremost, great effort must be made to ensure that no member of the home remains bereft of offering the five daily prayers. Whether male or female, this is incumbent on all sane household members of mature age. Even children should be imparted training to learn and establish prayer from an early age. The Prophet ﷺ said:

“Command a boy to pray when he reaches the age of seven years. When he becomes ten years old, then beat him for prayer” (Sunan Abu Dawood, Book of Prayer: Chapter on when to command a boy to prayer).

It is, therefore, imperative that no one remains devoid of prayer, male and female, young and old, should all become among those who establish prayer.

Do not make graveyards of your homes

The second thing is that every member of the home makes the recitation of the Holy Quran their daily ritual. The environment of the house should be such that it should be conducive to the recitation of the Quran; lack of this will only assist the home in resembling a graveyard. Every male and female member of the home should strive towards this; it is not essential for the whole Quran to be completed in a day; but one can aim to recite one section (out of thirty sections) or half a section, at the very least at least one ruku be recited so that a day does not pass without the recitation of the Quran. When reciting the Quran, one must try to raise one's voice so that at least it reaches his own ears. This way Allah's ﷻ angels will be present to witness such a recitation.

It is related in a prophetic tradition (hadith) that Usaid bin Hudair ؓ narrates:



"That while he was reciting Surat Al-Baqara at night, and his horse was tied beside him, the horse was suddenly startled and troubled. When he stopped reciting, the horse became quiet, and when he started again, the horse was startled again. Then he stopped reciting and the horse became quiet too. He started reciting again and the horse was startled and troubled once again. Then he stopped reciting and his son, Yahya was beside the horse. He was afraid that the horse might trample on him. When he took the boy away and looked towards the sky, he could not see it. The next morning he informed the Prophet ﷺ who said, "Recite, O Ibn Hudair! Recite, O Ibn Hudair!" Ibn Hudair replied, "O Allah's Apostle! My son, Yahya was near the horse and I was afraid that it might trample on him, so I looked towards the sky, and went to him. When I looked at the sky, I saw something like a cloud containing what looked like lamps, so I went out in order not to see it." The Prophet said, "Do you know what that was?" Ibn Hudair replied, "No." The Prophet said, "Those were Angels who came near to you for your voice and if you had kept on reciting till dawn, they would have remained there till morning when people would have seen them as they would not have disappeared."

(Bukhari, Book of Virtues of Quran, Chapter of the descending of tranquility and angels on the recitation of the Quran)

The recitation of the Quran will open the closed doors, will protect from deviant fortune tellers and will safeguard from baseless insinuations and whispers. Once ranks upon ranks of angels occupy our homes then, insha'Allah, the evil schemes of the devil will have no bearing on such a home and Allah ﷻ will protect it from all problems, suffering and anxieties.

Do not carry over today's work to tomorrow

The third habit to incorporate in one's life is to

repent for the day's deeds before one goes to sleep the same day; be it 21 times or 11 times or at least 10 times, one should repent by reciting Astaghfaar prior to sleeping. Although other virtuous actions should be incorporated into one's life and effort must be made to stay steadfast in them, this action has the effect of filling up for and rectifying any deficiencies, sins and transgressions (and which house or person is free from these?) perpetrated during the day. So it is of prime importance that one sits before his Lord for a little while, before he retires for the day, with a remorseful heart and repenting to Him by reciting the formula "Astaghfirullah". One also hopes that as a result of this he will clean today's slate today; take care of the day's business so that he does not have to be raised in a compromised state before his Lord tomorrow.

The need for a corrective relationship

The fourth thing is to take for oneself a guide or a master who instructs one on how to dispose the affairs of his life in the light of the Islamic tradition. The idea is to be under the guidance of someone who not only is the possessor of knowledge but also brings with it the light of action upon that very knowledge. The intention of a person should be to be under the guidance of such a person devoted to Allah's ﷻ chosen way of life so that his own affairs and dispositions are corrected and rectified. The benefits of such a relationship are that the decisions of one's life will then be grounded in the light of divine knowledge, will have the sound base of God-consciousness and awareness, and benefit will be derived from the prayers and supplications of such a pious mentor as well.

- To be concluded, insha'Allah

Odyssey of the Spirit

(Part 3 of 3)

By Muhammad Harun

I was at first put up in a room with the only two other western converts, Abd ul Karim, an African-American brother, and Yousuf Talal, a white American, both senior students, who already had acquired a considerable

amount of scholarship, and who were quite helpful, seeing me through the initial phases of adjustment to the new environment. The administration thus made all-out efforts to make my stay as comfortable as possible,

as well by having me take my meals in the foreigners' mess. These were all well-meant arrangements, which however I soon declined to utilize, and instead asked to be allowed to live and eat with the local students, which was, with some astonishment though, granted, and it did not diminish my comfort in the least, quite to the contrary. The academic aspect of my adjustment was a bit more difficult. Due to understandable restraints on part of the administration, who of course were not able to set up a special study program for me, put me in traditional Qur'an-reading class, where I was to get acquainted with the Arabic script in order to be able to read the Holy Book. There was quite a number and variety of mostly non-resident students, mainly young boys and girls between 4 and 12 years of age to whom the addition to their ranks of a 27 year old 'gora' or 'angrez', as they referred to me when talking amongst themselves, was quite a curiosity. This probably applied as well to the teacher, who, except for the disciplinary use of his cane, nevertheless applied the same method of instruction to me as he did to the rest of his pupils.

In this manner it took me about three or four weeks to complete the 'qa'idah' (a small booklet, traditionally used to teach the Arabic alphabet to children), and I started to have serious doubts whether I had made the right decision to get myself into this situation. Although I had learned by this time to slowly read words in this new script, I sort of despaired at the thought of how long it would take me to actually learn the language, if I continued at this pace and in this fashion...

So, one day I decided to find out when the next boat to Bombay was available. The people at the shipping company informed me that there was no service until after one month, except for a ship, which was sailing that very day, but there were only two hours until its scheduled departure. I thought this was my good chance, and rushed back to the *madrasah* to pack a few necessities. Having done so, I painstakingly avoided to be seen

leaving by anyone and sneaked out. At the port I was told that I needed a leaving permit from the police department, and there I was informed that the same could only be issued if I handed in my registration papers. Those were with the administration of the *madrasah*. When I reached there, it was shortly before the noon prayers, and the office was closed. In addition to the agony that the passing of every minute caused me, I was very concerned that the people in the office would ask me a lot of questions, which to answer and to explain I had neither the time, nor the guts, and although I hated myself for it, I decided to tell them I needed my registration papers for some work at my consulate. The person dealing with these matters was somewhat astonished, but he nevertheless gave me the papers. I rushed back to the police station, and the officer there said that the ship must have left by now. I quipped: "You are not supposed to be here anymore, but you still are, if God wills the boat will still be here." He smiled and gave me my leaving permit, but when I finally reached the docks, it turned out that God had not willed, the boat had sailed half an hour ago.

Even though it was disappointing, because I had fixed my mind on the idea that, since the departure of the vessel had coincided with the day on which I enquired about it, my decision to leave was correct, I felt also some relief, because if that cowardly lie I had made up to make good my escape, would have been part of the basis upon which my further endeavors were founded, did not feel right. I just had to put up with my present plight for another month.

In order to escape the somewhat uneventful and dry routine at the *madrasah*, I would sometimes go to the small shrine, where I had found so much solace during my first two weeks in Karachi, otherwise I kept to my earlier practice of reading a lot in my *Mathnawi*.

Once, a young man, who did not look like one of the students at all, approached me,

and asked me in English whether I was interested in Sufism, since he had observed me reading that book quite frequently. Upon my affirmative reply, he asked me whether I had actually ever met a Sufi master or *pir*, as they are called here, and on my denial, he asked me whether I would like to meet one. Of course did I want to, and so he promised to make arrangements for such a meeting.

This young man, Yusuf Kakakhel, was a student of engineering at the university, but he lived in the *madrasah* with his brother, one of the senior lecturers. One Saturday he took me to a lavishly furnished office in one of the business centers in the city, where he introduced me to one of the directors of that company, who was a disciple of the *pir*, we were going to visit. The businessman, Mr. Haroon Jaffer, kindly made a chauffeur-driven, air-conditioned car for us available to take us to our destination, which was also an institution of religious studies, like the *madrasah* where we had come from, some distance outside the city. We had to wait for a short while before the man, we had come to see, entered the room. He was a man of big stature, dressed very simply in a long white shirt and a *lungi*, and although his complexion was not of particularly fair color, there was a lot of light on it. He welcomed me in flawless English, and then listened patiently to my story. At the end, he said he would try to help me, and asked me to see him again in a week's time, during which I was advised to recite frequently benedictions upon the Noble Prophet ﷺ.

A week later, my friend Yusuf again took me to my appointment, this time the venue had changed, we went to a mosque in the center of the city, where quite a number of people had gathered, sitting on the floor around spread-out linen sheets, in the center of which a large amount of date pits and other seeds were lying, which they picked up in handfuls to drop them one by one onto heaps in front of them, while silently reciting something. After all the seeds from the center had

disappeared into the heaps in front of each person, Mawlana Tufail made a supplication, and then addressed the gathering, this time of course he spoke in Urdu, and I did not catch a single meaning of what he was saying. After that the congregation stood up for the night prayers, which concluded the gathering. I expressed my disappointment about having been invited to come here, and then not been given any attention to my companion, but he told me that I got it all wrong, and that the Mawlana's discourse actually had been revolving mainly around my case. Giving me a summary of the discourse, Yusuf told me that Mawlana Tufail had talked about the different Sufi orders and explained that these, while adopting different methods of training, had all but one aim, to realize and perfect the spiritual potential in man. The variety of the different *silsilahs*, as they are called here, was only a means of providing a suitable approach for the vast variety of human nature, and in this context, the Mawlana who himself belonged to the *Naqshbandiah* order, had mentioned that he could, and, if I insisted, would impart spiritual training to me, but that, according to my nature, I would be better off, entering the *Chishtiyah* order, and he also mentioned that there was a master of that order by the name of Shahidullah Faridi living in Karachi, whose address however was not known to him. One of Mawlana Tufail's disciples however remembered that he knew one of *Hadrat* Shahidullah Faridi's disciples through some business connection, and so the search for this Sufi *Shaykh* in a monster of a city like Karachi did not seem so hopeless anymore.

The following weekend my friend Yusuf again went with me to the city to seek out Mr. Saleem Tariq, the man who was supposed to become my contact to the *Chishtiyah* *Shaykh*. After finally finding the office of the insurance company for which he worked, we were told that he was on leave. The following week we repeated this exercise with the same result, he was still not back. Not having learned yet

the virtue of patience, and besides that, the time for the departure of the ship to Bombay, which was still spooking in my head, coming awfully near, I told my companion during our third attempt on the following Saturday, that, if we were again unsuccessful this time, I would give up my search and leave. He was very upset and tried to change my mind, telling me stories about the great rewards some people had gained by persevering, but I was rather determined, thinking, that if it had taken me three weeks just to make contact with a disciple of the Shaykh, how long would it take to reach him?

Allah never tries us beyond our powers of endurance, and although our man was not in the office, where we had gone to meet him, we were told that he was back from his leave now, and that we could find him in another office. Reaching there, we still did not find him, but we were informed that he was expected within half an hour, which was little after all the time and effort we had spent in the past three weeks. As promised Mr. Saleem Tariq finally turned up, and listening with great interest to the account of my odyssey, he decided to give a call to his pir immediately, who in turn, quite contrary to my apprehensions, ordered him to take me to him at once.

If one has expectations of something that one does not know from a previous experience, one always forms some conjecture in one's mind as to how it will be, and while we were waiting for *Hadrat* Shahidullah in the lounge of his house, my fantasy painted a picture of 'my master'. Having come from the West in search of a guide, I of course imagined him to be from among the people of this part of the world. Then, I expected him to appear in some sort of princely attire, adorned by costly ornaments. And lastly would he inspire such awe that I could not dare to look him straight into the eyes.

My surprise, when he entered the room came close to consternation. There was an over six

feet tall man of obviously European origin, dressed in a simple plain white collarless shirt and a pair of white pajamas, not even a ring on his fingers, and above all, a loving, welcoming smile on his noble face.

"Just look at him", the devil almost audibly whispered into my mind, bombarding me with the seed of doubt, "how can he qualify to be your master?" I never figured out whether it was the presence of the Shaykh himself, or the soul of my first spiritual guardian, Mawlana Rumi, which fortified my heart against this onslaught of satanic impertinence. I suddenly remembered, having read in the *Mathnawi* that Allah sometimes tests a seeker of the truth by allowing him to fall prey to an imposter, but if the former remained steadfast and sincere to his quest, God would deliver him from that false mentor, and never put him through the same test again. This very thing had already happened to me in Turkey during my first sojourn there, and thus I was inspired with the certainty that the man in front of me had to be a genuine man of God, into whose spiritual care I could entrust myself, without any danger of losing my soul, or harming it in the least.

The first words he spoke to me smilingly were something to the effect: "So, finally you have come, we were expecting you earlier." And to my surprised question, how he had known of my coming, he just casually replied that someone had told him about it. Then, after listening to some of my narrative, he told me that he was ready to accept me as a disciple and to teach me, however that I had to stay in Karachi for that purpose, and should forget about travelling, dealing a final and fatal blow to the 'spook of the boat to Bombay' that, although I had not mentioned any of it to him, had until shortly before my meeting with him still been lingering in my mind. I replied that since I had reached the goal and destination of my travels now, there was no need to go any further, and I sincerely meant

that. He once more confirmed his willingness to accept me as a murid, but told me to think about it myself once more before I made the commitment of obeying and following him unquestionably, and then to come back the following Thursday, on which day he had a weekly gathering in his house, after which he usually accepted new members into the order if there were any. I had no more doubts in my heart, but he still insisted that I should think it over once more.

The following Thursday Mr. Saleem Tariq came to the *madrasah* to pick me up, but he came two hours earlier than we had fixed, and I was just having a shower, slowly getting ready for what was to become the most consequential event of my life. He told me to hurry up, the Shaykh had specially called and told him to bring me there well before the gathering. The reason, why he had diverted from his usual practice, i.e. to initiate me into the order before the gathering instead of after it, I only realized later. That day was the auspicious day of the *miraj* – the famous night journey and ascension to the Divine Presence of the Noble Prophet – Allah’s Blessings and peace be upon him – and after the gathering, which always started with the sunset prayers, the date of the Islamic calendar would have changed, and the Shaykh wanted me to have the blessings of that day for my initiation.

When we reached the house of *Hadrat* Shahidullah, I was taken to the room of the master who was sitting on a prayer rug on the floor, with a calm air of serenity on his noble countenance. Seated next to him was another senior member of the order, who was present as a witness to the simple ritual, called *bay’ah* or *ahd*, (denoting an oath of allegiance) which was to take place. The master explained to me the implications thereof, and then asked me to sit before him in a kneeling position, which he also had assumed, my knees touching his. He then took my hands in between his and recited the words of the oath, which I repeated

after him sentence by sentence. After this, he raised his hands and made a prayer, asking God’s Blessings and Protection for me on this path I had chosen to tread.

His prayers, attention and loving care have ever since stayed with me as an inexhaustible source of strength and support in every situation, particularly in difficult ones and in moments of weakness, doubt and temptation, and his physical departure from this world in 1978, did not change this blessing in aught. I do not find words to even come close to portray the magnitude of blessings and benefits – temporal and spiritual – that I derived from my association with this *wali* of Allah – may God sanctify his secret, raise his station and grant him ever-increasing nearness to Himself!

Epilogue

I did not write this account of my experiences as some sort of memoirs, but mainly for three reasons:

Firstly, in Surah Duha of the Qur’an, which literally touches so many aspects of my life, Allah says: *fa ‘amma bini’mati rabbika fahaddith* – and as to the favors of your Lord, relate them!

Secondly, I have come across a number of dangerous misconceptions about the spiritual aspects of Islam and the working of the saints or *Awliya Allah*, as they are referred to in Islamic literature, which have, by my very own living experience, been de facto refuted. These wrong ideas are in vogue mainly among certain circles who like to consider themselves “progressive” Muslims, whereas the fact of the matter is that their minds are infested with materialistic thought, and their hearts are paralyzed by arrogance.

Thirdly, I have over and over again been asked by my Muslim brothers and sisters how my conversion came about, and was deeply rewarded by the interest, enthusiasm and joy they expressed about it, whereas Christians,

and in particular people from the west hardly ever ask. They think it is really weird and cannot conceive that there could possibly be any valid reason at all for someone to act this way.

Great changes in the lives of people usually have their effects not only on the person who undergoes the change, but also on his or her social environment, i.e. the people whose lives are directly or indirectly linked to that person. One very conspicuous trait of human nature is, its fixation to the status quo. Therefore, the people who are affected by somebody else's change usually are uneasy about it and oppose it - unless it brings them some obvious gain or benefit - because it means they have to adapt themselves to a new, unknown situation. They have to watch out, they might have to change their approach and attitude to that person, which might imply changing old habits (one of the most mortifying measures). This discomfort and opposition can even turn into enmity, when that change is in direct conflict with what they hold dear and cherish, or what had always been an unquestioned standard or truth, and they are absolutely unwilling, perhaps even incapable of considering a possible justification for the change their acquaintance or relative has made.

In the glorious Qur'an, there is frequent mention of people who were admonished by their respective Prophets ﷺ to amend their wrong social behavior or religious practices. The response of these people was invariably rejection of the admonition, because as they said, their ancestors had been doing the same things, and therefore there couldn't be anything wrong with it. This is the great pitfall of habit and even tradition; at one point it takes over and asserts itself as an unquestionable truism in the mind. If it is a truly good habit or a virtuous tradition, it can be a formidable travelling companion on the journey of life, but if there is any impurity in it, it can bring its adherent to fall.

The touchstone for what is good and what is not is uncompromising sincerity towards oneself, because God has given every one of us a conscience that would never fail us, unless we constantly violate it, and even in that case, it is not our conscience that fails us, but it is our faculty of perception that we have incapacitated.

If I look back, it was not really a conversion in the sense of a change in belief, it was rather a transformation, much like the one a caterpillar undergoes when it turns into a butterfly, which is actually a process of leaving the imperfections and limitations of a particular state of being behind, to move on to a state of perfection. The same principle really, that applied to the divine message itself, when it was presented in its final, the 'Muhammadan' version, which God Himself certified by revealing: "This day I have perfected for you your religion..." This does not mean that God's Message to man was at any time imperfect in any way – He is far beyond the possibility of imperfection in His Being and in His Acts! – only the various subsequent presentation forms of His Message, which were entrusted to man from time to time at the hands of a chain of Prophets ﷺ, suffered alterations and other effects of corruption that time inevitably brings with itself, while in the custody of man. We can hardly fathom how fortunate we are, that this latest and final edition which the Noble Prophet Muhammad – Allah's Blessings and peace be upon him – was entrusted with, and which he truthfully delivered in its full splendor, has got the promise of God's Protection from all corruption and decay until the end of time.

(Concluded)

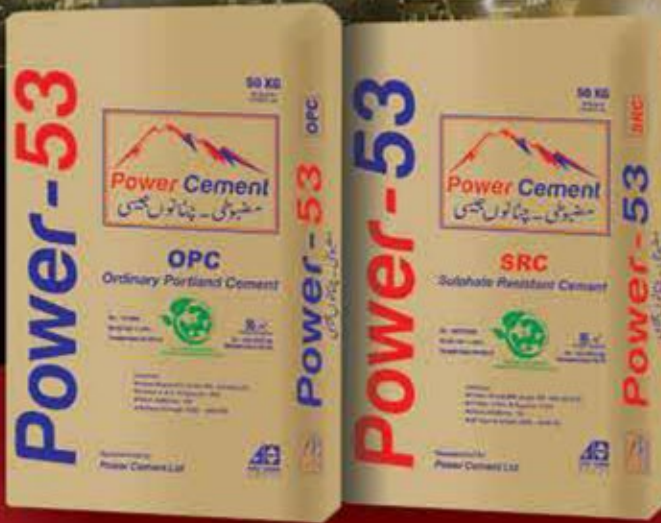




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(24) The Intellect

Re-awakening to the ideals of a blessed life



A WEEK IN IRAN

(Episode 5)

Excerpted from the travelogues of Mufti Taqi Usmani Sb دامت برکاتہم

Translation: Zawjah Zia

Mawlana Fadhl ur Rahman sahib was to speak right after me, followed by Mawlana Abdul Hameed sahib. The ceremony was gracefully concluded afterwards with Jumuah salah, the Dastaar-bandi event and dua.

The esteemed scholars and people of knowledge who had travelled for the occasion from afar had requested for an exclusive sitting with them as the presence of such huge crowd didn't allow me to mingle with



them earlier. Some of them had extended the wish to receive ijazah in hadith from me. So a private sitting was scheduled the same day, after Maghrib. There was one mistake that we made though: the announcement for this sitting was made right there in the gathering – hence the sitting didn't remain that private. After Maghrib, when I arrived at the Masjid where the meet up was decided, the crowd seemed no lesser than that in the afternoon. And of course, the purpose of this sitting got lost again. Trying to put the unforeseen gathering to productive use, Mawlana Abdul Hameed sahib requested me to give out a few words of Naseehah. Though I don't consider myself worthy enough, but only upon the insistence of these esteemed people of knowledge, I extended to them the ijazah for hadith musalsal bil awwaliyyah and also narrated a few insights about it until the Isha prayer.

We kept on receiving visitors in our hotel even after Isha prayers.

Ustadh Adnan Darwesh is a young scholar from Syria. Recently he had published Al Badai' was Sanai' with his own research and Takhreej. All through this stay in Zahidaan, he had expressed that although he had an indirect ijazah for hadith from my side, but he had a long wished to attain direct ijazah from me. He also wanted to have some discussions about a few Fiqhi issues. So he also visited after Isha. I extended direct Ijazah to him and had a discussion with him regarding whatever he wanted to discuss.

Mawlana Muhammad Qasim sahib is among those graduates of our Darululoom Karachi, Masha'Allah, whom we take pride in. As per Mawlana Abdul Hameed sahib, he is the soul and spirit of Darululoom Zahidaan. He has played a pivotal role in improving the educational and research standards

of the institution. Upon his kind wish, we had breakfast at his residence the next morning. His residence was just attached to the Darululoom. Post breakfast, he gave us a brief yet informative tour around different departments of Darululoom. To my utmost joy, I could see that this institution's various department were keenly devised considering the needs of students from not only Iran but internationally too. It had a spacious and hi-tech library too. Several literary works and translations have been published through the institution's publications department. I could also notice a number of translations of my writings on the shelves.

Drululoom's female wing was working in complete segregation from the males' side. There also was a department of social welfare. Another very interesting department was working to provide boarding facilities to college and university students. I hadn't yet witnessed anything like that ever before. The vision of this department was to encourage and invite these students towards various opportunities to indulge in religious and dawah-based activities while residing there. This facilitates their religious Tarbiyah alongside contemporary studies. This was a model surely deserving of being copied by other religious institutions around the world.

We left for Mashhad the same day on a flight in the afternoon. Mashhad is the capital city of the Khurasan province. We arrived there at around one o' clock in the afternoon. This city was renamed as Mashhad most probably in the Safwi era due to the presence of the tomb of Hadhrat Ali bin Moosa ar Ridha عليه السلام here. Before that it was known by the name of Tous; a combination of the twin cities of Tabiran and Touqan. This land was conquered in the time of Sayyiduna Uthman Ghani عليه السلام. In its golden days, the city of Tous was known for its extraordinary status with regards to

civilization, literature and scholarship, and political significance. Among the big names in scholarship from this land, Imam Ghazali's رحمته الله name is most mentionable. Besides, this is the very city that was home to Nizam ul Mulk at Tousi رحمته الله; a worthy personality in the history of literature and scholarship and also politics and governance. He was a minister under Malik Shah Saljoqi, but of such a stature that the Shah had entrusted almost all of the systems of government in his hands. Nizam ul Mulk brought radiance and expansion to the empire and established exemplary peace, security and discipline. Simultaneously, he established religious institutions in almost all of the cities of the empire. He even dedicated a tenth of his personal estate to the educational causes.

Tous indeed has been a great center of learning in the Islamic history. Due to time limitations, instead of going to our hotel from the airport, we directly left for the ancient city of Tous; Tabiran. Many reminiscences of its rich history are still present. Entering the ancient part of the city, we first witnessed a tower like structure. The structure was known as Harooniya here. Legend has it that Caliph Haroon ur Rashid had gotten this built as a prison for solitary confinement of political prisoners. Interestingly, after entering the remains of the building, the first thing we read was a notice from the archeological department denying this legend. Otherwise too, the building had such grandeur that it was difficult to imagine it to be a prison. Outside this building, upon a wall was written Imam Ghazali's رحمته الله name and it was mentioned that he used to stand in Qiyaam here. Another notion amongst people is that this is actually where Imam Ghazali رحمته الله is buried. So it is quite possible that this place used to be a monastery and not a prison, and that Imam Ghazali رحمته الله spent his last days in solitude here.

There were a few scholars from Khurasan accompanying us. When we discussed all of this with them, they revealed otherwise and said that Imam Ghazali's رحمته الله tomb was at another place, not far away from there.

Moving forward, we came across the tomb of the great Persian poet Firdawsi. His monumental work about the grand victories of Iran named 'Shahnama' is an icon of Persian poetry.

Not far away from this tomb was the debilitated wall of the ancient city enclosing the remains of a few tall buildings. Even the remains revealed the grandeur of these buildings that once would have been. Getting past this wall of the ancient city, in an empty plain, one can witness a solitary grave. The outworn gravestone says that this is Imam Ghazali's رحمته الله grave, but there is no way to actually authenticate the real place of his place of resting.

The famous biographers like Allamah Subki رحمته الله have stated that Imam Ghazali's رحمته الله grave is in a plain right outside the city of Tabiran. As per this narrative, this place was more probably it. Allah ﷻ knows best.

(To be continued, insha'Allah)



Islam and Art: Is Beauty a Form of Worship?

By Hijab Syed

In his philosophical poetic collection, *Payam-i-Mashriq*, Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal writes:

When the heart is illuminated with the light of God,

Every glance becomes an act of worship;

In beauty lies the reflection of the Divine,

And art becomes the prayer of the soul.

This verse encapsulates a profound truth in Islamic thought: Islam is not merely a set of rituals and laws—it is a complete way of life (*Deen*) that embraces the spiritual, ethical, and aesthetic dimensions of human experience. One of its most compelling aspects is the intimate connection between beauty and worship.

In Islamic tradition, beauty is not a superficial concept or a matter of taste. It is a spiritual principle rooted in the divine nature of creation. The human heart naturally seeks beauty—whether in the intricate design of a Persian carpet, the melodic recitation of the Qur'an, or the balanced geometry of a mosque's dome. In Islam, beauty is not just pleasurable; it carries profound spiritual significance. This raises a central question: Is beauty, in the Islamic perspective, a form of worship? To explore this, we must examine how Islam defines beauty, how this definition shapes artistic expression, and how intention (*niyyah*) and ethics elevate beauty into sacred practice.

The Concept of Beauty (Jamāl) in Islam

In Islam, *jamāl* (beauty) is more than visual appeal. It is a Divine attribute, a spiritual reality, and a moral force present in nature and human character. Beauty reflects Divine reality and holds theological significance.

“Allah is Beautiful and Loves Beauty”

A foundational hadith from the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ states:

“Indeed, Allah is Beautiful and He loves beauty” (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Hadith 91).

This connects beauty directly to the Divine Names and Attributes (*Asmā' wa Ṣifāt*). While *Al-Jamāl* (“The Beautiful”) is not among the traditionally listed 99 Names of Allah, scholars accept its significance based on this hadith. Beauty, as loved by Allah, includes both outward form and inward character—actions, intentions, and ethics.

Beauty in the Qur'an

The Qur'an frequently presents beauty as a sign (*āyah*) pointing to the Creator:

“We have certainly created man in the best of stature.” (Qur'an 95:4)

“He... made beautiful everything He created.” (Qur'an 32:7)

These verses affirm that the harmony and order of creation are intentional, reflecting Divine artistry. The Qur'an itself is described as a beautiful revelation:

"We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an, so that you may understand" (Qur'an 12:2).

Its eloquence, rhythm, and structure have inspired centuries of sacred art and literature.

Jamāl and Jalāl: The Divine Balance

Islamic scholars often speak of two complementary aspects of Allah's attributes:

Jamāl (Beauty): Mercy, love, generosity, forgiveness

Jalāl (Majesty): Power, justice, might, wrath

True beauty in Islam lies in balance—between mercy and strength, humility and dignity. This balance is reflected in Islamic art and architecture through symmetry, proportion, and complexity. Spiritually, a balanced believer embodies both compassion and resolve.

Qur'anic Perspective on Beauty and Art

The Qur'an is considered the highest form of sacred expression. Its language and structure have shaped Islamic aesthetics across centuries. Allah ﷻ says:

"Indeed, We have made whatever is on the earth as an adornment for it in order to test them [as to] which of them is best in deed." (Surah Al-Kahf 18:7)

Beauty is thus a test and a trust—meant to guide us toward higher purpose, not distract us from it. Verses in Surah An-Naḥl (16:6, 16:14) describe the beauty of animals and the sea, affirming that beauty is embedded in creation as a divine gift.

Art as Reflection of the Sacred

Islamic art traditionally avoids representational imagery, especially of humans or divine figures, to prevent idolatry (*shirk*). Instead, it flourishes through abstraction—arabesques, geometric patterns, and calligraphy.

Calligraphy, especially of Qur'anic verses, is not mere decoration. It is devotional. Artists embody *iḥsān*—excellence and sincerity for the sake of Allah ﷻ. As the Prophet ﷺ said:

"Verily, Allah loves that when anyone of you does something, he does it with excellence." (al-Bayhaqī)

This sacred aesthetic extends to architecture. Structures like the Alhambra, the Blue Mosque, and the Shaikh Zayed Mosque use light, proportion, and symmetry to elevate the soul.

Sufi Insights: Beauty as a Path to God

In Sufism, beauty is not just admired—it is experienced as a spiritual unveiling (*kashf*). It leads to knowledge (*ma'rifah*) and love of the Divine. Rumi رumi writes:

"Let the beauty of what you love be what you do. There are a thousand ways to kneel and kiss the ground."

For Sufis, the heart is a mirror. When polished through remembrance (*dhikr*), it reflects Divine beauty.

Ibn Arabi said:

"The beauty of the beloved is nothing but the reflection of God's light. When you love the beautiful, you are in love with God."

This view dissolves the boundary between the sacred and the aesthetic. True beauty is seen with the heart, leading to awe, love, and surrender.

Inner Beauty: Character and Conduct

Islam emphasizes inner beauty through excellent character (*ḥusn al-khuluq*). The Prophet ﷺ was described in the Qur'an:

"And indeed, you are of a great moral character" (Qur'an 68:4).

He also said:

"The most beloved of you to me and the closest to me on the Day of Judgment will be those with the best character" (Tirmidhī).

Thus, beauty includes how one lives, behaves, and treats others.

Beauty as a Sacred Trust

In Islam, beauty (*jamāl*) is not superficial or materialistic. It encompasses creation, Scripture, worship, character, and intention. It is a divine fingerprint in the universe—a form of remembrance (*dhikr*). When created or appreciated with the intention to glorify God, beauty becomes worship.

As Imam al-Ghazālī noted, beauty reflects Divine Light. Our ability to recognize and create beauty is a spiritual responsibility.

"Indeed, Allah is Beautiful, and He loves beauty."

Let this be not just a theological statement—but a way of seeing, creating, and being.

The Real Hunger

By Unaiza Ahsan

The best burger in town
With extra cheese and fries
The best pizza around
With all toppings money can buy
Cannot compensate
For the hunger
That is spiritual
And emotional

If My Colours Are Loud...

By Ateefah Sana Ur Rab

The scorching sun seeps through the layers of fabric wrapped around her—not just garments, but a reverent shield for a soul dreaming of a future where divine rewards far outweigh the fleeting pleasures of this world. Sumaira, unlike many women in the West, has endured relentless pressure—subtle and overt—to abandon her devotion to the commands of her beloved Lord.

Loyalty and faithfulness, though celebrated in societies that pride themselves on freedom, are often rejected when religion enters the conversation. Why is liberty embraced when it suits the impermissible, yet denied when it aligns with sacred values? Shouldn't freedom include the right to pursue excellence, to build a society where no one fears shrinking under the gaze of others?

Where is the right to speak freely? Have we not searched for it like a needle in a haystack? Laws and reforms meant to protect all have failed to uphold their purpose. Why must a woman sever her connection with modesty and sacrifice her dignity just to be seen, heard, and respected in a world that moves

too fast and thinks too little?

The sane are labelled insane for refusing to conform to a downward spiral. But one cannot force open eyes that are deliberately shut, nor hearts wrapped in layers of madness and deceit.

Now thirty-one, Sumaira walks through life with the reflexes of someone navigating a path flanked by flames—each step threatened by annihilation. Disapproving glances from strangers are only the beginning. Aggression has surged globally in recent years. Ironically, while people celebrate cultural diversity, their tolerance vanishes when a Muslim woman chooses to dress modestly. Her hijab becomes a threat—not to safety, but to the fragile egos of those who misunderstand it.

A new definition of “security threat” emerges: an unarmed Muslim woman who covers herself by choice. Meanwhile, real danger roams freely. Convicted criminals are given endless chances to repent, while innocent Muslims are assaulted—and their attackers excused as “mentally unstable.” Crimes are swept under the rug with surgical precision.

Those who ask the right questions often disappear or are silenced. Justice, it seems, is a commodity—available only to those who can afford it.

Where can one go to prove they have no ulterior motives? That they are simply civilians, disconnected from any extremist group?

There is no escape in a system where evidence is forged and false charges are used to suppress dissent. Why is authenticity judged by appearance, when in truth, it has nothing to do with the layers we wear? A person is not just a body. They are mind, heart, and soul—interwoven threads forming a unique existence. Thoughts, actions, and aspirations co-exist, each dependent on the other. Sanity and maturity should answer one question:

Who am I?

Does a headscarf or face covering alter one's mental health or personality? If a doctor wears an engineer's attire, does it change their intellect? The core remains unchanged. So why does modesty provoke discomfort?

Why does society recoil when a woman refuses to be objectified—when she chooses not to be consumed by indecent eyes? If a successful non-Muslim woman dons a scarf, does it erase her achievements or diminish her intellect? Of course not. Intelligence isn't measured by exposed skin. Likewise, removing layers doesn't reveal the mind—it's revealed through words and actions.

Authenticity means being true to oneself. For Muslims, it also means submission to Allah ﷻ and adherence to the principles of Islam. If our Lord commands modesty, then within that command lies our benefit.

Physical beauty fades. Inner beauty endures. Mental growth and spiritual progress are not erased by religious devotion. Despite the obstacles, Sumaira knows that being labelled

an outcast is better than conforming to a society bent on self-destruction. She walks with grace, head held high. The path may be difficult, but the destination is promised by her Lord—a reward for every step taken in righteousness.

This is what she teaches her students at the Islamic Centre: efforts are never wasted. Patience and endurance in this world are always remembered.

We often hear, *"There is light at the end of every tunnel."* But sometimes, light enters through cracks along the way—guiding the traveller before they reach the end. Darkness is not absolute. Why? Because our Lord never forsakes those who strive toward Him. Even if they stumble. Even if they fall. Even if they hurt themselves in the process. Allah ﷻ never forgets the sweat and tears of those who seek Him.

So what if her colours are bold and her presence unyielding? The rewards from her Lord will far surpass the fleeting gifts of this imperfect world.

"As for those who believe and do good, We will certainly house them in elevated mansions in Paradise, under which rivers flow, to stay there forever. How excellent is the reward for those who work righteousness!" — Surah Al-Ankabut (29:58)



How Salah affects one's State of Depression?

Dr. Omar Javaid

If I use polyvagal theory to describe depression, it is a state of being stuck in a freeze mode. In depression, one can get stuck:

1. Mentally, often because of a false self-image or false expectations from the world or people around us,
2. Psychologically (not finding the opportunity or strength to vent), or
3. Physically (not being able to complete a fight or flight response) ...
4. Spiritually (because of an overpowered ego that attempts to fix things beyond its control)

So,

- (a) Salah, when performed mindfully and heartfully, with full understanding of what we are doing, we can experience a shift or recalibration in our perspective about the world around, Who is really in-charge, what is our purpose or role in this world, what's the criteria for success etc. ... shaitan often make us expect things from people or society which are beyond their capacity ... the things that we should be expecting from Allah ﷻ, the resulting disappointment can make us hopeless, so salah can bring this shift and it reminds us about the reality of the world, and the true meaning of our life ...
- (b) In Salah, we surrender, we let go of control, the ego has to step aside, the same ego that suppresses emotions either to appear tough, or to take control of things which are beyond human control ... so, surrendering, can release suppressed emotions ... a

depressed person cannot cry even if they want to; if you are crying, you are sad and recovering, not depressed ... so, if you start to cry in salah, as your ego is not acting tough anymore, it helps in releasing (unfreezing) ... if you start to shiver, this is the release of the fight/flight energy stuck in your system ..

- (c) Bessel van der Kolk, one of the top gurus in trauma psychology, has written a whole chapter on yoga in his book, as how it helps the body stuck in freeze mode ... the position of Sajdah, is critical in this sense, as it takes us to a point where physically (muscle memory) our body remembers to be the most vulnerable (inside the mother's womb, where ego was zero) ... the overall process from performing Wudu, to the very end of salah, has the potential to reset the autonomic nervous system ... (whatever the mechanism there may be behind it, the affect can be experienced by anyone performing Salah, which can be seen as a gift from Allah ﷻ)
- (d) Finally, Dua, where you actually ask for it, that allows you to consciously acknowledge the deprivation with a sense of hope, as while in the state of suppression, you cannot effectively make dua either, and struggling with things beyond one's control can deplete one's hope as well; acknowledgement of our deprivation and incapacity expands our consciousness, which was constricted due to suppression, which ultimately also allows us have a shift of perspective.

Sabr or Silence?

Rabia Fatima

Patience, or *sabr*, in Arabic, is one of the most celebrated virtues in the Qur'an and Sunnah. It is repeatedly praised as a defining quality of the believer, a means of attaining divine closeness, and a source of strength during trials. The Qur'an describes Allah as being "with the patient," and the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ emphasized patience as a central part of faith. In classical Islamic scholarship, *sabr* is understood as the ability to restrain the self, remain steadfast in adversity, and persevere in fulfilling divine obligations. Yet, despite this centrality, the meaning of *sabr* has often been narrowed in practice. In many Muslim societies today, *sabr* is frequently misinterpreted as passivity or silence in the face of injustice, abuse, or hardship. Instead of empowering believers to remain steadfast while striving for what is right, *sabr* is sometimes invoked to discourage resistance, especially among

marginalized groups. This misapplication reduces a dynamic spiritual principle into a tool of compliance. To reclaim its authentic role, Muslims must return to the Qur'anic and Prophetic model, where patience is portrayed not as resignation but as resilience, courage, and perseverance in action.

The Qur'anic Vision of Sabr

The Qur'an mentions sabr more than ninety times, underscoring its central role in the spiritual life of a believer. However, it does not frame patience as passive acceptance. Rather, sabr is consistently presented as an active quality, enabling believers to endure hardship while remaining committed to justice, worship, and truth.

In Surah Al-Baqarah, Allah ﷻ instructs: "O you who believe, seek help through patience and prayer. Surely, Allah is with the patient" (2:153). Here, patience is not portrayed as withdrawal from life's struggles. Instead, it is a means of drawing divine support while engaging with the challenges of existence. The pairing of patience with prayer indicates that sabr is a disciplined strength that enables believers to persist in their duties and confront trials.

Another passage that underscores the social dimension of patience is found in Surah Al-'Asr: "By time. Surely, mankind is in loss, except those who believe, and do good deeds, and enjoin one another to truth, and enjoin one another to patience" (103:1–3). This short but powerful chapter links patience to truth and collective responsibility. It reminds Muslims that faith is not a private matter alone but requires perseverance in upholding justice alongside others.

Patience is also portrayed in the Qur'an as a defining trait of the Prophets. Prophet Ayyub ﷺ bore immense personal suffering yet never lost faith. Prophet Musa ﷺ endured the resistance of his people while leading them toward liberation. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ remained steadfast through years of ridicule and persecution. Their lives

show that patience is inseparable from action, leadership, and resilience.

Importantly, the Qur'an condemns silence when confronted with oppression. Surah An-Nisa (4:75) asks: "And what is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and [for] the oppressed among men, women, and children who say, 'Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people and appoint for us from Yourself a protector and appoint for us from Yourself a helper?'" This verse makes it clear that patience cannot mean indefinite tolerance of injustice. Instead, it must coexist with action to relieve oppression.

Thus, from a Qur'anic perspective, sabr is not synonymous with silence. It is resilience, an enduring strength that equips believers to face trials while remaining committed to truth and justice.

The Prophetic Model of Patience

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ embodied patience in all aspects of his life. His example provides the clearest model for understanding sabr as active perseverance rather than passive acceptance.

During the Makkan period, the Prophet ﷺ and his companions faced insults, boycotts, torture, and assassination attempts. Yet he did not abandon his mission. His patience manifested as persistence in delivering the message of Islam despite immense resistance. This patience was not quiet retreat but an unwavering commitment to calling people to faith.

The incident of Ta'if is often cited as a profound demonstration of patience. After being rejected and mistreated, the Prophet ﷺ prayed not for the destruction of the people but for their eventual guidance. His patience was rooted in mercy, long-term vision, and trust in Allah ﷻ. At the same time, when persecution in Makkah reached an unbearable level, he undertook the Hijrah to Madinah. Migration was a decisive and strategic act, demonstrating that patience sometimes requires enduring until the right

moment for action arrives.

The Prophet ﷺ also explained that patience operates across multiple dimensions of life. He taught that sabr is required in obedience to Allah ﷻ, in refraining from sin, and in enduring hardship. These categories highlight the balance between inner discipline and outward resilience. Patience is not confined to tolerating suffering but extends to the consistent pursuit of righteousness.

His companions embodied these lessons. Bilal ibn Rabah ؓ was tortured for his faith yet remained steadfast, repeatedly proclaiming "Ahad, Ahad" "The One, The One." Khabbab ibn al-Aratt ؓ endured severe suffering but continued to support the mission of Islam. Their patience was not silence, but a firm stand for truth in the face of oppression.

The Prophet ﷺ also made it clear that patience does not negate the duty to resist injustice. He declared: "The best jihad is a word of truth spoken to a tyrannical ruler" (Sunan Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi). This hadith demonstrates that speaking against tyranny is itself an act of faith, sustained by patience. Silence in the face of injustice is not sabr; rather, sabr provides the strength to resist, protest, and reform while bearing the consequences with dignity.

Historical Models of Active Patience

The lives of Muslims throughout history provide further testimony to the active nature of sabr.

The early Muslim community in Makkah displayed extraordinary patience while facing persecution. They endured loss of property, social ostracism, and even torture. Yet their perseverance was not passive; it preserved the integrity of their faith until circumstances allowed for the establishment of a new community in Madinah.

Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab ؓ embodied patience as a leader. His patience was not expressed in silence but in his willingness

to listen to the concerns of his people, bear criticism, and implement reforms. He dismissed governors when they failed in their duties and established systems to protect the rights of the weak. His patience was a form of responsibility, showing that true sabr includes accountability.

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal ؓ, during the Mihna, faced imprisonment and torture for refusing to accept theological doctrines imposed by the state. His endurance preserved the independence of Islamic scholarship and protected orthodoxy from political manipulation. His patience was not resignation but a form of principled defiance.

Women, too, provide powerful models of sabr. Sayyida Zaynab bint Ali ؓ displayed immense courage after the tragedy of Karbala. Standing in the court of Yazid, she delivered eloquent speeches condemning tyranny and upholding the truth of her family's sacrifice. Her patience was not silent suffering but moral strength expressed in public resistance.

These examples reveal that sabr has always been dynamic in Islamic history. It empowered individuals and communities to endure adversity without surrendering to injustice, combining resilience with active engagement.

The Misuse of Sabr in Contemporary Contexts

Despite the clarity of Islamic sources, sabr is often misused in modern contexts. Within families, women suffering domestic abuse are frequently told to remain patient, equating sabr with silent endurance. This distortion not only causes further harm but also misrepresents Islam, which emphasizes justice, compassion, and the protection of the vulnerable.

In political contexts, oppressive regimes often encourage citizens to be patient while denying them fundamental rights. Slogans of sabr are used to suppress dissent and maintain control. Such manipulation strips patience of

its empowering essence and turns it into an instrument of oppression.

Economic hardships provide another arena where sabr is misapplied. Communities living in poverty are sometimes encouraged to accept their condition passively, rather than striving for improvement through lawful means. The Qur'an encourages gratitude and resilience, but it also emphasizes seeking livelihood, supporting the poor, and working toward justice. Reducing patience to passive acceptance discourages progress and entrenches inequality.

The misuse of sabr often benefits those in power—whether patriarchal family structures, political elites, or exploitative economic systems. By misrepresenting patience as silence, they deny individuals their right to justice and dignity. This distortion creates a dangerous disconnect between the empowering message of Islam and the cultural practices that wrongly claim religious legitimacy.

Reclaiming the True Meaning of Sabr

To reclaim the authentic meaning of sabr, Muslims must return to the Qur'an and the Prophetic model. Patience must be understood not as passive silence but as resilience that inspires both inner strength and outward action.

Educational institutions and religious leaders have a vital role to play in correcting misconceptions. Sermons, lectures, and community programs should highlight Qur'anic verses and hadiths that link patience to justice, perseverance, and reform. The Prophet's ﷺ life should be presented as a model of active sabr endurance combined with strategic action and moral courage.

Families also need to cultivate a holistic understanding of patience. Parents should teach children that patience does not mean tolerating harm or unfairness. Instead, it

means facing challenges calmly while standing up for what is right. This balanced approach will produce individuals who are resilient yet proactive, capable of enduring difficulties while also striving for change.

In social justice movements, sabr should be emphasized as a sustaining force. Activists, reformers, and educators often face opposition and setbacks. Patience enables them to continue their work without despair, mirroring the Prophet's ﷺ example of persistence despite overwhelming odds.

Finally, public discourse must actively challenge the misuse of sabr. Communities should reject interpretations that demand silence in the face of oppression and instead affirm that patience empowers believers to resist, reform, and strive for justice.

Sabr as Strength, Not weakness

The Qur'an and Sunnah present sabr as a dynamic, empowering virtue. It is steadfastness in faith, endurance in hardship, and perseverance in the pursuit of justice. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his companions embodied patience not as withdrawal but as resilience and principled action. Islamic history is filled with examples of men and women who lived sabr as endurance coupled with courage, resistance, and reform.

When sabr is reduced to silence, it is stripped off of its transformative power and turned into a tool for maintaining injustice. This distortion is especially harmful for women, marginalized communities, and victims of abuse, who are often silenced in its name. Reclaiming the authentic meaning of sabr is therefore both a spiritual and social necessity.

Ultimately, sabr is not about waiting in silence. It is about standing firm in faith, striving for justice, and trusting in Allah's ﷻ plan while actively shaping a better world. Restoring this understanding will allow Muslim societies to cultivate resilience, advance justice, and embody the true spirit of patience that the Qur'an so powerfully extols.

Learn Who You Are!

Dr. Asad Zaman

This question of identity, which superficially seems like the simplest of questions, is not only the most important question we all face, but also, for reasons to be explained, the most difficult question...

There are powerful forces which work hard to deny us access to our true identities, and actively deceive us about ourselves. One of these forces is the capitalist economy, which seeks to use up and exploit all planetary resources for the production of wealth. This tendency has become so extreme that it threatens to destroy the entire planet. Our modern Western education was designed to turn us into human resources, instead of human beings. This is done by making us believe that we are commodities for sale in the labor market. We are taught to value the price that we will get when

we are sold (the money that we make from the careers we pursue). The fact that we are valuable beyond price, the most precious of the creations of God, must be concealed from us, so that we sell our lives cheap, for the benefit of the capitalist machines for the production of wealth.

In fact, Allah T'aala informs us about the value of our lives in the Holy Quran in many different ways. Man has been created in the best of forms, and reduced to the lowest of the low. This means that in us there is potential to rise above the Angels, and also the potential to become the worst of the creation. The Holy Quran tells us that if you save one life, it is as if you have saved the entire humanity. Our one life is equivalent, in the eyes of God, to the seven billion human lives currently living on the planet. How can this be? We don't feel our own lives to be that valuable. This is because we have been deceived about our true worth, made to understand that we are cheap, and that our lives are for sale. This has been done so that others can profit from our ignorance and use our precious lives for their own purposes, for making money.

But the question is: How can one life be equal to billions of lives? It is difficult to understand from a mathematical point of view. The answer is that this is true in terms of potential. A seed has the potential to grow into a tree, and produce thousands of seeds, which will produce even more trees and even more seeds. Similarly, if we realize the hidden capabilities which every human being is born with, he/she can rise to a position higher than that of the Angels. But, if we fail to realize the potential, our lives are worthless, just as a seed which fails to realize its potential and become a tree, is lost in nothingness.

Since we are extremely precious, there are many parties which would like to buy us, and to use us to further their own missions. There are so many ideologies, visions, bright and shining dreams, which appeal to our eyes and hearts, and are designed to deceive us into

accepting these missions and selling our lives for their achievement. The only way that these parties can achieve their goals is by misleading us about the purpose and meaning of our lives – by deceiving us about our true identities. This is why it is so difficult to learn who we are. There are so many groups who wish to buy our lives by selling us fake identities and persuading us to believe in them. So how can we learn the truth about who we are, what we are designed to be; how can we make the most out of our unique and precious lives, the few moments that we have on this planet?

We have to realize that Allah T'aala Himself is ready to buy our lives! He says that He has purchased the lives and properties of the believers in return for Paradise. This is the best use we can make of our lives, to sell ourselves to God, the Creator of the entire universe. Others who seek to buy our lives are all beggars, who have nothing compared to the treasures of the Creator Himself.

It is important to understand that the potential within the seed is only realized in the process of growth. We cannot learn who we are by looking inside our hearts to discover our true identities, because these true identities will be revealed and created as we pursue the path of spiritual growth. This is one of the meanings of the verse (26:69) of the Qur'an that "And those who strive for Us – We will surely guide them to Our ways." It is in the process of the struggle to discover the potentials hidden within our souls that Allah T'aala will give us the knowledge and guidance we seek for self-discovery.

The journey to discover who we are, and the amazing potentials with which we have been created is the most exciting journey of our lives. We have been taught to aim low, sell ourselves cheap, and never undertake this journey of self-discovery. In order to begin this journey, we must unlearn all these lies that have warped our understanding of who we are.

Memoirs of Hazrat Mufti Taqi Usmani دامت برکاتہم

Translation: Kaiser Nizamani



Teaching Arabic Literature

Since childhood, I had a special interest and affinity for poetry and literature. Due to this, whichever class I would be teaching Şarf (Arabic morphology) and Naḥw (Arabic grammar), Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) or any other subject, I would invariably be assigned to teach Arabic literature to the class one year ahead of them. Thus, when Maqāmāt Ḥarīrī was allocated to me, though I did not have affinity with its musajjaʿ (rhyming prose) and affectedly rhyming style, and I preferred smooth prose more, I nevertheless worked very hard in teaching Maqāmāt, because it contains a great treasure of Arabic vocabulary and idioms. While preparing for its lessons, I would not only refer to every commentary from “Sharīshī” to “Ifādāt”, rather for researching its vocabulary I would also directly refer to lexicons, and would also preserve my notes in a notebook. However, in front of the students I would only present as much as they could digest. Especially to explain the usage of words, I would cite verses of the Qurʾān and sometimes Arabic idioms as well. After that, I taught Dīwān al-Mutanabbī, Sabʿ al-

Muʿallaqāt and Dīwān al-Ḥamāsah with the same enthusiasm and passion. Al-ʿUkbarī’s commentary on al-Mutanabbī, and al-Zūzanī’s commentary on the Sabʿ al-Muʿallaqāt and on the Ḥamāsah, constantly remained in my study. Alongside “al-Ḥamāsah”, I tried to keep “al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt” in my reading, so that the poetic temperament of that era would remain in view.

Before beginning the lessons of “Maqāmāt”, when I studied various books concerning the introduction to the science of literature, I came across a saying that Arabic literature has four pillars: “al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn” of al-Jāhiz, “al-Kāmil” of al-Mubarrad, “Adab al-Kātib” of Ibn Qutaybah and “al-Amālī” of Abu Ali Al-Qālī. Among these, the third and fourth books were not present in Dār al-ʿUlūm’s library at that time, but the first two were available, and I would read them for recreation during my free time. In addition, I found “al-ʿIqd al-Farīd” of Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih in the library, which I liked more than the first two, because it contains excellent selections of Arabic prose, poetry, and speeches. Thereafter, I frequently kept it in my study. On the topic of Usūl al-Lughah (Principles of Lexicography), I also

liked ‘Allamah Jalaluddin Suyūti’s رحمته book “al-Muzhir” and benefited greatly from it. I had bought Ibn Rashīq’s “al-‘Umdah” and ‘Askari’s “Kitāb al-ṣinā’atayn” from a junk dealer, and their study too was very delightful.

Besides these, I was also fond of reading books of modern Arabic literature, and I used to eagerly read the writings of Hadhrat Mawlana Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi رحمته, Shakīb Arsalan, Abbas Mahmood al-Aqqād, al-Manfalūti, Shaykh Mustafa al-Sibā’i رحمته and others as well.

Introduction to the Discipline of Literature

Generally, when any book is taught, then at its beginning the teacher—by way of muqaddimah al-‘ilm (introduction to that discipline)—presents the definition of that discipline, its subject matter, its aim and purpose, and also its brief history. For all other disciplines, their introductions are usually mentioned at the beginning of the books of that discipline, but with regard to the discipline of literature (‘ilm al-adab), I could not find any such systematic and comprehensive introduction. As for whatever has been written in the commentaries of Maqāmāt on this subject, I was not fully satisfied by it. For this reason, the thought occurred to me that I should myself write an introduction to the science of literature, and in that introduction, insert the distilled results of the books I have mentioned above in such a way that the various genres of literature and their brief history become clear. Accordingly, I wrote this introduction in Arabic with great enthusiasm and eagerness, in which—besides the definition of adab (literature), the reason for its naming, its subject matter, and its aim and purpose—I also divided it into two parts: prose (nathr) and poetry (naẓm). I then mentioned the various genres of prose, which included mukālamah (dialogue), khuṭbāt (orations/speeches), maktūbāt (letters), maqālāt (essays), tawqīāt (concise official decrees), and others. And regarding each

genre, I explained what changes occurred in their style during different eras, and clarified those changes through examples. Similarly, in the section on poetry, I explained how poetry began, then introduced the various genres of poetry, which, besides qaṣīdah, ghazal, and rajaz, also included the Andalusian muwashshahāt and ajzāl. Then I introduced the different eras of Arab poets—Jāhiliyyūn, Mukhaḍramūn, Islāmiyyūn, and Muwalladūn—and explained their distinctive qualities, along with including selections from each genre. In this way, it became a detailed book which I lovingly kept in a file, and during my years of teaching, I would continue to make additions and deletions in it.

During this time, I received the news that Hadhrat Mawlānā Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadwī رحمته had come to Karachi. I desired to present this effort of mine before Hadhrat for the sake of correction, and if nothing else, that at least Hadhrat’s gaze fall upon it—that itself would an honour for me. Accordingly, I took the file and visited Hadhrat. Hadhrat very kindly looked through it, and—as far as I recall—even expressed words of encouragement upon it. Since I knew that Hadhrat remained very busy, I did not request him to write a taqrīz (commendatory preface) for it. Hadhrat’s merely glancing over it was itself a source of blessing for me. But after that, the tragedy that occurred was such that even now, when its grief comes to mind, it sends a shiver through my body. What happened was that on the return journey, in the taxi in which I was seated, I also had to bring home a female relative of mine, who had a considerable amount of luggage with her. When we reached home, being occupied with unloading her belongings, it slipped my mind that my file too was placed behind the seat of the taxi. Thus, all the luggage was unloaded, but that file in which was my manuscript remained in the taxi, and the taxi departed. When the taxi went beyond my reach, I remembered, and there was no option left for me except to wring my hands

in regret. Thereafter, I exhausted all possible means available at that time to search for the taxi—perhaps I even placed an advertisement in the newspaper—but it was not destined to be found, and it was not found. *Mā shā' Allāh kāna, wa mā lam yashā' lam yakun* (Whatever Allah willed did happen, and whatever He did not will did not happen). The age of computers and photocopying had not yet come, such that a copy of the manuscript could have been made and preserved separately. The result was that this effort of quite a long period was wasted.

In any case, the Divine Will was that this work of mine not come before the public, and certainly in that was some wisdom.

Arabic Speeches

I already had practice of delivering student-level speeches in Arabic thanks to my Syrian teachers, especially Ustadh Ahmad al-Ahmad. Therefore, whenever a guest would come to Dār al-'Ulūm, I would be asked to welcome them in Arabic. During this very period, in Jumādā al-Ūlā 1382 AH (corresponding to October 1962), the famous Syrian scholar Hadhrat Shaykh 'Abdul Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah رَحِمَهُ اللهُ came on his first visit to Pakistan. My respected father رَحِمَهُ اللهُ had already met him during his own visit to Syria, and in the letter he had written to us from there, he had mentioned Shaykh in words of high praise. On this occasion, when I was blessed with staying in his company, my heart became captivated by him. When he came to Dār al-'Ulūm, as usual I was asked by the teachers to deliver a welcoming speech. In that speech, besides welcoming him, I also mentioned — in a somewhat emotional manner — the background of the founding of Dār al-'Ulūm Deoband and the services of the senior scholars of India. At this, Hadhrat wrote in the visitor's book of Dār al-'Ulūm, encouraging me:

“لقد كان من فصاحة الأخ الحبيب في الله الشيخ محمد تقي العثماني ما كشف عن تقصير العرب في لغتهم.”

(Report of Dār al-'Ulūm Karachi, 1380 AH to

1382 AH, p. 26)

“My brother Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Usmani, whom I love for the sake of Allah, his eloquence was such that it exposed the shortcoming of the Arabs in their own language.”

This remark was certainly an encouragement from Hadhrat of a junior student of his, in which he did not consider even exaggeration to be objectionable. But it is a fact that in this journey I received his extraordinary affection. Wherever he went, I would try to remain with him, translate his speeches into Urdu, and derive abundant benefit from his scholarly discourses. To the extent that he once said to me:

“لو كنت تفاحةً لأكلتك”

That is: “If you were an apple, I would eat you.” Thereafter, he gave me the title *تفاحة الهند وباكستان* of (“The Apple of India and Pakistan”), and in one of his works (in the marginal notes on al-Taṣrīḥ) he wrote this title alongside my name. I have written a somewhat detailed account of my connection with him under the section on him in Nuqūsh-e-Raftagān, and some further details will, inshā'Allāh, come ahead. May Allah the Exalted have vast mercy upon him.

Alongside Naḥw and Ṣarf, by the grace of Allah ﷻ I had the opportunity to teach books of Balāghah (rhetoric), Fiqh (jurisprudence), Uṣūl al-Fiqh (principles of jurisprudence), Farā'id (laws of inheritance), Manṭiq (logic), philosophy, Kalām (theology), and all of the customary disciplines — and in this way over the years I taught all the books of the Dars-e-Nizāmī curriculum, except for three: one was Mukhtaṣar al-Ma'ānī, the second Sullam al-'Ulūm, and the third Maybūdī. However, in Balāghah I continued teaching Durūs al-Balāghah and al-Balāghah al-Wāḍiḥah, and in Manṭiq I was able to reach up to Sharḥ Tahdhīb and al-Qutbī. While I did not get a chance to formally teach Sharḥ 'Aqā'id as a regular lesson, but Mawlana Iftikhar Ahmad (who, mā shā' Allāh, is at present teaching Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim at Dār al-'Ulūm) had missed that lesson for

some reason, so I taught him a portion of it outside formal classes.

Journey to East Pakistan, 27 January 1961

At the beginning of 1961, I had the occasion, for the first time, to travel to East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh) together with my respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ. A pious nobleman of Sylhet, respected Majduddin (RH), had been writing to our respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ for a long time, saying that Sylhet had long remained a center of attention for the senior scholars of Deoband. Hadhrat Mawlana Sayyid Husayn Ahmad Madani رحمۃ اللہ علیہ used to spend extended periods of stay here, and another student of Hadhrat Shaykh al-Hind (may Allah sanctify his secret), Hadhrat Mawlana Sahūl Usmani رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, had also resided here for a lengthy time. The people of Sylhet thus have a special eagerness for benefitting from the elders in this way. Therefore, it is our desire that you visit Sylhet. The intention is not ceremonial gatherings or formal rallies, but rather that you stay here for some weeks, and people may benefit from your gatherings according to convenience. At long last, in January 1961, our respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ decided to undertake a journey of two weeks. And what was an immense joy for me was that he expressed the intention of taking me along. It was the month of Sha'bān (1380 AH), and our academic year was ending, so there was no harm in being absent from Dār al-'Ulūm. I had heard much about the conditions of Bengal and had a strong desire to see it myself. On this occasion, the sudden opportunity of traveling in my respected father's company gave me such joy that I still remember it. We thus set out for this memorable journey on the morning of 27 January. One of my respected father's students, Mawlānā Jamīl Ahmad Akyābī رحمۃ اللہ علیہ — who at that time was a transcriber of fatāwā in the Dār al-Iftā', and who would also copy my respected father's letters and statements — also accompanied us on this journey. This was my first long journey on an airplane, after the short trip from Jeddah to Madinah

Munawwarah in 1951 (when I was very young). I was in the eighteenth year of my life, so besides the real joy of being in the company of my respected father and visiting Bengal, I was also excited about traveling on an airplane. Until that time, jet aircraft had not become so common, and the plane in which we travelled was a propeller-driven Super Constellation. It did not fly higher than ten or eleven thousand feet, so the ground below remained visible from the windows. Throughout the flight I kept gazing out of the window: first at Sindh, then India — the confluence of the rivers at Allahabad, then Bhopal, and thereafter the far-stretching sight of Calcutta. I still remember all of this. Finally, after nearly five and a half hours of flight, we arrived in Dhaka, where a large crowd had gathered to welcome our respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ.

Hadhrat Mawlānā Mufti Muhyī al-Dīn رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, who was a particularly devoted student of our respected father, was there. His madrasa, Ashraf al-'Ulūm, located in the Bara Katra locality, was where we stayed. The principal of the madrasa was famously known as "Pir Jī Ḥuzūr," and in piety he was counted among the greatest scholars and ahlullāh of Bengal. I was blessed to visit him. The next day was spent in Dhaka itself, where we visited the madrasa at Lalbagh. There, I saw Hadhrat Mawlānā Shams al-Ḥaqq Farīdpūrī رحمۃ اللہ علیہ and Hadhrat Mawlānā Ahmadullāh رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, who was famously known as "Ḥāfiẓ Jī Ḥuzūr." From Sylhet, the father-in-law of respected Majduddin's son or daughter, who was himself among the great nawabs of that region, had come to Dhaka to take our respected father to Sylhet. Accompanying him was Mawlānā Tafaḍḍul 'Alī رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, the librarian of Madrasa 'Āliyah Sylhet, with whom I later developed a very informal relationship. After 'Ishā', we departed for Sylhet by train, spending the night in a reserved First-Class compartment. When I woke up early in the morning, the train was at Kulaura Station. The remaining journey of a few hours passed amidst beautiful, lush green scenery. There is a remark of Mawlānā Tafaḍḍul 'Alī رحمۃ اللہ علیہ that I still

remember. An attendant of the Nawab Sahib was traveling with him in another compartment. In the morning, when it was time to fold the bedding, Nawab Sahib was waiting for the next station so that the attendant would come and fold it. When Mawlānā Tafaḍḍul ‘Alī saw the bedding still lying spread out, he himself stepped forward to fold it. The Nawab Sahib said: “Leave it; the man will come shortly and fold it.” Mawlānā Tafaḍḍul ‘Alī replied: “We too are men.” And then he folded all the bedding himself. A lesson was learned from this statement: when a person can perform a necessary task by himself, why should he delay it waiting for a servant?

At Sylhet station, such a large crowd had gathered to receive our respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ that it was difficult to walk. I had heard about respected Majduddin رحمۃ اللہ علیہ that he was one of the great nobles of this area. But when I saw him, his appearance and attire conveyed the impression of an extremely humble and pious elder, and his whole bearing reminded me of Bahadur Shah Zafar رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, the last emperor of India. He had completed his M.A. from Aligarh, and was a friend of the then President of Pakistan, General Muhammad Ayub Khan رحمۃ اللہ علیہ. Whenever President Ayub Khan came to Sylhet, he would stay at his house. He took us to his residence, which at that time was known as “Phulbari House.” The skin of a lion which he had himself once hunted was hanging in the drawing room of the house. Our respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ stayed in one of the outer rooms of this beautiful house. This house was located in the Dargah Mahalla locality of Sylhet, close to the mausoleum and mosque of Hadhrat Shah Jalal Mujarrad al-Yamanī رحمۃ اللہ علیہ. It is narrated about Hadhrat Shah Jalal Mujarrad al-Yamanī رحمۃ اللہ علیہ that he came here from Yemen, and in this region his rank of sainthood and sanctity was regarded as approximately the same as that of Hadhrat Khwāja Mu‘īn al-Dīn Chishtī Ajmerī رحمۃ اللہ علیہ in India.

The late Majduddin Sahib’s house was situated in a most pleasant and scenic location. The deep impression of the hospitality with which

he hosted our respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ — with great appreciation, attentiveness to temperament, and courtesy — remains in my heart to this day. His son, the late Mohi us Sunnat, was a young man at that time, and he would take care of all the arrangements of travel and so forth. During this stay, considering my youth, two gentlemen took special care to provide me with recreation. One of them was Mawlānā Tafaḍḍul ‘Alī, and the other was respected Najābat ‘Alī, who was responsible for the Anjuman Taraqqī-e-Urdu (Society for the Promotion of Urdu). He had a strong interest in learning Urdu idioms, and every morning he would take me to the surrounding areas. Sylhet is filled with small lush green hills which are called “ṭīla” there. After Fajr we would go with him to one or another of the ṭīlas and enjoy the natural scenery. Sylhet at one time was part of Assam, and from here, on the horizon, the Khasi and Jaintia mountains of Assam could be seen enveloped in mist. From those very mountains the River Surma emerges and flows up to Sylhet, and the city is settled on both sides of it. At times we would also go for a walk on its bridge.

Lailat al-Barā’ah (the night of the fifteenth of Sha’bān) also occurred during that stay in Sylhet, and I witnessed the astonishing scene that caravans of people, carrying their bedding, were heading in throngs toward the mausoleum of Hadhrat Shah Jalāl رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, not only from Sylhet city but also from the surrounding villages and distant towns. The mosque and its wide courtyard were filled to overflowing, and people had spread their bedding far along the nearby streets and roads as well. All of these people had come to spend Lailat al-Barā’ah in the mosque of the shrine, and their number could not have been less than two to two-and-a-half hundred thousand. I came to know that every year on Lailat al-Barā’ah the same situation occurs here.

Our respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ stayed in Sylhet for about two weeks. Gatherings were held there twice a day, in which the scholars and common people of the area participated. On this

occasion, a large number of people established islāhī ta'alluq (connection for spiritual, moral reformation) with our respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, and some even took bay'ah (formal pledge of allegiance). Hadhrat Mawlānā Sahool 'Usmānī was a special student of Hadhrat Shaykh al-Hind رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, and he had remained in Sylhet for a long period. (Majduddin Sahib had enjoyed long companionship with him, the effects of which were evident in his personality.) Hadhrat Mawlānā Sahool's son, Mawlānā Maḥmūd رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, used to come daily to our respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, partake of the benefit of the gatherings, and in the end he too took bay'ah at his hand. In those days, our respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ was staying in our house at Lasbela House, while we two brothers, due to the engagements of Dār al-'Ulūm, were residing in Shārāfi. Therefore, I seldom had the chance to benefit from the islāhī gatherings of our respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ. Alhamdulillah, on this journey Allah Most High granted me that opportunity as well.

Hadhrat Mawlānā Akbar 'Alī رحمۃ اللہ علیہ was the Imām of the Jāmi' Masjid of Dargah Mahalla. He was an extremely humble and simple elder, such that from his appearance and demeanour, no one could even guess that he was a scholar. Every gesture, every aspect of his bearing radiated extraordinary innocence. Every day at the time of Tahajjud he would bring tea for our respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ. During this stay, our respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ advised him to establish a madrasa beside the mosque. Accordingly, he founded Madrasa Qāsim al-'Ulūm, which today is counted among the prominent madrasas of Bangladesh.

Respected Majduddin رحمۃ اللہ علیہ had four tea gardens in Sylhet and its surrounding areas. Out of these, he took our respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ to two of them, for one night's stay in each. It was at that time that I saw tea gardens for the first time. What kind of gardens were they? Not merely gardens — they were whole estates stretching over miles. Each estate had its own factory and a very well-decorated and well-kept bungalow. And the truth is

that I had never before seen gardens more beautiful, well-organized, and scenic than those; and of their type, perhaps never even afterwards. Keeping in mind the comfort of our respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, Majduddin Sahib رحمۃ اللہ علیہ had not arranged for him to attend any public gatherings. But there was a large madrasa in a village near the border of India which was having its annual gathering, and with the permission of our respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, it had been agreed to participate in it. Getting there required a journey on the River Surma. Accordingly, Majduddin Sahib رحمۃ اللہ علیہ arranged a comfortable and beautiful boat, and after almost two hours of travel on the river we arrived there. The gathering was so large that as far as the eye could see there was a sea of heads, but a great portion of them were scholars and students of religious madrasas.

Our respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ delivered a talk for about an hour. I remember that after the khutbah, in the introduction to his talk, he recited this couplet:

امیر جمع ہیں احباب، درد دل کہ لے
پھر اجتماع دل دوستان رہے، نہ رہے

Amīr! The friends have gathered, so pour out
the pain of your heart

(Who knows) whether such a gathering of
friends happens again or not

After this, he made particular mention of those matters among the people of knowledge that required reform.

In any case, this stay in Sylhet was very beneficial, interesting, and memorable. We returned home a little before the beginning of Ramaḍān. After this visit, I again had the opportunity to come here in the company of our respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, but at that time the stay was brief.

(To be continued, insha'Allah)



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Nayi Dhunn



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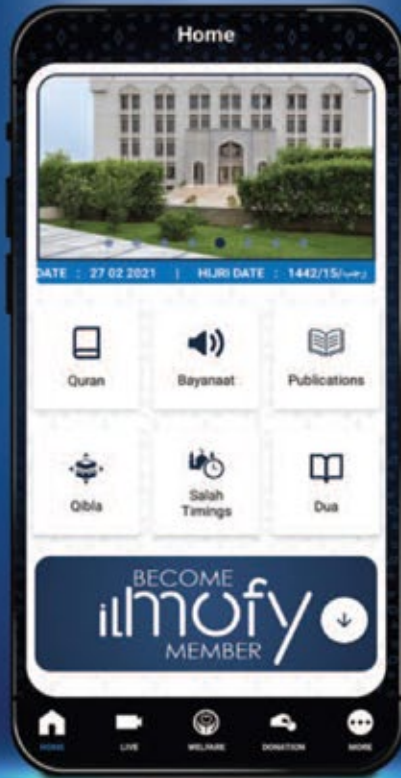
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