



Path to Paradise

MOTIVATION FOR THE
MODERN MUSLIMAH

VOLUME ONE

Path to Paradise

Motivation for the Modern Muslimah

Volume One

uswatul
MUSLIMAH
ROLE MODELS FOR THE MUSLIMAH

A humble appeal is made to the readers to offer suggestions, corrections, etc. to improve the quality of this publication in the future. May Allah Ta'ala reward you for this.

The writers, editors and typesetters humbly request your du'aas for them, their parents, families, Asaatizah and Mashaayikh.

Prepared and published by:

Uswatul Muslimah

4 Third Avenue

P.O. Box 26024

Isipingo Beach

4115

South Africa

Tel: +27 31 902 9818 (ext. 6)

WhatsApp: +27 72 566 4856

E-mail: info@uswatulmuslimah.co.za

Website: www.uswatulmuslimah.co.za

First Edition: Muharram 1440 / October 2018

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



uswatulmuslimah.co.za

Soooo many scarves... which one do I choose?

Headed to the mirror, I grab my selection of scarves from the closet and wonder how do I make the right choice, they all appear so stunning.

I try them on, one by one, the coral two tone stretch, then the purple colour blend, scrutinising it from every angle possible. The more I try, the deeper I fall into confusion. I decide to ask my mother for her wise opinion. *She tells me not to choose the one that looks the prettiest nor the priciest and not even the one that 'sits' the best, but rather the one that brings out the best in me.*

In the same manner, there are many websites all offering help and guidance. *How do we choose the correct one?* We choose the one that offers us a multivitamin, a wholesome package, *something that's going to bring out the best of our Deen, just like how Allah Ta'ala wants it!*

Welcome to uswatulmuslimah.co.za

This website is dedicated to the women, because without a shadow of doubt they have always played a fundamental and vital role in developing a healthy society. They are the homemakers and have a unique ability of getting things done the way they want. *If every woman uses this ability to guide her*

household towards Deen, society would most certainly undergo a phenomenal revolution of reformation, order and dignity.

This website is run by a panel of ‘Ulama under the auspices of Madrasah Ta’leemuddeen, Isipingo Beach, Durban, South Africa. The website strives to present the pure and unadulterated teachings of our noble Deen, in complete accordance to the views of the Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaa‘ah.

The website offers informative lessons on tafseer and hadeeth, Islamic rulings related to women, inspirational stories and incidents from the lives of the pious and great women of Islam, guidelines on daily issues, tips on enhancing relationships between spouses, parents and children, etc.

Additionally, there are also audios of women’s events. *Most importantly, is there something that you wanted to know? Some issue you needed guidance on?* Sometimes a little advice could reduce a mountain of problems to dust. This website offers you a sharee‘ah conducive space to privately address those concerns with the right people.

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Motivation & Inspiration	5
Life's a Rollercoaster! Enjoy the Ride.....	7
Be Thankful, Not Tearful.....	12
Personalized Gifts.....	13
Daily Anti-Depressant	15
The 'Upgrade' of the Akhirah.....	16
CAB	17
Blessing in Disguise.....	18
Melt Away your Worries	20
When the Goings Get Tough	21
Goal - Weight	28
The Orchard of Imaan and Actions	28
Our Hotline to Allah.....	30
Sweet Sixteen.....	32
The Ins and Outs of Change	38
The Play Dough.....	39
Self-Improvement	43
Emulating the Ways of the Ambiyaa ('alaihimus salaam) ..	45
For Sale: Palace in Paradise	46
Tit-for-Tat	47
A Golden Guarantee	48
The Reward of Pleasing a Muslim.....	49

Seeking the Faults of Others.....	50
“My Right”	51
Relation-ship.....	53
Endless Greed and Desire	56
No Opportunity for Doubt.....	57
Showing the True Colours	58
Tolerate Until...?	58
Double Dose of...?	60
The Worst Best.....	62
Stain Removal	63
S.O.S. - Saving Our Seconds.....	64
Tie the Tongue.....	72
Modesty & Dressing	85
The Protective Peel	87
Cover up... on the Catwalk!	87
Are YOU Blind?	91
Sold to the Highest Bidder	93
Beauty where it Belongs.....	94
Running for Cover!.....	96
British German	97
Media & Technology	99
It Switched off the Mind	101
Horror Movies.....	102
Video Games	104

Smart Phone	106
Addict?	110
Social Media	112
“But She’s on BBM”	115
Disobedience Broadcast	118
‘Selfitis’	119
No More Magz and News.....	121
Novel Company	123
Marriage.....	127
The Marriage Carriage	129
The Map of Marriage	130
Happily Ever After!	131
Boat Afloat but Couple in Crisis!	137
A Soulless Ceremony	143
Ten Steps to Winning His Heart.....	145
Hearts make Homes	147
Warmth and Smiles	148
A Smile a Day	148
A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed	149
Kitchen Specialist.....	151
When Last Did I Thank?	152
Focus on the Favours	153
A Rose without Thorns?	154
In Privacy, Not Public	155

A Partnership of Improvement	156
Keeping the Spark Alive	157
Boundaries in the Bedroom	159
Betraying Bedroom Secrets	160
Safeguarding the Secret	162
Shaitaan is Overjoyed	163
Absolute Last Option.....	164
Say what Needs to be Said	166
A Saint’s Advice to his Daughter	167
Children	171
I’ll Cross the Bridge when I Get There!	173
A Profound Legacy	179
Farming for the Future.....	181
Du’aa for the Parents and New-born.....	184
First Impressions.....	185
Tahneek	186
“Rather Safe than Sorry”	188
What’s in a Name?.....	194
The ‘NEED’ of the Hour	196
Baby Talk	201
The Silent Recorder	203
Two Vaccines	204
Gradual Guidance	205
Enjoying Arabic	206

The Bitter Pill with Sweet Results	207
Ummi!	209
Causing Moral Decay in our Children	215
Empty Threats	216
Don't Interfere	216
My Child's Comfort	217
Fed Up!	219
GPS Programming.....	220
“Game Over”	223
Enable the Disabled.....	225
Equality between One's Children.....	228
Removing Nazar	229
My Kind, Cruel Mother	230
Home	239
Talk of the Town	241
United in Purpose	242
House or Home?	243
Dynamic Daily Du'aas	245
'Mise en Place'	247
Progress Report.....	248
The Concept of Consequence	250
Family Doctor	252
Save the Low Pan!	254
How to Treat the En-suite?.....	256

Water-Wise.....	257
The Gift of the Guest	259
Ramadhaan	261
Nani’s Coming!.....	263
I don’t have my ‘Eid Clothes yet!	265
Food for the Soul	265
Savouring the Spirit of Ramadhaan	267
Haleem and Naan... or a Revolutionary Ramadhaan?	269
Mega Sale.....	278
Interior Decor	279
“There’s Enough Time”	281
Wi-Fi Free	282
Further Reduced - Don’t Miss!.....	284
Freezer is not Working.....	285
Turning Point.....	286
The True ‘Eid.....	287
‘Eid Mubaarak!	288
‘Eid or Anti-climax?	291
Nurturing the Relationship	293
The ‘Cold Shoulder’	294
Maintaining the Momentum	296
Hajj & Qurbaani	299
Hajj – The Right of Allah	301
‘Hajj Mabroor’	302

Hajj from Home	304
Place it under the Blade	305
Savour the True ‘Flavour’ of Qurbaani	307
Witness it Being Slaughtered	309
Oh Dear there’s an Odour!	310
Breakfast Menu.....	313
The Greater Qurbaani	314
Holidays	317
Take a Break.....	319
Serenity Coastal Resort vs The Gardens of Paradise	321
Holiday @ Home.....	327
“Clean Fun”	329
Damage Control.....	330
A Blessed Destination	332
General.....	335
Too many Cooks Spoil the Broth!	337
Du‘aa of Seventy Thousand Angels	344
“Sale! All Items Reduced up to 50%!”	346
The Pillar of Power	348
Making Amends.....	350
No Place in the Cupboards.....	352
Hocus Pocus and Bogus!.....	353
The Reality of Death	360
The Double-Edged Sword.....	361

Dead Body of a Donkey	363
Intellect over Instinct	363
Do we REALLY Care?	366
Mind over Matter	371
It's Your Company.....	375
Strive to be Simple in Five	377
'Weaning' the Nafs	378
Poor yet Rich.....	379
'Khaalah, Khaalah'	383
The Time to Tie.....	384
Rise to the Occasion	387
Open Eight Doors of Jannah.....	389
The Aid for Acceptance	390
The Avenues of Sadaqah	391
Thousands in Seconds	392

Introduction

When we imagine a traveller, what comes to mind?

Perhaps we picture a person jet-setting to Japan with a Samsonite in tow, or maybe we envision a man driving his dusty kombi to Durban with a trailer in tow. Whatever it is that we imagine, none of us consider a person relaxing in his lounge to be a traveller, nor do we regard a person occupied in his work to be a traveller.

The reality of the matter is that each and every person's life, from the cradle to the grave, is a journey along the "Path to Paradise", and hence every person is a perpetual traveller.

Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) has mentioned in a blessed hadeeth, "Live in the world like a stranger, or rather like one who is passing by." (Saheeh Bukhaari #6416)

When a traveller is intent on reaching his destination, he doesn't break his journey, divert from the road on a detour or pause at any place, unless absolutely necessary. Rather, he 'passes by' everything, until he completes his journey.

This hadeeth gives us the same message – *your life is a journey and Jannah is your destination. Don't become attached to the world, but rather yearn for Jannah and focus on arriving there safely.*

Just as a person travelling along a road, from one place to another, faces various threats and dangers, and has to prepare accordingly, *there are many hurdles, obstacles and threats that*

await us in ambush on the path to Jannah. Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said, “Jannah has been surrounded with difficulties.” (Saheeh Muslim #7130)

The speed traps of Shaitaan... The potholes of pride... The roadblocks of false rumours... The hijackings of haram relationships... The smash and grab of shamelessness... The oil patches of extravagance... the accidents of anger... These – and many more – are some of the difficulties and dangers which will have to be avoided on the “Path to Paradise”.

On one occasion, Sayyiduna ‘Umar bin Khattaab (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) asked Sayyiduna Ubayy bin Ka’b (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) to explain the essence of taqwa. In reply, Sayyiduna Ubayy (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) asked, “Have you ever travelled along a path filled with thorns?” When Sayyiduna ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) answered in the affirmative, he asked, “How did you conduct when travelling on this path?” Sayyiduna ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) responded, “I lifted and held onto my garment (so that it would not get caught in the thorns) and I walked with extreme caution (trying my best to avoid being pricked by the thorns).” Sayyiduna Ubayy (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) concluded, “That exactly is taqwa.” (Tafseer Ibni Katheer vol. 1, pg. 255)

The challenge is thus for us all to safely navigate the “Path to Paradise” without falling prey to any of the threats and dangers that lurk along this path. In this regard, many diverse articles addressing an array of topics have been written and posted onto the Uswatul Muslimah website.

Introduction

In writing these articles, an effort was made to identify the challenges and hurdles facing a Muslimah of the twenty-first century, together with providing the solution to these predicaments in the light of our beautiful and perfect Deen.

This compilation comprises of many of these articles that were handpicked for the benefit of one and all. We make du‘aa that Allah Ta‘ala accept this broken effort and guide us on our journey along the “Path to Paradise”, aameen.

*Motivation
& Inspiration*



Life's a Rollercoaster! Enjoy the Ride

Life is topsy turvy. One day you are feeling high and the next day low. Every coming day is, well... just unpredictable.

*Life is like a seesaw, it's just like that
One up one down, tit for tat
You a ball one day, and the next you a bat
Be happy like a child, bear patience till the end
Old became gold, just like that*

This phenomenon affects everyone, without exception. Every Nabi that set foot on this planet experienced these feelings and emotions. *The rich in their high rise apartments and the poor in their crumbling huts, the pious on their prayer mats as well as the sinful on their sofas and couches – every single one rides the changing tides of fortune.* All shake the hands of prosperity and poverty. Everyone's bowl is filled with his share of happiness and sadness, as well as the excitement and disappointment.

What we fail to observe is that no one has any influence over what has been decreed for him. One cannot command the amount of wealth that is desired, or the happiness that is cherished and dreamed about. Neither is it possible for an individual to avert the problems and pains that are destined for him. *None have any say whatsoever, in the matters of destiny.*

This is because we are the creation and Allah Ta'ala is the Creator. We are owned and He alone is the Owner. What He has decided will happen, regardless of anything and everything else. In short, every man will receive and live through the full spectrum of life's offerings at the time, place and condition that Allah Ta'ala decides... not at his own behest and desire.

*What He wants to decide, by it shall we abide
Never can we His will avoid, with His pleasure we walk side by side
Heads bowed down to His command, His word never denied
In His presence no arrogance, in His court no pride*

We are just like passengers on a plane, train or any other commuter. **One might either sit grumpily for the entire journey, whining and complaining all the way.** When the journey's end is reached, physical exhaustion and mental fatigue accompanied by darkness, doom and despair shall be his only companions. *Ah, the end-result of helpless whining, carping and complaining!*

The other option would be to make the best of it. Share a smile. Have a good word. Be patient, positive and productive. **The trip remains the same; but one's a winner at the end.**

This was the theme of the life of the Queen of Paradise (Jannah) – *Sayyidah Faatimah (radhiyallahu 'anha)*. She was born as the youngest of four siblings and her childhood was 'rocked' by extreme abuse and persecution that her noble father, Nabi Muhammad (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) had to endure. But she was brave. Her courage reached to such an extent that she openly defied the abuse of his enemies and removed the entrails of a camel off his back, in their presence. It was such a time that

men lacked the courage to do what she fearlessly did. *Did she choose to be in a difficult situation? Not at all! The challenge never put her down. Instead, she was daringly and boldly pro-active.* She accepted the challenge, threw down the gauntlet and defended the truth.

She was just entering the second ten years of her life when her elder sister Sayyidah Ruqayyah (radhiyallahu ‘anha) leaves Makkah Mukarramah and migrates to Abyssinia. She bids her farewell knowing very well this may be their last meeting for it was a trip into the unknown... a journey to the wild jungles of Africa. *Would they return alive? Would they come back safe and sound?* This was life’s bitter pill that she had to patiently swallow. *It may not have suited her idea of the perfect family setting but she knew that Allah Ta’ala had a better plan.*

A few years down the line and the brave and young Faatimah (radhiyallahu ‘anha) joined her family when they were forced to abandon their homes and ‘dumped’ in a valley. This was the evil boycott imposed by the Quraish. No one was permitted to trade with this banished group. Effectively, the boycott was frightening, cold and totally inhuman.

Society was forbidden to interact with them and vice-versa. Starvation had reached such a point that the babies’ cries of hunger could be heard resounding through the valley. People had to suffice on eating the roots of grass and shrubs for some nourishment for there was nothing else available. What could this feeble human being, who was the beloved daughter of the most beloved of Allah Ta’ala, do? *She knew and understood that*

this was indeed, the decision of Allah, The Mighty and The Wise. The earth belongs to Him and He decides what His creation should receive and experience.

With time, the boycott ends and relief barely sets in when her loving mother, Sayyidah Khadeejah (radhiyallahu ‘anha) falls ill and passes on, leaving her forever. She was never to see her again. It just happened. It was all over. **This was not any small problem. This was her mother. There was no replacement. But she knew that her mother belonged to Allah Ta‘ala, who takes life and gives life. She could only turn to Him for solace.**

The period that followed, recorded an unprecedented increase in pressure, persecution and harassment. The inhumanity became more intense and continued unabated. The pillars of support that her family once enjoyed had now fallen away and the horizon appeared dark, dingy and daunting.

It was just a matter of a ‘brief pause’ and the next big change and challenge befell her arduous life. She had to move house. *Not from one street to the next!* She had to abandon her homeland and move to a place new and foreign to her. She had to leave behind fond memories, friends and family. Young Faatimah (radhiyallahu ‘anha) had learnt a long time ago that the mindset of a Muslim was to be happy and contented with the decree of Allah Ta‘ala, in any and all situations. **Why wouldn’t she live out this lesson, when she was, after all, the daughter of the leader of both the worlds (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) and the Queen of Jannah (Paradise) in waiting?**

The ‘wheels of time turned on’ and she soon found herself living in Madeenah Munawwarah as a young woman who was married to Sayyiduna ‘Ali (radhiyallahu ‘anhu). Things were difficult and became even harder with four children to tend to. Food was hard to come by. *Sayyidah Faatimah (radhiyallahu ‘anha) would carry out her daily chores by herself. She had no assistant whatsoever.*

When she had requested for a helper from her loving father (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) he turned her attention towards the Hereafter. He recommended the famous “Tasbeeh Faatimi” to her. *An intangible in exchange for a tangible!* He gave her something she couldn’t feel, see or even talk to in response to her request for physical help! But accepting it was a breeze for her and for anyone who Allah Ta‘ala has guided.

Why this mindset? Indeed, it was simply because she had decided to be happy with the ultimate decree of Allah Ta‘ala. How could she not be pleased? Indeed, she was Sayyidah Faatimah (radhiyallahu ‘anha), the beloved daughter of the most beloved of Allah Ta‘ala, Nabi Muhammad (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam)... she understood that everything that happens, positive or negative, is the will of Allah Ta‘ala and is backed by the wisdom of the All-Wise. Simply because she understood that pious deeds like salaah, reciting the Quraan Majeed, zikr and abstaining from sin have a telling impact on our physical daily lives. She accepted it and it worked wonders for her. *It will work for you too. Make it part of your daily life and experience it first-hand.*

Sayyidah Faatimah (radhiyallahu ‘anha)’s life was a manifestation of the verse: *“We will afford a good life to those people whose actions are pious and carried out in the condition of imaan, be they male or female”.* (Surah Nahl v97)

A good life is not based on hoards of riches, good health and happy families. Rather it is the blessing of an empowered heart to take on the world and still smile from within.

Life’s a rollercoaster, enjoy the ride.

Be Thankful, Not Tearful

Two people were presented with a 250ml glass containing 125ml of water. When asked to describe the glass, the first person said, *“It’s half full.”* The second person, on the other hand, described it saying, *“It’s half empty.”*

While both descriptions may technically be correct, the different descriptions serve to highlight the stark contrast between the mindset of the two people. The first person has a positive mindset, while the second has a negative mindset. *A person’s mindset is such an important element that if the correct mindset is created, literally half the battle against depression will be won.*

In future, if we are ever beset by negative thoughts, turn our minds and hearts to the infinite favours of Allah Ta’ala.

Let us not feel depressed if the elaborate outfit we wished to buy was sold to somebody else. Instead, let us think of those people who cannot even afford basic clothing.

If we are not embarking on a fancy, foreign holiday, let us think, for a moment, of our brothers and sisters who cannot afford to take a break from work.

If our meal does not turn out to be as tasty as we had hoped, let us think of those people who live on the streets and eat the scraps they find in bins.

If our vehicle is not the latest model or the exact colour that we wanted, let us think of the people who do not even own a vehicle. They often stand in the rain, waiting for public transportation which takes double the time to carry them home.

If we are beset by crime and threatened with violence, think of our brothers and sisters in war-torn countries who go to sleep at night fearing that a bomb may fall upon them.

It is this mindset that creates gratitude and contentment within a person. On the flip side of the coin, without this mindset, a person can be handed the world on a shiny gold platter and he will still remain discontent.

Personalized Gifts

Imagine awakening one morning and opening the front door, only to be greeted by the sight of a beribboned basket packed

with steaming croissants, a flask of hot coffee, a jug of freshly squeezed orange juice and other fresh breakfast delights! You wonder who your generous benefactor could possibly be as the accompanying note merely says, “Hope you enjoy”.

To your absolute delight, this early morning treat continues. Every morning without fail, the basket arrives on your doorstep, containing a different selection of tasty treats. By the time the third or fourth morning dawns, you are extremely eager to identify your well-wisher so that you can, at the very least, say “Thank You”.

If the idea of a breakfast basket delivered to our door every morning, free of charge, sounds fantastic, have we ever pondered over the fact that every morning, we all wake up to enjoy another fresh basket of life filled with precious gifts, designed exclusively for us?

We have all been blessed with unique features that make us different from other people. The curve in our ears, the shade of our eyes, the slope of our nose, the tone of our voice, the shape and length of our fingers; every fine detail designed especially for you.

Best of all is the fact that we all know the identity of the One who has blessed us with these bounties – Allah Ta’ala. Appreciation demands that we express gratitude to our generous Creator, Allah Ta’ala, by utilizing these favours solely in His obedience.

Let us strive to personally thank Allah Ta'ala every day by pleasing Him.

Daily Anti-Depressant

Many people are under the misconception that an increase in wealth will lead to an increase in happiness. However, this could not be further from the truth, as depression affects people across all income-brackets and from all walks of life.

The severity of depression can perhaps be gauged by the fact that according to statistics, in South Africa alone, there are approximately twenty-three known suicides a day!

Islam has given us a simple, free prescription that has no unwanted side effects and is incomparable in combating depression. In this regard, Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) taught us that we should always look at those who are less fortunate than ourselves. (*Saheeh Muslim #7428*) In doing so, we will realize how many bounties we enjoy for which we should be thankful and how fortunate we really are.

Hence, we should daily contemplate over the plight of others in the world. There are people in the world who have *no food at all* and are *dying of starvation*. There are people who have *no limbs* or *limbs that do not function*. There are people who were forced to witness their entire family being killed before them. By pondering over the difficulties which these people encounter, we will realize that our difficulties, as painful and

unbearable as they may seem, are actually not as bad as the suffering of others.

Whenever we feel down and depressed, let us think of our brothers, sisters, children and parents around the world who are less fortunate than ourselves. Then, let us raise our hands in du'aa, thank Allah Ta'ala for the innumerable favours that we enjoy, and beg Him to assist those in difficulty.

This is the ultimate anti-depressant of which we should all strive to take a daily dose.

The 'Upgrade' of the Aakhirah

Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) has mentioned, "When Allah Ta'ala has decreed a particular rank (in Jannah) for a servant, but the servant is unable to reach this rank through his good deeds (as they are insufficient), then Allah Ta'ala tests him in his body, wealth, or his children. Allah Ta'ala then enables him to exercise patience over this test, until it makes him reach the rank that Allah Ta'ala had decreed for him." (Sunan Abi Dawood #3090)

Every person hopes for an upgrade – be it an upgrade to the latest cellphone model, an upgrade from economy to business or first class, an upgrade to the latest car model, or even an upgrade from a normal hotel room to the Presidential Suite. Many people cannot afford these upgrades, and those who receive them for free are few and far apart!

Our Beloved Allah Ta'ala is so kind that He wishes us to enjoy a very high level in Jannah. However, we sometimes fail to 'qualify' for this upgrade as we lack sufficient righteous actions, while our 'ibaadah are also weighed down by the burden of our sins. Hence, Allah Ta'ala sends us free 'upgrade' packages. This package is sometimes a 'bundle' of sickness, our child passing away, a robbery, or any other calamity. Once the upgrade package is delivered, it requires an 'activation' which is the 'password' of patience and sabr.

If every person 'downloads' the mindset of adopting sabr and patience under all circumstances, we will all receive the upgrades of the Aakhirah.

CAB

We face, on a daily basis, situations which test our tolerance and patience. Unfortunately, we sometimes fail the test and succumb to our temper, behaving in such a manner that we cause nothing but remorse and regret for ourselves.

Thus, as of today, when faced with any test, simply remember the word 'CAB'.

'C' stands for the 'Command' of Allah Ta'ala. Remember that this test was decreed to happen and there was no way that we could have escaped it. *We cannot choose our tests, but we can choose the manner in which we face these tests and challenges.*

‘A’ stands for ‘Aware’. Allah Ta‘ala is all aware regarding our condition, so let us not lose our composure and temper and behave inappropriately. **Furthermore, when He is aware of our trial, then we are not alone in this test.** If we turn to Him, we will definitely enjoy His unseen help.

‘B’ stands for ‘Blessing’ in disguise. We fail to see beyond the present and thus lose hope and become frustrated. In comparison, Allah Ta‘ala alone, in His infinite knowledge, knows what is best for us at any given point. Generally, it is only years later that we eventually realize the wisdom that was in the divine planning of Allah Ta‘ala. **Additionally, every test that is borne with patience becomes a means of great reward.** With every test, we are being handed a chance to score in the Aakhirah. Hence these tests really are ‘blessings’ in disguise.

The next time you face a challenge and the tide turns against you, remember ‘CAB’!

Blessing in Disguise

As young children, many of us were dragged to the dentist. Once at the surgery, despite our protests, we were seated on the chair and made to open our mouths, after which the dentist carried out ‘unspeakable atrocities’ against us. Scaling, polishing, filling and worst of all – injecting and extracting – are some of the horrors that we were made to undergo. **To our disappointment and dismay, our emphatic appeals to our parents to bring an end**

to the torture simply fell on deaf ears, and they even went as far as to side with the dentist, scolding us and telling us to sit still! To add insult to injury, while we nursed our wounds, they thanked the ‘torturer’ and paid him handsomely for what he had done!

Now, as adults, we look back in retrospect, and realize that the dentist was actually a ‘blessing in disguise’. *Had he not treated us, we would have probably lost some of our teeth – a loss that would have plagued us for the rest of our lives. Thus, although we did not understand it at the time, the difficulty that we suffered was actually for the best.*

Similarly, we often face difficulties and trials in our lives. Whether a car accident, a burglary, sickness or any other calamity befalls us, although we suffer and undergo difficulty at the time, *we seldom realize that often there is actually great benefit and wisdom in the difficulty. Hence, we should instantly hold firm to sabr (patience) and hope for reward from Allah Ta’ala.*

A few decades ago, a man from Durban was at the Jeddah airport, returning home from hajj. Inexplicably, the airport staff rejected his ticket, although he had followed the procedure and regulation of the time by going to the airline offices and confirming the ticket prior to the flight. The officials refused to allow him to board the aircraft. This man was naturally upset and could not understand why he had been denied his seat on the plane.

Hardly an hour had passed, when this man learned that the plane in which he was originally meant to travel had crashed

and all the passengers had tragically passed away! He was now relieved and grateful, realizing that although his ordeal had seemed to be a difficulty at the time, it was actually Allah Ta'ala's divine intervention to save him from the plane crash.

If, when afflicted with calamities and difficulties we adopt sabr, remain pleased with the decision of Allah Ta'ala and do not complain of the circumstances, then Allah Ta'ala rewards us for these actions of sabr and submission. Furthermore, difficulty is sometimes sent our way in order to ward off a far greater calamity that was otherwise destined to befall us. **Simply because we fail to comprehend the benefit and wisdom behind the difficulty, it does not mean that it is not there.**

Whenever we face a difficulty in future, let our first reaction be that of sabr and happiness with the decision of Allah Ta'ala.

Melt Away your Worries

Time and time again, while living in this world, we are beset by grief and worries. The following is a tried and tested method to 'melt away' your worries:

Simply think of the bounties that Allah Ta'ala will shower us with when we are blessed to enter Jannah. Ponder over the gardens and streams of Jannah. Ponder over the fact that it will be an eternal life of eternal pleasure. **Sit down and meditate over the fact that we will be blessed with the opportunity to see Allah Ta'ala and listen to the divine speech of Allah Ta'ala.**

Ah, what beauty and pleasure will that be!

Sit in solitude and imagine that we are already sitting in Jannah. For a clearer picture of Jannah, read the commentary of Surah Rahman and Surah Waaqi'ah. Continue reminding ourselves that every difficulty wipes away our sins and draws us closer to Allah Ta'ala, provided we are patient.

Meditating over the bounties of Jannah in the manner described, will surely melt away our worries and also increase our enthusiasm for acquiring Jannah. This will insha-Allah propel us towards the obedience of Allah Ta'ala, and the unswerving emulation of the blessed sunnah of our most beloved Rasul (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam).

When the Goings Get Tough ...

As she lay in bed, Faatimah could not help but stare glaringly at her beautiful doll, *baby Saalihah*, who was the apple of her eye. Tears streamed down her cheeks as she began to reminisce about the magical moments of joy and happiness that she enjoyed in her short-lived marriage, which ended in the tragic death of her 'prince charming'. The fatal motorcar accident will forever remain etched in her mind.

It was a life she had dreamt of, after having lived her infancy and youth as an orphan. However, she never expected her dreams to materialise, and then be snatched away after such a short span of time.

She had barely staggered out of that ordeal when she suffered another blow. Her little baby Saalihah was diagnosed with leukaemia. She was her last straw of hope that she could clutch on to, and now she had little or nothing to live for – hoping *only* for the best. Every coming day was to be faced with the realisation that the fate of her daughter was unknown.

“It never rains, but pours on some”.

Just a day before baby Saalihah’s diagnosis, she was handed a two-weeks-notice by her landlord! He required the flat for a close relative of his. It felt as if there was no end to the list of problems and complications she was enduring and braving.

As a single mother, she now needed to see to the intensive medical treatment of her ‘little angel’ and also find a place to live. And all of this had to happen in double quick time!

With all these thoughts plaguing her shattered mind and heart, Faatimah looked out of the window to experience the spectacular scene of a fading cloud-cover over a brilliant full moon.

This spectacular scene reminded her of the fact that life will have its brilliant and enjoyable moments. But there shall also be periodic patches of darkness and dimness. Life will definitely pose its challenges, but they play a great role in us appreciating the ease and comfort that was enjoyed before, and that which will be enjoyed in the future.

The splendour of the moon, its lighting effect on the skyline, the calm and the comfort that it brings to the eye and heart, and

the light it provides would never be appreciated without the cloud cover. Such grandeur would never be cherished without the waxing and the waning of the moon.

Life in this world is exactly the same. There would be times of extreme happiness and joy, days of immense gloominess and murkiness, and days with a mixture of both. *In essence, life can never be a 'bed of roses' without thorns.*

As this realisation struck her, she understood deep down that crying and complaining will be of no avail. She needed to be strong at heart, having a deep rooted conviction in the Alleviator of all hardships and worries, Allah Ta'ala, and understanding that He alone in His infinite wisdom knows why this 'thick cloud cover' had overwhelmed the 'brilliant sheen' in her life.

A spark of hope was now ignited in her heart causing her to forget her sorrow and grief. It was as if an entire mountain was lifted from her head.

Indeed, life is a severe test and struggle! For some it's a test in luxury and affluence, while for others a test in difficulty and adversity. However, a successful woman is she who does not succumb to the emotional ploys of Shaitaan and begins blaming others for her predicament, nor does she become oblivious of the Great Being who has put her to the test.

Initially, exercising patience will be difficult and burdensome, but when one is determined, then Allah Ta'ala will divinely strengthen that person. Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) said:

“He who persistently adopts sabr (patience), Allah Ta‘ala will bless him with sabr.” (Saheeh Bukhaari #1469)

Imagine a person appearing on the Day of Qiyaamah without having to render an account of his deeds and he then receives his rewards without any restrictions and limits. Imagine his emotions when his rewards will continue to be heaped onto his scales of deeds. *How fortunate and privileged will such a person be!*

Indeed, this will be the case for those who patiently bore the hardships and difficulties that they underwent in this worldly life. Allah Ta‘ala states in the Quraan Majeed: *“The saabiroom (patient ones) will be granted their reward in full without any measure (and limit).” (Surah Zumar v10)*

Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbaas (radhiyallahu ‘anhuma) reports that Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said, “A martyr will be brought forward on the Day of Qiyaamah and he will be made to render an account of his actions. Thereafter, a generous person will be summoned and he will also be made to render an account of his actions. Eventually, those who were afflicted with difficulties and calamities (and bore them with tolerance and patience) will be called forward. *No scale will be erected for them, nor will any register of deeds be placed before them. Instead, rewards will be showered and heaped over them,* to such an extent that on seeing the rewards that they are receiving, those who passed their worldly lives in comfort and ease will begin to wish at that moment – if only had their bodies been slit with scissors in their worldly life – they too could be

entitled to such rewards.” (*Al-Mu’jamul Kabeer – Majma’uz Zawaa-id #3860*)

Who could be better examples than Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) and the Sahaabah (radhiyallahu ‘anhum) in displaying what sabr really means.

There was never a moment in the life of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) that passed without him undergoing some difficulty or the other, yet never was a word of complaint ever uttered from the blessed tongue of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam).

When one studies the lives of the glorious women of Islam, one such woman stands out as a glaring example, fitting the description of *As-Saabiraat* (the women who patiently persevere for the sake of Allah Ta‘ala) – regarding whom Allah Ta‘ala speaks of in the Quraan Majeed. *She was even described as As-Saabirah and Ash-Shaakirah* (the one who patiently persevered for the sake of Allah Ta‘ala and who was grateful to Him).

This was none other than Sayyidah Asmaa bintu Abi Bakr (radhiyallahu ‘anhuma).

There was hardly a difficulty that women presently face, which she had not undergone. If we speak of domestic problems, then she experienced it as a daughter and as a wife.

Her illustrious father, Sayyiduna Abu Bakr (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) had divorced her mother Qutailah when she was young. Hence, she grew up with a step mother. After many years of marriage with Sayyiduna Zubair (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) she was

unable to gel and blend with his temperament. Hence, this eventually led to them parting ways.

If we look at her financial standing, here too she had undergone constraints. In her advanced life she lost her sight, and in this state, her illustrious son Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah bin Zubair (radhiyallahu ‘anhuma) was mercilessly slain by the infamous Hajjaaj bin Yusuf.

Despite all these difficulties, she never became suicidal, or as we would say, a ‘loony’. She understood that this was all a test from Allah Ta‘ala. Hence she patiently underwent these difficulties while placing her trust and hope in Allah Ta‘ala alone, and turning to Him only!

There was no need for counselling or requesting a Moulana for a ta’weez or a special wazeefah. She fully understood that life will certainly have its cloud-covers but only to reap the rewards of the Hereafter.

Hence, adopting her approach in facing the challenges of life will definitely bring about ease and serenity in our hearts and mind, and allow life to be a pleasant and comforting experience.

In all of this tragedy, test and trauma, she maintained her loyalty and allegiance to Allah Ta‘ala. Her predicament did not make her oblivious of the fact that she was after all a bondswoman of Allah Ta‘ala.

In fact, on one occasion after making hijrah to Madeenah Munawwarah, her mother Qutailah who was a disbeliever paid her a visit. Naturally, a woman would rush forward to receive

her mother. *And why not, when they last met more than six years previously?*

A mother is after all the person a woman would normally turn to when she experiences any problem or undergoes any difficulty. This was certainly not the case with Sayyidah Asmaa (radhiyallahu ‘anha). Upon her mother’s arrival, she declined to entertain her and accept the gifts that she had brought unless she first sought permission from Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam). *What a mighty lesson for each one of us?*

Emotions cannot override the laws of sharee‘ah. Deen has the greatest priority in every person’s life. Whether it is a wedding, a funeral, a family get-together or any other situation, the pristine yet simple Deen and sunnah of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) must be upheld under all circumstances.

If one is unsure regarding a matter, then first enquire from those who are knowledgeable, righteous and experienced.

Rashly and foolishly many rush into doing things and enquire *only* after the action – only to realise that they had broken the laws of Deen. Why should one put oneself into such dilemmas when the simple solution is – *first refer to those who know before embarking on any matter.*

Even when it comes to solving a problem or overcoming a predicament, one should only act after receiving guidance from those who know and adopting only those methods and means that are approved by the sharee‘ah.

Goal - Weight

Allah Ta'ala has created everyone unique. We all have different body structures. Each person's metabolism is also different. Many people eat much but remain slim while others who, despite eating little, just keep putting on weight. *In this era of being extremely concerned about the outer physical self, many people have become obsessed with the concept of "goal-weight" (the ideal weight of a person based on his age, height, etc.).*

We pass our entire lives trying to look like some model we have seen on the cover page of some magazine. At times we harm our own bodies and health in trying to be what we were never created to be. The end result is depression and ungratefulness. *It is time we realise that everyone is unique. I need to realise I am different and I need to be grateful to my Allah Ta'ala for all his bounties.*

The Orchard of Imaan and Actions

When it comes to gardening, some people have 'green fingers'. They successfully plant and cultivate a host of different plants, some for beauty and others for food. They tend to their plants, watering, pruning and spraying insecticide when necessary.

Through their careful, continuous effort, a lush orchard is produced, bright with beauty and laden with fruit.

Other people sometimes complain that they have ‘toxic thumbs’ and ‘poisonous pinkies’. If they merely go within a meter of any plant, it will almost definitely wither and perish soon thereafter. Such people either possess plots that are rocky and totally barren of vegetation, or plots that are overrun with weeds, snakes and other wild animals and plants.

Our lives are like plots of land and our actions form the vegetation that grows within it. *The difference, however, is that every person with imaan has ‘green fingers’ (the ability to carry out righteous actions that will be accepted by Allah Ta’ala).* All that is required is that he carefully tends to his plot, transforming it into an orchard of beauty and productivity.

If he goes into ‘holiday mode’ and neglects irrigating the plants with the water of zikr and ‘ibaadah, he will find the valuable plants (imaan and righteous deeds) in his orchard withering from the lack of water. If he neglects to regularly remove the alien plants (sins), the plants will soon be choked by weeds and will gradually die. If he allows these weeds to remain and take root, they will soon become more abundant and stronger than the plants, until his plot will be one filled with only weeds (sin). *Hence, it is vital to uproot and remove the weed as soon as it rears its thorny head. Together with uprooting the weed, the weed killer of sincere repentance will have to be applied so that every last trace of the weed is eradicated and it never again returns.*

By tending to the orchard with diligence and care, the orchard is transformed into a plot filled with the plants of Jannah (imaan and righteous deeds). **He will pluck and enjoy its fruit in both this world and the next.** If his orchard is particularly productive, the crop will be sufficient for him to sustain himself and will even benefit others.

Let us all take stock of our orchard, pinpoint the weeds that need instant uprooting, and identify the plants that require urgent attention. If we revamp and revive our orchards, we will enjoy its fruit and beauty – both in this world and the next.

Our Hotline to Allah

People instinctively react to problems in different ways. A policeman would immediately reach for his gun while a housewife grabs her rolling-pin. A teenager simply shrieks ‘my phone!’, and a child just latches onto his mother’s skirt.

The ahaadeeth clearly point out that Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam)’s first port of call in a predicament was salaah. (*Sunan Abi Dawood #1319*) His very nature would take him there. Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) would rush to salaah in any problematic situation, just like a person running for cover in pouring rain.

Why not? After all, the solution to all the problems in this mortal world and the next lie only in the control of One Allah Ta’ala. While the forces and means of this world apparently

contribute towards an event or occurrence, they all occur by the power and control of Allah Ta'ala. **He has total authority. What He wishes occurs. What He does not will to happen, will never come into existence. Everything happens in the manner Allah Ta'ala determines: precisely, perfectly and accurately.**

The things of this world may project an image of control and influence but they are nothing more than the link between the flag of the station master and the movement of the train. An onlooker may be deceived by the fact that the movement of the train is governed by the motion of the flag because the train only moves when the station master drops his flag. **However, the reality of the matter is that the driver of the train has full and total control.** If he wishes, he may accelerate. If he wishes, the train remains stationary.

Whether it is huge meteorites or small stones, rough seas or gurgling springs, cyclonic winds or gentle breezes, chemical warfare, cyber warfare, precious metals, mineral resources, health, sickness, joy, sorrow, mothers-in-law, daughters-in-law, lazy husbands, whatever... tangible or intangible and elusive.

In short, the entire universe and whatever it contains are all owned and controlled by Allah Ta'ala. **So, it would make perfect sense to cut out the middle man and go directly to the source. It's cheaper. It is only rational that a person begs the help of Allah Ta'ala in a predicament. It's faster. C'mon, it's common sense. Dial 'PATIENCE' and 'SALAAH' for the help of Allah Ta'ala.**

We may be aware that salaah is a solution to our issues. But, it's high time that we BELIEVE in this solution and ADOPT it.

Sweet Sixteen

The bright neon needles of the German-engineered deafening clock shone on the dressing table of my unusually 'cold' and eerie room. *Half the night had passed without even a wink of sleep.* Spending the entire day at the mall, where I 'shopped till I dropped'... I was exhausted, weakened and drained. So badly was I 'bushed' that I thought that my eyes would slam shut even before my head hit the pillow.

Tossing and turning since 22:30, I tried to cool myself, pacify my brain and clear my mind. Never before was I conscious that so many dogs lived... *nay, roamed...* the neighbourhood, but on this restless night I heard every single yap, howl and bark.

The nervousness, uneasiness and anxiety that haunted me and wreaked havoc with my brains were most definitely unlike the normal exam stress or the fretting and worrying about not having a 'killer' outfit for Aaliyah's 18th birthday party. *Zak (Zakariyya) ditching me, and Zakia back-stabbing me, didn't tickle anymore coz I was consumed and overwhelmed by a far greater concern.*

I was dejected, depressed and drowning in a state of 'emptiness'. Butterflies in my stomach, tightness in my chest, heaviness in my breath, blurriness in my vision, and palpitations turned my life upside down. *I was literally drowning in my perspiration.*

Neither could my best friend Fats (Faatimah) help me, nor my adoring mother avail me. Downloading a few soothing and relaxing nasheeds didn't make a 'diff'. Neither did texting my classmate, Zahraa, who's always up till late, make any dent.

Aah! What's gonna happen when the fiery and scary eyes of the angels replace the two neon needles in that pitch black pit two meters down? What have I done for that 'first' night?

My screams won't be heard by mummy and my sobbing won't be comforted by any.

'OMG'! Didn't my favourite cousin, Raeesah, abruptly leave us at my age... sweet sixteen as they say?

What's sweet about my being sixteen? I've already messed up the first three months with guys, music, clubbing, drugging and the worx. Aah! What's gonna happen to me? I'm doomed forever...

Unable to handle the stress, fearing a nervous wreck, having lost hope in all, I was forced to make wudhu and perform my 'Esha Salaah, which I only did in Ramadhaan and on that odd Thursday night. *Oh, what a relief!* Is this the same salaah that would be such a burden and seem like a never-ending ordeal? It feels so brief now! How I wish it could last much longer!

Completing the salaah, my hands instantaneously lifted up in du'aa, again something I only did for five minutes in the entire year on the 27th night of Ramadhaan. *Am I the same person? Crying and sobbing in du'aa? Is it me? Never before did I cry so much. Unlike other cries, this time every tear brought me more comfort and every sob gave me greater relief.*

Just then I remembered having a CD with some lecture, which my aunt distributed on the occasion of her daughter's *hifz* completion. It was too unthinkable of me listening to it back then... but now, in my moment of dark despair... the lecture-title struck, "*Don't Lose Hope.*"

Darting to my junk drawer, I scratched through it and managed to lay my hands on the disc. *Then it was 'junk', but now it was more valuable than 'gold'!*

Just gazing at the title was a relief which words cannot describe... as if a huge boulder was moved off my chest, or a mountain lifted off my head.

I then rushed over to my mp3-player, but this time with an Islamic lecture, not the latest album of my favourite pop star or the so-called 'Islamic Music', which has nothing Islamic, bar a few names and words.

"Our Merciful Allah Ta'ala loves to forgive our sins. He waits for us to repent to Him. No sin is too grave. He forgave thousands of disbelievers, murderers, prostitutes, fornicators, drunkards and the worst of sinners", said the learned scholar. *"Take one step towards Him and see how He will 'run' towards you."*

"I may be bad, but not so bad" I thought. "I'm not a write-off. There's still hope for me."

The scholar then went on to explain the most 'hope-boosting' incident I've ever heard. Yes, it's about the 'despicable blighter' who killed ninety-nine people and then 'scored' his century with the man he was misdirected to when he said there

was no hope for him. Even then he didn't give up. He continued with his search for the path of repentance until he came across an experienced, pious and learned scholar who assured him that the doors of repentance are still wide open.

“What! A hundred murders! Yet the doors of repentance haven't slammed shut on him! There must be hope for me then... I may have committed tons of sins, but murder, never ever! Not even one, forget a hundred!”

This gave me all that I needed... hope in His mercy.

An intriguing side-note the scholar mentioned in this connection: “just as we refer our worldly problems to the experts of the respective fields; the accountants, lawyers, doctors, engineers... much more importantly we need to refer our Deeni and spiritual concerns also, to some *specialist!*”

We cannot solve them by self-study of the Quraan Majeed and hadeeth or by referring to 'Mufti Google, Shaikh Facebook and 'Allamah Twitter'.

Furthermore, the choice of the *specialist* is extremely critical. Just as referring to an unqualified and incompetent person in worldly issues may result in us sinking deeper into the hole... taking Deeni and spiritual guidance from someone who is unreliable, insincere and far removed from the glorious sunnah, both outwardly and inwardly, will result in us distancing ourselves further away from Allah Ta'ala. To the contrary, such *'self-taught-scholars'* are potential threats to the principle beliefs of Deen ('aqaa-id). A classic example in this regard, is the

disastrous outcome of the first person to whom the multi-murderer was (*mis*)directed to.

“If a person has deliberately denied himself of the beauty of our beloved Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) on his face and on his head, how can he tell the masses about following Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam)? If he interacts casually and flirtatiously with women, and is ‘approachable’ by the opposite gender, how can we take our Deeni and spiritual guidance from him?”

Wow! How true! It’s just so logical and makes perfect sense! Yet it has sadly become a difficult ‘common sense’ to grasp!

After giving him this assurance, the pious and learned scholar showed him a unique method of repentance. He was advised to leave his town; a town which was infested with vice and sin, due to the flood of filth, flaws, muck and evil influences. The man was asked to move over to a town where the pious resided. Hopefully, this was going to assist him in repenting and committing himself to the straight path.

I immediately grabbed my Galaxy Note 9, deleted a few of those ‘cool’ apps and all those “just good ‘boy’ friends” I had as WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook contacts.

“These are definitely negative influences for me. They cause me to slip and slide, every so often. If I really mean to change, I don’t need this ‘stuff’ in my life.”

Sincere about repenting, this multi-murderer, a ‘centurion’ at this evil, leaves on his journey towards Allah Ta‘ala. En route his

moment of death stares him in the face. The angels of mercy and the angels of punishment begin to dispute about who should extract his soul. Allah Ta'ala orders another angel to decide between the two disputing parties that whichever town he (the multi murderer) is closer to, the respective angel/s will extract his soul.

Guess what happens next...

Although he happened to be closer to the town of vice, Allah Ta'ala instructed the town to move further away, and ordered the town of virtue to draw closer to him, thereby qualifying him to be ushered into His mercy.

“O my Allah Ta'ala! You are so Merciful! You are so Kind! You love to forgive! You make such strange arrangements for the one who turns to You! I am so ungrateful and unappreciative. I have wasted my early teens in heedlessness and rebellion. Please do forgive me and make me from among Your obedient servants!”

By now I was a changed person. I turned a new leaf in my life and resolved to become an 'abiding servant' of Allah Ta'ala.

What can I tell you my buddies... It's been the most enjoyable six months of my life. I am still the same girl... still sixteen... but the sweetest sixteen I could have ever dreamt off.

Take my word for it. Make the change. Do the 'upgrade' and see how sweet your sixteen would become... Nay, even your sixties and after!

The Ins and Outs of Change

The average woman of today is constantly on the 'change'. *Be it in her clothing, her home or her cooking, she appreciates and looks forward to variety and change.* Her creative mind is constantly restyling her outfits, rearranging her home or replacing her old recipes.

As such, the day should most definitely dawn upon her where she realises, *"I am changing everything on me and around me, thus earning the praises and the admiration of people; is it not now time for me to change from within?"*

The instant we begin to change our inside, we will begin to enjoy the long anticipated contact with our Allah Ta'ala that we had previously lost. *Our focus will now be Deen, hence those women who come into contact with us will also be inspired to change from within.* Our conversations, instead of centring on temptations of the world which are actually only filled with gloom, will rather be abloom with the colourful, unlimited variety of the Hereafter.

Let us strive to change from within and enjoy even the outside from within.

The Play Dough

She stared at the play dough in her hands. The different colours reminded her of the rainbow that her father had shown her just the day before. She was only four years old and doctors had given up hope of her motor-skills ever returning to her since that ghastly accident two years ago. Pushing the curls away from her eyes, she miraculously began pulling at it; twisting, rolling and shaping it into the house... the house that she would always tell her father about whilst sitting on his lap and swinging in their sun-filled veranda. He would always twirl her baby-soft hair around his fingers and say,

“Darling, the happiest day of my life will be when you build me a house with your play dough.”

That evening, a plastic toy box lid lay on the doorway holding a house whose blue roof was ready to cave in, whose red walls were set in a shape other than a square, whose green door leaning on the wall appeared more like a warrior’s shield than a door. She waited in the guest room hiding behind the curtain until she heard the car pull into the driveway. The door banged, the alarm clicked and the sounds of footsteps crunching the gravel pounded her ears as he jingled his keys in his pocket to open the door.

Ah! It was a sight sweeter than the sweetest honey, more fragrant than the richest perfume, the dawning of a new era in the future of his baby, a sight that pieced together his shattered

hopes, a sign that her neuro-motor-skills were slowly returning to her.

He shouted out for her. She stood behind the curtain grinning from ear to ear unable to contain her laughter, her pink shoes with their white bows peeping out from beneath. She let out a small giggle, then a bigger one until she burst out laughing. He rushed into the room and cried “*I caught you!*”. She ran out from the curtain into his strong arms which lofted her to the ceiling, spinning her around. He hugged her and tears of joy streamed down his cheeks and soaked his beard.

*What joy and excitement! What happiness and elation! What delight!
All because of the SOFT dough!!!*

Had the dough not been soft and pliable, the house would never have been built and the return of her skills never proven. If the dough was hard and tough, her father may have never seen this joyous day. *The pleasures of life lie in being soft and submissive, in being meek and obedient.*

A cake can only be baked if the egg eventually cracks, the egg white allows itself to be whipped, the sugar granules slowly dissolve, the flour allows itself to mix and the chocolate eventually melts... A car can only be built if the steel eventually softens and becomes a panel, the rubber allows itself to be moulded into a tyre, the petrol eventually burns to provide energy and the parts allow themselves to be restricted and bolted to one place... *and the list goes on and on.*

Analyse the list of words in these examples; soft, pliable, crack, whipped, dissolve, melt, soften, mould, burn, restricted and bolted. **Every single one of them indicates toward the meek nature and submissive character of the dough, the cake and the car.** The pleasures and enjoyment of this world are the same. They could have only come about when someone or something was submissive.

Attaining the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala is the very same. **It requires total commitment, loyalty and submission to the commands of Allah Ta'ala and the sunnah of Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam).** It calls upon us to be soft and pliable, to be cracked and whipped, to dissolve, melt and soften, to burn, to be moulded, to be restricted and to be bolted. It demands that we be totally meek and submissive to His laws without any hesitation or reluctance.

This was the hallmark in the life of Sayyidah Haajar ('alaihas salaam). When Nabi Ebrahim ('alaihi salaam) brought Sayyidah Haajar ('alaihas salaam) to the barren land of Makkah Mukarramah, she was, *bluntly speaking*, staring at her destruction. Such a land stretched out before her eyes, where there was no soul to be seen or even heard, where nothing edible grew... a land that outwardly promised no future. **She was, however, fully aware of the fact that this was the command of Allah Ta'ala brought to her by the Nabi of Allah Ta'ala.** The command of Allah Ta'ala and the way of His messenger as a rule is never beyond a person's ability. All it requires is a bit of courage in the beginning. Then the road opens up.

The response of Sayyidah Haajar (‘alaihas salaam) to this command of Allah Ta‘ala is worthy of being written in gold and etched onto the heart of every Believer. Her words echoed the very mindset that made her a celebrated member of a family chosen by Allah Ta‘ala. She said:

“How will Allah Ta‘ala ever destroy us when we submit wholeheartedly to His decree? I am happy with the command of Allah Ta‘ala.”

Self-Improvement



Emulating the Ways of the Ambiyaa ('alaihimus salaam)

Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) said, “Indeed good manners, pious ways and adopting moderation are a portion from the twenty-five portions of nubuwwah (prophethood).” (*Sunan Abi Dawood #4776*)

It is neither possible for any person to become a Nabi, as Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) was the final Nabi, nor is it possible for actual nubuwwah (prophethood) to be divided into portions. The scholars of hadeeth have thus explained this hadeeth to mean that these praiseworthy traits form a great portion of the excellent traits with which the Ambiyaa ('alaihimus salaam) were blessed.

We should therefore endeavour to instil these qualities within ourselves so that we may emulate the ways of the Ambiyaa ('alaihimus salaam) who were the best of mankind and the most beloved of all the creation to Allah Ta'ala. **By emulating their ways, we will also become beloved to Allah Ta'ala, due to which even the creation will love and honour us.**

For Sale: Palace in Paradise

Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said: “I guarantee a palace on the outskirts of Paradise for the person who abstains from disputes, even though he may be in the right; and a palace in the middle of Paradise for the person who abandons speaking lies, even if it be in jest; and a palace in the highest stages of Paradise for the person who has good character.” (*Sunan Abi Dawood #4800*)

In the abovementioned hadeeth, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) stands guarantee for a person receiving a palace in Jannah. However, there are three different palaces promised.

The first is a palace on the outskirts of Jannah, and this is promised for the person who avoids disputes and arguments, even if he be in the right. **It is obvious that avoiding a dispute, in the situation where one is in the right, will entail one foregoing and sacrificing his right.** However, on account of his sacrifice being for the sake of maintaining peace and good relations, Allah Ta‘ala will reward him with a palace on the outskirts of Jannah. Furthermore, if a person has such self-control that he can avoid an argument even when he is in the right, this person will definitely avoid arguing, fighting, and attempting to justify his actions when he is in the wrong.

The second is a palace in the middle of Jannah, which can be considered as a ‘prime spot’, and this is promised for the person who has such a high level of truthfulness that he does not even

lie in joking and jest. Sometimes, even a person who is generally truthful will lie in order to amuse people and win a few laughs. This, however, is impermissible. When a person has complete truthfulness, he will speak the truth at all times.

The third is a palace in the highest stages of Jannah, and this is promised for the person who has good character. **The reason for this person receiving the best palace is that good character is the root of all other good qualities, including avoiding arguments and leaving out speaking lies.** Hence, a person who has good character will have all the other good qualities which stem from good character and will ensure that he causes no harm to the creation of Allah Ta'ala.

Tit-for-Tat

Sayyiduna 'Abdullah bin 'Amr (radhiyallahu 'anhuma) narrates that Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) said, "The one who truly joins family ties is *not* the one who deals with people in the same manner that they deal with him. **Rather, the one who truly joins family ties is the one who joins ties when they have been severed.**" (*Saheeh Bukhaari #5991*)

To be good to those family members who treat us well is easy, while showing good character to those family members who ill-treat us is difficult. However, a major occasion for joining family ties is when there is a need to join the ties on account of the ties being severed. Under these circumstances, showing the family

the same ill-conduct that they showed us will only result in one thing – *our stooping to their level and spoiling our behaviour. If we wish to join ties, then instead of ‘giving them a dose of their own medicine’ by having a tit-for-tat attitude, we should show them the character of Islam and treat them in the best manner possible.*

If treating them with good character does not make them feel ashamed and regret their behaviour, thus leading to reconciliation, we will nevertheless still be counted in the court of Allah Ta‘ala as being among those who tried to join family ties. This is after all the most important aspect. *Thus, the next time a family member treats us badly, let us take the initiative and return their treatment with a smiling face, salaam, a gift and du‘aa.*

A Golden Guarantee

Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) has mentioned, “Whoever guarantees me (that he will safeguard and protect) that which is between his jaws and that which is between his legs, I will guarantee him Jannah.” (*Saheeh Bukhaari #6474*)

Safeguarding that which is between one’s jaws refers to two things. *It refers to one being cautious in his speech i.e. abstaining from backbiting, lying, vulgar speech, speaking of things that are futile, etc., and it also refers to one ensuring that he only consumes halaal.* Safeguarding that which is between one’s legs refers to one safeguarding his private parts i.e.

abstaining from zina and all other sins of lust. (*Mirqaat* vol. 8, pg. 559)

If we have to ponder and reflect, we will realize that many, if not most of our sins and problems are related to either our speech or lust. Hence, if a person can exercise control over these two aspects, he will be able to eliminate most of the sins in his life and will thus be guaranteed Jannah by *none other than Rasulallah* (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam).

The Reward of Pleasing a Muslim

Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbaas (radhiyallahu ‘anhuma) narrates that Rasulallah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said, “Indeed (among) the most beloved of actions to Allah Ta‘ala after fulfilling the faraa-idh (obligatory acts of Deen) is bringing happiness to a Muslim.” (*Al-Mu’jamul Kabeer and Al-Mu’jamul Awsat - Majma‘uz Zawaa-id #13740*)

Bringing happiness to a Muslim is an act of ‘ibaadah that is easy to fulfil yet earns immense rewards. In trying to bring happiness to a person, we should never consider any deed to be small and insignificant. Whether it is sharing something like a chocolate or a simple meal, or lending the neighbour flour and eggs in their hour of need, these seemingly mundane actions,

when carried out with the correct intention, bring abundant rewards.

When the purpose is to please the person, then we should do what will please him and what he will be comfortable with, not what will please us and make us comfortable. For example, if you wish to invite a certain person for supper and you know that he prefers to eat after Maghrib, then serve the meal after Maghrib as this will make him comfortable and happy. Do not serve it after 'Esha to suit yourself at the expense of his comfort. After all, the goal is to bring him happiness for the sake of Allah Ta'ala.

One of the most important ways of making people happy is to ensure that we do not cause them any inconvenience – intentionally or unintentionally. We should always make an effort to ensure that others are not harmed because of us.

It is very important and very rewarding to make people happy. However, it is even more important to please Allah Ta'ala. Hence, we cannot please people at the price of displeasing Allah Ta'ala. For example, if we are invited to a family gathering where men and women will intermingle, then the priority will be to please Allah Ta'ala by *not* attending, even if the family members will be unhappy.

Seeking the Faults of Others

Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) said: "O those who have accepted Islam with their tongues while imaan has not entered

their hearts! Do not backbite the Muslims and do not search for their faults, for verily the one who searches for their faults, Allah Ta'ala will take him to task for his faults and the one who Allah Ta'ala takes to task, Allah Ta'ala will disgrace him in his (own) home.” (Sunan Abi Dawood #4880)

This blessed hadeeth first of all teaches us that spying on people and delving into their affairs in order to find and publicize their faults is a quality of a munaafiq (hypocrite). A Muslim, on the other hand, is one who strives to conceal the faults of others and preserve their dignity.

Secondly, if we stoop so low so as to search for and advertise the faults of others, we are actually inviting our very own downfall. Allah Ta'ala – the Being from whom no fault can be hidden – will publicize our own faults until we will even suffer disgrace and embarrassment for the sins we committed while hidden behind the four walls of our homes.

“My Right”

In the world at present, people are constantly encouraged to stand up for their rights and claim their due. People have become so fanatical in this regard that they are prepared to take all and sundry to court. A son suing his father, a brother suing his sister and even a wife suing her husband have become common occurrences. This, in turn, has contributed greatly to the widespread breakdown of society.

Society comprises of people, and people belong to family units. When there is no cohesion and cooperation within individual families, how will they be able to make a significant contribution to improving and bettering society?

People are undoubtedly entitled to their rights. However, every single right does not have to be demanded, as there is also something known as ‘foregoing one’s right’ – an act of great virtue and reward which has been encouraged in the Quraan Majeed and hadeeth. *If a person is never prepared to sacrifice his right and insists on claiming every right that is due to him, he will become a very difficult person to live with and will be impossible for people to tolerate.* Hence, foregoing one’s right and giving preference to others is a vital ingredient in the recipe of akhlaaq (good character).

Furthermore, when a person has the ‘my right’ attitude, he becomes so fixated over his right that he never worries about ‘my wrong’. He will rant and rave about the people who owe him money, block his driveway, fail to respect him, spread rumours regarding him, etc., yet fails to realize that he is also guilty of perpetrating the very same crimes, if not crimes of a worse nature.

On the Day of Qiyaamah, Allah Ta‘ala will not ask us, “Why was your right not fulfilled?” Rather, he will ask us why we failed to fulfil the rights of others. *Pondering over this, we realize that our primary focus should be on fulfilling the rights of others, not demanding our own rights.*

If we help to create the culture of fulfilling the rights of others and overlooking our rights – especially the little and trivial things – insha-Allah in time there will be nobody demanding “I’m right” since everyone’s rights will be fulfilled.

May Allah Ta’ala assist us all to focus on our wrongs instead of our rights, aameen.

Relation-ship

The captain of a ship has a very delicate task of steering his ship safely to the destination. While at times he will sail through the calmest waters under sunny skies, he may also encounter very stormy weather and surging waves. *He has to also carefully navigate past icebergs and sandbars or else the ship could be in serious danger.* Likewise, if the engine malfunctions or he experiences navigation equipment failure, his ship could sink in the deep seas. *He thus has to be alert, keep his focus on the destination, be very careful in stormy weather, avoid the icebergs and continue checking his navigation equipment and engine.* If he does this, insha-Allah he will safely reach his destination.

The same applies to every relation-ship, whether between parents and children, spouses, siblings, extended family, in-laws, etc. *There are bright sunny days in the relation-ship... and there could be some stormy nights as well.* Various day to day issues — *whether due to some misunderstanding, a sheer mistake or wanton carelessness*

and neglect — become icebergs and sandbars that can bog down or even sink a relation-ship.

Very often, it is a case of navigation equipment and engine failure. The compass which should be set towards gaining the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala in all situations, and the engine of the heart which should be driven and motivated by His love, has malfunctioned. The compass is jammed by anger and set towards taking revenge, or towards emotions of “I will show him”, “I will fix him up”, etc., or towards greed and jealousy. Instead of the engine of the heart being fuelled by the pure love of Allah Ta'ala, it is filled with the love of the ego, pride, arrogance and malice. If the compass is pointing in the wrong direction or if the engine fails, any relation-ship is in extreme danger of sinking.

The person whose compass is pointing to the right direction will be very accommodating and forgiving and he will make big issues very small. He will ignore the dozen negatives, latch onto the one positive and will always try to keep the relation-ship sailing smoothly even in the most stormy seas.

On the contrary, if the compass is pointing in the wrong direction, all the positives will be ignored and the smallest negative will be latched upon. Very small issues will deliberately be made big — often just in order to “show him a point”. In the process, the relation-ship has sunk — and has embroiled and dragged down the ‘ships’ of many other close family members as well.

Keeping the relation-ships sailing smoothly, especially close family relation-ships, is EXTREMELY IMPORTANT and very

greatly emphasized in our most beautiful Deen. It is the prescription for barakah (blessings) in one's life and sustenance, and for one to receive the du'aas of the 'kin-ship' that is suspended from the 'arsh (the throne of Allah Ta'ala), as well as numerous other blessings that have been reported in various ahaadeeth.

On the contrary, those who do not care to uphold kin-ship and do not maintain family ties are seriously deprived. For instance, on the 15th night of Sha'baan Allah Ta'ala forgives numerous souls from the fire of Jahannum. **However, among those who are deprived of this extremely great blessing are those who are disobedient to their parents, who sever family ties and those who harbour malice.**

Life is short. It is not worth clinging onto petty issues. This is a time to earn the great blessings of Allah Ta'ala by mending broken ties and keeping relation-ships sailing smoothly. **The icebergs and sandbars will still be there. However, if we pay attention to our engines and ensure our compass is set in the right direction, we will insha-Allah safely navigate past these obstacles without sinking any relation-ship.** Insha-Allah this will help us to a very great extent to sail safely in this world and the Hereafter, aameen.

Endless Greed and Desire

Sayyiduna Anas (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) narrates that Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said, “If the son of Aadam has two valleys of wealth, he will desire a third valley (of wealth), **and nothing will fill the belly of the son of Aadam besides sand (of the grave),** and Allah Ta’ala forgives those who repent to him.” (Saheeh Muslim #2415)

On account of his carnal nature, man is ambitious and greedy. *The more he has, the more he wants.* If we have three pairs of shoes, we will still pine for the fourth. If the latest phone is released, we will not be satisfied until we upgrade by acquiring it. If we fly business class, we will hanker after flying first class. If we drive a German vehicle, we will wish that we drove an Italian supercar, and the list goes on.

In essence, there is no end to the greed of man. If he devotes himself to amassing wealth, so that he can fulfil his dreams and ambitions, his mission will never end, as the horizon of his ambitions will simply continue to expand. **In this manner, his life will end without him having secured happiness and satisfaction.**

The only thing that will curb this insatiable craving is the sand of the grave. Sadly, it is then too late for a person to attend to his primary objective – preparing for the Hereafter. **Thus, we need to wake up to reality – no amount of wealth, clothing, holidays, social events and functions or anything else of this**

material world will help us in the Hereafter or even bring us true satisfaction and happiness in this world. Rather, true happiness lies in being content and making *shukr* (expressing gratitude) for what you have, not in acquiring what you do not have.

Finally, after realizing that we have been exhausting our energy, time and resources in the wrong avenue, there is no need for us to be depressed and despondent, as Allah Ta‘ala will forgive us if we turn to Him in sincere repentance.

No Opportunity for Doubt

Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said: “Two persons should not whisper into each other’s ears in the presence of their companion (a third person) for verily that will cause him grief.”
(*Sunan Abi Dawood #4851*)

Man’s nature is such that when two people are whispering to each other in his presence, he automatically feels that he is being discussed, though most of the time this is not the case. Nevertheless, the teachings of Islam are so refined that it does not even allow such a situation to arise which could be a source of pain or grief to the next person.

Furthermore, this hadeeth teaches us to avoid doing such things that will give others an opportunity to have suspicion and doubts regarding us. *This will also apply to going to doubtful and suspicious places.*

Showing the True Colours

When Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) would dispatch any of the Sahaabah (radhiyallahu ‘anhum) to fulfil a need of Deen, he would instruct them saying, “Give glad tidings and do not chase (people) away. Create ease, not difficulty.” (Sunan Abi Dawood #4835)

Allah Ta‘ala has blessed us with a Deen that is not only natural but also an embodiment of ease. It is therefore necessary for us to ensure that we always highlight and show people the natural beauty and ease of Deen when advising them and trying to get them closer to Allah Ta‘ala so that they will be attracted to and not turned away from Deen.

We cannot compromise and change Deen in any way to suit and placate people. Hence we are instructed to show people what is right in Deen, even if they find it bitter. However, we have not been instructed to make the truth bitter and then present it. If there is thus a nice, palatable way for us to advise people, let us use it to win their hearts and bring them closer to Allah Ta‘ala.

Tolerate Until...?

Remember the last time your child scribbled on the walls with a permanent marker? Did you reprimand and perhaps punish the

child for this misdemeanour? *If not at the first instance, then you probably did punish the child when he did it for the second or third time.*

Remember the last time one of your friends spoke ill of you in your absence? When her crass comments and hurtful remarks reached your ears, did you choose to overlook and forgive? If you did, then what happened when she continued to behave in this manner? In all probability, you 'wrote her off as a friend' and decided to move on. Even if this friend thereafter came to you and begged your forgiveness, you may have forgiven her, but it's unlikely that you will forget the manner in which she 'stabbed you in the back'.

Essentially, most people are only tolerant to a certain extent, after which they become impatient and cease to exercise tolerance. Hence, we need to ponder over and take lesson from the tolerance of Allah Ta'ala.

How many times have we blatantly disobeyed Allah Ta'ala, yet how many of His invaluable bounties do we still enjoy? Perhaps years have passed with some people failing to perform even the fardh salaah, yet Allah Ta'ala still feeds them, clothes them, allows them to enjoy good health, and if they raise their hands and cry to Him in earnest, begging forgiveness, then He will not only readily forgive them but even erase every record of the sin!

Hence, let us resolve to try and show people tolerance, just as we enjoy tolerance from Allah Ta'ala. If we tolerate the harm of people for the sake of Allah Ta'ala, He will reward us greatly, in this world and the next.

Double Dose of...?

If a person has one apple and thereafter buys another apple, how many apples will he have? The answer is obvious – *two apples*. Similarly, if a person has one child and is then blessed with another child, he will now have two children. This elementary concept of one-plus-one-equals-two is so basic that even kindergartners (pre-school children) have ‘mastered’ it and understand that two sweets are better than one!

However, there is one occasion when even the most intelligent of people can forget this concept and thus lose out – the occasion of ill-treatment.

When someone shows us bad behaviour and ill treats us, there are a number of ways in which we can react. Some people break down into tears, some simply ignore the offender and walk away, and others retaliate. However, as Muslims, the question we need to ask is, “*Which response will please Allah Ta’ala?*”

In this regard, the Quraan Majeed teaches us that forgiving and overlooking is closer to taqwa and piety. By treading the path of pardoning people, we will be emulating the blessed example of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) who forgave even the worst offenders. *This will undoubtedly earn us the happiness and pleasure of Allah Ta’ala – a prize with which nothing can equate.*

Many people choose to retaliate and ‘prove a point’ to the one who has offended them – and this is where we fail to remember

our pre-school addition. If we are shown bad behaviour, and we retaliate with bad behaviour, then the result is a double dose of bad behaviour, it's simple maths! Hence, instead of improving the situation, we have worsened it. Instead of displaying exemplary character and emulating Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam), we have stooped to the level of the offender and emulated his behaviour.

When a person retaliates, he enjoys a brief moment of satisfaction. However, in the long run, he knows that he missed a golden opportunity to earn huge reward. Thus, soon thereafter, his short-lived euphoria (happiness) fades and is replaced with a lasting feeling of wretchedness and emptiness.

To forgive and forget when faced by an offensive person may be a bitter pill to swallow. However, after the initial bitterness fades, it will be replaced by a feeling of happiness that stems from practicing on the sunnah of Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) and pleasing Allah Ta'ala. This person will have no regrets and excess baggage weighing him down as his heart will be clean and free of grudges.

Finally, when retaliating, one is forced to tread a fine line, as it is not permissible for one to retaliate by doing more than the offender had done. Unfortunately, most people fail in this regard. In response to ten words of abuse, they reply with one hundred words, and post it online to be 'liked' and 're-tweeted' for good measure.

So, the next time someone treats us badly, let us be the 'bigger' person by rising to the character of Rasulullah

(sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) instead of belittling ourselves by stooping to the bad behaviour of the offender.

The Worst Best

A person once instructed his servant to slaughter a goat and return with its two best parts. The servant went and soon returned with the heart and tongue of the goat. The master next instructed the servant to slaughter a second goat, and to this time present its two worst parts. The servant went and again returned with the goat's heart and tongue!

The master was confused as to how the heart and tongue could be both the best and worst at the same time.

The servant explained to the master that the heart and the tongue are two organs of such potential, that if they remain engaged in good, there will definitely be no other part of the body able to surpass them in virtue. On the other hand, if they are spoiled and corrupted, there will be no part of the body worse than them.

It is thus up to us to strive in safeguarding our hearts and tongues. We should not harbour even a single ill-feeling in our hearts and should not let even a single foul word slip off our tongues.

Let it be good – and only good – that governs our every action and statement until our hearts beat with goodness and our tongues find sweetness only in good.

Stain Removal

The overalls of a mechanic can sometimes become so stained and blotted with grease and oil, that beneath the layers of filth, the colour of the overall itself becomes lost and almost impossible to determine! *Due to the overalls already being so filthy, it won't bother the mechanic in the least if a few more drops of oil have to splash onto him.*

On the contrary, a person immaculately dressed in pristine white clothing would probably be unable to tolerate even a single drop splashing onto and staining his clothing. If his clothing does become marred by a stain, he will immediately whip out the 'Vanish' and try to remove it.

Similar is the case of a person whose heart is covered in layers of muck and filth which accumulate through continuous sinning and the lack of repentance. *Due to the heart being so overwhelmed by this flood of filth, additional sins will not irk the conscience in the least.* The heart becomes so dead that the person can now freely intermingle with people of the opposite sex and claim "there is nothing in my heart" because this dead heart really does not feel anything anymore.

A person who keeps his heart pure and free of sin, however, will find the blot and stain of even a single sin too much to bear. If he still does somehow fall into sin, his heart will not let him rest until he has repented and made amends, thereby removing the stain.

S.O.S. - Saving Our Seconds

There was a woman who worked hard at home, producing the most exotic, delicious ice cream. Whether ‘seriously salted crack-caramel’, ‘passionate pistachio’ or even ‘intense espresso’, she painstakingly prepared the most delectable frozen desserts. She would then give these desserts to her husband who would load them into his ‘ice cream bike’ and cycle to the park where customers would eagerly await his daily arrival. He would stand in the park, braving the intense heat and patiently serving his patrons, until all the ice cream was sold.

Although this husband and wife repeated this routine every single day, the money they made was barely enough to meet their needs. Hence, they ensured that no matter what happened, they churned out the ice cream and sold it to their customers.

One day, the woman thought to herself, “*There’s more than enough time to prepare today’s ice cream! I only have four chapters left to finish this new novel. I can surely finish the novel first!*” She reclined against her pillow, her eyes ‘glued’ to the writing, until she turned the final page. However, it had taken her a little

longer than expected! Nevertheless, she didn't panic. After all, she made ice cream every day! She could probably do it in her sleep!

She next went to the kitchen, tied her apron and picked up her spatula. Then, as she began to prepare the ice cream mixture, she heard a 'ping!' from her phone. With the spatula still in her hand, she picked her phone up with the other hand. When she read the message though, she placed the spatula down, holding the phone with both hands. This was not just news – it was breaking news! *Her neighbour had caught her husband cheating and everyone was discussing it!* **Not wanting to be left out, she too joined in the gossip and 'juicy' discussion, until she suddenly realized that a whole hour had passed!**

She was now frantic, as she had barely any time left. She rushed from one bowl to the next, adding a few nuts here, a few strawberries there, trying to get the ice cream ready in time. In her panic, she knocked a bowl onto the floor! **Then, she realized that in the rush, she had forgotten to switch the machine on, so it wouldn't be cold enough for another 30 minutes!**

This was too much for her! She could take no more! She gave up and 'called it a day', but she knew that she was squarely to blame for the difficulty they would face that day. When her husband arrived on his bicycle to fetch the ice cream, she didn't know what to say. How could she explain that they had no ice cream to sell because she had wasted all her time?

Every single one of us is like the woman in the example above. Allah Ta'ala has blessed us all with the bounty of time. If

we value our time and use it correctly, we will reap tremendous profits in this world and the next. If we waste and squander our time, we will hang our heads in shame and face difficulties on the Day of Resurrection.

For this reason, we have chosen to discuss a few aspects of time that will insha-Allah assist us in 'Saving Our Seconds'.

The Reality of Time

When any person goes to a shop to purchase something, he knows that there will be a price to pay. If the item is small and insignificant, such as a box of matches, it will be cheap. However, if it is an exquisite and rare 'designer' item, it will cost a considerably larger sum of money.

Hence, when Jannah is the 'ultimate' prize that any person could aspire for, we can well imagine the price one will have to pay to enter Jannah! In the case of Jannah, however, the difference is that Allah Ta'ala Himself gives us the capital to purchase it. We don't have to earn any capital – *all we have to do is pay!*

This capital is our 'wealth' of TIME. If we dedicate our time to Allah Ta'ala, by worshipping Him, obeying Him and abstaining from that which displeases Him, we will be purchasing our Jannah. At every moment, we are receiving a small portion of the capital to purchase Jannah. The question is, "*Will we use it to purchase Jannah or will we squander and waste it?*"

If we have money in our purse and do not spend it, the money will remain in our purse, waiting to be spent another day. If we fail to spend our time in purchasing Jannah, those moments of time will be gone and will never come back. That is why the hadeeth explains that the sole regret of the people of Jannah will be the time that they allowed to pass by without them using it to please Allah Ta'ala, thereby earning an even better Jannah. (*Al-Mu'jamul Kabeer vol. 20, pg. 93*)

Our lives are short, perhaps fifty, sixty, seventy or eighty years at the most. Very few people ever live to be a nonagenarian (person in his nineties). *If we examine the reality, spending fifty years in the obedience of Allah Ta'ala is undoubtedly a small price to pay to earn an eternity of bliss and ecstasy.*

The Need of the Time

Surah 'Asr is a surah of the Quraan Majeed dedicated to the importance of time. In this surah, Allah Ta'ala explains that every person is in a loss regarding his time, unless he holds onto four actions. *Hence, we understand that spending one's time fruitfully and productively revolves around a person engaging himself in these actions.*

These four actions are; making effort on imaan, carrying out righteous deeds, encouraging others towards righteousness and encouraging people to remain steadfast and persevere.

In essence, these four actions revolve around a person either improving his own Deeni condition, or the Deeni condition of

others. In this regard, every person is able to influence certain people in certain ways. Parents have authority over their children, the older siblings have some control or at least influence over their younger siblings, and friends are able to encourage and motivate one another as well.

In this day and age, when we and our children are exposed to influences of kufr more than ever before, it is utterly vital that we make a concerted effort to strengthen and fortify our imaan. After going through the educational mill of the secular system, there are many who are left confused, *unsure as to whether we are descended from Nabi Aadam ('alaihi salaam) or some ape in the jungle.* With the majority of our time spent in this system, it is easy to understand how the imaan becomes weak, until even a fundamental belief is eroded and destroyed.

It is an undeniable fact that the world has 'progressed' and times have *changed*. However, from an Islamic point of view, things have *changed for the worse*. Sin is now easier to commit, haraam is now easier to consume, shame and modesty are now 'endangered qualities' and the list of threats to the imaan of Muslims goes on. When the threats to Islam and imaan are now so much greater than before, it demands that we too step up our efforts to safeguard our imaan. The key is to implement a programme within the home which will cater for all the imaani needs of a Muslim in the twenty first century.

The foundation of this programme is daily ta'leem in the home. This ta'leem will comprise of reading from Fazaail-e-Aa'maal and Fazaail-e-Sadaqaat. Additionally, making du'aa as a

family and sitting together to engage in zikr and recite the Quraan Majeed will transform the environment of the home into one of imaan and Deen.

Furthermore, we have to watch our children with a hawk's eye. Before, a person would have to leave the home to commit zina. Now, a child can lie in his bed, plugged into his earphones, viewing the most obscene and filthy acts imaginable, with no person the wiser (*may Allah Ta'ala save us all, aameen*). If we do not adopt certain steps, such as controlling internet access and usage, there will be a great chance of us failing in our parental responsibility of saving our children from sin.

It's About Time!

Every single person has different tasks, errands and responsibilities that he has to attend to on a daily basis. From basic human needs, such as eating and sleeping, to activities that are more leisure orientated, such as enjoying a cup of coffee with friends, people spend their time in different ways.

It is human nature for a person to be inclined to engaging himself in the action which interests him the most. Hence, household chores hold little appeal, while catching up with friends is highly enjoyable. However, a wise person will prioritize and ensure that the most urgent of tasks are attended to first.

Just as consuming food is absolutely important and essential for our physical survival, engaging in 'ibaadah, conducting ta'leem, making du'aa, etc., are utterly vital for our spiritual

survival. *The ‘problem’, however, is that nobody seems to have any time!*

The reason is that we do not understand the importance of ‘ibaadah and conducting ta’leem in the home. *Had we understood the importance, we would not have said “we don’t have time”, but would have instead made the time, just as we make time to eat when we are hungry.* Hence, the answer is for us to decide, once and for all, that come what may, we have to complete our daily ‘ibaadaat and conduct ta’leem in the home. *We have to fix a time and stick to it, without allowing anything to distract us.*

Secondly, if we closely examine our daily routine, we will find two things; free moments (*even if they consist of just a few minutes, e.g. while waiting for the kettle to boil*) and time spent in idle pursuits (*things that will neither benefit us in this world nor the next*). *These moments are in reality ‘ready-made time’.* Instead of encroaching on our important activities, these are the moments that need to be ‘appropriated’ for completing our ‘ibaadah, etc.

As a cautious estimate, people spend perhaps one hour a day on social media (be it WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, etc.). There are then ‘hobbies’ such as reading novels/blogs, surfing the net, etc. These ‘hobbies’ are completely void of benefit (*we gain nothing in this world nor the next*). In some cases, the hobby is undoubtedly beneficial in this world, e.g. exercising. *However, a person becomes so consumed by this hobby that they attach too much of time and importance to it, while things that are far more important are neglected and suffer.*

‘Ibaadah and conducting ta’leem are just two of the necessary activities that are generally neglected. Tragically, being consumed by futile hobbies and activities also causes one to neglect basic responsibilities such as attending to the children. Many people have the misimpression that if they feed, bath and cloth the child, then they have fulfilled the rights of the child.

What about the imaani needs of the child? Every child has a right over his parents that they instil within him the qualities of imaan, the love for Islam and Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam), and impart to him the necessary knowledge of Deen. It is obvious that even if the child attends a madrasah (*which many children do not*), the focus of the madrasah is to teach the child the Quraan Majeed, various sunnah du’aas, etc. *Inculcating the values of Islam and learning right from wrong is not something that can be achieved in the two hours that they give five times a week.* This is a constant effort – one that requires the parents to continuously monitor the child, spend time with him, speak to him and correct him with love and concern. *When the parents spend the majority of their time at home glued to the screens of their phones, leaving their children to their own devices, then how can this ever be achieved?*

‘It’s about time’ that we put our time in order. After all, we will have to answer for our time and the avenues in which we spent it on the Day of Qiyaamah. If the people of Jannah will regret the time they spent without remembering Allah Ta’ala,

how much more will the sinners regret the time that they spent in evil and sin!

May Allah Ta'ala assist us all to use our time correctly and value this irreplaceable bounty, aameen.

Tie the Tongue

Contrary to popular belief, the tongue is *not* the strongest muscle in the body. However, it may very well be the muscle structure with the greatest endurance. *After all, when can you ever remember your tongue becoming tired?* As much as we may eat, swallow or speak, our tongues seem absolutely tireless. *Hence, due to its exceptional endurance, exercising this organ causes no strain, and we thus tend to use it without thinking and more than we should.* This is a major problem as the seemingly-small tongue actually has the ability to cause serious consequences.

Sayyiduna Abu Hurairah (radhiyallahu 'anhu) narrates that Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) said, "Indeed the servant of Allah Ta'ala makes a statement which pleases Allah Ta'ala, and the servant does not attach any importance to what he said, yet Allah Ta'ala elevates his rank due to this statement. And indeed the servant of Allah Ta'ala makes a statement that angers Allah Ta'ala, and the servant does not attach any importance to what he said, yet he falls into Jahannum on account of the statement." (Saheeh Bukhaari #6478)

From the abovementioned narration, the profound power of the tongue is evident – it can either elevate one’s rank or cause him to fall into Jahannum. **However, as mentioned in the hadeeth, the person uttering the statement is often unaware of the might of his tongue and consequence of what he uttered.**

In this regard, it is imperative for us all to ‘tie’ our tongues and *think before we speak*. We should first ponder over whether the statement we wish to utter is necessary. If it does deserve mention, then we should next ponder over the consequences of this statement – *the consequences in both this world and the next*.

Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) once offered a woman, who was not careful in her speech, some food. When offered, the woman declined and explained that she was fasting, to this, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) responded, “*You did not fast.*” The woman understood that her speech was damaging her fast and thus attempted to control her tongue and partially succeeded. On another day thereafter, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) offered her food. When she replied that she was fasting, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said, “*You almost fasted but did not manage.*” The woman thereafter managed to gain control of her tongue. When Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) offered her food on the third occasion and she replied that she was fasting, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said, “*You have fasted.*” (*Kitaabus Samt wa Aadaabil Lisaan #172*)

In this hadeeth, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) explained that on account of a person being careless in their

speech, they lose the reward and benefit of their fast, thus gaining nothing but hunger.

“The pen is mightier than the sword” is a well-known proverb. However, what should perhaps be added is *“and the tongue is the mightiest of all!”* How many life-long friendships came to a screeching halt on account of a careless statement? How many marriages broke down because of an insensitive, hurtful remark casually uttered? *A wound to the flesh may heal, but the wounds inflicted by the tongue often fester and worsen until they ultimately cause irrecoverable damage and loss.*

For this reason, we have chosen to discuss a few topics relating to the tongue below. May Allah Ta’ala make these articles beneficial to one and all, assisting us in our endeavour to ‘tie’ the tongue, aameen.

Blinded by the Log

Associating and interacting with people is a basic need of human nature. When meeting and interacting with people, the chosen method of communication is normally that of speech. However, what is the topic that we choose to discuss? Some may discuss the news and political landscape, others may discuss the latest sport results, while mothers may discuss children issues, recipes or even the latest fashions and trends.

Whatever the topic may be, in many instances the conversation eventually drifts to a person being discussed. Thereafter, depending on the nature of the personality, his praises may either be ‘sung’ or his dirty laundry may be ‘hung’

with all and sundry free to spectate and participate in the backbiting ‘feast’.

The severity of the sin of gheebah lies in a few aspects; the backbiter will not be forgiven unless he secures the forgiveness of the one who was the victim of his gheebah (backbiting). If he fails to secure his forgiveness in this world, he will be made to recompense him by giving him his good deeds or bearing his evil deeds in the Hereafter. Another aspect is that all those who happily spectate, even though they do not actively participate, are party to the sin. **Also, most people who indulge in gheebah do not regard their action as a sin.**

Often, when the person backbiting is told that he is indulging in gheebah (backbiting), he replies, “*But the person really does have these faults!*” In this regard, it is imperative for us to understand that gheebah is to say something about another person or even indicate or gesture towards some quality of the person (e.g. a gesture showing that he is fat, short, etc.) which although *true*, is such that if he knew about it, he would not like it. **In the case where the statement made is not true, then the statement was not gheebah but was rather buhtaan (slander) which is even worse!**

Tying one’s tongue and abstaining from gheebah is vital at all times – but more so in the month of Ramadhaan as gheebah has the potential to rob one of all the benefits and rewards of his fast. Hence, Sayyiduna Abu Hurairah (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) reports that Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) once said, “Fasting is a shield, provided that one does not tear it.”

Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) was then asked, “How does one tear the shield?” Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) replied, “By lying or indulging in gheebah (backbiting).” (*Al-Mu’jamul Awsat - Majma‘uz Zawaa-id #5073*)

Hence, the next time gheebah takes place, let us either put a stop to it, or if we are unable to do that, excuse ourselves and leave so that we do not become implicated. Furthermore, if we ever feel the impulse to indulge in gheebah, then let us ponder over this statement of Sayyiduna Abu Hurairah (radhiyallahu ‘anhu): “You take note of the speck in the eye of your brother, yet forget the log in your own eye!” (*Kitaabus Samt wa Aadaabil Lisaan #195*)

Pleasant in Speech

Did you ever see a wealthy person emerge from the business-class lounge empty handed? Similarly, did you ever see a wealthy person decline when offered a free gift with a purchase? The answer is that most wealthy people, as well-off as they may be, will take something when leaving the business-class lounge (even if it’s just Voss water) and will never decline the chance to get something for nothing. The reason for this is simple – one will benefit at a 0% or minimum cost.

This very same mindset should be applied in our Deen. We should try to identify the areas where we can easily benefit and gain, as the effort and cost is minimal. In this regard, one of the most ‘profitable’ avenues is that of pleasing people. Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbaas (radhiyallahu ‘anhuma) narrates that

Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said, “Indeed (among) the most beloved of actions to Allah Ta‘ala after fulfilling the faraa-idh (obligatory acts of Deen) is bringing happiness to a Muslim.” (Al-Mu‘jamul Kabeer and Al-Mu‘jamul Awsat – Majma‘uz Zawaa-id #13740)

Among the easy methods that we can adopt to please people is for us to speak to them in a kind and pleasant manner. *Often, a person’s heart can be won with just a kind word, or to the contrary, a person’s day may be spoilt and ruined with a harsh word.*

Furthermore, over and above the reward for pleasing a Muslim is the effect that speaking kindly and pleasantly has on the person. It is for this reason that when Nabi Moosa and Nabi Haaron (‘alaihimas salaam) went to speak to Fir‘aun and give him da’wah, then despite him being a tyrant and cold-blooded killer, Allah Ta‘ala instructed them to speak to him kindly as harsh speech would not affect him in a positive manner.

Hence, even if we are forced to tell a person something which he may not like (e.g. if we have to correct a person who is committing a sin), we should ponder over the approach that will be most effective. If we shout and yell at him, we may silence him and vent our anger, but at the same time, we may have lost the person as he will feel hurt and insulted. *Very often, the very same message can be delivered in a pleasant and palatable manner.*

There was once a king who had a dream in which he saw that all his teeth were broken. When he summoned a dream interpreter, the interpreter told him that the dream meant that

all his children and family would die before him. Intensely annoyed at this interpretation, the king commanded that he be executed. Thereafter, the king summoned another dream interpreter. This interpreter said, “*Sire! The dream means that you will enjoy a long life and even outlive your family!*” Hearing this, the king was extremely happy and showered gifts on the interpreter, even though his interpretation was essentially the same.

When trying to please people, whether through speech or any other method, then it is vital to bear in mind that we cannot please people at the cost of displeasing Allah Ta‘ala as our allegiance to Allah Ta‘ala is always first. Hence, even if someone who is near and dear asks us to lie, make any statement or behave in any manner that will displease Allah Ta‘ala, we will not compromise our Deeni standards by obliging to them. Similarly, kind and pleasant speech is only meant for those who Deen has allowed us to communicate with. Hence, if we answer the phone and hear the voice of a non-mahram on the other side, we should cut out the pleasantries and get straight to the point as courtesy, in such a case, could potentially cause fitnah (evil).

Finally, the importance of kind, pleasant speech can be understood by the fact that speaking unkindly and harshly to people is so severe a sin that even if a person has abundant nafl deeds to his account, he will still be made to undergo punishment (unless he secures the forgiveness of the one who was hurt). In this regard, let us consider the following narration:

A Sahaabi (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) once spoke of a certain woman to Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam), mentioning the abundant nafl salaah, charity and fasting that she would carry out. He thereafter mentioned that this woman had the bad habit of speaking to her neighbours in a hurtful manner. Hearing this, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said, “She will be punished.” Thereafter, another woman was mentioned, and the fact that her nafl deeds were very few was also mentioned. **However, she had the habit of giving pieces of cheese in charity (i.e. her charity was very little), and she would not hurt her neighbours with her tongue.** Hearing this, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said, “She will go to Jannah (without punishment).” (*Musnad Ahmad #9675*)

May Allah Ta‘ala assist us all to speak kindly to people and abstain from hurting people in any way.

Truth or Lie...?

“*LIAR!*” – From all the accusations that could be levelled against a person, this is definitely among the worst. **This word is not a mere accusation – it is a sword that slices through one’s integrity, honesty and truthfulness, leaving them no more.** Once a person is branded a liar, people are reluctant to trust him and view him with suspicion. *In short – he loses all honour and respect.*

Lying is a very dangerous habit as it has a ‘snowball’ effect. If a person makes a snowball and rolls it down a hill, then as the snowball progresses downward, it gathers more snow, growing in size, until it becomes too big to control. Similarly, when a

person speaks a lie, he sparks off a chain reaction. In order to cover-up for the first lie, he will be forced to speak a second lie, and then a third, and so on, until he is eventually caught and the entire chain of lies is revealed.

However, this evil trait has absolutely no place in Islam and the lives of Muslims. On one occasion, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) was asked, “Can a Believer be a coward?” Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) replied, “Yes.” Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) was next asked, “Can a Believer be a miser?” Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) replied, “Yes.” Finally, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) was asked, “Can a Believer be a liar?” To this, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) replied, “No.” (*Muwatta Imaam Maalik pg. 732*)

Throughout Islam and even before Nubuwwah (prophethood), Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) was renowned for his qualities of truthfulness and honesty. It was for this reason that many people chose to keep their valuable belongings with him in trust. The Sahaabah (radhiyallahu ‘anhum), being the ardent followers and companions of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam), maintained the highest level of truthfulness in their lives, and thus Muslims were a people who were once known for their honesty and truthfulness.

Truthfulness, in every facet of our lives (be it speech, actions or even our thinking), is something to strive for and is a quality that leads a person to Jannah. Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) mentioned, “Indeed truthfulness leads to piety, and

piety leads to Jannah. And a person continues to be truthful until he is recorded as a ‘Siddeeq.’” (*Saheeh Bukhaari #6094*)

The quality of truthfulness is one that is even cherished and prized by the disbelievers. Hence, when a Muslim is dishonest and deceitful, whether in the business place before an associate or at home before the domestic worker, he tarnishes the entire image of Islam. The disbelievers, instead of labelling the individual a liar, will often say, “Muslims” are dishonest people.

May Allah Ta‘ala assist us all in the endeavour to acquire truthfulness, in all facets of our lives, to the highest level – aameen.

Safety in Silence

The blessed speech of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) is a miracle, with his every statement brimming with wisdom and meaning. From the treasure of hadeeth, just one example of the profound speech of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) is when he said, “He who is silent is safe.” (*Sunan Tirmizi #2501*)

If we ponder, we will realize that the majority of our quarrels, arguments, fall-outs with friends and problems in general were linked to the misuse of the tongue. Often, a statement is made in innocence and no harm is meant, yet the words are received badly, causing great offence and pain. We thus realize that “*I did not mean to hurt*” is not enough. Rather, we should ask ourselves “*did I mean not to hurt*”?

Some harms of the tongue have already been discussed and the essence to avoiding all these harms is one – *tying the tongue*.

Hasan (rahimahullah) has mentioned that people would say, “The tongue of a wise person is behind his heart. When he intends to speak, he first turns to his heart. If the statement is to his benefit, he utters it, and if it is to his detriment, he abstains from saying it. **On the contrary, the heart of a fool is on his tongue and hence he cannot consult his tongue before speaking. He thus utters whatever comes into his mind.**” (*Kitaabus Samt wa Aadaabil Lisaan #424*)

The people of the past truly understood the importance of gaining control of the tongue and thus disciplined themselves until their tongues were subjugated. In this regard, Artaat bin Munzir (rahimahullah) once recounted the incident of a man who controlled his tongue for forty years by keeping a stone in his mouth. The result of this exercise was that he was unable to eat, drink or speak without first removing the stone. Hence, he was unable to blurt out whatever crossed his mind on the spur of the moment. He would only remove the stone for the purpose of eating, drinking and when he needed to sleep. (*Kitaabus Samt wa Aadaabil Lisaan #437*) We can well imagine the safety from the harms of careless speech that this man enjoyed!

Every night, before retiring to bed, we should set aside a few minutes to engage in introspection. Let us ponder over our speech for the day and see if it has improved from the previous day. If we hurt any person, we should seek their forgiveness and make amends. The effort to restrain the tongue is an ongoing one that will only end when we are lowered into our graves. At

no point in time can we become complacent and turn a blind eye, as the tongue is quick to strike.

Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah bin Mas‘ood (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) was once on the mountain of Safaa, reciting the talbiyah, when he said, “O tongue! Speak that which is good and you will benefit, or remain silent and you will be safe. (Do this) before you regret.”

Hearing this, those present asked Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah bin Mas‘ood (radhiyallahu ‘anhu), “Is this your statement or did you hear it (from someone else)?” He replied, “I heard Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) say, “Indeed most of the sins of the son of Aadam (‘alaihi salaam) are due to his tongue.” (Kitaabus Samt wa Aadaabil Lisan #18)

*Modesty
& Dressing*



The Protective Peel

The peels of different fruit differ in thickness, colour, texture and even smell. They all, however, serve the same purpose – protecting the precious ‘treasure’ contained within. *Once a fruit is stripped of its peel and laid bare, its quality rapidly deteriorates until it is finally overcome by rot and mould and remains of no good or benefit to anyone.*

In the very same way, modesty serves as a shield to protect our imaan. *Stripping our priceless imaan of its shield of modesty leaves it exposed and vulnerable which leads to it eventually succumbing to the onslaught of evil and immorality.* When the rot of evil and immorality set in, it is only a matter of time before a person’s imaan withers away and dies.

The need of the time is thus to safeguard our modesty to save our imaan.

Cover up... on the Catwalk!

She stepped onto the catwalk, her outfit clinging to her body. She was dressed, yet undressed. She was covered, yet uncovered. Cameras flashed and music blared from each end of the arena. Heads turned and everybody looked in her direction. Some stared. Many ogled. She didn’t seem to mind the attention. *In fact, she didn’t mind anything at all. It was all in a day’s work for*

her. This was her business. She sold her body using it to display the latest designs from around the globe.

After the show... most certainly... another sale is on the cards!

She would sell her body to those who had fancied her, at a price, of course. But she was at risk. Those who couldn't afford her were plotting other ways of violating her already-violated self. They couldn't control themselves. They saw her and liked her. Bad luck for her, but it was her fault and the worst was still to come.

Stable, happy families were about to be ripped apart. Fathers who emotionally supported young innocent children, were about to be detached from them and husbands who once would love their darling wives with all their heart, were now torn between this wench and them. Her figure and gait would haunt them when they would look at their loyal life partners and the thought of her 'charming' smile and 'shy' giggle would shatter the hugs and kisses they would shower on their kids.

And as every woman and girl leaves her home she does indeed step onto the catwalk of the world.

It may not be a fashion arena in Milan or a chic hotel in Paris surrounded by world class designers, fashion media and the social elite but the elements are exactly the same. The world is a jungle where the strong dominate the weak and hungry predators prowl in large numbers. *A woman is prey whether she likes it or not! The 'liberated' Western world teaches us how to use her to attract customers to a car or even an ice-cream!*

So by allowing the unfit to look at her or the unworthy to touch her, why should she give her body away for free? Selling it was bad enough! Some things are sold to be looked at. Others are sold to be used. Both are just as awful.

So cover up! A woman was never that cheap. A woman is not that cheap. A woman will never be that cheap.

A woman would never stoop so low as to share her knight in shining armour with anyone. Not even her sister. I mean, he belongs to her 'happily ever after'. Every woman deserves that. *So let's protect the marriages of others and cover up! Let's like for others what we like for ourselves.*

And mind you, covering up doesn't mean that we are prisoners or that we are oppressed. This is our protection. A bulletproof vest is not a sign of oppression. It indicates just who is in control. It protects your vital organs from bullets and it's used at the time of need.

A surgical mask is not a sign of oppression. It shows that you know what you're doing. It's used at the time of need to protect you from the germs and bacteria of others and to protect others from your germs and bacteria. *It's not your fault, and neither is it theirs!*

An unattractive veil and loose fitting clothes in unattractive colours is meant to protect us from the evil glances and wicked advances of 'sick' men and to protect 'healthy' men from falling 'sick'. *It's not oppression. It's used at the time of need. When the*

need is over you may resume your favourite permissible outfit. Simple as that.

Sure, you may receive attention when you leave your door in this manner but who doesn't? No one's invisible. However, what makes you different to the woman next to you is that you are dignified and respectable. *Her clothing tells a different story... yours another!*

Covering up is the natural instinct of a human being and for a woman it's a passion. The body of a woman is her private possession which she jealously guards.

No one should see me. No one should hear me. No one should touch me. I'm priceless. I'm a diamond... polished to perfection. I'm not placed on a shelf neatly lined up with the others. Someone might drop me on the dusty floor. I'm not placed in a window for public viewing. Someone might get the wrong ideas. I'm kept in a velvet case. Only those who are permitted may see me with respect, with honour and with dignity.

It was a passion in the life of the Queen of Paradise – Sayyidah Faatimah (radhiyallahu 'anha) not to allow a strange man to even look at her. On being asked: "What's the best thing for women?" her spontaneous reply was "that they don't see men and men don't see them!" (Musnadul Bazzaar #526) Wow! The Queen of Paradise elegantly articulates what's the best thing for us.

If there was anything that would stress the Queen of Paradise, it was that a strange man would lay his eyes on her. She ensured that this would never happen, *even after her demise*. She made a

bequest that as she is carried to her grave, a frame draped with a sheet should be placed over her bier. She further advised that every effort should be made in order to ensure that no man should ever see her body shape and figure. She also insisted that she be buried at night.

And the cherry on the top... It just gets better for those who are loyal to Allah Ta‘ala and His Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam). Allah Ta‘ala so highly rated this passion of Sayyidah Faatimah (radhiyallahu ‘anha) of covering up, that an announcement will be made on the Day of Qiyaamah to all those present, *“look down and keep your gazes low so that Faatimah bintu Muhammad (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) may pass!”* (As-Siraajul Muneer, vol. 1, pg. 173)

Ah, what an honour! What a stamp of approval for such lofty sentiments! So... *cover up the next time you’re on the ‘catwalk’!*

Are YOU Blind?

Sayyidah Ummu Salamah (radhiyallahu ‘anha) narrates the following:

I was once in the blessed presence of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) while Maimoonah (radhiyallahu ‘anha) was also present. While we were with Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam), ‘Abdullah bin Umri Maktoom (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) arrived, and this was after the law of hijab was revealed. When ‘Abdullah (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) arrived, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) instructed us, “Adopt hijab from him.” We

replied, “O Rasul of Allah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam)! *Is he not a blind man who can neither see us nor recognize us?*” Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) responded, “*Are the two of you blind? Can you not see him?*” (Sunan Abi Dawood #4112)

The blessed wives of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) were the purest of women, living in the purest of ages, in the purest of presences – the presence of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) – and the man who entered, over and above being blind, was a Sahaabi and thus from the purest of men. *Despite the level of purity that prevailed, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) still instructed his respected wives to adopt hijab in the presence of this Sahaabi, as there is more precaution in this.*

Hence, the commentators of hadeeth have explained that although it is permissible for a woman to look at a man (provided there is absolutely NO fear of fitnah (evil) and sin arising), *piety and precaution still demands that she refrain from even this.* (Mirqaat vol. 6, pg. 285)

When Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) commanded his respected wives to adopt hijab and not look at this blind Sahaabi in the situation of pristine purity described above, we can well imagine the law that applies to us! After all, we are not only sinful, but live in an age and environment wherein we are perpetually bombarded by evil and lust.

Thus, if an ‘Islamic’ event or conference is taking place, where male and female presenters are addressing a mixed crowd of males and females, non-mahram men and women are freely

interacting, etc., we should ask ourselves, “How can they impart Deen and flagrantly violate and disregard the laws of Deen at the same time?” After all, it is absolutely impermissible for the men to be looking at the women – let alone freely interacting with them! – *and it is equally impermissible for the women to interact with the men and sit with them.*

Sa‘eed bin Musayyab (rahimahullah) was given the title “Leader of the Taabi‘een” on account of his piety and knowledge. Despite this, even when he was eighty-four years old, blind in one eye and had very weak vision in the other, he exclaimed, “There is nothing (no trial) that I fear more than women!” (*Mirqaat* vol. 6, pg. 285) Hence, at no point did he ever sit with women saying “*my heart is clean*” or “*I have no feelings*”.

Sold to the Highest Bidder

The material world has reduced women to the level of merely being a commodity for sale. From beauty products to even car tyres, everything requires the poster of a barely-clad woman to sell. *She has become a visual ‘titbit’ for the eye of one and all to feast on.* Every morally depraved, filthy pervert has the opportunity to drool over her image. *If that’s not bad enough, he is even free to fantasise to his fill and make her the new ‘toy’ in his mental playground.* *To what depths of degradation they have been thrust!*

The irony of the matter is that they have been dragged out of their homes and stripped of their dignity and virtue in the name

of “Women’s Liberation” and “Gender Equality” – concepts that falsely promise to do the exact opposite.

Islam, on the contrary, not only protects but actually promotes the true value of women. *Islam recognizes her as an irreplaceable, precious diamond to be guarded and revered, not to be gawked at and visually violated by all and sundry.* Her beauty and charm are exclusively reserved for the one person who truly loves and appreciates her – her husband. She is thus coveted and concealed at all times, not circus-paraded like the cheap, shameless, free-for-all women of the material world who are passed from lap-to-lap of the highest bidders seeking this woman’s company as ‘disposable’ amusement. *This woman is adored by millions; but loved and appreciated by nobody for what she is really worth.*

Beauty where it Belongs

There is a well-known principle in life which states, “*There is a time and place for everything*”. *When correct time and place are not taken into consideration, an experience that would have otherwise been extremely enjoyable becomes disappointing and a pain to endure.*

To understand this in perspective, take the example of a platter of steaming hot, delicious food. The aroma of this gastronomic delight wafts through the air and it’s so tantalizing that people involuntary begin to lick their lips. As appetizing as

the platter may be, however, if it is placed in the cubicle of a public toilet, people will refuse to even give it a second glance. *This is simply because it was not in the correct place.*

On the same note, Islam instructs women to beautify themselves for their husbands. Being an instruction of Deen, this seemingly ordinary task actually becomes a means of reward for the wife when done with the correct intention. *A woman's beauty, however, has only one place... and that is in the eye of the husband.*

Unfortunately, there are many men who enter their homes after a long, tiring day at work and instead of finding their wives dressed and adorned for them, are disappointed to find them in a shabby, unsightly state. Sadly, if visitors were to knock on the door or they were to go out to visit someone, the wife would immediately rush to get dressed and ensure that she has an immaculate appearance.

Is she dressing for her husband in the home, or for other people, and for out of the home? Does she allow her husband to always see her in the same gown or kaftan while she can't imagine wearing the same new outfit for two occasions?

If this is the case, her beauty is definitely out of place and will thus never bring her true happiness, as she has earned the unhappiness of both Allah Ta'ala and her husband. *On the other hand if she dresses up for her husband, she will feel beautiful, he will find her attractive and most importantly - she will have earned the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala.*

Running for Cover!

When we leave the privacy of our homes and enter the public eye, we tend to change the way we behave in order to present a certain image of ourselves to society. The need to constantly present and maintain that image stems from the fear of public opinion which lurks in the back of our minds. *“What will people say?”*

It is when we are within the confines of our homes, however, that our true colours are exposed. The secrets we harbour in our hearts are revealed when the four walls of our homes shield us from public scrutiny.

Do we cover ourselves from head to toe when leaving home, displaying piety in dressing to the world, whereas in the privacy of the home, we dress in such immodest and revealing clothing, that if an unexpected visitor were to knock at the door, we would find ourselves running for cover, trying to quickly throw a burqah over ourselves to save us embarrassment? This is living a double-life.

When we make an effort to be true to Allah Ta'ala, in and out of the home, in our internal as well as external appearance, and His presence becomes established in our hearts and minds, then respect will automatically demand that we cover ourselves adequately. When we are blessed with the true awareness of Allah Ta'ala, we will be hasty in our daily dressing and

undressing – although we are within the privacy of our very own rooms – because we will know that Allah Ta‘ala can see us.

Let it not be that we turn a blind eye to Allah Ta‘ala’s ‘opinion’ and value the opinion of everybody else. *After all, it’s the ‘opinion’ of Allah Ta‘ala that really counts.*

British German

Our Muslim women and youth have become the number one targets of the clothing and fashion industry. *We are entranced into abandoning our simple and modest way of dressing, only to adopt the extravagant and immoral garb of other nations.*

To clearly understand how serious it really is to imitate the dressing of others, imagine a war-time scenario where a British soldier dresses up in the uniform of a German soldier. Although he may be British inwardly and he may even serve Britain outwardly as well, his choosing to dress like one of the enemy will definitely not be appreciated. In fact, he may be court martialled and punished.

The truth of the matter is that we are only adopting the dress of others in order to command some awe and respect. *This essentially means that our decision to dress in this way boils down to pride.* We are trying to make ourselves appear to be great whereas this is a great crime in the court of Allah Ta‘ala. The person, who has pride in his heart, even if equivalent to a grain of a mustard seed, cannot enter Jannah. *The fashion*

industry of today thrives on people's pride and their desire to show off.

*Media &
Technology*



It Switched off the Mind

We are repeatedly asked in the Quraan Majeed to ponder and reflect, as this is the means to recognize Allah Ta'ala. However, the science and technology that man uses to bring pleasure and entertainment into his life, **has unfortunately taken over his heart and switched off his mind, hence his ability to ponder and reflect has been paralyzed.**

Let us take the example of the television. It feeds us with a swift contamination of pictures. Before we can decide to even think about an image, there is another eye-catching picture to distract us. **Thus the television does not even permit us to ponder or to reflect.** It implants images containing hidden messages into our heart, and not concepts based on sound reasoning into our mind.

Thus the heart seems to be alive with feelings and emotions whereas the mind is paralyzed and the intelligence is switched off. This in turn provides the fertile ground in which man is moulded and programmed to react and move in a particular course and direction. **Hence we find very few people in the world who truly think for themselves, let alone pondering and reflecting. Their thoughts and perceptions come through the mould shaped by the television.** Thus he then looks at and understands everything through the 'eyes' and 'mind' of the TV propaganda.

Horror Movies

It is an established fact that TV programs and movies in general, especially scary movies, (apart from being impermissible) can have a lasting effect on one's mind. The devastating effects of these movies can be understood from the experiences of the viewers. According to one study, a wide range of symptoms were reported, including crying, screaming, trembling, nausea, increased heart rate, feeling of paralysis, shortness of breath and fear of losing control. **Some people even become suicidal after watching certain movies, whilst others become rebellious to their parents.**

Apart from these short term effects, often long term effects could result in depression, anxiety, panic attacks and insomnia. The frightening scenes which were viewed could occasionally haunt a person causing a host of psychological disorders. This could ruin the entire life of an innocent child.

Recently we were informed about the latest release of a horror movie titled "The Twilight Series". Some people who watched this movie experienced several of the negative symptoms mentioned above.

Hereunder are two cases regarding which we have first-hand information.

Case: 1 - A Muslim girl came home in a very frightened and disorientated state after watching the movie. She was crying and very anxious for no apparent reason. A haafiz of the Quraan

Majeed was called in to recite for her. As soon as he entered the house she became hysterical. After reciting for some time the girl calmed down.

Case: 2 - Another girl from a reputable family fell into a severe depression after watching the same movie. For two weeks, she only cried and slept. She was not interested in eating or socialising even with her immediate family. Medication was administered to her to treat the depression but did not have any benefit. Her depression reached a point where she would cry aloud “*I am frightened, I am frightened.*” She was constantly calling out for her parents and wanting them to be at her side. The situation was horrific. *A 22-year-old girl behaving in this manner! A girl who was attractive and healthy had become very weak with a demonic look on her face! She had dark patches below her eyes!* All the money in the world could not bring a smile back on her face. In a state of helplessness, the family contacted a Moulana. *The girl was finally diagnosed with being under the influence of a jinn, whereas she was perfectly normal before watching this movie.* By this time, she was severely dehydrated and admitted into hospital. After few days of being put onto drips and together with some spiritual treatment the girl partly recovered, but was still not completely cured.

These are real life situations which should serve as a lesson to every parent. Unfortunately, such movies are flooded on Dstv channels and are appealing to the youth. Vampires, werewolves, magicians and magic have become the order of the day. *Generally, this weakens the mind of a person and makes one an*

easy target for the shayaateen and jinn. We should not take things for granted and become complacent. Tomorrow it could be our child in a similar predicament, *Allah Ta'ala forbid*. While many regard these aspects to be trivial, the reality is that it is very serious and could throw an entire family in turmoil.

It is the duty of every parent to protect their children from such negative influences. **Remember, prevention is not only better, but easier, than cure.** *Let it not be that your 'angel' is transformed into a 'demon' and your comfortable home becomes a house of horror.*

May Allah Ta'ala protect us all, our children and our progeny till the Day of Qiyaamah.

Video Games

Is your iPad or some other device keeping your child occupied with video games? If yes, think again.

In a study conducted in Canada, Brock University academics found that playing violent video games for long periods of time can hold back the 'moral maturity' of teenagers. **They also warned of adolescents losing a sense of 'right and wrong'.** Empathy, trust and concern for others, which should develop as teenagers grow up, were found to be delayed. (BBC News website)

Another report states: “Research has long shown a cause-effect relationship between television violence and aggression among children and youth who watch it. **Many social scientists expect video games to have an even greater impact for the following four reasons:**

- Children are more likely to imitate the actions of a character with whom they identify.
- Video games require active participation rather than passive observation.
- Repetition increases learning. Video games involve a great deal of repetition. **If the games are violent, then the effect is a behavioural rehearsal for violent activity.**
- Rewards increase learning, and video games are based on a reward system.

Early research confirms those concerns. A 2004 study by Gentile, Lynch, Linder & Walsh found that teens who play violent video games:

- Tend to be more aggressive.
- Are more prone to confrontation with their teachers.
- May engage in fights with peers.
- Decline in school achievements.

While the above effects are serious enough, the negative impact on imaan and akhlaaq (character) are even worse. *May Allah Ta’ala guide us all, aameen.*

Smart Phone

The twentieth century ushered in technological advances never previously seen. From the numerous new and technologically advanced devices that have been produced, *perhaps nothing has captivated and addicted people to it to the extent that the 'smart phone' has possessed its users.*

The 'smart phone' is a combination of every media related device. One is now able to carry, in the recesses of his pocket, a device which serves as a phone, internet browser, camera, multimedia player, radio, television and fully functional computer. *Unfortunately, the day all these diverse devices were rolled into one super-device – the smart phone – was the day all the negative effects of these technologies were combined into one seemingly harmless device.*

What was initially viewed as a simple tool of communication has now become an integral part of people's lives to the extent that the smart phone is, in many cases, the last thing a person sees when going to sleep and the first thing he sees when awaking in the morning. This deep bond and sense of attachment to the smart phone, however, has left its mark. *This device, despite the many advantages and benefits that can be derived from its correct use, has been revealed as being one of the greatest inviters to sin of all time and has firmly gripped numerous people in its vice and evil.*

At the simple gesture of a finger, one is able to load pornographic material of the filthiest nature. Hence 70% of children under the age of 18 have stumbled across pornographic material while attempting to search for *homework* related information on the internet. With almost every child carrying a phone in his hand, it then comes as little surprise that 90% of children under the age of 16 have watched pornographic material online. Surfing online has become the most common past-time for numerous people — **but many have spiritually drowned in the massive waves of immorality and vice.**

With social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, My Space, Twitter, Instagram, etc., literally connecting all and sundry, mahram and non-mahram, it comes as little surprise that people are falling into zina and cannot remain contented with their spouse. These illicit relationships are facilitated by the smart phone, and the haraam communication is concealed from others simply by locking it with a password. **There are countless couples who enjoyed a happy marriage for many years after which, to their dismay, they found their marriages on the rocks due to one or both of the spouses falling into zina by means of social media.** In the year 2009, a UK divorce firm revealed its findings that one out of every five divorces that were filed through them were blaming Facebook as the cause of their marriage breaking. A survey of other divorce lawyers revealed that 66% of divorce cases relied on Facebook as their primary source of evidence to prove their partner's infidelity.

Among the major vices of the smart phone is that while it has connected people to the entire world, **it has disconnected a great number from Allah Ta'ala as well as from those closest to them.** Often many people sitting in the same room are all engaged in conversation – *yet there is pin drop silence.* Each one is engrossed in chatting with someone else and oblivious of the presence of those who are nearest and dearest to them in the same room. With the ‘blessings’ of the smart phone, spouses are sometimes as far away from each other as the east is from the west, though both are in the same room. **Many people’s ‘tablet’ is not a pain-killer – it is instead a pain-instigator and a source of much heartache for their spouse.** Likewise, a great number of children feel forgotten and off-loaded... because their parents are always busy downloading. And... many children feel ignored... because their parents are too busy playing games on their devices!!!

The only way forward is to ‘DE-VICE’ (to detach oneself from the vice of the device). The following are some important steps towards ‘DE-VICING’:

- **Allah Consciousness:** **The most important aspect is to acquire the consciousness of Allah Ta'ala and develop the awareness of death.** The reality that ‘Allah Ta'ala knows’ all that one is doing or thinking, that He has the power to take one to task at that very moment and that there is death and also a Day of Judgement when one’s deeds will be exposed to all – the conviction of this reality must be firmly rooted in one’s heart. **Minus this conviction, and the consciousness of Allah Ta'ala, all other means of ‘DE-VICING’ will not help in any way.** Among the

fundamental ways to attain this conviction is by accompanying people of firm imaan, daily remembering Allah Ta'ala by means of zikr and sacrificing one's wealth and time for the sake of Deen.

- **Abstinence:** If the smart phone has ever gripped you in its vice, do without it. DE-VICE by doing away with the device itself. **Do not take chances. It could kill your respect, chastity, marriage and even imaan, may Allah Ta'ala save us.**

- **Simpler is Smarter:** Get smarter — keep a simple phone without internet and chatting capability. This is safest.

- **Transparency:** Maintain complete and unconditional transparency. **Each spouse should, at all times, be able to monitor the other's internet browsing and messages** (whether over social media, email, WhatsApp, etc.). In this regard, it is essential that no device is locked in a way which prevents the next person from accessing it at any time and monitoring its use. In the case of Gmail accounts, each person having the password of the next will enable him to remotely access his account from his own device and view his web history, bookmarks, e-mails, etc. **Parents also must have unconditional access to the devices of their children.**

- **No Wi-Fi:** Do not install Wi-Fi in your home. In many homes it ignited a 'Wild Fire' of immorality and vice. If genuinely necessary (*not for entertainment and idle surfing - which often leads to drowning in sin*), keep securely locked with the password only known to the parents.

- **Curfew:** Agree on a device curfew in the home, from ‘Asr, or at least from Maghrib, to approximately two hours after ‘Esha. **There should be a strict curfew on devices during all meal times and other quality time which should be dedicated to the children.** In the case of genuine necessity for homework, etc., this must be very strictly controlled and limited to the bare minimum access.

- **Sorry, No Children:** Children do not need a cellphone, let alone a smart phone. If the circumstances necessitate it, a simple phone with no internet access may be given and the usage be closely monitored.

May Allah Ta‘ala enable us to DE-VICE and keep us safe from the vice of every device, aameen.

Addict?

“Cornell Information Science published research earlier this month that looked at (among other things) the difficulty some people have in quitting Facebook and other social networks. **They even have a label for the failure to quit: “social media reversion.”**”

The study used data from a site called 99DaysofFreedom.com, which encourages people to stop using Facebook for 99 days.

The site and study are interesting because they revealed the difficulty people have in quitting Facebook because of addiction.

Participants intended to quit, wanted to quit and believed they could quit (for 99 days), but many couldn't make more than a few days.

The addictive aspect of social networking is associated with FOMO - fear of missing out. Everyone is on Facebook. They're posting things, sharing news and content and talking to each other 24/7.

Social media addiction is real, and it can damage careers, degrade life and even harm relationships.

For most of us, though, we're simply being manipulated by the social sites and content creators to waste far too much time in a way that benefits them, not us." (Computerworld)

Uswatul Muslimah Comment:

Modern technology can be used for various permissible purposes and can also sometimes be very beneficial. *However, generally for the majority of people the harms far outweigh the benefits.* Thus for most people abstention is the best decision. Numerous people started off on a 'harmless' note and very soon thereafter found themselves addicted.

Social media addiction harms oneself and others — at times very clearly and most of the time in a very subtle way. Like many who are addicted to substance abuse, the biggest hurdle in overcoming social media addiction is being in a state of denial. *Therefore, the first step to overcoming this addiction is to acknowledge that one has a problem.* Among the signs of

addiction, or being on the verge of addiction, is repeatedly using social media at frequent intervals throughout the day.

As a first step to escape from the claws of social media is to fix a time for using it. Stipulate two or a maximum of three 15 minute ‘social media slots’ for the day at a time when no family or work will be neglected. Then strictly stick to the specified time slots and firmly suppress any urge to check what may have come in or to post anything to others. Also switch off audible message alerts. **Most importantly, confine yourself to those things which are permissible in sharee‘ah.**

May Allah Ta‘ala guide us all to His pleasure at all times, aameen.

Social Media

“More addictive than alcohol and cigarettes!” This is the conclusion of a study conducted in Germany with regard to the effects of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and other such platforms. Describing this addiction, The Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications (vol. 2, no. 1) states: **“This generation has made social media their top priority and continues to need more usage in order to feel satisfied.”**

The internet and social media outlets have ‘reprogrammed’ the way millions of people think and how they conduct themselves. This is, as some researchers describe it, due to “this interactive world’s power to alter the tangible world.” Indeed, it has ‘altered’ many things. According to another study, “some

behaviour consequences of the new digital brain is hyperactivity, inattention, depression and multitasking mania.” The study further states: “All this access and vast selection is causing some entertainment seekers brain to develop the constant need for instant gratification with a loss of patience.”

Companies are also taking note of the negative impact on productivity as a result of people constantly fiddling with their phones during work time. As one director put it: “We’re clearly seeing what psychologists call ‘online compulsive disorder’ spill over from our personal lives to the work environment.”

While the abovementioned aspects are serious, comparatively speaking they are a ‘very small’ problem. *The really catastrophic consequences are on one’s Deen as well as on family life.* The engrossment in social media has led many people to abandon salaah, has involved them in zina and many other vices and has made numerous marriages either dysfunctional or broken it altogether.

Social media is acclaimed for its ability to “connect people without any boundaries.” Most people using social media have dozens — perhaps hundreds — of ‘contacts’ and are often ‘connected’ to numerous people whom they have never met. *The husband and/or the wife are ‘connected’ – each one with his or her ‘own contacts.’ They are only not connected to each other. While each one is closely connected to their social contacts in far flung places, the two people in the same room are worlds apart!!!*

A similar situation occurs in many homes between parents and children. This pathetic state of affairs is the 'blessing' of social media.

Many will argue that Facebook and its sister outlets are merely tools and it is up to the user to use it or abuse it. While this is true, social media platforms have developed an 'atmosphere' of their own. According to many who used and abused these platforms and have now repented, the 'atmosphere' is similar to being in a 'disco or rave club' where one is strongly drawn towards sin. Promiscuity is the norm on these sites. *It is estimated that approximately more than 90% of those who use Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, etc., have scores of non-mahram male/female 'friends' on their contact lists.* It is rare that one logs onto Facebook and the like, and one's Deen and imaan is not negatively affected at all.

Thus to venture into such an environment is to expose oneself to serious dangers. *Save your imaan. Save your marriage. Save your family. Log off all social media now, forever.* Delete all social media applications and thereby apply for a place among those who sincerely turn to Allah Ta'ala and earn His blessing and pleasure.

May Allah Ta'ala enable us to turn to Him and completely turn away from everything that leads us away from Him, aameen.

“But She’s on BBM”

It was one of those days... *dull, grey and gloomy*. The skies were threatening to repeat last night’s ‘explosive fireworks’. Adding to the nerve racking shivers and quivers, a chilly breeze roared in from over the dark and dim mountains perched on the northern edge of town.

She shuddered and trembled wishing that she had just sheltered indoors, cuddled, curled and coiled up in front of the old iron fireplace. It was definitely a warmer and a more cosy option to stay there huddled in blankets in front of the roaring flames. *Ah*, but one more stroll in the garden before the rains, and perhaps snow later that week, would maybe ease the pain.

That wasn’t a very good move. But she had decided, and she walked towards the koi-fish-pond. *Maybe the beautiful colours of those thinly-finned creatures might brighten up her gloomy day*. She climbed onto the concrete bridge. It had cost her father a fortune but it was beautiful. Red brick paving, cast iron balustrades and a beautiful bench to feed the birds.

She clasped the railing, looked at the water and gasped. *Her reflection took her down memory lane... The masked man and the butt of his ugly gun smashing down on her face*. The cries and screams of her father, as they beat him up yelling and yelping for “*more and more*” money, rang in her ears. As though this wasn’t gruesome enough, images of her mother pleading for

mercy, only to be bashed by the heavily moustached grim-faced thug, just kept on flashing in her mind.

Her swollen face and the ugly scars were enough for her to relive those horrible and horrifying moments.

“You’re lucky to be alive,” said the counsellor. “Focus on the positive.”

“Yes, but I can’t help it,” she thought to herself, running her finger gingerly over her swollen forehead.

The scandalous criminals were definitely behind bars but they tattooed their scars on the very fibre of her life. They haunted her dreams at night, and the sight of those terrible scars rudely reminded her of that grisly, ghastly and fateful day.

Oops, just as scars have their own ‘flashbacks’, so do ominous evils and sins; they too leave in their wake, remorse, regret and embarrassment... and a stinking stigma for years to come!

The sin may be forgiven by Allah Ta‘ala and the sinner may have turned over a new leaf and abandoned the vice. *However, people forgive, but few forget.*

These scars in her case were indeed unavoidable, but yes, the scars of transgressions and sins are most definitely avoidable.

How foolish for us, the *rightly-guided*, to ‘mess up’ the gift of life, ‘scar’ our untainted respect and ‘demolish’ our bright future! All this merely to enjoy some moments of ‘cooling off’ at the wrong places or chatting with and texting the wrong ‘guys’

(non-mahram males). *What a terrible price to pay for a few moments of 'fun'!*

It would really be a shattering experience when we finally 'secure' our 'Mr. Perfect', with sweet dreams of the future, and everything set for us in life, when suddenly he calls it off after discovering: *"She's chatting with my friends on BBM!"*¹

When Sayyidah Maryam ('alaihas salaam) miraculously conceived without the biological means of a father, she was totally bewildered. It was no fault of hers. A great sign of Allah Ta'ala was being manifested through her. But, is there anyone to grasp this miraculous event? Who will believe her that she was clean and innocent! *Ah, she bemused: "... It might have been better, if I'd have died (rather than lived with the stigma of 'sin')!"*

When giving birth to this marvel and wonder, she exclaimed, *"If only I would have died before this, or would have never existed."* (Surah Maryam v23)

Chatting on social media with the boys... ain't it fun?

Nay... when the perfect-prospective finds out, he will definitely run.

What about a little tweet to the 'guys'... will it matter?

The consequence is not sweet, rather bitter.

And Facebook... think that's 'cool'?

But when it boomerangs... your tears will fill a pool.

¹ This article was written when BBM (BlackBerry Messenger) was a very common form of social networking. The message of this article, however, can apply to all other forms of social networks.

Be wise and think long term! Not only the long term of this world, rather the everlasting term of the Hereafter.

Disobedience Broadcast

Imagine if we woke up every morning to find that the sins which we had perpetrated during the night were written all over our front door, advertised for the entire world to witness. *Wouldn't we be horrified?* In fact, we would feel so disgraced that we wouldn't know where to hide our faces! *If we reflect over this, we will realize that it is only out of His infinite kindness that Allah Ta'ala conceals our sins.*

Let us next imagine that we go out of our way, sacrificing our wealth, time and energy, to do someone a favour. Instead of expressing appreciation, this person takes the very same favour and throws it back into our face. *Will we appreciate this? Never!* Furthermore, we will not feel happy to do a favour for this person in the future.

Similarly, Allah Ta'ala preserves our dignity and conceals our sins from people in this world. *However, the 'appreciation' we show for this invaluable bounty is that we take photos of our sins and post them online for all to 'admire', we video ourselves 'caught in the act' and even distribute the evidence of our sins and we use social media to keep all updated on our latest disobedience. This advertising of our sin is actually worse than the initial sin itself!*

If we advertise only those sins that suit us, then remember that there are two angels that are perpetually recording all our deeds. Let it not be that Allah Ta'ala exposes their complete, unedited records of our sins before the entire congregation of humanity on the Day of Qiyaamah, before our loved ones, grandchildren and most importantly – before Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam).

If we wish Allah Ta'ala's forgiveness and favour, in this world and on the Day of Qiyaamah, let us at least express sincere shame and regret over our sins and repent to Him instead of tearing the veil He has placed over our sins.

'Selfitis'

Among the greatest qualities of a Believer is humility. *Conversely, pride and arrogance are among the worst diseases that can afflict a person.* A humble person is beloved to Allah Ta'ala and is also loved by people, while a proud person or one who loves to 'show off' falls from the grace of Allah Ta'ala and is disliked by people as well, though they may appear to respect him.

Pride and vanity are not detected by means of an X-ray or CT scan. *Instead they are manifested in one's utterances, reactions to situations, choices, manner and general conduct. One of the recently discovered symptoms is 'selfitis'.*

The American Psychiatric Association has defined ‘selfitis’ as being “the obsessive, compulsive urge to take photos of one’s self and upload them on social media.” In essence, the victims of this illness are major ‘attention seekers’. The APA further explained that the suffix “itis” by which the word ends generally refers to inflammation. Hence bronchitis refers to inflammation of the lungs and tonsillitis to the inflammation of the tonsils. **Thus this mental disorder was named ‘selfitis’ as the people who suffer from it are generally prone to having ‘inflamed egos.’**

The ahaadeeth have sounded numerous warnings for people who engage in the sin of photography. Apart from these warnings, when a person is filled with such vanity and conceit that his ego tricks him into thinking that the entire world is simply dying to share every moment of his mundane life with him, and thus he cannot see past his own face, *how is he supposed to see the majesty and glory of Allah Ta’ala?*

When we will stop trying to attract the attention of people to ourselves in whichever way, including posting pictures of ourselves or our activities on social media, insha-Allah we will attract the special attention and blessings of Allah Ta’ala towards us. **This will make our lives in this world contented and peaceful.**

No More Magz and News

By and large, the magazines and newspapers of today are filled with the same things. Nearly every edition must have:

- How to lose weight (which gives or reinforces the complex within people that they will never be happy or successful unless they are slim and trim).
- Advertisements of the latest products and trendiest homes (which creates discontentment and greed in the heart as we feel that what Allah Ta'ala has already given us is not good enough).
- Love advice (which teaches you how to indulge in zina in the easiest way possible).
- Write ups and reviews of the latest movies (tempting you to watch them).
- A section on the latest fashion and fads (inviting you to dress in the most provocative manner possible).
- “Alleged” reports of events which transpire in people’s private lives.

Regarding the “alleged” (which means unconfirmed and unverified) news which is reported, it is more often than not a public display of people’s private lives which boils down to lying, backbiting, slandering and degradation. Our purchasing and reading of such sin is actually a sin in itself.

Next, consider the cover-page of a magazine. It will generally feature the picture of some male or female celebrity. Sadly, we hungrily feast our eyes on such pictures and never, for a moment, consider that this is not only gazing at a non-mahram but is also photography which is forbidden. Even if a woman is looking at a woman, most of the time her satr area is also exposed, hence impermissible even for a woman to view. *These celebrities are portrayed as living the ideal, ultimate life and we are thus fooled into making them our role models in their make-up, fashion, style and sometimes even gestures and way of speech.*

Allah Ta'ala forbid! We are bewitched into cutting our hair in the name of fashion and most shamelessly bare our beauty by removing the veil. We have forgotten that the very essence of a woman is modesty, an integral part of which is concealing herself – not stripping before the public eye.

Celebrities should actually be pitied, rather than admired, as their beauty will soon be enjoyed by the venomous creatures of the grave, and if they die without imaan, they will form the fuel of Hell. *How unfortunate it is that we spend our entire lives in trying to look like such people and fail to appreciate the natural beauty which Allah Ta'ala has blessed each one of us with.*

Let us strive to remove all magazines and newspapers from our lives as they subtly brainwash and influence us until we eventually begin to think like the disbelievers.

Novel Company

A beautiful parable in the hadeeth compares a good friend with a perfume seller and a bad friend with a blacksmith. The least benefit one will acquire in the company of a perfume seller is that one will certainly get the beautiful scent of perfume, which will freshen the mind and heart. Likewise, a good friend will always be a means of benefit. Merely being in his company will incline the heart towards good. On the contrary the least harm in the company of a blacksmith is that one will breathe the toxic smoke that will be all around his environment. Likewise, the company of a bad friend is spiritually toxic. Merely being in bad company will influence one towards evil and sin.

While human companionship will generally have the greatest effect and influence on one, the company one keeps is much broader than being in the company of friends and associates. Many people spend long hours in the company of novels. Novel addicts can read a thick novel of a few hundred pages in a night or two. “Reading cannot harm you,” exclaim novel readers.

The question is; “Does a novel really have no effect on the reader?” Scientists believe otherwise. According to Dr. Gregory S. Berns, director of Emory University’s Centre for Neuropolicy in Atlanta, “Stories shape our lives and in some cases help define a person.” Berns says their findings suggest that “reading a novel can transport you into the body of the protagonist.” Using MRI scans, the investigators noticed heightened connectivity in an area of the brain (of their

subjects) which is associated with making representations of sensation for the body. They explain that, for example, when we merely think about running, we can activate neurons in the brain that are associated with the actual physical motion of running.

In the light of the above consider the contents of the vast majority of novels read by young and old alike. If merely thinking of running activates the neurons in the brain associated with running, which will make one want to start running, **what happens to a person reading a novel whose entire plot is intertwined with materialism and illicit relationships?**

If “*stories shape our lives*” as scientists have found, what happens to the mind (and body) of the person reading the lurid scenes of zina in almost every novel? The minimum disastrous effect that this will most likely result in is that the heart and mind of the reader will regularly become engaged in zina – Allah Ta’ala forbid. *When the mind and heart will be repeatedly engaged in zina, what next?*

Novel-reading is also among the major contributors towards the shameless behaviour that is becoming the norm. (Merely to highlight this, a non-Muslim librarian expressed his ‘confusion’ to his Muslim friend as to how come so many Muslim girls and young women donned in purdah borrow such ‘racy’ novels. *May Allah Ta’ala save us all from such shamelessness*).

Among the greatest calamities of novel-reading is that such people are very often deprived of reciting the Quraan Majeed. **For every hundred pages of a novel read, not even one page of**

the Quraan Majeed is recited. *Innaa lillahi wa innaa ilaihi raaji'oon!* This is borne out by the confession of many novel-readers who repented from this evil 'past time'.

It is thus not a novel idea to keep a novel as company. (The same applies to the modern-day version of novels — the endless BLOGS blabbing away their fictitious tales).

One should read good authentic Islamic books after consulting with an experienced 'aalim. *Most of all, daily recite 'The Book of Allah Ta'ala'. No book can ever be better company than His Book.*

Marriage



The Marriage Carriage

Marriage is one amazing journey...

The fuel for the first half of the journey is love while the fuel for the second half of the journey is mercy.

Marriage initially takes off as a beautiful, novel experience in which you enjoy the thrills and frills.

With age, the couple turn over to a new page called “old age” which is certainly not some cold cage. Rather, it is a stage where a sage will wage no rage.

A true couple will happily and carefully work around moments of pain and agony. With patience and intelligence, they will learn to give and forgive, let and forget.

The couple will have to live their life which will be surrounded by strife. The world is a place of pressure while the Hereafter is full of grace and pleasure. However, marriage is a special treasure which offers leisure in measure.

By keeping the Hereafter in mind, the couple will find it easy to bind. It is so rewarding to be kind when put to the grind, allowing problems to quickly unwind.

Youth comes once and old age too. Many reach youth but old age a few. Thus old age is rare, which a selected few wear. An old couple is no trouble. Together they will care and remain fair. No frightening stare! No threatening dare! As an aged pair, they will repair, and for the Hereafter prepare.

It is only natural to grow old, for the hair to become grey, the memory to fail and delay, the movements to completely slow down, the ears to struggle to pick up sound, and the eyes to squint to have to see. After all, everything tall will someday fall. The couple is made of sand, by the unseen hand, all part of our Creators Divine plan.

Every worldly journey ends, despite the many bends. Marriage certainly tends to have its sends and lends, mends and defends. Death, however, is the final separator, controlled by one Creator, taking every couple sooner or later.

The Map of Marriage

Any intelligent person undertaking a very long journey – through a route which he has not travelled before – will ensure that he makes adequate preparations before he departs. **He will seek advice and directions and will make enquiries regarding the road and what to expect.** After making all the appropriate preparations and taking all the necessary advice and directions, he will most likely carry a GPS to guide him along the way and prevent him from taking any wrong turns.

Marriage is also a journey. However, the journey of marriage is meant to last a lifetime. It takes one through different terrains and past various sceneries. **While it may generally be smooth sailing, like a luxury car on an open freeway, there are sometimes the odd and unexpected gravel patches.** While the

route may mainly usher one past gardens, rivers, waterfalls and rolling seas, it does also sometimes lead one through dry and quiet deserts. If the traveller keeps his eye on the road and focuses on his destination, he will insha-Allah safely pass through all the hills and valleys as well as gardens and deserts.

The Mu-min's (Believer's) destination in marriage, like everything else, is the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala. The perfect, all-terrain vehicle that will transport him safely and smoothly through the open freeways as well as the rocky patches is Deen – the path of the Quraan Majeed and sunnah, while the advice of the 'Ulama and elders is the GPS, assisting him to remain on this path.

As long as the couple are in the right vehicle and remain on the path of Deen and focused on their destination, insha-Allah they will travel smoothly and will not have a bumpy ride. They will thus travel safely through their journey of marriage, until the angel of death makes them part from each other.

Happily Ever After!

A successful marriage lasts happily ever after. It thrives on correct behaviour and ethical conduct. This in turn is influenced by correct thinking. Therefore, correct thinking and attitude play a big role in preparing for the big day and the new life ahead. The lives of the Sahaabah (radhiyallahu 'anhum) were a perfect example of correct thought and an Islamic mindset.

There lived a man by the name of Sayyiduna Julaibeeb (radhiyallahu ‘anhu). He was an ordinary man by worldly standards. He was not endowed with the charm and allure that other men had, nor did he hold the social standing that the noble would enjoy. *But... he was a man of imaan and a companion of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam). This was an attribute that far superseded any worldly disadvantage.*

Once, Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) spoke to a man of the Ansaar and said, “Give me the hand of your daughter in marriage.” It was the practice of the Ansaar of Madeenah Munawwarah not to get any of their women married unless they had confirmed whether Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) had any interest in marriage at that time or not. They loved Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) dearly and wanted to be part of his physical family just as they were part of his spiritual family. This man was elated for this was a great honour and privilege coming his way.

“Yes. By all means O Nabi of Allah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam). It would be my honour,” was his excited reply. “But it’s not for me,” Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) went on to say. “Then for who is it O Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam)?” *“It’s for Julaibeeb,”* came the answer from the blessed mouth of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam). The man then said, “O Nabi of Allah, would you mind if I speak to her mother?” Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) didn’t mind at all. This was the balance in the outlook of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam); that he did not force his

recommendation on anyone. **Yes, he would enforce the Deen of Allah Ta'ala by all means.**

He went home and addressed his wife thus, “Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) seeks the hand of our daughter in marriage”. He broke the news in the same way that Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) did and her answer was the same as his. She said “Yes by all means.” “But it’s not for him. It’s for Julaibeeb,” continued the husband. She said, “*What? Is it for Julaibeeb? Never ever! Is it that man? How can we accept him when we rejected the proposal of many a suitor? Is he the only option?*” **She was a mother after all. Which mother wouldn’t want the best for her child?**

The Ansaari girl sat all the while listening to the heated exchange between her parents. Her father lost hope of furthering the discussion. He had just got up to leave when a voice rang out. “Who sent the proposal?” The voice belonged to the girl for whom the proposal had come. “The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam),” was the reply.

This was merely the recommendation of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam). However, in her life, the wish and desire of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) took the place of a command.

Thus her spontaneous response was: **“How can you reject the command of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam)? If Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) is happy with Julaibeeb, then marry me off to him.”** She went on to say, **“I am happy and satisfied and I totally submit to whatever Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) likes for me.”** Saying this she recited the verse of Surah Ahzaab (v36) “It does not befit a male or female Believer, when the decision of

Allah Ta'ala and his Messenger has been passed, to have any option in the matter.” She then said, “*Marry me to Julaibeeb (radhiyallahu ‘anhu). The recommendation of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) will never dampen my future!*”

Her reply sparkled with the true spirit of imaan and Islam and impacted her parents. They were impressed and they relented. Not because of parental love and biological affection but because of the noor (lustre) of her words. *They said, “You are right. You have spoken the truth.”*

Her father returned to Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) filled with the same spirit. “O Messenger of Allah! If you are happy with him then we are happy with him.”

What happened next was the most fabulous thing under the sun. Something everybody longs for. Some travel great distances to holy lands and undergo mammoth difficulties to obtain it. Some take the pain to try patiently on auspicious occasions for years before they secure it. Some give up their folks and abandon their beloved homelands searching for it and seeking it. It's a priceless commodity, a coveted asset and a key to all good. *It's nothing but a du'aa from the blessed lips of the most beloved of Allah Ta'ala's creation. She never asked for it. She earned it. She earned a sign of the pleasure and approval of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam). “O Allah! Do pour all good on her and make her life on this planet a pleasure.”*

She secured a most comprehensive supplication encompassing all good. There was no doubt in its acceptance. It was only a matter of time before it would manifest itself. But...

she got it on the plate. She secured in moments what others would get in years. Talk of express service. *All by virtue of her correct thinking.*

The marriage took place and life carried on. Once Sayyiduna Julaibeeb (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) signed up with the Muslim Army and joined them for the expedition. Allah Ta‘ala had blessed the Muslims with victory. When the dust had settled and the battle was over Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) enquired, “*Is there anyone missing?*” “Indeed there are a few,” the companions replied and they proceeded to name them. “But is there anyone else?” Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) asked. “No,” came the reply. “*But I don’t see Julaibeeb anywhere. Where is he? Look for him among the martyrs.*” They went out and found him lying dead besides the bodies of seven people whom he had killed. They returned and said, “*O Messenger of Allah. There he lies to the side of seven whom he killed until he was killed.*”

Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) proceeded to the ground where his body lay and expressed his appreciation for the services rendered to Islam by this ‘nobody of society’. He, (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) announced, “*Julaibeeb belongs to me and I belong to him. He is part of me and I am part of him.*” Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) then carried his body in his blessed arms until his grave was dug. Allah Ta‘ala blessed him with this honour that the blessed arms of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) carried him instead of the traditional bier.

His name became one of prestige, for this action of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) caused his rankings in society to rise

and his honour to increase. Over and above the honour of martyrdom, this consideration of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) was another feather in his cap.

In the bigger picture, all this had served towards the honour of this blessed girl who had submitted her thinking to the preference of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam). *There remained no woman among the Ansaar who was more highly sought after than her.* She was now a living answer and physical testament to the du‘aa of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam). *Her life on this earth was a bliss and she moved on to the Hereafter to enjoy the luxury of Jannah, ‘Happily Ever After’.*

(Reference: Musnad Ahmad #19784 & #12393 and Usdul Ghaabah vol. 1, pg. 334)

Undoubtedly, thinking and attitude has its effect on a marriage, way before the wedding. *It impacts on the type of person we choose and the style of wedding we hold.* Similarly, it has a telling effect on our lives as a couple till death do us apart.

Let us submit our choices and preferences in all aspects of our lives, especially in our marriages, to the ways and preferences of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) and his Sahaabah (radhiyallahu ‘anhum). *In this way our marriages will last ‘Happily Ever After’.*

Boat Afloat but Couple in Crisis!

“Beep!” went my phone, rousing me from my sleep. I searched for it on the bedside table with one hand while rubbing my bleary, half open eyes with the other. I struggled to sit up as my fumbling fingers finally found the phone and got a shock when I saw the time. 2AM! I groaned in frustration and wondered which inconsiderate person had texted me at this insane hour. I opened the message, from my best friend, and honestly, as I read the words glaring at me from the screen, I almost had a heart attack: “*Its over. We dvrccd. Im cmng hme. Dnt knw wt 2 do!*”

I blinked in confusion at first, unable to believe what I saw. This was surely her idea of a sick joke, right? **I mean, there’s no way she could already be divorced when she got married just three weeks ago!** I suddenly felt weary and sad and tears began to well in my eyes as I wondered how her *dream wedding* had turned into a *nightmare marriage*...

To call her wedding ‘an event’ would be an understatement. It was ‘*the event*’. **Even the local newspapers covered the occasion by plastering her photo on page three with a description of the festivities following on page four.** I can still picture the title “*Beach Wedding Makes Waves*” emblazoned above the article.

Planning her wedding and the events that led up to it (the engagement, meethu mauru, Arabian night, seafood night, bridal

shower, bachelorette party, mehndi, etc.) took her the better part of eight months. We (her friends) stood by her side throughout it all and it was only with our combined support, mostly showed through moments of sympathetic head shaking and fuelled by countless litres of skinny Frappuccino, that Bridezilla made it through to the end.

Being ‘daddy’s little girl’ definitely had its perks – he didn’t even set the sky as the limit to how much she was allowed to spend to make her dream wedding become a reality. Between shopping for her trousseau and the accessories she ‘needed’ for the myriad of functions she had planned, she breezed through every mall in a 100km radius leaving a string of burned out, smoking credit card machines in her wake. There were naturally certain things which couldn’t be bought locally (*or so she claimed*) and so a flying trip was taken to Dubai and India where she spent a week each, desperately darting between designer stores and jewellery boutiques until she was finally convinced that she had prepared for a wedding which would not be eclipsed for at least the next century.

It was always her dream to have an ‘Emirates’ themed wedding and although we would never have dared say it to her, we did feel she went overboard. I mean, it was already an Emirates themed wedding, *on the sand*. So was it really necessary for her to ‘import’ an actual shaikh from Dubai to perform her nikaah? “What about your ustaaz? Won’t he feel hurt? In fact, is he even invited?” we asked. “Nobody will take the Emirates theme seriously without an actual authentic shaikh.” she explained.

“And as for my ustaaz,” she continued, “I’m actually doing him a favour by not inviting him. You know he won’t come anyway, with the music, photography and it being a mixed function.” Having justified her elaborate import instead of putting the function in order, she concluded the conversation and refused to hear more on the subject.

The mehndi was absolutely *insane*. There was a stage decked with huge speakers and microphones erected behind the house. We climbed on and went wild, literally letting our hair down (*a bit more than that actually - after all, it was a girls-only event*) and dancing while singing Hindi songs. As the festivities were about coming to an end, we got a shock to see the fiancé and his friends running at us (they apparently gained entrance by bribing the guard at the gate), armed with water balloons filled with tomato sauce! As if plastering us in that mess wasn’t enough (*it takes ages to wash out of your hair*), they manhandled us and threw us into the pool before escaping into the street, whooping like hooligans all the while.

The kuncha exchanging function was one of a kind and a real trend setter. Still adhering to the Emirates theme, she arranged for a mini luggage carousel to be erected. *She then had all the kunchas placed on the carousel and slowly paraded through the house amidst the ‘Oohs!’ and ‘Aahs!’ of the envious guests.*

She even demanded that we, the bridesmaids (and myself specifically, the maid of honour), live up to her inflated expectations. Remember the flying trip to Dubai? *She returned with a pair of Jimmy Choo’s and Louboutin’s each for all of us!* As

we opened the gift bags and screeched in excitement, she triumphantly declared, “We’ll show them how it’s done! We’ll glide down the aisle in style!”

Our makeup (for every function) was applied by a world renowned makeup artist. From MAC to Lancome, his toolboxes modified to carry cosmetics contained secret substances which, in his talented hands, could transform even the ugliest hag into a bewitching beauty. *Had he been there, the story of “Beauty and the Beast” would have definitely turned out differently.*

“But... He’s a man!” one of us objected. “So what? My dress designer’s a man too. You only get married once, you know. Sometimes you have to just overlook these ‘small things’ to ensure you get the best,” retorted the bride. “Besides, the way he’s dressed, I doubt he’ll have feelings for any of us!” she whispered, attempting to allay her friend’s fears with the disturbing observation that he seemed to be inclined to men.

For the wedding itself, all the guests were shuttled from the parking lot to the beach in carts pulled by camels (*genuine Emirates camels of course!*). The bride had to make her entrance in grand style and what could be grander than landing on the beach in a hot air balloon draped in bridal satin?

Although the invitations (printed to look like Emirate’s Airline boarding passes) stated that lunch would be served at 2pm, the caterers couldn’t begin serving for another two hours because the bride arrived late (*or is late actually considered as ‘on time’ for the bride?*). Once she finally arrived and took her seat on the stage next to her husband, the guests had to wait for her

brother and sister to give their respective speeches. They took the mike and gushed on about how sad they were to bid her farewell (*although she's actually moving only two streets away*). Using a projector and the curtain behind the stage, they even showed photos and videos of her at different stages in her life, pointing out how well she'd outgrown the 'ugly duckling phase'.

The last 'hold up' before the nikaah itself (and the only interval during which the music was switched off) was the qiraat recitation. *A few women looked down guiltily (their hair and a lot more than that was uncovered) while the rest of the guests grumbled about how delayed the food was or alternatively, used the time to catch up with old friends.*

Towards the end of the afternoon, all the guests gathered to witness the 'cutting of the cake'. The cake itself was an *outstanding* affair – a giant structure measuring 2m in height from its base and shaped to resemble the world famous 'Burj Khalifa'. Due to its tremendous size, it had to be driven in on the back of a flatbed delivery van.

The highlight, the climax and crescendo to which the entire wedding had been building, was the moment when the bride and groom were rowed off into the sunset (dreamy sigh!) to an exclusively hired cruise ship aboard which they spent their first night.

Two days later, we were all ferried to the cruise ship to celebrate the waleemah. When the bride had forced us to take dancing classes, we took it as a joke. We didn't realize that we'd

be dancing on an actual dance floor to the tune of an actual band!

Once everything was well and over, we all headed back to shore to undress, remove our layers of makeup and crash for the night. We were all too tired to perform the salaahs we missed that day and were asleep as soon as our heads hit the pillow. While we were staggering home in exhaustion, the bride and groom set off on their honeymoon cruise.

Well, we all know how *that* cruise ended – wrecked on the rocks. *The Boat's still Afloat but the Couple's in Crisis*. All that's left of their marriage are the wedding DVDS, no longer a source of pride but another skeleton to add to their closet.

Now that I think over my friend and her 'dream wedding', the hours and hours of preparation that she put into it, the millions that she spent on making it materialize, *I realize that one problem lay in the fact that it was all about the wedding and never about the marriage*. In fact, I even remember her once saying wistfully, "*If only there was a way to have a dream wedding without having to go home with a husband afterwards!*" Reflecting over her mindset, it's obvious that she had never even thought beyond the wedding and honeymoon, *let alone actually being prepared to shoulder the responsibilities and demands that come with married life*.

A *wedding* is just a single function, lasting a few hours, and is forgotten shortly thereafter. A *marriage*, however, is meant to endure and prosper for a lifetime. How is it that we then prepare

for the *wedding* as if it's going to last forever and completely neglect preparing for *marriage*?

Most girls dream about or they at least want their 'big day' to be something special, an occasion to be fondly remembered. Sadly, what they don't realize is that the only giver of true happiness is Allah Ta'ala and He grants this happiness to those who follow the sunnah of Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam).

How can our wedding and marriage ever become a means of perpetual happiness and prosperity when we have removed the Giver of happiness and prosperity and the sunnah from the equation and filled our functions with haraam? Is the wastage, ostentation and other sins we indulge in for the sake of pleasing people and ensuring that our function makes an impression in society really worth the price we pay in sacrificed barakah and blessing which we need to last us a lifetime?

Remember, you will never find prosperity and happiness in haraam. Invest in the happiness of Allah Ta'ala and you will reap returns in both this world and the next.

A Soulless Ceremony

There was once a father who had just a single daughter. Being his only child, she was absolutely dear to him and the apple of his eye. When she finally came of age and was proposed in marriage, he was so eager to 'throw' her a wedding that she

would never forget that he commenced the wedding preparation one year in advance!

Instead of cards, invitations were engraved into small slabs of marble and hand delivered to all the guests. The utensils in which the food was served were embossed with the names of the bride and groom so that the guests could take them home after the function and keep them as souvenirs!

The groom, on his part, ensured that he arrived in style by turning up to fetch his bride seated on an elephant hired from the zoo!

When the big day arrived and the bride departed from her parent's home, her mother asked her father as to how much mahr (dowry) was given. **Only now did they realise that they had forgotten to arrange for the nikaah of the girl to be performed.**

The planning was so elaborate and detailed that even the colour of the icing on the cupcakes was only decided after careful deliberation. However, everything was thought of and given regard besides the command of Allah Ta'ala.

This is exactly what has happened today. We have removed the sunnah and the teachings of Islam from our marriages and have replaced them with our own customs and practices. **We have designed our marriage to please everyone and to displease Allah Ta'ala.** The result is that for most people, marriage has actually become a burden and a difficulty. Simplicity and minimal expenses, which form the soul and blessing of a marriage, have been removed, leaving us with a shell of a nikaah

– attractive on the outside but empty within. *Will such a nikaah ever have a bright future?*

Ten Steps to Winning His Heart

‘Amr bin Hujr Kindi had sent a proposal to ‘Auf bin Muhallam Shaibaani asking for the hand of his daughter, Ummu Iyaas, in marriage. On receiving the proposal, the father of Ummu Iyaas, ‘Auf, decided to accept it.

When the night arrived for Ummu Iyaas to leave her parents’ home and depart for the home of her husband, her mother came to her and said, “O my beloved daughter! You are about to leave the home in which you were born and the ‘nest’ which you have now outgrown. You are going to live with a man whom you do not know and a companion with whom you are unfamiliar. **You should therefore become his slave girl so that he will, in turn, become your slave.** Pay special attention to the following ten aspects as you will find them to be a great resource in assisting you to enjoy a happy marriage:

1. **Contentment** i.e. **express happiness and appreciation for whatever he provides you with and do not complain.**
2. Listen carefully and attentively when he speaks and obey his wishes.
3. Be particular regarding your appearance i.e. he should never see you in a state which is unappealing and unattractive.

4. Be particular regarding your body odour i.e. he should never smell anything but the best of perfumes and fragrances emanating from your body.

5. Ensure that you feed him his meals on time as the pangs of hunger serve to ignite the flames of temper.

6. Ensure that you allow him to sleep on time as sleep deprivation and fatigue cause irritability and anger.

7. Safeguard his wealth.

8. Be thoughtful and considerate when dealing with his family and servants.

9. Do not go against his wishes and instructions for if you do that, you will upset him. Also do not reveal to anyone that which he expects you to keep a secret. *If you betray his confidence, you will have to fear that he will betray you as well.*

10. Beware! Beware expressing happiness before him when he is overcome by grief and despair (you should rather share in his grief and thus lessen his burden) and also beware expressing grief in his presence when he is happy (as this will sour his mood and dampen his spirits).

Ummu Iyaas took her mother's advice to heart and thus had such a prosperous and blessed marriage, that she bore her husband a son, Haarith bin 'Amr, who was the grandfather of Imru-ul Qays, the renowned poet. (*Al-Mustatraf* vol. 2, pg. 344)

Hearts make Homes

All it takes to build a house is a few hands. To build a home, however, hearts are needed. **When bricks join and bond, a house is made and when hearts join and bond, a home is made.** For married couples to make a home, it is essential that they 'have a heart' – be tolerant and overlook each other's faults. **If they are not willing to forgive and forget, trivial issues will erupt into big arguments.** This will eventually result in the couple becoming the talk of the town with their 'dirty laundry' hanging out for all to see.

When cutlery is kept together in the same drawer, the spoons and forks will definitely clash and make noise. Similarly, when the husband and wife are close, some arguments are bound to take place. Despite the bickering and arguing, if one of them has to pass away, all the fights will be forgotten and the surviving partner will cry over the happy memories.

It often happens that a divorce is issued in the midst of a heated argument. **Only later on do the couple come to their senses, at which point they start wringing their hands in regret.** The depression, at times, even drives them to the point of insanity. *Couples thus need to bond their hearts in such a way that they insha-Allah remain united until death does them apart.*

Warmth and Smiles

The relationship of the husband and wife must be one of kindness, compassion and light heartedness. **The couple should always try to bring happiness and cheer to one another.**

For a man, it is indeed a great bounty to return home to a wife who radiates warmth and smiles. **A mere glance at such a wife is sufficient to melt away a day's worth of grief and tension.** On the other hand, a man dreads returning to a wife who is constantly shouting, fighting and bickering. Indeed, husbands should also conduct themselves in a compassionate manner.

Marriage is a lifelong contract which needs to be nurtured and maintained. Our pious elders realised the importance of having a healthy and pleasant marriage, and thus went out of their way to bring comfort and joy to their marriage partners.

A Smile a Day

A common saying is: *“An apple a day keeps the doctor away.”* Likewise, some marriages are on the point where the following will apply: *“A smile a day keeps Shaitaan away.”* This refers to keeping Shaitaan away from destroying the marriage.

In many cases, the husband looking at his wife once in the day with love and affection, and the wife speaking even once a day in

a soft and loving tone to the husband, may be enough to keep the marriage alive. *Obviously, the more this happens, the better.*

Unfortunately, some wives will speak to strangers in sweet tones, and likewise some husbands will speak with much compassion and even affection to customers, colleagues and other strange women. **This is haraam as sweet tones and affection must be directed to the spouse, not strangers.**

Out of need, when one has to speak to a non-mahram, then it should be 'short and sour' (*direct and straight to the point*), due to which the person being addressed will not have the courage to unnecessarily lengthen the conversation. We should also lower and protect our gaze as this will help us to appreciate the beauty of our spouse.

A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed

An intelligent woman, a sincere philanthropist, a pious soul, a patient human, a devoted wife, **a caring spouse, a loyal partner, a loving mother, an expert homemaker...** *The Ideal Woman and a dream for many...* This was Sayyidah Khadeejah Al-Kubraa (radhiyallahu 'anha).

Indeed, this 'superwoman' had supported Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) when he had no worldly resources; trusted and believed in him when most had denied him;

encouraged and understood him when he took up the call with trembling steps; withstood persecution, insults, threats and torture and was a lifelong helpmate of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) till her last breath at the age of sixty-five.

Her remarkable and outstanding personality was manifested on the occasion when her husband was crowned with Nubuwwah (prophethood). Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) was in the solitude of the cave when he suddenly received the first revelation. He was taken aback and terrified. *Why wouldn't he be terrified?* This was his first awe-inspiring encounter with revelation which had come from the Rabb of the Worlds through the greatest angel Jibreel (‘alaihi salaam).

This event was one of the greatest, not only in the life of Muhammad (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam), but in the history of mankind. Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) stood up trembling, heading home to seek rest and solace in the tender care of none other than Sayyidah Khadeejah (radhiyallahu ‘anha). This great woman, the best friend that she was, calmly comforted Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) giving him the strength he needed.

She addressed him thus, *“By Allah! Allah Ta‘ala will never disgrace you! Indeed you join and maintain family ties, you bear the burdens of others, you earn for those who cannot acquire a livelihood, you extend hospitality to your guests and you provide assistance when a calamity or disaster strikes.”*

Sayyidah Khadeejah (radhiyallahu ‘anha) spared no effort in consoling Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) at this greatest

moment, which is perhaps the greatest of her deeds. She then takes Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) to her cousin Waraqah bin Naufal, who consoles Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) and affirms what Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) was already certain of...

A friend in need is a friend indeed!

Kitchen Specialist

As housewives, many of us pride ourselves on our expertise and culinary creativity in the kitchen. We expend all effort in presenting our husbands with delicious dishes, tantalizing treats and decadent desserts that seduce the senses. *Thus when it comes to winning the hearts of our husbands through their stomachs, we not only succeed but thoroughly excel.*

Now imagine for a moment that you spent hours and hours in preparing and decorating an elaborate, multi-tiered cake – only to stumble and drop it and watch it smash to bits a few feet from the door of its intended destination. *Wouldn't you feel devastated and whole heartedly disappointed to watch the product of your labours disintegrate in just a few moments?*

Similarly, it should not be that we win our husband's heart through his stomach, just to break it through his ears a few moments later. This happens due to not being particular in regards to our speech. On the spur of the moment, we blurt out whatever crosses our mind and only realize later on, after the

damage is done, that we have hurt his heart. The simple remedy for this malady is for us to train ourselves to think before we speak. This habit will not be developed overnight. However, if we remain concerned and persevere, guarding our tongues will become part of our nature and a means of us avoiding problems in our marriage and all other spheres of interaction.

Just as our skill in the kitchen wins his heart through his stomach, let us use the same skill to win his heart through his ears. Sweeten our speech with sugar and don't make his eyes tear by mixing in chillies. Adopting this approach will ensure that he values, appreciates and is always happy with us.

When Last Did I Thank?

In many cases, married life has boiled down to moaning, groaning, demanding and complaining. Every wife should ask herself: *“When last did I sincerely say a heartfelt ‘Jazakallah’ to my husband?”* If one cannot recall when last one did this, the question is: *“Why can't I remember? Should this not have been a regular aspect?”*

Unfortunately, many of us have largely forgotten the lesson of gratitude. Often, if our husband says or does just one thing against our wish or desire, our immediate response is: *“You have never done anything for me!”* Yet the husband may have done so much for us.

Due to being very emotional and impulsive, we are quick to speak our mind and vent our feelings. **In order to remedy the situation, we need to simply ponder and recount the favours of our husbands.** For a while, let us forget our never-ending desires, as this will allow us to appreciate and be thankful to our husband. **Our appreciation and gratitude will bring about happiness, sparking life into our marriage once again.**

On seeing a person who is starving, none of us will respond by starving ourselves as well. Instead, we will help the person if possible and express appreciation for the food that we have. Similarly, if our husbands do not show appreciation, then instead of stooping to their level and ‘starving’ ourselves of the great rewards and benefits of appreciation, we should make du‘aa for them and hold onto gratitude. **If we respond to ingratitude with more ingratitude, our marriage will become one of double-ingratitude.**

Focus on the Favours

There was once a master who asked his servant to bring him a melon. When the melon was brought and sliced before the master, he picked a slice and gave it to the servant who ate it with relish. The master, on seeing the enjoyment with which the servant was eating the slice, thought to himself, “The melon must be extremely sweet!” **However, the moment he placed a slice in his mouth, he was forced to spit it out as it was extremely**

bitter! The master, wiping his mouth, turned to the servant and asked him, “*How could you show so much of enjoyment over something so bitter?*” The servant replied, “*Master! You fed me the sweetest of dishes on countless occasions! How could I express dissatisfaction on this one, single occasion?*”

If every couple can make this their mindset, then even when faced with the bitterest of experiences, the sweet memories of all their spouse’s virtues and favours, on all the other occasions, will assist them to overlook and forgive each other.

A Rose without Thorns?

A man once entered a tattoo parlour and asked the artist to give him a tattoo. “What tattoo would you like?” the artist enquired. The man pondered a moment then declared, “*A Lion! A ferocious lion with his fangs bared, about to roar and pounce on his prey!*”

The tattoo artist nodded and began to prepare his needles and ink while the man settled back with a dreamy look of anticipation on his face – *how grand the lion will look! How his friends will marvel!*

But as soon as the artist began working, he yelled in pain and jumped! “Ouch!” he exclaimed. “What are you drawing?” “The tail.” replied the artist. The taste of the pain still fresh in his mind he muttered, “*Skip the tail, he won’t need to swat any flies away.*” The needle was then placed on a lower spot to tattoo the feet. The artist had hardly started when the man once again

yelped in pain and sheepishly said, “Leave out the feet, this lion doesn’t need to go anywhere.” The artist then placed the needle on a third spot to tattoo the head. “No! No!” he moaned, “this lion has no need for a head.” This was too much for the artist. He put his needle down in disgust and walked away saying, “Can there ever be a lion without a tail, feet and a head?”

To give or receive a tattoo is not allowed in Islam. The lesson of the story, however, is that this man wanted the image of a lion tattooed on his body, but was not prepared to undergo any pain. *He wanted a ‘rose’ without any ‘thorns’. As a result, he was left without even a bare stem in his hand.* Thus, we who desire to enjoy married life should expect and prepare ourselves for the occasional hiccup when it comes to our spouse, children, in-laws and our extended families. If we keep the bigger picture in mind and remember that the petals always outnumber the thorns, we will cheerfully undergo every difficulty with a smile, ready to take on the challenges of tomorrow.

In Privacy, Not Public

It is natural that couples now and again become irritated and angry with one another. However, one should *never* lose control and composure in public, thus insulting and shouting at one’s spouse in front of others. This will definitely be a means of embarrassment for the spouse and will create much bitterness in the marriage.

More important than giving vent to one's anger and frustration is securing the heart of one's spouse. Hence, we need to control ourselves and train our minds **to solve all problems and differences with calmness and level-headedness**, within the privacy and confines of our homes.

A Partnership of Improvement

There are many different partnerships in this world, and each has its own purpose. The purpose of a business partnership is to make money, while the purpose of a political partnership is to gain dominance, power and rulership.

Similarly, nikaah is a life-long partnership which has multiple objectives. If raising the Muslims of tomorrow and gaining financial and social security are considered as objectives, then **one of the primary objectives of nikaah, without a doubt, is definitely that of the imaan and Deen of the spouses to become complete and remain protected**. Hence, a marriage in which each passing day finds the Deeni condition of the spouses better than it was the previous day is a successful marriage. Conversely, a marriage in which the husband and wife invite, tempt and encourage one another to engage in sin is an unsuccessful marriage.

Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) made du'aa saying, "May Allah Ta'ala shower His mercy upon the man who stands during the night, performing salaah, and he awakes his wife (so that she

may perform salaah as well). If she resists (awaking), then he sprinkles water on her face (to assist her in awaking). *May Allah Ta'ala shower His mercy on that woman who stands during the night, performing salaah, and she awakes her husband (so that he may perform salaah as well). If he resists (awaking), she sprinkles water on his face (to assist him in awaking)."* (Sunan Abi Dawood #1308)

We should thus all strive to encourage one another to strengthen our Deen. However, we should bear in mind that different people are encouraged in different ways. It will not be appropriate for one to sprinkle water on the face of her husband, at the time of tahajjud, who is in a deep sleep, after a long day at work. Similarly, a husband will probably not react positively if his wife corrects him in front of his children. *Hence, when encouraging one another, we should always first think carefully and try to determine the method of encouragement that will promote the most positive result*, as it is the person whom we want to 'improve', not a point that we want to 'prove'.

Keeping the Spark Alive

When a couple just get married, they experience the feelings of romance and excitement that accompany the phenomenon of being newly-wed. Hence, they constantly think about each other, continuously send messages to each other and keep giving each other gifts.

As time passes, however, and life settles into its routine, these initial feelings of excitement fade. **While this is perfectly normal and nothing to feel depressed over, as a person cannot constantly live in ‘honeymoon’ mode, it does not necessarily mean that the spark in the marriage has to die out completely.** Rather, by maintaining the spark in the marriage, the husband and wife will continue to find satisfaction in each other and the chances of them falling into haraam will be decreased. Hence, even when maintaining the spark, our intention should be that we are doing this out of appreciation for the gift of marriage which Allah Ta‘ala has given us and to ensure that we do not fall into haraam. **By making the correct intention, even these seemingly mundane actions will become a means of reward.**

In keeping the spark alive, we do not have to resort to extravagant and elaborate strategies. Rather, it’s the small things that count, the things that show that we care and make our spouse feel appreciated. **It can be as simple as taking out the time to send a message saying, “Miss U” or some other endearment, or giving a small gift, even if it be their favourite chocolate.** In all these, however, it is the thought that counts and thus the more thought that seemed to go into it, the greater the impact will be. Hence, even a small chocolate can be given – provided that it is attractively wrapped, as this shows the amount of love and attention to detail that was invested. Similarly, even though we can instantaneously communicate via smart phones, **taking out the time to write a few words on a card accompanying the gift, gives the gift an entirely new flavour.**

Remember, by keeping the spark alive, our marriages will be more fulfilling and will serve the purpose of keeping us out of sin to a greater degree.

Boundaries in the Bedroom

Imagine a person who hires a security guard to protect his home and family, only for the very same guard to later on become the greatest danger and threat to their safety! Imagine a person who daily takes a multi-vitamin supplement in order to improve his health, only for the very same supplement to later on become the cause of his health deteriorating, leading to his death!

In a similar vein, the hadeeth teaches us that one of the main purposes and benefits of nikaah is that it safeguards a person from falling into the sin of zina and other sins related to lust. **However, this purpose will be defeated if a person fails to realize that even life within the bedroom has limits.** A person's bedroom life need not be 'dry'. But on the same token, it is not necessary to resort to bedroom activities that are either outright haraam or totally unnatural and filthy in order to gain satisfaction. We are all aware that the husband may only seek satisfaction in his wife, and the wife may only seek satisfaction in her husband. **But, this does not mean that they may satisfy themselves in any and every manner they please!**

If we trespass the boundaries of Deen with our spouse within the bedroom, we will be defeating one of the primary purposes

of marriage – *remaining pure and chaste*. Then, instead of marriage strengthening our relationship with Allah Ta‘ala, it will become a means of us falling into sin and taking our spouses with us.

May Allah Ta‘ala bless us all to remain content and satisfied with that which is halaal and pure.

Betraying Bedroom Secrets

Imagine confiding in your best friend and revealing your deepest, darkest secret to her. **However, to your utter dismay and horror, she then proceeds to broadcast your secret to all of society!** *How would you feel and what would your reaction be?*

In all probability, you would feel mortified (extremely embarrassed) and would regard your ‘friend’ to be a backstabber. You would never again trust her and would be reluctant to even remain friends with her.

In this regard, one of the most important and serious secrets and trusts which should never ever be betrayed or revealed is the secret and trust of “bedroom secrets”.

Sayyiduna Abu Sa‘eed Khudri (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) reports that Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said, “Indeed the greatest (betrayal of a) trust and secret in the sight of Allah Ta‘ala on the Day of Qiyaamah is (the betrayal) of a man who is intimate with his wife, and she is intimate with him, and he thereafter reveals her secret.” (*Saheeh Muslim #3543*)

In this hadeeth, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) has clearly explained that ‘*what happens in the bedroom stays in the bedroom*’. Neither spouse should ever reveal their private, intimate relations to any person, nor even describe one another in any way. *In fact, the demand of shame and hayaa is that we completely refrain from discussing this topic unnecessarily, even if we avoid describing our own intimacy.*

Unfortunately, many people are lax in this regard. Sometimes, they speak in jest and joke about a bedroom experience, betraying the trust in the process. *However, even worse are the cases where the newly-wed bride is interrogated by her friends and cousins to describe how her first night went.* In certain instances, she may even be pressurized to describe her husband’s body before all! This is undoubtedly the pinnacle of perversion and disgusting behaviour and is absolutely impermissible. Only an utterly shameless person can stoop so low!

Finally, the secrets of the bedroom have been declared a trust in the sight of Allah Ta’ala. Hence, even if one’s spouse has lost their hayaa and apparently ‘doesn’t mind’ their intimate moments being discussed, it is still impermissible and a severe sin to do so.

May Allah Ta’ala assist us all to understand the seriousness of this trust and protect us from violating and betraying it, aameen.

Safeguarding the Secret

Imagine a woman who possesses an exquisite piece of jewellery. She values it, cherishes it and guards it, always fearful for its safety.

One day, in a moment of negligence, she confided in a person whom she had wrongfully regarded as a friend, informing her of the jewellery, its location and even its worth! Shortly thereafter, the home was burgled and her precious jewellery was stolen. In the aftermath of this tragedy, she wrung her hands in regret, lamenting to herself, “*Why did I reveal the secret?*”

Similarly, all women associate and interact with other women. As Allah Ta‘ala has created all people uniquely and blessed them differently, one woman may have some feature that is exceptionally attractive, while another may be attractive and blessed with beauty in a different aspect, and a third woman may be blessed with beauty in all aspects!

One of the greatest treasures that a woman can possess is the attention of her husband, where he finds her attractive and is satisfied with her. Having said that, one of the quickest ways to lose this treasure is to ‘reveal the secret’ by speaking of other women to one’s husband, describing their features, habits, manner of speaking, clothing, figure, walking or anything else related to them for that matter. If one wishes to enjoy the undivided attention of her husband, then why does she discuss and describe other women to him, intentionally drawing his

attention away from herself and towards these women and their beauty?

Thereafter, when he begins thinking about these women, or even worse – fantasizing over the picture that his wife painted on the canvas of his imagination, she will naturally become upset and feel betrayed. While he is answerable for his actions and will be taken to task for it, however, she fails to realize that she has nobody to blame but herself for her own misery, as she personally ‘introduced’ these women to her husband by speaking about them and describing them to him.

Hence, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) himself taught us that a woman should not interact with another woman, thereafter describing her to her husband in such a vivid manner that it is as if he can actually see that woman. (*Saheeh Bukhaari* #5240)

This beautiful teaching of Islam not only safeguards the husband from sin, but also serves as a means of protection for the marriage by allowing the husband to remain satisfied and content with his wife.

Shaitaan is Overjoyed

Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said: “Verily Iblees places his throne on the waters of the ocean. Then he dispatches his troops to lead people astray. *Thereafter from amongst them the closest to him in rank is the one who causes the greatest mischief.* One

of them comes and says, 'I have done such and such', so Iblees says, 'You have done nothing so great'. **Then another one comes and says 'I did not leave him until I caused a separation between him and his wife'**, so Iblees brings him closer to him and says, 'Yes, you (have done an excellent thing)' and he embraces him." (Saheeh Muslim #7105 & #7106)

A divorce is not the mere separation of a husband and wife, rather it often leads to a break up of two families that were once so close to each other. **It opens the doors of backbiting, slander and hatred on a collective basis which adds to the severity of these sins.** *More than the couple, it is the children that suffer the most.* An Ummah for which Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) strove so hard to put together, is casually broken into pieces over petty day to day differences. *May Allah Ta'ala protect us all, aameen.*

Absolute Last Option

Sayyiduna Thowbaan (radhiyallahu 'anhu) narrates that Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) said, **"Whichever woman asks for a divorce without a genuine need, the fragrance of Jannah will be haraam upon her."** (Sunan Tirmizi #1187)

Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) has explained that the facility of talaaq is the most abhorred of permissible actions in the sight of Allah Ta'ala. (Sunan Abi Dawood #2178) Hence, this facility is meant to only be utilized as an absolute last resort, when all sincere attempts to reconcile have failed. It is for this

reason that such a severe warning has been sounded in the above hadeeth for the woman who seeks a divorce without a genuine need.

Sadly, divorce is something which is today considered trivial by many people. *As a result, talaq, or even worse – triple talaq – is issued without even batting an eyelid!* Similarly, some women demand talaq from their husbands due to a petty argument or simple misunderstanding. *In most cases, the root cause of the problem is pride.* Due to pride and arrogance, neither spouse – even if they know that they are in the wrong – is willing to back down and make peace. *Instead, they stubbornly persist in trying to ‘make their point’, until the marriage is lead to the ‘breaking-point’.*

In the heat of the moment, when the mind is clouded with anger and tempers are flaring, a person begins to think that divorce will solve their problems. When talaq is requested and issued on the spur of the moment, then in most cases, the divorced couple now begin to regret as they realize the implications and consequences of their action – especially in the case of triple talaq.

After pondering over the above hadeeth, we will arrive at the conclusion that the option of talaq should never even cross our minds, unless we are in extremely dire circumstances.

Say what Needs to be Said

Often children approach their parents to complain about their married life! “I am being treated terribly and spoken to harshly! I cannot take it anymore! I wish I could just end this marriage!” are some of the endless complaints we probably hear. When faced with these complaints, how do we respond and react?

In a situation where they are jumping at the first convenient opportunity to bail out of the marriage and have not already tried their best to make it work, the correct response is, “My son! Go and make your marriage work! There is no way I am going to let you allow this marriage to fail!” or “My daughter! You need to make your home as there is no way that you will be coming back here!”

In essence, our sons and daughters need to be told what they need to hear, not what they want to hear. As parents, we need to remind ourselves that we also go through the same ups and downs and will sometimes have similar complaints in our marriages. Our children complain to us hoping that we will blindly believe them and justify their complaints for them. If we do this, they will regard themselves to be completely innocent and will place the entire blame for the failed marriage on their spouse.

As parents, we will definitely be emotionally affected by the complaints of our beloved children. However, we cannot allow ourselves to be governed by these emotions as this will lead us to

blindly siding with our child after only hearing one side of the story.

Always remember that in a marital issue, the winners are not the parents who proved their child to be right. Rather, the winners are those parents who save the marriages of their children.

A Saint's Advice to his Daughter

The respected daughter of 'Aarif Billah Moulana Shah Hakeem Muhammad Akhtar (rahimahullah) had always harboured the desire and longing to perform 'umrah at least once with her father. Accordingly, Moulana Shah Hakeem Muhammad Akhtar (rahimahullah) decided to perform 'umrah, but was thereafter forced to postpone the trip on account of his illness and weakness.

The respected daughter of Moulana Shah Hakeem Muhammad Akhtar (rahimahullah) was naturally disappointed that she would not be able to perform 'umrah with her father. Nevertheless, her husband, Manzar Mia, decided that they would proceed with the trip.

On that occasion, Moulana Shah Hakeem Muhammad Akhtar (rahimahullah) advised his daughter on the phone, with tears in his eyes, saying, *"Remain happy and pleased with that which pleases your husband. Choose that which makes him happy, as your success in*

this world and the next lies in pleasing him.” Hearing this, his respected daughter mentioned, “I am sad and disappointed because I have never performed ‘umrah with you.”

Moulana Shah Hakeem Muhammad Akhtar (rahimahullah) replied, “I know that you are disappointed, but be happy with that which pleases your husband! *The pleasure of Allah Ta‘ala lies in pleasing your husband, and the pleasure and happiness of Allah Ta‘ala is greater than every other happiness.* Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) mentioned, ‘If I had to command any person to make sajdah (prostrate) before another person, I would have commanded the wife to make sajdah before her husband.’ (Sunan Tirmizi #1159) Though it is not permissible to make sajdah before anyone besides Allah Ta‘ala, this hadeeth highlights the high rank and importance of the husband. This can also be gauged by the fact that Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) did not mention this in regard to anyone besides the husband. *The pleasure of Allah Ta‘ala is most valuable.”*

With great emotion and love, Moulana Shah Hakeem Muhammed Akhtar (rahimahullah) then said, “*Ensure that you please Allah Ta‘ala! Ensure that you please Allah Ta‘ala! Ensure that you please Allah Ta‘ala! Sacrifice all your wishes, hopes and desires before the pleasure of Allah Ta‘ala! Allah Ta‘ala is pleased with that which makes your husband happy.”*

His respected daughter then said, “Abba (My beloved father)! If I went for ‘umrah with you, then you would have been happy!” Moulana Shah Hakeem Muhammad Akhtar (rahimahullah) responded, “*Don’t look at the happiness of your Abba (father)!*

Look at what will be pleasing to your *Rabba* (Allah Ta'ala)! The pleasure of your *Rabba* (Allah Ta'ala) lies in the pleasure of your husband, so ensure that you make your husband's happiness your first priority! **The right of the husband is even greater than the right of the mother, father and siblings.** Don't look at the happiness of your father! What will cause me great happiness is that you go to perform 'umrah with your husband."

His respected daughter then mentioned, "I benefited greatly from your advice and found consolation. Even the little disappointment that I perceived has vanished. I will happily go with my husband." Moulana Shah Hakeem Muhammad Akhtar (rahimahullah) then mentioned, **"Show your husband that you are happy to go with him for 'umrah, and do not show him the least disappointment or sadness. Whatever advice I have given you, ensure that you share it with your own daughters-in-law and share it with people wherever you go."** (*Khazaain-e-Sharee'at wa Tareeqat* pg. 415)

Children



I'll Cross the Bridge when I Get There!

A few months back, the media carried the story of a 'Muslim' woman who was the new 100m women's champion. The article also quoted her saying that she is working on improving on her times for future races.

I'm pretty sure that every Muslimah who values the dignity and honour of being gifted with the beautiful and noble Deen of Islam, doesn't require an explanation on the impermissibility of such an act. A Muslim woman throwing aside her modesty and shame for the sake of a measly medal and some cheap fame is indeed contemptible. However, the point to take note of is that: *An 'outstanding performance' demands intense training and preparation.*

In the case of an athlete, it would perhaps require dieting, controlled hydration, sleeping eight to ten hours a day, strenuous training for a minimum of twenty hours a week, preparing psychologically, consulting a nutritionist, exercise physiologist, sports medicine specialist, a coach, and much more...

In the same vein there are certain things in life which require intense training and extraordinary preparation in order to achieve an 'outstanding performance'.

When the topic of ‘parenting’ and ‘motherhood’ is broached, the typical response of many a teenager is:

*“Agh! Who cares about that? I’m only gonna marry at 24 and get my first child maybe at 29 and my second at 33. That I think would be more than enough for me. The day I get to **that** bridge, I’ll cross it.”*

Remember! All bridges and flyovers in life are not the same. While some bridges do not require planning to be easily crossed, there are many others that are quite challenging and demand thorough preparation. *If we leap in blindly, not only will we be hitting a rocky road, rather we’ll also face the peril of plunging to a pitiable end.*

Imagine an Olympic champion, not training for the entire year, waking up a few minutes before the race, rushing to the stadium with a “Red-Bull” in his hand and expecting to win the championship for a second time. *We’ll call him ‘nuts’, ‘crazy’ and ‘goofy’. Isn’t it?*

The question we need to pose to ourselves is:

“Are we not perhaps ‘nuttier’, ‘crazier’ and ‘goofier’ by wishfully thinking that we can qualify as champions in life’s ‘major race’ of ‘motherhood’ and ‘rearing the leaders’ of tomorrow without any preparation?”

“So... well... are you trying to tell me that I must start changing nappies and clean up vomit from now?” would be the next question.

Not at all! Those are the bridges that you would be able to cross when you get there.

“Then what other preparation needs to be made for motherhood? Do you perhaps mean that I should start shopping for some baby-growers, nappy bags and other essentials to lessen the financial burden on my hubby-to-be?”

No! It’s much simpler than that - *Just be the person you want your child to be!*

You obviously don’t want the day to come when you’ll have to tell your teenage daughter: “Darling! I don’t like you hanging around with friends in the mall on a Saturday night.”

Then she snaps back: “But mummy... you also spend every Wednesday afternoon at the coffee shop in the same mall with your friends, Aunty Nasreen and Shireen.”

As the mother, you go on to advise her not to mix with boys at the beach front on a Sunday afternoon. To this, she rudely fires back: “Mummy! Aren’t there men watching you, when you work out in the gym twice a week?”

Aha, just imagine the agonising embarrassment if she then impulsively blows burning hot lava: “*But, Mum I saw a picture of you posing with my friend, Tasneem’s daddy at your matric party. ‘Don’t rain on my parade!’ ‘Don’t tell me how to live!’ You had your ‘fun’, now it’s my turn.*”

If this sounds embarrassing, try to imagine the embarrassment and humiliation we would be drowning in on the Day of Qiyaamah when the complete detailed ‘movie’ of our lives would be played in front of our parents, grand-parents, children, grand-children, and the entire world, especially our Beloved

Nabi, Muhammad (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam). Isn’t he, the one who tolerated the divorce of his pure daughters, the martyrdom of his respected uncle, the shedding of his precious tears and the spilling of his priceless blood... all for our sake?

The game’s not over yet... you still have a chance... *Just become the person you’d like your child to be!*

History testifies to the justice of the 2nd ‘Umar, also regarded by some as the 5th Caliph of Islam, ‘Umar bin Abdul ‘Azeez (rahimahullah). *What was the secret ingredient that helped produce this great and gentle-giant of a leader?*

The story goes like this:

One night while Ameerul Mu-mineen, Sayyiduna ‘Umar bin Khattaab (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) was patrolling the streets of Madeenah Munawwarah, he leaned against a wall and overheard a remarkable conversation between a young girl and her mother.

The mother was instructing her daughter to add water to the milk that was to be sold the next day in order to increase the volume. The girl replied: *“O my mother! Aren’t you aware of the law that Ameerul Mu-mineen has passed, that water should not be added to milk as this is tantamount to deception?”*

“O my daughter! Where can ‘Umar see you? Just do as I’m saying” said the mother.

The daughter declared: “O my beloved mother! I cannot be so ‘two-faced’ as to obey him in public and disobey him in

private. *It may be that ‘Umar cannot see, but definitely the Rabb (Lord) of ‘Umar is watching!*”

Sayyiduna ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu), as great as he was, was ‘blown away’ by these sentiments which emanated from a heart that was brimming with the awareness and consciousness of Allah Ta‘ala.

The next morning, after making inquiries about the family, Sayyiduna ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) called his sons and said: “If your father had a need for marriage he would have been the first to marry this girl. Which of you requires a wife? *I foresee this girl giving birth to a warrior who will lead the Arabs.*”

His son Sayyiduna ‘Aasim (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) responded: “I don’t have a wife. Arrange that I be married to her.”

From this marriage a daughter was born, who in turn became the mother of ‘Umar bin Abdul ‘Azeez (rahimahullah), the great leader of Islam.

(Reference: Sifatul Safwah vol. 1, pg. 409 and Al-Kitaabul Jaami‘u li Seerati ‘Umar ibni Abdil ‘Azeez [rahimahullah] vol. 1, pg. 13)

This wasn’t a case of “crossing the bridge when we get there”. The production of this illustrious personality was the culmination of the effort of two lengthy and eventful generations.

How apt is the beautiful saying that the nurturing of a child begins the day the mother of that child is born. The nurturing of ‘Umar bin Abdul ‘Azeez (rahimahullah) began the day his mother

was born! Indeed, her nurturing was undertaken with piety and Allah-consciousness. And, yes, she was an epitome of the love, recognition and nearness to Allah Ta'ala from a young and tender age.

So if we desire our children to be the 'leaders' of tomorrow, productive for themselves and a blessing to others, we need to start preparing from *now*. *The piety of the mother sows the seeds for the piety of the child who will in turn raise true servants of Allah Ta'ala.*

Another significant lesson that shines out from this incident is that when a young girl lives a life of piety and obedience to Allah Ta'ala, He will bless her with a good home and a bright future.

The 'girl' in this incident had no father. She and her mother 'battled' to make ends meet by selling milk. *She was not of a very high social standing, yet she received a proposal from the 'prince', apart from the fact that the 'king' himself would have married her, had he needed to.*

So... becoming the person we would like our child to be, would indeed prepare us to cross two bridges... the 'bridge' of marriage as well as the 'bridge' of motherhood.

Even if we don't live to cross these bridges, there is another bridge which we will inevitably face one day. It is thinner than a strand of hair and sharper than a sword... suspended over the blazing fire of Jahannam.

Insha-Allah preparing in this manner to cross these worldly bridges will enable us to cross that bridge at a speed, faster than that of lightning, securing us entry into the gardens of bliss forever and ever and ever...

A Profound Legacy

A legacy is what one leaves behind after one dies. Your friend might leave behind a valuable piece of art while her grandfather may have left a vintage car. Someone may bid farewell to a state-of-the-art-kitchen equivalent in value to many people's entire home. On the other hand, someone might part with wardrobes full of designer apparel, branded scarves and fashionable footwear; the colours and variety of which could put an exclusive boutique to shame.

These are some of the mundane and finite legacies of this world. They are bound to perish one day. They will become outdated and unfashionable. The image that they lend to their owners is redeemed the day they die. The benefit that would accrue to those who possessed them discontinues and ceases the moment they part ways.

It is for this reason that Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) exhorted us to leave behind such legacies that continue to benefit us even after we have passed on to the Akhirah. Hence, his (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) blessed words leave us in no doubt about the type of legacies we should aspire to leave

behind. *“When a man dies he leaves behind only three legacies; an act of charity whose benefit continues, beneficial knowledge, and pious children who make du‘aa for him.” (Saheeh Muslim #4223)*

The pure and honourable wife of Nabi Ebrahim (‘alaihi salaam), Sayyidah Saarah (‘alaihas salaam) was blessed in her ripe old age with a son by the name of Nabi Ishaq (‘alaihi salaam). He was destined to be blessed and inspired with divine knowledge and prophethood. *Could any mother ask for anything better?*

What is more interesting is that he was to be the father of Nabi Ya‘qoob (‘alaihi salaam) who was the primary ancestor of the entire nation of the Banu Israa-eel. From among the Banu Israa-eel came thousands of Ambiyaa (‘alaihimus salaam). Some of these illustrious Ambiyaa had received the divine books of Tauraah, Zaboor and Injeel. *Sayyidah Saarah (‘alaihas salaam) was thus the Mother of a Nation.*

Sayyidah Haajar (‘alaihas salaam) was the mother of the first born child of Nabi Ebrahim (‘alaihi salaam). His name was Nabi Ismaa‘eel (‘alaihi salaam). He was to be endowed with a tremendous degree of forbearance and tolerance. He was also in line to be appointed as a Nabi. *Could any parent enjoy any greater boon?*

What added to the glory and honour was the fact that the greatest of the entire creation of Allah Ta‘ala was to appear in his progeny among the Arabs. He was destined to be such a personality who *all* the Ambiyaa (‘alaihimus salaam) would consider it their honour for him to be their leader.

It was none other than Sayyiduna Nabi Muhammad (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam). The prophethood of our Master, Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) would last till the end of time. His progeny would rule over the world. His followers, unlike the nations of the past, would be privileged to represent their Leader (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) in his mission. **This was the greatest favour that Allah Ta‘ala would ever bestow on any parent.** Thus, Sayyidah Haajar (‘alaihas salaam) was also the Mother of a Nation.

Sayyidah Saarah and Sayyidah Haajar (‘alaihimas salaam) were great personalities who left behind great legacies. Such personalities deserve to be honoured and followed. Study their exemplary lives and follow in their footsteps... you will also attain greatness as a mother, insha-Allah.

Such profound legacies are indeed a beauty and a joy forever.

Farming for the Future

There was once a farmer who planted a seed. With great care, he pressed the seed into the ground, marked the area and watered the small mound of soil. **Day after day, he diligently watered the seed, watching as it gradually sunk its roots into the soil and pushed its tender stem out of the ground, emerging into the light.**

As time passed, the plant grew stronger and firmer, and the aging farmer grew weaker and frailer. Yet, not for a single day

did he neglect to water and tend to the tree. Without fail, he would examine the leaves and branches for signs of fungus, disease and pests. He would tie the thin trunk to a wooden stake embedded into the ground to ensure that the trunk grew straight and not crooked. He would prune the plant to promote growth and would hasten to shelter it when the weather became inclement.

Seeing this unceasing effort, someone asked the aging farmer, “*Why are you undergoing all this trouble?*” The farmer replied, “*This tree is my investment. One day, it will give shade and shelter to people and feed them as well. Even if I am not alive at the time, I will surely reap the rewards!*”

The farmer then explained, “*The plant needs the most attention and care when it is young. During that time, it is most susceptible to being devoured by pests and ravaged by diseases. At that time, it needs constant watering, or else it will wither away and easily perish. In its early stages, it does not have the strength to weather the storm and thus requires shelter for its survival. Even when the stem develops into a trunk, it is weak and allows the breeze to easily bend it this way and that way. If it is left in this state, it will undoubtedly become crooked. Once the crooked stem becomes a firm trunk, it can never be straightened without being broken entirely. Pruning the plant may seem cruel, but it actually allows the plant to prosper and progress. Pesticide may seem to suffocate the plant, but it actually shields it from falling prey to insects and diseases.*”

Hence, if I am committed and diligent in attending to the plant, the day will come when it will stand tall and tower over all the other trees. Its roots will run deep and its branches will stretch far. Its fruit will spread across the globe to benefit one and all. It will have such strength in its trunk that it will not be shaken by anything. At that time, I will be able to rely on the tree, and the tree will not need to rely on me.”

Each and every child is a budding plant while the parents are the farmers. Children require the most attention in the developmental stages – the stages in which they acquire life values and morals. *They require constant watering with imaan and need to be ‘sprayed’ with Islamic values to shield them from the harmful effects of corrupt influences and attacks on their Deen. If they are not constantly under the watchful, concerned eye of the parents, they will easily fall prey to spiritual sicknesses.*

When a flood of evil is unleashed, the parents need to hold onto their child firmly, lest he be swept away and lost forever. Upholding the way of Islam may seem oppressive to the ignorant, but a true Muslim understands that it is the pure progress and prosperity – just like pruning.

When the parents raise their child in this manner, and do not leave the child unattended with an iPad or entrust him to some day-care or crèche, then the result is a young man who is unshakeable in imaan and firm in Islam. He will be of benefit to one and all while his parents will be able to completely rely on him in their old age and times of need. In fact, even after their

demise, they will reap the rewards of raising a child who is an asset to Islam and society.

May Allah Ta'ala bless every parent to take their responsibility as parents seriously and to raise their children in a manner that is pleasing to Him, aameen.

Du'aa for the Parents and New-born

Islam is a Deen that teaches us to love for others that which we love for ourselves. Hence, when our friends or relatives are blessed with a child, we should be happy for them and try to increase their joy. We should congratulate them on the blessing that they have received from Allah Ta'ala and make du'aa for them, as du'aa is one of the greatest gifts that a person can give the next.

Furthermore, doing so will not only strengthen our ties and create love among us, but will also bring us barakah (blessings) as when a person makes du'aa for the next person, Allah Ta'ala accepts that same du'aa for the one who made it. Thus, a very effective method of making our children obedient and pious is to make du'aa that Allah Ta'ala grant others pious and obedient children.

A man who had just been blessed with a child was once in the presence of Hasan Basri (rahimahullah) when another person

arrived. The newcomer, on seeing the father of the new-born, said, “Congratulations on your horseman! (referring to the new-born child) Hearing this, Hasan Basri (rahimahullah) asked, “How do you know whether this child will be a horseman or a donkey?” This person thus asked, “How should we then congratulate the parent?” Hasan Basri (rahimahullah) replied, “Make the following du‘aa: *May Allah Ta‘ala bless you in the child that He has gifted you, may He bless you with the ability to show Him gratitude for this child, may this child reach the peak of his strength and may he be obedient to you.*” (*Tuhfatul Mowdood pg. 27*)

First Impressions

The phrase “first impressions are lasting impressions” is well known. Hence, when going to the home of one’s prospective in-laws for a proposal or when going for a job interview, a person ensures that he is on his very best behaviour, as he wishes to create a positive impression that will hopefully remain a lasting impression.

Similarly, Islam teaches us that when a child is born, then the very first thing that should be done is to call out the azaan in his right ear and the iqamah in his left ear. *In this manner, the child’s very first impression is the impression of Islam and the greatness of Allah Ta‘ala.*

Aside from being a teaching of Islam, this azaan and iqaamah in the ears of the new-born child contains numerous benefits. If the very first words that the child heard, when entering the world, were the words of the kalimah in the azaan, then it is hoped that the final words of the child, when leaving this world, will also be the words of the kalimah. An additional benefit is that of repelling Shaitaan. When the azaan is called out, Shaitaan is forced to flee. Hence, as soon as the child is born, we chase Shaitaan away and ensure that the child hears the invitation to Deen in the form of azaan.

Finally, the name of Allah Ta'ala and the kalimah are such that they have a definite, positive effect on the person hearing them, even if he does not realize it. Thus, we strengthen the Deen of this new-born child with the kalimah and azaan, just as the doctors attempt to strengthen his immune system with vitamin injections, etc.

Tahneek

Among the teachings of Islam is that one carries out the tahneek of the newborn child.

Tahneek is for one to soften a date (or any other sweet food) by chewing it until it becomes a paste (so that it is easy for the child to swallow) and to thereafter place it in the mouth of the newborn child. It is preferable that the one carrying out the tahneek be a pious person. There are many ahaadeeth which

mention Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) performing tahneek for the children of the Sahaabah (radhiyallahu ‘anhum).

The primary reason for one to carry out the tahneek is that it is the teaching of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam). Nevertheless, the practice of tahneek contains numerous physical and health benefits as well.

When the date or sweet substance is placed in the mouth of the child, the child instinctively begins to suck it and chews at it with his gums. This strengthens the muscles, blood vessels and nerves of the mouth and jaw, preparing them in advance for the baby’s first feed from the mother. (*Tarbiyatul Awlaad fil Islam* pg. 77)

On average, one out of every ten premature babies suffers from low blood sugar which sometimes even causes brain damage. In 2013, doctors ‘discovered’ a remedy that was more effective than the glucose solution normally administered via I.V. drip – dextrose syrup. This sugar-rich syrup is plastered onto the cheek of the child, and by sucking on the syrup, the blood sugar level of the child is maintained.

Little did these doctors realize that through the blessing of Islam and the sunnah, Muslims have adhered to the very same practice, known as tahneek, for over a thousand years!

“Rather Safe than Sorry”

It's the first day in the life of baby 'Aamir and he is wheeled into the maternity ward to be met by his over joyous mum. It is her first child and she is bounding with delight. She holds him to her chest, cuddles and plays with him, admiring his petite figure, delicate fingers, cute little toes and reddish complexion. Suddenly there is a knock on the door and in comes the sister. She advises the first-time, nervous, yet excited mother regarding the need for immunising her bundle of joy (though debateable among medical researchers and conservatives). **Although upset by the disturbance, with the future of her child's health in mind, she consents and baby 'Aamir is immunised against polio, and in the weeks and months to come he is immunised for measles, mumps and rubella.**

Many of the oldies would be reminiscing the good old days when holidays were spent with all the cousins at Nanima's (maternal grandmother) or Dadima's (paternal grandmother) house... and on one morning all the children were lined up and given a tablespoon of castor oil. *Ooh! How difficult was it to gulp down that one spoon which seemed like a lifelong suffocation!* **Hearing the never-ending talk from Nanima on the importance of cleaning the system and removing all the “muck” was unavoidable.**

Not to forget, the school-visits by the nurses from the local clinic. Pupils were subjected to examination for various ailments

and sicknesses. And, how can we forget the 'yellow card' for travellers to overseas-countries. Dare a traveller risk not taking his immunisation, his entire trip would be thrown into a quagmire of jeopardy.

All these might sound quite familiar to most of us. Don't they ring bells in our minds?

Each of these stems forth from the importance that people attach to immunising and protecting their children and themselves from impending diseases and sicknesses.

However, let us be true to ourselves and do a bit of soul-searching. *Have we shown such importance and afforded that measure of significance to immunising our 'little angels' against the inevitable harm and destruction that the many 'anti-imaan viral diseases' are causing to not only our 'little angels', but our adults as well?* In many a case, it is too late to turn back the clock and regain that which has been lost via deadly viral attacks of vice and evil that are wreaking havoc around us.

If the infant is correctly and timeously spiritually 'immunised', then it will save us the trouble of running to the 'aamils for check-ups and enlisting their help for a stronger ta'weez and a special 'amal. Parents will not find the need to seek advice and counselling regarding their rebellious child or dealing with an "emo-kid" slitting his wrist. *The day will never dawn upon them to lower their heads in shame when their 'innocent' darling elopes with her non-Muslim boyfriend, or when their dear son is pulled out of a club inebriated and intoxicated as ever.*

Allah Ta'ala teaches us in the Quraan Majeed how Hannah, the mother of Maryam ('alaihas salaam) 'immunised' not only her child, but her grandchild as well, against the 'anti-imaan viral diseases' that Shaitaan spreads. Her immunisation did not start after a day from birth, but in the words of the Quraan Majeed: *"When she delivered her, she said, 'I have given birth to a girl,' ... 'Indeed I name her Maryam and I seek protection in You (Allah) for her and her progeny from Shaitaan the accursed.'"* (Surah Aal 'Imraan v36)

Her immunisation commenced from the moment her issue took her first breath of oxygen on earth.

It is on account of this du'aa and 'immunisation' against the attack of Shaitaan that Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) has stated in the hadeeth: *"Every child is probed by Shaitaan at the time of birth causing it to cry, except for Maryam and her son ('Isa ['alaihi salaam])."* (Saheeh Bukhaari #4548)

This profound du'aa of Hannah most powerfully impresses upon us that a major threat to our imaan is our arch enemy Shaitaan. The "rejected one" had vowed to leave no stone unturned to mislead the progeny of Nabi Aadam ('alaihi salaam). Hence, the earlier he gets the opportunity to unleash his dreadful viruses upon an individual, the simpler the task of misguiding him.

With this being his sole objective in life, Shaitaan devises innumerable discreet strategies to achieve this, many of which may seem harmless to us. It is only with the passage of time that we realise the detrimental effect of these cancerous and

cantankerous ‘anti-imaan viral diseases’. Tragically, in most instances the malaise and life-threatening viruses are beyond any cure. Thus, the most prudent option and sensible approach would be to immunise our budding and blossoming young ‘flowers’ against these deadly viruses and nip them in the bud.

At times, the viruses that Shaitaan pours out, affects the respect, dignity and values that are required to maintain a healthy imaan. The child loses complete focus. In no time, others become his hero. He hails them as his champions.

This is just one of the many viruses that are packaged in cartoons. From a young age, the glory of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) and the Sahaabah (radhiyallahu ‘anhum) is eradicated from the ‘little angel’s’ mind and he is brainwashed through the lethal effects of these viruses.

“Ben”, the “bandit” with his strange magical powers becomes his “hero”. He wants a “Ben 10” watch as his ‘eidi’ and insists on a “Ben 10” bag for school. On the other end, the little girl gets enthralled with “Hello Kitty” and wants her purse to have the “Hello Kitty” icon on it. For another young boy, he wants a “Superman” costume so that he may jump off his bed imagining himself to be “Superman” jumping off high skyscrapers.

The viruses packed in cartoons do not end there! Instead the cartoons are laced with subtle messages and images to indoctrinate the ‘super-powers’ of these characters into the impressionable minds of the young viewers and expel the

concept of the absolute might and power of Allah Ta'ala from their hearts. *How sad, yet an undeniable reality!*

Shaitaan also prepares his virus packages to attack teenagers and other age groups. The damaging anti-imaan viral effects of novels cannot be over emphasised. “Potterheads” can vouch on the extent to which their minds were consumed by the magical powers of “Harry Potter”. What about “50 Shades of Grey”? The following comment by a non-Muslim woman is quite thought provoking for many fanatics of romance books:

“To me, any book that makes us want greater from our spouses than what we currently have, causes people to look elsewhere. Many women have issues with their husbands viewing pornography but find no harm in reading these books or other romance novels. Are they not the same?

Reading these books bring pornography into our brains?”

(<http://theimperfecthousewife.com/50-shades-of-grey/>)

For some, this could have come as an early wake-up-call thus allowing them to save their ‘little angels’ from being exposed to such deadly viruses, while for others, it would mobilise them to recuperate the loss that they have suffered thus far.

All said and done, this now begs the question as to how should we go about immunising our children and ourselves against these anti-imaan viruses.

The very first step would be to thoroughly inspect all that we offer and make available to our children. Any item or article that

will contribute to the weakening of our imaani immune systems should be immediately abandoned.

Secondly, as in the event of a life-threatening viral attack on our child, where we would at once seek the assistance and advice of an experienced paediatrician, likewise, we should refer to reliable and experienced Deeni scholars and the lovers and friends of Allah Ta'ala regarding matters that affect and endanger our imaan.

Thirdly, a virus-free Deeni environment needs to be created at home to enhance and boost our immune systems. For this to be achieved, a collective as well as a personal imaani 'diet plan' needs to be drawn up for the home. *Included in it, should be punctuality in the performance of salaah at its respective and fixed times (in congregation for the men-folk), daily recitation of the Quraan Majeed, ta'leem, zikr and du'aa.*

Together with this, anything or any individual who has the slightest possibility of negatively impacting on our imaani immune systems should be 'barred and banned' from the home.

Added to this, parents need to understand the importance and seriousness of the role they need to play in ensuring the proper Deeni upbringing of their 'little angels'. If this is realised as a genuine responsibility and acted upon, it would usher in and nurture a better society in every sense of the word.

What's in a Name?

Dawood... Salmaa... Mu'aaz... Each and every name is as unique as the individual bearing the name. But how are children named? Or rather, more importantly, how should a child be named?

Naming a child is normally a 'once in a lifetime' occurrence and is thus shown great importance. The matter is often debated and discussed for months on end before the child has even entered the world. **While it is not necessary to spend months deliberating different names, what is necessary is that we give the child a good name, as he or she will bear this name for life, and also because the name of the child has an effect on the child.** Hence, Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) instructed the Ummah to give their children good names, and he (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) would himself change the name of a person who had been given an unsuitable name.

The grandfather of Sa'eed bin Musayyab (rahimahullah) went to Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam). On enquiry, he informed Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) that his name was 'Huzn' (which means grief). Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) said to him, "You are Sahl" (Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) wished to change his name to Sahl which means 'ease'). However, his grandfather did not wish to change his name. Sa'eed bin Musayyab (rahimahullah) mentioned, **"The effect of that grief (in the name of my grandfather) remained in us thereafter."** (Saheeh Bukhaari #6190)

Some of the names recommended by Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) are: ‘Abdullah and ‘Abdur Rahmaan, together with the names of all the Ambiyaa (‘alaihimus salaam). (*Sunan Abi Dawood #4950*) As a general guideline, one should try to keep the names of pious people, such as the Ambiyaa (‘alaihimus salaam) and the Sahaabah (radhiyallahu ‘anhum), as it is hoped that the piety and good qualities of these individuals will rub off onto the child.

As parents, we wish the best of this world and the next for our beloved children. We should thus make it our priority to give them good, suitable names, instead of looking for ‘new’ names or names that resemble those of pop stars, sports icons or other ‘celebrities’ who are disbelievers. **We should ask ourselves, “Do we want the sublime qualities of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) to shine in our child, or do we want the filthy habits of these disbelievers to corrupt our child?”** Often, in the quest to keep a ‘fashionable’ name instead of an ‘old fashioned’ name, we keep names that have foolish, unsuitable meanings or no meaning at all.

When the child will bear this name and be influenced by it for life, it is only fair that we keep his or her interests at heart by choosing a good name.

The 'NEED' of the Hour

Friday 16:10: “Oh No, only 20 minutes left to pick up the kids from madrasah. Oh Gosh! Tomorrow is another crazy Saturday morning with them at home”, groaned mum.

Friday 16:40 (after madrasah): “Yesss, it’s weekend again. Tomorrow we can hook up with the gang at the mall. Maybe, we can catch a good movie,” thought the kids gleefully.

Saturday morning: “Stop that, I’m busy on the phone. Can’t you do something to occupy yourself! Enough nagging”, yells mum amid the chaos and clutter.

Mums nerves are frazzled by the constant questions and the irritating chatter of the enquiring minds of the kids. *By 10:00, she’s ‘driven up the wall’. So she leaves the crisis zone and jets off with the ‘baggage’ to the mall, appeasing each child with R200 and freedom till 13:00 in order to ‘buy’ some time-out with her friends over coffee.* Bursting with excitement, the kids tap away on their phones to get the co-ordinates of their friends.

At 12:30, mum’s iPhone beeped. It’s a broadcast message about a report-back on Syria, by an ‘aalim, at the local girls madrasah at 15:00.

That afternoon, mum diligently listened to the Moulana as he recounted his first-hand experiences of the merciless butchering of our youth and innocent children in Syria. She could not help but shed tears at their pitiable plight. At that very moment,

mum felt a pang in her heart. She regretted not giving her time to her children.

While the loss of the youth of Syria to the blood thirsty regime of their country is extremely heart-rending, the loss of our youth to the scourge of the “Satanic Cults”, to the night clubs and cinemas, to the drug lords of our neighbourhood and to the pandemic of lewd and illicit behaviour is equally, if not, more tragic.

If we ever want to peek into our future, then glance at the morals and values of our youth. *The building blocks of our future are being moulded by our hands... in our presence.*

Their ‘NEED’

N - Nurturing

E - Education

E - Example

D - Du‘aa

N = Nurturing:

Our children *are* our future. The moral, social, religious and spiritual values that we imbue in them now will play out in their lives tomorrow. *Firstly, we need to condition our minds that their success as human beings depends on Deen. It does not depend on making them into ‘money-making-machines’.*

Deep-rooted concern for the Deen of one’s children is a salient quality of the true servants of Allah Ta‘ala. This is aptly

highlighted in Surah Furqaan (v74), via the following supplication: “O our Rabb, make our spouses and offspring the coolness of our eyes (by making them obedient to us) and make us leaders (and examples) to those who fear You.”

It is thus quite clear that, we should galvanise all our effort and channel them into instilling sound Islamic values in the nurturing of our beautiful off-spring. *The ball is in our court.*

Invest in them and secure your sadaqah jaariyah, or neglect them, only to cry later on:

“Oh beta, why are you casting me in an old age home?”

“Oh my Muhammad, leave your business for a little while, and visit your mummy at least once a week.”

“Oh my dear Faatimah, remember that your mother comes before your friends and all your other commitments!”

E = Education:

This is our responsibility and not that of the madrasah teacher. *They only do us a favour by easing our load and supplement the task of the parents.*

Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbaas (radhiyallahu ‘anhuma) has reported his personal experience with Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) at a very tender age. He says: “One day I was seated behind Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) on a conveyance, when he said to me: ‘O young lad! Let me teach you a few lessons:

- Protect Allah Ta‘ala’s Deen and He will protect you.

- Remain within the limitations set down by Allah Ta'ala and you will find Him (His mercy and help) before you.
- When you beg, beg of Allah Ta'ala.
- When you seek assistance, seek it from Allah Ta'ala.
- Know very well that if the entire world gathers to benefit you, they will not be able to render more benefit than that which Allah Ta'ala has predestined for you, and if they gather to harm you, they will not be able to cause more harm than that which Allah Ta'ala has predestined against you.
- The pen (of destiny) has been lifted and the scrolls have dried up.” (Sunan Tirmizi #2516)

A reckless and foolish chant that we often hear is: “He’s still small.”

Ah, but in the above hadeeth, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) teaches the basic articles of imaan to Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbaas (radhiyallahu ‘anhuma), who was still a child!

We could make a start with the following simple method:

- Sit together as one family unit and dedicate a few minutes for the recitation of the Quraan Majeed, ta’leem of Fazaail-e-Aa’maal and some collective du’aa.
- Narrate to them the stories of the Ambiyaa (‘alaihimus salaam), Sahaabah (radhiyallahu ‘anhum), the pious and other beneficial incidents. Children love stories. These incidents will (insha-Allah) mould them and give them a direction in life.

- Teach them the etiquettes and du'aas of eating, drinking, going to the toilet, dressing, sleeping, greeting, travelling, etc.

E = Example:

Our children are our CCTV's (Child's Careful and Thoughtful Vision). They absorb our every move and replay it when faced with similar situations. Therefore, we need to walk the talk, and they will follow suit. This is the easiest method to teach our children. The famous adage goes: "An apple does not fall far from the tree."

Dear parents, let us take heed and lead by deed.

D = Du'aa:

Supplicating to Allah Ta'ala for the children's earthly and spiritual success was the hallmark of our pious predecessors.

Nabi Ebrahim ('alaihi salaam) implored Allah Ta'ala: "O Allah, I have settled my progeny in a barren land (Makkah Mukarramah) by Your sacred house, so that they may establish salaah. So make the hearts of the people yearn towards them and provide them with fruits, so that they may be grateful... O Allah, grant me and my offspring the ability to be punctual with salaah." (Surah Ebrahim v37 & 40)

The Master of Hadeeth, Imaam Bukhaari (rahimahullah), lost his eyesight during his early infancy. His mother, who was a very pious woman, was deeply grieved. She cried and begged Allah Ta'ala to restore her child's sight. After a period of intense crying and pleading, she saw Nabi Ebrahim ('alaihi salaam) in a dream giving her the glad tidings of her son's sight being

restored. On awakening she found his eyesight was restored. (*Hadyus Saari pg. 662*)

This 'super-woman' did not lose hope despite her son turning blind. Likewise, we cannot afford to give up on our children. While they may be drowning in sin and evil, due to being *spiritually* blind, we need to continue *trying* and *crying*. *That day will soon dawn when Allah Ta'ala restores their spiritual eyesight by virtue of our du'aas, just as He had restored the physical eyesight of Imaam Bukhaari (rahimahullah) through the blessings of his mother's du'aas.*

Dedicate time daily to cry for them, before they make you cry.

Stand up to the 'NEED' and Allah Ta'ala will infuse the 'DEEN.'

Reverse the word 'NEED', and that is their real need (i.e. DEEN).

Baby Talk

Instilling Deen within the child is an effort which begins from the very moment the child takes his first breath and begins to bawl. We will, at every turn, juncture and phase of the child's life, provide guidance in order to mould the child into becoming a true Muslim.

As soon as the child, in his own broken way, tries to pronounce a few words, we will begin teaching him the name of Allah Ta'ala in the hope that this will be the first word he utters. When the child has reached the age of basic

understanding, we will, together with being a practical example of Deen, verbally explain the concepts of Deen to him. For example, we will introduce our children to Allah Ta'ala by mentioning and explaining His qualities to them. We will explain that Allah Ta'ala has created everything and He alone gives life and death.

An effort will be made to instil the quality of du'aa within the child so that he understands that he should turn to Allah Ta'ala when confronted by any need – be it big or small. When the child gets up to any mischief, reprimand him by saying, “Allah Ta'ala does not like this action”. According to the opportunities presented by the day and moment, we will strive to make the child more and more aware of Allah Ta'ala. **This continuous repetition will, in time, convince the child of the constant presence of Allah Ta'ala.**

We should constantly correct the mindset and thinking of the child. As the child's capabilities grow, we should commence teaching him the shorter surahs and du'aas until we eventually teach him the recitation of the Quraan Majeed. When the child reaches the age of seven, we should teach him and show him the method of performing salaah and when he turns ten, we may adopt the appropriate punishment in order to make him perform salaah.

The Silent Recorder

A young child is like a recorder. Every laugh, cry, scream and sigh around them is recorded. However, on account of the recorder being silent, nobody realizes that they are being recorded.

These recordings are thereafter played, from time to time, through the years that follow. *If not played through the 'speaker' of the child's mouth, they play out through his actions – and actions speak louder than words.*

Every child starts with a clean slate and thus has the potential to record anything – be it good or bad. The environment which the parents create for the child thereafter determines what the child will record and re-enact later on in life. If the environment was polluted with sin and evil, the child will be corrupted – often for the rest of his life. On a positive note, if the environment is one of Islam and Deen, the child will be a reflection of the pristine teachings of Islam for the rest of his life.

The child's recording cannot simply be 'deleted' and 'rewritten'. *Hence we have to exercise the greatest level of caution in ensuring that it is only the values and qualities of Deen and Islam that are recorded by the child.* Doing this will ensure that the child will succeed in this world and the next.

Two Vaccines

There are two extremely essential “vaccines” with which we, as parents, need to inoculate and protect the hearts and minds of our children:

1. The love of Allah Ta’ala – Constantly speak about the innumerable favours of Allah Ta’ala and explain the beautiful qualities of Allah Ta’ala to them. **In this way every fibre of the child will eventually become soaked and saturated in the love of Allah Ta’ala.** The love of Allah Ta’ala will automatically bring about total obedience to the commands of Allah Ta’ala and will dissuade the child from chasing after the temporary pleasures of the world.

2. The concern for the Hereafter – Speak about the unpredictable nature of death, the reality of the grave, the last day, the pleasures of Paradise and the horrors of Hell and regularly remind them about life after death. The child will thus realize the importance of and the need to prepare for the Hereafter. **The child will be wary of and unwilling to fall into any sin due to the fear of one day standing accountable before Allah Ta’ala.** A concerted and calculated effort is being made by the disbelievers to entirely erase the concept of the Hereafter from the minds of our children. We therefore have to play an active role and be more alert in protecting our children and preparing them for the Hereafter.

Gradual Guidance

A mother wishing to wean her child doesn't introduce him to a diet of 100% solids overnight. She understands that the child's digestive system will not cope with such a sudden, drastic change and therefore makes small, gradual adjustments to the diet.

Similarly, when a child becomes mature (reaches the age of puberty), it is now obligatory for him to perform the five daily salaah, fast in the month of Ramadhaan, etc. *If these obligatory 'ibaadaat are introduced to the child all at once, he may find it difficult to make an 'overnight' change.* Therefore, the Sahaabah (radhiyallahu 'anhum) would begin training their children to perform 'ibaadaat long before they reached the age of puberty. In this way, they ensured that their children were not only accustomed to all the 'ibaadaat, but that the 'ibaadaat were actually a second nature to them.

Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) himself has taught us to train our children in this manner. He instructs us to make our children perform salaah at the age of seven and to punish them for not performing salaah when they reach the age of ten – emphasizing the importance of giving the child the correct training early in life. (*Sunan Abi Dawood #494*)

When a tree is a young sapling, it is easy to guide it and ensure that it grows straight. If left without guidance, however, it will grow crooked and become set in its crookedness. *To*

adequately train the child for the duties he will face later on in life is actually kindness to the child – not cruelty. If we do not inculcate the Islamic way of behaving, dressing and speaking and the habit of ‘ibaadah into our children from a young age, thinking that they are “still too small”, *what will we do when they are suddenly “too big” to heed our “too-late” guidance?*

Enjoying Arabic

Little children love writing and colouring. As mothers, we need to take advantage of this interest and use it to benefit the child. *Let us start by using this as a medium to introduce them to the language of the Quraan Majeed, the language of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) and the language of Jannat - “Arabic”.*

Start with the Arabic alphabet and take it one letter at a time. Our child should continuously write out that letter until he is able to write it easily and clearly. If done correctly, this entire exercise will not only be fun and interesting for the child but will also *enhance the child’s ability to easily recognize the letters of the Arabic alphabet.*

With time we can move onto small, easy words and we will be greatly pleased to see that all of this will create a bond and love in the child’s heart for the Arabic language. *This will insha-Allah ultimately embed the love of the Quraan Majeed in the child’s life, aameen!*

The Bitter Pill with Sweet Results

For everything in life, there is both a procedure and price. If a person wishes to build a house, he understands that the structure will cost him a substantial sum of money and that it will not spring up overnight. Similarly, if a person wishes to become a highly qualified specialist in the medical field, he will understand that he will first have to work his way through school, matriculate with good marks, gain admission into a university, pass through the various years, etc., before his aspiration can eventually be realized. **This is the simple yet inescapable system that dominates in all facets of life.**

If a person does not recognize this to be the system, he will expect to have whatever he wants, whenever he wants, how he wants, and he will expect to have it for free. Naturally, this cannot work, due to which this corrupt mindset will lead to massive problems.

The early years of a child's life are acknowledged to be the formative years – the years during which values, ideals and morals are instilled within the child and the mindset of the child is moulded. Hence, we need to take a close, unbiased look at our children to determine exactly what values we are instilling within them.

When they want something, do they resort to a tantrum, screaming and crying? If yes, is it because we give in whenever they do this and grant them whatever they demand?

If they want something, do we give it to them instantly? Or do we make them earn it, even if it be through some seemingly mundane chore such as picking up their toys or making their beds?

When they misbehave and become rebellious, do we punish them suitably? Or do we try to pacify them by placing an iPad in their hands or a sweet in their mouths?

Our honest answers to the above questions will be sufficient for us to gauge the type of upbringing that we are giving our children, and will assist us to see whether we are moulding them, or they are moulding us!

The result of this upbringing of ‘instant gratification with no consequences’ is exactly as described above – our children will expect to receive whatever they want, whenever they want, how they want, at the mere trigger of a temper tantrum!

The matter may not seem overly serious when they are small, but ask those whose children are no longer children but are now young adults, and most of them will tell you, with a broken heart, that their children are disobedient, refuse to behave responsibly and do not understand consequences, as they expect ‘daddy and his contacts’ or ‘daddy and his credit card’ to always rush to the rescue. They are unable to work or achieve anything in life, as they were always handed what they asked for on a

golden platter. Now, even as adults, they cannot handle not getting their way. Consequently, their marriages fail, they are not an asset but rather a liability to the family business and overall, are an embarrassment to the family and failures in general.

Before our children reach that point of no return, let us put measures into place for their own sake. From now on, make them work for what they want, and make them face the consequences of their actions. Remember that the medicine may be bitter, but it is absolutely necessary for the recovery and wellbeing of the patient. Hence, we should never 'give up' and never 'give in'.

Ummi!

O my Sister!

“When last did you, as a mother have a decent discussion with your child, or when was the last time you as a daughter, conversed with your mother?”

You may be already giving yourself a pat on the back, all excited that you will receive full marks for this question, since the last time was a mere moment or just a few hours ago.

But wait a minute...

“Zainab, get in the bathroom!” “Yumna, did you do your homework?” and “Mummy, your silly maid burnt my jeans!”

These are not decent discussions and constructive conversations.

I'm referring to the intimate exchanges, where the daughter confides in her mother, and her mother gives her correct guidance on how to weather the tempestuous tornadoes of life and navigate herself to calmer waters.

Below are a few paraphrased snippets of a rich conversation, brimming with lessons, that took place between a seventy three year old son and his hundred year old mother, just a few hours before sacrificing his soul in the path of Allah Ta'ala.

Guess what? ... If you thought you're too old to speak to your mother, I bet you're not yet seventy-three!

The son, who was besieged in the best of lands, Makkah Mukarramah, 'traitored' by not only his men, but even his own blood (sons), approaches his aged and blind mother and presents his predicament to her. He enquired whether he should accept the offer of his enemy to surrender on any sum of wealth.

You would most probably be expecting her to say: "Accept the offer, spare your life and serve your aged mother." But her answer was totally different and absolutely mind-boggling.

Her firm reply was: "You know yourself better. If you were fighting for material gain, then you are a wicked soul who has destroyed himself and his army. And O my son, if you were fighting for Allah Ta'ala, then remember that the truth is as strong as ever. In any case how much longer do you expect to live in this world?"

Wow! A hundred-year-old woman exhorting her son to reject the offer, ignore the odds and fight in the face of death!

The least you can do, my sister, is to encourage your children towards righteous activities and not become an impediment in them progressing in Deen.

The son draws closer, kisses his mother on the forehead and responds: “By Allah! Neither was I inclined to the material possessions of this temporary life, nor did I desire to live longer in it. The sole reason for me posing this question to you was to ascertain whether you are backing me in my decision to persevere and lay down my life. Now, you have only added to my resolve.”

He then goes on to console and comfort her saying: “O my beloved mother! I will be martyred very shortly, so don’t allow your grief over my loss to consume you, rather be pleased with the decision of Allah Ta’ala. *Take solace from the fact that throughout his life, your son neither committed an intentional sin, nor has he indulged in a shameless act ever.* The be all and end all in his life was the pleasure of his Creator.”

The mother replies: “O my son! Continue with your mission. I am optimistic that Allah Ta’ala will grant me the courage to bare your loss patiently.”

Who do we marvel at? Is it the son who ‘stood out’, or the mother who ‘withstood’?

Never forget! As you sow, so shall you reap... If you sow the correct values and instil good qualities in your children, they

will become the coolness of your eyes when you need them the most – in old age.

The opposite, however, is also unfortunately true... If you sow the wrong ‘seeds’ in them, or simply neglect them, allowing the weeds of evil to sink their roots into your potential rose garden, the day may come when you will be engulfed by such regret that being beneath the earth will hold more appeal to you than being above.

The dialogue doesn’t end here. He now requests his mother to make du‘aa for him, to which she responds: “I always make du‘aa for you.”

Imagine his emotions, the heaviness he must have felt in his heart, the lump in his throat, and the tears in his eyes. Yet, he knew that if anything would benefit him, it was his mother’s incredible and powerful du‘aas.

At that critical juncture, she supplicated in these words: “O Allah! Pity the lengthy rakaats of salaah that he would offer, the raging thirst that he endured (during his optional fasts) in the scorching heat of Makkah Mukarramah and Madeenah Munawwarah, and have mercy on him due to his obedience to his mother and father. O Allah! I have handed him over to You and I am totally at ease with Your decision. So reward me on his loss, the reward of the patient and the grateful ones.”

To you, who are fortunate enough to still enjoy the affectionate shade of a parent! Value it before it’s too late. Don’t

just ask for du'aas but *take* du'aas (i.e. serve them in a way that they feel obliged to make du'aa for you).

And as a parent, never underestimate the power of begging Allah Ta'ala on behalf of your little ones. While they may not be going to battle against an outward enemy, they are definitely often fighting a losing battle against the ever-increasing forces of the devil.

Next, the aged mother asks her son to come close. She then embraces and kisses him bidding him farewell before he embarks on his one-way journey to the Hereafter, never to return.

Just close your eyes and imagine the scene; an old woman, a hundred years old, embracing her son who was the “coolness of her eyes and a delight to her heart”, knowing that this was the last time she would ever meet, touch and smell him.

As she hugged him, she felt the hardness of his armour, and commented: “O my son! If you truly desire martyrdom, I don't expect you to wear this.”

He replied: “O my mother! I only wore it to keep you at ease and to comfort you.”

What an invaluable lesson indeed! We should leave no stone unturned in bringing comfort to our elderly and make it our mission to save them from the least bit of inconvenience.

The mother, who's resolve was firmer than the plate of his armour, instructed her son to remove it. Thereafter, as he donned the rest of his clothing, she urged him to ensure that his

lower garment was fastened tightly so that his 'awrah does not get exposed when he falls to the ground as a martyr.

Amazing! Look at her concern! She was prepared to accept her son as a martyr but could not tolerate his 'awrah being exposed in the process!

Here is a situation where steps are being taken to ensure that the body is not exposed after death. *We, on the contrary, go out of our way and even spend a fat sum to acquire the garment which is most revealing, just to look 'gorgeous' according to today's warped definition of the word.*

If you have not yet figured out who this outstanding son and 'withstanding' mother was... it was none other than Sayyiduna 'Abdullah bin Zubair (radhiyallahu 'anhuma) and his patient, enduring and tolerant mother, Sayyidah Asmaa (radhiyallahu 'anha).

(Al-Bidaayah wan Nihaayah vol. 9, pg. 130)

May Allah Ta'ala make us parents the like of Sayyidah Asmaa (radhiyallahu 'anha) and children the like of Sayyiduna 'Abdullah bin Zubair (radhiyallahu 'anhuma).

Causing Moral Decay in our Children

One of the main reasons for the moral decay in many children is that when there is an occasion which demands love and affection, we punish and shout the child, and when the occasion warrants admonition, we show the child love and affection.

Often the child makes a mistake, and on realising his mistake is remorseful and intends to make amends. At this juncture, the child needs our warmth and support. *If at such a time instead of supporting the child, one gets angry and reprimands him over his mistake, it may break his spirit and courage to change and rectify himself.* In future he will not even consider correcting his mistake as he will think to himself *“Whether I change or not, my parents will still shout at me.”*

Sometimes the child does something which warrants some punishment. However, we completely ignore the wrong and continue to show warmth and affection to the child. *The result is that the seriousness of doing wrong leaves the child’s heart and the child feels he can get away with any wrong in future.*

Empty Threats

When parents threaten their children with a certain punishment for misbehaving, provided that the punishment is appropriate and within the limits of sharee'ah, and the child is deserving, it is essential that they implement the punishment.

While the parent has many functions to fulfil e.g. protector and one showing love, a very important role and function of the parent which serves to develop the child's discipline and behaviour is that of 'figure of authority'.

If the parents fail in administering their threat, the child will lose his respect for them as the 'figures of authority' in his life. He will view his parents as people who make empty threats because they cannot stick to their word and have a weak resolve.

Apart from the harm caused by the child losing respect for his parents, they are further harming him by setting a bad example – the example of somebody who does not keep to their word.

Don't Interfere

It often happens that the child misbehaves and is thus deserving of punishment. However, while one or both of the parents are expressing disapproval and wish to punish the child, the other parent or other parties (grandparents, etc.) laugh at the 'performance' of the child and try to protect the child. **This is**

extremely detrimental as it confuses the moral compass of the child. The child is lead to understand that my behaviour is only disapproved in the eyes of my parents whereas others admire my antics. This encourages the child to ‘perform’ for his spectators and to also resent his parents for punishing him as he feels that his ill-behaviour is actually acceptable.

Furthermore, the child becomes cunning and realizes that he can get away with ill-behaviour in the presence of these ‘protectors’ and thus turns to them to continually undermine the authority of his parents.

It is thus essential that we do not, in any way, interfere when a parent metes out an appropriate punishment to their deserving child.

My Child’s Comfort

Sayyidah Zainab (radhiyallahu ‘anha), the beloved daughter of Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam), passed away in the eighth year after Hijrah.

Sayyiduna Anas (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) mentions, “When Zainab (radhiyallahu ‘anha) passed away, we emerged with Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) (to attend to her burial) and saw that he (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) was extremely grieved and sad. (Such was his grief) that we did not speak to him until we arrived at the grave. When we reached the grave, we found that it was still being dug. Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) therefore

sat for some time, speaking to himself and glancing at the sky, while we sat around him. When the grave was ready, Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) descended into it and I saw his grief intensify. **When he had completed burying her and emerged from the grave, his blessed face was radiating relief and happiness.**

We therefore asked, ‘O Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam)! We saw the extent of your grief and hence were unable to even speak to you. We thereafter saw that you were suddenly very happy. What was the matter?’ He (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said, **‘I had remembered the narrowness and grief of the grave and I thought about Zainab and her weakness. This thought grieved me.** I therefore made du‘aa to Allah Ta‘ala to grant her ease from the constraints and grief of the grave. Allah Ta‘ala accepted my du‘aa and granted her ease.’” (*Al-Mu‘jamul Kabeer - Majma‘uz Zawaa-id #4308*)

We are generally concerned and ensure that our children are not only comfortable in this worldly life, but that they enjoy the very best that we can provide. **More important than this, however, is that we show concern and do our utmost to ensure that they are comfortable in the grave.** The grave is the first stage in the journey to the Hereafter. If our children are successful and comfortable in this stage, they will most likely be successful in the stages to come.

Fed Up!

Ever heard of the ‘terrible two’s’? It’s the age where your endearing, innocent angel suddenly seems to transform into a bundle of tantrums. Even a mundane task such as feeding him or her becomes a battle of wills with the kitchen floor serving as the battlefield, covered in the debris of yet another meal refused.

Soon after follow the ‘terrifying threes’, ‘fearsome fours’ and ‘furious fives’. This breakdown in behaviour sometimes even continues into the ‘sour sixes’, ‘sneaky sevens’, ‘evil eights’ and ‘nasty nines’!

Many mothers understandably face frustration as they struggle to cope with the challenge of balancing their numerous chores together with dealing with children who are bent on being difficult. In this regard, implementing the following will insha-Allah prove helpful:

1. Difficult behaviour is generally nothing more than a plea for attention and is thus often witnessed when the child feels insecure e.g. when there is a new sibling who is now rivalling him or her for attention. **For a child, this is a natural reaction so try to give the child extra attention and love so that he feels secure.**
2. If the child has a ‘meltdown’ in behaviour, then we should not follow suit by also losing our composure and temper, as this will literally double the problem. **Instead, remain calm and try to remind yourself that this is a test from Allah Ta’ala for which**

you will be greatly rewarded, provided that you exercise sabr (patience) and do not lose your temper.

3. Be steadfast on the aa'maal (good actions) of the home, viz. Daily ta'leem, reciting the Quraan Majeed (preferably loud enough that the children can hear), du'aa, istighfaar and zikr. All these aa'maal will draw the mercy of Allah Ta'ala together with 'sakeenah' (divine tranquillity and peace).

4. Try to pacify and console the child with love and compassion. If this does not work, try to distract the child.

5. Remove all Shaitaani influences from the home and life of the child, e.g. television, music, toys, books or clothing with pictures of animate objects. All these are factors that drive the angels of mercy away.

6. Lastly, turn to Allah Ta'ala and pour out your heart to Him. Cry to Him and lay your complaint before Him. Beg Him to make your children the coolness of your eyes.

GPS Programming

From Garmin to TomTom and every GPS app besides – the choices are endless when it comes to finding a solution to safe navigation and guidance to the destination. With a GPS in hand, a person feels at home on even foreign roads, casually driving about and comfortably commuting from one point to the next.

However, imagine for a moment that a person is all alone and driving through the wilderness at night. Suddenly, he enters an area that is ill-reputed to be fraught with hijackers and robbers. As he enters this area, his GPS system goes absolutely haywire. The system ‘speaks’ and tells him to turn left, but when he glances at the screen, it clearly shows that he should proceed straight ahead without taking any turns. It is not farfetched to believe that this person would break out into a sweat and panic, as he would not know which direction to take in this most dangerous of places.

In exactly the same manner, every individual has to traverse his own path of life. In this path, he will face numerous threats and areas of intense darkness. If he safely navigates past all the roadblocks of Shaitaan, potholes of sin and oil-patches of the nafs (carnal desires), he will arrive safe and sound at his destination of Jannah.

When a child is born, he carries within him a blank ‘GPS’ system which will guide him throughout his life. As he grows up, it is the input of those around him – primarily his parents – that ‘program’ his GPS. However, when conflicting commands are entered into the GPS system, it causes the entire system to go haywire and crash, leaving the traveller stranded on the roadside or even worse – involved in an accident.

As parents, we should all introspect and ask ourselves, “*What is the state of my child’s GPS?*” Unfortunately, many of us may be guilty of either directly or indirectly saying to our children, “DO

AS I SAY, NOT AS I DO.” As absurd as this may sound, it’s actually way more common than we imagine.

How many children are taught that the five daily salaah are compulsory, yet live in a home where salaah is taken casually?

How many fathers prevent their children from smoking, yet regularly ask them to empty the ashtray?

How many parents teach their children that lying is evil and haraam, yet lie to the teachers of the child when asked to explain why the child was absent?

These are just a few examples, and if we seriously ponder, we will be able to find many more. The point is that many of us are causing our children’s GPS systems to go haywire and malfunction as we input contradictory commands. The children are told to behave in a certain way, but witness the behaviour and values in their very own homes to be the exact opposite. *These ‘double-instructions’ result in the child having ‘double-standards’.* For instance, he will reach the conclusion that he should never ever lie – unless he is absolutely certain that he can get away with it.

When traversing the dark sections of the path – the sections that are filled with fitnah and in which evil invites from every corner – how will my child’s GPS perform? Will it guide him to safety, or will it plunge him into the pits of ruin and destruction?

To a great extent, the choice is ours. Before it’s too late, update the GPS system by doing a daily download of ta’leem in

the home and erasing all viruses and malware threats (sins and evils) from our own lives.

“Game Over”

Playing is a natural activity for a child and is even important for the correct, healthy development of a child. For a child, playing is not merely a pastime. Rather, it is a developmental and educational process through which the child learns many basic principles such as cause and effect, effort and reward, etc. It is due to the process of playing being such an effective medium of education that teachers seek to capitalize on playing and use it to engage the students in games through which they will be educated in a subtle yet definite and enjoyable manner.

However, since the world has taken the route of technology, the nature of ‘the game’ has changed. Now, games are seldom played on fields and in backyards. Rather, the computer, tablet and phone screen has become the new field of play, and once the game begins, players become glued to the screen.

For many parents, ‘parking’ the child before the PC or placing an iPad in their hands is a daily solution to occupying the child, leaving the parent free to attend to their own responsibilities or even relax. This has led to children becoming increasingly addicted to these games. As a result, if a child is invited to play soccer in the backyard, it is not farfetched to imagine him replying, “Why should I kick a ball when I already have an app

for that!” *The result... The virtual world is now preferred to living life in the real world.*

The dangers that accompany these games are numerous. Games that contain music, pictures of animate objects, indecent content and other similar elements of haraam are impermissible, and playing these games causes devastating damage to the imaan of the player.

However, even if the game is void of these haraam elements, these games teach different, subtle messages to these young, impressionable players. Children who grow up playing car racing games generally grow up mimicking the same behaviour by living life ‘in the fast lane’. Similarly, when games are played that depict and encourage violence, such as fighting, shooting and war games, then the child develops violent tendencies as his natural, inborn aversion to violence is desensitized. In many cases, children who pulled a gun on their classmates and went onto a shooting rampage, murdering innocent people, were found to be avid players of these games.

The fundamental difference between these games and the real world is that there are no real consequences in the gaming world. Rather, when one encounters difficulty, one can easily escape by pressing the convenient ‘reset’ button. In real life, there is no reset. When reckless driving leads to an accident and the loss of lives, there is no reset. When a gun is pulled and lives are lost, there is no reset. *In real life, there is only one result – the child’s life is ruined and it’s GAME OVER.*

Furthermore, the playing of the past almost always benefited the child in some way or another. If the child was running in a field, his body benefited. If the child was playing in the kitchen, they were perhaps learning a basic skill such as peeling potatoes, rolling dough, etc. If the child played in the garden, they learnt how to wield a spade, etc. Hence, even though the child was playing, the child was developing a practical skill with which they would be able to benefit themselves and others. On the contrary, most children glued to their screens suffer obesity, anti-social behaviour and a range of other physical and psychological problems.

If we truly love our children, let us wake up to the damage that these devices are wreaking on our innocent children. At the very least, let us limit their screen time. *Switch off the game before it's... GAME OVER.*

Enable the Disabled

Screeeech! Crash!

In a matter of seconds, it was over. The car went off the road and capsized, injuring the occupants within. An hour later, they were all in the emergency ward of the hospital with their loved ones waiting outside, fervently engaged in du'aa. *Finally, the surgeon brought them some news. They had all survived and had sustained no serious injuries – besides their young child... His spine had been broken, leaving him paralyzed!*

May Allah Ta'ala save us all from being tested with such a tragedy. Nevertheless, when a family is faced with the above situation, what generally happens? No parent can bear to see their beloved child in pain and difficulty, and no person would wish for their family member to be disabled and wheelchair-bound.

Hence, the effort to “enable the disabled” commences. They seek the very best neurologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, aqua therapists and every other possible therapist that they feel may assist them. From India to USA, they will travel the world to find a cure for their beloved child. They beseech the saintly ‘Ulama of the time to make du‘aa for their child and even give sadaqah on his behalf. The reason? *They wish him to be cured of his physical ailment.*

As serious as the ailment may be, however, it is limited to the physical body of the child. The child is only bound by this body for a few years. After he passes away, he will be completely free of his disability. At that point, it will be his imaan and his actions that will ‘carry’ him to Jannah – *not his physical legs. If he led a life of piety in this world, he will even be able to ‘fly’ in Jannah if he so wishes! Hence, the vital question is whether he will be able or disabled on that crucial day?*

If a child is paralyzed, the concern and worry will be so great that the parents will feel as if THEY have been paralyzed. Yet, when the imaan of the child becomes ‘paralyzed’, many parents feel absolutely no concern and show scant regard! Sadly, it is the ailments of imaan that are far more serious, as they will cripple a

person on the Day of Qiyaamah. *How many parents are bothered or worried when their children fail to perform salaah? Or are involved in an illicit relationship? Or speak in a vulgar and rude manner? Or dress indecently? And the list goes on...*

THESE are the serious maladies and ailments that should worry and concern us. If our child – or any Muslim for that matter – is involved in any sin that is ‘crippling’ their imaan and will ‘handicap’ them on the Day of Qiyaamah, it should worry us, disturb us and cause us great anxiety. *Which person wishes for their child to undergo difficulty in entering Jannah?*

We should engage in continuous, fervent du‘aa, approach the saintly ‘Ulama for guidance and du‘aa and turn to Allah Ta‘ala, together with adopting all the necessary measures in assisting the child to overcome his weakness. This entire process is undertaken with the sole aim and objective of pleasing Allah Ta‘ala through ‘enabling’ our fellow Muslim whose imaan has become ‘disabled’.

May Allah Ta‘ala assist us all to realize the importance of strengthening our children’s imaan and protecting them from all that which can cripple them on the Day of Qiyaamah.

Equality between One's Children

Allah Ta'ala has instilled a deep love within every parent's heart for their children. This love manifests itself in many ways. At times, the parents may hug and kiss their children, at other times they may show them kindness and affection, while sometimes they give them gifts.

Love is an emotion over which a person does not have complete control. Hence, it is possible for a parent to naturally have more love for one child than he has for the other. Since this increased love is something over which he has no control, Allah Ta'ala will not take him to task for having more love for one child than the other. However, our behaviour is something which we do have control over, and thus Allah Ta'ala will take us to task for showing more favour to one child than the other.

Sayyiduna Nu'maan bin Basheer (radhiyallahu 'anhu) once came to Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) and said, "I have given this child of mine a slave." Hearing this, Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) asked him, "Did you give all your children a slave like this?" When Sayyidnua Nu'maan bin Basheer (radhiyallahu 'anhu) replied in the negative, Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) said, "In that case, take the slave back." (*Saheeh Bukhaari #2586*)

As parents, we should strive to maintain a standard of equality when dealing with our children. If a parent buys a house or a car for one child, he should do the same for the other children. If they do not need a house or car, then we should at least give them some other gift which is equal in value or give them cash to that value.

By doing this, over and above fulfilling the instruction of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam), **we will not leave Shaitaan an opportunity to poison the minds of our children, causing them to think that we do not love them and only love our other children.** By doing this, we will enjoy a good relationship with them during our lifetime, and after our demise, they will remember us and make du‘aa for us.

Removing Nazar

The hadeeth clearly states: **“The evil eye (nazar) is a reality.”** (*Saheeh Bukhaari #5740*) Since many complain of this, especially in children, hereunder are a few simple ways of removing it:

1. **The last two verses of Surah Qalam are very effective in removing nazar.** They should be recited eleven times and blown on water, which the patient should drink. The water could also be sprinkled on his face and head, or used for bathing. Alternatively, the verses could be merely recited and blown on the patient.

2. The above mentioned verses could also be combined with Surah Humazah, Surah Falaq and Surah Naas three times each, preceded and followed by durood shareef three times. It could then be used in the above mentioned manner.

3. One could also recite the last two verses of Surah Qalam once and blow on a dry red chilli. The chilli will be passed from the patients head to toe seven times. Then the chilli will be burnt. It is advisable that this be repeated for few days in order for the nazar to be completely removed.

4. The recitation of Manzil is also very effective in removing nazar, sihr (black magic) and effects of jinn.

Note: Although these details are not mentioned in the hadeeth, these forms of treatment have been proven through the experience of many, and they do not contradict the hadeeth. Hence using them would be like using any other permissible treatment.

My Kind, Cruel Mother

Every cook, from a celebrity chef to a humble homemaker, relies on a few essential ingredients. Safely nestled within their 'masala dubbah' (spice box) are powders and pods which though small in quantity, are potent in taste. *It is on the foundation of these vital ingredients that the cook exercises her culinary skill, preparing dishes that have the potential to either tantalize the taste buds or poison the palate.*

Every cook worth her salt knows that some ingredients are absolutely necessary in most dishes, yet always cause tears (like chopped onions). Certain ingredients are the backbone of every recipe, yet may lead to a rise in blood pressure (like salt). Other ingredients assist the food to cook, yet cause heartburn when used in excess (like oil). Many ingredients give the food an incredible ‘zing’, but if added with a heavy hand, render the food almost inedible (like chilies).

Often, the difference between an ordinary dish and the masterpiece of a maestro is as simple as ensuring that every ingredient is added in the correct quantity and at the correct time. Also, the cook has to remain vigilant, continuously monitoring the progress of the dish, as turning a blind eye for just a moment can result in the pot boiling over, leaving the stove an absolute mess. Finally, when all these steps are taken and all the dangers safely navigated, the final product is not a mere dish – it’s a work of art that satisfies on every level – taste, nutrition and appearance.

Interestingly enough, a child is exactly like a dish while the parents are the chefs. The parents have to instil the correct qualities and values (ingredients) within the child, while ensuring that the child is exposed to stimuli that are not only appropriate but are also in the correct proportions and at the ideal times. Certain ingredients are necessary for the child, but are harmful in excess. *Different parents follow different recipes, while some parents don’t follow any recipe at all, simply hoping for the best!*

In an age where fusion cuisine was all the rage, my mother's recipe for raising her children was unique for being old-fashioned and traditional. The food elsewhere may have been gourmet or artisanal, but even if it managed to do more than just look good and lack taste, there comes a point when a person craves 'home food'. Be it biryani, or just plain old chicken with roti, there's something in home food that satisfies and satiates like no other food can. *When it came to my upbringing, this is the recipe that my mother used – the failsafe, tried-and-tested Islamic recipe for a 'home girl'.*

I write this many years later, in retrospect and appreciation of my mother's efforts. As a young girl, there were the occasional moments when I resented my mother's approach to upbringing as it felt like a prison cell with me – *the convict* – behind bars. *Today, I realize that due to my own short sightedness and ignorance, I had failed to comprehend her wisdom and understanding.* Now, as a mother myself, trying to raise my own children in an environment which is increasingly dangerous by the day, I fully understand the wisdom in my mother's approach and really wish that every child could have been fortunate enough to have received the upbringing that I 'enjoyed'.

As a small child, I would often 'read' salaah with my mother (to be honest, I seldom read more than one rakaat and my qiblah continuously changed!). However, when I turned seven, my mother sat me down and stressed the importance of salaah to me. She then began to make me read all my salaah on time – including Fajr. *Be it summer or winter, a holiday or a school day*

- there was absolutely no difference as every day was a salaah day and there was *never* a break from salaah.

I have many cousins and friends who aren't in the habit of performing their five daily salaah. A few of them eventually changed their lives and began performing salaah, but now they have five years, ten years or even more of qadhaa salaah to perform. *Had it not been for my mother's concern, I would very possibly have been in the same boat.*

Many of the girls in our family, from as early as childhood, were encouraged to pursue a career. *The idea of 'independence' in the event of a failed marriage, the perceived prestige of the professional life, the concept of financial equality between husband and wife - these were some of the factors that made a career appealing to these girls.* My mother, on her part, stood her ground and followed her recipe - I was sent to a girls' madrasah down the road. There I learnt basic masaa-il, tajweed, seerah, tafseer of some short surahs, the various sunnah du'aas and other similar subjects. During our final year, we were instructed to remain at home for two days of the madrasah week so that we could focus on learning essential domestic skills under the supervision of our mothers. I graduated from this madrasah when I was sixteen.

The outcome? Well, I certainly didn't master advanced arithmetic, physics, or any of those subjects, but despite my 'ignorance' in these sciences, I never once suffered an inferiority complex or felt deficient in any way. *In fact, I was glad that I hadn't wasted a few years learning irrelevant information that*

benefited barely anyone after graduation anyway. But this is only part of the outcome – listen to the other part.

There is one occasion when EVERYBODY gets together and that's a funeral. I was at a funeral, after I graduated, and we were all seated together, reciting the Quraan Majeed. At some point, I happened to glance at one of my distant relatives, who was supposedly 'setting the standard' for young girls in the family (she had a PhD in marine biology) and saw something strange – *she was holding the Quraan Majeed upside down!* I looked at her for a few moments longer, and then realized that her lips weren't moving, and she wasn't turning the pages either. Only then did I realize that the rumours were true – despite her advanced education, *she was absolutely unable to read the Quraan Majeed!*

I did not look down at her in a condescending manner, rather I pitied her. From birth, her parents had envisaged a certain future for her and had accordingly plotted the course her career would follow, from the best private school to the most exclusive university. Sadly, that 'career plan' did not include a madrasah or even the basic Deeni education.

Comparatively, I didn't have a diploma, but I was adequately equipped with the basic knowledge and vital values of Deen. To me, that was way more important than going 'mental' trying to memorize the elemental chart.

After graduating from madrasah, we could now turn our full focus to the home phase of my upbringing. I would join my mother in the kitchen and assist her with whatever she was doing. I say this purely out of gratitude to Allah Ta'ala – by the

time I was seventeen, I could prepare any meal in any recipe book from scratch, unassisted. Whether steakhouse-style rump with mushroom sauce, Chinese chow mein, Italian style pizza, Thai noodle-soup, Mexican fajitas and burritos, African samp and beans or Indian cuisine, I was equally proficient at preparing them all. My efforts in baking and dessert-making were similarly successful as I learnt the ins and outs of ‘soft-ball’, ‘hard-crack’ and everything else in between.

Seeing the talent that Allah Ta‘ala had given me, my father encouraged me to take orders and sell my baking, cooking and desserts, especially as I had some free time. As soon as the word went out, the meal orders and cake requests came flooding in. The money that accumulated was considerable, and on my father’s encouragement, I happily donated half of it in charity, hoping to assist the less fortunate.

Considering this empowering ingredient of my upbringing, I am immeasurably thankful to my mother and ever indebted to her. The ‘cherry on the top’ is that if the need ever arises (may it never happen – aameen!), I will be capable of supporting myself, my husband and my children, *all from the comfort of my kitchen!*

I know of a girl who got married a few years back. When faced with the dilemma of feeding her husband his first post-marital meal, she was at a total loss. Hailing from a campus background, she had never ‘graduated’ beyond frying eggs and ‘cooking’ pre-cooked baked beans. Since her recipe arsenal only boasted these two weapons, she figured she’d ‘fire’ one for lunch and the other for supper. Hoping to make his omelette ‘eggstraordinary’, she

chopped a potato into the egg, whipped the mixture with a fork and poured it into the pan. *Obviously, the egg was cooked in no time while the potato remained raw.*

Thankfully, her husband was patient. He ate the egg and jokingly remarked that they could recycle the potato by adding it to the beans later. Not all stories have a happy ending though. Sometimes, a man returns home in a state of exhaustion at the end of a long day, expecting comfort and a warm welcome from his wife. Naturally, ambushing him with an unappetizing pot will do little to lift his spirits.

One of the biggest challenges today is that of finding children's clothing that is decent and not plastered with pictures and logos. *As I had been sent for sewing lessons, I easily overcame this challenge by sewing some of my children's clothing myself, designing the garments to fit the measurements and specifications of hayaa (shame and modesty).* Occasionally, I also sewed clothing for myself that was not only exactly as I wanted, but also cost me a fraction of the department store price.

Both my parents were very particular regarding ta'leem in the home. We would all sit together and recite the Quraan Majeed, read Fazaail-e-Aa'maal and conclude by making du'aa. We would also eat together, seated on the floor around the dastarkhaan (eating mat). Being a close-knit family, we had a pleasant, cheerful atmosphere in the home.

In our home, none of us children were given cellphones or were allowed to use the computer and phone *unsupervised*. For

us, this was the bitterest pill to swallow. ALL our friends and ALL our cousins, down to even the six year olds, had their own phones. Without phones, we would stick out like sore thumbs in the midst of these tech-savvy teens and toddlers!

We grieved and groaned, campaigned and complained and begged and beseeched – but to no avail. Whereas my father tended to be the more indulgent parent, in this case, we found even him unyielding and resolute as rock.

Seeing the disappointment and dismay on our faces, my father tried to console us saying, *“Trust me, you may not appreciate my decision now, but a time will come when you will make du‘aa for me and be grateful that you were never entrusted with a phone.”*

By Allah, my father’s words were true! I too refuse to allow my children the ‘privilege’ of a cellphone. In my generation alone, when the smart phone first stole the scene, almost every one of my cousins and friends were swept off their feet by some Facebook boyfriend and slipped into sins through WhatsApp and other phone-related features. Even if their parents didn’t allow the TV into the home, they could lie in bed and watch movies on their phones with earphones, none the wiser to what they were up to. The extent of the damage done to both Deen and dunya through misuse of the phone is astronomical. Pornography and haraam relationships, as serious as they are, are just the tip of the iceberg – an iceberg that can easily sink our imaan.

Finally, I make du‘aa for my mother every day, after every salaah, asking Allah Ta‘ala to reward her for the perfect and pristine recipe she followed in raising me. I state this without

any exaggeration – the irreplaceable ingredients of an Islamic upbringing were the most valuable assets that she left me, as they were pillars that supported me in good stead throughout my life, the turbulent times and the prosperous periods.

Home



Talk of the Town

In essence, a house is nothing more than a place of shelter and refuge in which a person lives. Hence, in the past, homes were simple and often small structures, yet were open to family and guests alike, housing them happily and comfortably for as long as they required.

As time passed, however, houses ‘evolved’. Boundaries expanded, fences rose, rooms multiplied, floors were tiled and carpeted, walls were painted, gardens bloomed, pools sparkled, air conditioners were installed, and in general, everything ‘improved’.

Some of these improvements, such as appliances, led to more ease and a better “quality of life”. While improvements such as electric fencing led to increased security. Other improvements like painting, etc. fulfilled the purpose of making the home appear presentable e.g. painting the wall.

However, in the present context, there are certain features in people’s homes that are deliberately installed for the purpose of show and ostentation. The sole motive is to impress people – to woo them until they “Ooh!” and “Aah!” and the home becomes the talk of the town. In many instances “interior decorators” are hired at great cost – merely to ‘decorate’ in elaborate style so that it is most ‘impressive’. Whether it is in the form of a ‘show’ kitchen (*a kitchen that is not built to serve the function of a kitchen but rather to ‘show off’*) or ornate chandeliers, or the exclusive

imported table, etc. that are bought solely to impress people – it is condemned in Islam and will undoubtedly cause our home to be deprived of divine blessings.

Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) has explained in a hadeeth that it is sufficient for each member of the house to have one bed, while an extra bed should be kept for guests. Any additional bed that is kept for the purpose of show, ostentation and impressing people is for Shaitaan. (*Saheeh Muslim #5452*)

From this hadeeth, we understand that ostentation and showing off in our homes is pleasing to Shaitaan and displeasing to Allah Ta‘ala. Hence, there is no harm in us making our homes comfortable – provided we are living within our means and are not involved in extravagance and other sins. However, we should not decorate our homes with the intention of impressing people. Doing so will earn the displeasure of Allah Ta‘ala and cause our homes to be bereft of barakah (divine blessings), happiness and peace. If the barakah is lost, the end result will be what often happens – a fabulous and elaborate HOUSE which is anything but a HOME (a place of warmth, love, understanding and happiness).

United in Purpose

A household is made up of not one but many members. In order for the household to progress and be productive, it is important

for them to be united in purpose – all working towards and assisting each other to reach a common goal.

Thus if the husband is on Deen but does not have the support of his wife and children as they are not on Deen, he will definitely find it difficult and face challenges to remain firm on his Deen. This naturally applies to every member of the household and not the husband alone.

It is thus important for every member of the home, the husband, wife and children, to all be firm on Deen. *Everyone will strive for one common goal – ‘The Pleasure of Allah Ta’ala’.*

If they are not united in their goal and focus, everyone will be pulling in their own direction. This is the root of all tension and fights in our homes today.

We all simply need to work together to please one Allah Ta’ala alone.

House or Home?

“*Home is where the heart is*” forms a well-known phrase which we often hear. However, we seldom hear a person say “house is where the heart is”.

The reason is simple – the word ‘house’ generally refers to just the structure, be it of brick and concrete or stone and mud, while the word ‘home’ refers to the special place to which a person belongs and where he feels most comfortable, relaxed and ‘at home’.

Let us now ask ourselves, “How many of us feel at home in our own houses?” Before we ‘jump the gun’ in our eagerness to answer, let us ponder over the following: *Do we feel trapped in our homes, and feel like we just need to go out?* Despite us having every luxury, amenity and comfort in our homes, is it inconceivable for us to spend a holiday at home? *When we enter our homes, do we feel peace, tranquillity and happiness?* Or are we overwhelmed by feelings of gloom, depression and frustration?

If it feels as if our home is permanently permeated by the darkness of fighting, quarrelling and discontentment, then we need to look beyond Eskom for enlightenment. *In this regard, we will find the ‘down-lighter of du‘aa’ and the ‘quarrel-breaking contentment-making current of the Quraan Majeed’ indispensable and irreplaceable.*

Sayyiduna Abu Hurairah (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) says: “The house in which the Quraan Majeed is read, becomes comfortable for its members, its virtues and barakah (blessings) multiply, angels come down upon them and the Shayaateen run far away from there, but the house in which the Quraan Majeed is not read, life there becomes difficult and empty of barakah, angels leave the house and the Shayaateen stay in it.” (Musannaf Ibnu Abi Shaibah #30650)

Naturally, the environment of a house filled with Shayaateen and void of angels will be one of misery and unhappiness. However, there is no need to despair, as we literally hold the flawless formula in our hands – *The Quraan Majeed.*

We need to enliven our houses, transforming them into homes of happiness, by daily reciting some portion of the Quraan Majeed. *Whether collectively or individually, every member of the home should be part of this effort to illuminate the home with the noor of the Quraan Majeed.* When recitation of the Quraan Majeed is replaced by reading posts on WhatsApp and Facebook, or reading novels and blogs, then the angels are forced to flee as the Shayaateen flock to the family's home.

Just as we repel mosquitoes with 'Peaceful Sleep', let us repel the Shayaateen with the Quraan Majeed to enjoy peace, not only in our sleep but also in our wakefulness, and in every other aspect of our lives.

Dynamic Daily Du'aas

A Muslim strives to remember Allah Ta'ala at every moment of his life, and Allah Ta'ala, in His infinite kindness and generosity, is always prepared to bless His servants and shower His favours upon them. Hence, Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) has taught us specific du'aas to be made on specific occasions. If we have to learn and punctually recite the sunnah du'aas relevant to the various daily activities and occasions, *there will hardly be a moment where we will not be turning to Allah Ta'ala in du'aa, due to which we will perpetually enjoy the bounties and favours of Allah Ta'ala.*

Some of these du'aas are well known such as the du'aas to be recited before and after eating, whereas other du'aas are perhaps not known to most people, for instance the du'aa to recite when sighting the moon of the new Islamic month.

In order to easily introduce these dynamic du'aas into our lives, we should incorporate the learning of these du'aas into our daily home ta'leem. One du'aa should be selected which will be revised during the daily ta'leem for the entire week. Once the week has elapsed and the whole family has learnt the du'aa, another du'aa may be selected and learnt. Furthermore, in order to assist one another in practicing upon the du'aa, when the relevant occasion arrives, we should recite the du'aa audibly (provided that we will not be disturbing others). *By reciting it audibly, others will also be reminded and encouraged to recite the du'aa.* In this manner, by us becoming a means for others to recite, we will have a share in their reward for reciting the du'aa.

By us practicing on these du'aas, our children will automatically learn them and du'aas will occupy an important position in their life. *If children are not practically taught and encouraged to recite the du'aas, then du'aas will remain a mere subject in madrasah – something to learn for the exam and thereafter forget.*

The next time we sit to eat, or complete eating, or commence a journey, let us recite the du'aa aloud.

‘Mise en Place’

In the world of food preparation, there is a concept that is greatly emphasized – the concept of *mise en place*. Actually a French term, it means ‘putting everything into place’. Thus, *mise en place* is where before preparing a dish, a person first takes out the necessary ingredients in the required amounts, finds the utensils that will be used and ensures that everything is in a state of preparedness before commencing. **Once ‘all the ducks are in a row’, it becomes easy for a person to prepare even a complex dish.**

On the converse, imagine that just as the onions begin to brown, the cook realizes that the meat still hasn’t been washed and cut. As he rushes to wash and cut the meat, he realizes that he doesn’t have some of the necessary ingredients for the dish he wanted to prepare. As he rushes out the door to buy the missing ingredients, he realizes that one of the utensils that he will need has been lent to someone. *Obviously, the result will be nothing short of a disaster!*

In essence, being prepared and organized is one of the vital keys to being efficient, effective and successful in any field of life. In this regard, we need to see just how organized and planned we are in our homes.

Did we ever face the crisis where our child comes to us and asks for help with a huge project due the very next day? Did we ever face the crisis where we were preparing a meal for guests but due to

being disorganized, burned the food or ran short of some ingredient and had to thus resort to some drastic form of damage control? Did we ever embark on a journey, only to realize that we forgot to pack some essential item – such as our passport?

All these unnecessary difficulties – and more – can be easily avoided if we become organized and plan correctly. From chores and cooking to the children’s homework, we should sit, every night, and assess what needs to be done. Thereafter, we should plan the ‘when’ and the ‘how’. Finally, we need to ‘stick to the plan’.

By implementing this principle in every home, the home will run smoothly and successfully. Furthermore, this invaluable habit will also be instilled into the lives of our children.

Progress Report

All companies and businesses have targets and goals that they wish to achieve. In their quest to progress, there are certain procedures that they adopt in order to assist them in achieving their goal. One of these procedures is that of the ‘progress report’.

At regular intervals, the HODs (heads of departments) meet and discuss their progress. They compare the progress that was made to the progress that they had projected, anticipated and hoped to make. If the progress was not as positive as expected,

they determine the factors that hindered their progress and work at eliminating these factors. **By adopting these procedures, these companies and businesses ultimately make great strides of progress and grow from strength to strength.**

Similarly, every Muslim has a common goal and this common goal is actually his main goal in life – *the goal of pleasing Allah Ta'ala by fulfilling the commands of Deen and adhering to the blessed sunnah of Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam)*. However, without taking out the time for routine introspection, whereby we look deep within our hearts and lives to determine whether we are actually progressing or retrogressing, we often lose our focus and completely lose sight of our goal in life. **We then become side-tracked by other superficial, irrelevant goals and make these the priority in our lives.**

We should thus routinely sit (perhaps weekly), as a family, and take a progress report. We should determine how punctual we have been on our ta'leem in the home, our Quraan Majeed recitation and other similar deeds which are essential for our Deeni progress. **If we are falling short in reaching our goals, we should identify our obstacles and work to eliminate them.** In doing this, we will create a unity of purpose and a sense of Deeni accountability within the home – of which both will assist in achieving our goal.

The Concept of Consequence

If every person in this world was free to do exactly as he pleased without any law and order, wholesale havoc and mayhem would prevail. Imagine if ownership was not respected and each person was allowed to snatch whatever he wished from the next person, or if life was not respected and people were free to kill each other if they so wished, what would be the situation??? **Such a world would undoubtedly be unliveable and unmanageable.**

In order to maintain law and order two systems are generally used, both of which revolve around the concept of facing consequences. **These are the systems of ‘punishment’ and ‘incentive’.** Through these two systems discipline is engendered and maintained.

If there is only punishment, there will be no motivation to excel and progress. Also, one will become despondent and depressed, eventually leading to rebellion or cracking mentally. If there is only reward, there will be nothing to restrain a person from falling into evil and vice.

By implementing both systems, a healthy and effective balance is maintained, since the individual is motivated to excel and perform as he will be duly rewarded, and he is also discouraged from shirking as he will be punished accordingly.

The same two systems need to be implemented in our homes. In many cases, they are implemented – but only as far as school achievements and material aspirations are concerned. If the

child achieves a cum laude or an 'A' pass, he is rewarded with a holiday, a new phone or something else that he desires. Similarly, if the husband pleases the wife, she sometimes rewards him by going out of her way to prepare a lavish meal, replete with all his favourite dishes and desserts.

Likewise, if the son failed his exams, or 'borrows' his father's car and damages it irreparably, he is grounded and punished in numerous ways, all meant to instil a deep lesson within him and compel him to feel remorse. If the husband treats the wife unfairly or badly, she sometimes gives him the 'silent treatment' in order to impress upon him the extent of her unhappiness.

However, there are very few homes in which this system is implemented for the sake of progressing and excelling in Deen. How many homes impose a punishment or penalty upon the children - or even upon the adults - for missing a salaah? How many households are disciplined when the daily portion of the Quraan Majeed is not recited, or some sin is committed?

We tend to value and show importance to school achievements, wealth and our reputation in society. Hence we make an effort to excel in these departments. What we have failed to realize though, is that a loss in Deen is far more serious and detrimental. Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) has said, "The one who misses one salaah, it is as if his family and wealth have been destroyed." (*Saheeh Ibni Hibbaan #1468*)

From this day onwards, let us strive to give due importance to our Deen and impose a penalty on those who miss their salaah,

etc. At the same time, if they progress and excel, let us reward them and encourage them.

However, let us remember that the punishment and reward should be proportionate to the deed committed. Hence, a mere ‘tap on the wrist’ is insufficient for missing salaah. Likewise, a small child should not be beaten mercilessly for a small mistake. Also, when rewarding, let us give greater rewards for achievements in Deen than we do for dunya, as Deen is infinitely more valuable than the dunya.

Family Doctor

Most homes have a family doctor, a man qualified in the medical field whose medical advice they value and trust implicitly. From a boil on the chest to cardiac arrest, he is the man they consult in their hour of need.

If our physical health is a priority, then our spiritual health holds paramount importance. Hence, it is vital for us to attach ourselves to a family ‘doctor’ who will see to our spiritual health. These spiritual doctors are none other than the rightly guided ‘Ulama and Mashaayikh.

Just as the layman is unable to treat anything greater than common ailments – such as a cough or headache – on his own, the layman is similarly unable to determine what it is that Allah Ta’ala wants from him in certain situations. **Without consulting**

the family 'aalim, he will most probably make the incorrect decision, thus harming his own Deen and the Deen of his family.

Adhere to the following guidelines when choosing the family 'aalim:

- He must have sound, adequate Islamic knowledge.
- He must be experienced and have wisdom.
- He must adhere strictly to the sharee'ah and the sunnah in every aspect of his life.
- He must be a personality who is accepted and endorsed by the other senior 'Ulama and personalities of the time.
- He must be a personality whose only concern is your Deeni progress and he does not have any worldly motive.
- He must strictly observe the laws of purdah when interacting with women.

Once we have chosen this 'aalim, we should constantly refer to him for guidance relating to all departments of our life. If our children are rebellious, if we are lax in performing salaah and do not know how to rid ourselves of the laziness, if a proposal arrives for our child and we are unsure as to whether we should accept, if there is a death in the family, if we come across some attractive literature and wish to read it, if we meet a person whose beliefs clash with what we learnt – no matter what the situation, at every turn, be it a moment of adversity or prosperity, such an 'aalim will be there for us and will show us

the straight path, assisting us to easily traverse our journey through the danger-filled dunya and reach Jannah.

Save the Low Pan!

For centuries and centuries, since the beginning of time, the natural position that people globally adopted for relieving themselves was that of squatting. *Indeed, this position is so natural that a child instinctively adopts it when he needs to relieve himself.*

It was only around the seventeenth century that Lord John Harington invented the high-pan toilet. Despite the years that have passed since its inception, and its popularity among certain classes of society, more than half the population of the world still squat to relieve themselves.

Squatting has numerous Deeni as well as health benefits. *When a person squats, there is no water directly below him – as is the case with the high-pan toilet. As it is well known, the high pan toilet has a tit-for-tat – or rather ‘splish for splash’ attitude. Suffice it to say that a person using the high-pan toilet is at great risk to suffer a splash-back. This not only messes a person’s body with najaasat (impurity) which renders salaah null and void, but is also the cause of one suffering painful punishment in the grave.*

Furthermore, when a person uses the high-pan toilet, his thighs and buttocks are in contact with the seat – a seat on which countless people sat before him. Without first washing

and cleaning the seat, there is no way for one to know whether the seat is truly hygienic or not.

From a health perspective, doctors have only recently ‘discovered’ the benefits of squatting. **In a nutshell, squatting allows a person’s colon to straighten, facilitating easy, effortless movement.** On the contrary, when a person is seated on the high-pan, his colon is bent, due to which he has to strain and push in order to relieve himself. This unnecessary straining and pushing harms the colon and leads to fissures (tears in the colon) and other health complications.

Another observation is that people who squat tend to relieve themselves in a much shorter span of time compared to those seated on the high-pan. **Because sitting on the high-pan hinders the movement of the bowel, prolonging the toilet session, people have now resorted to reading magazines, novels or even using their phones in the toilet in order to pass the time!** The toilet is a place of filth and Shayaateen, and should thus be frequented for as short a duration as possible. *However, people are now all too comfortable in the loo and thus unnecessarily spend up to twenty minutes at a time on the pan!*

The West, in a misdirected effort to enjoy the benefits of squatting, has invented contraptions such as the ‘squatty potty’ and other similar squat-stools. Although this may assist with the bowel movement, this does not address the ‘splash-back’ dilemma with which all high-pan users are faced.

The solution is much simpler – *the low pan toilet.* **We need to keep the low pan toilet chained to our homes – not flushed out**

of our lives. If we are able to, let us install these toilets in our homes and teach our children how to use them correctly. Only those who cannot use the low pan at all due to old age or ill health (such as knee problems) should use the high pan – *and that too with extreme care.*

How to Treat the En-suite?

As man advances and progresses in developments and technology, the levels of comfort in his life also proportionately increase. Among the many facilities with which we are now pampered is that of the en-suite toilet.

There was a time when the toilet was outside the home. *Using it at night was literally a nightmare!* Navigating through the yard in the dark was itself a mission, let alone the fear of being given a fright.

When a person steps onto the battlefield, he has to ensure that he is armed and well equipped. Otherwise, he will be vulnerable and prone to danger. *Similarly, on account of the toilet being the devil's 'battlefield', Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) has shown us certain weapons with which we can equip and protect ourselves from danger and harm.*

Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) has taught us to recite the du'aa before entering the toilet so that we will enjoy the protection of Allah Ta'ala from the male and female devil. Together with reciting the du'aa, we must ensure that our head

is covered, we are wearing shoes, we enter with the left foot, avoid urine splashes and do not turn our face or back towards the qiblah.

When the toilet was outside the home, we probably felt so spooked that we read the du'aa a dozen times! Unfortunately, today, with the en-suite being part of the bedroom, we have become so casual that we simply step in and out as we please, without shoes, bare headed and without reciting the du'aa. We sometimes even use the toilet without any clothes at all because we intend using the shower thereafter. This is definitely not in keeping with hayaa (shame).

Is it any surprise that we complain of jinn and jaadoo when we ourselves have entered their domain without any defence?

Let us strive to bring alive the sunnats and etiquettes of using the toilet in our lives and that of our children.

Water-Wise

Did you know:

- Globally, the average water consumption is 173 litres per person daily?
- In South Africa, the average water consumption is 235 litres per person daily?
- A 5-minute shower uses approximately 80 litres of water?

- A running tap can use up to 8 litres a minute?

South Africa is among the world's 'water-scarce' countries. In the midst of the 'water worries', all South Africans are generally encouraged to be 'water-wise' (save water).

However, as Muslims, we do not wait to be struck by a water crisis before we learn to appreciate and save water. *Rather, our Deen teaches us to always appreciate and save water – even if there is an abundance of water – as it is an invaluable blessing from Allah Ta'ala that should never be taken for granted, lest He withhold it from us.*

On one occasion, Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) passed by Sayyiduna Sa'd (radhiyallahu 'anhu) while he was performing wudhu. Observing him perform wudhu, Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) asked, "What is this wastefulness?" Sayyiduna Sa'd (radhiyallahu 'anhu) asked, "*Is there wastefulness in wudhu?*" Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) replied, "*Yes, even if you are at a flowing river.*" (Sunan Ibni Maajah #425)

Sayyiduna Anas (radhiyallahu 'anhu), who was blessed to be the special attendant of Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam), mentioned that *Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) would perform wudhu using just one mudd of water (under 800ml), and ghusal using approximately one saa' of water (under 5 litres).* (Saheeh Muslim #737)

We should thus take stock of the water consumption within our own homes and after identifying the areas in which we are

wasteful, work out ways to curb the waste. Furthermore, we have to instil good water-usage habits into our children as well, as we will all have to answer, on the Day of Qiyaamah, for the water that we used. *If we cannot manage having a bucket-bath, which is closest to the sunnah and far more effective in restricting the amount of water that we use, we should at least make a conscious effort to conserve water by limiting our shower time as well as limiting the flow of water.* Similarly, while brushing our teeth, we should not leave the water running. The same applies to closing the tap at the time of making masah of the head during wudhu.

By taking steps in this direction, we will avoid falling into the sin of wastefulness and will be expressing appreciation to Allah Ta'ala for His invaluable bounty of water. If we do this, there is hope that Allah Ta'ala will bless us, in His infinite mercy, with more water and will not withhold this vital resource from us.

The Gift of the Guest

Sayyiduna 'Abdullah bin 'Abbaas (radhiyallahu 'anhuma) reports that Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) said, *“Goodness comes to a home where food is consumed (by guests) faster than the blade goes to the hump of the camel.”* (*Sunan Ibni Maajah #3357*)

Among the Arabs, the meat from the hump of the camel was regarded as one of the best, most delicious cuts. Hence, when

slaughtering a camel, they would hasten to cut the meat from the hump first and eat it before the meat of any other section.

In this hadeeth, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) explains that when there are guests in a home, then barakah (divine blessings from Allah Ta‘ala) come to the home even faster than the knife to the hump of the camel. **This means that entertaining guests in one’s home is a means of ‘instantly’ attracting barakah (blessings) and the mercy of Allah Ta‘ala to the home.**

This barakah and mercy will assist in making the home one of happiness, peace and tranquillity. *We should thus welcome guests into our homes, as this, in reality, is to welcome barakah into our homes.*

Ramadhaan



Nani's Coming!

Imagine if you were married overseas with no relatives around you. Moreover, you haven't seen your parents and siblings for years. *Your children don't even know what their Nani's face looks like.* Out of the blue, your mother drops a surprise call that the entire family is coming over to visit for one full month.

Can words ever express the level of excitement at home??? You would be over the moon. *You would turn the house upside down cleaning and scrubbing, perhaps even applying a new coat of paint.* A special menu would be planned and your pantry would be stocked up. Your house and family would be shipshape and ready for the very special visitors.

Why is all this done? ... Because these guests are very important to you.

As the day draws closer, the anxiety increases and the wait becomes unbearable.

This is exactly the condition of the pious with regards to the month of Ramadhaan. Some of them begin preparing for it six months in advance. When the moon of Rajab would be sighted, Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) would beg Allah Ta'ala to allow him to witness the blessed month of Ramadhaan.

We also need to prepare for this great guest by *'spring cleaning' the thick layers of dust that have settled on our hearts through sins and disobedience,* and by patching up with those

whom we have cut off ties with. **Let us draw up a spiritual ‘menu’ of the different acts of worship that we would complete in this month**, laying greater emphasis on completing all our past qadhaa salaah.

When the ‘big day’ finally comes, and our guests arrive, we will spend maximum time with them. Perhaps we would stay awake the whole night catching up on the years of stories and ‘panchaat’. **We would never ‘dump’ them in the lounge and continue with our daily routine, or leave them at home and go for a stroll in the mall, or a night out with the friends!!!** We won’t even dream of allowing our children to go on an excursion, or spend their entire weekend in sport practice and league matches!!! *Never! That’s unimaginable!* Why? Because they mean too much to us. In fact, some might even freeze food in advance to spend more time with them.

If this great guest of Allah Ta’ala, the blessed month of Ramadhaan, means as much to us as well, we won’t allow it to merely pass whilst we continue with our normal lives. **Rather we would definitely spend maximum time ‘in its company’ and stay awake during its nights.**

I don't have my 'Eid Clothes yet!

“The last ten days are already here. I haven't found my 'Eid clothes as yet! I walked from one side of the mall to the other... shop to shop till I dropped... You name it and I saw it. Forget an outfit, I didn't even find a decent cloak. I got my last chance... I might get lucky at the 'Eid Fair. As for these two 'scamps', I just don't know what I am going to do for their second outfit. Don't talk about their 'Eid pyjamas. I can't understand how I am going to manage to finish my khatam, and still do all the baking. 'Eid is at my mother-in-law's place this year.”

Does this ring a bell? We need not waste our Ramadhaan in this way. Let us try to complete our errands before Ramadhaan and keep ourselves as free as possible. In this way we can maximise on the 'great bargains' that have been promised in this 'mega sale'.

Food for the Soul

*Staring into the starlit sky,
sighting the crescent moon.
Ramadhaan has at last come by,
and not a moment too soon.*

Depending on people's state of heart,
this month has different meaning.
Some greedily fill the grocery cart,
while others see spiritual healing.

Samoosas, pies and savouries galore!
Decadence and delight with every bite!
Isn't Ramadhaan supposed to mean more?
What about the joy of Tahajjud at night?

Many soothe their ailing souls,
And the pleasure of their Rabb they earn.
While others fill haleem bowls,
And eat till they suffer heart-burn!

Seated around the dastarkhaan,
hands raised like a beggar.
A few turn their eyes to the naan,
while the rest cry to the Giver.

Taqwa is the ultimate prize,
acquired by those who strive.
Through the ranks they steadily rise,
as the Quraan brings their hearts alive.

Make this Ramadhaan one to cherish,
by attending to your imaan.
Don't allow your soul to perish,
through neglecting your Islam.

*Braais and fast-food are always around,
we can easily enjoy them later.
Special moments in Ramadhaan simply abound,
there's no month that's greater.*

Savouring the Spirit of Ramadhaan

People are 'creatures' of habit. We all tend to have a daily routine revolving around the various responsibilities that weigh on our shoulders. *Making breakfast for the kids... seeing them off to school... preparing lunch... attending to the domestic chores... and the list goes on.* In general, we are all committed to our schedules, and many people have such hectic schedules that they never find any 'me' time to 'redefine' themselves or even just relax.

Seeing this to be an ideal opportunity, many resorts and spas cater for this exact need – by providing getaways in which people can unwind, recharge and refocus. For those whose 'me time' involves losing weight, there are even 'boot camps' available. If someone needs some 'me time' to kick a dangerous drug-habit, there are a multitude of drug rehabs to be found. In short, all these facilities assist one to 'cut off' from their normal environment and routine so that they can focus on something important and precious to them.

However, in the 'rat race' of today's fast-paced lifestyle, people find even less 'me-and-Allah' time. Hence, Allah Ta'ala, in His infinite mercy, provided us with the month of Ramadhaan. From abstaining from food, drink and relations during the day to standing in salaah at night, every aspect of this blessed month is 'custom designed' to assist us to enjoy some 'me-and-Allah' time so that we can cut off from our distractions and reconnect with our Creator.

The secret to making the most of this sacred month is for one to enter the month prepared – especially mentally – so that the moment the moon is sighted, we 'hit the ground running' (get off to a good start). In this regard, the aspect of having the correct mindset and focus cannot be stressed and emphasized sufficiently. When a person's focus is correct and they have a goal in mind, they not only make the most of the opportunity provided, but even enjoy it and take pleasure in it. Exercising is exhausting, yet certain people do it day after day and relish the activity and exertion. The reason? ... They are focused on the end result and know that the effort is worth it.

In exactly the same way, by cultivating the correct focus, we will not only maximize on the month of Ramadhaan, but will even enjoy every moment of it. Standing in salaah, raising our hands in du'aa at the time of iftaar, waking up for sehri and tahajjud – all these activities will take on a new meaning and will become beloved to us. We will discover a newfound pleasure and 'sweetness' in connecting with Allah Ta'ala that will urge us to

relish and cherish every second. This is called ‘Savouring the Spirit of Ramadhaan’.

Haleem and Naan... or a Revolutionary Ramadhaan?

People often speak about the ‘one special moment’ that changed everything in their lives. For some, it’s the moment when they were struck by a brainwave that led to a revolutionary invention which rocketed them to fame and fortune. For a professional sportsman, it’s often the moment when they signed onto the team or scored the crucial goal. I am neither a sports star nor a genius inventor. *I am merely an ordinary Muslimah, like most of you out there, and my life did not change in a ‘single magical moment’. Instead, my entire life changed in a single Ramadhaan...*

I remember the period with crystal clarity. I was 18 years old, the countdown for the dreaded final matric exams had commenced and Ramadhaan was around the corner. Although I put up a brave front, I would never admit it, but my world was in turmoil and I was, in general, miserable, confused, stressed out and even a little scared.

I was always considered intelligent and never had to work hard to produce good grades. As I progressed through the years in school, my above-average marks impressed both my teachers and family. While I was content to be the homely type and never

entertained visions of varsity after school, they began to plot the course that my life would follow, taking it for granted that I would be complacent and would meekly *'do as I was told'*.

I remember Aunty Khairon declare, with her mehndi-dyed finger wagging under my nose, *"You got brains, bachu (darling)! You a bright girl! Can't waste that potential frying puri patha in the kitchen!"*

If Aunty Khairon wasn't pestering me, then her twin sister, Aunty Zaiboon, refused to get off my case. *"What you'll do if your hubby divorces you, huh? You saw what happened to Nabeelah? Such a hari poiri (good girl) she was, and she had brains too, just like you! But she married young and now she's divorced! You want the same future?"*

Aunty Zaiboon was so emotional when speaking that her hands would wave about, causing her designer bangles to clash and almost drown out the sound of her voice. She wore so much of gold that she was a walking advert for a jewellery store. A popular theory was that the sunglasses she wore were to protect her eyes from the glare of the few golden kilos she attached to herself daily.

The only exception to the *'career craziness'* was my mother. Quiet, humble, kind, always pleasant and smiling, never outspoken – these are some of the words that aptly describe my mother. She was the silent yet supportive pillar that I could always count on, and it was my mother alone who didn't pressurize me to pursue a career.

The pressure, as you can imagine, was immense, and it was only a matter of time before I buckled and gave in. Eventually, I ceased to resist and decided that it was simply easier to go with the flow. Now that I had a goal to achieve, I could no longer remain complacent with my grades, as decent as they were. I had to put in extra hours, with tuition and late night study groups, to ensure that I emerged ahead of the competition in a school of high achievers.

From that point on, although the world labelled me ‘progressive’, the reality was that I was heading downhill at an alarmingly rapid rate. *When I looked into the mirror, I no longer saw the shy, modest girl who had taken after her burqah-clad hijaab-hidden mother. No! I was taking the school by storm. Wherever I went, I caused heads to turn – the boys’ in admiration and the girls’ in envy. I traded in weekly ta’leem for weekend parties, surmah before sleeping for sleepless nights in mascara, five-times salaah for five social media platforms, daily Quraan recitation for studying the latest fashion guides, and worst of all – my priceless Islamic identity for the cheap role of a so-called ‘liberated woman’.*

I have to admit that I was not an entirely innocent brainwash-victim as I did not completely resist. I remember thinking to myself, under the onslaught of Aunty Zaiboon’s campaign, “*If they are so convinced that I will fail as a wife and end up a divorcee, then why are they so convinced that I will make a successful professional? If I can’t be a good housewife to my husband, what makes*

them think that I can be a professional, attending to the demands of thousands?"

All along, I knew that this was not who my Creator wanted me to be. *But... you know how it is, don't you?* It's easier to go with the flow than go against the grain. Anyway, the idea of becoming an independent woman was now becoming an attractive one, and the voice of my feeble, crippled conscience was finally silenced.

With my new attitude and total makeover came a newfound popularity that made me the centre of attention. In time to come, I not only got involved with boys but actually went through them faster than a flu-patient goes through tissues. *I surprised even myself by partying like a rock star, and through it all, my naïve family failed to see beyond the 'innocent' angel who was apparently paving the path to her career success.* Because I attended so many study groups, it was easy to slip off to a party or meet a boy under the pretence of studying. *This life of sin, however, began to take its toll.*

The first time I did something REALLY bad, my conscience protested and complained, but the 'thrill' of the sin soon suppressed that irritating voice in the back of my mind. *After a while though, even the excitement of sin began to fade, leaving me hollow and miserable. No matter what I did, I felt... empty, depleted and lost. I then became a 'sin junky'.*

You see, a sin junky is exactly like a drug junky. When a person takes a drug for the first time, he experiences a 'high', an absolutely 'sublime' sensation. However, the next time he pops a pill, snorts a line or shoots up, it just doesn't match the first

time. Eventually, he ups the dose or upgrades the drug, chasing his first high, not realizing that he is destroying his life, bit by bit.

A sin junky is exactly the same. You feel so miserable and empty, that you commit more sin, and worse sin, to try and experience the thrill again. *Take it from me, I'd know – sin is sneaky and deceptive. It makes you feel amazing and fantastic – but only for the moment.* Once the fun is over, the darkness re-envelopes and suffocates you until it forces you back for another fix.

I was by no means a fool. I was intelligent enough to know that I needed help. But help would only benefit me if I was willing to receive it.

One night, shortly before Ramadhāan, my eyes opened at 3am. Feeling thirsty, I crept out of my room and headed to the kitchen. As I passed the salaah room, I stopped dead in my tracks, hearing the sound of weeping. *What was going on? Was someone hurt?* My eyes strained through the darkness until I made out the form of my mother prostrate on her musalla in a remote corner of the room. I then heard her supplicate, *“O my Allah! Please! I beg You! It's not too late! Inspire her to change her life! The pious daughter I once had is dead! You revive her, O Allah! I can't complain or cry to anyone but You! I know the damage she is doing to herself and I need her to wake up and change! Help her to come back to You, O Allah!”*

I was shaken to my very core. This short du'aa, tinged with my mother's tears, had struck a chord within me, forcing me to

confront what I had become. My thirst forgotten, I silently snuck up the stairs and slipped into bed but could not sleep. My mother's du'aa continued to ring in my mind, *too loud to ignore*. Finally, after much tossing and turning, I drifted off into a troubled sleep.

The next day, I arrived home after class and entered amidst the madness of the 'savoury crusade'. For the past week, Aunts Zaiboon and Khairoon had come, every day, to prepare their Ramadhaan savouries. The pressure of Ramadhaan's imminent arrival stoked their fiery tempers, and their raised voices drove my father to seek the sanctuary of the golf course. I wasn't in the mood to face my wehlan (rolling-pin)-wielding aunties either, so I took advantage of the ready-made distraction (*they were debating the pros and cons of upright vs chest freezers*) and silently escaped to my room.

I made wudhu and performed Zuhr Salaah, amazed at the long-lost peace I enjoyed in these few, simple actions. As I made the final salaam and stood, I spotted my mother in my doorway, carrying a plate of freshly baked pies. As our eyes met, my gaze dropped to the floor in guilt as I remembered the du'aa she'd made for me. My mother entered with a smile, placed the plate on my bed and gestured for me to join her. As I sat, I raised my gaze to her face and saw only love and compassion, giving me the courage to do what I should've done a long, long time ago.

"Mum..." I began, hesitantly. "Jee?" she replied. "I... I..." This single pronoun was all that I could choke out as my emotions overcame me and I began to sob, tears streaming down my

cheeks. My mother immediately shifted closer and hugged me, patting my back and making those senseless yet comforting shushing sounds that are hardwired into every mother and child's brain. I continued sobbing into her shoulder as I struggled to get my feelings under control. Finally, I blew my nose, wiped my face, sat up and squared my shoulders. I was ready.

I confided in my mother and managed to describe the serious mess that I was in without being specific on the details. After hearing me out, she said, “Bachu (darling), we all mess up in life. But admitting it and making an effort to clean the mess takes courage. I'm proud of you for taking this step.”

Not wasting a moment, she immediately phoned her uncle, a senior 'aalim who was accepted and respected by not only the community but also other 'Ulama. I was on the verge of seeking guidance through the limitless supply of YouTube clips when my mother shook her head at me in disapproval. “If you are recovering from a major heart attack, will you consult a cardiologist or YouTube? Our souls are even more important than our hearts as they take us beyond this world to the next. We can't entrust our Deen to random YouTube scholars, as entertaining and popular as they may be. We have to go to the specialist.”

Moulana was very helpful and gave us practical and simple advice. As the upcoming Ramadhaan coincided with the school holidays, he stressed the importance of my following a strict programme in this month to get my life back on track. And so,

without further ado, I launched myself headlong into the Ramadhan that healed, cleansed and saved me.

To undo the damage that I had wreaked on myself over the past year and a half, I needed to completely cut off from everything that could tempt me to evil. **I switched off my phone and disconnected the WiFi. No WhatsApp, no Facebook, no Instagram, no e-mail, no nothing.** *“If it’s urgent, they can always contact me on the house phone,”* I reasoned. I chalked out a programme to recite five paras of the Quraan Majeed daily and asked my mother to ‘be on my case’ in case I became lazy. We made ta’leem for 30min daily, as a family, and would all sit around the dastarkhaan at the time of iftaar, engaged in our individual du’aas.

As far as possible, I avoided leaving home, and would sit with my mother and listen, over the receiver, to the programmes delivered by her uncle in the masjid. **With every day that passed, I found myself feeling more and more at peace as I perceived the darkness being dispelled from my soul.** I found an indescribable sweetness in reciting the Quraan Majeed and wondered, in amazement, as to how a person could ever turn to drugs in the presence of the Quraan Majeed.

Most of all, I engaged in abundant, excessive du’aa. I would sit in isolation and pour my heart out to Allah Ta’ala, admitting my wrongs and sins. I would speak to Him and say, *“O Allah! You gave me so much! We have no shortage of money, beauty or intelligence, yet I used Your very bounties to trample Your commands and to anger and displease You! O Allah! Only You are so merciful that despite my*

ingratitude, You still inspired me to repent and are still willing to forgive me. O Allah! I beg You to forgive me, and I beg You to save me from falling into sin again!” When I would wipe my hands over my face at the conclusion of my du‘aa, whether it was at the time of tahajjud or after salaah, I would perceive an exquisite sensation and would feel confident that Allah Ta‘ala had accepted my du‘aa.

By the end of Ramadhaan, I was a different person. I was a girl who after being on the brink of destruction, had gained salvation, and was thus determined to never stray from the path of righteousness again. I had restored my relationship with Allah Ta‘ala and with Him on my side, I feared none – *not even Aunts Khairoon and Zaiboon.* I made my decision, a decision which I have never for a second regretted – I would not pursue a career.

My life changed in a single Ramadhaan and yours can too. It takes determination and the support of those around you, but it can be done. I know that every tear I shed in taubah (repentance) helped to extinguish the fire of punishment that I had ignited and fuelled with my life of sin. *Ramadhaan afforded me the opportunity to emerge from the darkness to the light.*

Ramadhaan is not merely a month of haleem and naan, it is the gateway to discovering the YOU that Allah Ta‘ala wants you to be.

May Allah Ta‘ala allow you to benefit from Ramadhaan as I did, aameen.

Mega Sale

Some time back, a famous chain store opened a new branch nearby with ridiculous opening specials. *Perhaps you won't believe if I tell you that there were people waiting at the gates since 3am.* By the time the store opened its gates, the traffic had backed up a few kilometres.

Now, what was it that got these people out of their cosy beds at this early part of the morning? What was it that deprived them of their dear sleep and prompted them to wait for such a long time in their cars, even suppressing the urge to relieve themselves? *It was nothing but the desire to save a few hundreds or thousands of rands.*

We are about to witness a "Mega Sale", not just an opening special which lasts for a few days and saves us a few coppers. Rather it is a month long sale that can secure us the everlasting bliss of the Hereafter.

This sale also requires us to wake up from our cosy beds and get onto the musalla crying to our Allah Ta'ala in the early hours of the morning. It also requires us to spend hours, not in the shopping queue rather in the recitation of the blessed words of our Allah Ta'ala.

May Allah Ta'ala allow us to strike great bargains in this "Mega Sale," aameen.

Interior Decor

Interior decor is an art. People spend much time, effort and money on their homes, offices and businesses in order to get that special finish and make it look as impressive and appealing as possible. Great pains are taken to ensure that the furniture 'blends in' with the surroundings, while the carpets are made to match the curtains. Just any ordinary bulb sticking out of the ceiling is unthinkable. A variety of light fittings are positioned in the proper places so that the light may reflect in the best way. The right 'tone' must be captured in the colour co-ordination. Several other trimmings and trappings are added for the final touch.

Allah Ta'ala has also given us a month for interior decoration - a month to decorate our hearts. The month of Ramadhaan is a time to truly make our hearts sparkle and shine and to look truly impressive in the sight of Allah Ta'ala.

The first part of interior decoration is to remove the cobwebs, scrape the rust and do a general thorough clean-up. The clean-up of our hearts requires sincere taubah. We will have to scrape off the rust of sin, remove the filth of jealousy, sweep out the dirt of malice, scrub away the pride and generally wash away all the evil within us with the flowing tears of earnest and sincere repentance.

The preferable procedure of repenting is very simple. Dedicate some time in solitude. Perform a proper wudhu.

Thereafter get on to the musalla (prayer mat) and perform two rakaats of nafl salaah with the intention of the salaah of taubah. Then simply let the tears of repentance flow. If the eyes cannot cry, just let the heart weep. Weep over our utter ingratitude. Beg Allah Ta'ala's forgiveness by saying, "O Allah! You granted me a heart to fill with love for You... but I filled it with the love of the world, with even haraam love... O Allah forgive me. You gave me hands to raise unto You, to hold the Quraan Majeed and to assist the needy... but I used it to touch what You forbade, and to indulge in illicit 'chatting' on my phone... forgive me." This is just a little example.

Simply weep over every sin perpetrated and wash the heart clean. However, when washing the heart with the tears of repentance, the detergent that is compulsory to use is "Deep Regret" for having transgressed the laws of Allah Ta'ala. One must also have a firm determination that one will not return to the sin in future.

After removing the filth, rust and dust, the internal decor must commence. The purpose of fasting is to decorate the heart with taqwa – the fear of Allah Ta'ala and the constant awareness that "Allah Ta'ala is watching". While fasting, even if one is very hungry and thirsty, one nevertheless refrains from all eating and drinking. Why? Simply because it is the command of Allah Ta'ala... and Allah Ta'ala is watching.

Likewise, there should no more be any shameless dressing, harbouring ill-feelings, illicit chatting, zina, looking at haraam, etc., because... Allah Ta'ala is watching. The heart with taqwa indeed is a billion times more sparkling and impressive in the

sight of Allah Ta'ala than the most expensive decor that money can buy!!!

Ramadhaan is also a month to decorate the heart with various other important trimmings and accessories. Ramadhaan is a month of patience and compassion. *Therefore, paint the heart in the soft shades of patience. Tint it with the colour of tolerance and give it an elegant look by draping it with compassion.*

This Ramadhaan let us not waste much time in acquiring glittering garments, dazzling jewellery and shining shoes to decorate ourselves for 'Eid. While cleanliness and neatness are essential on the outside, the greatest effort must be made to decorate the inside – the heart.

May Allah Ta'ala enable us to truly adorn and decorate our hearts, aameen.

“There’s Enough Time”

Ramadhaan is the month to capitalize and gain, as Allah Ta'ala offers us tremendous ‘bargains’. When the month of Ramadhaan arrives, people initially tend to be ‘charged’ and ‘motivated’. *After a few days though, they relax and think, “There’s more than enough time left! I can read Quraan later on! I can repent later on!”*

Worsening the situation are the distractions such as social media, WhatsApp, etc. which not only destroy our time but

sometimes even draw us into severe sins such as gheebah (backbiting). For some people, the entire month passes in negligence. Eventually, when the month comes to an end, we realize that we achieved very little or nothing at all!

In order to make this Ramadhan count and to derive maximum benefit from it, we have to learn to safeguard our time and use it wisely and productively. If we learn the lesson of making every second count in the month of Ramadhan, there will be hope of us using our time wisely out of Ramadhan as well.

Wi-Fi Free

We often see the sign “Free Wi-Fi”. In fact, we often search for this sign, as people fear becoming ‘disconnected’. Whether in a hotel, airport, restaurant or anywhere else, this sign is a sure draw card, attracting people to the premises.

However, it is doubtful that any of us would have seen a sign saying “Wi-Fi Free”, even though this is the sign that we all need to hang in our homes at the very least for the last ten days of Ramadhan.

The last ten days of Ramadhan are unlike the first twenty days. It is most probably during one of the odd nights of these ten days that Lailatul Qadr (the Night of Power) occurs which is more virtuous than a thousand months. Showing his Ummah the importance of these ten days, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi

wasallam) exerted himself even further during this blessed period.

After understanding the significance of these ten days, we all desire to exert ourselves and reap the great rewards offered by Allah Ta'ala. However, there are numerous distractions which lie in ambush, waiting to 'pounce' and trap us, preventing us from fulfilling our ambition. Among these, perhaps the greatest distraction is the internet.

Be it novels, social media or anything similar, most of these distractions are facilitated by the internet. Hence, to 'nip the distraction in the bud', we should aim to make the last ten days (rather make the entire month of Ramadhaan) Wi-Fi and internet free.

By freeing ourselves of these distractions, we will find ourselves free to make the most of this blessed period. Furthermore, the internet is the cause of many evils and sins taking place. Hence, disconnecting from the internet will undoubtedly aid us in connecting with Allah Ta'ala, which is the very objective of the month of Ramadhaan.

May Allah Ta'ala assist us all to make the most of this blessed period and truly connect with Him.

Further Reduced - Don't Miss!

The signs at the front of your favourite clothing store first read “*End of Season Sale - 50% Off!*” However, twenty days have passed since the signs were first erected and they have now been changed for signs that read “*Further Reduced!*”.

The sale period has not only been extended, the bargains have become better and are now absolutely unbeatable. Nobody wants to be left out.

This is exactly the case with the final ten days of the blessed month of Ramadhaan. The entire month is the month of mercy, the month in which Allah Ta'ala forgives multitudes of his servants who turn to him in repentance. Furthermore, the entire month is host to such a bargain that for one fardh action, the servant is granted the reward of 70 fardh actions!

Enter the final ten days, however, and the deals are so fantastic, that Allah Ta'ala, for the duration of one of the odd nights, grants his servants the reward of 1000 months of worship!

If we have failed to make the most of this month and value its precious moments by making 'ibaadah, reciting the Quraan Majeed, etc. until now, then let us not lose hope and 'throw in the towel'. Rather, let us make the most of the remaining days, as by doing this we can still salvage our Ramadhaan and prevent it from having gone to waste.

Very often, it's the final moments that make all the difference. How many people lived their lives as disbelievers, but were blessed with the courage to bring imaan and shortly thereafter passed away? If we use the last moments of Ramadhaan fruitfully, there is hope that Allah Ta'ala will forgive us and overlook the fact that we failed to adequately appreciate this blessed month until now.

Hurry up and cash in before it's too late! These deals are not to be missed!

Freezer is not Working

Two weeks before Ramadhaan, you were pleasantly surprised by your 'hubby' with a gift that you needed most at that time... *the biggest upright freezer that can comfortably and neatly accommodate all those tupperwares of savouries that you made or ordered with sooo much of difficulty.* You unwrap it with excitement, plug it with anticipation and then fill it till capacity.

The next day, when you went to grudgingly take out some samoosas for an unexpected guest, you were shocked to see that all your savouries had melted and some were even giving off a stench.

Rushing to the phone you dial the customer care line number, *"Your product is rubbish... and all my Ramadhaan savouries are gone off... I'm taking you'll to court"* you yell.

“But ma’am, did you follow all the instructions” asks the consultant. “What a silly question to ask... it’s only about switching it on” you scream.

“That’s the problem... did you check if the door was tightly shut?” You think to yourself, “Oh no! It’s my fault. The door was left slightly open.”

Just as leaving the door of the freezer open is a cause of it not freezing and results in major problems, **similarly committing sins together with the good actions that we carry out in the blessed month of Ramadhaan is a means of us not gaining the desired effect of the various acts of worship.**

Let us strive to make this Ramadhaan a sin-free one in order to earn the great rewards and blessings that are contained therein.

Turning Point

Allah Ta’ala mentions in the Quraan Majeed, “Whoever honours the distinctive signs of (the Deen of) Allah Ta’ala, then it is from the piety of the hearts.” (Surah Hajj v32)

Respect for the symbols of Deen denotes taqwa in a person’s heart. **In the past there were those mothers who, when the azaan was called out, would shout out to their children saying: “Quickly switch off the haraam TV, azaan is going”. When it was Friday they would say, “Today is Jumu’ah, no TV”, and when Ramadhaan arrived, they would announce, “Listen children,**

Ramadhāan has come so there will be no TV in this house.” As a result, the Shaitaan box used to be covered and put away.

Outwardly, the mother seemed to have double standards, but in reality it was only a matter of time whereby the mothers respect for azaan, Jumu‘ah and Ramadhāan brought about a revolution within that home and the colours of Islam embraced that household.

Thus, we should try to abandon all our bad habits in the blessed month of Ramadhāan. *If our old habits come back into our lives after Ramadhāan each year, we should not lose hope but rather continue trying.* Allah Ta‘ala in His infinite wisdom will one day make that particular Ramadhāan the turning point of our lives.

The True ‘Eid

A group of people once passed by a monk in a monastery. Seeing him, they enquired, “*When do the people of this monastery celebrate ‘Eid?*” The monk replied, “*On the day that they are forgiven.*”

The monk then recited the following:

لَيْسَ الْعِيدُ لِمَنْ لَبَسَ الْجَدِيدَ ، إِنَّمَا الْعِيدُ لِمَنْ طَاعَتْهُ تَرْبَتُهُ

‘Eid is not for those who merely wear new clothing. ‘Eid is actually for those whose good deeds increase.

لَيْسَ الْعِيدُ لِمَنْ بَحَمَلَ بِاللِّبَاسِ وَالرُّكُوبِ ، إِنَّمَا الْعِيدُ لِمَنْ غُفِرَتْ لَهُ الذُّنُوبُ

'Eid is not for those who merely beautify themselves by wearing attractive clothing and riding on exotic conveyances. 'Eid is actually for those whose sins have been forgiven.

(Lataaiful Ma'aarif pg. 483)

Annually, the day of 'Eid is eagerly anticipated by the Muslim Ummah and is viewed as an occasion of happiness and rejoicing. However, how many people spend their Ramadhaan in such a manner that they actually have something to celebrate? If the Ramadhaan was profitable, by them earning the mercy and forgiveness of Allah Ta'ala and changing their lives, then this is definitely one of the greatest blessings that one can rejoice over.

If we have not appreciated this blessed month as we ought to have done, then it is still not too late. There are still a few invaluable moments remaining which we can use to turn to Allah Ta'ala and seek His forgiveness. If we do so, there is hope that Allah Ta'ala will shower His mercy on us and also include us among those who gained His mercy in this month.

'Eid Mubaarak!

It was the last day of Ramadhaan and the madrasah classroom was bubbling with excitement with every child discussing what pretty outfits they were going to wear, where they will be

spending their ‘Eid, and what they were expecting for ‘eidy (‘Eid presents). The echoes of “Eid Mubaarak” were heard all over the class.

‘Aaishah was a shy little girl who wouldn’t speak much. However, she had an enquiring mind and would try to understand everything correctly from her Aapa Raheemah. She asked unexpectedly: “Aapa! What does ‘Eid Mubaarak mean?” The Aapa locked the kitaab cupboard, smiled at her and said: “May your ‘Eid be blessed.” “But how does it become blessed, Aapa?” she asked. “Is it just by saying ‘Eid Mubaarak’ or do we need to do certain things?”

Aapa Raheemah replied: “I like that question ‘Aaishah! You are 100% correct. It does *not* become blessed just by saying ‘Eid Mubaarak,’ rather it is by us spending our ‘Eid in a way that makes our Allah Ta‘ala happy. I can only explain to you three very important things which will please our Allah Ta‘ala and make our ‘Eid a blessed one. We only have twenty minutes left to go home and Zahraa never read her sabaq yet:

“Firstly, we must dress like true Muslimahs. We cannot wear clothes that show our body and shape, or make us look like ‘Tom Boys’.”

By this time the class had quietened down and everyone was listening to this interesting conversation.

“But Aapa, my mummy already bought me a sleeveless top and skinny tights. What must I do now because tomorrow is ‘Eid. Where am I going to get another outfit now?” asked Yumnah

with a terrified look. “Why don’t you look for a matching inner in your cupboard, borrow a skirt from Yusrah and tell your mummy that you like it that way,” responded ‘Aaishah. “That’s a good idea,” said Aapa Raheemah.

Then she went on to explain: “Children! The second thing we need to do to make our Allah Ta’ala happy is that we mustn’t play with boys. **We must eat with the ladies and the boys must eat with the men.**” “But Aapa, in our house the uncles and aunties always eat together. *How am I going to change such a big thing now?* My mummy will tell me that if we separate the men and women everyone will get upset.” ‘Aaishah responded again and said: “That’s easy. You must explain to your mummy that it’s more important that Allah Ta’ala doesn’t get upset with us. This will be a start insha-Allah. Remember if we try to make Allah Ta’ala happy, he will make it easy for us and everyone will eventually understand.” Aapa Raheemah said, beaming with joy: “*Masha-Allah ‘Aaishah. That’s how a true Muslimah thinks.*”

“Lastly,” the Aapa explained: “**We need to make a point of meeting our relatives that are nearby, and phone those that are far away.**” “But you know Aapa, my Gori Foy (father’s sister) lives in the next street, but mummy doesn’t allow us to visit her because they had an argument last year on ‘Eid Day. *It was so embarrassing.* Now even daddy is not speaking to his sister,” explained ‘Aaliyah. “Why don’t you try this?” said ‘Aaishah. “When you go home today, call your mummy and daddy, sit on their lap and act like you are crying. When they ask you what’s the problem, tell them: *‘How can I enjoy my ‘Eid when I haven’t seen*

my Foi and cousins for one whole year. I'm missing them so much.' Then beg them to phone your Gori Foi and invite her for 'Eid. Insha-Allah this will bring them back together and all of you would have a really happy and blessed 'Eid together."

"Excellent, 'Aaishah," exclaimed the Aapa. "It seems like Allah Ta'ala has blessed you with great wisdom and understanding as He had blessed our mother Sayyidah 'Aaishah (radhiyallahu 'anha)."

"My beloved children! If we try to please our Allah Ta'ala on this auspicious day by doing these three things, insha-Allah our 'Eid will really be mubaarak - a blessed one," concluded Aapa Raheemah.

'Eid or Anti-climax?

Imagine receiving an elaborately wrapped gift platter filled with the most exotic sweet meats. From *burfee* to *magaj* and *jalebee* to *halwa*, the platter promises the taste buds a trip to gastronomic 'heaven'. However, as you undo the wrapping and pull back the cellophane, you see a flash of movement. **No! A giant cockroach darts out from behind the *burfee* block and climbs over the *goolaab jamoon* in its race for freedom!**

This is a typical example of an anti-climax. A person expected one thing, and everything seemed promising, and suddenly, things turned out completely contrary to expectations.

‘Eid is the occasion when the servants of Allah Ta‘ala receive their prizes and rewards for obeying Allah Ta‘ala and worshipping Him faithfully throughout the month of Ramadhaan. Hence, although ‘Eid is a joyous occasion, a Muslim’s greatest concern is that Allah Ta‘ala should crown his efforts with acceptance. If Allah Ta‘ala does not accept his efforts, his hunger and exertion would have been to little or no avail.

Bearing this in mind, a Muslim will thus ensure that he continues to obey Allah Ta‘ala on this day, not descend into sin and transgression. In this regard, some of the avenues of sin that are most common on this occasion are those of intermingling between non-mahram men and women, dressing inappropriately (*e.g. revealing or body hugging clothing*) and being lax regarding salaah.

To commit such sins on any occasion is bad – but on the occasion of ‘Eid is even worse. By behaving in this manner, how do we hope to gain the acceptance of Allah Ta‘ala?

When the cockroach is found in the platter, nobody wants to partake of the sweetmeats. Similarly, when the Day of ‘Eid is spoilt with sin, it taints the efforts of the entire month of Ramadhaan.

May Allah Ta‘ala bless us all on this joyous occasion and crown our broken efforts with His acceptance.

Nurturing the Relationship

There are few methods that express love as eloquently as speech. Hence, a newly-wed couple who have the 'misfortune' of living apart for some time will often compensate for their separation by remaining glued to their phones, speaking to each other for hours on end. On the contrary, when two people have hatred and enmity for one another, they make it a point to avoid speaking to each other.

During the month of Ramadhaan, Muslims the world over remained glued to the Quraan Majeed, earnestly conversing with Allah Ta'ala. The more they recited the Quraan Majeed, the more their love for Allah Ta'ala grew and the closer to Him they became. However, how many of us have continued to converse with Allah Ta'ala, through reciting the Quraan Majeed daily, as we used to in the month of Ramadhaan? Similarly, how many of us are still conversing with Allah Ta'ala through the direct-line of du'aa, as we used to during the month of Ramadhaan?

When a person has a close, bosom friend, and this friend suddenly gives him the cold shoulder, it greatly perturbs and hurts him as his beloved friend is now treating him as an enemy would. When we earnestly conversed with Allah Ta'ala and did our best to gain His nearness in the month of Ramadhaan, then what message is sent out when after the month of Ramadhaan, we seldom recite the Quraan Majeed and rarely raise our hands

in du'aa? *Are we showing Allah Ta'ala a cold shoulder' (may Allah forbid!)?*

Just as we would not appreciate our near and dear ones suddenly abandoning us, we should not suddenly abandon our relationship with Allah Ta'ala, who is the most beloved and dear to us. *Instead, if we strive to maintain our relationship with Allah Ta'ala, our love and bond with Him will grow until the next Ramadhaan, during which it will be boosted and increase even further.* In this manner, we will become closer and closer to Allah Ta'ala until He eventually summons us from this world.

The 'Cold Shoulder'

"Excuse me! May I have your attention please!" Yet, despite the repeated requests, the plea fell on deaf ears and was totally ignored.

The above scenario plays out in many spheres of life. Sometimes, it's an obstinate member of the staff that 'plays dumb' and chooses to ignore their employer. At times, it can be a friend that chooses to ignore us. *At other times, it can even be our own near and dear ones that give us the 'cold shoulder', and it is from these people that this treatment is most painful and upsetting.*

If a spouse hurts or upsets their partner, and out of disappointment, the partner gives them the 'cold shoulder' and 'silent treatment', it will hurt and disturb them more than if any

other person had to ignore them. From one-word answers to point-blank silence, the anxiety and disappointment perceived will be so severe that one will lose their appetite and will even find it difficult to sleep!

When this is how seriously we treat the ‘cold shoulder’ from our near and dear ones, *than how much worse will it be for us to give Allah Ta’ala the ‘cold shoulder’?* However, this is precisely what many people unwittingly do.

During the month of Ramadhaan, many people increased their commitment to Deen and communicated regularly with Allah Ta’ala through reciting the Quraan Majeed, standing in salaah and raising their hands in du’aa. Somehow, when the moon of ‘Eid was sighted, they casually turned away and gave Allah Ta’ala the ‘cold shoulder’. After connecting with their Creator for one month, they inexplicably turned away and returned to their evil ways of old. *Do we really think that Allah Ta’ala will accept and tolerate this? For how long do we expect to ‘get away’ with this behaviour?*

If we want Allah Ta’ala to continuously show us love and mercy and shower His blessings upon us, we need to maintain our relationship with Him. A person who only maintains a relationship when it suits him is generally termed and regarded as a ‘user’. *Let us be ‘lovers’ and ‘devotees’ of Allah Ta’ala – not users.*

May Allah Ta’ala assist us all to become and remain His devoted servants.

Maintaining the Momentum

How many people do you know who one day looked into the mirror or stood on the scale and announced, “Enough!” The digits on the scale and the reflection in the mirror are both unbiased and don’t hesitate to tell a person that it’s time for him to shed those extra kilos.

How many people thereafter sacrificed their scrumptious snacks and exerted themselves in exercise, gradually achieving their goal weight? The answer to both questions is – quite a few actually. *However, an overwhelming amount of these people are unable to maintain their ideal weight and soon thereafter slip into their old rut of unhealthy and bad eating habits, only to regain the unwanted weight even faster than they had initially lost it.*

Hence, the key to a successful diet, more than losing the weight, is to maintain the weight and avoid regaining the burnt fat.

In exactly the same manner, most Muslims, during the month of Ramadhaan, embark on a diet from sins such as backbiting, lying, watching movies, dressing indecently, exploiting people, venting their anger and temper on those around them, etc. However, once this blessed month terminates, most people consider themselves to be unchained and free to return to their previous lives of sin – just as the rebellious Shayaaateen are unchained and allowed to freely roam the earth once again.

It is thus essential for us to maintain the momentum of good deeds and abstention from sins that we had built up during **Ramadhaan**. Our daily recitation of the Quraan Majeed, engaging in du'aa, giving sadaqah to the poor, controlling our tempers and other righteous efforts should not cease merely because Ramadhaan has ended.

It should not be that we are 'seasonal worshippers' - Muslims who only show devotion and loyalty to Allah Ta'ala in Ramadhaan and thereafter turn their backs to Allah Ta'ala and befriend Shaitaan.

May Allah Ta'ala assist us all to maintain the momentum of Ramadhaan, aameen.

*Hajj &
Qurbaani*



Hajj – The Right of Allah

وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا ۗ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ عَلِيمٌ

As a right of Allah Ta'ala, it is obligatory on people to perform hajj of the Ka'bah – on everyone who can afford the journey. If one disbelieves, then Allah Ta'ala is independent of all the worlds.

(Surah Aal 'Imraan v97)

In the above verse of the Quraan Majeed, Allah Ta'ala speaks of the fardh of hajj and tells us that it is His right over us that we perform hajj if we have the means to do so.

Having the means refers to a person being physically capable as well as possessing the financial means for his travel costs to go and return, accommodation and other related expenditure. If one has dependents at home, the needs and expenses of the dependents must also be seen to. **Furthermore, a woman will require a mahram to travel with her for hajj. If she does not have a mahram, it will not be permissible for her to travel alone for hajj.**

In our context, once hajj becomes fardh on a person, he cannot merely board a plane and fly off to fulfil this great 'ibaadah. Rather, he has to follow the procedure of applying through SAHUC, awaiting accreditation etc. Hence, as soon as we possess the means to perform hajj, we should set the money aside and forward our application. **We should not delay as it**

often takes a few years before a person receives accreditation and is able to go for hajj.

In the above verse, Allah Ta‘ala warns us that if a person shows an indifferent attitude towards the ‘ibaadah of hajj by not performing hajj or delaying unnecessarily, then Allah Ta‘ala has no need for him – *or anyone else for that matter*. Hence, by neglecting to perform hajj or delaying, we are harming no one but ourselves.

Additionally, we should not think that we are doing Allah Ta‘ala a favour by performing hajj. Rather, we are performing hajj for our own benefit through absolving ourselves of the obligations and earning the tremendous rewards promised for the one who performs hajj. *We should thus try our best to perform our hajj as soon as we can.*

May Allah Ta‘ala favour us all with the honour of presenting ourselves at His door.

‘Hajj Mabroor’

Sayyiduna Jaabir (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) reports that Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said, “The reward of a ‘mabroor’ (accepted) hajj is nothing other than Jannah.” Hearing this, a Sahaabi (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) asked, “What constitutes an accepted hajj?” Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) replied, “*Feeding people and speaking to them in a gentle and good manner.*” In another narration, Rasulullah (sallallahu

'alaihi wasallam) mentioned, "Feeding people and spreading salaam (i.e. making salaam to people)." (*Shu'abul Imaan #3824 & 3825 and At-Targheeb wat Tarheeb vol. 2, pg. 165*)

In this hadeeth, Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) explained that among the actions which make a person's hajj gain acceptance are the actions of feeding people, speaking kindly to them and making salaam to one and all (obviously, this does not apply to non-mahrams as one will not greet them). Similarly, in order for a person's hajj to be 'mabroor', it needs to be void of show and ostentation, and sins and shamelessness.

Fortunate indeed are those individuals who have already proceeded or will soon depart for hajj, and may Allah Ta'ala bless them all with 'Hajj Mabroor'. Nevertheless, if we are not among those performing hajj this year, it does not mean that we cannot at least inculcate the spirit of hajj.

If we cannot pelt the jamaraat (the 'shaitaans'), engage in du'aa in 'Arafah, make tawaaf of the Ka'bah and perform sa'ee between Safaa and Marwah, then we can at least speak kindly to people, feed them, make salaam to everyone we meet, avoid shamelessness and indecency, and refrain from ostentation and show, as these actions are not restricted to the occasion of hajj. In this manner, although we are not among those performing hajj, we will at least enjoy the spirit of hajj. Furthermore, when these actions contribute to a person's hajj gaining acceptance, then through us holding firmly to these

actions, it is hoped that Allah Ta‘ala will bless us with His special acceptance as well.

May Allah Ta‘ala bless us all with His special acceptance and take us all for hajj and ‘umrah, aameen.

Hajj from Home

We all have the burning desire in our hearts to present ourselves at the doorstep of the Ka’bah and fulfil the blessed rites of hajj. Some are fortunate enough to perform hajj once in a lifetime, some twice in a lifetime, and there are the select few who are extremely fortunate as they perform hajj annually.

However, Allah Ta‘ala, in His infinite kindness, has made it such that even those who cannot journey to Makkah Mukarramah to perform hajj are able to acquire the reward of hajj. Furthermore, they can do it from the comfort of their own homes!

Below are two such actions through which one can perform ‘Hajj from Home’:

1. Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah bin ‘Amr (radhiyallahu ‘anhuma) narrates that Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said, “The one who recites ‘Subhaanallah’ 100 times in the morning and 100 times in the evening is like one who has performed 100 hajj.” (Sunan Tirmizi #3471)
2. Sayyiduna Anas (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) narrates that a man once came to Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) and said, “I

desire to participate in jihaad, but I am unable to do so.” Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) asked him, “Are any of your parents alive?” When the man replied that his mother was still alive, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said, “Show Allah Ta‘ala the manner in which you serve and obey her. **If you do this, you will be (like) one who is performing hajj, ‘umrah and striving in jihaad.**” (Abu Ya’la, *Al-Mu’jamus Sagheer and Al-Mu’jamul Awsat - Majma‘uz Zawaa-id #13420*)

The ‘beauty’ of the above two actions is that they can be done perpetually, throughout the year! One can thus easily earn the reward of hajj out of the month of Zul Hijjah.

Let us strive to bring these two actions alive so that we can be among those who perpetually earn the reward of hajj.

Place it under the Blade

Once again the qurbaani fever is in the air. Those exotic gardens where even a few dry leaves are normally intolerable will have sheep droppings lying all over. Those moms who cannot stand a single stain on their children’s clothes will have their darlings returning to their spotless homes all smelly and dirty. Those cars in which placing a sack of onions often becomes a problem, will have buckets and boxes of freshly cut meat stacked in them.

Ever wondered how all of this happens?

The answer is simple... It is the result of the great spirit of Nabi Ebrahim ('alaihi salaam).

This spirit of his has been encapsulated in this verse of the Quraan Majeed: *“Indeed my prayer, my offering, my life and my death are for Allah, the Rabb of all the worlds.”* (Surah Al-An'aam, v162)

It was this very spirit that prompted him to forsake his disbelieving family and folks in his young age and enabled him to leave his wife and innocent child in a barren land in his old age. This spirit further motivated him to readily accept the command of slaughtering his beloved son, when he needed him most... *in his advanced age.*

All this and much more, he did merely because... *it was the command of his beloved Allah.* No relationship, desire or emotion was important or dear to him if it became an obstacle in carrying out the command of Allah Ta'ala.

Thus, the great lesson of qurbaani which we ought to learn is that every impermissible desire, pleasure or emotion needs to be 'placed under the blade' for the sake of our beloved Allah.

These desires would appear in different shapes and forms. For some it would be the desire to 'fall for the bait' of a charming young man, or the urge to dress in a figure revealing skinny jeans, or to apply the latest designer perfume and make-up to 'raise eyebrows' as she walks down the 'catwalk' of the outside world. For others it may be the urge to silence a nagging mother-in-law, to give a 'nosey' sister-in-law a piece of her

mind, or to listen to the latest ‘number’ or to watch the hottest movie.

All these impermissible desires and emotions need to be ‘placed under the blade’ in order for us to achieve the true spirit of qurbaani (sacrifice). *If we fail in this then we have lost out terribly, although we may have stocked up our freezers with meat to last for an entire year or even more.*

Savour the True ‘Flavour’ of Qurbaani

We are fast approaching that special occasion which graces us only once a year – *the occasion of ‘Eidul Adha or qurbaani.*

As the countdown commences, the planning and preparations begin and the atmosphere is charged with excitement and joy. While the adults are locating the knives, hooks, buckets, aprons, overalls, gumboots, arranging for the carcasses to be sliced and the meat stored, etc., the children are probably running to and fro in a state of excitement. They eagerly pull on their gumboots and walk amidst the animals, ‘inspecting’ and ‘choosing’ their animals. Likewise, they beg their fathers to take them to other homes and farms so that they can see who has the biggest bull or grandest goat.

The occasion of ‘Eidul Adha is a happy occasion on which we are the guests of the most gracious of all hosts - *Allah Ta‘ala.*

Hence, it is only befitting that the children be happy and filled with joy. They should be encouraged to ‘get their hands dirty’ by getting involved and helping in whatever way possible so that they also have a share in the activities of qurbaani. However, the be-all-and-end-all of the children’s ‘Eidul Adha should not merely be to participate in the activities, run outside, play and meet long lost relatives and friends. Rather, the essence and relevance of this qurbaani in the life of a Muslim should be imparted to them so that they may savour the true ‘flavour’ of qurbaani.

The parents should tell the children the incident of Nabi Ebrahim (‘alaihi salaam) and Nabi Ismaa’eel (‘alaihi salaam). When telling them the story, explain to them that Allah Ta’ala did not really want Nabi Ebrahim (‘alaihi salaam) to slaughter Nabi Ismaa’eel (‘alaihi salaam), but He was testing them to see whether they would do what He told them to do. These great Ambiyaa (‘alaihimas salaam) passed the test ‘with flying colours’, and Allah Ta’ala was so pleased that until today, the entire Ummah slaughters animals on this occasion in their remembrance. We should thus highlight the point to our children that throughout our lives, our goal is to make Allah Ta’ala happy and fulfil what He wants from us, just as Nabi Ebrahim (‘alaihi salaam) and Nabi Ismaa’eel (‘alaihi salaam) did. In this way, the children will view ‘Eidul Adha and qurbaani in a different light and will be able to appreciate the occasion.

Together with this, since the occasion of ‘Eidul Adha involves animals, it is important that the children are supervised and

taught to treat the animals correctly. Sometimes, in excitement, the children climb onto the animals, jump on them, chase them and harass them to the extent where the animals are caused great inconvenience, are frightened and are not even allowed to rest. This is obviously impermissible, and we should thus teach the children to respect and care for the animals.

Finally, since qurbaani is one of the symbols of Islam, let us try our best to give our children a true qurbaani. *The honour of qurbaani should be firmly entrenched in their hearts, they should eagerly anticipate qurbaani, enjoy eating the meat which Allah Ta'ala has provided for us, as his guests, and should understand its great importance and significance.*

May Allah Ta'ala bless us all with the true spirit and the rewards of 'Eidul Adha and qurbaani.

Witness it Being Slaughtered

Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) said to his beloved daughter, Sayyidah Faatimah (radhiyallahu 'anha), on the Day of 'Eid, *“O Faatimah! Stand and witness your sacrificial animal (being slaughtered), for verily you will receive forgiveness for every sin the moment the very first drop of its blood is spilt. Behold! Its flesh and blood will be brought (on the Day of Qiyaamah) and placed on your scale, (multiplied) 70 times (in weight).”* Sayyiduna Abu Sa'eed (radhiyallahu 'anhu) asked, *“O Rasul of Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam)! Is this (virtue) for the*

family of Muhammad (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) alone, for they are indeed worthy of virtue which is bestowed to them alone, or is it for all Muslims in general?” Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) replied, “**For the family of Muhammad (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) especially and for all Muslims in general (as well).**” (*At-Targheeb wat Tarheeb* vol. 2, pg. 154)

For a woman to witness the slaughter of her qurbaani animal is definitely meritorious, as it was the wish of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) that his own dear daughter witness her animal being slaughtered.

As meritorious as it may be, however, this action will NOT gain us the happiness of Allah Ta‘ala and His Rasul (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) if, in the process, we blatantly trample the laws of Deen. How sad if an action undertaken to secure the pleasure of Allah Ta‘ala, instead earns us the displeasure of Allah Ta‘ala! **It is thus absolutely essential that due attention be paid to aspects such as purdah/hijaab, intermingling of sexes, etc.**

Let it not be that the Day of ‘Eid, a day of happiness, a day meant to take us a step closer to Allah Ta‘ala, actually takes us 10 steps away from Allah Ta‘ala!!!

Oh Dear there’s an Odour!

Imagine that it’s your only brother getting married. Excitement is in the air and all are eagerly anticipating the marriage. The day of the walemah arrives and you sit surrounded by your

beloved family on this most joyous occasion. As the food arrives, however, your heart sinks and your face drops.

“Oh No!” you think in dismay. The caterers, as usual, have made the food literally ‘swim’ in oil. In fact, it seems that they were even more liberal with the oil than usual. The word ‘swimming’ didn’t do justice; the food was drowning in oil. *After four months of intense dieting and strict discipline, you had finally begun shedding those extra kilos of puppy fat that had always haunted you. You did not want four months of effort to be spoiled by a weekend bingeing on biryani.*

But then you think to yourself, *“It’s not an everyday event, let me not be the one to ruin the happiness. My poor brother will feel hurt if I don’t eat anything,”* and in honour of your brother, out of happiness for the occasion, you make sure you eat the food.

The days of qurbaani are days in which the normally meritorious deed of fasting actually becomes haraam. *This is because they are the days in which Allah Ta’ala extends an invitation to every single Believer.* Allah Ta’ala is the most generous of hosts and so serves his guests (us) only the best – the meat of the qurbaani animals.

When we are invited to somebody’s home, we ensure that we eat at least a little from every dish prepared so that the host feels that all the food was eaten and appreciated. On the occasion of the farewell hajj, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) had no less than *one hundred camels* sacrificed for qurbaani. He wished to honour the invitation of Allah Ta’ala and

also gain the tremendous blessings contained in the meat of the animals – *but how could he eat from a hundred camels?*

Not wanting to be deprived of the blessings and showing his appreciation to Allah Ta'ala, he ordered that a piece of meat of every one of the hundred camels be placed in a pot and cooked. He thereafter ate from and sipped the gravy in the pot. (*Saheeh Muslim #2950*) In this way, he secured in just a few morsels, the blessings of one hundred camels and also showed Allah Ta'ala how eager he was to eat of the meal Allah Ta'ala Himself had chosen for the occasion. (*Sharhun Nawawi - Saheeh Muslim vol. 1, pg. 399*)

Can we ever imagine attending the function of a prominent member of society and taking our own food along to the table? ... If he questions us, could we ever tell him that his food “has a smell” and so we prefer our own food? Absolutely never!

Allah Ta'ala deserves more honour than any member of society. Let us eat at least some of the qurbaani meat and understand that it is what Allah Ta'ala himself is feeding us on the Days of 'Eid.

How sad it is when we ‘take our own food’ to the invitation of Allah Ta'ala and don't eat any of the qurbaani meat! Actions speak louder than words. What are our actions telling Allah Ta'ala?

Breakfast Menu

Eggs – *poached, sunny-side-up, boiled, scramble, or omelette?*

Bread – *white, brown, baguette, bagel, croissant?*

Cereal – *All Bran, Cornflakes, Special K, Nutrifik, Weet Bix, Frosties?*

Fruit – *banana, apple, papaya, orange, melon, strawberries, kiwi?*

Juice – *orange, mango, apple, berry?*

Breakfast menus vary from household to household, but regardless of our tastes and preferences, **there is one day of the year when each and every household should eat the same breakfast – the day of ‘Eidul Adhaa**. On this day, the very first food that we eat (breakfast) should be the meat of the qurbaani animal.

Sayyiduna Buraidah (radhiallahu ‘anhu) reports that on the occasion of ‘Eidul Fitr, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) would not leave for the ‘Eid Salaah until he consumed something. However, on the occasion of ‘Eidul Adhaa, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) would **not** consume anything until he returned from the ‘Eid Salaah. **Thereafter, the (first) thing that he consumed was the meat of the sacrificial animal.** (*Musnad Ahmad #22984*) In one narration it is reported that **the first thing which Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) consumed was the liver of the sacrificial animal.** (*As-Sunanul Kubraa - Baihaqi #6161*)

It is extremely important and emphasized that we all eat the meat of the qurbaani animal. However, we should not wait for

lunch or supper to enjoy the qurbaani meat. Rather, it was the sunnah of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) to ensure that the very first thing which he consumed on the Day of ‘Eid was the meat or liver of the qurbaani animal.

We should all strive to bring this blessed sunnah alive by delaying our breakfast on the Day of ‘Eid, waiting for the meat or liver to be prepared and served as breakfast.

May Allah Ta‘ala bless us all with the true love of the sunnah.

The Greater Qurbaani

The immense rewards of qurbaani are mindboggling. One’s sins are forgiven before the first drop of blood of the animal falls onto the ground. A person’s reward will be equivalent to the number of strands of hair or fibre of wool on the animal he is slaughtering. Likewise, many other great rewards have been promised for this very great ‘ibaadah. *Hence, can you imagine a reward greater than this?*

Indeed, Allah Ta‘ala loves something even more than sacrificing animals and blesses the one who undertakes it with greater rewards. Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbaas (radhiyallahu ‘anhuma) reported that once on the Day of ‘Eidul Adha Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said, “There is no action more virtuous than the spilling of blood (qurbaani) on this day, except the joining of family ties (that have been severed).” (*Al-Mu’jamul Kabeer - At Targheeb wat Tarheeb vol. 2, pg. 154*)

While performing qurbaani is certainly a great sacrifice, joining and maintaining family ties is a greater sacrifice. **The sacrifice of qurbaani only entails the sacrificing of wealth while joining and maintaining family ties often entails the very great sacrifice and ‘qurbaani’ of one’s ego and self-esteem.** At times it also requires the sacrifice of some wealth.

An indifferent family member may snub one and spurn the gesture of re-joining and patching up. However if one undertakes the great ‘sacrifice’ in humbling oneself to join kinship, it will definitely surpass the sacrificing of animals in reward and in securing the pleasure of Allah Ta’ala. Allah Ta’ala loves that the paragon of His creation (insaan) and the followers of His beloved Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) should live harmoniously and cordially with one another. **Hence any initiative undertaken to foster a harmonious relationship is greatly appreciated and rewarded by Allah Ta’ala.**

There are numerous benefits and rewards that one receives for maintaining a healthy relationship and reuniting torn hearts. It is therefore the duty of every individual to undertake the ‘sacrifice’ necessary to maintain kinship. It is better to trample one’s ego or tolerate some loss of wealth to join and maintain family ties (earning great rewards and benefits in the process) rather than suffer the severe consequences of severing family ties.

Therefore, this ‘Eidul Adha, let us engage in the ‘ibaadah of qurbaani as well as the ‘ibaadah of the act that is greater than

qurbaani. May Allah Ta'ala guide us all to the path of love and harmony, aameen.

Holidays



Take a Break

The Deen of Islam is complete and perfect. Hence Islam recognizes and caters for all the needs of a human being by showing him the Islamic way of attending to and fulfilling these various needs. Eating is a basic human need. Thus Islam not only allows us to eat but also gives us guidelines and teaches us the Islamic way of eating.

Among our basic, human needs is the need to occasionally 'take a break'. *Islam is not a 'dry' Deen and thus allows us to take a break when needed.* However, just as we adhere to the guidelines laid down by Deen when fulfilling our other needs, *we should also adhere to the laws and injunctions of Deen when fulfilling this need and ensure that it is done in a manner that is approved of in Islam.*

In essence, there are two guidelines which we should strive to adhere to. The first is that we do not 'take a break' which lives up to its name by 'breaking' our Deen. *Rather, we should remember that we are always Muslims, whether at home or on holiday. We can take a break from work but there is never a break from Deen.* Hence, when on holiday, our dressing, eating, travelling, interacting and every other aspect of our lives should conform to the pristine teachings of Islam. *Remember, the purpose of a 'break' is to relax the body and mind - NOT to relax our Deeni standards.*

The second guideline is to bear in mind that ‘taking a break’ is a need and is not the object of our existence. It is thus imperative that moderation be exercised. **In this regard, taking a break is similar to salt. When found in moderation, it enhances the enjoyment which one experiences, but if found in excess, it spoils the entire dish and causes it to become inedible.**

A Muslim never loses sight of his ultimate destination – Jannah. If he takes a break, it is with the intention of recharging his batteries so that on his return, he once again feels motivated to strive for Jannah.

On the other hand, a disbeliever has no Jannah to look forward to and thus seeks to make this world into his Jannah. On account of the disbeliever’s desperation to enjoy Jannah in this very world, before the first holiday can even terminate he already begins planning his second holiday and he feels depressed when the holiday comes to an end. Furthermore, he spends all his energy and wealth in preparing for what he considers to be the ‘ultimate holiday’. **If one has to examine the mindset of this disbeliever, one will realize that it is almost as if he ‘worships’ this holiday and considers it to be the object of his existence.**

If a Believer takes a break with the correct intention and mindset, without breaking or compromising any law of Deen, in an environment that is conducive to Deen and far away from any fitnah (evil), it will become a means of him ‘making’ his Jannah. He will enjoy a holiday in which his salaah will not be neglected and in which he will remember Allah Ta‘ala in abundance. As a

result, he will enjoy the 'break' and also enjoy the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala, *a pleasure to which no other pleasure can compare.*

Serenity Coastal Resort vs The Gardens of Paradise

Serenity Coastal Resort

Are you sick and tired of being stuck in the same rut, day after day? ... Do you suffer from chronic back pain, aches and migraines? ... *Are you tired of housework and the smell of 'wagaar' (braising onions) and feel like you need to just have a break and a change of scenery?*

If your answer is yes, then look no further!

Come to "Serenity Coastal Resort", situated on Durban's north coast, and enjoy an unforgettable experience! *From A-Z, from a hair tie to a shower cap, our expert, friendly staff are on duty 24hrs a day to see to your every need.*

Stay in your choice of a cosy log cabin overlooking the lush, green forest or a rustic beach cottage with a stained-wood patio spilling onto the sand. Awake to the relaxing sound of crashing waves or the enchanting sound of chirping birds. Regardless of your selection, your accommodation (*down to even the bathroom*) houses state-of-the-art technology, ensuring the ultimate in comfort. *Each unit is completely secluded and includes its own*

private entertainment facilities such as an indoor heated swimming pool, outdoor swimming pool, jacuzzi, sauna, trampoline, built in braai and much more!

If staying indoors isn't for you then why not try a serene, peaceful hike through one of our many, internationally acclaimed nature trails? *Why not stroll down to the beach and frolic in the waves of the Indian Ocean?*

To loosen those knotted, tight muscles and soothe those aching feet, come to our spa where you will be in capable hands. *If self-catering is not your scene, simply dial the concierge and have your personal butler bring the seven-course meal to you!* Make use of our many golf carts to easily get from one point of the resort to the next.

To get more out of your stay, call us and book the facility of your choice (beach, etc.) so that it will be exclusively yours for the day. *There really is no reason to say no. Go on, you deserve it.*

The Gardens of Paradise

Are you tired of your dreams never quite materializing the way you want them to? ... Are you fed up with the crime rate, social insecurity and perpetual stress of the rat race? ... *Are you sad at how quickly happy moments fade away into hazy memories, barely re-collectable?* ... Are you sick and tired of your emotions endlessly see-sawing, of being delighted one day and depressed the next?

If your answer is yes, then there really is only one place where you will be guaranteed true, eternal happiness.

Make your way to “The Gardens of Paradise” situated in the Aakhirah and enjoy the ultimate experience that will never be forgotten because it will never, ever come to an end. Lean back and relax like never before with armies of youthful servants vying with one another to serve you. Accommodation options include 60-mile-long palaces constructed from hollowed out pearls, mansions built from bricks of solid gold and silver and much more!

There’s no need to book any of the facilities as the entire garden, which is many times larger than the world, with all its facilities, is exclusively yours. Regardless of where you stay or where you may be, simply make a wish and watch as Allah Ta’ala causes not one but two of what you wished for to instantly materialize before your eyes.

Need to loosen those knotted, tight muscles and soothe those aching feet? Once you stroll into Jannah, all worries, stress and anxiety will melt away to never again return.

Not in the mood for self-catering? No need to even call a concierge! Simply glance at the bird flying overhead and, in the blink of an eye, you’ll have “chicken tikka” in your plate which, with every bite, will only taste better and better.

There are no state-of-the-art bathrooms in Jannah as there is no need for a bathroom at all! In Jannah, even sweating is something to look forward to as the beads of your perspiration will emit the smell of the most fragrant musk.

Once in Jannah, you can say goodbye to age-defying anti-wrinkle beauty products as you will be blessed with eternal youth. The most ornate and exquisitely crafted jewellery of Dubai's gold souk will seem a cheap trinket before the jewellery of Jannah which will outshine and dazzle even the sun.

To get from one point to the next in Jannah, climb onto your winged horse made of precious stone and fly around at your leisure.

Finally, the absolute ultimate in ecstasy and pleasure that only "The Gardens of Paradise" can offer, *the chance to go on gazing at the countenance of your most beloved, Allah Ta'ala.*

Go on and book now before it is too late. Take advantage of the "2R" special offer (*do what's Right and don't do what's wRong*) and make a choice you'll never regret.

Trip Advisor Comparison

Serenity Coastal Resort VS The Gardens of Paradise

Cost: Our conclusion is that the special offer running for "The Gardens of Paradise" simply cannot be matched. "SCR" charges upward of R4000 a night - *out of season* - whereas "The Gardens of Paradise" only charges 2R for eternal admission. *Even a week's holiday at "SCR" bites a considerable chunk out of your bank balance and, in many cases, lands you in debt, unable to afford paying for basics such as groceries and school fees.*

Facilities: Although "SCR" boasts an array of world-class facilities, it has nothing to set it apart from the host of other

resorts dotting the coastlines of the world. After all, once you've been to one resort and swam in the pool, picnicked on the beach, played a round of golf, hiked on the trail etc., there's only so much you'll find different in the other resorts. **At this point, all resorts become boring and lose their appeal and holidays become another routine which is carried out just for the sake of it.** "The Gardens of Paradise", on the other hand, has unlimited entertainment of a variety never before witnessed on earth!

Food: "SCR" hire only the best chefs and culinary artisans from around the globe in order to, at every meal, wow you with a seven course meal of cosmopolitan cuisine. **However, even if they hired every chef in the world, they would be unable to produce a single morsel that could compare to a bite of the fruit of "The Gardens of Paradise" which increases one's delight with every bite.** Furthermore, it is not unheard of for people dining at such resorts and their restaurants to languish in misery with a bad case of food poisoning just moments after they were enthusiastically digging into their lavish meal.

Transport: "SCR" can only be accessed by a road which is ill-reputed for its abundant accidents as well as speed traps which force travellers to drive at a snail's pace. **Many women have attempted navigating this road without a mahram only to later realize their folly when they were left standing in painful high heels on the side of the road, staring in frustration at their blown tire.** "The Gardens of Paradise" is the easiest to reach as the road is absolutely straight and can even be traversed from the confines of your home! **In fact, if you are a woman, remaining in**

the comfort of your home greatly increases your chances of reaching the destination safely.

Relaxation: The spa at “SCR” does wonders at de-stressing even the most highly strung people. *Once back home after your holiday, however, the stress returns with a vengeance and the relaxation enjoyed at “SCR” fades into a vague memory, easily confused for a figment of your imagination.* The once-obedient children are now rebellious and spoilt and refuse to settle back into routine. “The Gardens of Paradise” is different. Crossing the threshold eternally rids you of every form of stress, worry and anxiety.

Conclusion: Our conclusion, after weighing all the pros and cons of “Serenity Coastal Resorts” and “The Gardens of Paradise”, is that *“SCR” - and all resorts like it - are nothing more than that - A HUGE CON.* Even if these holiday destinations seem fun-filled, they will fail to fulfil and leave you even more depressed than before. Sadly, many people flock to “SCR” type resorts and other holiday destinations and in the process, fail to pay the 2R admission fee for “The Gardens of Paradise” by leaving out or delaying their salaah, not being particular regarding the consumption of only halaal food, misusing the eyes, visiting places of vice, sin and nudity etc.

Remember, there IS NO comparison! Don't settle for anything less than the best. Insist on “The Gardens of Paradise”!

Holiday @ Home

A person's home is their ultimate sanctuary and place of comfort. Hence, when a child feels threatened, his first instinct is to run home, as home is the place of safety. As our homes are our private places, meant for our comfort and happiness, we tend to spend both time and money on 'doing up' our homes until they meet our desired level of safety, comfort, beauty and efficiency.

This is easily witnessed in the money that we spend on painting, tiling, alarm systems, electric fences, state-of-the-art appliances, furniture, linen, Italian flooring, granite counters, German bathroom fittings, air-conditioning, and so on. *In fact, some people are so particular in this regard that every room of the home has its own theme to which the curtains, carpet, BIC (built in cupboards), linen and even light switches and plug points have to match!*

After all the effort is undertaken and money is spent, the result is a home that is 'tailor made' to the exact 'spec' of the family living in it. Their home is exactly as they designed, providing comfort, security and even entertainment. *Hence, many a home even has its own swimming pool!*

In the light of the above, why is it deemed 'sad', 'unfortunate' and 'depressing' if a person enjoys his holiday from home? If we honestly ponder over the reality, not many hotels in the world boast the combined comforts that we enjoy at home, and even

those that do have the comforts charge you through the nose for it! **Even after paying the price, the pillows are not as we are used to, and so we wake up with a stiff neck.** The wall between the rooms is too thin, or the corridor is too busy, and so the noise disturbs us and we cannot sleep comfortably. The shower curtain is too small and so every time we shower, the entire floor is flooded. All the lifts are full, as its peak season, so it takes 20 minutes just to get to the lobby from our floor.

If we feel for something as small as a cup of tea and are not prepared to pay the exorbitant room service rate, we are left with the option of making it ourselves in a plastic kettle that threatens to rattle its way of the counter as it boils, after which we have to resort to creamer in our tea instead of milk. Sometimes, due to flight schedules, we arrive at our hotel before the check-in time, and are forced to spend precious hours of our time waiting in the lobby, unable to even rest or freshen up after our long journey.

Let alone all, do we face even one of these inconveniences at home? **The purpose of a holiday is to recharge and relax. With a change of mindset, we will realize that for most of us, our home with its comforts is actually the place most conducive to achieving that purpose.** Hence, it is *not* necessary for us to fork out a fortune and fly off to foreign destinations whenever its holiday time.

May Allah Ta'ala make our homes places of comfort, solace and fulfilment.

“Clean Fun”

School had just closed and all the children in the lift club were excited and making plans for their holiday. Little Taskeen barely entered her home, hugged her mother, gave her a kiss and asked: “Mummy! Please can I go?”

“Where to my darling?” replied her mum. “To my friend ‘Aatiqah’s house for holiday. All my friends are going there for the weekend. They going to have sooo much of fun, because she has a lovely swimming pool, a big jungle gym and lots of toys and games. Pleez mummy, let me go. I know you the best mummy in the world.”

“Alright, take off your school bag, change your clothes and enjoy your favourite chicken and mayo sandwich that I made for you. Then we’ll decide” replied her mother.

Taskeen raced to her room, threw her school bag on the floor, changed in half a minute, gobbled her sandwich down and asked again: “Mummy, now can I go?” Seeing the anxiousness of little Taskeen, her mother was forced to accept and said: “Ok, my sweet heart; I’ll let you go for the day but you’ll have to come home at night. Also, you better behave yourself there and I will phone ‘Aatiqah’s mummy to ask if you are troubling or not.”

What will a sensible person say about this mother? ... Will he call her cruel, oppressive and hard? ... No! Rather he will say that she is a very intelligent, mature and loving mother. She doesn’t just give in to any demand of her child, rather she is concerned about

the long term future of her child, as she understands the disastrous outcome of giving her ‘little angel’ complete freedom.

Likewise, our Most Loving and All-Wise Allah Ta’ala allows us to take a break, ‘chill’ and ‘cool off’, but within the limits, since He knows what is in our best interest. **Hence, He will insist that we come ‘home’ to Him five times a day and at every moment He will check on us if we are ‘behaving’.**

Hence, we need to enjoy our holidays by having “clean fun”. Otherwise we may ruin our entire dunya and Aakhirah just in one holiday.

Damage Control

The commencement of the new school and working year signals something which is dreaded by some but faced by all – *the termination of the holidays*. Different people face the ending of the holidays with different feelings and reactions. **Those who spend their holidays wisely and productively generally feel refreshed and recharged and are simply raring to put their shoulder to the wheel and get back to work.** On the contrary, those who spend their holidays badly dread the day when their holiday will come to an end.

A bad holiday can be a holiday in which Allah Ta’ala was disobeyed and Deen was forgotten. Now that the holiday is over, we struggle to get back into the routine of performing our salaah on time, reciting the Quraan Majeed daily, etc. **Furthermore, we**

are racked by guilt for the sins that we committed and the evil that we indulged in.

A bad holiday can also be a holiday in which the budget was blown and the bank was 'broke'. When the holiday is over and reality comes knocking, we realize, *all too late*, that we do not have sufficient funds for school fees and other basic necessities. Additionally, we bear the sin of wasting the wealth that Allah Ta'ala blessed us with. In some cases, we bear the even graver sin of wasting it in avenues of vice.

If we were fortunate and spent our holidays wisely, we should thank Allah Ta'ala and ask Him to continue to bless us and favour us.

However, if we regret the way we spent our holiday then let us not fall into depression and despondency. **Rather, let us understand that our remorse is itself a great favour from Allah Ta'ala as without remorse, it is not possible for a person to repent and change their life for the better.**

After repenting and begging Allah Ta'ala to forgive us, we should make a firm resolution to *never* again fall into the same sins. Thereafter, we should make an effort to try and repair the damage that was done to our Deen in this period. If we missed any salaah, we should perform the qadhaa. If we were negligent in reciting the Quraan Majeed, let us once again become punctual on our daily recitation, or even recite a little extra to compensate for the days in which we did not recite. **To compensate for all the sins we committed, we should ensure that we abstain from all sins in the future.** Insha-Allah, this will draw

the forgiveness of Allah Ta'ala, as He will see that we are genuinely remorseful and are doing all that we can to repair the damage and prove our loyalty to Him.

Our hearts are designed to contain the love of Allah Ta'ala alone. *When the holiday ends and we feel plagued by the void and emptiness in our hearts, then let us realize that there is only one way to fill this void and acquire true happiness – turning to Allah Ta'ala.*

A Blessed Destination

Every Muslim has the deep yearning in his heart to visit the blessed lands of Makkah Mukarramah and Madeenah Munawwarah. *As Muslims, our attachment to these blessed places is so great that the mere mention of the Ka'bah Shareef and the Raudhah Mubaarak of Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) is sufficient to bring tears of love to our eyes.*

The sanctity and blessing of these places can be gauged by the fact that a person's good deeds in these places are multiplied by up to a thousand times or more! On the same token, we should remember that the greater the sanctity of a place, the better our behaviour should be. *If our good deeds are multiplied in these blessed places, then our sins and evil deeds are similarly multiplied.* The reason for this is obvious – a person has chosen the holiest of places to violate the commands of Allah Ta'ala.

If we wish to benefit from these places, we should strive to ensure that we visit these places with the correct mindset and that we behave correctly. This starts with us ensuring that we do not violate any law of Allah Ta'ala and that we follow every sunnah of Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam). *When in these blessed places, we should try to bear in mind that we are placing our feet on the very same spot that thousands of Ambiyaa ('alaihimus salaam) and Sahaabah (radhiyallahu 'anhum) had placed their blessed feet.*

If we misbehave and disobey Allah Ta'ala in Makkah Mukarramah and Madeenah Munawwarah, and regard these places to be nothing more than another holiday destination, we will return from our 'umrah in a worse condition than the condition we left home in.

May Allah Ta'ala guide us and enable us to benefit in these blessed places, aameen.

General



Too many Cooks Spoil the Broth!

“Too many cooks spoil the broth.”

Ever wondered what in the world that meant? Especially when you walk into a world class buffet and take in the spread of food. Hot and cold cereals and porridges, freshly baked rolls and breads of countless varieties stacked neatly in wicker baskets, pastries, crepes, crumpets, pancakes and waffles artistically piled up with every accompaniment you could imagine; cream, cinnamon sugar, honey, syrups, jams, pastes and spreads. The ice layer at the end of the room invites you to freshly squeezed juices and ‘smoothies’ whizzed in front of you in flavours and varieties you may never have heard of (*cucumber and mint, pear and banana, pineapple and black grape...*).

As though cleverly designed, unsuspectingly the aroma of freshly ground coffee of the finest Arabica and Robusta blend pulls and lugs you to the tea and coffee station where international varieties introduce themselves to you for the first time. Not to speak of the egg chef who can prepare eggs in any way; poached, scrambled, boiled and can prepare the most delectable varieties of omelette that your supermom may never come up with after weeks of planning. The grills station offers the best of steaks while you wait and the salad and deli-bar has the freshest and the finest.

Ah, then there's the curry counter tempting you with the most authentic curries from India to Indiana and the hot vegetables are simply out of this world. **The highlight of it all is the fruit table with the best of berries to the sweetest of melons, the finest sortès of stone fruits to the most amazing of desert fruits.** From the most exotic to the very basic, mangosteen, litchi, starfruit, apples and pears in a dozen variants all arranged in the most eye-catching display with mindboggling fruit art. Watermelons in the shape of a flowerbed, cantaloupe in the shape of a rose, bananas, naartjies and kiwis in the shape of a palm tree all arranged around a fountain of fresh mineral water.

How do they do it? There is no way that one person would prepare all this food singlehandedly from scratch every day and give it this world class presentation? Who does it? And how do they all spoil the broth? If this is spoiling the broth, then I want more!

In the 1800's a French chef invented the kitchen brigade system. This system is still used in many restaurants and kitchens around the world. **It streamlines kitchen duties, avoids duplication of efforts and keeps everybody out of everybody's way. Everybody is given a position and a duty.** Someone is assigned to seafood whilst another mans the grill-corner. Some prepare soups and sauces whilst others prepare the vegetarian fare. There is a pastry cook, a roast cook, a fry cook, a pantry supervisor and a dishwasher. The list extends to thirty different positions in order to ensure that every patron enjoys his meal hot, with the best of presentation, and in the shortest of time.

The simple secret behind this fascinating system is *distribution of work*. Duties were assigned to selected capable individuals. They in turn stuck to their duties. This, accordingly produced tremendous results.

Too many cooks would definitely spoil the broth when duties are free for all. Imagine the fish cook behaving like the pastry cook. The malva pudding might taste like fish paste from the Maldives. There would be pandemonium in the kitchen with everyone eventually pulling each other by the hair, not to talk of dissatisfied patrons. Nobody but nobody wins in the end. The cooks are scrapping it out, the customers are disgruntled and the establishment loses money.

Likewise, social structures vary from thousands of people in an army to hundreds of people in a company to a team of two people in a marriage; husband and wife. Every social structure has duties and responsibilities. An army has various tasks to be carried out and a company has multiple duties to be fulfilled. This requires people to occupy different positions. **In the same way every home has multiple duties and responsibilities. These are normal and natural in every marriage and are not alien to any society.** Rentals and utilities need to be paid and daily supplies need to be purchased. For this, an income needs to be generated and errands need to be run. In the home, food needs to be prepared, the home has to be kept tidy and when they do come, the handful that they are, the children need to be attended to, nurtured, disciplined and most importantly, loved.

These are the basic, primary duties of any home consisting of a man and his wife.

What system do we then follow when assigning duties in a marriage? *Should a woman receive equal opportunities as a man and 'everybody does everything'? Does she dress like him, work like him and behave like him? Is she equal to him?*

The teachings of the Quraan Majeed clearly indicate that a man and woman are both equal to one another in their personal capacities in the court of Allah Ta'ala. A man is not better than a woman just because he is a man, and a woman is not better than a man merely because she is a woman. *"The better person in the sight of Allah Ta'ala is the one who has better taqwa (Allah consciousness)." (Surah Hujuraat v13)*

Commonsensical banking practise would reveal that a bank balance only increases after funds are transferred or deposited. Bank balances don't go higher just because of gender, be it a *camel-age-man* or a *rocket-age-woman*. *"To a man's credit is the reward of his deeds and to a woman's credit is the reward of hers."* (Surah Nisaa v32)

It is at this point in Islam that gender equality stops. Period!

Beyond this, Islam acknowledges the differences that men and women enjoy. Diversity in temperament, differences in anatomy, disparity in emotions, purpose of creation and functionality are but a few of the distinguishing features. Men are naturally more rugged, hard and physical. Women are instinctively more gentle, soft and emotional. *Why wouldn't*

these differences be catered for when the source of Islamic teachings is indeed our Creator, who knows the finest detail of the human blueprint?

“He created you, then perfected you, then brought you to due proportion. He composed you, in whichever form He willed.” (Surah Infitaar v7-8)

It is Allah Ta‘ala Who’s the Creator and Nourisher of all things. By accepting him as our Creator we would have to accept that His decision of roles and duties for both genders would be the most wise, most prudent and most accurate; indeed, it is a judgement that would be infallible, stand the test of time and span across every age. People are limited just as their views and sentiments are. They see, hear, smell and touch to a fixed point. Their thought only reaches to a limited plane. **But Allah Ta‘ala is unlimited and unrestricted. His theories don’t change. He doesn’t have a re-think. He doesn’t miss a point.** *“My Lord doesn’t err nor does He forget.” (Surah Taaha v52)*

To accept His decision and abort our ‘*brainchild*’ is a smarter move than challenging His Divine Word. Asserting our ideas and abandoning divine guidance is more like a child trying to motivate for a plastic rattle over a gold bar. *Weird, isn’t it?*

Hence, roles and positions were awarded to husbands and wives, men and women, keeping in mind their instinctive behaviour and inherent strengths. And mind you, tasks and duties were shared so that duties are streamlined and duplication is avoided. Everybody is happier that way and no one is overworked and stressed out. It shouldn’t be that a man is

working and a woman is also working. The wife is cooking and the husband is also cooking. The father is babysitting and the mother is also babysitting. The woman runs errands and the man also runs errands. *That would definitely be “too many cooks spoiling the broth.”*

In that event, both would be returning home tired from work, frustrated with the traffic and irritated with the kids. Food still has to be prepared, the house needs to be cleaned and the children need to be helped with homework. *Would that be a happy home or a hell of a home?*

It’s a laughable situation, just like a bunch of chefs all running to peel potatoes and then racing to dice tomatoes and then jumping over one another to clean meat. How absurd!

These are the double standards of the world around us. It actively supports and encourages distribution of work at all levels of society but the home. Armies, governments, business corporations, schools and shops all have a system of work distribution, but the home. *Cry, the beloved home.* It’s as though the home has been excluded from this universal principle so that chaos reigns in every home!

Society is made up by the people that belong to it. The people are made up by the homes they belong to. A healthy home is a healthy society. A broken home is a broken society. A home with a correct system is a happy home. A happy home is a happy society. A sad home is a sad society.

To rub salt into the wound, women are oppressed under the banner of 'women's rights'. *She has to work, return home and work again. You see, it's one job for the men and two for the women.* The height of it all is that she deems it her honour to chant these paradoxical slogans... "oppression" in the name of "rights"! *What a world?*

The million-dollar question is who plays what role? What is the career path of a woman? What is the duty of a man? The man was given the position of a leader and decision-maker. Yes, indeed, he rules, *but* not as a master over his slave or an employer over his employee. He does not have a free rein to do as he pleases. He rules, but Allah Ta'ala overrules.

He is obligated to live with her with kindness and compassion. He is asked to make her part of household matters and affairs. His word would be final and his influence respected. *Monetary obligations and expenses are to be borne by him alone. He would run all errands and all affairs external to the home.* "Men are the guardians and caretakers of women because of the virtue (of position) that Allah Ta'ala has afforded to some over the others and because of expenses that they bear." (Surah Nisaa v34)

The woman having been relieved of the burden of earning and leaving home was given the important task of the homemaker. *It's not just about cooking and cleaning and attending to the mundane chores about the home, but a significant part of that is effective management of the home and the upbringing of children.* She is to correctly mould the impressionable minds of her children and provide solace and comfort to her vulnerable

husband. The primary field of a woman's endeavour is... *home sweet home*.

Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) outlined this very clearly, and set the trend when his blessed daughter went to live with her husband, Sayyiduna 'Ali (radhiyallahu 'anhu), by assigning all affairs outside the home to him. Sayyidah Faatimah (radhiyallahu 'anha) was to be responsible for taking care of the home. (*Musannaf Ibni Abi Shaibah #29677*)

All of the above, as well as numerous other injunctions and incidents, clearly establish the basic division of labour between men and women in Islam.

Otherwise too many cooks will, spoil the broth. *Nobody likes their broth spoilt. Do you?*

Du'aa of Seventy Thousand Angels

Often, we have the perception that 'earning great reward' from Allah Ta'ala is something that will require immense effort, energy and action. However, Allah Ta'ala, out of His infinite mercy, has blessed us with numerous avenues through which we can easily earn immense rewards with a minimum effort. One of these avenues is the sunnah of visiting the sick.

In this regard, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) has mentioned, “There is no person who visits someone who is sick in the evening, except that seventy thousand angels come out with him, making du‘aa for his forgiveness until the morning, and he will receive a garden in Jannah. And there is no person who visits someone who is sick in the morning, except that seventy thousand angels come out with him, making du‘aa for his forgiveness until the evening, and he will receive a garden in Jannah.” (*Sunan Abi Dawood #3098*)

In this regard, it is important to bear in mind that the purpose of visiting the sick is to make du‘aa for them and to raise their spirits, giving them hope in recovery. Hence, Deen teaches us certain etiquettes to ensure that we do not cause any inconvenience to the person who is sick. By adhering to these etiquettes, the sunnah will be fulfilled correctly and immense reward will be earned. Failing to adhere to these etiquettes, however, can cause the sick person to be inconvenienced, due to which we can incur sin instead of earning reward. Among these etiquettes is that of keeping the duration of the visit short and brief.

Sometimes, we wish to visit the sick, but then ‘overstay our welcome’ until the sick person and the other household members are put into difficulty. Naturally, out of shame, they will not have the heart to ask us to leave. However, if we adhere to the sunnah of keeping the visit ‘short and sweet’ and the other related etiquettes, we will earn the du‘aa of the sick person and the angels as well – both of which are readily accepted.

“Sale! All Items Reduced up to 50%!”

How many people are there who after seeing the above advertisement, will be able to resist the temptation of embarking on a shopping spree? Even if a person does not really need to buy anything, he will still visit the store to window shop, justifying his action by saying, *“Perhaps I will find something on sale that I don’t need now but may possibly need in the future. By buying it now, I will save on the price that I would have paid later on when I needed the item.”* Further, if we learn of a sale that we missed, or if the sale item that we wanted is sold out, we feel disappointed and feel that we missed out.

While many people have this attitude and mindset of progressing and constantly benefiting, the reality is that we tend to adopt this mindset only in avenues related to our material benefit, *not in avenues of Deeni benefit.*

The Sahaabah (radhiyallahu ‘anhum), on the other hand, had an insatiable thirst for progressing and benefiting in Deen. Hence, those Sahaabah (radhiyallahu ‘anhum) who were not blessed with wealth once came to Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) and complained that the wealthy Sahaabah (radhiyallahu ‘anhum) had surpassed them. On account of their wealth, they were able to carry out both non-monetary ‘ibaadah and monetary ‘ibaadah. Hence, the Sahaabah (radhiyallahu

‘anhum) who were not wealthy felt that they were missing out, being left behind and were unable to keep up with the wealthy Sahaabah (radhiyallahu ‘anhum).

In reply, Rasulullahu (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said, “Shall I not teach you something through which you will catch up with those who have surpassed you and you will surpass those who are behind you, and nobody will be more virtuous than you besides the person who does as you do (i.e. he also carries out this action)?” When the Sahaabah (radhiyallahu ‘anhum) replied in the affirmative, expressing their eagerness to learn this action, **Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) taught them Tasbeeh Faatimi and instructed them to recite it after every salaah.** (*Saheeh Muslim #595*)

This action is such that it has no cost and requires very little time and effort. Yet, its rewards are such that the person who adheres to this action will surpass all others, unless they carry out this action as well. *Why should we be left out?*

Let us adopt the mindset of improving our Deen and start by striving to bring the Tasbeeh Faatimi alive. The value of the few moments that it will take us to recite this tasbeeh will only be realized on the Day of Qiyaamah, when we see how Allah Ta‘ala has allowed us to progress and surpass those who did not recite this tasbeeh after every salaah.

Note: Tasbeeh Faatimi is to recite ‘Subhaanallah’ thirty-three times, ‘Alhamdulillah’ thirty-three times and finally, ‘Allahu Akbar’ thirty-four times (completing one hundred).

The Pillar of Power

We live in an age of jet setting, an age in which many people awake in one country, eat lunch in a second, and go to sleep in a third. From Kingston to Kazakhstan, and Taiwan to Toronto, with the ease of travel and communication, the globe has seemingly ‘shrunk’ with even the remotest area now connected to the rest of the world. From any region of the planet, we can use the internet to book a room in the Intercontinental, or transfer funds across thousands of kilometres in the mere flash of an eye. We can communicate across opposing hemispheres in just seconds, and enjoy the produce and products of diverse countries in our very own locality.

However, all this has been made possible through electricity. Without electricity, we would have no flights, no LED lighting, and you get the point – almost every single invention and comfort that we enjoy, from a microwave to a geyser to even our automated garage doors and driveway gates would cease to function and be of very little benefit to us. It is thus clear that electricity plays a pivotal role in the grand scheme of things, giving power to technology and allowing it to function.

Similarly, we have been taught that salaah is such a pivotal and crucial ‘ibaadah in the life of a Believer that it has a direct impact on all the other branches of Deen in a person’s life. In essence, if a person’s salaah is in order, his entire life will be in order, as salaah is like the electric current that gives him a

spiritual charge, assisting him and motivating him towards righteousness. If one's salaah is lacking in any way, the negative impact will definitely be witnessed in the other aspects of one's Deen.

People understand that they are dependent on electricity and energy in all areas of their lives, and so they attach great importance to paying the electricity bill, anxious that the municipality should not disconnect them from the grid. Even when leaving home, people are concerned that their smart phones should not 'die' and thus carry power banks to boost their batteries in times of need.

In the same way, just as we are particular regarding performing our five daily salaah on time when we are at home, we need to be even more particular regarding our salaah when we are out of the home and travelling, as salaah is our 'power bank' that will keep our imaan charged and powered. Often, people become lax when travelling and neglect performing their salaah on time saying, "We will make qadhaa when we reach our destination." *We should realize that the disastrous loss incurred through neglecting just one salaah has been likened to a person losing all his wealth and his entire family! The importance of salaah should thus never be trivialized.*

Furthermore, over and above the sin that one incurs, one is 'cut off from the grid' and left with a 'powerless' imaan. The result is that he feels no motivation and inclination whatsoever to carry out righteous deeds and abstain from sin. *Neglecting*

salaah is thus a sin that causes a breakdown in the rest of a person's Deen.

May Allah Ta'ala assist us all to uphold the pillar of salaah and charge our imaan.

Making Amends

Toothbrush? Check! Charger? Here! Hairbrush? Packed! Clothing? In the bag! Visa? Oh no, we haven't got that!

Before embarking on any trip, especially to a foreign country, every traveller makes certain preparations. Although packing the appropriate provisions and essentials forms an important part of the preparation, **perhaps the most important part is for one to ensure that their travel documents are in order.** When one arrives in a foreign land, the very first thing examined is the passport and visa. If they are in order, one will be granted entry and the remainder of the trip will be 'smooth sailing'. **However, if there is a problem with the passport or visa, then since the very first requirement has not been met, packing all the essentials and converting all the currency will be of little avail and assistance.**

Similarly, whether we are rich or poor, well-travelled or house-bound, there is one particular journey that each and every one of us will have to make. Furthermore, none of us knows the date of departure, and so it is vital for us to constantly remain in a state of preparedness. This is the once-in-a-*after-*

lifetime-journey to the Aakhirah (Hereafter). Just as the first requirement on landing in a foreign country is the passport and visa, on landing in the Aakhirah, there will also be a first requirement. Meeting this requirement will ensure that the remainder of the checkpoints will go smoothly, while failing to meet this requirement will put us on the rocky road to further misery and difficulty.

In this regard, Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) has forewarned us that the very first thing which we will be required to present on the Day of Qiyaamah will be our salaah. If our salaah meets the grade, then Allah Ta'ala willing – the rest will be smooth sailing. However, if we fail to meet the very first requirement, we can well imagine the difficulty that will thereafter ensue.

It is thus absolutely necessary that we get our salaah in order. Firstly, we should ensure that we perform our five daily salaah on time, and secondly, we should perform the qadhaa for any salaah that we have outstanding. *If we fail to make amends for our salaah before our eyes close, we will regret, suffer and lament after our eyes close.* At that time, it will be too late for us to make any amends. We thus need to perform all our salaah before our salaah (*janaazah*) is performed.

May Allah Ta'ala bless us all with the courage and determination to make amends for our salaah, aameen.

No Place in the Cupboards

Did you ever battle to find a place in the kitchen cupboards for the latest dinner set purchase, or the new Tupperwares?

Did you ever stand before your wardrobe before a function and find yourself at a loss regarding what to wear, simply because your collection was so extensive?

If your answer to any of the above is 'yes', then you need to stop and ask yourself the following questions:

“Is the wealth which I possess truly MINE or is it merely a trust from Allah Ta‘ala regarding which I will be held accountable?”

“Did I buy these items because I needed them or did I buy them on impulse or to keep up with the latest fashion and trend?”

“Could I have done without these items? If yes, then what stopped me from rather giving some of the money in sadaqah to the poor?”

Remember! Islam allows us to use and enjoy the bounties of this world. However, Islam does *not* allow extravagance and waste. If we use the bounties of Allah Ta‘ala without being wasteful and express gratitude to Him, these same bounties will both give us satisfaction and enjoyment and also become a means of us earning reward.

Hocus Pocus and Bogus!

I sat in the line of the waiting room, secretly examining those around me. To my left was a shabbily-dressed woman with bloodshot eyes who'd clearly spent the past few days crying. To the right I spotted a balding man who constantly fidgeted. He was trying to put on a calm demeanour and display a brave front, but the stains of sweat rapidly spreading on his shirt betrayed his nervousness. *Everybody here, it seemed, had a problem "too huge to cope with" and had knocked on the door of the renowned herbal doctor from Uganda, Prof. Ali Baba, for relief.*

"Next!" We all jumped as he called for the next 'patient' to come through. I suddenly realized that it was my turn and stood panicking, my heart thumping in my chest. I stood for a moment, breathing deeply, trying to soothe my nerves. I clenched and unclenched my fists, feeling my chewed nails dig into my sweaty palms. *"It's now or never"* I thought. I braced myself and pushed open his door entering the unknown...

It all started about six months ago when I transferred to a new school and hooked up with some new friends. Their clique were the absolute 'elite' in school. They were held in such awe that other wannabe students actually formed a fan group in their honour. Being the new student in the school, I did feel kinda odd, not having any friends, so when one of the clique came up to me out of the blue and invited me home, *I saw this as*

a major step up the social ladder and grabbed the rungs with both hands. She approached me in the break and said, “I’m Khadeejah. Why don’t you join us at my place after school for lunch today? Oh and you can call me “Kat” for short, hardly anyone calls me Khadeejah anymore. See you later!”

I wonder why they took an interest in me. I’d be foolish to stare a gift horse in the mouth though. She turned and, with the Swarovskis studding her glasses flashing, whirled away like the whirlwind in my life she was soon to become.

I got closer and closer to the clique over the next few weeks, Kat in particular, until I finally won their trust. I was now ‘privileged’ to join them for sleepovers. *Little did I know that these sleepovers would leave me sleepless for a long time to come...*

“HMMMM!!!” we all inhaled appreciatively. “Nothing beats the smell of freshly baked muffins, hey Kat?” laughed Tasneem. We all grabbed a few hot muffins and settled down on the floor to watch the latest release in the “Twilight” series we’d all been waiting for. Halfway through the movie, Kat turns to me and asks, “Are your muffins working yet?” “What do you mean ‘working’?” I ventured cautiously. “I mean are you getting high yet?” she asked matter-of-factly.

My heart skipped a beat. I was NOT ready for this. Nobody had told me that the muffins were laced! But I didn’t want to lose my new friends either. “Um... Not yet.” I hastily replied. But I soon was high, very high, way too high, and all I wanted was more “magic muffins” to scoff down.

Before long we were all giggling to ourselves, each of us in a 'happy zone'. The fun wasn't over though, in fact – it was only just starting. Kat brought out the pencils – it was Charlie Charlie time.

That was the first of a series of many “sleepovers” (we never actually slept) in which each outdid the last in the drug we'd take, and the way we'd clown around calling Charlie. Our taste in movies went from bad – to worse – to purely satanic and the EDM music we blasted was none the better. That was also the beginning of my misery.

Whether it was the drugs, the movies or the whole Charlie Charlie – thing to blame, I was soon seeing ghosts and having nightmares every night. I'd hear knocking on my cupboard doors despite being alone in the room. The fear was eating away at me, I was perpetually on edge, and I was going to go out of my mind.

My grades naturally dropped and my parents were, by now, frequently hearing me scream in bed. They knew that there was a problem at hand but didn't know what it was. *I could have never told them the entire story though and so... they obviously blamed it on jaadoo.*

“I'm telling you! It's Yasmeeen and her lot! Always jealous of us they are! It must be them putting jaadoo on our little girl!” my mother ranted and raved to nobody in particular. *“She even smirked at me in Spar the other day as if she knew we had a problem!”* she justified.

I sat huddled in the corner, just wishing this nightmare would be over. *Knowing well that I had brought all this misery on*

myself just made me feel worse. My dad managed to get an appointment with a so-called ‘aamil, I’d be seeing him tonight...

I think my mind must have blocked out the memory because I honestly can’t remember how it happened. I do remember that we were alone in his room as his ‘jinn-catcher’ hadn’t pitched. The one moment he was holding my hand to “check me up”, and the next – he’d taken advantage of me!

How could my dad be stupid enough to leave me alone in there with him anyway?

When we emerged from the room to my anxious parents, he confirmed their worst fears – I had a jinn in me. “A very powerful one too!” he said shaking his head gravely. “Lucky you weren’t in the room with us. He was on the verge of getting quite violent” he lies to my gullible parents. He prescribes some treatment and sends us home with a sly grin on his shark-like face.

I felt humiliated, violated and helpless. I cried the entire trip home.

The treatment obviously didn’t work. My parents were now more worried than ever and so confided in their various friends, asking them if they knew of anybody powerful enough to remove the jinn who’d ‘fallen in love with’ and wanted to ‘possess’ their dear daughter (*wherever did they get those details anyway?*).

Jaadoo was Nani’s absolutely favourite topic so she obviously couldn’t let herself be left out of the action. “I wonder if it’s not jaadoo instead of a jinn?” she said, thinking out aloud. “Must be

hidden away in our freezer!" she declared with a sniff. "Yasmeen knows we only clean it out after every second 'Eid." she concluded, even swaying my mother with this line of reasoning. Dad rolled his eyes to himself and replied, "*No jaadoo is powerful enough to find place in that freezer.*"

Aunty Zubi eventually came to the rescue, phoning my mother and insisting that the most powerful healer of any sort to be found in the country was Prof. Ali Baba from Uganda. He was apparently so powerful that he'd succeeded where all previous 'aamils had thrown up their arms in despair – he told her which maid was stealing the teabags and sugar! After the appropriate oohing and aahing, my mother fell for the story, hook, line and sinker and an appointment was made.

That was how I now found myself entering his room with my mother at my side (*I'd never go in alone a second time!*).

A wrinkled old man called us in from behind the desk of a surprisingly modernly furnished office. The Prof, in fact, didn't seem to fit in with the whole PC, fax machine, Mercedes car key and coffee machine décor as he was wrapped in seemingly nothing but a few tatty old leopard skins.

"*Da ancestahs said me dat you coming today.*" He announced in a wheezy voice. He squinted at us through glasses that were so thick; if he looked up at the sun he'd probably burn a hole in his head. As he spoke, I noticed that he had hardly any teeth left and even those were terribly rotten. I felt slightly nauseous and wished we hadn't come. After my mother told him her version of the problem, he turned and handed me a small leather bag. As I

took it I heard the contents rattle. *“Throw da bones and let da ancestahs speak!”* he urged, rocking back and forth in a frenzy. *More than a little afraid of this old lunatic, I reached in and – Ugh! – pulled out some disgusting bones which I flung on the floor as quickly as I could. “Hmm... It looking like a very powaful muthi has been used on this gehl!”* he declared with an air of success. *“Was it Yasmeeen? Is it in my freezer?”* my mother eagerly asked. *“Same one! But in fridge, not freezah.”* he confirmed.

After dishing out a staggering R5000 (*which was apparently a bargain*), we departed for home with a list of weird instructions to follow.

On arriving home, mum made a bee-line for the fridge and began frantically digging through all the contents. *I, however, was now at my wits end. This was the last straw. I’d had enough! I was not going to be sprinkled with the blood of a black rooster slaughtered at full moon and thereafter bath in the waters of Blue Lagoon. I could think of only one person who could help me. I picked up the phone and dialled...*

She answered on just the second ring and I wasn’t surprised. I mean, that’s what superhero-aapas do right? I poured out my heart to her, confiding in my childhood mentor, the woman who’d taught me the basics of Deen which I’d now sadly neglected. Being the superwoman she was, she instantly comforted me and made my dilemma seem easily manageable. *“Don’t stress!”* she insisted. *“All you need to do is re-*

connect with Allah Ta'ala. He'll solve all your problems in no time!" she advised.

I maintained contact with her and through her help and support, I kicked the habit and changed my circle of friends. I even realized that I hadn't suffered from jaadoo at all – I was merely hallucinating and suffering the ill-effects of all the drugs I was poisoning my body with. She managed to get me onto a programme of reciting at least quarter para of Quraan Majeed daily which I thereafter worked on increasing. I guiltily lifted my Quraan Majeed from the shelf where it had lain discarded, covered in dust for the past few months. As I started to read, I felt such a feeling of peace and happiness wash over me and warm me from the inside that I literally felt high – *high on the love of Allah Ta'ala.*

The ecstasy 'smarties' Tasneem had once stuck on the cupcakes were no match for the ecstasy experienced in making du'aa at the time of tahajjud (*Aapa would punctually phone and wake me up every morning*). Allah Ta'ala had given me a second chance and I was going to value it.

Looking back in retrospect, I guess I learnt some really important lessons:

1. **The most effective remedy is to have the lifestyle of a true Muslim.** With my aa'maal now in order, my dressing more modest, my circle of friends changed and the TV now out of the house (*my parents took some convincing for the last one but eventually came around and even they are slowly changing their lives now*), I slept

soundly every night, content with the knowledge that Allah Ta'ala had sent an angel to guard me.

2. Beware of bogus 'aamils taking advantage of women with their hocus pocus!

3. Our first conclusion should not have been that jaadoo was to blame. We would have been spared a lot of trauma and saved a lot of money if we had just dealt with my lifestyle problems.

4. I'm so thankful that my parents sent me to maktab madrasah. If they hadn't, I'd by now be a totally lost case.

5. Mum, to this day, is unable to face Yasmeen because of the rumours she spread and things she said about her. She should have never listened to Prof. Ali Baba.

The fortunate one is he who learns from the mistakes of others, don't fall into the mess I did!

The Reality of Death

Just as our sustenance, down to the last morsel, has been decreed long before our birth, our life, down to the last breath, has been similarly decreed. Hence, we have a limited amount of breaths to take, and, with every breath, we draw nearer and nearer to our death.

Sayyiduna 'Ali (radhiyallahu 'anhu) has described the reality of death and our limited breath in the following verses:

حَيَاتُكَ أَنْفَاسٌ تُعَدُّ فَكُلَّمَا
مَضَى نَفْسٌ أَنْقَضَتْ مِنْ عُمرِهَا جُزْءًا

The years of your life are but counted breaths. Every breath that passes decreases a portion from your life.

وَيُحْيِيكَ مَا يُفِينِكَ فِي كُلِّ حَالَةٍ
وَيَحْدُوكَ حَادٍ مَا يُرِيدُ بِكَ الْهَرَاءَ

That which is slowly leading to your death is also sustaining you at every moment (i.e. your breathing), and it acts as one driving you with complete seriousness (to your death).

فَتُصْبِحُ فِي نَفْسٍ وَتُمْسِي بِعَيرِهَا
وَمَا لَكَ مِنْ عَقْلِ تُحْسِبُ بِهِ رُزْءًا

You awake in the morning with one breath, and you enter the evening with another, and your intelligence cannot perceive when these breaths will abruptly cease.

(The Poetic Works of Sayyiduna ‘Ali [radhiyallahu ‘anhu] pg. 7)

The Double-Edged Sword

Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) once mentioned to the Sahaabah (radhiyallahu ‘anhum), “By Allah! It is not poverty that I fear for you! Rather, I fear for you that the world will be spread out for you (i.e. it will be given to you in abundance), as it was spread out for those who came before you. **You will then desire and pine for it, as they desired and pined for it, and it will destroy you as it destroyed them.**” (Saheeh Bukhaari #3158)

Normally, prior to departing from this world, it is the concern of every father that his beloved children should be financially secure. For this purpose, he labours and toils until he is confident that he has left them in a state of material security. Rasulallah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) was like a father to the Ummah, and his love for the Ummah was far greater than the love of any father for his child. **However, contrary to normal fathers, the fear and concern of Rasulallah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) for his Ummah was not that they will fall into poverty. Rather, his concern was the exact opposite – that they will hanker after wealth and become intoxicated by it.**

Wealth is a double-edged sword. If used correctly, it can purchase our Jannah. However, it is very easy for wealth to become the means of a person’s destruction through him being wasteful, spending in impermissible avenues, becoming proud and arrogant, failing to discharge zakaat, earning it through haraam means, etc.

Hence, if we have been blessed with wealth, we should be extremely cautious regarding how and where we use it. Also, we should ensure that love for the wealth does not enter our hearts.

If Allah Ta’ala has not given us as much wealth as others, then we should realize that this is also a favour of Allah Ta’ala, as it makes it more difficult for us to fall into sin, since without wealth, a person lacks the means to commit many sins.

Dead Body of a Donkey

Nabi (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said: “When any group of people rise from a gathering wherein they did not engage in the remembrance of Allah Ta‘ala, they stand up from the likeness of the carcass of a donkey, and it will be a source of remorse for them.” (*Sunan Abi Dawood #4855*)

The existence and continuity of this entire world depends on the name of Allah Ta‘ala. As long as there is a single Believer taking the name of Allah Ta‘ala, this entire world will continue to exist. With the passing away of the last Believer, this entire world will come to an end.

In the same way, the blessed name of Allah Ta‘ala brings life to a gathering and causes the gathering to become a means of reward for us. On the contrary, a gathering which is devoid of the remembrance of Allah Ta‘ala is a ‘dead’ gathering which, instead of earning us reward, becomes a means of grief and regret for us in the Hereafter.

Intellect over Instinct

Every person has within him basic instincts which subconsciously, without him realizing, influence him and compel him to behave in a certain way. However, together with these basic instincts is another force – the human intellect – that

understands what Allah Ta'ala wants from us. At times, these two forces will clash, and it is us who decide which force will ultimately prevail and forge the course of our actions.

When seeing a strange person who is attractive, our instinct may urge us to raise our gaze and stare to our fill. However, our intellect understands that this is against the law of Allah Ta'ala and thus urges us to ignore our lowly urge and behave intelligently by lowering our gaze.

When the azaan for Fajr Salaah is called out on a cold winter's morning, our instinct will urge us to remain in our warm and cosy bed, and will console us by telling us that we can make qadhaa later. However, our minds will caution us against this and remind us that our salaah has to be performed on time, and that our reward will be even greater due to the difficulty of enduring the cold.

Likewise, when we are angered, we may lose our temper, and our basic instinct may urge us to become violent, speak obscenely, break family ties or behave in some similar inappropriate manner. However, our intellect and understanding will intervene and explain to us that together with being displeasing to Allah Ta'ala, the repercussions of such behaviour will be both disastrous and long-lasting. Hence, for the sake of our Deen and worldly life, we should instead maintain our composure and calm and behave rationally.

In all such situations, where our basic urge clashes with our better understanding of what will please Allah Ta'ala, we have to ignore our basic urge and instinct and do what is prudent. These

forces are just like other forces in our body – the more we use them, the stronger they become. Hence, by continually forcing our urges and instinct to become subservient to our intellect and understanding of Deen, our minds will become stronger and these urges and instincts will become weaker. **Eventually, as a result of continued striving and effort, practising on Deen and obeying the commands of Allah Ta’ala will become our very nature and our instinct.**

When this happens, just as a starving person, on account of the urge of hunger, can think of nothing but food, we will become such that when it is the time of salaah, we will be able to think of nothing but salaah and will not feel at ease until we have performed it. In the same manner, disobeying Allah Ta’ala will cause us such discomfort and grief that we will lose our appetites, be unable to sleep and will feel miserable until we have atoned for our sin and made amends.

The converse is extremely dangerous – where a person sins so regularly that his base instincts completely take over and he is left with no intelligence at all. For such a person, sin and vice is second nature and obeying Allah Ta’ala becomes very difficult. Hence, for him to spend the entire night watching movies, partying or chatting to friends will be easy and enjoyable, but performing just four rakaats of Fajr Salaah will be unbearable. Spending an entire day at the beach or mall will be eagerly anticipated, but attending a ta’leem will be dreaded. Regularly reading novels or blogs will be effortless, but just opening the Quraan Majeed will be difficult.

It is time for us to be intelligent - to ensure that our urges and instincts are subservient to our understanding of Deen, not the other way around.

Do we REALLY Care?

It was winter and a very bitter one after many years. It was not a sight that I wished for. A severe blizzard was striking up outside and I needed to take out the garbage before the garbage truck could pull up.

As I stepped out, I noticed in the distance the figure of a poor homeless woman clutching on to her baby, with nobody to take care of her. She was standing all alone at the traffic light waiting for some handout or a Good Samaritan to assist her with some shelter.

Devastated and intrigued by her plight in the severe blizzard, I decided to brave the extreme weather conditions and attend to her. As I drew closer, I found that her clothing was tattered and torn, her hands were covered with sores and her cute little baby's face was marred with scars of what looked like a dog-attack. *My heart bled and I choked over my saliva on seeing this pitiful and pathetic sight.*

But my amazement knew no bounds when on closer inspection, I found that she had beside her a suitcase, that was presumably, filled with banknotes. Nay, but now it lay half

empty, thanks to the unscrupulous passers-by who helped themselves to their 'share of the pie'.

Quite interesting though, was that this seemingly homeless woman apparently did not realise that she could have afforded herself a comfortable home, sumptuous meals and the best of clothing with the suitcase of money that she had beside herself. She was unaware of the value of the wealth she had in her possession and thus allowed herself to fall so low and attract the sympathy of others. *It was indeed a misfortune ... that she had earned for herself.*

Indeed, a real pitiful sight, but a point of reflection for each one of us.

This is exactly the example of the Ummah (nation) of the greatest of all Ambiyaa, Nabi Muhammad (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam); an Ummah whose present condition has led to this dreadful crisis. Indeed, an Ummah which possesses all the resources to haul it out from this depressing and demoralising 'pit'. In the words of our beloved master, Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam), this Ummah is like a single body. If the eye has a problem, then the rest of the body is affected. If the head aches, then, the rest of the body also suffers the pain. (*Saheeh Muslim #6589*)

The Ummah's 'hand' of Syria is being mercilessly butchered; the Ummah's 'head' of Palestine is being bombarded with drones, the Ummah's 'leg' of Yemen is being ruthlessly trampled and the list goes on and on.

Aha, the pertinent question is, is the rest of the body merely looking on, feeling the pain and wailing, or is it searching for the valuable resources that we *have been* bestowed with, in order to disentangle ourselves from this severe dilemma.

To an onlooker it would appear as though the rest of the body is totally ignorant about the valuable resources it possesses. *Certainly, those with vision and foresight can clearly ‘see’ that we have wretchedly opted to be like the homeless woman.* To that onlooker, we undoubtedly cut a depressing sight... waiting for a benevolent individual to grudgingly offer his hand of help.

As Muslims, our beloved Master (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) has beautifully explained to his Ummah: *“The one who constantly seeks the forgiveness of Allah Ta’ala, Allah Ta’ala in turn will make an exit for him from every constraining circumstance, bring about relief for each of his worries and bless him with sustenance and provisions from sources unknown to him.”* (Sunan Abi Dawood #1518)

At the end of the day, this is the ultimate solution to the Ummah’s disastrous catastrophe... the constant begging of forgiveness from Allah Ta’ala.

However, success will be achieved when a collective effort is undertaken towards reformation. Allah Ta’ala emphatically declares: *“Repent to Allah Ta’ala collectively O Believers so that you may be successful.”* (Surah Noor v31)

Be that as it may, the Ummah is undeniably in a crisis ... but the ‘rope of hope’ is permanently suspended for us to latch on to.

It is thus superfluous that when we *have* the solutions and resources at our disposal to overcome the calamity, that we still seek guidance and direction from strangers. The stranger's guidance will certainly be strange - packaged with lifestyles, practices and cultures which are alien and destructive to the noble way of life... *Al-Islam*.

Lamentably though, we have lost our direction in our journey of life. Though the needle of our life-compass faces in the direction of the first martyr in Islam, Sayyidah Sumayyah (radhiyallahu 'anha), who sacrificed her life for the sake of our noble Deen; the Queen of Jannah, Sayyidah Faatimah (radhiyallahu 'anha), who on account of her modesty and shame could not even approach her father due to the men seated around him; and the sage of her time, Raabi'ah Basriyyah (rahimahallah) who dedicated her life to the worship of Allah Ta'ala, unfortunately, the pendulum has swung and we have now turned in the total opposite direction.

What we have failed to realise is that we are an integral component of the global Ummah, and it is our actions, that play the most important role in the changing of events and the conditions being decided by our Maker and Creator, Allah Ta'ala.

It boils down to the simple question: "Do we really have the concern of the Ummah at heart, or not?"

If the answer is in the positive, then an in-depth introspection of our daily lives is imperative. We will have to gauge our every action against the yardstick of the glorious women of the past and then ask ourselves:

- Would they have allowed their daughters to appear in tight tops and skinny three quarter jeans before strange men and casually talk to them?
- What would have been their reaction if they were informed that one of their 'daughters' was circulating pictures of herself in scanty clothing to the rest of the neighbourhood?
- Would these Islamic trend-setting women have covered themselves with alluring perfumes when emerging from their homes?
- Just imagine their response if they were to come across one of their friends spending hours reading fictitious enthralling series of girls' outrageous pre-marital flirting relationships, or gripping and obscene revelations of a super-rich girl's life considering it as the ideal 'Islamic substitute' for novels and romance books.

I'm pretty sure that these great illustrious role-models' only replies (*in our lingo*) would be: "Oh my gosh! What on earth is she up to?" ... "No ways! How is this ever going to happen?" ... "Oh my word! What are they really doing?"

These are just a few actions which only form the tip of the iceberg in the ever-increasing list of deeds during the Ummah's deepening crisis which display the Ummah's unfamiliarity with the great resources it has at its disposal. Additionally, it also reveals a frightening sense of complacency with the prevailing tsunamis of devastation and destruction pounding the Ummah.

It's about time that we realistically inspect the condition of our lives and follow the direction shown to us by our 'life-compass'.

But before doing so, the very first step would be detoxification (*detox*) and cleansing ourselves from the filth that has accumulated via the sins and evil that we commit. On a serious and sombre note, the obnoxious and detestable company that we keep and the immoral fantasies that we entertain, will all have to be cast into the incinerator ... *for total demolition*.

Thus, the great and urgent need for *taubah* and *istighfaar*... *and not any kind of taubah*... but one with a deep sense of remorse and regret and a painful heart.

Mind over Matter

Ever heard of "Mind over Matter"? Wondered what it's all about?

The following incident, extracted and summarized from "The New Scientist" of May 2009, sheds some light on the matter.

Late one night in a small Alabama cemetery, Vance Vanders bumped into a witch doctor who shoved a bottle of unpleasant-smelling liquid under his nose and told him he was about to die and no one could save him.

Once back home, Vanders felt ill and his condition soon began to deteriorate. *Some weeks later, extremely thin and near death, he was admitted to the hospital where doctors were unable to*

treat him as they could not find a cause for his symptoms. Only then did his wife tell one of the doctors, Drayton Doherty, of the incident with the witch doctor.

Doherty thought long and hard. The next morning, he called Vanders's family to his bedside. He told them that he had, the previous night, confronted the witch doctor and somehow got him to explain how the curse worked. The medicine man had, he said, rubbed lizard eggs into Vanders's stomach which had hatched inside his body. One lizard remained which was eating Vanders from the inside out.

Doherty then called for a nurse who had, according to his instruction, filled a large syringe with a powerful emetic (medicine that causes vomiting). He made a great show of inspecting the instrument and then injected its contents into Vanders' arm. A few minutes later, Vanders began to vomit uncontrollably. *In the midst of it all, unnoticed by everyone in the room, Doherty produced a green lizard he had stashed in his black bag. "Look what has come out of you Vance!" he cried. "The voodoo curse is lifted!"*

Vanders was shocked. He stumbled back to the bed and drifted into a deep sleep. *When he awoke the next day, he was alert and had regained his appetite. He rapidly recovered his strength and was discharged a week later.*

The facts of this case, from 80 years ago, were corroborated by four medical professionals. *(end of extract)*

This incident reflects the incredible power with which Allah Ta'ala has blessed the human mind. When the mind is convinced that something has transpired, its power causes even the physical body to behave accordingly. **It is therefore absolutely essential for us to always remain positive in our thinking.**

Mujaahid (rahimahullah) once complained to Sayyiduna 'Abdullah bin 'Abbaas (radhiyallahu 'anhuma) of seeing jinn and demons that would scare him. Sayyiduna 'Abdullah bin 'Abbaas (radhiyallahu 'anhuma) conditioned his mind with just a few words: *"Don't be afraid of them for they are also afraid of you. You don't be the coward."* This pep talk gave Mujaahid (rahimahullah) the courage he needed and armed him with the weapon of positive thinking. **This empowered him to such an extent that the next time the jinn showed up, he attacked it with a stick until he actually heard it hit the ground!** (*Musannaf Ibni Abi Shaibah #24069*)

If we entertain the belief that we have a jinn-related problem, our bodies will react and behave as if we really do - *even if the reality is that we don't*. Similarly, by dwelling on and allowing our minds to be caught up in conspiracy theories related to "Dajjaal and his agents ruling the world", "The Freemasons", "The Illuminati" and the like; **we will ourselves be paving the way to our mental defeat after which we will feel nothing but helplessness and depression.** We will refuse to accept responsibility for our actions, choosing to instead blame everything on the jaadoo which is apparently everywhere

around us. While a small percentage of cases may be reality, most of the time it is just ‘mind over matter’.

The harms caused by this mindset are serious enough. But even worse is the fact that this way of thinking clashes directly with the teachings of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam).

A Sahaabi of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) was once riding on an animal seated behind Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) when the animal stumbled. As it stumbled he uttered, “*May Shaitaan be wretched and destroyed!*” Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) immediately corrected him saying, “No! Do not say ‘*May Shaitaan be wretched and destroyed*’ for when you say that (and show him importance), he continues to swell (out of arrogance and pride) until he becomes the size of a house and he says ‘*because of MY power!*’ You should rather say ‘*Bismillah*’ for when you say that (*ignoring Shaitaan and showing importance to Allah Ta‘ala*), he continues to shrink until he is the size of a fly.” (Sunan Abi Dawood #4982)

If Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) could not tolerate the mere stumbling of a horse being attributed to Shaitaan, would he be happy with us attributing any and every random world event to Shaitaan?

By giving Shaitaan – *the attention seeker* – the attention he craves, we are actually pleasing him and displeasing Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam), as it was *his* instruction to turn our focus to Allah Ta‘ala.

A lover has eyes for his beloved alone. *Is Allah Ta'ala our beloved or Shaitaan?* If the answer is Allah Ta'ala, let us turn all our focus and attention to Him alone.

It's Your Company

Step back a moment and reflect... Imagine...

Think of a woman who has experienced all the ups and downs of life, enduring the death of one husband after the other, going through the difficulty of earning for herself due to her circumstances, suffering the heartache of the divorce of her daughters because of her faith, living in a home that was constantly beset with abuse and persecution for the sake of her Rabb, going into exile in her old age, tolerating adverse conditions of hunger and starvation... yet still maintaining the same intense love for her husband like a newly-wed bride... **yet still dedicated to him with her heart and soul, totally compliant with her mind and body... yet still pouring every vestige of her strength in nurturing her children... yet still spending large amounts of money for the cause of her faith with a smile... yet still motivating those around her despite the hostile environment...**

Translate those thoughts into reality and you have the Mother of the Believers, Sayyidah Khadeejah (radhiyallahu 'anha).

What made her the amazing woman she was? How did she do it?

Was it a wishing well or a motivational seminar perhaps? A mood-lifting anti-depressant or a funky nasheed the last thing before bed? Or was it a long drawn shopping expedition or maybe just letting some hair down with the friends? *Never. Not at all.* These are all quick-fixes. Some of them harm the body; others hurt the pocket and most kill the soul.

IT WAS HER GOOD COMPANY.

The reaction of some might be... “Okay” while others might be like... “Yawn... *anyone got a pillow.*” But as boring and as traditional as that may sound, the reality on Planet Earth is that whatever is good and pure will at the end of the day remain good and pure while whatever is evil and dirty will always remain the same.

Authentic historical accounts of the life of Sayyidah Khadeejah (radhiyallahu ‘anha) indicate very clearly that her attitude and outlook was shaped and moulded by her cousin, the pious and learned scholar of the time, Waraqah bin Naufal.

Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) explained that we are who we are, because of the company we keep.

Companions are not only humans we can talk to and laugh with. Websites and magazines, social media and TV/Radio programmes are the new companions of the Modern Age. Companions make you or break you!

Strive to be Simple in Five

In this day and age, there are very few places that we can frequent without encountering posters, billboards and flyers advertising “CONSOLIDATE YOUR DEBT!” “BLACKLISTED? WE CAN HELP!”

Even more surprising than the amount of debt aid agencies that have sprung up is the amount of people that flock to these agencies for what they believe to be assistance. *If we examine the nature of these debts, we will realize that the vast majority of people who land themselves in unmanageable debt have done so by failing to live within their means.* This has sprung from their discontentment, insatiable greed and the perception that they are unsuccessful if they do not have the latest phone, latest model of vehicle and the latest of everything else.

If each of us have to examine our lives, we will realize that our expenses can be divided into five primary avenues; food, clothing, home, vehicle and marriage.

In our greed to enjoy the most exotic food, at the most renowned and famed outlets, *we are even prepared to sacrifice our values of halaal and haraam.* The fashionable clothing that we don has removed all traces of modesty that may have existed. Our fancy ornament homes are in no way visitor friendly. The desire for the latest car has landed us in debts. *Our lavish weddings have tragically made fornication the cheaper option for many people of weak imaan.*

Islam, being the perfect and complete way of life, teaches us to maintain simplicity and exercise moderation in all departments of our life. By following this pristine prescription and exercising simplicity in these five basic avenues, we will not only enjoy barakah (blessings) and cultivate contentment, but will also remain debt-free, **thus avoiding the mountain of problems and stress that burden a person carrying debt.**

All we need to simply do, is simplify our costly lives and enjoy a simple life that is pleasing to Allah Ta'ala.

'Weaning' the Nafs

'Allaamah Booseeri (rahimahullah) mentions in his famous Qaseedah Burdah:

وَالنَّفْسُ كَالطِّفْلِ إِنْ كُتِمَتْ شَبَّ عَلَى
حُبِّ الرِّضَاعِ وَإِنْ تَقَطَّنَتْ يَنْقَطِمُ

The nafs is like a child; if you neglect (to wean) it, it will still have the love for the mother's milk when it reaches adolescence. However, if you wean it, it will become weaned.

This couplet explains that a person's nafs (carnal self) is like a young child. A suckling child, by nature, loves its mother's milk. However, being a child, it does not understand that this milk is

only beneficial for a short period, after which its consumption will prove harmful and detrimental to the child.

If the mother does not wean the child off the milk and instead feels sorry for the child, allowing it to continue suckling, the child's addiction to the milk will grow with it and ultimately harm it greatly.

Similarly, when a person's nafs has the taste for a sin or a bad habit, he sometimes 'feels sorry' for his nafs and thinks, *"Let me commit the sin one last time. If I do this, the craving will end, and I will thereafter abandon the sin."* However, he is merely deceiving himself, as by committing the sin one more time, he is actually ingraining and embedding the sin even deeper and increasing the addiction even further.

The only solution is to 'wean' the nafs entirely, once and for all, without showing it any consideration or mercy. It is only when this uncompromising discipline is adopted that the nafs will become disciplined and be 'weaned' of its sins and bad habits. (*Az-Zubdah fi Sharhil Burdah* pg. 218)

Poor yet Rich

"This car is too slow!" complained one person. "This food is too salty!" moaned another. "This house is too dark!" muttered a third. "This water is too cold!" exclaimed a fourth. "This clothing is too hot!" groaned a fifth.

Show the first person a child in a rural area who has to walk 20km a day merely to attend school. His complaint will cease. Show the second person people living in utter starvation. He will forget about his complaint. Show the third person people sleeping on the streets. Let alone complaining, he will become very grateful. Show the fourth person people without water in drought stricken areas. He will never complain about cold water again. Show the fifth person people covering their bodies with torn and tattered clothing. His complaint will be no more.

South Africa is admittedly a country with its fair share of challenges. From a currency dropping lower than a sunken submarine to a crime level constantly skyrocketing, many people live in doom and gloom, depressed over the sad state of affairs. However, if we reflect over the plight of those less fortunate than ourselves, we will realize that we still enjoy innumerable blessings and favours of Allah Ta'ala. In fact, blessings in dunya aside, Allah Ta'ala has blessed us immensely in Deen.

How many countries in the world enjoy our religious freedom, where we are allowed to build masaajid, madaaris, call out the azaan, dress as Muslims and uphold all other branches of Islamic life? Going a step further – despite our Muslim community of South Africa being relatively young and a minority, forming approximately only 2% of the population, Allah Ta'ala has granted us productive and progressive structures of Deen, the fruits of which are even enjoyed by other countries around the globe.

Among the greatest of Deeni blessings that the South African Muslims enjoy is that of the makaatib (primary madrasahs). *After the home, these madrasahs are the first step to acquiring the basic knowledge of Islam which forms the foundation of one's Deen.* Hence, it is commonly witnessed that those who are deprived of the basic maktab education are often bereft of even the primary teachings of Islam.

The maktab system is so advanced in South Africa that we have multiple curriculums specifically formulated for the needs of our children. The network of makaatib is so extensive that there is barely a town - *nay a suburb* - in which a maktab cannot be found. *Our maktab system has been granted such success by Allah Ta'ala that many other countries have sent teams to South Africa with the goal of studying and replicating our system in their own areas.*

A community without an 'aalim is a flock without a shepherd. In this regard, Allah Ta'ala has blessed us with many 'Ulama who are embodiments of piety, knowledge and sincerity. Whether in the role of imaams, asaaticah, spiritual guides, qaris, muftis, orators or all of these and more, the 'Ulama selflessly dedicate their lives to the service of the Muslims and upliftment of Deen.

Whereas the first 'Ulama of South Africa had either come from abroad or had studied abroad, Allah Ta'ala accepted our country to be the home of multiple Darul 'Ulooms. These centres of imparting Deen have produced 'Ulama that now serve locally and even internationally. Forty years ago, a locality would have to 'import' a haafiz to perform Taraaweeh Salaah in Ramadhaan.

Now, we have such an abundance of huffaaz and ‘Ulama that we ‘export’ to other countries. Furthermore, Allah Ta‘ala has made our Darul ‘Ulooms the centre of attraction for students of all countries. *From Muslim majority countries such as Malaysia to even Arab countries such as Palestine and Jordan, multitudes of students arrive on our shores to quench their thirst for Deen.*

There are many countries, such as America, that enjoy highly advanced infrastructures, technologies and economies, yet lack the structures of Deen with which we have been blessed. While we have ‘Ulama bodies for every province, attending to marriage counselling, Deeni education, issuing fatwa, social welfare and other projects, most areas in America lack sufficient ‘Ulama to form bodies that can serve their needs.

On the subject of social welfare – Allah Ta‘ala has assisted the humanitarian aid organizations of South Africa to take the lead in their field. *They have progressed to the point where they have teams on standby around the globe, ever ready to respond to a crisis or emergency, and are often the first on the scene of a crisis or disaster.*

Muslims prison boards seeing to the needs of Muslim inmates... The Tableegh Jamaat striving to rekindle the flames of imaan... Orphanages providing housing and care for the young whose parents have passed on... Easily available and abundant supply of halaal food... Pertinent and relevant Islamic programmes to educate and inspire men and women... Burial and funeral organizations, ready to assist in even the dead of night... *And the list of blessings that we enjoy goes on.*

In the light of the abundant blessings that we enjoy, there are two things required from us. Firstly, we should avail of these structures and benefit from them. *When these facilities are available, what prevents us from utilizing them and progressing in Deen?*

Secondly, we need to appreciate and support these structures in their efforts, whether physically, financially or through du'aas. By doing so, we will avoid falling into ingratitude, Allah Ta'ala will grant us a share in the reward of their work, and He will also increase His favours upon us, paving the path for further progress.

'Khaalah, Khaalah'

Once upon a time, the father of the home would 'load' his family into the car on a Sunday, or during the holiday, *and from the morning until the evening, they would go from 'khaalah to khaalah' (from one aunt to the next), visiting their various family members.*

As they entered the various homes, the cheeks of the children would be pinched and a kiss or two would be given before they would be allowed to run off and play with the children of the home. The men would sit together and 'catch up' while the women would likewise enjoy each other's company. *The kettle would be boiled, and whatever was available, no matter how simple it may be, would be served.* When it was time to depart,

the visiting family would seldom leave empty handed, and even the children would at least be given a lollipop to take home. These visits were regular features of the weekends and holidays and were emphasized by one and all. **As a result, love and unity was maintained in the family and all the members were well acquainted with one another.**

Our beautiful Deen of Islam greatly emphasizes the importance and reward of maintaining family ties, and similarly warns of severe punishment for those who sever family ties. Hence, in the past, many families had adopted the above method in an effort to uphold this injunction of Deen.

However, if we cannot visit our relatives regularly enough, then we should seek some alternate method of maintaining ties. One way of doing this is to maintain regular contact, whether via the phone or any other method. Similarly, sending gifts for our relatives – *even if it be a small gift, such as a plate of biscuits* – is a sure way to keep the hearts warm. Whatever effort is made in this regard, even if it be a small effort, will fetch tremendous rewards in the Hereafter.

The Time to Tie

There was once a person who made wudhu, called out the azaan and then called the people around him to join him for salaah. However, it was 9am and he was dressed in only a short pants! “*What salaah are you performing?*” one person asked. “Zuhr,” he

replied. “But it’s still 9am! It’s not yet time for Zuhr!” the people objected. “Never mind!” he responded, “That’s a small thing! The main thing is that I’m reading Zuhr!” “How can you perform salaah wearing only short-pants?” another person enquired. Once again, he replied, “That’s a small thing! The main thing is that I’m reading Zuhr!”

Although the above example may be farfetched, it aptly highlights the importance of knowing *how* and *when* to fulfil the commands of Allah Ta’ala. If one fails to observe these two essential aspects, then instead of earning the pleasure of Allah Ta’ala – *which is the very objective* – he will earn His displeasure.

The previous article encouraged us to maintain family ties. As a conclusion it, we will now discuss a few pertinent points regarding the *when* and *how* of maintaining family ties so that the desired outcome, of attaining the pleasure of Allah Ta’ala, can be achieved.

As far as the *when* is concerned, then maintaining family ties is an injunction that applies to us at all times. Conversely, in the Western lifestyle, joining family ties is restricted to a few select occasions, e.g. father’s day, mother’s day, birthdays, etc., while largely neglecting their family members for the rest of the year. Bearing this in mind, if we restrict maintaining family ties to a few occasions during the year e.g. the two ‘Eids, weddings and funerals, while not bothering to maintain ties at other times, then we will be following the way of the disbelievers.

As far as the *how* is concerned, then since the purpose of maintaining family ties is to please Allah Ta’ala, we have to

ensure that none of His laws are violated in the process of maintaining ties, as we will then incur His wrath instead of His pleasure. Hence, we will only maintain ties with people when it will not harm our ties with Allah Ta'ala.

In this regard, there are many people who punctually attend family functions such as weddings, braais, etc., all in the name of “maintaining family ties”. However, the functions that they attend contain blatant sins such as intermingling of men and women, photography, music, women dressed indecently, etc. However, despite these sins being committed openly, they insist on attending these functions saying that if they do not do so, they will be severing family ties, as their relatives will feel hurt and insulted. Furthermore, when the topic of the sins at these functions is raised, they say, “Never mind! The main thing is that we are maintaining family ties!”

The question that we need to ask is, “Is our relationship with family more important than our relationship with Allah Ta'ala?” By adding to the numbers of such gatherings and being present in such an environment, we may feel that we are appeasing our family members and maintaining ties. However, the reality is that we are severing ties with Allah Ta'ala. Furthermore, when the purpose of joining family ties is to earn the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala, then how can we do so in a manner that severs our relationship with Him and earns His anger by attending a function where His laws are broken and He is disobeyed?

We *should* definitely join family ties, but we do NOT have to compromise on our Deen and displease Allah Ta'ala to do so. Rather, there are ample opportunities, besides these functions, for us to uphold this injunction of Deen. **At all times, we should try to please Allah Ta'ala, as His pleasure and approval is the yardstick of acceptance.**

Rise to the Occasion

“Rise to the occasion” is an English maxim that is often heard and well known. The gist of this maxim is that a person should try to change and adapt in order to improve his reaction and performance under a special set of circumstances. One example of this may be a person who is suddenly faced by an emergency, yet remains level-headed and does not panic, rather adapting to the situation and securing his safety.

A person will encounter different occasions throughout his life, and the circumstances and tests of each occasion will vary. **In order to pass the test, one will have to try his best to “rise to the occasion” by behaving in the manner that is expected of him at that time.**

In this manner, Deen also presents us with different occasions. From a wedding to a janaazah – the demand of each occasion and the nature of each test is different. **However, for a person to be able to ‘rise to the occasion’, he will have to know**

how to please Allah Ta'ala in each and every situation, together with how to avoid inconveniencing people.

For example, a janaazah is an occasion of grief and mourning. Hence, if a person has to crack jokes and make merry on this occasion, not only will his behaviour be deemed inappropriate and insensitive, he will hurt the feelings of those who are bereaved. Similarly, when eating, we should not discuss any matter which will cause people to lose their appetite, e.g. conveying the news of someone's demise.

When faced with any occasion or situation, we should first ponder and think before acting. We should ask ourselves, “*What does Allah Ta'ala expect of me? How can I ensure that I will not harm or inconvenience anyone?*”

It may be that we are about to visit a friend, and at that precise moment, our mother asks us to make her a cup of tea. Similarly, it may be that after a trying and tiring day, we are expected to entertain a guest. Likewise, it may be that we were about to put our feet up and relax when our husband needed something. *In all these situations, we can either choose to secure our own comfort, or we can rise to the occasion and adapt by putting our wants aside and giving preference to others.* This is the response that will please Allah Ta'ala and cause us to ‘rise’ in Jannah.

Open Eight Doors of Jannah

Sayyiduna ‘Umar bin Khattaab (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) reports that Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said, “Whoever performs a perfect wudhu and thereafter recites the following du‘aa, eight doors of Jannah will open for him, and he may enter from whichever door he wishes:

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ ، اَللَّهُمَّ
اجْعَلْنِي مِنَ التَّوَابِينَ وَاجْعَلْنِي مِنَ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

I testify that there is no deity besides Allah, who is alone, without any partner, and I testify that Muhammad (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) is His servant and messenger. O Allah! Make me from among those who constantly repent, and make me from among those who are pure!” (Sunan Tirmizi #55)

In the above hadeeth, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) has prescribed an extremely easy action which will assist us to enter Jannah. As each of us has to perform wudhu at least several times daily before we perform salaah, all we have to do is ensure that we recite the above-mentioned du‘aa on completing our wudhu to qualify for the glad tidings.

However, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) also mentioned that one should try to perform a ‘perfect wudhu’. In order to achieve this, one should adhere to all the etiquettes and sunnah and mustahab actions of wudhu, such as facing the

qiblah, washing each limb thrice (besides masah of the head which is only once), not wasting water, cleansing the mouth with the miswaak, refraining from any worldly talk, etc.

May Allah Ta'ala bless us all to qualify for these glad tidings.

The Aid for Acceptance

Sayyiduna Sa'd (radhiyallahu 'anhu) reports that Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) said, "The du'aa of Zun-Noon (Nabi Yunus ['alaihi salaam]), which he made while in the belly of the whale, is:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

There is none worthy or worship but You. You are pure. Indeed, I was from among the wrongdoers.

No Muslim will ever make du'aa through reciting these words, except that Allah Ta'ala will accept his du'aa." (Sunan Tirmizi #3505)

The above words are very effective in gaining acceptance for one's du'aas. They are also concise and easy to recite. Hence we should recite these words whenever we make du'aa to Allah Ta'ala.

The Avenues of Sadaqah

Sayyiduna Jaabir (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) reports that Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) mentioned, “Every good deed is an act of sadaqah, and among good deeds is that you meet your (Muslim) brother with a cheerful countenance and that you pour from your bucket into the container of your brother.” (*Sunan Tirmizi #1970*)

In the above hadeeth, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) explained that every good deed is sadaqah (*a means of one earning the reward of sadaqah*). Hence, we should never disregard any good deed, no matter how ‘small’ it may seem, as it will earn us immense reward. Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) thereafter mentioned two examples of good deeds that are perhaps overlooked by many people.

The first is to meet people with a smiling face and cheerful countenance. This simple, effortless gesture, as small as it may seem, is an act of ‘ibaadah. Furthermore, smiling is an action which is such that even people who are not blessed with wealth are able to carry it out and earn the reward of sadaqah. Nevertheless, one should be careful to only smile and greet the same gender or to mahrams and totally refrain from smiling at non-mahrams. Wives should especially practice upon this when seeing the husband off to work in the morning and when he returns after work.

The second example is for a person to pour water from his bucket into the container of his Muslim brother. Perhaps the reason for doing so was that his brother did not possess a bucket, and hence he assisted him in acquiring the water, or perhaps he just wished to save his brother the trouble of drawing the water from the well himself. Whatever the case, the good deed is that of assisting others and coming to their aid.

Hence, we too should try to assist people in whatever way possible e.g. when we cook or bake, we can easily prepare a little extra which we can then send to neighbours, relatives or those in need (the elderly, those in financial difficulty, etc.). Similarly, if we have been blessed with a particular talent e.g. the ability to sew, or we have a sought-after recipe, we can teach the skill to others and share the recipe with them, thereby assisting them and spreading happiness. *In this manner, we will earn abundant rewards with a minimum effort.*

Thousands in Seconds

Once, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) left for Fajr Salaah from the home of his respected wife, Sayyidah Juwairiyah (radhiyallahu ‘anha). As he left the home, he noticed her seated in her place of salaah, engaged in the zikr of Allah Ta‘ala. *Thereafter, when it was midmorning, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) returned to her home and found that Sayyidah*

Juwairiyah (radhiyallahu ‘anha) was still seated in her place of salaah.

Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) thus asked her, “*Did you remain in the same condition (engaged in the zikr of Allah Ta‘ala) as you were when I left you?*” When she replied that she had indeed remained engaged in zikr for the entire time, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said, “*After I left, I recited four phrases three times. These phrases are such that if they have to be weighed against all the zikr that you made today, these phrases will outweigh your zikr.*”

Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) then taught her the following words:

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ عَدَدَ خَلْقِهِ وَرِضَا نَفْسِهِ وَزِنَةَ عَرْشِهِ وَمَدَادَ كَلِمَاتِهِ

I proclaim that Allah Ta‘ala is free of any imperfection together with praising Him, equal to the number of His creation, equal to the amount that will please Him, equal to the weight of His throne and equal to His words. (Saheeh Muslim #6913)

Similarly, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) once entered the home of another of his respected wives, Sayyidah Safiyyah (radhiyallahu ‘anha) and found her seated with four thousand date seeds before her. Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) asked her, “*O daughter of Huyayy! What are you doing?*” She replied, “*I am reciting tasbeeh on these seeds.*” Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) responded, “*I have recited more tasbeeh than that since I entered and stood next to you.*”

Sayyidah Safiyyah (radhiyallahu ‘anha) was eager to learn how she could also gain the reward of such abundant tasbeeh in so little time and thus beseeched Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam), “Teach me, O Rasul of Allah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam)!” Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) replied, “Recite the following:

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَدَدَ مَا خَلَقَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ

I proclaim that Allah Ta‘ala is free of any imperfection equal to the number of His creation. (Mustadrak Haakim #2008)

(Also see: Sunan Tirmizi #3554 and Nataa-ijul Afkaar vol. 1, pg. 81)