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WISDOM

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KINDNESS in ISLAM



Osman Nuri Efendi:
Essentials of Islamic Ethics –
Grace and Kindness

Ahmet Tasgetiren:
The Muslim and Grace

Prof. Suleyman Derin:
Not Breaking Hearts

EDITORIAL

*D*ear Readers,

Dear Readers,

“So whosoever does good equal to the weight of an atom shall see it. And whosoever does evil equal to the weight of an atom, shall see it.” (Zalzalah, 99:7-8)

Kindness is a matter Islam instils and places utmost importance upon. This sensibility extends from Allah and the Messenger of Allah, first and foremost, to one’s parents, all believers and all creation, in succession. It follows that as believers, we must learn the rules of propriety, show painstaking effort to keep these alive and provide a lived example to others. For this reason, we must appeal to manuals of morality and ethics to learn how we are to beautify our inner and outer state and, more importantly, we must strive to take on the morality of the pious believers through intimacy with them.

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, “While a man was walking on a road. He became very thirsty. Then he came across a well, got down into it, drank of its water and then came out. Meanwhile he saw a dog panting and licking mud because of excessive thirst. The man said to himself “This dog is suffering from the same state of thirst as I did.” So he went down the well again and filled his shoe with water and held it in his mouth and watered the dog. Allah forgave him for that deed.” The people asked, “O Allah’s Apostle! Is there a reward for us in serving the animals?” He said, “Yes. There is a reward for serving any living being.” (Bukhârî and Muslim)

Our teacher Osman Nuri Efendi points out that kindness is the most salient testimony of humanity in this world and every believer whose eye of the heart has been opened with perfected belief becomes graceful, refined and the itinerant of a completely different realm.

Ahmet Tasgetiren explicates what needs to be done is to become a ‘graceful Muslim’. In the article written by Professor Suleyman Derin you will find that how Imam Rabbani viewed the ‘heart.’

May Allah help us to be kind to our families, children, neighbours and all fellow creatures and let us enter Your Paradise!

We hope that you will read the articles of this issue with pleasure. Looking forward to being with you in the next issue.

Elif Kapici

editor@sufiwisdom.net

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**Ahmet
Taşgetiren**
**The Muslim
and Grace**



**Prof. Suleyman
Derin**
**Not Breaking
Hearts**



**Salih
Kareem**
**Propriety
and
Courtesy**

**Halime
Demiresik**
**Sayyidah
Ummu
Salama -II-**



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Essentials of Islamic Ethics – Grace and Kindness

Every word of a believer who has duly assumed and internalised the Qur'ânic morality takes the form of a precious expression exuding mercy to hearts.

If the core of Islam, a bounty bestowed upon humankind for their happiness in both worlds, were to be summarised in a single word, the most fitting would most probably have been 'morality'. This is because the highest degree to which a human being can ascend by means of spiritual maturity can only be acquired through adherence to ethics and 'morality'.

The most paramount provision on the path of spiritual training that is Sufism and its most important means of advancement is 'love'; its most beautiful manifestation is 'morality', or the observance of propriety and good manners in every matter.

Religion enjoins the best of conduct and love towards Allah and His Messenger first and foremost, followed by the spiritual teachers guiding the servant, one's parents, fellow believers and all of creation. Spiritual progression is impossible without modesty and love.

How aptly Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi indicates this truth:

"My reason asked my heart:

'What is religion?'

Whispering into the ear of my reason, my heart said,

'Religion is modesty.'"

Our Lord invites His servants to His Paradise that He has adorned with blessings, which no eye has seen, and a beauty beyond human grasp and perception. However, just as it is essential to respond to every invitation in a manner befitting the occasion, an ungainly and dense heart cannot immigrate to that abode of subtle beauty.

Thus, the heart must first be purified of the pollution of everything other than God (masiwahu), and the seeds of thought and feeling must take root and flourish in the soil of belief and then bear the fruits of the Divine morality in one's behaviour and actions, in order for it to become worthy of Paradise – the arena of eternal wonders.

That is to say, Allah Almighty invites us to His Paradise with a heart that is sound and ever-turning to Him, and a carnal soul that has attained the level of mutma'inna, or the Tranquil Self. The indications of having attained this state are delicacy, refinement, tears, resignation, service to good, shunning evil, guiding others and mercy and compassion to all Allah's creation. In sum, it is fulfilling the commandments of Allah in great reverence and humble submission, and showing mercy and compassion to the created by virtue of the

Creator (al-ta'zim li-amr Allah wa 'l shafkah 'ala khalq Allah).

Our Lord, Who is All-Merciful towards His servants, has not left us to our own devices in this regard, but has illumined our path of ultimate union with the eternal abode of felicity by means of His books and Messengers.

In this sense, we have come to this world at the most fortuitous time of human history and no amount of praise and thanks can ever be enough to this end. For we have been honoured with being the addressees of the Qur'an and the community of the Master of Creation – All praise and thanks be to Allah!

Of such a nature is this Qur'an, that a believer who has clothed himself or herself in its morality resembles a rosebud which forever comforts spirits, so to speak, with its enchanting aroma. Every word of a believer who has duly assumed and internalised the Qur'anic morality takes the form of a precious expression exuding mercy to hearts. Their smiling countenance reflects the smiling face of Islam. Their character and conduct is perpetually of a perfected, beauteous and impeccable nature. A perfected believer must be equipped with three mutually complementary attributes:

أَحْسَنُ - Ahsan: Their carrying out every action in the best possible way and exuding beauty to their surroundings.

أَجْمَلُ - Ajmal: Their every state and action must be of a refinement and poise bestowing tranquillity and solace to the heart.

When Islam was duly practised, it delivered the earth from being an arena of oppression and ambition and, to a field of festivity abounding in peace simply by means of beautiful character traits as morality and grace.



اَكْمَلُ - Akmal: They must display maturity, perfection and even splendour in every matter.

When Islam was duly perceived and practised, it delivered the earth from being an arena of oppression and ambition and, to a field of festivity abounding in peace and happiness simply by means of belief, deeds of righteousness and such beautiful character traits as morality and grace.

Grace, refinement and spiritual profundity – being the favour and blessing of a belief experienced with love – is the most salient testimony of humanity in this world. Every believer whose eye of the heart has been opened with perfected belief becomes graceful, refined and the resident of a completely different realm. They begin to gaze upon the manifestations of Divine majesty, workings of power and magnificent mystery and vignettes of wisdom in everything they see. Those who are ready to accept truth and goodness through acquisition of this spiritual depth and who become familiar to Divine beauties, come to constantly seek the beautiful and see the beautiful.

For instance, Prophet 'Isa (Jesus), peace be upon him, once came across the carcass of a dog. While those around him turned their faces in another direction, he remarked, "What beautiful teeth it has!"

A believer whose heart has opened and deepened with the sensitivities of belief understands the language of disposition of all beings in the classroom of the universe;

they thus become the addressee of their silent, wordless expression and a great many wise exchanges, for in their eyes, everything is a showcase of Divine majesty.

In saying, "We love the creation for the sake of the Creator," and delving into a poignant and deep exchange with a yellow flower, the famous Turkish Sufi poet Yunus Emre was captivated by the awe inspiring vision of the seal of Divine power on all creatures.

Shah Naqshband experienced a unique spiritual pleasure, in the first years of his affiliation (intisab), upon becoming acquainted with the sorrowful sounds of animals that were beseeching their Lord.

Aziz Mahmud Hudayi could not bear to pluck any flower, when he heard their praise and glorification of Allah in their own tongue.

Thus, a heart that has attained the horizon of grace and refinement engendered by a perfected belief collects profound secrets and extraordinary wisdoms, from a delicate offshoot of spring, a waterfall cascading in lamentation and the moving melody of the nightingale. As a result, their inner and outer world takes on a form more gracious than delicate roses.

The model of the ideal and perfected person Islam aims at is precisely such a 'person of the heart'. This delicacy of spirit of a person of the heart who has been able to duly internalise the truth of Islam and add it to their character, reveals itself as beauty of conduct and subtlety in thought, before anything else. In this respect,

Every believer whose eye of the heart has been opened with perfected belief becomes graceful, refined and the resident of a completely different realm.





The model of the ideal person Islam aims at is precisely such a 'person of the heart'. This delicacy of spirit of a person of the heart who has been able to duly internalise the truth of Islam.

a 'person of the heart' is the possessor of a sensitive heart, elegance, subtlety and courtesy. They are sympathetic, an element of gravitation, a centre of love and a model to humanity. They are altruistic individuals who share the joy and the grief of their fellow believers. They are people of noble character who direct their interrogation towards their carnal self and display tolerance to their brothers and sisters in faith, and so magnanimous as to respond to even evil with kindness. Blessed with manifestation of the Almighty's attribute of The One who Veils His Servants' Shortcomings and Sins (al Sattaar), they are those who have assumed the character traits of Allah and who conceal the faults and wrongdoing of others. Making their heart a refuge, they are people of perfected discernment and compassion who rebuke not the sinner, but the sin, and regard the sinner as the wounded bird in need of care and treatment. Their face is one that is smiling, their speech soft and their interactions gentle. They are forgiving, sacrificing, suffering, but in a state of complete resignation to the Divine Will. They are those who neither injure nor are injured, neither hurt nor are hurt. That is to say, just as they are able to silence their tongue so as not to break the hearts of others, they are also able to silence the lamentations of their own heart, so that they are not hurt themselves. They are those who understand that the darkness of the grave can only be transformed into light and the suffering of the Hour of Doom be transformed into the bliss of an eternal festivity through bearing the trials of the world, that is to end with the last

breath, with belief, deeds of righteousness and moral virtue.

The Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, the perfect exemplar for humanity in every way, is an immensurable example of good character, modesty, grace and refinement, and the pinnacle of virtue. His life is filled, from beginning to end, with exemplary conduct and behaviour expressing grace and cultivation.

Moreover, finding a way into the soul of every person and striving devotedly for their eternal happiness, Allah's Messenger never abandoned grace and courtesy even when correcting the mistakes of others; not addressing them individually but speaking in general to all people, he would say, "What is it that I see you [doing such-and-such]?" He would thus draw attention to his own sight.¹ By means of such kindness, he steered completely clear of coarse words and actions that would hurt those he addressed, instead conquering their hearts with words of tenderness and wisdom.

That sun of grace describes the state of the perfected believer as follows:

"The believer is comparable to the honeybee which eats that which is pure and wholesome and produces that which is pure and wholesome. When it lands on something it does not break or ruin it." (Ahmad, II:199; Hakim, I:147)

How finely the following incident related by Abu Qursafa reflects the grace of Allah's Messenger:

Those who are able to gain closest proximity to his beauty and reflect the subtleties of the Prophetic morality like a polished mirror are the friends of Allah, the heirs and of the Prophets.



“As a boy, I went to swear allegiance to the Prophet, together with my mother and her sister. When we returned home my mother and aunt said,

‘Son, we have never before seen the likes of this man, nor anyone better looking, cleaner dressed, or gentler in his speech; it was as though light effused from his blessed mouth.’” (Haythami, VIII:279-280)

As reported in descriptions of the Prophet (Hilya al-Sharif), there was beauty in his countenance, purity and eloquence in his speech and a lofty grace, refinement and fineness in his demeanour and actions.

As he was raised with a Divine education, he became the tangible and ideal model of the manner of servanthood to Allah who was sent to perfect noble character and as a mercy to the worlds. He was a marvel of creation and manifestation of the Divine art in the human being, of unsurpassed perfection.

That Sultan of Hearts states:

الْمَرْءُ مَعَ مَنْ أَحَبَّ - “A person is with those they love.” (Bukhārī, Adab, 96)

To the extent that we too can receive a share, for our own demeanour and conduct, in the spiritual fabric and beautiful character of Allah’s Messenger who was sent as a mercy to the worlds, we will have gained the opportunity of being in his company in the Hereafter to that same degree.

Most certainly, those who are able to gain closest proximity to his beauty and reflect

the subtleties of the Prophetic morality like a polished mirror are the friends of Allah, the heirs and devoted admirers of the Prophets.

They are those fortunate servants who have attained the station of intimate knowledge of Allah (ma’rifa), by ceaselessly purifying themselves of the negative proclivities that are present in the human being as a requirement of Divine examination. The distinguishing mark of the behaviour to emanate from them after having reached this spiritual station, or in other words, its most essential characteristic, is grace and refinement.

This is because Allah Almighty Himself has been the teacher of these blessed friends whom He has favoured with love and nearness as a result of their fear and reverent piety. They were honoured with a great many manifestations of the reality of the Prophetic statement, “My Lord has taught me good conduct and has perfected my conduct.”

Nearness to a friend of Allah who represents the pinnacle of human propriety and good conduct as a result of this Divine teaching and who has made grace and refinement their chief attribute, is without a doubt one of the greatest bounties that a believer can be favoured with in this world.

We, too, are among those favoured with such a bounty through our physical proximity to Musa Efendi – may Allah sanctify his secret on this occasion, the 14th anniversary of his passing. May endless praise and thanks be to

our Lord for this great Divine bestowal.

Musa Efendi's eighty-three year pure and dignified life, which carried exceptional expression of the Prophetic propriety, is filled with innumerable examples of grace and refinement that will never grow old for any of us, and that will serve to forever protect his precious memory in hearts.

He was a living example of grace and refinement, in his every act and behaviour, from his manner of sitting and standing, his silence and speech, his walk and presence, to his dress and attire and his subtle gaze. Due to the fact that this state is, so to speak, his distinguishing characteristic and true nature, he displayed countless reflections of delicacy, tenderness and refinement as naturally as a sweet blowing breeze and Divine mercy falling on the earth in the form of rain.

Moreover, when my respected father was to give in charity to the needy, he would first place it in a fine envelope and would then write upon it most meticulously in his elegant handwriting that resembled pearls: "Thank you for accepting this from us." In this way, he displayed the gracious manner depicted in the Qur'anic verse, "...surely Allah is He Who welcomes His servants' turning to Him in repentance, and accepts what is offered as charity for His sake..." (Taubah 9:104)

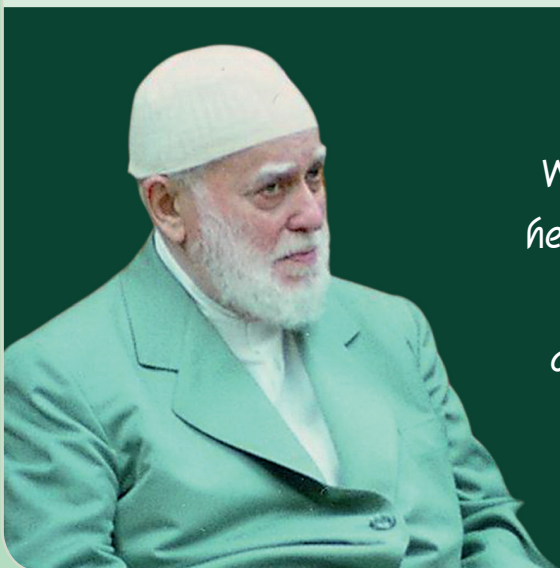
He used to display the same grace when he was to present someone with a gift; he would ensure that it was wrapped and packaged in

the best possible way and would present it with great graciousness, without causing offence and by paying compliment and, as such, in adding to the happiness of its receiver. Thus, my late father observed a sublime propriety and grace in accordance with the hadith, "...When a servant gives in charity, that charity reaches Allah before it is handed over to the hand of the needy."³

Again, when welcoming and seeing off guests, he exhibited the highest degree of this grace and courtesy with his heart warming words, as every Muslim was in his eyes deserving of respect and honour by virtue of their being servants of Allah. Whatever a person's rank or position, whether they were poor or wealthy, this made no difference. Being a servant of Allah was in and of itself sufficient cause for their being treated with utmost favour and regard.

A friend, who was one of those in his service, expresses an example of his sensibility of heart with this example:

"Our Ustadh, Musa Efendi, used to love giving gifts. There were days when we used to prepare countless gift boxes. He used to ensure that the boxes were prepared with utmost care. When we became exhausted from packaging these gifts, we used to seek his permission to present the gifts to those employed in his house in plastic bags, without having packaged them, but he insisted upon having their gifts wrapped and boxed too."



When Musa Efendi was to address someone, he would not refer to them merely by their first name, but always added the relevant and appropriate form of address, such as "Bey, Efendi, my son, or my daughter".



Musa Efendi placed great importance on visiting those who were ill and would send a representative in his place to offer his wishes for their speedy recovery, in the event of his inability to visit personally.

Our late Ustadh looked upon everyone with the consciousness and awareness that it was not possible to know whose heart was open to Allah and whose supplication concealed within it Divine approval and pleasure.

Moreover, the discernment he displayed in choosing gifts was also very particular. If the person to receive the gift was a pious and righteous person, he would present them with a prayer mat and prayer beads, if they were people of learning and scholarship, he would give them books and stationery and if they were young individuals, he would send them, for instance, a watch. In so doing, he would always take into consideration their inner world and sought to present everyone with gifts that they would most certainly be pleased with.

When he was to address someone, he would not refer to them merely by their first name, but always added the relevant and appropriate form of address, such as “Bey (Mr.), Efendi (Sir), Hajji (the special title for one who has made the pilgrimage), Hanım (Lady), my son, or my daughter”. In enunciating these words, he never refrained from imbuing his tone of voice with a soothing affection, resembling a pleasant aroma, as it were.

It is possible to see our respected father’s sensitivity in this regard through his following words:

“Unfortunately in our day, propriety and grace has come to possess a nominal existence. People speak to each other and treat one another

in a crude manner. And they call this ‘familiarity or friendship’. What has crudeness have to do with familiarity? On the contrary, familiarity engenders courtesy. With the exception of those who are by nature genial and polite, we can only encounter those maintaining this principle of courtesy and refinement among certain old-world Istanbul gentlemen and women in their sixties or seventies, and whose numbers have considerably waned. Whereas, courteousness and civility are among the central elements of Islam.”

Demonstrating at every moment of his life, through his words and actions, just how the Muslim character ought to be, my respected father exercised exceptional care in his dress, in the consciousness of representing the refinement of Islam. This meticulousness only increased for the spiritual discussions that he attended. His possessing the most presentable attire in every assembly at which he was present was explicit expression of representing the dignity of Islam and the deep respect he felt towards human beings.

Another example illustrating his boundless grace, refinement, appreciation and faithfulness is his sending individual gifts or letters each year to the doctors who treated him. He never omitted this even when in the city of Madina, and would call us directly to request us to fulfil this task in his name.

And so one of his doctors expressed this touching faithfulness and mark of appreciation as follows:

“I have treated a great number of patients over the years. There were some among them who would thank me following their treatment and even offer me gifts, but I saw only one person who continued doing so one year later and in the years that followed.”

Musa Efendi placed great importance on visiting those who were ill and would send a representative in his place to offer his wishes for their speedy recovery, in the event of his inability to visit personally.

Again, visiting Qur’anic schools and personally attending to its students like a compassionate father, constituted a great source of tranquillity and happiness for our esteemed Ustadh. He would remind the teachers that these students were each a Divine trust given to them and would advise them, most graciously, to firstly teach these students the Islamic morality.

Making children happy, conversing with them at their own level and setting aside from his own wealth a separate allowance for those who were orphaned were points to which he showed painstaking attention.

With a heart that journeyed on the peaks of compassion and generosity, he was constantly grieved by the sufferings of the Muslim world. He would share the distress, in heart and conscience, of every kind of calamity to befall the Muslims, in places unable to be reached, and when the opportunity to extend out a hand arose, he would realise this in great sincerity; not contenting himself with supplication only,

he would impel those around him to undertake a campaign of aid and support.

The lamentations coming back then, from Afghanistan, Palestine, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Kosovo made his sensitive heart bleed, first and foremost. His tender heart, the plain of indescribable spiritual breezes, was broken by the state of the Muslim world, yet consoled by the spiritual blessing of resignation to the Divine Decree.

He constantly sought to reflect to his surrounds the beauty and particulars of the spiritual path. His being in a state of entreaty even at the approach of his death and at one of his most distressing times, saying,

“My Lord, grant upon me health and strength so that I can travel from village to village and be of service and guidance to my fellow believers,” was the finest manifestation of this attitude.

May Allah Almighty bestow upon our hearts blessings from the spiritual climate of our esteemed father, our Ustadh, our guide, who spent his entire life in the path of Divine approval and who devoted himself to service of Islam in light of the Qur’ân and Sunna. May Allah give us the ability to continue his precious services in the way of Allah and bring to an end our fleeting separation in the Abode in Paradise through an eternal union in the circle of Allah’s Messenger.


Amin...

Endnotes: 1) Bukhârî, Manaqib 25, Ayman 3; Muslim, Salat, 119; Ibn Hibban, IV. 534. 2) Suyuti, al-jami’ al-saghir, I:12. 3) ‘Ali al-Muttaqi, Kanz al-Ummal, VI:377/16134.



Making children happy, conversing with them at their own level and setting aside from his own wealth a separate allowance for those who were orphaned were points to which he showed painstaking attention.

The Muslim and *Grace*



A smile's being described as 'charity' stems from its carrying beauty and goodness, or *ihsan*, for another.

There are differences between human beings, as there are between Muslims and indeed Sufis.

There is such behaviour that, while it do not purge the human of their humanity, the Muslim of their Muslimness and the Sufi of their Sufism, it causes us to remark that something is not quite right or befitting.

Or certain behaviour is displayed that attracts our admiration and its beauty causes us to declare its magnificence or peerlessness. This behaviour distinguishes that person from others and inspires admiration. Grace is precisely such a thing. Islam takes the person and, through repeated filtration, enables them to attain beauty of conduct.

While the recitation of the Declaration of Faith places someone inside the circle of Islam, Islam is not restricted to this alone. Islam is a spiritual journeying (*sayr suluk*) – a journey towards “Similitude with the best of human beings”.

Recall the way in which the Bedouin Muslims are admonished is the Sura al-Hujuraat, “You have not believed. Rather,



The institution of ‘the rights of others’ is a character discipline which ensures that these core values are reflected, as the finest sensibility, in the life of the human being.

(you should) say, ‘We have submitted (to the rule of Islam),’ for faith has not yet entered into your hearts...” Islam is precisely such a journey...

A Bedouin once came to the Prophet’s Mosque and relieved himself. The Muslims were angered by his action, but the Prophet told them to “Let him be.” This act did not nullify the Bedouin’s Muslimness, but Muslimness could not remain at such a point; through constant character training, that Bedouin had to reach the point of understanding the unacceptability of such behaviour. Moreover, he had perceive beyond this, in order to become a Muslim nearing the Prophetic criteria...

Thus, there is Islam, there is belief, but there is also the reflection of Islam and belief upon one’s character in the form of grace.

Grace is refinement, courtesy, purity, beauty, measure and purification.

It can be said that grace is the quality of the Muslimness described by Allah’s Messenger, “A Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe.” (Bukhari, Iman, 4)

The tongue and hand are a person’s most outward-looking organs. Gestures and mimics are reflected outwardly therefrom. They are the exhibition arena of the quality of our humanity.

The world inside the human being is reflected outside, through their hand and tongue.

The Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, does not regard anything

in those organs that adversely affect another as being part of Muslimness.

The hand and tongue reflect what is inside; the inner world of the human being, however, through a process of purification, can bring the hand and tongue to a ‘quality of Muslimness’.

In Islam, there are such acts of worship as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and charity. However beyond these, in Islam, there are character traits that either enable these to attain perfection or that arise when these reach perfection.

For instance, the institution of ‘the rights of others’ is a character discipline which ensures that these core values are reflected, as the finest sensibility, in the life of the human being. There is virtually no sphere in the life of a Muslim in which the rights of others is not reflected.

For instance, the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, says, “Smiling is charity,” as such describing the Muslim countenance. What does this mean? This means that one must adorn their face with a smile, unless necessity requires otherwise. Is a smile better for the human face, or a sullen facial expression? The former is indeed better. A smile’s being described as ‘charity’ stems from its carrying beauty and goodness, or *ihsan*, for another.

For a person’s face to be adorned with a smile, their heart needs to be at rest. There needs to be surrender. There needs to be resignation. One’s inner world needs to

achieve repose. Confusion and turbidity needs to come to an end. That is why a person must resolve any issues they have concerning Divine Decree.

Islam demands of the human being such sensitivity that they use even their facial gestures in a measured way. Reproaching another with one's facial expression is absolutely rejected.

Islam demands grace in the use of one's voice: "Be modest in your bearing, and subdue your voice. For certain the most repugnant of voices is braying of donkeys." (Luqman 31:19)

The Muslim receives instruction in this manner with the exhortation: "O you who believe! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet..." (Hujuraat 49:2)

To what other areas does the tongue's refinement extend?

The whispering of two people among three has not been viewed favourably.

Islam demands grace in the eye, in one's gaze. It teaches the Muslim not to gaze upon the private areas of another that that person does not want seen.

Sensitivity to privacy, in and of itself, becomes the expression of the Muslim community's attention to grace and refinement. Prying into the private business of others is forbidden. In contrast, veiling the

faults of others is commanded as a form of character.

A grace is even demanded in one's manner of walking: "Do not strut about the earth in haughty self-conceit; for you can never split the earth (no matter how hard you stamp your foot), nor can you stretch to the mountains in height (no matter how strenuously you seek to impress)." (Isra' 17:37)

Islam is a value system that embellishes the human being with refinement in every sense and in every domain.

Pride, one of the most evil habits injurious to human relationships, should not exist in Islam's human being.

Disdain of another should not exist.

A Muslim must do everything they undertake in the best way.

Careful attention even to tidying the soil of a grave is among the Prophetic principles of conduct.

In addition to this is the painstaking attention to the gaze of human beings and their viewing what they see as beautiful.

Smelling pleasant and using perfume to this end can be mentioned, for instance. Avoiding such things as the smell of sweat and garlic, and not going to the mosque in such a state. Carrying the bounties of Allah when entering into His presence.

Islam demands of the human being such sensitivity that they use even their facial gestures in a measured way. Reproaching another with one's facial expression is absolutely rejected.





What is the wisdom behind the constant reiteration of Allah being All-Clement despite His boundless wealth and infinite power? This is because mildness is the prerequisite of grace.

Dressing cleanly.

Paying careful attention to physical hygiene.

Our Lord characterises excessively raising one's voice during supplication as overstepping the bounds:

"Call upon your Lord (O humankind) with humility and in the secrecy of your hearts. Indeed your Lord does not love those who exceed the bounds." (A'raf 7:55)

It is declared, "To Allah belong the All-Beautiful Names, so call and pray to Him by them..." (A'raf 7:180)

In other words, raising one's hands and calling out to Him from the very depths of our heart, saying, "O the All-Compassionate, O the All-Merciful, O the All-Affectionate, O the All-Forgiving, O the All-Clement, O the All-Veiler..." A refinement in supplication...

The Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, cautioned his Companions, who recited 'Allah is Great' in a loud voice during battle when crossing a valley, saying, "O people! Be kind to yourselves! You are not calling someone who is deaf or absent. He is with you, near and hearing."

One of Islam's fundamental institutions is spending in the way of Allah, but not just spending. Spending of the best in the best way. That is to say, realising a grace in spending.

What is grace in spending in Allah's way?

Your right hand's not knowing what your left hand has given, for instance.

Not taunting others or making them

indebted to you, for instance.

Not seeing yourself as superior to the one receiving the charity.

"A kind word and forgiving (people's faults) are better than almsgiving followed by taunting. Allah is All-Wealthy and Self-Sufficient, (absolutely independent of the charity of people), All-Clement (who shows no haste in punishing.)" (Baqara 2:263)

What is the wisdom behind the constant reiteration of Allah being All-Clement despite His boundless wealth and infinite power? This is because *hilm*, which is translated as mildness, is enjoined upon Muslims, and mildness is the prerequisite of grace.

Let us continue our discussion of grace in spending in the way of Allah.

Thanking the receiver of the charity due to their being a means to carrying out such spending, for example.

The pinnacle of the discipline of spending in God's way is spend in the consciousness of personally placing that charity in the Divine hand, in great reverence.

This must be the peak of grace in spending in the way of Allah.

It is possible to speak of grace in the Prescribed Prayer also?

Most certainly:

For instance, is not exact conformity with the *ta'dil arkan* (specific conditions) of prayer, a refinement? This is, so to speak, standing, bowing, prostrating in a true sense of being in



The friends of Allah who purify their selfhood according to the Prophetic criteria and thus become models of grace are there. What needs to be done is to carry these qualities to our own personality and become a 'graceful Muslim'.

the Divine presence, in great self-possession and solemnity. This entails taking great pains with and doing justice to every element and never once deviating from the awareness of being in the presence of Allah.

If we were to consider a graceful prayer, I am certain that we would see its stark difference from a prayer that is performed perfunctorily, without an awareness of even being in the prayer, of which Allah's Messenger would say, "Go back and pray, for you have not prayed," and which will be thrown in a person's face on the Day of Judgement.

The manner of Allah's Messenger is a Divine manner. "My Lord educated me and taught me good manners," he states.

Such an education entails being 'adorned with mercy'. It entails not being "harsh and hard-hearted," but being "lenient with them." (Al-Imran 3:159) Each and every one of these are sparkling reflections of the gracious character of Allah's Messenger and have been included in the Eternal Word as fine examples for every Muslim.

In just the same way, grace in the family, within the framework of the Divine Word, is built with love and mercy. A Muslim's familial grace and refinement comes into prominence with hearts being warmed to one another and the 'tranquillity' it harbours within it. The Muslim family must not be a place wherein there is daily quarrel. (Rum 30:21)

And the 'Muslim society' at the base of which these families lie, becomes the society of grace woven with love and mercy, wherein

everyone observes the rights of others and without the need for a discipline of law enforcement, in the form of a character being reflected from the inside out, as pure and natural as the flow of water.

Are Muslim societies of such character today? This is debatable.

However, it is certain that this is the society that Islam aims to raise.

The esteemed character of Allah's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and the Qur'anic criteria of mercy are to be found therein. The friends of Allah who purify their selfhood according to the Prophetic criteria and thus become models of grace are there. What needs to be done is to carry these qualities to our own personality and become a 'graceful Muslim'.

Does not the verse at the very beginning of the Qur'anic chapter al-Mulk, "He Who has created death and life, so that He may try you (and demonstrate to yourselves) which of you is better in deeds," (Mulk 67:2), in a sense, begin the race of grace for our entire lives?

The Messenger of Allah says, "Allah is Beautiful and loves beauty. He is generous and loves generosity. He is clean and He loves those who are clean." (Tirmidhi, Adab, 41)

The respect shown by respected Muslim scholars who received spiritual training to one another is beautifully illustrated in the following incident involving Mawlana Jami':

Mawlana Jami' (1414-1492) was a prominent Muslim poet and scholar. Scholars, poets and

writers well known in his time had formed a committee which they called "The Assembly of the Silent". This assembly selected its members from among those who were contemplative, who spoke little and wrote little. The committee was restricted to thirty members. Scholars, poets and writers of the time sought membership to this committee and Mawlana Jami' was one of these. He was exemplary in his works, morality, and cultivation; however, the committee's limited membership did not allow for him to take part.

One day, he heard that one of the members of the assembly had died. Upon this, he came to the building where the members convened. A doorman waited in front of the building and without saying anything to him, he wrote his request on a piece of paper and sent it inside. The committee members knew Mawlana Jami' very well, but they had taken someone in place of the deceased member just a few days prior. Nonetheless, it was a rather difficult task to turn away someone like Mawlana Jami'. They deliberated among themselves for quite some time.

Subsequently, they filled a glass to its brim with water and sent it to Mawlana Jami' with the doorman. With this, they aimed to illustrate that membership to the assembly was complete and that there was no room for another. Mawlana Jami' understood well what the committee members meant by this gesture. He immediately removed a single petal from the rose next to him and placed it

slowly upon the water.

Naturally, the petal had not caused the contents of the glass to overflow. With his response, he attempted to explain that he too had a place within the assembly. The members understood at once his meaning upon having received the glass. They were deeply saddened by the fact that they had given a person like this, such a response, albeit exceptionally courteously. They decided upon increasing their membership and including Mawlana Jami' in their assembly.

When Mawlana Jami' came to the assembly, the president recorded his name on the list. Placing a zero after the number thirty indicating the number of members, he gave the paper to Mawlana Jami', thus illustrating that the worth of the assembly had increased tenfold with his membership. In order to illustrate his objection to this praise, he erased the zero added to the thirty and re-wrote it on the opposite end.

In so doing, he wanted to explain that just as he did not add to the membership, he was actually the zero to the left of this assembly. Through the deference and humility he displayed with his final response, Mawlana Jami' demonstrated that he was one of the most worthy members of the assembly.

Consider the way in which this event portrays the extent to which grace and refinement beautify human relations. The issue is that one ought to be as graceful as a rose petal and must not be too much for one's surroundings.





not BREAKING

Hearts

The place where good deeds will be of actual benefit is in the hereafter. People of sincerity do not hold expectations from the world for their good deeds.

Imam Rabbani is a great Sufi known for his sensitivity to the Shari'a and his vehemence towards the enemies of the religion. Despite his appearance as such, he in actual fact attaches great importance upon the human being and to human dignity. He promotes treating people with kindness without differentiating between those who believe or not, and refraining from breaking the hearts of others. As Allah Almighty has created the human heart as the organ which is closest to Him, the sanctuary of the heart must not be injured:

Know well that the heart is the neighbour of Allah, glorified be He; there is nothing nearer to His sacred Essence than the heart. Thus, beware of breaking hearts and causing them anguish, whether believing or disobedient, as the neighbour is protected even if they are rebelling. Be on guard against this! For there is no other sin causing greater offence to Him after unbelief, than breaking hearts and tormenting others. Only the heart, among all creation, can attain nearest proximity to Allah, glory unto Him. (Vol. III, Forty-Fifth Letter)

Sincerity is the integral condition of worship and actions. Whatever external conditions there are in worship, there is an important internal condition which is at least as important as them and that is sincerity.



According to the Sufis, the heart is precious due to its being the site where the Divine mystery is reflected. Breaking hearts heads the list of the major sins for the Sufis, so much so that the heart has been compared with Ka'ba with respect to worth. The Sufis reveal the significance of the matter by means of the following couplets in Persian:

The Ka'ba is a structure of the Friend, the son of Azar,

It is a building of stone constructed by Ibrahim, son of Azar.

The heart is the focus of the Majestic One of Grandeur;

It is the focus of the Divine gaze and is His Handiwork.

According to the Imam, those who break hearts do not realise that they cause offence to the Creator of those hearts, for Allah Almighty has rendered only the heart in the human body, as unique to Him:

Know well that the heart is the greatest and most honourable of creation. Just as the human being is the most superior of creation by virtue of their being the index of the universe and their holding together all things in their being, the heart too is superior due to its holding within it all things in the body and because of its austerity and being a compendium of the entire body. The degree to which a thing becomes such an index and its comprehensiveness therein determines the extent of its closeness to the Divine essence.

The heart is a centre of communication between this world and the next. It looks to the realm of creation with one aspect and the world of command with the other. For this reason, breaking a person's heart, even if they be an unbeliever, is prohibited, for such a thing implies severance of its connection with Allah. Once a person's heart has taken a stance against Islam, it is very difficult for it to be won over once again:

The things a person possesses pertain either to the realm of creation or the realm of command. The heart, however, is a passage, a bridge between these two realms. Throughout the degrees of a person's spiritual ascent, their subtle faculties transcend the aspects of these particular levels to reach their essence. For instance, they rise to water first, then to air, to fire, followed by the essence of their subtleties, from the partial name to the comprehensive one, and then to the station willed by Allah Almighty. The heart, however, is not thus, for the heart has no essence to which it ascends. On the contrary, beginning its ascension from within itself, it continues until it reaches Allah, glorified and exalted be He.

Imam Rabbani explains at this point what he means by use of the word 'heart', so as not to be misunderstood. In his view, 'heart' does not imply the piece of flesh that exists within every living being. While the human heart has a relation with its physical aspect, it is a subtle, divine and spiritual faculty and cannot be described. Even many Muslims today understand 'heart' to mean either the

cone-shaped piece of flesh in the body or a bodily organ, like the brain. The mystery of the heart is known by our Lord but unknown to us; in addition to having a connection with the physical heart, it is a being which transcends it.

Is it not evident that the heart's comprehensiveness and expansiveness are realised only after the aforementioned degrees are travelled. Implied in the heart here is the encompassing heart, and not the piece of flesh.

The sole exception in the matter of breaking hearts relates to Divine commandments and prohibitions; a person can adopt a firm stance only in the event that these are violated. What is essential here is to refrain from making this a matter of ego and penalising the perpetrator only in line with Divine command. Overstepping this boundary is oppression against the perpetrator:

All people are servants of Allah Almighty. Beating someone else's servant leads or even insulting them causes offence to their master. In that case, in consideration of the glory of the Absolute Sovereign – Allah Almighty – disposal over His creation is only possible to the degree to which He Himself commands. Such disposal constitutes not oppression, but holding firm to His command. For instance, the punishment to be dealt to a person who commits fornication is a hundred lashes. If a person comes forward and increases this amount, then this amounts to torture.

For this reason, the Sufis have approached the wrongdoers with mercy and have striven to win over their hearts. In addition, forcing Muslims to accept what has been prohibited by means of such concepts as tolerance and acceptance, and legitimising usury and fornication, cannot be deemed acceptable. Imam Rabbani is very particular in this regard. Above all, promising salvation to non-Muslims is by no means acceptable:

Divine benevolence and mercy in the Hereafter is for the good, the Muslims and the chosen servants of Allah. Indeed, all Muslims who draw their last breath in a pleasant manner have a share in mercy. Their deliverance from the Fire is possible, even if after an extended period therein; however, how is the impenetrable darkness of rebellion to dwell in the same place as the light of belief! How can indifference to the Divine commandments enable a person to proceed from this world to the Hereafter in safety and security! The scholars have said: "Insistence upon minor sins leads to major sins and insistence upon major sins leads to unbelief." We seek refuge in Allah Almighty from facing such a predicament.

Hence, overlooking the sins of others in order to please them and making light of the rebellion of unbelievers is not the practice of the Sufis. May Allah, glorified and exalted be He, enable all of us to be balanced in this regard and to share the beauties of Islam and belief with our brothers and sisters who are deprived of these. *Amin.*

Worship performed with empty feeling and thoughts which are far from being sincere and wholehearted reduces it to the level of habit while that performed with hypocrisy reduces it to the level of sin.





"Make the positive change in your life which could save you and others and get you a better station in Paradise!"

The greatest success of the MYMN is that it helps the entire Muslim family to come together to work for the sake of Allah, in a way that they feel able to contribute, without putting too much stress on any one person.

Wisdom: Can you please tell about yourself?

My name is Faisal Shaikh and I am a medical doctor training to be a General Practitioner here in the small town of Northampton, United Kingdom. Apart from my medical training, I have trained in the field of da'waa to non-muslims by way of attending various courses, field-experience, and by sitting-in with experienced scholars. I have been engaged in da'waa to non-muslims for about three years now Alhamdulillah and gained broad exposure to various ideas and methods for doing da'waa. My wife and I got introduced to Meet Your Muslim Neighbours (MYMN) by Allah's Grace and worked as volunteers with a team in the North of England, and played a useful part in the development of some teams. When we moved to Northampton for Job reasons, we decided to launch the concept in this town.

Wisdom: What is MYMN and what is the aim of it?

Meet Your Muslim Neighbours (www.mymn.org.uk) is a grass root movement which allows everyday, average Muslims to fulfil their obligations of da'waa towards themselves, their

families, other Muslims, and non-muslims in their respective communities, without being an excessive burden on any one person at any one time. I also helps foster brotherhood, teamwork and a sense of organisation amongst Muslims. It provides for an opportunity for families to partake in the da'waa effort and provides an excellent and safe environment for children to appreciate Islam, develop their skills and to have some fun whilst at it!

Meet Your Muslim Neighbours works on the premise that everybody is different and contributes in different ways, yet should be able to get all the rewards of the team. We set-up an exhibition style da'waa event with free food and gifts along with da'waa material and talk to our guests for hours! Calling people into a professional looking exhibition, being kind to them and lending them a good ear to understand them, before explaining the message of Islam in a relaxed, informal way has a profound impact on people: based on our feedback, we are yet to have a guest who left the event with bad impression of Islam and indeed several do accept Islam at our events, Alhamdulillah!

All teams work independent from each other in terms of finances and logistics, but volunteers and teams regularly exchange and barter resources, manpower and expertise to maintain effort quality. This has resulted in a national network of seasoned da'ees Alhamdulillah who support each other physically and emotionally. Our current team leader, Masood Khan is based in London and is kept busy in looking

after new teams and providing support and organising national conventions and family fun days, which are quite refreshing and fun.

Wisdom: What success has MYMN got so far?

Alhamdulillah, Allah has granted so many blessings in this effort and since its inception Meet Your Muslim Neighbours has been taken up by several groups in different towns and cities. We now have events being held regularly in more than fifteen locations across the United Kingdom, with newer centres being established rapidly.

As far as the Northampton chapter is concerned, we are a fairly fledgling team but over the last three events have shown definite signs of maturing into a fully self-sufficient one which has so far hosted roughly 150 non-muslim guests. To our knowledge, nine people have accepted Islam, directly or indirectly through our effort, Alhamdulillah. We are committed to helping our new revert brothers and sisters and look out for them and try our best to ease them in their new lives post-shahadah. We have consequently amassed substantial experience of issues around reverts and their circumstances.

The greatest success of the MYMN, I believe however is that it helps the entire Muslim family to come together to work for the sake of Allah, in a way that they feel able to contribute, without putting too much stress on any one person. In a world full of challenges to the imaan (faith) where the

Meet Your Muslim Neighbours works on the premise that everybody is different and contributes in different ways, yet should be able to get all the rewards of the team.





Intentions can be corrected before or during the act and can be repented for later, but if you never did anything then you will have nothing to repent for!

family structure is threatened from every angle possible, it is refreshing to see family members, people of different sects or schools of thought, professionals and non-professionals putting aside differences, working for Allah's sake alone to call all and sundry towards the Qur'an and Sunnah. It has a strongly positive impact as people experience their religion in action, they get to have a feel of what an ideal Muslim community could be like, and this is evident by the interactions of volunteers and guests, their greeting each other with love and mercy before they go home, having learnt and experienced from each other. Who knows what reward is hidden for us for this?

Wisdom: What are the obstacles to make dawah in the UK and how do you challenge them as MYMN team?

Alhamdulillah, the nature and design of the effort is such that it minimises friction at every level and in our experience, both in Northampton and around the country we have always had peaceful events with hardly any issues or problems of any nature. In fact the greatest challenge I find is from amongst the Muslims themselves!! These can be classified as follows:

The Number one obstacle to da'waa is giving in to the shaitaan: the one who whispers doubts or distraction in the hearts of sincere Muslims. It is clear that da'waa brings people to Allah and the first person your are calling to Allah is yourself! Shaitaan doesn't want this, so he plays on your personal weaknesses or fears to make

you think that da'waa not for you, or that your aren't good enough. I could go on and on about the methodology and perfection of the da'waa of the Prophet (pbuh), but amongst one of the qualities of his da'waa was that it was extremely relevant: He adapted his style to suit the needs of the other person.

The number two obstacle to da'waa is giving in to the shaitaan (again!); but this time he attacks you in a different way. When he knows he cant stop you from doing the good deed of da'waa, then he stops you from doing it properly. The common way this is manifested if when people work outside of their knowledge range: saying things they are not sure about or taking a stand when they do not know enough. Not taking the responsibility of da'waa seriously enough is another allied manifestation to this. Few things are more saddening than meeting a brother/sister all enthusiastic about da'waa but not taken the time to find out how our beloved Prophet (pbuh) or his companions would approach the situation! It gets worse when they refuse to accept well-meaning advice given to them politely in the best of manners and you know you cannot make use of their skills and talents because you cannot then ensure quality of the da'waa. May Allah protect us all from this grave sin.

In MYMN, we have a 'buddy network' where we each make social contacts which help and support us to deal with our personal and team challenges. Many teams have weekly classes where team members get together and



Effort without knowledge leads us astray as Allah says in Surah Fatiha. It is essential that we learn something every time we give da'waa ourselves, no matter how small.

discuss issues pertinent to themselves. Most importantly, MYMN allows us a framework for personal development as Muslims, Alhamdulillah.

Wisdom: Where do you want to see MYMN after 10 years?

On a local level and within the first five years, I see the work of da'waa flourishing by Allah's permission and a self-directed and self-motivated team of families developing which not only holds regular events across Northamptonshire County but also assists neighbouring areas such as Oxford and Leicester run events. I see this team being self-motivated and self-aware, so that it regularly holds study circles to improve knowledge and skills in da'waa, and also sharpens its skills in other areas such as presentation skills, logistical solutions, financial management etc. I also see a robust system in place for the support of new reverts who at present are nothing but a vulnerable underclass, abandoned and misunderstood. I see financial stability for da'waa that does not rely entirely on sadaqah or charity donations, but that is independent, by means of an enterprise or activity which sustains it financially, such as a charity shop or archery/sewing classes, hijama etc. Within the last five to ten years I see the establishment of a centre for da'waa in Northampton which will InshaAllah train Muslims from all backgrounds a way to come over their differences and teach

them the correct knowledge that needs to be spread amongst the non-muslims. An online presence by way of a website dedicated to modern interactive and multimedia tools to assist da'ees in spreading the correct knowledge is also sought after.

On a national level, Meet Your Muslim Neighbours, by Allah permission may continue to grow and be adapted by other teams and other efforts. Already other da'waa organisations have started to adapt their approaches according to ours and for us, MYMN is an idea more than an organisation: organic and adaptable by anywhere in the world, but steadfast to the principles of our beloved Qur'an and Sunnah. MYMN is likely to spread to Europe and potentially to other countries such as Australia and the USA.

Wisdom: Do you have any advice for the Muslims who want to make dawa in the West?

For those who have decided to do something for Allah's sake: Congratulations! You have finally decided to make the positive change in your life which could save you and others from the fire or get you a better station in Paradise InshaAllah. May Allah reward you all in your effort. To begin, I encourage you to read the verse and translation and tafsir of the powerful verse of Surah Nahl Chapter 16 Verse 125 which along with surah Asr Chapter 103 which together form the gist and overarching

principles of da'waa as laid out by Allah Himself.

Intention: This is where most people struggle, beginner or expert, no wonder many Sahaba and pious predecessors found this the single most difficult thing to preserve from their religion. On one side impure intention can instantly make a good deed turn into a bad deed. But on the other hand this shouldn't put one off doing da'waa as it did me. Intentions can be corrected before or during the act and can be repented for later, but if you never did anything then you will have nothing to repent for! And Allah loves to forgive the slave who repents, so give Allah an excuse to forgive you!

Technique: This is probably the most useful piece of research for da'ees- according to research in communication, 55% of our communication is non-verbal. 38% of the message is conveyed by simply the tone or our voice and only 7% is delivered by the actual choice of words! So, if we want to call to Allah then we must live according to Allah's wishes both in terms of knowledge and perhaps more importantly in terms of our attitudes and personalities. Many a times it is what we DO or how we react that will be remembered by people more than what we say to them. Much of the feedback we receive on our events is about how helpful the volunteers were and not how wise or knowledgeable, SubhanAllah!

Attitude: Da'waa is very close to jihad, and that is because it calls to question our courage, our courage to bow down to Allah in the face of our own arrogance. This arrogance in religion is rather subtle and very difficult to get at, and needs to be hunted and exterminated, like the last rat or vermin left in the house after months of pest control measures. In any da'waa conversation, if I find that I am talking for more than 30% of a conversation, I consciously stop and change the topic or ask the other person's opinion, I find this helps the guest feel in control and feel heard and ultimately they take more from the conversation than they would if they were only hearing me out of politeness.

Knowledge: Effort without knowledge leads us astray as Allah says in Surah Fatiha, the first chapter of the holy Qur'an. And it is essential that we learn something every time we give da'waa ourselves, no matter how small. After all, the real purpose of calling others to Allah is that we want to be in Allah's good books ourselves, right? This is why I encourage all team members to have a personal reflective log and try and incorporate at least one new piece of knowledge and associated action in every event.

May Allah guide all our Ummah to be the first at the gates of Paradise, Amen!

If I find that I am talking for more than 30% of a conversation, I consciously ask the other person's opinion, I find this helps the guest feel heard and ultimately they take more from the conversation than they would if they were only hearing me out of politeness.



Pearls Of Wisdom

The ones who are closest to Allah are those who love Him most.

Sayyidina Abu Bakr

No one attains the reality of zuhd until there are three characteristics in him: work without attachment, speech without personal motives, and honor without seeking position.

Yahya bin Muadh

Guard your tongue from praise as you have guarded it from blame.


Maruf al-Karkhi

Worry about Allah and what He wants you to do and He will take care of your worries.

Shaykh Nuh Keller

Absorption in worldly affairs breeds darkness in the heart, and absorption in the affairs of the next world enkindles light in the heart.

Uthman ibn Affan



*Seek the fellowship of those
who enjoy fellowship with the
Lord.*

Abdul Qadir Jilani

*The essence of knowledge is
to know what obedience and
worship are.*

Imam Ghazali

*Meet people in such manner
that if you die, they should
weep for you; if you live, they
should long for you.*

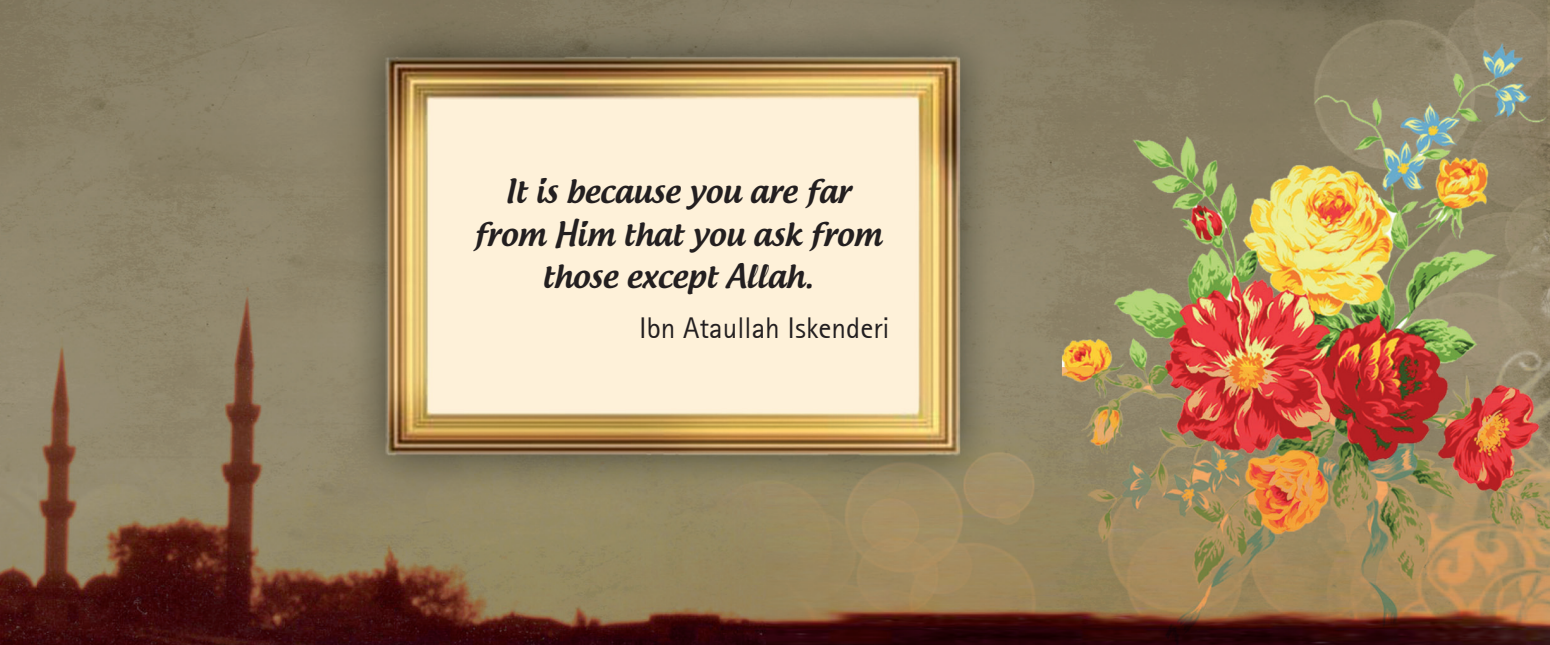
Imam Ali

*Intention is the measure
for rendering actions true,
so that, where intention is
sound, action is sound.*

Imam Nawawi

*It is because you are far
from Him that you ask from
those except Allah.*

Ibn Ataullah Iskenderi



"When islam 'found' me I was not able to turn my back on it even after trying!"

 Naa'ziyah Vakas was born in London, she graduated from University of Westminster with a BA in Modern Languages: English with Arabic. She works for an insurance company and she is married and has a son who is 3.

Wisdom: Can you please tell us about yourself?

I was born in a middle class Hindu family. I grew up in north west London being the middle of 3 children. My sisters and I had a comfortable upbringing; annual holidays, mobile phones and all the other luxuries seen in most middle class homes.

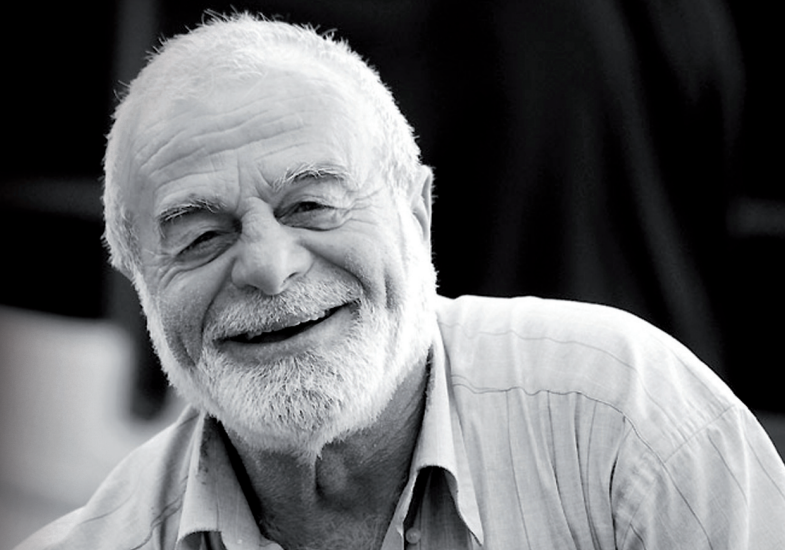
My parents were always very liberal with us. Their only request was we remain honest with them, telling them where we were going, with whom and when we would be back.

This independence allowed me to lead my life within my own preferences.

Wisdom: What made you search of another religion?

At the age of 16 whilst at college, I converted to Islam without informing my parents. Although not openly racist, my parents, the same as all Hindu parents, were wary about my choice of muslim friends and concerned I may get 'brainwashed' into Islam. At that time I knew this was not something my parents would be supportive of and I

No matter if you're 16 or 60.
This is the biggest decision of
your life. Every breath you
take after this moment will be
with one aim: His pleasure.



greatly feared hurting them and so decided to not discuss my feelings with them.

After college, my family desperately wanted me to go on and attain a Bachelors degree. I acquiesced to their insistence, but secretly took up a course in Modern Languages: English with Arabic, not informing my family of the Arabic aspect to my course. As willed by Allah, my course took me to Egypt for a year.

Upon my return from Egypt, having always been very independent, I sought employment and was successful in my efforts.

I met my husband at work and by the will of Allah within 10 months of meeting we were married. I still hadn't informed my parents of my conversion and although I had introduced them to my husband prior to my marriage, my parents were completely against us as not only was he muslim but also Pakistani. So our marriage also remained as a secret and my family were non the wiser.

It's now been 5 years since my marriage and my husband and I have a son who is 3.

Wisdom: How did you decide to convert to Islam?

I wouldn't say I had ever actually searched for another religion. Not only had I not searched but the thought of converting was alien to me. I was very happy as a Hindu. I found it an extremely fun, colourful and laid back religion, my motto being 'live and let live'.

However when Islam 'found' me, I wasn't able to turn my back on it even after trying.

My first real introduction to Islam or Muslims was during my high school history class learning about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I found my teacher, who was not muslim, to be extremely sympathetic towards the plight of the Palestinians and in doing so he raised a love within my heart for these people who'd suffered so much persecution simply for being muslim.

However I feel my unconscious mind was searching for something more. I would always feel a peace within myself whenever I would hear the Adhan on TV, films etc. Although not knowing what it was or understanding the words, I felt a natural inclination towards it. Maybe it was this longing that wouldn't allow me to turn away from Islam. However I did try. When the concept of Islam being the truth had begun seeping into my mind I became very defiant and tried to resist accepting Islam. I turned more to Hinduism, tried to practice it, increase my understanding of it and even forced myself to eat pork just to prove to myself that Islam wasn't for me.

Wisdom: What are the challenges in your new life as a Muslim?

I saw in a dream a boy prepare for his death. I saw in a dream a boy riding a bike on a busy roundabout. He fell off and his bike landed on top of him. Unable to avoid his death, he



Keep searching until
you feel a contentment
within as when you do
reach the truth, all those
uncertainties will vanish
and your purpose in life
will suddenly become clear.

raised his hands in dua and spoke in Arabic. Whilst watching him from the sidewalk I was able to understand every single word and woke up as a car was about to hit him.

I was completely shaken by this dream as not only had I almost seen him die but at that time I had understood what he had said, having had no previous exposure to Arabic.

Immediately after this dream I did what most people do; tried to put it out of mind and ignore that I had ever had that dream. All until a few months later when I told my friends. Although not practicing, they were both Muslim and immediately recommended I research this further.

Although I had no intention of doing so, I agreed and requested they not share my dream with the remainder of our friends.

Alhamdulillah they refused to listen to me and did share my dream with others who took it more seriously. I was eventually introduced to a girl, Aisha who although born into a Muslim family, had only recently initiated her life within the realms of Islam.

Aisha was a beacon of light, clearing up the confusion, worry, uncertainty and anxiety I felt. She was able to offer me the essential support and guidance I needed to understand what was happening, ultimately aiding me to take that most important and life changing decision.

Aisha took me to Regents Park Mosque on the day of my conversion. 7 February 2001. Every aspect of that journey is still fresh in mind. The rain on our way there.

The sunshine on our way back. The perfect atmosphere in the room. The soft, kind words of the imam. The wonderment on the faces of the witnesses. The sun directly on my face as I repeated those awesome words: There is no God but Allah. Those words were out my mouth and all my anxiety and apprehension just disappeared. I knew right then with the Grace and Mercy of Allah, I had made the right decision.

The biggest challenge I found and still find in my life as a muslim is I now represent Islam. I am identifiable as a Muslim and every one of my actions will be seen as a representation of not myself but my religion. This is easily forgettable when you become so used to your hijab that you forget you're wearing one until you see your reflection in a shop window. I am a walking advert for Islam and my good actions will be a reflection of the good we're taught within Islam; smiling, being gentle, kind, polite.

Wisdom: How did your family cope with your conversion to Islam?

It took me many years to actually reveal my truth to my family. Although not fearing for myself, I feared the emotional distress I would cause them. It was also not practical for me to tell them in the first years after my conversion. I would have been unable to practice under their roof and I wasn't able to support myself at that stage.

So I would continue my life as a muslimah in secret. I would tell my parents I was going clubbing and attend tarawih. I would say I was hanging out with my friends and attend

talks and lectures. I would say I am attending exam revision classes and attend Qur'an class.

A muslim does not lie and I would attempt to be colourful with the truth rather than lie. If I said I was going shopping, I would attempt to visit a shop during my outing.

I attempted to change my degree course so I could avoid going to Egypt but qadr Allah due to an administration error at my university I had to go or lose out a year of my studies anyway. I told my parents I'm going for a TEFL course - teaching English as a foreign language.

Whilst in Egypt I was able to live openly as a muslimah - wearing a hijab daily, attending classes and mosques without fear. I even managed to visit Al Quds during the blessed month of Ramadan and pray tarawih in the sacred Dome of the Rock.

Whilst in the UK, I would have to continue as a undercover muslim. I would put my hijab on in toilets or in my car on my way to work and uni and remove it on my way home.

One friend, before knowing my story, once asked me why my hijabs and jilbabs were never ironed. It's because they would sit stuffed in a bag in the boot of my car.

Something that I still reflect on today whilst washing my jilbabs is in those days I wasn't able to wash my jilbabs. It seems so simple but I couldn't wash them at home and at times would have to go a few days with a dirty jilbab until I managed to wash it.

After my Nikah, with the guidance of one of my friend's parents i decided to plan my reveal to my parents.

I started by applying to work in a location far from my parents home thus enabling me to move out. By the grace of Allah I was successful in finding a position with a 2 hour daily train journey there then 2 hours back.

I was physically shattered at the end of each working day and when 3 months later I suggested to my parents I would like to move out they reluctantly agreed.

My husband and I moved in together.

Alhamdulillah he already lived close to my new workplace and we got a place locally.

Now the scene was set, it was a perfect time to inform my parents.

I went to stay with them one weekend, desperately considering my approach. In the end I could not face telling them face to face so instead I wrote it all down. My conversion, my marriage. I placed the letter on their bed and left.

That phone call from them after the letter was the most emotionally distressing call of my life. However all thanks to Allah I had my husband's support throughout this phase.

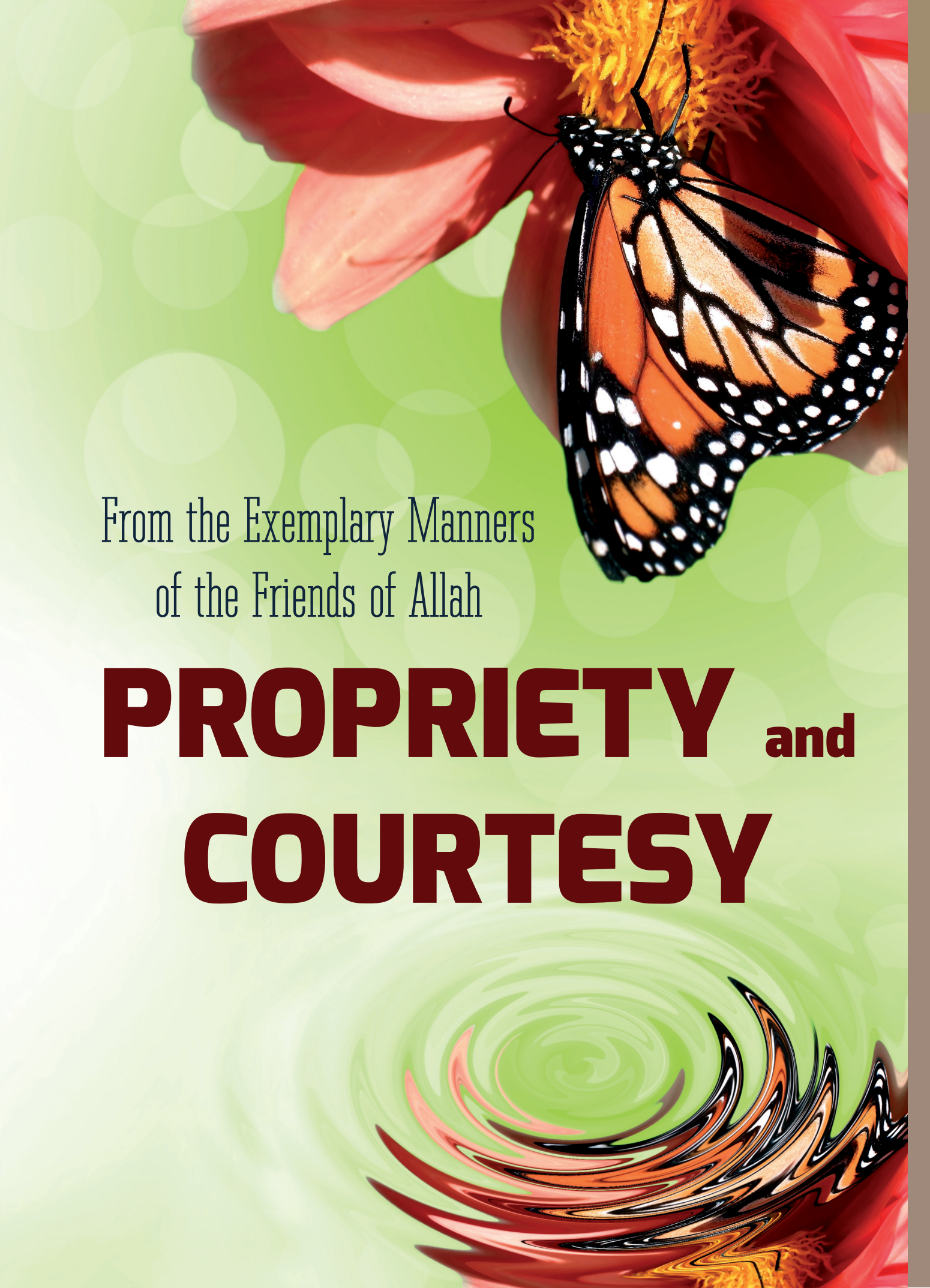
It was his patience and kindness that helped my parents adjust not only to my 'betrayal' but also to accepting him as a member of their family.

Wisdom: What do you advise people searching for the Truth?

Humans are naturally inclined to the truth and instinctively understand between right and wrong. For those searching for the truth, I advise they question. Question yourself and question others. Keep searching until you feel a contentment within as when you do reach the truth, all those uncertainties will vanish and your purpose in life will suddenly become clear.

Most people, upon hearing of my journey, marvel at the age at which I took this huge step. The real marvel of my journey was the constant guidance and support I received both before and after. No matter if you're 16 or 60. This is the biggest decision of your life. Every breath you take after this moment will be with one aim: His pleasure.

Islam is so beautiful that it incorporates life beyond our comprehension. Islam incorporates life before us, life as we know it and life after death. Even those who have studied Islam for many years are still learning. So do not feel daunted at the vastness of Islam. It is as vast as life. Trust yourself and ask God for guidance. Turn to God at every stage and ask Him to open your heart to the truth. La illaha IllAllah.



From the Exemplary Manners
of the Friends of Allah

PROPRIETY and **COURTESY**

Propriety (*adab*) is a quality which differentiates the human being from other creatures. A person gains importance and worth in the eyes of Allah through their propriety, courtesy, grace and piety. It is for this reason that the virtues of *adab*, or good manners and **refinement** hold a special place in the beautiful qualities of the friends of Allah. And so, many great Sufis have seen Sufism as being comprised of “**good character and propriety**”.

In the first years of his spiritual affiliation, Shah Naqshband, may Allah sanctify his secret – who was raised under the auspices of Amir Kulal with a perfected propriety and courtesy – had been charged with service to ill and suffering human beings, helping injured animals and cleaning the roads used by the people, in order to break the pride and arrogance of his carnal self and duly experience a sense of ‘**nothingness**’ before his Lord. He himself explains his state then as follows:

“I kept on that way until I reached such a state that, upon seeing an animal in the street, I would stop and make way for it. I would not take a step before it. My service continued for seven years. As a result, such a great state came upon me that I began to sense their supplications to Allah.”

For hearts illuminated with wisdom, everything in the universe is comprised of manifestations of Divine power and majesty. In order to attain such a state, the spirit needs to achieve tenderness and refined awareness through spiritual training, become able to observe spiritual scenes, take lesson from them and deepen in wisdom, for the mysteries that cannot be grasped by the intellect, are solved with wisdom. Spiritual mysteries cannot become manifest without deepening in wisdom.

Propriety, or *adab*, is the most precious provision for the traveller on the way to Allah. A person cannot be pious and coarse, ill-natured and disobliging, for if the essence of Islam is belief in Divine unity and oneness with

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Propriety, or *adab*, is the most precious provision for the traveller on the way to Allah. A person cannot be pious and coarse for if the essence of Islam is belief in Divine unity and oneness with respect to faith, it is *adab*, *istiqama* and compassion with respect to deed.

respect to faith, it is ***adab***, straightforwardness (*istiqama*) and compassion with respect to deed. In this respect, it can be said that the religion of Islam with all its essentials, is altogether comprised of grace, refinement and purity, or “**good character**”. How beautifully the friend of Allah, Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi expresses this:

“Open your eyes and look at Allah’s word from beginning to end. The whole Qur’an, verse by verse, is instruction in good character.”

Friends of Allah have attained their particular spiritual degrees with nothing save their sublime propriety. Imam Rabbani states:

“No one that fails to observe good manners can advance in the path of ultimate union with Allah, or become a friend of Allah. The road of the religious notables is good character throughout.”

The most important propriety is that shown towards Allah Almighty, our Creator.

It must not be forgotten that Satan – may he be cursed – was banished from the Divine presence not due to deficiency in knowledge or deed but because of his impertinence. On this account, the finest virtue destroying Satan is propriety. Rumi expresses this as follows:

“When Satan refused to prostrate before Prophet Adam and disobeyed Allah, he said,

“I am of fire, while he is of clay. Does it befit one who is superior to prostrate himself before one inferior?”

Satan became cursed because of his shamelessness

before Allah and was driven away from the Divine presence. On top of that, he acted insolently and presumed to quarrel with the One Who created him. (Fibi Ma Fih, 159)

Abu ‘Ali ad-Daqqaq, may Allah have mercy on him, says:

“Abandoning propriety necessitates rejection from the Divine presence. Whoever behaves impertinently before the Sultan, he is sent to the door; if they display insolence at the door, they are sent to the barn.”

Saying, “*Learn propriety from the improper*,” our forefathers advised taking lesson from the condition and lot of those who lack propriety. We too must take necessary lesson from Satan’s predicament.

A servant who observes due propriety and good manners towards Allah Almighty shuns flippancy and thus becomes aware of the faults, shortcomings and heedlessness in their worship and dealings. They are not afflicted with the illness of relying upon their deeds.

Let us not forget that however great our righteous deeds may be, they resemble a bucket of water thrown into the sea. We must regard all our worship and service as little before the Almighty’s favours. We must weigh our responsibility of servanthood not against the base level in society, but against the Companions and the friends of Allah, as Allah Almighty holds the Helpers (*Ansar*) and the Emigrants (*Muhajirun*) up as models for us.

Those who duly experience the *adab* of

servanthood attain the consciousness of **all beauty and goodness being from Allah and all evil being from their own self.**

A person who abandons their worship or goes astray saying, "What can I do, this is my fate!" expresses a carnal and satanic heedlessness. Allah Almighty favours a person with the desire to perform the prescribed prayer the causes enabling them to do so, while those who do not desire to pray are hindered from performing the prayer.

Excusing ourselves from our own sins and wrongdoing amounts to calumny against Divine Decree, and this constitutes impertinence and indiscretion before Allah. It was not other than Satan's shamelessness in this regard that led him astray. As a result, that which distresses Satan most is the obedience, resignation and submission, or in short, the '*adab* of servanthood', that the believer demonstrates at the point where he himself fell into error.

One of the most important aims of Sufism is to enable the human being to possess propriety before Allah, both inwardly and outwardly, through raising them to the awareness of constantly being in the Divine presence. The Sufis have said:

"Embrace good manners both outwardly and inwardly, as if a person fails in respect to outward propriety, they are punished outwardly, while their being wanting in their inner propriety leads to an inward punishment. Whoever abandons good manners is distant from Allah though they may

see themselves as near to Him, and while they see themselves as accepted, they are rejected." (*Ruh al-Bayan*, X:401)

Consequently, showing immediate submission before the Divine will instead of entering into discontent and anger, and preferring to consider that manifestation to be that which is best for us, is among the most important elements of attaining inward propriety.

* * *

A hadith scholar was once delighted upon seeing the young Bayazid al-Bistami. In order to gauge his intellect and understanding, he asked,

"Beautiful child, do you know how to perform the prayer well?"

When Bayazid al-Bistami replied, "Indeed, with the permission of Allah," the scholar asked, "How?" Bayazid al-Bistami said,

"I say 'Allah is Great' with the consciousness expressed in, 'O my Lord, I stand in Your presence to carry out Your command'; I recite the Qur'ân clearly and distinctly, bow in veneration, prostrate in humility and complete my prayer with greetings of peace." In admiration, the scholar asked,

"Intelligent child, why do you allow people to pat you on the head when you possess such profound understanding?" He assumed that this praise and compliment could lead to self-conceit and that he ought not give rise to this.



Let us not forget that however great our righteous deeds may be, they resemble a bucket of water thrown into the sea. We must regard all our worship and service as little before the Almighty's favours.

The young Bayazid al-Bistami's response was subtle and penetrating:

"They pat not me, but that beauty with which Allah Almighty has adorned me. How can I prevent their touching something that does not belong to me?"

Another one of the manners of servanthood that the heart needs to attain is acknowledging all beauty and goodness as coming from Allah and not ascribing these to the carnal self.

The greatest propriety is exaltation of Allah Almighty and the finest manifestation of this reveals itself in worship. The friends of Allah have said,

"Worship takes a person to Paradise, while propriety and veneration in worship lead to Allah and make one His friend."

Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be well pleased with him, states:

"Adab in worship is an indication of its acceptance."

Al-Khidr, peace be upon him, advised making the following supplication:

"O Allah, favour me with the good manners with which to be a true servant to You."

As the friends of Allah live with a consciousness of constantly being in the Divine presence, in addition to all these inward states of propriety, they have shown utmost attention to outward propriety. And this can be expressed as maintaining the state of devoted reverence and propriety shown during worship, outside

worship also. Moreover, Allah Almighty declares:

"And those who safeguard their Prayers (including all the rites of which they are constituted)." (Ma'arij 70:34)

"Those who are constant in their Prayer."
(Ma'arij 70:23)

Offering a spiritual meaning to these verses, Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi says:

"The servant protects their state during the Prayer after the Prayer also. In this way, they spend their entire life in propriety and humble submission, and protecting their tongue and heart. This is the state of the true lovers and the friends of Allah..."

The objective of spiritual training is to inculcate in the human being the consciousness of forever being beneath the Divine 'camera' or gaze, and to thus make such lofty traits as grace, refinement, propriety and modesty, a person's true nature.

Dawud al-Tai explains:

"I spent twenty years in the company of Imam Abu Hanifa. Within this time, I never once saw him sit bareheaded or extend his feet for the purpose of rest when alone, or when in the presence of others. I once asked him,

"What harm can there be in extending your feet when you are alone?" He replied,

"Propriety before Allah Almighty is of greater virtue."

Similarly, Mahmud Sami Ramazanoğlu was never once seen sitting with his legs stretched

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out or eating seated leaning against something. A model of exalted manners and courtesy, Sami Efendi, may Allah have mercy on him, used to frequently repeat the following couplet in his spiritual discussions:

Adab is a crown from the Divine Light;

Wear that crown and be secured from all affliction...

Again, one of our friends, Mustafa Okutan, who attended to the ritual washing and shrouding of another friend of Allah, Hüseyin Efendi of Samsun, whose life was crowned with good manners, courtesy and refinement, relates:

"When we were washing Hüseyin Efendi, he pulled his knees up to his chest. When we placed him in the grave, he immediately turned to his right."

This is undoubtedly, an extraordinary manifestation reminiscent of the truth in, *"A person dies in the state in which they lived and is resurrected in the state in which they died."* (Munawi, *Fayd al-Qadir*, V:663). Allah Almighty sometimes reveals certain mysteries with a view to human beings taking lesson from these.

Those in the presence of a king or higher authority are not at liberty to behave as they do at other times and places. The friends of Allah are those who are aware that they are constantly in the presence of Allah, without need for any proof or demonstration, and whose hearts are endowed with intimate knowledge of Allah. In other words, they live in the consciousness of spending every living moment in togetherness

with the Almighty, as knowers of the mystery of **"...And He is with you, wherever you may be..."** (Hadid 57:4) For this reason, a state of propriety encompasses their every action and behaviour.

On account of this, the friends of Allah assume an exceptional *adab* even in solitude, in places far from the gaze of others. For instance, covering the head as an expression of reverence towards Allah is an act of propriety that the friends of Allah, who lived in a climate of constant worship, also observed outside their prayer.

When one of the Companions asked the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, what one should do in terms of clothing when one is alone, the Prophet said,

"Allah is more entitled than people that bashfulness should be shown to him." (Abu Dawud, *Hamam*, 2:4017)

With their inner worlds kneaded with Islamic teaching, our forefathers, too, exhibited a magnificent level of morality in propriety, virtue and purity, which attracted the admiration of the entire world. Describing the Muslims in his work, German Protestant priest Salomon Schweigger says:

"In the bath they cover themselves in a very modest way... We Christians should take these barbarians as an example from the point of view of good behaviour and morality."¹

Covering oneself is a quality particular to human beings and is not in question for other creatures. Moreover, covering oneself is an

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innate *adab* of servanthood. And so, Prophet Adam and his wife Eve were bashful in Paradise, despite the absence of other human beings, and hastened to cover themselves with leaves. That is to say, covering oneself and its spiritual motivation that is propriety and modesty, are among the most firmly established qualities that are present in human nature.

The *adab* that is required before Allah encompasses all creatures, in accordance with their degrees of nearness to Him. The second most important *adab* after that felt towards Allah's essence is that towards His Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.

ADAB TOWARDS ALLAH'S MESSENGER

The Companions displayed the most perfect examples of required respect and sense of propriety towards the Messenger of Allah. As a case in point, the devoted reverence and state of *adab* they assumed in the presence of Allah's Messenger was described as follows:

“They used to sit so cautiously as if birds are sitting on their heads and if they quivered the birds would fly away.”

Their manners were such in the presence of Allah's Messenger that they more often than not considered even directing questions to him as impudence. Hence, they would wait for a Bedouin to come and ask questions to the Prophet so that they too could receive the spiritual blessings of the Messenger's discussions.

Even among those who were constantly in the company of Allah's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, those who could gaze upon his illuminated countenance to their heart's content, were very few, due to their *adab*. Moreover, it is also reported that all the Companions, with the exception of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, habitually lowered their gaze before Allah's Messenger and that only these two Companions were able to make eye contact with Him. (Tirmidhi, Manaqib, 16:3668)

This situation was later expressed by 'Amr ibn al-'As, may Allah be well pleased with him, towards the end of his life as follows:

“And then no one was more dear to me than the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and none was more sublime in my eyes, than him. Never could I pluck courage to catch a full glimpse of his face due to its splendour. So if I am asked to describe his features, I cannot do that for I have not eyed him fully.” (Muslim, Iman, 192)

In daring to describe the Pride of Humanity within the limited means of words, we too, seek refuge in our Lord's ocean of mercy from our deficiency and inadvertent failings in *adab* and courtesy.

From another standpoint, invoking peace and salutations upon Allah's Messenger at every mention of his blessed name is part of the Divinely ordained *adab* for the community of the Prophet. It is declared in a Qur'anic verse:

“Surely Allah and His angels bless the Prophet (He always treats him with His

special mercy, with the angels praying to Him to grant him the highest station of praise with Him, and for the decisive victory of his Religion). O you who believe, invoke the blessings of Allah on him, and pray to Allah to bestow His peace on him, greeting him with the best greeting. (Love and follow him with utmost sincerity and faithfulness, and give yourselves to his way with perfect submission).” (Ahzab 33:56)

How meaningful it is that while the other Prophets are addressed by name in the Qur’an, the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, has not be addressed thus, but with the expressions, “O Prophet” and ‘O Messenger’. Allah Almighty invites all believers to this sense of propriety:

“Do not treat the Messenger’s summoning and praying for you as your summoning and praying for one another...” (Nur 24:63)

Ibn ‘Abbas, may Allah be well pleased with him, says the following in relation to this verse:

“People used to address the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, saying, ‘O Muhammad, O Abu al-Qasim.’ Allah, glory unto Him, prohibited them from addressing His Messenger thus, so as to exalt him in honour. Thereafter, people addressed him saying, ‘O Messenger of Allah, O Prophet of Allah.’” (Abu Nu’aym, *Dala’il*, I, 46.)

That being the case, the Prophet being mentioned only by name is contrary to the *adab* of his community. His lofty and sacred

attributes must be mentioned alongside his name. Moreover, showing the required respect to all that were close to him is essential.

What great instruction in propriety is the state of Ottoman Sultan Yavuz (Selim I), who was greatly devoted to the Prophet:

Selim I conquered Egypt in 1517 and was entrusted the position of Caliph. When, on 20 February during the Friday sermon in Cairo’s **Al-Mu’ayyad Mosque**, the imam said of him in his sermon, **“The King of the Two Noble Sanctuaries** [of Makka and Madina]” (*Hakim al-Haramayn al-Sharifayn*), he immediately interrupted the sermon and exclaimed, in tears,

“No, No! Far from it, the Custodian of the Two Noble Sanctuaries” (*Khadim al-Haramayn al-Sharifayn*).

Subsequently, he lifted the carpet and prostrated on the soil directly, in praise to his Lord. As an expression of being the custodian of the Noble Sanctuaries, he attached to his turban a crest carved in the form of a broom.

May Allah Almighty enable us all to assume the beautiful character of His Messenger, whom He raised under His Divine guidance, and allow us to be graceful, refined and courteous believers of great moral character by benefiting from the spiritual grace of His friends.

Amin...

1) Ilber Ortaylı, *Osmanlıyı Yeniden Keşfetmek*, 88. 2) See: Abu Dawud, *Sunna*, 23-24:4753; Ibn Maja, *Jana’iz*, 37.



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Sayyidah

UMMU SALAMA -II-

Abu Salama was the foster brother of the Holy Prophet (pbuh). He and his wife were among the first to believe in Islam and to make hijrah to Ethiopia. They left everything behind and emigrated to Ethiopia, because of the suffocating torture of Mecca.

Sayyidah Ummu Salama's Morals

Umma Salama (r.ah) was a wise woman who spoke well and for this reason she was listened to with respect. In fact, from time to time her words could even bring someone like Umar to a halt.

Indeed, at one time Umar (ra) heard that the wives of Prophet Muhammad (saw) had upset the Prophet (saw), the Sun of the Two Worlds, and he was infuriated. He started to speak in a hurtful manner, but Sayyidah Ummu Salama interrupted and said:

"I am surprised at you, O son of Hattab!.. You interfere in everything... are you going to even interfere between the Prophet (saw) and his wives?"

Umar (ra) was later to say: *"Her words affected me in such a way that my anger melted away."*¹

Advice to the Believers in Hudaybiyah

Sayyidah Ummu Salama was a knowledgeable and cultured woman. Prophet Muhammad (saw) would consult with her from time to time and sometimes act in accordance with her opinion. In fact, in the

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sixth year of the Hijrah, during the drawing up of the Hudaibiyah Treaty, that was made with the polytheists of Mecca, Prophet Muhammad (saw) asked for her opinion and acted accordingly.

To briefly recap this event, Prophet Muhammad (saw) had marched with the Companions towards Mecca to make the *umrah*, but he was prevented from doing this by the polytheists. After long arguments, a treaty was drawn up with the polytheists and it was decided to return to Medina without performing this *umrah*. The conditions of the treaty seemed to be against the Muslims. For this reason, everyone, including Umar (ra), did not know how to act. Thus it was that even though the Prophet of Allah (saw) ordered the Companions to sacrifice an animal, shave and take off their *ihram*, three times, the Companions remained motionless, quietly hoping that the Prophet (saw) would abandon the treaty.

Prophet Muhammad (saw) was saddened by their behavior and headed towards his tent. Sayyidah Ummu Salama said:

“O Prophet (saw), forgive them. They hoped that they would be able to circumambulate the Kaaba this year. Not only have they realized that this hope was in vain, but a treaty that fulfills the wishes of the polytheists has been made. You should go and slaughter a sacrificial animal and shave; when they see you do this, they will follow your lead.”

Prophet Muhammad (saw) left the tent and acted as Sayyidah Ummu Salama had suggested, and the Companions, understanding that the treaty was not to be broken, followed suit and made the sacrifice and shaved.²

Thus, at such a sensitive time, Sayyidah Ummu Salama was able to analyze the situation using her intelligence, perception and courage, and thus the matter ended happily in a way which upset no one.

She was With the Prophet (saw) in War and Hard Times

Sayyidah Ummu Salama (r.ah) was with Prophet Muhammad (saw) during the Haybar Campaign, the Conquest of Mecca, the Siege of Taif, the Battles of Hawazin and Sakif, and the Farewell Pilgrimage.

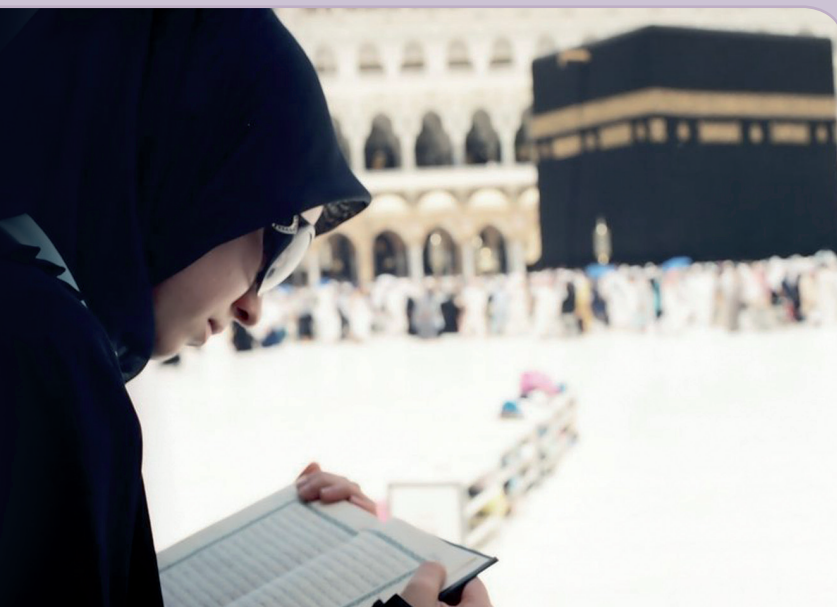
In short, she was a battling lion who carried the same blood as the Sword of Allah, Halid bin Walid. She was a woman who managed to be a monument of modesty while at the same time being resolute, brave and wise.³

The Wife Who Saw Jibreel

Our mother Sayyidah Ummu Salama saw Archangel Jibreel (AS) in the form of Dihya, one of the Companions. As reported by Usama bin Zaid:

“One day Jibreel (AS) came to Prophet Muhammad (saw). At that point Sayyidah Ummu Salama was with the Prophet (saw).

Umma Salama (r.ah) was a wise woman who spoke well and for this reason she was listened to with respect. In fact, from time to time her words could even bring someone like Umar to a halt.



After talking to the Prophet (saw), Jibreel got up and left. Prophet Muhammad (saw) turned to Sayyidah Ummu Salama and asked: “*Who was that?*” She answered “*That was Dihya*”. Then Sayyidah Ummu Salama said “*I swear that until I listened to the speech Prophet Muhammad (saw) delivered in the mosque about the revelation that he had received from Gabriel (at that time) I thought Gabriel was Dihya.*”⁴

Her Respect for and Service to Prophet Muhammad (saw)

When Prophet Muhammad (saw) stayed in her house she prepared everything; the prayer mat, bed and everything else: whatever he would need would be ready.⁵

Sayyidah Ummu Salama kept a lock of Prophet Muhammad’s (saw) hair and protected it as a memento throughout her life.⁶

The House to Which the Revelation Came

Both Sayyidah Â’ishah and Sayyidah Hafsa, (r.ah) made great efforts to treat this new wife of Prophet Muhammad (saw) well.

The earlier revelations only came when Prophet Muhammad (saw) was in Sayyidah Â’ishah’s house; this was a source of great pride for Sayyidah Â’ishah. This situation continued until Prophet Muhammad (saw) married Sayyidah Ummu Salama and verse 102 of *Surah Tauba*⁷ was revealed.

You and Your Daughter are of My Ahl al-Bayt

One day, Allah’s Prophet (saw) was with Sayyidah Ummu Salama, and Sayyidah Ummu Salama’s daughter Zainab was there too.

Fatimatu’z Zahra and her sons Hasan (ra) and Husayn (ra) came. The Prophet (saw) embraced them, saying: “My *Ahlil- Bayt*, may Allah’s mercy and blessings be upon you. Allah deserves every type of praise. He is One of utmost honor!..”

According to what her daughter Zainab related, Sayyidah Ummu Salama started to cry when she heard this. The Prophet (saw) looked at her and said kindly: “What has made you cry?” She replied “O Allah’s Prophet (saw), you have divided (Allah’s mercy and blessings) between the *ahlil-bayt*, but you have forgotten me and my daughter.”

The Prophet (saw) answered: “Both you and your daughter are of the *ahlil-bayt*.”⁸

The daughter of our Mother Ummu Salama, Zainab, (r.ah) was a great canonist after Sayyidah Â’ishah. In fact, it was said that she was the person who knew *fiqh* (Islamic Law) the best among the women of her time.⁹

According to one report, while the Prophet of Allah (saw) was bathing, Umma Salama’s daughter Zainab (r.ah) came near him, she was still a young child, and the Prophet (saw)

sprinkled water on her face. The narrator tells us that Sayyidah Zainab still had the freshness of youth on her face even when she was old.¹⁰ According to another report, Sayyidah Zainab, (r.ah), who had this water splashed on her face, had a beauty that was envied by those who saw her.

Prophet Muhammad (saw) loved the children of Sayyidah Ummu Salama as if they were his own and protected them thus. In fact, he married his stepson Salama to Umama, the daughter of his uncle Hamza who had died at Uhud. After marrying them the Prophet (saw) turned to the Companions and said: *"You see, I have rewarded him."*¹¹

The calm and peaceful atmosphere of the Prophet's house continued until Prophet Muhammad (saw) became ill. Sayyidah Ummu Salama and the other wives of Prophet Muhammad (saw) willingly agreed that he should rest in the house of Sayyidah Â'ishah.¹²

After the Death of Prophet Muhammad (saw)

After the death of Prophet Muhammad (saw), Sayyidah Ummu Salama retreated to her home and began to lead a secluded life.

Sayyidah Ummu Salama (r.ah) was the last of the Prophet's wives to die. She died

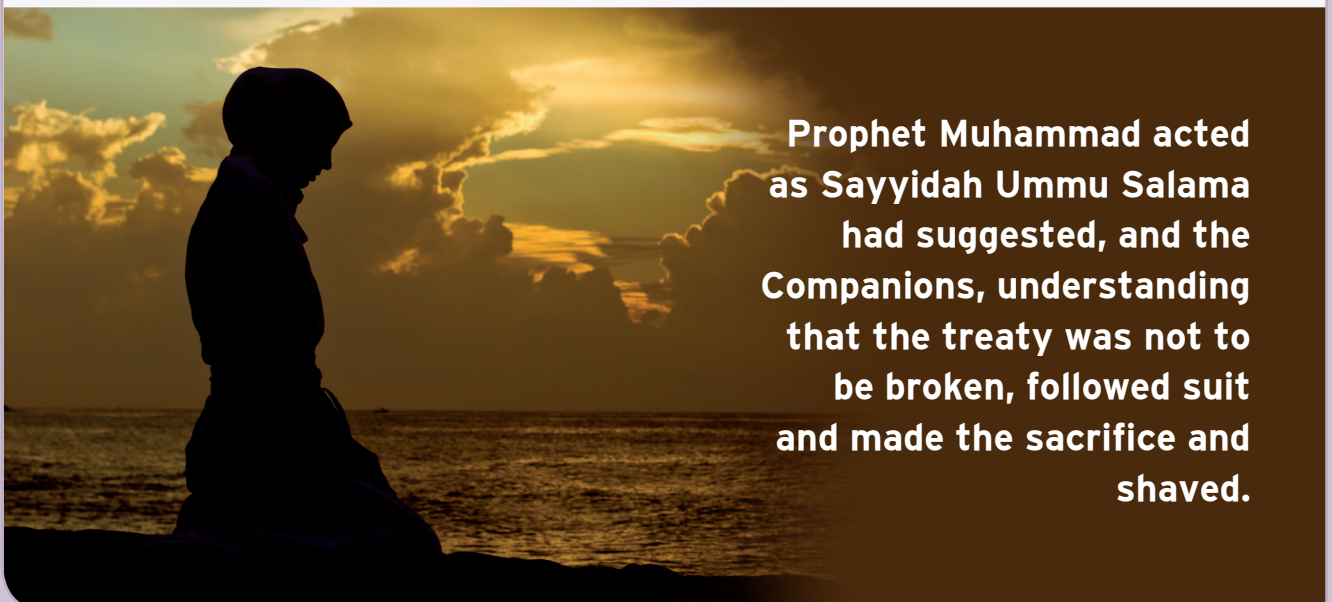
in the 61st year after the Hijrah and was 84 years old, though some reports state that she was even 90.¹³ Yazid bin Muawiya was the Caliph at this time. She was buried in the Baki cemetery in Medina. Abu Huraira led the funeral prayer.

When Sayyidah Ummu Salama heard of the martyrdom of Husayn and his family at Karbala she fainted from sorrow, and it is stated that her death was due to the sadness caused by this event.¹⁴

Level of Knowledge

Sayyidah Ummu Salama was a woman who knew how to write and she was also a poet.¹⁵ Although Mahmud bin Labid explained that although the people had a great respect for all the wives of Prophet Muhammad (saw), Sayyidah Â'ishah and Sayyidah Ummu Salama held a special place due to their memorization and protection of hadiths.¹⁶

Sayyidah Ummu Salama (r.ah) was a Companion who was acquainted with *fiqh* and who narrated hadiths. In fact, of the Prophet's wives, after Sayyidah Â'ishah, she narrated the most hadiths and there are a total of 378 hadiths that were reported by Umma Salama,¹⁷ moreover, 13 of these are in both Bukhari and Muslim. Dozens of people learned hadiths from her, including Abu Huraira and Ibn-i Abbas.¹⁸



Prophet Muhammad acted as Sayyidah Ummu Salama had suggested, and the Companions, understanding that the treaty was not to be broken, followed suit and made the sacrifice and shaved.

**After Sayyidah
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Lessons We Can Learn from the Life of this Blessed Mother

1- Sayyidah Ummu Salama's life was full of many examples of the difficulties and sacrifices she underwent for Islam. She was one of the first women believers, and she suffered persecution and torment at the hands of the disbelievers of Mecca; and so she was forced to emigrate to Abyssinia and then to Medina. Thus, she abandoned the land in which she was born and raised, twice, in order to follow her religion.

2- While she considered emigrating to Medina she was separated from her husband and children and forced to remain apart from them for a long time; but this did not cause her to waver or to falter in her belief. On the contrary, her patience, reliance and submission to Allah increased.

3- In her deciding to emigrate from Mecca to Medina on her own, without husband and family, she personally demonstrated great bravery to other Muslim women. The life of our blessed mother was a great comfort for the women who were experiencing similar difficulties.

4- As we can understand from the sacrifices that Sayyidah Ummu Salama made in her life, Islam does not come us easily, it comes to us with great difficulty, but it never came with a concession. Sayyidah Ummu Salama is an exceptional example of a wife, mother and believer: one who endured the

difficulties thrown up by this world of trials, bearing them without giving up her belief.

5- After the Hudaibiyah Treaty, when the Companions did not act despite the order of Prophet Muhammad (saw), Sayyidah Ummu Salama (r.ah) fulfilled the duty of the Mother of Believers, in that she did not react based upon her tumultuous feelings, but advised with reason and wisdom, and was an example of a faithful woman who *"did not incite, but soothed."*

6- Sayyidah Ummu Salama, an intelligent, cultured woman who was also a poet, was accomplished enough to offer counsel to the Prophet (saw); and she followed the Prophet's life with great care, making great efforts to transfer his memory to his community. After Sayyidah Â'ishah, she is one of the Prophet's wives to have reported the most hadiths.

7- The thousands of positive and negative zigzags that make up life most certainly affect husbands and wives, so that from time to time a variety of unforeseen events can occur in their home. Sometimes they experience joy, sometimes sorrow. However, with good intentions, the extended family and friends that are not part of the immediate family circle will try to help the husband and wife. Thus it is that the solutions for some simple problems, the details of which should have remained within the family and been resolved by husband and wife, can at times become untenable due to such "outside" interference. Thus, Umar's interference,

which was completely well intentioned, could sometimes make things worse in the family life of Prophet Muhammad (saw). However, Sayyidah Ummu Salama resolutely reminded Umar (ra), despite him being a very strong minded person, that he was in danger of making such a mistake.

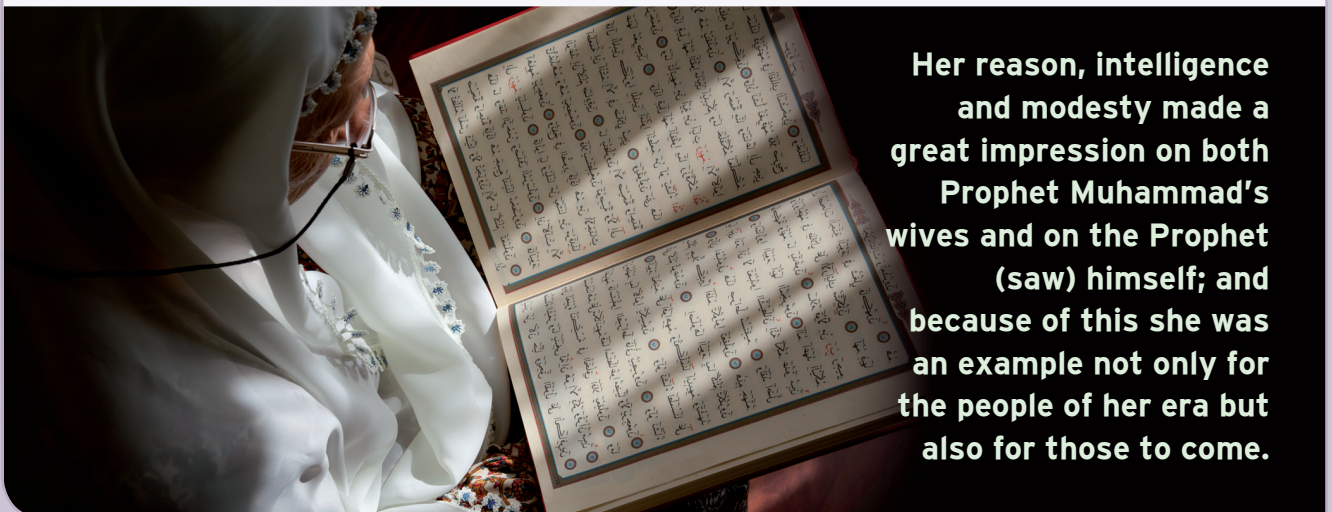
8- In fact, sometimes mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters or other close relatives interfere in the problems of married couples in order to help them find a solution to those problems or deficiencies, but generally this causes more problems than it solves. Not only are all people different from one another, but also all of the families have different characteristics, even if the general features are the same. Therefore, the older generation, rather than trying to dictate how a couple should solve their problems, should be content to present their knowledge as an “experience”. The actual authority that will solve the problem belongs to the couple who have established the family. Such an approach will allow the young couple to be happier, more successful and confident in matters of marriage.

9- In the person of Sayyidah Ummu Salama we can see another value that Islam gives to women: she expressed her opinions as needed, when it was necessary and to whom it was necessary, with great courage, wisdom and self-confidence; and she did not receive any negative reaction to this behavior. Sometimes she offered advice to Prophet Muhammad (saw), and at other times she challenged Umar (ra). This shows

that expressing the truth in the proper way at the proper time is something that will be accepted by all; even if the truth is spoken by a woman. Thus, people should be careful about the truth of what they utter, and also the timing and location: only in this way can words achieve the intended result.

10- May Allah bless us all with a share of the life of this blessed mother who was full of wisdom and who is a great example. May she be our intercessor.

Endnotes: 1) Bukhârî, Tefsir, (66), 323. 2) See: Bukhârî, Şurût, 15; Ziya Kazıcı, Ibid., 229-231; O. Nûri Topbaş; Nebiler Silsilesi, IV, 208-210; Afzalurrahman, Ibid., II, 179. 3) Celal Yeniçeri, Ibid., page: 86. 4) Afzalurrahman, Ibid., II, page: 182. 5) Madni Abbâsî, “Hz. Peygamber’in (saw) Âile Hayatı”, Translated by: Ali Zengin, İstanbul, 2000, page: 206. 6) Madni Abbâsî, Ibid., page: 217. 7) This verse was concerned with Abu Lubaba, who had been sent by the Bani Qurayza, to betray Prophet Muhammad. During this envoy’s visit, the Companions, thinking that he had behaved incorrectly, and without consulting the Prophet, tied Abu Lubaba to a pillar in the Masjid, to remain there until Allah and His Prophet had forgiven him. When Prophet Muhammad was informed about this event he waited for an edict from Allah Almighty but made no ruling himself. Abu Lubaba remained tied to the pillar, and it was after five days, whilst Prophet Muhammad was with Ummu Salama, that the 102nd verse of Surah Tauba was revealed. The verse reads as follows: “Others (there are who) have acknowledged their wrong-doings: They have mixed an act that was good with another that was evil. Perhaps God will turn unto them (in mercy): For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (9,102). There is a report that the same verse was revealed for those who did not participate in the Tabuk Campaign and tied themselves to the pillar of the Masjid. 8) Ziya Kazıcı, Ibid., page: 224. 9) Ziya Kazıcı, Ibid., page: 234. 10) Ziya Kazıcı, Ibid., page: 24-225. 11) Ziya Kazıcı, Ibid., page: 225. 12) Bkz: Ayşe Abdurrahman, Ibid., page: 331. 13) Saliha Akgül, Ibid., page: 155. 14) Ibn-i Sa’d, Tabakât, VIII, 96; Celal Yeniçeri, Ibid., page: 86. 15) Celal Yeniçeri, Ibid., page: 85. 16) Madni Abbâsî, Ibid., page: 206. 17) Afzalurrahman, Ibid., II, 181. 18) Bkz: Madni Abbâsî, Ibid., page: 214-215.



Her reason, intelligence and modesty made a great impression on both Prophet Muhammad’s wives and on the Prophet (saw) himself; and because of this she was an example not only for the people of her era but also for those to come.

Quiz For Children



1. All people are equal in Islam except on the basis of one thing. What is it?
 - a. Taqwa
 - b. Money
 - c. Ancestry
 - d. Children
2. "Shura" means, to make a decision by _____.
 - a. Mutual Consultation
 - b. Decision
 - c. Question
 - d. Gathering
3. What do we call the activities that are mandatory?
 - a. Makruh
 - b. Mubah
 - c. Fard
 - d. Sunnah
4. While the Prophet and Abu Bakr traveled to Madina, they hid in _____.
 - a. Cave
 - b. Desert
 - c. House
 - d. Forest
5. The Prophet said, "_____ lies at the feet of your mother."
 - a. Paradise
 - b. Golden jewellery
 - c. Her children
 - d. Her family
6. Name the Surah which refers to the creation of man from a mere clot of blood.
 - a. Nas
 - b. Falaq
 - c. Alaq
 - d. Maun
7. Which Surah begins with "Say O disbelievers?"
 - a. Ikhlas
 - b. Adiyat
 - c. Kafirun
 - d. Fil
8. Akhirah is the real life after our deaths which lasts-----.
 - a. For few years
 - b. For few months
 - c. For few days
 - d. Forever
9. For how many years did Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) preach?
 - a. 23
 - b. 22
 - c. 21
 - d. 20
10. What is the name of the book sent down to Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh)?
 - a. injil
 - b. Sahifah
 - c. Zabur
 - d. Tawrat

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