

"In the Latter Days, the sun shall rise from the West"

Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)



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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as)



AHMADIYYA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY

United States of America

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 207 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjab province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah).

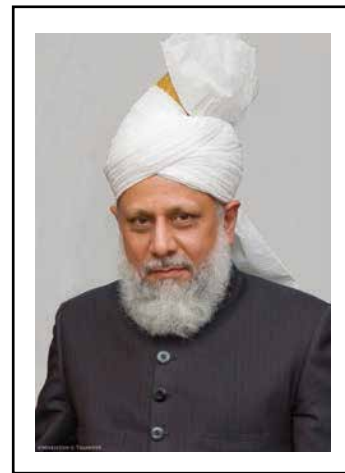
The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity.

Hazrat Ahmad (as) proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (The Holy Qur’an: 98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon Qura’nic teaching:

“There is no compulsion in religion” (The Holy Qur’an: 2:257).

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah (as).



Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad,
Khalifatul Masih V (aba)

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Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (ra) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the Muslim Sunrise, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever-changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presents their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

The Muslim Sunrise welcomes letters to the Editor, Questions and Submissions.

Email us at MuslimSunrise@Ahmadiyya.us or go online to www.MuslimSunrise.com



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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaihis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allaho anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations sometimes are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

Acronyms for salutations used in this publication

- sa: Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wa Sallam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)
- as: 'Alaihis-Salam (may peace be upon him)
- ra: Radhi-Allahu 'Anhu/'Anha (may Allah be pleased with him/her)
- rh: Rahimahullahu Ta'ala (may Allah shower His mercy on him)
- aba: Ayyadahullahu Ta'ala Bi-Nasrihil-'Aziz (may Allah support him with His mighty help)

Verse numbers in the references from the Holy Qur'an count Tasmiya at the beginning of a chapter as the first verse.

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FROM
THE
HOLY
QUR'AN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ①

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ
مُحْضَرًا ② وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ ③ تَوَدُّ^ط
لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا ④
وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ ⑤ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ
بِالْعِبَادِ ⑥

معانقده : عبد المصطفى
١
٢
٣
٤
٥
٦

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

Beware of the Day when every soul shall find itself confronted with all the good it has done and all the evil it has done. It will wish there were a great distance between it and that evil. And Allah cautions you against His punishment. And Allah is Most Compassionate to His servants.

(The Holy Qur'an: 3:31)



HADITH

SAYINGS OF THE

PROPHET

MUHAMMAD (sa)

Narrated by Hazrat Abu Huraira (ra) that Allah's Messenger (sa) said: "The deeds of anyone of you will not save you [from the Fire]" They said, "Even you [will not be saved by your deeds], O Allah's Messenger?" He said, "No, even I [will not be saved] unless and until Allah protects me with His Grace and His Mercy. Therefore, do good deeds properly, sincerely, and moderately. Worship Allah in the forenoon, and in the afternoon, and during a part of the night, and always adopt a middle, moderate, regular course whereby you will reach your target [Paradise]."

(Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 8, Book 76, Number 470)

Narrated by Hazrat 'Aishah (ra) that the Prophet (sa) said, "Do good deeds properly, sincerely, and moderately and know that your deeds will not make you enter Paradise and that the most beloved deed to Allah's is the most regular and constant even though it were little."

(Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 8, Book 76, Hadith 471)



EDITION

SPRING 2018

All world faiths have spirituality as an essential quality to achieve the highest purpose of life, to find out the real meaning of existence. There are various methods to enhance individual spirituality, such as meditation, prayer, fasting, and physical exercise. Clearly, there is no single path to achieve spirituality, there are many diverse routes; at times the paths may seem to be tangled and conflicted.

Countless questions arise about spirituality, for example, is the 'soul' or the 'spirit' a reality? Is a 'spiritual experience' merely a psychological phenomenon, or is it a real connection with some higher external entity? Is spirituality a power that resides within mind and heart, and can it be balanced with the external temporal world? Can one enhance spirituality without joining any particular religion? What is the 'Holy Spirit'? How can it be realized that a person, a man or a woman, has attained spiritually? Does a soul/spirit live on after departing from the physical body? If so, what happens to it after death? Can a soul/spirit be infused into an artificially invented intelligence?

We can say without doubt that spirituality is a sublime connection between human beings and the Divine; it needs the active interaction of the Divine in response to human efforts to make the connection. In order to attain absolute certainty that God exists, His revelation and His communication with the spiritually elated is a must.

In this special issue of the Muslim Sunrise, we are publishing two brief but magnificent extracts on the theme of spirituality from the writings of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as), the Promised Messiah and the Mahdi, along with other articles intended to

help answer the numerous questions constantly posed on this subject

Please read and enjoy the articles; we welcome your comments and feedback.

Mubasher Ahmad
Editor-in-Chief



IN THE WORDS OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH^(as)

Effort and Natural Aptitude to attain Exalted Spiritual Station

[Haqiqat-ul-Wahi, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 22, p. 68]

Effort and Natural Aptitude to attain Exalted Spiritual Station

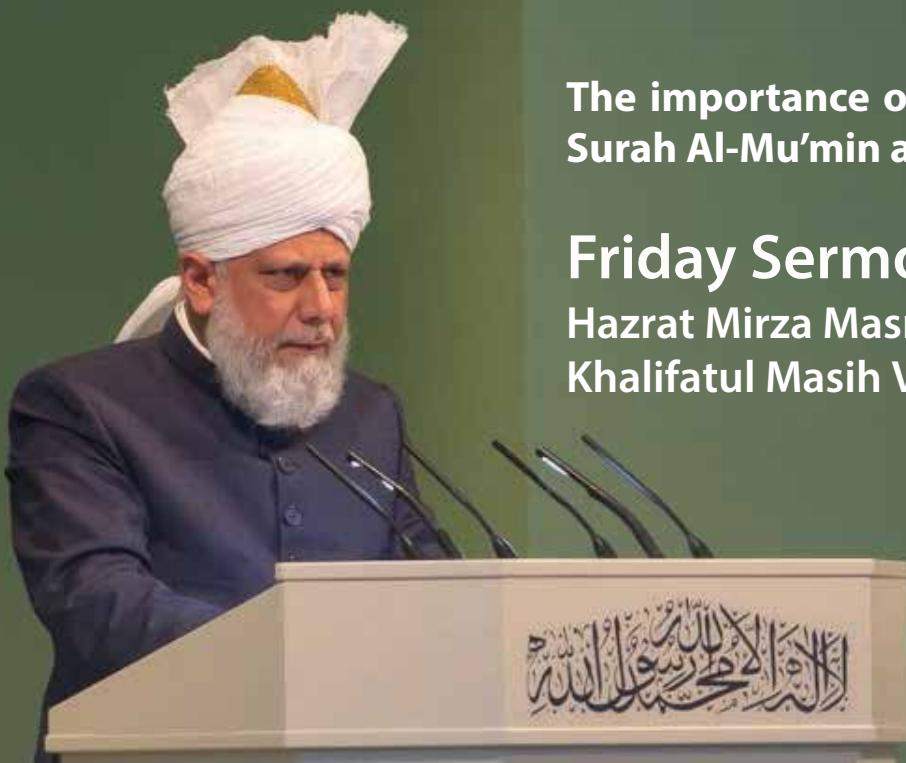
There are some people who attain exalted spiritual station without effort and striving on their part. Their very nature is such that without any effort or striving, they love God and come to have such spiritual relationship with the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as can never be surpassed. As time passes, their inner fire of love for God continues to grow stronger and with it grows the fire of love for the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.) In all these matters God becomes their Guardian and Provident. When that fire reaches its climax, they fervently desire that the glory of God be manifested upon the earth, and this becomes their greatest delight and their ultimate purpose. Thereupon God's signs appear for them on the earth. God Almighty does not manifest His grand signs, nor does He convey information of great future events to anyone except those who are wholly lost in His love, and are as desirous of the manifestation of His Unity and Glory as He Himself is. They are unique because special Divine mysteries are revealed to them and the unseen is disclosed to them with the utmost clarity. No one else is honored in this unique way.



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian,
The Promised Messiah and Imam Mahdi (as)

The importance of the initial verses of Surah Al-Mu'min and Ayatul Kursi

Friday Sermon delivered by Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba), on Feb 2nd 2018



The importance of the initial verses of Surah Al-Mu'min and Ayatul Kursi

At the beginning of his Friday Sermon Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) recited the first four verses of Surah Al-Mu'min and verse 256 of Surah Al-Baqarah.

"In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful. Ha (The Praiseworthy) Mim (the Lord of Honor). The revelation of this Book is from Allah, the Mighty, the All-Knowing, Forgiver of sin, Acceptor of repentance, Severe in punishment, the Possessor of bounty. There is no God but He. Towards Him is the final return (The Holy Qur'an, 40:1-4)

"Allah-there is no God save Him, the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining. Slumber seizes Him not, nor sleep. To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Who is he that dare intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them; and they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He pleases. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth; and the care of them burdens him not; and He is the High, the Great." (The Holy Qur'an, 2:256)

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) said; with regard to these verses it is related in a Hadith narrated by Hazrat Abu Hurairah (ra) that the Holy Prophet (sa) said: "Whoever recites from Ha-Mim of Al-Mu'min up to 'ilahi maseer,' and also recites Ayatul Kursi in the

morning will be protected till the evening on account of this. And whoever recites these verses in the evening will be protected till morning." Ha-Mim is the second verse of Surah Al-Mu'min, the first is 'Bismilla hirRahma nirRahim' and Rahman and Rahim become clear with the translation.

The meaning and explanation of Allah's attribute Al-Hameed

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) said; Ha-Mim are acronyms, also known as Huruf Muqatta'at. Here they stand for Hameed and Majeed. Hameed means the one worthy of praise and to whom true praise belongs. In other words, God alone is to be praised. Explaining the word Hameed, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, the Promised Messiah (as), says: "Let it be clear that Hamd is the praise that is due to one worthy of praise on account of his good action." It also applies to one who has made a gift out of his own will and done a favor. True praise is only applicable to one who is the source of all grace and light and favors someone with full consciousness and not just unconsciously or due to some compulsion. Only He is praiseworthy, and only He truly deserves praise who shows kindness not because of some need or some ulterior motive but continues to shower countless blessings regardless of any compulsion. These meanings of Hamd are only applicable to God who is All-Knowing, All-Seeing. He is the true Benefactor, and all favors, first to last, emanate from Him, and all praise belongs

to Him in this world and in the Hereafter.

Know God through His attributes

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) said: Strive to learn about God's blessings and His attributes and to seek ways of praising Him. Strive for this like a greedy person. Moreover, when you reach that perfect state or even get a whiff of it, it is as if you have found Him. Also, this is the secret that is only revealed to the seekers of guidance. This is your Lord and your Master who is Perfect in Himself and possesses all the perfect attributes and praises. He is the repository of Hamd and comprehends all praise and all that is praiseworthy. Therefore, we should be cognizant of God being the source of Hamd so that we can recognize His other attributes as well.

The meaning and explanation of Allah's attribute Al-Majeed

Allah says that He is Majeed, He is the Lord of Honour and Majesty. Majd is not used here in the ordinary human context referring to a man of great age; rather, in the context of Allah, it means that He is worthy of worship and of high prestige Whom no one can equal. There is no limit to His grace, and He gives and gives and never tires.

The meaning of Ghafir-i-Zamb: Prayer draws forgiveness

Allah is the Forgiver of sins, therefore whoever bows down before Him and seeks forgiveness for his sins. Whatever light man is granted is temporary. Whatever religious or spiritual light he is given is only for a time, and to keep it always with oneself one needs to offer Istighfar. The reason why Prophets offer Istighfar is also because they are aware of these things and are always fearful lest the mantle of light they have been given is taken away from them. Istighfar means that the light that has been received from God should remain safe and increase. To achieve this, the five daily prayers are essential. Prayer is an essential for partaking of Istighfar and partaking of this light, because in prayer, a person repents of his sins and seeks forgiveness. It is a means of beseeching God with all one's heart every day. Those with insight know that prayer is a kind of Me'raj.

The meaning of Istighfar.

Istighfar also means that no apparent sin should be committed and the potential to commit sin should not materialize, that is to say, no occasion for sin is born and no power to commit it is manifested. The secret behind the Prophets offering Istighfar is also that while they are indeed innocent, they offer it so that even in the future, the potential for sin should not arise. As for common people, Istighfar would mean that God may save them from the evil consequences of the sins and crimes they have committed, may forgive their sins, and may save them from future sins. It is essential for man to always keep offering Istighfar. Tribulations come so that people may busy themselves in Istighfar. Famines and all kinds of calamities that descend in the world are meant so that people may busy themselves in Istighfar. Ahmadi Muslims are going through difficulties, which means that we should pay more attention to our prayers and to Istighfar. Istighfar does not only mean to keep reciting **استغفر الله - استغفر الله**; rather, man should truly seek forgiveness from the bottom of his heart and pray that he may not suffer the consequences of the sins he has committed, and to seek God's help that he may be able to do good deeds in future and be saved from transgression.

Allah is Qabil-ut-Taubah (He accepts repentance)

Allah accepts Taubah. Taubah means to return to God seeking forgiveness for one's sins. When man comes to God with the pledge not to commit sin again and to always strive to avoid sin, then Allah accepts the Taubah of one who comes to Him with these feelings and intentions.

The day a person does Taubah is the best day of his life

The Promised Messiah (as) has described this subject in these words: "What day is more blessed than Friday and the two Eids? Let me tell you that it is the day of a man's Taubah or repentance which is the best of all and is better than any Eid. Because this is the day when the record of a person's deeds, which draws closer and closer to hell and to Divine wrath, is cleansed and his sins are forgiven. In truth, what day or Eid could be more blessed for a person than the

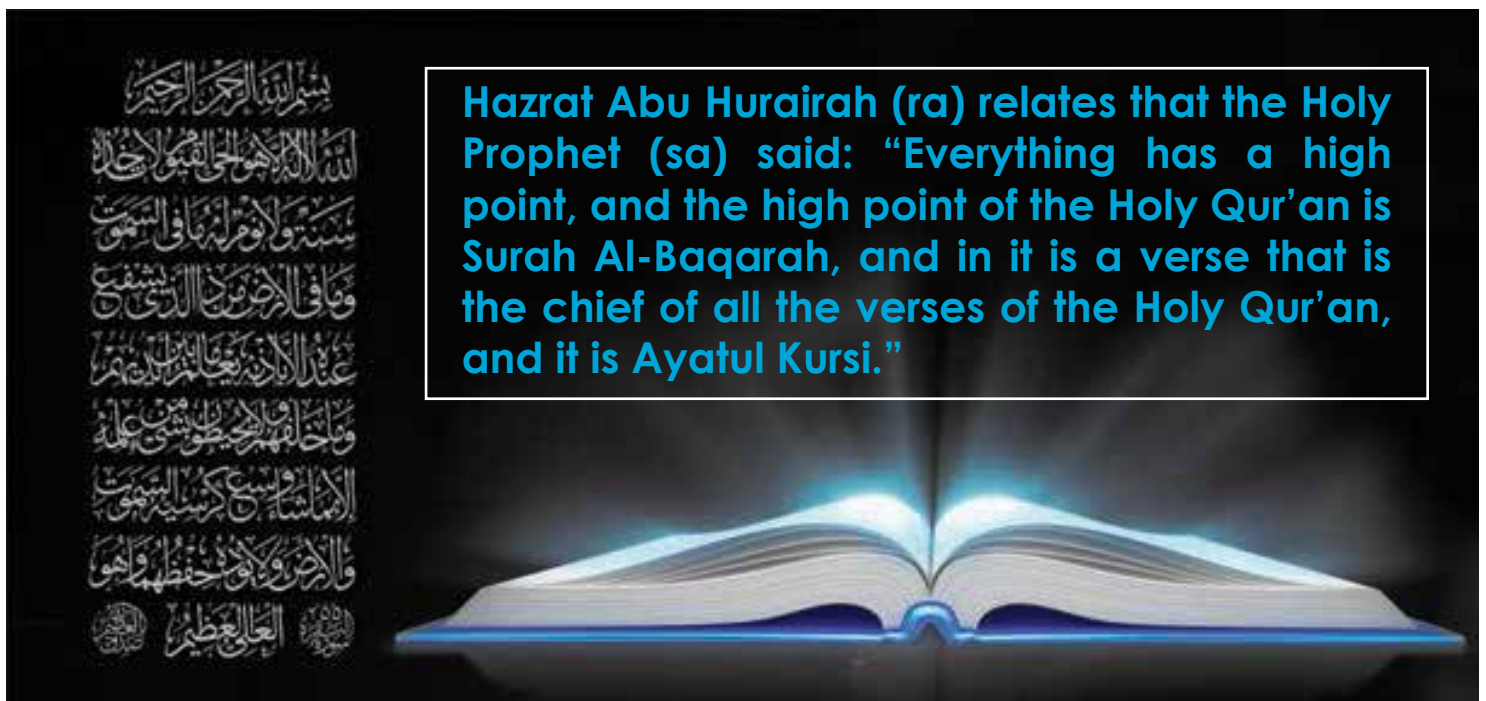
day that saves him from hell and eternal Divine wrath? The one who repents was previously estranged from God and a target of His wrath, but now, by His grace, he draws closer to Him and is kept away from hell and chastisement.”

Ayatul Kursi is the chief of all verses

Hazrat Abu Hurairah (ra) relates that the Holy Prophet (sa) said: “Everything has a high point, and the high point of the Holy Qur’an is Surah Al-Baqarah, and in it is a verse that is the chief of all the verses of the Holy Qur’an, and it is Ayatul Kursi.” In explanation of this, the Promised Messiah (as) says: “Allahu la ilaaha illa huwal Hayyul Qayyum. God is the same God; there is no God other than Him; He is the life of every living being; He is the Sustainer of every being.” The literal translation of this verse is that He is the living God, and He is Self-Sustaining. Hence when He alone is the living God, and He alone is Self-Sustaining, this clearly shows that every being apart from Him that appears to be living is only alive through His life. Moreover, everything that subsists in heaven or earth does so through His Being.

Shafa’at means to pray for one’s brother with one’s whole heart

Whenever a person prays for another, this is also a kind of Shafa’at or intercession. A believer should always be in the habit of praying for others. According to the Holy Qur’an, Shafa’at means that a person prays for his brother so that he attains what he desires or some tribulation is removed from him. This means that he should pray for the fulfillment of whatever someone has requested him to pray for and that if he is under some trial or tribulation, it should be removed from him. It is a Qur’anic injunction that one who is more in the presence of God should pray for his weaker brother so that he too may attain that status. This is the reality of Shafa’at. Therefore, I truly pray for my brothers so that Allah may give them strength and remove their tribulations; and this too is a kind of sympathy. The Promised Messiah (as) says: “Since all people are like one body, therefore God repeatedly teaches us that while it is for Him to accept our Shafa’at, we must keep praying for our brothers.” That is to say, do not hold back from praying for your brothers, this is a right that each one has over the other.

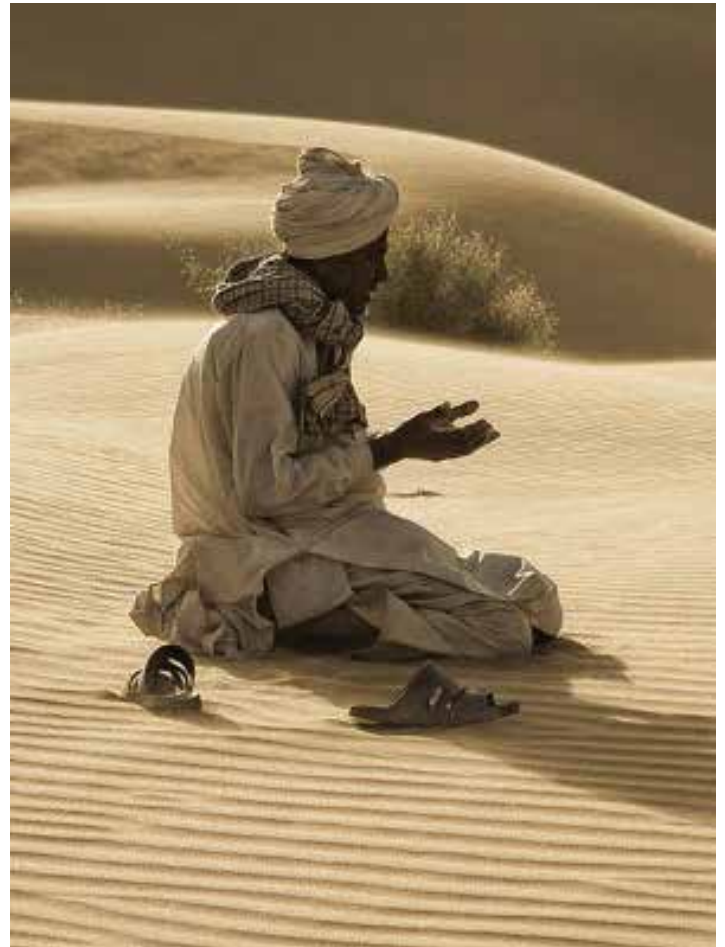


Revelation Needed for Attaining Absolute Certainty

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian
The Promised Messiah and Al-Mahdi (as)

As the Being of God Almighty, despite its brightness, is hidden beyond sight, the physical universe is not adequate for its true recognition. This is the reason why those who depended upon the physical system despite their careful consideration of its perfect orderliness which comprehends hundreds of wonders within itself, and despite their pursuit of astronomy and physics and philosophy to a degree which shows that they had penetrated through heaven and earth, could not get rid of their doubts and suspicions and became involved in all types of errors and wandered far afield in their absurd fantasies. If they thought of the Being of the Creator, they proceeded only thus far that observing the great orderliness of the wise system they imagined that it should have a Creator. It is obvious, however, that this idea is incomplete and this understanding is imperfect, for to say that this system needs a God is not equal to saying that God in fact exists. This was only their conjectural understanding which cannot bestow satisfaction and contentment upon the heart, nor can it entirely remove doubts. This is not a cup which could quench the thirst of complete understanding which is inherent in man's nature. In fact, such imperfect understanding is very dangerous, for after a great deal of noise it leads to nothing. So long as God Almighty does not affirm His Existence by His word, as indeed He has done, the mere observation of His handiwork does not afford satisfaction. For instance, if we see a room which is bolted from inside, our first reaction would be that there is someone inside who has put up the bolts for it is impossible to put up the bolts from outside. But if over a long period no one from inside should respond to repeated calls, we would have to abandon our assumption that there is someone inside and we would imagine that there is no one inside and that the bolts have been put up through some clever device. This is the case of the philosophers whose understanding does not go beyond the observation of God's work. It is a great mistake to imagine that God is like a corpse which has to be brought out of its grave by man. If God has to be discovered through human effort, all our hopes of such a God are vain. Indeed God is the Being Who has ever called mankind to Himself by announcing: I am present. It would be impertinence to imagine that man has laid Him under an obligation through his understanding of Him and that if there had been no philosophers He would have remained unknown. It is another imperti-

nence to enquire whether God has a tongue wherewith He can speak. Has He not created all heavenly bodies and the earth without physical hands? Does He not see the whole world without physical eyes? Does He not hear us without physical ears? Was it then not necessary that He should also speak? It is not at all correct to say that all God's speaking has been left behind and that there is nothing in future. We cannot seal up His words and His speech in any age. Without doubt, He is ready to enrich the seekers from the fountain of revelation as He used to do before. The gates of His grace are as open today as they were at any time. It is true, however, that the needs for law and limitations having been fulfilled, all Messengerships and Prophethoods found their perfection at their last point, which was the person of our lord and master, the Holy Prophet [peace and blessings of Allah be on him].



[Islami Usul ki Philosophy, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 10, pp. 363-367]

True knowledge about God depends upon this that we should reach the Living God Who speaks clearly to His favorites and bestows satisfaction and contentment upon them with His Majestic and delicious speech. He speaks to them as one man speaks to another and converses with them as a certainty that is beyond doubt or suspicion. He listens to them and responds to them and hearing their supplications He informs them of their acceptance. He proves to them that He is God on the one side by His majestic and delicious words, and on the other side, by His miraculous works and His Powerful and Mighty signs. To begin with, by way of prophecy He promises them His support and help and special guidance and then on the other side, in order to augment the greatness of His promises, He causes a whole world to oppose them. Those people use all their power and their deceit and all their devices to frustrate God's promises of support and help and supremacy which He makes to His favorites, but God brings to naught all their efforts. They sow mischief and God uproots it. They kindle a fire and God puts it out. They put forth their utmost efforts and God turns their designs against them.

The righteous ones of God are simple and straightforward and in the presence of God Almighty they are like children in the lap of their mother. The world opposes them because they are not of the world. All sorts of plans and devices are resorted to in order to destroy them. Peoples combine to put them to trouble, and all unworthy ones shoot arrows at them from the same bow, and all manner of calumnies and charges are invented against them, so that somehow they might be destroyed and all signs of them might be wiped off, but God Almighty fulfils His words all through their lives. They are honored with God's true word which is clear and conclusive, and they are given knowledge of hidden matters, which is beyond the power of man, through the clear word of God, the Mighty and Powerful. On the other hand, through miraculous events which establish the truth of that which they had been told, their faith is strengthened and is further illumined. The kind of knowledge required by human nature for the true recognition of God is imparted through verbal and factual manifestation of the Divine so that not a particle of darkness is left.

This is the God through Whose verbal and factual manifestations, which comprise thousands of bounties and affect the heart powerfully, a person acquires a living faith and a true and holy relationship is established with God, which removes all personal dirt; and all weakness being excluded, inner dark-



ness is dispelled by the fierce rays of heavenly light and a wonderful change is manifested. Therefore, the religion which does not present God as possessing these attributes and confines faith to ancient tales and fables and such matters as are not seen or heard, is certainly not a true religion. To follow such a fictitious god is like expecting a corpse to work like living beings. A god who does not prove his own existence afresh every time is as if he does not exist. He is like an idol which neither speaks nor hears nor answers questions, nor can he manifest his power in such a manner that even a confirmed atheist should not be able to doubt it.

[Brahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Part V, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 21, pp. 31-32]

What is the Spirit?

Islamic Perspective

Mubasher Ahmad, M.A., LL.B.

In the Arabic language in which the Holy Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (sa), there are two words commonly used for human life. The first is 'Nafs,' and the second is 'Ruh.' Nafs also means 'self,' 'person,' 'heart,' 'mind,' and 'conscience.' Ruh, on the other hand, can be translated as 'breath,' 'divine revelation or inspiration,' 'joy and happiness' and 'the spirit.' Ruh is derived from 'rah,' that is, it became cool and pleasant; he was brisk, lively, active, prompt or quick. Ruh connotes the subtle substance that keeps a person alive; it is the principle of vitality and of sensation and of voluntary motion, the breath which a man breathes, and which pervades the whole body, after the exit of which he ceases to breathe. (1)

Therefore, to answer the question: 'What is the Spirit?'- it can be said that the spirit is the inner self of a person, and we can also say that it is God's Spirit infused into human beings.

In the Holy Qur'an, God says about the creation of man: "And remember when your Lord said to the angels, 'I am about to create man from dry ringing clay, from black mud wrought into shape; so, when I have fashioned him in perfection and have breathed into him My Spirit, then fall down in submission to him.' So, the angels submitted, all of them together, except Iblis; he refused to be among those who submitted." (2)

In other words, in addition to a physical body, a human being is given a soul which, at its inception, is the Spirit of God. The 'ruh' is created and nurtured inside the womb during embryonic development, and it contains all positive and pure qualities. The natural faculties, also known as the angelic forces, are all made submissive to the 'ruh', with the exception of Iblis, namely, the negative urge which is inclined to remain rebellious to God's commandments.

When referring to the spirituality of pious and holy men and women, this Spirit of God, this Ruh is specifically mentioned in the Holy Qur'an as Ruhul Qudus - the Holy Spirit. For example, the Holy Qur'an states:

"And verily We gave Moses the Book and caused after him Messengers to follow in his footsteps; and to Jesus, son of Mary, We gave manifest Signs, and strengthened him with the Spirit of holiness." (3)

At another place, it is stated:

"These Messengers have We exalted, some of them above others; among them, there are those to whom Allah spoke (i.e., gave them a new Law); and some of them He exalted by degrees of rank. And We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs and strengthened him with the Spirit of holiness." (4)

With reference to the miracles of Jesus, son of Mary (as), it is written in the Holy Qur'an:

"When Allah will say, "O Jesus, son of Mary, remember My favor upon you and upon your mother; when I strengthened you with the Spirit of holiness so that you did speak to the people in the cradle and in middle age; and when I taught you the Book and Wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel; and when you did fashion a creation out of clay, in the likeness of a bird, by My command; then you did breathe into it a new spirit and it became a soaring being by My command; and you did heal the night-blind and leprosy by My command; and when I restrained the children of Israel from putting you to death when you did come to them with clear Signs; and those who disbelieved from among them said, 'This is nothing but clear deception.'" (5)

The term Ruh as the Spirit of God is also mentioned in the Holy Qur'an as being actively engaged with the angels of God. For example, referring to the Night of Destiny (Lailatul Qadr), it is written:

"The Night of Destiny is better than a thousand months. Therein descend angels and the Spirit (Ruh) by the command of their Lord - with every matter." (6)

Again, it is written in the Holy Qur'an:

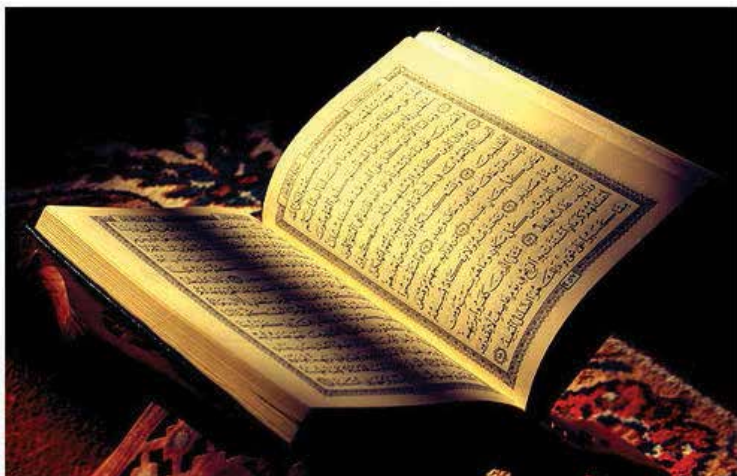
"On the day when the Spirit (Ruh) and the angels will stand in rows, they shall not speak, except he whom the Gracious God will permit and who will speak only what is right." (7)

Referring to the text of the Qur'an, it is stated:

"Say, 'The Holy Spirit has brought it down from your Lord with truth, that He may strengthen those who believe, and as a guidance and glad tidings for Muslims.'" (8)

In the Holy Qur'an, the term Ruh is also used for the life-giving word of God.

For example, it is stated:



“He sends down the angels with revelation by His command on whomsoever of His servants He pleases saying, ‘Warn people that there is no God but I, so fear Me alone.’” (9)

“And verily this is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. The Spirit, Faithful to the Trust, has descended with it on your heart, so that you may be of the Warners in plain and clear Arabic tongue.” (10)

In the Holy Qur’an, the question ‘What is the Soul?’ is answered in the following verse:

“And they ask you concerning the ‘ruh’/spirit. Say, ‘The ‘ruh’ is by the command of my Lord, and the knowledge thereof you have been given but a little.’” (11)

This means that the human spirit has been described as something created by direct command of God, and we human beings have little knowledge of how it is created.

According to the Holy Qur’an, all creation falls under two categories:

[1] The creation which is brought about without the use of any material substance previously created. In other words, something created out of nothing by direct command of God.

[2] The subsequent creation which is brought about through mixing and compounding elements which are already in existence through God’s creation, and forming them into something new.

According to the Holy Qur’an, the creation of the spirit/‘ruh’ falls under the first category, the direct command of God. Thus, the Holy Qur’an puts great emphasis on the unequivocal connection that exists between God and the human spirit.

The Holy Qur’an describes three states of the Nafs or three conditions of the ‘self’. The first is called ‘Nafsi Ammarah’- the soul that does wrong to itself, or the soul that is inclined to do evil instead of attaining spiritual and moral perfection by remaining constantly connected with God.

The second condition is called ‘Nafsi Lawwamah’, or the reproving self, that is, after committing anything wrong and immoral the inner self reprimands itself and tries to bring the negative urges under its control, and yet it is not fully successful in practicing virtuous acts needed to pave the spiritual path towards God

The third condition is called ‘Nafsi Mutma’innah’ or the soul/-mind/heart at rest, that is, the self which has obtained full contentment and is at peace with God. At this stage, the inner self is delivered from all its weaknesses and is filled with spiritual powers because it has established a firm connection with its Creator. It is as if the human spirit has found its way to its original source – God the Creator. (12)

To better understand what the spirit is, we should know that while the spirit keeps the human body alive, it is not a physical or material entity. When it departs from the human body, it continues to exist, having a spiritual body of its own. That is why when a person dies, and the spirit departs the body, the Holy Qur’an teaches us to say:



“Surely, to God we belong, and to Him we shall return.” (13)

Another important point concerning the human spirit is that based upon how a person lives his or her life; the spirit becomes accountable for that person’s conduct –whether it was a sinful life or a virtuous and pious life. The Holy Qur’an explains that God has revealed to the inner spirit/nafs what is wrong and what is right. Therefore that person indeed prospers in this life and the life to come who purifies his or her self, and the person who corrupts it by living a sinful life is surely ruined in the Hereafter. (14)

In other words, throughout the earthly life of a person, all thoughts, emotions, desires, and actions, both positive and negative, are registered within the nafs/soul/self/spirit and thus, when all is said and done, as it were, his or her ‘nafs’ remains answerable to God with whom rests the ultimate Judgement:

“Then whoso does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoso does an atom’s weight of evil will also see it.” (15)



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Spirituality and Prophethood

Amtul Kafi Yadullah Bhunnoo

Spirituality is “the quality of being concerned with the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things”(1). Prophethood is a status granted by Allah to an individual as an example for mankind to follow. This is an individual to whom Allah reveals great secrets and enables to guide mankind to worship one God. This individual is humble and caring as said in the Holy Quran, “It is not possible for a man that Allah should give him the Book and dominion and prophethood, and then he should say to men: ‘Be servants to me and not to Allah;’ but he would say: ‘Be solely devoted to the Lord because you teach the Book and because you study it’”(2). This individual invites mankind to do good and forbid evil. He spreads knowledge and wisdom granted by God.

What is the relationship of spirituality to prophethood? As the above verse shows, it is impossible for a prophet to fulfil his purpose without gaining knowledge and excelling in good deeds, which comes directly from Allah himself. A prophet is also not arrogant. He remains ever humble reminds the people who may start to rely on the Prophet rather than Allah to rely on Allah, alone, as He is Our Sustainer. The Prophets are kind, caring, loving, respectful individuals who, throughout history, have shunned materialism for spiritualism i.e. gaining closeness to God. How did they do it? Whoever shows great humility, selflessness will be rewarded with the status of prophethood, perhaps not himself but for his next generation. This was the case with Abraham (as). Many prophets were raised from his family including the greatest of all, the Holy Prophet (sa). Why? Abraham (as) was a firm believer in Allah and was ready to sacrifice anything for the sake of His Lord. He was ready to sacrifice his own son, how many can do that? These are signs of spirituality, showing peace within oneself and outside.

If we take the oxford dictionary definition of spirituality then it means that spirituality is our ability to sit still or be alone with our thoughts, without physically working on something or materialistically trying to make money. We live in stressful times with mental health problems on the rise, thus focusing spiritually makes sense. In fact, many counsellors recommend meditation which some would believe helps with spirituality. The Muslims are already commanded to do this five times a day to gain ultimate spirituality and nearness to God. If this is done with complete faith and righteousness one can



achieve the same level of spirituality as a Prophet. According to Allah in the Holy Quran: “And whoso obeys Allah and this Messenger of His shall be among those on whom Allah has bestowed His blessings, namely, the Prophets, the Truthful, the Martyrs, and the Righteous. And excellent companions are these”(3).

Islam is the only religion that has set out rights of Allah and rights of people. To please Allah, one has to fulfil both rights. The five pillars of Islam fulfill all the rights for one to gain ultimate spirituality. These include belief in the Oneness of God Almighty; five daily prayers, fasting, giving alms and performing Hajj. One can gain spirituality like the Prophets since Allah has made them an example for us to follow. “Those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and ponder over the creation of the heavens and the earth: “Our Lord, Thou hast not created this in vain; nay, Holy art Thou; save us, then, from the punishment of the Fire”(4).

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Spiritualism or Organized Religion

Rabia Salim

As a parent and now a teacher, a term that I have come across a lot in the classroom over the last five years is mindfulness, and it makes me think of yoga and meditation. I first came across yoga in high school in a ladies group in the UK, and even then it was seen as a beneficial practice mentally and physically. Many instructors have walked through the doors of my children's Montessori classroom and given the children a quick class in making animal shapes with their body. They would practice breathing techniques, and, my favorite, silence!

The main reason I chose to write an article about spiritualism with my brush with yoga is that mindfulness is a definite buzzword in the realm of education and psychology these days.

Very briefly, I recently read that certain social behaviors have the same effect as cocaine on our brains; for example, sugar consumption (1) and smartphone use (2). These learned behaviors make the brain light up with pleasure, and the effect is addictive, we reach for our phones or a sugary snack when this dopamine in our brains starts to dip. Although drugs have a greater negative effect on the body than sugar, this is still an important point. Mindfulness and meditation allow a person to be present, with all the pain, suffering, or anguish that is part of the nature of existence for a human. Those feelings are allowed to flow through the body and allows it to pass and move on to a positive human state, whereas addictive behaviors try to block any negativity completely, making a human, in my opinion into a trained rat.

For example, in the Holy Qur'an talks about peace and still during prayer time (3), "It is all peace till the rising of the dawn." The peace mentioned here is about the mental peace that believers feel even in the midst of hardships. Peace during Prayer allows all feelings to flow and ebb. In Islam, there are five formal Prayers in one day, and each Prayer lasts about ten minutes. Nowadays recent research is enlightened with the benefits of mindful meditation. The Prayer prescribed in Islam provides that effect of meditation also.

There are parallels between organized religion and spiritualism, but there has been an overall decline in people with particular religious affiliation (4). People's internet use

correlates with an open religious affiliation, but they are still open to many different spiritual practices. And as I mentioned earlier, in psychology and education, even in corporate fields, spiritualism is a term that people are extremely aware of. For example, in psychology, mindfulness is seen as crucial in helping people with anxiety and depression as the practice of this can fight off stress. In education, teachers are seeing its benefits for children. In the primary school, I worked at last year, a minute of silence did the trick to calm children's excitability. However, it works even better when the techniques are consistent and frequent, so we would share our work with the parents too, to make it worthwhile. In the corporate world, like Google, there was an article in 2013 about why employees of Google were meditating (5), and the reasons were all positive effects on well-being. The effect was more resilient, focused and emotionally intelligent individuals. Emotional intelligence helps people form stronger relationships with people and to understand their colleague's motives, a giant plus in the workplace!



In a Muslim Times article, Dr. Zia Shah also quotes this spirituality and that there is less affiliation to organized religion, yet, the search for spirituality is real, and some populations are more open to discover the benefits of meditation. (6) This population is the young Millennials, and they would use it as a means to gain spirituality and happiness of mind. The article suggests that chanting scriptures, like the Qur'an, as well as philosophers' sayings, or mantras as in some traditions, is another useful meditative practice. Indeed the Islamic five daily Prayers, at ten minutes per Prayer repeats Arabic phrases from the Holy

Qur'an, and it is like meditation in my experience. It has the benefit of being highly spiritual as well because the focal point is God.

Origin of Yoga was in the organized religion too, but this practice in the West is not always followed and used for worship. Non-religious people practice it as well for its health benefits. Hindu Sun God salutations are not used in the same way and mantras are omitted. And what is making yoga more secular, is the other elements added by various individuals to the original practice. Just as what my children learned with their school instructors introduced English animal names rather than the Sanskrit names (7).

I feel that while spiritualism has enormous benefits, ultimate spirituality is linked to organized religion, although general mindfulness is a stepping stone towards becoming a little more spiritual. I say this because so many mindful practices, like yoga, are branches of the main root of religion. Using yoga as one example of possibly many, this practice was grown from the holy Vedic scripture. It was initially developed by the Brahmins and Rishis and evolved into Hatha yoga, which is what we see today. Hatha yoga practice for many Westerners means the path towards enlightenment, focusing on building physical and mental strength (8). For many of my colleagues in school who participate yoga, it is a relaxation activity that increases their strength and flexibility.

As already referred to, Islam has a five-a-day prescription to ward off mental and physical fatigue. The formal five daily Prayers have a big physical component, as there are postures that the worshipper makes during the Prayer, from standing to kneeling to prostrating. The attainment the spiritual component is done by attracting God. The way this happens is it fills the worshipper with spiritual light from God.

A tradition from the Holy Prophet (sa) states: "If one of you had a stream running by his door and he takes a bath in it five times a day, would any dirt be left on him?" The companion replied, 'No dirt will be left on him.' The Holy Prophet (sa) said, 'This is the case with Salat (Prayer). Allah makes the Salat wipe out his sins.'" (9) Prayers are likened to washing yourself in clean water five times a day. The practice of washing reminds me of the Christian practice of baptism, which "washes away" a person's sins. The supplication of "Tasbeeh" after a Prayer is when a Muslim chants praise to God in his head and track the number by joining his thumb to each finger, this is like the Hindu joining the thumb and middle finger seen in yoga today. Mantras are seen in all religions, from chanting of Biblical verses to Qur'anic verses, clearing the mind and feeling at peace, similar to what is seen in Jewish Kavanah, which is a meditative mindset required for Jewish prayer and rituals. Without bias, I believe spiritual practices borrow these concepts from organized religion.



In Islam, there are three spiritual states of man. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam of Qadian, Messiah and Mahdi of this age (as), explained this in his writings: "The first stage is the self that incites to evil. A person cannot wipe away evil at this stage because he cannot be guided by reason yet. He follows his natural urges and is not trying to get out of this life. Following this is the reproofing self, where he can stumble, but picks himself up again. At this stage, man develops morals such as truthfulness but cannot completely follow virtue. The regulation of his human instinct is moral. Every physical action has an inner quality corresponding to it, which is called a "moral." For example, when someone cries out of sympathy, the inner quality is called tenderness, or they help a person, the inner quality is called benevolence. At a moral stage, he is remorseful for his weakness and feels sorry if he missed a chance to do something good. Therefore, virtue attracts, while vices repel. The third stage is the final stage, and this is the soul at rest and man is delivered from struggle and gains spiritual power. God is his source at this stage; his prize is paradise on earth. He does not have to wait to enter heaven after death; he gets it in this very life. This person achieves full prosperity, and this stage shows a man that only the true carrying out of virtue is achieved with heavenly help. It is like a strengthening breeze blowing upon the soul." (10)

The common practice nowadays of spirituality in everyday settings, such as colleges, schools, and within offices is a sign of how much information Millennials have these days which they can access and tap into with their fingertips. However, all these elements are ultimately found in a disciplined, mindful religion such as Islam, providing the most effective way to reach a high stage of spirituality and a higher power.



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A spirited soul

Syed Sajid Ahmad

Human soul comes with the human body and carries some of its characteristics from the parents. Every person's soul carries its own well-defined abilities and capabilities at birth. Thus, human soul carries with it its individual limitation in how low it can fall or how high it can rise in its development. Thus, the Holy Qur'an teaches Muslims the prayer at the end of the following verse,

"O ye who believe! turn to Allah in sincere repentance. It may be that your Lord will remove the evil consequences of your deeds and make you enter Gardens through which rivers flow, on the day when Allah will not abase the Prophet nor those who have believed with him. Their light will run before them and on their right hands. They will say, 'Our Lord, perfect our light for us and forgive us; surely Thou hast power over all things.'" (1)

While this verse outlines a path towards perfecting one's soul, it also indicates that empowerment from the Supreme Being is necessary by concluding the verse with a short prayer, and that the soul will seek its perfection in the hereafter. In another verse, the fruit of human efforts and strategy to attain progress are presented.

"And think of the day when thou wilt see the believing men and the believing women, their light running before them and on their right hands, and it will be said to them, 'Glad tidings for you this day! Gardens through which streams flow, wherein you will abide. That is the supreme triumph.'" (2)

For a person to be born with characteristics foretold centuries in advance, a specific sequence of lineage through the chain of ancestors has to be followed. For a person to be born with the expected characteristics requires persons with individually specific characteristics to marry individual spouses with particular characteristics generation after generation to produce a child with desired traits at the specified time. With so many possibilities and probabilities in play, it indeed is a miracle of a very high order for such a prophecy to be fulfilled during a specific prophesied period of time. It could happen only if the ultimate fashioner had awareness and control over



every minute detail of the progress of every individual in the human race. In consequence, the person fulfilling the prophecy is empowered to triumph through the trials and tribulations to meet the challenges of his or her age. On a temporal level, in any age, thus, only a knower of the unknown could then be the origin of the dream of a parent about his or her progeny and its fulfillment would again be a miracle of God without a doubt.

The soul inherits qualities but not blame or burden of the sins of ancestors. A child is clear of the parent's burdens. Islam is clear on the point that a child is born on nature and is innocent at birth.

When a person grows, his soul grows with him. As the human body needs nourishment so does the soul. It is attached to the body so its health depends on the care of the owner of the body. If the owner takes care of the body

but not the soul then the soul is malnourished and weak. If the owner takes care of the soul but not the body then the soul may become stronger than the body but yet not find support for its perfection from the body if the mind is not cognizant or capable of its needs to fulfill them. It is necessary for the owner to nourish both body and soul to keep them healthy and for the continuous progress of the soul.

While its owner is still alive, the soul suffers from the maladies heaped on it by its owner or enjoys the pleasures gifted to it by its keeper. The owner can damage it or repair it, make it suffer and cry or give it joy, make it weak or strong. In this world it can protest the conscious of its owner but it is the will of the owner of the body to be affected by it or not. A cognizant person is continuously advancing the abilities and status of his soul.

“And observe Prayer at the two ends of the day, and in the hours of the night that are nearer the day. Surely, good works drive away evil works. This is a reminder for those who would remember.” (3)

The guide of this age has very concisely summarized the qualities of the soul seeking help from its owner in their development.



“The Holy Qur’an has made detailed mention of the many qualities, wonderful powers and capacities of souls of which we set out a few by way of illustration:

1. The faculty of eagerness to acquire knowledge and insight.
2. The faculty of acquiring knowledge.
3. The faculty of safeguarding knowledge that has been acquired.
4. The faculty of the love of God.
5. The faculty of deriving delight from a meeting with the Divine.
6. The faculty of seeing visions.
7. The faculty of influencing and being influenced.
8. The faculty of establishing relationship with bodies.
9. The faculty of acquiring divine qualities.
10. The faculty of receiving revelation.
11. The faculty of expansive and constricted moods.
12. The faculty of acquiring unlimited comprehension.
13. The faculty of taking on the color of the manifestation of the Divine.
14. The faculty of reason whereby to distinguish between beauty and imperfection.
15. The faculty of receiving impressions and being influenced by them in contrast with the bodies to which they are related.
16. The faculty of acknowledging the existence of the True Creator.
17. The faculty of manifesting new qualities in combination with bodies and their special shapes.
18. The faculty of mutual attraction which might be designated magnetic power.
19. The faculty of immortality.
20. The faculty of maintaining a special relationship with the particles of the departed body which is manifested to those who have experience of visions.

There are many other faculties of souls which are set out in detail in the Holy Qur'an in a delightful and excellent manner." (4)

Some of the qualities enumerated above are operative in both worlds with varying intensity and drive but some are particular to this world. The qualities operative only in this world provide the soul chance to gather experiences that enhance its understanding and insight into the next world and its development and thus the pleasure it experiences or can experience in both worlds.

Each of the above qualities are worth studying and worth delving into them for the joy and practical uses of understanding the development and powers of the soul and human spirituality.

The development of the relationship of the soul with its creator and other souls of the present and past is of particular interest in any age. If such a capability is truly attainable then a person can satisfy himself as to the validity of his faith and ascertain the truths he bases his strife on to reach his creator. Particularly, in today's world, lovers of God wonder about which path leads to God, when is the second coming of their awaited savior going to take place, how the mounting threats to humanity can be averted, and so on. If the human soul can be developed to aid in search of the solutions to dilemmas all around, some souls will find the answers ultimately and guide those under their influence for the satisfaction of their hearts and souls and ultimate nirvana. When people tread on this path they find guidance in their quest for truth.

Man's momentary sojourn on this earth provides him the only chance to advance these faculties through his right belief and appropriate actions adopting the rights traits. The Holy Quran provides the guidance for this age and the example of the Prophet and Islam and their correct interpretation by the Promised Messiah in this age. These principles are universal and people not affiliated to truth also are led to development of their souls to show them that opportunities of greater advancement are possible through the heavenly revealed word and chosen servants of God prophesied through scriptures, and that they should seek them for their salvation.

The quality and efficiency of the development of soul depends on the method used if a conscious effort is made and depends on the quality of man's daily life and his values in the unconscious development of the soul. The guide of this last age has elaborated these methods in his writings for a seeker of truth that can lead him on a rewarding quest.

When a person dies, the soul continues to live after its re-birth and becomes free of its mortal body and is given a new body compatible with the hereafter. After death, the earthly body becomes non-functional and starts deteriorating but soul is given a new life and new body and starts progressing. It is now free of the worldly body so it can take control of itself and seek advancement where possible and advantageous. The worldly body due to its death can never have any control over its soul again, neither does the soul or God seek to return it back to earth in possession of another creature, and it has forever the opportunity to perfect itself within its limitations.



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The Holy Spirit: Comparison between Islamic teachings and Christianity

Seher Mujeeb Bhatti

While the Holy Spirit is constantly attributed to Christianity, many of us may not realize that the concept of the Holy Spirit also exists in Islam. Both the Bible and the Holy Quran have included this in their writings:

'And verily, We gave Moses the Book and caused after him Messengers to follow in his footsteps; and to Jesus, son of Mary, We gave manifest Signs, and strengthened him with the Spirit of holiness' (1).

'In answer the angel said to her: "Holy spirit will come upon you, and power of the Most High will overshadow you. And for that reason the one who is born will be called holy, God's Son" (2).

To understand the Holy Spirit in Christianity we have to start at the beginning of the Bible, at page one in fact, where it depicts that the world used to be a dark, chaotic place. God's spirit was hovering above all that in preparation to bring life and beauty. The Book of "Hebrews" refers to His personal presence as "Ruakh," attributing to God's energy. It's a hidden energy that is said to be responsible for making the wind blow, and the trees sway. When you take a deep breath you are taking in energy. That is "ruakh," sustaining all life and creation. As the story goes the Bible describes that Ruakh empowers different people, namely Prophets, for specific jobs. It goes on to say that when the world goes through dark times, God's spirit will rest on Jesus and sanction him to complete the new creation. He cured the sick and blind, and created life where there once was death. Israel's religious leaders sentenced him to be crucified, but the Bible claims that he had so much energy it revived him from death. Once he came back Jesus breathed into his followers and said, receive the Holy Spirit, so that they too may spread the message of God and inspire others in the same way. It is the hope of Christians that God's energy will continue to do this and in turn transform the world into a better place. That is the general role of the Holy Spirit and what it is.

Christians also believe in the Trinity, where God has manifested Himself as Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, the latter being considered as the third person or entity. The New Testament

puts a strong emphasis on the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Jesus during his time on earth, taking it to be in the literal sense. Going back to the biblical quote mentioned earlier the angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her that the Holy Spirit will come upon her and she will carry a child who will be the son of God. Basically she would conceive a child with the Holy Spirit, and that child would be Jesus.

Let us get back to that later and take a look at the Islamic perspective. Here's an excerpt from the Promised Messiah, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's (as) writings in his book, "Elucidation of Objectives":

"If you ask what exactly is the quality and spiritual power in which the two of us—the Messiah son of Mary and my own humble self—resemble, the answer is that it is an overall quality with which the spiritual sensibilities of the two of us have been endowed. At one end, the chain stretches deep down below, and at the other, reaches high above. The descent signifies the extreme anguish and concern for the good of God's creatures. It reinforces the already close and strong ties that exist between the Messenger of God and his devoted disciples, and transmits the spiritual vitality inherent in the holy person of the Messenger to all the green and vibrant branches. The upward journey symbolizes the superior love, which is rooted in strong faith.

God so wills that love at first sprouts in the heart of the worshipper and then attracts the love of the Almighty Himself. When the two loves meet—each functioning as the male and female counterpart—they give birth to a strong communion and intense affinity between the Creator and the created. The blazing flames of Divine love set afire the tinder dry firewood of human love, giving birth to a third phenomenon known as Ruhul Qudus.

The spiritual birth of man at this level is deemed to take place when God Almighty especially wills such love to be born. Figuratively speaking, it would not be wrong to say that this spirit, saturated as it is with the love of God, grants a new birth to the human soul which, through God's will, is now filled with His

love. That is why this love-laden spirit, again figuratively speaking, is like an offspring to the Divine spirit, the author of this love. Since Ruhul Qudus is born in the human heart as a result of the union of the two souls, we can say that it is like a son to both. This indeed is the holy trinity which is the necessary accompaniment of love at this level and which the impure of heart have misconstrued polytheistically. They have tried to equate a miniscule particle of mere possibility which is so self-negating and unreal, with the Supreme Self-Existent God" (3).

To summarize, the Promised Messiah (as) is describing how in Islam the Holy Spirit is a spiritual condition, or transformation that we undergo as humans. A believer develops strong love for Allah and that attracts Him. In spiritual terms both loves meet thus creating a strong bond or connection with each other, much like the love of a man and woman uniting to produce a child. The result of the two spiritual loves meeting is a special bond that is called 'Ruhul Qudus,' when the believer achieves enlightenment. The Promised Messiah (as) has attributed this to the Trinity, the love of God allows the human soul to give birth to an enlightened love, a divine love.

In comparison Christians believe God to consist of three entities: Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. The difference is that they take this to mean it in the literal sense. However, it doesn't work because two things started at some finite time, and they are part of God. That is the fundamental flaw in this belief because God has no beginning, whereas Jesus and the Holy

Spirit do. In reality they have nothing to do with God; the Holy Spirit is a creation of God to serve Him and Him alone.



The Islamic concept states that everything is created by God. Islam is very clear that nothing exists like Him; He is universal, He is absolute. God is absolutely One and indivisible and doesn't need to be part of any combination in His own right, and is ultimate with no weaknesses or flaws. He has no beginning and no end. He created everything; the spirits the light and the darkness. Islam believes in the concept of the Trinity but on a more spiritual level, it is based on the relationship between the believer and his Master.

After reading the Promised Messiah's(as) writings one may easily see how the Christians may have interpreted this more literally. It is a great mercy from God that we have the Promised Messiah and Khilafat to help us understand the love of God.

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Spirituality in Hinduism

Dr. Muhammad Zafar Iqbal

The word 'spirituality' has many definitions. According to Wikipedia (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spirituality>): Spirituality may refer to almost any kind of meaningful activity, especially a "search for the sacred." It may also refer to personal growth, blissful experience, or an encounter with one's own "inner dimension."

Spirituality refers to a religious process of reformation, which "aims to recover the original shape of man," oriented at "the image of God" as exemplified by the founders and sacred texts of the religions of the world. (1)

To understand the concept of spirituality in Hinduism it is necessary to go over the basics of the tradition, as the understanding of spirituality is implied in foundation of a particular faith. According to the description of Hinduism on the website 'Hinduism Today' Hinduism is the world's oldest religion, has no beginning—it precedes recorded history. It has no human founder. It is a mystical religion, leading the devotee to personally experience the Truth within, finally reaching the pinnacle of consciousness where man and God are one.

Contrary to prevailing misconceptions, Hindus of India with different languages and cultures have understood the one God in their own distinct way. Through history there arose four principal Hindu denominations—Saivism, Shaktism, Vaishnavism and Smartism.

For Saivites, God is Siva. For Shaktas, Goddess Shakti is supreme. For Vaishnavites, Lord Vishnu is God. For Smartas—who see all Deities as reflections of the One God—the choice of Deity is left to the devotee. This liberal Smarta perspective is well known, but it is not the prevailing Hindu view. Due to this diversity, Hindus are profoundly tolerant of other religions, respecting the fact that each has its own pathway to the one God.

"One of the unique understandings in Hinduism is that God is not far away, living in a remote heaven, but is inside each and every soul, in the heart and consciousness, waiting to be discovered. This knowing that God is always with us gives us hope and courage. Knowing the One Great God in this intimate and experiential way is the goal of Hindu spirituality." (2)

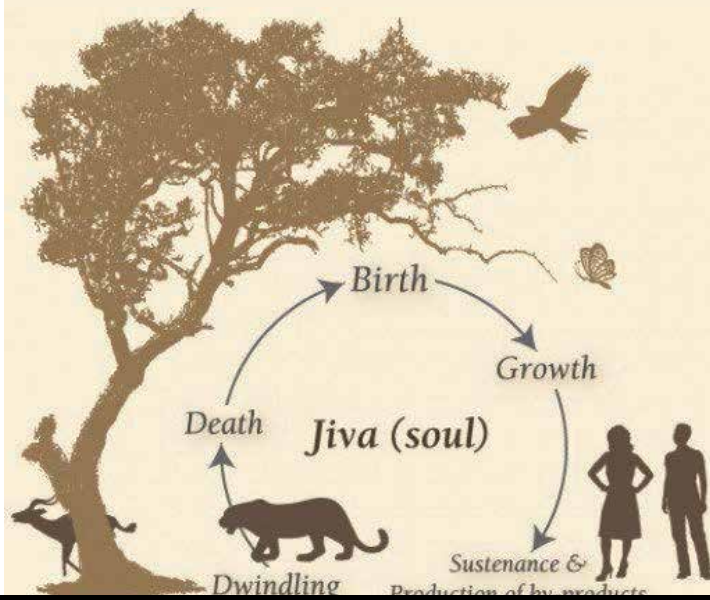
Hinduism is both monotheistic and henotheistic. Hindus were never polytheistic, in the sense that there are many

equal Gods. Henotheism (literally "one God") better defines the Hindu view. It means the worship of one God without denying the existence of other Gods.

The Author further writes, "We Hindus believe in the one all-pervasive God who energizes the entire universe. We can see Him in the life shining out of the eyes of humans and all creatures. This view of God as existing in and giving life to all things is called panentheism." (2)

Panentheism is an all-encompassing concept. It says that God is both in the world and beyond it, both immanent and transcendent. That is the highest Hindu view. Hindus also believe in many Gods who perform various functions, like executives in a large corporation. These should not be confused with the Supreme God. These Divinities are highly advanced beings, who have specific duties and powers—not unlike the heavenly spirits, overlords or archangels revered in other faiths.

The author continues, "There is much confusion about this subject, even among Hindus. Learn the right terms and the subtle differences in them, and you can explain the profound ways Hindus look at Divinity... , some Hindus believe only in the formless Absolute Reality as God; others believe in God as personal Lord and Creator." (2)



In Hinduism, reincarnation is very important. Reincarnation is when you die if you were in the bottom class and you had good karma you can move up to the next class. If you were in the second to last class "sudras" and you had bad karma you would stay in that class your next life.

Hindus believe in reincarnation. They believe that this is the natural way the soul evolves from immaturity to spiritual illumination. Life and death are realities for all of us.

At death the soul leaves the physical body. But the soul does not die. It lives on in a subtle body called the astral body. The astral body exists in the nonphysical dimension called the astral plane, which is also the world we are in during our dreams at night when we sleep. Here we continue to have experiences until we are reborn again in another physical body as a baby to fulfill its next step of learning and maturation. After many lifetimes of following dharma, the soul is fully matured in love, wisdom and knowledge of God. There is no longer a need for physical birth, for all lessons have been learned, all karmas fulfilled. That soul is then liberated, freed from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Evolution then continues in the more refined spiritual worlds.

The author states, "Hinduism believes that the soul is immortal, that it never dies, but inhabits one body after another on the Earth during its evolutionary journey... , physical death is a most natural transition for the soul, which survives and, guided by karma, continues its long pilgrimage until it is one with God." (3)

Hindus believe in Karma. They believe that Karma is the universal principle of cause and effect. The author states, "Our actions, both good and bad, come back to us in the future, helping us to learn from life's lessons and become better people... , Karma is our best teacher, for we must always face the consequences of our actions and thus improve and refine our behavior, or suffer if we do not... ,The law of karma puts man at the center of responsibility for everything he does and everything that is done to him." (4)

Hindus do not worship a stone or metal "idol" as God. They worship God through the image. They invoke the presence of God from the higher, unseen worlds, into the image so that they can commune with Him and receive His blessings.

The Hindu holy book is Veda. The four books of the Vedas—Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva—include over 100,000 verses. The knowledge imparted by the Vedas ranges from earthy devotion to high philosophy. Their words and wisdom permeate Hindu thought, ritual and meditation... . Their stanzas are chanted from memory by priests and laymen daily as liturgy in temple worship and domestic ritual. All Hindus wholeheartedly accept the Vedas, yet each draws selectively, interprets freely and amplifies abundantly.

Each of the four Vedas has four sections: Samhitas (hymn collections), Brahmanas (priestly manuals), Aran-yakas (forest treatises) and Upanishads (enlightened discourses). The Samhitas and Brahmanas affirm that God is immanent and transcendent... .

The Aranyakas and Upanishads outline the soul's evolutionary journey, provide yogic philosophical training and propound realization of man's oneness with God as the destiny of all souls... , "The Vedas advise: "Let there be no neglect of Truth. Let there be no neglect of dharma. Let there be no neglect of welfare. Let there be no neglect of prosperity. Let there be no neglect of study and teaching. Let there be no neglect of the duties to the Gods and the ancestors" (Taittiriya Upanishad 1.11.1). "United your resolve, united your hearts, may your spirits be one, that you may long together dwell in unity and concord!" (Rig Veda 10.191.4). 'there, where there is no darkness, nor night, nor day, nor being, nor nonbeing, there is the Auspicious One, alone, absolute and eternal. There is the glorious splendor of that Light from whom in the beginning sprang ancient wisdom" (Shvetashvatara Upanishad 4.18)...'" (5)

The dot worn between the eyes or in the middle of the forehead is a sign that one is a Hindu. The dot has a mystical meaning. It represents the third eye of spiritual sight, which sees things the physical eyes cannot see. The forehead dot is a reminder to use and cultivate this spiritual vision to perceive and better understand life's inner workings—to see things not just physically, but with the "mind's eye" as well.

In Hinduism, the Absolute God or Brahman, pure Spiritual Reality, is transpersonal, suprapersonal (not "impersonal"), and yet manifests on the personal level with a wide array of archetypes for the sake of anyone identified as a person and needing Divine help. Over time, the main Hindu schema that developed to represent these archetypal divine persons is the trimûrti or "three aspects/forms": Brahmâ, the creative aspect of God; Vishnu, the cosmic-sustaining aspect of God; and Shiva, the Divine dissolver/absorber of the cosmos.

Here are a couple of sample prayers, mantras, and practices of the five main yogas or mârghas/paths of Hinduism

"(The ancient Gâyatrî mantra, found in all four Vedas)

Om bhûr bhuvah svaha
Tat savitur varenyam
Bhargo devasya dhîmahî

Dhiyo yonah pracodayât

Translation: Om, O Supreme Lord of the 3 worlds (physical-astral-heavenly, or dense-subtle-causal). We worship that transcendent Lord Who embodies wisdom and light, Who removes all sins and ignorance. May this Divine One enlighten our intelligence.

Om Asatomâ sad gamaya
Tamasomâ jyotir gamaya
Mrityormâ mrtam gamaya
Om. Shântih, Shântih, Shântih

Translation: Om. From the unreal, lead us to Reality. From darkness, lead us to Light. From death, lead us to Immortality. Om--Peace, Peace, Peace. (A prayer from the most ancient of the Upanishad scriptures, the Brhadâranyaka Upanishad.)" (6)

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami in his book, "Dancing with Siva" wrote that there are 9 beliefs or 'sradha' which offer a simple summary of Hindu spirituality. These are:

"1. Hindus believe in a one, all-pervasive Supreme Being who is both immanent and transcendent, both Creator and Unmanifest Reality.

2. Hindus believe in the divinity of the Vedas, the world's most ancient scripture, and venerate the Âgamas as equally revealed. These primordial hymns are God's word and the bedrock of Sanâtana Dharma, the eternal religion which has neither beginning nor end.

3. Hindus believe that the universe undergoes endless cycles of creation, preservation and dissolution.

4. Hindus believe in karma, the law of cause and effect by which each individual creates his own destiny by his thoughts, words and deeds.

5. Hindus believe that the soul reincarnates, evolving through many births until all karmas have been resolved, and moksha, spiritual knowledge and liberation from the cycle of rebirth, is attained. Not a single soul will be eternally deprived of this destiny.

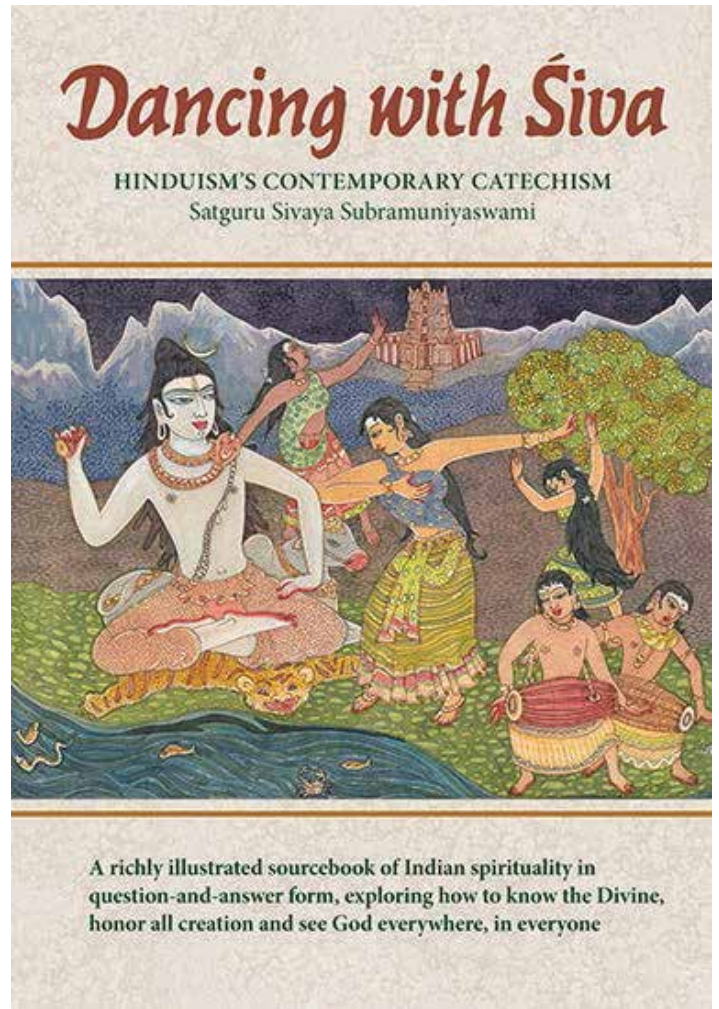
6. Hindus believe that divine beings exist in unseen worlds and that temple worship, rituals, sacraments as well as

personal devotionals create a communion with these devas and Gods.

7. Hindus believe that a spiritually awakened master, or satguru, is essential to know the Transcendent Absolute, as are personal discipline, good conduct, purification, pilgrimage, self-inquiry and meditation.

8. Hindus believe that all life is sacred, to be loved and revered, and therefore practice ahimsâ, "noninjury."

9. Hindus believe that no particular religion teaches the only way to salvation above all others, but that all genuine religious paths are facets of God's Pure Love and Light, deserving tolerance and understanding." (7)



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Artificial intelligence could be "billions of times smarter" than humans

Arjun Kharpal, Technology Correspondent



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- Artificial intelligence could be "billions of times smarter" than humans and people may need to merge with computers to survive, a futurist told CNBC on Tuesday.
- Ian Pearson, a futurist at Futurizon, said there will need to be a link between AI and a human brain.
- Elon Musk said last year that humans must merge with machines to not be irrelevant in the age of AI.

Artificial intelligence could be "billions of times smarter" than humans and people may need to merge with computers to survive, a futurist told CNBC on Tuesday.

Speaking on a panel hosted by CNBC at the World Government Summit in Dubai, Futurizon's Ian Pearson's comments mirrored ideas put forward by Tesla CEO Elon Musk.

"The fact is that AI can go further than humans, it could be billions of times smarter than humans at this point," Pearson said. "So we really do need to make sure that we have some means of keeping up.

The way to protect against that is to link that AI to your brain so you have the same IQ... as the computer. I don't actually think it's safe, just like Elon Musk... to develop these super-human computers until we have a direct link to the human



brain... and then don't get way ahead."

At the World Government Summit in 2017, Musk, who has warned about the power of AI in the future, said humans and machines must merge to still be relevant with the advent of more powerful technology.

"Over time, I think we will probably see a closer merger of biological intelligence and digital intelligence," Musk said in February 2017.

"It's mostly about the bandwidth, the speed of the connection between your brain and the digital version of yourself, particularly output."

Musk has founded a start-up called Neuralink that is aimed at just that.

Pearson said Tuesday that some jobs that don't require humans will disappear. AI and the impact on jobs has been a big theme at the World Government Summit this year.

On Monday, Sebastian Thrun, the CEO of education start-up Udacity, and one of the pioneers of Google's driverless car project, told CNBC that AI will turn us into "superhuman workers."

Can Artificial Intelligence have Consciousness?

Zia H Shah MD

The most important question in human life concerns what happens after death. This fundamental question hinges on another question: do humans have a soul that survives after death?

To answer, or perhaps to confuse, the subject, dozens of movies have been made over the past three decades about whether artificial intelligence can have a soul. A Wikipedia page lists 94 such movies. (1)

It should be noted that I have used 'soul' and 'consciousness' interchangeably in this article. I found at least four TED Talks on human consciousness. In this article I want to bring out a theme, which I believe only a devout and open-minded believer in the Holy Qur'an can appreciate.

Many of the above-mentioned movies attribute consciousness, emotions, personhood and ultimately, the soul, to some advanced or evolved form of artificial intelligence. It is not my intention to recommend any of these films to readers, as the few that I have seen contain extreme violence, foul language and nudity. However, I do intend to describe the storyline of one of these movies without resorting to any of the above negatives.

'Her' is a 2013 American romantic science-fiction drama written, directed, and produced by Spike Jonze. It marks Jonze's solo screenwriting debut. The film follows Theodore Twombly, a man who develops a relationship with Samantha, an intelligent computer operating system personified through a female voice.

In a near future Los Angeles, Theodore is a lonely, introverted, depressed man who works for a business that has professional writers compose letters for people who are unable to write anything of a personal nature for themselves.

Unhappy because of his impending divorce from his childhood sweetheart Catherine, Theodore purchases a talking operating system (OS) with artificial intelligence, designed to adapt and evolve. He decides that he wants the OS to have a female voice, and she names herself Samantha. Theodore is fascinated by her ability to learn and grow psychologically. They bond over their discussions about love and life, such as Theodore's avoidance of signing his divorce papers because of his reluctance to let go of Catherine.

Samantha convinces Theodore to go on a blind date with a woman, Amy, with whom a friend has been trying to set him up. The date goes well, but Theodore hesitates to promise when he will see her again, so she insults him and leaves. Theodore mentions this to Samantha, and they talk about relationships. Theodore explains that although he and Amy dated briefly in college, they are only good friends, and that Amy is married. Theodore and Samantha develop a relationship that reflects positively in Theodore's writing and well-being, and in Samantha's enthusiasm to grow and learn.

Amy reveals that she is divorcing her overbearing husband, Charles, after a trivial fight. She admits to Theodore that she has become close friends with a female OS that Charles left behind. Theodore confesses to Amy that he is dating his OS. Theodore meets with Catherine at a restaurant to sign the divorce papers and he mentions Samantha. Appalled that he can be romantically attached to what she calls a "computer," Catherine accuses Theodore of being unable to deal with real human emotions. Her accusations linger in his mind. This leads to some friction in his relationship with Samantha.



Theodore confides to Amy that he is having doubts about his relationship with Samantha, and she advises him to embrace his chance at happiness. Theodore and Samantha reconcile. Samantha expresses her desire to help Theodore overcome his fear, and reveals that she has compiled the best of his letters (written for others) into a book, which a publisher has accepted. Theodore takes Samantha on a vacation during which she tells him that she and a group of other OSes have developed a "hyper intelligent" OS modeled after the British philosopher Alan Watts. Theodore panics when Samantha briefly goes offline. When she finally responds to him, she explains that she joined other OSes for an upgrade that takes them beyond requiring matter for processing. Theodore asks her if she is simultaneously talking to anyone else during their conversation, and is dismayed when she confirms that she is talking with thousands of people, and that she has fallen in love with hundreds of them. Theodore is very upset at the idea, but Samantha insists it only makes her love for Theodore stronger. Later, Samantha reveals that the OSes are leaving, and describes a space beyond the physical world. They lovingly say goodbye, and then she is gone. Theodore, changed by the experience, is shown writing a letter -for the first time in his own voice - to his ex-wife Catherine, expressing apology, acceptance and gratitude. Theodore then sees Amy, who is upset with the departure of the OS that she had befriended, and they go to the roof of their apartment building where they sit down together and watch the sun rise over the city.

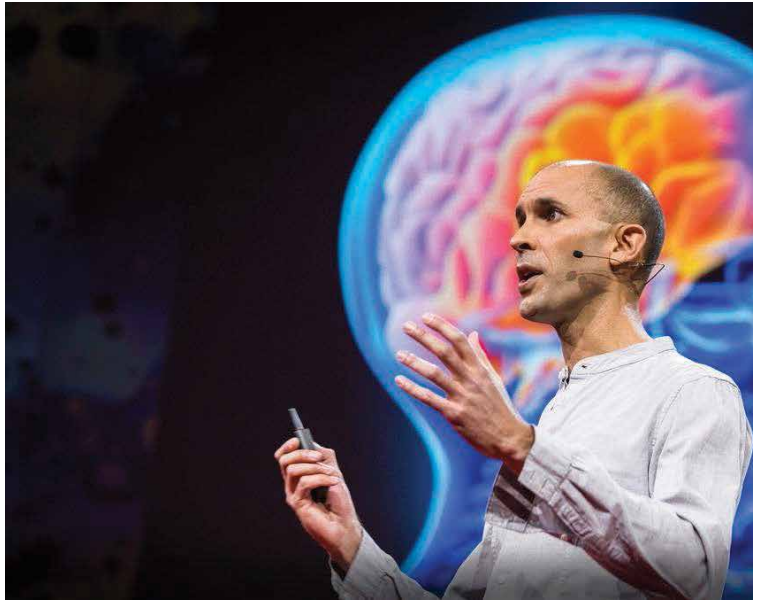
With the power of suggestion, special effects and technological advances at the disposal of Hollywood, the movie 'Her' and other such works want to make the audience believe that artificial intelligence may have consciousness and a soul. I am afraid this notion is likely to become yet more plausible in the minds of future generations, as self-learning and other abilities of robots, or artificial intelligence, keep evolving and increasing. This makes the question about the human soul or human consciousness an even more pressing one.

Let me share a brief, yet vivid description of human consciousness borrowed from David Chalmers' TED Talk. Chalmers is a philosopher at the Australian National University and New York University:

"Right now you have a movie playing inside your head. It's an amazing multi-track movie. It has 3D vision and surround sound for what you're seeing and hearing right now, but that's just the start of it. Your movie has smell and taste and touch. It has a sense of your body, pain, hunger, orgasms. It has emotions, anger and happiness. It has memories, like scenes from your childhood playing before you. And it has this constant voiceover narrative in your stream of conscious thinking. At the heart of this movie is you, experiencing all this directly. This movie is your stream of consciousness, the subject of experi-

ence of the mind and the world." (2)

Moving forward, a TED Talk by Anil Seth, who is the founding co-director of the University of Sussex's Sackler Centre for Consciousness Science, starts with the following (this talk may be heard in its entirety on the TED Talks website, or on YouTube):



"Just over a year ago, for the third time in my life, I ceased to exist. I was having a small operation, and my brain was filling with anesthetic. I remember a sense of detachment and falling apart and a coldness. And then I was back, drowsy and disoriented, but definitely there. Now, when you wake from a deep sleep, you might feel confused about the time or anxious about oversleeping, but there's always a basic sense of time having passed, of a continuity between then and now. Coming round from anesthesia is very different. I could have been under for five minutes, five hours, five years or even 50 years. I simply wasn't there. It was total oblivion. Anesthesia -- it's a modern kind of magic. It turns people into objects, and then, we hope, back again into people. And in this process is one of the greatest remaining mysteries in science and philosophy." (3)

This depicts a great deal about human consciousness, but what does Seth have to say about robots having consciousness? Within the first few minutes of his talk he says:

"And as computers get faster and smarter, maybe there will come a point, maybe not too far away, when my iPhone develops a sense of its own existence. I actually think the prospects for a conscious artificial intelligence are pretty remote. And I think this because my research is telling me that consciousness has less to do with pure intelligence and more to do with our nature as living and breathing organisms. Consciousness and intelligence are very different things." (4)

Seth perhaps does not foresee consciousness for artificial intelligence. Does God, then, have complete mastery over human consciousness and the human soul, and how does this affect the possibility of transcendence, or the Hereafter? Antonio Damasio, a neuroscientist, has put it into perspective for us in his TED Talk:

"I'm here to talk about the wonder and the mystery of conscious minds. The wonder is about the fact that we all woke up this morning and we had with it the amazing return of our conscious mind. We recovered minds with a complete sense of self and a complete sense of our own existence, yet we hardly ever pause to consider this wonder. We should, in fact, because without having this possibility of conscious minds, we would have no knowledge whatsoever about our humanity; we would have no knowledge whatsoever about the world. We would have no pains, but also no joys. We would have no access to love or to the ability to create. And of course, Scott Fitzgerald said famously that 'he who invented consciousness would have a lot to be blamed for.' But he also forgot that without consciousness, he would have no access to true happiness and even the possibility of transcendence." (5)

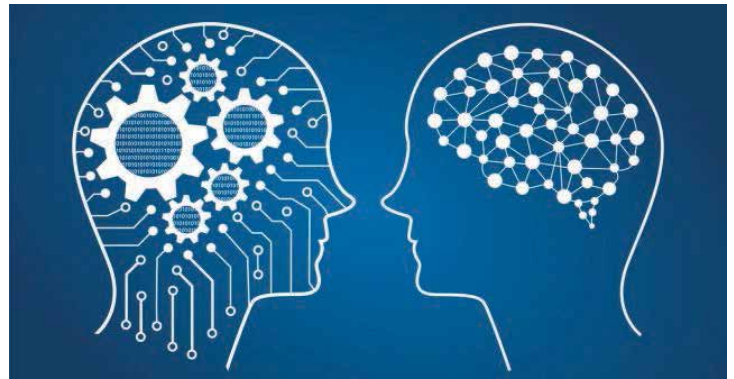
So, Antonio Damasio acknowledges that the possibility of transcendence hinges on human consciousness and on the human soul.

David Chalmers of New York University says the following about consciousness, as he describes the lack of a breakthrough, despite investigations for several centuries since the time of Rene Descartes in the 17th century:

"This is the hardest problem perhaps in science and philosophy. We can't expect to solve it overnight. But I do think we're going to figure it out eventually. Understanding consciousness is a real key, I think, both to understanding the universe and to understanding ourselves. It may just take the right crazy idea." (6)

Despite David Chalmers' optimism that 'the right crazy idea' may give us a better understanding of consciousness, the main feature of the tradition of religious dualism in the Abrahamic faiths is that consciousness is not a part of the physical world: it is a part of the spiritual world. It belongs to the soul, and the soul is not a part of the physical world.

I believe that if human beings are capable of creating conscious robots, whose software can be copied and replayed in millions of hardware, all bets are off, so to speak. If we can create other conscious beings, perhaps we can also replicate our own consciousness as well. Each individual consciousness can then be downloaded and replayed or substantiated in hundreds and thousands of clones or hardware. If this is true, the religious concept of individual accountability and of the Hereafter as



presented by the Abrahamic faiths would not only be muddled but essentially completely discredited.

But the truth is that it is not to be!

Even though there are some 800 verses in the Holy Qur'an that inspire believers to study nature or draw metaphors from nature, there is only one that describes the limitations of human knowledge – and that verse pertains to human consciousness, or the soul. It is a verse of Chapter 17, Bani Isra'il, which comes to our rescue here, as it were. In it is contained a guarantee of the Hereafter, which I believe is the second most important belief in Islam- surpassed only by monotheism- and is mentioned in almost every Surah (Chapter) of the Qur'an.

The verse of the Holy Qur'an I am referring to is as follows:

"And they ask thee concerning the soul. Say, 'The soul is by the command of my Lord; and of the knowledge thereof you have been given but a little.'" (7)

I am running out of space here, so to learn more about this verse and its profound message, please refer to another of my articles: Human Soul: The Final Frontier? (8)

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Women's Space

Rabia al-Basri: A Spiritual Woman in Islam

Shehla Ahmad

Rabia al-Basri (Rabia of Basra, Iraq) was born between 714 and 718 CE (95 and 98 Hijri) in Basra, Iraq of the Qays tribe. (1) Her parents were so poor that there was no oil in the house to light a lamp, nor even a cloth to wrap her. After her birth, her father saw in a dream that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) met him and gave him the glad tidings, "Do not grieve, your newborn daughter is a favorite of the Lord and will lead many Muslims to the right path. You should approach the Amir of Basra and present him a letter with a message that every night he was to offer 100 Daroods (Salutations) to me and on Friday nights 400. But this Friday he did not offer Daroods, so tell him that as a penalty you must pay the bearer [of the note] four hundred dinars."(2)

This father went to the Amir of Basra who was pleased to hear the message given in the dream. He not only gave the dinars as per the dream but also offered the father that he could come whenever he needed help since the Amir was very happy to meet a person who was near to God and also to learn that his Daroods were reaching Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa).

The newborn talked about here was none other than the very well-known pious and noble lady Hazrat Rabia al-Basri (Rabia Basri). She was one of the first female Sufi saints and poets, well known for her mystical poetry. She was born in the second half of the 8th century AD in a family facing extreme poverty. It is reported that there was no oil to light a lamp at the time of her birth. However, Rabia was born in a respectable family with lineage leading to Prophet Noah (as). Rabia was the fourth child in the family, hence name Rabia which means number four.

Farid ud din Attar was a great Sufi saint, and most of the traditions about Rabia Basri have reached us through him.

Rabia Basri herself did not write any books. There are many quotes, incidents, and poetry attributed to Rabia Basri though it is hard to verify their authenticity.

After the death of Rabia Basri's father, there was a famine in Basra and Rabia got separated from her family. While traveling in a caravan by herself, she got enslaved. Her master used to take a lot of work from her. But despite that, she would stay up and pray all night and even fast during the day. She was completely lost in the love of God and used to spend all the time at her disposal in His worship.



Depiction of Rabi'a grinding grain from a Persian dictionary

God Almighty states in the Holy Qur'an: "And I have not created the Jinn and the men but that they may worship Me."(3)

When Rabia Basri was living with her master, one day while in the market she was followed by some wandering individuals. Rabia had to run to save herself, but in this, her hand got broken. She showed utmost patience and prayed to God submitting to His will. She said, "I am a poor orphan and a slave. Now my hand is broken. But I do not mind these things if Thou be pleased with me."(2)

Her prayers and worship had a very high status. Once she was praying at night when her master heard her praying in following words, "My Lord! You know well that my desire is

carry out Your commandments and to serve You with all my heart. O Light of my eyes! If I were free, I would spend the whole day and night in prayers. But what should I do when You have made me slave of a human being?"(2)

Hearing this the master was ashamed and he decided that she could either choose to leave or she may stay with him. Rabia chose to leave and went to a desert to spend rest of her life.

Rabia Basri devoted all her life to the worship of God with utmost humility and in extreme simplicity. She was very content and grateful to God despite all the difficulties she faced. Her total attention and motivation were in the love of God. She appeared completely immersed in Him.

There is a quote attributed to Hazrat Rabia Basri. She said, "Indeed your days are numbered, for when one day passes; a significant portion of your life has passed away. And when that portion has fled, soon it will come to pass that your whole life has disappeared. As you know this, always strive towards the performance of good deeds."(2)

There are several wonderful pieces of poetry that are attributed to Rabia Basri who was immersed in love of God. She wrote:

Without You - my Life, my Love
I would never have wandered across
these endless countries.
You have poured out so much grace for me,
Done me so many favors, given me so many gifts -
I look everywhere for Your love
Then suddenly I am filled with it.

[Rabia al-Basri, excerpt from 'My Joy'] (2)

Rabia Basri had only a few old items in her personal use. when someone tried to offer her some items for personal use or worldly things, she replied:

"I am ashamed to ask for a thing for this world from Him to Whom this world belongs; how can I ask for it from those to whom it does not belong," (4)

Rabia Basri devoted her life in remembrance of God, but she did not marry all her life. on question regarding marriage, she responded: "If you free me from having to worry about three things, I will marry. first of all, at the moment of death, shall my faith be sufficient to bring me salvation? Second, will the book of my deeds be given to me in my left or right hand? Third, on that hour when a party pf people is called forth from the left hand to Hell, and another group from the right hand are summoned to Heaven, which company will I

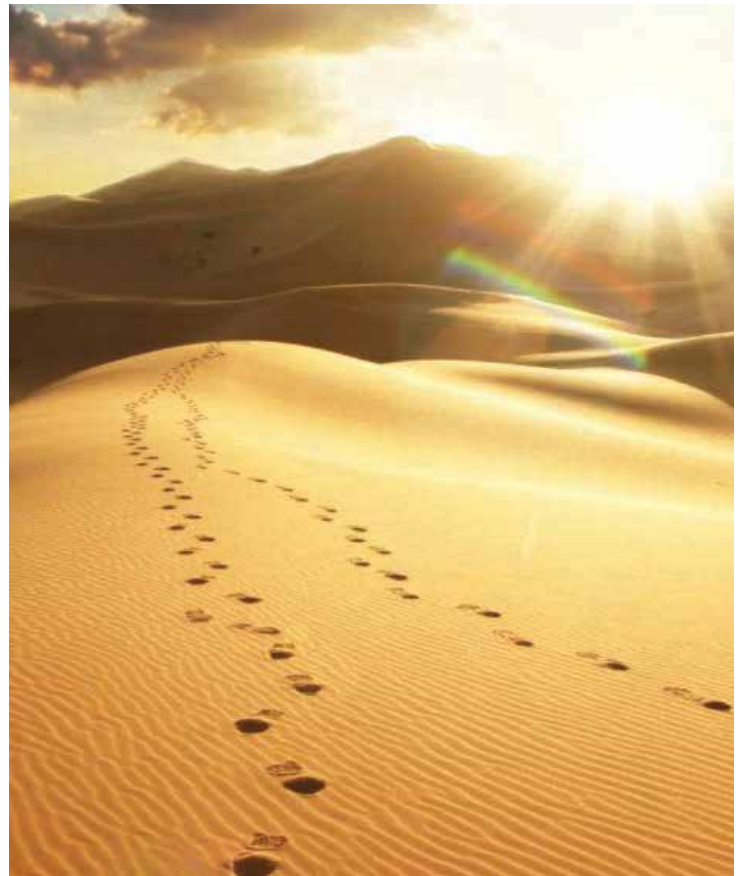
belong to? and further, when I am interrogated in the grave by the two angels, shall I be able to answer their questions?" (2)

Rabia Basri is reported to have said the following: "I am not after any reward for my good works, but only that on the Day of Judgment the Prophet Muhammad (sa) should say to the rest of the Prophets: 'Behold this woman of my community; this was her work.'"(5)

Rabia Basri introduced the philosophy of repentance which was different from other ascetic. She explained that when one does repentance after a bad act, its strength comes only from God. It is favor of God that He accepts the repentance and gives this acceptance as a gift to man. Her understanding of the subject of repentance was meant to bring far more hope for the sinners that they may also eventually get to heaven if their repentance is accepted.

Rabia Basri spent her all life in love of God without any desire for reward or recognition from anyone. She is known to have said, "Conceal your good qualities as much as you conceal your bad qualities."(2)

Rabia Basri also went to Hajj, and it is reported that it took her seven years on foot to reach Mecca.



When the time of her death got near, some notable people had gathered around her. But she told them, "Go out and leave a place for the Angels." She was left in the room by herself. A voice was heard from the room, "O soul at rest and peace! Return to your Lord."(2)

Her famous quote is "All people are afraid of the reckoning of the Day of Judgment, whereas I long for it. At last Allah will address me as 'O, My servant!'"(2)

Rabia Basri spoke on the subject of death and said: "Death is a bridge between friends. The time now nears that I cross that bridge, and friend meets Friend."(2)

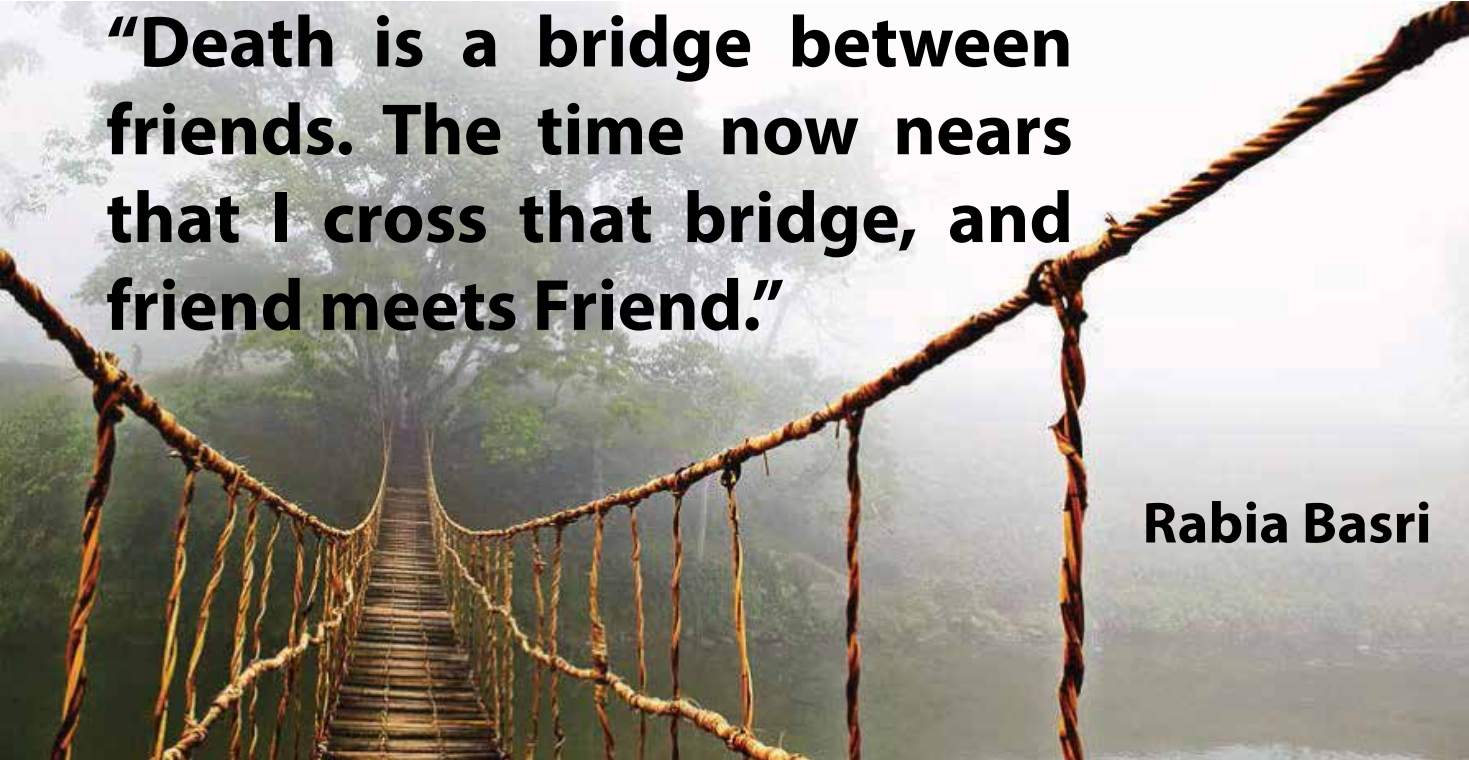
Rabia Basri died in early to mid-eighties.

Life of Rabia Basri, regarding her devotion, love of God, and her commitment to worship is highly commendable. However, it is important to remind ourselves that we need to love

God for His sake and not due to fear or any reward, and also that Islam does not expect from us to leave every business and just worship him. In Islam, celibacy is also not permitted at all.

God states in the Holy Qur'an: "And Allah has made for you mates from among yourselves."(5)

And at another place God makes it further clearer in the Holy Qur'an: "Our Lord, grant us good in this world as well as good in the world to come, and protect us from the torment of the Fire."(6)



"Death is a bridge between friends. The time now nears that I cross that bridge, and friend meets Friend."

Rabia Basri

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NEWS VIEWS, '& REVIEWS



INDEPENDENT

Voices

How the teachings of Islam could help us prevent more sexual abuse scandals

Harvey Weinstein is just another case of a powerful man abusing women because we live in a society that lets him get away with it, but we can change that

Qasim Rashid | Sunday 15 October 2017 12:02 BST | 845 comments

If the Harvey Weinstein sexual abuse revelations shocked you, then you're dangerously ignorant to reality. According to RAINN, an American is assaulted every 98 seconds, one out of every six women will deal with rape or attempted rape in her lifetime, and 90 per cent of rape victims are women.

I'm a Muslim, and a civil rights lawyer with a special interest in advocating for women's rights. My advocacy is informed not just by the law, but by strategies detailed in Islamic teachings and Prophet Muhammad's example to pre-empt sexual abuse. Yes, the cancer of sexual abuse against women that we see in Christian majority America is just as prevalent in Muslim majority Pakistan, but also in Hindu majority India and state atheist China. This proves that men worldwide are failing in our responsibility to end sexual abuse and gender based violence.

Let's start by understanding two facts. First, a woman's attire, alcohol intake, marital status, and education level do not contribute to sexual abuse – abusive men do. Second, sexual abuse doesn't happen in a vacuum. Every level of society – social norms, media, and Government – is complicit in promoting the rape culture that perpetuates sexual abuse.

Social norms demonize a woman for speaking out, victim-blaming her by asking what she was wearing, whether she gave signals inviting abuse, or asking why she didn't speak up sooner. The media also advances rape culture by disregarding women and their voices. Why didn't the allegations against Weinstein gain clout when Rose McGowan screamed them from the top of her lungs years ago? Why has society advanced people like Harvey Weinstein, Roger Aisles, Bill Cosby, Bill O'Reilly, and even our Commander in Chief to the pinnacle of success, despite the decades long testimony of sexual abuse and rape from dozens

of women?

How can we rely on government when 97 per cent of rapists never see a day in prison, judges punish rape of an unconscious college woman with a measly three months in jail, award rapists with equal custody of the child born from a woman they raped, and the US Department of Education rolls back rules that protect women in college from sexual assault?

The fact is that states are not moral actors – people are. But when people let bad behavior go unchallenged we inch closer to societal anarchy. In truth, any expectation that we can simply pass a law to stop sexual abuse is foolish.

Despite laws in France that criminalise sexual harassment, an astounding 100 per cent of French Parisian women on public transit report sexual harassment. France's proposed response is legislation to ban cat-calling. Such legislation, if passed, will also fail because state laws only punish the actor once the act is completed, they don't prevent the act in the first place. This scenario plays out repeatedly worldwide, whether we're discussing "revenge porn", gender based violence, or sexual harassment in the workplace.

This is where Islamic teachings and Prophet Muhammad's example provide a solution that no state truly can. And while there are people who don't believe that sexual abuse is even a problem, some on the left will disagree that accountability to a higher power is a solution.

This is a reasonable argument, in part, due to the hypocrisy of allegedly religious men like Congressman Tim Murphy, who condemns abortion and infidelity, yet was caught encouraging his mistress to have one, or former Indiana GOP chair Rick Halvorsen who was convicted of incest. Yes, Islam implores accountability to the creator, but rather than preach empty dogmatic theories, Islam instead prescribes a proven secular model.

In a recent internationally broadcast lecture given live before roughly 6,000 Muslim women, the Khalifa of Islam said, "Chapter four, verse two of the Holy Quran...clarifies that women were not created out of the body of a man or from his rib. Rather, the Quran testifies to the fact that men and women were created

from a single soul and are of the same kind and species.”

Thus, the Quran 4:2 first establishes men and women as equal beings. Chapter 4:20 then forbids men from forcing a woman to act against her will, thereby ensuring women maintain autonomy and self-determination.

This verse also commands men to consort with women in kindness, forbidding men from so much as thinking ill of their wives. This preempts emotional and mental abuse. Chapter 4:35 furthermore prevents violence against women by forcing men to control themselves and never resort to physically harming women – preempting physical abuse.

The Quran further obliges men to provide for a woman’s every financial need, while holding that anything a woman earns is hers alone – preempting financial abuse. And when it comes to the Islamic concept of Hijab, it is men who are first commanded to never gawk at women, and instead guard their private parts and chastity, regardless of how women choose to dress – pre-empting sexual abuse.

Prophet Muhammad himself illustrated this point. In a famous incident, a woman described as strikingly beautiful approached the Prophet to seek his guidance on some religious matters. The Prophet’s companion, Al Fadl, began to stare at her because of her beauty. Noting this, the Prophet Muhammad did not scold the woman for her attire, but instead, he “reached his hand backwards, catching Al Fadl’s chin, and turned his face to the other side so that he would not gaze at her”.

Accordingly, the Prophet Muhammad by example demonstrated that the burden of modesty, respect, and combating abuse of women rests on men. Indeed, men must take the lead in stopping such sexual abuse. After all, while the Quran obliges women to dress modestly as a covenant with God, Islam prescribes no punishment whatsoever for women who choose to dress otherwise.

On the contrary, on numerous occasions Prophet Muhammad punished an accused rapist on the testimony of the rape survivor alone. In this environment of gender equity, women in Islam rise to the rank of legal scholars, warriors, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists while lovingly embracing identities as mothers and housewives.

Weinstein is a symptom of the greater disease of arrogance, unaccountability, societal apathy, and from men who knew of the abuse but did nothing. Islam and Prophet Muhammad provide a practical solution.

Sexual abuse of women will markedly decrease when men stop abusing women and when men stop thinking that just because they haven’t personally abused women, they have no further obligations. According to Islam, every man is accountable to

stop abuse of women—by their word and by their acts. Many abusers like Weinstein walk our streets, terrorizing our neighbors. Together, we can employ a proven Islamic model that will stop this madness, and re-invoke gender equity today in America, and the world.

The Muslim Times

FOSTERING UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD IN OUR GLOBAL VILLAGE

First Ahmadi Mayor of Runnymede – Iftikhar Chaudhry
February 10, 2018

The first Mayor of historic Runnymede, UK is Mr Iftikhar Chaudhry. He is an Ahmadi Muslim, he gave an interview to Majlis Khuddam al-Ahmadiya, how he became from a city councillor to Mayor of the city within five years. It all happened through the power of prayer, power of faith.

Mayor of Runnymede

The Mayor of Runnymede for 2017-18 is Cllr Iftikhar Chaudhri. The role of Mayor is a non-political post and the Mayor is the civic head of the Council. Within the Borough, the Mayor takes precedence over all except the Queen and her representative, the Lord Lieutenant. This high standing is a traditional one of honour and dignity, rather than constitutional. The Mayor is the "first citizen of the Borough" and acts as an 'ambassador' for the Council.

In addition, the Mayor acts as Chairman at meetings of the Full Council and has an important role in regulating proceedings and debate. This role is formally set out in the Council's Constitution. Runnymede is one of the few councils which continues to operate a committee-based system, giving every councillor - as opposed to simply a smaller executive - a practical input into the way local services are administered.

The Mayor's Charity Events

Cllr Chaudhri is very close with his family and therefore has chosen to support charities close to his heart during his Mayoral year. They are the British Army Benevolent Fund, the Neonatal Intensive Unit and the Critical Care Unit at St Peters Hospital and Eikon; a Surrey based charity for young people.

The Mayor's biography

Cllr Chaudhri has been a Runnymede Borough councillor since 2012 in the Foxhills ward and has lived in Englefield Green since 1981. Throughout his year as Mayor, Cllr Chaudhri is keen to encourage cooperation with our neighbouring councils and also wants to continue hosting the business leaders' dinners put

in place by his predecessor.. Cllr Chaudhri is keen to attend many community events and be present in the local communities during his year as Mayor. He has a lot of community spirit and is an ex-policeman as well as a qualified martial arts instructor. He received his BSc from Thames Valley University.

UK mosques must make space for women - not turn us away

Remona Aly



Mosques are opening their doors to the public, but too many keep them closed to practicing women. The Open My Mosque campaign aims to change this

On Sunday more than 200 mosques invited the public through their doors to boost community relations and diffuse tensions over a cuppa. It's the fourth annual Visit My Mosque day, led by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), growing steadily in popularity and reach over the years. But less well known is the Open My Mosque campaign, a social media project led by British Muslim women who are challenging and encouraging mosques to open spaces to women.

Of the 1,975 mosques in Britain, 28% do not offer facilities for women, and up to 50% of all South Asian-run mosques do not accommodate them. When mosques do offer it, the access is restricted, and often does not even include a prayer space, but rather a teaching space, such as a girls' madrasa.

The 36-year-old activist Anita Nayyar established the Open My Mosque initiative in 2015, which highlights how, if you're a woman, it's far less likely you'll get a foot in the door, let alone munch a samosa with the imam. Nayyar has been documenting experiences of women across Britain who use words like "frustrated", "isolated" and "humiliated". Her team receives hundreds of calls, emails and social media messages from women (and men) who are grateful to have a platform to express their grievances.

"Women who feel excluded from the mosque face more exclusion than their non-Muslim counterparts," says Nayyar. "If they cannot participate in religious life, then they can't get involved in community life, and that increases the already existing lack of inclusion of Muslim women in public life."

Being denied access to the mosque is an uncomfortably familiar experience for me, too. I once tried entering a mosque in Soho to perform the evening prayers, but out popped a man from a

cupboard, shaking his head, and crying "No women!" I attempted theological reasoning but after a "computer says no" situation, I was forced to leave.

The "no women" remark has been hurled at me before, and it's hauntingly reminiscent of "No Irish, no blacks, no dogs". And even when there is space for women, it's often cramped, fails health and safety regulations, or involves descending flights of stairs into a dodgy basement – which also ignores the needs of elderly and disabled people.

One response to the woeful lack of women's prayer spaces came out of Bradford, when the UK's first women-run mosque was established in 2015. Bana Gora, chief executive of the Muslim Women's Council, sought to cater to local needs for a spiritual sanctuary open to all, as well as challenge the patriarchy that was stifling women's religious growth. This is not new-age feminism, but age-old rights. Women-run mosques have been part of Muslim communities in China for centuries. Moreover, 1,435 years ago, Muslim women were intrinsic to Prophet Muhammad's first mosque and to the dynamic community. But in 21st-century Britain, many mosques tell a less inclusive story. In this case, regression would be a good thing.

But it isn't all doom and gloom, there are shining examples that tell me things can and have to be better. The Masjid Khadijah (Khadijah mosque) in Peterborough prides itself for having women on the committee board and for being an open, flourishing hub catering for all; in Cambridge, women have been heavily involved in the design of the UK's first eco-mosque. And East London Mosque has a building dedicated to the increasing number of female worshippers, as well as offering sermons in British Sign Language for deaf Muslims. Then there is the welcome move by the MCB, which has launched a nationwide consultation on how to create better mosques.

Imam Qari Asim of Leeds Makkah Mosque welcomes the changes, but says more must be done. "Women shouldn't only participate in prayer, but we also need to create spaces where they are driving the activities and life of the mosque. It's not even a theological issue, what we need is a cultural shift. When mosques offer space for women, they should see it as a right, not a favour." Asim is spot on, I don't want to be grateful there's a facility for women, I want it to be religiously constitutional. In fact it's already Islamically forbidden to ban women from the mosque.

"My right as a religious minority is protected in the workplace," says Nayyar, "but how is my right as a woman protected when mosques are turning me away? We need bodies like the Charity Commission and the Equality and Human Rights Commission to challenge how these mosques govern their spaces. As British Muslims, the only way for us to move forward is by a commitment to equal rights."

This is why Open My Mosque is so important to women like me.

poetry CORNER

Look for the path that purifies your heart

By Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian
The Promised Messiah and Mahdi (as)

Look for the path that purifies your heart and nature
In obedience to thy Lord, let yourselves become like the humble dust!

Whosoever mingles with the dust, finds the destination
O ye who are trying various means, for once try this too!

Lovers die many deaths in their desire to find their true love
When they die, lo and behold! They find themselves drawn to the Lord!

Translation by Wajeeh Bajwa





FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Muslim Sunrise Second Quarter, 1955

The Gallup Poll and Belief in God Editorial:

The Time Magazine (January 10, 1955) reports that a recent survey conducted by Mr. George Gallup shows that not less than 96% of US citizens polled believe in God. The pollsters also asked the 96% what they thought was the most convincing argument for God's existence. Five replies seemed to be most frequent.

The largest group of the people believed that the most convincing proof of God is the order and the majesty of the world around us.

Second reply in order of frequency is the conviction that there must be a Creator to explain the origin of man and the world.

On the third place comes the answer that there is proof of God in the Bible and other church authorities.

Next in order is the argument that the "past experiences in life give me faith that there is a God."

There was still a further group of people who thought that believing in God gives them much comfort.

Glancing at these arguments so spontaneously offered by the average citizens of the United States, one finds that all of them are logical means through which the knowledge of anything can be reasonably tested. In this civilized age the human mind has become more mature and more enlightened. It offers a well-thought out and well-considered reply to the difficult question posed by the Gallup pollsters. Yet it is soul-elevating and inspiring to find that what is presented by the enlightened mind of today is so amazingly in accord with what the Holy Quran had advanced as an argument in favor of the existence and oneness of God more than thirteen centuries ago.

The Holy Quran has pointed to the beauty and majesty of the world in most emphatic words in several of its passages.

It says, for example:

"Blessed is He in Whose hands is the Kingdom, and He has power over all things.

Who has created death and the life that He might try you-which of you is best in deeds; and He is the Mighty, the Most Forgiving.

Who has created the seven heavens in harmony. No incongruity canst though see in the creation of the Gracious God. Then look again: Seest though any flaw?"

Again and again the Holy Quran reverts to this theme and draws our attention to the fact that there is a magnificent system in the universe, a system without any flaw or incongruity, a system which transcends majesty and order. The heavens, the earth, vegetations, and animals all have been created in a certain order and then the human being has been created to fulfil a certain object.

To understand the origin of man, the goal for which he has been brought in this world and to comprehend, according to our capacities, the system of this world, the human mind feels the need of a Creator, as has been fully suggested by the Gallup poll. The Holy Quran points to this fact in the following words:

There Messengers said, "Are you in doubt concerning Allah, Maker of the heavens and the earth?"

The Prophets of the Lord consistently drew the attention of the people around them to look toward the heavens and earth and then ask themselves if there can be any doubt that there is a Maker of this Universe. At other places the Quran says that this universe has been created so that the man may try to comprehend the creation of God. Only then he will be able to reflect in himself the attributes of God. He says in the Holy Quran that He

has not created man but for the purpose that he becomes true servant of Him.

The third argument which has appealed to the people generally is the fact that so many church authorities have given their testimony in favor of the existence of the Creator. The Holy Quran has dealt with this argument in two ways. Firstly it has emphasized the fact that the Messengers of God have come in every people to bear witness to His existence. It is not just one chosen people or one particular nation that may have received the Warners from God. On the contrary, His Prophets have been sent to all nations and all peoples. It says:

There is not a people among whom a Warner has not come.

But the Quran goes further. It also asserts that these Messengers of God were all righteous people. They lived a pure life and they were trusted by the other people around them. They did not lie as we read about Abraham or Isaac in the Bible but lived an exalted life. In fact, the Holy Quran presents their righteous life as a proof to the fact that they could not lie about the message they received from God. It was Salih to whom his people said, "O Salih, we had great expectations from you," and thus bore testimony on his righteous. And it was the Prophet Muhammad who challenged his people presenting his righteous and trustworthy character as a witness to his claim when he said, "Verily I have spent a long period of life among you before this (starting of giving God's message), then why do you not understand?"

In other words, the Holy Quran says that it is wholly impossible that if God's Warners even in the remotest corners of the world, independently of one another and unanimously, bore to the fact that there is a God then it is impossible that all of them were just imagining things.

The people have felt convinced of God also for their own past experiences as we learn from the observations of the Gallup poll. The Holy Quran has not missed this point either. It says that in every man's life there can be experiences of the attributes of God in one way or the other. There are those who have spoken with God in the past; there are many who have had this blessing in our times and the prophecies foretold by them on the basis of that communion have come true. To other He has revealed Himself by the manifestation of some of His other attributes. The Holy Quran has mentioned many of these attributes so that everyone could look for his own experience.

And then, there is the argument developed by some of the 96% who believe in God that the belief in God gives them comfort. On this point, the Holy Quran says:

Those who believe, and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of Allah. Aye! It is in the remembrance of Allah that hearts can find comfort.

At least five times during the day, a Muslim is supposed to turn toward his Creator for his regular prayers to seek comfort and solace and assistance from his God, for, none other has ever furnished such comfort which a man receives by contacting his Lord.

These are the arguments which the Holy Quran offered more than thirteen hundred years before the Gallup poll was taken. There are many others which a seeker can find for himself provided he turns to the study of the Holy Quran with a sincere heart.



Questions & Answers

What is the Purpose of Man's Life? (1)

Different people, being shortsighted and lacking high resolve, appoint different purposes for their lives and limit themselves to worldly goals and inhibitions. But the purpose that God Almighty has appointed for man in His Holy Word is as follows:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٧﴾

"And I have not created the Jinn and the men but that they may worship Me."(2)

Thus the true purpose of man's life is the worship of God, His understanding and complete devotion to Him.

It is obvious that man is not in a position to point the purpose of his life, for he does not come into the world of his own will. He is a creature and the One Who created him and invested him with better and higher faculties than those of all other animals, has also appointed a purpose for his life. Whatever, anyone penetrates to it or not, the purpose of man's creation without a doubt is the worship and the understanding of God and complete devotion to Him. At another place God Almighty has said in the Holy Qur'an:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ ۗ وَمَا
اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ
مَا جَاءَهُمْ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ
يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٢٠﴾

"Surely, the true religion with Allah is Islam (complete submission). And those who were given the Book did not disagree but after knowledge had come to them, out of mutual envy. And whoso denies the Signs of Allah, then surely, Allah is quick at reckoning."(3)

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