

LUMS RELIGIOUS SOCIETY

FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER 2018

The Quran and I

Rasheed Arshad sahab presented a session on 'The Essential Traits of a True Momin' on 7th February, 2018. He mentioned how becoming a true momin is important for all of us and that the momin is such that when Allah SWT is mentioned, his/her heart trembles. Islam is not a religion where you can pick and choose which parts you want to believe in and which you don't. It is not to do or not to do; it is simply to believe or not to believe. For example, there is a difference in speaking the truth and in being an honest person. Islam becomes the nature of a momin, where the attributes such as honesty become a part of his/her nature. Furthermore, the likes and dislikes of a momin are in relation to the likes and dislikes of their deen. Imaan or faith is the state of a believer; deen doesn't just come to the tongue of a believer but it shows in his/her actions as well. To do an act for the pleasure of Allah SWT is more than doing an act for the desire of the Jannah. The carrot and stick approach cannot be applied to Jannah and Jahannam, they are nothing less of physical abodes. A Christian theologian once said that 'God is wholly,' meaning no creation can be compared to Him; this makes it natural to fear Him or to want Him.

All the big things in life are tragedy and all the small things in life are comedy. The remembrance of Allah SWT generates fear in a momin, but this shouldn't be taken in a negative light, rather in actuality, it is a paradox. Allah SWT says in the Quran that "when the ayahs of the Quran are read in front of them, their hair stand in fear but then their hearts become soft". This can also be taken as a sign of increase in their Imaan. In Surah Anfal, Allah SWT mentions five attributes of the Momin.

1. A momin fears Allah SWT.
2. A momin's Imaan (faith) increases when the Quran is recited.
3. A momin's level of tawakkul. Everything in the world is so commoditized now that we no longer experience the feelings of Imaan or tawakkul. There was a time when farmers used to have the highest tawakkul on Allah SWT. They believed that Allah SWT would bring rain when needed and either it be a good harvest or bad, they were both from Allah SWT. However, now the farmers would rather rely on the predictions of Google.
4. Quran and the feelings that it is supposed to inspire in us. We lack being the audience of the Quran and spending time in understanding it.
5. The last attribute is to spend on others from what Allah SWT has blessed us with.



HALAQAS



DOUBTS AND DESIRES



HOW I CAME TO ISLAM



ETHICAL TRAINING PROGRAM

HALAQAS

Ignorance, Intolerance and Impatience

One of the significant aspects of the life of Nabi Kareem sws is that Allah SWT blessed him with ilm (knowledge) that He did not give to anyone else. And that ilm is devoid of any khata (mistake). The ilm of dunya on the other hand is full of flaws. Allah SWT asks the man what is it that you have understood of the society. Whatever you have acquired is nothing but limited knowledge by which you can't spend your entire life and make every decision of wrong and right. We see ignorance everywhere, in our society, in our classrooms and amongst ourselves. People who come to deen are even more ignorant, and the sad part is that nobody is trying to solve this problem. Allah SWT says that there is no forcefulness in deen. When we try to perceive deen we think it as forceful because we have made it like that by expecting everyone to be like us. Instead of appreciating people who are praying along with us, we start thinking about what jama`at he belongs to. This approach closes all doors of love.

There is jalal only between Allah SWT and His abd (slave) for the sake of teaching. But Allah SWT doesn't give us that right of jalal over each other. Like your father would have the right to get angry with you for your tarbiyat, but your brother doesn't have that right on you.

We see that Allah SWT often has a strong stance towards a people, but Nabi Kareem sws would make them softer as he was sent as Rehmat-ul-lil-Alameen. In the time of Nabi Kareem sws, even the jews used to come to the masjid.

"Today, we have lost that tolerance, even towards our Muslim brothers. Abdullah bin Umar (R.A.) was passionate about following the Sunnah of Nabi Kareem sws. He was poor and lived a very simple life. In one month only once would meat be cooked at his house and he wouldn't eat until his Jewish neighbor had eaten it too. We don't do the same for even our Muslim fellows. Nabi Kareem sws would be sorrowful at the demise of any Jew. There are a lot of things common among Muslims, Christian and the Jews. We have to be tolerant.

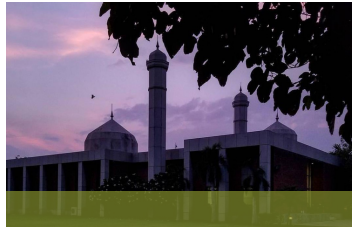
We live in a time of high intolerance. Differences will be removed amongst ourselves when we listen to the perspectives of each other. It was the character of Nabi Kareem sws that inspired so many people to convert to Islam. We have to follow our Nabi sws and make ourselves good-charactered so that people come to deen because of that.

There are four kinds of ignorance.

1. Zanul Jahiliya: the basis of this ignorance is assumptions. People associate every wrong or evil to Allah SWT. They say that Allah has created both the evil and the good.
2. Tabarrul Jahiliya: when a person tries to beautify himself in ignorance. People are getting more and more vulgar as we go further away from the prophetic era.
3. Hamiyatul Jahiliya: when we gang up on people, for example, in the name of 'school of thought.'
4. Hukmul Jahiliya: all the decisions are based on ignorance. There is no tolerance at all.

A mother gives her child two apples, with the intention to teach her child the concept of sharing. She then asks her child to share one apple with her. The child instead takes a bite of the first apple and then of the second one too. The mother becomes sad thinking she has failed to teach her child the lesson. The child then offers her one apple saying, "Mom, this one is sweeter." Whenever you feel in life that you do not get something, then remember Allah is that Being who will give you something much better, in fact, the best. We have to learn to be patient.

Free Will and Predestination



Free will The first thing we need to understand is that free will and predestination are different. While free will is connected to the creation, destiny is connected to the Creator. To further comprehend the concept of free will and predestination, we need to understand time and space. For Allah past, present and future do not exist while we are bound by time. Time and space is the creation, and the Creator is Allah SWT; He has created the dimension of time. We are able to grasp the fact that Allah knows our past and our present, but what worries us is that He also knows our future. Future is the present that will come to us someday, and we will have to make choices. People make predictions for each other based on experiences and what they know of the other person; that is Dunya. What about Allah SWT, who is our Creator and is watching us all the time? He knows us well enough and thus can predict our future correctly. Like a second grade teacher needs to come to the level of the children to make them understand something, Allah SWT also comes to our level to make us understand. Allah has put us in Dunya which has some rules and Allah Himself is bounded by them as well. This is similar to a Dean of a university who, because of his rank, can do whatever he wishes, but there is still a code that he has to follow. Allah is All-Qadir and All-Powerful, so yes, He can use His power to do whatever He wants, but it is up to Him where He exercises that power. If we keep thinking that we have no control over anything, then we can not even take a step, and if we believe that Allah has no power, then we are at fault there as well. If we knew our own future, we would not have the motivation to do anything. Already knowing the outcome ruins the journey. Choice and actions are our free will, but the knowledge is with Allah SWT. Allah does put us in certain circumstances, but He doesn't judge us on those circumstances until we are mature enough to make decisions on our own

At the end of the day, it is also about if we are willing to take responsibility for our actions. Allah did not create because He wanted to test us in any wrong way. Allah put us in different circumstances to see if we can love Him in different conditions. We often ask, 'why did He create evil and the one who creates evil, is He evil too'? If an instructor has the right to give an F and does give an F, does that mean he is wrong/evil? If it is evil, then the good is appreciated. Allah swt even guided us towards that good. If bad things happen in society, Allah SWT has created a system of justice to deal with those wrong doings. Imagine if there was no such thing as justice and law and criminals were to roam around freely. It's a frightening thing to imagine.

Then there is also the question regarding people who are atheists, but they are also good? For such individuals Allah SWT has said that He will give them all the good in this world. Allah SWT is Just; He will give them their reward but in this Dunya only as there good was for the Dunya. Can dua change destination? Dua for us has become the last resort when we desire something. When we have tried all other possibilities, we raise our hands in desperation and make dua, while in actuality, we don't do anything. Dua was supposed to be the first step, which would motivate us to take actions to get to our goals. Dua brings about the intentions, the motivation to use the means and the trust in Allah SWT. In other words, you have the power to change your destination. It is not a magic wand, but something that triggers the control of actions within you.



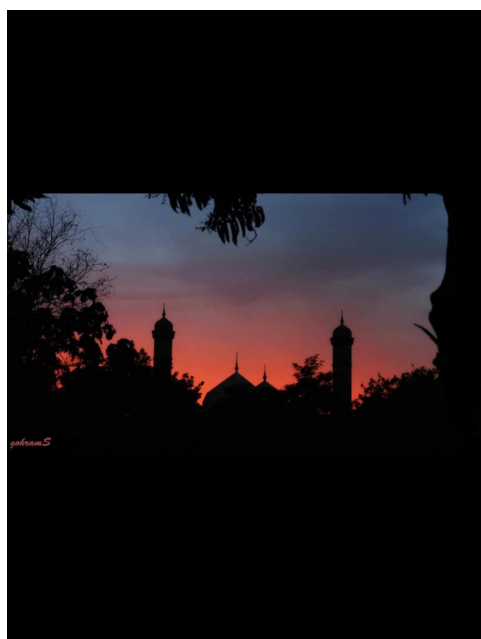
Actions and Intentions

"The actions and intentions of a person have different dimensions and can either be good, bad or neutral. To decide if a person will be rewarded for his/her actions, it needs to be seen in what category the action and intention falls into. The person can either be rewarded positively, negatively or not be rewarded at all. If both the intention is good and action is good then obviously the reward will be positive as well. However, if the intention is good but the action is bad then that will result in a negative reward as a bad action cannot be corrected even with a good intention. For example, a person decides to give sadqa (charity) from the money gained through interest. Furthermore, if an intention is good, but the action is neutral then the reward will be positive.

Throughout our lives most of us have heard the hadith that our deeds are dependent on our actions. Unfortunately we also forget that there is more to this hadith than just one line. It is actually about a sahabi who had migrated for the sake of marrying a woman. All the other sahaba were migrating with him as well, but they were migrating for the sake of Allah SWT. So each person is to get what he intends from his action. A neutral intention but good action would not necessarily lead to a positive reward.

Bad intentions with good actions are like hypocrisy, where ikhlas is a very important thing. For example, there are times when we are praying and we end up performing a longer salah if we catch someone watching us. Here we need to ask ourselves 'if my action is for the deen or dunya'. It should also be realized here that it is very natural for the state of the action to change because of the change in the company. The solution isn't to stop the act, which is what we end up doing in fear of negative reward, but the solution is to think over it positively and work on the areas we lack with sincere effort. Like good intentions, sincere effort is loved by Allah SWT.

There was once a person who had a window made in his house with the intention that it would allow the call for prayer to be heard. Now this window could have provided other benefits as well, such as allowing air to pass, but in the end we all need to learn to be a little more aware and creative in our intentions and to remember Allah SWT before the actions we take.



Doubts and Desires



"We have made ourselves the way people want and through that have lost ourselves." Shaykh Atif Ahmed started his session with these words on 22nd of February. We all have this agnosticism that we want to live in this world on our terms. It requires a lot of struggle to convince the universe and Allah SWT that we want to work on our terms. The root of all success is failure, but we forget the actual purpose of problems in our lives. These problems are stations in our lives. If we go too slow or too fast at these stations, then we may arrive at our destination but won't achieve the goal. We would then have to go through the stations again. Everything in life is meaningful. Nabi Kareem sws once saw a person offering prayer and told him to repeat it. The person prayed again, and again Nabi Kareem sws told him to repeat. This happened thrice, and then the person came and asked Nabi Kareem sws what his mistake was. That is the best part of life: when you understand what you were supposed to learn from a problem. Problems arise when we do not start correctly from the beginning.

"The two diseases of the heart are doubts and desires which kill productivity, patience, certainty, consistency and consciousness. The most beautiful part of life is when we have pains and problems in life as we have the highest level of knowledge. There is contentment of the heart when there is faith in Allah SWT. The more there is hope, the more there will be trust in Him. The more we waste our time, and don't fix our lives, the more the consciousness dies. The more we delay, the harder it is to come back.

Failure is part of life, and we need to learn from it. We need to learn about our God and then we need to learn about people. Allah SWT says in the Quran that there are three kinds of people: those who are righteous, those who don't believe and then those who are hypocrites. Quran also tells three ways to deal with them: to reply with optimism, to ignore the ignorant or to use evil to deal with evil. We can control doubts and desires when we build a firm connection with Allah SWT and when we understand the people around us.



Ethical Training Program

Lums Religious Society has recently been able to start a very heartening and inspirational program: An 8 week session based on moral training and ethics, where the volunteers of the society go to a school for underprivileged students called the Capital Foundation. Upon their first visit, the volunteers were welcomed warmly by the principal and they observed that the students are quite enthusiastic to learn new and exciting things that come their way. The students shared their hobbies, ambitions and favorite subjects. Instead of making them write and note things down, the students are encouraged to speak and participate in class.

"Interactive discussions are carried out on topics like 'Environmental Conservation' and 'Personal Hygiene' while, of course, bringing it to the mental level of the kids. The point is to develop an understanding in children of ethical values.



This is a program where not only the students learn from the volunteers but the volunteers themselves learn a lot from the students. Our general society is such that one always has a lot to learn from the other but so many times in life we forget our responsibilities to other members of the community. This is a small initiative by LRS to reach out to a small portion of the society.



How I came to Islam

On 27th of February, Dr. Arif Zaman, a graduate of Stanford and a professor at LUMS shared his inspirational story of how he had come closer to Deen. He is the kind of person who teaches a lot without saying anything explicitly. This is the story he told:

“The rumors about me are growing larger and larger. There is a grain of truth somewhere, but other people have taken this idea much further in development.

My father was not any hafiz or maulwi but just an ordinary Pakistani Muslim, irregular in prayers and other religious duties. When I was 12, my parents were living in Sudan, and I was sent ahead to Pakistan for study. Till my parents came to Pakistan, I lived with some relatives who were very devoted to religion. It was a new experience for me and that was the kind of Islam I saw. Somewhere around the time my father went to Hajj, and that marked his journey towards Deen, and then he tried to bring us on that line too. He was exploring more and more about Islam, and in the process, he became affiliated with the tableeghi jama`at. On the other hand, I left for Florida for higher studies. I had always been an inquisitive person, and I believed science could answer all my questions. However, when I got to college, I realized science didn't have much of a solution; instead, it just raised more questions. So I became interested in Philosophy. I realized after a while that the philosophers are very good at breaking arguments apart. When they argued against things, it was fascinating but they too did not have any concrete answers.

Eventually, I realized after some time that the only things one is going to be sure about are the irrelevant ones. When you look towards Physics, you get to know that it is an incomplete theory, but then you also have "imaan" in Physics that one day it will explain everything. My father said to me that I should do something useful in life. So I chose Statistics. I found that it was the most beautiful thing. It teaches you that if you see data, how do you know what its source is. You don't. The next number in the data pattern can be anything. The certainty that I was looking for was nowhere to be found. At the end of my doctorate, I concluded that even though there is the possibility that there is a God, I don't have the belief. Even if there is a God, how would I know it is a Muslim God? How can I live the rest of my life on this shaky ground?

When I came home after completing my doctorate, my father told me to take a piece of paper and write down the number of years it took me to get that degree. In another column on the page he told me to write the number of years it took me to understand my Deen. It was incomparable! Then he asked me if after all those years learning statistics I had been able to understand all of the Statistics. I didn't. How, after not taking out time for Deen, was I to know my Deen then, he commented. He said to me that I should take out only four months for Deen and that had to be before I turned to 30. When the time came for me to do that, I tried hard to avoid it, but I failed. So I finally went to a tableeghi jamaat for four months. I decided to give my best in those months and give a last chance to Allah. At the end of those four months, I realized that nothing out of the ordinary had happened to me. However, I noticed later that my change was gradual. The most important thing was that I had found what had primarily been missing: certainty in my heart. If we sit and talk about hypothetical Islam, then it is all theory, but when we live it is when we realize that it is true.”

