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NEWS FROM THE BERLIN MOSQUE

AMIR AZIZ AL-AZHARI

Three-hour documentary of the Mosque
An Arab television team filmed a three-hour documentary about the Mosque, during which I was interviewed in Arabic.

It is important to report that the Imam of the Arab mosque in Berlin, Sheik Al-Sidiq Al-Khalid, was with the team, and conducted the entire programme. He told me that when he had first seen the Mosque, he was amazed that so few people had built it.

Later on, he had discussion about the Ahmadiyya Movement and Hazrat Mirza Sahib. He was amazed to know the differences between the two sections. He told me that he did not know about Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. He also said that people sometime ask him whether they should go to this Mosque or not. Uptil now he used to tell them reluctantly to pray at the Mosque, but now he would be very clear in his mind to allow them to go to it.

He prayed Maghrib in our Mosque. I asked him to give the Azan, and I led the prayer. After the prayer, he said that he was very impressed with the talawat (recitation).

I presented Sheik Al-Sidiq Al-Khalid with the Arabic translation of The Ahmadiyya Movement and also The Religion of Islam. He has invited me to his place, and I will soon visit his Mosque. He promised to provide all support to the Mosque.

Group from Nelson Mandela School, Berlin at the Mosque
Students and the Chief Editor of the Nelson Mandela School News visited the Mosque and interviewed me about Islamophobia. The interview went very well. It will be published in the magazine. The book The Religion of Islam was presented to the students for their library.

Discussion about history and significance of the Mosque
A very useful meeting was held at the Mission House with Mr Michael Toler, Ph. D, Archnet Content Manager, Khan Documentation Center, and Ms Sharon C. Smith Ph.D, Program Head, Agha Khan Documentation Center, both of the USA.

We had discussions for about one hour on the history and significance of this Mission. I specifically mentioned and showed them photos of a visit by (the late) Agha Khan to the Mosque, and his Memorial Service at the Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking. They were amazed to know about the history, architecture and activities of Berlin Mission. I also presented them with a copy of the book about the history of the Mosque.
I hope that the Mosque will get a place on their website, which will project the Berlin Mosque and its importance. I also hope to get a chance to have close contact with this organisation in future, as this will be beneficial for us.

**Interview for Radio Koln**
Ms Marfa Heimbach, Islamic studies academic and author for Radio Koln, visited the Mosque on 31 March 2015, and interviewed me for an hour. The interview will be broadcast in half of the eastern cities of Germany.

It was a fruitful interview. Ms Heimback asked about the differences of the two Jama’ats, about which she already had good knowledge. I told her about the history of the Mosque and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. The interview will be aired on 26 April 2015.

Ms Heimback was given a summary of my last Friday sermon on knowledge, which will be broadcast as well, and she was also presented with some literature, for which she was grateful.

I informed her about the death of the respected scholar, the former Imam of the Berlin Mosque, Mr Muhammad Aman Hobhom, who passed away last year.

**One-hour question/answer session with young Danish volunteers**
A group of students and four teachers visited the Mosque on 3 April 2015 from Denmark. The students are volunteers of the Danish Young Men Christian Association (YMCA), and are being trained by Andreas Lund Rasmussen, who was in charge of the group.

We had an hour and a half discussion about Islam and current issues. At the end the students commented that their doubts were removed. Their teachers asked me about my profession, and said that while I was talking and answering questions, they all guessed that I was a teacher by profession and not just an Imam.

**A German convert joins the Jama’at**
A very noble young man, Abdullah, who had accepted Islam earlier joined the Jama’at. He had a discussion with me about the Lahore Movement and was given some literature. After two sessions and by studying the books given to him, he came for Friday prayer and now is with us, Al Hamdulillah. He stayed with me till Asr prayer.

**Books sold or given free**
German Translation of the Holy Qur’an; German Translation of The Religion of Islam; German Translation of Teachings of Islam; German Translation of the History of the Mosque and AAIL, Europe; Arabic Translation of The Ahmadiyya Movement; Islam, Peace and Tolerance (in English); French Translation of Islam, Peace and Tolerance; German Translation of Al-Wasiyyat. German Translation of The British Government and Jihad. German Translation of the Brief History of the Mosque.
**ISLAM ON BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION**

**MR RAFFIQUE ALI (TRINIDAD)**

“And eat up not one another’s property unjustly [in any illegal way, e.g. stealing, robbing, deceiving], nor give bribery to the rulers [judges before presenting your case] that you may knowingly eat up a part of the property of others sinfully” (2:188).

Brothers and Sisters, today I want to discuss two issues which seem to pervade and affect our everyday lives and which are prevalent in our society. They also occupy much space in the news. The issues to which I refer are bribery and corruption. They are so closely related that sometimes we think of them as one and the same.

**Corruption in our society**

It seems that corruption has now become a part of our culture; it has become so widespread that we take bribes and kickbacks as a norm of life. We are also accustomed to offering bribes and gifts to get our business done. The worst part is that it has become so commonplace that we no longer feel shocked when these things happen, and we may even take part in it without thinking.

What has become particularly frightening is that corruption is practised openly and people in position are not ashamed to demand bribes and kickbacks. How often we hear people boasting about how easily they got something done and how much they paid and whom they paid.

When a policeman or a public official does not indulge in this type of behaviour, you actually hear people say, “What he trying to play?” or, “What kind of police is he?” It is almost as if people are disappointed if public officials do not indulge in this type of behaviour.

The same goes for politicians. We have come to believe that it is the norm for politicians to engage in such behaviour.
But shouldn’t this be the other way around?

In these times it is common to hear people trying to justify bribery. Society has assimilated it well into its culture and calls it all sorts of names. Some call it a gift, some call it a gratuity, some call it appreciation, and all sorts of other names. Brothers and Sisters, call it what you will, it is wrong.

**Justification for corruption**

Let us look at some examples of this and how people seek to justify it:

- The doctor who receives free gifts – arranged trips abroad along with meals, entertainment and other facilities and amenities by the medical companies.
- The public official will say that he did not ask for money but someone offered it in appreciation or return for a favour.
- An official may say that he never asked the importers of goods for anything but they insisted on repainting or furnishing his house.

Many people try to justify it by saying things like:

- If I don’t come up, I won’t get the contract and my children are at college in the USA; or
- I have to accept gifts since my salary cannot pay for my recurrent expenses or my wife’s new car; or
- If I don’t give the policeman something, it might cost me more to go to court.

Aren’t we all familiar with this?

So when people seek to justify their actions they are very unmindful of what Allah says, and there is no fear of the Almighty left in their hearts.

But these things cannot be hidden from Allah (swt), for He says in the Qur’an: “Verily Allah is All-Knower of that which is in the [secrets of your) breast” (5:7).

Allah also says: “Verily Allah is well-acquainted with what you do.”

Thus, when people make lofty excuses for engaging in corrupt practices, Allah is aware of it.

Allah also says: “They think to deceive Allah and those who believe, while they only deceive themselves” (2:9).

**Corruption and Bribery in the eyes of the Holy Prophet (saw)**

Corruption and bribery were disliked by our beloved Prophet (saw), who is reported to have said: “May Allah curse who gives a bribe, one who accepts it, and one who acts as an agent between them.”

In another instance, our beloved Prophet (saw) is reported to have said: “Beware of bribe! It is nothing but disbelief. The one who is involved in bribe will not even smell the fragrance of Paradise.”

Again, Allah warns us about making mischief when He says: “And when it is said to them make not mischief on the earth. They say we are only peacemakers” (2:11).
But, even in the face of warnings from the Almighty, people continue to make excuses to justify their wrong acts.

**How to avoid it**
The question I would like to address in this *khutba* is how Muslims should treat with these issues. In the first place, when we give or take a bribe to do something, we unjustly affect the person who is harmed by it, the community, and the country at large. Bribery and corruption cause devastation in the economy and the lives of people in the country. Look at what it has done to the lives of the people in Haiti and several countries in Africa. Huge amounts of money and resources are diverted from projects to improve the lives of people and end up in the pockets of unscrupulous officials.

Corruption has served to widen the gap between those who have and those who have-not. We know the cost of building the new airport, don’t we? We also know that because of bribery and kickbacks, the building was finished at an obscene cost to us, the taxpayers and citizens of this country. When you look at the final cost, you realise that hospitals could have been built or at least expanded with part of that money, which certain people stole by way of inflated invoices, kickbacks and bribery.

In another incident, a boy kills another and in the face of overwhelming evidence, the Judge allows him to walk free because of some technicality. This Judge later went into politics and indulged in further mischief. Remember Section 34? Thankfully, he is now out of politics and unable to influence our lives in any meaningful way. But the fact remains that someone’s son is still dead and justice was miscarried and the family still has to live with this tragedy.

**Corruption leads to disruption and lawlessness**
When things like these happen, it may cause people to take the law into their own hands in order to get justice. Can you imagine what will happen if this practice became widespread in our beloved country?

Again, when an importer pays a worker on the port to facilitate the loading of his goods and when he pays an official to expedite his business, do you know who pays for this? You and I pay for it, because that additional cost is passed down to us. And when someone pays an official to allow prohibited or restricted goods to enter the country, we all pay the price.

The influx of drugs and guns in the country not only sets the youth on a path of destruction, but the security of our homes, our families and the country as a whole are affected.

Let us look at some of the reasons which facilitate corruption.

We live in a materialistic world. Everyone wants to live a good life, give good education to their children and their families and earn the respect of their community and the wider society. So, we work or start a business. With the money we make we provide for our families and try to give them the very best that money can buy. Because we live in this materialistic environment, we constantly think of ways to enhance our income so that we can achieve higher and higher standards of living. Sometimes in chasing the dollar we forget to consider whether the money we make is *haram* or *halal*. 
Media drives people to go beyond their means
The constant blitz from advertisers and the media conditions our minds to acquire new things even though they may be expensive and out of reach of our pockets. In other words, we are conditioned to live beyond our means. We all know of the term “the rat race”. It causes us develop certain attitudes that cause us to strive to outdo our neighbours.

Corruption is the misuse of entrusted power for personal or private gain. This occurs when a person has the authority to make a decision which impacts on others whose interests may be affected. People will find ways and means to secure their interests. We read about instances like these every day. Do you recall the numerous stories about contractors building houses for Ministers of Government, and buying expensive cars as gifts?

If you go to Chaguaramas, look up to the hills. Although there is a law against erecting buildings beyond a certain height, we see several mansions high up the mountainside. I leave you to figure out how the owners got approvals. One of the results of this practice is that places like Diego Martin and other nearby areas have become prone to serious flooding. This never happened before.

As citizens of this country we are all entitled to certain services, like healthcare, the right to obtain a driving permit, the right to own a house provided by the Government, if we so qualify, the right to a job, if we are qualified. However, when people do not get what they feel they are entitled to and they fail to get redress, they may resort to bribery in order to get what they want. So now we pay to pass a driving test; we pay to get a passport in time; we pay to get a birth certificate on time; we pay someone in HDC to get a house. And the list goes on and on.

Brothers and Sisters, in reality you and I pay a heavy price for these corrupt practices, although you may not be aware of it.

The Holy Prophet (saw) seemed to target the politicians and others in authority when he [is reported to have] said: “A ruler who has been entrusted with the affairs of Muslims but makes no endeavour [for their material and moral uplift] and is not sincerely concerned [for their welfare] will not enter Paradise along with them.”

May Allah forgive for our trespasses and give us the strength to do the right thing at all times.

The question now is, how do we handle this widespread corruption in our lives? To this, I say to you: seek guidance from Allah’s words as laid down in the Holy Qur’an and the Hadith, which are the two sources of Shar’iah.

I would also like to quote from a speech given by the Hon. Justice Mohammed Shehu of Abuja at a Code of Conduct Training for CEOs: “The Qur’an is a comprehensive book of guidance. It contains a complete book of universal standard. It is superior to any other faith in that it guarantees happiness in man’s life. It has an unshakable belief system with moral and practical laws with source firmly codified in the Holy Qur’an.”

Allah says in the Holy Qur’an: “And no question they bring to you but We reveal to you the truth and the best of explanation” (25:33).
Islam on Bribery and corruption

Islam is based on moral and ethical values, equity, honesty, justice, decency and accountability. These values provide a framework for human behaviour derived from the Holy Qur’an.

Allah says in the Qur’an: “O my people, give full measure and full weight in justice and do not reduce the things that are due to the people (nor defraud them of their things) and do not commit mischief in the land, causing corruption” (11:85).

Sometimes during the course of our lives we look at the achievements of others and we become obsessed with achieving what they have. This seems to be a common trait in human beings and is in itself not necessarily a bad thing. However, when we seek to acquire these material things by using illegal and un-Islamic means, it makes us vain and mean, and affects our very soul.

Allah (swt) has warned us of this in the following verses (103:1-8):

The mutual rivalry [for piling up of worldly things] diverts you.
Until you visit the graves [until you die.]
Nay! you shall come to know.)
Again nay! you shall come to know.
Nay! If you knew with a sure knowledge [the result of piling up, you would not have occupied yourselves in worldly things].
Verily you shall see the hellfire.
And again you shall see it with certainty of sight!
Then on that day you shall be asked about the delights [you indulged in, in this world]!

But do not despair, Brothers and Sisters. Take heart in what Allah says in Surah al-An’am: “And He it is Who has made you successors in the land and exalted some of you in rank above others that He may try you by what He has given you...” (6:165).

What this means is that not all of us will own a Mercedes Benz or own property in Westmoorings, because Allah has given some of us more than others.

In order to fight the scourge of bribery and corruption, we also have to look at the Hadith. The Prophet Muhammad (saw) is reported to have said: “Whoever amongst you sees an evil, let him change it with his hands; and if he is not able, then with his tongue; and if he is not able, then let him hate it in his heart, and that is the minimum required by faith.”

Our beloved Rasul has, therefore, exhorted us to fight corruption by all means. Hence, we have to use the pressure of public opinion and our collective conscience to keep these evil practices in check, and know that what we are doing is what is required by Allah from His Ummah. If not, we are doomed to see corruption spread and engulf this nation.

In conclusion, I leave you with this piece of advice taken from the Holy Qur’an: “Truly Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves” (13:11).

* * *
My topic today is “The Qur’an and the psychology of fear”. I chose this topic because for too long now non-Muslims have accused the God of Islam as a God of retribution. Interestingly, this is the same God known in the Old and the New Testaments (the God of Abraham) as ‘God the Father’ Who was responsible for the murder of an innocent prophet, that is, Jesus. So this topic is equally important for them to look closely at this accusation.

Women in Islam have no rights according to Western writers and live in fear of the patriarchal religion, Islam. Is there any truth in this, as there are no ‘women imams’? It is only this Jama'at in the UK which has placed women on the international arena by granting them the opportunity to give Friday kuthbas when no male is available. As a result, we have gotten some criticism for this. Perhaps this means that we are on the right path. It also means we have no fear as we are living the dictates of the Qur’an, which has given men and women equal opportunity.

Fear causes cowardice, which has long-term repercussions, and if not dealt with creates mental as well as physical illness. I set about looking to see if the Qur’an has identified these issues and how it asks us to deal with them.

**Mostly fear is false appearing as real**
The word **fear** appears 296 times in 269 verses of the translation of the Holy Qur’an by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. There are at least ten different Arabic words used in the Qur’an that are translated as **fear**. A detailed discussion of all the different words and their applications is beyond the scope of this short talk.

**Definition of fear**
Fear is an emotion induced by a threat perceived by living entities, which causes a change in brain and organ function and ultimately a change in behaviour, such as running away, hiding, or freezing from traumatic events. Fear may occur in response to a specific stimulus happening in the present, or to a future situation, which is perceived as a risk to health or life, status, power, security, or in the case of human wealth or anything held valuable. (cf. *The Free Encyclopaedia*)

Fear is a very interesting yet a complicated emotion that God created within us. Some people think that fear is a negative quality and therefore try to hide it. In reality though, fear is a great bounty from God. Fear acts like a protection mechanism. It is the fear for life that makes us drive carefully on the highway; it is the fear of poverty that makes some people get up every morning and go to work.

**In Islamic theology**
There are three kinds of fear. Firstly, we have natural fear. This fear is neither praiseworthy nor blameworthy; it is just natural. God tells us in the Qur’an that even Moses, one of the strongest prophets, experienced this type of fear.
Imam Al-Gazali claims that “remembrance of Allah removes all fears; the heart of the person who remembers Allah becomes filled with relief and satisfaction after he being afraid and suspicious.”

Dr Ramez Taha states that “remembering Allah immediately dismisses fear, anxieties and negative thoughts and stops their effect on the emotional centre.”

Secondly is blameworthy fear. This type of fear can accumulate and pile up till it paralyses you. Here the Qur’an tells us that fear is nothing but a tool of Satan: “It’s indeed Satan that strikes fear using his agents, so don’t fear (takhāfūhum) them and fear Me” (3:175). In fact, this verse also tells us the solution to this type of fear: we should fear Allah alone. Faith in Allah negates all kind of fear and embraces you with the support of the All-Powerful, Allah.

The third type of fear is fear of God, which needs to be encouraged. This fear is not a weakness but it is a source of the greatest strength. It is based on knowledge of who God is. The Qur’an has used a word for this fear – khashyah. The Qur’an tells us that it is the knowledgeable people who possess this type of fear. This fear defines our moral compass. It urges us to do what is good and stops us from doing what is evil.

**Khashyah**

*Khashyah* (خشية) is a fear which is the result of certain knowledge about something which not only apprises us of its power but also gives direction to our actions. It happens when one has full knowledge of the object of fear and its greatness and magnitude of what one fears, and, as a result, it naturally compels one to owe it awe and reverence.

Allah suggests to the Holy Prophet (saw) in the Qur’an: “You can only warn one who follows the message and fears the Most Merciful Unseen. So give him good tidings of forgiveness and noble reward” (36:11).

In this verse, Allah describes the one who will benefit from the Qur’an: he has fear (*khashyah*) of Ar-Rahmaan (the Beneficent). By using the attribute *Ar-Rahmaan*, it shows the level of their *khashyah* or fear. This kind of fear can be interpreted in two ways: ‘fear of Allah’ and ‘awe of Him’. This is a fear of an objective which is not visible or tangible and is “unseen”.

The Holy Qur’an tells us that this fear is fully dependent on the amount of knowledge one has about Allah. The more knowledge one has of Allah, the more fear he will entertain. This type of fear has tremendous positive effect on the courage and conviction of the person who entertains this kind of fear. “It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah” (35:28).

Imam ibn Kathir states with regards to this verse: “Only those who have knowledge truly fear Him as He should be feared, because the more they know about the Almighty, the All-Powerful, the All-Knowing, Who has the most perfect attributes and is described with the most beautiful names, the more they will fear Him.”

This is to fear Allah with awe of His Majesty when you truly understand the nature and power of Allah, the Wonderful Originator of the heavens and the earth. This could also be understood as to
share admiration at the magnificence of the creation and how it reflects the beauty of the Creator and in realising how insignificant we are in the larger scheme of things.

Elsewhere, the Holy Qur’an says: “Nay, whoever submits himself wholeheartedly to Allah, and he is a doer of good to others, he shall have his reward from his Lord. And there is no fear for such people, nor do they grieve” (2:112).

And: “Allah has promised to those of you who believe and do good that He will surely make them rulers in the earth as He made those before them rulers, and that He will surely establish for them their religion, which He has chosen for them, and that He will surely give them security in exchange after their fear. They will serve Me, not setting up partner with Me. And whoever is ungrateful after this, they are the transgressors” (24:55).

In the two verses above, the Arabic word used for fear is khawf (خوف). Khawf is a perceived danger and a fear of something that is physical. It is the type of fear you would feel, for example, if a dog began to chase you.

In another verse, Allah describes His blessings upon the Quraysh in the following words: “(He) Who has fed them against hunger, and has made them safe from fear (khawf)” (106:4).

While most of the tribes of Arabia worried about being invaded or about a war, Allah protected the Quraysh from this danger and granted them safety in Makkah.

The verses above deal with physical fears that we may experience in our lifetime and also show that it was experienced by the most powerful tribe at the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw). Physical loss has a special effect on us, especially when the loss is of something for which we have worked very hard, such as property, land, status, investment.

This type of fear tends to give us an unsettling feeling of what the future holds for us and what will happen to our possessions. This affects our psyche with great perturbation and worry. So the Merciful God Who has created us weak reassures us in the Qur’an, where He says He will exchange fear for security and establish your religion for you.

President Franklin Roosevelt of the USA once remarked, “The only thing we have to fear, is fear itself.”

**New research into the psychology of fear**

Research has shown that the way our minds react to and process emotions such as fear can vary according to what is happening in other parts of our bodies.

In two different presentations on 8 April at the British Neuroscience Association Festival of Neuroscience in London, researchers showed for the first time that the heart’s cycle affects the way we process fear, and that a part of the brain that responds to stimuli, such as touch, and is felt by other parts of the body, also plays a role. Dr Sarah Garfinkel, a postdoctoral fellow at the Brighton and Sussex Medical School (Brighton, UK), told a news briefing: “Cognitive neuroscience strives to understand how biological processes interact to create and influence the conscious mind. While neural activity in the brain is typically the focus of research, there is a growing appreciation that
other bodily organs interact with brain function to shape and influence our perceptions, cognitions and emotions. We demonstrate for the first time that the way in which we process fear is different dependent on when we see fearful images in relation to our heart.”

Dr Garfinkel and her colleagues hooked up twenty healthy volunteers to heart monitors and then showed images of a fearful face on a computer screen. Their results showed that if we see a fearful face during systole then we judge this fearful face as more intense than if we see the very same fearful face during diastole.

To look at neural activity underlying this effect, we performed this experiment in an MRI scanner and demonstrated that a part of the brain, called the amygdala, influences how our heart changes our perception of fear. Dr Caroline Leaf (Cognitive Neuroscientist and PhD in Communication Pathology) states that 75% to 95% of the illnesses that plague us today are a direct result of our thought life. What we think about affects us physically and emotionally. It is an epidemic of toxic emotions.

The average person has over 30,000 thoughts a day. Through an uncontrolled thought-life, we create the conditions for illness; we make ourselves sick! Research shows that fear, all on its own, triggers more than 1,400 known physical and chemical responses and activates more than thirty different hormones.

Reasons to forgive
There are intellectual and medical reasons to forgive! Toxic waste generated by toxic thoughts causes the following illnesses: diabetes, cancer, asthma, skin problems, and allergies, to name just a few. Consciously control your thought-life and start to detox your brain.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “A man is what he thinks about all day long.”

In relation to these scientific findings, the Qur’an states: “Verily, the remembrance of Allah is the greatest force.”

What causes fear to generate bodily responses?
On receiving fear signals from the amygdala, the hypothalamus acts reflexively to control the reproductive, vegetative, endocrinial, hormonal, visceral and autonomic functions of the body. Breathing, digestion, blood circulation, brain activity and body fluid flows are instantly affected. The signals from the amygdalae dilate pupils and increase brain wave frequency. They make hairs stand on end. They reduce saliva, drying the mouth. They cause sweating and a decrease in skin resistance. They decrease peripheral blood flow and cause hands to become cold. The signals speed breathing and dilate bronchial tubes to allow more air to the lungs. They tighten stomach muscles, slow digestion and close down the excretory system. They increase acid in the stomach, causing diarrhoea.

The signal travels to the adrenal gland, which produces cortisol, causing an increase in glucose production to provide additional fuel for the muscles and brain to deal with the potential stress. The signal also increases blood pressure, releases blood sugar in the blood and increases the tendency for blood clotting. The signal increases red blood cells. They tense postural muscles, causing hand and body tremors. They dilate blood vessels to skeletal muscles to allow greater blood flow. They slow the working of the immune system. The amygdalae trigger a chain of biological events and
engulf the mind in the fear emotion, even before the conscious mind can assess the situation. In the modern world, such persistent fear signals are not set off by real physical danger; they are triggered by an instinctive brain, which tries to overcome social and career issues by foolishly preparing the body to freeze, flee or defend itself.

Thus, one can see how fearing God should be encouraged. However, the second type of fear mentioned in the Bible is not beneficial at all. This is the “spirit of fear” mentioned in II Second Timothy (Chapter 1:7): “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (NKJV). A spirit of fearfulness and timidity does not come from God.

**Long-term effects of fear**
A persistent lack of escape routes from danger lead to the insistent fear signals of anxiety, which raise heart rate and blood pressure over time. Such conditions are believed to lead to heart palpitations, fatigue, nausea, chest pain, shortness of breath, stomach aches, or headaches. Escalating fear signals trigger panic attacks, which have indications similar to the symptoms of heart attacks.

**Negative thinking motivated by six basic fears**

**Fear of poverty:** This is the fear of the loss of the tangible things you have acquired, such as the fear of going broke. People who fear poverty hoard money and material possessions. They are often cheap and stingy, even though they may possess great wealth. The fear of poverty will keep you broke in consciousness, regardless of what you may possess in your bank account. It destroys ambition, initiative, enthusiasm, persistence and self-discipline. The fear of poverty becomes a big hurdle in the way of taking new initiatives and undertaking ambitious plans.

**Fear of criticism:** This fear either creates in you an inferiority complex or robs you of exercising the power of imagination. It is usually fatal to your own personal achievement. It makes you timid, insecure, and slow to reach decisions, or express opinions.

**Fear of ill health:** It stems from negative knowledge and negative feelings about illness. It causes you to become preoccupied with symptoms of sickness and disease. The habit of constantly speaking and thinking with strong feelings about sickness and disease often creates the very symptoms of the illness in your life experience. Disappointments in business and love affairs cause fear of ill health to grow and magnify.

**Fear of loss of love:** This fear is probably the most powerful of all the basic fears. The fear of the loss of love causes you to become suspicious of everyone. You quickly find fault with friends and loved ones, often without cause. It encourages the idea that love can be bought. People who fear the loss of love often give gifts at the slightest provocation. They also have the tendency to remind you of every good thing they have done – or think they have done – for you.

**Fear of old age:** The fear of old age, to a large extent, stems from the negative portrayal we have as a society of the challenges of old age. This fear often manifests as a fear of being alone and unable to care for yourself. Sometimes the fear of poverty masquerades as a fear of old age. Here you believe that as you grow older, you are in greater danger of losing your worldly possessions. The fear of old age causes you to constantly talk about other people’s age, or how good or bad they look for their age. The fear of old age will have you constantly apologising for your age. It will drive you to try to
dress, act, and look like a younger person. People who fear old age often try to associate themselves with younger people.

**Fear of death:** It comes from concentrating on dying instead of living. It often stems from idleness, lack of purpose, and lack of occupation. People who fear death are mostly the ones who have wasted their lives in frivolous and unproductive endeavours. This fear also comes from a sense of unfulfilment in those who live their lives without direction. The fear of poverty sometimes manifests as the fear of death. Here you feel that your death will inflict poverty or hardship upon your family and loved ones.

These six basic fears and their infamous cousins, indecision and doubt, go to the very heart of your nature. When these fears hold you hostage, every thought that you have in your conscious mind is neutralised. The result is that your will to act or your willpower is engulfed by these fears. As long as these fears control your nature, your attitude cannot be positive.

This verse of the Qur’an sums up most of our fears on a daily basis and what attitude we should have when afflicted by these misfortunes: “And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient who, when a misfortune befalls them, say: Surely we are Allah’s and to Him we shall surely return” (2:155).

A Muslim has the prescription for these types of fears and it is rehearsed by giving up these fears to the All-Hearing God in the five daily *salah*. These are strategically placed at times of the day when these fears are likely to affect you. The Merciful God gives you the opportunity to offload your troubles five times a day in order to preserve your mind, body and soul.

Thus the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) says: “When you pray, pray as though you are seeing God; and if you are not seeing Him, then know for certain that He is seeing you” (*Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih al-Muslim*).

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**COMMUNICATION SKILLS TAUGHT BY THE QUR’AN**

**IRFAAN AHMAD**

(Talk given on 4 January 2015 at the Sunday meeting held at Lahore Ahmadiyya Centre, Wembley, London)

“My Lord, expand my heart, ease my task for me and remove the knot from my speech so that they may understand what I say” (Holy Qur’an, 20:25).

The Qur’an informs us that these words were spoken by Prophet Moses as he took on the weighty task of confronting the tyrannical Pharaoh of the time. “Arm me with the right words,” he asks his Lord earnestly.
In the light of the mayhem and atrocities committed in the name of Prophet Mohammed (saw) in France recently, I would like to talk about the skill of communication and the importance it is given in Islam.

In the beautiful Surah which speaks of the gifts bestowed on humankind, the gift of skilled speech is given a special mention: bayaan.

The Qur’an elsewhere says: “He has taught him intelligent speech” (55:3).

We share a world with people of different viewpoints, different faiths, and different ideas, and even within family members, differences in opinions arise. This is the reality of the world we live in as acknowledged by the good Lord in the Holy Qur’an: “O humankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female and made you into different nations and tribes that you may know each other. Verily, the most honoured amongst you in the sight of God is the most righteous. And God has full knowledge and he is well acquainted with all things” (49:13).

**Peace through kind words**

Did not illuminating words such as these change a fractured people so profoundly? If we strive with words calmly composed, can we not achieve peace?

The Holy Book of Islam repeatedly exhorts us to be kind and tolerant while arguing with others. Here is a very pointed instruction to Muslims: “Invite all to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious” (16:125).

Now, let us turn to the very first revelation, “Read! In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created (1) Created man, out of clot. (2) Read! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful, – (3) He Who taught (the use of) the pen, – (4) Taught man what he knew not” (96:1-4).

Let us listen to the aural nature of this ayah. Please note that by aural I mean A-U-R-A-L, which means related to sound and hearing.

The predominance of the deep consonants in the first three verses, which are produced by the throat, kaf, or more precisely (qaaf), gives us a sense of the difficult mystical experience in the heart of a cave where the Holy Prophet (saw) struggled to get these words out. “Iqra bismi rabbikal lazi khalaq. Khalaqal insaaana min ‘alaq. Iqra wa rabbukal akram.” (Read! And thy Lord Who creates – Creates man from a clot. Read! And thy Lord is Most Generous) – (96:1-3).

Moreover, the imperative verb is Iqra! Read! Recite! Proclaim! But our Holy Prophet (saw) did not have these skills.

**Effect of rhythmic words**

Notice how the relationship is formed between the words ‘alaq and khalaq using rhyming, showing that ‘created’ and ‘clot’ are closely associated words. These word-associations underscore our relationship with our Creator: at the very moment of conception we are dependent on our Creator. The message conveyed using such sounds and poetry is: strive and depend on your Creator to guide you; the One Who knows you so intimately.
In verses 4 and 5, the deep qaaf is gradually replaced by the easier sounds of laam and meem, which are produced in the middle and front of the mouth. “Allazi ‘allama bil kalam. ‘Allamal insaana maa lam ya’lam.” (Who taught by the pen, Taught man what he knew not.)

Sounds produced from deep within the throat have been replaced with sounds that are produced by the tip of the tongue reaching the lips. These fluid sounds give a promise that the task which seems steep will become easier.

The rhyming words here are qalam (pen) and ya’lam (to know), which both relate to the word ‘Allama (He taught). The word-associations underlie the gift we have all been bestowed with to enable us to hold the pen. Here, there is also a prophecy that the written word will eventually spread knowledge.

**Communication through words**

These words speak to us on so many different levels. We get an insight into the difficult mystical experience the Holy Prophet (saw) underwent. History testifies to the prophecy that bringing the revelatory words to the people would initially be a struggle but eventually ease with the passage of time and have wide reach. The Holy Prophet’s deep faith in his Lord clothed him in patience; the words eventually impacted not only his society but reverberates in time for all to hear if they choose.

And note three very important words which occur in this very first revelation: Read, write (symbolised by the pen), and knowledge (ya’lam – to know). Such few words communicate so much.

We have all been gifted with the power of thought and speech and we can all aspire to master the craft of communication with the help of our Lord.

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**ISLAM stands for: I SHALL LOVE ALL MANKIND**

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